Chapter – 6

India – Sri Lanka Relations During (1990-2000)
Geopolitical and geo-strategical concerns have led to close ties between Sri Lanka and India. At the same time the fact remains that there has not been a coherent and workable foreign policy either of Sri Lanka, towards India or Indian foreign policy towards Sri Lanka.¹

In the absence of such a policy the relations between these two sovereign independent nations have faced too many irritants many a time. It has really been a matter of great concern that no permanent cure for the deteriorating relations of these two nations could be evolved. The absence of a coherent and viable foreign policy was felt most during the presidency of J.R. Jayawardene and premiership of Rajiv Gandhi in India.

The ethnic problem in Sri Lanka arose at the point of island’s political history from where the power wielders extended the doctrine of “One Nation” to “One Language”, that is Sinhala only. The year 1983 was just a revival of the past and the legacy of the “Sinhala Only” movement.²

Sirimavo Bandaranaike, other important leader of the SLFP had warned the governing UNP party to behave as she thought that the victory of Rajiv Gandhi at the polls was certain.

She said nobody could stop Rajiv Gandhi from coming back. Improve your relations with India before he comes back. During the debate on foreign policy. Gamini Dissanayake one of the architects of 1987 accord, pointed out that the accord was an agreement between two heads of Government and not a treaty.³

The main thrust of Rajiv Gandhi’s foreign policy was centred on India’s basic goal in South Asia to play a dominant role, make others to accept her policies. Rajiv Gandhi did not seem to have a foreign policy design of his own. In his speeches and statements, it is difficult to find a conceptual frame of the world and India’s place in it. However, piecing his foreign policy thrust together, it is possible to discover, with an effort an attempt to join Jawaharlal Nehru’s Orientation to the center of world politics to Indira Gandhi’s focus on regional pre-eminence.

Regarding Sri Lanka crisis, Rajiv took two steps.

1. Ramesh Bhandari replaced G.Parthasarathy as the Prime Minister’s special envoy dealing with Lankan problems and

2. Rajiv’s Government took steps to curb Tamil militant activities in India.

---

3. Indian Express, December 13, 1990 cited in Ramakant and Bhola, Post Cold War Developments in South Asia (RBSA Publishers Jaipur 1995) P-190
According to a strategic analyst Rajiv Gandhi spearheaded a new activist foreign policy to establish India as the greatest military power along the area stretching from the Himalayas to the North Sea. Rajiv Gandhi thus dealt with neighbours including Sri Lanka with a mixture of power and friendliness.

INDIA'S PEACE POLICING AND REGIME PROTECTION ROLE IN SRI LANKA.

Unlike his predecessors when V.P. Singh assumed office as Prime Minister of India in December 1989, he did not face any serious problems with any of India's neighbours V.P. Singh said that effective steps would be taken to improve relations with India's neighbours. He also said that he will endeavor to make SAARC a dynamic institution. During his address on the occasion of the Independence day celebrations. V.P. Singh said that in the case of Sri Lanka, India was concerned about the life and property of Tamils and volunteered to help Sri Lanka to establish camps in Sri Lanka where Tamils could feel secure. At the same time, he insisted that India would not allow extremists and militants to use Indian soil as their place.\(^4\)

Although V.P. Singh too operated within the regional strategy followed by Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi his approach differed from that of Rajiv Gandhi. It seems V.P. Singh believed that foreign policy begins at the borders and therefore his approach was friendly. For example V.P. Singh maintained that ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka was an internal matter and India will not interfere in it. He also said that Tamil Nadu should not be allowed, to become a base for Sri Lankan Tamil militant activities. It was during V.P. Singh’s regime that the last batch of the IPKF was withdrawn thus Premadasa’s insistent demand in this context was amicably met. It was an effort specially made by the Indian Government to accommodate Sri Lanka.\(^5\)

Premadasa is a known critic of Indo-Sri Lanka accord since its inception and was keen to replace it with the accord was signed at a wrong time and hence it was misunderstood. He wanted the IPKF to be withdrawn from Sri Lanka soil for one more reason and that was since Sri Lanka was due to host the SAARC summit at the end of the year, it was not possible to do so with any self respect if foreign forces were still present on the island.\(^6\)

