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469A Bukit Timah Road
#07-01, Tower Block, Singapore 259770
Tel: 6516 6179 / 6516 4239
Fax: 6776 7505 / 6314 5447
Email: isassecc@nus.edu.sg
Website: www.isas.nus.edu.sg



Globalisation and South Asian Insurgencies: With Special Reference to the Tamil Tigers and the Nepal Maoists¹

S. D. Muni²

Introduction

Conceptually, globalisation is a process that has been evolving and unfolding itself for centuries. The spice trade, the Silk Road, colonialism and unregulated migration of people from one country to another were all parts of its various stages. However, globalisation, as is understood in the contemporary international relations studies, is only two decades old or even less. South Asian insurgencies, in this sense, are older than the emergence of globalisation as the buzzword in contemporary international politics and studies.

Broadly, the insurgencies can be grouped into three categories, namely, religious, ethnic and systemic. South Asia has witnessed all these categories. Religious insurgency would include the Shia-Sunni conflict in Pakistan and the Islamic extremism *a la* Al-Qaeda and the Taliban terrorism in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Some scholars have a tendency to club the Kashmir conflict in India as a part of religious insurgency. However, this would be misleading in view of the complex nature of the Kashmir issue that has strong historical and transnational dimensions. Prominent among the ethnic insurgencies are the Sikh (Khalistan) and northeast insurgencies of India; the Baloch uprising in Pakistan; the Chakma revolt in Bangladesh; the Nepalese conflict in Bhutan; and the Tamil insurgency in Sri Lanka. Among the systemic insurgencies, the Maoists insurgency in Nepal and other democratic uprisings in Nepal and Pakistan as well as the Naxalite revolt in India will claim a prominent place in South Asia. Many of the present-day insurgencies in South Asia and elsewhere in the developing world are described as terrorist movements. Terror is no doubt used as a method, sometimes a principal method, in waging these insurgencies but most of them have specific goals, political as well as socio-economic, and also use other methods, in addition to the unleashing of terror on innocent civilians. The terror methods are also resorted to because these conflicts are unequal, asymmetric and unstructured.

¹ The original paper was presented at a conference on “Uncivil Society”, organised by the Centre for International Governance Innovation, Canada, in Waterloo, Canada, from 25 to 27 August 2008. It has been updated to include recent developments in Sri Lanka and Nepal.

² Professor S. D. Muni is a Visiting Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of South Asian Studies, an autonomous research institute at the National University of Singapore. He can be contacted at isassdm@nus.edu.sg.

Globalisation has influenced and impacted insurgencies in many different ways. To begin with, the globalised approach to development, based on intensive exploitation of natural resources and unequal distribution of the benefits of growth, has helped to generate and reinforce “uncivil” societies. Those left out and deprived of the developmental process have become ready recruits of these “uncivil” societies. Globalisation has also directly affected both the means as well as the ends of insurgencies and terrorism.³ The insurgencies have greatly enhanced their means and methods of fighting through the use of new technologies, easy access to transnational movements of people and goods, and newer sources of support, all facilitated by globalisation. As for the ends of insurgencies, “foreign intrusions and [the] growing awareness of [the] shrinking global space have created incentives to use ideal asymmetrical weapon, terrorism, for more ambitious purposes.”⁴ Limited ethnic and political objectives have been enhanced to altering regional and global power structures.

Globalisation has “increased inter-connectedness, inter-dependence and de-territorialisation”. Accordingly, there is “increased flow of capital and commodities, people and ideas across borders” and the effects of all these on the overall “operating environment” have been harnessed by the insurgent and terrorist groups to their considerable advantage.⁵ They have also taken advantage of what Jeremy Brecher and others describe as the “globalisation from below” where various non-state and societal groups, ranging from professional non-government organisations (NGOs) to terrorist, insurgents and criminal groups, have established networks to promote their respective causes.⁶ The exposure provided by the process of globalisation has also given the terrorist groups the space to innovate, as was evident in the 9/11 attacks on the United States in which civilian aircrafts were converted into ‘weapons of mass destruction’.

To look at the impact of globalisation on insurgencies, we have chosen here two South Asian insurgencies – the ethnic insurgency in Sri Lanka by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), and the Maoists of Nepal which has been a systemic insurgency. We have avoided taking the case of a religious insurgency for comparative analysis as considerable literature is already available on Al-Qaeda and Taliban terrorism in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Of the two cases chosen, Sri Lanka’s Tamil insurgency has been militarily crushed with the killing of its supreme leader, Vellupillai Prabhakaran, in May 2009. However, the structures of the LTTE’s spread, in terms of leadership, linkages and material stakes (offices, agents, commercial links, and fixed and liquid resources and assets) outside Sri Lanka, are still intact. What happens to them remains to be seen, as the possibility of the revival of Tamil resistance in some form or the other (violent or peaceful) would depend on the political solution of the Tamil question by the Sri Lankan state as well as the nature of that solution.

³ Audrey Kurth Cronin, “Behind the Curve: Globalization and International Terrorism” *International Studies*, Vol. 27, No.3, Winter 2002-2003, pp. 30-58. Also see Brynjar Lia, *Globalisation and the Future of Terrorism: Pattern and Predictions*, Routledge, 2005.

⁴ Audrey Kurth Cronin, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

⁵ Brynjar Lia, *op. cit.*, (Chapter 2.), Also see David Martin Joanes (ed.), *Globalisation and the New Terror: The Asia Pacific Dimension*, Edward Elgar, London, 2004; T. David Mason, “Globalization, Democratization and the Prospects for Civil War in the New Millennium”, *International Studies Review*, Vol.5, Issue 4, pp. 19-35, December 2003; Adamson, Fiona B., “Globalisation, Transnational Political Mobilisation and Networks of Violence”, *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 18, Number 1, April 2005, pp. 31-49 Routledge; and Richard Sandbrook; David Ramano, “Globalisation, extremism and violence in poor countries”, *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 25, issue No. 6, 2004, pp. 1007-1030.

⁶ Brecher Jeremy, Tim Costello and Brenden Smith, *Globalisation From Below: The Power of Solidarity*, South End Press, Cambridge 2000.

