

CHAPTER VI

SRI LANKA AND THE SOUTH ASIAN SUB-SYSTEM

Foreign policy analysis within the contours of the ‘analytic’ international system¹ invariably over-emphasizes the influence of the global milieu and undermines the impact of local and regional settings which though less conspicuous are functionally significant to the foreign policies of the concerned states. To avoid such a lopsided analysis, a section of scholars advocates the adoption of a sub-system framework supplemental to the larger analytic one, since the former would take proper note of the regional context.² The sub-systemic level of analysis is of considerable importance to the study of the foreign policies of the small developing countries because the regional environment has a crucial bearing on their external interactions. The foreign policies of these states are often directed towards the protection of the political system from dysfunctional and destabilizing forces arising out of the infrastructural linkages in the region. Also the foreign policies are used to create a regional power-balance to act as a deterrent on potential threat-sources. Usually, the small developing states perceive threat from their big neighbours and the magnitude of such threat perception is more, if there are infrastructural socio-cultural and economic linkages with the big neighbours.

In this chapter an attempt is being made to analyze Sri Lanka’s external behaviour in the South-Asian sub-system. Before we proceed to analyze Sri Lanka’s regional interactions, we will briefly discuss the subsystemic features of South Asia, including its textural and structural characteristics.³ This will help us to underline the major influences on Sri Lanka and its regional objectives.

South Asian Sub-System

As implied earlier, the term 'South Asian Sub-System' is used here in the nature of an analytical framework to help systematic analysis. There are five grounds for considering the region as a distinct sub-system namely: (i) South Asia is composed of Afghanistan, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka. The rationale for limiting the scope of the sub-system to these countries is historical and geo-political; (ii) members of the sub-system project a regional identity which has manifested more clearly with the formation of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC); (iii) members of the international system recognize South Asia as a distinct congeries of states; (iv) shared historical heritage and commonalities in ethnic, linguistic, cultural and religious spheres lend a special Indo-centric character to the region; and (v) lastly the non-aligned orientation of all members except Pakistan, till recently, has helped the retention of a separate identity of the regional power structure as also the 'relative autonomy' of the region as a whole.

Textural Characteristics

On the basis of the prevailing power structure in the sub-system, it can be loosely differentiated into four sectors, namely: (a) core; (b) semi-periphery; (c) periphery; and (d) intrusive.

India occupies the core place in South Asian power structure because of the wide disparity between its power potential and capabilities and that of the semi-peripheral and peripheral states. Alongside the power disparity are the infrastructural linkages with the peripheral states which impede the national building processes in both the core and the peripheries. Such linkages have unleashed both 'push' and 'pull' forces which govern their attitudes and responses to one another.⁴ While India with its greater capability can afford to be less concerned about these linkages, the peripheries are greatly concerned about them. Vulnerability to India pulls the peripheries away from it and has made India a constant variable in their foreign policies.

But common colonial experiences, the cold war, politico-economic interdependence and similar socialization of their ruling elites bring them closer to the core. The prevalence of such harmonious factors and particularly the similar socialization of the ruling elites have evolved certain common external national role conceptions in the regional context. For example, the ruling elites of all the states are greatly concerned about the maintenance of stability in the region and also the perpetuation of the status quo in their own political systems, which prevail upon them to cooperate with one another to contain adverse trends inimical to the existing social order. However, the initiative to effect such cooperation lies with powerful India, cooperation without which would be futile and meaningless.

Both Sri Lanka and India possess harmonizing forces of common colonial legacy, and geo-political consideration like instability in the region which would mutually endanger their political systems. The discordant factors are the presence of a sizeable Tamil population in the island which has failed to evolve a common national identity along with the dominant community (Sinhalese). A section of this minority has in recent years sought secession. Moreover, labourers in the tea plantations had been an irk-some problem between the two countries. Besides, the two countries had disputed each other's sovereignty over the atoll of Kachchathivu which was ultimately resolved in favour of Sri Lanka. Similarly there were differences on the issue of maritime boundaries between them. In economic interaction too, Sri Lanka finds itself adversely placed because of an imbalance in trade with India.⁵

Pakistan is neither a core state nor is it a peripheral state. It is a semi-peripheral state. Its socio-economic capabilities are inferior to that of India, but it is now a nuclear weapon state. Its relations with India is conflictual and competitive. It has striven to attain politico-military parity with India.

The peripheral sector denotes countries like Afghanistan, Maldives, Bhutan, Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka whose individual power potential is inferior to that of the core, India and they are directly or indirectly dependent on India in the material, cultural and ideological spheres. The countries belonging to semi-peripheral and peripheral sectors have socio-political

and cultural linkages among themselves which influence their respective foreign policy making. For instance, Muslims the dominant community in Pakistan and Bangladesh are minorities in Nepal and Sri Lanka but they harmoniously co-exist with the dominant communities. Buddhism, the dominant religion in Sri Lanka is less important in Nepal but relationship between Nepalese Hindus and Buddhists is cordial. Interestingly there is no adverse balance of trade payments in the intra-peripheries' economic interactions. The presence of such linkages and their common threat perception from the core, India, impel these states to have cordial and cooperative interactions among themselves to counterpoise India's regional predominance. However, on certain occasions, discrepancies are manifested in their pursuit of this motivation because of their varied capabilities, and aspirations. Unlike the semi-peripheral state, Pakistan which aspires for parity with India, the peripheral states aim to protect and promote their independence and autonomy viz-a-viz India.

The intrusive sector constitutes states extrinsic to the region, which had endeavoured in the past, or are endeavouring at present to manipulate the regional power-structure for the furtherance of their respective foreign policy goals. As a result, these states are in a state of perpetual competition with each other to influence and win over the support of the regional states in order to further their respective objectives. In this context, one can identify states like Britain, the United States, the former Soviet Union and China.

Following its withdrawal from the region, one of the major objectives of Britain was to maintain friendly relations with the regional actors for perpetuation of its economic activities in South and South East Asia. Besides, because of the unstable post-war political scenario in Asia, Britain wanted to safeguard the smooth intercourse of its commercial transactions in the region east of Suez for which control over the Indian Ocean was imperative. Since Sri Lanka's geopolitics placed Britain at a vantage position, and also during the colonial rule it had established military bases there for such exigencies, retention of these bases became important.

Initially the United States and the Soviet Union had not shown much interest in the region, but with the intensification of their rivalry the sub-continent came to attain a high priority

in their respective foreign policies. The two super powers, obviously, attempted to woo India to their respective camps but having failed to do so, they adopted other tactics to influence the regional power structure. The American strategy in this regard has been to maintain friendly relations with the core and the peripheries to contain the Soviet Union and China, and also to boost the capabilities of the peripheral and semi-peripheral states to restrict the regional predominance of India. However, when it came to a crunch situation to choose between India and the peripheral states, the US preferred to maintain the regional status quo that is it recognized India's status as a regional power.

By and large, the Soviet Union had striven to project a friendly image in the sub-continent by providing aid to the regional states. However, as it had been able to strike a good relationship with India, the other states of the region had been of marginal importance to it. Nevertheless, it had registered its presence in the peripheries too, through the usual diplomacy of aid, grants and arms so as to checkmate the penetration of adversaries like the United States and China.

Following the breakdown of the monolith Communist power structure, China too has been giving high priority to the area. Guided by its desire to be acknowledged leader of the 'underdog' nations, China interacts with the peripheries mainly to counteract the Soviet presence in the region as well as to keep Indian predominance within bounds. In this context, China's strategy has been to sell a 'friend in need, is a friend indeed' image to the peripheries. Particularly for Sri Lanka, China happens to be the most important intrusive actor.

Structural Characteristics

The complex interplay of competing interests and desire for stability in the peripheries have caused India to be flexible towards the peripheries in their interactions with the intrusive powers for developmental purposes and also to overcome their fear of India. However, India has been apprehensive of too great a friendship with the intrusive powers inimical to it.

Some of the peripheral states like Nepal and Sri Lanka have been equally apprehensive of excessive penetration by the intrusive actors like India, for penetrations from either sectors entail possibilities of encroachment on their freedom and independence. Hence these states – Nepal and Sri Lanka – have usually preferred to be cautious in their interactions, shifting their weight towards the core or intrusive sectors according to perception of their leadership of the environment and the demands on their respective political systems. Therefore, the nature and character of the sub-systemic interactions of Sri Lanka have largely depended on the perceptions of the party in power.

