

# Regional hegemony and small state survival: Re – examining Ceylon’s foreign policy under premier D.S Senanayake

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**Abstract**— Literature that deals with Ceylon's foreign policy during the D.S Senanayake administration (1948-1952) evinces a general hypothesis regarding the close relationship between the Ceylonese administration and the British government. This paper argues that Ceylon adopted an 'inclination' to an extra-regional power with the intention of mitigating the threat stemming from India. It argues that Ceylon's relationship with the British was intended to balance the threat from India. The paper evaluates the threat perceptions from India at the time of Ceylon's independence and the rationale behind the close relationship between Ceylon and its former colonizer. I have utilized a descriptive, analytical and historical methodology based on existing literature on Ceylon and India to demonstrate the threat perception that Ceylon faced from the latter as well as the underlying reasons behind an 'inclined' foreign policy towards the British. The paper examines the security challenges that the small state faced from its incipient regional hegemon and the reasons. Under such circumstances Ceylon chose to be inclined towards the British - thereby balance the threat of India - so as to ensure her survival.

**Keywords**— Ceylon, India, Small State Security, D.S Senanayake

## I. INTRODUCTION

This article explores the foreign policy of Ceylon, under Prime Minister D.S Senanayake, in the wake of the island's independence from the British in 1948. It surveys the complexities which the island had to face at the time of independence in a rapidly decolonizing world milieu. The paper reviews Ceylon's *modus operandi* of ensuring its survival - eluding a security dilemma with India; through a close relationship with Britain. The paper also strives to rearticulate the traditional definition of foreign policy during this period, which is often dubbed as being 'pro-western' in outlook. Independence movements in South Asia differed from state to state and that of Ceylon was structured in an 'elitist' fashion. This factor had direct implications on the type of post-colonial government that was established following the provision of dominion status by Britain. At the time of independence Ceylon faced a choice of:

- Implementing a foreign policy that had no leaning towards any country whatsoever and was either

- isolationist in nature or based on building friendly ties with all nations to an equal degree or,
- Establishing a foreign policy that was centred on maintaining a close relationship with the regional hegemon of south Asia – India (bandwagoning with India).
- Or developing ties with an established power which could mitigate the uncertainty the island underwent due to its close proximity to India. Such ties could be of a 'pro' tilt or an 'inclined' leaning towards an extra regional power.

Although the island chose the last option, this paper argues that Ceylon, decided to refrain from espousing a 'pro' attitude towards any country for fear of antagonizing India. I postulate that the rather untested leadership of - Prime Minister D.S Senanayake - devised a foreign policy that was 'inclined' towards the British. Nonetheless the degree of this relationship did not extend beyond an 'inclined' foreign policy which could have antagonized the Indian leadership at that time. The choice of Britain also becomes significant as Ceylon did not engage the animosity of India through an 'inclined' relationship with an extra regional power.

The granting of independence to India in 1947 and the size of India, both in terms of geographic proportions and population had significant implications in chartering a foreign policy for Ceylon. 'Physically India is fifty times the size of Sri Lanka<sup>1</sup> and forty times larger in population' (Kabir, 1996: 9). In order to maintain its survival amidst such a geographical 'giant' Ceylon's prime minister was forced to implement a novel foreign policy in a newly established independent country. Thus, the basic premise of this paper is as follows. While plotting a new foreign policy, although swayed by the close relationship that he and many in his government maintained with the British, D.S. Senanayake did not overlook Ceylon's geographical proximity to India and the latter's regional security concerns.

Based on arguments advanced in Structural realism I argue that Ceylon's proximity to India influenced the foreign policy of the island to be structured in such a way that it did not arouse the displeasure of India. The theory of Neo Realism is employed because it considers structural factors

as more likely to explain the foreign policy of states. In this paper I consider the rising threat from India – Ceylon's closest geographic regional power - as the principle structural factor which impinged on the islands foreign policy decision making. The latent fear of India among Ceylon's leaders created a dichotomy of conflicting views as to how the island should behave in the altering geopolitical environment of the late 1940s - early 50s period. Although diverse opinions voiced by members of the first Ceylonese government remains beyond the scope of this article; it does investigate the factors that the prime minister (also holding the title of foreign minister), had to take into consideration in determining the foreign policy of the island.