The Tamil insurgency is old enough, starting with the early 1980s when the Cold War was active, and had influenced the evolution of this insurgency. The Nepal Maoists are a post-Cold War development. The most interesting contrast between the two cases chosen is that while globalisation has induced a drastic shift in the means and the ends of the Nepal Maoists insurgency – of abandoning violence and seeking democratic transformation – the LTTE was reinforced to stick to its objective of a separate state to be secured through violence and war. The Maoists may not admit it but a major shift in their strategic and ideological formulations started under the thrust of the “global war on terror” (post-9/11), making them realise that the international community would resist any military victory on their part. We shall look at the differences between the impacts of globalisation on these two insurgencies in our concluding section.

There are various dimensions of globalisation that get linked with insurgencies for the impact and feedback. We will, however, focus on three areas – the role of diasporas, the transnational linkages/operations, and the use of information and communication technologies. Diasporas can be covered under transnational linkages but the significance of the diasporas’ role has enhanced considerably and there are separate studies on this role. However, these areas together encompass most of the newer developments in insurgency movements and the impact of globalisation in these three areas has also been significant in transforming the character of insurgencies in South Asia.

Diasporas

Diasporas have come to occupy an increasingly important role in international politics as a part of post-modern development that takes into account the migration of people across the borders. The diasporas presence in a host country raises the issues of identity and assimilation and the diaspora groups also become easy instruments as well as targets of propaganda, lobbying and other foreign policy uses of the home country.⁷ The diasporas also have a very significant economic role by being a source of remittances that contribute critically to the foreign exchange reserves and economic needs in many of the developing countries. Countries such as China and, of late, even India have evolved specific policies targeted at their diasporas. The economic as well as political role of the diasporas is not confined to the state entities. Many non-state entities, including insurgencies and terrorist groups, also benefit from the political and economic role of diasporas. A RAND Corporations study of 2001 argues that after the end of the Cold War, the role of rival states has declined in supporting insurgencies and the vacuum created in this respect has been filled, to a considerable extent, by the diasporas.⁸ The role played by the diasporas in sustaining insurgencies in the developing countries has become decisive.⁹

Diasporas role depends upon their size, composition, place and identity in the host country. From these factors will manifest the diasporas’ “nationalism” which may be viewed as an asset by the home state. Ethnically also, the diasporas can relate themselves to the ethnic and political/ideological identity of the given insurgency/conflict back home. Depending on the

⁷ Yossi Shain and Aharon Barth, “Disaporas and International Relations Theory”, *International Organisation*, Vol. 57, No. 3, Summer 2003, pp.449-479.

⁸ Robert J. Bunker, *Non-State Threats and Future Wars*, Taylor and Francis, 2002. Also see, Angel Rabasa, Cheryl Benard, Christine Fair, Theodar Karaski, Rollie Lal, Ian Lesser, David Thaler, *Muslim World After 9/11*, Published by RAND Corporation, 2004.

⁹ Joell Demmers, “New wars and diasporas: suggestions for research and policy”, in *Journal of Peace, Conflict and Development*”, Issue 11, November 2007.

specific nature of the identity, the diasporas relate themselves either to the state or to the insurgent movement at home. For instance, the Sinhalese diasporas will generally relate to the Sri Lankan state and the Tamil diasporas to the Tamil militancy in the case of Sri Lanka. In the case of Nepal, sections of diasporas looking for democratic transformation identified themselves with the cause advanced by the Maoists. However, those who preferred stability and disapproved of violence and ideological extremism of the Maoists supported the monarchy back home. The diasporas will not be active if they do not identify with the cause in question back home. The efficacy and impact of their role will, however, depend on their organisation and leadership in the host country. A number of credible studies are available on these themes.¹⁰

Tamil Tigers

All the South Asian insurgencies have made use of the diasporas but the most effective and rewarding use has been made by the Tamil Tigers. Tamil diasporas have existed in the world for a long time but their organisation and political consciousness was greatly streamlined in the context of Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict that flared up in July 1983. All the Tamil militant groups of Sri Lanka helped in politically organising and engaging with the Tamil diasporas. However, after 1987, when all other Tamil militant groups laid down their arms except the Tamil Tigers (LTTE), it was the LTTE which made most of the diasporic support.

The estimates of the size of Tamil diasporas range from 750,000 to 800,000 strong. Its largest concentration is in Canada, with an estimated 250,000 Tamils from Sri Lanka. Then there are 150,000 of them in India, 110,000 in the United Kingdom, about 50,000 in Germany, and 30,000 each in Australia, Switzerland and France.¹¹ In smaller numbers, the Tamil diasporas may be present in 40 other countries, including the United States, where despite its smaller size, it is politically very active and supportive of the Tamil cause.

The LTTE had worked hard to organise the Tamil diasporic community to serve its political cause. The organisational structure was federal where local Tamil associations were linked to national associations. There are at least seven well-known national federations of Tamil associations in Australia, Switzerland, France, Canada, the United States, Norway and the United Kingdom. There are occasional political and ideological conflicts and rivalries between and within these associations but the LTTE generally managed to use all of them. The LTTE had also successfully used the World Tamil Federation, which also had many Indian Tamil associates, in the pursuance of its objectives. The LTTE had offices in all these countries and many more – 54 in all according to some estimates – including in countries such as Botswana, Myanmar, Qatar and South Africa. In these countries, the LTTE had varied and wider interests than engaging the diasporas.

The LTTE had generally used its diaspora linkages for three purposes: i) fundraising; ii) publicity, propaganda and lobbying; and iii) networking for its other commercial activities, arms procurement and shipping. The most profitable and vital of these purposes had been

¹⁰ See, for instance, Abdullahi An Naim, "Religion and Global Civil Society: Inherent incompatibility of Synergy and Inter-dependence", Chapter 3, in M. Kaldor and H. Anheier (ed) *Global Civil Society 2002*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2002. Also see Sanjeev Khagram, James V. Riker, Kathryn Sikkink, *Restructuring World Politics: Transnational Social Movements, Networks, Norms*, University of Minnesota Press, 2002.

¹¹ Rudiger Falksohn and Padma Rao, "Tamil Tigers Exploit Exiles Abroad to Fund Insurgency", Spiegel online, 14 February 2008, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/0,1518,535316,00.html>.

fundraising. For the other activities, the LTTE could and did engage people even outside the diaspora groups. There was often an overlap in these three activities where the same organisation and volunteers were motivated to deliver different tasks at different times. However, fundraising had remained the principal goal of the LTTE's activities in relation to the diaspora groups.

