

ROLE OF PERCEPTIONS IN FOREIGN POLICY MAKING :
A CASE STUDY OF INDO-SRI LANKAN RELATIONS
1971-85

ROLE OF PERCEPTIONS IN FOREIGN POLICY MAKING:
A CASE STUDY OF INDO-SRI LANKAN RELATIONS,
1971-85

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PREFACE

Inter-state behaviour is a mirror of inter-personal behaviour. As in inter-personal relations, so also in inter-state relations, perceptions and misperceptions underlie the roles, attitudes and behaviour patterns of one state actor towards another.

The problem gets further accentuated in international relations because here the extent of personal contact which is possible at the level of individuals is considerably restricted. At the same time, the number of sub-actors increase manifold as do their interests, experiences and concerns.

In the formation of perceptions and the 'images' derived therefrom, there are as many tangible elements as there are intangibles; together the total number is staggering. The task of putting these together is not simple. Yet, the exercise needs to be undertaken. Indeed, it is no gainsaying that the study of perceptions in foreign policy is of crucial significance.

Unlike most other regional, sub-systems, South Asia is a region in which one country is overwhelmingly dominant and constitutes the core of the region. This immutable fact of geography when combined with the region's historical evolution, has created a perceptual divergence among its seven countries and generated mistrust all around.

However, while much is made of the conflict within the region, it is equally a fact that South Asia is a region singularly free of any real clash of essential national interests. What prevents these countries which share the burden of the same colonial legacies and strive for the same ends, viz. development and eradication of age-old poverty, from joining hands to exploit, to their mutual advantage, the developmental potential of the resources of the region? The answer is rooted in the misperceptions that plague the various State actors.

The high costs of misperception is most evident in Indo-Sri Lankan relations. Being the only two functional democracies in the region, India and Sri Lanka have a strategic, systemic and interest identity. They have enjoyed more cordial relations than any other two South Asian countries. Yet, underlying their cordiality is lurking mistrust on both sides: India suspecting Sri Lanka's extra-regional linkages as being detrimental to what it perceives as its security environ and Sri Lanka fearing Indian intervention in what it perceives as its internal matters.

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INTRODUCTION

"If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences".¹ In other words, an individual responds not only to the 'objective' characteristics of a situation but also to the meaning that situation has for him. The person's subsequent behaviour and the results of that behaviour are determined by the meaning ascribed to the situation. What is true of individual psychology is equally true of a state's psychology for that is but a composite of the psychology of the individuals who comprise it. The hiatus between perception and reality, which has been the principal concern of many a philosophers and scholars since the times of Plato, is to be found in International Relations as much as in the other realms of life.

The ability of a country to comprehend the reality of any situation is conditioned and constrained by the interfacing of several multiples such as the social environment, the policy-maker's personality, experiences and psyche, the history of the nation, domestic politics and so on. The perception of reality substitutes reality in the minds of peoples and nations and determines their external responses.

Indeed, the role of perceptions cannot be undermined.

1 Ole Holsti, "Cognitive Dynamics and Images of the Enemy", in John C. Farrell and Asa P. Smith, eds. Image and Reality in World Politics (New York, 1967) p.16.

Any student of history, reflecting on the causes of war, cannot fail to be struck by the role of distorted images and misperceptions in compounding the objective conflicts of interest. In most cases, the unreality has its foundation in the caricatured images of each other that are held by both countries. South Asia, too, is a prisoner of the perceptions of the various countries of the region.

South Asia is a unique region of heterogeneous homogeneity. Most of its states being artificially delineated - South Asia comprising of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan and the Maldives, retains an essentially unified character, arising from a shared historical, cultural and linguistic heritage and belonging, in a sense, to the same "civilizational area". Not unnaturally, such linkages have unleashed both "pull" and "push" forces in the region. The "ethnic commonality", more than any other single factor, binds it together into an 'entity' just as the asymmetrical power structure, more than any other single factor, results in the efferent attitudinal behaviour of the state actors. India's centrality to both is indisputable. Indeed, if South Asia be a unique region, India occupies a unique position in that region. Taking up 72% of the region's area, constituting 77% of its population and 78% of its GNP, India is perceived to be an ominous giant in the region by the six smaller countries. It touches borders with three

out of the seven countries in South Asia and for all practical purposes, touches two more whereas no two other members touch each other. As is only to be expected, it is perceived to be the chief threat to them and figures as the central point in their defence calculations.²

That the ethnic element is the most impending stress factor in the multiethnic countries of the region is a fact that nobody can deny. Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Nepal all face the problem in varying degrees of intensity. The transnational character of ethnic groups leaves every country vulnerable to the possibility of intervention in what it perceives to be its "internal matters" by another country in the region. If today, India alleges Pakistani support to Khalistan, Pakistan asserts that India is siding actively with the Pakistan Peoples' Party. Traditional fears and suspicions arising from the disparate sizes and capabilities further compound the problem. Ironically, it is not just the smaller countries of the region that are trapped in this fear psychosis. India, too, has an inherent fear of its smaller neighbours "ganging up" against it to undermine its position in the region.

2 Pierre Trudeau said in the context of the US-Canadian equation, "To live with a big neighbour is like sleeping with an elephant".

Indo-Sri Lankan relations, the case study of this paper, intertwines both problems intricately viz. the ethnic and the perceptual. While the task of meeting the challenges posed by transnational ethnic groups necessitates closer inter-state cooperation, the perceptual factor comes in the way and drives the wedge deeper in. What makes the case of Indo-Sri Lankan relations more interesting is the fact that for more than two decades, these two countries have enjoyed very cordial relations, more so than any other two South Asian countries. Yet, with the Tamil problem gaining momentum, the confidence built over this time - span has not proved strong enough to prevent the traditional small-country - big neighbour fears from resurging.

It would be expedient to discuss at the outset itself, the scope of the subject chosen for this research paper and the limitations inherent in it. It needs to be stressed that the central subject of research being 'Perceptions', this study delves into the other aspects of decision-making only where they are relevant. The emphasis in the case-study is not on Indo-Srilankan relations per se but on the changing nature of their perceptions of each other.

The foremost limitation of the subject is the fact that there is no easy way to determine the accuracy of perceptions. It is hard to know what a person's, more so, a State's/ people's perceptions were/are and even harder to know whether they were/are correct. Also, it is artificial, in a sense,

to speak of the 'perception' of any country for within each one of these 'actors', there are elites with differences of opinion regarding the national interest, the optimal course of strategy and other issues. As far as the case study of changing Indo-Sri Lankan perceptions go, the subject matter is of too recent an origin. Its recent history is itself a constraint in its research.

This dissertation is limited to studying Indo-Sri-Lankan relations for the time-period of 1971 to 1985. These years have been chosen for a specific reason. The starting-point of this time-span, i.e. 1971, can be taken to be the zenith of Indo-Sri Lankan relations while 1985 marks the nadir. Faced with the Jatika Vimukti Peramuna insurgency in April 1971, the United Front government led by the Sri Lanka Freedom Party's Mrs. Bandarnaike sought external assistance in suppressing the uprising. India was one of the first countries that she turned to and which gave substantial support. In direct contrast, in confronting the Tamil Eelam problem, the United National Party government under J.R. Jayawardene has appealed to the U.K., Israel and Pakistan for help. India has been conspicuously left out. This is so essentially because, in Sri Lankan eyes, India has since assumed the mantle of a potential aggressor.³ We have

3 The Hindu (Madras), 1 June 1984. Quotes Ranasinghe Premadasa, the Sri Lankan Prime Minister "India should not play hide and seek with us. India should invade us openly and we are prepared to lay down our lives to defend our country".

travelled a long way since 1971.

In collecting the data for this dissertation, I have used the following methods:

- (i) Collection of information published in Indian (New Delhi and Madras) and Srilankan newspapers and other journals.
- (ii) Study of relevant literature (books are listed in the bibliography).
- (iii) Study of selected documents issued by the governments of Srilanka, India and by international organizations like the Human Rights Commission. (These documents are also listed in the bibliography).

The data-collection exercise was made more difficult by my inability to undertake a field trip to Srilanka and Madras. This made newspapers the basic primary data used. Even here, the availability of Sri Lankan papers was limited and only English language newspapers could be used. The importance of newspapers as a source itself becomes difficult to ascertain because while the newspaper circulation is high in Srilanka because of its unusually high literacy rate, the papers are largely government controlled or sponsored and therefore given to limited reporting. Also, as most Tamil papers have been banned, Sri Lankan newspapers for the most part reflect the Sinhalese viewpoint. Above all, there is the danger of

mistaking mere rhetoric for actual motives because very often in speeches, idealistic disguises are used for less lofty goals.

Having decided upon the theme and the scope of this study and having collected the relevant available data, the following methods for processing them have been used:

(i) Perceptual Analysis: This is the basal methodology used and it consists of stepping into each nation's shoes to look at the world from its own point of view rather than taking a detached look at each nation's views critically, of suspending judgement temporarily to better appreciate the perception of the "other" and to give considerable attention to the internal political features and to problems of the various actors which shape their external behaviour.

(ii) Historical Evaluation of decisions and events.

(iii) Content analysis and interpretation.

The three methods have been used simultaneously, moving from one to the other as the need arises. Such an approach answers to a great extent, the criticisms levelled against an outright content-analysis exercise. It is not necessary to condemn content-analysis totally for while it is true that it is skeletal and does not take into account all the variables relating to international behaviour, it is useful to the extent that such an analysis of facts reveals behaviour

patterns, independent of the personal preferences of the researcher.

The structural organization of the dissertation tries to interlace the theory of International Perceptions with the case-study of Indo-Sri Lanka⁴ relations. Such a method tends to view the behaviour of each actor, in this instance, India and Sri Lanka, in the sympathetic light of its own values and experiences. Ultimately, each actor is victim of its misperceptions and it becomes immaterial to sit in judgement of it. It is true that this may lead to moral ambiguities but then it is equally true that ambiguity is inherent in International Relations.

4 Ceylon's official name was changed to Sri Lanka on 22 May 1972. In this dissertation, 'Ceylon' and 'Sri Lanka' have been used interchangeably.

PART - I

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Chapter - 1

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR STUDYING THE ROLE OF PERCEPTIONS IN FOREIGN-POLICY MAKING.

Appearances to the mind are of four kinds. Things either are what they appear to be; or they neither are, nor appear to be; or they are and do not appear to be; or they are not and yet appear to be. Rightly to aim in all these is the wise man's task.

Epictetus, 'Discourses'¹

The lacuna between 'Reality' and 'Perception' has engaged the attention of philosophers and scholars since the times of Plato. His famous statement regarding the horse which is not a horse but the image of a horse, enunciates this basic principle, drawing as it does a fine distinction between 'what is' and 'what appears to be' and being premised on the fundamental assumption that the human mind's ability to comprehend objective Reality is constrained. Unfortunately, however, later students of international relations paid little attention to this postulate, preferring to assume that decision-makers usually perceive the world quite accurately and that those misperceptions that do occur can only be treated as random accidents. Such a naive approach left several basal questions unanswered, especially in the context of the ongoing East-West cold war.

1 John C. Farrell and Asa P. Smith eds., Image and Reality in World Politics (New York, 1967), p.v.

Why don't the nations concerned sit down and iron out their differences? Why don't they work out each others misunderstandings and resolve atleast that portion of their conflicts which is rooted in that? Why don't they get down to the 'facts' and replace all their confusion with an understanding of 'Reality' ?

It was increasingly realized that to answer these queries, the discipline of International Relations would have to borrow some new concepts from social psychology. That keywords like 'perception', 'misperception' and 'image', could no longer be regarded as jargon. That Plato's concern with the problem is as real and central to the understanding of the international relations of today as it was in the 4th and 5th centuries B.C.

The theory of international perceptions,² the intrinsic tenets of which are adapted from social psychology and applied to the study of International Relations, is of prime relevance in studying the elusive concept of perceptions and images. As such, it becomes important to understand some of its rudimentary propositions.

2 The discussion of the theory of International Perceptions draws heavily from Steven J. Rosen and Walter S. James, The Logic of International Relations (Masachusetts, 1974); Ole Holsti, "The Belief System and National Images", Journal of Conflict Resolution (1962); Kenneth K. Boulding, The Image (Ann Arbor, 1956).

In everyday life, we generally assume that our understanding of Reality flows directly from the nature of that Reality itself. In other words, it presupposes that certain things are facts while the opposite assertions are not and that if we can ascertain the facts, certain conclusions will naturally follow. The purpose of information-gathering, as such, is to determine the 'facts' from which a knowledge of Reality can be drawn. Perceptual theorists, however, reject this simple conception of knowledge. To them, knowledge has a subjective as well as an objective component. Facts do not speak for themselves but are given meaning by each interpreter from his own analytical point of view. As such, the conclusion that follows from certain given facts depends on the interpretation that the facts are given.

Furthermore, facts in themselves do not constitute Reality. Rather, they constitute pieces of information from Reality that are 'selected' by a researcher as having importance, while other pieces of information are rejected as being inconsequential. Indeed, "Reality" consists of an infinite amount of potential information from which only a tiny part is taken as a set of facts". For example, in writing the history of a particular war, the historian selects a small portion of the available data to report. Millions of individuals are involved in the billions and trillions of acts and each participant is involved in innumerable decisions

making. In short, the patterns of interaction are kaleidoscopic. The historian has to, of necessity, select from all this, a few pieces of information which seem to him, to describe the interactions and explain their causes. It becomes evident, then, that facts do not and cannot speak for themselves.

David Easton has summarized this view of facts: "A fact is but a peculiar ordering of reality according to a theoretic interest". In other words, facts are themselves imposed on Reality by the researcher rather than the other way around and as such the very nature of 'facts' themselves depends on the questions that the researcher chooses to ask. Since each "perceptual system" asks its own questions, observers of different points of views naturally arrive at different answers or 'facts'. It stands to reason, then, that if facts are themselves subjectively defined, being a phenomenon of 'Perceptions', perceptions cannot always be corrected when confronted with facts.

In defining 'Perceptions', perceptual theorists identify three distinct components viz: values, beliefs, and cognitions.

- a) A value is a preference for one state of Reality over another. It does not specify what is but rather what ought to be. It assigns a relative worth to objects and conditions e.g. Democracy is better than dictatorship.
- b) A belief is a conviction that a description of Reality is true, proven and known. Often, it is based on prior receptio

of information from "the environment" but it is not the same as data. It is, rather, an "analytical proposition" that relates various pieces of information in a "proven" pattern³ e.g. Imperialism is the mature phase of monopoly capitalism.

A belief is also distinct from a value. One might believe that communism brings a higher rate of economic growth and that capitalism has a better record of protecting individual freedoms. Given these beliefs, one must decide whether capitalism or communism is better according to one's own values.

c) A cognition is data or information received from the environment e.g. USA is giving F-16 aircrafts to Pakistan. Cognitions are the key element in formulating perceptual systems and so also in changing them. The concept of changing national perceptions refers to introducing new cognitions that will revise beliefs and values. In trying to iron out differences and misperceptions between two actors, one would have to influence their perceptions by introducing new information, to amend old beliefs and values.

Having examined the inputs of 'Perceptions', it becomes meaningful to understand the process of making and 'un-making', rather, altering, perceptual systems.

3 Steven J. Rosen and Walter S. Jones, n.2, pp.188-191.

Each perceptual system claims to support itself on an array of data and historical analysis. Each seems to its proponents so well supported by facts that it needs no further substantiation. Substantively, however, there is a subjective substructure supporting each perceptual system. This is partly the product of social conditioning and folklore and partly of the individual decision-maker's personality, experience and psyche.