The UNP Government and the South Asia Sub-System : 1948-1956 and 1965-1970

In its first term of governance (1948-1956) the UNP governments perceived threat not only from communism and communist states of the Soviet Union and China but also from India. Apprehensions from India were obviously based on objective circumstances like the power disparity between the two countries, the presence of Tamil population in the island, the historical legacy of invasions from South India, more particularly from the Indian province of Tamil Nadu, and notably the irresponsible suggestions by some Indian leaders, immediately after the attainment of independence, for the creation of a regional confederation to ensure India's security. This upset the Sinhalese sensibilities. The then Indian Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, had made earnest efforts to assuage Sri Lanka's apprehensions by dismissing such remarks as the outcome of fanciful imagination of a few individuals and maintained that this was not the reflection of the official viewpoint. However, this did not remove Sri Lanka's fear of India.⁶

To fortify the island from a hypothetical attack from India, the government of D.S. Senanayake actively participated in the Commonwealth which attained high priority in Sri Lanka's foreign policies, particularly in the delay of the membership of the United Nations.⁷ Besides, Sri Lanka's defence and external affairs agreements with Britain helped considerably to

fortify the island from communist designs as well as minimize threat perceptions from India. On the basis of the defence agreement Britain was able to retain control over the military bases at Trincomalee and Katunayake, the former being a naval base and the latter being an air force base.

During the Prime Ministership of Sir John Kotelawala (1953-56), the threat perception from India seemingly appeared to have increased because of his own idiosyncrasies. Sir John is said to have suffered from an identity crisis in relation to Nehru. The clash of personalities and his dislike for Nehru got translated into a general dislike for India. He tried to minimize India's international stature by interacting more with India's rivals and made efforts to erode India's image among the Afro-Asian states. In 1954 he convened a Southeast Asian Prime Ministers' Conference at Colombo to discuss the situation in Indo-China. The invitees were Myanmar, India, Indonesia and Pakistan other than the host country. In this conference, Kotelawala's prejudices towards Nehru were so apparent that he was just not prepared to accept any suggestions or views put forth by Nehru.⁸ At the subsequent Bandung Conference (1955), he interacted more with China and others, much to the chagrin of India.⁹ On the Kashmir issue, he deviated from Sri Lanka's neutral position by openly accusing India of being intransigent.¹⁰ Thus the UNP in its first term of office tried to neutralize India's predominance by interacting with many states of the intrusive sector as well as the peripheral countries. Nevertheless, the UNP leaders never felt free to alienate India.

The manipulative strategy increased Sri Lanka's bargaining and resisting power in its bilateral relations with India, which is clear from the fact that it was India which responded to D.S. Senanayake's unilateral enactment of the citizenship laws concerning the Indian Tamil population in the island.¹¹ The Indian High Commissioner, C. C. Desai initiated talks with Dudley Senanayake to arrive at a more amicable and mutually acceptable solution. Later on though the 1953 London parleys between Nehru and Dudley on the issue remained more or less inconclusive,¹² Dudley Senanayake's successor Kotelawala did succeed in arriving at an agreement with Nehru in 1954 on certain related matters (e.g. modality to check illicit immigration and preparation of a new electoral register) pertaining to Indian Tamils.¹³ However, the Nehru-Kotelawala agreement was not seriously and scrupulously implemented by the two

governments. Nevertheless it highlights the amount of confidence Sri Lanka had gained and the manner in which its manipulative strategy enhanced its bargaining capability.

Though in their bilateral relationship the UNP leadership attempted to check India's predominance, on issues pertaining to global peace and stability there was a consensus of views between the two countries. This is evident from Sri Lanka's active participation in the Asian Relations Conference held at New Delhi in 1947 and subsequently the 1949 Conference on Indonesia to mobilize international public opinion in favour of the Indonesian nationalist movement. Even on other issues pertaining to colonialism and imperialism, there was more or less unanimity of opinion between the two countries.

When in 1965 UNP returned to power significant changes were marked in its patterns of interactions in the sub-continent. The new government headed by Dudley Senanayake perceived greater threat from an intrusive state – China. During the rule of the SLFP, China had been able to penetrate into the Sri Lankan economy through its generous aid programmes, which had provided it with much leverage in the island's politics. This created much anxiety to the UNP. Moreover fear of China also resulted from the image perceived of it as an aggressive power. In the 1962 Sino-Indian border conflict, the UNP had viewed China as the belligerent and had attempted to mobilize public opinion to pressurize the then Prime Minister, Sirimavo Bandaranaike to declare China as the aggressor.¹⁴

India's set back during the 1962 India-China war as well as its positive response to Mrs. Bandaranaike's numerical formula to solve the Indian Tamil problem, coupled with fact the local Tamil parties were its partners in the government considerably diminished the UNP's threat apprehension of India. Consequently during the tenure of the UNP, a number of high level goodwill visits between the two countries were exchanged. In 1968, Dudley Senaranayake visited New Delhi and discussed with his Indian counterpart, problems relating to world peace and stability. The purpose of such visits were, firstly, to appease the local Tamil population by articulating his government's close relationship with India, and secondly, to seek economic aid

and assistance from India in order to stabilize the economic situation in the island. In both the objectives, Dudley Senanayake was successful to a considerable degree.

India realized the problems of the UNP Government and came forward to help it to stabilize the economic condition in the island. Such gestures by India were also motivated by its desire to minimize China's influence in Sri Lanka. India helped Sri Lanka economically through government to government trade, as well as permitted a number of private Indian business houses to establish industries in Sri Lanka. This was encouraged by Dudley Senanayake, for it not only had prospects of stabilizing the economy but would also counter Chinese penetration into the island. However, the agreement with private Indian business houses were abandoned when the SLFP came to power in alliance with the left forces in 1970.¹⁵

Furthermore, India also cooperated with Sri Lanka in the competitive area of the tea trade. In March-April, 1968 the Indo-Sri Lankan delegates met in Colombo to discuss common problems relating to tea marketing. It was decided that the two states would work harmoniously for the promotion of tea exports. Such cooperation went in favour of Sri Lanka as it could neither afford sophisticated quality control programmes nor could it embark an expensive sales promotion schemes. It also had the added advantage of diminishing the cut-throat competition between them.

India's friendly attitude towards Sri Lanka was reciprocated by the UNP government which could be noted from Dudley Senanayake's statement on the atoll of Kachchathivu over which both Sri Lanka and India were asserting their claims. Dudley Senanayake reiterated Sri Lanka's claim but without adopting a confrontationist attitude. On the eve of Mrs. Gandhi visit to the island in 1968, Prime Minister Dudley Senanayake replied to a question directed on Kachchathivu: "The civilized approach is to discuss these differences and arrive at an understanding. I have every reason to believe that what differences.... Can be amicably settled."¹⁶

While the government of Dudley Senanayake tried to boost Sri Lanka's interaction with India for a variety of contextual factors, its apprehension of India was never completely ruled out. The objective conditions present were bound to make the UNP government conscious of such threat potentials and the government of Dudley Senanayake was no exception. In this context, it is worth mentioning that the UNP government's interactions with Pakistan also received a fillip with the quantum of trade increasing rapidly.¹⁷ Besides, credit agreements were signed between the two countries to boost the economic activities.

Politically also, when Dudley Senanayake got an opportunity, he sided with Pakistan implicitly, such as at the time of the 1965 Indo-Pak war. While Sri Lanka overtly maintained a 'non-aligned' stance disclaiming violence and urging peace, in an official statement before Parliament, the UNP government emphasized that Indian troops had crossed the border at Lahore. Such statements were certainly intended to embarrass India. This gets further substantiated from the fact that when the Indian High Commissioner protested against such remarks, the UNP government while admitting its mistake in narrating the sequence of events, issued no official clarification.¹⁸

Despite threat perceptions from China leading to the deterioration of political relations between them, neither Sri Lanka nor China could afford to rupture their relations. If for Sri Lanka economic expediency was the motivating factor, China had immense politico-strategic interests in Sri Lanka. As such without signing any new aid or loan agreements China continued to honour its previous commitments. As the Rubber-Rice Agreement was of immense importance to Sri Lanka, it was renewed. Thus convergence of their respective interests compelled them to maintain bare-minimum contacts. Nevertheless, whatever apprehensions arose from such dependence, they were effectively countered through interactions with non-communist powers of the intrusive sector namely the US and Britain and with the regional core, India.

The SLFP Government and the South Asian Sub-System (1956-1965; 1970-1977)

In 1956 when the SLFP led MEP came to power, significant changes were soon manifested in Sri Lanka's interactions in the region. S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike, the Sri Lankan Prime Minister, expressed views identical to those of his Indian counterpart, Jawaharlal Nehru, on almost all problematic issues. They did not consider either capitalist or communist developmental syndromes suitable for their respective countries. This resulted in having a similar foreign policy orientation of non-alignment. Besides, Bandaranaike did not nurture any acute apprehension from India. He expressed, "nobody in this right senses would have imagined that a country like India would at any date annex Ceylon (Sri Lanka)."¹⁹ Finally, in the issue of the Indian Tamils, Bandaranaike's approach was least embarrassing. He viewed the problem to be essentially one of Ceylonese citizenship which India could not possibly resolve. Besides, he abrogated the politico-legalist agreement of 1954 and initiated registration of all Indian Tamils who desired citizenship of the island. And only when this work was completed, he considered it necessary to discuss the matter with India on a fresh basis. Similarly, Nehru categorically underlined that the problem of Indian Tamils should not be treated only from the legal and political angles, but from a humane viewpoint.²⁰ Such concurrence of opinions heralded new dimensions in Indo-Sri Lanka relations.

