

5 July 2019

Indiscriminate violence as strategy: The effectiveness of using indiscriminate violence in counterinsurgency (COIN)

Word count: 12970

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1. Introduction

Since 1949, insurgency has become the most common form of armed conflict (Hammes, 2005). Unlike conventional warfare, which is clearly defined by Clausewitz, defining insurgency is somewhat problematic. As a mode of conflict, insurgency contains various forms ranging from resistance to invasion to ethnic strife. These diverse forms of insurgency make it challenging to define. Insurgency shares some similarities with conventional warfare and terrorism; for instance, all of them intend to use force in order to achieve a political end. However, the scope and scale of violence make them distinct from each other. Furthermore, whereas conventional warfare requires both involved parties to share a symmetric level in strength, insurgency has an asymmetric nature and the weaker party in the conflict is usually the non-state actor who seeks to use guerrilla tactics when fighting state-based forces (Baylis *et al.*, 2016). As the State Department of the United States has defined, insurgency is 'the organized use of subversion and violence to seize, nullify, or challenge political control of a region' (State.gov., 2009; 6). The only problem of this definition is that it fails to distinguish insurgency from terrorism. The difference between insurgency and terrorism is that terrorism rarely results in a direct change (Baylis *et al.*, 2016). Besides, in order to succeed, insurgency often requires 'the support and mobilization of a significant proportion of the population' (Baylis *et al.*, 2016; 177).

Due to the existence of insurgency, which attempts to topple the government, counterinsurgency (COIN) has become an important task for state actors in recent decades. According to the RAND Institution, counterinsurgency is defined as 'efforts undertaken by a government and its security forces (or the security forces of supporting partners or allies) to oppose an insurgency' (Paul *et al.*, 2013; 2). In general, such efforts are manifested in the form of two distinct approaches with different areas of interest, the first of which is entitled the enemy-centric paradigm. This approach views counterinsurgency efforts as something that mirrors conventional warfare, where the main goal is to defeat the enemy, which in this case, is the insurgents themselves (Schutte, 2017; Paul *et al.*, 2013; State.gov., 2009). The second approach to counterinsurgency is the population-centric paradigm. This approach places special interest on populations. Here, the goal is to control and secure a population (State.gov., 2009). The reasoning that underpins this focus on populations is that this approach views counterinsurgency efforts as a direct competition between the government on the one hand, and the insurgents on the other. In other words, it is a competition on who can 'win over' the population (Schutte, 2017; Paul *et al.*, 2013). Naturally, both of these approaches have their shortfalls. The enemy-centric paradigm, for example, is commonly condemned for being too violent, which is a characteristic that can result in a reverse reaction, whereby civilian populations react to state-sanctioned violence by siding with the insurgents. On the other hand, the population-centric approach is

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cited as being too time-consuming and too expensive, thereby draining governmental resources (Paul *et al.*, 2016). As a result, most contemporary counterinsurgency efforts tend to utilize a combination of both approaches in an effort to fulfill their strategic goals (State. gov., 2009).

It can be suggested that the distinction between these two counterinsurgency approaches, the enemy-centric and population-centric paradigms, can also be observed depending on a country's governance or political system type. The idea here is that democratic countries and authoritarian countries respond to insurgents differently, and employ different counterinsurgency campaigns. When it comes to authoritarian states, it can be argued that the population-centric paradigm is less relevant, since the leaders of such nations are almost entirely dependent on the support of elites for their survival, rather than the rule of law. Thus, such countries prioritize eliminating insurgents over winning the hearts and minds of their populations (Ucko, 2016; Byman, 2016). On the other hand, when it comes to democratic countries, counterinsurgency efforts tend to be tied to democracy's ability to improve the way of governance, as an effort to get populations to recognize the country's legitimacy vis-a-vis the legitimacy of insurgent groups (Bayman, 2016). This dynamic has led to the emergence of the so-called 'democratic model' of counterinsurgency, which places the focus on winning the hearts and minds of people, as opposed to complete dependence on military power (McChrystal, 2014). Thus, the authoritarian response to counterinsurgency aligns with the enemy-centric paradigm, whereas the democratic approach mirrors the population-centric paradigm.

On a more practical or operational level, authoritarian governments often combat insurgents by employing their internal security services and bodies in order to enable the government to prohibit dissent, usually by controlling media outlets and preventing opponents from supporting insurgencies in public. These tactics are directly related to authoritarian governments' desire to control their populations and achieve a monopoly on the distribution of information. Once these aspects are achieved, these governments can mobilize their public against insurgent groups, and they can even make the masses accept -and even support- their brutal actions against insurgents (Ucko, 2016). Indeed, the control of media and the dissemination of information enables authoritarian regimes to pursue a counterinsurgency strategy of mass violence and repression. This is usually carried out by the state's military forces, which are not only employed to remove or 'clean' insurgent presence but to control the territory where the insurgents operated as well. This is done in order to prevent these groups from reforming (Ucko, 2016). Thus, authoritarian nations use coercion and fear to suppress insurgencies, and they use mass violence in order to entrench their authority and intimidate their populations. Intimidating their people, and spreading fear amongst them means that civilians become less willing to support and help insurgents out of fear for their own safety (Ucko, 2016). In an ideal case, when insurgent groups are removed, and when insurgent-controlled territories are under the control of the

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government, the government is supposed to re-establish itself and its legitimacy through efforts and campaigns to reach out to local populations. However, since most authoritarian leaders are solely interested in centralizing their control –as opposed to creating power-sharing mechanisms– such outreach efforts are not conducted (Ucko, 2016). Russia and China's examples of countering insurgents can be offered as examples of how such authoritarian models can be effective in practice.

When it comes to practical strategies used by democracies, Merom (2003) has stated that such political systems are sensitive to casualties, meaning they are less likely to carry out any brutal military operations against insurgents due to their commitment to democratic values. In addition, it is argued that democracies are less willing to use collective punishment in counterinsurgency (Ucko, 2016). Furthermore, in parallel to developing a plan of fighting insurgents, democratic governments have to face the added challenge of facing antiwar movements arising from their own citizens when conducting counterinsurgency campaigns. Studies have shown that citizens in democratic states are strongly unwilling to fight limited wars. In this case, governments place a special focus on appealing to their citizens and taking national viewpoints into account, in order to preserve state legitimacy. Indeed, the 'hearts and minds' approach that characterizes democratic states requires governments to have at least some degree of legitimacy, since such an approach will be ineffective if local populations were strongly against counterinsurgency activities (Engelhardt, 1992). As a result of these aspects, democracies have been accused of being 'too soft' on insurgents due to their adherence to democratic norms (Engelhardt, 1992). Thus, while the democratic model of insurgency appears to be more sustainable, some have maintained that democratic systems are unable to effectively combat insurgent groups (Engelhardt, 1992; Zhukov, 2014).

Therefore, while the democratic and people-centered approach to counterinsurgency is useful to a government wishing to obtain or maintain legitimacy, a number of scholars have suggested that authoritarian governments and their enemy-centric viewpoints enjoy a comparative advantage when it comes to counterinsurgency, since they are faced with fewer limitations when compared to democracies (Engelhardt, 1992; Byman, 2016).

It should also be clarified that while repression and mass violence are usually used by authoritarian states when countering insurgency, this does not mean that democracies do not use mass violence as well, despite their hesitancy towards the use of repression (Valentino *et al.*, 2004). To some extent, repression is more or less a universal phenomenon, as evident by several historical cases. For instance, during the Algerian War of Independence, democratic states also employed repression in counterinsurgency operations. As mentioned before, repression is considered a useful counterinsurgency strategy due to the

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fact that it undermines the capabilities of insurgents. Owing to the unique nature of insurgency, which demands the insurgents to rely on the support of civilians, it makes eliminating the supporters of insurgents crucial for the success of a counterinsurgency campaign. It is believed that using repression in counterinsurgency also deters civilians from supporting insurgents, since repression also increases the risks for civilians who attempt to help them (Olsen 1965; DeWitte, 2009; Schutte, 2017).