Kenneth Boulding has described the process of creating 'Images and Perceptions' as a "literary one",⁴ in that it comprises of a melange of narrative history, memories of past events, stories and conversations, plus an enormous amount of usually ill-digested and carelessly collected information. When we add to this, the strong hates, loves, loyalties and disloyalties that each system produces, we get certain 'folk images' to which we are exposed incessantly in day to day existence.

The role of the individual decision-maker is more complex. It is true that every decision-maker is to some extent a prisoner of his beliefs and expectations and that these inevitably shape his definition of Reality.⁵ Yet individual values

4 Kenneth K. Boulding, 'Learning and Reality - Testing Process in the International System' in John K. Farrell and Asa.P. Smith ed., n.1, p.5.

5 John K. Farrell and Asa.P. Smith ed., n.1, p.vi. Quotes R.G. Collingwood's description of a researcher's task as "penetrating the thoughts of the agents whose acts they are studying".

and attitudes can have only marginal effect on foreign policy decisions which are subject to bureaucratic constraints ranging from constitutional and legal requirements to informal expectations of associates, public opinion and pressure groups. Indeed, it has been increasingly recognized that the relevance of human actors and their motivations and perceptions is constricted by the roles they play in the larger societal process and, more so, by such givens of the international system as the distribution of power, the geographical location, economic conditions of the country and its demography.

Perceptions are influenced by immediate concerns, (termed "evoked sets"),⁶ as well as by more deeply rooted expectations. An actor will perceive and interpret stimuli in terms of what is before his mind. To understand his perceptions therefore, one needs to know what problems concern him at the moment and what information he has recently received. The evoked set may be strong enough to lead the actor to ignore information that is not relevant to his immediate concerns even if in retrospect it seems clear that the message merited serious attention.

Communication, too, plays a significant role. The ability of an actor to perceive the messages and behaviour of another

6 Robert Jervis, *Perceptions and Misperceptions in International Politics* (New Jersey, 1976), p.203.

is usually reinforced by the belief that the other shares his concerns and information. In most cases, actors tend to overestimate the degree to which each understands what the other is trying to say. What the 'sender' means to be central may strike the 'receiver' as being inconsequential; what seems obvious to the former may appear ambiguous to the latter.⁷ According to Robert Jervis, "differences in information perspectives and time lags can produce misperceptions even when there is complete common interest between the actors, when deception is neither intended nor suspected and when both actors wish to communicate accurately".⁸

It needs to be pointed out that there is no ready and simple way to determine the accuracy of perceptions. The problem of what constitutes realism in our images remains far from being resolved, simply because images can only be compared with other images and never with Reality.⁹ As such, actors, be they individuals or nations, behave as if their image were true.

7 The communication problem is humorously described in the following anonymous verse:

"I know that
 you believe you
 understand what
 you think I said
 but
 I am not sure
 You realise that what you heard
 is not
 what I meant".

8 Robert Jervis, n.6, pp.203-15.

9 Hume's skeptic philosophy is also concerned with the problem of realism in images.

The elimination of misperceptions can be accomplished by feedback. From the actor's apprehending of the world, he derives an expectation -- an image of the future. As time goes on, the future becomes the past and it becomes possible to compare his image of the future with his image of the same period when it has become the past. If the two images do not coincide, the element of error in the actor's perceptions becomes exposed and necessitates the adjustment of one image or the other.

However, this is easier said than done. It has been found in a variety of studies that^{at} all the levels of human behaviour, deeply held values and beliefs are highly resistant to change through new cognitions. Social psychological research data support a theory of "cognitive dissonance". Briefly stated, this theory holds that when a deeply held value or belief is contradicted by a new information from the environment, (a "dissonant"¹⁰ cognition) the information (fact, cognition) gets rejected and the value and belief is retained. While this may not take the form of an outright rejection of the discrepant message, it might result in the reinterpretation of the datum to make it consistent with

10 Dissonance can be defined as the relationship between two elements where, when considering the two in isolation, the obverse of one would follow from the other.

existing beliefs.¹¹ The net result is the same in that the individual's/nation's value and belief system protects itself from external alteration. It is almost as if the individual/nation has a filtering system whereby every single reality is fitted to a preconception so that the basic perceptual system remains inert and unchanged.¹²

Explaining attitudinal changes, Max Planck argues,

A new scientific truth does not triumph by convincing its opponents and making them see the light but rather because its opponents eventually die, and a new generation grows up that is familiar with it.(13)

A new generation ushers in a new paradigm. Otherwise, people, and so also states, change as little of their attitude structure as possible. If they must change, they will just alter the peripheral beliefs that are least important and that are tied to the fewest other beliefs.

Elaborating on the mechanisms of attitude preservation, several such can be identified. To begin with, a person may simply fail to see that the new information might contradict

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- 11 Leon Festinger, A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance (Stanford, 1957), pp.13,31. The theory of cognitive dissonance implies two things viz. (a) "the existence of dissonance being psychologically uncomfortable will motivate the person to reduce dissonance and achieve consonance; (b) when dissonance is present, in addition to trying to reduce it, the person will actively avoid situations and information which would likely increase the dissonance". The second behaviour pattern is predominant.
- 12 Robert Jervis, n.6, pp.382-406.
- 13 Ibid., p.288.

his belief. This may mean that the information is immediately and automatically dismissed or that it is not noticed at all or that the issue has been evaded psychologically by simply not understanding the message. Secondly, the information may be seen as being discrepant but its validity explicitly rejected. The rejection is made easier if accompanied by the discrediting of the source of the discrepant information. Where the person cannot avoid dealing with the information, he may preserve his old beliefs by admitting his puzzlement with the new information. In other words, he acknowledges that the information is correct and yet holds that it cannot be explained, at least for the time being. He does not then, deny the validity of the new evidence but, neither, does he modify his contrary belief. Finally, he may engage in "bolstering", that is, seeking new information and considerations that support his view and at the same time undermine the new information with the aim of weakening it.

Preserving the attitudinal status quo becomes important because over time it begins to support the entire power structure. As such vested interests develop in sustaining and reinforcing the same perceptual system. Politicians often use it to get more votes, defence men more armaments, supplies, and perquisites and so on.

The foreign office bureaucracy also plays a significant role in reinforcing perceptions. Decision-making with regard

to external affairs is structured in a hierarchical manner with numerous foreign office and military establishment sub-hierarchies. In such an organization, the information gathering apparatus always tends to confirm the existing perception of the top decision-makers. There is an "inescapable" tendency to please the seniors by conforming to their ideas.¹⁴

These same public officials also play a major role in channeling the cognitions that reach their 'publics'. Many studies have shown that the same information can be accepted or rejected depending on whether it comes from a positive or negative source, in terms of prestige. As such incoming information is processed in such a way as to maintain the existing perceptual system of the constituents. Interestingly, too, constituents choose their leaders for the relative inflexibility of their perceptual systems. If the leaders were relatively free to revise their perceptual framework, they would not be considered reliable.

Perceptual systems are also perpetuated by what Henry Kissinger terms the "inherent good faith" model.¹⁵ According to this, because friends are expected to be friendly, all their actions regardless of their character are interpreted

14 Kenneth Boulding, n.4, p.10.

15 Henry Kissinger, The Necessity for Choice (New York, 1961), p.201.

as being non-hostile. The reverse model denotes a conception of the other nation whereby, it is defined as evil whatever be the nature of its actions" .. "damned if it does and damned if it doesn't". Perceptions are, thus, self-perpetuating for the model itself denies data that could contradict it. At the interpersonal level, such behaviour would be tantamount to paranoia but different standards seem to apply at the international level.

Interestingly, each perceptual system regards the other as being inaccurate and dishonest. Proponents of the other point of view are subject to misperception or a limited perception or inspite of knowing 'the truth', for ulterior motives, pretending to have different perceptions. In short, national policy-makers believe their own perceptual systems to be true and those of others to be, atleast partly, false.

There is, also, a tendency to judge the actions of others according to different standards from those applied to oneself. Each actor sees the others as being more centralized and calculating than itself. Each one feels that while it has the friendliest intentions towards the others, they harbour hostile intentions towards it. So also, each side is quick to point to the misperceptions of the other but rejects the view that this might be the case with its own perceptual framework too. Facts are raised to justify the rationalization of each side that "our case is different". Unflattering parallels are rejected by either side so that

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the perceptual framework remains invulnerable to empirical and logical regulation.

Perceptual theorists also point out the hazards of "self-perception". Almost as important as a nation's perception of another nation, is its own perception of itself. Actors, often, exaggerate the degree to which they play a central role in other's policies. When the other behaves in accord with the actor's desires, the latter overestimates the degree to which his policies and influence were responsible for ^{the} outcome. On the other hand, when the behaviour is undesired, the actor is likely to see it as being derived from internal sources, rather than as being a response to his own actions. In some cases, the individual decision-maker/leader may even perceive that the other actor is responding not only to the State he heads but to himself personally.

The overestimation of one's influence can be attributed primarily to two factors. In the first place, such a perception gratifies the ego. The person/state has mattered; he has been efficacious. He has been able to shape his environment. Secondly, the actor is familiar with his own efforts to influence the other but knows little about the other factors that might have been simultaneously at work.

There is another intrinsic danger in the concept of self-perception. When an actor believes that he is not a threat to another, he usually assumes that the other knows

that he is not hostile. This is primarily so because of lack of understanding of the context in which the other sees the actor's behaviour, the familiarity that the actor has with his own intentions, which makes it harder for him to believe that others might not see them as he does. And, finally, the self-righteousness that rules out the possibility that the other's undesired behaviour might have been provoked. It takes great insight to realize that actions that one believes to be aimed at defending one's vital interests can appear to others as being directed against them. Very often, it leads the perceiver to conclude that if the actor's behaviour has harmed him, this must have been the actor's intention. Hence, an actor's failure to understand that he may not have communicated his non-hostile intentions feeds 'spirals' of misperception.

An actor's view of himself is usually highly rigid and will be maintained at the cost of altering several other elements. He usually believes that he is just and fair. If evil has been done, he cannot have done it. Conversely, if he did it, it cannot be evil.

Another important aspect of 'self-perception' arises from the fact that, often, an actor's perceptions of other states is based on the understanding of his own political system. From this he learns many of his basic ideas that unconsciously colour his views of both international relations and of the internal systems of other states. States are prone

to act as if their foreign counterparts are so like themselves that the issue at stake could as well be a domestic one. Speaking of the United States, George Kennan observed,

It has never occurred to most Americans that the political principles by which they themselves lived might have been historically conditioned and might not enjoy historical validity. (16)

This tendency is more pronounced in the case of statesmen who rise to power through the political processes as opposed to a career diplomat because for the former, domestic politics has supplied his basic political concepts as well as strategies and tactics to attain the desired goals. This can be dangerous to the extent that when one believes that the other state has a general resemblance to one's own, there is a tendency to overestimate the degree of congruence between the structures, norms and patterns of behaviour of the two states.

Summarizing the theory of international perceptions, it can be simply said that every 'Reality' has multiple meanings depending on the nationality of the perceiver, that international events are selectively perceived by key actors and that each side can defend its actions by pointing to certain factual differences that favour a given perception.

16 Robert Jervis, n.6, p.283.

P A R T - II

CASE-STUDY : INDO-SRI LANKAN RELATIONS
1971-85

Chapter - 2

GENESIS OF INDO-SRI LANKAN RELATIONS

Roles, attitudes and behaviours of regional actors can best be understood at the sub-systemic level of analysis.

David Singer correctly observes:

the atomized and less coherent image produced by the lower level of analysis is somewhat balanced by its richer detail, greater depth and more intensive portrayal. As the explanation, there seems little doubt that the sub-systemic or actor orientation is considerably more fruitful, permitting as it does a more thorough investigation of the processes by which foreign policies are made. (1)

This is especially so in the case of the developing countries where the regional environment has a crucial bearing on the external interactions. The foreign policy of these states are often aimed at protecting their internal political systems from the destabilizing forces arising out of the 'infrastructural linkages' in the region. They are also used to creating a power balance to "act as a deterrent on potential threat centres."² In most cases, the small developing states perceive threats from their big neighbours and the magnitude of this perception is exacerbated if there are infrastructural

1 David J. Singer, "The Level of Analysis Problem in International Relations" in James N. Roseman (ed.), International Politics and Foreign Policy (New York, 1969), p.28.

2 Sivananda Patnaik, "Sri Lanka and the South Asian Sub-System: A Study of Sub-macro International Politics", India Quarterly, April-June 1980.

socio-cultural and economic linkages with the big neighbours.

In the South Asian 'Sub-system', both the 'push' and 'pull' forces, which govern the attitudes and responses of the actors to one another, are to a great extent, determined by the great asymmetries which characterize the region. It has been pointed out, that there are "two types of actors", in South Asia -- "the dominant actor with a status of a regional power and the smaller actors with virtually no influence in international affairs".³ Indeed, India towers over the other countries in South Asia in size, population, economic and military power and in the capacity for resource mobilization. As such, "India's dominant position... tends to cause a fear psychosis among her regional partners especially when there is a difference in vital and sensitive matters".⁴ While India with its superior capability can afford to be nonchalant, the peripheries are overly anxious of their vulnerability to India.

In systemic terms, South Asia presents a polychrome of different political systems and institutions, ranging from the authoritarian, centralized and comparatively narrow-based regimes to functional democracies. Advocates of the power theory pragmatically maintain that neighbours should deal with one another, irrespective of the form of government. Yet,

3 Krishna P.Khanal, "Anti-Indian Feeling in South Asia: A Case of Nepal", The Nepalese Journal of Political Science, Nos.1-2, 1982.

4 Ibid.

in a region like South Asia which has intimate socio-cultural ties and is geographically contiguous, systemic differences cannot be ignored. Indeed, they can have significant stability and security repercussions in the form of spill-overs.

Of the seven South Asian countries, only India and Sri Lanka pursue the democratic tradition. This 'ideological' and 'systemic' commonality that they share underwrites their relationship. Although separated by a narrow strip of water (29 miles), the Palk Straits, India and Sri Lanka are indissolubly bound together by a common culture and a "common tie of blood".

Geologically, Sri Lanka belongs to the same land shelf as India. It is an extension of the Malabar coast of India. Historically and ethnologically, the first Sri Lankan king, Vijaya, the founder of the Sinhalese race, hailed from 'Vanga' (Bengal) and founded his kingdom in Sri Lanka in the 5th-6th centuries B.C., by dispossessing the aboriginal Nagas and Yakas.⁵ Religiously, India is the land that gave Sri Lanka her religion when King Asoka sent his son Mahinda

5 According to Prof.K.M.de Silva of the Sri Lanka University, "Both legend and linguistic evidence indicate that the Sinhalese were a people of Aryan origin who came to the island from Northern India about 500 B.C.", The "DIPAVAMSA" also supports this view.

to Sri Lanka to propagate Buddhism. Socially, intermarriages between the Sinhalese and the South Indians strengthened the ties of kinship. Indeed, in all ways, India and Sri Lanka may be considered to be 'links of the same chain'.

However, this Indian umbrella gave birth to divergent sentiments in India and Sri Lanka. Whereas India saw South Asia as a historical-cultural extension of India, the Sri Lankans balked at expressions of South Asia's historical unity, continuity and assimilative qualities. They feared that the umbilical cord may one day strangulate their independent identity and existence. The imbalance in size, population, military and economic capabilities added to raise, in the minds of the Sri Lankans, a murky mistrust of India. There were widespread feelings that while military force was not everything in the relations between nations, yet, where there vested the inherent capacity to employ it, it necessarily overshadowed all else. It only needed a single maverick to use the military option for perceived national or personal gains and motives. Indeed, however, innocent India was of designs on Sri Lanka, Indian action in Hyderabad, Goa and later in Bangladesh caused anxiety to the Sri Lankan mind.