In 1991 the change of scene in India did not go in unnoticed by the major political parties in Sri Lanka. The Sri Lanka government was observing the prevalent Indian situation. The Sri Lankan leadership read the new Indian Prime Minister Chandrashekhars’s mind and his predilections and

---

5. Ibid
believed that the new Prime Minister would not embark on any external forces and also that foreign policy would be completely over shadowed by domestic political and parliamentary maneuvers. The Premadasa government was a little apprehensive of the change of government in India and uncertain about the altitude of India’s new Prime Minister towards Sri Lanka.

He knew it for certain that whether he liked it or not India’s altitude towards Sri Lanka would remain a crucial one. There was some suspicion in the minds of the leaders and the President of Sri Lanka regarding Chandrashekhar’s line of action because he was made Prime Minister with the help of Rajiv Gandhi’s party and also that he was a very little known in Sri Lanka. Rajiv Gandhi was disliked in Sri Lanka and Premadasa would have been happier to see him out of power.7

A major development in India Sri Lanka relations was the dastardly assassination of Rajiv Gandhi at Sriperumbudur. The manner in which he was killed by a suicide squad was disturbingly reminiscent of LTTE’S methods through the LTTE made some weak denials of any involvement. It was widely believed in India that he was killed at the behest of the LTTE, despite not very stout denials by the latter.

7. Times of India, 27 May 1991
In an interview with an Indian newspaper one of the so called Intellectual mentors of the LTTE, K. Elaventhen, while denying LTTE hand in the assassination, asserted that Indira Gandhi was "sympathetic and during her time" we got ample training arms and other help, but that things changed and Rajiv Gandhi and finally help stopped entirely in 1987. Which was suspected of having no compulsion in finishing off its perceived opponents. Already in March the Sri Lanka Defence Minister Ranjan Wijeratne had been killed in a bomb explosion in Colombo.  

The LTTE lost heavily in sympathy not only else where in India, but in Tamil Nadu itself and the government was pressed to ask for LTTE supreme Prabhakaran's extradition to stand trial for the murder of Rajiv Gandhi. A new government headed by P.V. Narasimha Rao took office in New Delhi, but India Sri Lanka relations remained some what acerbic and mercurial, Although in a very limited way.  

On the positive side after protected preparatory exercises spread over several months. At the conclusion of the visit of the Sri Lankan Foreign Minister. India and Sri Lanka set up on 29 July a joint commission headed by their foreign minister to provide an institutional frame work for expanding bilateral cooperation.

The then external affairs minister, Madhav Singh Solanki, believed that the commission could have a major catalytic role if invested with the necessary political will, but significantly noting that the day was also the fourth anniversary of the India-Sri Lanka agreement signed by Rajiv Gandhi and Jayewardene. Solanki made it quite clear that India continued to consider it as the basis of the current phase in bilateral relations.\(^9\)

To India the agreement had not lost its validity, and New Delhi did not fail to emphasize the need for full implementation of the 13\(^{th}\) amendment devolution of powers for the North-East region. India and Sri Lanka had also to address themselves to the problem of the return of some 200,000 Tamil refugees in India.

Both sides faced painful dilemmas in dealing with the major problem between them the dilemmas for India being no less acute than for Sri Lanka. India could not pretend that it had nothing to do with Sri Lanka’s ethnic problem. There were too many linkages between the Tamils of the two sides for India to just wash its hands of the matter. This did not justify the supply of arms to the Tamil groups in Sri Lanka people did not ever support to IPKF opposition leaders were also unhappy.

\(^9\) Dutt, V.P. India’s Foreign Policy, (Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, 2003) P- 162
Indeed the wisdom of sending India’s peace-keeping troops to Sri Lanka was questionable and many leaders were not too enthused about the decision. But it is equally possible that had the post Jayewardene Colombo administration cooperated with the IPKF. The LTTE might have been licked in another six months. The Sinhalese, however looked upon the presence of Indian troops as an affront to Sri Lanka’s sovereignty.