When it comes to achieving repressions with violent measures, two types of mass violence can be identified, namely selective violence and indiscriminate violence. Selective violence occurs when the targets are punished based on individual behaviors and attributes, and indiscriminate violence refers to violence which is used to punish targets on the basis of certain collective criterion, like identity or ethnicity (Zhukov, 2014). Classic counterinsurgency theories believe that selective violence is more effective than indiscriminate violence (Downes, 2007; Zhukov, 2012; Zhukov, 2014; Schutte, 2017; Eastin and Gade, 2018). To briefly explain the idea, this means that violence is effective when it is applied against individuals who have helped insurgents (Downes, 2007). Because punishing such individuals sends a signal to the population and warns them about the consequences of helping the opponents. As a result, civilians will not ignore the risk of supporting the rebels, and thus, selective violence helps counterinsurgents in reducing the insurgents' support base. Many works of literature have argued that indiscriminate violence is less efficient for a number of reasons. First of all, indiscriminate violence usually targets victims on the basis of ethnicity or geographic location, consequently, innocent individuals who have not provided support to insurgents, also fall under the subject of punishment (Downes, 2007). Secondly some scholars even argue that indiscriminate violence incites more insurgents (Eastin and Gade, 2018), this is a phenomenon termed 'insurgent math', which dictates that 'For every civilian killed, a number of new insurgents are generated' (Paul *et al.*, 2013; 6). Thus, the practice of indiscriminate violence often plays into 'insurgent math' and pushes civilians to the side of the opponents. Indeed, the logic behind this is simple: if individuals are targeted by the government based on factors they cannot change, why don't they just join the insurgents? In addition, using indiscriminate violence may give the population more motives (for example, revenge) to join or support the rebels. Hence, it is argued that the use of indiscriminate violence is always counterproductive. Indeed, the use of indiscriminate violence is harmful to counterinsurgents who aim to obtain legitimacy.

Despite its counterproductive nature, indiscriminate violence is still employed by some states in their counterinsurgency campaigns. This raises a question that if indiscriminate violence is less effective and creates new problems, then why is it still adopted by counterinsurgents in their operations? Some scholars have argued that the use of indiscriminate violence is not always irrational, and for those who

employ it, there must be one or multiple valid reasons for its use. It is assumed that indiscriminate violence is automatically produced as a result of the repeated interactions between state actors, insurgents, and the public, in a loophole that is difficult to break out of (Lyll, 2009). In this case, civilians are the victims of the escalation of conflict between the government and rebels. Following this assumption, it is indicated that indiscriminate violence is adopted by the government as a response to the increased insurgent attacks (Lyll, 2009). In addition, Zhukov (2014) has found that indiscriminate violence is more likely to be employed when the opponent is in a stronger coercive position. Beyond that, the results of other studies which have addressed the topic have suggested that lack of available intelligence regarding local conditions tends to lead to the employment of indiscriminate violence in counterinsurgency operations (Kalyvas, 2006; Humphreys and Weinstein, 2006; Downes, 2007; Zhukov, 2014). The lack of intelligence available to the state makes it difficult to distinguish insurgents and their supporters from the population, and it increases the cost of identifying the supporters. As a consequence, indiscriminate violence becomes the only way to eliminate enemies and their supporters. According to this line of thought, the level of violence is associated with the relative informational endowments of the counterinsurgents, and violence acts as a substitute for intelligence. This means that if counterinsurgents can punish their opponents selectively, then they can keep the use of violence at a relatively low level, whereas when the counterinsurgents have no or limited intelligence, counterinsurgents tend to employ violence indiscriminately at a broader scale (Zhukov, 2014). Another theory of why indiscriminate violence is preferred demonstrates that it is more likely to be used when the engaging parties are competing over resources and control in the same territory (Metelits, 2010). Moreover, in addition to the motivations that urge the government to use indiscriminate violence, it is suggested by that -at least under certain conditions- the practice of indiscriminate violence is actually capable of defeating insurgency (Stoll, 1993; Merom, 2003; Kalyvas, 2006; Lyll, 2009).

Thus, there has been a considerable amount of studies conducted on why state actors employ indiscriminate violence in counterinsurgency. However, questions regarding the particular circumstances behind the practice of violence to suppress insurgency are less well explored, meaning the mechanism behind the success of indiscriminate violence is rarely understood. Therefore, this dissertation aims to study the effectiveness of indiscriminate violence in counterinsurgency campaigns conducted by governments. It also aims to explain why the use of indiscriminate violence is effective in one particular case, rather than trying to figure out why the government attempted to use it. Being 'effective' in this context refers to the situation in which the government used indiscriminate violence within a counterinsurgency campaign that successfully defeated insurgents.

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The fallacy of defining 'effectiveness' in this manner is that the success of counterinsurgency may not be the direct result of using indiscriminate violence, since success is always dependant on a number of case-specific factors. Indeed, in many cases it is likely that indiscriminate violence has damaged the process of counterinsurgency and has slowed down the winning process. However, it is not possible to find hard evidence to prove that the counterinsurgent campaign will be more successful (in terms of shorter time duration) without the use of indiscriminate violence, because history has passed and changing one variable in a historical case may lead to the change of the outcome. Hence, despite the fallacy of the definition of 'effectiveness,' this dissertation considers the practice of indiscriminate violence effective when the counterinsurgency side wins. Since the definition of the term 'effectiveness' has been clarified, the research question of this dissertation is formulated as follows:

What are the reasons behind the effectiveness of the use of indiscriminate violence by counterinsurgents?

1.1 Case Study: The Sri Lankan Civil War

In order to answer this research question, this thesis will take the Sri Lankan Civil War as a case study. The case of the Sri Lankan Civil War will be analyzed in-depth since it is one where indiscriminate violence was used by the government as a tool to eliminate its opponents, and one that ended with the success of the counterinsurgents. This paper is focused solely on the Sri Lankan case in order to conduct a within-case analysis. The reason behind the decision to focus the study on solely one country is due to the fact that cross-national studies on such topics tends to ignore the particularities of each specific counterinsurgency campaign. Such ignorance often results in the failure of explaining why indiscriminate violence works in some cases whilst it fails in others (Lyall, 2009; Paul et al., 2013). Therefore, this thesis is predicated on the idea that an in-case analysis will provide better insights into the logic of indiscriminate violence.

The Sri Lankan case is chosen for the following reasons. Chiefly, the Sri Lankan Civil War is not an on-going counterinsurgency campaign without a conclusive ending. In 2009, the counterinsurgents won the war and successfully defeated the insurgency group. Therefore, it fits the first criteria of case selection: it has to be a case that ended with the victory of counterinsurgents. Secondly, it is evident that indiscriminate violence was practiced by the Sri Lankan government (UN Secretary General, 2011). To be precise, both parties practiced indiscriminate violence during the 26-year war. Hence, it fits the second criteria of case selection. Thirdly, the Sri Lankan Civil War has not been extensively studied by literature and the research on the Sri Lankan case either tends to explore why the government won the war or focuses on the military

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strategy of both parties, or alternatively the rebel's governance strategy. Not much literature has addressed the use of indiscriminate violence during this war.

Based on the ideas and theories presented so far, this dissertation is constructed in the following manner: it begins with a literature review on relevant research that has been conducted to identify conditions that enable the effectiveness of indiscriminate violence in counterinsurgency. In this section, three models of indiscriminate violence are discussed, namely the inflammatory model, the suppressive model, and the threshold model. After introducing these models, which explain the conditions under which indiscriminate violence is effective, the latter part of the section will propose a hypothesis that is intended to explain the mechanism behind each model. This is followed by a section which explains the research design and methodology in detail. Then, the use of indiscriminate violence by the Sri Lankan government during counterinsurgency operations will be studied and analyzed to see which model it fits into. The result of the case study will be further analyzed in a discussion section to find out why the use of indiscriminate violence is effective in the Sri Lankan context. Finally, this thesis will end with a conclusion that summarizes the specific circumstances under which the use of indiscriminate violence by governments is useful for counterinsurgency.

2. Literature Review

When it comes to discussing the effectiveness of indiscriminate violence, many studies have asserted that this type of violence is counterproductive, and even ineffective in most cases. Chiefly, this implies that by hurting more civilians in order to defeat insurgents, the government is creating more opponents and losing the support of a neutral population (Paul *et al.*, 2013; Eastin and Gade, 2018). Kalyvas (2006, 151) has criticized indiscriminate violence as “at best ineffective and at worst counterproductive.” But is this necessarily true? It is undeniable that indiscriminate violence disrupts the ability of insurgents to mobilize and organize their military activities, which is the primary goal of counterinsurgency (Trinquier, 1961). Hence, when it comes to the evaluation of indiscriminate violence, one should not ignore the contribution of indiscriminate violence to the destruction of the opponent's capabilities. Furthermore, Zhukov (2014) has suggested that the practice of indiscriminate violence indeed makes the population less likely to remain neutral. However, this does not automatically equal to the fact that these civilians will turn to support the insurgents. The reason here is that as long as the public believes that it is more risky to support the insurgents than supporting the government, the civilians will still support the government (at least in action), despite the government being responsible for their suffering (Zhukov, 2014). Each of these various

theories corresponds to one of three models that explain the pattern of indiscriminate violence (fig. 1), which are explained in the following sections.