Sri Lanka consulted India on the two major cold war issues, that is, the Suez and the Hungarian crises and broadly their stands were analogous. On the issue of Kashmir, Mr. Bandaranaike's government made efforts to persuade the two parties to resolve the issue peacefully and mobilized international public opinion in this direction. While he cooperated with India and Pakistan, by showing his willingness to negotiate, Pakistan outrightly rejected his move as a "neutralist and communist" proposal.²¹

Harmonious relations, however, did not mean the SLFP government had completely overcome the latent fear of India and forsook the strategy of creating a regional balance of power. The balancing strategy continued to be the pivot of Bandaranaike's foreign policy too. However, transformation in international, regional and national settings changed the interactional pattern to create the balance. Under the leadership of S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike, Sri Lanka pursued

a more outward-looking foreign policy and several factors, like its non-aligned strategy and membership of the United Nations considerably increased its manoeuvrability. As the SLFP government was nonchalant towards Britain, there was significant improvement in Sri Lanka's relationship with both China and the Soviet Union.

Sri Lanka's interactions with China paid good dividends. China, in order to spread its sphere of influence and curtail India's predominance, projected a friendly image. In January, 1957, Chou En-lai, the Chinese Premier, visited the island and reiterated that countries with different political systems could live together. Bandaranaike in this context remarked, as far as China is concerned, "we shall never forget the ...help you have rendered us through our difficult days."²²

Moreover, China assisted Sri Lanka in the tasks of economic development and industrialization. In this context, it is worth mentioning that according to the Rubber-Rice Agreement of 1952 the premium and floor price of rubber was abolished. Besides, China gave Sri Lanka a loan Rs.151 million annually for imports from it. Permission was also given for the sale of Chinese goods in Sri Lanka. The flow of Chinese goods affected India and Japan, the two countries which dominated the Sri Lankan consumer sector.²³ It is worth noting that Mr.Bandaranaike, in recognition of China's friendship, refused to castigate China on the Tibetan question despite immense popular pressure. He only voiced his concern for immediate cessation of violence and initiation of peace in Tibet.²⁴

When Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike assumed power, after the assassination of her husband, S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike, she pursued policies initiated by the latter. Friendly relations were maintained with India and relations with China continued in the same vigour and smoothness. In the 1962 Sino-Indian border conflict, Mrs. Bandaranaike adopted a neutral stand; her only concern being immediate cessation of hostility. Amidst the conflict, she communicated with New Delhi and Beijing to explore ways and means for a cease-fire. To facilitate the boundary demarcations between the two disputants, the Sri Lankan leader convened in Colombo a conference of six non-aligned nations to explore possibilities to solve the problem. As the

emissary of these non-aligned states, Sirimavo Bandaranaike went to New Delhi and Beijing to communicate their proposal to solve the border problem between the two Asian giants.²⁵

It is very interesting to know why Mrs. Bandaranaike was so much concerned about peace between the two countries. The concern shown by Sri Lanka was due to its inherent vulnerability. Instability in the region would have adversely affected the island, particularly when it involved India and China with whom her interactions were pretty close. Besides, the clash between the two Asian giants had shown signs of turning into a global affair as the United States, the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union had already entered the fray indirectly. If such a situations continued, it would have had adverse effect on Sri Lanka's independence and manoeuvrability.

The 1962 war, to an extent, altered the South Asian power equation. India's hitherto acknowledged leadership had been challenged by China which too like India was professing similar ideas. While China's image received a boost, India's image was being tarnished by its neigheburbur, Pakistan. The Pakistani ruling elite, aspiring for parity with India, found this an opportune moment to erode India's support-base among the Afro-Asian states. In this context Pakistani President, Ayub Khan undertook a circuitous tour to paint an aggressor's image of India. Besides vilifying India's image, he boosted the image of China. At Colombo he embarrassed India by announcing Pakistan's willingness to repatriate persons of Pakistani origin in Sri Lanka.²⁶

Furthermore, within the country, Mrs. Bandaranaike was facing serious challenges to her political leadership. The UNP had taken advantage of her neutral stand in the 1962 crisis to come closer to the socially conservative Sinhalese elements and also endeared itself to the Tamils. At the other extreme, was the attempt by the major Marxist parties to forge a United Left Front. Under the circumstances, Mrs. Bandaranaike shrewdly broke the envisaged alliance of the left parties by inducting the Trotskyite Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP) into the Ministry. Obviously with the coming of the Trotskyites into the her government, Sri Lanka became closer to China ideologically. Besides, within the bureaucracy of Sri Lanka there was an anti-India

lobby which now exercised effective influence. The SLFP government was also keen in improving the economic plight of the people because of the forthcoming elections. In this context, China held the upper hand because of its generous aid programmes. As such, the combination of forces gave Sri Lanka a definite tilt towards China.²⁷

Sri Lanka-China relations during this period were at its peak with tremendous economic and political cooperation to aid Sri Lanka's economic growth and development. China undertook to supply large quantities of powerlooms and other material to increase production of goods in the island and also increase the scope for employment for the island's working force. To facilitate smooth transport of goods from China, Mrs. Bandaranaike signed a Maritime Agreement in 25 July, 1963 which allowed Chinese ships to carry goods to and from Sri Lanka.²⁸

The growing friendship between Sri Lanka-China caused much concern and anxiety for India; it made attempts to appease Sri Lanka and bring it back to its non-aligned and 'equidistant' policy. Nehru tried to solve the nagging problem of Indian Tamils. But he expired in May 1964 before arriving at any concrete results. Lal Bahadur Shastri pursued Nehru's initiatives. In October 1964 Shastri and Sirimavo Bandaranaike concluded an agreement known as Sirimavo-Shastri Pact. According to the agreement, Sri Lanka was to grant citizenship to 300,000 stateless persons and India was to repatriate 525,000 stateless persons and confer citizenship on them. The whole process was to be carried out within stipulated period of 15 years.²⁹ Regarding the political status of the residual 150,000 resident Tamils, it was agreed that their future would be the subject of a separate agreement. The implementation of the agreement has not been very encouraging as it has had to face various bottlenecks from time to time. However, one of the significant achievements has been that in 1974 the Prime Ministers of the two countries agreed to share equally the burden of the residual 150,000.³⁰

As far as the peripheral states were concerned, Sri Lanka during the SLFP government maintained favourable relations particularly with Pakistan with which it had growing economic activities. Pakistan was supplying Sri Lanka with rice, textiles and other commodities and imported tea, coconut, copra, etc. An interesting dimension was also that, all the three main

peripheral countries – Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Nepal – were in close cooperation with China, much to the chagrin of India. This increased their manoeuvrability to a large extent viz-a-viz India.³¹

When the SLFP came to power in 1970, in alliance with the left parties under leadership of Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike, it continued to pursue an outwardly rigorous regional policy. The SLFP led United Front government attempted to draw upon the complex interactions of various national interests to its advantage. Pursuing a balancing strategy, it was not difficult for Sri Lanka to be assertive with regard to the core-India, in pursuance of its national interests. Radicalism in this sphere was shown in her dealings with India. As the presence of a large number of Indians controlling the commercial activities in Sri Lanka was not appreciated by the Sinhalese, the United Front government passed various enactments to curtail the economic activities of the Indian business community, like abolishing temporary residence permits. In order to protect the local film industry, the government imposed restrictions on the import of films from India. Also restriction was imposed in the import of periodicals from South India more particularly from Tamil Nadu.³²

Apart from this, as the slow implementation of the Sirimavo-Shastri Pact was causing much burden on the crisis ridden Sri Lankan economy, the United Front government insisted that for every four persons registered as Sri Lankan citizens, seven should be registered as Indian citizens and repatriated to India immediately. The implication of this was that once the stateless Indian Tamil population was repatriated, employment prospects for Sri Lankans would improve considerably.

Though at various levels, much anxiety was raised over the actions of Sri Lankan government, official views of India were very cool and cautious. The Madras publishers were worried over the restriction on export of journals and magazines to Sri Lanka and viewed it as a prelude to complete banning.³³ On the issue of the banning on temporary resident permit for Indian businessmen concern was expressed by the opposition parties over the manner in which Indians were treated in Sri Lanka.³⁴ The Government of India maintained that there was no

discrimination in Sri Lanka's decision to abolish the category of temporary resident visa.³⁵ When the amendment was passed in the Sirimavo-Shastri Pact, concern was ventilated by vested interest especially in Tamil Nadu.³⁶ But the Indian Government's view on this was expressed by Swaran Singh in the Lok Sabha on 23 June, 1974 who maintained that there was complete cooperation between India and Sri Lanka in the implementation of the 1964 agreement. He added that it was essentially a human problem and the difficulties in its settlement were now being overcome.³⁷

Thus it appears that Sri Lanka adopted a more aggressive stand, while India adopted a cautious posture in response. This was because of the balance of forces that came into being and provided much manoeuvrability to Sri Lanka. India could have opposed Sri Lanka by taking a firm stand by being critical of the actions of Sri Lankan government, but such actions on the part of Indian government would have furthered the 'Indian apprehension' and driven Sri Lanka further towards China. By posing a low posture, India managed to pursue its foreign policy objectives of peace and stability in the peripheral states.