As per a World Bank assessment, the LTTE had been raising an average of US\$480 million per year during the 1990s. The recent estimates vary from US\$200 to US\$300 million per year. In an address delivered at the International Institute for Strategic Studies Shangri-La Dialogue Singapore, Sri Lanka's Foreign Minister Rohitha Bogollagama, quoting *Jane's Intelligence Review*, described the LTTE:

...as second only to Colombia's FARC [Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia] terrorist group in its income and has documented that it raises US\$200-US\$300 million a year for arms procurement among others. The former United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan once described terrorist groups, which capitalise on the nexus between drug trafficking and arm smuggling, as representing a supra national subversive threat to the humanity. Today, the LTTE has established a presence in the arms black market and has been servicing several other terrorist groups as well.¹²

The funds raised by the LTTE covered approximately 50-60 percent of its overall expenditure.¹³ The sources of raising money were both through voluntary contributions and forced collections or extortions. Voluntary contributions were mobilised through the diaspora associations with the help of committed workers. The amount collected was transferred through diverse mediums, ranging from personnel baggage to legal bank and illegal *hawala* transactions.¹⁴ Often, the funds collected were paid directly for arms procurements or other purchases needed for the LTTE's varied operations. The LTTE's "Hero's Day" functions were used annually for special fundraising. At many places, contributions by the diasporas into the LTTE funds were institutionalised. During the early 1990s, every Sri Lankan Tamil living and working in Norway was expected to contribute at least 100 Norwegian Kroner (approximately US\$12) every month. There were about 6,000 to 7,000 Sri Lankan Tamils living and working in Norway at that time.¹⁵ Funds were also raised on special occasions and for specific causes. For instance, the LTTE raised a considerable amount of money in the name of the Tsunami humanitarian relief during 2004-2005. Strong emotions of ethnic nationalism were invoked to maximise contributions for the relief efforts, though there have been reports that very little of these contributions really reached the affected people. Explaining the LTTE's power to control the diasporas, Joell Demmers writes:

Indeed a large share of the LTTE's power to control Tamil population both at home and in the diaspora lies in their successful rhetoric. The organisation combines revolutionary message of self-determination with a rejection of both

¹² Text of the speech in Asian Tribune, 2 June 2008. <http://www.asiantribune.com>.

¹³ The LTTE ran efficient commercial enterprises and obtained its funding through other sources. LTTE's funding was analysed in details by the *Jane Defence Weekly*, 25 August 2007.

¹⁴ Hawala system rests entirely on trust. Roger G. Weiner, "Financing of International Terrorism", Criminal Division, US Department of Justice, October 2001.

¹⁵ Based on author's own interviews and study in Oslo. Also see, Oivind Fuglerud, *Life On the Outside: the Tamil Diaspora and Long Distance Nationalism*, Pluto Press, London, 1999.

Tamil tradition and ethnic pluralism and Western cosmopolitanism, giving expression to the feelings of exclusion and negative attitudes...¹⁶

The reluctant members of the diasporas were also forced by the LTTE's strong arm methods to raise funds. Many members of the Tamil diasporas have close family relations living in Tamil-dominated areas back home in Sri Lanka. Their safety and wellbeing depended upon the LTTE's goodwill and this was exploited by the LTTE cadres to raise money. The LTTE also indulged in human trafficking, that is, transporting people from Sri Lanka to distant countries in search of peace, jobs, studies and better careers. Money was extracted from such migrants by the LTTE not only when they exited Sri Lanka but also when they re-visited Sri Lanka to meet their relations. Intimidation, threats and violence used by the LTTE in extracting money from the diasporas as well as from the Tamils living under their control had been detailed in a Human Rights Watch Report released in March 2006.¹⁷ Specific case studies of extortions had been presented to substantiate the point that Tamil expatriates visiting Sri Lanka had been victims of such extortions. The World Tamil Movement (WTM) had been involved in collecting such extortions on behalf of the LTTE.¹⁸ However, it denies collection of any money directly on behalf of the LTTE but admits:

We are sympathetic to our cause there and because the LTTE is fighting for our rights and in the vanguard we have always campaigned to help them... We don't raise funds but we canvas and advise people to help our people there [in Sri Lanka] for rehabilitation from the war and tsunami...we ask them to give it to the TRO [Tamil Rehabilitation Organisation] or SEDAT [Social and Economic Development Association of Tamils]. Some give to the TRO branch here, or some give bank-to-bank transactions. People do it individually in their own way.¹⁹

The common method used in such extractions was to collect money while on visit to Sri Lanka or to secure commitments to pay to the LTTE on a regular basis after these visitors returned to their host countries. In securing such commitments, sometimes even the passports of the visitors were confiscated and, after their return, they were systematically pursued (including by the WTM) for payments on the basis of information collected during such short visits.

The Sri Lankan government started working to curb the flow of diasporas funding to the LTTE towards the end of the 1990s. The process initiated by the former Sri Lankan Foreign Minister, Lakshman Kadirgamar, (who was assassinated by the LTTE in 2005) had been carried further by the present regime. As a result, the western governments gradually put restraints on the raising and transfer of such funds. As a result, the flow of funds had declined but in no way did it completely stop. The LTTE had made extensive use of informal and covert banking channels as well as humanitarian organisations in moving these funds.

Besides raising funds, the LTTE had used established and elitist sections of the diasporas to lobby for their cause in the host countries. Influential lawyers and community activists worked with their local parliament members to promote the Tamil cause in Sri Lanka. These

¹⁶ Demmers, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

¹⁷ Human Rights Watch, "Funding the 'Final War' ; LTTE Intimidation and Extortion in Tamil Diaspora.", New York, March 2006, pp. 48.

