CHAPTER FOUR

INDIA-SRI LANKA ACCORD AND INDIAN PEACEKEEPING

After a long chapter of conflict and distrust over the difficult ethnic question in Sri Lanka, the year 1987 opened with no promise of hope on India-Sri Lanka relations. The ethnic problem had, by then, been rendered intractable by the complex international politics of the region. The diplomatic efforts by India to mediate the crisis was once again deadlocked with the Tamil militant groups, particularly the LTTE, that had established their position as the most dominant group, rejecting the “December 19th Proposals” as just inadequate. With India’s attempts of mediation turning abortive again, both the Sri Lankan Government and the LTTE hardened their postures by the beginning of the year 1987. An all-out military offensive by the Sri Lankan armed forces against the Tigers appeared certain and imminent. The Indian Government was in a state of utter confusion vis-à-vis Sri Lanka as 1987 dawned.1 India, however, persevered with its mediatory efforts.

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By the end of December 1986, Prabhakaran and the LTTE also stood alienated from the Indian authorities and agencies dealing with them.2 While being overtly friendly

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to India, Prabhakaran never allowed any Indian official to come too close to the LTTE so as to preclude possible infiltration. Naturally there were to soon develop black spots in India’s awareness of the motives, methods and the very capability of the Tigers and the limits to their commitment and access to resources. Once out of Indian influence, the Tigers shopped elsewhere for training and weapons. If the account in the book *By Way of Deception* by former Mossad operative Victor Ostrovsky co-authored with Claire Hoy is to be believed, the LTTE cadres were trained by Mossad in Israel at the same time they were training the Sri Lankan Government commandos. The book mentions a hilarious situation when the two groups almost came face to face in a training camp.

Sri Lankan Government was all geared up for a military punch on the militants. The Government forces and commando units were trained by the best people in the business. In Israel, Sri Lankan cadres were attached to Shin 'bet and Mossad. In Pakistan, they were given training in the commando establishments of the Pakistani armed forces. The operations of the Sri Lankan army in Jaffna in 1985 and 1986 were different from the previous operations. There were Israeli military experts training Sri Lankan forces even though their numbers could not be reported. There

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3 Narayanswamy, n. 1, p. 212.

4 The authenticity of the revelations has been subsequently questioned by Steven Emerson in an article in *The New Republic*, 19 November 1990. The Government of Sri Lanka appointed a Commissioner to investigate the allegations, who had recorded Ostrovsky’s own personal testimony in Ottawa, Canada. See *The Island* (Colombo), 1 December 1990. The revelations have not been proved false. Also see the interview of Lt. General Depinder Singh in *The Indian Express*, 28 November 1987 where the head of IPKF operations in Sri Lanka had stated that the role of Israel in arming and training the LTTE was evident.

5 Dixit, n. 2, p. 69.
were intelligence teams, security communications specialists and military training personnel working among the Sri Lankan forces. The para-military Special Task Force (STF) which was functioning in the Eastern Province in the country was set up on the advice of Israeli experts.6

India realized that her mediation has to go beyond political persuasion to make the Sri Lankan Government responsive to the legitimate aspirations of the Tamils.7 Rajiv Gandhi's hands-on style in Sri Lanka policy issues obviated the sustained participation, application and wise counsel by the Minister for External Affairs, the top political executive position in the foreign policy establishment that found frequent changes during 1985-87.8

While the Western powers led by the United States were generally opposed to India's role in Sri Lankan affairs, the Russians and the Chinese adopted a detached and formalistic stance. The Russians were supportive of the logic of India's interaction with Sri Lanka on the ethnic issue, but the Chinese generally took the stand that it would have been better had India left Sri Lankans to solve their problems themselves. Pakistan was fishing in troubled waters to ensure the failure of Indian political and diplomatic efforts. Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Iran started


7 Dixit, n. 2, p. 84.

8 Rajiv Gandhi kept changing the Cabinet level incumbents in the External Affairs Ministry between 1985 and 1987 and South Block witnessed Khurshid Alam, Balaram Bhagat, Shiv Shanker, N. D. Tiwari and Narasimha Rao occupying this post for brief periods, one after another.
exerting influence to create a divide between Tamil Muslims and Tamil Hindus in Sri Lanka. There was a fair amount of financing of Islamic cultural activities which commenced from 1979-80 onwards, reaching an ascending curve by 1986. West European countries and Australia viewed the ethnic crisis through the prism of developmental challenges and the Tamil migrant refugee phenomenon.\(^9\) Germany, France and Switzerland used to be the preferred destinations\(^10\) of the Sri Lankan refugees. In European countries the Sri Lankan Tamil refugees have been made to feel that they are “an unwanted lot”.\(^11\) Thus the undercurrent in the policies of those countries which had earlier accepted large numbers of Sri Lankan Tamils as political refugees and asylum seekers was their keenness to send them back to Sri Lanka at the earliest opportunity so that these migrants would not become permanent residents in their respective countries.

The military pressure on the civilian population in Jaffna continued without any let up and the security forces were gaining ground against the LTTE. India, on the other hand, wanted Sri Lanka to suspend the military operations so that it could continue its mediatory efforts. During early March, UNP’s parliamentary group passed a resolution fully endorsing the Government’s military operations and rejecting the request of the Government of India for stopping the military offensive. Rajiv Gandhi sent Dinesh Singh, his Minister for External Affairs, as special emissary to Colombo during March. After discussions with him, Jayewardene agreed to

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\(^9\) Dixit, n. 2, p. 73.

\(^{10}\) *Background paper on Sri Lankan Refugees and Asylum Seekers* (UNHCR, Geneva, 1994)

declare a cease-fire for ten days with the stipulation to the Government of India to indicate in the meanwhile the Tamil militant groups’ willingness to enter into a political dialogue. In the middle of the cease-fire, the LTTE killed 127 civilians who were travelling in a bus to Trincomalee.

Again, an LTTE car bomb exploded at the busy bus station in Colombo at the end of April 1987 killing 113 people. The Government, faced with popular outrage, unleashed the all-out offensive on Jaffna peninsula code-named “Operation Liberation”, which they had all along planned for and kept in abeyance due to India’s mediatory efforts. Internationally there was no opposition to such a venture, especially so in the wake of such heinous acts of terrorism. It was generally felt that such action had been made necessary by the LTTE’s proven intransigence while an apparently reasonable set of proposals were on the table.12

Operation Liberation was planned and executed with commendable efficiency. Being a small country with limited resources, the manner of deployment of resources and timing was of crucial importance. To this end, the capacity to gather and analyse intelligence had been strengthened with foreign, and particularly Israeli, help to an admirable degree. By the end of May, the Sri Lankan army captured a large part of the peninsula at great cost in terms of life, property and the massive dislocation of civilian life in these areas.

