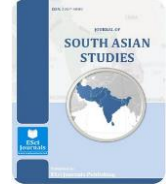




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INDIA'S UNWARRANTED INTERVENTION IN AN ISLAND'S ETHNIC QUESTION: THE ROLE OF THE LIBERATION TIGERS OF TAMIL EELAM IN INDO-SRI LANKA RELATIONS

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ABSTRACT

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) was a terrorist organization that ravaged the island nation of Sri Lanka for three decades. In their quest for a separate state for Tamils within Sri Lanka, the LTTE received much help from India. Why did the subcontinent aid a rising terrorist organization to wage war against an immediate neighbor and a longtime ally? Indo-Lanka relations regarding the LTTE have developed along bitter lines defined by a curious mixture of friendship, misunderstandings, unanswered questions and unasked questions. This paper evaluates the shifts and dynamics of Indo-Lanka relations shaped by the LTTE factor, the play of international actors in this major exchange, and the implications of these developments for South Asia.

Keywords: India, Sri Lanka, LTTE, Intervention.

INTRODUCTION

India, essentially the cultural hub of South Asia and arguably the most dominant power in the region, is a sub-continent that accommodates a staggering 1,220,200,000 population. A rich combination of spirituality and vibrant artistic expression, the Indian culture benevolently patronized many of the country's immediate neighbors including Sri Lanka whose civilization owes largely to the fateful introduction of Buddhism by Emperor Asoka of India during 3rd century B.C.E.

Sri Lanka is an island situated right beneath the southernmost tip of India. True to the geographic image where Sri Lanka resembles a drop falling off the larger pot of India, the island nation's traditions are decidedly a drop off the sea of Indian culture. These strong cultural ties have since then branched off to political, economic and even military relations.

Though marked by an auspicious beginning of genuine fraternity in cultural exchange, relations between the two countries since then have been hostile and amiable rotationally. Geographic proximity has been an incentive

to both kinds of interactions. For instance the introduction of Buddhism and inter-dynastical marriages were made possible because of neighboring locations; invasions were also possible due to the same reason. On a more personally experienced level, the recent occurrence of rather bitter events in the mutual political space of the two countries again owe to physical proximity.

Any attempt to define Indo-Sri Lanka relations would thus, understandably, do injustice to the actual scope and dimensions of the multi-faceted exchanges between the two countries. At times resembling the nurturing and sustaining bond between mother and child, and at others defined by the frosty disposition of restrained rivals, the nature of this relationship could at best, albeit inadequately, be denoted by the term 'volatile'.

This multiplicity of exchanges has rendered the task of providing an all-encompassing account of Indo-Lanka relations nearly impossible. The paper, hence, would narrow down its scope to focus on India-Sri Lanka relations in terms of the LTTE, a terrorist organization that ravaged the island nation for more than three decades, whose military defeat was marked on 18th May 2009. This issue will specifically be discussed not only because of its direct impact on Indo-Lanka relations, but

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also because it is an important element that has stimulated rather interesting patterns of 'clustering' in the international political arena during recent times. The paper will first analytically present direct interaction between India and Sri Lanka in relation to the LTTE. In order to trace the function of the LTTE factor in relations external to those between Sri Lanka and India and to observe how they have impacted this key relation, the paper would then discuss the positions of China, Pakistan and the US vis-à-vis India, Sri Lanka, and the LTTE respectively. Finally, the implications of these interactions on South Asia will be analyzed in order that it may provide guidelines for the region to avoid further segmenting itself.

BIRTH OF THE LTTE AND INDO-LANKA RELATIONS

The armed conflict in Sri Lanka was primarily the manifestation of longstanding frustrations of Tamils who were repeatedly discriminated against by Sinhalese in general and Sinhala politicians in particular. The introduction of universal adult franchise whose obvious numerical implications were creatively manipulated by Sinhala politicians to serve their own ends resulted in the continuous marginalization of Tamils. Drawing strength from popular mandate, Sinhala politicians introduced a series of legislations including, but not limited to, the notorious Citizenship Act of 1948 and the Language Act of 1956. The former denied a sizeable portion of Tamils their citizenship, and the latter impeded the right of Tamils to have equal access to job opportunities among other things.

The LTTE emerged as a means of militarily redressing Tamil grievances in the face of an increasing lack of space to achieve that objective democratically. However, the domestic factors that prompted the rise of Tamil militant groups in Northern Sri Lanka, while no less acknowledged than India's role in helping the LTTE thrive, are beyond the purview of this paper and hence will be left out of the discussion.

Ever since its inception, the LTTE has consistently conditioned Indo-Lanka relations, most notably the political dimension of them. What is more, India is speculatively credited for the very creation – or on a more plausible level the nourishing – of the LTTE. The possible reasons for this alleged patronizing of an emerging group with rather evident terrorist inclinations are worth exploring.

Sri Lanka was the first South Asian country to introduce her citizens to an open economy. As such, many positive

prospects of immense proportions opened up to her. Global giants like the US had vested interests in Sri Lanka because the country was situated in a strategically vital location that would be helpful in effectively containing the expansion of Communism which loomed as an imminent threat. The transformation of the island from recluse to enthusiastic explorer, then, was viewed with much warmth – at least so long as it served their own interests in the region – by the sovereign members of the liberal democratic world.

The resultant economic and military ventures, some of which included the training of Sri Lankan intelligence officers by the best of their field in the world, made India uncomfortable to such an extent that she started viewing Sri Lanka essentially as a threat to her perceived regional hegemony despite the island's infinitesimal physical volume. The obvious question here as to why India herself could not simply open up her economy has much to do with the contemporary preferences of the subcontinent. Vojtech Mastny articulates India's response to the Cold War as follows:

He [Nehru] saw both superpowers as sinful but believed that the Soviet Union was more capable of redemption because it was untainted by the evils of racism and colonialism ... Rajiv was also "conspicuously" critical of the United States, decrying Washington's "feudal, colonialist approach" and lashing out at Americans for caring "little about deeper things," such as not appreciating that "the most important is the heart, not the mind" ... Nowhere was the demise of the Soviet Union more bemoaned than in India (Mastny, 2010).

India's endorsement of Socialism, contrary to the policy of non-alignment so celebrated and promoted, then, was an effective check against the introduction of a capitalist system. Restrained by choices that were her own, and unwilling to passively lag behind as her neighbors pursued shinier paths by merging with the outer world, India opted to exhaust other means to preserve her precious 'regional leader' status.

Thus to offset the growing power of Sri Lanka, an anxious India decided to feed the Tamil separatist movement that was gaining momentum in the island, a preemptive strike of paranoia that was to cause much suffering in times to come not only to her long-time ally but also to her own peoples. Extremist factions of the Sri Lankan Sinhala populace provided the perfectly legitimate excuse India was looking for by carrying out the 1983 ethnic riots that effectively painted the

Sinhalese as a ruthless race bent on ethnic cleansing in the eyes of the international community.

Hence India started to endorse the Tamil cause on the pretext of countering the marginalized treatment Tamils received in Sri Lanka. Such endorsement was given by way of military trainings carried out for the benefit of such Tamil insurgency groups as LTTE, People's Liberation Organization of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE), Eelam Revolutionary Organization of Students (EROS), Tamil Eelam Liberation Army (TELA), etc. This fact can be verified through an interview given by Kumaran Pathmanathan – perhaps better known as K.P. – to *sify* news on 1st June 2011 (Tharmalingam, 2011).

The aim of this move was to create an intra-state conflict powerful enough to divert the island government's attention from the sheer magnitude of the open economy and the many investment opportunities it afforded, thus giving India space to settle more comfortably in the position of 'main regional power'. Additionally, despite her declared 'non-alignment' India was in fact aligned with the Soviet Bloc. Sri Lanka's choice – again though supposedly non-aligned – to pledge allegiance to the West was a rather uncomfortable juxtaposition that, it can be persuasively argued, did much to undermine India's quest for regional hegemony. The contrast was even starker when considering the geographic volumes of the two countries. The strong hints of slipping control over the region rather embarrassingly demonstrated by the obstinate choice of this minuscule immediate neighbor would not have been missed by India and particularly Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of the subcontinent. As Akshaya Mishra notes in his article *Indira Gandhi helped train Tamil rebels, and reaped whirlwind*: "... Indira Gandhi's Sri Lankan strategy was a mixture of contradictions. It reflected Cold War calculations, rather than purely Indian strategic compulsions. The LTTE's war to create a separate state for Tamils called Eelam proved a handy tool for Indira to work India into a role in Sri Lanka, but her mistake was to presume she could manage the conflict without letting it get out of hand" (Mishra, 2011).

Hence India decided to militarily aid the LTTE, the most promising militant group rising in Northern Sri Lanka.

LTTE: A MOVEMENT IS BORN

The LTTE came into existence in 1972. Its first signal to the outer world, however, was given in 1975 with the assassination of the then Mayor of Jaffna Alfred

Duraiappah. Sri Lanka was maintaining a precarious balance between chaos and order, having survived the 1971 JVP insurrection with miraculous resilience. Possibly inspired by the failed revolution, and most definitely having found an ideological justification in the revolutionary theory and practice of Marxism and Leninism (Anton, 2011), the tigers launched a bloody mission whose cost was to come in untold proportions.

