

# **ETHNIC CONFLICT AND FOREIGN POLICY OF SRI LANKA, 1983-1994**

*Dissertation Submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University  
in partial fulfilment of the requirement for  
the award of the Degree of*

**MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY**

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**1998**



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July, 1998

## CERTIFICATE

Certified that the dissertation entitled "ETHNIC CONFLICT AND FOREIGN POLICY OF SRI LANKA, 1983-1994" submitted by Ms. Julee in partial fulfilment for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy is entirely her own work and has not been considered for any other degree of this or any other university.

We recommend that this dissertation may be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

  
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## Acknowledgement

First and foremost my heart felt thanks to my supervisor Dr. P.Sahadevan who was a constant source of inspiration and confidence during the course of my work. His valuable suggestions and comments with regard to this work helped me tide over many a weak moment of self-doubt and despair.

Among my friends, I would like to thank Sangeetha, Sreelekha, Seema, Meena, Chamy, Sree and Zarin who were always there to give me any kind of help during my work. I specially thank Sunitha and Manjusha who proof read my chapters.

A special thanks is due to Mrs. Manita Yadav of Goodwill Associates C-67, Goodwill Lane, Opp. Canara Bank, Munirka, New Delhi who patiently typed out my thests.

I take this opportunity to thank all my class mates and friends. Having them around was always an inspiration for me to work.

Finally a word of thanks to my family and Ramesh for the steadfast support and appreciation, which kept me going through the process of my research work.

The entire responsibility for the mistakes in this work are mine.

Place : New Delhi

Date : July, 1998.

(Julee)

## **PREFACE**

The outbreak of ethnic violence has brought about major changes in the domestic environment of Sri Lanka. Ethnic conflict posed a threat to the country's security from within and outside. The over dominating presence of India in the region has a threat to its security from outside. The moral and material support given by India to the Sir Lankan Tamils in the conflict was a cause for Sri Lanka's concern. Moreover, the economic situation in the country was fragile. A combination of these factors have brought about changes in the country's foreign policy behaviour.

The main purpose of the proposed study is to find out the linkages between ethnic conflict and foreign policy of Sri Lanka, by analysing various shifts and changes that have occurred in the country's foreign policy since 1983.

The principal objectives of the proposed study are to:

1. analyse the drift and changes that have occurred in Sri Lanka's foreign policy in the wake of ethnic conflict.
2. find out the thrust of Sri Lanka's foreign policy during the time of the conflict.

3. analyse the process of foreign policy decision-making during the conflict.
4. examine the extent to which the country made compromises on its basic tenets of foreign policy.

The linkages between ethnic conflict and foreign policy of Sri Lanka has not been studied seriously so far. There are many studies which deal with the ethnic conflict in the island. Some of the notable ones are, Bhandari & Karim (1990), Dharamdasani (1988), Jayasekera (1992), Jayatilleka (1995), Manogaran (1987), Manor (1984), Piyadasa (1984), Ponnambalam (1983), Ram (1989), Spencer (1990), Narayanswamy (1995), Jayewardene (1986), Warnapala (1994), Wilson (1988). Sivarajah (1996), Somasundaram & Vanniasingham (1988). These studies give details about the circumstances which led to the outbreak of the conflict; how far it affected the peaceful atmosphere of the country and how it influenced the foreign policy decisions.

Studies on foreign policy of Sri Lanka include those done by Kodikara (1982 and 1990), Kumar (1986), Mendis (1983), Nissanka (1976 and 1984), Prasad (1973), Sinha (1992), Yatanoor (1997) and Amarasingam (1980). These studies and provide and useful account of the Non-aligned foreign policy of Sri Lanka, from 1984 to the present.

There are many studies which analyse the external involvement in the ethnic conflict. They mainly concentrate on the Indian involvement and the related developments. The most noteworthy ones are Bose (1994), Hyndman (1988), Jayasekara (1992), Singh (1990), De Silva (1977 and 1993), Muni (1993) and Suryanarayan (1991).

However, there is hardly any work which analyses the impact of ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka's foreign policy approach and orientations. The proposed study would try to fill the void.

The study puts forward the following hypothesis;

1. A small country with limited resources cannot follow a coherent and consistent foreign policy when its national survival is threatened.
2. The greater the domestic instability and threat to sovereignty of a small country, the more the chances of erosion of independence in its foreign policy decision-making.

The study is divided into five chapters

In the first chapter, the linkages between ethnic conflict and foreign policy will be analysed. It will also see how internal violence

creates insecurity in a small country, with limited resources and how it affects the country's foreign policy decision-making.

The second chapter will deal with the fundamental objectives, determinants and goals of Sri Lanka's foreign policy.

The third chapter deals with the 'India factor' in Sri Lanka's foreign policy. In this, the Indian intervention in Sri Lanka and the related developments will be analysed and seen how far it influenced the country's foreign policy decision-making.

The fourth chapter will list out the changes that have occurred in the foreign policy after the outbreak of the conflict. This chapter will clearly deal with the foreign policy that Sri Lanka has followed from 1983 onwards.

While summarising the study, the fifth chapter will find out the continuity and change in Sri Lanka's foreign policy. I will also draw some fresh insights on the linkage between ethnic conflict and foreign policy of a country.

The study adopts a historical-analytical method. While some of the primary sources were used, the study is largely based on secondary source material, books, research papers and news-paper reports.



## CHAPTER-I

# **ETHNIC CONFLICT AND FOREIGN POLICY: AN ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK**

Foreign policy of every country is rooted in its domestic politics. As foreign policy is a function of domestic politics, any change in the domestic situations may also produce change in a country's foreign policy.

The external behaviour of countries is partially a reflection of their internal structures. The international system may limit and condition this behaviour in important ways but the range of choices and emphases within the range of choices and emphases within these limits are wide, with the result that the goal, contents and style of foreign policy are to a significant extent shaped by the domestic context out of which it arises.<sup>1</sup>

In his 'Linkage Politics' James. N. Rosenau has attempted to define and identify the linkage between national and international systems or 'policy external environment linkages' as he calls them. In order to distinguish between the initial and terminal stages of linkages, Rosenau referred to the former as an input and the latter as an output. Taking linkage as the

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1 James, N. Rosenau, *The Scientific Study of Foreign Policy*, [New York : Free Press, 1971], PP.399.

basic unit of analysis he defined it as any recurrent sequence of behaviour that originates in one system (national or international) and is reacted to in another. In other words, inputs from national environment has significant impact upon international politics and vice versa.<sup>2</sup>

National interest is the core of any foreign policy decisions. 'Interests are what a nation feels to be essential to its security and well-being'<sup>3</sup>. Security of a nation has both internal and external dimensions. Taking into consideration the internal dimension one can say that, any volatile situation inside a country can be a threat to its security. The degree of the threat varies from situation to situation. If the state has the capacity to contain these threats, either through domestic means or by the use of force, so far so good. But if such a situation arises in which internal violence becomes a serious problem, the state finds it impossible to contain it with the limited resources and manpower available to it. In such a situation, the security of the state can be said to be in danger.

If so, the only concern of those in power will be protect the unity and sovereignty of the nation by all means. When the state fights violence, resources available in the country may get diverted for defence purposes, the value systems and norms in the society may change, and welfare functions of the state are neglected. The one and only aim of the country

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<sup>2</sup> See James N. Roseneau, *Linkage Politics*, [New York : Free Press 1968].

<sup>3</sup> Feliks Gross, *Foreign Policy Analysis*, [New York: Philosophical Library Inc,1954], P.55.

will be to protect its Sovereignty. An increase in its defence expenditure and military build up is the possible outcome.

A major part of the domestic environment is the set of phenomena that we label 'Political'. This includes variables such as the activities of pressure groups, the amount of domestic political conflict, the competition among politicians, the nature of the party system and the level of political development.<sup>4</sup>

These variables exert direct or indirect influence on a country's conduct of its foreign policy.

### **Ethnic Conflict : General Perspective.**

Ethnicity is a sense of ethnic identity having, 'Subjective, Symbolic or Emblematic use' by 'a group of people..... of any aspect of culture in order to differentiate themselves from other groups.'<sup>5</sup> It also involves in addition to subjective self-consciousness, a claim to status and recognition either as a superior group or as a group at least equal to other groups. Ethnicity is to ethnic category what class consciousness is to class.<sup>6</sup>

Six criteria should be met before a group can be called an ethnic

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4 Patrick. J. Mc Gowan, *The Comparative Study of Foreign Policy*, [London: Sage Publications. 1973], P.75.

5 Paul. R. Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism*, [New Delhi : Sage Publications, 1991], P.19.

6 Ibid.,

community. First, the group must have a name for itself. This is not trivial; a lack of a name reflects an insufficiently developed collective identity. Second, the people in the group must believe in a common ancestry. This is more important than genetic ties, which may exist, but are not essential. Third, the members of the group must share historical memories, often myths or legends passed from generation to generation by word of mouth. Fourth, the group must have a shared culture, generally based on combination of language, religion, laws, customs, institutions, dress, music, crafts, architecture, even food. Fifth the group must feel an attachment to a specific piece of territory, which it may or may not actually inhabit. Sixth and last, the people in a group have to think of themselves as a group in order to constitute an ethnic community; that is they must have a sense of their common ethnicity. The group must be self-aware.<sup>7</sup>

Ethnic conflict is a dispute about important political, economic, social, cultural or territorial issues between two or more ethnic communities.<sup>8</sup> Ethnic conflicts may occur due to different reasons in different settings. John Agnew points out three factors responsible for this: "The degree of geographical economic differentiation within a country and its relationship to ethnic divisions, increased bureaucratization of the state and the growth

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7 Montserrat Gui bernau & John Rex. *The Ethnicity Reader*. [Cambridge: Polity Press, 1997], PP. 81-82.

