

LANKA

GUARDIAN

Vol. 18 No. 27 June 1, 1995 Price Rs. 10.00 Registered at GPO, Sri Lanka QD/33/NEWS/94

WAR AND PEACE

ARMY

Can

WIN

— S.D. Muni

OR

ANOTHER VIETNAM?

— Anirudh Despande

LESSONS OF HISTORY

JPKF's errors and LTTE's response

—K.M. De Silva

EXTRADITING PRABHAKARAN

—Vijay Satokar

REGIONALISM

INDIAN OCEAN COOPORATION - Gareth Evans

U. S. S. A. - S. Venkat Narayan



Black Knight
It's your move

Back to the killing fields

Mervyn de Silva

EELAM WAR 3 takes us back to the killing fields but with a difference. The weaponry as well as the kill ratio of both combatants have introduced a new intensity into this 13 year separatist 'low intensity' conflict. At the same time, the "internal" conflict attracts more external interest and a growing foreign or international involvement.

The death toll exceeds 600, the armed forces probably taking more casualties than the LTTE in the first few weeks ----- certainly in the surface-to-air missile (SAM) attacks on two SLAF AVROs. The rumour that the LTTE has bought six microlight aircraft in France doubtless prompted the government to buy anti-aircraft in France doubtless prompted the government to buy anti-aircraft guns, a new feature of the Colombo skyline that attracts the attention of motorists and the pedestrian alike.

The death of more than 90 servicemen in the missile attacks on the AVROs was certainly the most shattering blow, to the armed forces, and to mass morale. Where did the missiles come from? Were the weapons of Russian or American make? The finger pointed anyway to Afghanistan, the last proxy war of the Cold War rivals, the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. It was too close for comfort --- certainly for the Prime Minister of India, Mr. Narasimha Rao who described this development as "frightening" ... for the whole region. Indian analysts say that it has "added a new dimension to the security scenario since this is the first time that heat-seeking missiles have been used by a militant or guerrilla group against aircraft in the subcontinent."

For Sri Lanka and the P.A. government it had more direct and immediate consequences, equally disturbing. It meant goodbye to the "peace dividend", a key factor in the Kumaratunga government's strategy. Defence expenditure, well over a million dollars a day, would be diverted to development, employment-oriented projects most of all, to meet what the P.A. think-tanks

had identified as the main security threat --- youth unemployment in the South which accounted for the steady rise of the J.V.P., albeit in a new non-violent, parliamentarist form. A failure to tackle that problem could catch the governing Sinhala elite in a pincer: a tough, disciplined and armed secessionist group in the North (the LTTE) and the steady rise of political violence in the South led probably by armed J.V.P.-type youth groups. The ruling class would be caught in a pincer. It could be "a state of siege".

On June 8, Deputy Finance Minister Prof. G.L. Pieris announced new revenue measures needed to meet mounting defence costs:

- 1) Defence levy up from 3.5% to 4.5% imposed on imports, local manufactures and financial services, it would net 1.9 billion rupees more.
- 2) The privatisation program would be expedited to net 5 billion rather than the estimated 4 billion.
- 3) Transferring 1.5 billion from the C.E.B.'s accumulated profits to the Treasury.
- 4) A 10% cutback on non-priority rupee-funded projects.
- 5) Postponing new projects.

"We are quite certain that the people of this country are willing to contribute to the war effort. Nobody will grumble. We are strengthened by this knowledge" said Dr. Pieris. In 1994, Sri Lanka spent 27 billion rupees on defence, about 540 million US dollars. After the ceasefire, the minister confidently cut the vote in his 1995 February budget. On April 19th, two "Sea Tigers" and two "Sea Tigresses" in two bomb-laden canoes blew themselves, two Sri Lanka navy patrol boats and the P.A.-LTTE 100-day truce to pieces, as NEWSWEEK reported. So now we have what the L.G. has named EELAM WAR 3.

Can we win this one? Prof. S.D. Muni of the Nehru Univ., one of India's best known "Sri Lanka experts" thinks we can. (See SRI LANKA CAN WIN THE EELAM WAR.)

The Sonia Factor

India is no dispassionate observer of the escalating hostilities in Sri Lanka's north and east. The Palk straits, no more than 20 miles, has separated sovereign Sri Lanka from India, the world's largest democracy with a population second only to China. Its southernmost state is known as TAMILNADU because Prime Minister

(Continued on page 18)

LANKA

GUARDIAN

Vol. 17 No. 27 June 1, 1995

Price Rs. 10.00

Published fortnightly by
Lanka Guardian Publishing Co. Ltd.
No. 246, Union Place
Colombo - 2.

Editor: Mervyn de Silva
Telephone: 447584

Printed by Sarasavi Printers
No. 9, Sir Henry De Mel Street,
Colombo-2.
Telephone: 436266, 320365

CONTENTS

How Sri Lanka can Win the Eelam War	2
India: Intermediary as Actor	3
TADA repeal may help extradite Prabhakaran	5
Indian Ocean and U.S. Policy	7
From 'SAARC' to 'United States of South Asia'?	10
Regionalism a New Tempo:	12
The Sri Lankan talks: a tragedy?	15
A surprise declaration	16
Lessons of Military History in Sri Lanka	19

How Sri Lanka can Win the Eelam War

By S.D. MUNI

SRI Lanka is caught in its third Eelam war. The responsibility for disrupting the four month old peace process and initiating armed conflict Chandrika Kumaratunga was serious about a peaceful solution to the ethnic strife. She relaxed the political atmosphere between Colombo and the LTTE by releasing essential supplies and fuel to the LTTE held north and by accommodating the LTTE's demand on the movement of Tamil fishermen. This was done at the cost of displeasing strong vested interests in the Sri Lankan security establishment and Sinhala chauvinist strongholds.

The only demand that Colombo was unwilling to concede was the dismantling of the Pooneryn military camp of the Sri Lankan security forces. The LTTE's demand for the removal of this camp is unjustified having agreed with the UNP government to shift it only by 500 meters. President Kumaratunga was even willing to shift the camp by 800 meters but is prepared to remove it to facilitate LTTE's military movements.

Three Reasons

There are three real reasons behind the LTTE's call to war. The peace process had started hurting the LTTE leader. Western governments put pressure on the LTTE to consider the peace process seriously and imposed restraints on the mobilisation and transfer of funds from the Tamil expatriot community to the LTTE. And the western governments began taking Ms Kumaratunga's peace initiatives seriously.

Tamils in north and east of Sri Lanka were happy with the peace process as supplies of essential commodities began gradually reaching them.

The common people were fast becoming admirers of President Kumaratunga making Prabhakaran uneasy and restless. The peace process would limit Prabhakaran's options tying him up in an unfamiliar process of political negotiations and bargain. Having lost the initiative, the burden of transition from a guerrilla leader to a democratic negotiator would have become unbearable for the LTTE supremo. Therefore, he started the "war of liberation for Tamil Eelam". He had done so on two earlier occasions in October 1987 and June 1990. In this case his excuse is far less credible.

Mr Prabhakaran's decided to disrupt the fragile peace in to disrupt the fragile peace in two ways. One, the acquisition of anti-aircraft weaponry in the LTTE's arsenal. Surface to air, heat seeking missiles were suspected to have reached the LTTE from Ukraine by the beginning of 1995, roughly around the time when President Kumaratunga worked out cease-fire with the LTTE. The LTTE accepted the cease-fire perhaps to train its cadres in the use of such new weapons.

The Sri Lankan president's discussion during her visit to India, March 1995, with the Indian leaders on the subject of Rajiv Gandhi's assassination and possible extradition of Prabhakaran to India, made the LTTE supremo insecure. In this context, the divergence between the AIADMK regime in Madras and Mr Narasimha Rao-led government in New Delhi - Madras conflict and count on Tamil Nadu as a possible source of support and sanctuary in his renewed Eelam war.

The outbreak of Eelam War-III negates the very basis of Ms

Kumaratunga's approach to the ethnic issue. Sri Lanka's security forces have been taken by surprise and the Peoples Alliance governments agenda for political and constitutional reforms has been put in jeopardy. In order to regain its lost confidence and initiative, the Kumaratunga regime has to work simultaneously on three fronts. Militarily, the LTTE has to be shown that it cannot win a war. The Sri Lankan security forces have to move fast, so as to neutralise their anti-aircraft weapon advantage and defeat their plans of overrunning the isolated military camps in the northeast region.

Continued Commitment

Ms Kumaratunga has to avoid falling into the trap of becoming a Sinhala war goddess. Instead she should mobilise all sections of the Sri Lankan nation; the Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims and other minorities in her fight against the LTTE. Her continued commitment with the peace process and to a devolution package to meet the basic aspirations of Tamils and Muslims will be of considerable help in this regard.

President Kumaratunga has considerable international support in this third Eelam war. She has to cautiously nurse and consolidate this support as an effective source of strength. Prabhakaran's irritation with the international community was clearly evident in his broadside against the Americans. India cannot afford to let Ms Kumaratunga fail in its own vital security interests. The form and extent of India's support in will have to be carefully worked within the parameters of the Indo-Sri Lanka agreement of July 1987.

India: Intermediary as Actor

K.M. de Silva

The tensions and dramas of the early days of June were followed by weeks of mutual recrimination between the two countries. On the diplomatic scene stalemate and immobility replaced the frenetic activity of May and early June. Yet in the first two weeks of July an exchange of political signals set the two governments on the road to serious negotiations to break the deadlock. The initiative came from India with the offer to underwrite the implementation of a political programme that would ensure the end of the current ethnic conflict in the island. Both governments had a clear understanding of what this meant: the LTTE would have to accept the settlement negotiated by the two governments, and the Indian government would use all the resources at its command to compel them to do so. In return the Sri Lankan government was urged to consent formally to implement the substance of the agreements reached on devolution and related subjects in the negotiations which had taken place between 1985 and 1987. There was a second proviso: the Sri Lankan authorities were asked to agree to a link between the northern and eastern provinces, the large Tamil ethno-region on which the Tamil political activists had set their hearts. This was the final step in the adoption of the devolution package which the TULF as well as the armed separatist groups had demanded since 1983, and which the Sri Lankan government had refused to consider, much less to accept. A loophole was left to make the offer more palatable to the government: the link would be a temporary one, and its fate would eventually be decided by a referendum to be held in the eastern province. Even so, there was no mistaking the enormity of the political risks inherent in its acceptance by President Jayewardene. Once this was agreed upon, the negotiations proceeded beyond the devolution issue to foreign policy matters relating to India's security concerns and interests.