Furthermore, traditional Indo-Srilankan relations were circumscribed by the small-power - big neighbour syndrome. Howard Wriggin's "Pakistan Model" could be extended to even smaller Sri Lanka. According to this, Pakistan's (and so

also Sri Lanka's) foreign policy could be explained in terms of the anxiety that was to be expected when a smaller, weaker state bordered a larger, stronger one. "Typically", he wrote, "smaller states next to larger ones are rendered anxious by that larger neighbour". He went on to quote Thucydides' contention that fear was a central driving force behind statesmen.

Elaborating on the fate of the smaller states, David Vittal wrote:

In the final analysis, the condition of the small state which wishes to retain its political identity and autonomy has elements of the tragic. It may be sure of retaining its identity and autonomy only so long as its capacity for autonomous action is not put to serious test. Conflict with a great power (or even a middle power) is ultimately a conflict for autonomy. If it seeks and gains protection from another great (or middle) power, it loses autonomy. If it remains unprotected, it is faced with the unquestioned preponderance of usable force which because it is so clearly preponderant, the minor power can neither deter nor a fortiori, hope to overcome.(6)

Sri Lanka's predicament seemed to be just this. To it, "India, appear(ed) as a friendly but potentially dangerous neighbour to whom one must be polite but a little distant".⁷ Coming too close to the Indian incandescence could well singe Sri Lanka's wings and end its free flight:

6 David Vittal, The Survival of Small States: Studies in Small Power/Great Power Conflict (London, 1971), p.12.

7 Sadhan Mukherjee, Ceylon, The Island that Changed (Delhi, 1971), p.37. Quotes in Ivor Jennings.

India's inability to understand the traditional fears of a territorially small state, being itself a spatially vast country, made it insensitive to its fears and apprehensions. Its self-image bore no resemblance to the image that it raised in the minds of the surrounding countries. There was a psychological chasm between the two countries, rooted in their divergent physiological characteristics.

It's historical experience of recurrent invasions from South India, starting from the 2nd century B.C. and continuing during the different periods thereafter, and by different rulers - the Pandyas, the Pallavas and the Kalingas - also strengthened Sri Lanka's distrust of India. It was only after the conflict between the Muslim Bahamani kingdom and Vijaynagar broke out, that Sri Lanka was left alone.

In the more recent times, India's strategic doctrine kept alive these fears. Independent India, for better or worse, inherited the defence and strategic perceptions of colonial Britain. According to this, the defence of India rested on a three-fold basis:

- a) Safeguarding of the North-West Frontier through which successive invading armies had made inroads into Indian territory.
- b) Preventing the area around the Indian sub-continent from falling under the control of a foreign power.

- c) Retaining command of the Indian ocean and its environment.⁸

All these three elements had firm roots in India's historical experience, spanning centuries. And it was in the light of these perceptions that India sought to shape her relations with her smaller neighbours. Not, surprisingly, proclamation of the strategic unity of India and her smaller neighbours became the recurrent theme of Indian pronouncements on relations with these nations. It became all the more highlighted in the case of Sri Lanka which had functioned as the launching pad for colonial expansion in India.⁹

As such, India perceived a very real interest in ensuring that no hostile power should establish itself in Sri Lanka. For the same reason, Indian defense planners held Sri Lanka to be within India's defence area, at the very "heart centre" of the Indian ocean. K.M.Panikkar maintained that Sri Lanka "is for all defence purposes, an integral part of India. Ceylon (Sri Lanka) can neither feed herself nor defend herself, nor in respect of any other important matter,

8 S.U.Kodikara, Strategic Factors in Interstate Relations in South Asia (New Delhi, 1983), p.13.

9 The Dutch, Portuguese and British all entered India with Sri Lanka as their base.

stand on her own feet."¹⁰

Even Jawaharlal Nehru, in one of his speeches, said: "culturally, racially, and linguistically Lanka is as much a part of India as any province" and political and economic development "point inevitably to a closer union.... presumably as an autonomous unit of the Indian federation".¹¹ Although he later repudiated his earlier views, and made serious efforts to assuage Sri Lanka's apprehensions about India by dismissing such remarks, they nevertheless contributed in exacerbating the Sri Lankan fear phobia by making them acutely sensitive to being drawn closely within the Indian orbit.

The Indo-centricism of Indian statesmen and intelligentsia was reaffirmed by the behaviour of Indians residing in Sri Lanka. They presented "an air of complacent superiority"¹² reminding the Sri Lankans that they were part of the Indian cultural area and owed a deep debt to the Indian past from

10 Ceylon Daily News (Colombo) 23 April 1949. Quotes Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramaya, "India and Ceylon must have a common strategy and common defence strength and common defence resources. It cannot be that Ceylon is in friendship with a group with which India is not in friendship - not that Ceylon has no right to make its own alignments and declare its own affiliations - but if there are two hostile groups in the world and Ceylon and India are with one or the other of them and not with the same group, it will be a bad day for both.

11 Jawaharlal Nehru, Speech to the Youth of Lanka, 9 Oct. 194

12 Howard J. Wriggins, Ceylon : Dilemmas of a New Nation (New Delhi, 1961), p. 399. "Conversations have a noticeable way of dying down when articulate overbearing Indians are present. But when the Brahmins withdraw, life goes on and the Burmese or Ceylonese feel free to talk, to joke and enjoy themselves once more."

which Sri Lanka was created. The Indian businessmen, suffering from the 'marwari psyche',¹³ indulged in unhealthy economic practices which were selfish and shortsighted, intended only to make quick and disproportionate profits without contributing in any positive manner to the Sri Lankan economy.

The Tamil factor also cast dark clouds of suspicion and distrust on both sides. Sri Lankan Tamils, a large minority group, did not assimilate themselves into the national, social, political and economic life of the island but chose to always maintain close and active ethnic and cultural links with the large Tamil population in South India. The resulting fear, that the Sri Lankan Tamils might someday join hands with their brethren across the waters and overrun Sri Lanka, generated a peculiar psychology in the island, whereby the Sinhalese majority began suffering from a minority complex.

Commenting on this idiosyncrasy, a Sri Lankan Trotskyist leader wrote,

Even though the Tamil people who inhabit Sri Lanka are a minority in Sri Lanka, if they are regarded together with the Tamil people who live in South India near the northern boundary of Sri Lanka, the Tamil people appear as the majority and the Sinhalese people as the minority. Also when one contemplates the history of Sri Lanka, that history is full of battles between

13 S.D.Muni, "India and Regionalism in South Asia",
International Studies (JNU, New Delhi) Vol.17, 1978.

these two sections.¹⁴

For India, the Tamil factor created an extremely sensitive zone. The close ethnic bonds between the Tamils of the two countries made for a difficult situation especially when faced with the South Indian, pan-Dravidian regionalism and strong linguistic attachments. The dangers of a spill-over effect, in the context of an unwieldy and precariously balanced multi ethnic, multi-linguistic and multi-religious society, could not be ignored.¹⁵

Its geographical location, made it apparent that if there were to be any external threats to Sri Lanka, the most likely source of such threats would be India. Therefore, it became imperative for it to find ways and means of effectively dealing with this leviathan lying across the Palk straits. A continual search for options and choices which would establish its independent identity and status became a major motivating factor in the foreign policy strategies of Sri Lanka. Such strategies aimed at the manipulation of regional and global forces to maximize its power and to reduce the potentiality of India, who had the latent capacity to pressurise it.

14 Robert N. Kearney, Communalism and Language in the Politic (Durham, 1967), p.114. Quotes House of Representatives, Parliamentary Debates, vol.48, col.1313. "In this countr the problem of the Tamils is not a minority problem. The Sinhalese are the minority in Dravidastan, we are carrying on a struggle for our national existence against the Dravidian majority".

15 A parallel is drawn between the South Indian fear of North-Indian Aryan domination and the Sri Lankan Tamil fear of Sinhalese domination.

Sri Lanka's attitude towards India alternated, as did the government between the UNP and the SLFP. The UNP and the SLFP, comprising two sets of elites, the 'colonial' and the 'nationalist' respectively, with divergent societal interests and outlooks, adopted different attitudinal postures vis-a-vis India. Having interests and aspirations closely associated with the development of a free economy and foreign private capital investment, and being pro-West in ideology, the UNP tended to be more suspicious of India and tried to deal with India by increasing Sri Lanka's interactions with other states, with a view to neutralising Indian predominance. The defence pact with Britain, the Commonwealth membership, the closer friendship with China and Pakistan and the search for an ASEAN identity, were all a part of this strategy of redressing the balance against India.¹⁶ Sir John Kotelawala, ex-Prime Minister of Sri Lanka went as far as saying, "The day we dispense with Britain, Ceylon would go under India".

The SLFP which came into the forefront in the 50's, when Sri Lanka witnessed a belated resurgence of nationalism, aimed at the assertion of Sri Lanka's political independence by diversifying economic dependence on the communist bloc, especially China, and working for a socialist model. Defining their attitude towards India, S.W.R.D. Bandarnaike said, "Nobody in

16 Ceylon Daily News (Colombo) 29 June 1970. Editorial titled, "India and Ceylon" expressed the nationalistic view in local circles that Sri Lanka could do well with some advice from Kautilya and that "the wise man directs us towards Peking and Islamabad".

his right senses, would have imagined that a country like India would at any date annex Ceylon (Sri Lanka)". In view of their limited defence resources, it was felt that Sri Lanka's security could be better maintained by developing cordial relations with India. The non-aligned policy, adopted by the SLFP, and inspired by the Indian experiment,¹⁷ was also an extremely important foreign policy instrument for Srilanka because it constituted a frontline defence against external threats. By pursuing its non-aligned policy, Sri Lanka was able to increase its manoeuvrability vis-a-vis, India. Within the blatant limitations of the disparity in their size, population and capabilities, Sri Lanka was able to adopt an independent line of action which served, first and foremost, its own national interest, during both the Sino-Indian border dispute of 1962¹⁸ as well as the Indo-

17 Ceylon Daily News (Colombo) 16 July 1953. S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike said, "As far as I can see, the wisest foreign policy that is being followed in the world today by any leading statesmen is that of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the Prime Minister of India."

18 In the Sino-Indian conflict, Sri Lanka pragmatically did not declare China "aggressor in spite of domestic opposition pressures as, this would have directly affected Sri Lanka's rice and rubber deals with China. Conversely, a pro-China policy would have meant that India would not cooperate with Sri Lanka on the 'citizenship' problem. As such, Sri Lanka expressed "great concern" and tried to play a constructive mediatory role through the 'Colombo Powers' group. Unfortunately, its efforts met with little success, being rejected by both India and China.

Pak war of 1971.¹⁹

Indian policies towards Sri Lanka were, it may be said, generally more consistent than Sri Lanka's pendular attitudes towards India. Progressing from the dictum that "it is the oceanic space that dominates the strategy of India's defence, the primary object of India's foreign policy over the decades, remained the "erection of a stable inner balance in the sub-continent in which India as the principal power, was to play an integrative role". As such, it allowed peripheral states like Sri Lanka to have relations with outside (also termed 'intrusive') powers for developmental purposes and also to overcome their inbuilt fear of India but, at the same time, remained ever-vigilant and apprehensive of too great a friendship developing between Sri Lanka and an 'intrusive' power

19 In the Indo-Pak conflict (1971), Sri Lanka did not stray from its traditional policy of maintaining friendly ties with Pakistan. It allowed Pakistan use of landing facilities at the Katunayake airport. India protested against this, holding it to be an "unfriendly" act as it maintained that such flights were carrying military personnel and equipments to Bangladesh (then East Pakistan). Apart from this, Sri Lanka followed a neutral policy. It mediated in the exchange of Indian and Pakistani diplomats. Interestingly, it took Sri Lanka 2½ months to formally recognize Bangladesh. This was disappointing in view of Mrs. Gandhi's special friendship with Mrs. Bandarnaike. Perhaps Sri Lanka's defence planners had all along hoped that a power balance between India and Pakistan, with China on the latter's side, would keep any aggressive or expansionist Indian designs in check. Indian action in Bangladesh put an end to this line of thought.

inimical to it.²⁰

Indians believed that after the British withdrawal, they had increased responsibility for safeguarding the Indian ocean, that India was the guardian of the region. Ironically, this was exactly what the smaller countries of the region wanted to guard against.

In her speech to the National State Assembly in Colombo, Mrs. Gandhi said, " Countries such as Sri Lanka and India should remain aloof from all manoeuvres to interfere in the affairs of others. We should continue to resist the expansion of military presence".

Whatever the perceptual differences between the two countries might have been, the relationship between them was one of carefully nurtured cordiality. Despite Srilanka's lingering suspicions about India and India's often 'big-brotherly' and bullish attitude towards Sri Lanka, the long-standing problem of the stateless Indian Tamils, although the subject of endless and acrimonious debate between Nehru and four Sri Lankan Prime Ministers, was dealt with bilaterally,

20 The Illustrated Weekly of India (Bombay) 23 June 1974. India was always concerned about the friendship between Sri Lanka and China. "China has made it quite clear that the Indian ocean comes under its sphere of influence. And if Pakistan, Ceylon and some East African countries provide the Chinese with base facilities, the menace would assume outstanding propositions."

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in a spirit of friendly cooperation. The Sirima -Shastri Pact (1964)²¹ and the Indo-Ceylon Agreement (1967) were significant milestones towards resolving the problem, even though it could finally be settled only in 1985.

21 According to the Sirima-Shastri agreement India agreed to take back 5 million "stateless" persons of Indian origin as against Sri Lanka's 3 million over a stipulated period of 15 years. For details see, Lalit Kumar, Indo-Srilankan Relations: The Sirimavo-Shastri Pact (New Delhi, 1977); Phadnis and Lalit Kumar, "The Sirimavo-Shastri Pact of 1964 Problems of Implementation", India Quarterly, vol.31, No.4, 1975.

Chapter - 3

CHANGING PERCEPTIONS IN INDO-SRI LANKAN RELATIONS, FROM 1971-85

Just as relations among nations are never static, threat perceptions also undergo periodic changes. This is both because of the ever-changing environment and of changes in the groups or parties in power. The latter plays a more visible role because even while the perceptual framework may infact be changing in response to the altered environs, that change is eventually perceived and interpreted by the decision-makers. Interestingly, sometimes the threat perceptions may be radically different and sometimes the differences in perception may be only marginal even though radical transformation may have taken place at the decision-making level.

The period between 1971 and 1985, identified as the time span of this case study, has been extremely trying and critical, testing the mettle of the three decades of "carefully nurtured cordiality" between India and Sri Lanka and registering the perceptual volteface that has taken place in the duration of these fourteen years. Indeed, if 1971 can be termed the 'zenith' of this association, then 1985 is most surely its 'nadir'.

Several questions come to mind: What are the causitive factors underlying these changing perceptions? Is there infact a substantive change in the perceptual framework or is it merely a resurgence of age-old fears and suspicions?

Is this increased psychological distance irreparable or can it be bridged at all? The answers are not easy to find for they are intertwined in an entire complex of factors, acting and interacting in a convolution. Some of these causitive factors may be identified as the following:

- (i) The Tamil Problem.
- (ii) The Domestic compulsions.
- (iii) Role of External Actors
- (iv) The Personality factor
- (v) Economic factors.
- (vi) Role of mass media.

Each of these elements is interrelated and requires careful examination.