8 Ibid. P.82

of the welfare state, and the growing internationalization of economic and political activity."<sup>9</sup>

When people with a shared ethnic identity are discriminated against, they are likely to be resentful and angry : Anger is expressed in a number of ways: Some people opt for accommodation; others vent their frustrations openly. For people who are motivated to action, the greater the discrimination they experience, the more likely they are to organize for action against the sources of discrimination.<sup>10</sup>

In a democratic political environment the ethnic groups express their opposition through non-violent means. "In political environments other than democracies, violence is more likely to be used to quell protest and riots. The more violence is used by political authorities, the greater the likelihood that challengers will respond with increased violence. However, state authorities that have used extreme force, such as massacres, torture, and genocide, to subdue challengers are also less likely to be openly challenged, either because groups cannot organize open resistance or they fear the consequences of doing so. Thus the more extreme force is used, the less likely the chances for open rebellion. A curvilinear relationship thus exists between state violence and the extent and level of violence of political

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9 John Agnew, "Beyond Reason' in Louis Kriesberg Terrell, A.Northrup & Stuart J. Thorson [eds.], **Intractable Conflicts and their Transformaton**, [Syracuse: syracuse University Press, 1989], P. 44

10 Ted Robert & Barbara Harff, **Ethnic Conflict in World Politics**, [Boulder : Westview Press, 1994] PP.83-84.

action taken by the challengers. Clandestine movements that use terrorism and guerrilla warfare are typically responses to situations in which government authorities have used deadly force in dealing with challengers."<sup>11</sup>

Consequences of ethnic conflicts are many. The main target of attack during ethnic wars will be the civilian population. When this happens a larger number of refugees flow affects the outside world in several ways. First, offering sanctuary to refugees can invite military reprisal thereby drawing the host country into the conflict. Often fighters mingle with refugee populations, using refugee camps for rest, recuperation and recruitment. Second, if refugees flee to neighbouring countries where large numbers of their ethnic brethren live, their plight can lead their compatriots to become more involved in the original conflict, thereby intensifying the war. Third, refugees impose tremendous economic costs on host states. Large numbers of impoverished people have to be housed and fed for long and sometimes indefinite periods of time. Fourth, refugees can be seen as potential threats to the cultural identity of host states, especially when refugee communities are large and when they establish their own schools, newspapers, cultural organizations and places of worship. Fifth, refugees can become political force in host countries, particularly influencing foreign policy issues relating to their homeland. Some host governments worry that refugee communities will turn against them if they pursue uncongenial policies. Sixth and last,

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid. P.85.

when refugee problems pose threats to 'international peace and security', as they often do, the United Nations has a right, if not an obligation, to consider intervening in the crisis.<sup>12</sup>

### Ethnic Conflict and Foreign Policy : Linkages

Ethnic conflict, when it starts, always starts as a domestic problem. It affects the social set up at large. As foreign policy is a function of domestic policy, ethnic conflict brings about changes in the way a country conducts its foreign policy.

When violent ethnic conflict erupts, the "affected state becomes relatively weaker than surrounding states whose internal unity is intact. In all cases and in all stages separation affects state power".<sup>13</sup> In such a situation the state usually tries to contain the conflict through all possible means. The power of the state is centralized. The executive becomes the all powerful. Then foreign policy of the country will be made and executed the way suitable to the internal situation of the country. No democratic norms will be followed. The only aim of foreign policy operations will be to gain maximum resources from outside to fight the conflict and sustain the country's sovereignty. In such situations the foreign policy will be secretive. Foreign office will be used to gain sympathy for the state. If a foreign

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<sup>12</sup> Guibernan & Rex, n.7, P.93.

<sup>13</sup> Stephen Ryan, *Ethnic Conflict and International Relations*, [Aldershot : Dartmouth, 1990], P.32.

power is involved in the conflict, and is helping the separatist groups, the foreign policy makers will try and get the support of the international community to pressurise the intervenor to keep its hands off the conflict.

When ethnic conflict breakout, refugee generation is a possible outcome. In such a situation, the conflict get internationalized. Then the status attributed to the country by the international community becomes an important factor. "International status is awarded to groups and states according to the number and value of economic resources they command. States blessed with abundance of resources are more likely to enjoy the support of the international community, which is dependent on such resources. They are also more likely to be free from unwanted interference than are those with fewer resources.<sup>14</sup> A country with a low level of resources will be under international pressure to resolve the conflict as soon as possible. To pressurise the country, economic and political means will be used by the international community. If international help is stopped to a state which is marred with ethnic violence, and has only limited resources, there are chances of the total collapse of its economy. To avoid this the country will use its foreign office and diplomatic channels to get resources from every available sources. In such a circumstance, the country need not follow a particular ideology. It may even compromise on the basic tenents of its

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<sup>14</sup> Gurr & Haff n.10, PP. 85-86.



foreign policy. Every attempt of the country will be to get maximum assistance from the international community.

If the ethnic group is well organized and is getting help from outside the country, the country will have to build up its own military to fight such a group. For this resources should be found. The country then use its diplomatic channels to get arms supply and the like to build up its own military capabilities. Diplomats will try to convince the aid giving countries that the security of the country is threatened. Diplomatic channels are sued to generate sympathy for the country. Military assistance in sought from any one who is ready to give it.

When an ethnic conflict gets internationalized, the image of the country is tarnished. The human rights are violated. Such violations pose a direct challenge to important international principles and, the maintenance and promotion of which is in the interest of the international community as a whole. "The international community will try to distinguish between combatants and non combatants in formulating rules and laws about the conduct of war; it will find its distinctions and norms hard to sustain in the long run if it allows them to be tramples in ethnic conflicts, in which civilians are attacked not just indiscriminately, but deliberately and systematically. Another reason for caring about-and taking action against-civilian slaughter is that tolerating it is morally diminishing.<sup>15</sup> This being the matter, tremendous

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<sup>15</sup> Gui Bernan & Rex Op. Cit Pp.92-93.

pressure will be on the violence ridden state to stop its coercive strategies and find a peaceful solution to the problem. Then the state will pay a special attention to keep up its image as a country that cares for international laws and one which upholds human rights. For this image building, foreign policy is accordingly made and conducted.

Contextualising the study, Sri Lanka provides an interesting case of a country where ethnic violence has brought about changes in socio-economic and political spheres. The country has had to fight a well organized militant group. To add to the problems, the group maintains cultural ties with its neighbour India. This has complicated the problems further. Refugee flows to India combined with political pressures from Tamil Nadu forced the country to become a third party in the conflict.

As far as the internal situation of Sri Lanka is concerned, violence has produced pressure on the administration. The society is militarized. The economy of the country remains shattered. Welfare activities of the state has been affected to a large extent. The main attention of the state has been affected to a large extent. The main attention of the administration has been to contain the violence some how. The very security of the country has been under severe threat.

All democratic norms have been violated. There seems to be a growing tendency towards centralisation of power. The president is the final authority

with regard to domestic as well as foreign policy matters. Every possible source was approached to get maximum material and moral support both to contain the conflict as well as to keep India out of the conflict.

Human rights violation in a possible outcome during ethnic wars. But such violations produce international outcry. The state mechanism in Sri Lanka was unable to contain the violence through democratic means. So gross use of force was made to contain the violent situation. Grievances of the violence victims as well as India's expression of concern led to the internationalization of the conflict. The country was put under tremendous pressure to solve the conflict through political means. Human rights organizations and the like kept on pressurizing the government to stop violence.

The country could not ignore this international pressure because its economy is much dependent on foreign aids. The only way left out was to use its diplomatic channels and resources to get maximum assistance from the international community. If international aid was to be stopped, the economy of the country would have collapsed.

In such a situation, the foreign policy of the country has shown drastic shifts. The basic principles on which the foreign policy was rooted, were diluted. Marked difference in foreign policy norms could be detected. The one and only interest of the country was to protect its security.

In the following chapters this change in the conduct of foreign policy will be analysed. It will be seen how ethnic violence put the security of the country under threat. How did it produce changes in the Sri Lanka's conduct of its foreign policy. Linkages between ethnic conflict and foreign policy may be seen through the Sri Lankan experience in the 1980's.

## CHAPTER-II

### **SRI LANKA'S FOREIGN POLICY : PRINCIPLES AND GOALS**

Sri Lanka has not inherited a distinctive foreign policy from its Colonial rule. After independence, it was left to the new leaders to evolve a policy within the resources available to them at the time.<sup>1</sup> Interestingly, foreign policy seemed to be a peripheral matter in the overall political programme of the leadership. In the general elections of 1947, none of the parties projected foreign policy issues in any major way in their respective manifestoes. Indeed, foreign policy did not even merit mention in the manifesto of the United National Party (UNP) which won a majority of seats in the elections and to which power was eventually transferred in 1948.<sup>2</sup>

#### Important principles of Sri Lanka's Foreign Policy

##### (a) Close Association with Britain and the Commonwealth:-

Sri Lanka had negotiated its freedom from Britain in a largely amicable

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- 1 Vijaya Samaraweera, "Foreign Policy" in K.N.De silva [ed.], **Sri Lanka : A Survey**, [London: C.Hurst & Company, 1977] P.338.
  - 2 Urmila Phadnis, "Foreign Policy of Sri Lanka in the seventies", **The Institute for Defence Studies and Analysis Journal**, Vol.III, no.1 July-Sep. 1975 P. 94.

way.<sup>3</sup> So Britain was considered to be an ally of Sri Lanka. Taking into consideration the close political economic and military relations between Sri Lanka and Britain, membership in the Commonwealth was found to be an important option. As a newly independent country, with limited foreign policy experience, Sri Lanka found a safe shelter under the Commonwealth umbrella.