What incentive was strong enough for these Tamils to willingly compromise their own lives? Or, more to the point, what gave India space to manipulate the conditions in Sri Lanka so severely that it evolved into a ferocious war? Anton Balasingham, the chief political strategist and negotiator of the LTTE, observes in his article *The Birth of the Tiger Movement LTTE: The revolutionary ardor of the Tamil youth, which manifested in the form of indiscriminate outbursts of political violence in the early seventies, sought concrete political expression in an organizational structure built on a revolutionary political theory and practice....having exhausted all forms of popular struggle... having being alienated from the power structures of the Sinhala State, the Tamil politicians still clung onto Parliament to air their disgruntlement which went unheard ... Confronted with this political vacuum and caught up in a revolutionary situation created by the concrete conditions of intolerable national oppression the Tamil revolutionary youth sought desperately to create a revolutionary political organization to advance the task of national liberation* (Anton, 2011).

The isolation of Tamils from the democratic process of the island and the resultant bid for a separate Tamil state, then, was the point of access India found to Sri Lanka. Thus one of the most destructive terrorist organizations the world ever saw was born in a South Asian country with the help of her immediate neighbor, patron, friend and, ironically, foe.

THE LTTE, INDIA AND CHANGING SRI LANKAN POLITICAL AGENDAS

The various Sri Lankan presidents who occupied office since the inception of the LTTE have played a major role in determining the course of Indo-Lanka relations. Their decisions – at times undermining the sovereignty of the nation, at times inflating it, and at yet other times not addressing the issue at all – have changed Sri Lanka's image in the eyes of India and with it, India's policy towards Sri Lanka. Better comprehension of this dimension can only be obtained through a detailed

analysis of the major political occurrences regarding the LTTE that happened under various presidents of the island and that made India's treatment of Sri Lanka soft or aggressive as the case maybe.

Jayawardene Regime and Indo-Lanka Relations: As was proven shortly afterwards, Indian patronizing of the LTTE was a grievous mistake. After Indira Gandhi's notorious assassination by one of her Sikh guards, she was succeeded by her son Rajiv Gandhi.

Rajiv Gandhi demonstrated decided ambiguity in his dealings with the LTTE. Perhaps his youthful idealism and relatively inexperienced political persona prompted him to make the initial impulsive decisions to terminate military trainings and arms supplies to the LTTE that led to the dropping of all links with the terrorist organization his own mother strived to sustain. Whatever the reasons behind this sudden antipathy towards the LTTE in the Gandhi sentiment, they were swiftly negated and replaced by a host of (ostensibly) positive thoughts that led the young Gandhi to recommence the supply of arms and ammunition to the LTTE.

T.S. Subramanian observes in his evaluation of the Interim Report of the Jain Commission on the activities of Sri Lankan Tamil militants: The Indian government with Rajiv Gandhi at the helm arranged to renew the supply of arms and ammunition to the LTTE and its ally, EROS. They were also supplied anti-aircraft guns. Their cadres were brought to India for military training. In the camp near Dehra Dun, they were also taught to fire surface-to-air missiles. Some EROS cadres were taught how to lay sea mines (Subramanian, 1997).

Apart from supplying arms, Rajiv Gandhi was also keen to explore the possibility of a negotiated settlement to the conflict possibly because the continued patronizing of militant groups that were recognized as terrorists did not promise India a bright future in terms of her international image. Thus the first attempt at peace talks was brokered by Rajiv Gandhi's government and Thimpu, Bhutan was picked unilaterally by India as a neutral venue for parties to the conflict. However, three of the four 'cardinal principles' declared by Tamil militants at the talks were rejected by the Sri Lankan government on grounds that they constituted a violation of the territorial integrity of Sri Lanka, and the negotiations ended in failure (Ferdinando, 2013).

Soon the accommodative feelings of the Gandhi

administration towards the LTTE manifested themselves in an offending violation of Sri Lankan air space by the Indian air force, a notorious gesture of blatant disrespect for the sovereignty of the island made in favor of the LTTE. Rajiv Gandhi, in a sweeping move to stall the offensive of the Sri Lankan forces that had successfully cornered the tigers into the Jaffna Peninsula, ordered a fleet of helicopters to drop dhal from the sky to the tiger territories. The move was more symbolic than strategic, and the message was not missed on the Jayawardene administration.

The incident was followed by the Indo-Lanka Accord of 1987 which made the Sri Lankan government responsible for implementing a provincial government system in order to quench the needs of the militants at least partially. The infamous agreement met with much domestic distaste, the most widely known demonstration of which took place the day following the signing of the Accord when a Sinhala soldier tried to club Gandhi with his rifle. Why did Rajiv Gandhi risk his political image on a bi-lateral treaty with a foreign country when elections were imminent? A correspondent of Economic and Political Weekly notes in *Who supported LTTE?*: "The timing of the Indo-Sri Lankan accord in July that year was prompted by the domestic political compulsions of Rajiv Gandhi who was then trying desperately to divert attention from the Bofors scandal¹ and to be re-elected for a second term. The accord boosted his image as a peacemaker particularly in Tamil Nadu" ("Who supported LTTE?" 1997).

The provisions of the pact, however, fell well short of the expectations of an enraged LTTE which promptly launched an offensive against the Sri Lanka army. The incumbent president Jayawardene tactfully turned the tables on Delhi and demanded they send troops to handle the situation since the pact was what triggered the conflict. India was less than pleased with the LTTE for her own reasons. The shifting of the collective Indian sentiment regarding the LTTE during this time is captured rather neatly by Arjun Katoch in *LTTE: Need for a Balanced Assessment* as follows:

Public perception of the LTTE in India has shown several sharp shifts as events in the southern portion of the subcontinent unfolded. The pre-1987 perception was that of sympathy for this underdog Tamil outfit bravely fighting the Sri Lankan army and keeping it at bay. The post-Accord 1987 period saw the LTTE portrayed as

lungi-clad upstarts who bit the hand that fed them, who dared defy the might of the Indian state, and who would soon be taught a lesson by the Indian army. By 1990, 4000 IPKF casualties later and after many claims by the IPKF Commander Lt. Gen Kalkat, the LTTE came to be regarded with a mixture of grudging admiration and condescension as an organization that had fought well but was critically weakened and confined to the jungles of Vavuniya, and which would soon be mopped up by the Sri Lankan army (Katoch, 1991).

Katoch's account illustrates two facts. First, India did play a vital role in militarily strengthening the LTTE. Second, all of India's actions concerning Sri Lanka and particularly the LTTE were and are conditioned by her quest for regional supremacy. As explained earlier in the paper Indira Gandhi patronized an emerging terrorist organization to counter Sri Lanka's growing power. However, the said organization's audacity not only to reject a solution presented by its patron but also to battle with and cause serious damage to the Indian army was not something either of the Gandhi entertained as plausible. The fact that the LTTE did indeed do so did not reflect well on India in that it suggested the country's inability to control a creation of her own. Indian conduct regarding the LTTE, then, was shaped as much by the bruised ego of the subcontinent as it was by strategic calculations.

Premadasa Administration and the Rajiv Gandhi Assassination: A New Dimension of Indo-Lanka Relations: Rajiv Gandhi's actual reaction to the second Eelam war is known to him alone. It can be reasonably argued, however, that the LTTE's renunciation of the political solution produced by India was not received with grace by the latter especially seeing as the tigers were nurtured by India. Rajiv Gandhi in particular had a personal element involved because of his mother's huge presence in the LTTE since inception.

As such, it is hardly surprising that India was prompt in dispatching troops to aid the Sri Lankan government forces against the LTTE. President Jayawardene had enough political wisdom to have discreetly inserted a clause in the Accord that safely kept domestic forces out of the action. In the subsequent clashes, the IPKF sustained heavy losses. As the northern theatre was showing every sign of stagnating in a bloody stalemate, a regime change brought President Premadasa to power. M.R. Narayan Swamy presents an account of the Premadasa regime in *Sri Lanka's arming of LTTE against*

IPKF: Mystery of Kobbekaduwa's death: Premadasa's stated aim was to restore peace in Sri Lanka by befriending the LTTE and JVP ... In April 1989; the LTTE agreed to talk to Premadasa and flew down a delegation from London to Colombo. The JVP, however, refused to make peace. On June 1, 1989, Premadasa publicly asked the IPKF to quit Sri Lanka. Rajiv Gandhi refused, leading to a much publicized war of words between the two. It was in this scenario that Premadasa decided, on LTTE's request, to supply it with arms and ammunition (Swamy, 1998).