The Premadasa regime went even further and as revealed by the former National security Minister, Lalit Athulathmudli, secretly supplied arms to the LTTE to fight the IPKF. The IPKF had gone there to uphold the unity and integrity of Sri Lanka and suffered nearly a thousand casualties in the process besides in curing expenditure of millions of rupees.\textsuperscript{10}

In evitably relation between the Premadasa govt. and New Delhi were marked by coolness and worriness. It was a particular low point in India – Sri Lanka ties. Both the Premadasa government and the Narasimha Rao regime eyed each other with very considerable spectacular, manner in which the IPKF had to be with drawn from Sri Lanka after what New Delhi perceived as the sacrifice made by the Indian force to maintain the unity and integrity of Sri Lanka.

On the other hand Colombo, funned at what it perceived as an Indian attempt at overload-ship through the Tamil connection.

In the prevailing atmosphere question were also raised about the security of Prime Minister Narasimha Rao in case he went to Colombo for the SAARC summit that was scheduled for 7-9 November.

Some mistakes were made by Colombo and some by India. Colombo was a little clumsy in its manner of inviting the Bhutanese king to the summit.

New Delhi used Chogyal’s absence as an excuse to insist that the Head of state or government of all member countries must participate for summit to be held. It hurt not just India – Sri Lanka ties but, unnecessarily SAARC too. It put into question India’s Commitment to regional cooperation.

Shortly after the collapse of SAARC summit and as the immediate anger dissipated some what, efforts were made by the two sides to give a more positive to direction to their relation.

The Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Herald Heart visited India (5-7 Jan. 1992) on a fence mending mission. Already before his visit, the foreign minister had described Sri Lanka’s relation with India as absolutely cordial and friendly.¹¹

¹¹ Mishra, R.C. P-177 Op.cit. No.2
Tensions were defused some what with the convening of SAARC summit in Colombo on 21 December and with the Indian Prime Minister attending it.

This helped soothe the ruffled sentiments of Sri Lanka and to renew India’s commitment to SAARC. The diffusion of tensions made it possible for the thread to be taken up again and for the promotion of bilateral ties.

A well represented delegation from Sri Lanka participated in the two day India – Sri Lanka joint commission in its first meeting in the first week of January 1992. On the political side the talk converged on the need for a negotiated political settlement within the unity and integrity of Sri Lanka.  

It can be concluded that there has been a sober realization on the part of both and Sri Lanka that they must steer bilateral relations away from the contentious issue of ethnic conflict in the island, the decision to set up an Indo-Sri Lanka joint commission for economic cooperation and Indo-Sri Lanka treaty of friendship reflected such a concern India has realized that it should pursue a hands of a policy in order to let the Tamils realize their own aspirations. The treaty between these two Nations is an agreement to consolidate and extend the friendly relations. Total pull out of IPKF was removal of a major irritant in Indo-Sri Lanka relations.

A further effort was made to infuse a little more warmth in India-Sri Lanka ties at the official level with the visit of President Premadasa on 10 October 1992, but it also revealed the gap in the perceptions of the two sides. The Sri Lankan President came as the chairman of the SAARC and stressed various economic steps that could promote economic development and cooperation.

Premadasa was not particularly keen to discuss in any great depth the Tamil problem. His focus was on SAARC and how its development could be buttressed as an achievement under his chairmanship of SAARC. He spoke about poverty alleviation programmes, the signing of SAPTA (South Asia Preferential Trade Agreement) at the next summit in Dhaka, and the institutionalizing of the South Asian Development fund that was mooted at the Seventh SAARC Summit.13

The joint statement on 3 October expressed the belief of the two countries about the validity of SAARC as a forum for achieving social goals and developing the region’s human resource potential. Cooperation among SAARC countries could substantially reduce terrorist activities in the region, the statement said. President Premadasa stressed during his talks with Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao his governments commitment to a peaceful, negotiated settlement of the ethnic issue by involving all parties concerned.