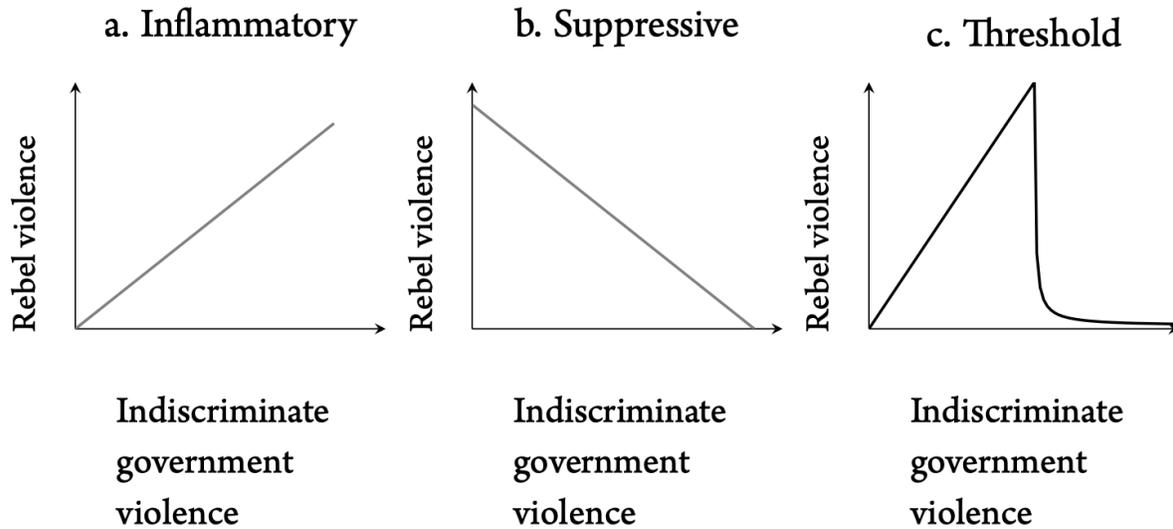


Figure 1: The three models illustrating the relation between indiscriminate government violence and rebel violence (Zhukov 2014, 6).

2.1 The inflammatory model

The theory that believes that indiscriminate violence is counterproductive is called the inflammatory model, which is the most dominant school of thought in the field of counterinsurgency and counterterrorism (Wells, 2015). The inflammatory model has demonstrated that rather than defeating insurgents, indiscriminate violence incites rebel violence by generating backlash against the combatants (Mason and Krane, 1989; Kalyvas, 1999). Scholars who support the inflammatory model have stated that the use of indiscriminate violence by the government in guerrilla warfare suffers from several side-effects. For instance, indiscriminate violence demands a massive amount of effort to eliminate opponents, and the practice of violence is often short of normative constraints (Danning, 2019). Besides, the biggest problem of indiscriminate violence is that counterinsurgents are supposed to make the cost of supporting the insurgents as high as possible, so that the population is less likely to cooperate with the opponents. However, if civilians are punished for things they cannot change (rather than behaviors that they can actually control),

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then why would they obey the will of counterinsurgents? If the security of the neutral civilian is not guaranteed, why won't they turn to the other side, which is relatively less harmful? Following such logic, when indiscriminate violence is used, it will always drive civilians to the opponents' side and create more insurgents in return, and consequently, it witnesses an increase of rebel violence.

The inflammatory model is supported by several case studies. A comparative analysis of Russian and Chechen counterinsurgency campaigns suggests that the Chechen operation was more successful than the Russian one because Chechen soldiers employed selective punishment more frequently in operation (Lyll, 2010). Studies focused on the Vietnam War have addressed the damage that resulted from the abuse of violence and highlighted the significance of using violence selectively (Pape, 1996; Horowitz and Reiter, 2001; DOD, 2007; Schutte, 2017). Kocher *et al.* (2011) observe that the raised level of control by the Viet Cong is associated with the frequency of strategic bombings. This is because bombing is perceived as a collective punishment by civilians, and such punishment incites resistance against attackers (Pape, 1996; Berman *et al.*, 2011; Condra and Shapiro, 2012).

Furthermore, indiscriminate violence is more likely to produce a negative emotional response to the counterinsurgents (Petersen, 2002). Indeed, indiscriminate violence tends to trigger a revenge attitude among civilians and urge them to join the rebel group (Kalyvas and Kocher, 2007). Besides, the lack of normative constraint of indiscriminate violence attracts external support from the international community, which gives the insurgents and supporters more bargaining power (Murdie and Bhasin, 2011). Last but not least, applying indiscriminate violence on a large scale usually raises the risk of conflict in the future (Fox, 2004).

2.2 The Suppressive Model

The suppressive model disagrees with the inflammatory model, and it argues that indiscriminate violence enables counterinsurgents to eliminate their opponents by restricting their capabilities. Instead of regarding indiscriminate violence as a way to limit the choices available to the population, the suppressive model has indicated that indiscriminate violence can be considered as an effort to prevent rebel mobilization and deny their access to material and human resources. Despite the suppressive model acknowledging the existence of some opposite effects following indiscriminate violence, the suppressive model believes in the strength of fear, and that the fear of indiscriminate violence will keep the population on the counterinsurgents' side (Zhukov, 2014). The suppressive model blames the low level of violence for the failure of indiscriminate violence (Zhukov, 2014) and it asserts that despite indiscriminate violence, it is

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still safer for civilians not to participate in the insurgent group (Tullock, 1971). Such a conclusion arrived in this manner: indiscriminate violence increases the absolute costs of remaining neutral and supporting the rebels. However, the relative risk of staying neutral is still lower than participation. Hence, if civilians aim to seek the maximum level of personal security between both options, then remaining neutral is still the better choice.

Beyond that, Tilly (1985; 1992) and Luttwak (2007) also offer a strong argument to back up the suppressive model, being that coercion is essential for state-building and as long as the coercive power remains, the population has to obey it. Thus, the side effects of indiscriminate violence barely matter as long as the government is strong and coercive enough to deliver its will. It is further argued that in such contexts, indiscriminate violence is a manifestation of the state's will, and it contributes to the extraction of resources by the government. Furthermore, scholars like Trinquier (1961) and Merom (2003) have questioned the importance of popular support in counterinsurgency and have concluded that only the destruction of the political and military organization of the opponents can be considered a victory. Therefore, democracies which do not employ indiscriminate violence suffer a disadvantage in counterinsurgency, since indiscriminate violence is a powerful tool in their operations (Stoll, 1993; Merom, 2004; Peters, 2007). Moreover, Lyall's (2009) study on the Chechen War has confirmed that the practice of indiscriminate violence at a massive scale causes logistical problems for the rebel group and hence, it undermines the capacity of insurgents by denying their access to resources and making mischief between rebels and civilians. Downes (2008) echoes this argument based on evidence from the Boer Wars, and he argues that civilian victimization is an effective interdiction strategy. In later research, Downes and Cochran (2012) further argue that indiscriminate violence prevents both sides from gaining logistical support or recruiting new participants in contested areas.

2.3 The Threshold Model

The threshold model is a relatively new model proposed by Zhukov (2014), who argues that the existence of a threshold makes it safer for the population to support counterinsurgents that use indiscriminate violence. Zhukov (2014, 19) has stated that the 'threshold occurs where one side out-produces the other in selective violence, convincing civilians that supporting the opponent is the costliest option available.' This can be achieved by either using high-quality intelligence to punish the enemies selectively, or by using military power as a substitute for poor intelligence. In the latter case, indiscriminate violence equips with a deterrent effect like selective violence with a higher cost (Zhukov, 2014). The

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threshold model considers indiscriminate violence as a response to the disadvantage of intelligence. Since selective violence is not working when the intelligence is in poor quality, in order to achieve a coercive effect, the counterinsurgents must escalate. If the combatants attempt to escalate quantitatively, they should use more coercive violence. When the informational disadvantage has made the cost of coercive violence too high, then the counterinsurgents shall choose qualitative escalation as an alternative, which means using violence as brute force to establish territorial control, interdicting support from the insurgents instead of trying to deter it (Zhukov, 2014). As Schelling (1966) has suggested that military action is an alternative to bargaining rather than the process of bargaining. In the threshold model, military action turns out to be the alternative of bargaining when the price of coercion is too expensive.

The threshold model is backed up by data from data sets collected from several case studies like the First Chechen War. After examining the data from more than 80 armed conflicts since 1979, Zhukov (2014) has confirmed the validity of the threshold model, and that firepower is a substitute of informational deficiencies. Zhukov (2014) has explained why in some cases indiscriminate violence succeeds and why it fails at other times. It is concluded that indiscriminate violence often fail as a coercive instrument, and it normally succeeds as brute force. Certainly, indiscriminate violence as coercion works in some situations, however, it requires a high level of intensity which is beyond the level of intensity that most counterinsurgents are willing and able to produce (Zhukov, 2014).