The reason for the president to have chosen the word of a terrorist organization above that of a long time ally – however ambiguous her role was – remains obscure and leaves much room for speculation. A popularly endorsed assumption is that the president, being the first non-elite leader of the country, detested the Indo-Lanka Accord made essentially between two prime elite families of India and Sri Lanka that naturally ignored the needs of the commoner. The LTTE's struggle against oppression by the vicious social structure must have corresponded with his own notions of injustice, though the two grievances ran along different divides. If this theory is to be entertained, one finds that President Premadasa was able to identify himself more comfortably with the LTTE than with Rajiv Gandhi and his strategic concerns.

Another theory that could explain this phenomenon is Premadasa's political instinct. A calculated populist, the president might have thought that a solid reaffirmation of Sri Lanka's sovereignty in the face of Indian imperialism would juxtapose him starkly with President Jayawardene whose administration suffered the brunt of the country's undermined sovereignty. An added bonus would be the popularity and the subsequent smooth re-election it would ensure.

W.M. Karunadasa in his *Essays on Sri Lanka's Foreign Policy – Volume I* formulates an interesting argument on Premadasa's antipathy towards IPKF. He maintains that Premadasa was worried about the growing Indian presence in the island and the fact that despite IPKF's clear superiority over the LTTE in numbers, no military progress was being made in the North. "Moreover, there was a noticeable attempt on the part of the Indian High Commissioner in Sri Lanka to control the affairs of the Northern Sri Lanka as one of their own territories" (Karunadasa, 2005).

For whatever imagined or actual reasons, President Premadasa demanded the immediate evacuation of IPKF

and India's subsequent rejection to withdraw her troops from the North of Sri Lanka resulted in a steep decline in the cordiality between the two countries. Karunadasa presents an account of the exchanges that took place between Premadasa and Gandhi during the height of the IPKF crisis.

It is evident that Premadasa was provoked by the Indian response to the Sri Lankan request. In a press release issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs ... Premadasa ... suggested that the decision regarding the troop's withdrawal depends not on India but on Sri Lanka. The emerging dilemma was that neither India nor Sri Lanka accepted the position maintained by each other on the question of deciding the withdrawal of the IPKF ... he (Premadasa) pointed out to the Indian government that any act by the Indian government or its armed forces within Sri Lanka, other than at Colombo's request would constitute a serious interference in internal affairs of a friendly country and a gross violation of pre-empting norms of internal affairs (Karunadasa, 2005).

The enormous amount of external and internal pressure exerted on Rajiv Gandhi regarding the IPKF issue caused him to finally succumb to the will of Premadasa. Thus Indian troops completely withdrew from Sri Lankan territory by 20th March, 1990 (Ferdinando, 2013).

India's parliamentary elections for the year 1991 were as crucial to the LTTE as they were to Rajiv Gandhi. Having lost the 1989 elections, the Congress Party was fortunate to have yet another election coming its way ahead of time. "For the extremist organization struggling for a separate homeland, Tamil Eelam, it meant a possible re-induction of the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) in Sri Lanka and a certain crackdown of the elaborate LTTE network established in Tamil Nadu" ("Rajiv Gandhi Killing", *sinhaya.com*).

Hence the LTTE made a fateful decision that would dramatically change the course of Indo-Lanka relations even in terms of civic interaction – the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi. As part of his election campaign, Rajiv Gandhi visited Sriperumbudur in Chennai, South India. It is reported that Gandhi was taking unwarranted liberties with his security arrangements, especially seeing as his security was compromised after a much publicized interview he gave to the *Sunday* magazine saying that upon returning to power, he will send Indian troops to Sri Lanka to disarm the LTTE.

Making the warnings of his security personnel come alive, Rajiv Gandhi was killed in a suicide bomb attack which took the lives of fourteen other unintended victims along with it. The bereaved Indian sentiment assumed a decidedly anti-Sri Lankan stance after this incident and the paradox is almost laughable.

India, particularly the Gandhis, sustained the LTTE which ironically took the life of the junior Gandhi. Despite the fact that the Gandhi administration thrust the canker of terrorism into the relatively stable and peaceful Sri Lankan society, when Rajiv Gandhi was killed the Indian commoner viewed all Sri Lankans essentially as enemies rather than as victims of the Indian imperial strategy. The gist of the story was that a terrorist organization from Sri Lanka killed a beloved Indian leader. All facts of history were thus effectively ignored in the gush of popular emotion.

Roughly two years after Gandhi's assassination, Premadasa followed suit. While attending a May Day rally in Colombo, the president was killed by a suicide bomber in broad day light and among thousands of his supporters. The LTTE claimed responsibility for the attack. It is clear then that the seeming good will between the president and the LTTE was merely a calculated move by the latter to secure enough arms to re-launch its bloody quest for a separate state within Sri Lanka. Premadasa, in his preoccupation with the growing Indian presence in the island, failed to pay due attention to the tiger factor, a woeful mistake that cost him his life.

The Kumaratunga Reign and the Changing Face of Indo-Lanka Relations: President Kumaratunga who succeeded Premadasa to the presidential office was, perhaps by virtue of being female, less aggressive towards both India and the LTTE. Her reign was more or less militarily stagnant with neither the LTTE nor state forces claiming any decisive victories. Upon assuming office, the president entered into a ceasefire agreement with the LTTE which proved to have an extremely short life span due to the latter attacking two vessels belonging to the Sri Lanka navy. President Kumaratunga's accommodative attitude is especially noteworthy since she went so far as to propose the introduction of a new constitution that accorded greater autonomy to all the provinces even after the LTTE attacked the central bank of Sri Lanka, killing approximately 100 and wounding around 1400 ("The

Tamil Terrorist War in Sri Lanka: A Brief Chronology”, *vgweb.org*).

Kumaratunga’s tolerance, however, was tested repeatedly during her administration when the LTTE attacked the most hallowed Buddhist shrine in Sri Lanka, the Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic, and then executed a suicide bombing to claim the life of the president herself which proved to be a failure. The former incident led to the LTTE being banned as a terrorist organization within Sri Lanka. The president, possibly having earned additional sympathy votes owing to the assassination attempt, emerged victorious in the subsequent election and served a second term in the presidential office.

India, having maintained a discreet silence throughout the Kumaratunga reign, perhaps because her metal was tested rather harshly in the dealings with the LTTE, became a dynamic force in the Sri Lankan crisis yet again, albeit in a ‘behind the scenes’ capacity, when Ranil Wickramasinghe was elected Prime Minister in 2001. Wickramasinghe’s peace initiatives mediated by Norway were readily endorsed by the LTTE and Eric Solheim, the Norwegian mediator, recently revealed that India continued to have a strong hold over the LTTE despite the country’s declared anti-LTTE stance after having banned the organization as a terrorist group following the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi. The *Island* reports on 13th November 2011: Solheim (said that) contrary to public knowledge, the India government ... played a key behind-the-scenes role in the framing of the Norwegian-sponsored CFA ... some meetings with RAW officials took place at the New Delhi airport ... he (Solheim) said, that they (India) were bitterly opposed to any break up of Sri Lanka and that “Tamil Eelam would never be acceptable.” Solheim added that ... Anton Balasingham ... maintained that “nothing done contrary to Indian interests will ever work” (“India, LTTE met ‘secretly’ before Sri Lanka truce: Eric Solheim”, 2011).

India’s wounded pride so done by the repeated obstinacies of the LTTE, then, seems to have conditioned Delhi’s conduct even after nine years of Rajiv Gandhi’s death. Added to the issue of a bruised ego were pragmatic concerns about strategic agendas designed to further Indian imperialism. The rise of a terrorist organization powerful enough to defeat the Indian armed forces, largest of their kind in South Asia, posed a decided threat to Indian primacy in the region. Hence India’s urge to stall the military progress of the LTTE and initiate peace talks in Sri Lanka was prompted by

very rational underpinnings indeed. The LTTE on the other hand evidently realized the futility of pursuing their agenda without India’s blessings. If not Delhi, at least the Tamil Nadu factor was crucial for them to sustain through yet another potential clash with the Sri Lankan forces.

The 2002 peace talks again suffered a premature death, having ended abruptly in March 2003 with the LTTE withdrawing for no apparent reason. The most widely entertained, and perhaps plausible, speculation is that the organization simply used peace talks as a means of buying time to purchase enough arms to resume the war. Amidst growing public disdain over the ceasefire agreement, President Kumaratunga used her executive powers to dissolve the parliament and call for fresh elections in 2004. The manipulation of circumstances paid off well, since her party was able to assume office by forming a coalition.

Preceding the presidential elections of 2005, the attention of the Kumaratunga administration shifted to its foreign policy aspect because the LTTE was being mysteriously and prosperously funded, thus effectively blocking space for negotiation and making the organization more inclined towards war than ever before. Addressing the High Level Plenary Meeting of the UN General Assembly in September 2005, she appealed to the sovereign members of the international world to take action against LTTE activities in their countries. DayaGamage commented in an article written for *Asian Tribune* that “Until then, the Kumaratunga administration was blind to the reality, the reality that the LTTE was strategically using its overseas ‘cells’, or call it the ‘front organizations’, to persuade human rights organizations and policy makers with distortions, misinterpretations and half truths about the Sri Lankan scene” (Gamage, 2005).

