

**SMALL STATES IN REGIONAL POLITICS: A CASE STUDY
OF SRI LANKA'S POLICY TOWARDS SOUTH ASIA**

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*To
My Parents &
Gangatharan*



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CERTIFICATE

Certified that the Dissertation entitled "SMALL STATES IN REGIONAL POLITICS: A CASE STUDY OF SRI LANKA'S POLICY TOWARDS SOUTH ASIA" submitted by N. MANOHARAN in partial fulfilment for the award of the Degree of MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY, has not been previously submitted for any other degree of this or any other university. This is his original work.

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

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CONTENTS

	Page No.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	
PREFACE	i-iii
CHAPTER I Small States in Regional Politics-An Analytical Framework	1-26
CHAPTER II Sri Lanka's Regional Policy: Determinants and Objectives	27-49
CHAPTER III Sri Lanka in South Asian Politics: Issues and Reactions	50-73
CHAPTER IV Sri Lanka and SAARC	74-91
CHAPTER V Conclusions	92-96
BIBLIOGRAPHY	97-108

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PREFACE

The phrase "small is beautiful, but vulnerable", raises many interesting questions : Are small states vulnerable? If so, what are their problems? How do they behave in regional and international politics dominated by big powers? Incidentally, these questions have not received serious attention of scholars of international relations, who focus more on the role of big and middle powers in regional and international politics.

The present study will analyse the behaviour of Sri Lanka in the South Asian regional politics. It is analysed against the theoretical background of small states in regional and international politics.

Sri Lanka is a small island state with an area of around 65,610 square kilometres, population of 18.3 mn and gross domestic product of US\$ 14.4 bn. It depends on a few commodities like manufactured goods, tea, rubber and coconut for its exports. It has less 'influence capability' both in regional and global politics.

Eversince its existence as an independent entity, Sri Lanka has shown much interest in the developments in South Asia. Any conflict within the region or arms race between India and Pakistan, or unfriendly extra-regional power's presence in the region have been a cause for Sri Lanka's concern. The 'India factor' has been an important element in Sri Lanka's regional policy. This factor has been one of the

determinants of Sri Lanka's extra-regional linkages or cooperation with other small states in the region.

The main objectives of the present study are :

1. to examine the goals and objectives of Sri Lanka's South Asia Policy;
2. to find out various actions and reactions of the island state towards the regional issues;
3. to examine the interests and role of Sri Lanka in SAARC.

This study is also intended to test the following hypotheses :

1. Small states tend to assert independence vis-a-vis dominant regional power(s) even by entering into alliance with or by cultivating friendly relations with extra-regional powers;
2. The smaller the states the more they favour regional co-operation or arrangement so as to protect their national interests;
3. In an attempt to resolve the regional issues, which affect them, the small states readily offer themselves as mediators.

The present study is divided into five chapters. Chapter-I provides an analytical framework on small states and their behaviour in regional politics. Chapter-II is devoted to identify the determinants and objectives of Sri Lanka's regional policy in the South Asian context. Chapter-III analyses Sri Lanka's reactions to some of the important regional issues and extra-regional involvements in the South Asian region. In Chapter-IV, Sri Lanka's regional spirit is examined in the context of its role and interest in the SAARC. While summing-up the discussions, the concluding

chapter will try to find out the pattern of Sri Lanka's interactions in South Asia. The success and failure of Sri Lanka's regional policy is also evaluated in the course of this study.

The study is based on 'historical-analytical' method. The data for the study is drawn from both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include government publications, parliamentary debates, auto-biographies and collection of speeches of the Sri Lankan leaders. Secondary sources include books, research articles, news reports and seminar and conference papers.

Chapter I

Chapter I

SMALL STATES IN REGIONAL POLITICS- AN ANALYTICAL FRAME WORK

One of the most striking features of the contemporary international politics has been the asymmetrical power relations between states.¹ Conventionally, the study of international politics is the study of big power or middle power interactions. The inclusion of small states in the international relations is some what a recent phenomena. The proliferation of small states in the post-World War era has drawn the attention of many scholars who have studied them as a particular type of actors in the world politics.²

In any theoretical discussion on small states, two basic approaches, based on their weakness and their strength, are evident.³ Traditionally, small states were viewed as insignificant actors in international politics. Treitschke and his followers and some social Darwinists predicted that small states would disappear en masse. Karl Haushofer favoured unification of small states with larger ones.⁴

¹ Robert O. Keohane, "Lilliputians' Dilemmas: Small States in International Politics", *International Organization*, vol.23, 1969, p.291.

² Many works on small states appeared during this period. Most noteworthy are by Azar, Barston, Benedict, Blair, Bruntland, Galtung, Keohane, Machinsen, Rapaport, Rothestein, Schou, Singer, Sviects, Vital, etc.

³ Michael Handel, *Weak States in International System* (London, 1981), p.6.

⁴ Andreas Dorpalen, *The World of General Haushofer* (London, 1945), pp.51-55.

It was only after the birth of the United Nations that the sovereign equality of the states began to be fully respected, atleast in principle. Earlier, small states were considered to be unfit in international relations. Some of them were used by their powerful neighbours as buffer states. However, this trend has changed in the post-War period. The emergence of many small states as independent entities has made them a part of the reality, recognised by the United Nations. They gained much importance in the Cold War period when the Super Powers tried to co-opt them as their allies. Particularly, small states situated in a specific geo-strategic area were viewed as the potential trouble spots.⁵

Genesis of Small States Existence

Though early thinkers like Plato, Aristotle and Rousseau favoured small states, their viability was regarded as precarious till the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries. It was only in the Second Hague Conference (1907), that the existence and usefulness of small states were first recognised⁶. The First World War brought to the fore specific problems faced by small states. During the inter-war period, there emerged opportunities for the small states to play a role in the League of Nations.⁷

⁵ Shaheen Afroze, "Foreign Policy of Small States:A Comparative Study of Bhutan and Maldives", *BISS Journal*, vol.8, no.2, April 1987, p.231.

⁶ M.S.Rajan, "Small States and the Sovereign Nation- State System", *International Studies*, vol.25, no.1, January 1988, pp.1-2.

⁷ Niels Amstrup, "The Perennial Problem of Small States: A Survey of Research Effort", *Cooperation and Conflict*, vol.4, 1976, pp.164.

But the League did not practice the principle of equality of nations and, as such, the small states regrettably accepted the inferior position bestowed upon them by the dominant powers.⁸

The emergence of a large number of small states as independent entities raised a serious question regarding their membership in the United Nations. The Security Council, which dealt with the issue of admission of new members, recommended that the small states would be given associate membership status, even though the UK and the US suggested for an observer status for them. Since these recommendations were in contrast with the principle of "sovereign equality" of nations enshrined in the UN Charter (Art-4), the United Nations had to give up the idea of fixing quantitative criteria for the membership.⁹

Apart from strengthening the UN, the small states has also strengthened regionalism and regional institutions. Small states took utmost interest in regional cooperation and organisation. Hence, post-Second World War era was also significant for the proliferation of various regional institutions.¹⁰ This was due to the vital stake of small states in the regional organisations for their security and economic interest.

⁸ Jacques Rapaport, Earnest Muteba and J.J. Therattil. *Small States and Territories: Status and Problems* (New York, 1971), pp.558-63.

⁹ Rajan, n.6, p.3.

¹⁰ Numerous Regional Institutions like Organisation of American States(OAS), North Atlantic Treaty Organisation(NATO), Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development(OECD), South Pacific Commission (SPC), European Union(EU), Nordic Council, League of Arab States(LAS), Association for South East Asian Nations(ASEAN), Caribbean Community and Common Market(CARICOM), Central American Common Market(CACM).

Solution to the Definition

One of the most important concerns of any study on small states is to operationalise a definition¹¹. The fundamental question that arises is: What are the characteristics of small states. Some scholars¹², who found it difficult to answer this question, went to the extent of considering strict definition was unnecessary and irrelevant. A seminar organised by the Institute of Commonwealth Studies (London) on small states concluded that it was difficult to define the concept of 'smallness' with much precision.¹³ Nevertheless, the concept is not as vague as some other concepts in the lexicon of international politics.

Quantitative Approach

In defining the small states population, gross national product (GNP) and size of the territory are considered as core variables. For Thomas Masaryk¹⁴ and J.A.R.

Gulf Cooperation Council(GCC), Economic Community of West African States(ECOWAS), Council of Arab Economic Unity(CAEU), North American Free Trade Area(NAFTA), Organisation of African Union(OAU), South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation(SAARC), Economic Cooperation Organisation(ECO) and of late Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation(IOR-ARC). See *World Europa Year Book 1977*, vol.I, (London, 1997).

¹¹ Amstrup, n.7, p.165.

¹² Annette Baker Fox and David Vital avoided the entire problem of definition. However, David Vital in his later work, *The Survival of Small States*, 1971, takes 'viability' and 'dependability' of states into criterion.

¹³ Colin Clarke and Tony Payne (eds.), *Politics, Security and Development in Small States* (London, 1987), p.ix.

¹⁴ Thomas Masaryk, *The Problem of Small Nations in the European Crisis* (London, 1966), p.23.

Marriot¹⁵, a small state is one which has a population of 20 million or less. According to Barston any state having a population of about 10-15 million will qualify to be called as a small state¹⁶. Simon Kuznets brings down the figure to 10 million.¹⁷ David Vital on the other hand, includes the level of economic development as a vital variable along with the size of population. Thus, according to him, any developed state with a population of 10-15 million and an under-developed state having a population of 20-30 million, are essentially small states.¹⁸ In his other work, Vital adds GNP to the population size. He calls a state as a small state which has a population ranging between 10-15 million and GNP equivalent to US\$ 1 billion.¹⁹ A UNITAR study²⁰ conducted in 1971 added the size of the territory of a state as a third variable in

¹⁵ J.A.R.Marriott, *Federalism and the Problem of the Small State* (London : Allen & Unwin, 1943), p.62.

¹⁶ R.P.Barston, "The External Relations of Small States", in August Schou and A.O.Bruntdland (eds.), *Small States in International Relations* (Stockholm, 1971), pp.41-43.

¹⁷ Simon Kuznets, "Economic Growth of Small Nations" in E.A.G.Robinson (ed.), *Economic Consequences of the Size of Nations* (New York, 1960), p.14.

¹⁸ David Vital, *The Inequality of States : A Study of the Smaller Powers in International Relations* (London, 1967), p.8.

¹⁹ Ronald P.Barston (ed.), *The Other Powers : Studies in the Foreign Policies of Small States* (London, 1973), pp.7-8.

²⁰ UNITAR (United Nations Institute for Training and Research) undertook this study on the problems of small states and territories with special reference to the question of their role and participation of small states in the international affairs and the assistance which can be rendered to them by the United Nations' family of organizations. The study was actually done by Jacques Rapaport, Earnest Muteba and Joseph J.Theratill. See UNITAR, *Small States and Territories : Status and Problems* (New York, 1971).

determining the smallness of a state. It described those states which had a population of less than a million, territory of less than 850,000 square kilometres and GNP of less than US\$ 1500 million as small states.

But scholars like Bjol and Rothstein feel that small states could not be defined exclusively by quantitative variables. For instance, all the big states are not highly populated. On the other hand, some of the states with less population have stood-up in all other aspects. Moreover, population is a variable that changes from time to time. The less populated state today may cross the set limit in the immediate future. Other things being stagnant, any increase in population will not alone raise the power status of a state. In fact, it is a weakness. For example, Bangladesh with a population of 122 million is considered as a small state, while Australia which has only 18 million is best regarded as a middle state.²¹

Likewise, size of the territory will not help very much in defining a small state. Some states with large territories do not have sufficient economic strength. As such, they are not categorised as middle or big powers. Countries like Sudan, Mongolia, Mauritania, Ethiopia, and Angola for instance, are small states though they are many times larger in territory than countries like Britain and France, which are considered as big states.²²

²¹ *World Europa Year Book*, vol.I&II (London, 1997).

²² *Ibid.*

Qualitative Approach

Authors who were not satisfied with the quantitative factor-based definition, emphasised the necessity of variables like international power structure, geographical locations and domestic political system. Bjol suggests that relative disparity in capability and national interests be considered for defining small states.²³

Aimed at removing definitional inadequacies in Bjol's formulation, Rothstein counts 'psychological' factors and 'material' conditions. He uses the words "small states" and "small powers" interchangeably. "A Small Power", according to him, "is a state which recognizes that it cannot obtain security primarily by use of its own capabilities, and that it must rely fundamentally on the aid of other states, institutions, processes, or developments to do so. A 'small power' on the other hand relies on its own means and is recognised by the other states involved in international politics"²⁴

This definition rests either on traditional judgements or simple material-strength calculations. The definition is also anachronistic as it serves well only for those periods in the past in which security was obtained by use of a state's own capabilities. In this nuclear age, in which effective deterrence is possible only for a few, a definition based on capacity will not stand.

²³ Erling Bjol, "The Small States in International Politics", in Schou, n.16, pp.29-30.

²⁴ Robert L. Rothstein, *Alliances and Small Powers* (London, 1968), p.29.

Characterization

The difficulties involved in defining small states through both quantitative and qualitative approaches led some scholars to adopt characterization as an appropriate method. Attempts by Ramio Vayrynen and East is worth mentioning here. Vayrynen suggests a "classificatory scheme" containing five different dimensions to characterize small states:

1. low rank/status, either as measured by hard data or by perceptual data;
2. high degree of external penetration;
3. specific type of behaviour;
4. specific interests of small states compared with other states; and
5. a specific role of small states, and in particular a specific role conception by the decision-makers of the small sates.²⁵

But Vayrynen's analysis is too vague. He does not specify the 'type', 'interests' and 'role' of small states.

Maurice East develops an "alternative model"²⁶ focusing largely on small states' behaviour. He provides seven definitional characteristics of small states:

1. low levels of overall participation in world affairs;

²⁵ Ramio Vayrynen, "On the Definition and Measurement of Small Power Status", *Cooperation and Conflict*, vol.6, 1971, pp.92-93.

²⁶ See Maurice A.East, "Size and Foreign Policy Behaviour:A Test of Two Models", *World Politics*, vol.25, 1972/73, pp.256-76. For full analysis of Maurice East's 'Alternative Model', see Shaheen Afroze, "Do Small States Behave Differently from Big States? A critique of Maurice East's Alternative Model", *BISS Journal*, vol.14, no.1, January 1993, pp.1-15.

2. high level of activity in international organizations;
3. high levels of support for international legal norms;
4. avoidance in the use of force as a technique of statecraft;
5. avoidance of behaviours and policies which tend to alienate the more powerful state in the system;
6. a narrow functional and geographic range of concern in foreign policy activities; and
7. frequent utilization of moral and normative positions on international issues.

Based on the analysis of foreign policy behaviour of 120 small countries, Marshall R. Singer introduces four components of power in his characterization of small states. According to him, "... the basic components of power are `Wealth' (human and material), `Organization' (formal and informal), `Status' (ascribed and acquired) and `Will' (conscious and subconscious) and the small states are those that are deficient in all these basics²⁷".

The foregoing discussion on the character of small states leaves much scope for further exploration aimed at evolving a comprehensive definition of small state(s). Hence, the incorporation of some of the other main characteristics gains merit. An attempt is made to include various dimensions of states' life so as to avoid the handicaps of any type of inclination.

²⁷ Marshall R.Singer, "The Foreign Policies of Small Developing States", in James N.Rosenau (ed.) *World Politics:An Introduction* (New York, 1976), p.263.

1. In terms of will, "a small state is a state that is, neither on a world scale nor on a regional scale, able to impose its political will or protect its national interest by exerting power politics"²⁸
2. In terms of 'war waging capacity', "a small state is one which is unable to contend in war with the big or middle powers. Their military weakness make them diplomatically weak. As a result they play an insignificant role in world politics".²⁹
3. Small states generally have defensive ambitions, as against the big states' desire to acquire offensive capabilities.³⁰
4. Small states are "those which suffer from the limitations their smallness places upon their capacity to implement significant decisions in foreign policy."³¹
5. Small states have no imperial ambitions. It is not because they are morally superior to other nations, but due to their overall weakness in power politics.³²

²⁸ L.G.M.Jaquet, "The Role of Small States within Alliance System", Schou, n.16, p.58.

²⁹ Army Vandenbosch, "The Small States in International Politics and Organization", *The Journal of Politics*, vol.26, 1964, p.294.

³⁰ Raymond Aron, *Peace and War* (New York, 1967, p.55.

³¹ Robert Durnell, *The Society of States : An Introduction to International Politics* (London, 1973), pp.98-99.