¹⁸ See "Priya's Story" detailed in the Human Rights Watch report. (Section VI), *Ibid.*

¹⁹ "Funding the Final War", (Section V), *Ibid.*

sections of the Tamil diasporas also pleaded in parliamentary committees dealing with Sri Lankan issues in the host countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Australia, Norway, etc. The local parliamentarians in the host countries issued statements, pressured the Sri Lankan government and tried to influence policies of their governments towards Sri Lanka.²⁰ On many occasions, the Sri Lankan government's military actions were condemned by the diaspora lobbyists by emphasising the violations of human rights. Many human rights organisations in the Western countries were activated and supported to build pressure on the Sri Lankan government against their military operations aimed at the LTTE in the interest of human rights. For instance, Father S. J. Emmanuel, a well-known name in the Tamil human rights movement, writes:

How is it possible that people and nations cry out so loudly against a single bomb in a city of Colombo or in any part of the world, including the horror of Oklahoma, but do not condemn the Sri Lankan government, when its security forces under the pretext of attacking terrorist bases and under the cover of a strict media blockade, drop not one but hundreds of bombs and fire thousands of artillery shells over civilian areas causing indiscriminate destruction and killing many civilians?²¹

The diasporas openly supported the LTTE during its last days of war by raising the question of 'humanitarian catastrophe' and 'genocide', and asking for a ceasefire to save the innocent human beings trapped. There were demonstrations in various countries such as Canada, Norway, the United Kingdom, the United State and Australia against the Sri Lankan army's "ruthless" operations.²² The pressure thus built up by the diaspora community influenced a number of European countries and the United States which raised the question in the UN Human Rights Council as well as the UN Security Council. There were also threats by the 'international community' to subject the Sri Lankan government to investigations for 'crimes against humanity'. Even the demands of direct intervention by the 'international community' to stop the war under the provisions of the "Responsibility to Protect" were raised. The UN Secretary General first sent his representative and followed with a personal visit to Sri Lanka to take stock of the humanitarian situation resulting from the anti-LTTE war.²³ The Sri Lankan government rubbished these attempts as efforts to save the LTTE.²⁴

Nepal Maoists

The Nepalese diasporas are also quite sizeable and well spread like the Tamil diasporas. However, there are no authentic figures available on the size of this diaspora in different places. The largest concentration of the Nepalese (non-Indian) diasporas is in India. More than one million Nepalese are estimated to be scattered in and around New Delhi and the

²⁰ The author witnessed such lobbying by the Tamil diaspora members in the United States House Committee hearings in 1986, where the lobbyists were willing to promise naval facilities and access rights in the proposed Tamil Eelam if the United States could support the creation of such a separate Tamil state in Sri Lanka.

²¹ As quoted in "The LTTE rides high in Norway while Lanka gets torn apart", Special assignment by Fedrica Jansz. <http://www.sinhaya.com/norway.htm>.

²² <http://www.readmyday.co.uk/maryreid/archieve/2009/05/11/tamil-demonstration-outside-parliament.html>. The British House of Commons discussed the Sri Lankan situation on 29 April 2009. Also see "Sri Lanka: The Coming Battle" Economist, 27 April 2009.

²³ UNIC/PRESS RELEASE/79-2009, 6 June 2009.

²⁴ "International Community tried to save LTTE chief at the last moment, Sri Lanka government says". http://www.colombopage.com/archieve_091/may123178591CH.html.

National Capital Region alone, covering parts of the states of Haryana and Uttar Pradesh. The total number of Nepalese in India may be somewhere between 8 to 10 million and this number keeps fluctuating depending on the conditions in Nepal. In the recent years, the rise in violence and instability resulting from the Maoists insurgency and the people's uprising induced thousands of Nepalese to migrate to India. There is an estimated presence of about 1.7 to 2 million Nepalese in the rest of the world, mostly in West Asia, particularly in Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Besides, the Nepalese are also scattered in Southeast Asia (Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand), Britain, the United States (150,000) and Europe. In all, the Nepalese diasporas are present in at least 25 countries. They are organised locally and along ethnic lines. Since the year 2000, an umbrella organisation called the Non-Resident Nepalese (NRN) has been established. It is believed that the NRN sent about 100 billion Nepalese Rupees as remittances during 2002-2003, which has since been growing at the rate of 30 percent.²⁵ The NRN has opened chapters in 24 countries and is planning to do so in another 30 countries.

Nepal Maoists have been able to make only limited use of the diasporas in pursuance of their political objectives. This has been due to a number of constraints. First of all, the cause being fought for by the Maoists from the beginning, of carrying out a people's war to establish "New Democracy" wrapped in an extremist leftist ideological jargon, was not quite popular with the people settled abroad who had generally identified themselves with the Nepalese state. This situation gradually changed with the redefinition of the Maoists goals and recasting of their political strategy. The establishment of a republic and a democratic system are not as emotive causes as ethnic nationalism, evident in the case of Sri Lanka. The Maoists also launched their people's war in 1996 which escalated in 2001. The Nepalese settled in India were always a factor when working out the Maoists strategy for revolution but perhaps they did not have the time or even links to focus their attention on the diasporas elsewhere and organise political and material support from them. The Nepalese diasporas, except those in the developed countries, were generally poor people, working for their livelihood in labour-intensive and menial jobs in foreign lands, where they neither had much awareness nor money and confidence to come forward in support of a home-based insurgency.

The only area where some of these factors did not apply was India and the developed West. In India, since his student days in Jawaharlal Nehru University, the Maoist leader, Dr Baburam Bhattarai, had organised Nepalese students and workers living in India. The All Nepal National Free Students Union was established in 1965 but it went through various splits and political/ideological regroupings. The one affiliated to the Maoists insurgency was called the All Nepal Free Students Union-Revolutionary. This organisation was re-christened as The All Nepal National Independent Students' Union-Revolutionary. The Maoists have made use of this organisation for publicity and propaganda purposes as well as for securing logistic support for the cause of the insurgency. There is no reliable evidence but it was believed that the Maoists had also raised funds through some of the diaspora organisations and individuals in India and elsewhere.