Mahinda Rajapakse and the Doom of the LTTE: Re-definition of Bi-Lateral Ties: Shortly after Kumaratunga’s speech the 2005 presidential elections placed Mahinda Rajapakse in the highest office of the country. Hailing from a land-owning family of the southern extremity of Sri Lanka, namely Hambantota, he was a curious mixture of the stereotypical Sri Lankan political leader with elite roots and Premadasa, the president from the village. While Rajapakse does belong in the highest order in the hierarchy of castes and boasts a substantially influential political background, he is not a representative of the rich, refined, sleek, and

inaccessible recesses of high-end Colombo.

As such, he claimed a unique position in the political discourse of the country. He is a Sinhala Buddhist member of the land-owning *Govigama*ⁱⁱ caste in consonance with the traditional and most decisive criteria in determining the eligibility of an individual for the position of the ruler, and at the same time he is not a person hailing from the distinguished and distant Colombo. The combination held special appeal for the commoner who could look up to him as a ruler and simultaneously identify with him as sharing common rural roots.

Rajapakse's election into office, however, was not an occurrence that enjoyed glorious consensus. The LTTE, ironically, is believed to have played a crucial part in bringing him to power by preventing voters of the North and the East from going to polling stations. The expected aim was to block the votes that were almost certainly going to be cast in favor of Ranil Wickramasinghe who had earned a rewarding reputation in those areas due to the ceasefire agreement.

The reasons behind the LTTE's conduct here are not clear. There are two possible explanations. The first is that the agreement was detrimental to the LTTE on the long run since their rigid stance to settle for nothing less than a separate state would eventually have demanded they declare a unilateral end to the agreement, which would have made the organization lose credibility in the eyes of the international community. The second explanation is that the LTTE underestimated Mahinda Rajapakse's capabilities and hence did not consider his assuming office a serious threat to their existence. Especially in light of the fact that Wickramasinghe's increasing popularity in the North and the East posed a threat to the authority of the LTTE, Rajapakse must have seemed a particularly sensible preference.

In any case, the votes that were denied to Wickramasinghe ensured the victory of Rajapakse in whose favor the easily predictable rural votes too were cast. Though he did observe the ceasefire agreement that was already in force during the time of his assuming office till July 2006, his tolerance was not as enduring as that of President Kumaratunga. On 21st July 2006 the LTTE closed down the sluice of Mavil Aru, depriving thousands of farmers the central element of their survival. The Rajapakse government promptly waged the Fourth Eelam war, which ended precisely on 18th May 2009 with the military defeat of the LTTE and the

death of the highest circle of leaders of the organization including Velupillai Prabhakaran, the notorious leader of the thousands of Tamil rebels who rallied for the cause of a separate state.

Sri Lanka-India relations have been especially volatile since this historic occurrence. While New Delhi abstained from expressly intervening during the final phases of the war – a hugely felt absence given the combined hopes of the LTTE and Tamil Nadu for any kind of intervention at all – its conduct has not particularly encouraged any pro-Sri Lanka government posture. It can safely be assumed that Delhi has struck a very delicate balance indeed between domestic political sensitivities and wider strategic interests. Not wanting to compromise the fragile equilibrium for obvious reasons, Delhi has had to strive to appease its two diametrically opposed political partners to the maximum possible extent which, understandably, comes at the cost of a substantial amount of good will between Delhi and Sri Lanka as well as Delhi and Tamil Nadu.

Post-War Indo-Lanka Relations: Benign or Hostile?

Indo-Lanka relations during Sri Lanka's post-war period have been decidedly less strained than expected. For instance President Rajapakse's first visit to India after the war demonstrated an almost unusually high level of warmth and cordiality between the two leaders especially in light of India's uncomfortable and difficult position between Sri Lanka and Tamil Nadu. Reports Mian Ridge to the *Christian Science Monitor*: ...there were little signs of tension between Rajapakse and the Indian Prime Minister Man Mohan Singh on Wednesday, as they met for the first time since Sri Lanka declared victory over the Tigers. The two nations signed a raft of deals, from the economic to diplomatic, including an agreement that India would open consulates in the Tamil city of Jaffna in the north of the island (Ridge, 2010).

This account draws attention not so much to the continuously flourishing good relations between the two countries as it does to India's unrelenting designs over the island. Especially by offering to open consulates in Jaffna, India might be discreetly making sure that she has a continued hold over the island and specifically over the explosive LTTE issue. The fact that the Sri Lankan forces defeated a terrorist group India herself was not able to – for whatever reasons – might well be concerning the power pockets of Delhi seriously. India definitely does not favor the idea of an alternative force to the LTTE that would openly challenge Indian primacy in the region,

much less the possibility of said force being a legitimate government of a sovereign nation.

However, India's soft approach has certainly not made allowances for Sri Lanka's alleged war crimes during the final phases of the war. The insistent pushing to conduct an unbiased investigation into the issue on the part of Delhi might be serving dual purposes. On the one hand, it asserts the Indian position as the main regional power that has a decisive hand in determining the political fate of her neighbors. On the other, it is an effective way to handle the Tamil Nadu factor by demonstrating Delhi's genuine (?) attempts at securing justice for the Tamils in Sri Lanka.

The recent 'comment' given by the former Indian Foreign Secretary Nirupama Rao regarding India's priorities is perhaps a warning to Sri Lanka of Delhi's thinning patience. Ms. Rao had said that the "Central Government of India paid attention to the sentiments of Tamil Nadu and its people as they are part of India..." ("Indian Foreign Secretary sends warning signal to Rajapaksa administration", 2011). The statement prompts speculation as to whether the Indian center is questioning the wisdom of risking the integrity of the Union for the sake of strategic gains. In other words, Delhi would most probably choose Tamil Nadu over Sri Lanka in the event of a serious dispute.

The Sunday Leader in a report on a statement made by Shivshankar Menon, Indian National Security Advisor observes: ... Menon has made it clear to the Sri Lankan top brass that New Delhi's stance at the UPR of Sri Lanka's human rights record at the UNHRC in November would depend entirely on what Colombo does to improve its human rights image ... Menon's comment highlighted ... that Lanka cannot count on blind backing from India at the UNHRC... The Rajapakse government also in 2009 promised to effectively implement the devolution package contained in the 13th Amendment, but failed to honor it ... the continuous diplomatic faux pas by the Rajapakse administration with India continued to be a strain on Indo-Sri Lanka relations (Abeywickrema, 2012).

As explained previously, the conduct of Tamil Nadu possibly conditions Delhi's conduct more decisively than Colombo does by virtue of being a physical part of India and therefore being of more immediate interest to Delhi. Hence the Indian center will logically be more sensitive to the grievances at home than those abroad, however close that relationship might be. Tamil Nadu has

effectively manipulated this prioritization to serve its own ends.

The recent upheaval in the southern state regarding giving military training to Sri Lankan military personnel in India is one such instance. Chief Minister Jayalithaa Jeyaram went so far as to accuse the central government of having a "callous and adamant attitude" that demonstrated "utter disrespect to the people of Tamil Nadu" ("Jayalithaa accuses Centre of 'callous' attitude in training Lankan officers", 2012). The pressure became so intense that Delhi was compelled to ask Karnataka to host the proposed training instead.

Tamil Nadu has been especially active, if not explosive, regarding Sri Lanka's alleged war crimes issue as well. No doubt the shared ancestry and kinship of Tamils of Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka have stimulated these passionate responses. The thwarted quest for a Tamil Eelam violating the sovereign boundaries of Sri Lanka seems to still be occupying a place of consequence in the collective mindset of Tamil Nadu. The Tamil Guardian reported on 9th June 2011: In a show of unity, the Tamil Nadu Assembly led by Chief Minister Jayalithaa, unanimously passed a resolution calling upon the central government in India to ensure those responsible for the massacre of Tamil civilians in Sri Lanka are declared 'war criminals' by the United Nations... Jayalithaa moved the resolution in the Assembly stating allegations of Sri Lanka committing human rights violations and preventing humanitarian aids from reaching the suffering Tamils prompted her to move the resolution ("Tamil Nadu Assembly demands India pursue Sri Lankan war criminals", 2011).

Tamil Nadu was also successful in pressurizing the center to vote against Sri Lanka in the March, 2013 United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) session where India's single vote caused the resolution to pass. However, India is said to have had a hand in altering certain clauses of the resolution that effectively prevented it from having a harmful impact on the island. Analyzes Dr. JehanPerera: Ironically it was India whose vote against Sri Lanka came as a great shock, which also softened the potentially adverse impact of the UNHRC resolution on the Sri Lankan government. It did this by negotiating an amendment to the clause relating to external technical assistance to ensure that it only came after "consultation with, and with the concurrence of," the Sri Lankan government ... In his letter to President Rajapaksa after the vote at the UNHRC, Indian Prime

Minister Manmohan Singh explained that the Indian delegation had “spared no effort and were successful in introducing an element of balance in the language of the resolution” (Perera, 2012).