Narasimha Rao’s approach to relations between India and Sri Lanka was outlined on the following lines:

1. India continued to be supportive of the legitimate political, social and cultural aspirations of the Tamils.

2. India, however, opposed the brute violence and terrorist methods to achieve these aspirations.

3. India supported initiatives aimed at resolving the crisis in Sri Lanka through political dialogue.

4. Having been criticized by all parties concerned for the sincere efforts made by India to mediate between the Tamils and the Sinhalese dominated Sri Lanka Government, India did not desire to take any active part in resolving the problems of Sri Lankas themselves regardless of whether they were Sinhalase or Tamils.

5. Apart from these specific aspects of India-Sri Lanka relations India tried to build up bilateral relations and cooperation in the political, economic and cultural spheres with Sri Lanka.

6. The government of India and the government of Tamil Nadu tried to ensure to the extent possible, that the LTTE did not have bases or sanctuaries in India. India remained opposed to any secessionist
or terrorist group operating from its territory against any of its neighbours.

7. Indian attempted be to establish a practical working relationship with the Sri Lanka government.\textsuperscript{14}

India-Sri Lanka relations were markedly improving during this period. According to a Colombo analyst, year 1993 saw a remarkable turn about in India – Sri Lanka relations. An increasingly close and cordial relationship replaced cool and distant dialogue often marked by friction and moments of high tension.

He believed that Indian diplomacy in recent times had been markedly free of big brother condescension of course clapping required two hands. President Premadasa had also soon realized the importance of good neighbours, and a quiet stable neighbourhood.\textsuperscript{15}

The political and social realignment could in fact boost the prospects of a continuing improvement of relations. The clear change of mood in Tamil Nadu and the decline of chauvinism in both countries could act as a stimulant in the process of warning up. Inevitably their geography determined that they could not avoid incidents that tended to create acrimony, but if every incident was not taken to mean the involvement of national self respect, the even tenor of relationship did not need to be

\textsuperscript{14} Dixit, J.N. Assignment Colombo (Konark Publishers Pvt. Ltd. 1998 New Delhi) P-297
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid
affected. These incidents could relate to the ethnic issues refugees from Sri Lanka, arms smuggling and the naval vigilance that both countries conducted and fishing in the Palk straits.

As for instance the killing of five Indian fishermen from Tamil Nadu by the Sri Lankan navy on 8 October 1998. Reminding Sri Lanka of several such incidents. India said it was taking a very strong view of these recurring incidents and lodged a strong protest with the Sri Lanka government. A team of Indian officials visited Colombo in early March 1994 for talks to find ways of avoiding such incidents Colombo had consistently denied any willfulness in there matters by its navy. But in view of the deep suspicious in Colombo about the ethnic support from Tamil Nadu to the Ceylonese Tamils and about gun running by the LTTE, it was not easy to find a solution to the problem.16

The Colombo talks ended with both sides reiterating their positions and no new ground was broken. However, since neither side wanted to escalate this into a major issue, the tension accruing from it could be kept under manageable control. Sadly but equally true was the inability of India or the regime in Colombo to protect other Lankan Tamil groups from the violence and fury of the LTTE. Some times one side and some times the other scarified one or the other of them in the expedient but elusive quest for

an accommodation with the ‘Tigers’ even though many of them could have played a moderating role that extended on one side to the protection of the Tamils as a community and a peaceful and honourable political solution to the ethnic problem and on the other to protecting them from the wrath of the LTTE so that a free atmosphere could be created for democratic functioning within the Lankan Tamil Community. Many of them became fugitives in India, forced to lead a marginal political existence and in mortal danger to their lives from the Tigers.

The Tigers were also attacking on Lankan traders such type of incidence disturb the internal politics and peace. We have an example of President Premadasa.

Premadasa’s killing introduced on element of uncertainty in India – Sri Lanka relations which had been on the mend for the past one year. The felled President had apparently considerably strengthened his position internally and relations with India were also on the mend. In January he had fulfilled his wish and gone on a pilgrimage to Bodhgaya. He had also managed to keep the LTTE at bay, first cultivating it and then fighting it alternatively.17

---

The uncertainty in Sri Lankan politics was an indication of realignment of political and social forces in Sri Lanka.

1993-94 saw a political churning, bringing about a major change of government as well as of political and social attitudes.