12 Rajan Hoole and others, *The Broken Palmyra*, (Claremont: Harvey Mudd College Press, 1988), vol. 1, p. 70. One of the co-authors of this title, Dr. Ranjini Thiranagama, who was a Lecturer in the Anatomy Department of Jaffna University and an active member of the Jaffna University Teachers
India perceived the operations in Jaffna as an exercise in genocide which had aroused deep-felt indignation in Indian public. The military offensive and the continued harassment of civilians had altered the basis of understanding between India and Sri Lanka. The messages between the heads of Governments continued to be exchanged through the diplomatic channel. Therefore President Jayewardene was eventually asked to reconsider the advisability of continuing operations as otherwise India would be forced to review its policies. When the message to this effect was conveyed to Jayewardene by J. N. Dixit, the then Indian High Commissioner in Sri Lanka, the President replied thus: "Convey to your Prime Minister that each of us has to adjust to our respective political compulsions and to decide on policies which serve perceived interests at given points of time. Tell him that while I take note of what he said, the military offensive will continue." The competitive Sinhalese-Buddhist chauvinism in Sri Lankan politics had drawn certain thresholds beyond which no Sinhalese leader could be responsive to Tamil aspirations.

This reply, though not unexpected, was obviously unwelcome in New Delhi. Rajiv Gandhi in the press conference on 28 May spoke with a view to administer a warning on Sri Lanka that India would intervene to safeguard the Sri Lankan Tamils against the military assault: "Horrific losses in innocent lives of this magnitude are
totally disproportionate to the avowed aim of exterminating the Tamil militant groups. It is apparent now that Sri Lankan government was buying time over the last few years for pursuing a military option.\textsuperscript{14}

The military offensive was at a critical phase. The BBC correspondent Mark Tully quoted the army command at Palaly as having hopes of taking Jaffna within the next 48 hours.\textsuperscript{15} It was at this stage that Indian Government intervened directly and decisively. Arguing that the embargo on supplies and the army offensive had rendered the people of Jaffna totally destitute, India decided to send in humanitarian relief. The convoy of fishing vessels carrying relief supplies was sent on 3 June 1987. The flotilla was refused entry by the Sri Lankan navy. The much publicized airdrop of food packets and relief supplies over Jaffna by the Indian Air Force AN-32 transports escorted by Mirage fighters on 5 June 1987 announced the open Indian intervention quite dramatically. The relief mission, code-named "Operation Eagle", violating the air space of Sri Lanka was calculated to convey to the Sinhalese chauvinists India's determination to act decisively in favour of the beleaguered Tamil minority. Although not intended, this operation was eloquent and arrogant enough to confirm India's earlier covert involvement in affording sanctuary and logistic help for the militants and, more than that, to confirm that the apprehension of the island nation about India's hegemonic ambitions was not unreasonable.

\textsuperscript{13} Dixit, n. 2, p. 97.

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., p. 97.

\textsuperscript{15} Hoole, n. 12, p. 75.
Almost all Sri Lanka's new-found allies were critical of the Indian action but were also ambiguous about the probable alternatives to defuse the crisis. They even stepped up military supplies but were not prepared to commit themselves for Sri Lanka's security. The Sri Lankan government was forced to call off its offensive after scenting victory. Operation Liberation...would have succeeded, but for India's decisive intervention in June 1987 to safeguard Tamil interests. It was incumbent upon Sri Lanka not to ignore India's security concerns as part of the process of resolving the ethnic conflict bilaterally.

On the policy front, a military victory for either the Sri Lankan Government or the rebels was not in India's interest as already surmised in the last chapter. A military stalemate was all what India wanted, to serve its geo-political imperatives. The military stalemate alone would lead to a political resolution of the conflict that accommodates India's security concerns in the region as well as the just democratic aspirations of the Tamil minority as a collectivity within a united Sri Lanka. The nature and timing of India's intervention ostensibly 'on humanitarian considerations' yield no other plausible explanation.

The symbolically forceful intervention by India was also to empower its mediatory role. Left to themselves, neither the Sri Lankan Government nor the Tamil groups, especially the LTTE, would come to a durable compromise unless

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17 Hoole, n. 12, p. 78.
India took an aggressive role. From a mediator, India, therefore, had to assume the role of a peacemaker, the mediator-with-muscle, and the guarantor of such peace. In that role, India would have the legitimacy to address its own security concerns, which were in consonance with that of the region.

While the negotiations towards an agreement got seriously underway, the LTTE found themselves overtaken by the political developments. The Indian intervention was welcomed by the Tamils in the north-east and the LTTE suffered a crisis of identity and prestige. On 5 July 1987, the LTTE launched a suicide attack against the Sri Lankan army camp at Nalliady Central College. Captain Miller, a member of the LTTE's new Black Tigers, drove a van packed with explosives through the gates into the front building while the whole action was being videographed. This was the first Black Tiger operation and it left more than 10 Sri Lankan soldiers dead. The army's reaction was not disciplined and this worked to India's advantage to prove Sri Lankan Government's limitations in making headway with solving the problem. On the part of the LTTE, it was an act of valour that demonstrated their commitment to the cause of Eelam. It had also the symbolic effect of taking revenge on the wrongdoers. The Tigers were modulating their actions to regain their lost prestige and relevance and to pep up the Tamil dream for the Eelam.

18 Dixit, n. 2, p. 81.
The direct Indian intervention that started with the air-drop of food and essential supplies on 5 June 1987 culminated in the signing of the India-Sri Lanka Agreement on 29 July. The Agreement signed between Rajiv Gandhi and J. R. Jayewardene in Colombo was essentially a rehashed version of the “December 19th Proposals”. It underscored the need to preserve the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka, which was acknowledged as a multi-ethnic and multi-lingual plural society consisting, inter alia, of Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims (Moors) and Burghers. The Agreement recognized the need to nurture the distinct cultural and linguistic identity of each ethnic group. The Northern and Eastern Provinces of Sri Lanka had been identified as “areas of historical habitation of Sri Lankan Tamil-speaking peoples who have at all times hitherto lived together in this territory with other ethnic groups”.