Nonetheless, the regional implications of the subcontinent voting against an immediate neighbor were hard to miss. Granted that domestic factors at force were probably too powerful to be ignored, but in terms of regional solidarity it painted a poor picture. Tamil Nadu's hand in making the bill pass was reported by the Hindu as follows: “India initially showed reluctance to vote on a nation-specific resolution but changed its stand after political parties in Tamil Nadu exerted pressure on the United Progressive Alliance government to go with the resolution. The DMK, in particular, threatened to pull out its Ministers from the UPA government on the issue” (“India votes for resolution against Sri Lanka”, 2012).

A fresh wave of Indian aversion spawned in Sri Lanka from the misgivings regarding India's plans to establish a nuclear power plant in Tamil Nadu. Given the notorious strain in relations between Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka, housing a nuclear plant in such close proximity to the island is unsettling for obvious reasons. Though the plant is said to be established in order that Tamil Nadu's energy demands are met, Sri Lanka has strong reasons to entertain anxieties regarding the issue. Upon expressing concerns over radiation reaching her coastal areas, Sri Lanka was promptly assured by Delhi saying that “the safety measures instituted at the Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant in Tamil Nadu are of the highest order and there is no threat of radiation from the atomic unit” (“Kudankulam nuclear plant is safe, no threat of radiation: India tells Sri Lanka”, 2012).

The most recent manifestation of Tamil Nadu antipathy towards Sri Lankans, particularly the Sinhala populace, was the attacks on Sri Lankan sports persons and pilgrims to the state. “There is a reason to suspect that some of these incidents were more politically-orchestrated than spontaneous expression of anger by the local people against the Sri Lankans” (Raman, 2012). The recurrent bitterness between Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka has resulted in a steady deterioration of Indo-Lanka relations. “If the political parties in Tamil Nadu do not conduct themselves with a sense of balance and responsibility and indulge in competitive exploitation of the discontent in certain sections of the population over Sri Lanka-related issues, they may end up by creating

passions beyond control in both countries ...” (Raman, 2012).

Coupled with the dangerously declining goodwill with Tamil Nadu, Sri Lanka is presently consumed by paranoia about being a nuclear target of India. The Agni missile range, India's foreboding nuclear arsenal, is said to be entertaining the possibility of attacking a few of Sri Lanka's prime locations including harbors and airports in the event of the island entering a nuclear arrangement with Pakistan. Though much of the Agni fears can certainly be attributed to paranoia and speculation, the island administration seems less than comfortable with Indian nuclear capabilities altogether.

Adding yet more unpleasantness to this churning broth of Indo-Lanka political chaos is a ghost from the past - the 1987 Accord still seems to be haunting the political scene of the two countries. The Thirteenth Amendment introduced to the Constitution of Sri Lanka in accordance with a clause of the pact promised to devolve power in Sri Lanka on a Provincial Council basis. The original intention was to appease Tamil sentiments enough to conclude peace. The amendment, however, was never actually enforced by any of the five executive presidents of the country who assumed office since the signing of the Accord.

India is now pushing Sri Lanka to enforce the amendment, a request around which the Rajapakse administration seems to be dancing. Not wanting to risk the wrath of a newly powerful subcontinent - especially one that is in good grace with the US - and not also wanting to indulge the demands of a party that was instrumental in creating the conflict in the first place, President Rajapakse seems to have found a rather neat way to avoid the problem - repeal the amendment altogether.

Dharisha Bastians observes in the Colombo Telegraph: “There is a certain rustic simplicity to the way Sri Lanka's present rulers go about their business ... The sudden increase in volume regarding the ‘dangers’ of the 13th Amendment emanating from Government proxies and mouthpieces is ... in no way accidental” (Bastians, 2012). The Rajapakse administration, it seems, is trying to project a negative image of the 13th Amendment by highlighting its detrimental effects. This might well prove to be effective since the core of the Amendment, namely devolution of power, apparently collides with the prized notion of a unitary state Sri Lankans, particularly the Sinhala Buddhists, have nurtured for

centuries. The inextricably interwoven elements of Buddhism, the ruler who by destiny is appointed to protect it and territorial integrity that is fundamental for the realization of that mission have been held in esteem, if not veneration, by Sinhala Buddhists in Sri Lanka for a very long time. Luckily for the president, these beliefs can be manipulated with alarming ease to fit his political agenda. Repealing the Amendment would block space for a resurrection of the Tamil militant insurgency to a considerable extent but at the same time it would also mean the executive president will be accorded a sovereignty so complete he will almost be the king of the country – not a healthy sign for a democracy.

The president's rather simple yet effective method of handling all the overwhelming diplomacy around him has left New Delhi baffled. Violating a fundamental principle of diplomacy as well as democracy namely accountability, President Rajapakse in a recent meeting with some foreign correspondents in Colombo blatantly denied having promised S.M. Krishna, the Indian External Affairs Minister to devolve power transcending the prescriptions of the Thirteenth Amendment. A bewildered Krishna requested in writing that the Sri Lankan government confirm its stance only to receive no reply (Bastians, 2012). As the credibility of the Sri Lankan government suffers a steep decline, India's ever growing concerns about the shifting loyalties of Sri Lanka demands a scrutiny of the international factors at play in the mutual political space of the two countries.

INTERNATIONAL FACTORS IN THE SHAPING OF INDO-LANKA RELATIONS

It is interesting to note the switch of roles by India and Sri Lanka with respect to their global allegiances. India, who was aligned with the Soviet Union during the Cold War, can now be observed more or less in the same league as the US. Sri Lanka, renouncing her cozy affairs with the west is now showing an increasing leftist inclination owing largely to the solidarity manifested with Russia and China during the final stages of her armed struggle with the LTTE. Pakistan, India's notorious rival, has been a consistent friend of the island nation and apparently continues to be so. A closer look into the function and motifs of these state actors will enable clearer comprehension of the underpinnings of Indo-Lanka exchanges in terms of the LTTE.

China: The only Asian country able to rival India in terms of physical volume is China. Economic capabilities, however, place China in a comfortably superior position

to India. As of 2012, China's GDP purchasing power parity recorded \$12.38 trillion compared to \$4.735 trillion of India. Chinese GDP per capita boasted \$9,100 in comparison to India's \$3,900. Furthermore, the GDP of China was growing at 7.8% against the Indian growth of 5.4% ("China vs. India: Economic Overview", *Indexmundi.com*).

This duo has not had the luxury of enjoying a warm relationship despite the many positive interactions physical proximity could have afforded. Constant border skirmishes between the two giants have rendered this strain, and a trilogy of clashes has been instrumental in defining Sino-Indian relations in recent history. The first is the 1962 dispute over Tibet, a land whose ownership both states claimed. The consequent war saw China emerging victorious, a defeat that was not received well by India. Observes Vikram Doctor: The Sino-Indian War of 1962 is not a happy memory. It is remembered for the humiliation of India's total defeat, the betrayal of Hindi-Chini-Bhai-Bhai and the devastating personal blow it dealt Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. It left us minus large chunks of territory and an inability to admit this that has resulted in the ridiculous policy of having to stamp every book and magazine that does admit this with the assertion that they are incorrect (Doctor, 2012). The second confrontation came to be known as the Chola Incident of 1967 where the gradual – almost negligible – encroachment of Indian Territory by the Chinese along the Sikkim-Tibet border caused a six-day armed conflict ("The Chola Incident", 1962). The final major conflict between India and China occurred in 1987 concerning Arunachal Pradesh in India, which fell just short of an armed clash. Recounts Indian Defence: At the end of 1986, India granted statehood to Arunachal Pradesh, which is an area claimed by China but administered by India. The Chinese government proceeded to protest. But the military movements in Tawang, taken in conjunction with this political action were seen as a provocation by the Chinese. In early 1987 Beijing's tone became similar to that of 1962, and with the Indian Army refusing to stand down, Western diplomats predicted war ... Both India and China realized the danger of inadvertent conflict and after initial posturing the decision was made to de-escalate their deployments ("1986: How India and China almost went to war", 2012).

It is clear then that the prevalent unpleasantness overland grabs between India and China has made the

two countries, despite professed diplomatic cordiality, essential historic rivals. As such, it would be natural for China to extend her support to Sri Lanka as a means of securing an ally in South Asia in preparation for a potential clash with India. The island's strategic position in the Indian Ocean would be a handy commodity in a war, for it serves dual purposes of acting as a place from which India could be attacked with ease and also to fuel military ships and air craft.