Meanwhile major political changes were in the offing in Colombo. Mrs. Chandrika Kumaratung had taken over the mantle of leadership from Sirimavo Bandaranaike. The People’s Alliance (PA) of which the SLFP was the major component, supported by the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC) and up coming People’s front emerged as the largest party in the parliamentary election in mid August one seat short of majority. The PA won 112 seats in a house of 225 indicating the change of atmosphere in the country. The Ceylon workers congress led by Mehrotra, O.N.

Thandaman, with seven members in the new parliament, offered “Selective support” to the PA government.

Subsequently the CWC joined the govt. of the new Prime Minister, Chandrika Kumaratunge.

Ethnic Issues:

Not only was the ethnic issue the most troublesome for India – Sri Lanka relations but had also become the central issue within the island
republic. Peace was the single most demanding task before any government in Colombo. The costs of the continuing war were heavy and well known and in the final analysis it was self defeating. How to achieve peace with a force ranged against the government that was determined to accept nothing less than complete independence that was Colombo’s problem. How to preserve the unity and integrity of the country and yet devolve enough power to Tamil areas to assure the Tamils a life of honour and safety of their lives and property – that was the real issue with no painless answers.18

Chandrika Kumartunge was perhaps the best suited Sinhalase leader to cope with the problem. She put a very positive foot forward to do use the passions and assure a reasonable deal for the Tamils. She announced what was under the circumstances a bold-package on 3 August 1995, envisaging a change in the whole complexion of Sri Lankan politics.

Under the package, regional councils were to be established with unnumbered jurisdiction over some forty five subjects police, judicial and public service commissions. The regional Governors would be appointed by the President with the concurrence of the chief minister of the region. A chief minister would not be removed from office as long as he enjoyed the confidence of the regional council assembly.

18. Dutt, V.P. P- 169-170, op.cit, No. 9
Undoubtedly the Kumaratunge plan went much further than the Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement of 1987 on envisaged. It was as plan for a real change in the political structure of Sri Lanka. However there were two major catches. The proposals needed amendment of the constitution which had to be passed with two thirds majority of parliament without the cooperation of the opposition UNP there was no way in which the government could manage a two thirds vote for the package the UNP has been chary of spelling out its exact stand point and as yet there is little certainty of the package being approved by parliament with the requisite majority. 19

The second catch was the intransigence of the LTTE and its insincerity in negotiations. The Tamil Tigers have not show any genuine inclination to negotiate on the basis of the government package. In fact the government itself embarked upon full scale military operations and have in the onward offensive of the armed forces captured Jaffna, the rest while strong hold of the LTTE, but it also became a situation of all fight and no peace.

It was too early to say whether this policy would finally succeed two months before the army stormed into Jaffna, President Chandrika herself had warned the people, on the occasion of the second anniversary of her People’s Alliance government in power that the country was “on the brink of

disaster” and called for ethnic peace. The ethnic conflict had brought the entire Nation to the point of ruin during the past few decades, affecting adversely all aspects of national life, she said in her words. The ultimate consequence of this debilitating conflict is that a pall of gloom is cast over the like of the nation.20

Ethnic peace was still eluding Sri Lanka the political processes were virtually at a stand still while war raged in its full intensity. The trouble in such situations is that thousands of innocent people suffer and leave behind a legacy of distrust and alienation. Victories were achieved on the military front, but there was no advance on the political front.

**Peace Process**

The foundation for sound relations between the two countries was laid when President Kumaratunga visited New Delhi in March 1995 on her first visit abroad. In her convocation speech at Bandaranaike center for International studies on 29 Sept. 1995, she said –

“It is no accident indeed it is a matter of deliberate choice that my official state visit as President was to our largest immediate neighbour, India. I think, I can say that this visit succeeded in eliminating at one stroke

20. Ibid
the legacy of mutual suspicion and distrust that had been carried over from
the past and in restoring friendly relations."\(^{21}\)