The news that an accord

was about to be signed leaked out despite all the efforts of the negotiating teams to keep the discussions as confidential as possible. The opposition parties and the Marxist and ultra nationalist JVP sensed much more accurately than the government the public mood of hostility to an agreement with India so soon after the humiliation inflicted on Sri Lanka in early June. The accord ignited massive protests in the country in the last week of July, the worst anti-government riots in the country's post-independence history. The opposition was partly a reflection of an innate hostility to Indian pressure, partly a rejection of the more controversial features of the accord such as the link between the northern and eastern provinces, but much more because of the antipathy if not antagonism to Rajiv Gandhi for India's violation of Sri Lankan air space, which had occurred just six weeks earlier.

President Jayewardene decided to brave the hostility of the opposition forces and went ahead with preparations for the signing of this controversial and fateful accord. On 29 July Rajiv Gandhi arrived in Colombo to sign it on behalf of India.

The main points of the accord were:

- * a complete cessation of hostilities, and the surrender of weapons held by the Tamil separatist activists, within seventy-two hours of the implementation of the accord;
- * the provision of Indian military assistance to help with its implementation (more than 7,000 Indian troops were drafted in August);
- * the establishment of a system of provincial councils in the island, based on the island's nine provincial units;
- * the joining together of the northern and eastern provinces into one administrative unit with an elected provincial council there (to be elected within three months)

- * the holding of a referendum in the eastern province to determine whether the mixed population of Tamils, Sinhalese and Muslims there would support its merger with the northern province in to a single Tamil dominated province;

- * a general amnesty for all Tamil separatist activists in custody, imprisoned or facing charges, after the general surrender of arms;

- * the repatriation of about 100,000 Tamil refugees in India to Sri Lanka.

- * the resumption of the Repatriation of Indian citizens from Sri Lanka, under the terms of agreements reached between the governments of Sri Lanka and India in 1964 and 1974.

- * the prevention of the use of Indian territory by Tamil militants for military or propaganda purposes; the prevention of the military use of Sri Lankan ports, Trincomalee in particular, by any country in a manner prejudicial to Indian interests; and

- * a provision that Tamil and English have equal status with Sinhala as official languages.

Although the Cabinet eventually approved the signing of the accord, the divisions among Cabinet members on this issue could not be concealed. Lalith Athulathmudali, as Minister of National Security, was the most consistent critic. Prime Minister R. Premadasa was scarcely less hostile. Much of the opposition was based on personal antagonism to Rajiv Gandhi; some of it reflected a sense of despair at the political risks incurred by the government; the higher priority given to India's over Sri Lanka's security interests; as well as the use of Indian troops to supervise and enforce the ceasefire. The Sri Lankan negotiators had opted for an Indian army presence for this latter purposes for two reasons; the need for speedy implementation of the

accord, two weeks to a month being the optimistic time-table spoken of at this stage by their Indian counterparts; and because such an Indian contingent would be more acceptable to the Tamil who would be readily surrender their arms to them rather than to the Sri Lankan security forces. With whom they had been in conflict for so long, or to a Commonwealth / UN peace-keeping force. The attempt to restrict if not ban the employment by Sri Lanka of foreign military and intelligence personnel directly impinged on Sri Lanka's own security interests and was seen as a constraint on its choices in security. The references related to an Israeli presence in Sri Lanka, and to British mercenary groups engaged in training Sri Lankan forces. The resort to these had been forced upon Sri Lanka by Indian pressure on Great Britain and other countries, likely to be of assistance to Sri Lanka, to desist from establishing training facilities for Sri Lankan forces in the island. The Indian offer to provide training facilities and military supplies for Sri Lankan security forces was regarded as one-sided when the threat to Sri Lankan security was, and still is, seen to come from India alone.

The signing of the accord lead to violent protests and wide spread civil unrest among the Sinhalese majority in and around Colombo and in the south-west of the country. These demonstrations had the support of the SLFP, of sections of the sangha, and of a revived JVP. Rajiv Gandhi himself narrowly escaped serious injury, if not death itself, when an enraged sailor swung his rifle but at him at the guard of honour ceremony prior to the Indian Prime Minister's departure from Colombo.

Although many risks were expected in nay progress towards the stabilization of the accord (given the Opposition of the SLFP, the Prime Minister and several other members of the Cabinet), the early indications seemed encouraging. Sri Lankan security forces in the northern and eastern provinces returned to their barracks and the paramilitary forces

there were disarmed as part of the Sri Lankan government's obligations under the accord. The LTTE began a symbolic handing-over of arms. However, it is in the nature of things that peace accords seldom work according to the wishes of those who negotiate them. The early signs of progress proved to be deceptive.

If a swift pacification of the north and east was envisaged by the Indian and the Sri Lankan governments, they were quickly disillusioned. The Indian Peace-Keeping Force (IPKF) entered Sri Lanka under the assumption that they would be welcomed in the Tamil areas of the north and the east as liberators and that the separatist forces would quickly and willingly surrender their arms to them. What happened was that its presence was very soon resented by the LTTE, who decided to defy them. They began with attacks on their Tamil rivals, of whom nearly 150 were killed. The massacre of about 200 Sinhalese in the eastern province shortly thereafter (in September) led to a toughening of the Indian attitude.

Urgent discussions between President Jayewardene and Prime Minister Gandhi brought into force part of the hidden agenda of the peace accord, that Indian troops would eventually be used against the LTTE. As early as 2 August 1987 Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi had given an assurance to President Jayewardene that ".....if Prabhakaran goes back on his word in any manner or fails to organize surrender of arms, the Indian army will move to disarm the LTTE by force."²² With practically world-wide condemnation of the LTTE, and severe criticism of India for its failure to maintain the peace, the Indian army at last decided to disarm the LTTE, and to make an effort to destroy it as a military if not political force.

Accordingly the IPKF now moved into disarm the LTTE and, when faced with resistance from the latter, launched a major attack on the LTTE strong holds in Jaffna town and peninsula in the second weeks of October.

Despite stiff resistance from the LTTE which necessitated the deployment of thousands of reinforcements, the LTTE's hold on Jaffna and the peninsula was eventually broken. Both parties, the Indian army and the LTTE suffered heavy casualties, but those who suffered most were the Tamil people.

The Indian government which had intervened earlier in the year to prevent the destruction of the LTTE by the Sri Lankan army were doing it themselves; the Indian government which objected to the Sri Lankan army taking Jaffna city was doing it themselves, and in that process inflicting much heavier casualties and far greater hardship than anything done up to that time by the Sri Lankan Human rights in their confrontation with the Tamil separatist groups, now found itself defending its own forces facing similar charges and with even greater frequency.

The Indian army made a number of tactical mistakes which helped the battered LTTE forces to regroup. The latter was allowed -- or able -- to escape from the Jaffna peninsula to precisely those areas of the northern province from which the small Sri Lankan army had driven them out earlier in the year. They were also permitted to establish themselves in the Trincomalee district of the eastern province in which - up to that time -- they had not much more than foothold. Above all, if the LTTE had been able to survive in the jungles of the northern province against the massive presence of the Indian army, that had as much to do with the reluctance if not failure of the Indians to deliver a coup grace to the LTTE -- for political purpose linked to the Byzantine politics of Tamil Nadu -- as with the LTTE's far superior knowledge of the terrain they were operating in relative to that of the Indians. The LTTE was permitted to maintain a small but conspicuous presence in Madras through which it channelled its official "messages" to various parts of India, and from there to the rest of the world. This contradiction in Indian policy, was regarded in Sri Lanka as a concession to Tamil

Nadu sentiment.

Although the IPKF was never seen outside the north and east of the country (except in the North Central province on their way to the east coast) its shadow lay across the country's political landscape. Its presence was exploited politically against the government, by the SLFP and the JVP acting together or separately.

6. Implementation of the Accord - the Sri Lankan Aspect

The opprobrium attached to the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord was focused on its architects within the government and especially the President himself. The JVP, the most vocal, violent and consistent critics of the accord, called for his assassination through posters and inflammatory pamphlets and speeches (transmitted through tapes). On 18 August 1987 the JVP

very nearly succeeded in assassinating him within the parliamentary complex when the whole parliamentary group were gathered to discuss the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord. He had a miraculous escape. One District Minister was killed on that occasion and several cabinet Ministers (including Lalith Athulathmudali, Minister for National Security) seriously injured. Earlier one MP had been killed on 31 July by the JVP in the violence that broke out in the wake of the signing of the accord.

Over the next 15 months the JVP assassinated one Cabinet Minister and one District Minister, as well as the Chairman and Secretary of the UNP. Several MPs narrowly escaped death at the hands of the JVP. It is estimated that over a 1,000 UNP cadres were killed during this period alone. The objective of this violence in the early stages was to

prevent the implementation of the legislative program envisaged in the Indo-Sri Lankan accord. That this program was implemented at all was due in the main to the political skills and Personal courage of President Jayewardene. When Parliament debated the 13th amendment to the constitution (in November 1987) making provision for the establishment of a system of provincial councils, by far the most controversial part of this program, the security precautions taken within and outside Parliament were unparalleled in the history of the national legislature.

TADA repeal may help extradite Prabhakaran

By Vijay Satokar

COLOMBO, May 21

The Indian government's decision to repeal the controversial Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (prevention) Act obstacle in the extradition, if sought, of the LTTE leader V Prabhakaran, according to legal opinion here.

The issue of extradition of the LTTE leader wanted in connection with the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi in 1991 has again become a topic of discussion here following recent remarks by external affairs minister Pranab Mukherjee in the New Delhi. Mr. Mukherjee said relevant aspects of extradition of Prabhakaran and other accomplices remained under the consideration of the relevant agencies of the government.

Some legal experts felt that the draconian provisions of TADA might have provided a justification for the refusal of extradition since the act alleged to constitute the extraditable offence must be on that has its equivalent in Sri Lanka.

Prabhakaran and his intelligence chief, Pottu Amman, the two wanted LTTE leaders, in addition to the general criminal law, have also been charged under the TADA in the designated court in India.

Legal circles also point out that although extradition of Prabhakaran would be subject to his arrest by the Sri Lankan authorities, the capture itself is no pre-requirement for commencement of the extradition proceedings which consists of a lengthy legal process.