In the Agreement it was resolved to temporarily merge the Northern and Eastern Provinces as one administrative unit and would have an elected Provincial Council, a Governor, a Chief Minister and a Board of Ministers. The temporary merger of the provinces was subject to a referendum to be held before 31 December 1988 for the people of Eastern Province to ratify or reject the merger. The modalities and monitoring process of such a referendum were specified.

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19 The text of India-Sri Lanka Agreement is Annexure IV. The India-Sri Lanka Agreement is referred variously as “Indo-Sri Lanka Accord”, “India-Sri Lanka Accord” etc. even in official documents and correspondence so much so that its original name sounds unfamiliar. The India-Sri Lanka Agreement is referred here either as “the Agreement” or as “the Accord” for clarity and convenience.
The cessation of hostilities was to take effect within 48 hours of signing the Agreement. The arms held by the militant groups would be surrendered to authorities and the army and security personnel confined to the barracks within 72 hours of the cessation of hostilities. The Emergency would be lifted by 15 August 1987. The President of Sri Lanka would grant a general amnesty to political and other prisoners held in custody under PTA and other emergency laws.

While Sri Lanka was obliged to implement the relevant proposals, India would underwrite and guarantee the resolution and co-operate in the implementation of these proposals. The proposals were conditional to Government of India taking certain listed actions “if any militant groups operating in Sri Lanka do not accept this framework of proposals for a settlement”. Such actions India was obliged to take include (1) ensuring that Indian territory was not used for activities prejudicial to the unity, integrity and security of Sri Lanka; (2) ensuring cooperation of Indian Navy/Coast Guard with Sri Lankan Navy in preventing Tamil militant activities from affecting Sri Lanka; (3) to afford military assistance to Sri Lanka to implement these proposals as and when requested; (4) to expedite repatriation of Indian citizens from Sri Lanka and Sri Lankan refugees from Tamil Nadu; (5) to cooperate with Government of Sri Lanka to ensure the physical security and safety of all communities inhabiting the Northern and Eastern provinces.

Regarding the official language of Sri Lanka, the Agreement read: “The official language of Sri Lanka shall be Sinhala. Tamil and English will also be official languages.” In the annexure to the Agreement, among other things, it was indicated
that in terms of the agreement that makes it obligatory on the part of India to guarantee the implementation of the proposals and to afford military assistance on request in the event of any militant group did not accept the proposals, an Indian peacekeeping contingent may be invited to guarantee and to enforce the cessation of hostilities.

At the time of the signing of the Agreement, letters were exchanged between the signatories on matters of bilateral interest. This was in affirmation "not to allow our respective territories to be used for activities prejudicial to each other's unity, territorial integrity and security". India's understanding on the concerns included (1) the presence of foreign military and intelligence personnel in Sri Lanka would prejudice Indo-Sri Lanka relations; (2) Trincomalee or any other port would not be made available for military use by any other country; (3) a joint venture between India and Sri Lanka would take up the work of restoring and operating Trincomalee Oil Tank Farm; (4) agreements with foreign broadcasting organizations would be reviewed. In the same spirit India was committed to (1) deporting all Sri Lankan citizens found to be engaged in terrorist activities or advocating separation or secession and (2) providing training facilities and military supplies for Sri Lankan security forces. A joint consultative mechanism set up would continuously review matters of common concern in the light of the common objectives affirmed. In his reply, President Jayewardene confirmed the understandings arrived at.

20 The text of the letters exchanged is Annexure V.
At this stage and before examining the terms of the Agreement in greater detail, the security concerns of India vis-à-vis Sri Lanka, whether articulated in the letters exchanged of not, are worth a closer examination. Sri Lanka's drift away from the non-aligned policy in its foreign relations alone would have been nothing more than a diplomatic irritant for India. But the course of developments during the escalation of the ethnic conflict was instrumental in bringing to the fore India's security concerns. The presence in Sri Lanka of intelligence agencies of extra-regional groups and the visible military linkages with countries inimical to India are to be viewed in this light.

V

The history of Indo-Sri Lanka relations would indicate that Sri Lanka’s strategic linkages were of little concern to India. As discussed in the previous chapter, India did not react when Sri Lanka entered into the defence pact with the UK in 1947. Sri Lanka’s signing a maritime agreement with China in 1963, months after the Sino-Indian conflict, was also not countenanced as a security hazard by India. Sri Lanka’s offer of landing rights and refueling facilities to Pakistan’s civil aircraft after India withdrew their over-flying rights during the East Bengal crisis was also not viewed as an act offending India’s security interest. During this period not only that India did not oppose Sri Lanka’s foreign policy priorities, but also accommodated the interests of the small neighbour in resolving long-pending bilateral issues.
Sri Lanka’s interest in the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) goes back to 1967 when the group was formed. Sri Lanka made its formal application for ASEAN membership on 29 May 1981. Prime Minister Premadasa did not consider that Sri Lanka’s policy of Non-Alignment would in any way be vitiated by joining ASEAN for although member countries like the Philippines and Thailand had American military bases. Apart from trade expansion and economic benefit, a strategic intent was also latent in this bidding. These smaller states of the Indian Ocean area had common interests, surrounded as they were by ‘giants’ like India, USSR, China and Australia and the ASEAN’s way of thinking reflected these interests. ASEAN, however, rejected Sri Lanka’s application primarily on geographical considerations, as Sri Lanka is not a South East Asian nation to qualify for membership in the regional grouping. But it is believed that the actual reason for the denial of membership in ASEAN was the unequivocal assertion by SFLP that a future SLFP Government would not retain or accept the membership in ASEAN as ASEAN, in their view, was not an association of nations that shared the ideology behind Sri Lanka’s domestic and foreign policy objectives. It is significant that Sri Lanka’s efforts to secure membership in ASEAN for whatever reason did not provoke India to react.

The subsequent events within Sri Lanka especially the escalation of ethnic conflict and terrorism and the increased tension in the region due to heightened superpower rivalry altered India’s security concerns, apart from the compulsion of

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the domestic politics in Tamil Nadu. Sri Lankan overtures to the strategic interests inimical to India had been apparent from 1983 onwards.

