Chapter 6

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The state of Tamil Nadu in India served as an initial ground for the LTTE to take roots. The presence of 60 million co-ethnic Tamils in Tamil Nadu was a great advantage to the Tamil Tigers. Apart from receiving direct patronage from New Delhi and Tamil Nadu governments from the beginning, the LTTE also used the Sri Lankan Tamil refugees in that state as cover for its activities. Often, the refugees became scapegoats to the LTTE's excesses (*Sri Lanka Monitor*, April 1993). The Tamil Tigers could acquire a strong underground machine, having connections with organized crime and ultra-nationalists among the Tamils in Tamil Nadu (ibid.). But due to restrictions imposed by the Indian government, this centrality got dispersed.

The foundation of the LTTE's international network was laid by three organizations namely, the TULF, the EROS (Eelam Revolutionary Organizers or Eelam Revolutionary Organization of Students) and the TLO (Tamil Liberation Organization, formerly called the Tamil Liberation Front) (Gunaratna 1999: 110–11). In the mid-1970s, the TULF leader Appapillai Amirthalingam, who was then the opposition leader in the Sri Lankan parliament, secretly helped the LTTE to develop overseas links. Another TULF MP, V. N. Navaratnam, supported the LTTE and introduced many influential and rich Tamil diaspora to the organization. The TLO, which had its origins in London in the mid-1970s, was active in organizing protest rallies and marches against the Sri Lankan government. The TLO got absorbed by the LTTE, and served as its international arm (Gunaratna 1999).

The Tamil diaspora network helped the LTTE to expand internationally by establishing offices and cells worldwide. After the LTTE lost effective control over the Jaffna peninsula in 1995, finance from overseas became a major source. The LTTE's financial offices were located in Thailand and it also had branches in the UK.

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112 The TULF's prominent youth wing members Uma Maheswaran and Urmila Kandiah became active members of the LTTE. Uma Maheswaran served as chairman of the LTTE. Urmila was the first female member of the LTTE (Gunaratna, 1999: 110).
and Australia. K.P. Kummaruppa was the LTTE’s chief finance officer. The LTTE’s “quasi-governmental international structure” is extremely intricate (Gunaratna 2000: 2). This financial web connects commercial companies and small businesses, government offices, informal banking channels, human rights organizations, arms dealers and foreign mercenaries.

The LTTE’s central governing committee included the International Secretariat, which was in London, headed by John Christian Chrysostom, alias Lawrence Thilagar. He was replaced by Velumyllum Manoharan in early 1997 (Chalk 2000; www.csis.org; Hoffmann and Chalk 2001: 43). Shanthan, Shegar and Ramasar were said to be the other LTTE leaders in London (Gunaratna 1999: 114). This body had the responsibility to ensure the smooth functioning of the LTTE’s global network. Different sections of the international structure were headed by experts in their own fields. Activities like propaganda, fundraising, arms procurement, etc. though they were operated independently, their functions overlapped. The International Secretariat was the coordinating body.

The international network of the LTTE had offices and cells in at least fifty-four countries in 1998 (Chalk 1999), mostly in the Western countries. The largest and most important LTTE centres were located in the UK, France, Germany, Switzerland, Canada and Australia, which have large Tamil expatriate communities. The LTTE was also represented in Thailand, Cambodia, Burma, and South Africa. The transnational aspects which are strategic for separatist movements got further propelled by globalization and helped in making the LTTE a transnational enterprise.

The LTTE’s international network was said to have a ‘profit margin’ of between $200 million and $300 million annually. The LTTE’s money, manpower and weapons management were carried out chiefly by the Aiyanna Group (intelligence and operations) and the Office of Overseas Purchases, nicknamed the KP Department113 (arms procurement) (Jayawardhana 2007).

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113 After Kumaran Pathmanathan.
Fundraising

The LTTE raised funds through a variety of means, ranging from investments in businesses to donations, outright blackmail and extortion. Between $80 million and $100 million (80 per cent of the LTTE budget) came from diaspora contributions and revenue generated from international trade and investments (Gunaratna 2000). The LTTE has its support base in the Europe, US, Canada and Australia, which heavily depends on them to raise and launder money, acquire intelligence and purchase military arms, equipment and technology (FBI statement 2006, defence.lk).

After 1983, the Tamil Tigers made the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora feel obligated to fund the militant movement. On Tamils becoming economically stable in the Western countries, the Tamil Tigers felt more comfortable in collecting funds from them regularly. There were regular reports of extortion by the LTTE sympathizers in the European countries such as Germany since 1985 (Sri Lanka Monitor, January 1990). While many members of the Tamil diaspora willingly and actively support the LTTE, others have been subject to intimidation, coercion, extortion, and physical violence. The expatriate Tamils are persuaded to donate. This is done by the LTTE to curb criticism of its violent activities and to make certain that the income steadily flow (Human Rights Watch 2006: 1). The LTTE started taxing Tamils abroad in the beginning. After some time, the voluntary contributions also got transformed into extortion. Claiming that the secure, comfortable life of the Tamil diaspora was because of the LTTE, the militant organization’s representatives started collecting 10 to 15 per cent of their earnings every month (Human Rights Watch 2006).