There was some confusion caused here when the Interpol office in India last year issued two "red corner" notices calling for the extradition of Prabhakaran and Pottu Amman from any country.

The Colombo Interpol replied stating that it was unable to apprehend the two offenders as they were in LTTE controlled areas in the North.

Even as legal aspects of the extradition of Prabhakaran and Pottu Amman continue to be debated in the newspaper columns, the recent remarks by Sri Lanka's Minister of Livestock development, Savmyamorthy Thondaman, in India comparing the LTTE leader with the Indian martyr Bhagat Singh have come in for severe criticism in some quarters.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

Air Mail

Canada/U.S.A.

US\$ 65/ for 1 year

US\$ 45/ for 6 months

U.K., Germany, New Zealand, Australia, Netherlands, France, Japan, Holland, Philippines, Austria, Norway, Sweden, China, Ireland, Sweden, China, Ireland, Switzerland, Nigeria, Belgium, Denmark, Paris, London.

US\$ 55/ for 1 year

US\$ 35/ for 6 months

Hong Kong, Saudi Arabia, Dubai, Bahrain, Arabian Gulf, Syria, Singapore.

US\$ 45/ for 1 year

US\$ 25/ for 6 months

India, Pakistan

US\$ 40/ for 1 year

US\$ 22/ for 6 months

Local

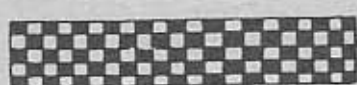
Rs. 250/- for 1 year

Rs. 150/- for 6 months

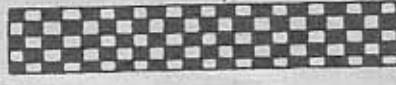
Ace Radio Cab

- Computerised meters • Can be summoned to your doorstep
- No call up charge within city limits • Vehicle access from selected stands
- Receipts issued on request • Company credit available

Call 501502 501503 or 501504



Aset Ltd



Another Aitken Spence Service



INDIAN OCEAN AND U.S. POLICY

Humayun Kabir

As the 'Northern Tier' was in disarray by the late 1970s, the American policy was devoted to the twin objectives of preventing a projection of Soviet power southwards towards Pakistan and the Persian Gulf area, and to maintaining a naval presence in the Indian Ocean in the interest of American global deterrent strategy as well as for the purpose of countering an Indo-Soviet build-up of naval forces in the South Asian region.¹⁰ This policy called for a revision of the "Vietnam syndrome" and it was reflected in the "Carter Doctrine"¹¹ on the use of military force in the Persian Gulf as an "inviolable sphere of U.S. interest" and in the resurrection of American self-confidence and a resumed policy in American global responsibilities under the Reagan administration which took detente as a fundamentally mistaken concept and was bent on reestablishing the power position of the United States through a policy of strength, including military. The United States, therefore, concentrated its policy mostly on the Indian Ocean / Persian Gulf area with a view to upgrading the facilities at Diego Garcia and with an eye on Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

India found its strategic environment seriously threatening its security interests. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi stated in Parliament that "the focus of the Cold War has shifted from Europe to the Indian Ocean littoral.... Our South-west and South-east Asia flanks are flash points. New armaments are being piled up in our region, not only around the India Ocean but in a number of island countries.... Never in the last two decades has the international outlook been as grim as it is today".¹² Members of the Lower House of India Parliament (Lok Sabha), while debating on the Defence Ministry Demands for Grants, also painted a grim picture

of the security impinging on India's interests. They stated that "the outbreak of armed conflict between Iran and Iraq... and developments in Afghanistan and the competition of big powers for making their presence felt in the Indian Ocean are additional burning issues of vital importance...".¹³ Earlier on, in 1978, Prime Minister Morarji Desai, his External Affairs Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and several other MPs had expressed their concern at the presence of superpowers in the Indian Ocean, particularly at that of the U.S. strengthening of its base at Diego Garcia.¹⁴

Clearly, the oceanic front assumed greater significance for India. As India began to orient itself in an extended strategic framework from the later half of the 1970s, when India had already established its predominant status in South Asia by means of the 1971 victory over Pakistan and the 1974 nuclear explosion, the altered strategic scenario came as a challenge to her 'natural status and role' making it vulnerable, in its own perceptions, through its vast and exposed southern oceanic front. India, therefore, became sensitive about its neighbours' stability and their foreign policy and security postures, particularly of those in its south.

On the other hand, Sri Lanka under President Jayewardene followed a pro-West foreign policy. There was, indeed, a pronounced pro-American tilt in his policy. While this pro-Western orientation was clear to all Sri Lanka, the views on the causes attributable to such a course varied. Some people, representing the whole spectrum of Sri Lanka's power elite, including the government and opposition, officials, and the academic and media world, contended that the determining factor in the foreign policy orientation of the

post-1977 UNP administration was its economic compulsions; these apparently pushed the country to the doors of the Western nations which are capable of releasing the much-needed inflow of foreign capital to Colombo. But in reality Jayewardene's new open-door economic policy, which of course strengthened his foreign policy, was a mere coincidental priority. At a later stage, President Jayewardene himself made a clear when he stated: "The main purpose of any foreign policy of a country is the preservation of its independence and thus its defence. The second important factor would be the preservation of its food supplies. Thirdly, its trade, both export and import. Even the ideological friendships and attachments depend mainly on these factors".¹⁵ Clearly, the principal objective of Sri Lanka's foreign policy was to ensure its security. But security against what?

Obviously, it was against India, because of its increased power capabilities consciously built up over the years. Jayewardene was apprehensive of the potential threat from a more powerful India for his country's security, despite his Indo-phile past. Even before becoming Sri Lanka's leader, he once asked: "... how are the people who live in the small countries around the Indian Ocean to defend themselves against a huge and mighty nation (India) of five hundred million people....".¹⁶ Sri Lanka's security strategy, therefore, continued to be the building of counter-balance against India. It may be mentioned that while India's Janatha Party government was attitudinally softer and bilaterally more accommodative and its leaders personally not being imperious and domineering towards the neighbouring countries and their leaders, the Congress (I) administration was much less so,¹⁷ leading respectively to a warmer and more tense

atmosphere in the South Asian regional relationship. However, on the question of India's security, there was no let-up in its eternal vigilance irrespective of the complexion of the party in power in New Delhi.

Jayewardene's UNP government apparently found this counterbalance in the United States, Pakistan and, to a lesser extent, in China. But it was essentially more of a strong pro-American bias than anything else. As mentioned earlier, the UNP has always been an advocate of a West-oriented foreign policy, and Jayewardene himself was known as "Yankee Dickie". Nonalignment, the second of Sri Lanka's security, 'tripod', was downgraded and pursued in favour of the West, while the UNP government was practically not interested in vigorously pursuing the efforts to implement the UN resolution on IOZOP.

In Sri Lanka, it is a commonly held view that President Jayewardene's foreign policy was essentially prejudicial to India as it appeared to do oblivious to India's security sensitivities and ignored the regional geo-strategic fundamentals intrinsic in a situation of proximate and asymmetric power balance. Such trends and turns in Sri Lanka's foreign policy was observed in her nonaligned policy, in her attitudes towards the concept of IOZOP and U.S. bases in Diego Garcia, in its position on certain important international issues, and in the nature of relationships with the U.K., China, Pakistan and the ASEAN.

Jayewardene government's Non-aligned Policy.

The UNP government of President Jayewardene officially professed adherence to nonaligned policy. In his inaugural address to the Colombo Ministerial Meeting of the Coordination Bureau of Nonaligned countries in June 1979, President Jayewardene stated: "Non-alignment runs like a golden thread through the fabric of our country's foreign policy... At no stage has our country deviated from that policy. At no stage, I will make bold to say, will it do so in the future".¹⁸ But in his policy

statement made on 4 August 1977 in the National State Assembly, there was no mention as to what its policy towards NAM would be. Instead, he declared that the principles of Non-Alignment which were first adopted at the Afro-Asian Conference at Bandung in 1955 will be supported. In fact, stress was laid on 'strict non-alignment, ostensibly to 'correct' Mrs Bandaranaike's with a 'bent towards one side'.¹⁹

Although President Jayewardene once stated to the press that he was more non-aligned than Mrs Bandaranaike who had leaned more towards some states than the others²⁰, his assurance of pursuing a strict or genuine non-aligned policy was, as rightly told by Naveed Ahmad, "an implicit promise to be more friendly to the U.S. and other Western countries, instead of being more partial towards the socialist states".²¹ As a matter of fact, the rhetoric of the Sri Lankan leaders did not accord with the substance of the country's foreign policy. One Opposition MP aptly put it when he stated in Parliament that "Non-alignment can only mean non-aligned. A circle is a circle. One cannot be more round than the other. You cannot truly say you are non-aligned".²² Whether this pro-Western strand in Sri Lanka's non-aligned policy was governed by economic factors²³ or not, it appeared to many as a harking back to the foreign policy of the UNP regimes of the 1950s with its overtones of anti-Indianism.²⁴ Kodikara aptly put it when he wrote that "the UNP and the government led by it, while adopting non-alignment as a general principle of foreign policy, have always been more prone to seek reinsurance against India in the West, that is Britain and the United State".²⁵ While India's Janatha government had found some sort of similarity with Jayewardene's brand of non-alignment, Mrs Gandhi was clearly irritated by it. This was evident from the way she resented Jayewardene's proposal at the NAM summit in 1983 in New Delhi for a non-aligned initiative to acquaint countries of the North with the economic plight of the South. The proposal envisaged visits by a roving team of

Heads of Government led by the Indian prime Minister to important world capitals. Indira Gandhi sharply reacted by saying that she would not line to go abroad with a begging bowl in hand. She betrayed her resentment again when replying to a query at a press conference later on.²⁶

Jayewardene government's Indian Ocean Policy.