³² Carl J.Hambro, "The Role of Super Powers in International Affairs Today", *International Affairs*, vol.15, no.2, March-April 1936, p.172.

6. Small States, because of their military and economic weakness, do not weigh heavily in the international balance of power. Hence, their shifting from one side to another is of no consequence to the overall balance among the great powers.³³
7. As regards their security, "small states are those whose leaders recognize that their own states' political weight is limited to a local arena rather than to the global one; that they are dependent upon outside political forces for much of their security; and that their particular interest may be dispensable in the eyes of one or more great powers."³⁴ In a similar vein, Barston voices, "Small states are almost by definition local powers whose demands are restricted to their own and immediately adjacent areas.... the power of the small state is narrow in domain however much or little may be its weight".
8. In using their opportunities, small states are more limited in their freedom by the nature of the systemic structure. They are dependent on the kind of system which exist; they can rarely create their own opportunities.³⁵
9. Small states are generally known for "their extreme suspicion of any possibility of an external influence adversely impinging their sovereignty and

³³ Vital, n.12, p.9.

³⁴ Annette Baker Fox, "The Small States in the International System, 1919-1969", *International Journal*, vol.24, 1968/69, p.751.

³⁵ Rothstein, n.24, p.182.

independence. They tend to assert and guard their autonomy more zealously than large states".³⁶

10. Small states tend to possess less "influence capability" and more of "stress sensitivity".³⁷
11. Economically, it seems preferable to define small state as one "which, while depending comparatively heavily upon foreign trade, both for supplies and sales markets, only a modest contribution is made to the aggregate flow of international trade. A nation is small from the point of view of foreign trade when its dependence on foreign markets is relatively great but its contribution to them is small in absolute terms".³⁸
12. As regards economic structure, "most small countries have a more specialized export industry than their large counterparts. It is hence, easy to find examples... where agricultural or forest products, fishery, oil or shipping dominate the exports of small states. This is an apriori likelihood that small

³⁶ Rajan, n.6, p.20.

³⁷ "Influence Capability" represents the degree to which a state can affect the international environment of other states and international institutions. "Stress Sensitivity" is the degree to which domestic state-society structures can be affected by changes and demands emanating from the relevant international environment. See Patrick J. Mc.Gowan and Klaus-Peter Gotwold, "Small State Foreign Policies-A Comparative Study of Participation, Conflict and Political and Economic Dependence in Black Africa", *International Quarterly*, vol.19, no.4, December 1975, p.425.

³⁸ G.Marcy, "How Far Can Foreign Trade and Customs Agreements Confer Upon Small Nations the Advantages of Large Nations", in Robinson,n.17, p.268.

countries will more often find themselves for periods in a favourable or unfavourable situation as regards the trends and potentialities of their dominating exports"³⁹

Small States in Regional Politics

The students of 'foreign policy' of small states have to be more concerned about the region to which a small state belongs. This is because small states' foreign policy decisions are influenced to a considerable extent, by the regional environment itself. Hence, this study focuses on the regional dimensions of foreign policy of small states.

Region and Regional Politics

Generally speaking, "a region is a homogenous area with physical and cultural characteristics distinct from those of neighbouring areas. In the international sphere, a region may consist of a group of nation states possessing a common culture, a common political institution and often a formal organisation".⁴⁰ A region can also be "two or more contiguous or proximate states who perceive themselves, and who are

³⁹ I.Svermilson, "The Concept of the Nation and its Relevance to Economic Analysis", in Robinson, n. 17, p. 12.

⁴⁰ *International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences*, vols. 13&14 (New York, 1972), pp. 377-78.

perceived by others, as forming a distinct unit".⁴¹ In short, regions are perceived as sub-systems of international system.

The conventional or traditional definitions of "region" would be of less help in explaining the current labyrinth of 'regional politics'. Apart from the cultural dimension, a new focus and outlook is required in the better understanding of politics in the region. This is because one has to take into consideration the internal conflicts or issues, extra-regional influences on the region and the politics of regional cooperation, in understanding the entire gamut of regional politics. Each dimension demands separate exploration. However, the components of internal conflicts and extra-regional influences are clubbed together due to their inter-relatedness. Regional co-operation is given separate space in this discussion.

Region as a Zone of Conflict and Intervention

Regional conflict formations are a complex mixture of intra-national, intra-regional and extra-regional conflicts of violent character.⁴² Thus, a region can be perceived as a zone of conflict arising out of the distribution of power or patterns of

⁴¹ William R. Thompson, "The Regional Subsystem : A Conceptual Explication and Propositional Inventory", *International Studies Quarterly*, vol.17, March 1973, pp.89-117.

⁴² Ramio Vayrynen, "Regional Conflict Formations: An Intractable Problem of International Relations", *Journal of Peace Research*, vol.21, no.4, April 1984, p.344.

enmity and amity.⁴³ But, in a region characterized by asymmetrical power structure, the patterns of conflict can be distinguishable from a region with states having power parity.⁴⁴ This is explained by Vayrynen in terms of "regional power centre".⁴⁵

The two most important concerns of small states are their security and economic well being. Of these security always gains precedence especially, when they are located in close proximity to a larger state.⁴⁶ This is primarily due to the "small state paradox".⁴⁷ The very colossus of big state in the region is looked-upon by the small states with utmost suspicion. Hence, the latter opt for a collaboration with other small states in the region, to gain power parity, as a group or a collectivity. Some states, which do not qualify as a regional power centre, but have a certain minimum of economic and military capacity, are seen as a balancer.⁴⁸ If the balance can not be brought about, small states readily invite an external neutralizer⁴⁹. That is, by

⁴³ Barry Buzan, *People, States and Fear : The National Security Problem in International Relations* (Brighton, 1983), p.42.

⁴⁴ Kanti P.Bajpai and Harish C.Shukul (eds.), *Interpreting World Politics* (New Delhi, 1995), p.31.

⁴⁵ 'Regional Power Centre' is one which sits at the top of the hierarchy of an identifiable regional subsystem. For example, India in South Asia, Indonesia in South East Asia and Nigeria in Western Africa. See Varynen, n.42, p.340.

⁴⁶ Rajan, n.6, p.48.

⁴⁷ Amstrup, n.7, p.169.

⁴⁸ Vayrynen, n.42, p.346.

⁴⁹ Handel, n.3, p.120.

becoming members of bilateral or multilateral military alliances, by offering military bases to foreign powers, by accepting external military assistances, etc.⁵⁰

Rothstein talks about three types of alliances-bilateral, multilateral and mixed multi-lateral-preferred by small states. 'Bilateral alliance' is the one which is concluded with great powers outside the region; 'multi-lateral alliance' is concluded with other small states in the region and 'mixed multilateral alliance' involves great powers and small states, from within and outside the region.⁵¹ Spiegel categorises the big powers and small states as 'power suppliers' (big states) and 'power consumers' (small states in the region). His analysis is based on the premise that 'consumers' depend on the 'suppliers'⁵², Trygve Mathisen discusses the role of small states in relation to the spheres of influence of big states and the implications of a rim and buffer position for the security of small states⁵³. Bjol takes into account the locational factor in the 'alliance option' of small states⁵⁴. This idea was also emphasised by Phadnis, in a different sense. She maintains that geography of small states is both a 'liability' and an 'asset'. It becomes a 'liability' when small states are used in any

⁵⁰ Rajan, n.6, p.20.

⁵¹ Rothstein, n.23, pp.151-246.

⁵² Steven L.Spiegel, *Dominance and Diversity : The International Hierarchy* (Boston, 1972), pp.133-36.

⁵³ Trygve Mathisen, *The Functions of Small States in the Strategies of the Great Powers* (Oslo, 1971), pp.70-120.

⁵⁴ Erling Bjol, "The Power of the Weak", *Cooperation and Conflict*, vol.3, no.2, 1968, p.159.

power rivalry by big states; and their 'asset' is explained in terms of their strategic location which enhances their bargaining strength with big states.⁵⁵

For small states, alliances with big states are not free from any disadvantages. While acquiring protection against an immediate or local danger, the small state may find itself facing new and unexpected threats. It may be drawn into the conflicts of big powers or, if the big power has acquired bases on the small states' territories, the latter may find, itself on the target list of another power with which it has no direct conflict. Moreover, all the big states might not be ready to terminate the alliance once the reasons for its existence (that is the danger of small states' security) have disappeared.⁵⁶

On the other hand, some small states take recourse to the policy of neutrality as a security option. Rothstein does not look at this policy in its right spirit. He maintains that "the European small states opted for a policy, which they called neutrality, but which was in fact nothing more than a desperate attempt to avoid war".⁵⁷ But Morgenthau holds the view that the legal and political status of neutrality is intimately connected with the legal and political structure of the international society at a given historical moment. Any basic change in this structure necessarily affects the normative content and the effectiveness of the rules of neutrality.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Urmila Phadnis, *IDSJ Journal*, vol.12, no.3, January-March 1980, p.317.

⁵⁶ Handel, n.3, pp.127-29.

⁵⁷ Rothstein, n.24, p.233.

⁵⁸ Cited in Amstrup, n.7, p.170.

After the Second World War, a new policy option came into being in the form of 'non-alignment' for the small states. Here, one should not mistake 'non-alignment' with 'neutrality'. 'Non-alignment', in totality, is a tactical principle designed to extract the widest range of advantages from a particular kind of power configuration. But 'neutrality' is a strategic principle which can protect one's interest in the event of serious armed conflict.⁵⁹

However, there are few other small states which choose to go alone in safeguarding their security (as in the case of seventeenth century Sweden). This type of small states was subjected to enquiry by David Vital. According to him, the success for such a state depends not only on its static capacity to withstand pressure and attack, but also its freedom to act in a positive way in the regional and international arena with the object of increasing its material and political resources. Such policy, to a great extent, depends on the nature of the society of the small states.⁶⁰ Sviects gives emphasis on this nature of society, in the defence of small unaligned states. He offers, to such states, the strategy of 'national resistance', i.e., the strength of its well-knit national community.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Anton Pelinka, "The Non-Aligned and Neutral Approaches to International Order through Disarmament and Arms Control", in Syed Farooq Hasnat and Anton Pelinka (eds.), *Security for the Weak Nations: A Multiple Perspective* (Lahore, 1986), p.17.

⁶⁰ Vital, n.17, pp.120-22.

⁶¹ V.V.Sviects, *Small Nation Survival: Political Defence in Unequal Conflicts* (New York, 1969), pp. 37-41.

Region as an Area of Interdependence

Region can also be perceived as a zone of interdependence.⁶² It is a fact that the emergence of small states has strengthened regionalism and regional institutions.⁶³ With a few exceptions, small states do not possess sufficient competence or display enough interest to play any significant role at the global level. It is partly because of this reason in fact, that there has been a greater proliferation of regional organisations along with small states (especially after World War II). This is mainly due to the fact that small states have developed stakes in continuing of regional institutions than big states themselves⁶⁴. Such vital stakes of small states are in political, strategic or economic matters.

As such, small states may be individually of little or no value, but (both in terms of vote and otherwise) they carry collectively considerable weight. Their ideas and proposals can be easily projected as those of their groups. The regional organizations also aid in the promotion of bilateral and multilateral relations between the members of the subsystem. In other words, it is a good confidence building mechanism.⁶⁵

⁶² Kanti P. Bajpai, "Introduction: International Theory, International Society, Regional Politics, and Foreign Policy", in Bajpai and Shukul, n.44, p.33.

⁶³ Note that the terms 'regional institution', 'regional organisation' and 'regional cooperation' are used inter-changeably. But the central idea remains the same.

⁶⁴ Rajan, n.6, pp.12-13.

⁶⁵ Bhabani Sen Gupta, "Regional Organization and Security of Small States," in M. Abdul Hafiz and Abdur Rob Khan, *Security of Small States* (Dhaka, 1978), p.263.

Strategically, the regional organizations are probably the best insurance the small states can have against any threat to their security. Small states may face threat from other small states or big states within the region or from the external powers. In a regional cooperation guided by the principle of good neighbourliness, small states are safer. A regional grouping with mechanisms to control conflict can provide security to small states. Even big state members are unlikely to threaten small states in the association. If that happens, the threatened small state can mobilise other members of the group to bring pressure on the big state to moderate its behaviour. In the case of external threat, a small state can always hope to protect itself by mobilising the support of all members of the regional institution.⁶⁶

When looked at economically, small states seek economic integration as a means against any threat to their economic interests.⁶⁷ But it is small states which gain more from any type of regional arrangement. The domination of the colossus is intrinsic in such integration. This was explained by Gunnar Myrdal in terms of 'spread' and 'backwash' effects of integration.⁶⁸ Here one has to understand that domination of a big state is often achieved by virtue of its control over intra-regional

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Amstrup, n.7, p.176.

⁶⁸ See Gunnar Myrdal, *Economic Theory and Underdeveloped Regions* (London, 1957). See also W. Andrew Axline, "Underdevelopment, Dependence and Integration : The Politics of Regionalism in the Third World", *International Organization*, vol.31, no.1, 1977, pp.84-88.

trade. However, the fear of big power domination in the minds of small states forms a major obstacle to any meaningful regional integration. The small states do not hesitate to use the regional forum for countering the big states.⁶⁹

Domestic Sources of Foreign Policy of Small States

Gone are the days when the analysis of international relations suffered from the neglect of domestic factors.⁷⁰ But, it must be conceded that the analysis of domestic factors in foreign policy is an extremely complex exercise and one must proceed with utmost humility. This is true as the line dividing domestic and foreign source is thin, especially in the case of small states where it is much thinner.⁷¹ However, it is not difficult to draw the distinction and analyse the domestic sources in isolation. In such an attempt factors like regime, leadership and economic compulsions are taken into consideration. This does not mean that there is a virtual absence of other factors. The point is that, though apart from the above sources other

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⁶⁹ Rohitashwa Dubey, "Indophobia as the Ailment of SAARC", *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, vol.49, no.1, January-March 1988, pp.69-75. Also see K.Raman Pillai, "Tensions within Regional Organizations: A Study of SAARC", *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, vol.50, no.1, January-March, 1989, pp.18-27 and S.D.Muni and Anuradha Muni, *Regional Cooperation in South Asia* (New Delhi, 1984).

⁷⁰ Kjell Goldman, "The Foreign Sources of Foreign Policy: Causes, Conditions or Inputs?", *European Journal of Political Research*, vol.4, 1976, p.291.

⁷¹ Partha S.Gosh, *Co-operation and Conflict in South Asia* (New Delhi, 1995), p.1.

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factors are present, they are negligible enough to be ignored in small states, if not in their bigger counterparts.

Regime and Foreign Policy

Domestic considerations often influence foreign policy decisions of regimes in small states. This is because of the fact that the issues over which governments stand or fall are domestic rather than external. Hence, the ruling regime in small states tries to manipulate the external system to fulfil its domestic goals rather than gathering the support of its public opinion in favour of an external issue.⁷² The other aspect of the linkage between regime and foreign policy is that certain kinds of regimes are often associated with a particular typology of foreign policy.⁷³ This implies that foreign policies too, witness change with the change of governments.

Leadership

In the absence of significant military and economic capabilities, small states rely on the political instruments. No matter what device is chosen, its success or failure depends, to a certain extent, on the quality of leadership.⁷⁴ In small states,

⁷² Rosenau, n.27, pp.284-85.

⁷³ Ibid, pp.286-88.

⁷⁴ Susan A. Gitelson, "Why do Small States Break Diplomatic Relations with Outside Power? Lessons from the African Experience", *International Studies Quarterly*, vol.18, no.4, December 1974, p.452

where foreign policy institutions and mechanisms are under-developed the leadership has a greater role in decision making. In the case of integrating natural communities to gain legitimacy and support for hard foreign policy decisions, it is the leadership which find itself operating in the finalising of whether to have alliances or stay non-aligned and taking such other crucial decisions.⁷⁵ Leaders, also take strong decisions in response to changes at the domestic arena. There is a conventional way for government leaders to indicate shifts in foreign policy orientations, to symbolize their ascendancy over other leaders or groups which are known to have strong support from a particular country or bloc or to divert attention from internal problem. This is done by expelling another country's representative or to break diplomatic ties with a country known to be a prime exponent of opposite views.⁷⁶

Economic Compulsions

Of the four components of measuring the status of a state, 'wealth' is the principle one identified by Marshal Singer. According to him " a small state is one which lacks (along with other three) 'wealth'- human and material"⁷⁷ The implication here is that without 'wealth' a state can not maintain other components viz.,

⁷⁵ Vital, n.18, p.29.