The territorial grudge seems to have colored the better part of Chinese opinion regarding India throughout recent history. Especially the LTTE issue to which China does not have any immediate relevance has been a topic of much interest in the Republic due to the heavy Indian involvement in the issue. John N. Garver observes in *China and South Asia*: Chinese support for Colombo was fairly strong in 1984-85 as the Tamil insurgency in Sri Lanka escalated and Indo-Lankan relations deteriorated. Beijing may have perceived its relations with Colombo within the normal gamut of state-to-state relations rather than as support for Sri Lanka. But in the context ... Beijing's words and actions gave Colombo important help ... Beijing's most dramatic support for Sri Lanka came in November 1985, when a 3000-ton guided-missile destroyer and a supply ship ... called at Colombo for a 'friendly visit' ... it heartened the embattled Sri Lankan government, antagonized India, and involved China more deeply in the Indo-Lankan dispute ... (about the 1987 Accord) Privately, however, China's leaders were very critical of India's actions. One internal study by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences ... argued that India intervened in Sri Lanka's internal affairs and forced Colombo to sign the various agreements so as to "control" Sri Lanka and achieve "regional hegemony" in South Asia. "India has continually dreamed of establishing its regional hegemony ... it carved up Pakistan and created Bangladesh. It annexed Sikkim. It has purchased aircraft carriers. It has done everything to accomplish this objective" (Garver, 1992).

China's border concerns prompted her to consistently lend support to the government of Sri Lanka in the war against the LTTE as a strategic precaution against Indian expansionism. However, this move was perceived by the island nation as well as the larger international community as necessarily anti-LTTE and as part of the leftist proliferation agenda.

The USA is another of China's concerns in the issue regarding Sri Lanka. The island nation's strategic

position in the Indian Ocean, wobbly economy, and domestic unrest simmering just beneath the surface are all very conducive to manipulation by any great – or super in this context – power, swiftness of approach being its sole determinant of success. As such, leaving Sri Lanka unattended would cost China a priced opportunity of securing a regional power base.

Colombo has already demonstrated its vulnerability to being made a pawn in international agendas in the 1970s' and China probably would rather avoid taking chances. Hence Beijing has craftily paved ways into the island through compelling gestures of fraternity not the least of which comprise military assistance and political backing rendered to successfully complete Sri Lanka's war against the LTTE. This assistance has earned Beijing not only the goodwill of the Sri Lankan government, but also an increasingly pro-Chinese domestic sentiment, a score decidedly more rewarding than the amity of a temporary government. India's slipping control over the island is partly prompted by the growing presence of China in Sri Lanka, the countering of which has been made ever more complicated by the popular preferences of the island which are decidedly more inclined to accommodate China than India.

Pakistan: Needless to say that Pakistan's relations with India have been hopelessly doomed owing largely – if not solely – to the bloody and bitter secession in 1948, a notorious historic occurrence understated by the rather lame label 'Partition of India'. The tension between the two countries has affected all aspects of civic life in untold proportions, as has been reflected many a time in, inter alia, cricket matches. The wars of 1965, 1971 and 1999 served to heighten the already overwhelming animosity. Relations between India and Pakistan since then have been sprinkled with an unhealthy dose of minor military encounters.

However, Pakistan has successfully maintained very close ties with Sri Lanka despite the rather itchy geographic layout where India lies in between the two countries. The tension of this Indian positioning is accentuated by the shared history and civilizations of the trio whose source is clearly and most definitely found in the subcontinent. A romantic might even phrase the interaction between Pakistan and Sri Lanka right over India's head as 'ungrateful'. The most telling example of such an exchange is the gesture of friendship extended by Sri Lanka to Pakistan during the decisive third major armed conflict between India and Pakistan in 1971.

As is popularly known, India liberally fuelled the disintegration of Pakistan by dispatching troops and rendering great military assistance to East Pakistan during the war. Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India, banned Pakistani air craft from Indian air space in this crucial time. West Pakistan used Colombo to refuel her aircrafts that were transporting infantry reinforcements to East Pakistan (present day Bangladesh). Incidentally the assassination of Alfred Duraipappah which marked the beginning of overt military activity by the LTTE in Sri Lanka also occurred a mere four years later. Sri Lanka's accommodation of Pakistani aircrafts was a fateful event in the military history of the island because it fostered a strong reciprocal relationship between the two countries that was to prove of much use since Pakistan was to quench much of Sri Lanka's military needs in the years to come. That Pakistan has her own strategic concerns in mind when rendering extensive military assistance to Sri Lanka is also a widely entertained interpretation of the mutual warmth between the two countries. Observes Farzana Shaikh: Crafted in the aftermath of the blood-stained 1947 partition that resulted in the creation of a chronically insecure Pakistan, it bears all the hallmarks of what is commonly described as an 'enduring rivalry'. As the weaker party, Pakistan has sought to manage this rivalry by assiduously cultivating allies among the smaller states of South Asia, notably Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka, which share some of Pakistan's concerns about Indian ambitions. Although Pakistan's endeavors have yet to bear fruit, it is widely assumed that its bilateral relations in the region are still overwhelmingly dictated by its desire to contain and counter-balance India (Shaikh, 2011).

In terms of the LTTE issue, Pakistan's strategic designs have again served to shape the military course of Sri Lanka. As the only country immediately next to India that is harboring a widely known grudge against the subcontinent, Pakistan has actively sought alliances with regional neighbors in an attempt to form a loose coalition against India. The states of Nepal and Bhutan, in this quest, are not of much use to Pakistan since they cannot afford to assume an anti-Indian stance owing to their geographic location that enables them safe passage out of their countries only through India. Surrounded by the Himalayan Mountains on the other three sides, Nepal and Bhutan have a difficult time devising ways to exit

their territories without coming into harmful contact with the mountain range.

Sri Lanka, on the other hand, has less challengeable borders by virtue of being an island. The terrorism issue of this country thus provided Pakistan a convenient opportunity to foster good relations by assisting the island militarily in her endeavor against the LTTE.

The heavy military connotations that were present at the onset of bilateral relations between the two countries have continued to define Sri Lanka-Pakistan relations ever since. Mutual military assistance rendered at the most crucial hours has given these interactions an alluring dimension of sisterhood and friendship that the leaders of the two countries have consistently made a point to note and emphasize. Dr. Anjali Sharma engaging in an extensive analysis of Sri Lanka-Pakistan relations observes: Sri Lanka has an excellent defence relationship with Pakistan... The defence partnership began in 1999, when Pakistan offered a credit line (US\$ 20 million) to Sri Lanka for procurement of defence equipment (Bastians, 2012). In November 2004, both sides agreed to strengthen cooperation in this field and to review the credit line with a view to its operationalization during a visit by the then Sri Lankan President Kumaratunga to Pakistan ("China vs. India", Indexmundi.com). The total purchases till December 2007 were to the tune of US\$ 50 million. There was a sudden jump in the quantity of merchandise ordered in 2008 due to the escalation of the ethnic war (Doctor, 2012). In 2008, during a meeting between Sri Lanka's Lt. General Sarath Fonseka and his Pakistani counterpart General Ashfaq Pervez Kayani, Pakistan agreed to supply 22 Al-Khalid Main Battle Tanks (MBT) worth US\$ 100 million, besides high-tech weapons ...in January 2009, the two countries i.e. Sri Lanka and Pakistan agreed to enhance their cooperation in the field of military training, exercises and intelligence-sharing, so as to counter terrorist threats jointly within the region (Sharma, 2011).

The two countries have made initiatives to expand their trade relations as well, but they have not been as extensive or mutually sustaining. India's concerns regarding Sri Lanka-Pakistan interaction are also largely founded upon military exchanges as opposed to economic ones.

The ever increasing cordiality between the two countries has spawned fresh doubts in India about a ubiquitous fear engulfing all major and emerging powers of the world – that of nuclear capabilities. In response to

the perceived threat, India has been prompt to arrange discussions with the top brass of Sri Lanka in the near future. The nuclear power plant, as reported to India by her sources, is to be set up in Sampur, Trincomalee (Karthiyayini, 2012).

The web of interactions her neighbours are weaving around, but excluding, her has definitely prompted India's preemptive move to initiate talks with Sri Lanka regarding the issue. Especially in light of widespread speculation about China playing a major behind-the-scenes role in this venture India has to seriously consider her increasing regional isolationism – owing largely to domestic concerns regarding Tamil Nadu – and device measures to undo it. As Karthiyayini notes in her web article *Pak's plan to set up nuclear plant in Sri Lanka sets off alarm bells in India*, "Pakistan is quietly making advances while the UPA government allies in Tamil Nadu continuously pressure New Delhi on its defence relationship with Lanka that takes a toll on India" (Karthiyayini, 2012).

Pakistan has always been an itch in the Indian agenda; first, because of the latter's very creation that resulted in the disintegration of India; second, Pakistan's strategic position and political allegiances have been notoriously inconsistent with Indian interests. Adding yet more spice to this relationship laden with negativity, Sri Lanka has switched from pro-Indian to pro-Pakistan owing solely to her military concerns. The switch has done nothing to improve Indo-Lanka relations except India being more cautious in her dealings with Sri Lanka. Any attempt on India's part to improve relations with the island, thus, will essentially contain an element of strategic deliberation.

United States of America: If there ever is an issue of political concern anywhere in the world, the United States definitely plays a role in it. The Young Nation's clout is such that it has become a major determinant of the course of events of political occurrences across the world regardless of who the immediate parties are. Throughout recent history, nations big and small have sought good relations with the USA due to her sole super power status. Thus naturally she occupies a place of consequence in Indo-Lanka relations as well.