The Nepalese diasporas were divided on political lines between the King, the Maoists and other mainstream political parties. The Maoists only received class-based support from the poorer sections of the Nepalese communities living abroad. However, after 2002, and particularly after 2005, when the King made several autocratic moves, the opinions among

²⁵ Interview of a Nepalese Minister in *The Nepal Digest*, Published by the Nepalese Diasporas Foundation, New York. <http://www.theNepalDigest.org>.

the diasporas turned in favour of the goal of democracy. The conclusion of the 12-Point Agreement between the Maoists and the Seven Party Alliance also blurred the ideological unacceptability of the Maoists as the struggle turned to one between the King and the 'people'. With the emergence of *Jan Andolan-II* in 2006, a large majority of the diasporas became sympathetic to the cause of a republican Nepal which politically strengthened the Maoists and the anti-monarchy movement of the political parties. The Nepalese migrants held rallies and demonstrations in India, the United States, the United Kingdom, Hong Kong and Australia where the King's "regressive" moves were criticised and strong demands for peace and democracy were raised. After the victory of the *Jan Andolan-II*, the Maoists have started appealing to the NRN and other diaspora members to come forward to help in the reconstruction of the country. Political party's leaders such as Girija Prasad Koirala, Sushil Koirala, Sujata Koirala and Madhav Kumar Nepal have been hosted by the diasporas associations in the United States in support of establishing a democratic republic in Nepal. One must also keep in mind the fact that there have been members of Nepalese diasporas, committed to the monarchy and distrustful of the Maoists.

Both the LTTE and the Nepal Maoists have also used the issues of democracy, freedom of expression and other human rights of the people back home to mobilise support and sympathies of the diasporas. These issues now constitute a robust part of the global ideological consensus, particularly in the context of the post-cold war perception of "New World Order" and the post-9/11 thrust on spreading awareness for these values at the global level. This has helped these two insurgencies to build the international community's pressure on the states that they confronted at home. The international and local human rights organisations and NGOs, including Amnesty International, considerably facilitated the task of these insurgencies in this respect. The international human rights organisations now make hardly any distinction between the human rights of the terrorist cadres and the innocent people.

Transnational Linkages

Globalisation has provided a great impetus to commercial and human movements across the boundaries. It has also facilitated networking and engagements across interest convergence, be they related to trading in material goods or ideological and intellectual ideas. The transnational linkages thus created have not only been exploited by legitimate entities of states and business communities but also by the "uncivil" groups and organisations, including criminals, terrorists and insurgent groups. "The increased permeability of the international system has also enhanced the ability of non-state terrorist organisations" to promote their interests.²⁶ The terrorist organisations have established and nursed transnational links for diverse purposes of building financial resources, procuring arms and establishing ideological networks and support bases. South Asian insurgencies have not lagged behind in this respect.

Tamil Tigers

The LTTE was known for running elaborate commercial operations that included shipping, money laundering, human and drug trafficking, arms black market, etc. The LTTE started building its commercial establishment and network in the early 1980s. Velvettiturai port in Jaffna has been a traditional hub of trading and smuggling network even before the outbreak of ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka. Being born and brought up in Velvettiturai, the LTTE chief,

²⁶ Audrey Kurth Cronin, "Behind the Curve", op. cit.

Prabhakaran, had a natural instinct to work through this network. He started his commercial operations “like a good merchant capitalist by registering a company in Singapore for buying radio sets, invested in Malaysia, started a shipping company in Cyprus and played the share market in London.”²⁷ Yangon (Myanmar) was one of the early ports of call by LTTE freighters because Prabhakaran’s grandfather had property there. The LTTE’s commercial establishment was expanded and reinforced, getting a fleet of vessels registered in Panama, Honduras and Liberia, by Prabhakaran’s trusted comrade, Kumaran Padmanathan, popularly known as “KP” in the LTTE circles, with the help of Pratima Das, a Bombay shipping magnet.²⁸ By 1991, the LTTE’s commercial-cum-arms procurement operations had expanded sufficiently. In a confession to the Indian intelligence agencies, one of the LTTE operatives disclosed:

KP has been dealing not only with the financial transactions of the LTTE but also in procuring arms and ammunition, communication equipments, fibre-glass boats and engines and other essential electronic gadgets for his organisation. Most of the arms and ammunition required by the Tigers are purchased through the underworld arms dealers operating in various European countries such as the United Kingdom, West Germany, Yugoslavia, Belgium, France, Austria and Cyprus. KP has been in this line since 1986...The LTTE has been purchasing arms and ammunition worth three to four million US dollars per annum...²⁹

In these operations, goods were ferried first to Indian ports and then taken to Sri Lanka in smaller fishing boats. The advantage of the Indian access to the LTTE in this respect came under increasing pressures during the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) operations (1987-89) and in the aftermath of former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi’s assassination in 1991 by the LTTE. This led the LTTE to shift its operations to Southeast Asia, particularly, Thailand and Singapore. The convenience of Thailand for the LTTE was inherent in its shorter distance, of only a little over 2,000 kilometres from the north Sri Lankan coast and easy availability of weapons from former conflict areas of Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar.³⁰ In addition, “brand new weapons are also available, either smuggled from China or obtained openly from legal manufacturers. There are more than 10,000 trawlers and other vessels roaming the Thai seas. This makes it difficult to strictly monitor weapons smuggling activities.”³¹ Besides, the LTTE ships were not indulging in arms smuggling all the time. Most of the time, the LTTE vessels “engage[d] in transporting a variety of general cargo like timber, cement, flour, sugar, salt, steel, etc. The LTTE vessels also engage[d] in drug smuggling and gun-running, human smuggling and transporting LTTE cadres.”³² In only 10-15 percent of its operations, the LTTE vessels carried contraband goods such as arms and drugs, and that too along with the normal cargo, so as to avoid being detected.

²⁷ Anthony Davis, “Tiger International”, *Asia Week*, 26 July 1996.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ From the Jain Commission Report, as quoted in Vijay Sakhuja, “The Dynamics of LTTE’s Commercial Maritime Infrastructure”, ORF Occasional Paper, Observer Research Foundation, New Delhi, April 2006.

³⁰ The author’s interview with the Cambodian Home Minister in July 2005. Former Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Kadirgamar had in personal interviews mentioned to the author in Laos the details about the LTTE’s illegal operations linked to Cambodia and Laos during his official visit to Laos in 1999.

³¹ “LTTE and Thailand”, <http://www.svik.org/thai.htm>. Also see “LTTE Tamil Tiger Terrorist Activities in Thailand”, <http://www.spur.asn.au/ThaiCurrentNews.htm>.

³² Vijay Sakhuja, op. cit.