There were three reasons for the Tamil diaspora’s contribution to the war machine: Fear for the family members back home; social pressure to make Eelam happen; and guilt that they were safe in an alien land while their compatriots were suffering back home (Bhagwan Singh, Interview, Chennai, 21 January 2008).

The older generation, well established as members of the expatriate communities, firmly supported the LTTE struggle for a separate State. They believed this to be the sole long-term solution to the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka. Illegal migrants or asylum seekers contributed as they depended on the LTTE to facilitate their integration into society, find jobs, acquire forged identity papers and access housing (Chalk 1999).
Every month, Tamil diaspora contributed to the LTTE approximately $660,000 in Switzerland, $730,000 in Canada, $390,000 in Britain and 37 million rand in South Africa (Davis 1996). The Tigers collected 50 Swiss francs monthly per family in Switzerland. In some parts of Germany like Berne, each family contributed an estimated DM1000 annually (Guha 2003: 12). The LTTE was actively involved in fundraising in Norway, Denmark, Sweden and Finland as these countries were regarded as safe havens for LTTE operations. Norwegian law allows Sri Lankan Tamils to raise funds in Norway. After entering Norway there is no need for individuals to register as an organization before fundraising (Chalk 1999). Fundraising in Norway is done in the name of humanitarian issues for the Tamil population in Sri Lanka. The LTTE collected around US$65,000 monthly from Sri Lankan Tamils in Norway and other Scandinavian countries (Jansz, sinhaya.com).

The groups linked to the LTTE such as the World Tamil Movement repeatedly called and visited Tamil families, seeking funds. Some families received as many as three visits in a single week. The victims, if they claimed inability to pay because of scarce funds, would be told to borrow or even re-mortgage their homes (Human Rights Watch 2006: 2). Many of the migrants have left behind their property and relatives in Jaffna. The Tamil Tigers even threatened to kill the family members of the migrants in Sri Lanka if the migrants did not pay. Sometimes they abduct the relative in Sri Lanka till the Tamil expats pay the pending share of their contribution. Because of the fear of LTTE, the Tamils do not deny financial support to the group. (Rajanayagam, Interview, UK, 30 April 2008).

If a Tamil from the West visited his family in Sri Lanka, the LTTE would immediately identify him and put a systematic pressure on him for funds. The amount collected was often calculated to be Cdn$1, £1, or €1 per day for the length of time they had lived in the West (Sivalingam, Interview, London, April 2008; HRW 2006: 2, 35). If an individual has been in abroad for years, he may be asked for thousands. They were not allowed to leave without paying the amount demanded. For assurance of payment, their passports might be confiscated. With the signing of the cease-fire in 2002 between the Sri Lankan government and LTTE, more and more expatriates started visiting the northern and eastern provinces of Sri Lanka. This boosted the LTTE’s coffers (Kuhanendran, Interview, London, 17 April 2008).
In the Western countries, wealthy Tamil diaspora families and Tamil businessmen are made to pay lump sum amounts. Mostly, when the war is in full-fledged in Sri Lanka, they demand them with pressure. One famous doctor residing in the USA was even made to give US$100,000 at anytime the LTTE demanded (Chalk 1999). In Toronto, individual families were asked to pay between Cdn$2500 and Cdn$5000 and even up to Cdn$10,000. Businessmen were asked for amounts ranging from Cdn$25,000 to Cdn$100,000. In London, many individual families were asked for Â£2,000 and businesses were targeted for amounts ranging from Â£10,000 to Â£100,000. Sometimes, individuals and business owners were told that the money was a “loan” which would be repaid with interest, while others were outright made to pay contribution (Jeyaraj 2006).

The Tigers also brought the Tamils together on a common platform by organizing annual festivals and rallies. By conducting such programmes, the LTTE keeps the ethnic spirit alive. This is one means to propogate their cause and raise funds. The congregation of Tamils in Swiss town of Bern explains this. Tamils gather in Bern every year in the month of August. Four or five thousand Tamils in this get-together affirm their spirit of community. The motto behind this annual festival is to congregate Tamils across Europe to consolidate them as a community. The festival reminds them of an unfinished struggle back home. Their attention is drawn to the needs and claims of the LTTE. Each participating team had to pay an entrance fee. Every shop had to make a cash deposit (Guha 2003: 12). On events like Heroes Day, the money collection used to go up (Sivalingam, Ramraj, Interviews, London, 17 April 2008).

Funds are not always raised directly through Tamil diaspora. Donations given to non-profit cultural bodies were also diverted to the LTTE. The biggest advantage of this kind of money acquisition was that no account was given of the money spent (Chalk 1999). The Tamils established charitable organizations – which were fronts for the LTTE – to raise funds for the Tamil cause in most countries with a significant Tamil diaspora. They included the WTM, British Tamil Association, Tamil Rehabilitation Organization, etc. (Human Rights Watch 2006). These organizations generally raise funds to assist civilians affected by the war. But Numerous inquiries,
including investigations by Canadian intelligence, have found that a major amount of
the funds raised was directed to the LTTE’s military operations. In Canada, the key
front organizations raising funds for the LTTE are World Tamil Movement, the
Federation of Associations of Canada’s Tamils and the Tamil Eelam Society of
Canada (Chalk 1999).