However, Sri Lanka did not go entirely against India. It continued to maintain restrained-friendliness towards her. Their economic interaction remained as before. When an Indian plane was hijacked to Pakistan in February, 1971, the Government of Sri Lanka deplored the act.³⁸ This was in pursuance of its policy of friendly gesture towards India. Besides, its deplored was also because such acts would usher instability in region by igniting the hostility between the two unfriendly neighbours – India and Pakistan, and such a situation would not have augured well for Sri Lanka.

However, within less than a year in power, Mrs. Bandaranaike's United Front Government was forced to give up the outward foreign policy orientation directed to enhance the country's international status, in preference to the maintenance of stability within the country.³⁹ Such shift in its foreign policy orientation was effectuated because of new challenges the island had to face from within as well as outside. The unsuccessful attempt of the JVP to seize power brought to fore the underlying forces of discontent and social miseries which alienated large

sections of the population and drove them towards the revolutionary path. Though 1971 insurrection was suppressed by Mrs. Bandaranaike's Government through timely help from foreign powers, such as the US, the USSR, Britain, India, Pakistan and China she was well aware that unless and until the socio-economic plight of the masses was alleviated the possibility of threat of instability in the system could not be ruled out. Hence Mrs. Bandaranaike Government's effort were directed to contain the process of alienation of individuals from the system and rehabilitate those already alienated.

The Government was also keen to strengthen the security system of the island as insecurity would not be ruled out from the outbreak of another insurrection or from a separatist movement launched by the Sri Lankan Tamils. The success of the nationalist aspirations of the East Pakistani Bengali Muslims to create their own independent state of Bangladesh and India's help to them in this regard, provided a sort of emotional inspiration to the Tamil separatists within the island.⁴⁰ The Government of Sri Lanka was much concerned with such developments.

At the regional and international level, Sri Lanka's foreign policy was directed to overcome these twin problems of instability and insecurity. Particularly in the regional system, interactions were very interesting because of the peculiar combination of forces. On the one hand, India's immediate help to suppress the JVP insurrection evolved a sense of gratitude amongst the Sri Lankans but India's assistance to the East Pakistani Bengali Muslims caused discomfiture to the dominant Sinhalese community. Similarly, China too was alleged to have had a hand in the insurgency, though Beijing belatedly condemned it as "counter-revolutionary" in nature, and thereby attempted to wash of the alleged stigma of patronizing the JVP.⁴¹

Although Sri Lanka suspected North Korean and Chinese involvement, it could hardly afford to offend China because of the massive Chinese assistance to the country. Thus, the aim of the SLFP led United Front Government was to skillfully balance the core with the intrusive power – namely China, to further its goals and also have chose interactions with the peripheral members. Besides when many global powers intruded into the sub-system, the island's inner contradictions forced it to play a 'low-profile' role which was quite unusual for the SLFP.⁴²

Almost simultaneous to the insurgency, Sri Lanka had to face the challenges of Indo-Pakistan confrontation and East Pakistani civil war. Sri Lanka adopted a very low posture on the issue of the East Pakistani demand for autonomy in the initial stages. She 'indirectly' condemned India's involvement in the crisis; this is evident from its stand in the United Nations, where it held the problem to be an internal issue of Pakistan and viewed the demand of East Pakistan-Bengali Muslims as fratricidal and separatist in nature.⁴³ Sri Lanka provided all facilities to Pakistani civil and military planes enroute to Dhaka. In this regard, Sri Lanka's attitude was largely influenced by its own nation-building problems. The Sri Lankan Tamils in the island were a source of constant concern and the recent youth insurgency furthered such fears. If the SLFP government had taken up a moral and ethical stand on the East Pakistan issue, it could have embarrassed itself over its own Tamil problem.

However, subsequent developments in East Pakistan and the general tempo of international as well as domestic public opinion influenced the Sri Lankan government to revise its earlier stand and accept the reality of Bangladesh as a separate independent state. This shift is easily discernible from the views expressed at the United Nations. In the General Assembly on 8 December 1971, Sri Lanka voted in favour of the Argentinian resolution which called for immediate cease-fire and withdrawal of Indian troops.⁴⁴ Later, Sri Lanka's representative, Amarasinghe, sought special permission to speak at the Security Council in which his country was not a member. Amarasinghe contended that political settlement of the Bangladesh issue was the key to the Indo-Pak strife and wanted a 'settlement to precede withdrawal of Indian troops.' Later on it was reported that Sri Lanka refused to even comply with Pakistan's request for re-opening the issue before the UN General Assembly.⁴⁵ Thus, initially Sri Lanka, within the broad terrain of a non-committal stand, attempted to manipulate India and Pakistan to maintain a balance of power situation to safeguard its own security, but when Bangladesh became a virtual reality, Sri Lanka readjusted its position in the light of the new power relationship that emerged in the sub-continent.

Following the Indo-Pakistan crisis, Sri Lanka's foreign policy emphasis shifted to the maintenance of stability and security. To achieve this the island strove for a greater degree of cooperation with the core, semi-peripheral, peripheral and intrusive actors. It signed numerous aid and trade agreements with India. The most significant progress in this context was in February, 1976 when Sri Lanka's Commerce Minister, T.B. Illengaratne and his Indian counterpart signed a joint pact underlining various areas of cooperation between the countries pertaining to economic aid and trade, and science and technology. Under the terms of the agreements, surplus goods produced in Sri Lanka were to be absorbed in the Indian market.⁴⁶

While relations with the core improved considerably, Sri Lanka also improved its cooperation with China and Pakistan. As India was willing to help Sri Lanka on pragmatic diplomatic considerations, so were the other two countries. During this period China not only emerged as Sri Lanka's biggest supplier but its largest buyer. On 18 December 1972, the two countries signed for the fifth time the Rubber-Rice Agreement for a period of five years. Under this agreement, China was to supply rice at less than the world market price. Besides, China also granted generous financial assistance to the island.⁴⁷

Simultaneously, Sri Lanka's economic interactions with Pakistan was significant. Common apprehension of India helped them to come closer. Economic activities between them increased briskly; Pakistan emerged as one of Sri Lanka's major trading partners. Sri Lanka in its desire to reduce dependence upon India, imported from Pakistan items like rice, textiles and other consumer products. Similarly, Pakistan imported tea, and other products from Sri Lanka. To facilitate smooth economic transaction the two countries signed a credit arrangement agreement to the tune of Rs.4 million in March, 1974; accounts were to be settled every six months.⁴⁸

However, it is clearly evident that the SLFP-led United Front was, to a considerable degree, predisposed towards India. This could be because of the post-1971 subcontinental power configuration, wherein India occupied a pre-eminent place; besides, the turmoil in the sub-continent itself demonstrated the inability of the intrusive actors to come to the aid of the

Pakistani ruling elite to prevent the succession of East Pakistan. Consequently, the Sri Lankan leadership possibly thought it expedient to have cordial relations with India because of their own Tamil sub-nationalist problem. It is interesting to note that when Mrs. Indira Gandhi, as the Prime Minister of India, visited Sri Lanka in April 1972, she assured the Sri Lankan leadership that India had no intention of helping the Sri Lankan Tamils to secede. She remarked “The very idea (i.e. India’s help to the Tamil secessionist) is not merely fantastic, but absurd and unthinkable.... I am aware there is (an) insidious campaign by vested interests to drive a wedge between our countries.”⁴⁹

Even from the Indian side, there were attempts to better relations with Sri Lanka during this period. India relinquished its claims over Kachchathivu in 1974 and signed a maritime boundary agreement with Sri Lanka.⁵⁰ This was prior to the Law of the Sea Conference and was supposed to act as a pressure in the Conference to accept certain principles. Furthermore, the problem of the 150,000 stateless persons was also resolved and the Sirimavo-Shastri Agreement was implemented with greater vigour. Probably the reason for India’s cordiality towards Sri Lanka was to dispel the image of an ‘aggressor’ that it had acquired in the eyes of the small neighbouring states after the emergence of Bangladesh, and also to properly exploit Sri Lanka’s suspicion of Chinese involvement in the insurgency of 1971.