Sri Lanka became a member of the United Nations (UN) in the year 1955. Till then Commonwealth provided the only international forum for its interaction with other countries.<sup>4</sup> It was the only forum through which Sri Lanka could make contacts with the outside world. As a member of the Commonwealth Ceylon could feel that it was equal not only to India and Pakistan but also the U.K. This arose from the fact that every member of the association, whether big or small, enjoyed equal participatory role in decision-making<sup>5</sup>. Thus its membership in the forum, to an extent, helped it in overcoming the fear psychosis it had in relation to India and communist countries like the former Soviet Union.

Sri Lanka is a small country with limited resources. In the initial years of its independence, the country did not develop a viable security

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3 Samaraweera "Foreign Policy" in K.M.De silva n.1 P. 338.

4 Dhirendra Mohan Prasad, *Ceylon's Foreign Policy under the Bandaranaiques [1956-65]: A political Analysis* [New Delhi: S. Chand & Co. Pvt. Ltd., 1973.] PP.14-15].

5 Ibid. P.12.

system. India being a big and strong neighbour, was always seen as a source of threat to Sri Lanka's security. Sri Lanka through its contact with Britain and other Common Wealth countries was in a way seeking defence against foreign aggression. "To Senanayake, this was a measure with less investment. With no strong security forces, he saw reliance on Britain for defence as the country's sole option. There is no doubt that Senanayake feared foreign designs on Sri Lanka, and although he cited the Soviet Union as the possible aggressor, his concern arose more from India's dominance in the region.<sup>6</sup>

The defense agreement between Britain and Ceylon which accompanied the grant of independence, "provided for the use of air and naval bases and facilities by Britain and mutual defense agreements between them. These included the retention by Britain of the naval base of Trincomalee and its installations and the Royal Air Force base at Katunayake which had been developed during the World War II.... Under the agreement Britain undertook to provide military assistance to the island for its defence, for protection against aggression and to safeguard vital communications.<sup>7</sup> Sri Lanka's security interests were best served by a close association with the United Kingdom.<sup>8</sup>

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6 Samaraweera, "Foreign Policy", n.1 P.339.

7 V.L.B.Mendis, **Foreign Relations of Sri Lanka : From Earlier times to 1965**, [Dehiwela : Tisara Prakasakaya Ltd., 1983] P. 366.

8 Shelton. U.Kodikara, **Foreign Policy of Sri Lanka: A Third World Perspective**, [Delhi : Chanakya Publications, 1982] P.55.

D.S.Senanayake and his successors tended to regard the Common Wealth as a kind of third force in a world of power blocs headed by the United States and the USSR, in which Britain's role was seen as a mediator and preserver peace.<sup>9</sup> The fact that Britain was herself a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and therefore an integral part of the cold war alliance headed by the West, did not appear to deflect Senanyake from this view.<sup>10</sup> Instead of seeing it as imprudence on the part of Sri Lankan leadership, one could infer that such a stance was taken by Sri Lanka out of its insecurity.

**B) Ideological Affinities with the Western Democracies.**

The most powerful determinant of UNP government's foreign policy was its antipathy to communism. It perceived threat, to the newly established parliamentary institutions and feared communist subversion in Sri Lanka.<sup>11</sup>

The immediate post-Colonial period, 1947-1956, saw the seemingly successful transplanting of Western style democratic institutions and organization of civil society in Sri Lanka. Apart from a vocal Marxist minority advocating a radically different political system and social order,

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9 Ibid. P.55.

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid. P.83.



the vast majority of the educated elite, who had grown up in a liberal political culture, got attracted to the democratic ideology.<sup>12</sup>

Explaining this attitude of Soviet Union, Senanayake declared :

“Enslavement of the world is what we believe to be their attitude. Our view is quite the contrary. Since it is the freedom of this world we are concerned with, we will never be with Russia until she give up her policy”.<sup>13</sup>

Kotelawala continued to show active interest in strong association with West. His alignment with the West was best demonstrated when he permitted landing rights in Sri Lanka for United States air force planes ferrying French troops to Indo-China.<sup>14</sup> There were even fears that Sri Lanka would become a member of SEATO (South East Asia Treaty Organization). But one notable feature during this time was that Sri Lanka's relations with the Communist World increased. The rubber-rice deal with China in 1952, establishment of trade relations with Czechoslovakia and Romania indicated the changing trends in Sri Lanka's foreign policy. Moreover, in 1955 Sri Lanka became a member of the UN as a result of the withdrawal of the Soviet veto.

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12 K.M.De silva, "Conclusion" in K.M.De silva [ed.] *Problems of Governance*, [Delhi: Knoark Publishers Pvt. Ltd. 1993] P.400.

13 Kodikara, n.8 PP. 56-57.

14 K.N.De silva, *A History of Sri Lanka*, [London : C. Hurst & Co and Berkeley : University of California Press, 1981] PP. 508-09.

Trade links were established with some communist countries in 1955 and 1956. While this was a significant new development, Kotelawala did not establish any diplomatic links with Communist powers.<sup>15</sup>

In spite of this pro-West tilt of Sri Lanka, it always made it a point to assert that the country will not become party in any blocs politics. Country's leadership always made it a point to assert Sri Lanka's position as a non-aligned nation.

### Non-Alignment

S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike, "provided an ideological corpus to Sri Lanka's non-alignment" policy.<sup>16</sup> His insistence on the winding up of the British bases on the island, his refusal to allow the British to use the Sri Lankan base during the Suez crisis and his efforts to develop close relations with the countries of both the blocs (which implied a virtual erosion of Sri Lanka's earlier special relationship with the West) were aimed at changing the ideological bias and dependent image of Sri Lanka and projecting it as a truly non-aligned country. Such measures not only ensured support from the Leftist parties but also secured a large quantum of assistance from a number of countries and considerable diversification of trade transactions.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid, P.509.

<sup>16</sup> Urmila Phadnis and Sivananda Patnaik, "Non-Alignment As a Foreign Policy Strategy : A Case Study of Sri Lanka", *International Studies* Vol. 20 No.s 1-2 Jan.-June 1981 P. 229.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

Mrs. Bandaranaike's government actively pursued the policy of non-alignment. Her "international outlook appeared more dynamic, critical and outspoken in its non-aligned anti-military pacts, anti-colonialist and anti-militarist approach to foreign policy."<sup>18</sup>

Mrs. Bandaranaike was committed to "the emerging unity of action among the non-aligned states of Asia and Africa, and their search for a distinct identity as a third force in international affairs".<sup>19</sup> During this period, relations with India was friendly. Sri Lanka thought it acceptable in its interest to keep closer ties with the Third World than with either of the power blocs. It could be said that such a position helped Sri Lanka in getting assistance from both the power blocs. At the same time, its new ties with the Third World also proved useful in building up strong trade ties, "quite often on the basis of barter agreements and through this a greater diversity in her pattern of external trade".<sup>20</sup>

This period saw an increase in Sri Lanka's foreign policy activism. It played the role of a mediator in regional conflicts.<sup>21</sup> Apart from this it played an active role in the

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<sup>18</sup> Phadnis, "Foreign Policy of Sri Lanka in the Seventies", n. 2 p.99

<sup>19</sup> K.M.De silva, "1970-1991: The Political System Under Severe Stress" in K. M. De silva, n.12 P.55.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> In the Sino-Indian Conflict [1962], Mrs. Bandaranaike had played an important mediatory role by holding a conference of Colombo Powers and evolving proposals for the resolution of territorial dispute between the two countries.

United Nations as well.<sup>22</sup> The Sri Lankan initiative to keep Indian Ocean free from super power rivalry was also a manifestation of its non-aligned stand in international politics.

Sri Lanka "co-sponsored the conference of non-aligned countries held in Belgrade and Cairo in 1961 and 1964, respectively. It was in Cairo that Mrs. Bandaranaike mooted her proposal to make the Indian Ocean area a nuclear free zone. In the economic conference of the non-aligned countries in 1962 as well as at the UN Conference on Trade and Development, Sri Lanka played a prominent role".<sup>23</sup>

Non-aligned position adopted by the country was acceptable to a great majority of people in the country. So the leadership in the country gave much importance to this principle in its foreign policy decisions. Nationalization of tea plantations and oil industry was in the interest of the nation. When this step was taken US suspended aid to Sri Lanka.

Commenting on the suspension of aid, the SLFP leadership declared that it was not prepared to "accept aid as a condition to ....political subordination". "Srilanka" declared premier Sirimao Bandaranaike, "had

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<sup>22</sup> During the discussions on Congo issue, in 1960-62 Sri Lanka not only opposed Soviet stand for posting of the UN forces but also refused to toe the American line on the issue of the recognition of the Kasavabu government.

<sup>23</sup> Phadnis, n.2, P.99.

zealously safeguarded the policy of non-alignment, even in regard to the matter of aid. Any foreign aid offered to the Government with strings attached has not been and will not be accepted."<sup>24</sup> This stand taken by the government was well accepted by the public. Moreover, it got alternative sources of supply from China, Romania and the Soviet Union.

Thus non-aligned strategy helped, a small country like Sri Lanka in building up an image of its own in international forums. At the same time, it also helped the country get the necessary resources from all available sources around the world, overruling ideological rivalries and power bloc politics.

Faith in UN.