(i) The Tamil Problems

The Tamil factor, as discussed earlier, has all along been an important deterrent in promoting harmonious Indo-Sri Lankan relations. Since 1983, the problem has assumed graver dimensions both for the future of Sri Lanka as well as the future of Indo-Sri Lankan relations.

According to the 1981 official census, Sri Lanka's total population consists of 74 percent Sinhallas and 18.2 percent Tamils (Sri Lankan Tamils comprise 12.6 percent and the Indian

Tamils 5.6 percent).¹ A divergent set of racial-religious-linguistic congruence marks the identity of the two groups. The Tamils, being of Dravidian descent, are predominantly Hindu and speak the Tamil language. The Sinhalas claim Aryan ancestry, persue Buddhism (except for a small Christian percentage) and are Sinhalese speaking.² Accentuating the

1 Satchi Ponnambalam, Sri Lanka : The National Question and the Liberation Struggle (Surrey, 1983), p.30. Quotes Dr.N.K.Sarhar, "...no matter what the racial origin, little remains of the original stock except a belief in it.

2 Howard J.Wriggins, Ceylon, Dilemmas of a New Nation (New Delhi, 1961), p.232. A sample survey of 70 Sinhalese children in a government school in Colombo characterizing themselves and the Tamils revealed clearly differentiated images of each group:

<u>Sinhalese sect conception</u>	<u>Conception of Tamils</u>
Kind	Cruel
clever	clever
rich	poor
brave	diligent
jealous	cunning
proud	rich
good	black
religious	intelligent
farmers	thrifty
poor	ugly
courageous	arrogant
lazy	business-minded
honest	dirty
patient	proud

(arranged in order of their frequency)

identity-assertion, is the territorial factor. Of the 24 districts the Tamils are in absolute majority in 5 and the largest single group in one.³ All these districts being contiguous, are perceived by the Sri Lankan Tamils, as their 'traditional homeland'.

Both groups view themselves as the 'principal' and 'foremost' inhabitants of the island and have a long history of hostile relations. The Sinhalese and the Tamils have also been traditional rivals in establishing their administrative hegemony over each other. Under the British, the Donoughmore Commission (1928) had observed that the Tamils obtained political influence somewhat disproportionate to their numerical strength,⁴ especially in clerical positions.⁵

In the absence of a nationalist movement which could amalgamate various groups into a single national mainstream,

3 According to the 1981 census, Tamils constitute 95.3% of the total population in the Jaffna district, 50.6% in Mannar, 70.8% in Batticaloa, 56.8% in Vavuniya, 76% in Mattaitivu and 33.8% in Trincomalee.

4 Ambalavanar Sivarajah, "Problems of Minorities in South Asia" in Bhabani Sen Gupta, ed. Regional Cooperation and Development in South Asia, vol.2 (New Delhi, 1986) p.119. In 1921, the Sinhalese comprising 76% of the total population held only 46% of the 'Select Professions' while the Sri Lankan Tamils who made up only 13% of the population held 31.9% of them.

5 The two main reasons for this were:

(a) Tamils were educated in English medium, being less resistant to missionary education than the Sinhalese.

(b) Coming from a tough and barren area, government employ was their main source of livelihood.

the Sinhala and the Tamils remained two distinct entities, existing side by side, rather than together, in somewhat unnatural, watertight, compartments.⁶

The post-independence processes of 'development' and 'modernization' generated an 'adversarial concept of politics in a highly competitive and volatile political ethos'.⁷ The two ethno-linguistic communities perceived themselves as being in direct competition for sharing the shrinking economic resources and opportunities. This started a new phase of Sinhalese-Tamil competitive coexistence characterized by overt ethnic conflict whose manifestations were religio-political but the underpinnings dominantly economic.

The increasing affirmation of the majoritarian principle by both the leading political parties, the SLEP and the UNP, further deepened the schism. For the purpose of mobilizing support on communal basis, the policy of appeasing Sinhala chauvinism, initiated in 1956, by the adoption of the

6 For details of Tamil-Sinhala relations, see Urmila Phadnis, "Infrastructural linkage in Sri Lanka - Indian Relations", Economic and Political Weekly, vol.7, Aug. 1972, pp.1493-1501.

7 Urmila Phadnis "Ethnicity and Nation-Building in South Asia : A Case Study of Sri Lanka", India Quarterly, vol.35, No.2, April-June 1979. Mrs. Phadnis writes, "...interaction between civic developmental processes and ethnic consciousness has been an ongoing one".

'Sinhala only' Act, continued unabated with measures like the standardization of the education system, and the state-sponsored migration of Sinhalese to Tamil majority areas. All of these perceived as being heavily weighted against them, the Tamils felt increasingly alienated in both the decision-making⁸ and reward-distribution⁹ systems and finally raised the demand for Tamil Ēelam at Vaddukodai in May 1976. Since then, the violent activities of Tamil militants fighting for their separate nation and the counter-violence by the Sri Lankan armed forces in the Tamil dominated Northern and Eastern provinces, has brought the island on the brink of civil war.

8 So long as the UNP and the SLFP won by simple majority, the Tamil parties enjoyed a certain leverage. However, this pattern of power dispersal was disturbed in 1971 after which both parties have returned with landslide majorities.

9 Ceylon Daily News (Colombo) 17 July 1979, p.8. The ethnic breakdown of recruitment for various government departments in 1979:

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Total Recruitments</u>	<u>Tamils recruited</u>
i) C.A.S. (Open competition)	140	Nil
ii) Asstt. Station Masters	98	4
iii) AMP pharmacists and Radiographers	- 480	 7
iv) Survey learners	318	5
v) Sri Lankan Navy	2170	146
vi) Graduate teachers	1000 (approx.)	nil
vii) General clerical service	1000	2
viii) Teachers	17000	700

On coming to power in 1977, the UNP government did adopt certain reforms to assuage Tamil sentiments, like giving Tamil the status of an associate national language, granting greater autonomy in district administration and cancelling certain discriminatory provisions in university admissions. However, this was a classic illustration of "too little, too late" and failed to bridge the chasm.

In retrospect, the Jatiya, Vimukti Peramuna (JVP) insurgency of 1971 had a more or less similar genesis.¹⁰ It was a revolt against the system by unemployed, educated Sinhalese youth, frustrated by the lack of opportunity for the rapidly growing population, by the absence of visible economic progress and by their feeling of alienation from the closed and privileged ruling elite.

However, with regard to India, Sri Lankan threat perceptions reflected a marked change from 1971 to 1983. The JVP insurgency had brought India and Sri Lanka in closer cooperation¹¹ than ever before in that India was one of the

10 Fred Halliday, "The Ceylonese Insurrection" in Robin Blackburn, ed., Explosion in a Sub-continent (Middlesex 1975), p.190. The JVP ideology was moulded out of diverse elements such as a general Marxist-Leninist outlook, a Maoist itch for revolutionary practice, the Guevarist obsession with instant revolution, Sinhalese ethnocentrism and the frustrations smouldering in the sub-conscious of the unemployed youth.

11 The JVP had an anti-Indian ideology, wanting to expel the Indian Tamil plantation workers as agents of 'Indian expansionism'.

"friendly countries"¹² that Mrs. Bandaranaike turned to for help,¹³ in the country's hour of crisis and whose navy, in consultation with the Sri Lankan government,¹⁴ virtually cordoned off the coastal areas to prevent the possibility of outside help to the insurrectionaries.¹⁵ Conversely, the 'Tamil eelam' issue has driven the wedge deeper in between the two countries and sparked off the dried tinder of old and lingering fears about India in Sri Lanka.¹⁶ -- the bogey of Tamil expansionism and a nightmarish scenario of the

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- 12 Sri Lanka appealed to the US, UK, Pakistan and India for help.
- 13 The Statesman (Delhi) 14 April 1971 and 16 April 1971. Reports that 8 Indian helicopters were loaned to flush out insurgents and 5 Indian ships patrolled the Sri Lankan waters.
- 14 V.P. Dutt, India's Foreign Policy (Delhi, 1984), p.232. India provided \$ 55 million worth of military assistance to Sri Lanka to suppress the JVP insurgency.
- 15 A. Jeyaratnam Wilson, Electoral Politics in an Emergent State (London, 1975), p.182. Although Mrs. Bandaranaike claimed that the immediate military assistance was a vindication of her non-alignment, the states that rendered help also had an interest at stake which would have been adversely affected if the JVP insurgency had succeeded.
- 16 John Kotelawala, An Asian Prime Minister's Story (London 1956), pp.106-07. "The trouble with the Indo-Ceylon relation had always been that the disease (Sri Lankan Tamils) was on Ceylon's chest so to speak, and India need to do nothing to help the patient".

Sinhala being driven to the sea by massive hordes of Tamil invaders from across the Palk straits.¹⁷

India, both under the Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi governments, has categorically stated that it does not support the Tamil demand for a separate state in Sri Lanka. Nevertheless, a nagging feeling persists in Sri Lanka that India has been indirectly supporting the Tamil cause by giving sanctuary and not extraditing militant Tamil leaders sojourning in various parts of Tamil Nadu, by entertaining the frequent visits of TULF leaders to India, and most of all by permitting itself to become a base of operations for Tamil militants against Sri Lanka's armed forces.¹⁸

Although, India has consistently denied these allegations,¹⁹ the fact that terrorist attacks against Sri Lanka's

17 Howard W. Wriggins, "Impediments to Unity in New Nations The Case of Ceylon", American Political Science Review, vol.55 (July 1961), p.316. "There are only 8 million Sinhalese in all the world. In Ceylon itself reside 2 million Tamil speaking people; across in India there are some 28 million more. The Sinhalese are often fearful of being overwhelmed by their Tamil neighbours, the Ceylonese Tamils fear being swamped by the island's majority Sinhalese".

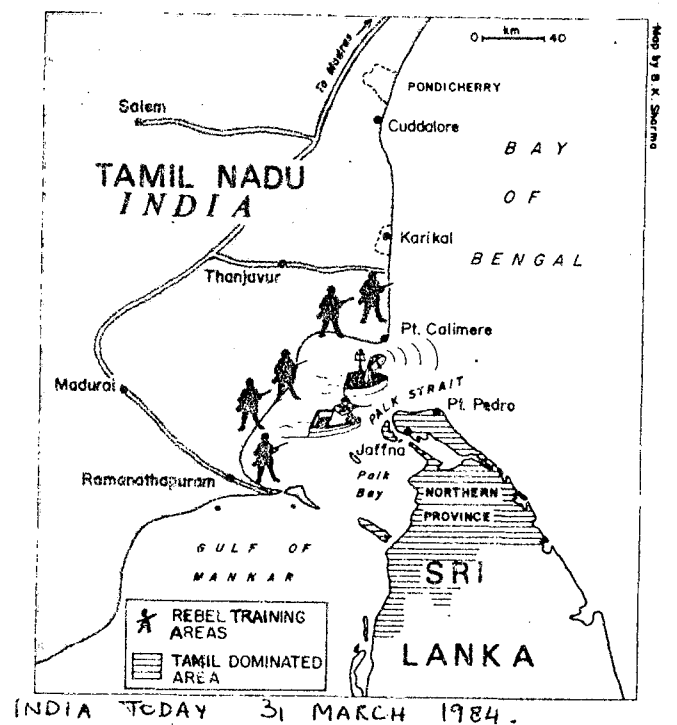
18 President Jayawardene, in his opening address to the Parliament (27 February 1985) said, "there is documentary evidence that some of those in positions of authority in South India are actively responsible for attempts to unite the Sri Lankan Tamil terrorist groups under a common programme".

19 Times of India (Bombay), 9 August 1984. Ram Niwas Mirdha State Minister for External Affairs, "It is...both deplorable and regrettable that responsible leaders of Sri Lanka continue to make baseless allegations against India for providing sanctuary and support to Tamil militants.

armed forces are often planned and carried out from Tamil Nadu is now too well-known to need substantiation²⁰ and it is also no secret that the Sri Lankan Tamil leadership is residing in Tamil Nadu, issues statements from there and has links with Tamil Nadu's political parties.²¹

India's interest in the Sri Lankan Sinhala-Tamil problem centres around two issues. First, the influx of Tamil refugees (mostly plantation workers, estimated to be approximately between 50,000 to 80,000) gives India a direct stake in Sri Lanka's ethnic problem as it places a tremendous

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21 The kidnapping of the Allen couple embarrassingly exposed the AIADMK government's close links with the EPRLF.

economic burden on its already tightly-stretched resources. Moreover, it threatens to upset the delicate social and ethnic balance that exists in Tamil Nadu much in the same way as did the Bangladeshi refugees in Assam.

Second, a strong ethnic solidarity exists between the 50-60 million Tamils living in South India and the Sri Lankan Tamils. The entire ethno-linguistic Tamil group in India is in unanimous support of the Sri Lankan Tamils. S.Thondaman, of the Ceylon workers' Congress, articulated this feeling succinctly, "...we have different problems but when there is a determined policy to discriminate, to harass, to persecute, to crush, then all the Tamils in Tamilnadu or here (Sri Lanka) or anywhere in the world feel that injustice is done."²²

Another important component in Sri Lanka's current threat perception is its overriding fear of an armed intervention by India in Sri Lanka for the creation of the Tamil Eelam. A.Amrithalingam, Secretary-General of the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) is reported to have said:

A situation similar to the one that prevailed in East Bengal during 1970-71 has arisen in the Northern and Eastern parts of Sri Lanka and the time has come for India to take positive action to end the genocide in the Tamil areas.(23)

22 V.Suryanarayan, "Ethnic Conflict in Sri Lanka: Emerging Trends," Paper presented to the Seminar on Domestic Conflicts in South Asian States : Emerging Trends (JNU, New Delhi) October 1984, p.27.

23 The Hindu (International edition), 23 February 1985.

V.P.Vaidik writes:

The Prime Minister, Mr.Premadasa in an interview full of invective told me that Mrs.Gandhi wants to invade Sri Lanka using Tamil terrorists as her advance guard.(24)

Commenting on this fear phobia, Paul Stieghart writes,

Even well-educated Sinhalese will construct fanciful scenarios of the state of Tamil Nadu, forcing the Union of India, by threats of secession, to invade Sri Lanka in defence of Tamil interest.(25)

1971 has left a lasting impression on the psyche of India's island-neighbour.²⁶ It is obsessed with the possibility of a "Bangladesh kind of operation" being led by India in Sri Lanka. This is ironic in view of the fact that if India intervened militarily in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), it also helped Sri Lanka in suppressing the JVP insurgency on a similar ground, namely, that in both countries, India's "support was for the democratic will of the people". Interestingly, whereas Mrs.Bandaranaike had at that time thanked India, for her "timely assistance,"²⁷ the Indian rescue operation

24 Times of India, 15 August 1984.
25 V.Suryanarayan, n.22, p.9.

26 A.J.Wilson, Politics in Sri Lanka 1947-73 (London, 1974), p.277. The 1971 war established India as "pivotal" state in the South Asian power structure.

27 The Statesman (Delhi) 15 April 1971.

has, since, become suspect. India's prompt reaction was perceived in Sri Lanka as indicating the existence of contingency plans for intervention in Sri Lanka and a readiness to implement them.²⁸

Sri Lanka's threat perceptions of India, in the context of the Tamil-Sinhala problem, do not match with the Indian position. Officially, India after the 1983 riots, offered its "good offices" in resolving the issue and has repeatedly reaffirmed its interests in maintaining the political and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka. It has accepted that the matter is an "internal" one and concerns India only because of the refugee influx. All through, it has concentrated its efforts on trying to keep the channels of dialogue open between the two directly concerned parties so that they may arrive at a political settlement of the problem.²⁹ Through the efforts of G. Parthasarthy, Mrs. Gandhi's special envoy, and later Romesh Bhandari, India has repeatedly tried to bring the Tamils and the Sinhalese to the negotiating

28 Barnett R. Rubin, "The US Response to the JVP insurgency in Sri Lanka: 1971", in Lloyd I. Rudolph and others, ed., The Regional Imperative (Delhi, 1980), p.180.