The LTTE's merchant fleet, comprising an estimated 11 ships, was separate from the vessels and smaller boats of its Sea Tigers. Even the command and control of the two operations were supposed to be kept separate. There were around 150 personnel engaged in the merchant navy operations. Most of these people were trained LTTE cadres, though the possibility of the LTTE hiring sailors and navigators from other countries such as the Philippines, Indonesia and some East European countries could not be ruled out. In the international shipping business, the changing of the identity of ships was not uncommon and the LTTE also made good use of this practice to protect its illegal operations and identity of its merchant vessels. In almost every respect, the LTTE merchant navy operations were as globalised as any other shipping line could claim to be. Besides Southeast Asia, the LTTE navy also had trading links with South Africa and Latin America in terms of generating funds through the transportation of cargo and for ferrying arms.

In addition to running a well-developed merchant navy, the LTTE's transnational linkages also involved dealings with a large number of insurgent and terrorist organisations. Among the Islamic terrorist groups, the LTTE had close contacts with the Palestinian groups, the Kurdish groups based in Europe, Taliban and Al-Qaeda affiliates in Afghanistan and Eritrea, and the Abu Sayyaf group in the Philippines.³³ Some of these contacts started much before 9/11 when the LTTE was looking for arms and training during the initial phase of its struggle. Subsequently, these links developed commercial and arms procurement interests as well. In South Asia, the LTTE had links with almost all the insurgent groups in India's northeast and the Naxalite groups in Andhra Pradesh. The Maoists of Nepal had also initially established contacts with the LTTE but did not pursue them to any length, largely to avoid possible Indian displeasure. The Maoists also did not find themselves compatible with ethnic nationalism propagated by the LTTE.

The LTTE's relations with these transnational groups were geared to a mix of political and commercial objectives. Though ethnic nationalism was a common factor between the LTTE and similarly-based insurgent groups such as the United Liberation Front of Asom [ULFA] (in Assam, India) and other north-eastern insurgency groups in India or the Karens of Myanmar, there was no convergence of their specific political interests with those of the LTTE. The LTTE dealt with them for commercial purposes, to provide training and to procure as well as supply arms. After 1987, there developed a strategic dimension to these commercial links as the LTTE faced the IPKF and decided to support India's insurgent groups in order to weaken India internally. There had been twists and turns in the LTTE's approach towards India, influencing its dealings with the Indian insurgent groups. The LTTE was also cautious in handling its relations with the Islamist terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda so as to avoid any retaliation from the United States and its western allies, particularly after the 9/11 events.

The LTTE carried fairly elaborate international relations of its own, in pursuance of its political objective. At the grassroots level, these relations were carried through by about 54 LTTE offices in various countries but the top leadership of the LTTE also interacted with high-level diplomatic officials. The thrust of these relations was to secure support of the West and India and to secure the LTTE's diverse commercial, political and organisational interests. The attitude of the United States and the European Union had become somewhat indifferent and uncooperative towards the LTTE only during the past five years or so. However, Norway

³³ Shanaka Jayasekara, "Tamil Tiger Links with Islamist Terrorist Groups", Asian Tribune, 4 March 2008, <http://www.asiantribune.com>.

and Australia had remained sympathetic and understanding towards the LTTE. In a so called balanced observation, a submission made by the Australian Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security argued against proscribing the LTTE. The basis of this argument was that the LTTE, being a self-determination organisation, enjoyed public support and the Tamil diasporas might help move the LTTE towards peace and democracy. The report said on 1 June 2007:

The LTTE poses no direct threat to Australia or the Australian interests...we have to ensure we have a genuine understanding of the political situation in the country in which we chose to intervene. But this is often difficult. If a struggle for self-determination has persisted for a long time, this persistence is a strong indicator that both sides of the conflict enjoy significant support; many support the government but many also support the non-state actor seeking self-determination. Therefore, it is important that Australian law keep the interests of both in mind when publicly declaring a stance.

A legal intervention that criminalises the LTTE is likely to prevent the Tamil diaspora from continuing to engage the LTTE in a direction of peace, development and democracy. Currently there are various private individuals and diaspora think tanks that are considering the best possible ways of engaging the LTTE in a direction of peace, but criminalising them will outlaw this activity.³⁴

Norway's sympathy and support for the LTTE had been indicative in the LTTE's demand for Norway to play the role of peacemaker between the Sri Lankan government and them.³⁵ There were allegations by the Sri Lankan government that Norway clandestinely supplied radio and broadcasting equipments to the LTTE in December 2002, besides other favours. Then Sri Lankan President, Chandrika Kumaratunga, protested to the Norwegian Prime Minister in writing on the violation of Sri Lankan laws and the Vienna Convention on diplomatic practices.³⁶ With India, the LTTE had a complex love-hate relationship but it realised that its linkages and bases of support in India were critical to the success of the struggle. The sympathies of a number of western countries towards the LTTE came out in the open during the last phase of the war, as noted earlier. India, however, continued to keep the LTTE at a distance and refused to intervene, despite considerable internal and international pressures, to halt that war that eventually eliminated the LTTE leadership.

Nepal Maoists

The Maoists insurgents of Nepal had no major commercial operations. They collected most of their funds through bank robberies, extractions and taxes in the areas of their dominance, including from foreign tourists coming to Nepal for mountaineering and trekking expeditions. Some estimates put the Maoists collections to more than US\$100 million.³⁷ In addition, there have been reports that the Maoists traded in cannabis, a plant from which marijuana and

³⁴ Report by the Australian Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security, 1 June 2007.

³⁵ For an account of Norway's support to the LTTE see, "The LTTE rides high in Norway while Lanka gets torn apart", Special Assignment by Fedrica Jansz. <http://www.sinhaya.com/norway.htm>.

³⁶ For the text of the letter, see the official website of Sri Lankan government. The letter was written on 31 December 2002. <http://www.priu.gov.lk>.

³⁷ Dhruba Kumar, "Consequences of the militarized Conflict and the Cost of Violence in Nepal", *Contributions To Nepalese Studies*, Kathmandu, July 2003, p. 184.

hashish are prepared, because this plant grew in abundance in the areas that the Maoists have been in full control of, namely, Rukum, Dolpa, Rolpa, Salyan and Pyuthun.³⁸ There has, however, been no hard or reliable evidence to suggest the Maoists' deep involvement either in the cultivation or trafficking of drugs. The Maoists did make money out of the sale of another rare herb called *Yarcha Gumba* (*Codryceps Sinesis*) which is used in Chinese potency medicines. This herb is available in the Himalayas and the Maoists have been selling it to the Chinese to raise resources.³⁹ The Maoists claim to encourage the commercial use of this herb in Nepal's national interest as and when they get their hands on the economic policy of the new republic.