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Sri Lanka became a member of UN in the year 1955. Through its membership in UN, the country got a platform to play an active role in international issues. It actively took part in UN deliberations. Two occasions on which Sri Lanka enunciated faith in the UN, were the Egyptian crisis and the Hungarian crisis in 1956. Nasser's nationalization of the Suez Canal led to the Anglo-French, Israeli invasion of Egypt. Prime Minister Bandaranaike reacted by suggesting a users conference, which was supported by the United States. When Britain, France and Israel invaded Egypt, Sri Lanka co-sponsored a resolution in the UN General Assembly

<sup>24</sup> Quoted in Phadnis and Patnaik, n.16 P.229.

for a ceasefire and the appointment of the United Nation Emergency force (UNEF).<sup>25</sup>

In 1956 when Soviet Union intruded into Hurgary, Sri Lanka condemned the invasion. Sri Lanka supported the Cuban resolution, which invited Hungary to allow observers. Sri Lanka was a member of the special committee on Hungary.

From 1960-65 Sri Lanka gained a seat in the UN Security Council as a non-permanent member. During this period Sri Lankan troops were send to Congo on peace keeping operations. It was Sri Lanka who brought in the Indian Ocean Peace Zone (IOPZ) proposal in the UN. Sri Lank was made the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Indian Ocean. Sri Lanka ~~at~~ occupied an important position in the discussions. "When Pakistan initiated the proposal of a nuclear free zone for South Asia in 1974, Sri Lanka became a strong supporter of the proposal. <sup>26</sup>

### Asian Regionalism

Sri Lanka adopted a positive attitude towards regionalism even

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25 Mervyn De silva, "The United Nations and Sri Lanka" in victor Gunewardena [ed.] **The UN at 50** [Colombo : BMICH, 1995] P. 69.

26 Gamini B.Keerawella, "Peace and Security Perceptions of a small state" in Shelton. U.Kodikara [ed.], **South Asian Strategic Issues: Sri Lankan Perspectives**, [New Delhi : Sage Publication, 1990.] P.189.

before it attained independence from the British rule. An unofficial Sri Lankan delegation led by S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike participated in the Asian Regional Conference held in New Delhi in April, 1947. It wholeheartedly endorsed the only resolution to emerge from this conference, relating to the establishment of a permanent Asian Relations Organization.<sup>27</sup>

The second instance of Sri Lanka's interest in regional co-operation was the Colombo Power Conference in Sri Lanka in 1954. The importance of this meeting, its objective, particularly the list of the original invitees indicates that it was Sir John Kotalawela who conceived the idea and instrumental in bringing some of the countries together. Its influence in forging a regional co-operation in South Asia later was not to be missed.<sup>28</sup>

In May 1980 the Bangladesh president made a proposal for the establishment of a regional arrangement in South Asia. Important powers of the region like India and Pakistan had major doubts about the grouping. At this time Sri Lanka was very enthusiastic about such a grouping and even took the initiative to hold Foreign Secretaries level meeting of all the South Asian Countries for the purpose of launching the SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional co-operation).

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27 Rarinatha Aryasinghe, "Regionalism: As dimension of Sri Lanka's foreign Policy". **Sri Lanka : The Government Information Department**, Socio-Political perspectives of SAARC Countries Colombo, 1991, P.56.

28 Ibid.

Inspite of the ethnic unrest, which broke out in Sri Lanka on July 23, 1983, and its ramification on Indo-Lanka relations, Sri Lanka's commitment to South Asian Regional Co-operation has not diminished.

### **Major Goals of Sri Lanka's Foreign Policy**

When Sri Lanka became independent, the country was economically insecure. The main aim of the then leadership was to achieve economic progress and development. This factor coupled with the threat that the country perceived from India created more insecurity. The India factor remained a dominant factor in Sri Lanka's foreign policy decisions.

Sri Lanka's relations with Britain had a larger economic component. Its economic compulsion in forging a cordial relation was quite evident in many ways. Under the framework of the Sterling Area financial network, according to which the bulk of foreign exchange reserves of member of regions were held in London, Sri Lanka's foreign exchange reserve was accumulated in London.<sup>29</sup> Since independence, Sri Lanka's structure of trade with the UK had remained basically unchanged. Sri Lanka was a large importer of primary products, manufactured goods and machinery etc. and an exporter of tea and rubber.

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<sup>29</sup> Lucy. M. Jacob, *Sri Lanka From Dominion to Republic*, [Delhi: National, 1973] P.119.



In the first decade of independence, the UK remained Sri Lanka's major trading partner.<sup>30</sup> As such it was important for Sri Lanka to have cordial relations with Britain. Apart from this, Sri Lanka lacked a well equipped and well trained defence force.

Common Wealth membership was to be considered incompatible with the desire for an independent foreign policy cherished by some politicians, but they were unable to overlook the advantages derived from it, ranging from assistance given under programmes like the Colombo Plan to trade relations on the basis of a common partnership in the Sterling Area.<sup>31</sup>

The non-aligned strategy of Sri Lanka was used to "manipulate competing interests in the regional and global contexts with a view to ensuring its security from external powers, exchanging its status as a Sovereign state, and maximizing its manoeuvrability in the spheres of aid and trade."<sup>32</sup>

By following a non-aligned strategy Sri Lanka was able to build up its image in the international forums. Moreover it got the much needed economic support from countries in both power blocs. Non-aligned strategy even helped the country in gaining assistance from

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30 Ibid.

31 Samaraweera, "Foreign Policy" n.1 P.335.

32 Phadnis and Patnaik n.16 P.230.

mutually rival powers like India and Pakistan.<sup>33</sup> Like its membership in the Common Wealth, the Non-aligned position of Sri Lanka was also to get economic and defence support from outside powers. Non-alignment was followed more as a principle than as an instrument of diplomacy than a principle that need to followed.

Wherever "adherence to principle" has entailed economic sacrifices the SriLankan ruling elites have not hesitated to find excuses for sacrificing principle.<sup>34</sup> Thus, in respect of South Africa, even though Sri Lanka strongly protested against apartheid and supported resolutions demanding sanctions against it, it still continued its trade relations with the country. "In contrast with its policy towards South Africa, it imposed a total ban on trade with Southern Rhodesia in 1966. Sri Lanka had virtually no trade with Southern Rhodesia. It could, therefore, combine economic sanctions and political condemnation in the case of Southern Rhodesia."<sup>35</sup>

The pro-West stand taken by all the governments in power was mainly due to economic dependence on these countries. When S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike was in the opposition he was very much vocal about reducing the country's dependence on the West. But once in power they could never realise it. "A part from China, no other non-Western

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<sup>33</sup> During the 1971 JVP insurgency operations.

<sup>34</sup> Phadnis and Patnaik n.16 P.235.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

state (had) markedly increased its scale of assistance to Sri Lanka".<sup>36</sup> Over dependence on Western aid was because of the lack of alternative sources of resources.

Sri Lanka's interest in Asian Regionalism can be attributed to uphold the rights of a small state. The SAARC forum in the past was mainly used to counter India. It could do so with the support of other small countries in the region. The dominant issue with India was related to Sri Lanka's Sovereignty and territorial integrity. It feared that India was a major threat to its existence. Because of its small size and limited resources, the country could play only a minor role in world politics. This was also a reason which brought Sri Lanka into the SAARC as an active member.

Once we analyse all aspects of Sri Lanka's foreign policy one could conclude that economic dependence and its security interest play an important role in all its foreign policy decisions.

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<sup>36</sup> Samaraweera, "Foreign Policy" n.1 P.349.

### CHAPTER-III

## **ETHNIC CONFLICT AND INDIA FACTOR IN SRI LANKA'S FOREIGN POLICY**

### **Introduction**

India is Sri Lanka's closest neighbour. Both the countries are separated by a narrow stretch of water in the Palk Straits. "Thus the strongest influence on Sri Lanka throughout the ages has been from India."<sup>1</sup>

Apart from this physical proximity, the island nation has both historical and cultural linkages with India. The two chief religions in Sri Lanka- Buddhism and Hinduism-came from India. Indian influence has also been strong in the social sphere. Indian culture and social system have left their mark on Sri Lanka's culture. Indian influence in Sri Lanka's literature and art has been over whelming.

"Proximity to India has had important political consequences. It is not merely that political concepts and models of political organization were often borrowed from India. Whenever most of peninsular India or

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1 C.R. Desiva, *Sri Lanka: A History*, [New Delhi : Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., 1989], p.8.

a major part of South India has been dominated by a single power, that power has sought to extend its political domain to Sri Lanka. The admiration and acceptance of Indian ideas and culture has often existed side by side with fears of Indian political dominance.”<sup>2</sup>

Sinhalese form the major ethnic group in the island, and the Tamils are the more dominant ethnic minority. Sri Lankan Tamils are the descendants of early immigrants from India and the Indian Tamils went to the island as labourers during the British colonial rule. Both the Sri Lankan Tamils and Indian Tamils have close connections with the Tamil population in Tamil Nadu. After independence, the citizenship status of Indian Tamils became a bilateral questions between India and Sri Lanka.

### **The Out-Break of Ethnic Conflict.**

In post-independence period, the Tamils were discriminated by the successive Sinhalese dominated governments in Sri Lanka. The first instance was the new citizenship law of 1949 which made a bulk of the Indian Tamil population stateless. Later, in 1956 the Sinhalese language was made the only official language of the country. This was followed by the Republican Constitution of 1972 which gave pre-eminance to Buddhism and the Sinhalese language. The constitution also centralized all power in the Sinhala-dominated legislature.