Although Sri Lanka continued to support the IOPZ in principle,²⁷ the initial enthusiasm indeed declined sharply after 1977. President Jayewardene was apprehensive of India's filling the power vacuum that would be created in the Indian Ocean in the event of withdrawal of the external powers from the area.²⁸ He, therefore, favoured a balance of power in the Indian Ocean that would safeguard his country's security. In practice, however, Sri Lanka exhibited an explicit pro-U.S. tilt. This was manifested in the following:

First, Sri Lanka's position on the U.S. military build-up at Diego Garcia was favourable to Washington. India was opposed to it as it resented the naval competition between the super-powers in its immediate neighbourhood. Second, in 1982, Sri Lanka abstained from a U.N. resolution calling on all nuclear states to refrain from stationing nuclear weapons on the territories of other states. India supported the resolution.²⁹ Third, Pakistan presented at the Seventh NAM Summit in New Delhi in 1983 a proposal wanting the entire Indian Ocean area to be declared a Nuclear Weapons Free Zones (NWFZ), including the littoral and hinterland states. Sri Lanka, along with Bangladesh and Nepal, supported it. India rejected it as she thought that it was aimed at bringing in the old Pakistani proposal to make South Asia a NWFZ, and also including within the scope of the proposal the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. Earlier, India had also rejected a Pakistani proposal for a regional collective security in the Indian Ocean in 1979.³⁰

Fourth, in 1981 Sri Lanka withdrew its candidate, Ambassador Christopher Pinto, for the post of Chairman of the

Third Law of the Sea Conference to pave the way for Singapore's Ambassador Tommy Koh. One eminent Sri Lankan commentator was of the view that the U.S. would be happy to note that Sri Lanka was not lobbying too hard for IOZOP.³¹ And fifth, Sri Lanka was the Chairman of the UN Special Committee on the Indian Ocean. But President Jayewardene was not keen on the convening a conference of this committee. He tried to avoid responsibility by saying "what can we do if one or both of the superpowers do not agree to come to the conference. I am afraid we cannot do much. It is up to the United Nations to think of what to do".³²

The developments in the Indian Ocean area and the changed perspective of Sri Lanka regarding the IOZOP were perceived by India as having deleterious effect on her security. After all, the IOZOP is the maritime corollary of India's regional strategic policy³³, which is to deny or neutralise any extra-re-

gional role, to maintain the status quo in the South Asian power balance and to maintain stability in the region. India was concerned about its security as it believed that the Indian Ocean/South Asian region became a possible arena of cold war confrontation which would also undercut her politico-military primacy in the area. Sri Lanka's revised Indian Ocean policy just compounded India's security concerns. The other trends in Colombo's foreign policy did so still more. India appeared to have been most concerned over Sri Lanka's alleged offer of base facilities to the U.S. Navy at the Trincomalee Port, over the grant of contract regarding the Oil Tank Farm (ITF) at Trincomalee to a U.S.-affiliated consortium, and over the Voice of America (VOA) agreement between Washington and Colombo.

The Trincomalee base controversy.

They were speculations that the Jayewardene government had offered

facilities to the American Navy at Trincomalee. These were given rise to by two factors. The first was Colombo's lifting in 1981 of nine-year old ban on foreign warships using facilities at the Trincomalee harbour, following which the U.S. Navy sent a number of warships to this Sri Lankan port on various missions.³⁴ And the second was a 1981 report that America had naval access to this port. General David Jones, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, reportedly referred to the possibility of Trincomalee being considered as a potential U.S. base in the Indian Ocean.³⁵ It was also reported in the Indian capital in 1980 that some U.S. Congressmen, reportedly with the blessing of the State Department, had approached officials at the Sri Lankan Embassy in Washington for "rest and recreation" facilities at Trincomalee for U.S. sailors serving in the Indian Ocean region.³⁶

Notes

10. See for details of NALT talks P.S. Jayaramu, *India's National Security and Foreign Policy*, ABC Publishing House, New Delhi, 1987, pp. 96-99.
11. Sheila Harden, *Small is Dangerous: Micro States in a Macro World*, Frances Pinter, London, 1985, p. 6.
12. *Time* magazine, 3 January 1979, p. 4.
13. Hedley Bull, "The Great Irresponsibles? The United States, the Soviet Union, and World Order", *International Journal*, Vol. XXXV, No. 3, Summer 1980, p. 437.
14. Philip Windsor, "Superpower Intervention" in Hedley Bull (ed.), *Intervention in World Politics*, Oxford University Press, 1984, p. 58.
15. Shelton U. Kodikara, "International Dimensions of Ethnic Conflict in Sri Lanka", An Unpublished research paper, Colombo, undated, p. 30; Paul X Kelley, "Putting 'Lethal Teen' in U.S. Foreign Policy", *The Christian Science Monitor*, 20 August 1980, p. 22.
16. See President Carter's State of the Union Message, 23 January 1980 in *Current Policy*, No. 132, U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Public Affairs, Washington, D.C.
17. *Lok Sabha Debates*, Seventh Series, Vol. XV, No. 39, 9 April 1981, Cols. 365-

366. In 1980 she stated that "...today, we find it (Indian Ocean) churning with danger.... The frantically increasing pace of militarisation in the Indian Ocean makes the 3,500 miles of our coast more vulnerable.... Any big power conflict in our ocean or neighbourhood will hit us hard. All this tension has built up because of the collapse of detente and the resultant renewal of the cold war with all its severity". **Selected Speeches and Writings of Indira Gandhi**, Vol. IV, January 1980-December 1981, Publication Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, New Delhi, 1985, pp. 513-14.

18. *ibid.*, Col. 264 and *ibid.*, Vol. XXVI, No. 25, 25 March 1982, Cols. 339-410.
19. *Lok Sabha Debates*, Sixth Series, Vol. X, No. 6, 27 February 1978, Cols. 260-281. In 1982, one MP stated in the Lok Sabha that "by establishing a military base at Diego Garcia, America has, as in the game of chess, put a chess, put a check on the sovereignty of the Indian nation. No patriot can tolerate this." *Lok Sabha Debates*, Seventh Series, Vol. XXVI, No. 25, 25 March 1982, Col. 410.
20. *The Sunday Observer*, Colombo, 25 October 1987.
21. *Report of Proceedings of the Twentieth Commonwealth Parliamentary*

Conference, held in Colombo in September 1974, Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, London, n. d. p. 44.

22. *Report of Proceedings of the Twentieth Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference*, held in Colombo in September 1974, Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, London, n. d. p. 44.
23. Under the Janatha government "India gave top priority to improving its relations with its immediate neighbours among its foreign policy objectives. These relations, developed on the basis of equality, goodwill and mutual trust, helped towards creating a climate of normalisation and friendship, thus promoting the cause of peace in the region". See *Ministry of External Affairs Report, 1977-78*, New Delhi, 1979, p. 1. By contrast, the central theme of the neighbourhood policy of the Indira Gandhi government was "India's desire to promote the establishment of peace in the region to enable individual countries to pursue their efforts for economic and social amelioration of their peoples, free from outside interference.... Reciprocity...would...form the basis of good neighbourly relations" (emphasis added). See *ibid.*, 1980-81, p. v.

From 'SAARC' to 'United States of South Asia'?

S. Venkat Narayan

THE SEVEN countries that are members of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) will ratify the South Asian Preferential Trade Agreement (SAPTA) by November this year, one month before the regional grouping celebrates its tenth anniversary. This was decided during the eighth summit of SAARC's heads of states or governments, which concluded here on May 4.

SAPTA's ratification will enable Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka to promote intra-SAARC trade. According to an estimate made by the United States-based Centre Global Trade Development (CGTD), low customs tariffs and minimum restrictions on movement of goods and services from one country to another in the region will help increase intra-SAARC trade five-fold from the present US dollars 3 billion to over dollars 15 billion by the year 2000 AD.

South Asia, where 1,200 million people (a fifth of humankind) live "is poised to become an important economic force with the preferential trade agreement (SAPTA) and could change the economic scenario of the most ancient market place of the world", predicts CGTD report.

The seven geographically contiguous countries were considered the backbone of the British Empire. Throughout recorded history, this area was coveted by every empire-builder worth his salt, including Alexander the Great. Until the British left the subcontinent in 1947, British India was considered a Jewel in the (British) Crown.

However, even five decades later, the legacy left behind by the British continues to haunt South Asia. The political and economic amalgamation of the seven countries in the region into a formidable entity by the turn of the

century appeared to be an impossibility until the other day.

No longer. Quite a few of those who had gathered to witness the birth of SAARC in December 1985 in Dhaka were sceptical about the outfit taking off in the first place. As it happens, India is the only country which shares its borders with four of the member countries, while narrow strips of sea separate it from the remaining two.

Inevitably enough, only neighbours tend to have problems. India has had some problem or the other with Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal. Merci-

yet happen, and SAARC may eventually help the quarrelling neighbours to sort out their problems in the not too distant future?

SAARC may indeed be a poor men's club. Individually, its member countries may not wield much clout in the comity of nations. But shared history, culture, heritage, natural resources and talent that are available in the region may verily make South Asia the lion of tomorrows Asia. The strength of South Asia lies in the seven countries sticking together and demanding to be counted in global affairs.

SAARC may indeed be a poor men's club. Individually, its member countries may not wield much clout in the comity of nations. But shared history, culture, heritage, natural, resources and talent that are available in the region may verily make South Asia the lion of tomorrows Asia. The strength of South Asia lies in the seven countries sticking together and demanding to be counted in global affairs.

fully, Indian Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao, who took charge as SAARC chairman at the New Delhi summit, does not look at them as problems or irritants, but only as the legacies left behind by history. He believes they can be solved if you have patience and perseverance.

Having covered all the summits held so far, and having witnessed the vicissitudes through which SAARC has passed, prospects of the success of SAARC have not been so bad or disappointing as professional pessimists would want us to believe.

Yes, its progress has been painfully slow. The clouds of distrust that bedevil India's relations with Pakistan forever threaten to wash the fledgling organisation out of existence in a frightening downpour. But it hasn't happened, it never will. Who knows, a miracle may

It is true that roughly every second person in South Asia lives below the poverty line. But it is equally true that it is home to over 425 million people in the middle-class bracket -the biggest anywhere in the world. Now that India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh are queuing up to get into the region. But, right now, intra-SAARC trade amounts to a pitiable 3.5 per cent of the region's total trade. The just-released "SAARC Survey of Development and Cooperation 1995" notes. The interregional trade between South Asian countries is very small and there is significant potential for its increase"

In 1993, the total exports of non-SAARC developing countries amounted to a staggering dollars 1,125 billion. Of this intraregional trade between those countries was as high as 40 percent (dollars 450 billion). Therefore, the potential for increased trade

within SAARC countries is obviously enormous.

THIS IS where SAPTA can come in to make this happen. The New Delhi-based Research and Information System (RIS) for the non-aligned and other developing countries, which prepared the SAARC Survey, recommends that "reduction in trade barriers should be steeper than that provided under the World Trade Organisation (WTO) Agreement". It also suggests that the current "product-by-product" approach should be replaced by "across-the-board concessions".