Many Tamil front organizations did not file any financial reports for a long time.
One such front charitable organization, White Pigeon Limited had not filed any
financial reports till November 2006 (Rijock 2006). They were also collecting funds
before they were registered. This is considered to be a common practice among the
Tamil fronts. After the TRO was banned, the White Pigeon took over its functions.

In the end of 2005, UK Government run Charity Commission removed TRO from
the list of charities following reports that TRO “had not been able to account
satisfactorily for the application of charitable funds of the charity.” (14 April 2006,
http://news.bbc.co.uk, BBC Tamil service). Tamil Rehabilitation Organization (TRO)
is considered to be the humanitarian arm of the LTTE and it has many branches in
many Western countries. The LTTE’s front organizations have not been banned in
Canada and they could raise funds.

After the tsunami tragedy in December 2004, the LTTE collected huge sums of
money. The Tamil community worldwide gave lump sum contributions for the
victims in Tamil areas through charitable front organizations like the TRO. The
donations collected were much more than some prominent international NGOs’ aid to
the Tamil areas. The Tamil Tigers were also accused of diverting tsunami funds to its
militant movement (Rijock 2006). The collections were, for example, in UK 20
million pound sterling, in Canada more than twice that amount, in Germany about 100
million euros. Canada, which has the highest population, the Tamil Tigers collected
more than two times than in the UK (Manoharan, Interview, London, 15 April 2008).
Even in Australia, three Australian Tamils were accused of collecting millions for the
LTTE in the name of charity for tsunami victims. Said to be the members of Tamil
Coordinating Committee, they were blamed in 2007 to have spent the money for
purchasing electronic equipment for the LTTE (17 September 2007,
lankadailynews.com). After the tsunami, the funds raised by the TRO in Australia surged from $200,000 a year to more than $1.1 million.\textsuperscript{114}

Temples were another source of money. The LTTE has sought control over temple events, management, and revenue. The temples may also collect money for the TRO or other LTTE front groups. At one temple in London, the congregation supposedly was told to make out "standing orders" (monthly pledges) for the LTTE. The British Tamil Association then collects them (Human Rights Watch 2006: 21). In Canada, one Hindu temple reportedly was asked to pay Cdn$1 million (Jeyaraj 2006). In 2005, the LTTE detained two British Tamils for several weeks in Sri Lanka in order to gain control over a Hindu temple in London. Such incidents have created a culture of fear within the Tamil community, stifling dissent and discouraging individuals from organizing activities that are not sanctioned by the LTTE (Human Rights Watch 2006: 1). The Tamil Tigers feel they are the greatest benefactors of the temples. Also, they try to get hold of the Hindu temples as they are the places of good business. Even the LTTE also grabbed a temple started in Eastham in London by north Indians fifteen years ago (Rajanayagam, Interview, London, 30 April 2008). It is estimated that Tamil diaspora have built three hundred temples in the Western countries (Nathan, Interview, UK, 28 April 2008).

If any business owned by a Sri Lankan Tamil expatriate was doing well in the West, the LTTE would annex it by including its members in the board and making investments in it to expand. As the LTTE also helped the refugees in getting employment in many of its businesses, later they felt obliged to fund the LTTE (Sivalingam, Ramraj, Interviews, London, 17 April 2008). The LTTE was also engaged in money laundering to generate clean money and earn high profits, by investing in trade, enterprise and stock exchange through its front, cover and sympathetic organizations. It is very easy for the group as the registered company operates on behalf of it and transacts business. The LTTE also employed professional accountants. The LTTE invests its funds in businesses. In the UK, the LTTE owns broadcasting stations, restaurants, newspapers etc. From the mid-1990s, the LTTE’s

\textsuperscript{114} 'Aussie Tamils Funding Terror', 2 September 2006, www.defence.lk.
revenue from businesses exceeded that of contributions compared to the preceding period. It is very easy for the group as a registered company operates on behalf of it and transacts business (Gunaratna 2000). So, all the transactions are done in disguise. If any business owned by a Sri Lankan Tamil expatriate is doing well in the West, the LTTE in no time, annexes it includes its members in the board and make investments in it to expand. As the LTTE also helps the refugees in getting employment in many of its businesses, later they feel obliged to fund the LTTE (Sivalingam, Ramraj, Interviews, London, 17 April 2008).

Apart from the Tamil diaspora’s direct role in sustaining the Eelam Movement through fundraising, the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora is also significant for its economic interests in the LTTE held region of Sri Lanka. Jaffna became “Money order economy” (Gopalan, BBC Tamil Service, Chennai, Interview, 20 January 2008). For that economy to sustain, diaspora and their family ties helped. Self-help village organizations, Tamil alumni associations could facilitate financial help to rehabilitate and rebuild the infrastructure destroyed or damaged in the ethnic war in Sri Lankan North-East region. Almost every village organization is building primary and secondary schools in its village (Zunzer, berghof-center.org).