To begin with, though maintenance of friendly ties with Pakistan had always been a basic element of Sri Lanka’s foreign policy,22 Colombo’s seeking of non-Indian sources, especially Pakistani assistance, for curbing the Tamil militants alarmed India. Of particular concern to India were visits to Sri Lanka by the personnel of the Pakistani Department of Space and Telecommunications. The ostensible purpose of these visits was to expand cooperation in the field of telecommunications between Sri Lanka and Pakistan. But these Pakistanis were taken to the Central Highlands where Pakistan might reportedly help Sri Lanka in establishing satellite earth stations. Indian intelligence agencies had, however, information that Pakistan was planning to set up sophisticated electronics and signal monitoring equipment in this region which would have an adverse impact on the security of peninsular India. Activities of India’s Southern and Eastern Naval and Air Commands could have become vulnerable to Pakistani surveillance. The Sri Lankan Government had reportedly agreed to give facilities in this regard to Pakistan. Sri Lanka’s interest was that they could utilise these facilities to intercept LTTE’s telecommunications network.23 Sri Lanka thus developed links with Pakistan, which became one of the main suppliers of equipments and centres of training of the Sri Lankan forces for dealing with Tamil separatism.

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22 Ibid., p. 27.
23 Dixit, n. 2, p. 69-70.
Pakistân apart, Sri Lanka sought assistance from other non-Indian sources such as the US, Israel and South Africa. To cite the US assistance, for instance, General Vernon Walters, a senior figure in the US strategic and intelligence establishment, visited Colombo in October 1983 and then again in 1984. Walters had followed up the first visit to Colombo with a visit to India also. General Walters was perceived by the Indian security establishment as a confirmed Cold War warrior. He was known to be the subterranean architect of many of the anti-Indian aspects of US policies on matters of India's national security. India had confirmed information about the nature of discussions Walters had on Sri Lanka, both in Colombo and in Washington. These were prejudicial to Indian security interests. During his second visit in 1984, General Walters had reportedly told the then Sri Lankan Minister for National Security, Lalith Athulathmudali, that the United States had satellite photographs of training camps for Tamil separatist groups in India and that he had told his interlocutors in New Delhi that if India kept on denying the existence of such camps and did not close them down, the US would release these satellite photographs to the media to embarrass the Government of India.24

In a desperate bid to win the US support, the Jayewardene administration allegedly extended refueling and recreation facilities to visiting US naval ships at Trincomalee port. India's concern about Trincomalee harbour increased with Sri Lankan Government's proposal to lease some one hundred disused World War II oil storage tanks there to make them the nucleus for enlarged refueling facilities. These could be used by US forces and would complement the oil storage facilities.

24 Ibid., p. 20-21.
established in Diego Garcia. Routine access to Trincomalee would thus be available to US naval vessels transiting to Diego Garcia from Singapore. India's concerns in this matter were exacerbated by incautious statements made by some Americans drawing attention to the excellent natural features of Trincomalee harbor.\(^{25}\)

The strategic importance of the natural harbour of Trincomalee and other ports of Sri Lanka cannot be underestimated. India has no natural harbour on the eastern coast. During the Second World War, the British strategy of defending India especially after the Japanese occupation of the Philippines, Hong Kong and the Dutch East Indies was centred on Sri Lanka and its ports. Sri Lanka's strategic importance received a further fillip when the Japanese naval forces under Vice Admirals Nagumo and Ozawa carried out a daring expedition aimed at destroying the Eastern Fleet in Sri Lanka in early April 1942. This resulted in the bombing of Trincomalee and Colombo. Kakinada and Vizag ports in India were also bombarded. The British decision to create the South East Asia Command (SEAC) for the coordination of the South-east Asian offensive, again focused on the strategic value of Sri Lanka. One of the constant elements in the British defence strategy was to ensure that Sri Lanka did not fall into the hands of the hostile power. Independent India's defence thinking has in many ways been influenced by the tradition of British India's role in the Indian Ocean region and the experiences of the Second World War. The development of India's blue water naval capability extending across the

Bay of Bengal to the borders of South-east Asia made Sri Lanka and particularly its Trincomalee harbour a sensitive area in Indian defence strategy.26

The US had denied any such interest in Trincomalee, but uncertainties surrounding the lease of facilities in the Philippines proved a fresh impetus to such speculation. A contrary view, however, was that the United States seemed unlikely to seek port facilities in another Asian country considering the difficulties it was then facing in retaining the naval facility at Subic Bay and Clark Air Force base in the Philippines and the availability, in any case, of a major naval-air base in Diego Garcia. India was a bidder for the work of restoring and operating the Oil Tank Farm. Coastal Corporation, the company to which the contract was awarded was a Singapore-based US corporation. India objected to the tender selection process. As per the understanding reached while signing the India-Sri Lanka agreement, India and Sri Lanka would carry out the work as a joint venture.

Sri Lanka entered into an agreement with the US in December 1983 to expand and upgrade the Voice of America (VOA) station at Chilaw near Colombo. It was expected to be the largest radio station with a powerful transmission facility established outside the US.27 India was apprehensive that this radio station would be utilised to spread disaffection against countries that opposed the United States.28

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27 Sahadevan, n. 16, p. 169.

28 Chari, n. 25, p. 6.
The original VOA station was set up following an agreement to this effect concluded in 1952. For over three decades, this relatively powerful broadcasting facility owned by the US was not found spreading disaffection or transmitting intelligence. India’s apprehension on the expansion and upgrading of such a facility was excessive notwithstanding the changes in the strategic environment in the region in the 80s due to superpower rivalry.

The services of Israel were obtained for improving and expanding the Government’s intelligence infrastructure and Israel was allowed to open a Special Interest section in the US embassy in Colombo. The Sri Lankan government also procured the services of various mercenary organizations, primarily Keeny Meeny Services (KMS) of the UK, an outfit formed by former Special Air Services (SAS) officers for training their commandos. Thus Sri Lankan Government began to establish links with many governments and organizations hostile to India. These links were suspected to mature into strategic relationships. It is also apprehended that the activities of the foreign intelligence agencies in assisting Sri Lanka in its counter-intelligence, counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism operations might have been extended to Tamil Nadu.

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29 The Tamil militants were based in India; their presence was tolerated by the state and Union Governments. Though officially denied, it was obvious that the training and staging grounds of the militants were in India. “I couldn’t have trained my people in India. They were training the terrorists”, President Jayewardene told an interviewer after the Accord. *India Today* (New Delhi), 31 August 1987.