29 Sri Lanka Daily News (Colombo) 31 January 1985. Reports excerpts of Rajiv Gandhi's interview with the PTI "This is really their problem, not our problem. We are affected by it and we would like to see it solved politically because it has gone to a point where it is going to be difficult for this sort of a thing to go on".

table.³⁰ However, the All-Party Conference and the Thimpu talks achieved little with the Sri Lankans unwilling to concede the main Tamil demands of recognizing their 'traditional homeland' and of a joint Regional Council for the Northern and Eastern provinces with substantive executive and legislative devolution.

In fact, in the course of these negotiations, the Sinhalese psyche has shown itself to respond to Indian pressure in contradictory ways. While the fear of an Indian invasion in the event of grave provocation, dictates tentative moves towards reconciliation, the Sinhalese flinch at signing a "document of peace" because such a peace is perceived as capitulating to Indian pressure. Indian diplomacy as such needs to be extremely sensitive to this almost continuous swinging of the pendulum between the fear of India on the one hand and an assertion of national self-respect vis-a-vis a 'big' neighbour, on the other.

Furthermore, according to the perceptions of certain sections of the Indian intelligentsia,³¹ Sri Lanka's response to India's peace making efforts shows that it might be going along with Indian mediation only with a view to blunting

30 Sri Lanka Daily News (Colombo) 25 April 1985. Reports excerpts of Rajiv Gandhi's first overseas television interview on Melbourne T.V., "We provide the cushion to ease the tension (in Sri Lanka)."

31 Saeed Naqvi, "New Perceptions in Lanka", Indian Express (Delhi), 11 September 1984.

Indian opposition to the Sri Lankan armed forces' military operations in the Tamil-dominated Sri Lankan provinces. It is pointed out, that although it continues to say that it wants a political solution, the indifference that marks Sri Lanka's participation in the dialogues arranged by India, suggests that it is merely engaging in consultations with the Tamil leaders, at India's urging, to placate New Delhi and prevent it from succumbing to pressures from Madras and adopting a harsher policy line.

(ii) Domestic Pressures:

The foreign actions of a nation are continuations of essentially domestic processes and demands,³² concomitantly international perceptions cannot be studied in isolation from the broader value base that gives rise to them.³³

As such, the domestic compulsions underlying the Indian and Sri Lankan policies towards each other need to be examined carefully.

In addition to being multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-linguistic, India is also a geographically vast

32 James N. Roseman, ed., Domestic Sources of Foreign Policy (New York, 1967), p.2.

33 Robert Jervis, Perception and Misperception in International Policies (New Jersey, 1976), p.23.

country where the Aryan-Dravidian identity-assertion is accentuated by the North-South divide. The Dravida Kazagham movement introduced a regional thrust in Tamil politics. Having its historical roots in Anti-Brahmanism, it fed on the strong emotions generated in Tamil Nadu by the Tamil language and its defence against, what was perceived to be, "Hindi imperialism". Although since 1963, its secessionist demand has been diffused and the Dravida Munnetra Kazagham (DMK) involved in the participatory democratic system, the anti-north, pan-Dravidian sentiment still runs deep in Tamil Nadu.

The Congress party, which has remained in power in the centre, ever since independence, except for the brief Janata rule (1977-80), has been facing an increasingly shrinking popularity in the South. With Tamil Nadu lost to the two regional parties, DMK and the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazagham (AIADMK), Kerala lost to the Communists, Andhra Pradesh to Telegu Desam and Karnataka to the Janata led coalition, the Congress urgently needs to secure a foothold in atleast one of these states to retain its national status and image. This need to count on, atleast, one South Indian state as being 'safe' makes Tamil Nadu a vital factor in the Congress Party's political calculus.

Eversince it lost power in Tamil Nadu in 1967, the Congress has remained in the sidewings of the Tamil political stage. It has no significant party machinery or leadership

in Tamil Nadu and has, in the last four elections (1971, 1977, 1980, 1984) faced the Tamil electorate in alliance alternately with the DMK or the AIADMK. Political accumen makes the Tamil voter support the Congress backed alliance in the Parliamentary elections.

The following table shows the electoral pattern in Tamil Nadu for the Lok Sabha elections.

Table-A:

Election		Congress	DMK	AIADMK
1971	(i) Seats contested	9	23	-
	(ii) Seats won	9	23	-
1977	(i) Seats contested	15	19	20
	(ii) Seats won	14	1	18
1980	(i) Seats contested	22	16	24
	(ii) Seats won	20	16	2
1984	(i) Seats contested	26	26	12
	(ii) Seats won	25	1	12

Source : India Today (15-11-84 and 31-12-84).

Its rewards in the 1984 Tamil Nadu State Legislative Assembly elections, where it has doubled its share of seats, indicates that the Congress might be regaining its lost footing in Tamil Nadu.

Table-B:

Total Number of Seats in Tamil Nadu State Legislative Assembly : 234	No. of Seats contested	No. of Seats won
1977 (Cong. alone)	198	27
1980 (Cong. + Alliance with DMK)	112	30
1984 (Cong. + Alliance with AIADMK)	72	62

Source: India Today, 15-11-84 and 31-12-84.

It has, as such, become all the more crucial for the Congress Party to step cautiously in Tamil Nadu and not alienate Tamil sentiments.

The Tamil-Sinhala issue, as discussed earlier, is of direct concern to the Tamil population in Tamil Nadu. It is therefore not surprising that it has become a major political issue. As Mrs. Urmila Phadnis observes:

the competitive nature of the political system in India induces rival elements in Tamil Nadu to make use of the Tamil sentiment to mobilize public support. (34)

34 Urmila Phadnis, "India and Sri Lanka", International Studies (JNU, New Delhi), vol.17, 1978,

Thus, the DMK, now in opposition, has assumed a more militant attitude on behalf of the Tamil cause in Sri Lanka, if only to expose the limitations of the AIADMK, which is obliged to act with restraint because of the responsibilities devolving on it as a ruling party.³⁵

Although the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, M.G.Ramachandran, has been less vociferous than M.Karunanidhi, leader of the DMK, in espousing the cause of the Sri Lankan Tamils, by identifying itself totally with the Sri Lankan Tamil cause and making it an election issue, the DMK has forced M.G. Ramachandran also to support the rebels.³⁶ This is evident from his setting Prabhakaran and Uma Maheswaran free from criminal charges, allowing Sri Lankan Tamil militants to freely operate in Tamil Nadu, pressurizing Delhi to issue Indian passports to certain Tamil leaders like Uma Maheswaran who visited Mauritius on a temporary Indian passport.

The pressures of local politics become clearer when we see that the DMK and the AIADMK enjoy an almost equal voter support in Tamil Nadu. According to one estimate, both

35 Interestingly while in power in Tamil Nadu, the DMK has observed restraint in the state but its members in Parliament have not hesitated to champion the Tamil cause and derive whatever advantages they can against the Congress government.

36 M.G.Ramachandran earlier tried to dilute the regional nature of his politics by renaming his party, from Anna DMK to the All-India Anna DMK and by consistently soft-pedalling the anti-Hindi issue.

parties have an assured base of approximately 30-35 percent each, with the AIADMK having a marginal 2 percent edge over the DMK.³⁷ As such, it cannot afford to ignore the sentiments of the electorate. More so, in the light of recent by-elections in Tamil Nadu which have shown the DMK to be increasing its popularity in the state.

In this context of heightened political competition, both the DMK as well as the ruling AIADMK are trying as Sri Lanka's Foreign Minister, Shahul Hameed aptly put it, to better their political fortunes "by hitching their wagons to the Tamil problem in Sri Lanka".³⁸

The Indian government is, thus, caught in a peculiar dilemma. Local politicians in Tamil Nadu, from both the DMK and the AIADMK, are unanimously sympathetic and supportive to Sri Lankan Tamils.³⁹ The Tamil public opinion is also with them. Telephones, post-offices box numbers, multi-page colour calenders proclaim the Tamil cause. If New Delhi

37 The India Today (Delhi) 15 November 1984.

38 S.U.Kodikara, "Regional Roles and Behaviour in South Asia: A Theoretical Framework of Regional Cooperation" in Bhabani Sen Gupta, ed., n.3.

39 The Hindu (Madras) 22 August 1981, "The Finance Minister and leader of the House, V.R.Nedunchezian who moved the Resolution and leader of the opposition, M.Karunanidhi and other party leaders who extended unqualified support to it said they did recognize the dictum that no country had the right to interfere with the internal affairs of another nation; where (however) human and minority rights were at stake, everyone had a right to demand justice, they contended".

decides to disown the Tamil militants, it would be raising a hornet's nest in an ethnically-conscious state. As it is, the commonly held Tamil perception of the Government policy towards Sri Lankan Tamils is: "Arms for the Bengalis but talks for the Tamils". On the other hand, by letting Tamil militants take refuge in Tamil Nadu, India is leaving itself wide open to embarrassing allegations by Sri Lanka in international fora and press.⁴⁰

The Sri Lankan political scene is dominated by an overbearing Sinhalese chauvinist sentiment. The long years of appeasing the Sinhalese by both parties, the SLFP and the UNP, have resulted today in a stage, where neither party, for sheer political existence, can afford to defy the Sinhala verdict. They have truly become prisoners of their competitive politics, which have generated an independent momentum before which they must now bow. Whereas traditionally, the anti-Indian cry was used to unify, at least temporarily, the majority Sinhala-Buddhist sentiment, today, the India bogey is a 'genie' over which both the leading parties have lost control. Any concessions to the Tamils would be considered a sign of weakness rather than strength in the eyes of the

40 The India Today (Delhi) 31 March 1984. Quotes Premadasa's statement to the Sri Lankan Parliament: "Tamil youths are being given terrorist training in Madras and other parts of South India. What would be the position if the sikhs came to Sri Lanka to train in terrorism and fight for secessionism?"

highly politicized Sinhala electorate. As it is, the Indian mediatory initiatives are perceived by the Sinhalese as "influence" and President Jayawardene has to be constantly alert lest he gives the impression of having "negotiated" with India.

Various factions in the UNP hierarchy pull the party in different directions. The hawks and the Buddhist clergy⁴¹ are the dominant group and in dealing with India, the government has to repeatedly demonstrate that it is no less unremitting on Tamil demands than they are. The result is a 'blow-hot-blow-cold' Sri Lankan policy towards India⁴² where at one moment, the Sri Lankan government is reasonable in New Delhi and the next, it is hurling unsustainable charges of an India-directed conspiracy to break up Sri Lanka.

Moreover, the Buddhist clergy has assumed a powerful role in Sri Lankan politics and is much too formidable to be ignored. To begin with, there was a deliberate effort made by the political leadership, especially S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike to draw the Bhikkus into its fold and harness their socio-religious resources for political support. As the symbols

41 Urmila Phadnis, Religion and Politics in Sri Lanka (New Delhi, 1976). In new states, which are struggling to have some system of functional democracy and are still underdeveloped, religious elite can play a significant role.

42 A.S. Abraham, Gathering Sri Lanka Crisis, Columbo's Dangerous Ambivalence, Times of India (Delhi) 13 April 1984.

of Sri Lanka's cultural traditions, it was easy for them to rally mass-support and evoke nationalist sentiment, all of which helped the ruling elite to aggregate their power. As such, Mrs. Phadnis observes,

The pattern of interaction between the religious and political authorities (was) thus characterized by mutuality of interest and a role complementary to each other. (43)

Traditionally, the Buddhist clergy has been active in two principal issues of Sri Lanka's foreign policy. Firstly, those in which it feels concerned as members of a pan-Budhist community and secondly, those in the solution of which, it envisages a way out for the socio-economic amelioration of the Sinhalese Buddhists at home. Both factors are intertwined regionally in the Indo-Sri Lankan and domestically in the Tamil-Sinhala relations. Not surprisingly then, the Buddhist clergy led by the Buddhist Mahasangha, has emerged as a dominant "political influential", which is Sinhalese in character. In fact, the close link between Sinhalese and Buddhism has given rise to the maxim "there is no Buddhism without the Sinhalese and no Sinhalese without Buddhism". Reviving memories of the Sinhalese-Budhist past, the Bhikkhus have fanned Sinhala chauvinism against the "anti-Budhist barbarians", and are most adamantly opposed to negotiations of peace with the Tamils.

43 Urmila Phadnis, n.41, p.301.

Interestingly, within the Sri Lankan leadership today, no leader with political ambitions wants to be seen as being favourably disposed towards India. Each one is playing "his exaggerated hawkishness to the Sinhala gallery".⁴⁴ Seen in the context of succession within the ruling UNP, the issue becomes all the more crucial. With Jayawardene in his late 70's, Lalith Athulathmudali and Ranasinghe Premadasa are the front runners in the succession stakes. Writes Saeed Naqvi of Athulathmudali, "

Since he is perceived by many of his own party as only a hawk-~~posed~~ dove playing out a role for political gains, he is going out of his way to project himself otherwise, as one who even in the past was a dove-~~posed~~ hawk. (45)

Premadasa, being "congenitally combative" represents the hardliners. His frequent and intemperate anti-India statements make Athulathmudali, in comparison appear to be "New Delhi's boy".

The unhelpful attitude of the main opposition party, the SLFP is also a constraint. As a member of the UNP claimed, "All the SLFP is interested in/^{is} the return of Sirima Bandaranaike's civic rights⁴⁶ and the holding of a general

44 Saeed Naqvi, n.31.

45 Ibid.

46 Mrs. Bandaranaike's civic rights were restored to her in the beginning of 1986.

election". Instead of putting narrow political gains behind them, and helping evolve a national concensus for resolving the ethnic problem, at this time of crisis for Sri Lanka, the SLFP has been engaged in politicking for short-term gains.

In the Tamil-Sinhala issue, the Sri Lankan government is also obstructed by the uncooperative attitude of the TULF and of late by its weakening position vis-a-vis the Tamil militant groups. Its leaders having left Sri Lanka for refuge in Madras, the TULF has discredited itself in Tamil eyes. This has been exploited successfully by the terrorist groups, who, with their demand for "Eelam and no less", have assumed leadership of the Tamil movement in Sri Lanka. However, even within these groups, there is splintering and lack of cohesiveness, in terms both of leadership and ideology. As such, President Jayawardene finds himself in a position, where even if he wants to, he has no one to negotiate with, who can represent the Tamil demands and whose decisions would be acceptable to the entire Sri Lankan Tamil community.

(iii) Role of External Actors:

Besides the core and the periphery sectors, there also exists at the sub-systemic level of analysis, the 'intrusive sector' defined as states extrinsic to the region which have endeavoured in the past or are doing so in the present to manipulate the regional power structure for the

furtherance of their respective foreign policy goals.⁴⁷ In the South Asian sub-system, where one country towers disproportionately over the rest, the intrusive sector assumes a significant role in that the smaller countries of the region have consistently sought extra-regional linkages as a counterpoise to India.

1971 posed new challenges to Sri Lanka's limited diplomatic manoeuvrability because before this it had relied on its close ties with Pakistan and China to create a balance of power and ensure its security. During the Indo-Pak conflict, a segment of public opinion in Sri Lanka raised a pertinent question which seemed to sum up the small power psyche of Sri Lanka aptly: "It wondered whether India was going to be the 'policeman' of South Asia and if so who was to define the norms of such a role".⁴⁸

The war of 1971, having clearly demonstrated the inability of extrinsic actors to aid Pakistan's ruling elite in managing the secessionist movement in East Pakistan, Expediency pushed Mrs. Bandaranaike's SLFP government in the direction of developing cordial relations with India. Since the

47 Sivananda Patnaik, "Sri Lanka and the South Asian Sub-System : A Study of Sub-macro in International Politics" India Quarterly, vol.36, No.2, April-June 1980.