⁷⁶ Gitelson, n.74, p.452.

⁷⁷ Singer gives four components as, 'Wealth' (human and material), 'Organisation' (formal and informal), 'Status' (ascribed and acquired) and 'Will' (conscious and unconscious). See Singer, n.27, p.263.

`organization', `status' and `will'. This applies to any foreign policy in pursuit of greater national interests. Compared to big states, small states do allot a small proportion of their resources to foreign affairs. This reflect on the size and capacity of the foreign policy machineries. Foreign policy personnel are likely to be few in number, involved in the work of monitoring international developments. Thus the scope and number of issues to be covered will also be small.⁷⁸ Hence, small states go in for relations with selected few states which they feel are important for their interests.⁷⁹

Even with regard to this selective approach, some small states face, many constraints. Hence, small states sacrifice bilateral diplomacy in favour of multilateral diplomacy. They undertake foreign policy actions and initiatives jointly with other small states. They make the most use of regional and international organizations.⁸⁰

Small states also have problems of economic survival. This is mainly because of a higher degree of concentration in the commodity composition of their exports as well as in the number of their foreign markets. In other words, their exports constitute one or few commodities targeted at a few destinations. On the other hand, for many of

⁷⁸ Maurice A. East, "Foreign Policy-Making in Small States:Some Theoretic Observations Based on a Study of the Uganda Ministry of Foreign Affairs". *Policy Sciences*, vol.4, no.4, 1973, p.492.

⁷⁹ Michael O'Leary, "Linkages Between Domestic and International Politics in Under-developed Nations", in James N.Rosenau (ed.), *Linkage Politics*. pp.324-346.

⁸⁰ East, n.78, pp.492-93.

the finished goods or staple food grains, they depend on the outside supply. This export-import disparity leads to adverse balance of trade.

This economic aspect is highlighted by Raimo Varyrynen through his "Five Hypotheses" on foreign trade position of small states. To him, the small states :

- (i) are more dependent on foreign trade;
- (ii) are more prone to having a deficit in their balance of trade;
- (iii) export more raw materials and import more finished goods;
- (iv) are more concentrated on main trading partners; and
- (v) are more dependent on one single commodity in their export.⁸¹

To deal with such economic issues, small states manipulate their foreign policy. Even, ideologies are discarded so as to achieve maximum economic benefits. They may also join larger economic unions to garner more tariff concessions, free movement of goods and special economic privileges, within the region. All these economic centred foreign policies of small states is referred to as "adaptive behaviour of small states" by Peter Hansen.⁸²

Against the back drop of this conceptual frameworks of small states, Sri Lanka's regional policy is analysed in this study.

⁸¹ Vayrynen, n.25, p.96.

⁸² Peter Hansen, "Adaptive Behaviour of Small States: The Case of Denmark and European Community" in Patrick J. McGowan (ed.), *Sage International Year Book of Foreign Policy Studies* (Beverly Hills, 1974), pp.147-48.

Sri Lanka falls under the category of small states when measured in terms of above analysed variables like size, population, gross domestic product, foreign trade, military strength, influence capability and interest in regional organisations.

In terms of size, Sri Lanka is a small island of an area of around 65,610 square kilometres, population of 18.3 million and gross domestic product of US \$ 14.4 billion.

Economically, Sri Lanka depends on few commodities like manufactured goods, tea, rubber and coconut for its foreign exchange earnings. On the other hand, it relies on the outside supply for many of the basic commodities like rice, petroleum and industrial goods. Hence, Sri Lanka always faces adverse balance of trade.

Both in terms of military personnel and armaments, Sri Lanka is less equipped. It does not have much influence capability either at global or regional level. Hence it tries to gain status by advocating morality in international affairs. It also offers itself as mediator or arbitrator for this purpose. Finally, Sri Lanka has been enthusiastic in the roles and policies of SAARC in order to enhance its political, economic and strategic objectives.

Chapter II

Chapter II

SRI LANKA'S REGIONAL POLICY : DETERMINANTS AND OBJECTIVES

Foreign policy is a comprehensive plan aimed at promoting and protecting the interests of a country. "There is but one guiding star", remarked Morgenthau, "one standard for thought, one rule for action in a nation dealing with other nations, the "National Interest".¹ Foreign policy has, as its main component, what those interests are, and, the means to go about it.² In a broader perspective, foreign policy is the study of determinants, objectives and the resultant policies and their mutual relationships.³

Objectives are the foreign policy ends which the policy makers set to achieve. Determinants are, on the other hand, those basic factors or the pre-existing conditions which impinge on the foreign policy decision-making process.⁴ The foreign policy strategy of any state, big or small, is the result of objectives pursued in a particular way because of certain determinants⁵. As regards small states, the principal objectives which continue to guide their foreign policy decision making are protection of independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and achievement of economic development. On the other hand, the determinants which steer the foreign policy

¹ Hans J. Morgenthau, *In Defense of National Interest* (New York, 1951), p.242.

² Hugh Wilson, *The Road to Foreign Policy* (New York, 1944), p.9.

³ Felix Gross, *Foreign Policy Analysis* (New York, 1944), p.9.

⁴ George Modelski, *A Theory of Foreign Policy* (New York, 1962), p.88.

⁵ A.P.Rana, *The Imperatives of Non-alignment* (Delhi, 1976), p.4.

makers may be historical legacy, geographical setting, economic compulsions, regional power structure, ruling regime and ethnic configuration.⁶ The primacy of an objective however, depends upon the dynamics of determinants at a particular time.

Determinants of Sri Lanka's Regional Policy

Sri Lanka's, policy towards South Asia is determined by its historical legacies, its geo-strategic location, the economic constraints it confronted from time to time, asymmetrical power structure of the region, the party in power (UNP or SLFP with their coalitions) and the socio-cultural matrix of the Sri Lankan society.

A. Historical Legacies

Foreign policy of a country cannot be delinked from its history. It has been said that our ancestors rule us from their graves.⁷ This observation is true in the case of Sri Lanka. From time immemorial, Sri Lanka has been perceiving India as a colossus with hegemonistic and expansionist tendencies. This apprehension stemmed from repeated and devastating invasions from South India. Infact, the history of pre-colonial Sri Lanka is the history of conflicts between the Sinhalese and Tamil kings.⁸

⁶ W.Howard Wriggins, *Ceylon:Dilemmas of a New Nation* (New Delhi, 1980). Also see S.D.Muni, *Foreign Policy of Nepal* (New Delhi, 1975), p.37.

⁷ M.Ruthna Swamy, *Principles and Practice of Foreign Policy* (Bombay, 1961), p.28.

⁸ G.C.Mendis, *The Early History of Ceylon* (Calcutta, 1954), pp.240-55.

The historical legacy is indeed so paramount, that even today the victory of Datugemanu (Sinhalese king) over Elara (Tamil king) is hailed as a great triumph.⁹

In the post-independence era, many Sri Lankans feel that India has retained the imperial legacy of British Empire in the South Asian region. It is also perceived that India's security doctrine follows colonial British strategic thinking. This was evident from the ideas and thinking of the ruling elite and strategic community on the eve of India's independence.¹⁰ It was believed that the end of British domination would spell the culmination of Indian domination.¹¹ It was this fear that pushed Sri Lanka to seek protection under the 'British security umbrella'.

Sri Lanka however, does not have any historical linkage with the rest of the South Asian countries. Hence, its relations with these countries have not been affected by historical legacies.¹²

⁹ A.Liyanagamage, "Pre-Colonial Indo-Sri Lankan Relations with Special Reference to Sri Lanka's Security Problems", in P.V.J.Jayasekera (ed.), *Security Dilemma of a Small State* (New Delhi, 1992), pp.29-36.

¹⁰ The ideas of Nehru, K.M.Panikkar and Pattabi Sitaramaiya are important to mention here. Jawaharlal Nehru pointed out the ethnic, linguistic and cultural unity of India and Sri Lanka. By this, he supported that Sri Lanka be drawn into a closer union with India. K.M. Panikkar opined that it was necessary for the security of Sri Lanka and Burma to form with India under basic federation for mutual defence. According to Pattabi Sitaramaiya, it will be a bad day for both India and Sri Lanka if both declare their affiliations to two hostile groups in the world. See Wriggins, n.6, p.399; K.M.Panikkar, *India and the Indian Ocean* (London, 1945), p.45 and S.U.Kodikara, *Foreign Policy of Sri Lanka-A Third World Perspective* (Delhi, 1982), p.23.

¹¹ S.U.Kodikara, "Defence and Security Perceptions of Sri Lankan Foreign Policy Decision Makers: A Post-Independence Overview", in Jayasekera, n.9, p.207.

¹² Urmila Phadnis, "Ceylon and India-Pakistan Conflict", *South Asian Studies*, vol.2, no.1, January 1967, pp.41-42.

B. Geo-strategic Location

"The policies of all powers, big or small, are inherent in their geography", observed Napoleon Bonaparte almost two centuries ago.¹³ This observation has been validated by Sri Lanka. Indeed Sri Lanka's geo-strategic situation has been a major factor in its domestic politics as well as foreign policy formulations.

Sri Lanka is located in the central Indian Ocean which is also an important sea route connecting the West to the East. The Trincomalee harbour also increases the strategic importance of the country. The Katunayake airport serves as a stop-over point for many airlines operating between the West and the East.¹⁴ Such locational features of Sri Lanka made D.S.Senanayake to feel that whoever occupied the island would dominate the Indian Ocean.¹⁵ Due to its immense strategic value, great powers therefore, tried to woo Sri Lanka during the Cold War period. However, recognizing the pressures and pulls of bloc politics, Sri Lanka decided to follow the policy of non-alignment.¹⁶

At the regional level, the geographical setting of Sri Lanka has been more of a liability than an advantage. Sri Lanka's close proximity with India is one of the key determinants of its regional policy. Since India's security interest is co-terminous with

¹³ Norman D.Palmer and Howard C.Perkins, *International Relations* (California, 1970), p.35.

¹⁴ A.J.Wilson, *Politics in Sri Lanka, 1947-1973* (London, 1974), pp.268-71. Also see Wriggins, n.6, pp.373-74.

¹⁵ Urmila Phadnis, "Foreign Policy of Sri Lanka in Seventies", *IDSJ Journal*, vol.3, no.1, July-September 1975, pp.94-95.

¹⁶ Urmila Phadnis and Sivanand Patnaik, "Non-alignment as a Foreign-Policy Strategy:A Case Study of Sri Lanka", *International Studies*, vol.20, no.2, April 1981, pp.222-24.

that of the region, Sri Lanka is not without any importance to India. In this context, Pattabhi Sitaramaya, observes :

India and Ceylon must have a common strategy and common defence strengths and common defence resources. It cannot be that Ceylon is in friendship with a group with which India is not in friendship not that Ceylon has no right to make its own alignments and declare its own affiliations - but if there are two hostile groups in the world, and Ceylon and India are with one or the other of them and not with the same group, it will be a bad day for both.¹⁷

Sri Lanka's alignment has been looked upon with concern by India. The expression was that Sri Lanka is strategically important to India as Eire is to the United kingdom, Taiwan to China, or, Cuba to the United States.¹⁸

Thus India did not show any resentment towards Sri Lanka's Defence Agreement with Britain in the early 1950s. At that point of time, India's security interests were in line with the West. Later, India expressed its concern when there was a difference in its security perceptions with the West. Sri Lanka also gained considerable resentment from India when it entered a Maritime Agreement with China in 1963. Due to proximity India showed its security concern over the presence of military personnel of many other countries (including Israel and Pakistan) to tackle the ethnic situation in the early 1980s.

But, Sri Lanka's location has been an advantage in its relations with other countries of the region, especially Pakistan, for Sri Lanka has been Pakistan's valued marine neighbour. Before the liberation of Bangladesh in 1971, Sri Lanka was the only fuelling point for the Pakistani ships in the 3,000 miles long sea route between

¹⁷ Quoted in Kodikara, n.10, p.23.

¹⁸ Ravi Kaul, "The Indian Ocean:A Strategic Posture for India", in T.T.Poulouse (ed.), *Indian Ocean Power Rivalry* (New Delhi, 1974).

the eastern and the western wings of Pakistan.¹⁹ Moreover, the absence of geographical contiguity between Pakistan and Sri Lanka, has reduced the former's impact on the latter's security.

Sri Lanka's close proximity with India made the former to face the problem of illegal immigration across the Palk Straits in the early years of independence. This was due to Sri Lanka's relatively higher standard of living.²⁰ Later, from early 1980s, the geographical proximity facilitated the movement of Tamil militants across the Palk straits, thereby causing strains in Indian soil in the Indo-Sri Lankan relations. But Sri Lanka does not face similar problems with other countries of the region owing to lack of geographical proximity and contiguity.

C. Economic Compulsions

Economic conditions also guide foreign policy decision-making of small states. To understand the economic factor as a determinant of a small state's regional policy, however, it is necessary to analyse the economic setting of Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka is an export-import oriented economy. About 40 per cent of its gross national product comes from exports. Imports amount to around 35 per cent. The export commodities are not diversified. Nearly 90 per cent of its foreign exchange used to come only from commodities like manufactured goods, tea, rubber and coconut.²¹ Now, manufactured goods dominate the export commodity along with tea. Nearly 50 percent of rice is imported because of its subsistence agricultural

¹⁹ Phadnis, n.12, pp.44-45.

²⁰ Wriggins, n.6, p.378.

²¹ Ibid. pp.378-79.

sector. Sri Lanka has been facing severe foreign exchange problem mostly due to the fluctuating prices of its export commodities and increasing costs of its import commodities.²² Under these conditions, Sri Lanka's search has been for those countries which provide competitive prices for her primary commodities, supply necessary goods required at cheaper rates and pump-in capital either in terms of investment or aid. Hence, Sri Lanka has identified itself closely with the Commonwealth countries soon after its independence. Later, due to its economic interests, Sri Lanka developed good relations with the Communist countries as well. Since the sixties, the non-aligned policy has been used to gain economic benefits from many countries.²³

At the regional level, same factors guide Sri Lanka's economic relations with other countries. As far as India is concerned, adverse balance of trade²⁴ has been a grave concern for Sri Lanka. As evident from the statistical data since its independence, the Island State's trade deficit has been widening remarkably. Hence, it has been the aim of foreign policy makers to bring down the gap, if not to do away

²² Buddhadasa Hewavitharana, "The Management of External and Internal Finances in Sri Lanka: Problems and Policies", *Asian Survey*, vol.13, no.12, December, 1973, pp.1137-54.

²³ Buddhadasa Hewavitharana, "Economic Compulsions and Foreign Policy: A Case Study of Ceylon", in S.P.Varma and K.P.Misra (ed.), *Foreign Policies in South Asia* (New Delhi, 1969), p.108.

²⁴ In 1948, Sri Lanka imported goods worth Rs.125 mn but its exports accounted for Rs.20 mn to India. This constituted 13 per cent of imports and two percent of total exports. In 1963, the imports and exports were of about Rs.149 mn and Rs.50 mn respectively. In 1995, the corresponding figures stood at Rs.24,045 mn and Rs.1,616 mn, a deficit of Rs.22,411 mn.

with it. Continued overtures have been made (bilaterally as well as multi-laterally) to India to give more tariff concessions to Sri Lankan goods.²⁵

Another concern for Sri Lanka is its lack of complementarities in trade. India, for instance, is a major competitor in its tea trade, which forms 60 per cent of Sri Lanka's exports. India does not need Sri Lanka's rubber as it is an exporter of rubber.²⁶

On the contrary, Sri Lanka maintains by and large, a favourable trade balance with Pakistan.²⁷ This is because Pakistan remains the biggest buyer of Sri Lankan goods. There has been perfect complementarities of trade between the two countries. In fact, three main surplus goods of Sri Lanka- tea, rubber and coconut, are in demand in Pakistan. As such in the seventies, Pakistan became the second largest buyer of Sri Lankan tea, next only to Britain.²⁸, At the same time Pakistan is the largest supplier of rice to Sri Lanka. Thus, economic factor has been playing a crucial role in "the unblemished relationship between Sri Lanka and Pakistan during the last fifty years" .²⁹

²⁵ The Hindu, 27 December 1996.

²⁶ Wilson, n.14, p.194.

²⁷ In 1948, Sri Lankan exports and imports to Pakistan were around Rs.18 mn and Rs.11 mn respectively. In 1963, the figures were Rs.33 mn and Rs.23 mn. In 1995, exports and imports were Rs.3660 mn and Rs.2705 mn respectively.

²⁸ Zeenat Majid, "Trade between Pakistan and Sri Lanka during 1970s", *South Asian Studies*, vol.7, no.2, July 1990, pp.51-62.