30 Chari, n. 25, p. 6.
What is perceived as a security problem but not articulated as one is the problem of the Sri Lankan Tamil refugees in Tamil Nadu. The exodus of refugees commenced after the 1983 Tamil pogrom and continued till the signing of the India-Sri Lanka Agreement. The flow of refugees was a consequence of the Sri Lankan military operations in Tamil areas. People fleeing a war situation are a direct consequence of war. In a low intensity guerrilla war, the refugees are partly a consequence and partly a function. When the refugees of an ethnic conflict migrate across international borders into areas of proximate ethnicity, it can be more a function of the conflict than the consequence of it. Their flight could be more out of a design than by chance, the case of the fish manipulating water, to distort Mao’s famed imagery. From the past experience, the functions of Tamil refugee migration from Sri Lanka to India could be: (1) to regionalize or internationalize a domestic problem through the publicity of the plight of the refugees; (2) to play upon the emotional chord of the host population; (3) to influence the foreign policy of the host country through the local politics of the host population; and (4) to secure the safe cross-border base for operations for the militants. At the Sri Lankan side, the people migrating to India as refugees had to pay a hefty fee and get the approval by the militants. The misery and cruelty in the life in Sri Lankan Tamil camps in Tamil Nadu has been described thus: “All Tamil groups had their own camps, which were virtually prohibited zones for outsiders. One could do anything in these secluded fortresses, no questions asked. Even when someone was tortured to death, the screams would reach nowhere. If the victim died, he would be simply buried there or in the vast barren vicinity.”

31 Narayanswamy, n. 1, p. 175.
Other than the security dimensions of the Sri Lankan refugee problem in Tamil Nadu, which was perceived only as a humanitarian crisis and not as a security threat at the stage of signing the Agreement, the expressed security concerns of India appear somewhat exaggerated and prompted by the general perception that President Jayewardene's economic and foreign policies were leaning towards the United States. Indira Gandhi's tenure in office contrasted the indifferent Indo-American relations with warm Indo-Soviet ties. Indo-US relations did improve in the Rajiv Gandhi era, and the United States refused to countenance Sri Lanka's fears of possible intervention by India in its ethnic conflict, but encouraged India to assert its regional primacy. Consequently, India's obsession with Trincomalee and VOA facilities is only explicable as evidence of bureaucratic ennui that could not adjust to changed international circumstances, but remained shackled to unrealistic historic beliefs.

Another way of looking at the exaggerated security concerns is that they were a camouflage to conceal India's real motivation, which is none other than the linkages of Sri Lankan Tamils in Tamil Nadu politics. The conditions imposed on the Sri Lankan Government were almost an afterthought, designed to make the Indian action more acceptable to the domestic political audience. The repeated attempts by

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32 For a detailed discussion of new improvements in India-US relations during Rajiv-Reagan era led Washington to accommodate India's regional role, see Nalini Kanth Jha, "India and the United States: Pursuit and Limits of Accommodation", Strategic Analysis (New Delhi), vol. 17, no. 1, April 1994, pp. 89-108.

33 Chari, n. 24, p. 6.
Indian Government to sponsor a solution starting from Thimpu Talks suggests that policy was a response to day-to-day events and a wish to find 'a solution' rather than the clear-sighted pursuit of well-defined goals by means that were within India’s control.\textsuperscript{34}

VI

The unanticipated fall-out of the Agreement was that it proved unacceptable to the opposition SLFP and large sections of Jayewardene’s UNP, apart from JVP, the radical Sinhala nationalist group. This would mean that major segments of the Sinhala community and also the LTTE were opposed to the Agreement even at the time when it was concluded. In other words, the radical sections of the entire Sri Lankan polity were against the Agreement. The LTTE's track record and its possible resistance to make a peaceful transition from a military resistance movement to a legitimate political order were dangers to the Agreement that should have been anticipated and assessed.

The international community, however, welcomed the Accord essentially because it meant cessation of hostilities in a seemingly unending armed conflict. "We applaud the statesmanlike efforts and perseverance of these courageous leaders in achieving this Accord", the US State Department spokesman Charles Redman said.\textsuperscript{35}

\textsuperscript{34} Robert W. Bradrock, "India's Foreign Policy since 1971", \textit{Chatham House Papers}, (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, n.d.), p. 73.
The Accord came as a relief to Western countries that had substantial numbers of Sri Lankan Tamil refugees and asylum seekers. Given the usual cross-border connections of many ethnic groups, ethnic conflicts in a country can quickly be transferred from a domestic issue to an international issue. An ethnic crisis is not only a security concern for the aggrieved state but also for the international community.

Before coming to the terms of the Agreement, the very fact that it was signed between Sri Lanka and India should raise reasonable apprehensions about its very viability. The Accord was to decide the nationalist aspirations of Tamils in Sri Lanka who were up in arms against the state represented by the majority Sinhalese. The Accord was to decide the fate of the Tamil nationalist aspirations and the Tamils were not even a party to it. As an ideology and movement, ethno-nationalism had thrown up many of world's most intractable conflicts. Members of marginalized, threatened or aspiring ethnic communities who had gone past the stage of peaceful protests and political dialogue and taken to militancy are difficult to appease. Ethnic conflicts, especially when the cultural marker is either language or religion, are difficult to resolve and tend to drag on for a long time. It is significant to mention


here the wise counsel J. N. Dixit, India’s High Commissioner to Sri Lanka got from Narasimha Rao who had taken over charge of Minister for External Affairs in Rajiv Gandhi Government prior to signing the Accord:

Narasimha Rao made three points about the whole process of negotiations about to start. First, we should not rush into this Agreement. Second, we should carefully consider the wisdom of being direct signatories to this Agreement. He was of the view that Sri Lankan Tamils should sign this Agreement with Sri Lankan Government and we should just be the guarantors. Thirdly, he felt that we must very carefully assess whether the willingness of the LTTE and Sri Lankan government to come to an Agreement at that point of time was based on a genuine desire for peace and a durable settlement or was it just an interim tactical move. He asked me to keep these points at the back of my mind while negotiating the Agreement. 39

It is significant that Narasimha Rao was an old hand in External Affairs Ministry having handled the same portfolio with distinction in Indira Gandhi’s cabinet. The haste with which the Agreement was carried through gives the unerring impression that none of the three tenets of wisdom from the incumbent Indian Minister for External Affairs were put to use while negotiating and finalising the deal.