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.,

Attempts by political leaders to find a solution to Tamil grievances were thwarted by the dominant Chauvinistic forces in the Sinhalese society. The Bandaranaike-Chelvanayakam Pact of 1958 and Senanayake - Chelvanayakam Pact signed in 1965 were two significant attempts which tried to work out a form of regional autonomy as a solution to Tamil grievances. Both these attempts were opposed by the Sinhalese hardliners, both from the political spectrum and the Buddhist Sangha<sup>3</sup>. In 1958 it was the UNP which opposed the Bandaranaike-Chelvanayakam Pact and in 1965 it was the SLFP which opposed the Senanayake-Chelvanayakam pact.

The escalation of the hegemony of Sinhalese-Buddhist nationalism resulted in Tamils' demand for a federal system of government in the 50's. This demand later grew into the demand for a separate state in the 1970's. The 1970's also saw the aggravation of ethnic relations due to the introduction of new university admission policies which discriminated the Tamils and greatly favoured the Sinhalese.

With the escalation of the ethnic conflict, a new political leadership emerged in the Sir Lankan Tamil society, and armed struggle became the dominant form of political struggle. As regards their social background, the leaders were less Westernized than the earlier Tamil leadership, and were based in the Northern Province where there is a concentration

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3 Sunil Bhasin "Liberalised Policies and Regional Autnomy" in Sunil Bastin (ed) *Devolution and Development in Sri Lanka*, [New Delhi : Konark, 1994] p. 157.

of Tamil population. All these factors contributed to the strengthening of the Tamil demand that sought control over the North-Eastern part of the country where they had a majority, and armed struggle became a popular mode of political action by the mid-seventies.<sup>4</sup>

The later half of the 1970's saw increased violence by the Tamil militants. As a result, in 1979 the government enacted a Prevention of Terrorism Act. This law was mainly directed against the Tamil militant youth. Military repression and Tamil violence continued in Jaffna. In 1981 anti-Tamil riots broke out, resulting in a large scale loss of lives. Negotiations between government and TULF leaders failed to make any headway.

On 23rd July 1983 ethnic violence again broke out in Sri Lanka. This was in reaction to the killing of 17 soldiers by the Sri Lankan Tamil militants. Subsequently, the army also intensified its operations in Jaffna Peninsula. Large-scale human rights violations were also reported because of the army's activities. Several Tamils were killed and many others injured.<sup>5</sup>

The Sri Lankan Tamils alleged that the security forces were given orders not to intervene and that some elements of the security forces actually encouraged mobs into violent activity.

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4 Ibid. p.158

5 Edgar. O. Ballance, *The Cynide War*, [London : Brassey's, 1989] p.21.

On the other side, the Tamils who were subjected to violence, formed strong militant groups, the prominent one was the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). It is believed that a large number of training camps were set up in many parts of India for the training of Tamil militants, and sophisticated weapons were given to them from the funds contributed by expatriate Tamils living in the West. Funds also came from armed robberies and smuggling of narcotics. "By 1984, the militants began a series of organized attacks and bombing in which a large number of people lost their lives. In the North, anti-separatist Tamils were ruthlessly killed in retaliation and isolated Sinhala Villages were attacked by the well-organized Tamil militants. As a result, about 24,000 Sinhalese became displaced." <sup>6</sup>

The July riots and the subsequent repercussions in Sri Lanka caused considerable concern in India, particularly in Tamil Nadu. Tamil refugees reaching India told tales of horror and atrocity committed not only by Sinhalese mobs, but also by Sri Lankan Security forces.<sup>7</sup>

### **Process and Patterns of India's Involvement**

The 1983 riots in Sri Lanka was a matter of great concern for the

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<sup>6</sup> Major Shankar Bhaduri & Major General Afsir Karim , *The Sri Lankan Crisis*, [New Delhi : Lancer International, 1990] p.17.

<sup>7</sup> Edgar. O. Ballance n. 5 p. 26.



Tamils in Tamil Nadu. A wave of spontaneous indignation swept throughout Tamil Nadu and life in that State came to a virtual standstill as all political parties joined in public processions and meetings against the killings of Tamils in Sri Lanka<sup>8</sup>.

The strong influence exerted by Tamil Nadu on the Centre over the Sri Lankan issue was mainly due to the cultural, religious and social ties between the Tamils across the Palk Straits.

The Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.G. Ramachandran, convened an all parties meeting on 28 July 1983 in Madras which condemned, in no uncertain terms, the killing of Tamils in Sri Lanka. It was decided in the meeting to send a delegation to New Delhi to seek India's intervention to end the ethnic violence in the island. M.G. Ramachandran not only sent a telegram to Indira Gandhi urging her to take up the matter in the United Nations Organisation (UNO) but also led a delegation to New Delhi on 31 July 1983 representing different political parties in Tamil Nadu. The delegation submitted a memorandum to the Prime Minister which stated among other things that 'The grim and inhuman killings in Sri Lanka cannot be dismissed as the internal affairs of the country..... We definitely feel that the time has come for the Indian

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8 A. Sivarajah, "Indo-Sri Lankan Relations and Sri Lankas' Ethnic Crisis : The Tamil Nadu Factor" Shelton. U. Kodikara (ed) **South Asian Strategic Issues : Sri Lankan perspectives**, [New Delhi : Saga Publications : 1990] p.140.

government to intervene effectively, actively and urgently to save the Tamils in Sri Lanka<sup>9</sup>.

India adopted a two track response to the events. It offered its good offices to find a solution to the conflict. At the same time, it helped the militants with arms and sanctuary facilities. The Sri Lankan Tamil refugee influx highlighted the intensity of violence against the Tamil population in Sri Lanka. The refugee influx also imposed a great burden, both financial and administrative, on both the State and Central Government authorities.<sup>10</sup> This factor also gave India a context for its involvement in the conflict.

### **Security Concerns of India**

Certain decisions of the Sri Lankan government with regard to seeking support of the extra regional powers were considered by India as a threat to its security. Two such instances were : the permission to set up a VOA station on the island and the leasing out of oil tanks in Trincomalee.

The agreement that the Sri Lankan government had entered into with the US regarding the VOA facilities was not a new one. It was

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>10</sup> John Gooneratne "India's Management of Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict" Baladas Ghoshal (ed), **Diplomacy and Domestic Politics in South Asia**, [ New Delhi : Konark Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1996] p. 265.

the updating of an Agreement originally signed in 1951. It was renewed on several previous occasions, expanding the facilities and premises by mutual agreement, in 1954, 1971, 1976 and thereafter by one-year period till a Reviewed Agreement was entered into through an Exchange of Notes on 9 December 1983. The main features of the latest Agreement was the construction of a relay station consisting of six shortwave transmitters of which two would have the capability to transmit up to 250 kilowatts, and four up to 500 kilowatts. The Sri Lankan government would lease or help acquire 1,000 acres of land for these facilities.<sup>11</sup>

Another source of concern for the Government of India was the plan to lease nearly 100 oil storage tanks in China Bay, Trincomalee. There were storage tanks that the British Admiralty had constructed. Except for a few storage tanks that the Petroleum Corporation used, the rest remained unused. The Indian government feared that such storage tanks in the hands of private foreign firms, might surreptitiously be used for military purposes by interested Western countries.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, The Indian Oil Corporation also submitted a bid. The Minister of State for External Affairs, on 24th January 1985, told in Rajya Sabha that Indian Oil Corporation's "tender was fairly competitive but, unfortunately, the contract was allotted to three firms from Singapore for reasons not known to us."<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid. pp.265-66.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. p. 267

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. pp.267-68

These policies of Sri Lanka was a challenge to India's security. These moves were seen by India as an attempt by the Sri Lankan government to bring extra regional powers into the region, thereby by restricting Indian influence in the region.

### **Forms of Indian Involvement**

As stated earlier, India involved in the conflict as a mediator and extended military assistance to Tamil militants.

The extension of military training facilities to the Tamil militants by the Indian government was one of the most negative part of its involvement in the conflict. The Tamil Nadu government permitted the Tamil militants to enjoy a great deal of freedom; for example, the Tamil militants were permitted to carry their weapons, in public, which is not allowed to Indian civilians. There were several incidents involving members of some militant groups clashing with the Tamil Nadu public, instances of involvement in drug peddling, arms smuggling and the like, and even attempting to blow up an Air Lanka plane at Madras Airport.

The military assistance that the Indian government was giving to one party to the conflict, while at the same time offering to mediate the conflict cast doubts on the bona fides of India's role. While India was arming and training Tamil militants, Sri Lanka's efforts to improve

the army's fighting efficiency was interpreted as an indication of lack of interest in genuine negotiation. Military manoeuvres by the Sri Lanka armed forces were often cramped and cribbed by India. The Tamil militants were also sometimes threatening non-participation in the talks until military operations were called off.<sup>14</sup>

Side by side, India was active in the scene as a mediator. On the initiative and mediation of Indira Gandhi's special envoy, G. Parthasarathy the President of Sri Lanka agreed to convene an All Party Conference (APL) in December 1983. As a result of discussions in Colombo and New Delhi, a proposal (Annexure-C) was prepared by Parthasarathy for consideration by the APL.<sup>15</sup> Unfortunately this proposal was not acceptable to a section of the Sri Lankan Society. The Sri Lankan government itself found this proposal as an interference in its internal affairs.

Within a few months, the collapse of the conference led to more formal diplomatic negotiation between the governments of Sri Lanka and India, which eventually led to a meeting between President Jayewardene and the new Indian Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi, in June 1985. A three-months cease-fire was declared and talks were held under Indian auspices in Bhutan in July and August 1985, between

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid p.272-73.