The cooperative relations that developed between the core-India and Sri Lanka is clear from the fact that Sri Lanka did not immediately criticize India’s nuclear test as had been the case with many other countries. In fact, it appeared that it wished to remain silent on the issue, but was forced by the opposition to react. Lakshman Jayakkody, the Parliamentary Secretary for Defence and External Affairs, made it clear that his Government accepted India’s assurances of carrying out tests for peaceful purpose.⁵¹

Nevertheless, Sri Lanka’s changing responses to the Indian Ocean issue indicated to a degree that India’s nuclear implosion created some awe in the island. Initially, Sri Lanka’s proposal was to declare the Indian ocean as a ‘Zone of Peace.’ India quickly endorsed this proposal as it envisaged economic and political benefits to all littoral and hinterland states. Later

on, however, Sri Lanka supported the proposal for the permanent renunciation of nuclear weapon options by the littoral and hinterland states, that is, for the establishment of a Nuclear Free Zone in South Asia. This proposal was initiated by Pakistan. The essence of the new proposal was to bring about the de-nuclearization of South Asia – South Asian states would undertake not to manufacture nuclear weapons and the nuclear powers were to guarantee that they would not deploy nuclear weapons against the local states by not bringing nuclear weapons to the region. So far as the proposal for de-nuclearization of local states goes, it was mainly directed against India. India had serious reservations on the Nuclear Weapon Free Zone proposal.⁵² But what is important politically is that the two peripheral states – Sri Lanka and Pakistan – joined hands to tactfully ensure their security – viz-a-viz India. Thus even during the most promising phase of Indo-Sri Lanka relations, Sri Lanka continued to pursue its policy of balancing India's regional predominance.

The UNP and the South Asian Sub-System : The J.R. Jayawardene Era (1977-1988)

Sri Lanka witnessed a close relationship with India under Dudley Senanayake's tenure in governance (1965-1970), and the same trend continued even after 1977 when Jayewardene came to power. During the early phase of J.R. Jayewardene's regime, India also witnessed a change when the Janata Party came to power with Morarji Desai becoming the Prime Minister. Both the UNP and the Janata Party had been successful in toppling the dominant party in their respective countries. There was similarity in the international perceptions of the two government. Both the parties looked towards the West as friends. Both needed Western aid to meet the demands of food shortage and other economic difficulties and challenges. When Jayewardene assumed the office of the first executive President of Sri Lanka in February 1978, the high ranking minister of the Indian Government, the Home Minister, Charan Singh was present at the inauguration ceremonies. In the later part of 1978 Jayewardene undertook a state visit to India and Nepal which was followed by Desai's visit to Sri Lanka in early 1979. However, this bonhomie between the two countries did not last long as the Janata government tenure came to an end following instability within the party.⁵³

When Mrs. Gandhi returned to power relations between her and Jayewardene soured particularly when she did not take kindly to the move of Jayewardene to impose ban on the civil liberties of Mrs. Bandaranaike.⁵⁴ Furthermore, Sri Lanka's open economic policy and liberalization of the economy was an obvious move towards a pro-West orientation. The pro-West policy was also visible from his soft pedaling on the issue of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace and refusal to condemn US presence in Diego Garcia. He further antagonised India by providing additional facilities to Voice of America (VOA) and generating the apprehension that Jayawardene would grant base facilities to the US at Trincomalee.⁵⁵ India's and USSR's tenders for repair and modernization of the oil tank farm at Trincomalee was rejected though the India's tender bids was the lowest and instead the contract was given to a Singapore based private consortium with suspected US links.⁵⁶

This trend in Sri Lanka's foreign policy and its security implication for India continued to dominate Indo-Sri Lanka relations till the early 1980's and it witnessed its nadir point after the ethnic crisis of July 1983 when India began to take keen interest in the political development of the island. Finally from playing the role of a mediator it intervened in the crisis to resolve the problem.

The presence of Tamil militants in Tamil Nadu allegedly using it as a base coupled with allegation that Indian intelligence agency RAW was assisting the Sri Lanka Tamil separatists further aggravated India's relations with Sri Lanka. However, there is difference of opinion with regard to the involvement of RAW prior to July 1983, but some reports do confirm that RAW got involved in the issue after 1983 riots.⁵⁷

The Tamil Nadu connection to the separatist movement had begun to surface with the DMK supremo Karunanidhi's call for an all-party conference to express solidarity with the cause of the Sri Lanka Tamils. However, the then Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, M.G. Ramachandran though expressed concern over the plight of Sri Lankan Tamils asserted that Tamil Nadu will not interfere in the internal problem of Sri Lanka. Such sympathy on the other side of the Palk Straits was a matter of great concerns to the Sinhalese. This aroused in them the fear that Indira Gandhi

might consider the option of a military offensive against Sri Lanka in the style of Bangladesh. However, Mrs. Gandhi conveyed that although India was deeply concerned about the developments in Sri Lanka, India would not interfere in the internal matter of its neighbour.⁵⁸

The July 1983 riots, which had clandestinely the support of the government, Buddhist clergy and security forces, was directed at Tamils. It, in fact, affected Indian nationals and establishments particularly Tamils of Indian origin.⁵⁹ Sri Lanka approached friendly countries like the US, UK, China, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal for military and political support. It excluded India as well as the USSR. It excluded India because of the Tamil Nadu connection and refrained from seeking support of the USSR because in its perception Moscow identified itself with India's regional role. This move to involve foreign forces was inimical to India's regional security concerns and implied that Jayewardene was looking for a military solution to the ethnic crisis.⁶⁰

Although Jayewardene had earlier asserted that the Defence Pact with Britain was valid, Britain did not come to the support of the Sri Lankan government. Similarly the US too refrained from getting involved in the crisis. Both countries asserted that Sri Lanka should resolve the crisis with the help of the good offices of India. Both recognized that the management of the region should be left to the region's predominant power. However, China, Singapore, Malaysia, and South Africa provided Sri Lanka with arms and ammunitions. Pakistan and Israel actively helped Sri Lanka to fight the Tamil militants. Pakistan reciprocated to Sri Lanka's appeal by providing arms and training to the Sri Lankan military, while Israeli secret service Mossad provided counter-insurgency training to Sri Lankan security forces.⁶¹

Indira Gandhi was quick to respond to these developments, She sent her emissary P.V. Narasimha Rao to assess the situation in Sri Lanka. Violence erupted even as Narasimha Rao was visiting the island, and on returning home he informed the Prime Minister that the Sri Lankan situation was serious indeed and that the government of Sri Lanka had failed to bring the ethnic violence under control. Rao also confirmed media reports that Sri Lanka government had sought military assistance from foreign powers to meet the crisis.⁶²

Subsequent to the visit by Narasimha Rao, Mrs. Indira Gandhi telephoned to J.R. Jayewardene to convey her disapproval of Sri Lanka seeking foreign assistance and that the situation calls for a political, and not a military solution. Mrs. Gandhi offered India's good offices to find a solution to the problem through negotiations while asserting that India stood firm on the independence, unity and integrity of Sri Lanka.⁶³ Mrs. Gandhi, however warned Jayewardene that "any external involvement will complicate matters for both the countries."⁶⁴

Subsequently J.R. Jayewardene sent his brother, Hector Jayewardene to India to hold discussion with the Indian Prime Minister, Mrs. Gandhi from August 10-12, 1983. Hector Jayewardene conveyed the message of J.R. Jayewardene that India should stop the Tamil militant groups based in Tamil Nadu from operating against Sri Lanka. The visiting emissary also conveyed to the Indian Prime Minister that Sri Lanka was ready for talks with the Tamil leaders and would accept India's offer of good offices. The TULF leader Appapillai Amrithalingam met Mrs. Gandhi on August 14, and though he refused initially to renounce the demand for a Eelam, he expressed readiness, after a second meeting with her, to consider any reasonable offer that Sri Lanka was prepared to make to meet the 'substance' of Eelam. Having obtained the agreement of both sides to talk to each other, the Indian Government went ahead to prepare the ground for a negotiated settlement of the ethnic conflict. Entrusted with the task was Gopalaswamy Parthasarathy who had drawn up a plan of action for settling the issue. Following various rounds of talks a broad framework for political settlement within a united Sri Lanka emerged. However, the proposal required that the TULF to give up its demand for a separate Eelam in place of a new set-up of Regional Council after the merging of the District Development Councils within a province. The Tamil groups including the TULF rejected the offer of formation of Regional Councils as 'too little' and demanded for total regional autonomy in the absence of an Eelam.⁶⁵

Sri Lanka was not really keen on India's involvement in what it perceived as its internal matter. However, the western countries whom it had approached for assistance did not respond very encouragingly. The World Bank and the IMF cautioned the government against

deteriorating domestic condition and worsening of its economy, including the possibility of cut in foreign aid to the island. This left the government with very little room to manoeuvre its foreign policy. Thus the pressure from within and from outside compelled Jayawardene to agree to negotiate with the Tamils as well as accept India as the mediator.⁶⁶