The Tamil Television and White Pigeon publicize the need of money for building infrastructure in Vanni. Sri Lankan Tamils respond through telephone and donate money. The Sri Lankan Tamils have sophisticated electronic ways of sending money home (Satyaseelan, White Pigeon, London, Interview, April 2008). After LTTE took over the administration of this region in the late 80s, the finances sent by the Tamil diaspora organizations were channeled through the LTTE (Raghavan, London, Interview, 24 April 2008). There were many claims that the LTTE has been diverting these donations to finance its militant movement. While conversing with the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora, one can feel their nostalgia towards their homeland. Their economic affluence in the Western countries encourages them to invest in their homeland. They still had faith that armed struggle would achieve something for them, not necessarily Eelam.
After 1983, the exodus of asylum seekers who also comprised the Tamils’ from poor families and school dropouts, showed large scale tendency for financial corruption, mostly in businesses. There were extremely clever criminals who broke into the national telephone system and siphoned away gas station payments through counterfeit cards (Bhagwan Singh, Interview, Chennai, 21 January 2008). In Norway, sixteen LTTE supporters were jailed in May 2007 for credit card fraud. Singapore and Thailand authorities raided criminal gangs outfitted with blank credit cards and reading devices. These were designed to crack secret codes at ATMs (dailynews.lk, 18 February 2008).

Apart from the diaspora, nexus with Tamil criminal gangs also helped LTTE in raising fund. Some of Canada’s street gangs have strong connections with the LTTE. A report by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) exposed the relation between the A.K. Kannan gang operating in Toronto and Montreal, and the LTTE. RCMP report also revealed the presence of large number of LTTE members in Canada. Their reliance on Tamil gangs for fundraising and intimidation is also reported.115 Some key figures in the LTTE were active gang members. The LTTE’s involvement and their widespread use of violent Tamil gang named VVT in Canada to carry out their political and economic activities have been reported by the Toronto Police. Niranjan Claude Fabian, also active in the LTTE, was an important member of the Tamil gang VVT116 in Toronto. He was imprisoned for his involvement in the illegal Canadian passport trade, among other crimes (National Post, 7 April 2005; lankalibrary.com). The Tamil criminal groups indulge in various activities like “extortion, theft, import and sale of brown heroin, home invasion, production and sale of counterfeit passports, attempted murder, arms trafficking, migrant smuggling, money laundering, casino and fraud” (spur.asn.au, 2000). Some Canadian politicians were ignoring the LTTE’s fundraising activities in their constituencies because of the Tamil vote bank (Chalk 1999). The LTTE, however, imputed these activities to Sinhala Buddhist organizations as intended to create a gap between the Tamils and the LTTE (Press Release, Head Office, MTCC, tamilcanadian.com).

116 Short for Velvettiturai.
The LTTE has also been accused of involving in the human cargo trade. Tamil militant groups were running many travel agencies and had control over the refugee market (The Sri Lanka Monitor, February 1994). Intelligence officials in the UK, Canada and Australia have found the LTTE’s significant role in smuggling illegal migrants from Sri Lanka and India to the West. Between $18,000 and $32,000 were charged per transaction (Rand, scribd.com).

The finance raised from the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora went for supporting the war at home. The war conditions further created a ground for Tamils to migrate. This migrated population provided more “fighting fodder” for the militant movement (Rajanayagam, Interview). So, migration of more Tamils meant more financial flow for the LTTE.

The LTTE is also involved in drug trafficking and it is considered as the most profitable LTTE activity.

Drug Trafficking

In the early 1990s, over 600 instances of drug trafficking involving Sri Lankan Tamil traffickers were reported to Interpol (Brewda and Gurung 1995). Over 400 Sri Lankan Tamils were found in Italian jails alone in the 1980s. They were caught smuggling drugs into the West (http://www.ourworld.compuserve.com). The revenues earned through narcotics trade help the LTTE in financing arms smuggling. The LTTE was reported to be involved in trafficking heroin through Mumbai, Turkey, the UK, France, Germany, Switzerland, Spain, Italy, Canada, and the US (Brewda and Gurung 1995).

A minimum of 10 million rupees was collected by the LTTE monthly from smuggling drugs and gold (priu.gov.lk, 13 March 2000). KP, based in London, coordinated these smuggling activities of the LTTE both for illicit drugs and gold. He is the international coordinator for the LTTE based in London. A fair amount of evidence does exist which suggests some nexus between the LTTE and narcotics trafficking. V. Manoharan, the head of the LTTE International Secretariat, was arrested in Paris in March 1985 for possessing heroin. He was not only fined 120,000 francs but also sentenced to three years imprisonment on 25th March 1985. When
Manoharan was in jail, it was found that LTTE office in France paid monthly salary to his family as per the orders of Prabhakaran (Gunaratna 2000; Chalk 1999). LTTE cadres were also arrested for drug trafficking in Brussels, Rome, France, India and Britain. Some years ago, the *Enfield Advertiser* (a local North London newspaper) reported the kidnapping of a Tamil man by a Tamil gang over a drug deal. Garden pruning scissors were used to cut off all the fingers of one of his hands (*The Times*, London, 8 September 1999). In 1997, the British police raided the International Secretariat of the LTTE at London on a narcotic investigation, but discovered nothing incriminating. Western security agencies were always suspicious of the LTTE’s involvement in drug trafficking. So the LTTE was continuously under scrutiny by outside agencies.