<sup>15</sup> Sivarajah, n.8. p.143.

representatives of the Sri Lankan government and leaders of the various Tamil separatist groups, as well as the TULF. These talks, however, fizzled out.<sup>16</sup> Even during these talks regular outbursts of violence were taking place in the country.

A turning point in India's role in the Sri Lankan affairs came in the year 1987. In early 1987 attempts by the LTTE to make a unilateral declaration of independence in the north of the island led to an escalation of the conflict. This threat was treated by the Sri Lankan authorities as gravely provocative.<sup>17</sup> In May 1987 J.R. Jayawardene planned Operation Liberation in Jaffna. The six day operation ended on 31st May with heavy civilian casualties in Jaffna and the entire Vadamarachchi area came under the control of Sri Lankan armed forces.

Indian reaction to this was very sharp. On 1 June, High Commissioner of India in Sri Lanka, J.N. Dixit called on Sri Lanka's Foreign Minister Shahul Hameed and said that the government and the people of India propose to send urgently needed relief by sea to Jaffna. In spite of opposition from the Sri Lankan government a flotilla of nineteen boats carrying food and medicine was sent towards Sri Lanka. But they were not allowed to reach the Sri Lankan coast.

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16 K.M. De Silva, "1970-1991 : The Political System under severe stress" K.M. De Silva (ed) **Sri Lanka : Problems of Governance**, [New Delhi : Konark Publishers Pvt. Ltd. 1993] p.61.

17 Ibid. p.63

The following day India paradropped relief supplies over Jaffna Peninsula. Thus India for the first time directly intervened in the conflict. Till then, was only playing the role of a mediator. This intervention brought the Sri Lankan military operations in Jaffna to an end and led to the conclusion of the Indo-Srilanka Agreement nearly two months later.<sup>18</sup>

### **Foreign Policy Concerns of Sri Lanka.**

When the conflict broke out the Sri Lankan state found it difficult to contain the violence all by itself. Moreover Tamils were getting material and moral support from India, which became a moral cause of concern for Sri Lanka. The leadership in Sri Lanka saw India as a source of threat to its security. Public opinion in Sri Lanka was also against Indian involvement in the conflict. All these factors compelled Sri Lanka to try and keep India out of the problem. For this Sri Lanka began to seek the help of powers, both within and outside the region.

Sri Lanka approached 'friendly countries' - particularly the USA, the UK, China, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Malaysia - for military and political support.<sup>19</sup> India was excluded from this list of friendly countries. So was Soviet Union because of that country's close friendship with India.

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<sup>18</sup> See S.D. Muni, *Pangs of Proximity : India and Sri Lanka's Ethnic Crisis*, [New Delhi : Sage Publications, 1993] p.82.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. p.52

The Jayewardene government used both normal diplomatic channels as well as special missions to secure military and political support. These missions emphasized the threat to Sri Lanka's unity and integrity posed by Tamil terrorism working with the support and encouragement of government and people in India. Also projected were scenarios of a direct military invasion by India for the creation of an independent and sovereign Tamil State.<sup>20</sup>

Israel was approached for its assistance to counter insurgency training. The Sri Lankan government also allowed the establishment of an Israeli Interest Section in May 1984 at the American Embassy in Colombo. Israel's internal security service, Shin Bert, trained Sri Lankan personnel several weeks in 1984 in Sri Lanka.<sup>21</sup>

Pakistan also promptly joined in helping Sri Lanka to deal with its ethnic conflict. Though initial reports of Sri Lankan request for arms to Pakistan were denied, Pakistan contributed rupees 10 million in August 1983, towards relief assistance and gave an option to the Sri Lankan government to utilise it for the purchase of rice, cloth, sugar etc. Sri Lankan reporters claimed that with these supplies also came military

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid pp.52-53.

<sup>21</sup> Sivarajah, n.8 p.153.



equipment, in Pakistani civilian planes, to avoid any Indian suspicion and protest.<sup>22</sup>

Arms supply also came from Malaysia, Britain, South Africa and the USA. British ex-SAS commandos came under the name of the private mercenary agency called Keenie Minee Services to train the Sri Lankan army. The leasing out of oil tank farms in Trincomalee and giving permission to set up VOA station in the Sri Lankan soil was also a part of joining hands with outside powers against India.

Notable in the context of Sri Lanka's strategic relations with the West during this period was also President Jayewardene's assertion that his country's defence pact with Britain entered into in 1947, still remained valid. In this way he conveyed a message that some sort of alliance in defence matters existed between his country and the United Kingdom.<sup>23</sup> These involvements by outside powers in the region was considered by India as a threat to its security.

The above factors led to Indian suspicion against Sri Lanka. Each move by Sri Lanka to join hands with any foreign power was seen by India as an attempt to isolate it in the region. India, on its part, adopted a policy of discussions and negotiations with the Sri Lankan government

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22. S.D. Muni, n.18, p.53

23 Ibid p.55

and the Tamil minority. At the same time, India used its diplomatic channels to internationalize the conflict. India, through its high commissions and embassies in the West - in Ottawa London and Washington, in particular - highlighted human rights violations by the Sri Lankan security forces.<sup>24</sup> In the UN General Assembly, Indian delegates raised the Sri Lankan issue in the course of debates. Moreover, because of the gross violation of human rights in the country, it came under international pressure to resolve the conflict.

With regard to violation of civil and political rights since 1981, Sri Lanka's record has been dismal and has attracted severe criticism in various international fora. There culminated in a resolution adopted in 1987 at the UN Resolution at the Sub-Commission on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Minorities. The Resolution reads as follows:

"Calls upon all parties and groups to respect fully the universally accepted rules of Humanitarian law;

Calls upon all parties and groups to renounce the use of force and acts of violence and to pursue a negotiated political solution based on principles of respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms."<sup>25</sup>

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24 K.M. De Silva, **Regional Powers and Small State Security**, [ New Delhi : Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd. 1996]. p.113.

25 Radika Coomaraswamy "The Civil Liberties and Human Rights Perspective" in K.M. DeSilva (ed) **Problems of Governance**, [New Delhi : Konark Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1993], p.160

Apart from this, the Amnesty International, International Alert, International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) and other international human rights organisations, also condemned the violation of human rights in Sri Lanka. As such, the Sri Lankan government came under great pressure. The image of the country was tarnished. No country at such a circumstance could give direct support to Sri Lanka. Thus Sri Lanka was compelled to use India's good office to resolve the conflict.

Sri Lankan government was under pressure from within the country also. This was because of the Indian assistance to the Tamil militancy. The extent of support to the militants varied with the intensity of the Sri Lankan army's operations and the failure on Colombo's part to advance the process of seeking a negotiated solution.<sup>26</sup> This, in turn, was used as an argument by the Sri Lankan side, and rightly so, after the public exposure in March April 1984 of the existence of training camps in Tamil Nadu for Sri Lankan militants".<sup>27</sup>

Thus, under international pressure and the states' inability to fight a well organized militant group like LTTE, the Sri Lankan government was forced to enter into an agreement with India. In the agreement itself Sri Lanka had to make amendments in its approach towards other countries. Sri Lanka was asked to accommodate India's Security concerns

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<sup>26</sup> S.D. Muni, n. 18, p.75.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

also when forging security relations with other countries. The Annexure to the Agreement said that :

"Trincomalee or any other parts in Sri Lanka will not be made available for military use by any country in a manner prejudicial to India's Interests.

The work of restoring and operating the Trincomalee oil tank farm will be undertaken as a joint venture between India and Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka's agreement with foreign broadcasting organisation will be reviewed to ensure that any facilities set up by them in Sri Lanka are used solely as public broadcasting facilities and not for any military or intelligence purposes."<sup>28</sup>

Thus through the agreement the position of India as a regional power was reinforced. Sri Lanka through this agreement was forced to acknowledge India's dominant position in the region.

## **Conclusion**

The turn of events in the 1980's were very important as far as the history of Sri Lanka is concerned. The ethnic violence brought about

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<sup>28</sup> Text of the Indo-Sri Lankan Agreement to Establish Peace and Normalcy in Sri Lanka, Colombo, 29 July 1987.

changes in the domestic situation. Pressure was on the leadership to keep a control on the domestic environment and to maintain the image of the country outside. Along with it, the dominant presence of India to accomodate its security interest was also an additional tension for Sri Lanka. All these factors produced certain marked shifts in the way Sri Lanka conducted its foreign policy in the 1980's.

## CHAPTER-IV

# FOREIGN POLICY IMPLICATIONS OF ETHNIC CONFLICT

### Introduction

In the wake of the outbreak of ethnic violence, there has been a marked shift in the way Sri Lanka conducted its foreign policy. Foreign Office was mainly used as an instrument to mobilise resources and to build up the country's image. Ethnic conflict demanded the total attention of the leadership on internal issues. The country's security was at stake. Indian interference, the internationalization of the conflict, weak economy, weak defence structure—all produced changes in Sri Lanka's foreign policy behaviour.

There has been an erosion of Sri Lanka's commitment to Non-Alignment and interest in upholding the SAARC Charter. Its affinity with the West had increased tremendously. All these compromises were for the sake of protecting the country's security. Therefore, the security of the country has been the principal goal which the country's foreign policy tried to protect.

## **Centralization of foreign Policy Decision-making**

Under the 1978 constitution, President is placed at the apex of the administration. All the executive powers are vested in him. In the conduct of foreign policy also, President plays an important role. Unlike in normal situations, the ethnic conflict demanded the attention of the leadership more on the domestic issues than on foreign policy matters. Foreign policy decision making became a highly centralized affair with the President holding the fort. He endowed himself with power and authority to take some important decision by considering the internal violence and threat to the country's security.