The transnational relations of the Maoists during the insurgency have been limited mostly to their ideological groups. These relations fall in two categories, one with the West, and another with India and South Asia. The Nepal Maoists were the founding members of the Revolutionary International Movement (RIM), established in 1984. Through this organisation, they came in contact with the Columbian and Peruvian communists as well as the Revolutionary Communist Party of the United States. In his report to the Second National Conference, the Maoist leader, Puspa Kamal Dahal (also known as Prachanda), accepted the critical role played by these contacts in advancing the Nepalese struggle. He said:

...[The] RIM committee kept on playing important role in synthesising experiences of the world...Among all of them, those of [the] people's war in Peru, led by Comrade Gonzalo, had been the highest and most important. Also, the documents and articles written by the Revolutionary Communist Party, the USA, and its Chairman Bob Avakin played an important role in lifting the debate to a new height. At the same time, positive and negative experiences of armed struggles in various countries, including Turkey, India, the Philippines, Bangladesh, Iran, had been the agenda for direct debates and interactions.⁴⁰

The RIM welcomed the launching of the people's war in Nepal in 1996. Since the Nepal Maoists were the only group that launched a people's war from among the RIM members, they have been even aspiring to take the leadership of the RIM and make it a "Third-World"-dominated organisation. To that end, even after the success of the *Jan Andolan-II*, the Maoists organised a RIM meeting in December 2006.⁴¹

As a regional chapter of the RIM in South Asia, the Maoists took the initiative to establish the Coordinating Committee of Maoist Parties and Organisations of South Asia in July 2001. The Maoists groups from India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan and Sri Lanka joined in this initiative and have been holding annual meetings to chalk out their respective strategies of struggle. However, operationally, the most useful linkages of the Nepal Maoists have been with the Indian Naxalite groups. It is believed that the Nepal Maoists played a key role in bridging differences among these groups and their leaders, particularly between the Maoists Community Centre and the Peoples War Group, both in the state of Andhra Pradesh of India. The Maoists also established operational linkages with other Indian insurgent groups in the northeast, like the ULFA, the Bodo group and the Kamtapur Liberation Organisation. These

³⁸ Sudha Ramachandran, 'Nepal cashes in On Cannabis', Asia Times, <http://www.asiatimes.com>.

³⁹ Kantipur Online, <<http://www.kantipuronline.com/kolnews.php?&nid=146061>.

⁴⁰ *The Worker*, (Organ of the Nepal Maoists), No. 7, January 2002. p. 44.

⁴¹ Nepal's Maoists: Purists Or Pragmatists? Asia report No.132, 18 May 2007, International Crisis Group, Kathmandu/Brussels, pp. 16-17.

linkages have been used by the Maoists for logistic support in several areas regarding procurement of arms, health and educational help for the relatives of their cadre, movements, shelter and rescue, and training and transport.

After 2005, the Nepal Maoists were careful in avoiding any offence to India by way of their linkages with the Indian Naxalites. The Indian Naxalites have not endorsed the Nepal Maoists deviation from the radical path and joining hands with other mainstream parties. There have been exchanges of harsh words between the erstwhile comrades. The Indian government also officially toned down its criticism of the Nepal Maoists for their alleged operational links with the Indian Naxalite groups. However, the Nepal Maoists have evolved their own strategy to deal with the challenges faced by them and have even brought about changes in their overall political approach. They have proved to be certainly more resilient and innovative, and that is reflected in the success achieved by them as compared to their other fraternal ideological organisations in India and South Asia.

Appraisal

The preceding pages clearly underline that globalisation has greatly facilitated and reinforced South Asian insurgencies. The use of information technology by the South Asian insurgencies has obviously enhanced their mobility and in-group communication, resulting in the evolution and implementation to their strategies. We have not discussed that aspect in detail here. The LTTE, being a close-knit organisation with elaborate and extensive diasporas and commercial interests, could not have done without the efficient use of information technology. Regarding the Nepal Maoists, the difficult terrain and communication situation in Nepal could be considerably overcome through satellite cell-phones and frequency modulation (FM) radios. The FM radios became a very forceful instrument of propaganda as well as communication network for the Maoist cadres. The Maoists leadership had access to satellite telephony to keep in close contact with each other as well as with the regional commanders, grassroots cadres and international contacts. The King, while taking over direct power and vowing to fight the Maoists in February 2005, took the first step to order the disabling of mobile telephone network and FM radio stations. That step in itself, however, did not succeed in paralysing the communication network of the Maoists. Instead, it contributed to the build up of popular resentment against the monarchy.

Two positive aspects of the insurgency-globalisation linkages need to be taken into account here. One was that if the state or the counter-insurgency operations work systematically, they could erode and contain, if not completely eliminate, the “uncivil” spill-over of globalisation. As already noted, the Sri Lankan government since the late 1990s moved to curb the LTTE’s diasporas funding sources and supply of arms from the Cold War zones such as Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar. Then-Foreign Minister Kadirgamar and his successor since 2005, Mr Bogollagama, worked hard to sensitise the concerned countries and mobilise support among them to ensure restraints on undesirable diasporas activities and clandestine flow of arms. Though they did not succeed completely, the cooperation of the international community has, to a considerable extent, been obtained. This has been helped, to a large extent, by the anti-terrorism atmosphere created in the aftermath of 9/11. However, there is surely a need to strengthen such efforts at the regional as well as global levels. Bilateral measures can only work to a limited extent.

The Sri Lankan government’s deft manipulation of international political fault-lines was also evident during the final phase of the ethnic war that eliminated the LTTE in Sri Lanka.

Colombo refused to heed any international advice or succumb to any international pressure to relent on its ultimate goal of eliminating the LTTE. On India's refusal to sell arms to Sri Lanka, China, Pakistan and Ukraine were approached. China emerged as the biggest arms supplier to Sri Lanka.⁴² China was also engaged in some of Sri Lanka's strategically-important developmental projects such as the exploration of oil and gas in the 'Gulf of Mannar' and the development of the Hambantota port on the southern coast. The continued support from China, Russia, Pakistan and India helped Sri Lanka in its war against the LTTE even at a time when international pressures were building on humanitarian issues against the war. These countries also were mobilised to counter any resolution against Sri Lanka in the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva on 19 May 2009.