Subsequent to these developments, the two countries agreed to jointly work towards finding a solution to the ethnic crisis. Talks between Parthasarathy and the Sri Lankan government continued. In the meantime, during the Commonwealth Head of States meeting held in New Delhi during the last week of November, 1983, President Jayewardene also held talks with Mrs. Gandhi and it was during the Delhi talks that the final shape of the draft proposal popularly known as Annexure “C” was drawn up, which would serve as the basis for talks between Sri Lankan government and the TULF.⁶⁷

The Annexure “C” drawn up by Parthasarathy was similar to the one provided by the Bandaranaike-Chelvanayakam Pact of 1957. It contained further proposals providing for extensive devolution of powers to the provinces.⁶⁸ The proposal was not received favourably by the Sinhalese population as well as by sections within the government of J.R. Jayewardene. With the opposition to the proposal from the Sinhalese population and from members of his government, Jayewardene disowned the proposal. According to A.J. Wilson, the disowning of the proposal was indeed a grave mistake; Annexure “C” was the best compromise that any Sinhalese government could ever have obtained given the determination of the Tamil militants to seek a military solution and achieve the goal of a separate state – the Eelam.⁶⁹

Jayewardene summoned the All Party Conference (APC) to discuss the ethnic problem and seek a solution of the same. After a series of meetings and deliberations, the APC in 14 December, 1984 put forth two bills to effect decentralization : the Draft District and Provincial Council Bill and the draft bill of Pradeshiya Sabha (village level local bodies). R. Premadasa, then the Prime Minister did not support the move and demanded a referendum on the proposal. On the other hand, the TULF leader, Amrithalingam stated that the two bills did not embody the

scheme of autonomy and was not acceptable to the Tamils. Following these developments, Jayewardene dropped the APC proposal.⁷⁰

After Rajiv Gandhi succeeded his late mother as Prime Minister, Indo-Sri Lanka relations showed definite signs of improvement. Rajiv Gandhi like his mother showed keen interest in establishing peace and stability in the island. His continuous efforts to bring about peace in the island by resolving the ethnic conflict and his efforts to establish a good working relationship with Jayewardene culminated in the Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement of July 29, 1987. However, India's role from a mediator took sharp turn when it took the form of intervention and later India actively participated in the implementation of the agreement.

It should be noted here that prior to the 1987 accord, violence had escalated in intensity and magnitude. In the backdrop of this a meeting between Rajiv Gandhi and Sri Lankan Minister for Internal Security Lalit Athulathumudali was held in New Delhi in February, 1985 to discuss the ongoing violence in the island. The meeting was described as 'most constructive,' and Indian government took two important steps that convinced Sri Lanka of Rajiv Gandhi's genuine interest in resolving the ethnic problem. Firstly, G. Parthasarathy, who himself being a Tamil was not favourably accepted by the Sinhalese, was replaced by Romesh Bhandari as Rajiv Gandhi's special envoy dealing with the Sri Lankan problem. Secondly, steps were taken to curb the activities of Tamil militants in India. Rajiv Gandhi, having won the parliamentary election with a thumping majority, was less constrained in moving against the Sri Lankan Tamil militants based in Tamil Nadu. Thus in March 29, 1985, the Indian coast guard intercepted a boat carrying arms and explosives to Tamil rebels in Sri Lanka, and less than a week later Indian customs officials in Madras port seized a container loaded with arms and ammunitions bound for Sri Lanka. Action was also taken to remove Tamil militants from their bases in Tamil Nadu. These steps were major confidence-building measures adopted by India which convinced the Sri Lankan government of the genuine interest of Rajiv Gandhi's government to resolve the ethnic problem in the island.⁷¹

It is against this backdrop that Romesh Bhandari visited Sri Lanka and after discussion with Sri Lankan officials was able to draw a new Peace Package in April 1985 which included a general amnesty for Tamil rebels, release of detainees, confinement of security forces to barracks and resumption of negotiations to settle the Tamil issues. A summit meeting was also arranged between Rajiv Gandhi and Jayewardene which took place in June where both parties agreed to defuse the volatile situation and create a conducive atmosphere for finding a political solution. Afterwards, the Sri Lankan government and the five major Tamil separatist groups reached a three-month ceasefire agreement in June 18 1985, the first ceasefire agreement since the July riots of 1983. Agreement was also reached to start a fresh round of negotiations to seek a political solution to the ethnic problem. Under India's initiative it was agreed that fresh round of negotiations would commence in Thimpu, the capital of Bhutan. Rajiv Gandhi also made it clear that India did not support the Tamil demand for a separate state, and at the same time it also made it clear that India will not support any solution that undermines the dignity and liberty of Tamils.⁷²

The new round of talks began on July 8, 1985 in Thimpu, Bhutan. Talks were held between July 8-13 and August 12-17, with all the Tamil groups, moderates and militants represented.⁷³ There was much expectation that Thimpu talks would hail much success, but this was not to be. The Tamils continued to adhere to the four cardinal principles: Tamil nation, Tamil homeland, self determination, and fundamental rights of all Tamils in Sri Lanka.⁷⁴ On the other hand, the Sri Lankan delegation presented the proposal for devolution based on formation of district and provincial councils, which was analogous to what was offered at the All Party Conference in 1984. Sri Lanka's offer at Thimpu angered both moderate and militant Tamil Groups. The talks were adjourned on August 18 after the Tamils walked out alleging that the government's security forces had killed about 400 innocent Tamils in Vavuniya and stated that it was 'farcical' to talk peace when there was no security for the Tamil people.⁷⁵

India's efforts to revive the peace process continued. Following the Thimpu talks, Hector Jayewardene undertook a trip to India in late August and through his discussion with Indian official were able to draw up a working paper dealing with the term of accord and understanding. However, the differences over the decentralization of power continued to be the main stumbling

block to bring about a settlement of the issue. While the TULF and the militants demanded the merger of the Northern and Eastern provinces, Sri Lankan government did not favour this demand. The matter was further discussed by Rajiv Gandhi and J.R. Jayewardene during the SAARC Summit in Bangalore in November, 1986. Jayewardene proposed to divide the Eastern Province into three provincial council areas: Tamils, Sinhalese and Muslims. Needless to mention the proposal of Jayewardene was not acceptable to the Tamils.⁷⁶

J.R. Jayewardene expressed his willingness to meet Prabhakaran, but the LTTE chief Prabhakaran declined the offer. India appreciated the latest proposal of J.R. Jayewardene and was convinced that it would form the base for further negotiations. Prior to the SAARC Summit India exerted pressure on the Tamil militants not to jeopardize the talks between the TULF and Sri Lankan government. Subsequently, Tamil Nadu government mounted 'operation tiger' to disarm the Tamil militants and approximately 1000 militants were disarmed and some prominent militant leaders were placed under house arrest for security reasons.⁷⁷ The LTTE talks with India centered on the homeland issue, while it rejected the trifurcation of Eastern Province. It continued to demand the merger of Northern and Eastern Provinces.⁷⁸

Following the SAARC Summit two Indian Ministers, Natwar Singh and P. Chidambaram visited Sri Lanka in December, 1986 and after discussion with Sri Lankan officials formulated a new proposal which came to be known as the 19 December Proposal.⁷⁹ The government of Jayewardene was not able to evolve a consensus over the proposal and hence he did not push it very hard. The Tamils too did not seem to be convinced with the proposal. In the meanwhile, the LTTE had established itself firmly in the Northern Province. These developments alongwith the continuing violence and attacks on Sinhalese by the LTTE saw Sri Lankan government slowly moving towards finding a military solution to the ethnic crisis.⁸⁰

At the same time, Sri Lankan government also tried to have direct talks with the LTTE. This process began with the returning of the bodies of soldiers killed by the LTTE. Sri Lanka was under the impression that if it could hold direct talks with the LTTE and find a solution then it could bypass India and it could circumvent India's role. Thus by holding direct talks with the

LTTE, (until then the TULF represented the Tamils) Sri Lanka recognized the LTTE as the de-facto representative of the Sri Lankan Tamils.⁸¹

This policy plank of the government failed when in early 1987 confrontation once again emerged with the LTTE leaders returning to Jaffna and taking control of civil administration in the North and unilaterally declaring the independence of the region.⁸² Simultaneously, Jayewardene government began to exert economic, political as well as military pressure to force the LTTE to come to the negotiation table. The government imposed a fuel embargo, economic and communication blockade on the Jaffna peninsula. Finally the government took to military offensive and the army was dispatched to the Eastern and Northern provinces with clear instructions to clear the areas.⁸³