²⁹ This was stated by Sri Lankan Minister for Internal and International Commerce, Kingsley Wickramaratne on "SAARC related cooperation with Pakistan". See The Hindu, 10 January 1998.

Economic compulsions have been a major factor in Sri Lanka's approach towards regional cooperation. In this context, while inaugurating the first meeting of South Asian Foreign Secretaries in April 1981, Foreign Minister A.C.S. Hammed said :

Just as much as Colombo has served as a focal point for different forms of cooperation, successive governments of Sri Lanka have strongly endorsed and supported the ideal of an integrated regional approach to our common aspirations and to our common problems. As far back as in 1947 when the 'Asian Relations Conference' was held in New Delhi, Sri Lanka's officially stated hope was that the movement set in motion by that Conference would lead eventually to the creation of a structure of cooperation in our region. We have continued to hold that view, and it was that same spirit which moves us in our various exertions connected with Colombo Plan, the Bandung Conference and the evolution of NAM.³⁰

It was the desire for attaining maximum economic benefits that led Sri Lanka to seek a membership of the Association for South East Asian Nations(ASEAN). It was felt that Sri Lanka's close association with the ASEAN would greatly help the country in working out stable and remunerative prices for its chief export products. Interestingly, Sri Lanka's paramount desire to pursue its economic interests prevented it from taking into account certain political realities and objectives. The point is that it preferred the ASEAN membership despite the US military presence in Philippines and Thailand, which its non-alignment policy seeks to oppose. However, ASEAN did not consider Sri Lanka's membership on the grounds of lack of geographical contiguity.³¹

When a proposal was made by Bangladesh for "regional cooperation" in South Asia, Sri Lanka welcomed it as a great move. It strongly believed that a

³⁰ SARC Directorate, *SARC Documents* (Dhaka, 1985), p.9.

³¹ Kodikara, n.10, p.187.

constructive regional cooperation would help improve the lives of its people.³² The rationale was that a successful SAARC framework would increase intra-regional trade and offer lots of trade incentives and concessions for the small states like Sri Lanka. This has to some extent, been made a reality by the SAARC Preferential Trading Arrangement(SAPTA) in December 1995. Now, a creation of a free trade arrangement-SAFTA remains the dominant goal of SAARC.³³

D. Political Regimes

An important outcome of the linkage between domestic politics and foreign policy is that the orientation of the latter may change when there is a change of regime. The regime in small states try to manipulate the external system to fulfil their domestic goals.³⁴

Since its independence, Sri Lankan politics has been dominated by two major political parties - United National Party(UNP) and Sri Lanka Freedom Party(SLFP). They have alternatively formed governments, either alone or in coalition with smaller parties in the island. Changes in the government have reflected in the country's foreign policy orientations and focus. As such, there has been no bi-partisan approach to all foreign policy matters in Sri Lanka.

The UNP government's world view was characterised by "anti-colonialism" and "anti-communism". It aligned with the West and ignored the communist countries

³² SARC Directorate, n.30, p.214.

³³ The Hindu, 31 December 1995.

³⁴ James N.Rosenau (ed.), *World Politics:An Introduction* (New York, 1976), pp.286-88.

for a long time. In the region, the UNP government over emphasised India's threat to Sri Lanka's security. As a result, Indo-Sri Lankan relations experienced strains. The UNP government sought to cultivate friendly relations with other countries in the region, especially Pakistan. At the same time, it avoided taking a definite stance on the regional issues, be it Indo-Pakistan conflict or Kashmir issue, or the problem of external involvement in the region.³⁵ It was during the UNP rule that the extra-regional involvement in the region was openly sought and achieved.³⁶ This is evident from the 1947 Defence Agreement, permission for the setting up of a Voice of America (VOA), transmission station on the island, and external military supplies to tackle the Tamil militancy.

On the other hand, SLFP governments' stand in international issues was marked by dynamic "neutrality". Its leaders refused to accept ideology as the criterion for determining the island's relations with other countries. There was also shift in the objective-priorities of the government, from 'security' to 'status'. A definite role for small states like Sri Lanka in world, as well as in regional politics was envisaged. Due to its smallness, it was believed, Sri Lanka would play the role of conciliator and mediator to bridge the gulf between opposing factions, and thereby, help reduce regional as well as world tensions.³⁷ At the regional level, initiatives were taken by S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike to diffuse tensions between India and Pakistan. Later, Mrs. Bandaranaike tried to bring India and China to a conference table to settle

³⁵ Phadnis, n.15, pp.94-114.

³⁶ This does not mean that there was virtually no external involvement in Sri Lanka during SLFP's period. The point here is that compared to SLFP, UNP sought more external involvement causing discontent to its neighbour, India.

³⁷ Phadnis, n.15, p.97.

their problem. Recently, president Chandrika Kumaratunga has offered her government's good offices to bring about an understanding between India and China as well as India and Pakistan. The spirit of regional cooperation was well articulated by the SLFP leadership. S.W.R.D Bandaranaike was a great exponent of the concept of Afro-Asian solidarity and Asian unity. As early as in 1947, he proposed a federation of free and equal Asiatic countries and believed in mutual co-existence.³⁸ Though there was no significant step towards regional cooperation in South Asia, Mrs. Bandaranaike government realised the advantage of cooperating in the region. The present government led by Kumaratunga too is optimistic about the success of SAARC, not only in economic development but also "in strengthening measures for practical and meaningful cooperation among its member-states".³⁹

E. Ethnic Configuration

Among the domestic sources of foreign policy, ethnic factor holds an important relevance. This is especially true when there is a cross-boundary ethnic linkage between groups. In such a situation, the issues affecting an ethnic group in one country, may raise concern and sympathy of its kin-group in another country. This can impinge on foreign policies of both the countries, leading to tensions in bilateral relations. Indo-Sri Lankan relations provide a good example of how cross-boundary ethnic linkages can influence bilateral relations.⁴⁰

³⁸ Mahinda Werake, "S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike's Concept of Regionalism", *South Asian Survey*, (New Delhi), vol. 1, no. 1, March 1976, p. 95.

³⁹ The Hindu, 4 June 1998.

⁴⁰ Partha S. Gosh, *Cooperation and Conflict in South Asia* (New Delhi, 1995), pp. 1-4 & 173-77. Also see James N. Rosenau (ed.), *Linkage Politics* (New York, 1969), pp. 167-71.

Sri Lanka is a multi-ethnic society. The Sinhalese are the dominant group, and the Sri Lankan Tamils, the Indian Tamils and the Muslims are minorities. This ethnic configuration has been one of the major determinants of Sri Lanka's regional policy. The presence of Tamils in the island-both Indian and Sri Lankan, have been a factor in Indo-Sri Lankan relations.

Due to historical and colonial legacies, the Sinhalese have viewed the Tamil minority as a threat to their socio- economic and cultural interests. The mutual distrust and competition between them attained violent dimension in the eighties. The Sinhalese have a minority complex which got exacerbated by the presence of Indian Tamils, who came to the island during the British colonial period.⁴¹

The inter-ethnic relations in the island have therefore, influenced the ethnic and foreign policy of the Sinhalese dominated governments. In the domestic sphere, a number of discriminatory measures against the Tamils reduced them to a group of second class citizens. This had a definite foreign policy implications. Tamils of Tamil Nadu extended their moral support to Sri Lankan Tamils, thereby adding an international dimension to the ethnic conflict. India was drawn into the conflict as an external party- a mediator, a supporter of militancy and a peace keeper under the Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement of 1987.⁴²

⁴¹ Urmila Phadnis, "Infrastructural Linkages in Sri Lanka-India Relations", *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol.7, nos.31-33, August 1972, p.1493.

⁴² S.D.Muni, *Pangs of Proximity:India and Sri Lanka's Ethnic Crisis* (New Delhi, 1993), pp.61-70.

F. Asymmetrical Power Relations

Based on power relations, the regions can be divided into three kinds, viz., symmetrical, nearly symmetrical and asymmetrical. In the first two categories, the power composition of states are equal or nearly equal. But, in the third category, there is absolutely unequal power relations between states.⁴³

South Asia is a region with asymmetrical power structure. India dominates the region and is the central point of reference for all the countries of South Asia . India's huge territory, population, resources and industrial and military base cause an intimidating effect on its small neighbours. Some of the small countries are fearful of India and in the process of countering India's threat, they have become an ally of extra-regional powers.⁴⁴ Sri Lanka is not an exception to this framework of relations in the region.

Sri Lanka, in fact, has followed four different policies to counter India. Firstly, it tried to cultivate and seek security assistance from extra-regional powers. In 1947, Sri Lanka entered into a Defence Agreement with Britain.⁴⁵ With the withdrawal of the British bases in Katunayake and Trincomalee, the Sri Lankan leaders sought to foster good relations with China. The 1963 Maritime Agreement with China provided the "most-favoured nation" treatment to the Chinese ships in Sri

⁴³ Ramio Vayrynen, "Regional Conflict Formations: An Intractable Problem of International Relations", *Journal of Peace Research*, vol.21, no.4, April 1984, p.346.

⁴⁴ Stephen P.Cohen, "The Regional Impact of a Reforming India", *Adelphi Papers*, no.276, 1992-93, p.85.

⁴⁵ D.M.Prasad, *Ceylon's Foreign Policy Under the Bandarnaiques (1956-65) A Political Analysis* (New Delhi, 1973), pp.40-41.

Lankan ports.⁴⁶ Another occasion, for Sri Lanka's search for external military assistance was in the mid-eighties when the island witnessed intense ethnic violence. It made overtures to the US in terms of offering base facilities in Trincomalee and permission to set up a VOA station on the island. In return it sought military support to counter the vaguely perceived threat from India.⁴⁷

Secondly, Sri Lanka always tried to forge cordial relations with Pakistan in order to counter India's influence in the region. Incidents like Sri Lanka's granting of transit facilities to Pakistani flights during the 1971 war indicated Sri Lanka's mute diplomatic moves against India.⁴⁸ It was also reported in 1987 that Sri Lanka tried to develop an "air defence system", with the assistance of Pakistan, against any possible air attack by India.⁴⁹

Thirdly, Sri Lanka, on its own, tried to tackle India through diplomatic means. As early as in 1957, S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike proposed non-aggression pacts with India and other Asian countries.⁵⁰ Though his proposals did not materialize, they clearly demonstrated Sri Lanka's fear of India.

Fourthly, Sri Lanka has sought to protect its interests from any threat from India through SAARC. On a few occasions, Sri Lanka used the SAARC forum or its members to persuade India to accommodate the Island's interests. One such instance

⁴⁶ Anuradha Muni, "Sri Lanka's China Policy: Major Trends", *South Asian Studies*, vol.8, no.1, January 1973, p.83.

⁴⁷ Asian Recorder, vol.33, 1987, p.19352.

⁴⁸ Cohen, n.44, pp.85-90.

⁴⁹ Indian Express, 8 June 1987.

⁵⁰ Asian Recorder, vol.1, 1956, p.817.

was when India linked the withdrawal of its forces from the Island, with the implementation of the 1987 Agreement. As a protest, Sri Lanka declined to host the SAARC Summit in 1989 on the ground that it could not have enjoyed freedom when a "foreign force" was present on its soil.⁵¹ It also urged all the SAARC members to pressurise India to withdraw the IPKF.

Regional Policy Objectives of Sri Lanka

The foreign policy objectives of every state is rooted in its domestic needs and situations. According to Holsti, the "core objectives" of small states are protection of their territorial integrity and sovereignty, achievement of overall economic growth and promotion of their identity in global and regional politics.⁵²

A. Security

The principal objective of every government is to protect the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity, from internal and external threats. The small states protect their security with much difficulty and at a higher cost which might include loss of their autonomy in decision making.⁵³

Sri Lanka has been very much conscious and concerned about its security. Even during the colonial period, D.S. Senanayake, the country's first Prime Minister, underlined the need for evolving a strategy to protect the Island's security without

⁵¹ Asian Recorder, vol.33, 1987, p.19600.

⁵² K.J.Holsti, *International Politics:A Frame work for Analysis* (New Jersey, 1963), pp.145-55.

⁵³ Marshall R.Singer, "The Foreign Policies of Small Developing States", in Rosenau, n.34, p.289.

which, he felt, independence would be meaningless.⁵⁴ He said that, "the defence of the country is one of the primary obligations of an independent state, and this is not the sort of world in which small nations can be secured without large and expensive armed forces."⁵⁵

In pursuance of this objective, Sri Lanka concluded a 'Defence Agreement' with Britain in 1947. As per Agreement, Sri Lanka was to provide military bases and facilities to Britain. In return, Britain assured that it would defend the Island's security from any threats and render training facilities to the Sri Lankan military.⁵⁶

Sri Lanka perceived threat to its security from both internal and external sources. Internally, the threat was from the local communist groups. It was strongly believed that the communist expansionism world over would raise its ugly head in the Island too by forging alliances with the local communist groups. Under these circumstances, it was feared that some of the established democratic institutions would be threatened by the Communists.⁵⁷

Externally, India was considered as a major source of threat to Sri Lanka's independence. It was feared that India would absorb Sri Lanka as one of its federal units. In this context, Junagadh, Hyderabad and Kashmir were cited as examples.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ J.R.Jayewardene, *Selected Speeches, 1944-1973* (Colombo, 1974), p.41.

⁵⁵ Ibid, p.65.

⁵⁶ Wilson, n.14, p.275.

⁵⁷ Urmila Phadnis, "Non-Alignment as a factor in Ceylon's Foreign Policy", *International Studies*, vol.3, 1962, pp.427-28. Also see K.P.Krishna Shetty, "Ceylon's Foreign Policy:Emerging Patterns of Non-Alignment", *South Asian Studies*, vol.1, no.2, October 1965.

⁵⁸ Muni, n.42, p.34.

The threat also stemmed from the presence of Indian Tamils, who were viewed as a potential fifth column. They, along with the Sri Lankan Tamils, were considered by the Sinhalese as a threat to the Sinhalese-Buddhist interests. The threat perception attained a greater dimension when the Tamils in India extended their sympathy to Tamils in Sri Lanka. Such a fear was summarised by the Sri Lankan Minister of Communications, Leslie Goonewardene :

Even though the Tamil people who inhabit Sri Lanka are a minority in Sri Lanka, if they are regarded together with the Tamil people who live in South India near the northern boundary of Sri Lanka, the Tamil people appear as the majority and the Sinhalese people as the minority. Also, when one contemplates the history of Sri Lanka, that history is full of battles between these two sections.⁵⁹

It was the 'India factor' which mainly prompted Sri Lanka's decision to enter into a defence agreement with the U.K. Explaining why Sri Lanka preferred Britain to any other country, D.S. Senanayake said : "As I look around the countries of the world, I see at the moment only one country with sufficient interest in us to defend us at their expense, and that country is Great Britain".⁶⁰

The successors of D.S. Senanayake-Dudley Senanayake and John Kotelawala, let the status quo remain. In fact, Kotelawala was vociferous in proclaiming that he was "ready even to align with the devil to attain the security objective."⁶¹

⁵⁹ Quoted in Wilson, n.14, pp.274-75.

⁶⁰ Quoted in Phadnis, n.57, p.428.

⁶¹ Sir, John Kotelawala, *An Asian Prime Minister's Story* (London, 1956), p.187.

But S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike's world view was different from his predecessors. Bandaranaike believed that the country's security could be safeguarded best by developing friendly relations with all countries. In this context, he said :

I do not say that we should not protect ourselves. We must be alert and we must keep our eyes open. But we must not think to achieve this objective in terms of hatred of some particular country, of some particular ideology, of those who belong to some other race....⁶²

Following this ideals, Britain was asked to withdraw its bases. The government also did not mistrust India, and developed full faith in the non-alignment movement as a strategy to safeguard the security of small states.

Mrs. Bandaranaike followed, by and large, her husband's policy on Sri Lanka's security. The only difference was that she tried to cultivate friendly relations with China to balance power in the region. Besides, she took initiative to declare Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace. This was aimed at not only stopping militarisation of the Indian Ocean but also deferring India's defence build-up programmes.⁶³

In the eighties, Sri Lanka felt threatened by India. As a counter-measure, the UNP administration openly embarked on a move to mobilise Western strategic support and enlisted the support of a number of countries who supplied arms and ammunitions.⁶⁴

However, the nineties saw a change in the country's approach to its security. This is due to the changing security perception of the regime and India's policy

⁶² Government of Ceylon, *The Foreign Policy of Ceylon: Extracts from Statements by the Prime Minister S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike* (Colombo, 1959), pp.8-9.