At the first press conference Mr Rao addressed in his capacity as SAARC's new chairman here on May

4, I asked him: "Do you foresee the emergence of SAARC as a "United States of South Asia" (USSA) in the manner of the United States of America (USA) and the European Union (EU) in a decade or two from now"?

The 74-years-old leader pondered over the question for a moment or two, and said: "You see, I am not an astrologer. But I think the trend is right. The direction is the correct one. I am sure that we'll try more as we go along". Let's remember that it took ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) 25 years to get over their intraregional political problems to become a region of economic tigers.

Mr Rao had declared in his inaugu-

ral address: "In our quest for this future, we can take encouragement from the perceived historical shift that we are moving towards what is predicted will be the Asian Century. We have to ensure through our visionary actions that South Asia is part of this resurgence and does not become a backwater of the New Asia. By strength of numbers, talent and ability, we should, as we did fifty years ago at the dawn of the post-colonial era, be in the vanguard of the revival of Asia. This is the challenge of history before us which we have to address and master".

Are South Asia's decision makers ready and willing to cope with this challenge?

(Continued from page 9)

24. Text of Speech in **Sri Lanka Foreign Affairs Record**, Vol. 1, July 1978-June 1979, Colombo.
25. H.S.S. Nissanka, **Sri Lanka's Foreign Policy: A Study in Non-Alignment**, Op. cit., p. 345; T.D.S.A. Dissanayaka, **J.R. Jayewardene of Sri Lanka**, Swastika Press, Colombo, 1977, pp. 70-72; President Jayewardene said interview: "To me both sides are equal. I would like to be friendly with all countries". **Dawn**, Karachi, 9 September 1977.
26. **Sunday Observer**, Colombo, 11 September 1977.
27. Naveed Ahmad, "Recent Developments in Sri Lanka", **Pakistan Horizon**, Vol. XXXII, No. 3, Third Quarter, 1979, p. 42.
28. See for Dharmalingam's statement, **National State Assembly Debates, Official Record**, Colombo, Vol. 25(1), No. 2, 6 December 1977, Cols. 359-360.
29. Karunadasa is of the opinion that Sri Lanka's interest in non-aligned politics was governed more by economic factors rather than political. See Ph.D. Thesis of Wadu Mestriye Karunadasa, **Non-Alignment: A Case Study of Sri Lanka's Foreign Policy With Special Reference to 1970-1982**, Lake House Investment Ltd., Book House, Colombo, 1988, p. 12.
30. For example see Shelton U. Kodikara, "Keynote Address: Geo-strategic Perspectives of Indo-Sri Lanka Relations" in his (ed.), **Dilemmas of Indo-Sri Lankan Relations**, op. cit., p. 26.
31. Shelton U. Kodikara, Paper presented at the Marga Institute seminar on Political Dimension in South Asian Cooperation, 7-9 November 1987, Colombo, p. 21.
32. **The Hindu**, Madras, 27 April 1983.
33. Foreign Minister Hameed told the Ministerial Meeting of the NAM Coordinating Bureau in Havana in May 1978 that "We stand uncompromisingly for a total elimination of great power military presence and bases, as being the only certain means of removing tension and conflict in the area". See **Weekend**, Colombo, 21 May 1978. Tyrone Fernando, Deputy Foreign Minister, stated in Parliament that his government was fully committed to the concept of IOPZ. See **Parliamentary Debates, (Hansard), Official Report**, Colombo, Vol. 24, No. 5, 10 June 1983, Col. 496.
34. See President J.R. Jayewardene's Address at Convocation of the Bandaranaike Centre for International Studies on 2 September 1987, in J.R. Jayewardene, **My Quest for Peace: A Collection of Speeches on International Affairs**, Stamford Press Pvt Ltd., Singapore, 1988, p. 204.
35. **UNGA, 37th Session, Provisional Verbatim record of the 101st Meeting**, 13 December 1982, Resolution No. 37/89/A.
36. **Times of India**, New Delhi, 10 March 1983; **Indian and Foreign Review**, New Delhi, Vol. 16, No. 10, 1 March 1979.
37. Mervyn De Silva, "Operation ASEAN", **India Today**, New Delhi, 16-31 May 1981, p. 116.
38. **Far Eastern Economic Review**, Hongkong, 18 June 1982, p. 38.
39. Onkar Marwah, "India's Strategic Perspectives on the Indian Ocean" in William L. Dowdy and Russel B. Trood (eds.), **The Indian Ocean Perspectives on a Strategic Arena**, Himalayan books, New Delhi, 1987, p. 301.
40. **Times of India**, New Delhi, 6 May 1981.
41. See **Annual U.S. Military Posture**, Prepared by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 7 February 1981, USICA, New Delhi, p. 7; The "familiarisation tour" of Vice-Admiral C.A.H. Frost of the U.S. Seventh Fleet and the visit of a team from the Manila-based U.S. Naval Intelligence Service Resident Agency (NISRA) to Colombo in 1980 were construed as missions to press hard for base facilities in Trincomalee for American Navy. See **Tribune**, Chandigarh, 8 July 1980.
42. **Times of India**, New Delhi, 5 January 1981 and 5 January 1982.
43. Reportedly, the U.S. State Department intervened and the talks were aborted. See **Tribune**, Chandigarh, 8 July 1980. See also **Parliamentary Debates (Hansard)**, Colombo.

Regionalism a New Tempo:

The emergence of regionalism in the Indian Ocean would certainly not be before time. Nor would it be in any sense unusual, judged against developments in other regions around the world. Many states have come to recognise how effective a device regional cooperation can be for advancing a broad range of national interests. They have found new economic complementarities, and ways of expanding trade and investment with their neighbours. They have found mutual advantage in discussing policy problems, like refugee flows, environmental pollution, terrorism and narcotics trafficking, which cross multiple borders. They have developed the means of discussing and defusing tensions and disputes which threaten the security of their region.

The tempo of regionalism has been increasing rapidly since the end of the Cold War. New regional arrangements are emerging and existing arrangements are growing stronger as regional interests seek and acquire fuller expression. Europe has the European Union and the Organisation on Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Africa has the Organisation of African Unity and the Southern Africa Development Community. The Asia Pacific region has Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and the ASEAN Regional Forum. And, of course, South Asia has SAARC, and South East Asia the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN). Australia itself has its Closer Economic Relations arrangement with New Zealand. These creations - EU and OSCE, OAU and SADC, NAFTA and APEC, SAARC and ASEAN, and others as well - have a number of features in common, quite apart from the alphabet soup appearance of their titles. They have usually begun in quite modest ways, and with limited aims: the EU, for example, currently the world's most developed regional grouping, started life in the 1950 as a relatively simple agreement on coal and steel. Beyond such beginnings, habits of

cooperation and dialogue have gathered strength as participants have gained confidence in regional processes and in each other. New opportunities for cooperation have suggested themselves and the regional relationships have developed new, diverse, layers. The machinery of regionalism - the network of summit and ministerial meetings, conferences, workshops, business associations and other linkages - has expanded and developed as a result of the growing involvement of states and economies in regional arrangements. It has also been a characteristic of evolving regional structures and processes that they have accelerated the emergence, at a less tangible level, of a sense of community among their respective populations. That sense - a feeling of identification with the region and its constituent cultures and peoples - grows from the increased contact and knowledge that the formal arrangements bring. Tourism, business travel, education, new information technology and the ever-increasing cross-linking of trade and investment all drive along this growth. And the formal and the informal aspects of regionalism - architecture and community respectively - interact and help each other develop further.

Several features of successful regional arrangements ought to be recognised. They are, by nature, inclusive in their approach to membership, within the obvious limits of the strength of the basic adhesive which binds their members together. They tend, often if not invariably, to be heterogeneous, often accommodating wide differences in size, economic strength, religion and culture among their members. They operate to a large degree by consensus, accepting the critical importance of ensuring that development proceeds at a pace, and in directions, that all members are comfortable with. And they are almost invariably multi-tracked, advancing through the efforts not only of governments, but of a range of other players as well,

including business associations, and academic and research institutions.

None of this is to suggest that regionalism's growth will be at the expense of global cooperation - or, worse, will result in the emergence in a world-wide tribalism based on mutually-antagonistic regional groupings. For one thing, different regional groupings are not mutually exclusive; rather they are linked together by the overlapping memberships of their constituent states, in rather the same way that the five Olympic rings overlap.

Most nations maintain a multi-dimensional international focus, reflecting such basic factors as history, the nature of the economy, geographic location, and ethnic, religious and linguistic make up. They are usually engaged with different groups of states simultaneously, allowing them to identify with more than one region or sub-region. The linkages produced in this way should be seen as a source of strength and openness in each respective regional grouping - ensuring that these do not become inward-looking, as each member has regard for the other regional associations of which they are simultaneously members.

We in Australia identify primarily these days with the Asia Pacific, but we certainly don't identify only with that grouping. Australia, like most countries, has multiple other group interests and loyalties to which we can and should give weight. We are members (with 184 others) of the United Nations, and (with 50 others) of the Commonwealth of Nations. Within the UN system we have been part of the Western Europe and Other Group (WEOG) for electoral and policy discussion purposes. We are members, and in several cases initiators, of a number of special interest coalitions formed for particular purposes, like the Cairns Group of fair-trading agricultural producers and the 'Australia Group' of responsible chemical exporters. We have bilateral

or plurilateral defence alliances with the United States, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea and - in the context of the Five Power Defence Arrangements - with Malaysia, Singapore and the UK as well.

Geographically, we have a strong regional and institutional attachment to the South Pacific groups of nations. Within the South Pacific, we are an 'Australasian' country, bound intimately to New Zealand through the comprehensive CER Free Trade Agreement. In the context of the countries to our north, with whom we are becoming ever more strongly integrated, we are coming to see ourselves, and be seen, as a country of the "East Asian Hemisphere". And, of course, we are increasingly now not just looking north and east in defining our geographical identity, but west as well, to the Indian Ocean region. Australia can give weight and value and commitment to all of these group relationships, old and new, and to others as well, without in any way prejudicing or undermining our sense of identification with any single one of them. And our experience in this respect should be no different in kind from anyone else's.

