Militant movements arising out of ethnic conflicts get strong sustenance from the
loyalties of the global diaspora. The diaspora generated out of conflict develop strong
ethnic consciousness, which makes them play a significant role in the homeland militant
movement. Their wide dispersal across the world does not dilute their nationalist feelings.
They develop collective commitment to support the militant movement fighting for a
separate state.

There is extensive literature available on diaspora. However, they mostly deal with the
aspects of immigration and assimilation processes. The recent feature of diaspora's
contribution to the militant movements at home, though is of great significance in
international relations, is not dealt much in the literature. There is a close relationship
between the factors which lead to migration and their attitude towards militant movement
representing the ethnic community. Militant movements, which result from ethnic
conflicts, sustain for longer time as they depend on the loyalties of the global diaspora.

For over two decades, since 1983, the Sri Lankan civil war with its intermittent violence
has led to the migration of thousands of Sri Lankan Tamils. The solidarity among the
expatriates, especially in the West, has made them get involved actively in the Eelam
movement. The common victimhood and Tamil nationalism threatened by the Sinhalese
dominated state contributed mainly to their unification, outside Sri Lanka. This
interaction among them resulted in the formation of a wide diaspora network,
internationally.

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), fighting for a separate Tamil homeland,
has benefited enormously from its links with the Tamil diaspora. These have enabled it to
also had taken ample advantage of the dispersed community. By well understanding the
homeland feeling among the diaspora and by dominating the political space, the LTTE
could derive the invaluable economic support for its armed struggle at home. The links
also involve criminal activities such as trafficking in arms, drugs and human beings,
money laundering and military training. (In this work, the term Tamils, when used by itself for brevity, refers exclusively to Sri Lankan Tamils, who consider themselves as a nationality distinct from the Tamils in the state of Tamil Nadu in India and the plantation Tamils of Indian origin in Sri Lanka.)

There is little analysis so far on the links of the diaspora with militant nationalist movements. The following research questions have been framed to analyse this aspect:

- Does the diaspora Tamil community living away from its conflict-affected homeland retain its nationalistic tendencies?
- If yes, how do the diaspora help the militant organization develop its international network?
- Do the political activities of the diaspora strengthen the militant movement at home?
- Does the economic contribution of the diaspora prolong the conflict?

Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of this study are to analyse the conditions under which the Sri Lankan Tamils migrated and also to examine the nature and characteristics of the LTTE's nationalism. The study aims at analysing the importance of international Tamil networks in the LTTE's survival as a militant organization and the political and economic contributions of the Tamil diaspora to the Eelam movement. In the process, the study examines the impact of the diaspora support on the ethnic conflict.

Hypotheses

The study tests the following hypotheses:

- Diaspora communities retain their nationalistic tendencies even after leaving their conflict-affected homelands.
- The greater the overseas support network of the militants, the brighter the chance for them to sustain their separatist movement.
Internationalization of conflict by diaspora communities results in wholesome involvement of the international community for peacemaking.

Review of Literature

Sabaratnam (2001) elaborates the historical and sociological bases of increasing ethnic salience in Sri Lanka. Government policies affecting Sri Lankan Tamils and the reactions of Tamils to them, which led to the civil war, are discussed. O'Balance (1989) looks into the causes of the unrest, particularly the orchestrated Sinhalese attacks on the Tamils in 1983 and subsequent migration of Tamils. Swamy (2002) provides a sequential portrayal of the militant groups' growth.

Hellmann-Rajanayagam (1994) deals with the origins, basic ideas, programmes and ideology of the LTTE. Phadnis and Ganguly (2001) discuss the ethnic dynamics of autonomic and secessionist demands in the South Asian region, including the ethnic movement of the Tamils in Sri Lanka. Swamy (2003) sketches the biography of the LTTE leader Prabhakaran and his methods to evoke fanatical commitment from his followers. Sahadevan (1995) analyses the reasons for the LTTE's commitment to armed struggle, including its structural factors and the military strength. Kloos (1997) also analyses the LTTE in the context of its ethnic ideology and how it could transform into a strong force. Stokke and Rynitveit (2000) present a critical interpretation and contextual analysis of Tamil separatism in Sri Lanka.