⁶³ V.Suryanarayana "Sri Lanka and the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace", *Strategic Analysis*, vol.13, no.2, February 1990, p.817.

⁶⁴ *Asian Recorder*, vol.31, 1985, p.18333.

changes. Mutual suspicions have also diminished to a great extent, and as such "security is best safe guarded by greater co-operation within the region".⁶⁵

B. Economic Development

One of the foreign policies of small states is to achieve a reasonable level of economic development. Their economic problems arise out of their limited economic base, dependence on exports and imports, and foreign aid. Hence, external financial flow is the cardinal factor in fostering economic development of small states.⁶⁶

Sri Lanka has a limited resource base. Graphite, monazite and iron ore are the principal mineral resources available in the country. But coal and petroleum are hardly available. The country's maximum foreign exchange earnings come from tea, rubber, coconut and manufactured goods. Due to lack of trade diversification and rising cost of imports, Sri Lanka has been facing adverse balance of trade. Its excess dependence on foreign loan has landed the country in debt.⁶⁷

Thus, while having all the characteristics of a small under- developed state, economic interest is well pronounced in Sri Lanka's foreign policy. In order to further its economic interests, even ideology was ignored. A classic example of this was the 'Rice-Rubber Agreement' with China. The early UNP leaders were known for their anti-Communist position. But when China offered to purchase Sri Lanka's

⁶⁵ Daily News, 23 August 1994.

⁶⁶ R.P.Barston, "The External Relations of Small States", in August Schou and A.O.Brundtland (eds.), *Small States in International Relations* (Stockholm, 1971), p.47.

⁶⁷ Wriggins, n.6. pp.66-73.

rubber for a higher price and supply high quality rice on cheaper rates, a trade agreement was formalized in 1952.⁶⁸

In fact, Sri Lanka's regional policy lays greater emphasis on achieving maximum economic benefits by:

1. reducing its trade deficit with India; and
2. expanding its economic interactions with other countries of the region.

In order to attain these objectives, the Sri Lankan government has undertaken various bilateral and multi-lateral steps in the region.

After the formation of SAARC for instance, Sri Lanka's intra-regional trade has increased from US \$172 mn in 1985 to US \$612 mn in 1995. Indeed, Sri Lanka's interest in the SAARC is to gain some economic benefits. It was this aim that urged Sri Lanka, in the Colombo Summit (1991), to take initiatives to establish SAARC Preferential Trading Arrangement(SAPTA). Under this Arrangement, Sri Lanka got tariff concessions and its exports with India has also increased significantly. Many complementary items for trade was also identified with Pakistan, Maldives, Nepal and Bangladesh.⁶⁹

C. Identity and Status

Small states, due to their limited role in global politics, often face an "identity crisis". They feel that they are ascribed with less "status". Hence Marshal Singer, in his definition of small states, included "status", along with "organisation",

⁶⁸ Kodikara, n.10, pp.55-61.

⁶⁹ Davinder Kumar Madaan, "Sri Lanka and SAARC:Economic and Trade Development", in Verinder Grover (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of SAARC Nations* (New Delhi, 1997), pp.676-82.

"wealth" and "will", as four components which small states lack.⁷⁰ Hence, it has become a foreign policy objective of small states to acquire a "status" in world politics. For this, they try to act as mediators in the big power conflicts, actively participate in the international organisations, undertake various arms control and disarmament initiatives and support in the formation and maintenance of "regional organisations".⁷¹

Till 1956, Sri Lanka's foreign policy focused much on its security and economic interests. It was S.W.R.D. Bandarnaike, who introduced 'status' as one of the objectives of his foreign policy. Smallness was not looked down as weakness. In fact, it was recognised that the strength of Sri Lanka lay in its size. This could be used for mediatory role in regional conflicts.⁷² Sri Lanka for example, tried to bring about conciliation between India and Pakistan, on the Kashmir issue as early as in 1957. Its active involvement in the NAM was undoubtedly driven, by its interest in achieving an identity for itself. Also, it tried to work for regional and world peace through total disarmament and demilitarisation of the Indian Ocean.

In 1962, apart from economic reasons, it was the desire for 'status' which induced Sri Lanka to play a mediatory role between India and China. The same objective guided Sri Lanka, under Chandrika Kumaratunga, to seek a mediatory role

⁷⁰ Singer, n.53. p.263.

⁷¹ Shaheen Afroze, "Do Small States Behave Differently from Big States?- A Critique of Maurice East's Alternative Model", *BIISS Journal*, vol.14. no.1, January, 1993, pp.1-15.

⁷² Government of Ceylon, n.62., pp.5-9.

in the problem between India and China, and India and Pakistan, in the wake of recent nuclear tests.⁷³

'Status' has also been a motivating factor for Sri Lanka's active interest in the SAARC. As a characteristic feature of small states, Sri Lanka enthusiastically supported regional cooperation in South Asia and continued to uphold the regional spirit. Sri Lanka of course, is well aware, that only such an organisation can give equal status, both to small and big states.⁷⁴

Based on the above analysis, it is clear that, like any other small state, Sri Lanka's regional policy is constrained by many factors. They are — historical legacies, geo-strategic location, economic compulsions, asymmetry of the South Asian region, ruling regime and the ethnic configuration of Sri Lankan society. Based on these constraints, strategies are drawn to attain important foreign policy objectives like security, economic interests and identity. The foreign policy strategies include, maintaining closer relations with other small states in the region, enthusiastic participation in SAARC and linkages with extra-regional powers like China, the USA and the UK. There has been however, change in the strategies with the change in the ruling parties — UNP or SLFP. But, irrespective of strategies, the objectives remain the same.

⁷³ The Hindu, 7 June 1998.

⁷⁴ Asian Recorder, vol.25, 1979, pp.14800-01.

Chapter III

Chapter III

SRI LANKA IN SOUTH ASIAN POLITICS: ISSUES AND REACTIONS

One of the priorities of small states has been to ensure peace and order in their regions. Anything which disturbed peace, either in the form of bilateral or multilateral conflicts, arms race in the region, or any extra-regional powers' involvement in the region have been looked upon with concern by the small states. But in the case of a region with an asymmetrical power structure, small states extend support among themselves on the regional issues. They also do not hesitate to invite extra-regional powers to strike a balance with the regional colossus.¹

The first part of this chapter is intended to analyse Sri Lanka's reaction towards regional issues like Indo-Pakistan wars, Kashmir dispute, arms race between India and Pakistan and Indian Ocean Peace Zone proposals. In the remaining section Sri Lanka's stance on the involvement of extra-regional powers in the region is examined.

¹ M.S.Rajan, "Small States and the Sovereign Nation-State System", *International Studies*, vol.25, no.1, 1988, p.3. Also see William R. Thompson, "The Regional Subsystem: A Conceptual Explication and a Propositional Inventory", *International Studies Quarterly*, vol.17, no.1, March 1973, p.103.

Sri Lanka and the Regional Issues

It is fairly simple to analyse Sri Lanka's reactions toward regional issues in the background of its relations with Pakistan as against India and in the context of its national interests.

Historically, Indo-Sri Lankan relations have been influenced by the lay history of invasions from the South Indian empires. This adverse determinant is absent in the case of Sri Lanka-Pakistan relations. Geo-strategically, unlike India, Pakistan is not located in close proximity to Sri Lanka—an important factor which has avoided any type of territorial dispute between the two. Moreover, due to Sri Lanka's strategic location, it has been used as a transit point for the Pakistani shipments, to and from the East and South-East Asian countries. As far as the ethnic configuration is concerned, the presence of Buddhist minorities in Pakistan and Muslims in Sri Lanka has strengthened rather than strained, the Sri Lanka-Pakistan relations. This is perhaps because, these communities constitute far too small a percentage to form a threat of any kind to the majority community of their respective countries. Besides, unlike India, Pakistan did not inherit such problems as that of plantation labourers of Indian origin in Sri Lanka. Undeniably, there are estate labourers of Pakistani origin in Sri Lanka. But, they are too few in number to gain prominence in the diplomatic parleys between Pakistan and Sri Lanka.²

² Urmila Phadnis, "Ceylon and India-Pakistan Conflict", *South Asian Studies*, vol.2, no.1, January 1967, p.42.

Economically also, Sri Lanka enjoys its favourable balance of trade with Pakistan, whereas, its trade deficit with India has been a cause for concern. The other important aspect is the complementary nature of trade. Pakistan is the largest purchaser of Sri Lankan tea and the largest supplier of rice to Sri Lanka, in the region.³ Finally, the India factor makes the two countries to share common foreign policy orientations. Both Sri Lanka and Pakistan seem to be guided by the lurking fear of their big neighbour, India.⁴

Thus, historical legacy, close proximity, problems of minorities, adverse balance of trade and latent fear complex have been the guiding factors of Sri Lanka's reactions towards the regional issues involving India and Pakistan in 1947, 1965 and 1971. The 1947 India-Pakistan war however, is not taken into account, as it was fought before the independence of Sri Lanka.

A. 1965 War

In August 1965, Pakistan initiated the war to achieve some territorial benefits from India. A change in the leadership in India, setback faced by India in the Sino-Indian dispute and sophisticated arms supply by the US-all encouraged Pakistan to resort to war with India over Kashmir. However, Pakistan's attempt was unsuccessful

³ Zeenat Majid, "Trade between Pakistan and Sri Lanka during 1970s", *South Asian Studies*, vol.7, no.2, July 1990, pp.51-54.

⁴ S.U.Kodikara, *Foreign Policy of Sri Lanka-A Third World Perspective* (Delhi, 1982), p.22.

and proved counter productive, resulting in the UN sponsored ceasefire on 23 September 1965.⁵

When the War was going on, the Sri Lankan Prime Minister, Dudley Senanayake sent separate messages to both President Ayub Khan and Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri, urging them to desist from the use of military means. Request was also made "to seek every means and opportunity available for the early and peaceful settlement of the dispute". Senanayake offered to assist both the conflicting countries in reaching a peaceful settlement of the conflict.⁶ It has to be noted that the appeal to refrain from war was made by Sri Lanka without going into the merits of the question. Furthermore, the mediation offer was made without any specific suggestion regarding the "type of mediation".

When the United Nations was trying to bring the 1965 hostilities to an end, Sri Lanka appealed to both India and Pakistan to cooperate with the efforts being made by the world body. Endorsing the peace efforts by the United Nations Secretary General, U Thant, Sri Lanka's Minister of State, J.R.Jayewardene said, "Without going into the rights and wrongs of the dispute, every Asian nation must naturally welcome any attempt by the UN to bring the hostilities to an end".⁷ Consistent with

⁵ Sumit Ganguly, *The Origins of War in South Asia: Indo-Pakistani Conflicts Since 1947* (Lahore, 1988), p.91.

⁶ Asian Recorder, vol.11, 28 May-3 June 1955, p.6471.

⁷ Phadnis, n.2, p.43.

this position, the island, at the instance of the UN Secretary General, sent a 10 member military team' to supervise the India-Pakistan border.

On its part, the Soviet Union (Prime Minister Kosygin) was successful in bringing India and Pakistan to the conference table. Consequently, an agreement was signed between India and Pakistan at Tashkent on "bringing peace in the region through renunciation of war and settlement of disputes through peaceful means".⁸ The rapprochement efforts of Kosygin was welcomed by Sri Lanka. In a joint statement with President Ne Win of Burma, Prime Minister Senanayake said, "We welcome sincerely the Tashkent Declaration. Through this effort, we hope that there would be a lasting peace and stability in the region".⁹

Sri Lanka thus, as is evident, though concerned about regional peace, was more or less non-committal towards the whole issue. It did not specify and take positive steps in diffusing the tensions. It contented itself with the UN and Soviet efforts of arbitration between India and Pakistan. There are some reasons behind this "negative neutrality". Firstly, Sri Lanka's security interests were not affected by this war which was fought in a remote corner of the sub-continent. Secondly, rice supply for that year had been already availed from Pakistan. In the event of any further shortage Sri Lanka was confident of getting it from China. Finally, the newly formed

⁸ Article I of Tashkent Declaration. For the text of the Declaration, see K.Subrahmanyam, "Kashmir", *Strategic Analysis*, vol.13, no.2. May 1990, pp.168-69.

⁹ Hindustan Times, 18 February 1966.

UNP government under Dudley Senanayake was so busy with the domestic affairs of the country that it could not involve itself in the diplomatic parley. However, whatever interest was shown by Sri Lanka was mainly due to its own concern for regional peace and order.

B. 1971 War

In early 1971, the Pakistani authorities let loose a "reign of terror" on the East Pakistanis. This resulted in a large-scale influx of refugees into India. Not only these, in November 1971, Pakistan intensified its firing at Indian border posts, which led to a full scale war on December 3, 1971. The fourteen days war ended with the emergence of a new state in South Asia—Bangladesh. As a consequence, the power pattern in the subcontinent was restructured in favour of India.¹⁰ Sri Lanka's stand on this war has to be looked at in the context of two additional factors apart from the existing traditional determinants, viz., majority separatism and the emergence of a new state.

Sri Lanka treated the whole issue of East Pakistan crisis as an internal affair of Pakistan and not as an independence movement. The reason being, a liberation movement in the region was regarded by Sri Lanka as potentially contagious, possibly affecting its own national unity and territorial integrity. In this regard Shirley

¹⁰ Ganguly, n.5, pp.93, Amal Jayawardena, "Changes in Power Structure and Security Perceptions in the South Asian Subsystem", in P.V.J.Jayasekera (ed.), *Security Dilemma of a Small State* (New Delhi, 1992), p.473.

Lanka's delegate to the United Nations, gave a clear indication of such an apprehension:

This is surely not a liberation movement in the classic sense of the term. We would be creating a deadly precedent if we regarded it as such. It could be claimed that it is not only majorities that have a right to be liberated but, and even more logically, minorities. Most countries in this Assembly have substantial minorities- my country has and must bear in mind the explications of treating the East Pakistan Awami League Movement as a liberation movement.¹¹

Sri Lanka, along with other small states of South Asia, supported Pakistan's territorial integrity. This was due to a desire to uphold the status-quo in the power structure in the region. Hence Sri Lanka voted in favour of the UN ceasefire resolution.¹² Through a ceasefire, Sri Lanka believed that the dismemberment of Pakistan, as a result of the Indian victory, could be prevented.

Sri Lanka reinforced its tilt towards Pakistan by its actions. Despite protests at home and abroad, the Sri Lankan Government allowed Pakistani military planes to use the country's air space throughout the crisis. The justification provided in this regard was :

Pakistan was given transit facilities only on the basis of a declaration by the Government of Pakistan in each case that they did not carry military personnel or equipment. Besides, independent measures were taken by the Government of Ceylon

¹¹ Quoted in S.D.Muni and Urmila Phadnis, "Ceylon, Nepal and the Emergence of Bangladesh", *Economic and Political Weekly*, 19 February 1972, p.473.

¹² The resolution was sponsored by Argentina and 18 other states. It called upon India and Pakistan to take all measures for an immediate ceasefire and for the withdrawal of their armed forces from each other's territory.

to satisfy itself about the facts... The facilities extended to Pakistani flights were those which are granted to air crafts of friendly countries. If the flights had been disallowed by Ceylon, it would have been tantamount to contesting the right of Pakistan to communicate between parts of its own territory.¹³

Sri Lanka's leaning towards Pakistan was also evident from the former's delayed recognition of Bangladesh. Through this, an indirect friendly gesture was made to Pakistan, thereby recognizing its stand. It was only in March 1972 that Sri Lanka recognised Bangladesh as a separate entity. This move was made keeping in mind the idea of countering the regional power centre, India.

The tilt towards Pakistan was covered by a veil of "neutrality". Sri Lankan Prime Minister, Mrs. Srimavo Bandaranaike at the height of the crisis declared, "Our policy on the issue is well-known. We do not get involved in other's business. We are not prepared to take sides".¹⁴ This official position of neutrality in fact, was maintained so as to secure economic benefits from both India and Pakistan.

C. Kashmir Issue

Kashmir issue is another good example of Sri Lanka's veiled neutrality over the regional issues. Ever since their independence, the Kashmir problem has been a bone of contention between India and Pakistan. The issue was the cause for two wars between both the countries. While India has been pressing for solution to the

¹³ Asian Recorder, vol.17, December 1971, pp.10524-25.

¹⁴ Patriot, 2 December 1971.