During a visit to New Delhi in mid June 1996 the Sri Lankan Prime
Minister, Laksman Kadirgamar was remarkably up beat about relation
between the two countries which were described as being in exceptionally
good shape. He paid rich tributes to Prime minister Deve Gowda and to
Tamil Nadu chief minister M.Karunanidhi too for not letting the Sri Lankan
Tamil factor come to the fair in the election in Tamil Nadu. There were
currently no great irritants in India-Sri Lanka relation and subsequently it
was claimed that there was no better indicator of the warmth in their ties
than the President Chandrika chose India for her year and family holiday.\(^{22}\)

**Impact of Changing Political Scenario**

The Indian foreign minister’s official visit to Sri Lanka in January 1997, a
Sri Lanka foreign ministry official correctly pointed out, “Our relations
which declined to an all time low when the late President Ranasinghe
Premedasa gave a unilateral quite notice to the IPKF stationed in the north
and east of Sri Lanka in 1989, have improved to an extremely cordial level
after President Kumaratunga came to power.\(^{23}\)

---

He also pointed out that the relations improved further after Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda’s govt. came into power in mid – 1996. The above statements indicate that change in govts in Sri Lanka and India had helped to improve India – Sri Lanka relations.

Further in an assessment of foreign policy during 1996, Minister Kadirgarmar like to say is the personal elements and relationships between leaders is important. They must be used profitably, honourably, decently and equally. One must try to ensure that no harm comes from bad personal relationship. But this is not the end of the story by any means. I believe that between our two countries, India and Sri Lanka, we must strive to build our institutional links in a variety of ways.24

In 1998 India’s relations with Sri Lanka continued to be marked by warmth and cordiality. The visits of the Sri Lankan Foreign Minister, Mr. Lakshman Kadirgarmar, to India in March and June 1998, as a special envoy of the Sri Lankan President provided opportunities for useful high-level exchanges between the two govts. Both sides reaffirmed the consensus prevailing in both countries on maintaining close and cordial relations.

For maintaining the relation, Mrs. Chandrika Kumaratunga, paid a state visit to India from December 1998. During the visit, the two sides signed an agreement to establish a free Trade Area between India and

24. Ibid
Sri Lanka. The agreement is expected to lead to a steady growth of trade and investment through graduated reduction of tariffs. The two countries also signed a memorandum of understanding to set up the India-Sri Lanka foundation. The foundation would promote bilateral exchanges in various spheres and would be governed by an independent board. The deliberations during the visit reflected the priority attached by both countries to sustaining the warmth and understanding that mark the India-Sri Lanka relationship.

**Bilateral Co-operation:**

India-Sri Lanka joint commissions met at New Delhi. The Indian delegation was led by the Minister of External Affairs, while the Sri Lanka Foreign affairs Minister. Mr. Lakshman Kadirgarmer led the Sri Lankan delegation. The joint commission reviewed the existing levels of bilateral cooperation in the areas of science & technology, economy, trade and investment and cultural, educational and social matters. Both sides agreed on further programmes to broaden and deepen bilateral chances.

Bilateral trade between the two countries showed an upward trend. India continued to provide trade concessions to Sri Lanka within the SAPTA framework with a view to improving market access for Sri Lankan products in India.  

25. Economic & Political Weekly March 17, 2001
In India B.J.P. government came into the power. The BJP government has taken a prudent middle course, assisting the government of Sri Lanka indirectly (offering the services of farmer Indian officials with expertise in counter terrorism) offering humanitarian assistance and restraining the Tiger’s supporters. The government has also quietly allowed other countries to assistant Sri Lanka, but it is unlikely that is wary of direct engagement but cannot allow the situation to deteriorate further.  

Role of Norway –

The Sri Lanka govt. were facing crisis continue appeals have been made to the govt. of India by the various segments of Sri Lankan society to get involved in Sri Lankan affairs get again to prevent a military debacle for the Sri Lanka forces and reviving some kind of negotiation between the LTTE and Sri Lanka govt.

In India, govt. of India extended ban on the LTTE. While insisting that the ban would not impede its efforts to Mediate between the Tigers and the Chandrika Kumartunga govt. India was yet to receive any formal request for diplomatic intervention from the Sri Lankan govt. She maintained that could take a decision on India’s offer or mediation only offer receiving an official intimation about it from New Delhi. 