The question now is whether the Agreement was acceptable to the Tamils. TULF and the Tamil militant groups with the exception of the LTTE were agreeable to the deal underwritten by India, which promised them regional autonomy in the Tamil areas. At that point in time, one should be concerned only with the LTTE because the Tigers alone mattered after having neutralized or disbanded all other Tamil militant groups of any consequence. They alone fought the guerrilla war with the state forces and they had not accepted defeat. The negotiations and truce were all

39 Dixit, n. 2, p. 119-20
about their militant campaign. In any realistic assessment of the situation, the LTTE was more important than any other group or party simply because of their military might. After the direct Indian intervention and before the Accord, the Tiger leaders were seen haggling with Indian diplomats to recognize the LTTE as the "sole, legitimate representatives of the Tamils" and issued statements to this effect. The nature and extent of discussions Indian diplomats held with the LTTE leaders are not certain. First Secretary Hardeep Puri had discussions with V. Prabhakaran and reported that the Tiger leader was generally agreeable to the proposed accord. However, Prabhakaran was not furnished with a copy of the draft agreement India was contemplating to sign with Sri Lanka. Prabhakaran had only two preconditions: (a) the Sri Lankan forces should close down all the military camps set up in the Vadamarachi region after 25 May 1987 and withdraw to older camps/barracks; and (b) he would like to be taken to Madras and Delhi in Indian Air Force plane, implying thereby New Delhi's recognition of the LTTE.

Prabhakaran and party were air-lifted by two helicopters of the Indian Air Force from the grounds of Suthumalia Amman Kovil Temple on July 24 to Trichy from where they were taken by special aircraft to Madras. Prabhakaran called on the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu and proceeded to Delhi, leaving his wife and children behind in Madras. Prabhakaran reportedly changed his mind and said that he was not in a position to endorse the Agreement. He said that he was not aware that the Agreement was going to be signed directly between the Governments of India and

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40 Hoole, n. 12, p. 84.
41 Dixit, n. 2, p. 143.
Sri Lanka. His expectation was that he would get a chance to call on the Prime Minister when he could submit the demands on the lines on which the Agreement should be signed and that he would be allowed to negotiate with Jayewardene and finalise the Agreement. Prabhakaran also said that he could not endorse any Agreement which kept the merger of the Northern and Eastern provinces temporary. He was opposed to the referendum too.

The assessment of Prabhakaran by the Indian officials was that he had changed his mind after discussions held in Chennai on his way to Delhi. In the Cabinet Committee meeting chaired by the Prime Minister, the decision was taken to go ahead with the signing of the accord regardless of the LTTE’s obduracy. Although Indian diplomats consulted the LTTE while settling the terms of the agreement and they, in turn, offered their suggestions like the merger of the Northern and Eastern Provinces, they did not give their concurrence to the Agreement in the form in which it was signed. The LTTE’s opposition to the Accord was thus total and even before it was signed.

It is apparent that many of the terms of the Accord went against the avowed objectives of the LTTE. It was unclear whether the Tigers had, at that point of time, agreed to settle for a political dispensation within the framework of the unity and integrity of Sri Lanka. The LTTE fought other Tamil militant groups and eliminated their leadership and disbanded their cadres only to assert their position as the sole, legitimate representatives of the Tamil people. The separatist agitation went through

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Ibid, p. 147.
several stages and phases, beginning with peaceful political pressure, moving on to civil disobedience, and then to violence, and that violence itself from sporadic acts to more systematic attacks directed against state property and police and security forces....The final phase was a fully developed separatist movement bent on independence.43

And only the LTTE had reached the final phase while all others either opted out or were stopped midway. The moderate TULF was dysfunctional and of little consequence after the Sixth Amendment of the Constitution in 1983. The LTTE never gave up their dream and demand for Tamil Eelam. They have agreed to talk but every time they did that, they stood by the "Thimpu Principles". The Tigers knew that they cannot demand and get Tamil Eelam across the table simply because secession through negotiations is an impossible concept. For engaging Sri Lankan state or India in a dialogue for which the Tigers would have their own tactical reasons, their goal has to be something less than Tamil Eelam but at the same time it should not appear Eelam minus to any committed Tamil Tiger. The ideological dynamism of the LTTE can be sustained only by the unambiguous reiteration of the simple and easily comprehended goal of an independent Eelam. Therefore, the Thimpu Principles were articulated around the abstruse concepts of nationalism and national self-determination with this dual purpose in view.

The Accord recognized the Northern and Eastern provinces “as areas of historical habitation of Sri Lankan Tamil-speaking peoples, who have at all times hitherto lived together in this territory with other ethnic groups.” The Thimpu Principles, on the other hand, were about the recognition of the Tamils as a “separate nationality” and the areas occupied by them as their “homeland” and the right of self-determination of the Tamils. The cardinal principles were unanimously presented by all the Tamil parties and groups as the basis for settlement of the Tamil problem. Between Thimpu and the Accord, the major change in situation was that the LTTE had ruthlessly asserted their dominant role and became the only Tamil group worth reckoning for a peaceful political settlement. India and Sri Lanka had indirectly recognized the LTTE’s decisive role for the settlement of the ethnic issue during the SAARC conference in Bangalore. By early 1987 the LTTE was in total command of the on-going civil strife in Jaffna and had assumed the mantle of the dominant Tamil voice. The LTTE sought recognition from India as the sole representative of the Tamil People, a stature like that of PLO or the African National Congress.\(^4^4\)

By this time the LTTE was clearly not under the tutelage of India’s agencies and was not subservient to Indian strategic intent. Indian officials recall that Prabhakaran never compromised on the question of Eelam. Peace talks are fine but Eelam is non-negotiable, he would say. After destroying TELO, he declared that no force would be able to come between the LTTE and Eelam. Prabhakaran used India

\(^4^4\) Narayanswamy, n. 1, p. 223-24.
as long as he wanted to; he never allowed anyone to use him. He considered India, Tamil Nadu in particular, important to his war designs and banked heavily on the south Indian state. Instead of controlling the outfit, India found that its own intelligence agencies and political system were manipulated by the LTTE. "... New Delhi’s clout with the LTTE, which had emerged a well knit, disciplined and dominant group, was also weakened considerably. It was apparent that while the LTTE was willing to take assistance from Tamil Nadu and the centre in its single-minded objective of Tamil Eelam, Prabhakaran alone determined the group’s short-term and long-term strategies." It was also known by that time that the LTTE’s telecommunication network not only included Tamil Nadu but also extended to Singapore, Malaysia, Australia and Mauritius.

From the foregoing, it becomes apparent that the nationalist aspirations of the LTTE, the formidable Tamil group were at a level different from what the India-Sri Lanka Agreement sought to underwrite and there had been no sustained efforts to reach a consensus with the LTTE to accepting the promise of regional autonomy for Tamils the Accord could offer. Mistakes by a Government in the conduct of its domestic policy, though exacting a price, are remediable from within. Not so the

45 "...we also used India. We were aware of India’s strategy but made use of the opportunity to strengthen ourselves militarily", Prabhakaran said in an interview. See Time, 9 April 1990.