For thirty years, from 1948 to 1978, the Prime Minister stood at the apex of the foreign policy decision making process in Sri Lanka. Section 46(4) of the Independence (Soulbury) Constitution required that the Prime Minister should also hold the portfolios of Defence and External Affairs, and even when this constitutional requirement was done away with, under the First Republican Constitution in 1972, the then Prime Minister, Mrs. Bandaranaike, continued to hold these portfolios until the change of government in 1977. After the July 1977 elections, J.R. Jayewardena, appointed a Foreign Minister, when he became the President under the Republican Constitution which introduced a presidential form of government in place of Westminster model. Jayewardena, as head of state as well as head of Government, continued

to take initiatives, and give directives on important foreign policy issues.<sup>1</sup>

The appointment of a foreign minister for the first time in the post-independence history of the island was indicative of the priorities he attached to the responsibilities of the head of government. The important point being that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was no longer part of the direct responsibility of the head of government as it had been since 1947. To that extent, there was an inevitable and perhaps intentional reduction in the political status and importance of that ministry. However, as with heads of governments the world over, Jayewardene kept the more important pronouncements on foreign policy for himself, and intervened directly whenever he felt it necessary to do so. A.C.S. Hameed, Minister of Foreign Affairs, was not merely in the shadow of the President, he was often overshadowed in his own area of responsibility by his cabinet colleagues.<sup>2</sup> On many occasions, Ranasinghe Premadasa, as Prime Minister, was chosen to play certain foreign policy functions. For instance, he was sent to missions to the People's Republic of China in 1979 and to the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries in 1981.

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1 Shelton. U. Kodikara, *Foreign Policy of Sri Lanka : A Third World Perspective*, [Delhi : Chanakya Publications, 1982], p.4.

2 K.M. De Silva, *Regional Powers and Small State Security*, [New Delhi : Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd. 1996], p.42.



Another aspect of Jayaewardene's foreign policy decision-making was that it lacked transparency. The country's foreign affairs was a secret and was made usually behind closed doors. The people were never aware of the details of discussions and agreements reached with other countries. Because of the volatile situation inside the country the President could not afford openness in its foreign policy decisions.

### **Compromise on Non-Alignment**

Non-Alignment was one of the important principle of Sri Lanka's foreign policy. From D.S. Senanayake to Jayewardene every Prime Minister and President, at one point of time or other, was seen upholding this principle. In their speeches, they always emphasized the fact that they stood by this principle.

Sri Lanka's non-alignment policy found its golden period during the times of S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike and Mrs. Bandaranaike. The emphasis in keeping the Indian Ocean free from militarisation and power politics. For this Sri Lanka proposed in the United Nations that the Indian Ocean be made a zone of peace. Moreover Sri Lanka was active in international forums to fight for the cause of Third World Countries. Even Jayewardene was heard upholding the principle of non-alignment. He said :

“[Sri Lanka] works for the democratic ideal, it refrains from aligning

itself with any power block and is devoted to the peace, prosperity and welfare of humanity”<sup>3</sup>

But in the 1980's a change in attitude could be seen. Sri Lanka allowed the visit of US naval ships for refuelling and crew-rest. In addition to this two other important instances were notable.

To renovate and expand refuelling facilities at the strategic harbour in Trincomalee, the World War II vintage Oil-storage tank-form, international contracts were invited. But through a rather clear case of manipulation, the bids by India (infact the lowest) and the Soviet Union were rejected, and the contract was awarded to a Singapore-based private consortium with suspected US links.<sup>4</sup>

“Another important strategic deal with the USA was concluded in December 1983. This concerned the establishment of a powerful voice of America transmission facility, expected to be the largest of its kind outside the USA. This facility could also be able to beam high frequency messages to US submarines deployed in the Indian Ocean region.”<sup>5</sup>

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3 J.R.Jayewardene, "Golden Thread of Foreign Policy" Sugeeswara. P. Senadhira (ed), President. J.R. Jayewardene On National and International Affairs, [Indian Sri Satguru Publications, 1985] p.33.

4 S.D. muni, *Pangs of Proximity*, [New Delhi : Sage Publications, 1993] p.54.

5 Ibid. p.p.54-55.

These instances could be seen as an attempt on the part of Sri Lanka to invite extra-regional powers into the region. There decisions of the Sri Lankan government clearly shows the shift from the country's non-aligned position.

### **Priority to Security Concerns :**

When ethnic violence broke out the internal security was at stake. The leadership found it difficult to handle and settle it in peaceful ways. The state used coercive means to control the violence. The help given to the terrorist militant groups from India was an added cause of concern for the Sri Lankan authorities. This made the Sri Lankan government to get assistance in the form of aid, arms and military training from every available source.

During the Arab-Israeli conflict Sri Lanka always stood by the Arabs. This position of Sri Lanka had important domestic political overtones. Arab markets were important for Sri Lanka's tea trade. Another factor was that the Muslim in Sri Lanka was closely identified with the Arab cause, and alienation of this minority was a political liability that no government of Sri Lanka could afford to incur.<sup>6</sup>

After the outbreak of the ethnic conflict, diplomatic contacts with

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<sup>6</sup> Shelton. U. Kodikara, "International Change, Regional Compulsions and Sri Lanka's Foreign Policy" Shelton. U. Kodikara, no.1.p.129.

Israel were restored. As such, the primacy of Muslim domestic policies was superseded by the new primacy of fighting the Tamil insurgency. For this purpose, Israel became a valued supplier of arms, military training and technical assistance.<sup>7</sup> Israeli interest section was opened in Colombo, under the auspices of US Embassy in June 1984.

Arms supply and military assistance came from many other countries also. British ex-SAS commands came under the name of a private agency called Keenie Minee Services. Pakistan also promptly joined in helping Sri Lanka. "Pakistan contributed rupees 10 million in August 1983, towards relief assistance and gave an option to the Sri Lankan government to utilise it for the purchase of rice, cloth, sugar etc. Sri Lankan reports claim that with these supplies also came military equipment, in Pakistani Civilian planes to avoid any Indian suspicion and protest."<sup>8</sup>

Initially, it was economic compulsion that led Sri Lanka to develop friendly relations with China. With the aggravation of ethnic conflict, China became even more important as a source of arms supplies. "Fortunately for Sri Lanka, Pakistan and the People's Republic of China lay beyond the range of India's diplomatic pressures."<sup>9</sup>

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7 Shelton. U. Kodikara, "International Change, Regional Compulsions and Sri Lanka's Foreign Policy" in Baladas Ghoshal (ed), *Diplomacy and Domestic Politics in South Asia*, [New Delhi : Konark Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1996], p.254

8 S. D. Muni, n.4. p.53

9 K.M. de Silva n.2. p.140

As regards Sri Lanka's security, it was threatened both from within and outside the country. The internal threat arose from persisting ethnic violence and the external threat was posed by India.

Sri Lanka's interest in ASEAN goes back to the 1960's. The SLFP believed that Sri Lanka's policy of non-alignment would be compromised by joining ASEAN. The Communist Party of Sri Lanka, too, in a separate statement, condemned the UNP government's efforts to join ASEAN, stating that this decision "marks the start of a formal break with the policy of non-alignment"<sup>10</sup>

But in the 1980's efforts to join ASEAN was renewed. "Prime Minister Premadasa spear headed this mission. In Manila he exceeded his brief in making a public statement to this effect. The bid was unsuccessful. It was only after this rejection by ASEAN that Jayewardene really committed himself to supporting the SARC concept."<sup>11</sup>

### **Defence Build Up**

In the early part of 1984, the army was the only law enforcing agency, particularly in Jaffna. As a result of this, diversion of large sums of money for the expansion and modernization of its armed services was intensified. By 1985 expenditure on the armed services rose to

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<sup>10</sup> Shelton. U. Kodikara, n.1. p.191.

<sup>11</sup> K.M. De Silva, n.2.p.66.

\$ 207 million or 2.8% of the GNP. The level of defence expenditure "was sustained and increased over the next five years."<sup>12</sup>

In 1985, in a speech, President Jayawerdene said:

"We have in the last few months taken steps to train as many members of the security services as we need and to obtain such arms that are necessary to equip them..

We have not done this before and our Budget did not provide for such expenditure. Unfortunately we are now compelled to spend this money and we have decided to do so. I feel that very soon we will be fully equipped to meet any violent activity by the terrorists.<sup>13</sup>

Foreign Office and diplomacy was used to get arms supplies from outside. The countries which came to help include USA, China, Italy United Kingdom, Israel, Singapore, South Africa and even Pakistan. The following table show the arms purchased by Sri Lanka during the period 1983-88.

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12 K.M. De Silva, "The Police and Armed Services" in K.M. De Silva, (ed) **Sri Lanka : Problems of Governance**, [New Delhi Konark Publishers Pvt. Ltd. 1993] p.364

13 Sugesswara. P. Senadhira (ed & compiled0, n.3. p.96.

**Arms Purchases by Sri Lanka, 1983-88 (all figures are in \$m at  
constant 1985 prices)**

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988
United States	3	1	28	29	10	-
Soviet Union	-	-	-	-	-	-
China	-	-	-	2	8	-
Italy	-	-	-	5	-	-
United Kingdom	-	-	15	15	-	-
Israel	-	31	26	-	9	44
Singapore	-	38	-	4	-	-
South Africa	-	-	12	10	-	10
Total	3	70	81	65	27	54

Source : Deepak Tripathi, Sri Lanka's Foreign Policy Dilemmas [London : Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1989], p. 33

### Sri Lanka's Military Expenditure

Year	in m Rupees	in \$m	As % of GDP
1982	1,500	76.6	
1983	1,800	80.6	
1984	2,600	99.8	
1985	4,614	207	2.8
1986	4,351	181	2.4
1987	6,001	232	3.1
1988	4,732	160	2.1
1989	4,754	139	1.8
1990	8,754	219	2.7
1991	11,059	246	3.0
1992	13,590	271	3.2
1993	16,035	287	3.2

Source : SIPRI year Book, 1988, 1995 & 1996 (Stockholm : Oxford University Press).