2.4 The Mechanism Behind The Models

2.4.1 The Suppressive Model

As explained above, the suppressive and threshold model have provided some explanations regarding the success of indiscriminate violence in counterinsurgency. The arguments given by the suppressive theory is rather straightforward. The suppressive theory has stated that indiscriminate violence works by eliminating the enemies and destroying their capabilities. Therefore, the motivation dimension of the insurgents and civilians is out of the government's concern. Additionally, in situations where insurgents also use indiscriminate violence, counterinsurgents' use of indiscriminate violence can still repress the violent activities conducted by the other side. As long as indiscriminate violence manages to defeat enemies, the victory is ensured. Hence, the suppressive model believes that the higher intensity of indiscriminate government violence, the lower the level of rebel violence becomes.

2.4.2 The Threshold Model

The threshold model expects that the relationship between rebel violence and indiscriminate violence is non-monotonic (Zhukov, 2014). It is assumed that at the lower level of intensity, indiscriminate violence has an inflammatory effect, which means that at a certain scale of intensity, the increase in the level of indiscriminate violence triggers the rise of rebel violence; however, when the level of indiscriminate violence reaches a high level of intensity, a suppressive effect occurs, which means after a certain point, the increase of indiscriminate violence leads to the decrease of rebel violence.

The mechanism behind the threshold model is more complicated. Zhukov (2014) has suggested that the biased interpretation of data may be one of the reasons which resulted in the positive correlation between indiscriminate violence and rebel violence in the first phase. When Zhukov (2014) studied the use of blockades in the North Caucasus between 2000-2012, he noticed that in areas where the blockades were set, the intensity of violence was relatively high. However, he argues that the association between blockades and rebel violence is not caused by indiscriminate violence, on the contrary, due to the high level of violence, the blockades are more likely to be introduced in the area as a tactical move (Zhukov, 2014). Besides the biased interpretation, another explanation of the existence of the threshold is that in the first phase of the threshold model, the indiscriminate violence triggers a pushback from the rebels, and as the result of interaction, the government raises the intensity of indiscriminate violence, which further leads to the increased rebel activities. However, unlike the inflammatory model, the use of indiscriminate violence by the counterinsurgents contributes to the deconstruction of the capabilities of the opponents. Therefore, when the intensity of indiscriminate government violence reaches a certain point, the rebels will not be to operate an efficient operation, even if the indiscriminate government violence has inspired more civilians to support the insurgents. Consequently, the level of rebel violence decreases.

Furthermore, Zhukov (2014) has also indicated that indiscriminate violence is a substitute for intelligence. In this context, indiscriminate violence works because it saves time and resources for the counterinsurgents when they are not capable of distinguishing civilians from opponents. It is argued that especially in combat situations, eliminating one's opponents is the priority of the counterinsurgents. If the counterinsurgents do not have enough information to practice violence selectively, indiscriminate violence automatically becomes the only option to allow them to operate efficiently. As a consequence, indiscriminate violence compensates the informational disadvantage caused by the lack of intelligence.

2.5 Hypothesis

First of all, since the research purpose is to study the effectiveness of indiscriminate government violence, the inflammatory model which undermines the credibility of indiscriminate violence is excluded from the following analysis. Only the suppressive model and the threshold model will be employed in the case study. Based on mechanisms mentioned above, several hypotheses are formulated:

H1: The higher the intensity of indiscriminate government violence, the lower the level of rebel violence becomes.

H2: In the first phase, the higher the intensity of indiscriminate government violence, the higher the level of rebel violence becomes. However, when the intensity of indiscriminate government violence reaches a certain point, the level of rebel violence diminishes.

H3: Indiscriminate government violence serves as a tool to repress insurgents by destroying their capabilities.

H4: Indiscriminate government violence functions as a substitute for the lack of intelligence.

Hypotheses H1 and H2 intend to assess which model is more suitable to describe the association between the use of indiscriminate violence and rebel activities during the Sri Lankan Civil War. The latter hypotheses aim to explore the logic of indiscriminate government violence in this context.

3. Research Design

This dissertation will employ a qualitative research method to conduct a within-case analysis on the Sri Lankan Civil War. In general, a case study is the most common method of analysis in the field of political science. In addition, the choice of the within-case analysis as the research methodology is related to the fact that every counterinsurgency campaign has its own context and circumstances. Furthermore, cross-nation research tends to overlook the unique situation of each campaign. The within-case analysis, on the other hand, allows a more comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the research subject. The within-case analysis provides insights into the unique pattern of the studied case and it allows the analysis of the researched topic from different levels (Paterson, 2010).

As stated in the introduction part, the research question of this dissertation is: What are the reasons behind the effectiveness of the use of indiscriminate violence by counterinsurgents? In order to answer the research question, the within-case analysis is divided into two phases. All the hypotheses will be tested for this case study. The first phase intends to assess whether the Sri Lankan Civil War fits into the pattern of the suppressive model or the threshold model. In this phase of study, the observational variable is the association between the intensity of indiscriminate government violence and the level of rebel violence. In the first phase, when the non-monotonic relations between rebel governance and indiscriminate violence is observed, it is expected that the threshold model is applicable in this case. If at the beginning of the case, a suppressive effect is observed, it is assumed that the suppressive model may be effective.

Since the case study is a historical one which ends up in the victory of the counterinsurgents, after determining which model is more applicable, the study will move to the second stage to test other hypotheses which are designed to explore why the use of indiscriminate violence by government is effective. The second phase of the analysis involves more qualitative work, which will focus on evaluating the role of indiscriminate violence in such operations.

3.1 General Limitations

As to the limitations of this research, it should be mentioned that it is a purely qualitative analysis, meaning there is not quantitative data set being studied. As a result, the conclusions presented here are likely to be less accurate than conclusions derived from a more quantitative approach.

3.2 The limitations Of The Models

The inflammatory, suppressive, and threshold model offer logical and convincing explanations of why indiscriminate violence fails or succeeds from different perspectives. All the models share some similarities. All the models are based on the same assumptions. They assume that in counterinsurgency campaigns, individuals are rational security seekers who have calculated the risks before they take actions. Rational individuals will always seek to maximize their personal security and choose the least risky options (between helping the combatants, remaining neutral, and supporting the insurgents). All three models acknowledge the incentives that civilians have to remain neutral once they are able to achieve their own security and safety. In addition, all of them believe in the power of selective incentives. The difference between the inflammatory model and the suppressive model is that the suppressive model believes that the opposite effects of indiscriminate violence can be overcome by combatants, whereas the inflammatory

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model does not (Zhukov, 2014). Furthermore, it is argued that another difference between the inflammatory and suppressive model is that the inflammatory model is rooted in the ‘hearts and minds’ theory, which asserts that counterinsurgency is about winning people and legitimacy, and that without motivation people will not support insurgents. The suppressive model asserts that, on the contrary, destroying capabilities is the key to success and the intensity level of indiscriminate violence helps in destroying the capability of the opponents.

In the suppressive model, indiscriminate violence is useful for interdiction rather than deterrence. Indiscriminate violence, in this case, works by destroying the capacities of the population rather than trying to change their mind; therefore, in this case, the motivation no longer matters. The threshold model shares similar logic in a different way. It shows that indiscriminate violence is not a tool that attempts to change the preference of the public, it functions as a tool to limit their choice (Zhukov, 2014). It is observed that in the threshold model, indiscriminate violence (as brutal force) has limited capabilities and mobilization opportunities at a large degree. It also makes up for the informational problem. Furthermore, it highlights that the reason why civilians do not turn against the government is that they perceive the move of helping the insurgents as more likely to harm their personal security. The last point is associated with motivation, but it largely limits the significance of the role of motivation in this case.

In fact, the basic assumption of these three models is rather problematic. The assumption that individuals are rational security seekers and remain neutral at the beginning is far from reality. It is highly possible for civilians to be hostile to the counterinsurgents at the beginning of the war, especially when it comes to inter-state wars and ethnic conflict. For instance, in the Sino-Japanese War, the invasion of Japan incited the resistance of nationalists at the very beginning. Thus, it is argued that when it comes to ethnic conflicts, the assumption of the neutrality of civilians is rather invalid. Besides, in reality, assuming every individual as a rational security seeker oversimplifies the problem. The public support of the rebel group is a rather complicated question, and seeking security is not the only reason for civilians to support or even join the insurgents. Civilians have several categories of motivations to support insurgents, namely, attractions, rewards, duty and honor (Davies *et al.*, 2012). Indiscriminate violence may be able to reduce the supporters of insurgents who are inspired by rewards through diminishing the attractions of social service (provided by the rebel group) and deny the insurgents access to resources (so that they have nothing to reward their supporters). However, such efforts do not influence supporters who are motivated by ideological or religious ideas. For supporters who believe that they have a duty to act against counterinsurgents, indiscriminate violence cannot change their motivation. Although one can always argue

that indiscriminate violence is effective in destroying the capability so that underlying motivations do not matter.