46 Narayanswamy, n. 1, p. 329.


errors of diplomacy and international relations. They invariably take a more grievous toll.49

VII

The Indian decision to go ahead with the signing of the Accord even on the face of the LTTE’s opposition to the terms of the Agreement in which they were not a party was prompted by the intelligence assessment of the prowess of the Tigers and their capacity for mischief. The assessment by the Indian Army establishment was that the LTTE would not have the wherewithal to go back and confront India or the Sri Lankan Government. If the LTTE decided to take on India and Sri Lanka militarily, Indian armed forces would be able to neutralize them militarily within two weeks. So there need not be any serious worry on this score.50. The assessment by India’s civilian intelligence establishment was equally flawed. RAW felt that the entire process of discussions leading to the Accord commenced at the initiative of the LTTE “that owed much to India’s support”, and as such they could not have serious objections. At the same time, the head of that intelligence outfit reminded that the LTTE was not a trustworthy organization and the Accord being concluded went against their high-flown demand for Eelam.

The decision to sign the Accord was based on the predication inherent in the assessment made by the intelligence agencies and the mission in Colombo regarding

50 Dixit, n. 2, p. 156.
the situation on the ground. The then Indian High Commissioner in Colombo contended that during the entire month of July before the Agreement was signed there was no expectation that India would have to undertake a large-scale military intervention in Sri Lanka to enforce the Agreement.\(^1\) If it were so, it should go to the credit of Sri Lankan Government for having put the clauses in the Agreement relating to the contingency where militant groups refuse to accept the terms of the Agreement and placing the responsibility on India to enforce its compliance. It was indeed a peace-trap India walked into. The international media reported as early as August first week that Indian military’s job would not be easy and a direct confrontation between the guerrillas and their former protectors might be inevitable. Even if the Indians planned to stay only long enough to disarm the Tigers, that might take longer than New Delhi or Colombo ever anticipated.\(^2\)

Prabhakaran’s dramatic return to Jaffna from New Delhi after the signing of the Accord and the speech he made at Suthumalai were all part of the same orchestra meant to move the Tamils in support of the Tigers and ultimately against India. These events were extensively covered by the international media. In his speech Prabhakaran expressed his surprise at the tremendous turn in the history of their freedom struggle, due to events beyond his power to influence. He did not mince words to express their disapproval of the Agreement:

> The weapons that we took up and deployed for your safety and protection, for your liberation, for your emancipation, we now entrust to the Indian

\(^1\) Ibid., p. 156.

\(^2\) *Time*, 10 August 1987.
government.... We love India. We love the people of India. There is no question of our deploying our arms against Indian soldiers. The soldiers of the Indian Army are taking up the responsibility of safeguarding and protecting us against our enemy.... However, I do not think that as a result of this Agreement, there will be a permanent solution to the problems of the Tamils.... I have unrelenting faith in the proposition that only a separate state of Tamil Eelam can offer a permanent solution of the problem of the people of Tamil Eelam.... Let me make it clear to you here, beyond the shadow of doubt that I will continue to fight for the objective of attaining Tamil Eelam. The forms of struggle make change but the objective or goal of our struggle is not going to change.... Under no circumstance and at no point of time will I contest elections or accept the office of Chief Minister.53

Prabhakaran’s speech was commented as having been masterly delivered. He played the role of the chieftain, who had struggled for the people and had been ill-used by India who purported to be a friend. The surrender of weapons subsequently done with a lot of fanfare and in front of senior Indian Army officers and diplomats was just a sham. The Sri Lankan Government was convinced that a small fraction of the arms had been surrendered. In this, they had the concurrence of most observers.54 Indian Army officers assumed that the turn-in rate might be as low as 40 percent.55 The LTTE said the stockpile of weapons surrendered constituted 85 percent of the total weaponry. Indian diplomats reckoned it to be nearly 60 percent, but revised the estimate within a week.56 At the emergency Sri Lankan cabinet meeting which Indian High Commissioner J. N. Dixit was invited to address, Sri Lankan Minister for National Security Lalith Athulathmudali produced transcripts of wireless intercepts between the militants saying they would not surrender their arms. Dixit convinced

53 _The Hindu_ (Chennai), 5 August 1987.
54 Hoole, n. 12, p. 85.
55 _Time_, 17 August 1987
56 Narayanswamy, n. 1, p. 253.
the cabinet that the intercepts were forgeries and that the Indian government would guarantee the arms surrender.57

VIII

Subsequent events proved that none of the assumptions or assessments were anywhere near the truth. The intelligence analysts failed to read between the lines of Prabhakaran’s speech. The psychology of the Tigers and their sly ruthlessness as revealed from their antecedents should have given a different insight. The Tigers have attacked and decimated rival groups in the past, and Prabhakaran unabashedly advocated Tiger primacy in a one party state.58 The LTTE used to boast later that “surrender of weapons is not in our blood”.

The LTTE leader Thileepan’s fast to death was another step to mobilize the Tamil population behind the Tigers. On 13 September 1987, Prabhakaran sent a copy of the text of a resolution adopted by them to J. N. Dixit. Before the Government of India, the LTTE placed five points on which they wanted assurances within 24 hours. The points were (1) immediate stoppage of Sinhalese colonization in Tamil areas under the pretext of rehabilitation; (2) stoppage of rehabilitation work till the formation of the interim council; (3) suspension of opening police stations in Tamil areas; (4) surrender of weapons by home-guards and closure of all Army and police camps in Tamil villages; and (5) release of those in prison and detention camps under PTA.

57 *India Today* (New Delhi), 31 August 1987.

On the expiry of 24 hours, 24-year old Thileepan, head of the propaganda wing of the LTTE and a gifted orator, commenced his fast unto death in front of the historic Nallur Kandaswamy temple in Jaffna town. Three women also joined the fast. This worked well as a crowd pulling event. At the same time on the military front, the LTTE unleashed the most ruthless attacks on rival PLOTE, EPRLF and TELO whom the Tigers referred to as India's quisling groups. Nirupam Sen, Deputy High Commissioner of India had negotiations with Prabhakaran. The subsequent statement from New Delhi dubbing it as red herring to divert attention from LTTE’s attack on rival militants, only served to accentuate anti-India sentiments. Before a formal agreement on the points on which his fast commenced, Thileepan died on 26 September 1987, barely twelve days of fasting. His death became an event in the Northern and Eastern provinces. His last wish was that his body should be donated to the medical faculty of the Jaffna University and the LTTE honoured it with due publicity.  