The way Ahead for Indian Ocean Regional Cooperation

So how might we go about progressing regional cooperation in the Indian Ocean region? While it is true to say that regional relationships around the Pacific rim, particularly in the private sector, had reached a high degree of intensity before PAEC came into being, and there is no comparable intensity in the Indian Ocean rim, none of this is to say that the Indian Ocean region is condemned to be forever without forums for consultation and dialogue on matters of mutual interest.

One dynamic driving greater regional economic cooperation will be the Progressive reduction in developed country tariffs - resulting from unilateral measures and successive rounds of multilateral trade negotiations - which is eroding the value and relevance of preferential arrangements

such as the Lome conventions (where former colonial powers extended preferential access for former colonies). Increasingly, regional economies will need to take advantage of the more liberal global trading environment in ways which will require changes in economic culture, and a reduction in traditional patterns of dependency. Outward-looking approaches will increasingly become the norm as further deregulation and market opening occurs. The globalisation of the world economy means that inward-looking, self-sufficiency policies will inevitably fail to capture the enormous growth potential that interaction with other economies offers. In Australia, we have been solidly on that path for 12 years. A program of regional dialogue and practical cooperation can both strengthen and nurture such developments.

It is also easier to reform collectively than in isolation, and the gains are greater the more the participants. Specifically, a process of regional economic cooperation in the Indian Ocean region could capture this dynamic and act as a catalyst for greater regional integration and prosperity. Such a process could follow the cooperative model established in the early years of APEC, with an emphasis in the first instance on data compilation, information dissemination and policy dialogue and on cooperative projects in specific sectors of economic activity, such as transport, infrastructure and telecommunications, and particular thematic areas like human resource development and small and medium enterprise development.

There is a need for some creative thinking, new ideas and a willingness to look at new ways of doing things, if we are to develop a cooperative approach which is appropriate to the Indian Ocean region. In the process we need to allow a lot of ideas to flourish. Above all, we need to open up a dialogue and think through concepts and directions - without necessarily making assumptions, at this

stage, about what the end product might look like. The need at this stage is not so much for a decision-making process as an exploratory process.

That need is in fact, the rationale for the International Forum on the Indian Ocean Region (IFIOR), to be hosted by Australia in Perth next month. This forum will act not as an inter-governmental meeting but as a "second track" means of exploring the scope for regional cooperation. It will be well-suited to do so, by the nature of its membership, agenda and philosophy. The Forum will be inclusive in its attendance, with participants invited from all around the region. Participation will be on a tripartite basis, consisting of government officials (in their personal capacity), business leaders and academics. It will operate in a deliberately constructive and forward-looking fashion; no encouragement will be given to, or opportunity allowed for, the counter-productive airing of bilateral disputes or confrontational attitudes surrounding them. There will not be any negotiated declarations or communiques - simply a Chairman's Statement summarising the flavour of the discussions and perhaps suggesting some ways forward.

We have adopted a broad agenda for the meeting, embracing first, economic issues, including existing trade and investment linkages, existing economic cooperation, obstacles and opportunities for enhancing trade and investment and ways of moving economic cooperation forward; and secondly, other issues, including education, environment, maritime cooperation and security. While I don't want to in any way pre-empt the Forum's deliberations, let me say just a little more about two of these areas; the central agenda item, economic cooperation, and what seems to be the most sensitive item, security cooperation.

The economic agenda for IFIOR is expected to focus on the regional impact of the emergence of the global marketplace, the need to be equipped

COMPUTER

VISION

TESTING

VASA OPTICIANS

207. 2nd Cross Street,

Colombo 11.

The Sri Lankan talks: a tragedy?

By G.G. Ponnambalam

Much was expected from the scheduled May 17 talks between the Sri Lankan President, Ms. Chandrika Kumaratunga and some Tamil political parties in the island nation. This euphoria was evidenced not only in Sri Lanka but also internationally. This was to be expected, naturally, in the light of the breakdown of all communication between the Government and the LTTE after April 1995, when Tamil Eelam War III is said to have commenced.

With the announcement of Ms. Kumaratunga's invitation to "the Tamil political parties represented in Parliament" for talks on May 17, it was widely discussed that the Government, perhaps, wanted to go over the heads of the LTTE to the Tamil people with its much-awaited proposals for a solution to the Tamil problem.

The announcement of the May 17 talks was made a year after Ms. Kumaratunga's exclusive interview to a Tamil newspaper, wherein she stated categorically that her party's proposal for a political solution to the Tamil problem "was being prepared." It is more than one year now and, to that extent, the proposals are "much-awaited", more so because Ms. Kumaratunga went through two major elections - the general elections of August 1994 and the presidential elections of November 1994 without so much as two sentences in each of the election manifestos about the Tamil problem - the only crisis that the island has been confronting for so many years now!

Bad enough that the two election manifestos did not have any proposals on the Tamil problem, which was a clear indication of Ms. Kumaratunga's own ideas about her political priorities, but the unkindest cut of all is the canard that has been let loose that she even received wide support from that Tamils especially those living on the eastern board. If this is indeed true, then the only conclusion one could come to at this moment of time is that the Tamils have, once again, been taken for granted. For this situation the Tamils

have only themselves to blame because some of us fell over each other in wanting to recognise Ms. Kumaratunga "as the only Sinhala leader who wanted peace and who wanted a solution." So let us stand by for another day of deliverance.

Another day of deliverance there must be because May 17 turned out to be absolutely damp squib in more in more ways than one.

A responsible President, who initially announced an invitation to "Tamil political parties represented in Parliament," irresponsibly permitted the inclusion of a Tamil political party not represented in Parliament - the EPRLF. On what basis this was done and the rationale for it, only Ms. Kumaratunga can say. But what is equally significant is that the other Tamil political parties sat through that meeting without a whimper, accepting anything that comes along, which again emphasises the pitiable position the Tamils are in because their representatives are working on anything but a principled stand.

Who were these "the Tamil political parties" that sat down for talks with Ms. Kumaratunga and the President's men? The CWC, the UPF, the EPDP, the PLOTE and the EPRLF. If one were to look for the lowest common factor, one could only recognise them as plain and simple "collaborators" of the President and her Government. The CWC and the UPF are organisations primarily representing the interests of the Tamils of recent Indian origin and also hold office in the Government. The cadre of the EPDP and the PLOTE have, over the course of several years, and through successive Governments worked as mercenaries for and with the Sri Lankan Army, described by and large by the Tamils, (with the EPDP and the PLOTE being no exception), as a Sinhala army - ostensibly to help ferret out the Tigers but actually for their own bread and butter and for their own security.

The TULF, a Tamil political party represented in Parliament, did not accept Ms. Kumaratunga's invitation to these talks. No reasons have been given.

Did the TULF feel that the "package" that is being offered is not up to Tamil expectations or is it that this is not the most opportune time to make public the proposals? This question is raised because on May 7 a Tamil daily carried an interview of Dr. Neelan Tiruchelvam, TULF MP, where he has said that the Government proposals must not be made public now. Whereas Mr. A. Thangathurai, another TULF MP, in another interview on the same day to an English sister daily, states that the Government must make public its proposals immediately.

Was what was released on May 17 all that the Government is prepared to give the Tamils? This cannot be because it was the intention of the Government to show its proposals "to the LTTE first." If the May 17 proposals were all that the Government had to show the LTTE, the LTTE would, almost surely, have laughed it off! What was made public does not state whether the North and parts of the East would be a contiguous unit or with a corridor in between. The proposals are silent on the subjects of land, law and order, ports, the ability to raise funds independent of the Centre, which are all sensitive issues and on one or more of which a settlement can stumble. So if the May 17 meeting did not come out with the whole of the Government's proposals, what was the use of that meeting except to whet one's appetite?

There is a school of thought that the Tamil problem should not be solved per se but that it must be contained in a broad democratic exercise such as the complete overhaul of the Constitution because otherwise only more problems are going to be created by a polarisation of the Tamils and Sinhalese.

(Continued on page 18)

A surprise declaration

Imran Khan had left not a scintilla of doubt. One of the world's most eligible bachelors, whose halcyon feats on the cricket field and in nightclubs set female pulses racing, he was absolutely adamant. He repeated the message to any journalist who would record it: he would never marry a foreign woman. Only an arranged marriage to a pure Pakistani bride would meet his devout Muslim principles, he decreed.

Yesterday the sound of necks cracking in an incredulous double-take was deafening as the London family of Sir James Goldsmith, the millionaire financier, dropped a bombshell. He and his wife Lady Annabel Goldsmith announced their delight at the betrothal of the former Pakistan cricket captain and their 21 year old daughter Jemima.

The shock was compounded later yesterday when Imran's father said that the couple were in fact already married in London -- a claim he later withdrew after speaking to his son by telephone. It was an engagement that had taken place, he said.

The couple are expected to go through a civil ceremony in June, perhaps at Richmond register office in southwest London.

In a statement last night Imran said: "I'm extremely happy to announce that I have found someone who shares my ideals in life. Having studied the religion, Jemima has converted to Islam through her own convictions."

He added: "Both our families approve and are extremely happy about the match".

The London social scene was stunned by these developments. It was not just that Jemima's golden hair and fair looks required a leap of

imagination to fit into the Pakistani mould decreed by Imran. Or that she had converted to Islam.

What astonished and outraged the glitterati was that the couple were thought to have become engaged months ago -- and nobody knew. Jemima, a student at Bristol University, had never been publicly linked to Imran, who at 42 is twice her age. They appear to have nothing in common. Yet here was the girl's aunt, Katherine Goldsmith, saying contentedly: "We've known for some time. The romance is certainly not a flash in the pan".

IF there was consternation in London, there was apoplexy in Pakistan, where since his retirement from sport, the former playboy has re-invented himself as an Islamic populist, dressed in homespun cloth and apparently contemptuous of the jet-setting ways typified by the name Goldsmith. Some of his friends expressed disbelief at the match while colleagues reacted with astonishment.

The news of his intended match has shocked Lahore, not so much because Jemima is English, rich and young, but because her father is Jewish. Pakistan does not recognise Israel and anti-Israeli feeling has always run high in the country.

IMRAN has bowled a devilish googly that could rebound on him. There are already signs of a storm the like of which has not been seen since his "light-hearted" admission that he tampered with a cricket ball in a country game in 1981. His reputation plummeted then, but in Pakistan news of his engagement is likely to bring charges of hypocrisy and have profound implications for his new highprofile role in public life.