Lastly, these models do not mention the use of indiscriminate violence by the insurgents. None of the models explain what the consequence would be when the opponents are using indiscriminate violence as well. According to the inflammatory model, one can expect that the practice of indiscriminate violence by the insurgents may lead the civilians to the side that practices less violence. The suppressive model will tell a different story, arguing victory may favor the side which employs the higher intensity of indiscriminate violence. When both parties practice indiscriminate violence at the same time, the choice that the civilians will make is more unpredictable. In this situation, indiscriminate violence becomes a tool of competition between the combatants and the rebels, where a failure to manifest indiscriminate violence equals to the failure to destroy the opponents' capabilities.

4. The Sri Lankan Civil War

The Sri Lankan Civil War was a series of counterinsurgency campaign launched by the government of Sri Lanka (the GoSL), which aimed to defeat the insurgency group the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (the LTTE) or so called the Tamil Tigers.¹ It has been considered as one of the rare examples of counterinsurgency campaigns that end with the decisive victory of the state actor. In fact, the Sri Lankan Civil War is the first counterinsurgency victory in the 21st century (Hashim, 2013). The conflict between the government and the Tamil Tigers lasted for around 26 years, from July 1983 to May 2009. The war ended with the victory of the Sri Lankan government. On 19th May 2009, the commander of the Sri Lanka army (SLA), General Sarath Fonseka announced the death of Velupillai Prabhakaran, the leader of the LTTE (The Guardian, 2009). The death of Velupillai Prabhakaran hallmarked the collapse of the Tamil Tigers insurgency group and the end of the long-lasting armed conflict.

¹ The definition of the nature of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam may be a bit confused. The LTTE was defined as a terrorist group by the United States (FBI, 2008). Indeed, the LTTE has adopted a 'hybrid' tactics which include terrorist tactics. However, it is argued that the LTTE should be considered as an insurgency group because it is more organized and the influence it spread was much more magnificent than terrorist groups (Flynn, 2011; Hashim, 2013). Besides, the LTTE has established its own rebel government and managed to control a large proportion of territory (Mampilly, 2012). In terms of military perspective, the LTTE has followed the three stages of 'the People's War' and was capable of building its military strength to a near conventional level. Thus, despite it is called as a terrorist organization, the LTTE is in fact an insurgency group (Mao, 1967; Flynn, 2011; Beehner *et al.*, 2017).

4.1 Background

The Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, which was known as Ceylon until 1972, is an island country located in the Indian Ocean (Hashim, 2013). Sri Lanka is a country which hosts a religiously, ethnically and linguistically diverse population (Wickremesekera, 2016). The whole population size of Sri Lanka is approximately 22 million (Flynn, 2011). The demographically dominant group is the Sinhalese-Buddhist, which accounts for around 74% of the whole population. The minority group is the Tamil-Hindu, which constitutes less than 18% of the entire population (UN Secretary General, 2011; Mampilly, 2012). The Tamil-Hindu group mainly resides in the northern and eastern province of the state, but there are a significant amount of them living in the capital city Colombo as well (Hashim, 2013). Besides, a small proportion of Sinhalese people and Muslims also live in the minority Tamil gathering area (Vijayasin, 1999; Winslow and Woost, 2004).

It is commonly agreed that the armed conflict between the majority Sinhalese-Buddhist group and the minority Tamil-Hindu community is in fact an ethno-nationalist conflict (Fair, 2005; Flynn, 2011; Mampilly, 2012; Hashim, 2013; Bizouras, 2014). The root of the ethnic conflict can be traced back to the colonial ages. During the 19th and 20th century, the British colonial government manifested the antagonistic relations between the Sinhalese group and the Tamil population by carrying out its 'divide and conquer' policy (Brown and Ganguly, 2003; Fair, 2005; Flynn, 2011). The 'divide and conquer' policy of the colonial government means to grant privileges to the minority ethnic group and repress the majority population. Such policy has proven to be problematic by several examples like the Rwanda case (Mampilly, 2012).

Sri Lanka is no exception either. Ever since the independence of Sri Lanka in 1948, the Sinhalese elites managed to dominate the government by winning the needed votes from their own people. The elected government were composed of majority Sinhalese and these Sinhalese politicians asserted that Sri Lanka is the home of Buddhism and that the Sinhalese (instead of the Tamils) should have a privileged place. These political elites prioritized short-term gains over the long-term sustainable policy and built an exclusive state which is unfriendly to the Tamil people. For instance, after the 1956 elections, the national government attempted to make Sinhalese the official language of the state and announced a policy which forbade people who do not speak Sinhalese to get a position within the government (Wickremesekera, 2016). Besides, due to the 'divide and conquer' policy in the colonial age, the Sinhalese shared a common perception that Tamils had a relative advantage in education because of the privileges granted by the colonizers (Hashim, 2013). Hence, the Sinhalese population believed that such unfair advantage must be reversed. Consequently, the post-colonial age government had issued policies to interfere the university

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admission to 'erase the unfairness' (Hashim, 2013). Furthermore, the revision of the constitution in 1972, which confirmed the primacy of Buddhism in Sri Lanka has ulteriorly marginalized the social rights and dismissed the feelings of the Tamils (Hashim, 2013; Tikku, 2016). The series of inadequate and discriminatory policy has excluded the Tamil people, which has directly harmed the formation of a united national identity and further worsens the ethnic relationship between two groups (Hashim, 2013). The demand for a separate state by the Tamils also emerged after the launch of these policies. Moreover, these inadequate and discriminatory policies have also triggered the non-violent and violent political actions organized by Tamils. For example, the 1972 constitution has led to the establishment of the Tamil United Front (TUF), which evolved into the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) in 1976 (Hashim, 2013; Wickremesekera, 2016). The TUF (or TULF) aimed to form a militant group that belongs to the Tamils. Since the formation of the TUF, it has adopted terrorist tactics like assassination to attack civilian officials and in the later stage, the TUF became more extreme and it expanded the targets to older TUF officials who 'get in their way' (Flynn, 2011; Wickremesekera 2016, 23).

In the meantime, a substantial amount of Tamil militant groups such as the Tamil New Tigers, the Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization (which later became the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) and the People's Liberation Organization of Tamil Eelam mushroomed in the northern part of Sri Lanka (Hoffman, 2009). These militant groups consisted of Tamil youths and students seeking to achieve their political goals. They commonly adopted 'hit-and-run' tactics between the late 1970s and early 1980s (Mampilly, 2012; Hashim, 2013). However, these militant groups did not receive much support from the Tamils in the later 1970s and early 1980s (Brown and Ganguly, 2003; Cheran, 2009).

4.2 Eelam Wars (1983-2009)

4.2.1 Eelam War I (1983-1989)

The public support for the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) rocketed in 1983, after Velupillai Prabhakaran and his Tamil fighters ambushed the army patrol 'Four Four Bravo' (Lilja, 2009; Flynn, 2011). The ambush resulted in the death of 13 Sinhalese soldiers (Wickremesekera, 2016). Widespread anti-Tamil riots (known as 'Black July') broke out as a response to the ambush (Flynn 2011, 13). The anti-Tamil riots caused the death of hundreds of Tamils and the properties of Tamils were burned and looted during the riots (Flynn, 2011). These riots were highly organized and according to the sources, the police and army just stood by and in some cases, the officials even took part in the riots (Hashim, 2013; Wickremesekera, 2016). The anti-Tamil riots are hallmarked as the beginning of the Sri Lankan Civil War.

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To specify, the riots in the south hallmarked the Eelam War I. During the Eelam War I, the LTTE group (led by Velupillai Prabhakaran) won in their internal competition with the other Tamil militant groups and became the dominant organization (Flynn, 2011). Velupillai Prabhakaran claimed to be the sole representative of Tamils of Sri Lanka, and during the internal power struggle with other Tamil militant groups, he brutally killed a massive number of rivals just in order to consolidate his power (Flynn, 2011).