On 28 September, the LTTE reached an agreement on the contentious points with India and called off its agitation. The image of the IPKF, however, took a beating in the face of the LTTE’s propaganda offensive. New Delhi had underestimated the exponential propaganda effect of Thileepan’s fast.

Thileepan’s fast to death was the first such incident in the history of Tamil militancy in Sri Lanka. In a situation of conflict and militancy, a deliberate death

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59 Frontline, 3-16 October 1987.

60 Indra Today, 31 October 1987.
meant valuable publicity to influence public opinion for which examples abound in recent history. Fasting and fast unto death have always been highly evocative tools of extreme forms of militancy and political activism to wake up and mobilise the public to a cause.61

Being masters of publicity and propaganda, it is difficult to believe that the LTTE did not plan the way things were happening to restore their lost prestige and relevance. The response by the LTTE to the arrest of its seventeen senior members by the Sri Lankan navy was equally measured and modulated. This happened off Point Pedro coast on 3 October 1987. Those arrested included Pulendran, Trincomalee Regional Commander and Kumarappa, Jaffna Regional Commander. Colombo accused them of smuggling arms while they claimed they were mainly sailing to Vedaranyam in Tami Nadu to bring back LTTE’s documents from its office closed in Chennai. They were carrying two automatic rifles for personal safety. The LTTE appealed to the IPKF at Palaly to prevent Sri Lankan Army from taking them to Colombo for interrogation. Prabhakaran wanted them to be released as their detention violated the India-Sri Lanka Agreement. Prabhakaran sent word to the IPKF through his deputy, Ajit Mahathaiya, that if the arrested LTTE operatives were forcibly taken to Colombo, they would destroy themselves by swallowing cyanide and IPKF would be responsible for the consequences. The Sri Lankan Government

61 Bobby Sands, the activist of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) died in British prison on the 66th day of his hunger-strike in May 1981. Sands’ death made him an instant martyr to Ireland’s Roman Catholics. Bobby Sands was not the first to die fasting for Irish independence. “Lt. General” Sean McCAughhey did just that in May 1946. See Newsweek, 18 May 1981. Back home in India, Bhagat Singh’s trial in Lahore Conspiracy Case and subsequent hanging shot into prominence and became a moving saga of the freedom struggle mainly because Jatindranath Das, one of Bhagat Singh’s associates died in jail as a result of fasting on the 61st day of the hunger-strike. See Jawaharlal Nehru, An Autobiography (London: John Lane The Bodley Head, 1939 edn.), p. 193.
brushed aside pleas from IPKF not to take the LTTE men to Colombo. On 5 October, they were in the process of being shifted to a Sri Lankan Air Force plane, all of them swallowed cyanide capsules. Twelve of them including Pulendran and Kumarappa died. The LTTE exploited the propaganda value of the situation created by it to its maximum advantage. A few weeks earlier, in August, Prabhakaran had told his Indian interviewer the importance of cyanide capsules in peace time:

I think the capsules are needed most, they are indispensable now. They are the only weapons for the cadres to protect themselves in the Eastern province from hoodlums, the rival groups and the Sinhala army. Not only that: they would continue to wear them in remembrance of those cadres who fought along with them and sacrificed their lives.62

Simultaneously, the LTTE launched massive reprisals on the Sinhalese, mostly civilians and more than 150 were dead. The Sinhalese soldiers who were captured by the LTTE in March and were in custody all along were shot and their bodies dumped near Jaffna bus stand. The irony of the situation was that not only the Tigers, but also the Government of Sri Lanka was earnestly trying to precipitate things with a view to discredit IPKF and thereby India. The motive on the part of the Sri Lankan agencies to shift those arrested on flimsy grounds during the period of fragile peace appears dubious. One analysis then was that Athulathmudali, the National Security Minister, who was opposed to the Accord, was behind the snap decision to shift the arrested LTTE operatives to Colombo for interrogation. It was he who remained adamant on this in the face of persistent attempts by the IPKF and the Indian High Commission in Colombo to get the men released. The

62 *Frontline, 22 August – 4 September 1987*
recommendation of the Indian military professionals and diplomats was overruled, with tragic and horrifying consequences for the peace process.\textsuperscript{63}

IX

The situation gradually slipped to a civil war. India had almost unknowingly fallen into a trap set by the Sinhalese hawks. It was no longer the mediator, but a participant in a civil war in a neighbouring country. The IPKF soon found itself fighting a counter-insurgency war under the command of Sri Lankan President Jayewardene. Their mandate was to ensure that the militants were disarmed and the key leaders of the LTTE apprehended. India's decision was to go for a military shortcut rather than a mixture of the carrot and stick. Military analysts were critical of the outcome. "While Tamils charge India of betrayal and the Sinhalese gloat over the IPKF's grim predicament, Mr. Gandhi stands accused of himself pursuing the precise military solution that he was so quick to condemn when attempted by Mr. Jayewardene."\textsuperscript{64} Even within India, there might well be strong reactions which need not be confined to Tamil Nadu alone, columnist Nikhil Chakravarthy cautioned:

If IPKF, in trying to convince Jayewardene, gets more and more involved in the quick sand morass of Sri Lanka politics, then one would not be surprised if the Government of India is faced with the outcry in India for the withdrawal of Indian armed forces from Sri Lanka. One only would keep one's fingers crossed so that such a contingency may not have been faced.\textsuperscript{65}

\textsuperscript{63} Ibid., 17-30 October 1987.


\textsuperscript{65} Nikhil Chakravarthy, "Does Rajiv Realise He's Riding a Tiger?", \textit{Mainstream} (New Delhi), October 1987.
India caught the Tigers by its tail. With the commencement of combat operations in less than three months of its arrival, the peacekeeping role of IPKF got over.

The IPKF was neither ready nor prepared when this role reversal from peacekeeping to peace enforcement came about almost overnight. The disarming of the recalcitrant yet largely invisible Tigers who melted into the tropical jungles meant a change from relaxed urban-based peacekeeping role to full-scale rural counter-insurgency operations in alien, inhospitable terrain amid hostile population. The commencement of operations by the force not battle-ready and with grossly underestimated assessments about the enemy was the sure prescription for disaster. Underestimation has always been the Tigers' best ally.66 IPKF's calamitous peace enforcement experience is the area of enquiry in the next chapter.