There will be many broken hearts. The list of his romantic liaisons includes the actresses Stephanie Beachem and Goldie Hawn, Lady Liza Campbell and such high-flyers as Caroline Kellett, Sarah Giles and Susannah Constantine. The only woman with whom he has admitted contemplating matrimony was the painter Emma Sergeant, who turned him down.

Until recently, his girlfriend of three years had been Kristiane Backer, as MTV presenter. Even when they broke up she remained impressed by his religious convictions. "He's a very important man -- for mankind," she declared. "All this crap about him being a play boy, it's all in the past; he's a very devout man".

While championing in Pakistan as the saviour of the sick -- for whom he has built a cancer hospital -- and castigating the "brown sahibs" who mimic western habits in his own society, Imran was keen to amplify his thoughts on marriage to *The Sunday Times Magazine* recently: "I saw all my friends get divorced -- all my friends with out exception -- and that disillusioned me," he said.

"But then I realised that they didn't tackle marriage in the right way. Love and romance is not really the way to tackle it. It's not how marriage works: clearly your objectives in life must be the same as well. Most people don't know their objectives in life."

To avoid any misunderstanding, he emphasised: "That's why an arranged marriage works. And this year I want to get married".

Last night Imran was reported by his family to be on his way to London from Pakistan as the details of his secret romance began to emerge.

It is said that six months ago Imran

Had gone dancing at Annabel's nightclub in London with Backer. There he fell into a long philosophical discussion on the merits of Islam with Lady Annabel.

Imran had just "come out" as a born-again Muslim and was fond of lecturing his fellow countrymen on the merits of Islam as a political and social system. Sitting beside Lady Annabel was her impressionable young daughter, Jemima. According to close friends, she was smitten and made it so obvious that Backer became angry with Imran for flirting when they returned home that night.

"Despite all his proclamations about leading the goodness in life and marrying a pure Pakistani girl who would stay at home, it is pretty typical of the man that he should meet his future wife at Annabel's," said a friend and industrialist, who has donated lavishly to his cancer hospital.

Backer, a leggy German blonde who has visited Imran's home town of Lahore many times, lived for long periods in his London flat and converted to Islam herself.

"Imran had always made it very clear that his wife had to be a Muslim and it seems that every sexy, loaded member of the glitterati who wanted to marry him quickly became a Muslim," said a friend.

Jemima began the conversion to Islam on her own initiative two months ago, according to friends. But sources say the real matchmaker was her mother, who was clearly taken with Imran and genuinely liked him. It is beginning to look like an arranged marriage after all.

"Apparently the mother is very much into Islam. I don't know whether Imran is madly in love with Jemima, but being so young he knows he can mould her," a friend said.

Backer was reported to be "shocked and shaken" by the latest news and at first did not believe it. She refused to come to her phone in

London yes--tardy. Imran spoke to her for an hour last week and he did not mention he was getting married, say friends.

LAHORE was buzzing yesterday as Imran's close friends raced around trying to establish the facts. There was a clear division between those who thought the news of his marriage was untrue and those who accepted it. Most were annoyed with Imran for not informing them.

"This news is utter nonsense. If he was to marry a non-Pakistani he would have married Kristiane. And I know that next week Imran's family is going to Peshawar to be introduced to a very pretty Pathan girl, who his family want him to marry in an arranged marriage," said a close friend of Imran.

Many Lahore businessmen, some of whom had funded Imran's hospital campaign, were furious. "For the last six months we have listened to attacks by Imran on the 'brown sahibs' of Pakistan who apewestern culture and forget about their Muslim heritage. Now he has become a brown sahib himself," said a leading industrialist.

"So much for his critique on double standards"

"He has said women should bear children and stay at home. Now he is going to marry this nymphet," said another industrialist.

Many friends and businessmen say the marriage would doom his budding political career. Until now there has been widespread public support for him to head a political movement and become prime minister - something he has denied he wants to do.

Right-wing fundamentalists have supported his social awareness campaign. His main organisers are students, the fundamentalist Jamaat-e-Islami, who would react badly to their hero marrying the daughter of a prominent supporter of Israel.

His friends in Pakistan remain intensely loyal, pointing out that prominent local figures have married foreigners before. But some believe his decision shows an element of shrewd calculation.

"He is marrying a girl who is extremely rich, connected to the European royal families and major business groups around the world, and she will take him places," said one.

Imran was last sighted at a friend's house on Thursday, where he had a long conversation with Frank Wisner, the American ambassador to India, who is visiting Pakistan to try to calm Indian-Pakistan tensions over Kashmir. "Imran gave his line on Islam and American double standards," said a friend.

THE Goldsmiths are aware of scurrilous rumours suggesting that the couple are marrying so quickly because Jemima is pregnant. "Someone put it to Lady Annabel and she greeted the very idea with mirth," said a friend.

Lady Annabel yesterday welcomed the news of the wedding. "I just want to say that my husband and I are absolutely thrilled," she said. "We are very happy, but we feel it is Jemima who should talk about it."

Close friends of the family said last night, however, that some family members, particularly Sir James, were apprehensive about the prospect of Jemima marrying a Muslim and having to spend so much time in Pakistan.

"Annabel is her mother and she will do what mothers do and stand by her," said a close family friend. "But Jemima was worried about telling her father. She eventually did - just days ago - and he is going along with it."

"But everyone is worried by the culture differences. Imran is going to take her away and

effectively lock her up somewhere in Pakistan. Jemima is a delightful fairly and everyone is very concerned for her".

The friend said that the couple were planning a party in London at the end of the month.

Jane Procter, editor of *Tattler*, said she had known for a month, through a friend, of the plans for a marriage and she shared the family's concern for Jemima's future. "It has the awful feel of the arranged marriage. He has everything to gain and she has nothing to gain."

Procter played down the age difference and potential cultural or religious conflicts. "Jemima is mixing with older people all the

time through her father's friends, so age difference isn't a problem. I don't think Pakistan will be their main base. It may be London or New York or wherever.

"My main worry is what has she to gain out of it? He is very glamorous and the man all those other girls failed to snare. But I am not sure he is a prize worth having.

Vicki Woods, who interviewed Imran for *The Sunday Times Magazine*, expressed fears for the marriage. "I don't think Imran has a very honourable record with regard to women," she said.

"If the hospital he has founded in Lahore continues, he is shackled to it to keep producing

charitable income for it. That means any woman he marries would have to live in Lahore and under Pakistani traditions, which is virtually purdah.

Nigel Dempster, the Fleet Street gossip columnist who has known Jemima all her life, said the announcement that they were to marry had taken him totally by surprise. He also expressed concern for her future happiness.

"Imran is obviously very Muslim oriented. He has clearly captivated Jemima and she is infatuated by his whole aura. But I wonder whether she has thought everything through.

"At 21 she will find herself in a back room in Lahore while men in pantaloons sit next door discussing fundamentalism. It certainly will not be SW1".

(Continued from page 15)

To approach it in this way is to sweep the dirt under the carpet. The only issue facing the country is the Tamil problem. It has been festering for close up to half a century. The Sri Lankan psyche has been ingrained to think, see and look for a solution to the Tamil problem. To try to smuggle a purported solution into some other exercise would, first and foremost, be a dishonest approach and for that reason may be suicidal. There is a war going on as a result of the Tamil problem. We cannot wait for niceties. The bull must be taken by the horns.

If it is true that Ms. Kumaratunga has obtained repeated mandates for peace, that she has the goodwill of the two-thirds of the voting population of the country, that the Sinhala psyche is now ready for a solution to the Tamil problem, that she has the support of the Tamil people and that the Government is committed to "transparency" (whatever that means), what are we waiting for?

The President has commitment to abolish the Executive Presidential system by the July 1, 1995 by means of a new Constitution. The deadline for the People's Alliance to make public its new Constitution, therefore, is July 1, - just 40 days more. Is the Tamil problem to lose its priority and urgency and occupy a position like other matters to be tackled by the new Constitution? If that is the idea, it lacks honesty.

Ms. Kumaratunga, whilst in Opposition, taunted the last regime that it did not have a blueprint for a solution to the Tamil problem. Cannot the same thing be said of her Government today? If it is, or was, the Government's position that its proposals will not be made public in that way but would be included in an overhaul of the present Constitution, it could have been said so, in so many words, in the first instance. That would have been honesty.

To postpone making public the Government's proposals is to postpone the evil day. One is not going to gain anything. To expect the situation to become better, with a war raging, is to say the least, foolhardy. Every minute's delay is worsening the situation. Chauvinists are not going to change their attitude with this kind of postponement.

Even the LTTE has been continually saying that it is prepared to consider what the Government has to offer. If the LTTE is not prepared to "receive" the Government's proposals, does not the Government now have a duty, viewed from any or every quarter, to show its commitment, sincerity and transparency by making public those proposals immediately? To say that it was those proposals that were made public at the May 17 meeting would indeed be a tragedy!

(The writer is general secretary, All-Ceylon Tamils Congress.)

(Continued from page 1)

Nehru recognised the force of linguistic nationalism and carved out TAMIL-nadu by re-drawing borders in order to pre-empt Tamil secessionism. It is that post-independence Indian experience which made Prime Minister Narasimha Rao, the first prime minister from the Indian South, assure our President that a negotiated settlement of the Tamil issue in Sri Lanka "would be one problem less for India".

It is not the Prime Minister's southern political base alone that prompts him to study Sri Lankan political developments keenly. That fact was quite clear to me when I met him for half an hour or more in his office in Delhi in late 1993. The war in the north makes news in the Indian south, on the front pages of the Tamil dailies.

The Congress party has suffered some electoral defeats in State polls recently and the anti-Rao caucus in the ruling Congress has been strengthened. Apart from all this however there is the dynastic factor, an extraordinarily powerful force in South Asia --- India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. And the most important, regionally and internationally, is the Nehru dynasty, meaning right now Rajiv Gandhi's children and therefore Rajiv's widow, Sonia. Besides, the Congress is faction-ridden. In such conditions, Rajiv's widow may be able to write the next chapter of Congress history in a fine Italian hand.

Lessons of Military History in Sri Lanka

ANIRUDH DESHPANDE

It has been said that the Vietnam war was a quagmire. If so, it was not a Vietnamese quagmire into which the United States was sucked but an American quagmire—a quagmire of doubt and confusion regarding its will, and its credibility—into which Vietnam was sucked.

(Jonathan Schell, *The Real War: The classic reporting on the Vietnam war*, London, 1989, p.25).