Kashmir dispute through bilateral negotiations, Pakistan insists on third party mediation. This difference in perception has resulted in the prolongation of the issue for so long.¹⁵ Since its independence, Sri Lanka has developed a "neutral attitude" towards the Kashmir issue. However, a Pakistani scholar¹⁶ noted that Prime Minister John Kotelawala had openly accused India of "being intransigent over the issue". But, this might not be true. Kotelawala, during his visit to India in January 1954, discussed the possibility of Sri Lanka's mediation on the Kashmir dispute".¹⁷ Same idea was pronounced by his successor S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike. He went a step further in urging the countries which attended the Bandung Conference, to use their good offices in bringing about a peaceful settlement of the Kashmir issue. There was positive response from Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Vietnam, Ethiopia, Afghanistan, Nepal and Cambodia. India welcomed the initiatives by Bandaranaike. The efforts however, had to be given up due to non-cooperation from Pakistan.

A slight leaning towards Pakistan, on the Kashmir issue, was found during Mrs. Bandaranaike's era when she expressed that "it would be in the interest of peace in the subcontinent, if the Kashmir dispute be expeditiously solved in accordance with

¹⁵ Ashutosh Varshney, "Three Compromised Nationalities: Why Kashmir Has Been A Problem", in Raju C. Thomas (ed.), *Perspectives on Kashmir: The Roots of Conflict in South Asia* (Boulder, 1992), p.208.

¹⁶ Hafiz-ur-Rahman Khan, "Ceylon: Pakistan's Valued Neighbour", *Pakistan Horizon*, vol.15, 1962, pp.50-51.

¹⁷ W.Howard Wriggins, *Ceylon: Dilemmas of a New Nation* (Princeton, 1960), p.438.

UN resolution or by other peaceful means".¹⁸ The key words, "in accordance with UN resolution" did not mean Sri Lanka's unshakeable confidence in the UN arbitration. The undertone of the statement was Sri Lanka's virtual tilt towards Pakistan in the Kashmir issue. It is Pakistan which had been insisting on the upholding of the UN resolutions as against India's position—of these resolutions being inapt in the changed situation.¹⁹

The UNP Government (1965-1970) did not show much interest on the issue. It was maintained that "since both India and Pakistan were friendly to Sri Lanka, it did not wish to interfere in the internal affairs of both, or take sides"²⁰. This disinterest was primarily due to its contemporary priorities on domestic affairs over regional or global issues. Later, however, J.R.Jayewardene maintained that the Senanayake Government was in full agreement with the policy of its predecessor as exemplified in the Sirimavo-Ayub joint statement in December 1963. That is, Kashmir issue should be solved in accordance with UN resolution or through some other peaceful means—an idea which was retained during the second term of her office, from 1970 to 1977.²¹

¹⁸ Phadnis, n.2, p.48.

¹⁹ B.G.Verghese and Satish Kumar, "Rapprochement in Jammu and Kashmir", *Journal of Peace Studies*, vol.1, no.2, January-February 1994, pp.17-18.

²⁰ Ceylon Daily News, 24 July 1965.

²¹ Phadnis, n.2, p.52.

But, there was a considerable change in this stand during the UNP regime under Jayewardene and Premadasa (since 1977). During his visit to Pakistan in April 1985, President Jayewardene said, "We wish the people of Kashmir should be allowed to decide about their future themselves".²² This remark was deplored in India²³ as it was made without going into the merits of the question.

Jayewardene's successor R. Premadasa, during his one day visit to Pakistan in September 1992, asserted that "Sri Lanka and Pakistan had identical positions on most international issues and in almost all the regional issues".²⁴ This statement amounted to indirect support which Sri Lanka extended to Pakistan's stand on Kashmir.

Comparatively, the UNP leaders appeared to be more explicit in their support to Pakistan in the Kashmir question. The main reason behind was the strains which Indo-Sri Lankan relations witnessed due to the ethnic issue. The other explanation for this was Pakistan's support to Sri Lanka's stand on its ethnic problem.

Presently, the People's Alliance Government led by Chandrika Kumaratunga has reverted to the policy of neutrality. In fact, Sri Lanka has opted for a qualitatively new phase of diplomatic activism suited to a balancing act between India and Pakistan on Kashmir issue. This positive stand has to be looked at in the changed political

²² Ceylon Daily News, 5 April 1985.

²³ Times of India, 5 April 1985.

²⁴ The Hindu, 24 September 1992.

situation. India, of late, is indifferent to the ethnic conflict. Sri Lanka, on the other hand, has realised India's importance in the island's security.²⁵

D. Arms Race

Sri Lanka's stand on arms race has been guided by its security, economic interests and desire for peace in the region. Being a small state, it is not practically feasible nor economically affordable for Sri Lanka to maintain a large and sophisticated armed force. This being the reality, any arms build-up or modernization at the regional or global level, has been looked at with concern. Sri Lanka's reactions towards the arms race at the regional level have been more pronounced.

In the formative years, Sri Lanka's concern for arms race had a global dimension. Until early 1960s there was virtually no arms race in the region. Pakistan acquired huge arms by virtue of being a member in the Western security alliances. During this period, India depended on its diplomacy as the primary instrument to organize its security.²⁶ However, the regional security scenario started changing from early 1960s. When *Panchshila* and *good neighbourliness* failed due to the wars of 1962 and 1965, a policy of "military superiority" against Pakistan was followed. This resulted in India emerging as the biggest military power in the region. China's nuclear

²⁵ The Hindu, 31 May 1998.

²⁶ S.U.Kodidara, "Defence and Security Perceptions of Sri Lankan Foreign Policy Decision-Makers: A Post Independence Overview", in n. 10, p.217.

explosion in 1964 increased India's security concern. India conducted its peaceful nuclear explosion in 1974.²⁷

The entire development (in the conventional as well as in the nuclear field) was looked at with discomfort by Sri Lanka. To the Sri Lankan government any change in the balance of power situation in favour of India was a cause for concern. Sri Lanka was of the view that the more the number of nations who possess nuclear weapons, the greater the risk of nuclear war. Hence, it signed Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty(NPT) as soon as it came for signature in 1968. It wanted all the countries to sign the Treaty. In its view, NPT's implementation cannot be piecemeal. This view was held by Sri Lanka out of its desire to make India a signatory to the NPT.²⁸ India declined to sign the Treaty, because of its discriminatory nature.

Similarly, when Pakistan came up with the proposals of making South Asia a Nuclear Weapons Free Zone, Sri Lanka readily welcomed it. However, India maintained that the proposal overlooked the China factor. Even Sri Lanka failed to consider this and sided with Pakistan in its enthusiasm for making South Asia a 'Nuclear Weapons Free Zone'.²⁹ From Sri Lanka's point of view, there should either

²⁷ Raju G.C.Thomas, *Indian Security Policy* (Princeton, 1986), p.18.

²⁸ Gamini Wearakoon, "Nuclear Non-Proliferation:A Sri Lankan View", in P.R.Chari et al (ed.), *Nuclear Non-Proliferation in India and Pakistan-South Asian Perspectives* (New Delhi, 1996), pp.206-07.

²⁹ Nandini Iyer, "Pakistan and Sri Lanka:The Dynamics of Distant Cordiality", in Surendra Chopra (ed.), *Perspectives on Pakistan's Foreign Policy* (Amritsar, 1983), p.451.

be a nuclear parity or total non-nuclearisation of South Asia. It did not want a situation of nuclear domination by one country in South Asia. Hence, the recent nuclear tests conducted by both India and Pakistan is viewed by Sri Lanka as the best method to avoid war in the region. In this regard, Sri Lankan Minister for Development of Ports, M.H.M. Asharaf during his recent visit to India, said :

A war between India and any other country in the region would be detrimental to the interest of Sri Lanka. I welcome the nuclear tests conducted by both India and Pakistan. There will be no more war between the two, as both know each other's nuclear capabilities now.³⁰

E. Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace

Sri Lanka's desire of making the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace (IOZP) can be seen as supplementary to its stand on arms race. Sri Lanka strongly believed that arms race and disarmament were not only the subject of great powers, but, also of small states. In fact, the small states were in a singularly advantageous position of being free from prejudice or self-interest to express their views and take position on these issues.³¹

With this enthusiasm, Sri Lankan Prime Minister, Mrs. Bandaranaike broached the idea of making Indian Ocean as a Zone of peace in 1964 (at the Non-Aligned Movement Summit in Cairo). The UNP Government which succeeded her

³⁰ The Hindu, 7 June 1998.

³¹ D.M.Prasad, *Ceylon's Foreign Policy Under the Bandaranaiques (1956-65)-A Political Analysis* (New Delhi, 1973), p.136.

did not give much attention to these proposals. When Mrs. Bandaranaike came back to power in 1970, she renewed the "Peace Zone Proposals" with a new vigour. With much efforts by Mrs. Bandaranaike's government, under NAM, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution in 1971, declaring the Indian Ocean as a "Zone of Peace" (Res. 2832). The resolution urged the great powers and the Indian Ocean littoral states in "eliminating" all bases, military installations, logistical supply facilities, deposition of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction and any manifestation of great power military presence in the Indian Ocean".³² Subsequently (in 1972), an Ad hoc Committee was set up under the chairmanship of Sri Lanka, to undertake further steps in implementing the resolution.

Since Sri Lanka was playing a lead role in this aspect, doubts were therefore raised as to whether it became a proxy to India in eliminating great powers from the Indian Ocean. Pakistan was of the opinion that IOPZ proposals provided excellent opportunity to India in establishing regional hegemony by keeping off big powers.³³ But the real intention behind Sri Lanka's proposals was not merely to keep-off the great power rivalry from the Indian Ocean area. It also intended to obligate restraint on the part of regional powers. This intention was amplified in the memorandum

³² Para-2 of the UN Resolution 2832 (XXVI). Also see V.Suryanarayana, "Sri Lanka and the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace", *Strategic Analysis*, vol.13, 1990, pp.454-55.

³³ D.Banerjee, "Indian Ocean Peace Zone", *Strategic Analysis*, vol.25, no.8, November 1992, p.719.

presented by Sri Lanka at the Conference of Commonwealth Heads of State at Singapore in 1971. The memorandum noted:

A parallel corollary of a Peace Zone is that regional states bordering the Indian Ocean will themselves refrain from action prejudicial to the concept of a Peace Zone. Their defence requirements, therefore would have to be measured against their obligations not to compromise the concept of Peace Zone.³⁴

Thus, Sri Lanka's main objective was to contain India's growing military strength apart from keeping Indian Ocean free from big power rivalries. The same idea was reiterated in 1975 by Sri Lanka's permanent representative to the United Nations. During his address at the UN General Assembly, he said,

We do not want any great powers in the Indian Ocean. By the same token we do not intend that we should drive out Satan by Beelzebub and allow some other power within the group of littoral and hinterland states to take the place of the Super Powers.³⁵

The efforts of Sri Lanka obtained a big boost when President Jimmy Carter proposed demilitarization of Indian Ocean in March 1977. However, subsequent events like the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, overthrow of the Shah in Iran and the Cuban presence in Somalia made the prospects of the success of such proposals a mere wishful thinking.³⁶

³⁴ Weerakoon, n.29, p.203.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Banerjee, n.34, p.720.

Extra-Regional Powers in the Regional Politics

One of the common historical legacies of the South Asian states was colonialism. At one point of time or the other, most of the countries of South Asia were under the control of extra-regional colonial powers till their independence. This legacy had its own, repercussions in the post-independence period. In resolving the disputes among themselves, or to counter the threat from any major country in the region, it has become inevitable and habitual for the countries in South Asia (especially small states) to invite extra-regional powers on their behalf. In the process the regional spirit and solidarity was squandered.³⁷ This part of the chapter is intended to analyse the role of the extra-regional powers in the region under two heads:

- a. Sri Lanka's voluntary invitations to external powers for its own interests; and
- b. Sri Lanka's reactions toward regional conflicts involving extra-regional powers.

A. Voluntary Invitations

Sri Lanka was one the first countries in the post-colonial period which forged 'strategic alliance' with an extra-regional power. The alliance came through the 'Defence Agreement' signed with Britain in November 1947. Through this, Britain was to "provide military assistance for the security of Sri Lanka against any external

³⁷ Stephen P.Cohen, "The Regional Impact of a Reforming India", *Adelphi Papers*, no.291, 1993, p.85.

aggression". The compulsions for the agreement were both domestic and regional. Domestically, the Defence Agreement was useful to contain the local Marxist group and to resist 'Cominform' aggression from the Communist countries (by forging alliance with the local Communist groups). The Agreement was also useful for the newly independent Sri Lanka to have strong ties with 'Sterling' and 'Dollar' areas, for its economic development.³⁸

At the regional level, the main reason was its perceived threat from India. It was feared that the day British leave the shores of Sri Lanka, the island would come under Indian domination.³⁹ Hence, the 1947 Agreement was considered as a proper security shield against India. This factor induced Sri Lanka to join the multi-lateral extra-regional linkage (SEATO). However, the option was given up due to domestic pressures.

The security perception witnessed a change after 1955. Under the dynamic leadership of S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike, Sri Lanka was steered towards "neutralism". The implication was to virtually ward-off the extra-regional security linkages. Bandaranaike successfully negotiated the withdrawal of British bases from Trincomalee and Katunanyke without abrogating the 1947 Agreement.⁴⁰ However, this does not mean that Sri Lanka had dispensed away with the fear of threats to its

³⁸ A.Jeyaratnam Wilson, *Politics in Sri Lanka, 1947-1973* (Delhi, 1974), p.274.

³⁹ Kodikara, n.27, p.215.

⁴⁰ Prasad, n.32, pp.64-65.

security. The threat perception was present in the mind of Bandarnaike too. However, unlike the early UNP regime the solution he visualised was regional rather than extra-regional. The SLFP leader was of the view that Sri Lankan security could be maintained by having friendly relations with all the countries irrespective of size or ideology. His view proved to be right. Sri Lanka enjoyed good relations with all the countries including India. Moreover, Sri Lanka acquired economic benefits from both the West and the East.⁴¹

His successor Sirimavo Bandaranaike inherited the policy of neutrality from her husband, but blended it with pragmatism. During her period, Sri Lanka relied heavily on China. Though she maintained good relations with India, it was believed that China was the appropriate counter-weight to India. This stand was put into practice in 1963. Sri Lanka concluded a Maritime Agreement with China in July 1963. This agreement gave the contracting parties most favoured nation treatment in the cargo and passenger services. It has been argued that the Agreement was concluded keeping India's threat in mind rather than any maritime interest. It is to be noted that Sri Lanka did not own even a single ship at that point of time. Moreover, such a maritime agreement, purely for trade purpose, was unnecessary as in normal

⁴¹ D.M.Prasad, "Indo-Sri Lanka Relations: Mutual Problems and Common Approaches", in Surendra Chopra (ed.) *Studies in India's Foreign Policy* (Amritsar, 1983), p.297.

circumstances the island's harbour could be used without any such formal agreement.⁴²

On two occasions domestic factor was the cause for seeking extra-regional support. Firstly, in April 1971, the ultra-nationalist group, Janata Vimukthi Peramuna(JVP) launched an insurrection. The insurrection was of such a magnitude that the United Front Government headed by Sirimavo Bandaranaike was not militarily equipped enough to deal with the situation. The Sri Lankan Prime Minister therefore, appealed to various countries for military and economic assistance. Apart from India and Pakistan, USA, Soviet Union, China, Britain and Yugoslavia came to the Island's rescue.⁴³ But, the stark difference between this and the earlier extra-regional linkages was the India factor. In fact, India's contribution was immense and timely in countering the insurgency.

The second occasion was during the ethnic strife in the aftermath of 1983. With the worst ever ethnic killings in 1983, the agitation of Tamils entered a violent phase. The Sri Lankan political leadership feared that the Tamil militants were militarily supported by India. To counter this threat, Sri Lanka made strategic overtures to many countries including Israel, China, USA, and Britain and Pakistan. China and Pakistan directly supported Sri Lanka. Both countries were the major

⁴² S.U.Kodikara, *Strategic Factors in Inter-State Relations in South Asia* (Canberra, 1997), p.22.