Sri Lanka was, as stated previously, originally a USA ally and India that of the Soviet Union. India's accommodation of pro-leftist proclivity, given her gigantic volume and proportionate populace, was perceived as a red signal by the democratic bloc. Thus

USA used Pakistan as a check on a potential Soviet takeover of the region, and aided Sri Lanka when she opened up her economy. The two countries were then supposed to be able to act with relative autonomy within the region using the reflected muscle of America. The aim was to make India fret over regional isolationism as well as possible neglect and turn towards USA as a means of putting the regional scene back in order.

USA tactics obviously added heavy negative connotations to the Indo-USA relationship. India particularly entertained the doubt that USA was actually focusing on curbing the growing power of post-colonial India as opposed to treating her as the "unintended victim of containment aimed at the Soviet Union" (Nayar, 1977). India, despite her need to reverse the seemingly doomed relations with USA, was checked by the non-aligned policy which effectively prevented her from actively seeking better relations with a major party to the Cold War. Washington, on the other hand, in its preoccupation with the looming threat of Soviet expansionism, considered India to be not more than a potential minor development. Thus extensive interaction between the two countries, up till the Bush Administration, was nearly non-existent. Peter R. Lavoy notes in *India in 2006: A New Emphasis on Engagement* the dramatic leap of good relations between USA and India as follows: After a long stretch of rocky relations with the USA during the Cold War and in the decade following, India has finally become a key player in Washington's international security strategy... it was President George W. Bush who truly transformed the relations... Banking on India's growing global power and looking for a counterweight to China in Asia, Bush removed nuclear-related sanctions, approved defense technology cooperation, accelerated bilateral trade and investment, and partnered with India in the "war on terrorism" (Lavoy, 2007).

The improving relations between her gigantic neighbor and the global political power house overseas have not been very favorable to Sri Lanka in her war. The USA accommodates a sizeable Tamil Diaspora from Sri Lanka that has been proactive in projecting a negative image about the war in Sri Lanka, essentially labeling it as an ethnic conflict between the Sinhala and Tamil people as opposed to one between a legitimate government and a terrorist organization. This Diaspora has also been instrumental in aggregating international sympathy for the Tamil quest for a separate state within Sri Lanka and

calling for effective intervention in stalling the humanitarian operation carried out by the Sri Lankan forces during the final stages of the war. Added to this, the Tamil Diaspora in USA has also reportedly been engaging in raising funds for the election campaign of Hillary Clinton.

Well known activists of a banned terrorist group in the United States are involved in the fund raising activities of the USA Democratic candidate Senator Hilary Rodham Clinton ... New Jersey residents have expressed the fear, that LTTE or the Tamil Tigers could flush supporters with millions of dollars, to buy influence over the next possible President of the United States of America by infiltrating into democratic fund raising machine (Jayawardhana, 2010).

USA, partly in response to the plea of the Tamil Diaspora – whose voice leading politicians are compelled to take into account – and partly to ease the growing discomfort about Sri Lanka's new sisterhood with leftist countries, has since recently been a much interested international actor in the LTTE issue.

It is noteworthy that USA has categorized the LTTE as a foreign terrorist organization as opposed to legally banning it which would prevent the very function of the LTTE on American soil. Being named a foreign terrorist organization, on the other hand, has only limited legal consequences such as having its funds frozen and prohibiting the entry of LTTE members to USA. However, these measures are rather appallingly lenient. For one thing, openly supporting the LTTE politically is accepted; a USA citizen is free to become a member of the LTTE; LTTE members are eligible to receive political asylum so long as they have not engaged in direct terrorist activity and in the persecution of others; though funding the LTTE directly is prohibited, funds can be donated to such organizations as Ilankai Tamil Sangam or World Tamil Coordinating Committee which have an evident bias to the LTTE ("The Legal Status of the LTTE in the US: Fact Sheet", *sangam.org*).

The atmosphere in USA, thus, is clearly conducive to LTTE activity and any sympathizer who openly endorses the LTTE suffers only minimal legal consequences, if any at all. The resultant space for the growth of the LTTE's over-seas wing has created many leading figures among whom a chief place is occupied by Visuanathan Rudrakumaran. Head of the so-called Trans National Government of Tamil Eelam, Rudrakumaran leads a very public life that does not seem to be affected by his

equally public endorsement of the LTTE cause. What is more, a recent offer of the Sri Lankan government to share intelligence information with USA authorities in order to arrest Rudrakumaran was obliquely and diplomatically declined by Robert Blake, the USA Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs, on the grounds that Rudrakumaran has not committed any crimes on American soil ("Sri Lanka willing to share evidence to arrest Rudrakumaran", *srilankawatch.com*).

For a person who has publicly promised to violate the territorial integrity of Sri Lanka, Rudrakumaran is enjoying a rather alarming level of freedom. The repeated requests of the Sri Lankan government to arrest Rudrakumaran have been met with a troublingly passive response by Washington which seems more inclined to hurl the accusations right back at the government instead of taking concrete steps to prevent the advocacy of terrorism. Daya Gamage observes that "The USA State Department report of December 2009 by its Office of War Crimes Issues admitted the LTTE culpability of massacres of civilians nevertheless pointing a finger toward Sri Lanka urging the nation's government to be transparent and accountable" (Gamage, 2011).

The LTTE is believed to be especially operative in Maryland, New York, and New Jersey. In 2007 Karunakaran Kandasamy, who is supposed to be the LTTE coordinator of USA operations, was arrested by the FBI on charges of facilitating meetings between members of the USA business community and the LTTE in an attempt to generate funds for the organization. Two years prior to that, Congressman Danny Davis was accused of accepting a fully-sponsored trip to Sri Lanka's LTTE controlled areas, again organized by the LTTE. According to a release issued by the USA Department of Justice in 2007, the LTTE attempted to bribe USA State Department officials to remove the organization's name from the foreign terrorist organizations list. Another arrest in Maryland brought into light a LTTE member who tried to export arms and munitions worth millions of dollars to Sri Lanka for the benefit of the LTTE (Malkin, 2008).

All these instances illustrate just how extensive and influential the over-seas LTTE network is. Though these details were revealed following operations carried out by USA federal authorities, the fact that many more operations that advocate LTTE terrorism are yet to be

discovered remains true. Especially given the recent antipathy between Sri Lanka and USA regarding the UNHRC issue where USA was instrumental in drafting and adopting a resolution that urged Sri Lanka to investigate the possible occurrence of war crimes, the existence of large scale pro-LTTE activity in USA could be viewed as particularly detrimental to bi-lateral relations between the two countries. President Mahinda Rajapakse has recently expressed his concerns regarding US conduct when the new USA ambassador to Sri Lanka Patricia Butenis met him to present her credentials. "President Rajapakse expressed bewilderment and frustration at USA policy for encouraging him to fight terrorism and then criticizing him when he did" ("18.09.2009: President Bewildered, Frustrated with U.S. Sri Lanka Policy", 2011).

India, having voted in favor of the said resolution in an unprecedented move, unwittingly assumed an isolationist position in the region. The fact that India played a key role in softening the blow on Sri Lanka naturally prompts the question as to why she supported the resolution at all. It is popularly known that the Delhi power balance is maintained with the support of, among other parties, the Dravida Munnettra Kazhagam (DMK) of Tamil Nadu. Uttara Choudhary reported on 20th March 2012 that "The DMK has threatened to pull out its ministers from the UPA if the government doesn't back the international resolution rebuking Sri Lanka over war crimes" (Choudhury, 2012).

Evidently internal political compulsions blackmailed Delhi into violating the commonly accepted norm of regional solidarity. Whatever the reasons, India's vote in favor of the resolution put her in the same league as the US in the eyes of many. Additionally, India seems to have negotiated a fresh start with the USA sprinkled liberally with positive initiatives. Seeing as both US and India accommodate similar stances regarding the touchy and sometimes explosive issue of the LTTE – a stance that is decidedly against the government of Sri Lanka – the USA factor could be seen as another issue increasing the already deep rift between India and Sri Lanka.

Russia: Sri Lanka's relations with Russia grew especially warm largely owing to the latter's assistance rendered in combating terrorism in the island. Having promptly replaced the USA as a major supplier of arms and ammunitions to Sri Lanka during the crucial final phases of the war, Russia was also already the primary supplier of air craft that were used throughout the war, though

these were purchased from Ukraine due to the cheaper rates that were offered there ("Military aid: USA out, enter Russia", *LankaNewspapers.com*). In May, 2009, mere days before the official ending of armed hostilities, Sri Lanka purchased a range of weaponry from Russia including a number of helicopters ("Sri Lanka to buy military helicopters from Russia", 2009).

In addition to the countless instances of military assistance, Russia was also instrumental in checking international pressure on the island to investigate the possible occurrence of war crimes during the final stages of the war. Along with China, Russia prevented the UN Security Council from passing any resolution that would have drastic implications for Sri Lanka by exercising her power of veto. However, the USA was able to avoid the Security Council and push through a resolution via the UN Human Rights Council urging Sri Lanka to conduct an independent investigation on the issue.