At the third week of May 2000 the Norwegian took initiative international peace efforts. India, despite some initial skepticism supports the quiet diplomacy mode of Norway at least for the time being.

A delegation led by Erik Solheim special adviser to the Norwegian govt. on Sri Lanka arrived in New Delhi in the second week of May to hold consultation with the Indian govt. Both side agreed that there were no basic differences in approach in their respective peace moves with regard to Sri Lanka. They also agreed that a meaningful peace would be one that respected the aspirations of the minority peoples with in a united and sovereign Sri Lanka.28

Erik Solheim reassured Indian that his country recognizes Indian legitimate interest in Sri Lanka and that no obstacles would be placed in the way of any Indian initiative.

Danger signals from Sri Lanka-

Sri Lanka was in serious crisis again since the capture of the elephant pass the LTTE has swept across the Jaffna peninsula in a more or less victorious manner despite the use of airpower and armour by the Sri Lankan forces. LTTE has been able to sustain this successful campaign primarily

because of the passionate commitment of its cadres to their political and ideological objective of creating an independent Tamil state in Sri Lanka.  

The Sri Lankan army suffered a major set back in early 2000, and India was again confronted with a difficult situation. One option was to do nothing to affect the stalemate, which would have pleased the BJP’s Tamil coalition partners. However, this might have led to a further radicalization of the Sri Lanka government, with militant Buddhists gaining ascendancy, possibly leading to the partition of the island, with a flood of refugees pouring into India.

A second possibility was to attempt to repeat the 1988 IPKF operation and use force to suppress and even eliminate the Tigers. This would have been a bloody effort and might have been beyond Indian capabilities.

Third, India could have strengthened the capabilities of the Sri Lankan government to deal with the Tigers. This would have placed New Delhi on one side of a civil war, which would have put it at the mercy of Sinhala politics.

A fourth option would have been to deport from past policy and sponsor a coalition of regional and outside powers to help Sri Lanka cope with the insurgency, while continuing peacemaking efforts. Such a coalition could have been sanctioned by the United Nations or SAARC, with India as

the lead state, but with other South Asian states contributing their forces and expertise as well the risk was that Pakistan and other states might have argued that Kashmir deserves the same kind of internationalization.

**Elections in Sri Lanka**

General elections in Sri Lanka were held in the beginning of October 2000. President Chandrika Kumaratunga is due to face Presidential election in the 2001 year. Her people’s Alliance could not secure an absolute majority in the elections held in the first half of October. She managed to form a government of her party on the basis of an uneasy alliance with the Islamic party of Sri Lanka with representatives of Tamil Parties in Parliament and with some support from the JVP.

India’s foreign policy focus over the last few years has been on relations with the U.S. China, Russia and Japan. But it is time to pay attention to our immediate neighbour hood. Political developments in Sri Lanka subjected to the containing complications of the ethnic conflict remain a matter of interest and concern to India as the fall out of events in Sri Lanka impacts of India’s stability security even territorial unity.  

---

Elections in Sri Lanka, therefore merit our attention. Before coming to any value judgements about the elections and their results, or implications, it is necessary to examine the military the political and economic situation in Sri Lanka which constitutes the back drop of the elections. Militarily, the civil was situation is continuing in Sri Lanka.\textsuperscript{31}

Sri Lankan forces suffered in the summer of year 2000 with LTTE’s capture of the Elephant pass and its being poised to capture the entire Jaffna Peninsula. Sri Lanka was on the brink of territorial fragmentation earlier this time. But timely politico-military initiatives by Sri Lankan government under pinned by military and defence assistance from a number of countries particularly, the United states of America, Israel, Britain and Pakistan stemmed the LTTE’s run off military and territorial success. India also played a low-key but contributive role in assisting Sri Lanka counter the LTTE’s offensive.

The political predicament of Sri Lanka is even more involuted and complex. The ethnic conflict remains the focus of party politics, the processes of Governance and economic management. Kumaratunga’s initial efforts to find a solution by direct negotiations with the LTTE failed despite purposive efforts by her.

\textsuperscript{31} Dixit, J.N. P-277 Op.cit No. 14