The other positive aspect of globalisation is inherent in the transformation of insurgency goals. The Nepal Maoists, through their various transnational links with similar ideological groups, also realised that dogmatism was a hurdle in the success of revolutionary struggles. This is where the Nepal Maoists shifted from the path of "new democracy" to "competitive socialism". Prachanda Path (that is, Prachanda's approach to revolution) and a guarded critique of the Stalinist methods in the Maoists movement emerging since the Maoists Party Congress in 2003 were a clear reflection of the undercurrent of their ideological transformation. The global consensus against terrorism was certainly one of the important factors in inducing a rethink in them about an outright and enduring military victory. This led the Maoists to revise their grand strategy from a "people's war" to a "united front" and democratic mobilisation in achieving the goals of a republic. The dramatic change in Nepal's internal conflict would not have taken place and the *Jan Andolan-II* would not have happened without the Maoists shifting from the path of violence to democratic mobilisation. The role of the international community and coordination in its efforts through the channels of globalisation has been critical in helping the Maoists advance on the path of such transformation. Once the Maoists realised that without India's support, they could not advance their political goals, they quickly changed their stance towards India. The criticism of India as an 'expansionist power' was toned down and the channels of communication were established with New Delhi. This greatly helped them to operate from the Indian territory as well as forge a united front with the Nepali mainstream political parties. Any deviation from this path of constructive engagement between the insurgency and the forces of globalisation has the potential of reversing the transformation to the disadvantage of the Nepalese people, regional peace and stability and the interests of the international community. Any attempt to isolate the Maoists and marginalise them in building the new republic has every possibility of forcing the Maoists back on the path of violence and destruction.

The signs of this reversal have emerged following the Maoists' short-lived participation in power after their strong showing in the Constitutional Assembly elections of April 2008. The Maoist Prime Minister, Prachanda, resigned after his failure to sack the Chief of the Nepal army.⁴³ The impatience shown by the Maoists in changing critical institutions of state power gave rise to fears among the other political actors, the mainstream parties as well as the international community, including India, that the Maoists were aiming to control the state all by themselves. The Maoists did not realise that the non-Maoist political forces were feeling frustrated and insecure since their poor performance in the electoral battle and were waiting for any occasion to isolate the Maoists. On their part, the Maoists too had not been sincere in their commitment to the peace process. The 'Prachanda tapes' revealing the Maoist leader

⁴² *The Indian Express*, 30 April 2004.

⁴³ For a discussion of the issues involved, see, S. D. Muni, "The civil-military crisis in Nepal", *The Hindu*, 6 May 2009.

inflating the number of his People's Liberation Army numbers for integration into the Nepal army exposed this insincerity of commitment.⁴⁴ The Maoists also failed to learn to operate the levers of state power in a democratic political structure. If the unfortunate breakdown of the political consensus among the Maoists and the Nepali political parties persists, as it seems, the Nepal peace process may break down, notwithstanding everyone still swearing by its basic goals.

It is interesting to note that globalisation has impacted these two South Asian insurgencies differently in terms of their strategies and outcomes. While the Maoists of Nepal changed their strategy, deviated from the path of the "people's war" and collaborated with not only the political parties but also the international community contrary to their ideological position, the Sri Lankan Tigers' thrust on war and a separate state became reinforced. As was inherent in the situation, the LTTE has been militarily crushed, just like the Khmer Rouge. Its political fate for revival in some form of Tamil resistance for their rights would, of course, depend on the way Colombo approaches a resolution of the ethnic conflict, as noted earlier. These differing impacts of globalisation can be explained by the inherent characteristics of the struggle that has been waged by these insurgent groups and the manner in which the globalisation processes has impinged upon them respectively.

To begin with, the LTTE emerged as the wronged group, a victim of ethnic discrimination and violence by the majority Sinhalese community. The hardcore ethnic stance of the Sri Lankan state and the failure of the Sinhalese leadership to evolve a broad-based consensus to meet the legitimate Tamil grievances facilitated the Tamil militancy's image as an aggrieved group. As such, the LTTE received global sympathy and support generously, helping it to consolidate and reinforce its goals and strategies. The Nepal Maoists emerged as an ideologically aggressive organisation. They were ideologically incompatible with the tenets of globalisation and, accordingly, found themselves at odds with the currents of globalisation. As we have noted, they also did not get much financial or political support from the diasporas. The globalisation also exposed the Maoists to diverse ideological currents and the failure of "communist" movements elsewhere in the world. This forced them to review, rethink and revise their approach, their goals and strategies, particularly in the short and medium terms.

It may also be noted here that, while the LTTE's top leadership, especially Prabhakaran, had no global exposure, he remained captured in his conflict environment and tunnelled thinking. Some of his associates such as Anton Balasingham, Kittu and Mahatya had extensive global exposure but on critical matters, these associates did not have a final say. The Maoist leadership, on the other hand, in search of victory and success, interacted with diverse global currents and thus became amenable to change. The ethnic struggle of the Tamils was highly emotional and its intensity was enhanced by the LTTE's induction of self-sacrifice, through the cyanide capsule, which every LTTE cadre carried with him or her. This also led to the LTTE's suicide terrorism. This emotive intensity and the cult of sacrificing for the chosen cause also made the LTTE rigid in sticking to its ends and means. The Nepal Maoists did not have any such suicide streak. They had run their revolutionary struggle on a logical line, howsoever dogmatic their logic could have been. They had been trained to take the life in their perceived fight for justice rather than sacrifice their own lives. With a pragmatic leadership, this made the Maoists' struggle resilient and, thus, amenable to both the negative as well as constructive influences of globalisation.

⁴⁴ On 'Prachanda tapes', see, Kathmandu Post, 13 May 2009, and Nepali Times, 6 May 2009.

The point that emerges from this comparison is clear. There are both negative as well as positive impulses in the globalisation processes for the insurgencies and “uncivil” societies. The impact of these impulses will however, depend upon the character of the “uncivil” societies and the way they absorb these impulses. It may be sweeping or erroneous to surmise that globalisation has either universally softened or hardened the “uncivil” societies and the insurgencies.

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