Gunaratna (1997) examines how insurgent groups are transformed into transnational networks. He examines the international network of the LTTE – from where it receives finance, weapons, and training from other governments, non-governmental organizations, and individuals from across the globe. Gunaratna (1999) examines the LTTE’s strong propaganda, fundraising and training activities in South Africa. Davis (1996) and Chalk (1999) give a detailed explanation on the origin, nature and extent of the LTTE's international network.

Taking the Tamil diaspora as a case study Wayland (2004) examines how the ethno-nationalist networks are providing transnational opportunities like information exchange.
and financial support to the militant organizations. Gunaratna (2000) also describes the different dimensions of transnational support structures, including diaspora contributions to the LTTE’s movement; in this context, the nature and extent of the LTTE’s international investments and businesses are also examined. Fuglerud (2001) discusses the relationship between space, time and national identity in the Tamil diaspora in Norway. Hoffmann and Chalk (2001) examine the Tamil diaspora’s support to the Tamil insurgency. Guha (2003) and Mcdowell (2005) deal with the Tamils in Switzerland and their sustained nationalist feelings.

Though several studies are available on ethnicity and nationalism, the diaspora dimension in respect of prolongation of ethnic conflict and militancy has not received the required emphasis. Noticeably, there is no in-depth and comprehensive study on the role of Tamil diaspora in sustaining the militant movement in Sri Lanka. This study seeks to fill the gap.

A vast network of online resources by various political groups involved in the conflict has emerged recently, but it is difficult to authenticate their content. Given the scarcity of published works available on this subject, the author had to rely upon interviews and field research for collection of inputs. Gaining the trust of the interviewees was a major hurdle, and the interviewees’ reservation about the nationality of the interviewer had to be overcome first.

**Methodology**

The study has adopted both descriptive and analytical methods. Data have been collected from primary and secondary sources. The primary sources are the statements, official letters of the Tamil diaspora organizations and other relevant information from the Tamil diaspora websites, Sri Lankan government websites, Sinhala diaspora websites, LTTE publications and intelligence reports on the LTTE’s international activities. Fieldwork was done in the state of Tamil Nadu, India, and in London. More than fifty interviews were held with the Sri Lankan Tamil, Sinhalese, Muslim diaspora leaders in the UK, Sri Lankan Tamil Elderly Care Centre in North Wembley, Sri Lankan Tamil temple in
Ealing, the staff of OfERR, and the Sri Lankan Tamil refugees in the Keelputhupattu camp near Puducherry. Several Indian experts on Sri Lankan affairs were also interviewed. Secondary data have been collected from various books, journals, magazines and related websites.

**Chapter Scheme**

The study is divided into seven chapters.

Chapter One defines the concepts of ‘diaspora’ and ‘nationalism’ and examines how the nationalistic fervour of the diaspora keeps them active in homeland politics by their political and economic contribution to the militant movements. Chapter Two gives an overview of the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka and discusses how the outbreak of violence and militancy has led to migration of people abroad. It also discusses the demographic profile and settlement patterns of the Tamil diaspora. Chapter Three elucidates the militant nationalism of the LTTE and how it has helped in mobilizing Tamil support to its armed struggle. Its various propagation tools and methods to sustain the armed movement are also examined. Chapter Four explains how the diaspora organizations served as the basis for the establishment of the LTTE’s international network. The Tamil diaspora organizations in various regions, including Western Europe, Canada, the USA, Australia, etc. are discussed. The Tamil media network comprising newspapers, radio and television is looked at. Chapter Five analyses the political networks of the Tamil diaspora across the globe and how they influence the policies of the Sri Lankan government. The involvement of the diaspora in political mobilization through organization of conferences, rallies and political meetings in the host countries and their strategies to influence the foreign policy of the host country are also analysed. Chapter Six examines the economic support received by the LTTE from the Tamil diaspora. It also examines how the LTTE has used the diaspora as a conduit to purchase weapons. The development of the international network through international trade, enterprises and investments by the LTTE is examined. Chapter Seven summarizes the arguments and assesses the impact of the diaspora contributions on the conflict in Sri Lanka. Finally, the hypotheses are tested for their validity.