It is as if the hunted has become the hunter and vice versa.

—A military analyst in Colombo, May 7, 1995.

With the LTTE preparing a battle of encirclement and annihilation of the Sri Lankan troops trapped in Jaffna, the Tamil War in Sri Lanka seems to have entered a decisive stage. An important event is unfolding in Sri Lanka and military historians, politicians and other concerned people should awake to this fact. Having said this we make two bold assertions in this article before looking at some of the issues arising from the current phase of the civil war in Sri Lanka. These assertions may appear unpopular considering the flak the LTTE is attracting in the press these days. However they stem from an objective observation of the military situation prevalent in Northern Sri Lanka today.

1. Every War Reaches its Decisive Stage.

My first assertion is that probably the LTTE has won its war against Colombo for all practical purposes. The second assertion is that the LTTE, led by an extraordinary military leader, has already passed into history as one of the most efficient military organisations ever created by a resolute people striving for political autonomy. Perceptive military historians will explain that this has happened because the LTTE has seized the strategic initiative against Colombo by intelligently keeping the military option open even as the latter talked peace. Recent events also prove that by the use of heat seeking SAMs and other modern weapons the LTTE has effectively neutralised the Sri Lankan air force and navy. There are lessons in the audacity of the LTTE for other governments and their adversaries to learn in the Indian subcontinent.

And in the interest of peace and lasting economic development in the subcontinent these lessons can hardly be ignored.

The LTTE is placed in a comfortable position today and no amount of invective directed at its leader can detract from this historical fact. Tamil political victory is also reflected in the candid admission of the new Lankan President according to whom Prabhakaran controls one-third of Sri Lanka and two-thirds of its coast. Let us not forget that Sri Lanka is a small island country and such frankness leaves not very much for its Sinhala majority. More than 20,000 Lankan troops lie besieged and isolated in the Jaffna peninsula and face the prospect of surrender, or worse, massacre. The statements issued by the Lankan field commanders commanding these men inspire little confidence against the Tigers. In these circumstances Lankan morale is bound to fall with each passing day. Press reports also indicate that Colombo might initiate a desperate move to relieve its northern garrisons. I suspect that is exactly what the LTTE wants. In short, by meticulously planning and executing the encirclement of the Jaffna garrisons the LTTE has pushed the Sri Lankan Government into a 'no win' situation. Faced with this Hobson's choice what are the options left with Colombo? Let us examine the meaning of war and the predicament of Sri Lanka in its light.

2. The Meaning of War

The great philosophers of war from the ancient sun Tzu to the modern Clausewitz have described war as the

pursuit of policy by other means. The objective of war is not to get caught in attrition but to achieve victory over the enemy. However the mere annihilation of the enemy's armed forces does not result in complete victory. The political objective of waging war is realised when the victor successfully imposes his will over the vanquished. Ultimately victory in war depends upon correct strategy which emerges from a superior understanding of all the elements constituting a particular war. Following this is another principle of war according to which war must be directed and executed by statesmen and commanders endowed with exceptional political and military qualities. In contemporary history the Vietcong victory against the French, Americans and South Vietnamese illustrates the meaning of war in its classic sense. In contrast the failures of the Sri Lankan Government in the light of this historically received military wisdom become only too apparent. Many governments, including the Soviet, have failed to stand up to the time honoured dictum of war: "know yourself and your enemy, fight a hundred battles and win a hundred victories".

But having lost the war can the Sri Lankan political leadership and general staff, led as they are by a realistic and peace loving new President, win the peace? Many questions related to war and peace in the Indian subcontinent seem to lie in the shadow of this problem. Let us now confine this argument to the realm of possibilities confronting Colombo at the moment.

3. Options for Colombo

In my opinion, and considering the totality of the contemporary Sri Lankan scenario, the Lankan Government has three options before it. Let us examine them briefly.

(a) *The military options:* To increasingly desperate governments the military seems the ultimate solution to

apparently intractable domestic and foreign problems. Often by whipping up nationalist hysteria governments also try to popularise a resort to armed force as the obvious choice of an entire nation. But nothing is further from the truth. A careful look at the prevalent situation in northern Sri Lanka straightaway precludes the obvious. If the Lankan army launches a gallant looking offensive to save its trapped garrisons without adequate air and naval support it is more than likely that more of its divisions will be cut off in the north.

I am afraid more troops poured into the pocket of LTTE control, provided they manage to break the Tamil stranglehold in the first place, will only create the Stalingrad of the Sri Lanka army. Going by past experience, including the failures of the Indian Army against the LTTE, it can be said without doubt that the Sri Lankan army is incapable of sustaining a major offensive or an out-flanking manoeuvre against its agile adversary. The LTTE has demonstrated the ability to disperse and concentrate highly mobile formations at the right time and place on several occasions in the past. While the exact strength of the LTTE is not known to its enemies it has rarely failed to exploit in full the element of surprise which is essential to the type of war it has ruthlessly waged against Colombo. Analysts will easily conclude on the basis of modern Sri Lankan military history that the Sri Lankan armed forces will not be able to overcome the mastery of mobile war which has become the preserve of the LTTE. In short, the preservation of the Lankan garrisons trapped in the Jaffna region depends upon the political wisdom of their leaders more than anything else.

(b) *Foreign armed assistance/intervention:* At present I cannot think of any country but India which can possibly send an expeditionary force to Sri Lanka. Though this would please some shortsighted Indian politicians, in the event it will not, and should not, happen. First of all the Indian policy makers must remember the LTTE, which is only partly their creation, with great bitterness. Secondly the Indian Army will always remember its poor record in Jaffna with nothing but regret. Thirdly the Indian armed forces with Kashmir on their hands can hardly think of getting involved in Sri Lanka or anywhere else for that matter.

From the past the example of Viet-

nam and Afghanistan shine and dictate that the Indian Army should never be used to pursue someone else's domestic political policies. India and some other countries can supply military hardware to Colombo and in fact the latter has already started placing orders in the international arms market. But events suggest that imported weapons will not tilt the strategic balance in Colombo's favour. Furthermore, who can say that the Tigers will be unable to disrupt the supply of arms to the harassed and demoralised Sri Lankan armed forces. The import of arms will divert funds from the task of development, deepen Lanka's debt problem and prolong the war only in favour of the LTTE. Most probably the LTTE is gambling on this.

(c) *The peace option:* Since the import of arms and foreign intervention will push Colombo irrevocably towards the military option the Sri Lankan leadership would do well to shun them both. Political desperation and military panic at the moment will only help the LTTE by creating domestic instability. President Kumaratunga can ill afford all this. Unfortunately the situation leaves the Sri Lankan government with very few options. But even with these some peace can return to Sri Lanka.

Firstly the Lankan Government should revise the agenda of autonomy promised to the LTTE. A new policy for the Tamil controlled regions of the country should be announced and internationally publicised as soon as possible. Secondly the Lankan Government should persevere in its attempts to diplomatically isolate the LTTE. Thirdly the Sri Lankan navy should intensify its patrolling of the Sri Lankan coast to disrupt the supply of arms to the LTTE. Some people would go far enough to suggest that Colombo should negotiate with the LTTE on the latter's terms. In other words concede the Tamil Ealam and then see, and let the world see, whether an organisation trained for war can manage peace.

Above all, peace and not war will save the Lankan Government and preserve the Sri Lankan nation. The tilt towards the military option will weaken the process of democracy and civil society in Sri Lanka. On the other hand by losing the war in Jaffna the Sri Lankan Government might manage to win the peace in the rest of the country. I do not know whether or how this will happen.

Only time will tell whether the Lankan leadership is capable of steering its ship out of these troubled waters.

Some good Sri Lankan friends of mine were extremely hopeful of peace finally returning to their country a couple of months ago but recent developments have put paid to these hopes. Latest reports confirm that the Sri Lankan air force has resumed the bombardment of some LTTE camps but the results of this, from Colombo's point of view, will become clear only in the long run. For the moment, and with the LTTE beginning to evolve its air power, our southern neighbour is drifting towards another protracted conflict which will not yield peace. I have inveighed against the military option in this article not only because of the objective factors mentioned in the following lines of a song sung by American soldiers in Vietnam which highlights the horror of war for everyone involved in it:

*Strafe the town and kill the people,
Drop napalm in the square, Get out early every
Sunday And catch them at their morning prayer.*

(Continued from page 13)

to compete in it and implications of this for domestic economics. IFIOR could usefully discuss the impact on regional growth of regional countries' Uruguay Round commitments and the role the World Trade Organisation (WTO) can play in further encouraging trade and stimulating growth in the region. With the quickening pace of growth in key Markets around the region, business is placing a high priority on trade and investment liberalisation and facilitation, of and on business networking - areas where LIFIOR, with its broad business representation and inclusive approach to participation, can play a key role in identifying areas where Governments to play an early supportive role.

IFIOR could also help to identify the sectors and areas of government activity where regional business could benefit most from a region-wide cooperative approach and go on to suggest options for productive regional collaborative activity. The early indications are that the economies of the region could benefit particularly from collaborative effort in the areas of customs cooperation, telecommunications, tourism and human resources development.

Why there's sound of laughter in this rustic tobacco barn....

There is laughter and light banter amongst these rural damsels who are busy sorting out tobacco leaf in a barn. It is one of the hundreds of such barns spread out in the mid and upcountry intermediate zone where the arable land remains fallow during the off season.

Here, with careful nurturing, tobacco grows as a lucrative cash crop and the green leaves turn to gold... to the value of over Rs. 250 million or more annually, for perhaps 143,000 rural folk.

Tobacco is the industry that brings employment to the second highest number of people. And these people are the tobacco barn owners, the tobacco growers and those who work for them, on the land and in the barns.

For them, the tobacco leaf means meaningful work, a comfortable life and a secure future. A good enough reason for laughter.

 **Ceylon Tobacco Co. Ltd.**
*Sharing and caring
for our land and her people.*



INTEREST FREE CREDIT?

CONVENIENT REPAYMENT TERMS

LOWEST JOINING FEE?

**Yes. All and many more
benefits are yours with the
CEYBANK VISA CARD.**

Contact the Centre Manager,

**CEYBANK CARD CENTRE,
Bank of Ceylon**

No. 4, BANK OF CEYLON MAWATHA,
COLOMBO - 1.

BE WISE. CARD - WISE

BANK OF CEYLON

Bankers to the Nation



TELEPHONE: 447823 — Ex. 4180 & 4185