⁴³ Wilson, n.39, pp.272-73.

source of arms supply to the Sri Lankan armed forces. China and Pakistan were explicit in their support because of their anti-India postures.⁴⁴

Israel on the other hand, extended support by providing training facilities to the Sri Lankan Army in commando operations. The main interest behind Israel's support was to come out of diplomatic isolation by establishing relations with as many countries as possible. Moreover, it seemed to be the best opportunity to get a foothold in South Asia.⁴⁵ The support from the US and Britain came indirectly. Though USA shared India's view in political solution to the ethnic problem, it facilitated Israel's military support by the opening of its interest section in the US embassy in Colombo. In its enthusiasm to win US support Sri Lanka offered recreational facilities to the US Navy. It also entered into an agreement with the US in December 1983 to set up the powerful station of Voice of America (VOA). Sri Lanka was keen to offer base facilities to the US in its Trincomalee harbour. The above moves were made against the strategic interests of India.⁴⁶

The help from Britain came in the form of financial assistance to hire retired members of the British Special Air Services(SAS). Sri Lankan President, J.R. Jayewardene went to the extent of seeking a revival of the 1947 Defence Agreement

⁴⁴ S.D.Muni, *Pangs of Proximity:India and Sri Lanka's Ethnic Crisis* (New Delhi, 1993), pp.81.

⁴⁵ P.R.Kumaraswamy, "The Israeli Connections of Sri Lanka", *Strategic Analysis*, vol.11, no.11, February 1987, p.1341.

⁴⁶ P.Venkateshwara Rao, "Foreign Involvement in Sri Lanka", *Round Table*, 1989, p.93.

with Britain. Through this it was thought that Britain's direct military support could be obtained.⁴⁷

B. Conflicts Involving Regional and Extra-Regional Powers

There were two instances where conflicts between regional and extra-regional powers were involved. Sri Lanka's interests in perpetuation or termination of those conflicts were not inexplicable.

Firstly, in December 1961, Portugal indulged in armed intervention to retain its colonial possessions in India. In this conflict, Sri Lanka fully supported India's right to liberate Goa, Daman and Diu from Portuguese. In pursuit of this support, Sri Lanka ordered (on December 18, 1961) the closure of all its sea and air ports to the transport of troops, equipment and supplies to the Portuguese in Goa.⁴⁸

This whole hearted support to India must not be misunderstood purely on the basis of friendship and sympathy. There are other factors too. Firstly, Portuguese were the first to colonise Sri Lanka paving the way for the entry of other colonial powers into the island. Hence, there was general aversion towards Portugal's presence in the region. Secondly, Sri Lanka did not have any trade links or economic interests with

⁴⁷ Amal Jayawardene, "The Response of External Powers to India's Involvement in Sri Lanka", in Mahinda Werake and P.V.J.Jayasekara (eds.), *Security Dilemma of a Small State* (New Delhi, 1995), pp.242-43.

⁴⁸ Asian Recorder, vol.17, September 1961.

Portugal. Thirdly, Portugal did not have the strategic advantage to act as extra-regional counter-weight to India, due to the former's distance from South Asia.

The other major conflict involving extra-regional power was Sino-Indian conflict. In October 1962, China launched aggression against India and illegally occupied some tracts of Indian territory in the Northeast. This resulted in war between the two Asian powers⁴⁹. During this war, Sri Lanka did not condemn the Chinese aggression, inspite of pressures from opposition parties as well as from a section of the ruling SLFP. It stayed neutral during the conflict. Apart from this, it promptly assumed the role of a mediator. Sri Lanka's Prime Minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike convened a conference of six non-aligned countries. The conference unanimously suggested some measures to bring the two countries to negotiations. The conference entrusted the task of implementing the peace proposals to Mrs. Bandranaike. While India accepted the proposals, China showed some reservations.⁵⁰

This neutral attitude of Sri Lanka was adopted to achieve its foreign policy objectives. During the war, Sri Lanka practically witnessed the ability of China to act as a counter-weight to India.

Hence, instead of condemning the aggressor, Sri Lanka put India on an equal footing with China. This explains the cordial relations between China and Sri Lanka

⁴⁹ Sudhakar Bhat, *India and Ceylon* (New Delhi, 1967), p.158.

⁵⁰ For detailed analysis of the `Colombo peace proposals and mediation see Priyankar Upadhyay, "Colombo Peace Mediation Revisited", *International Studies*, vol.29,no.4, December 1992, pp.469-95.

in the Post 1962 era.⁵¹ Economically, the island state did not wish to lose immense economic benefits by branding China as an aggressor. It was maintained that "in the case of termination of economic aid it may well mean Sri Lanka's total economic destruction".⁵²

Conclusion

Thus, an analysis of Sri Lanka's stand on the regional issues and its reactions towards the extra-regional involvement in the region clearly demonstrates its priorities. To Sri Lanka, its national interest always gained primacy. Where ever its interests were involved, the rights and the wrongs of the regional issues were ignored. The Island state generally preferred to stay non-committal or neutral. However, when regional issues affect its interests it tries to resolve them by offering the role of arbitrator or supporting other's mediation.

Sri Lanka's stand is also determined by the 'India factor'. Its threat perception from India has been responsible for its traditional tilt towards Pakistan and China. However, this tilt has been displayed under the veil of 'neutrality'. On issues like arms race and disarmament Sri Lanka insists on morality. But, morality is ignored if it is against its national interests.

⁵¹ S.U.Kodikara, "Ceylon's Relations with Communist Countries, 1948-1966", *South Asian Studies*, vol.2, no.2 July 1967, pp.123-24.

⁵² Prasad, n.31, p.359.

Chapter IV

Chapter IV

SRI LANKA AND SAARC

Small states always have vital stakes in regional arrangements. It was mainly for this reason that the number of regional institutions increased with the proliferation of small states.¹ The vital interests of small states in regional organisations can be political, economical or strategic.

Politically, small states carry considerable weight when they act collectively, rather than individually, in any regional fora. The regional institutions also promote bilateral and multilateral relations among the members of the sub-system. Through regional institutions, small states strive to attain "artificial equality" in the region.²

In terms of economic interests, small states gain benefits from any type of economic integration or cooperation. Infact, small states look upon economic integration as a means for their economic growth and survival.³ It is through such economic cooperation at the regional level that small states secure maximum tariff and non-tariff concessions.

¹ M.S.Rajan, "Small States and Sovereign Nation State System", *International Studies*, vol. 25 (1988), pp.12-13.

² Bhabani Sen Gupta, "Regional Organization and Security of Small States", in M.Abdul Hafiz and Abdur Rob Khan, *Security of Small States* (Dhakha, 1987), p.263.

³ Niels Amstrup, "The Perennial Problem of Small States", *Conflict and Cooperation*, vol.12, 1976, p.176.

As regards strategic benefits, the regional organisations may provide a security cover for the small states. The threat to the security of small states could be from either within or outside the region. In the case of security threat from within the region, the small states can mobilise other members of the group to moderate the behaviour of the aggressor. If there is an external threat, the small states can always hope to protect themselves by mobilising the support of all the members of the regional organisation.⁴

It is in this back drop that Sri Lanka's interests in SAARC has to be analysed.

Sri Lanka's Interests in SAARC

The initiative for having regional cooperation in South Asia came from Bangladesh. Sri Lanka, which was making overtures with the South East Asian nations for membership in the ASEAN, considered this initiative as a good move. It whole heartedly welcomed and supported the step towards South Asian Regional Cooperation (SARC). Confirming this support, Sri Lanka's Foreign Minister, A.C.S.Hameed, in the first SARC Foreign Minister's meeting said, "We in Sri Lanka have advocated a venture of this nature for years and when this initiative was first proposed, we welcomed it with enthusiasm".⁵

⁴ Gupta, n.2, pp.263-64.

⁵ Statement by Foreign Minister of Sri Lanka, A.C.S.Hammed at the first Foreign Ministers Meeting of South Asia, in New Delhi in 1983. See SARC Directorate, *SARC Documents* (DHAKA, 1985).

This support was evident in Sri Lanka being the first country to have hosted any meeting on regional cooperation in South Asia⁶ to discuss the 'Working Paper on SARC', circulated by Bangladesh. As a follow-up measure, the first meeting of the 'Committee of the Whole' was also convened by Sri Lanka, between 31 August to 2 September, 1981. Sri Lanka was keen to do so because, it was on its soil the 'Colombo Plan' was born; it was there that the historical decision for holding the first ever Afro-Asian Conference at Bandung was made; and it was there that "Non-Alignment" became activated. Each of these events had implications which extended beyond the South Asian region. But, SARC was considered to be a mechanism evolving out of the spirit within and for the South Asian region.⁷

Sri Lanka's regional spirit did not exhaust at this initiating stage. It expressed deep conviction in "no turning back from the journey begun." It regarded the search for regional cooperation in South Asia as the most important initiative.

In this regard Sri Lankan Foreign Secretary, W.T. Jayasinghe, said, "We must make our own task with determined and firm step towards the goal of our

⁶ First ever meeting on South Asian Regional Cooperation was at Foreign Secretaries level. It was held in Colombo in April 1981.

⁷ This view was expressed by Sri Lankan Foreign Minister, A.C.S.Hameed, at the inauguration of First Foreign Secretaries Meeting held in Colombo, in April 1981. See SARC Directorate, n.5, p.9.

'Association'".⁸ Hence, when SAARC took shape in 1985, it was hailed by Sri Lanka as a "group chosen by history to make history".⁹

Sri Lanka's 'South Asian Spirit' and strong support for SARC, and later SAARC, were not without its own self interest. Eyes were set on the political, economic, security and such other benefits that accrue from SAARC, from time to time.

Political Interests

Politically, from the beginning, Sri Lanka maintained that its voice could be heard in the international fora, if it was collated with other members of the region. It was strongly believed that a closer cooperation amongst themselves could influence matters directly concerning peace, security and economic development of the region.¹⁰ It was also held that through a regional organisation like SAARC, the island state could get an "equality of status vis-a-vis other countries of the region, particularly with bigger states like India. It was this urge to attain "artificial equality" that induced Sri Lanka to strongly support" the regional cooperation based on the

⁸ Statement by Sri Lankan foreign Secretary W.T.Jayasinghe at Second Foreign Secretaries meeting held in Kathmandu, in 1988. See SARC Directorate, n.5, p.54.

⁹ Ceylon Daily News, 8 December 1985.

¹⁰ SARC Directorate, n.5, p.90.

political independence, non-interference in the internal affairs of other states and mutual benefit".¹¹

In the ninth SAARC Summit held in May 1997 at Male, a new political dimension was added to SAARC. An accord was reached among the members of SAARC which institutionalised normal consultations on the political issues outside the framework of SAARC Summits and meetings.¹² The proposition, in this regard, was made by the Sri Lankan president Mrs. Chandrika Kumaratunga, though the idea was first mooted by Maumon Abdul Gayoom, the President of Maldives. Sri Lanka appears to have considered such informal political exchanges as essential to the specific context of the geo-political centrality of India. In other words, such political interactions under SAARC auspices could be seen as a confidence-building exercise, obviating the need for balance of power in the region.¹³ In this regard Mrs. Kumaratunga said :

The principal reality of our region is the asymmetry in size, resources, development and power amongst us. Another reality is the uniquely central and pivotal position within our region of the largest member, India. What we need to achieve... (for) meaningful regional cooperation is to move towards a shared perception of the realities of our region.¹⁴

¹¹ See Article II of the SAARC Charter and Para-5 of the Dhaka Declaration, 1985.

¹² See Para-8 of the Male Declaration, 1997.

¹³ The Hindu, 14 May 1997.

¹⁴ The Hindu, 13 May 1997.

It was in recognition of such realities, that the novel political track was proposed.

Economic Interests

On the economic front, Sri Lanka's interest is more pronounced. Sri Lanka has been of the view that "political stability follows economic progress". In other words, regional economic cooperation is the true foundation of regional political stability. It was believed that through SAARC, the growth of collective self-reliance through regional, economic and technical cooperation, including expanded intra-regional trade and industrial complementarity, could be achieved. Through such collective self-reliance, negotiations could be made to establish new international economic order.¹⁵ Hence, cooperation, collective self-reliance and mutual assistance have been enshrined in the `objectives of SAARC'.

With regard to economic cooperation among SAARC members, the SAARC Preferential Trading Arrangement(SAPTA) is an important milestone. It was Sri Lanka which first proposed the idea of such an `arrangement', at the sixth SAARC Summit, held in Colombo, in December 1991. During his address Sri Lankan President Ranasinghe Premadasa desired that "the organisation(SAARC) should move towards the goal of a regional trade agreement through a series of incremental steps and look ahead to the eventual establishment" of `South Asian Economic

¹⁵ SARC Directorate, n.5, p.10.

Community".¹⁶ On Sri Lanka's proposals, and subsequent endorsement by other members, SAPTA became a reality from December 1995.

The SAPTA intends to promote and sustain mutual trade and economic cooperation among the member states by means of tariff reduction to each other's products. It is also to be based on the principles of overall reciprocity and mutuality of advantages, taking into account respective levels of economic and industrial development, the pattern of external trade, trade and tariff policies and systems. The basic premise has been to make member states reduce tariffs on selected commodities.¹⁷

But, it is criticized that the commodities identified so far, by the SAARC countries, do not account for more than 6 per cent of the total trade of these countries. It is also said that most of the areas in which these countries have offered concessions, are the ones in which trading is very limited or virtually non-existent.

However, one cannot strike a pessimistic note on the achievements of SAPTA. It is an undeniable fact that SAPTA has boosted the volume of trade in the region from 1-2 per cent to around 5 per cent. As far as Sri Lanka's trade at the intra-regional level is concerned, it has risen significantly with the birth of SAARC in general and SAPTA in particular. For instance, its share in the intra-regional trade which stood at 15.9 percent in 1985 rose to around 19 per cent in 1990. In 1995, it

¹⁶ The Sunday Times, 22 December 1991.

¹⁷ See Article 2 and 3 of SAARC Preferential Trading Arrangement(SAPTA).

stood at 20 per cent. With the implementation of SAPTA, Sri Lanka shared nearly 23 per cent of the total trade within the region.¹⁸

India has become Sri Lanka's largest trading partner, which hitherto was Japan. Reduction of tariffs under SAPTA has reduced the cost of Indian products (which are already considered as cheaper in Sri Lanka) vis-a-vis non-SAARC countries. This in turn increased Sri Lanka's cost-benefits tremendously. In April 1997, India unilaterally undertook to remove quantitative restrictions and reduce tariffs on 70 to 80 'items of export interest' to Sri Lanka. This exercise was undertaken within the framework of SAPTA and was expected to help Sri Lanka in narrowing down the export-import gap with India.¹⁹

However, Sri Lanka's major cause of concern has been the trade imbalance. During 1985-1995, Sri Lanka's imports and exports in the region (in percentage terms) were 26.3 and 7.1 respectively. Especially, its trade deficit with India has been on the increasing note. Hence, Sri Lanka has been vociferous of effective implementation of SAPTA.

Sri Lanka is all set to gain from the SAARC Free Trade Area (SAFTA), the target to which was advanced to 2001 A.D. at the ninth SAARC Summit held at Male last year (1997). The SAFTA envisages South Asia to become a full fledged trading

¹⁸ D.K.Madaan, "Sri Lanka and SAARC: Economic and Trade Development", in Virender Grover *Encyclopedia of SAARC Nations* (New Delhi, 1997), pp.680-84.

¹⁹ Public Opinion Trend Analyses and News Service Sri Lanka Series, 2 April 1997, p.164.

bloc with no internal barriers. If the ultimate aim of free movement of goods is achieved, Sri Lanka would accrue more economic benefits by enhancing its trade within the region.

However, doubts have been already raised regarding the shortening of the SAFTA deadline done without adequate homework. In this context, it now remains to be seen how Sri Lanka will seek to gain in the forthcoming SAARC summit, to be hosted by it, in July 1998.

Strategic Interests

Cooperation in strategic issues has been considered as highly contentious and complex by the South Asian countries. Hence, unlike other regional organisations like OAS, EEC and ASEAN, economy and not politics, is the basis of cooperation in South Asia (under SAARC). However, the strategic interests of South Asian countries have been rather implicit in SAARC. To Sri Lanka, latent security interests have been both external and internal.

At the external level, security against threat from India and against any other extra-regional power was the main impulse which pulled Sri Lanka towards SAARC. Sri Lanka believed that "cooperation" was the best defense mechanism vis-a-vis India. If Sri Lanka could be part of a regional organisation in which India was also a member, it believed that it could go on in its own way.²⁰

²⁰ Iftekharuzzaman, "Bilateral Impediments to SAARC: The Indo-Sri Lanka Crisis Over IPKF Withdrawal", *BISS Journal*, vol.10. no.3, July 1989, p.254.