The LTTE maintains very good relations with drug mafia groups in Ukraine, Czech Republic and Cyprus. About twenty-five LTTE cadres are posted in these countries. The LTTE also has links with the Burmese drug baron Khunsa (*Asiaweek* 1996). The LTTE carries out transcontinental drug trafficking also through semi-autonomous units (Gunaratna 2000) to escape surveillance and ensure deniability. The LTTE also uses merchant vessels to smuggle drugs and other merchandise goods.

**Military Training and Links with Other Militant Groups**

In the 1970s, Fatah, the Japanese Red Army, the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) and Sri Lankan Tamil groups all shared their expertise and experience. They trained with the African National Congress (ANC) military wing in the Syrian-controlled Bekaa valley in Lebanon (Gunaratna 1999). The EROS helped the Tamil Tigers mostly in developing the links with the Palestinian militant groups, particularly the Fatah (Kuhanendran, Interview, London, 17 April 2008). In the 1980s, the LTTE through Dr. Rajini Thirangama established contacts with the ANC in London. LTTE activists frequently met ANC representatives at the Arab League building in the UK. These meetings were facilitated by the umbrella organization Friends of Palestine (Gunaratna 1999: 43).

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117 Khunsa is part of the ‘Golden Triangle’ and is a major supplier of narcotics to the world.
The LTTE also established a series of training camps in three major Tamil-dominated towns in South Africa, namely Laudium, Lenasia and New Castle (Gunaratna 1999). After forming the front organizations and developing other links for propaganda, the LTTE’s position became strong in South Africa. The Tigers then concentrated on initiating military activities in South Africa. In the training, recruits were taught the history of Eelam Tamils. Six instructors were involved in giving rigorous physical training. After finishing graduation, the best recruits were sent to Sri Lanka. Tamils trained in South Africa for the LTTE’s movement are referred to as “South African Tamil Tigers.”

A number of state and private organizations in Lebanon, Libya and Syria provided training to the Tamil groups. Ex-French Legionnaires, dissident sects within the PLO and a few South American groups were also involved in this (Brewda and Gurung 1995). The Israelis provided them some of the best training. According to accounts by retired officials of the Israeli secret service Mossad, the Israelis were training and providing weapons to both the Sri Lanka Army and the Tigers. Victor Ostrovsky, author of By Way of Deception, told India Abroad News Service in 1991 that the Tigers were trained in Israel in 1985. “These groups kept coming and going. It was part of our routine job to take them to training camps and make sure that they were getting training worth what they paid for, not more and not less.” The groups paid in cash. Ostrovsky said that the arrangement for the training was made by the Mossad liaison in India, who lived there under a British passport (ibid.).

With the funds collected from the diaspora and money raised through illicit businesses, the group purchases most of its arms and weapons. The money collected is also used to bear the expenses of legal defenses of the LTTE and its members.

118 The LTTE established the training programme after registering as a closed corporation in February 1996 by paying 200 rand (US$32). (In South Africa a closed corporation can change its company name and also its members without informing the registrar.) In the beginning, only Sri Lankan Tamils participated in the training. Slowly, South Africans also joined them. Chandrika Kumaratunga, the Sri Lankan President, informed Nelson Mandela of the LTTE bases in South Africa and expressed her concern. On Mandela’s order South African troops, assisted by the National Intelligence Agency (NIA) raided three LTTE camps in South Africa. Investigations later revealed that the LTTE was tipped off about the impending raid by some influential sources in the National Intelligence Coordinating Committee. After these raids, the camp members moved to safe houses and operated in greater secrecy (Gunaratna 1999; Gunaratna, sinhaya.com).
Diaspora Conduit to Purchase Arms

Many times, the foreign intelligence authorities complained of the involvement of Sri Lankan Tamils in arms trafficking. In July 1991, Britain issued a deportation order to Sathasivam Krishnakumar alias Kittu, then head of the LTTE’s international wing in London, for fundraising from Tamils through “threats and coercion” and for his attempts to buy arms (Sri Lanka Monitor, July 1991).

Like the propaganda wing, the Tigers’ arms procurement network is also wide. It has been built up since 1983 with the support of millions of dollars (Davis 1996). The LTTE arms network was headed by Tharmalingam Shanmugham alias Kumaran Pathmanathan, or simply KP. His team was known as KP department. He had more than twenty passports, travelled extensively, and had bank accounts in London, Frankfurt, Denmark, Athens and Australia. KP also focused on setting up a specialized department in document forging and spreading the international network (Chalk 1999; Davis 1996). Most members of the KP department, including KP himself, had not received any formal military training. But those inducted into this department received intensive instruction in various fields like document forgery, gun running, communication, international freight shipping and investment (Chalk 1999).

The LTTE’s arms were procured mainly from Asia, Africa and Europe. In Asia, arms are available mainly in China, North Korea, Cambodia, Thailand, Hong Kong, Vietnam and Burma. The LTTE also developed links with Hekmatyar’s Hezb-i-Islami. The arms bazaars on the Pakistan-Afghanistan border were the LTTE’s favourite hunting ground for arms. In 1987, large quantities of arms with Pakistani and Israeli markings were seized by the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) in Jaffna from the LTTE (Brewda and Gurung 1995). Ukraine in the former USSR was another important arms market. In south-eastern Europe and the Middle East, the LTTE functioned particularly in Lebanon, Cyprus, Greece, Bulgaria and Turkey. In Africa, the LTTE’s focus was on Nigeria, Zimbabwe and South Africa (Chalk 1999).