In response, the Russian Minister of External Affairs Sergei Lavrov issued a statement in May, 2012 holding that "attempts to force international investigation on Sri Lanka without the sovereign state's permission and bypassing the UN Security Council are absolutely wrong, they also contradict our aspirations in the Human Rights sphere" ("Russia Backs Sri Lanka on War Probe Calls", 2005).

Of course, Sri Lanka does not by any means dominate the landscape of Indo-Russia relations. However, given the growing tensions in this relationship because of the USA factor, the Sri Lanka issue can be seen as deepening the divisions between Russia and India. The Russian Ambassador to New Delhi Alexander M. Kadakin recently expressed his concerns over the treatment of Russia by India, saying that "Russia does not exactly feel comfortable when attempts are made to put us on the same shelf with others as regards opportunities for future contracts and tenders under the guise of equal chances for all including several newly-acquired partners or contract-seekers who had clamped sanctions against India" ("Russia hints at unease with India", 2013). The thinly veiled reference to the USA could not have been missed by the Delhi administration.

Against this backdrop, India assuming a stance against Sri Lanka – again with the USA – will not spell a bright future for Indo-Russia relations. Obviously, Russia is concerned not so much about protecting the sovereignty of Sri Lanka as she is about countering the steadily strengthening US foothold in India. In terms of Indo-

Lanka relations, the Russian factor again serves to deepen existing rifts because Colombo is so liberally using the borrowed muscle of Russia (and China) to offset Indian pressure regarding the ethnic question.

CONCLUSION

The LTTE has been instrumental in defining Indo-Lanka relations in the recent past. Though domestic circumstances in the island indeed provided the most fundamental reasons for the LTTE to come into existence, India was the force that helped the organization sustain and thrive.

India's role in the rise of the LTTE was largely prompted by strategic considerations. Stuck as she was in her hopeless allegiance to the doomed Soviet ideology and the inevitable rejection of capitalist economy it demanded, India could not afford to compromise her regional primacy by letting her neighbors outshine her with the help of Capitalism she so abhorred. Her alternative was to create internal strife and distract the governments of those regional countries that were spinning dangerously out of her sphere of control.

Sri Lanka's orientation to an open economy in this context proved to be unfortunate. The simmering discontent of the Tamils in the country – that owed much to mistakes made by Sinhala politicians and endorsed to a considerable extent by the Sinhala populace – found military expression with the help of India. The subcontinent thus successfully prevented Sri Lanka from assuming an influential position in the region, albeit in the capacity of an American puppet, a phenomenon that was to be inevitable had the island progressed along the path of Capitalism without the burden of a bloody conflict to drain the better part of her resources.

The more recent role of India with regard to the LTTE, however, has not been entirely negative. Notwithstanding the Gandhian contribution towards worsening the Sri Lankan crisis, recognition is due of the fact that Delhi has been trying its best to assist the Sri Lankan government in its war against the LTTE. Delhi was a powerful force in minimizing the level of impact of the resolution passed by the UNHRC urging Sri Lanka, *inter alia*, to investigate the possible occurrence of war crimes. Though India in fact voted in favor of the resolution, it was rather evident that the pressure exerted by Tamil Nadu was a key factor that prompted the center to act the way it did. Hence India's vote against Sri Lanka, it can be argued, was more a measure

taken to preserve the coalition government as opposed to one that was taken strictly against a neighbor.

International actors – specifically China, Pakistan, USA, and Russia – whose function have shaped Indo-Lanka relations in terms of the LTTE have more or less served to increase the unpleasantness between the two countries that originated as a result of India's infamous history in the LTTE issue.

China, due to her border disputes with India, liberally provided military assistance to Sri Lanka in her war against the LTTE. The move was designed to serve dual purposes of showcasing China's increasing presence in South Asia to India and of winning Colombo over as a means of securing a base in the region in preparation for a potential clash with India. Colombo's choice to ally with China in her attempt to thwart the LTTE was in a way an undermining of India's decisive role in determining the political fate of the island.

As is widely known, Pakistan has never enjoyed good relations with the subcontinent due to her blood-stained break away. Since her creation, thus, Pakistan consistently sought fraternity with other members of the region to counter Indian animosity and emerge as a state worthy of recognition in her own right as opposed to being identified in relation to India. Pakistan's goodwill towards Sri Lanka has always been conditioned by this need, same as Sri Lanka's goodwill towards Pakistan has mainly been derived from the military assistance given by Pakistan to the war. Again, Sri Lanka's choice of a country other than India – and especially a rival of India at that – to solve her internal issues does not paint a bright picture of Indian supremacy in the region. As such, it is only sensible to assume that the Pakistan factor has caused a strain on Indo-Lanka relations.

The United States has since recently become a major stakeholder in the Indo-Lanka relationship by actively getting involved in the LTTE issue. USA accommodates a sizeable Sri Lankan Tamil Diaspora whose increasingly insistent voice seems to be shaping the USA policy towards Sri Lanka. USA's unusually personal sympathy for the Sri Lankan Tamil Diaspora seems to be stemming from generous funds donated for the election campaigns of leading politicians. This sympathy found the most remarkable expression in the passing of the recent UNHRC resolution mainly urging the Sri Lankan government to investigate alleged war crimes carried out during the final stages of the war. India, though she acted to minimize the effects on Sri Lanka, also voted in

favor of the resolution, resulting in further straining Indo-Lanka relations.

Russia's continued defense of the government of Sri Lanka with regards to war crimes allegations, in a context where India strongly campaigns to pressurize said body to conduct an investigation to determine whether or not war crimes happened, has again served to strain Indo-Lanka relations in addition to Indo-Russia ones.

The increasing tension between Sri Lanka and India is detrimental not only to bilateral relations between the two countries but also to regional peace and security. Unity is vital to South Asia in the present context where South Asian countries are steadily gaining recognition as a region culturally, politically and even economically. Emerging factions obviously undermine the importance of regional unity.

In order to overcome the challenge of narrow divisions within the region and aspire for an important position for South Asia in the global political arena, compromise is due on the part of all regional countries. On the one hand India has to curb the urge to assume regional supremacy in her policy towards neighbor states because the subcontinent's overwhelming physical presence does not automatically accord it such status. The arrogance of assuming it does and unduly interfering in the internal concerns of regional countries would, to put it colloquially, piss them off. India should particularly refrain from repeating the mistake of creating internal strife in neighbor countries just so she could preserve her perceived 'supreme' status in the region.

On the other, regional countries need a more realistic orientation to regional politics. While India should not take for granted her historic role of leader of South Asia, time is ripe for other countries in the region to acknowledge that – given her steadily developing economy, improving ties with the outer world, and the grand legacy she so benevolently shared with her neighbors – India is indeed the leader of the region.

Hence India as well as all other South Asian countries should compromise their inflated egos and overestimated capacities, individual and collective, for the greater good of the region. On a pragmatic level they should realize that development could only be achieved through regional solidarity. No alliance brokered with an extra regional party would serve their best interests; it would only continue the tragic pattern of woeful

exploitation to which the region has been subject since British colonialism. The world has taken for granted the economic pit in which South Asia has been stagnating. Unless regional countries take genuine and collective measures to rise as a potent force, South Asia will create the perfect conditions for the world to continue having their own ends served by playing one regional country against another.

The creation of the LTTE should set a clear enough example as to how terribly things could go wrong if South Asian countries pursue their own ends with no regard to regional interests. Though the majority Sinhalese of Sri Lanka are indeed primarily responsible for isolating Tamils from the democratic discourse of the country and thus for the creation of the LTTE, India's hand in nourishing the organization not only reversed Sri Lanka's progress in thirty years but also created space for international powers such as USA, China and Russia to pave ways into South Asia. On the other hand Sri Lanka's decision to seek assistance from extra regional countries – though a necessity that arose out of India's refusal to lend it – again signaled the world of deepening divisions in South Asia.

China and Pakistan are using Sri Lanka against India; USA successfully isolated India from the rest of the region during the recently concluded UNHRC session; Pakistan is ever so keen to broker alliances with extra-regional powers to set off growing Indian influence rather than negotiate a working relationship with India; Bangladesh struggles in a ditch of economic misery while Islam extremism from the Middle East is manipulating the situation to take root there; Maldives is tackling a host of democratic and environmental crises with no help from the region that is preoccupied with internal divisions; Bhutan and Nepal, though spared from the bulk of this chaos, do not boast conditions too impressive. If urgent and constructive measures are not taken to foster and promote regional solidarity, South Asia is in trouble indeed.

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ⁱ A major corruption scandal in which several top politicians including Rajiv Gandhi were charged with accepting bribes from a Swedish arms company named Bofors in order that the company may secure an arms deal with the Indian government.

ⁱⁱ Considered to be the highest caste in traditional Sri Lanka, comprising of people whose original occupation was rice cultivation.