At the beginning phase of the Eelam War, neither the Sri Lankan government nor the LTTE were prepared to fight a war. At this stage, the LTTE was more like a terrorist group. It started with the use of subversion techniques to attack police stations and attack the police force. In addition, the LTTE robbed banks in order to raise funds. The LTTE gradually built its capabilities through subversion activities, before moving to ambush regular security forces and police patrols on a small scale (Hashim, 2013).

Furthermore, the LTTE also received support (in terms of funding and training) from the Indian government (De Silva, 1999). The prime minister Indira Gandhi decided to actively support Tamil insurgents in August 1983 for two reasons. The first reason was her personal hatred towards the president of Sri Lanka, Jayawerdene. In addition, Gandhi was facing the pressure from domestic Tamil communities in India (Hashim, 2013). The support from India largely contributed to the growth of the Tamil Tigers. By 1987, approximately 20,000 Tamil insurgents had received training, weapons, and funds from the Indians (Flynn, 2011; Destradi, 2012). The military training was conducted at Chakrata, which is the leading military academy.

While the insurgents were gradually building up their competences and capabilities, the situation on the government's side was not going smoothly. At this stage of war, the Sri Lankan government and its security forces were not prepared nor able to counter insurgents effectively (Hashim, 2013). The government was not consistent in its approach when it came to the Tamil insurgency (Hashim, 2013). In the early days of the war, the government was not treating the rebels seriously. The inconsistent and indecisive policy resulted in the absence of continuity of counterinsurgency operations.

The Sri Lankan army also had its own problems at the time. The Sri Lankan military was small in scale and not well equipped, and it also had some structural and organizational problems. At the beginning of the war, the Sri Lankan army was short of staff. As a result, they were not able to conduct a proper counterinsurgency operation, which is manpower intensive in nature. When the government figured out that they did not have enough personnel to secure the state, they expanded. However, the rapid expansion of their personnel in a short period caused new problems. The newly recruited soldiers needed training and

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the military demanded a more effective system to deliver command and coordinate within each unit. However, there were not enough officers to train the new recruits and the officers had no experience in running a large group of soldiers.

Furthermore, the Sri Lankan security forces in the north had an informational problem. The military mainly consisted of Sinhalese people, and since the beginning of the war, there were fewer military personnel from the Tamil community. The majority of Sinhalese soldiers were not able to speak Tamil nor had sufficient knowledge of the local Tamil populations (Wickremesekera, 2016). In the meantime, the local community regarded the Sri Lankan security forces as alien and many of them were not willing to share information with the army. As a result, the security forces found it extremely difficult to gather human intelligence.

Moreover, the practice of indiscriminate violence by the Sinhalese forces has increased the difficulty of obtaining information. At the very beginning of the war, the indiscriminate government violence was not targeting civilians. It took the form of brute force. For instance, search operations were carried out repeatedly in order to hunt militants and their supporters. In December 1984, a 42-hour curfew was placed in Jaffna, Kilinochchi and Mullatithivu, and hundreds of government soldiers searched house by house. Over 700 youths along with some weapons and documents were detained (Wickremesekera, 2016). In the sea, similar harsh measures were taken as well. In April 1984, a naval surveillance zone was established around Jaffna and within the surveillance zone, boats with outboard motors were banned. Later in the same year, a blockade zone in the sea was created as well. The blockade zone was extended 100 metres into the sea around Jaffna and no one was allowed to enter the area without the permission of police (Miller, 2015). Furthermore, in the north-eastern coast, all the fishing boats were banned by the government in November 1984 (Weisman, 1985).

However, such harsh measures did not stop the rebel violence. As the conflict escalated, the counterinsurgency started to target civilians. As Hashim (2013) has stated, the security forces frequently punished local population and made the local communities pay for the sins of the insurgents. Some Sinhalese soldiers burned the houses of civilians and in some cases, they 'shoot at anything that moves' (Claiborne, 1984; Clarence, 2007). According to the Saturday Review (1986), it is possible that around 7,000 civilians were killed by the counterinsurgents in the North and East during 1984 to 1987. The high civilian casualties of the Sri Lankan army and the highly inappropriate behaviour of the soldiers have proven that the security force was not disciplined enough and did not have sufficient knowledge to form a sound and effective counterinsurgency strategy.

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However, despite the problems faced by the security forces, the army managed to launch Operation Liberation in Jaffna. It was an offensive operation that began on the 26th of May 1987, where 8,000 troops participated in the operations (Hashim, 2013). Soon after the beginning of the operation, the government troops took control of the northern zone of the peninsula and a significant amount of weapons and insurgents were captured (Flynn, 2011). The Operation Liberation was going well, however, when it moved to the next stage, the Sri Lankan government had to call it off due to an external factor, which was India. After careful consideration, India reached the conclusion that the Eelam War did not fit their strategic interest (Hashim, 2013). Because while the violence in Sri Lanka might have endangered the Tamil Nadu in India, once the Tamils in Sri Lanka gained independence, Indian assistance might backfire in the sense that the Tamil Nadu in India might demand to a separate state as well.

As a consequence, after negotiations on the 29th of July 1987, the prime minister of, India Rajiv Gandhi, and the president Jayewardene signed the Indo-Sri Lanka Peace Accord, which required the Sri Lankan government to make some concessions to the Tamils, including acknowledgment of the official status of the Tamil language (Rajasingham-Senanayake, 2009; Wickremesekera, 2016). The Accord also required the Indian government to stop assisting the Tamil insurgents. Consequently, the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) marched to the north and took over the north part of the region. In the meantime, the signing of the agreement with India led to an uprising organized by the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) in the South part of Sri Lanka, which was brutally repressed between 1987 and 1989 (Wickremesekera, 2016). The IPKF demanded that militant groups disarm and give their weapons back. While many militant groups disarmed (despite its agreement) the LTTE refused to surrender and engaged in firefights with the IPKF (Gunaratna, 1994). The LTTE adopted guerrilla tactics in the fight, and the Indian forces were not familiar with such tactics (Hashim, 2013). As a result, around 1,000 Indian soldiers were killed by the LTTE. In 1989, prime minister Rajiv Gandhi was removed from power and the new government withdrew the IPKF in 1990 (Wickramasinghe, 2009). The first Eelam War had reached the end.

4.2.2 Eelam War II (1990-1994)

The second Eelam War started with a bloodily opening. The LTTE attacked 12 police stations in June 1990 and executed 600 surrendered policemen (Hashim, 2013). Both the Tamil Tigers and the government security forces engaged in brutal killings during the Eelam War II. The Tigers attacked Sinhalese and Muslim villages and massacred the local populations for no reason. Additionally, in October 1990, all the Muslims were expelled from the city of Jaffna and almost 30,000 Muslims lost all their properties. As a response, the Sri Lanka government trained Muslims, who later pursued revenges on Tamil

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civilians. Besides, a substantial amount of Tamil civilians in the eastern part of the country were massacred by paramilitary forces, and government security force also took part of such massacres.

Another character of the Eelam War II is a series of high-profile assassinations. In 1991, the defence minister of Sri Lanka, Ranjan Wijeratne, and the prime minister of India, Rajiv Gandhi, were assassinated by members of the LTTE. Two years later, in 1993, the president of Sri Lanka, Premadasa, was also killed during a suicide attack. Lower level government officials also faced similar situations. The LTTE attempted to kill government officials in order to disrupt the function of the state. Along with the employment of terrorist tactics, the Tamil Tigers also started to build up their military capabilities during the Eelam War II. In 1991, 5,000 LTTE soldiers attacked and surrounded the army's Elephant Pass base (EPS). Over 2,000 soldiers from both sides died during the operation (Rajvijayasiri, 1999). By the end of 1993, the government was exhausted by the war. When the newly elected president Chandrika Kumaratunga came in power in 1994, she gave an order to cease fire with the insurgents and began to negotiate with LTTE leaders. The negotiations then ended the Eelam War II.

4.2.3 Eelam War III (1995-2000)

Despite president Kumaratunga's willingness to form a deal with the LTTE, the negotiation failed in 1995. The leader of the LTTE was aiming to establish a state for Tamils and the government of Sri Lanka would not give up its territory. Since both parties could not agree with each other, the negotiation went to a dead end. The Eelam War III began when the insurgents used explosives to sink a naval craft in April 1995. Later in the year, the government launched 'Operation Riviresa', which recovered Jaffna city from the LTTE's occupation. Other than losing its 'capital' Jaffna, the LTTE suffered from the loss of manpower as well. It was estimated that around 2,500 soldiers and rebels died and 7,000 were wounded during the Operation Riviresa (Rajvijayasiri, 1999). The LTTE had to flee to the Wanni jungle and approximately 350,000 civilians were forced to flee with them. As a revenge for losing Jaffna, the LTTE bombed the Central Bank in Colombo, which took life of 80 people, and where more than 1,300 were wounded. In addition to terrorist attacks, the LTTE attempted to strike back in the battlefield as well. In July 1996, the LTTE launched 'Operation Unceasing Waves I', which managed to take control over the entire Mullaitivu district. The fall of Mullaitivu revealed that the security force of Sri Lanka is still lacking in manpower in terms of quantity and quality. The success of 'Operation Riviresa' was the limit of the army, which led them to gather their troops, thereby exposing other defence infrastructure in the Eastern Province to the threat of the LTTE.