Well-established trafficking routes of these major sources were used to transport the weapons to Sri Lanka. At the center of KP departments’ operations is a highly clandestine shipping network. The LTTE possessed a fleet of two dozen merchant ships, operating independently of the Sea Tigers. These vessels were registered
mostly under Panamanian, Honduran or Liberian flags (colloquially known as Pan­Ho-Lib, notorious for lax registration requirements). They were managed through shell companies. The ships had Sri Lankan Tamil and foreign crew (Chalk 1999; Gunaratna 2001). Around 90 per cent of the time the ships transported legal cargo like sugar, rice, fertilizer, flour and timber. By transporting legitimate commercial cargo most of the time, it gives a safe cover for the transport of arms, explosives etc for the LTTE (Gunaratna 2001). LTTE ships, some of them heavily armed, frequently visited Japan, Indonesia, Singapore, South Africa, Burma, Turkey, France, Italy and Ukraine (Gunaratna 2001; Chalk 1999).

In the beginning, shipments were made to India, near the Madras coast along Nagapattinam, for onward shipment to Jaffna or the north-east coast of Sri Lanka through speedboats The LTTE had established links in Tamil Nadu even before the outbreak of the 1983 anti-Tamil riots. The relations got boosted further between 1983 and 1987 with India providing sanctuary, training and weapons to the LTTE. Without the assistance of India in particular, the LTTE by itself achieving its goals were indeed remote. The geographical proximity of south India proved a great benefiting factor in the militant movement of Sri Lanka. Vedaraniam and Point Calamere on the Tanjore coast are the nearest points from Jaffna. Prabhakaran has used the terrain to great advantage. Near -the Madras coast along Nagapattinam, the ships coming from Singapore or other countries used to dock off (Kartha 1999). The speedboats took only 45 minutes to cross the 35-kilometre Palk Strait.

There was also a network which supplied diesel, food, clothing and other items for Jaffna and the Tiger cadres (ibid.). Even the Indian Tamil fraternity in Tamil Nadu sympathetic to their cause could help in transporting arms and fuel to the Jaffna. Any of the 30,000 Indian fishermen who went for fishing down Rameswaram everyday could help in transporting arms and fuel to Jaffna (Sri Lanka Monitor, March 1995; Palani, Interaction, Chennai, 2001). Across the Palk Strait, the Indian coastguard seized over 20,000 litres of diesel in 1991 (Sri Lanka Monitor, March 1991). The LTTE had established a wide network of landing points and contacts all along the Tanjore coast. It had the advantage of using the fishing fleet as cover for its secret movements (Sinha 2001: 196). Tamil Nadu, which has thousands of Sri Lankan Tamil refugees, served as a “rear base” to the LTTE (Sri Lanka Monitor, March 1995). The
LTTE developed an efficient network consisting of political activists, fishermen, smugglers, businessmen and corrupt officials and transport operators in Tamil Nadu to support its war machine in Sri Lanka (*Frontline* 2000-2001). In 1990, the LTTE was receiving small weapons from factories in the Tamil Nadu centres of Ranipet, Coimbatore, Salem, and Trichengode and they also had communication and major supply complexes in Trichy (Brewda and Gurung 1995; *Sri Lanka Monitor*, December 1991; Kartha 1999). The Indian government had earlier arranged the supply of arms — rifles, pistols, rocket-propelled grenades, rocket launchers and rockets — to the militant group. Prabhakaran had easy access to Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.G. Ramachandran, who often donated large amounts of money to the LTTE (*Frontline* 1997). This support structure was evident at least till 1990.

After Rajiv Gandhi’s assassination, the Special Investigation Team (SIT) divulged a huge LTTE infrastructure in Tamil Nadu. Prabhakaran then turned his attention to local politicians and businessmen and began to develop contacts. These relations enabled him to set up the first independent arms manufacturing units in Tamil Nadu and Jaffna peninsula. For equipment, he first turned to Velvettiturai commercial contacts in Singapore. This helped the LTTE in buying radios. Their deep-sea-going operations started in 1984 itself with the purchase of a ship, *The Cholan*, from Singapore (Kartha 1999: 150). In between 1985 and 1986, the LTTE started building its maritime network. The most important purchases that the LTTE made from the international black market were fibreglass speedboats, which became part of the Sea Tigers. They are believed to have been purchased from Liberia (Kartha 1999). They travel with an average speed of thirty knots. The LTTE’s constant success can be attributed to these boats. In the late 1980s, the LTTE’s vessels were believed to have begun shipping from Myanmar to Thailand. This business brought them closer to the Myanmar military. The contact, which the LTTE developed, helped it in establishing a base at the small town of Twantay. This base, which came into existence after mid-1990, consists of a communication and transhipment facility. It was silently closed because of the protests from Sri Lanka (Davis 1996).