48 Urmila Phadnis, "Indo Sri Lankan Relations in the 1980's" in D.D.Khanna, ed., Strategic Environment in South Asia During the 1980's (Calcutta, 1979), p.33.

July 1983 riots, however, Sri Lanka's foreign policy has taken a turn, which is perceived by India, as being far from friendly to it.

In order to understand India's threat perceptions, we must take into account its two-fold policy vis-a-vis its neighbours, namely (a) to anticipate possibilities of internal disturbances in the neighbouring countries and prevent their cascading impact on India and (b) to prevent bilateral irritants from getting 'internationalized'.

Both these areas of concern came together in July-August 1983.⁴⁹ The United Press International (UPI) reported that President Jayawardene feared armed Indian intervention to protect the Tamils and had appealed to the US, Britain, Pakistan and Bangladesh for military assistance in the event of an invasion. Although Jayawardene later denied any threat of invasion and informed Mrs. Gandhi that Sri Lanka had appealed to no one for military assistance and the Indian government publicly accepted this assurance, India's conspicuous absence from the list of states supposedly asked for help by Sri Lanka in suppressing the Tamil insurgents, raised Indian suspicions.

49 Robert L. Hardgrave Jr., India Under Pressure (Colorado, 1984).

New Delhi's response to the situation involves the enunciation of what Bhabani Sen Gupta terms "an Indian doctrine of regional security".⁵⁰ According to this, while India will not intervene in the internal conflicts of a South Asian nation and will strongly oppose such intervention in any other country, it will not tolerate intervention in a South-Asian nation if there is any anti-Indian implication. In other words, if external assistance is required to deal with serious internal conflict, help should be sought from a number of countries within the region, including India. Exclusion of India, in such circumstances, will be considered an anti-Indian move.⁵¹

Since 1983, India has had misgivings about what it perceives to be, an increasingly influential role of the United States in Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka's policy of extending facilities to the Voice of America and in granting the tender for the Trincomalee Oil Tank farm to the western based consortium of Oroleum, Tradinatt & Oil Tanks⁵² has caused grave concern to India. Sri Lanka's rejection of the Indian

50 The India Today (Delhi) 31 September 1985, pp.14-15.

51 The India Today (Delhi) 30 April 1985. President Jayawardene on why he had excluded Indian assistance "...you see, Indian help is suspect in the eyes of Sri Lankan people".

52 The Hindu (Madras) 22 April 1984. The OROLEUM of Singapore is a front for the US based Coastal Corporation of Bermuda.

proposal was on a purely political consideration, its terms being far more beneficial to Sri Lanka than those offered by the western-based consortium.⁵³

India has, also, not discounted the possibility that Sri Lanka might give the US naval facilities in Trincomalee. The US authorities have repeatedly denied plans to develop Trincomalee into a U.S. base. The US ambassador in Colombo, Thomas Reed, declared publicly that the United States has no designs on Sri Lanka "despite what others may allege" and that it seeks no "special favours or advantages not available to other countries with which Sri Lanka has friendly relations."⁵⁴ Nevertheless, India is convinced that naval facilities in Trincomalee would be welcomed by the US in the context of its naval designs, globally.⁵⁵

It cannot be gainsaid that Sri Lanka with one of the finest sheltered ports in the world, Trincomalee, occupies a place of immense importance in India's defence strategies.

53 V.P.Vaidik, "The Tamil Problem in Sri Lanka", Times of India (Delhi) 18 August 1984. Quotes Lalith Athulathmudali "this contract could not be given to India because it would have created problems for the UNP government".

54 S.U.Kodikara, n.38, p.50.

55 Answering a question in the Rajya Sabha (27 November 1981), External Affairs Minister, P.V.Narasimha Rao said, "The government of Sri Lanka have assured us from time to time that they do not propose to permit foreign naval bases in Sri Lanka... I have given the categorical denial given by the government of Sri Lanka and we have to go by the official statement of another government. There is hardly anything we can do about it."

Foreign air strips and naval control of Trincomalee would expose India to air and sea bombardment and to assault along her extensive coastline.⁵⁶

The fact that a succession of American dignitaries have visited Sri Lanka in the last two years have compounded the prevailing tension in Indo-Sri Lankan relations. These included U.S. Defence Secretary, Casper Weinberger, Special Ambassador, General Vernon Walters, Senator Addabo, Chairman U.S. Senate Defence Appropriations Committee, Howard Schaeffer, US Assistant Secretary for South Asia and others. In June 1984, President Jayawardene himself undertook a state-visit to the United States. Although described as being "routine", these visits have heightened India's regional threat perceptions.

India is, also, apprehensive of Sri Lanka's efforts to combat terrorism by inducting the services of experts from the Mossad, Israeli intelligence service, and British SAS officers. The exact nature of the involvement of these experts and their total number is not known but it continues to raise concern in India. Mrs. Gandhi reportedly alleged that Sri Lanka was "virtually forging a security relationship with Israel".⁵⁷ Romesh Bhandari, also, in the course of his trip

56 The strategic unity of India and Sri Lanka has already been emphasized in Chapter 2.

57 The Hindu (Madras), 26 August 1984.

to Colombo in March 1985 reportedly said that the involvement of 'outsiders' in Sri Lanka's internal affairs was a cause of concern for India as a factor which might possibly destabilize the region.⁵⁸

Interestingly, it was the pressure from the Western powers which goaded India into offering its good offices in a manner that was acceptable to the Jayawardene and asked the latter to accept that offer.⁵⁹ This becomes evident from Sri Lanka's policy of not responding to India's call, while at the same time trying to mobilize Western support in the ethnic crisis. In pursuance of this policy, Jayawardene visited Pakistan and later on the US, Ronnie de Mel and A.C.S. Hameed also visited the US and UK for arms and military help. Only when such direct assistance was denied and also the need to create a picture of domestic peace and stability before the Western members of the Sri Lanka Aid Consortium arose, that, Sri Lanka accepted India's "good offices". It needs, also, to be noted, that Sri Lanka has since then tried to introduce various names, other than India (Henry Kissinger, the Commonwealth) to mediate in the Tamil-Sinhala conflict in Sri Lanka.

58 S.U.Kodikara, n.38, p.55.

59 S.D.Muni, "Sri Lanka : Deepening Concerns and Shrinking Options", Mainstream, 23 March 1985, p.5.

Taking note of the strengthening Pakistan-Sri Lankan nexus, the Ministry of External Affairs of India in its Annual Report of 1985-86 noted, "the growing military nexus between Pakistan and Sri Lanka following President Jayawardene's visit to Pakistan in April 1985 and the visit of the President of Pakistan to Sri Lanka in December 1985, is being viewed with some concern (by India)."⁶⁰ The memory of Sri Lanka's support of Pakistan during the 1971 war remains unforgotten, in the Indian decision-maker's mind and added to this, is the fact that both regimes have staunch US support. Not unnaturally then, India is anxious at being encircled by states whose domestic instability makes them extremely vulnerable to external manipulation, which capitalizing on India's so-called hegemonistic designs, threatens to undermine India's vital interests.

India's inherent stakes in the maintenance of status quo in the region is not only because it ensures its continued predominance, as its neighbours repeatedly allege, but, also, because any disruption would have undesirable consequences for the security and peace of the whole region. It is in this context of the asymmetrical geopolitics of

60 The Hindu (Madras) 28-31 January 1986. In an interview with N. Ram, President Jayawardene said, "...Pakistan is training our people. We send a large number of Pakistan officers...I am not hiding that. I must do something."

61 Sri Lanka Daily News (Colombo) 26 December 1985. Quotes Zia-ul-Haq's press conference in Colombo, "If only Pakistan had been an arms trading or arms producing nation, I would have put all I had in support of Sri Lanka's war against terrorism".

South Asia, of the desire of the smaller countries to search for a counterpoise to India, of the Indian desire to ensure its predominance and to maintain regional peace and stability by keeping out external influences that one has to understand India's consistent efforts towards preventing external power's gaining any significant presence in the region. And it is in this context only that the South Asian states' consistent search for external support can be explained.⁶²

(iv) Personality Factor:

Through out the course of Indo-Sri Lankan relations, the interaction of personalities at the highest level has been a factor of considerable importance in determining the nature of state interaction. During the period of 1971-85, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, Sirima Bandarnaike, Morarji Desai, Junius Jayawardene and Rajiv Gandhi have been the principal actors on the Indo-Sri Lankan centre-stage.

Indira Gandhi and Sirima Bandaranaike were "leaders cast in the same mould".⁶³ The first two women premiers, both ladies, widowed at an early age, were catapulted into politics under tragic circumstances, Mrs. Gandhi at the death

62 Nancy Jetly, "India and the Domestic Turmoil in South Asia : An Overview", presented to the Seminar on Domestic conflicts in South Asian States : Emerging Trends (JNU, New Delhi), October 1984, p.24.

63 S. Nihal Singh, "The Subcontinent : Old is Beautiful", The Statesman (Delhi) 26 July 1977.

of her father Jawaharlal Nehru, under whose shadow she had always lived and Sirima in an 'emotional vote of support', after the assassination of her husband Solomon Bandaranaike, then Prime Minister of Sri Lanka. Caught in similar circumstances, politically of dealing with the problems of poverty and underdevelopment, ideologically of pursuing a non-aligned foreign policy and aspiring for socialist goals and personally, of raising young children and holding their own in male dominated socio-political systems, a special empathy, a comradeship of sorts, developed between them. Their friendship, which began when Mrs. Gandhi accompanied her father Prime Minister Nehru to Colombo, deepened with time.

Coincidentally, their political careers also developed along parallel lines. While Mrs. Bandaranaike imposed emergency in Sri Lanka from 1971 to 1977, Mrs. Gandhi imposed it in India during 1975- to 1977, in which time they projected their sons, Sanjay and Anura as heir-apparents. When at the general elections held in 1977 in India and in Sri Lanka, both women were ousted, then sense of common interest and personal identity became more pronounced. Whereas Mrs. Gandhi faced the Shah Commission for emergency excesses, Mrs. Bandaranaike was deprived of her political rights on a charge of misuse of official position and corruption.

Commenting on the personalities of the two women,

S.Nihal Singh in his article, "The Sub-continent, Old is Beautiful", wrote:

Each a personality in her own right, they (Mrs.Gandhi and Mrs.Bandaranaike) have little time for obscurantist traditional values (although neither of them is above making publicized visits to temples and mosques to gain rewards), they are modern in outlook and are in varying degrees divorced from the indigeneous milieu. They have tremendous ego and their commitment to their countries is intertwined with their own fortunes. Each of them loves to strut on the world stage, even if the objective is achieved by abusing the governments of the very countries whose journals give them most prominence. Each overplayed... her hand. (64)

Admittedly harsh, this editorial succinctly points to the 'character commonality' between Mrs.Gandhi and Mrs.Bandaranaike

On returning to power in 1980, Mrs.Gandhi in her first press conference is reported to have expressed her 'deep distress' over the way that Mrs.Bandaranaike was deprived of her political rights.⁶⁵ Her sympathy for Mrs.Bandarnaike was undiluted and overt.⁶⁶ She even tried to persuade President Jayawardene to restore Mrs.Bandaranaike's civil rights. This friendship,between the Gandhis and the Bandaranaikes,has earned forthe SLFP a reputation of being

64 Ibid.

65 The Statesman (Delhi) 22 October 1980.

66 S.U.Kodikara, Foreign Policy of Sri Lanka : A Third World Perspective (Delhi, 1982), p.49.

pro-India. On many an occasion, Anura Bandaranaike has been confronted with references to 'Anura's aunty'. In the context of the ethnic crisis, Bandaranaike is reported to have said, "Why is he (Ranasinghe Premadasa) saying such nasty things about Mrs.Gandhi? Does he realize what J R Jayawardene has done by inviting foreign experts to contain terrorism? What if the CIA brings about a coup with the help of Mossad and the SAS? Who will Premadasa run to for help except Mrs.Gandhi?"⁶⁷

On its part, India, of late, has in an effort to gain President Jayawardene's full cooperation in resolving the ethnic crisis, been cold-shouldering the SLFP to disprove the UNP perception that India is pro-Bandaranaike and the SLFP.

Jayawardene's relationship with Mrs.Gandhi got enmeshed in his rivalry with Mrs.Bandaranaike, which dates back to a long-standing competition for power between the two 'Goyigama' family clans of the Bandaranaike and the Senanayakes (to whom Jayawardene is related).⁶⁸ Clubbing Mrs.Gandhi with Mrs.Bandaranaike, Jayawardene, caught in the euphoria of 1977 and not expecting her to return to power, made a number of serious and damaging public allegations on Mrs.Gandhi and her imposition of emergency. This together

67 The India Today (Delhi) 31 July 1985.

68 Howard W.Wriggins, n.2, p.110. "If public affairs required that any of these nationalists (the Senanayakes) should visit the Bandaranaike estate...they would be treated as inferiors on the Bandaranaike verandah and would not be asked to sit down".

with the UNP government's policy of harassing Mrs. Gandhi's close friend, Sirima Bandaranaike, resulted in strained Indo-Sri Lankan relations during Mrs. Gandhi's last term in office. Till the time of her death, she did not extend "fullest cooperation" to Sri Lanka on "certain matters".⁶⁹ Indeed, "it is no exaggeration to state that at no time in the past (had) the personal relations between the two Heads of States (India and Sri Lanka) declined to such low straits as (during the period 1977 to 1980)".⁷⁰

In direct contrast to Mrs. Gandhi and Mrs. Bandaranaike, of both Morarji Desai and Junius Jayawardene, it can be said that they waited a long time to occupy the coveted chair of the Prime Minister. Sidelined by the dynastic control of their respective political parties, the Nehru-dominated Congress and the Senanayake controlled UNP, both these leaders remained in the peripheral decision-making levels. Jayawardene had been responsible for revamping the UNP each time it was routed at the general elections and ensured its successful comeback. However, till the death of Dudley Senanayake in April 1973, the leadership of the UNP eluded him.

69 In 1975, when the SLFP government asked Mrs. Gandhi's help in sending back Kuttimani, a Sri Lankan Tamil terrorist hiding in India, she had him repatriated immediately. This is in direct contrast to her policy of turning a Nelson's eye to the Sri Lankan Tamil terrorists in Tamil Nadu.

70 S.U.Kodikara, n.66, p.49.

Extreme cordiality characterized relations between Morarji Desai and Jayawardene, with both men belonging to the same generation and pursuing right of centre policies. They "were both spartan and ascetic in their personal tastes and lives".⁷¹ In his message to Jayawardene on the occasion of the latter's election victory, Morarji Desai pointed to the "interesting parallel" between the "manner and extent"⁷² of the UNP victory in Sri Lanka and the Janata Party's emergence in India. He said,

I recall that on my assumption of office, you had drawn my attention to the many similarities between our approaches. The manner and extent of your victory also affords an interesting parallel. This encourages the hope that we shall succeed in working together for the common goal of our two countries. (73)

The most recent entrant on the South Asian centre stage is Rajiv Gandhi, elected to power with an overwhelming and unprecedented two-thirds majority after the assassination of his mother in October 1984. Scion of the most dominant political family in India, a pilot by profession, shy and retiring by nature, Rajiv Gandhi was forced to undertake political responsibilities after his brother Sanjay's death. Although it is much too early to assess his success in the

71 Ibid., p.47

72 K.P.Misra, ed., Janata's Foreign Policy (New Delhi, 1979), p.44.

73 The Statesman (Delhi) 24 July 1977.

international arena, he has made an impact on regional politics in South Asia.