Moreover, it was believed that Sri Lanka could always get the support of like minded states of South Asia in countering any Indian hegemonic tendencies in the SAARC fora. This was probably one of the main reasons, for India's reluctance to completely endorse Bangladesh's proposals for a regional arrangement in South Asia. At that point of time, both China and the United States were in favour of a 'South Asian Association' that kept India contained and allowed them to play a significant role in the region. The external powers duly supported and encouraged the small states (of South Asia) to go for an "association".²¹

Furthermore, the small states, including Sri Lanka were fearful of the spill over of Soviet intervention in Afghanistan in the aftermath of 1979. Russian influence into South Asia could well be countered through coordinated and harmonized responses of the South Asian countries.²² The pro-Western regimes in Sri Lanka, Pakistan,²³ Bangladesh and Nepal considered this factor to be an important one.

At the internal level also, Sri Lanka was facing many security challenges like terrorism and insurgency. It therefore held the view that coordinated thinking and action on these problems, at the regional level, might yield better and quicker results.

²¹ S.D.Muni and Anuradha Muni, *Regional Cooperation in South Asia* (New Delhi, 1984), p.53.

²² Ibid.

²³ Pakistan initially was suspicious of India's hand in Bangladesh's proposal of a regional cooperation in South Asia. Hence, It was not enthusiastic of any type of a regional arrangement. It was later that it realized the merits of a collectivity.

The reason behind this belief was the 1971 incident. In April 1971, Sri Lanka successfully put down the insurrection launched by the Janta Vimukti Peramuna(JVP) with the help of many countries, including India and Pakistan.

Hence, when SAARC took shape in 1985, the security issues were addressed gradually in the SAARC fora by the small states. Sri Lanka, in particular, expressed its sheer helplessness in tackling terrorism on its soil. It desired the urgency and beneficiality of a cooperative mechanism under SAARC to counter the menace.²⁴ Consequently, in the first SAARC Summit itself members recognised the seriousness of the problem of terrorism as it affected the security and stability of the region. Later, in the Second Summit held in Bangalore, the members agreed on the vitality of cooperation in the prevention and elimination of terrorism from the region. Finally, 'The SAARC Convention on Terrorism' was adopted at the Kathmandu Summit in November 1987.

As per the provisions of the Convention, it was resolved that the member states shall "cooperate among themselves, to the extent permitted by their national laws, through consultations between appropriate agencies, exchange of information, intelligence and expertise and such other cooperative measures as may be appropriate, with a view to preventing terrorist activities through precautionary measures".²⁵ Sri

²⁴ J.R.Jayewardane, *Men and Memories:Speeches of J.R.Jayewardene* (New Delhi, 1989), p.141.

²⁵ See Article VII of SAARC Regional Convention on Suppression of Terrorism.

Lanka saw the Convention as an important device in handling its separatist movement, especially in blocking the external support to insurgency. The Island Republic hailed the Convention as "an unequivocal expression of collective commitment of SAARC members to combat terrorism".²⁶ It is not that the Convention has altogether eliminated terrorism from Sri Lankan soil, but it has provided sufficient leverage to Sri Lanka for close consultation and coordination with SAARC countries in dealing with terrorist activities.

At the Male Summit (1990), Sri Lanka welcomed and endorsed the Maldivian initiative for the 'Protection and Security of Small States' at the UN in 1989.²⁷ In the following Summit at Colombo in 1991, Sri Lanka took initiatives to include 'Security of Small States' in the SAARC agenda. It was agreed by all the member states that "small states may be particularly vulnerable to external threat and acts of interference in their internal affairs and that they merit special measure of support in safeguarding their sovereign independence, territorial integrity and the welfare of their people".²⁸ In the later Summits, it was emphasised that all the member countries, either severally or collectively, should adhere to universally accepted principles and norms related to

²⁶ S.U.Kodikara, "Political Dimensions of SAARC", *South Asia Journal*, vol.2, no.1, January 1989, p.36.

²⁷ S.U.Kodikara, "South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation as an Instrument of Stability and Security:Prospects for Sri Lanka", in Mahinda Verake and P.V.J.Jayasekera(eds.), *Security Dilemma of a Small State* (New Delhi, 1995), p.372.

²⁸ See Para-39 of Colombo Declaration of SAARC, 21 December 1991.

sovereign rights and territorial integrity of all states irrespective of size. However, collective action under SAARC is yet to take-off. Sri Lanka, being a small state itself, this is the chief cause of its concern.

Thus, Sri Lanka has been involved in the SAARC process with clearly manifested and latent interest ever since the initiation of this regional organisation. When this pursuit is stretched beyond its limit it tend to cast its shadows on the progress of SAARC. The following section is devoted to analyse the political use of SAARC by Sri Lanka.

Politicisation of SAARC

Sri Lankan Foreign Minister, A.C.S.Hameed, during the first South Asian Foreign Ministers Meeting, held in New Delhi in August 1983 said,

"... the factors hither to retarded movement towards regional collaboration... had taken a heavy toll in *deep-rooted attitudes* and the case for regional cooperation had to be argued and won. The case has now been won; we stand poised to launch ourselves upon a journey of regional interaction based on the promise of future rather than the legacy of the past".²⁹
[Emphasis added].

But the case has not been won. The "factors" which retarded the SAARC process seems to exist and cast its shadow from time to time. Bilateral problems of most of the South Asian countries with India has been the chief impediment. Sri Lanka,

²⁹ SARC Directorate, n.5, p.185.

individually or along with member states, has never failed to use SAARC as a bargaining chip in its relations with India.³⁰

First attempt in this regard was made way back in 1985 on the eve of the third Foreign Ministers Meeting in Thimpu. At that meeting, Indian foreign Minister, Bali Ram Bhagat, criticized Sri Lanka's "handling of the ethnic issue as inhuman and deplorable". The Island state treated this comment to be an interference in its internal affairs. The Sri Lankan counter-part, A.C.S. Hameed, objected to the comment and said "Sri Lanka did not like to join a club, in which big members bullied small".³¹ It threatened to walk-out from the meeting, but was later persuaded to join.

On the eve of third SAARC Foreign Ministers Meeting held in New Delhi in June 1987, once again there arose the possibility of Sri Lanka staying away from the meeting. This time Sri Lanka wanted to protest against, what it considered as "a naked violation of its air space and territorial integrity".³² This was in the back drop of India's air lifting relief materials to Jaffna. But Sri Lanka, fearing criticism at the international level, desisted from using "boycott diplomacy". However, the meeting was made best use of. The Sri Lankan delegation not only made a reference to the issue, but also called for signing a 'SAARC Convention' that would bind member-states to respect each other's independence and territorial integrity by refraining from

³⁰ Iftekharuzzamam, n.20, p.259.

³¹ Partha S.Gosh, *Cooperation and Conflict in South Asia* (New Delhi, 1995), p.187.

³² Ceylon Daily News, 5 June 1987.

any acts of aggression, interference, violence and oppression.³³ Sri Lanka was successful in getting the support of Pakistan and Bangladesh, who endorsed the Sri Lankan stand.

In fact, this period saw maximum cooperation between Sri Lanka, on the one side, and Pakistan and Bangladesh, on the other. Each supported the other's stand on any issue vis-a-vis India. This mutual support however, was not based on the merits of the issues, but on the sole factor, India.

As per the Indo-Sri Lankan Accord of 1987, Indian Peace Keeping Force(IPKF) was invited by Sri Lanka to maintain peace and normalcy in the island. Ranasinghe Premadasa, one of the ardent opponents of the Accord, became the president of Sri Lanka in 1988. As a part of his election promise, he demanded the withdrawal of IPKF. When India refused to accept the demand on the ground that peace was not restored in the North East of Sri Lanka, President Premadasa decided to regionalise the issue. As a first step, Sri Lanka, boycotted the eleventh session of SAARC Council of Ministers, held in Islamabad, in July 1989. The Island state justified its boycott by arguing that the "objectives of SAARC could not be achieved unless its member-states agree not to interfere in the affairs of other members and take undue advantage of their size and predominance".³⁴ Unable to convince Sri

³³ A.C.S.Hammed, *Foreign Policy Perspectives of Sri Lanka: Selected Speeches, 1977-1987* (Singapore, 1988), p.426.

³⁴ Letter by Sri Lankan Foreign Minister, Ranjan Vijeyaratne to his Pakistani counter part. Quoted in Iftekharuzzaman, n.20, p.256.

Lanka to attend the meeting, the other members were forced to postpone the meeting to a later date.

The anti- climax reached its peak when Sri Lanka refused its turn of hosting the fifth SAARC Summit. Sri Lanka complained that it "cannot host a meeting in the soil where there was foreign troops".³⁵ It was the first time in the history of SAARC that a Summit level meeting was cancelled. This came as a major jolt to the SAARC progress.

The crisis did not end there. On IPKF withdrawal in March 1990, Sri Lanka insisted that the 1990 Summit be held in Colombo. It stuck to its stand not withstanding the fact that it was the turn of the Maldives to host the 1990 Summit, which coincided with the 25th anniversary of Maldivian independence. The Sri Lankan government sought the help of Pakistan in this regard. It went to the extent of threatening to boycott the Summit if held elsewhere.³⁶ But in doing so, Sri Lanka, which had been vociferous in "respecting the sentiments of small states", failed itself in the mission. At last, Sri Lanka was convinced to hold the forthcoming summit in 1991 at Colombo (6th Summit).

The Sixth SAARC Summit was originally scheduled to be held on 7th November 1991. But, it had to be postponed due to the inability of Bhutanese King, Jigme Singye Wangchuk, to participate in the Summit. Sri Lankan president,

³⁵ Kodikara, n.27, pp.366-67.

³⁶ The Hindu, 5 May 1990.

Ranasinghe Premadasa alleged that India had a role in Wangchuk's absence, though the real reason was internal problems in Bhutan. However, the Bhutanese King was willing to send duly accredited person to represent Bhutan.³⁷ This however, was against the SAARC Charter which allowed the attendance of either the head of the state or the government. India's, alleged hand had in thwarting the Summit was a mere misunderstanding of the situation. If India wanted to boycott the Summit, it could have done so on its own. It did not need to take recourse to any indirect means to do so. Moreover, India did not have any track record of using "boycott diplomacy" in SAARC meetings.

Conclusion

From the above analysis, it is clear that Sri Lanka, like any other small state, has a vital stake in the success of SAARC. This factor induced Sri Lanka, to either support other's initiatives, or to take its own steps, in the progress of SAARC. However, it tried to use the SAARC fora to maximise its interests and leverage. When its interests lay in thwarting the very spirit and achievements of SAARC, it did not hesitate to do so. It may be stated that SAARC has not totally eliminated the threat perception of Sri Lanka from India. This factor induced the former to gang-up with other like-minded states like Bangladesh, Nepal, and Pakistan against India.

³⁷ P.K.Mishra, "Colombo Summit and SAARC", *Foreign Affairs Reports*, vol.41, nos.1&2, January-February 1992, p.1.

It is imperative for Sri Lanka to realise that the division of interests will not only lead to the deterioration of relations among the South Asian countries, but also retard the growth of SAARC in general. Any damage to the Association, however unspectacular its accomplishments may be, is likely to be self-defeating for the region as a whole. Hence, in the changed political and economic scenario, it is important to uphold the regional spirit and tread the long, slippery path so as to attain sustained economic and social development through SAARC.

Chapter V

Chapter V

CONCLUSIONS

The regional policy of Sri Lanka has been dealt with in the light of small states' interests and involvement in regional politics. In the present study, small states are those which are not only with small territory, population and economic base but also with weak military. They do not have any capability to influence regional and global politics, capacity to wage war, imperial ambitions and economic self-sufficiency. These weaknesses impinge on the regional policy of small states.

Understanding a `region' must precede any discussion of its regional politics. Unlike conventional definition, a region can be defined as a zone of conflict, intervention and cooperation. The regional policy of small states has to be looked at through the prism of these three dimensions. These three external factors, along with the domestic ones like the ruling regime, the economic compulsions and the leadership, influence the regional policy-making of small states.

As far as Sri Lanka is concerned, its regional policy has been constrained by factors such as historical legacies, its geo-strategic location, its economic compulsions, the asymmetrical power relations, the ruling regime and the ethnic configuration of its society. Having these determinants in mind, regional policy strategies have been devised so as to achieve important objectives viz., security, economic development and identity. The strategies include :

- (i) maintaining neutrality towards the regional issues like India-Pakistan wars, Kashmir issue and arms race in the region;
- (ii) use of the regional organisation-SAARC-to advance its interests.
- (iii) forging extra-regional linkages, from time-to-time to bring about a structure of force to control India.

The present study has enriched our general understanding of a small state's behaviour in a particular region. The attempt has been to draw certain general conclusions from this specific case study. Two conclusions can be drawn. The first is about general behaviour of small states in regional politics and the second is on the specific behaviour of Sri Lanka in South Asian politics. As far as small states are concerned, they are more concerned about their security. They are always suspicious of external involvement in their domestic affairs. The suspicion is generally high when they are geographically close to a big power. Hence, to safeguard their security the small states follow the policy of "neutrality" or "non-alignment". They also go for extra-regional alliances to strike a balance in the region. More so, small states support and cooperate among themselves to counter the big powers. For this purpose, the regional organisation is made best use of.

Small states, due to their relatively weak economic strength depend heavily on foreign inflow of capital either in terms of aid or investment. They also rely on foreign trade for their economic survival. Since their export commodities are very few, small states always face adverse balance of trade. This is a serious cause of concern for them. Hence, next to security, economic objectives gain precedence.

Small states do not have sufficient capability to influence regional or global developments. Hence, they face the crisis of 'identity' or 'status'. One of the strategies the small states adopt to gain status is through 'mediation'. Their stand on the issues like arms race, military intervention and any type of domination by big powers depend primarily on their national interests.

Coming to the specific regional policy behaviour of Sri Lanka, it is evident that the country is always conscious of its security, territorial integrity and sovereignty. It is because of this over consciousness it is suspicious of India's intentions. To counter the perceived threat from India, it sought extra-regional support particularly from Britain and China. This proved beneficial both strategically and economically. Strategically, China was used as an external counter-weight against India. Economically, Sri Lanka has maintained favourable balance of trade with China. This has proved the hypothesis, "Small states tend to assert independence vis-a-vis dominant regional power(s) by even entering into alliance with or cultivating extra-regional powers", to be true.

Within the region, Sri Lanka views Pakistan as the potential force to counter India. Hence, the island state indirectly sided with Pakistan on all the regional issues. This was done under the veil of neutrality. However, Sri Lanka did not hesitate to offer itself as a mediator in resolving the regional issues in South Asia. Thus, our hypothesis, "In an attempt to resolve the regional issues, which affect them, the small states readily offer themselves as mediators". Moreover, Sri Lanka's stand on arms race in the region as well as its initiatives making 'Indian Ocean as a Peace Zone'

were to maintain peace in the near vicinity. SAARC forum has been used to gain maximum economic benefits, apart from using it as institutionalised defence to safeguard its security. This use of cooperative mechanism proves the hypothesis "The smaller the states the more they favour regional cooperation or arrangement so as to protect their national interests.

Now, the question that arises is: how far Sri Lanka's regional policy is successful?

Strategically, considering the threat perception from India, the early Sri Lankan rulers got security assurance from the U.K. through the Defence Agreement of 1947. The threat perception proved to be illusory, as India did not have any territorial ambitions in Sri Lanka. Later, S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike shed the suspicious attitude towards India. This change successfully proved that only by maintaining friendly relations with all the countries Sri Lanka could safeguard its security.

From the 1960's Sri Lanka however, moved closer to China. Sri Lanka used both China and Pakistan to counter India's predominance in the region. India did not take proper cognizance of this factor. This is how Sri Lanka worked out its complete security mechanism against India. All this was, however, nicely veiled under a stand of "neutrality".

During the UNP regime under J.R.Jayewardene and Ranasinghe Premadasa maximum external military help was sought, to deal with India's threat to the island. In this regard, some of the South Asian countries like Pakistan and Bangladesh had

also extended their support to Sri Lanka. This caused severe strains in Indo-Sri Lankan relations.

The regional policy of the present People's Alliance government headed by Chandrika Kumaratunga seems to be successful. The policy of "friendly relations with all the countries" is again emphasised. This policy has resulted in cordiality and absence of tensions in Sri Lanka's relations with the South Asian countries, especially India.

Economically, Sri Lanka has been successful in manipulating its regional policy. The 'neutral' stand has been maintained to gain maximum economic benefits from all the quarters. Sri Lanka has been successfully using SAARC to this respect. Among other issues, its initiative for SAARC Preferential Trading Arrangement(SAPTA) have proved to be economically beneficial for the island. Through this, it got many unilateral trade concessions from India.

Based on the case study conducted, one need not agree fully with the phrase, "Small is beautiful but, vulnerable". Often the vulnerability of a small state is a product of some of its own policies. If positive and friendly policies are followed it may remove their vulnerability.

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