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119 Its foundation is laid at Velvettiturai (henceforth VVT). VVT has long been the centre of Asia-wide web of LTTE’s commercial, maritime and smuggling activities. The traders belonging to the Tamil seafaring caste of VVT developed links with the countries across the Bay of Bengal, South China Sea and Java for centuries. The location of VVT at the north coast of the Jaffna peninsula made them easily access other parts of Asia (Davis 1996). After Sri Lanka gained independence in 1948, some traders turned smugglers ferrying goods across the Palk Strait.
Singapore and Hong Kong formed the communications hub of the LTTE weapons procurement network. These two city-states are strategically situated on key shipping lanes and possess sophisticated banking structures. Singapore also became a favourite market for the purchase of dual-use items like computers, electronics, outboard motors and diving gear. Singapore and Hong Kong orchestrate cells located in Thailand (particularly Phuket and Trang),120 Pakistan and Burma, particularly Twantay in the Irrawady delta, south of Yangon. These geographic links made them easily accessible to the flourishing arms bazaars of South-East and South-West Asia. Ukraine became the new favoured source after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1990 (Chalk 1999).

In close-quarter engagement with the Sri Lankan military in, the LTTE units were better armed and trained in the use of heavy weapons. No guerrilla or militant organization in the world could equal the LTTE in standoff capability. The main goal of the KP department was to provide the LTTE with war material that could not be produced indigenously. The LTTE had an arsenal of over 10,000 weapons (Kartha 1999). Soviet-made AK-47 Automatic Kalashnikovs, T-56 Chinese assault rifles, the Indian-Belgian AKMS, and the M16 manufactured by the Colt Company in the United States (believed to have been obtained through Vietnam) were the common weapons of the LTTE guerrilla (Brewda and Gurung 1995). The LTTE had abundant rocket-propelled grenades, armour-piercing light anti-tank weapons and surface-to-air missiles, satellite global positioning systems and sophisticated communication equipment (Gunaratna 2001; Kartha 1999). To counter the Sri Lanka air force strikes, the KP department helped in building up a sophisticated surface-to-air missile capacity for the LTTE, based mostly on Soviet-made SAM-Ts. These were purchased from corrupt government officials and insurgent forces in Cambodia. During the 1980s the US supplied as many as 900 stinger missiles to the Afghan mujahideen (Chalk 1999). These missiles, which are deadly and accurate, proliferated to the LTTE. The LTTE also possessed high-end trajectory weapons like mortars, artillery, multi-barrel rocket launchers, etc; The LTTE acquired 60 tonnes of high explosives from the Rubezone chemical plant in Ukraine, surface-to-air missiles from Bulgaria, micro-lights, fixed-wing aircraft and mini-helicopters from Australia in November 1994 (Gunaratna 2001).

120 Trang is a coastal town on the Andaman Sea.
The major source of the LTTE's arms and equipment was the black market and smuggling. Before Indian intelligence training, the LTTE had received training from Lebanese militant and Palestinian groups. These links helped it in acquiring weapons also. The Tigers got a major part of their sophisticated weapons from the Palestinian groups (Kartha 1999: 149), who were also important in providing the first access to the international black market. Mossad also supplied a variety of military equipment, including refurbished Soviet-made mines, Uzi sub-machine guns, Galil assault rifles, rubber boats, LMGs, shoulder-carried field missiles, Eagle pistols and water-resistant pouches for underwater sabotage. The LTTE had trading companies in Kuala Lumpur, Singapore, Yangon, Dhaka, Chittagong, etc. According to intelligence reports, most of the arms used by the LTTE were purchased from Singapore, India, Afghanistan, and the Middle East. The LTTE was also hijacked a vessel in international waters, carrying military supplies to the Sri Lankan government (Gunaratna 2001).

**Restrictions on the LTTE's Global Network**

In the 1980s and 1990s, the Sri Lankan government did not push for cooperation with foreign governments in cracking down on the LTTE activities abroad. This worked to the LTTE's advantage. No effective machinery was set up to counter the LTTE's lobbying in many countries. As such, the LTTE could easily operate across borders and thrive. In addition to this, the phenomenon of Globalization also helped the LTTE to flourish. Factors like the international political environment, disparity in national laws, and the lack of international cooperation in checking its militancy invigorated the LTTE. With no check on their fund raising the LTTE had strength to sustain its warfare in Northern Sri Lanka.

With the assassination of India’s former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in 1991, the LTTE's external activities started to get attacked. In 1997, the USA included the LTTE in the State Department's list of proscribed international terrorist organizations. The British Parliament passed a tough anti-terrorism law in September 1998, which banned even sending faxes or email by extremist groups (*Hindustan Times* 1998). In February 2000, Canada became a signatory to the UN-sponsored International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism. But the LTTE could
operate in many states like Norway, Sweden, and Australia where there were not even statutory provisions for proscribing a group as terrorist. In addition, the LTTE could bypass any legal stipulation by operating through social and cultural cover and front offices (Chalk 1999). The governments of the countries where substantial Tamil populations are present have taken less action to respond to the LTTE’s activities, as the issue was not of high priority. Intimidation and extortion by the LTTE resulted in few individual complaints to the police or other law enforcement bodies.