Being a newcomer to politics, Rajiv is perceived, by other leaders of the region, to have introduced a new attitude of sincerity in his politics. Compared to that "certain style of diplomacy and political rhetoric" of Mrs. Gandhi's that some neighbours found at times "abrasive",⁷⁴ Rajiv Gandhi's demeanour is seen as being more gentle, conciliatory and honest. In his interview on Japanese television, President Jayawardene said: "My strongest impression of him (Rajiv Gandhi) is one of sincerity. He is a warm person with a genuine desire to solve problems". Even the hawkish Premadasa, after meeting Rajiv Gandhi in New York, observed: "Rajiv is a very warm person and I hope our friendship will endure. Personal relations transcend politics". Above all, whereas neighbouring leaders were always wary of Mrs. Gandhi's shrewd and calculating politics, Rajiv Gandhi has the advantage of a clean image and does not have to face any mental blocks in his interactions with his counterparts in adjoining countries.

However, while it is true that the Sri Lankan leadership has, by and large, been more willing to place its confidence in his personal integrity and desire to resolve the Tamil

74 The India Today (Delhi) 30 April 1985.

problem, it would be naive to overlook the fact that like his predecessor, Rajiv Gandhi's hands are tied by domestic pulls and pressures and also by the other complexities of sub-continental politics".

(v) Economic Factors:

Economic factors are an important determinant of inter-state relations. The Indo-Sri Lankan relationship also has economic underpinnings which must necessarily be taken into account.

The post-independence ruling elite in Sri Lanka was a coalition of merchant-capital and petty-bourgeoisie with incipient industrial capital. Since merchant capital is not concerned with the development of the production process and thrives on an exchange economy, it was natural that the ruling elite promoted an export-oriented policy soft towards foreign capital. As Satchi Ponnambalam observed,

deriving its power base from the urban commercial and propertied class, it did not wish to adopt a policy of import substitution in regard to manufactured goods since this would have caused dislocation of trade and discomfort to the consumption of the latter. (75)

The success of these export-led growth policies, being dependent on the external market, in periods of market

75 Satchi Ponnambalam, Dependent Capitalism in Crisis: Sri Lankan Economy 1948-1980 (London, 1981), p.23.

buoyancy, like during the Korean war, the ruling elite found it easy to promote the interests of the Sinhala merchant capital. However, in the 1980's, this free-market and export-oriented regime introduced by the UNP, in replacement of the SLFP's protectionist, import-substitution policy, has not yielded rich dividends. The Sri Lankan ruling elite has sought collaboration with international capital at a time when the economies of the North are not in a position to extend all the wherewithal which is needed to sustain an export-led economy. As such, with the global market mechanism itself suffering from the pangs of transition, the Sri Lankan economy has fared poorly and got even more firmly tied with the fortune of the global economy over which it has no control.⁷⁶

The brunt of this economic inertia has been borne mainly by the Tamil minority community. On the basis of the chauvinistic argument that during the colonial days, Sinhala merchant capital was discriminated against the Tamils, all government policies since independence, as discussed earlier, have been aimed at reallocating economic resources and opportunities to the advantage of the

76 Girijesh Pant, "New Economic Policy of Sri Lanka: Conflicts and Contradictions" presented to the Seminar on Domestic Conflicts in South Asian States: Emerging Trends (JNU, Delhi, October 1984), pp.1-10.

politically strategic Sinhala group.⁷⁷

Statistics (Table C)⁷⁸ reveal that the Sri Lankan economy has registered a constant decline in the growth rate of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and the Per capita income.

Table -C: RATES OF GROWTH OF THE GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT AND PER CAPITA INCOME FROM 1977-83 (IN TERMS OF CONSTANT PRICE AT 1970 LEVEL)

	Rates of Growth						
	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983
GDP (at constant 1970 factor cost price)	4.2	8.2	6.3	5.8	5.8	5.1	4.9
GDP per capita at constant price	2.8	6.8	4.3	2.6	2.5	3.3	2.4

Moreover, the sectoral composition of the Gross Domestic Product for the period 1977-83 reflects the predominance of trade over manufacturing, a phenomenal rise of imports, and a quantum jump in public administration and defence spendings. (Table D)⁷⁹

77 Such was the extent of discrimination against the Tamils, that in 1981 the per capita capital expenditure in the jaffna district was only Rs.313 as compared to the national average of Rs.656.

78 Central Bank of Ceylon, Annual Report, 1983.

79 Ibid.

Table D: SECTORAL COMPOSITION OF THE GDP (AT CONSTANT 1970 FACTOR COST PRICE IN PERCENTAGE) FOR THE 1977-83 PERIOD

	1977	1983	% change
Manufacturing	14.6	13.0	26.3
Construction	3.8	4.5	65.3
Trade	18.6	19.7	50.1
Imports	3.2	4.6	103.5
Exports	4.1	3.5	20.1
Public Administration and Defence	4.9	6.3	81.9

Increasing pressure of global obligations has increased the Sri Lankan economy's debt liabilities considerably. However, its repaying capability is tied with the export of tea, rubber and coconut which account for 50 percent of its total exports. The deteriorating terms of trade for these products in the global market place, a greater burden on Sri Lanka's export earnings. In contrast, its import of consumer goods has increased significantly, inflating its deficit balance of trade.

Although, according to a Sri Lankan High Commission's report,⁸⁰ in 1979, India was the second largest exporter to

80 Information given by the Sri Lankan High Commission, New Delhi.

Sri Lanka, by and large, the trade flows have been low in volume. The ESCAP survey of 1981 shows the low inter-country trade between India and Sri Lanka. (Table-E).

Table -E: INTERCOUNTRY TRADE BETWEEN INDIA AND SRI LANKA in 1980

	Value in Million \$	% of total exports/ imports
<u>(i) EXPORTS 1980</u>		
Sri Lanka to India	34.3	3.3
India to Sri Lanka	88.0	1.0
<u>(ii) IMPORTS 1980</u>		
Sri Lanka from India	96.7	4.8
India from Sri Lanka	38.0	0.3

This is primarily because of the complementarities of their economies in non-traditional products.⁸¹ Moreover, Indian businessmen and money lenders have never been popular in Sri Lanka. The Indian traders, especially the Sindhis in the textile trade and the South Indians in the food import

81 V.P.Dutt, n.14, p.227. "Both countries (India and Sri Lanka) were major exporters of tea and they had ... tended to view their economic relationship in terms of competition and had not made any serious effort to explore areas of cooperation".

business amassed a great deal of wealth. They were seen to be both exploiters as well as rivals by the local capitalists. A content-analysis of the Ceylon Observer of 1971 shows that most of the hostile anti-Indian news reports were directed not against the Indian government but against the Indian trading community, especially in South India, which was perceived to be ganging up against the Ceylonese people by raising food prices and by indulging in hoarding practices.

In its trade relations with India, Sri Lanka is perpetually confronted with a negative balance. The highest value of exports from Sri Lanka to India was in 1980 when the figure reached SL Rs.568 million. This is in contrast with SL Rs.2,529 million, the estimated value of Indian exports to Sri Lanka in 1979.⁸²

Till about two decades ago, India was regularly importing from Sri Lanka agricultural commodities like copra, coconut oil, rubber, spices, cocoa beans, cinnamon, leaf oil, etc. Most of these items have come under import restrictions and in some cases, supply constraints. Under the Bangkok Agreement, India has granted tariff concessions for import of 12 items to Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka has lowered tariffs on 18 import items from India.⁸³ However, more of

82 Information given by the Sri Lankan High Commission, New Delhi.

83 K.J.Weerasinghe, "Investment Prospects and Trade Balance," Times of India (Bombay) 4 February 1980.

these efforts are needed to bring about a somewhat better balance of trade between the two countries, by making import duty concessions, relaxing import/^{on}controls items of interest to both, and entering into joint ventures. The Indian government is considering joint ventures in Sri Lanka on a buy-back basis for such industrial products like cement, block rubber and PVC, rubber belting, pharmaceutical formulation, etc.⁸⁴

However, by and large, the Indian economic diplomacy, through trade and aid, has been extremely limited in relation to Sri Lanka. Its foreign aid programme is a very small fraction of the total amounts disbursed to Sri Lanka and the even larger amount needed by it. Being itself a recipient of foreign economic assistance, it is difficult for India to shoulder the economic burdens of the economic development of another country, let alone a region. In fact, India's regional aspirations are severely handicapped by its resource limitations. Its inability to satisfy Sri Lankan economic needs made the island turn to China and later the United States.⁸⁵

84 V.P.Dutt, n.81, pp.227-232.

85 China established itself as a much more important factor in the island's economy by offering stable prices for Sri Lankan rubber in return for rice shipments.

(vi) Role of Mass Media:

Like technology, communications is not a neutral factor. Comprising of waves of messages and images carried forward through the infrastructure of the mass-media as well as through verbal and semiological exchanges, communications have been described by Nerbert Weiner as the "cement which makes organizations (to) think together, (to) see together and (to)act together".⁸⁶ Indeed perceptions of each other's country are based on folk memory and on messages conveyed through the wavelengths, newspapers, magazines and books. Whereas folk memory rests on past experiences, communications can play a key role in reinforcing or modifying the images derived from the past.

Communication among the countries of South Asia, as a whole, is severely limited and largely negative. By feeding adversary relationship perceptions, it has strengthened barriers rather than promoted cooperation. This is especially true of Indo-Sri Lankan relations.

Both India and Sri Lanka have repeatedly expressed their unhappiness with the role of each other's mass media. The Indian High Commissioner J.N.Dixit is reported to have said, "We should not allow newspapers to go to town with

86 Suneet Vir Singh, "A Regional Communication Policy for South Asia", in Bhabani Sen Gupta, ed., n.4, p.71.

stories that will affect the peace efforts."⁸⁷ S.Thondaman, the CWC Minister of Rural Industrial Development, after his 10-day private visit to India said, "The newspapers devote over half of their first page to reports of events in the North and the East (of Sri Lanka). They use provocative headlines like "massacre", "genocide", and "brutality".⁸⁸ On the other side, Sri Lankan papers very often carry headlines referring to the impending Indian invasion and the South Indian affinity for the Tamil Tigers.

From all this it appears that the media of both countries have, by and large, projected their own regional/world views and justified the politics and actions of their respective regimes. In fact, it would not be too harsh to conclude that ^{the media} ~~the~~ is guided more by the passions and prejudices of its own elite and by the state of bilateral relationship than by objective standards of professional journalism.

In India, the print medium has, within the limitations of government restrictions and difficult first hand access to regional news, tried to see the actions of its own government through lenses other than official. Indeed, this has created a degree of ambivalence in the Indian position on

87 Sri Lanka Daily News (Colombo) 14 November 1985.

88 Ibid., 21 March 1985.

the Tamil-Sinhala issue, with the South block denying the existence of Tamil bases in Tamil Nadu even while Indian periodicals⁸⁹ insist that they are very much there. This dichotomy has resulted in making the Indian official line suspect in the eyes of the Sri Lankans.⁹⁰

Between India and Sri Lanka, there are also misgivings on both sides about misreporting of ethnic issue. The Sri Lankan High Commission in New Delhi has frequently objected to Indian press reports as being 'false' and 'mischievous'.⁹¹

Apart from ignorance and inertia, misreporting is caused by the difficult access to news resulting from the illiberal attitude of the governments and the denial of visas to newsmen from neighbouring countries especially during times of internal crisis. In this case, Sri Lanka's banning the entry of Indian journalists, while granting visas to foreign correspondents stationed in India, has been a tremendous deterrent in allowing the Indian press to play a more independent and objective role in educating public opinion on the ethnic issue in Sri Lanka. Stories of the Sinhalese cruelty, murder, rape and torture, as told by the

89 The India Today (Delhi) 31 March, 1984.

90 The Government of Sri Lanka tried to buy 1000 copies of the India Today (March 1984) issue. However, it could procure only 200 copies which it sent to major world capitals to expose the Indian involvement.

91 Sri Lanka Daily News (Colombo) 28 February 1985.

Tamil refugees, are reported indiscriminately by the press⁹² and, in the absence of factual verification, have contributed, to a great extent, in the moulding of Indian public opinion.

While in general, the role of newspapers as a mirror or a moulder of public opinion may be debatable, in a country like Sri Lanka which has a literacy rate of 82 per cent, an aggregate circulation of 612,000 newspapers and 49 newspapers per 1000 of the population,⁹³ the print medium assumes an indisputable significance.

A content-analysis⁹⁴ of the Ceylon Observer (Colombo) for 1971 reveals:

- (a) Of all the South Asian countries, India figures most regularly in the news from the neighbouring countries. A very small volume of news from the remaining five neighbours is published and that, too, mainly where it affects their relations with India.
- (b) The range of news coverage is extremely limited being confined to bilateral political tensions. News regarding

92 One poster depicting Sinhalese atrocities went to the extent of showing a pregnant woman being ripped open and the child cut into pieces.

93 Suneet Vir Singh, n.64, p.92.

94 The Ceylon Observer (Colombo) January-December 1971 and the Sri Lankan Daily News (Colombo) January-December 1985 were made available for study by the Buttler Library, Columbia University, New York and New York Public Library.

the non-political events and developments, where no conflicting interests exist, and which are the shared concern of both countries, as indeed of the entire region, are ignored. (Tables F, G and H)

Table-F : CEYLON OBSERVER (1971) NEWSREPORTS CONCERNING INDIA REPORTED ON:

	Page 1(headlines)	Page 1(subtitles)
January	1	3
February	1	-
March	2	3
April	3	3
May	2	3
June	2	2
July	1	1
August	-	2
September	2	2
October	1	4
November	8	2
December	12	1
	35	26

Table-G : CATEGORIES OF NEWS REPORTS CONCERNING INDIA.

Month	Bilateral	Domestic	Regional	International
January	3	3	1	-
February	-	2	3	-
March	1	4	1	-
April	-	-	7	-
May	2	2	1	-
June	3	1	3	-
July	-	-	-	-
August	1	1	2	1
September	2	-	-	-
October	3	-	5	-
November	-	-	10	-
December	-	-	14	-
Total	15	13	49	1

Table H : ATTITUDINAL REFLECTIONS IN INDO- SRI LANKAN
NEWS REPORTS.

Month	Hostile	Strained	Cooperative	Friend
January	2	-	1	
February	-	-	-	
March	-	-	-	2
April	-	-	-	
May	-	1	1	
June	-	-	2	
July	-	-	-	
August	-	1	-	
September	1	-	1	
October	-	1	1	1
November	-	-	-	
December	-	-	-	
Total	3	3	6	3

A similar analysis of the Sri Lanka Daily News (Colombo) for the year, 1985, reflects the changing Sri Lankan threat perception vis-a-vis India. Whereas the Ceylon Observer of January to December 1971, carried a total of only 15 news items concerning Indo-Sri Lankan relations, the January through December publications of the Sri Lanka Daily News, contained as many as 35 news items on that subject on only the front page, indicating the increased concern with India. (Tables I and J).