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The following phases of 'Operation Riviresa' were successful because the LTTE forces were gathered in either the Eastern Province or the Wannai jungle, so that the army barely faced any resistance. The conventional style of fighting resulted in high numbers of casualties from both sides. Besides, when combined with the fight on the northern front, terrorist tactics were employed by the LTTE in the south to weaken the credibility of the government. The suicide bombings carried out by the LTTE caused the death of hundreds. In 1998, the Tamil Tigers seized Kilinochchi from the security forces. Then, the LTTE marched towards the EOS base in the north. After a series of short and swift engagements, the Tamil insurgents launched another offensive operation campaign. Later in December, the LTTE attempted to assassinate president Kumaratunga, who was seriously injured during a suicide bombing attack. By the end of Eelam War III, the insurgents managed to capture EPS, which was considered as a strategic position by the LTTE.

Both sides suffered heavy casualties during the third Eelam War. After a few rounds of negotiation, the LTTE and the government agreed to a ceasefire in 2002, which signalled the end of the Eelam War III. In the Eelam War III, both sides practiced indiscriminate violence over civilians. The LTTE massacred Sinhalese people in Kallarawa, which resulted in the death of 42 people. Besides, in Gonagala, LTTE insurgents took part in a massacre which caused the death of more than 50 people.

After the agreement to a ceasefire, several clashes broke out between 2003 to 2005. In 2004, the LTTE suffered from an internal power struggle. Colonel Karuna Amman separated from the Tigers and took around 6,000 soldiers with him (Flynn, 2011). In 2005, Mahinda Rajapaksa won the election and became the new president of Sri Lanka. President Rajapaksa had a firm position toward the Tamil insurgency and he aimed to defeat the LTTE. The Rajapaksa administration believed that the LTTE was using negotiation as a tool to consolidate its power and as a form of political warfare to achieve its goal (Landkroon, 2011). The Rajapaksa administration was worried that the LTTE's administration would help the insurgents to obtain legitimacy. The LTTE side was also trying to disseminate its own propaganda and undermine the image of the Sri Lankan government in front of the international community. In early 2006, the LTTE re-started the use of assassination and bombings as methods to eliminate government officials and security forces (Hashim, 2013).

4.2.4 Eelam War IV (2006-2009)

The last Eelam War began in 2006 after the failure of peace talks in Geneva. The Eelam War IV was characterized as the most violent one among all the Eelam Wars. The closure of the sluice gates of the

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Mavil Aru dam marked the beginning of Eelam War IV. The government argued that the closed gate could threaten the water supply of people in government-controlled areas in the Eastern Province. Next, the army launched 'Operation Watershed' to reopen the gates. As a response to 'Operation Watershed', the Tamil Tigers attacked the Trinco harbour and seized part of Muttur and began the ethnic cleansing on the local Muslims. The government launched operations to recapture Muttur and to seize areas within Sampur in return. The government security forces succeeded in recapturing Sampur has pushed the rebels away from the port in Sampur, while also raising the morale of the forces. Since the beginning of the war, the Tamil Tigers suffered defeat in the Eastern Province and the leader of the insurgents decided to concentrate the fight in the northern part of the country because the Northern Province was the centre of the LTTE. However, the LTTE's plan failed quickly and it was defeated overwhelmingly by the counterinsurgents in 2009. During the Eelam War IV, it was clear that the security forces of Sri Lanka had evolved into a sound and capable body. Unlike its performance in the previous wars, the Sri Lankan military demonstrated its military effectiveness in the fourth Eelam War. Since the outbreak of the war in the 1980s, the military had always faced the problem of shortages when it came to effective and sufficient personnel (Hashim, 2013). This situation changed in the Eelam War IV, since the size of the Sri Lankan military expanded rapidly. The expansion of the army comes with the huge increase of budget as well. In 2008, the defence expenditure increased to \$ 1.74 billion (Mehta, 2010) The number of armed forces increased from 125,000 people to approximately 450,000 between 2005 to 2009. Besides, this time the military did not have the problem of lacking capacity to train the new recruits. The modernization of the Sri Lankan army has greatly improved its capacity and its communication system; hence, the military was not overwhelmed by training new soldiers.

Furthermore, the Sri Lankan army demonstrated its military capabilities in combat. After solving the shortage of manpower, the army obtained the capabilities to fight insurgents effectively in different parts of the country at the same time. In the Eelam War III, the Sri Lankan military was not able to fight the insurgents in the Eastern and Northern province at the same time. However, in the Eelam War IV, the army had fought with the LTTE in the battle for Vagokarai, the battle of Thoppigala, and the battle in the Northern Province (including the Wannu jungle). The Sri Lankan military was able to fight the insurgents in conventional battle. Moreover, the naval army and air force of the Sri Lankan government contributed to the success of the counterinsurgency tremendously. Especially the Sri Lankan Navy (SLN), since it has been argued that the government would not have won the war without the SLN (Flynn, 2011). In the Eelam War IV, the leader of LTTE made a strategic mistake by taking the war to the sea (Hashim, 2013). As a result, The United States and India were able to share satellite images (which contained intelligence

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regarding Sea Tiger activities) with the Sri Lankan Naval (Wijewardana, 2010). Thus, the disadvantage of intelligence contributed to the failure of the Sea Tigers (Flynn, 2011).

To conclude, it can be said that the success of the counterinsurgency campaign is credited to the enhanced military effectiveness of the Sri Lankan military. The military effectiveness is an on-going process which illustrates the way in which the state converts its resources into fighting power (Hashim, 2013). Three dimensions have been involved in this process, which are the means, ends, and ways of fighting a war. The Eelam war IV was the first time that the government was determined to defeat the LTTE. This determined political will supported the counterinsurgents to face the international pressure when the government was blamed for high casualty rates. Besides, the boosted size of armed forces and the effective training system set the foundation for the victory of the counterinsurgents.

4.3 Discussion

Indiscriminate government violence took diverse forms in the Sri Lankan Civil War. The use of indiscriminate violence in the Sri Lankan case includes destroying the properties of civilians, massacres, rape, air bombings, resettlement, blockades (in the sea), denying civilian's access to food, water and medical care, isolation, and killing (Clarance, 2007; UN Secretary General, 2011; Flynn, 2011; Hashim, 2013; Wickremesekera, 2016; Jayawardena *et al.*, 2016; Beehner *et al.*, 2017). The intensity of using indiscriminate violence by counterinsurgents was extremely high in the fourth Eelam War (UN Secretary General, 2011; Flynn, 2011; Jayawardena *et al.*, 2016). Sri Lanka is even accused of conducting war crimes by some NGOs (Human Rights Watch, 2009; UN Secretary General, 2011).

Judging by the association between indiscriminate government violence and rebel violence, it can be argued that the Sri Lankan case basically fits into the pattern of the threshold model. As explained before, indiscriminate violence was practiced since the beginning of the Eelam War I by both sides. During the Eelam War I, the security forces took out their frustrations on the local community (Hashim, 2013). The security forces were destroying the property of Tamils and soon, the violence evolved into targeting civilians. Besides, indiscriminate government violence in the forms of blockades, resettlement, and air bombings was practiced by the Sri Lankan military since the Eelam War I. Such practices were not uncommon from the first to third Eelam Wars. However, the practices of indiscriminate violence had not managed to suppress the LTTE successfully between Eelam I and Eelam III. On the contrary, the practice of indiscriminate violence only managed to result in increasing the support for the Tamil movement among the population (Hashim, 2013). It is observed that sometimes, after repressive actions, the LTTE often

sought revenge by conducting terrorist attacks in non-combat zones (Flynn, 2011; Wickremesekera, 2016). Therefore, it is indicated that the first hypothesis, which assumes that the higher intensity of indiscriminate government violence, the lower the level of rebel violence becomes, is not presented in the Sri Lankan case. Since the first hypothesis is not confirmed by the case study, then the use of indiscriminate government violence in the Sri Lankan Civil War definitely does not fit into the suppressive model.