But the LTTE’s international operations were affected with the international bans, mostly after the terrorist events of 11 September 2001. With the FBI declaring the LTTE’s suicide bombing as the inspiration for al-Qaeda, the Tamil Tigers came under intense criticism and opposition from the international community (Hindustan Times 2008). The Sri Lankan government also took advantage of the global situation and marched ahead in its international lobbying against the LTTE. It could convince the international community that the LTTE is a terrorist organization by publicizing its suicide bombings, assassinations and its links with the Islamic terrorist groups. Sri Lankan embassies in the West also became active mouthpieces of the government to spread this message to the Western countries. The Sri Lankan government was also successful in acquiring military support from the US and other countries like India, Pakistan and China in its mission against terrorism (Asia Times 2008; transcurrents.com 2009).

The international bans of the LTTE are a major achievement by the Sri Lankan government’s political lobbying. It was regularly sending its foreign ministry officials to the Western countries to counter the activities of the Tamil Tigers. Its foreign minister, Lakshman Kadirgamar, was assassinated by the LTTE for his active anti-LTTE lobbying in the West. When the UK banned the LTTE in 2001 under its new terrorism act of 2000, its international headquarters in London was not able to operate openly. The EU ban of the LTTE and the formal proscription of the LTTE by Canada in 2006 retarded its activities. The LTTE’s fundraising and arms procurement activities received major setbacks. The operations of front organizations like the Tamil Rehabilitation Organization, its television networks like TTN and Tharsinam also were banned. Sri Lanka even urged the Gulf Arab states to ban the LTTE and block its funds. Noting the links of the LTTE with Cambodia in smuggling arms,
Prime Minister Ratnasiri Wickremanayake visited Cambodia in 2006 and obtained an assurance from the Cambodian Prime Minister, Hun Sen, that his country would not allow any flow of weapons to the LTTE (Goonetilleke 2006; asiantribune.com, 1 December 2006). The Sri Lankan foreign officials made regular visits to the Western countries, including Australia, to sensitize those governments on the activities of the LTTE.

After Canada proscribed the LTTE, the Canadian police raided the Montreal office of the WTM and seized files, computers, LTTE flags and other political documents. The WTM was accused of being involved in fundraising and arms purchase for the LTTE (defence.lk, 10 Nov 2008; asiantribune.com, 23 April 2006; satp.org).

The LTTE was nevertheless capable of acquiring resources irrespective of the international bans. Many of the Sri Lankan Tamil supporters of the LTTE were caught by the Western intelligence authorities while conducting their international illegal activities.

In 2003, three Sri Lankan Tamils, suspected to be LTTE members, were sentenced to five years imprisonment by a Bangkok court for their involvement in arms smuggling (asiantribune.com, 11 November 2003). A French court remanded fifteen out of the nineteen LTTE cadres arrested for illegal fundraising in 2006 (satp.org).

A press release issued by the US Department of Justice on 21 August 2006 stated that the FBI arrested eight Tamils under multiple charges, including conspiracy to provide material support to the LTTE. Four defendants were caught in an undercover sting operation attempting to purchase a large number of Russian-made SA-18 surface-to-air missiles, missile launchers, and hundreds of AK-47 automatic rifles. Three of them were Canadian citizens who travelled to New York for this operation. Apart from procurement of military equipment and dual-use technology, the defendants were also charged for fundraising in the US and Canada, and money laundering through "front" charitable organizations and US bank accounts (Press Release, US Department of Justice, 21 August 2006).
Release, US Department of Justice, 21 August 2006). They are supposedly having close connection with the LTTE leadership in Sri Lanka. These front organizations were also used to send goods and material to the LTTE in Sri Lanka. These arrests of high-level Tamil Tiger financiers and operatives were a clear example of the LTTE’s continuing activities in the US even after it was banned. Despite the cease-fire and peace negotiations, the LTTE carried on with its accumulation of sources to increase its strength.

In another sting operation by the US federal agents, four foreign nationals were arrested in Guam on charges of conspiracy of involving illegally in shipping surface-to-air missiles and other weapons to the Tamil Tigers. One of the suspects, Haniffa bin Osman, was from Singapore and the shipment of arms was worth $900,000 (http://www.washingtonpost.com, 30 September 2006). Apart from the missiles, the LTTE brokers were trying to buy grenade launchers, submachine guns, sniper rifles and night vision goggles. Another Indonesian arms dealer in the sting operation pleaded guilty before a US federal judge (Jayawardhana, http://www.tothecenter.com).

Conclusion

The activities of the Tamil Tigers centred in India in the early years. Slowly, the LTTE developed a vast international network for fundraising and arms procurement operations. For this network, the Tamil diaspora front organizations and cultural and media groups provided an easy base. Through such organizations, the LTTE could easily reach the Tamil diaspora. The LTTE also made international investments and initiated businesses in the names of Tamil diaspora. The sophisticated arms and weaponry purchased in the international markets bought with the funds collected from the diaspora were sent to the war field in Sri Lanka through the LTTE’s shipping network. The LTTE was also involved in various criminal activities to gain resources. Drug trafficking was a major profitable business.

Since the beginning of the new century, especially after the events of 11 September 2001, there have been increasing restrictions on the LTTE’s international operations. The global sensitivities to terrorism enabled the Sri Lankan government to advance its political lobbying and acquire more cooperation from the Western nations in
curtailing the group. This factor is also responsible for the Sri Lankan government’s recent military successes in its war against the LTTE’s secessionism.