Table-I : SRI LANKA DAILY NEWS (1985) NEWS REPORTS CONCERNING INDIA REPORTED ON :

Month	Page 1 (headlines)	Page 1 (subtitles)
January	2	2
February	3	1
March	2	1
April	2	2
May	3	1
June	2	-
July	1	1
August	1	1
September	-	2
October	2	-
November	2	2
December	1	1
Total	21	14

Table - J: ATTITUDINAL REFLECTIONS IN INDO SRI LANKAN
NEWS REPORTS

Month	Hostile	Strained	Cooperative	Friendly
January	-	3	1	
February	2	1	1	
March	1	-	2	
April	2	1	1	
May	1	-	2	
June	-	-	1	1
July	-	-	-	-
August	-	-	1	1
September	-	1	1	1
October	1	-	2	
November	-	1	-	
December	-	1	-	-
Total	7	8	12	3

A content-analysis of the Times of India (Delhi), from January to December 1971, shows that Sri Lanka has figured on page one headlines only 5 times during this time. This is in direct contrast to the 35 times that India figured in the same place in the Ceylon Observer of that period. This indicates that news from India is of much greater interest to the Sri Lankans than vice versa. This disproportionate weightage to newsreports from the two countries underlies

their small country - big neighbour relationship. Furthermore, whereas only 19.5 percent of the newsreports involving Sri Lanka in the Times of India dealt with bilateral issues, in the case of the Ceylon Observer (1971) the figure was as high as 24.5 percent (Tables K,L and M)

Table-K : TIMES OF INDIA (1971) NEWS REPORTS CONCERNING SRI LANKA REPORTED ON

Month	Page 1(headlines)	Page 1(subtitles)
January	-	-
February	-	1
March	-	2
April	5	15
May	-	9
June	-	2
July	-	-
August	-	-
September	-	2
October	-	3
November	-	2
December	-	-
Total	5	36

Table - L: CATEGORIES OF NEWSREPORTS CONCERNING SRI LANKA

Month	Bilateral	Domestic	Regional	International
January	-	-	-	-
February	-	-	1	-
March	-	1	-	1
April	3	14	1	2
May	2	7	-	-
June	-	2	-	-
July	-	-	-	-
August	-	-	-	-
September	2	-	-	-
October	-	1	2	-
November	1	-	-	1
December	-	-	-	-
Total	8	25	4	4

Table - M : ATTITUDINAL REFLECTIONS IN INDO-SRI LANKAN NEWS REPORTS

Month	Hostile	Strained	Cooperative	Friendly
January	-	-	-	-
February	-	-	1	-
March	-	-	-	-
April	-	-	-	3
May	-	-	-	2
June	-	-	-	-
July	-	-	-	-
August	-	-	-	-
September	-	-	2	-
October	-	-	1	1
November	-	-	1	-
December	-	-	-	-
Total	-	-	5	6

The January through December issues of the Times of India (Delhi) 1984⁹⁵ registered an increasing concern with Sri Lanka. From a total of 41 newsreports on page one involving Sri Lanka, the number had increased to 93. Of these, 29 per cent were featured in the headlines. Moreover, 60 percent of the bilateal news reports ranged from hostile to strained, as compared with the 50 percent reported in the Sri Lanka Daily News of 1985. There was no news report which reflected a friendly disposition towards Sri Lanka. (Tables N, O and P)

Table-N: TIMES OF INDIA (DELHI) NEWS REPORTS CONCERNING SRI LANKA REPORTED ON

Month	Page 1(headlines)	Page 1 (subtitle)
January	1	5
February	-	2
March	-	5
April	1	12
May	3	6
June	-	3
July	2	3
August	5	2
September	2	6
October	1	8
November	2	2
December	10	12
Total	27	66

95 For September and October 1984, The Statesman (Delhi) was analysed.

Table-0 : CATEGORIES OF NEWS REPORTS CONCERNING SRI LANKA

Month	Bilateral	Domestic	Regional	International
January	2	4	-	-
February	-	2	-	-
March	-	5	-	-
April	6	7	-	-
May	1	4	-	4
June	2	-	-	1
July	-	5	-	-
August	3	4	-	-
September	2	5	-	1
October	4	4	-	1
November	-	4	-	-
December	5	16	-	1
Total	25	60	-	8

Table -P: ATTITUDINAL REFLECTIONS IN INDO-SRI LANKAN NEWS REPORTS

Month	Hostile	Strained	Cooperative	Friendly
January	-	-	2	-
February	-	-	-	-
March	-	-	-	-
April	1	2	3	-
May	-	-	1	-
June	1	1	-	-
July	-	-	-	-
August	-	1	2	-
September	-	1	1	-
October	-	3	1	-
November	-	-	-	-
December	-	5	-	-
Total	2	13	10	-

A similar exercise was undertaken for the Hindu (Madras) for a time period of 6 months, January to June 1984. (Tables Q,R and S)

Table-Q: THE HINDU (MADRAS) JANUARY TO JUNE 1984 NEWS REPORTS CONCERNING SRI LANKA REPORTED ON

Month	Page 1(headlines)	Page 1 (subtitles)
January	7	10
February	1	12
March	4	7
April	4	13
May	4	13
June	7	8
Total	27	63

Table-R: CATEGORIES OF NEWS REPORTS CONCERNING SRI LANKA

Month	Bilateral	Domestic	Regional	International
January	2	15		
February	1	12		
March	5	6		
April	7	8		2
May	2	12		3
June	7	6		2
Total	24	59		7

Table-S : ATTITUDINAL REFLECTIONS IN INDO-SRI LANKAN
NEWS REPORTS

Month	Hostile	Strained	Cooperative	Friendly
January	-	-	2	-
February	-	1	-	-
March	1	4	-	-
April	1	2	5	-
May	-	-	1	-
June	-	4	3	-
Total	2	11	11	-

As can be seen, Sri Lanka is of much greater interest and concern to Madras than to New Delhi. Whereas the Times of India (Delhi) contained 93 news items on Sri Lanka in its front page, the Hindu contained no less than 90 in just six months. Interestingly, 7.78 percent of the news reports concerned Sri Lanka in world affairs. None of the other newspapers which were examined showed any interest in the international relations of the other country, choosing to confine themselves to bilateral and regional equations. So also, 5.56 percent of the news reports dealt with non-political issues and events. In direct contrast, all the other news papers reported less than 0.5 percent of such news items.

P A R T - I I I

CONCLUSION AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

CONCLUSION

Having discussed how beliefs about politics and images of other actors are formed and altered and how decision-makers draw inferences from information, especially that which could be seen as contradicting their own views, we can safely conclude that perceptions of the world and of other actors diverge from Reality in patterns that we can detect and for reasons that we can understand. However, 'images' of other actors being a polychrome of numerous contrasting factors, the task of peicing these together in a coherent whole is extraordinarily complex.

This dissertation attempted to understand and explain the patterns of interaction between India and Sri Lanka during 1971 and 1985 in the backdrop of this knowledge. It needs to be clarified that the principal focus of study was the role of perceptions in International Politics. Indo-Sri Lankan relations were discussed in limited context and only so far as they contributed to a better understanding of the perceptional interplay between two state actors and provided actual evidence to substantiate the central arguments.

The attitudinal divide between these two countries was found to be rooted in certain behavioural patterns arising from the Indian and Sri Lankan self-images, their images of each other as neighbouring countries and of the South Asian region: why must India be seen as the Big Brother? Does India lend its ears to the fears, suspicion and angst of Sri Lanka

and the other South Asian neighbours? Does it attach any weight to what they feel and how they look at it? Is there anything it can do to remove these fears? Is India playing a leadership role in South Asia? What are its expectations of the smaller neighbours like Sri Lanka?

The causes and consequences of misperception being grave, concerted efforts need to be made to minimize misperception. At the same time it must be realistically admitted that no formula can eliminate misperceptions totally or reveal the 'correct' image. Indeed, faced with ambiguous and conflicting evidence, decision-makers have to draw inferences that will often prove to be incorrect.

Within this limitation, if decision-makers become aware of common perceptual errors, they may be able to avoid or compensate for them. They can adopt safeguards to decrease their unwarranted confidence in prevailing beliefs and make them more sensitive to alternate explanations and images. As it is decision-makers usually assimilate evidence to confirm their pre-existing beliefs without being aware of alternative interpretations. Roberta Wohlstetter argues,

A willingness to play with material from different angles and in the context of unpopular as well as popular hypotheses is an essential ingredient of a good detective whether the end is the solution of a crime or an intelligence estimate.(1)

1 Robert Jervis, Perception and Misperception in International Politics (New Jersey, 1976), p.415.

Indeed, to expose implicit assumptions and give himself more freedom of choice the decision-maker should encourage the formulation and application of alternative images. He will then have to exercise explicit judgement to select his 'image' rather than seeing one view as the only possible one.

Furthermore, both to interpret others' behaviour and to pattern one's own conduct in such a manner that others draw the desired conclusions from it, the state actor must try to see the world the way the other views it. Actors often assume that their intentions, especially peaceful ones are clear to others.

This perceptual divergence is clearly evident in Indo-Sri Lankan relations where India, repeatedly dismissing any plans to invade Sri Lanka as "malicious propoganda"² and reiterating its peaceful intent, fails to understand the image that its size and capabilities conjours in the mind of its small island neighbour. Indians often regret that Sri Lankans do not understand and recognize the sensibilities of India as the largest nation in South Asia nor appreciate the threat to India's security from the Indian ocean front. Sri Lanka, on its part, continues to harp on the immutable fact of India's

2 Times of India (Delhi) 2 April 1972. Quotes Mrs. Gandhi, "Those who think India has designs on Ceylon are victims of malicious propoganda. The very idea is not merely fantastic but absurd and unthinkable".

bigness. Fifty times smaller than India in size and forty-three times in population Sri Lanka apprehends "a sensation of living under a mountain which might send down destructive avalanches".³ If, however, it looks closely, without fear and prejudice, at the problems of India's large size and population, it will see India as it really is, a huge land mass weighed down by ageless poverty, a nation whose preoccupation is and must continue to be the development of the deprived and the downtrodden rather than building up of military power.

Thus, by examining the world through a variety of possible perspectives, an actor, while still being unable to see himself and the world exactly as does the other, can to some extent, avoid the trap of believing that the other sees his actions as he sees them and also the common error of assuming that the way he sees the world is the only possible one.

Indeed, often decision-makers form incorrect images of others because they take too many things for granted and fail to scrutinize basic assumptions. This is especially evident when the environment changes without producing corresponding changes in beliefs and policies. In other words, as circumstances change and new obstacles and possibilities arise, policies do not shift in an optimum manner.⁴ This is

3 Ivor Jennings, The Commonwealth in Asia (London, 1951) p.113.

4 Robert Jervis, n.1, p.412

primarily so because once a person has conceived of a problem in a given way, it is difficult for him to break out of his pattern of thought. New information will be interpreted within the old framework.

As such, the Sri Lankan policy of extraregional "intrusive" linkages as a counterpoise to the so-called Indian hegemony still persists even though the threat from India is today more perceived than real. Moreover, South Asian^A Regional Cooperation (SARC), a regional effort, can be an effective safeguard for the security and stability of Sri Lanka as also of the other smaller countries of the region. Yet Sri Lanka is pursuing its efforts for membership of the Association of the South East Asian Nations (ASEAN).

To guard against this irrational cognitive consistency, it is important that decision-makers should not only identify the crucial elements that underlie their image of the other actor but should also take into consideration what evidence would tend to disconfirm their views. In other words, if the actor has perceived another to be hostile, he must also determine what behaviour pattern or actions of the other actor will prove him otherwise. Such an exercise will ensure that discrepant information will not be ignored or automatically assimilated into the existing image. It will sensitize the decision-maker to discrepant evidence and facilitate the re-examination of his beliefs.⁵

5 Ibid., p.414.

In the specific context of Indo-Sri Lankan relations, more positive images of each other could be promoted in the two countries, if India extradited some of the Tamil insurgents,⁶ restricted the Tamil militant leaders access to top officials, leadership and press in India and accepted the Sri Lankan proposal for joint coastal patrolling. For its part, Sri Lanka could set up an independent grievance committee to deal with allegations of excesses on both the Tamil and Sinhalese sides,⁷ share the economic burden placed on Indian resources by the influx of Sri Lankan Tamil refugees and by signing a treaty of friendship with India wherein both countries agree to not give military bases to external powers.

However, when an actor tries to alter the other's image of himself, he should be aware that this will require prolonged efforts which for a long time will continue to be misperceived. It is true that decision-makers are often unaware that they hold an "inherent bad faith" model of another and behave instead that the other has had manifold opportunities to reveal that he is friendly.

The Indian assistance in suppressing the JVP insurgency of 1971 in Sri Lanka is proof enough. Although it should

6 The deportation of three militant Tamil leaders including S.Chandrasahsan in September 1985 was welcomed by the Sri Lankan government and press.

7 A grievance committee had been established in 1985. However its independent authority was questionable and efficiency marginal.

have established without doubt, India's bonafides as a "friend",⁸ it created an even greater fear phobia in Sri Lanka. The fact that Indian presence was withdrawn immediately at Sri Lanka's behest, was ignored. Instead, the Sri Lankan policy-makers were haunted by the swiftness with which India came to their assistance. The Indian armed action in Bangladesh later that year made Sri Lankans argue that they too could fall prey to a chauvinistic and politically unstable, regime in New Delhi which might seek to buttress its weak domestic position by engaging in foreign war.⁹

Organizations and individuals also develop defence mechanisms against differing perspectives. For this purpose, a decision-maker must guard against allowing those with a vested interest in the maintenance of a policy to judge its effectiveness.

The Sinhala hardliners and the Buddhist clergy have allowed their power position to be tied to a specific image of India. Continuance of the anti-India perception and

8 Times of India (Bombay), 28 April 1971. India Malhotra optimistically wrote that India's prompt military help and later withdrawal "should not only allay past fears and suspicions but also lay the foundations of a new relationship in the future. Ceylon need not divert too many resources to defence. As at present, it should be able to borrow, at its own terms, Indian equipment".

9 A.J.Wilson, Politics in Sri Lanka 1947-73 (London, 1974), p.275.

perpetuation of the fear of Tamil expansionism ensures their political stronghold. As such, involving them in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of Sri Lanka's India policy is only going to preserve the status quo 'image' system.

In conclusion, certain measures can be derived, in the light of the common misperceptions that plague Indo-Sri Lankan relations, that can minimize perceptions between any two state actors. These can be summed up as follows:

- (i) If the decision-makers realize that their belief systems are given to irrational consistency, they will be more likely to examine the evidence supporting their belief system, scrutinize its basic assumptions and be vigilant for discrepant information which might require its re-examination.
- (ii) An awareness of the dangers of forming an image too quickly will lead the decision-makers to suspend judgement for longer time periods.
- (iii) An examination of alternate images will enable the decision-maker to avoid the error of assuming that the way he sees the world is the only one.
- (iv) By consulting people who have been less involved with the issue, by encouraging debates among a variety of analysts with a variety of perceptual predispositions, the decision-maker can select his beliefs and images from a wider range of choice.

(v) Beforehand identification of the evidence that would confirm or disconfirm the prevailing 'image' will allow the decision-maker to take note of even the small bits of discrepant evidence that would otherwise pass unnoticed.

(vi) The realization that people seize certain, often irrelevant, past events and experiences as analogies, will make the decision-maker search the past more deeply for possible guidelines to action.

(vii) An appreciation of the superficial nature of most learning of history would lead the decision-maker to analyze more judiciously the causes of previous events and so be in a position to determine what past cases are relevant in the present situation.

In the final analysis, however, decision-makers have to know the costs of misperceptions and the costs of the opposite error.¹⁰ If it is disastrous to mistake an enemy for a friend but not so costly to take a friend for an enemy, then decision-makers will do well to suffer the latter misperception rather than run the risk of the former.

10 Robert Jervis, n.1, p.424.

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