The second hypothesis of the study is that at first the correlation between indiscriminate government violence and the level of rebel violence is positive. In addition, when the intensity of indiscriminate violence reaches a certain level, the level of rebel violence starts to drop. It can be argued that the Sri Lankan case demonstrates such a tendency. The indiscriminate government violence has been used throughout the entire war, and yet it is associated with the increasing violent rebel activities during the three Eelam Wars². In the last stage of the Eelam War, when the use of indiscriminate violence had reached a new level, the counterinsurgents managed to defeat the LTTE and eliminate the entire group. Now that it has been determined that the threshold model is more appropriate to describe the Sri Lankan case, it is appropriate to move to the stages that explain whether hypotheses 3 and 4 are observed in the Sri Lankan case.

The third hypothesis argues that indiscriminate government violence serves as a tool to repress insurgents by destroying their capabilities. Such phenomena are observed in some situations of the Sri Lankan war, but not all of them. Not all indiscriminate violence is used as a tool to defeat opponents. Indeed, in the later stages of Eelam War IV, the use of indiscriminate violence was unavoidable. For instance, the LTTE insurgents always took civilians with them when they fled and used civilians as human shields (UN Secretary General, 2011; Beehner *et al.*, 2017). Under such circumstances, the use of indiscriminate violence is unavoidable, and using indiscriminate violence as a tool is justifiable. Otherwise, the army will let the LTTE get away, thereby failing to defeat its enemies.

However, in other cases, indiscriminate violence is not used as a tool to destroy opponents. For instance, as mentioned before, in the Eelam War I, the security force indiscriminately punishes civilians to release their frustration (Hashim, 2013). In addition, during the second Eelam War, the security forces took part in the massacre against the Tamils. Additionally, in the fourth Eelam War, the military launched a large-scale bombing that targeted a 'no fire zone' and hospitals. It is argued that the practice of

² The Eelam War IV is characterized with extreme high civilian casualty and the scale of using indiscriminate violence expands when the intensity of the conflict escalates.

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indiscriminate violence in such ways contributes little to undermining the capabilities of the opponents. Furthermore, the use of indiscriminate violence in such cases is probably driven by other motives.

The last hypothesis of this dissertation is that indiscriminate government violence functions as a substitute for the lack of intelligence. It is observed in the case study that when the counterinsurgents have no information on local conditions, indiscriminate violence is practiced (Hashim, 2013). However, in this context, indiscriminate violence serves as a channel of revenge rather than the substitute to the informational problem. In the cases of blockades, isolating communities and killing civilians which are used as human shields can be considered as using indiscriminate violence to make up for the fact that counterinsurgents are not able to conduct violence selectively. As harsh as it seems, the cost of imposing selective violence in these cases is too expensive. Alternatively, applying indiscriminate violence seems like a useful strategy from the government's point of view

Besides the hypotheses, it is argued that the case study further confirms that at least in the Sri Lankan case, the positive association between indiscriminate government violence and rebel violence fits the description presented in the first phase of threshold model, since the indiscriminate violence is the product of interaction between both sides. This is especially true during the early phases of the war, when the violent activities conducted by one party tended to trigger violent attacks from the other side in return. Then, when the level of indiscriminate violence increased during the Eelam War IV, the rebel violence decreased dramatically. However, it can be argued that in the case of Sri Lanka, the decreased level of rebel violence is the result of a combination of different reasons. To begin with, the decreased level of rebel violence should be attributed to the fact that the army manages to defeat the insurgents in the conventional battle, which also destroyed the operational capabilities of the LTTE. The military capabilities of the Lankan army were built as a result of over two decades of counterinsurgency experience and military effectiveness. The military effectiveness is an ongoing process which involves means, ends and ways rather than an end product.

To briefly summarize, it can be suggested that the success of the counterinsurgency campaigns relied on the military capabilities of the Sri Lankan military, and that the Sri Lankan counterinsurgency campaign adopted an enemy-centric approach. Since the beginning until the end of the war, the military consistently regarded the LTTE as its target, and the government barely tried to pursue the 'hearts and minds' approach to win some form of legitimacy from the Tamils. Considering the ethnic tension between the support base of both the government and the LTTE, it is not hard to understand why the 'hearts and minds' approach is not favored. The counterinsurgents' path of victory is built by the deconstruction of the

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opponents and the destruction of the capabilities of the opponents. The counterinsurgents won the war because it fundamentally destroyed the rebel's abilities to organize a war effectively. The factor of the public support is overlooked in the process. Arguably, the reason no backfire (caused by the manifestation of indiscriminate violence) occurred in the counterinsurgency campaign is that in this particular case, the organizational power of the LTTE was completely wiped out by the counterinsurgents. Thus, even if some civilians were aiming to seek revenge from counterinsurgents, they would not have been able to gain access to the necessary resources, nor would they have been able to form an effective fighting unit in such a short period of time.

The victory of the counterinsurgency did not equal an end to ethnic conflict. The Sinhalese-dominated government won the war, but this does not mean that their relationship with the Tamils has improved. In fact, after the success of the counterinsurgency operation, the Tamils are facing ethnic violence imposed by the government. It is possible that the imposed discrimination and violence on Tamils will deepen their beliefs that they need to build a country of their own and it may trigger a more intense conflict in the future. Thus, it can be suggested that the Sri Lankan counterinsurgency campaign has partially confirmed the effectiveness of using indiscriminate violence in counterinsurgency campaigns. In other words, indiscriminate violence works either by functioning as a tool to repress the capabilities of the opponents or as a substitute to the intelligence problem when the price of conducting selective violence is too high. Furthermore, one can maintain that at least in the Sri Lankan case, in the first phase of the threshold, indiscriminate violence simply occurred as a result of the violent interaction between the counterinsurgents and the rebels.

Therefore, it can be concluded that although the Sri Lankan Civil War is an interesting example of modern counterinsurgency, it is an experience that may not be universally applicable. This is especially true for the counterinsurgents in Afghanistan and Iraq. It is argued that the Sri Lankan counterinsurgency succeeded because it had no other alternatives. It is either losing the war and allowing the Tamils to build their own state or winning it and keeping Sri Lankan territory unseparated. Not every counterinsurgency campaign has the same political goals, therefore, it is argued that when determining the strategy of counterinsurgency, it is essential to consider which approach is suitable to achieve one's political goals. Besides, even if the use of indiscriminate violence may contribute to the success of counterinsurgency, one should always carefully consider it before applying such indiscriminate measures at a substantial scale.

5. Conclusion

This dissertation aimed at exploring the reasons behind the effectiveness of the use of indiscriminate government violence in counterinsurgency. In order to answer the research question, the Sri Lankan Civil War is chosen as a case study. The within-case analysis on the Sri Lankan case has revealed that the association between practicing indiscriminate violence and the level of rebel violence fits into the pattern described by the threshold model, which has indicated that the relationship between the intensity of indiscriminate violence and rebel violence is non-monotonic.

This study further analyzed why using indiscriminate violence works in the Sri Lankan case. The case study has shown that even within one case, the use of indiscriminate violence has different motivations and indiscriminate violence functions in different ways. For instance, in the beginning of the Civil War, indiscriminate violence was mainly used as a way to release frustrations by counterinsurgency personnel, since it was used as a revenge channel in some cases, or as a result of the escalated conflict between the counterinsurgents and rebels. However, in the late stages, the use of indiscriminate violence represented an effort to diminish the capabilities of the rebels and was sometimes used as a substitute for informational/intelligence problems. Besides, the success of the counterinsurgency operation is more so related in its credibility to the military effectiveness of the army rather than to the use of indiscriminate violence.

This dissertation argues that the use of indiscriminate violence did not endanger the victory of the war because the counterinsurgents eliminated the organization of the LTTE. Therefore, even if some Tamil civilians were motivated to support the insurgents, their access to the resources was denied and they were not able to form an effective fighting unit within such a time-consuming period.

Furthermore, this thesis has argued that despite its interesting nature, the experience of Sri Lanka may not be applicable in other counterinsurgency operations such as the ones in Iraq and Afghanistan. This is due to the fact that each counterinsurgency campaign has different political goals, and adopting strategies without considering whether they fit a particular country's goal may lead to the adaptation of inappropriate strategies which cause further problems, which in turn serve to postpone the progress of the entire counterinsurgency effort. Moreover, despite its usefulness, this dissertation calls for a careful evaluation of the necessity of indiscriminate violence before employing it.

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For future studies, it is recommended to conduct a comparative analysis on multiple instances of successful counterinsurgency campaigns which employed indiscriminate violence during the process. The advantage of conducting a comparative analysis is that it would allow the researcher to see whether any similarities or differences exist. A comparative study would also enable one to discern whether the conclusions reached in this paper can be applied to other cases as well, or whether they are indeed exclusively related to this particular case study.

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