India was critical of the Sri Lankan move. It send a strong message that military action would prolong and escalate the conflict. Furthermore, India announced the suspension of its good offices and demanded that Sri Lankan government should stop military offensive, lift economic blockade and affirm to the 19 December proposal. Heeding to the strong posture taken by India, the Sri Lankan government in April 1987 declared unilaterally a cease-fire and offered to lift the economic and communication blockade. Despite the Sri Lankan government's move, the LTTE continued with warfare. On 17th April, 1987, the LTTE stopped three buses, after separating the Sinhalese from the Tamils, it shot dead 127 persons of Sinhalese creed. This was followed by a bomb explosion in Colombo while claimed 200 lives. With such ongoing massacre and attacks on civilians, the Sri Lankan government was left with no option but to commence military offensive. In May Sri Lankan security forces launched 'operation liberation,' and were able to capture Vadamarachchi, which included the birth place of Prabhakaran and a strong LTTE stronghold.⁸⁴

Despite stern warning from India, Sri Lankan government continued the military offensive. India offered to send relief supplies to Jaffna as the condition there was critical because of the economic blockade. Indian flotilla carrying relief supplies were intercepted by Sri Lankan navy and sent back. In response to this on June 4, 1987 five Indian transport planes

escorted by four Mirage 2000 fighter planes in clear violation of Sri Lankan sovereignty and air space para-dropped relief supplies in and around Jaffna.⁸⁵ Sri Lanka condemned the Indian action as a “naked violation our independence” and an “unwarranted assault on our sovereignty and territorial integrity.”⁸⁶ However, Colombo lifted the six-month old embargo on Jaffna and ceased military operations. The air drop was also a warning to the rebel groups that if India had not stood in the way they would have been wiped out. It also gave a clear signal to the LTTE and other militant outfits that India was prepared to go ahead to impose a settlement to the crisis with or without them.⁸⁷

Following the air drop episode, Sri Lanka and India worked out modalities for organizing relief supply. In the meantime, Sri Lankan Foreign Minister A.C.S. Hameed carried out discussion with Indian leaders on resumption of talks and stated that India’s mediation is valid and necessary and also that the 19 December, 1986 proposal could be the base for negotiation.⁸⁸ In early July 1987 the Sri Lankan President Jayewardene took an extraordinary step and invited Shri J.N. Dixit, the Indian High Commissioner to Sri Lanka to meet his 12 senior ministers and discuss proposals to solve the ethnic problem.⁸⁹ Prior to this, the Indian High Commissioner was asked to clarify certain demands of the Tamils. Following these talks, President Jayewardene sent a message to Rajiv Gadhi proposing the creation of an autonomous province comprising of Northern and Eastern provinces and also stated that if the proposal was acceptable, he wanted India to underwrite the accord.⁹⁰

The proposal was found to be favourable to the Tamil Groups. However, the LTTE announced its rejection of the accord and affirmed its resolve to continue with the armed struggle. The reason for the LTTE’s rejection of the accord was on the grounds that it was drawn ignoring the aspirations of the Tamils. The LTTE also expressed disappointment and shock over the decision of Rajiv Gandhi to sign the accord in 29th July 1987.

The accord envisaged ending the civil war by establishment of a cease-fire effective within 48 hours after the signing of the agreement; surrender of arms by Tamil militants; withdrawal of Sri Lankan army to its barriers within 72 hours of the cease-fire; combination of

the Northern and Eastern provinces into a single administrative unit with an elected provincial council, one governor, one chief minister, and one board of ministers; a referendum to be held not later than December 1988 in the Eastern Province to decide whether it should merge with the Northern Province as a single unit; and elections to be held before December 1987, under Indian observation to the Northern and Eastern provincial council. The agreement also committed India to assist Sri Lanka militarily if the latter requested such assistance in implementing its provisions.⁹¹

With the signing of the accord Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) landed in Jaffna to augment the capability of the Sri Lankan army as well as divert Tamil resentment against Sri Lankan authority. Initially, IPKF was able to secure cooperation of the Tamils militants; the surrender of arms by smaller groups, and even by the LTTE seemed quite impressive. However, the arms surrender process proved to be illusory. The LTTE continued to procure arms and continued hostilities against the Sinhalese. The truce collapsed and the IPKF, whose role was noncombative, was involved in direct confrontation with the LTTE.⁹² This situation was not expected, and from a guarantor for implementing the accord, India got directly involved in military conflict. However, during the three years of its presence in Sri Lanka, the IPKF was successful, though limited, to restore peace and order, and maintain some degree of stability in the Northern province. It was also able to bring many Tamil parties as well as population to the electoral process and conducted three successful elections.⁹³

For Sri Lanka the accord ensured the preservation of its unity, territorial integrity and peace and stability. On the other hand, India met its security needs by the non-involvement of any extra regional powers in the conflict. Besides from the perspective of security, India got assurance from Sri Lanka that Trincomalee or any other port would not be made available for military bases to any country which would be prejudicial to the interests of India; the oil tank farm would be an Indo-Sri Lanka joint venture; the American broadcasting organization would be used only for public broadcasting and not for any military or intelligence purpose. Needless to mention, Sri Lanka had to pay a heavy price conceding to Indian demands. India brought Sri Lanka within its security fold and asserted its role as the pre-eminent power in the region. Jayawardene had little option in this context. He had to find a solution to the ongoing ethnic

crisis which had extracted a heavy toll on the island's socio-economic and political systems, and with foreign assistance not forthcoming he had no other option left but to accept India as the mediator and sign the accord.⁹⁴

It was during the tenure of J.R. Jayewardene that the idea of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) was mooted by Bangladeshi President Zia ur Rehman. Sri Lanka shared the initial enthusiasm with Bangladesh and Nepal for the establishment of SAARC. Sri Lanka's enthusiasm for SAARC reflected the anxiety that usually exists in the small state – large state relationship. In fact, since its independence in 1948, Sri Lanka has always shown keen interest in joining such international or regional organizations as the United Nations, the Commonwealth, the Non-aligned Movement (NAM) and the Colombo Plan. Sri Lanka's interest was shaped by the thinking that membership in a regional or international organization would provide some scope for developing a collectivity of small states anxious about larger neighbours.⁹⁵ The SAARC was seen as a platform where the smaller neighbours could increase their bargaining power as well as balance the power vis-à-vis India. Jayewardene was not happy with the policy to keep bilateral contentious issues out of the deliberations of SAARC. However, Jayewardene envisaged that the organization would work for welfare of the people of the region and solve the problem of poverty, hunger, unemployment and other similar issues in the region.⁹⁶

From the preceding discussion, it can be deduced that prior to the ethnic crisis, Sri Lanka's interaction in the South Asian sub-system was directed towards creation of a regional balance of power to fortify the island from probable encroachment by India or intrusive actors like China, and simultaneously to increase its manoeuvring capabilities in international politics. In this one context one discerns divergent patterns of interactions because governmental power had successively alternated between two political parties – the UNP and the SLFP.

In the first tenure in power, the UNP leaders perceived threat from communism and India, and to fortify the island from both established special relations with Britain in the form of defence and external affairs agreements. Besides, they became active protagonists of the Commonwealth as they derived a psychological sense of equality with India. But the UNP in its

second tenure in office (1965-70) under the leadership of Dudley Senanayake, accepted the general foreign policy model initiated by S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike i.e. to manipulate the core, peripheral and intrusive sectors to Sri Lanka's advantage. In this period, the UNP government perceived greater threat from China and tried to balance it through closer interaction with India. At the same time, Dudley Senanayake's government maintained close relations with Pakistan to reduce the pre-eminent position of India.

On the other hand, the SLFP government in its first tenure, displayed a clearly defined regional policy. Under S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike, Sri Lanka while maintaining close relations with India, befriended China to contain India's pre-eminence but kept away from Pakistan. When Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike came to power after the death of her husband she was inclined more towards China, considerably increasing her country's bargaining power vis-à-vis the core. This is clear from the fact that the Sirimavo-Shastri Pact to resolve the problem of Indian Tamils was signed in 1964. Yet Sri Lanka maintained a distance from China which is reflected in the fact that Sri Lanka signed the NPT which was vehemently opposed by China. Similarly, Sri Lanka did not support the Chinese call for a Third World movement – as it could have resulted in the initiation of a parallel movement to the NAM. When the SLFP in alliance with the left parties came to power in 1970, initially it pursued the same strategy of a tilt towards China but following the 1971 insurgency and the new sub-continental power equation because of the bifurcation of Pakistan, Sri Lanka's pro-China tilt declined considerably and it pursued an inward-looking foreign policy to stabilize its economy and polity.

When Jayewardene assumed power in 1987, he pursued the policy of manipulating the core, peripheral and intrusive sectors to preserve the security of the island and enhance its manoeuvrability in international politics. However, this strategy proved ineffective following the outbreak of the ethnic crisis. Jayewardene appealed to the US and the UK for political, military and strategic assistance to solve the ethnic crisis. But the intrusive actors including the US and the UK refrained from getting involved in the crisis. They did not want to alienate India as it had made it clear it will not appreciate the involvement of outside powers. The western powers particularly the US and the UK had good relations with India during the tenure of Indira Gandhi and more so during the tenure of Rajiv Gandhi. Instead of getting involved in Sri Lankan ethnic

crisis, both the US and the UK advised Jayewardene to seek a solution of the crisis by accepting India's mediation. Although China and Pakistan provided some military assistance in form of supplying Sri Lanka with arms and ammunitions, they too refrained from directly getting involved in the resolution of the crisis. Thus with external assistance not forthcoming, Jayewardene had no other options but to accept India's mediation which was not to the liking of his own self and that of the Sinhalese population.