An interesting thing to note is that the countries which supplied arms to Sri Lanka did not have close ties with India. Soviet Union was not approached for arms. This shows Sri Lanka's suspicions about India. The ideas like non-alignment, world peace etc were compromised when the country accepted arms from these countries. Arms supply mainly came from countries in the Western power bloc.

### **Internationalization of the conflict and Loss of Image**

With the escalation of the conflict, refugee flow increased. Many of them came to India. But a large number of them went to the UK, US, Australia, Canada and other European nations. They exerted strong pressure on their host countries to support the cause of Sri Lankan Tamils and they exerted pressure on the respective governments to pressurise the Sri Lankan government from following violent means.

When violence broke out and India began to show concern in the conflict, Sri Lanka used its diplomatic channels to create sympathy and support for itself against Indians' threat to its security. Even though it succeeded in gaining some support from some countries, India through its position in the International forums tried to mobilise world opinion on the gross violation of human rights in Sri Lanka. This resulted in international outcry against the island. The matter was raised in the UN Sub-Commission on Human Rights. Sri Lankan government was

asked to protect the rights of its citizens and find a political solution to the conflict.

"Taking note of the reports of the special Rapporteur on torture and of the Working Group on Enforced or involuntary Disappearances, which contained allegations of human rights violations on Sri Lanka, the Commission on Human Rights on 12 March 1987, called on all parties and groups to respect fully the universally accepted rules of humanitarian law, renounce the use of violence and pursue a negotiated political solution. It invited Sri Lanka to intensify its co-operation with ICRC in disseminating and promoting international humanitarian law and to consider favourably ICRC's offer of services to protect humanitarian standards and assist and protect the victims of all affected parties. The Commission expressed the hope that Sri Lanka continue to provide it with information.<sup>14</sup>

Sri Lankan economy was very much dependent on foreign aid. In every aid group meeting the need for a political solution was emphasised by the donor countries. "Human rights aspects of ethnic issue was one in which United States was intermittently showing its concern. Rather than a military confrontation, however, US administration firmly insisted on a political solution to the problem. The US administration under the

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<sup>14</sup> Year Book of the United Nations, [New York : Department of Public Information UN, Martinns Nijhaff Publishers, 1987] Vol. 41 p.807.

influence of human rights groups expressed a grave concern over violations of basic human rights.<sup>15</sup>

Micheal Armacost, Under Secretary for political Affairs said in April 1987;

"We must continue to remind the Sri Lankan authorities that military solutions to the Tamil problem are unlikely to work-even as we urge the Tamil militant to recognize that terrorist tactics will only harden opposition to their political aspirations. We reiterate our call to all parties - particularly the Tamil militants to come together to achieve a political solution within the framework of a united Sri Lanka. Thanks to the statesmanship of President Jayewardene and the constructive efforts of the Indian Government, considerable progress was made prior to the recent violent attacks. We hope that progress can be resumed and we are prepared to help Sri Lanka rebuild after the violence subsides.<sup>16</sup>

Thus the country was under international pressure to resolve the conflict. The image of the country became one where human rights are violated . The country had to try hard to regain its image as a democratic, peace loving country.

### **Loss of Foreign Policy Activism**

After the outbreak of ethnic violence, the country lost its foreign

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15 M.G.A. Cooray, "United States - Sri Lanka Relations : A Review" [Colombo : International seminar on External Compulsions of South Asian Politics, March 1-3, 1989]p.18.

16 Ibid. p. 19.

policy activism in multilateral for a and seemed to have adopted more an inward looking approach vis-a-vis international issues. Every available international forum was used to discuss the ethnic conflict and Indian involvement. This is evident from Sri Lanka's use of the SAARC forum.

Sri Lanka has been an advocate of regional co-operation in South Asia. From the beginning, it has whole heartedly involved in the SAARC process. Apart from hosting several meetings of the SAARC, it proposed many programmes of action like the convention on Terrorism and Poverty Alleviation in the region. However, in the wake of heightening of ethnic conflict in which India factor became strong, Sri Lanka tried to use the regional forum to ventilate its grievances against India.

In protest against a statement made in the Rajya Sabha by the Indian Minister of State for External Affairs Khursheed Alam Khan criticising the Island's handling of the ethnic problems - saying "the happenings in Sri Lanka were deplorable, brutal, barbaric cruel and in-human", Sri Lanka viewed the statement as an interference in her internal affairs.<sup>17</sup> So Sri Lanka did not participate in the meeting of Foreign Ministers held in Thimpu in May 1985.

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17 Ravinatha Aryasinghe, "Regionalism : As a dimension of Sri Lanka's Foreign Policy" [Colombo : The Government Information Department, 1991] p.61.

In the 1986 SAARC Summit held in Bangalore, Sri Lanka stressed the need to discuss bilateral issues in the SAARC forum. In the third SAARC Council of Ministers meeting in New Delhi, which was held after the air drop of food by India, over the Jaffna Peninsula, amidst the high level of anti-Indian hysteria, that ensued, Sri Lanka was initially reluctant to attend the meeting. But later Sri Lankan Foreign Minister A.C.S. Hameed agreed for a closed door discussion.

Thus in the 1980's the country was seen focusing its attention on its internal issues. Foreign Policy during the 1980s in a clear evidence for this.

## **Conclusion**

Keeping in mind all the developments in the island, shifts in the foreign policy of Sri Lanka are clearly evident. The one and only focus of the country's foreign policy seems to be on mobilisation of economy of external resources and support for its security. Democratic space of the country is reduced. This has made its impact on foreign policy also. Ideological commitment to non-alignment is lost. India is seen as the major security threat to the country from outside and, as such a major factor in its foreign policy decision-making.

## CHAPTER-V

### CONCLUSION

This study has dealt with the changing orientations of Sri Lanka's foreign policy in the context of the ethnic conflict since 1983. Until the early eighties, the country was committed to uphold the principles of non-alignment and follow the principles enshrined in the UN Charter.

Since the mid-eighties, when ethnic violence broke out the main focus of foreign policy was to find resources and support from outside to protect its security. The country's certain foreign policy decisions amounted to compromise of some of the basic principles of its foreign policy. Its commitment to the principles of non-alignment was significantly eroded; it also lost its foreign policy activism to promote international peace and order. The most important concern of the country was to protect its security , sovereignty and territorial integrity. This had vividly reflected in the country's foreign policy behaviour.

Sri Lanka's geographical proximity to India, trans-border ethnic

linkages of Tamils across the Palk Straits, India's over domineering presence in the region, etc., have played an important role in the conduct of its foreign policy. India factor was always the prominent factor which influenced many of Sri Lanka's foreign policy decisions.

The country's small size, weak economic base and underdeveloped defence were the major concerns of the Sri Lankan government ever since its independence. With the outbreak of ethnic violence, these facts began to pose a threat to the country's security. The security of the country was threatened by, from inside, the ethnic war and, from outside, India's support to the Sri Lankan Tamil militants. Sri Lanka did not have the resources and means to contain the conflict; nor did it have the defence capability to counter India. The only option available to its leaders was to rely on the country's diplomatic campaign to overcome the crisis situation. This situation changed Sri Lanka's foreign policy behaviour. Here the first hypothesis stands proved: 'A small country with limited resources cannot follow a coherent and consistent foreign policy when its national survival is threatened'.

Sri Lanka's domestic instability, and its inability to contain disorder posed a threat to its security. It was these factors which

invited Indian intervention in the conflict. Under the Indo-Lankan Agreement, the country was forced to incorporate the security concerns of India. This impinged greatly on Sri Lanka's autonomy in foreign and security policy making. This proves our second hypothesis: 'The greater the domestic instability and threat to sovereignty of a small country, the more the chances of erosion of independence in its foreign policy decision making.

Despite the changes that occurred in Sri Lanka's foreign policy orientations we would find some continuity also. Even during the conflict, the country tried to uphold the principles of democracy, and committed to the UN Charter. It did participate in UN and SAARC activities. The underlying determinants of the foreign policy of Sri Lanka before the conflict and during the conflict were also the same. Economic insecurity and the resultant dependence on foreign economies coupled with a constant perception of threat from India were always the determinants which shaped Sri Lanka's foreign policies.

To conclude we could say that the foreign policy of a country shows reflections of a country's domestic political situation. When internal disturbances like ethnic conflicts erupt, a relative change is bound to occur in a country's foreign policy behaviour. But the degree of change in foreign policy may vary from country to country and from situation to situation.



If the country is a strong power, with abundance of resources and a good defence system, it will be easier for it to contain the conflict. So internal conflict is not internationalized. This leaves the country with great discretionary powers in matters of foreign policy. The international pressure on the country to resolve the conflict will be minimum.

This is not true in the case of a small state. First, the country will find it difficult to contain the conflict. The aftermaths of ethnic violence like refugee flow, human rights violation etc., shall attract international attention. As the country would be dependent on outside powers, it will be under constant international pressure to resolve the conflict. Moreover, the country will be forced to accommodate the concerns and interests of outside powers in its policy decisions. This is bound to result in the erosion of the country's autonomy in decision making.

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