NOTES

1. The concepts of the international system and regional system have been used as frameworks for analysis.
2. Peter Berton, "International Sub-systems : A Submacro Approach to International Studies," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 13, no. 4, 1969 (Special Issue on International Sub-systems).
3. See Sivananda Patnaik, "Sri Lanka and the South Asian Sub-system : A Study of Submacro International Politics," *India Quarterly*, Vol. 34, no. 2, 1980, pp. 137-158.
4. Urmila Phadnis, "Infra-structural Linkages in Sri Lanka-India Relations," *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 7, no. 31-33, 1972, pp. 1493-1501.
5. Ibid.
6. See S.U. Kodikara, *Foreign Policy of Sri Lanka : A Third World Perspective*, (Delhi: Chanakya Publications, 1982) pp. 23-24.
7. Ibid., p. 24. Kodikara has remarked "... Sri Lanka opted for the Commonwealth and sought in the Commonwealth connection, to redress the balance against India;" Lucy Jacob comments, "D.S. Senanayake... also felt that membership of the Commonwealth would give Ceylon an international stature equal to that of India despite its being an artificial but useful equality." Lucy Jacob, *Sri Lanka : From Dominion to Republic*, (Delhi: National, 1973), p. 31.
8. D. M. Prasad, *Ceylon's Foreign Policy under the Bandaranaiques* (New Delhi: S. Chand, 1973), pp. 164-168.
9. See G. H. Jansen, *Afro-Asia and Non-alignment*, (London: Faber, 1966), pp.214-216.
10. Cited by Hafeez ur Rahman, "Ceylon : Pakistan's Valued Neighbour," *Pakistan Horizon*, Vol. 15, no. 1, 1962, p.55.

11. Prasad, no. 8, pp. 232-233.
12. Kodikara, no. 6, p. 34.
13. Prasad, no. 8, pp. 241-242.
14. Urmila Phadnis, "Ceylon and the Sino-Indian Border Conflict, *Asian Survey*, Vol. 3, no. 3, 1967, pp. 189-96.
15. Patnaik, no.3, p. 158.
16. *Asian Recorder* (New Delhi: Vol. 13, no. 45, 5-11, November 1967), p. 8000.
17. See Urmila Phadnis, "Ceylon and Indo-Pak Conflict," *South Asian Studies*, Vol. 12, no.1, 1967, p. 41.
18. Ibid.
19. The Hindu, Madras: 12 and 15 June, 1956.
20. Prasad, no. 8, pp. 250-251.
21. See Hafeez ur Rahman, no. 10, p. 58.
22. Cited by Anuradha Muni, "Sri Lanka's China Policy – Major Trends," *South Asian Studies*, Vol. 18, no. 1, 1973, p. 82.
23. Ibid.
24. Vijay Kumar, *India and Sri Lanka – China Relations* (New Delhi: Uppal Publishing House, 1986), pp. 47-48.
25. Ibid., pp. 64-66.
26. P.L. Bhola, "Sri Lanka – Pakistan Relations : India As Factor," (unpublished paper), pp. 15-16.
27. Vijay Kumar, no. 24, pp. 70-75.
28. Ibid.
29. Prasad, no. 8, pp. 296-297.

30. Kodikara, no. 6, p. 35.
31. See Vijay Kumar, no. 24.
32. Urmila Phadnis, "Foreign Policy of Sri Lanka in the Seventies," *The Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses Journal*, Vol. 8. No. 1, 1975, pp. 107-108.
33. *Institute of Defence Studies and Analyses News Review: South Asia*, October 1970, p. 22.
34. *The Hindustan Times*, 24 June 1971.
35. *The Statesman*, 24 June 1971.
36. *The Hindustan Times*, 30 January 1974. It reported that the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Karunanidhi did not welcome the agreement between India and Sri Lanka as that would increase the burden on the state government.
37. *The Times of India*, 24 June 1974.
38. *Institute of Defence Studies and Analyses News Review : South Asia*, March 1971, p. 14. It reports, "the cabinet at its meeting on 12 February deplored the recent hijacking of the Indian aircraft and expressed its grave concern over the resulting situation in India and Pakistan."
39. See, Phadnis, no.32.
40. *The Sun*, 14 January 1972.
41. For details refer G.S. Bhargava, "Ceylon Uprising and China," *China Report*, Vol. 7, no. 3, 1971, pp.10-12. Also see Vijay Kumar, no. 24, pp. 118-122.
42. Phadnis, no. 32.
43. S.D. Muni and Urmila Phadnis, "Ceylon, Nepal and the Emergence of Bangladesh," *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 7, no. 8., 19 February 1972, pp. 471-475.
44. Ibid.
45. Ibid.
46. Ceylon Daily News, 9 February 1976.

47. For details about China's assistance refer Gamini Navratne, *The Chinese Connection* (Colombo: Lake House, 1976).
48. *Ceylon Daily News*, 31 January, 1976.
49. *The Hindustan Times*, 1 April 1972.
50. Kodikara, no. 6, pp.30-34.
51. Phadnis, no. 32, p. 113.
52. For Sri Lanka's responses to the Indian Ocean issue see K.R. Singh, *The Indian Ocean: Big Power Presence and Local Response* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1977), pp. 206-262.
53. See Kodikara, no. 6, p. 153.
54. Ibid.
55. S.D. Muni, *Pangs of Proximity : India and Sri Lanka's Ethnic Crisis* (New Delhi: Sage, 1993), pp. 54-55.
56. Ibid. India protested and eventually produced evidence to response the phony nature of the consortium, forcing Sri Lanka to cancel the contract and reopen for fresh tenders.
57. Muni, no. 55, pp. 45-46.
58. Venkateshwar P. Rao, "Ethnic Conflict in Sri Lanka : India's Role and Perception," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 28, no. 4, 1988, p. 420.
59. Muni, no. 55, pp.50-51.
60. Rao, no. 58, pp. 424-425.
61. Ibid.
62. Ibid., p. 420.
63. Ibid.
64. Ibid.
65. Ibid., pp. 420-421.

66. Ibid., p. 422.
67. Muni, no. 55, see Appendix 1.
68. Stanley Jayaweera, "The Ethnic Crisis and the Indo-Sri Lanka Peace Process, 1983-87" in S.U. Kodikara, ed., *Dilemmas of Indo-Sri Lanka Relations* (Colombo: Bandaranaike Centre for International Studies, 1991), p. 68.
69. Ibid., p. 69.
70. Ibid., pp. 71-72.
71. See Rao, no. 58, p. 426.
72. Ibid.
73. Ibid., pp. 427-428. In all six Tamil groups were represented at Thimpu including the moderate Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF). The militant groups represented were: Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE); People's Liberation Organization of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE); Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF); and Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization (TELO).
74. Ibid.
75. Ibid.
76. Ibid., p. 430.
77. Gamini Keerawella, "India's Involvement in Sri Lanka's Ethnic Conflict : Objectives and Modus Operandi, 1980-1990," in P.V.J. Jayasekera and Mahinda Werake, eds., *Security Dilemma of a Small State : Internal Crisis and External Intervention* (New Delhi: South Asian Publishers, 1995), Vol. 11, pp. 295-296.
78. See Rao, no. 58, p. 430.
79. See William Nunes, *Security Dilemma of Sri Lanka : A Conceptual Analysis* (New Delhi: Ruby Press, 2013), p. 167.
80. Ibid.
81. Ibid.

82. Rao, no. 58, p. 431.
83. Ibid.
84. See Nunes, no. 79, pp. 168-169.
85. Rao, no. 58, p. 433.
86. Nunes, no. 79, p. 120.
87. Ibid.
88. Chandrakant Yatanoor, *Sri Lanka's Foreign Policy Under the Presidentship of J.R. Jayawardene*, (Delhi: Kalinga Publications, 1997), p. 196.
89. Nunes, no. 79, 1970.
90. Rao, no.58, pp. 433-434.
91. Muni, no. 55, pp. 124-164.
92. Ibid.
93. Ibid., pp. 110-117.
94. K.C. Dash, "The Political Economy of Regional Cooperation in South Asia," *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 69, no. 2, 1996, pp. 200-201.
95. Gopal Krishan, "Sri Lanka's Attitude Towards SAARC: Challenges and Opportunities" in B.C. Upreti, ed., *SAARC : Dynamics of Regional Cooperation in South Asia* (New Delhi: Kalinga Publications, 2000), p. 255.