In outlining the foreign policy of small states in the anarchic international setting, Rais (1993: 24) notes that 'it would be a wise and natural course for the weaker in any regional system to look towards powers that would support its quest for security'. In Ceylon's context, this was accomplished through:

- a Defense Agreement with the British (1947)
- an External Affairs agreement with the British (1947)
- a Public Officers Agreement (1947)
- maintaining strong trade relations with the British and
- By joining the British commonwealth in the immediate post-independence phase.

All of this points to the endeavours made by Ceylon to maintain relationships with an extra regional power. At the outset, the paper briefly analyses theories and approaches relevant to the study of foreign policy including the concept of security dilemma. It then observes the process adopted by D.S Senanayake and his political party in obtaining independence. The paper then draws attention to the country's relations with both India and Britain. Emphasis will also be laid to the terminological difference between a 'pro' foreign policy and an 'inclined' foreign policy to better understand the implications of each and the significance of applying the latter instead of the former. The paper concludes by outlining the significance of an 'inclined' relationship with Britain; both in ensuring Ceylon's independence and in assuaging Ceylon's latent fears of a possible intervention by the emerging regional power – India (amidst the security vacuum created with the British leaving south Asia).

## II. THEORETICAL SURVEY

In analysing the foreign policy of Ceylon during this period of time, the article utilizes the rational actor model and the geo-political model of foreign policy decision making. It takes into consideration both, idiosyncratic variables of the decision maker – D.S Senanayake - as well as the

structural variables pertaining to the 'geographic realities and ideological challenges from potential aggressors' as outlined by James Rosenau (1975: 39) in his pre-theory of foreign policy. The use of idiosyncratic variables (under the rational decision making model) in juxtaposition with the geo political model (which focuses on the structural variables of the international milieu) ensures that limitations present in each individual model are averted through the use of an eclectic approach. However the influence of structural factors such as India's proximity to the island had pre-eminence over idiosyncratic variables. Thus the proximity of India predisposed D.S Senanayake to move towards an extra regional power but his comprehension of India's security concerns resulted in an 'inclined' relationship over a 'pro' relationship with U.K.

The paper also argues that in the 'process of elaborating appropriate courses of action, actors inevitably have to take into account the strategies of all other players'(Brighi and Hill, 2016: 149) and Ceylon in particular, had to grapple with all the possible courses of action that India might take towards the island following India's independence in 1947. Finally the paper makes reference to the balance of threat theory. As its name implies, this theory predicts that states will balance against threats. This theory is based on the notion that 'if one state becomes especially powerful, and its location and behavior feed threat perceptions on the part of other states, then balancing strategies will come to dominate their foreign policies' (Wohlforth, 2016: 40-41). In this context - apprehensive of the rise of India as a regional hegemon - Senanayake decided to build an 'inclined' relationship with an extra regional power; balancing fears of India through ties with U.K.

*A. Security Dilemma in the Context of India and Ceylon*  
Security dilemma was identifiably the most probable outcome between Ceylon and India following Ceylon's inclination with Great Britain. But why was it important to ensure that a Security Dilemma did not emerge when Ceylon developed ties with an extra regional power? And more importantly what are the ramifications of creating a Security Dilemma between India and Ceylon? In order to better understand the context of Ceylon at the time of independence, a brief examination of what a Security Dilemma is and what it entails needs to be discussed. Security Dilemma, an often deliberated concept in the realist school of thought deals with a situation 'whereby nations taking steps to enhance their own security infringe upon the security concerns of their adversaries, thus triggering a spiral of distrust' (Leffler, 1994: 16; also see: Waltz, 1979:186; Wheeler and Booth, 1992: 30). 'At the heart of the security dilemma are two constraints: the inherent difficulty in distinguishing between offensive and defensive postures and the inability of one state to bank

on the fact that another states' present pacific intentions will remain so' (Art and Jervis, 1996: 3). 'Since no state can know that the power accumulation of others is defensively motivated only, each must assume that it might be intended for attack' (Snyder, 1984: 461; also see: Glaser, 1997: 171; Mitzen, 2006: 354). Therefore 'even if they can be certain that the current intentions of other states are benign, they can (not) neglect the possibility that the others will become aggressive in the future' (Jervis, 1976: 76).

Security dilemma is by no means uncommon to the south Asian region and small states generally struggle to ensure their survival in the context of a larger geographical neighbour (Cooray, 1992: 313). Although security dilemma generally leads to a self-defeating cycle whereby the original intention of a state to fortify its power leads to a reactive strengthening by the other, not doing so at the time of independence risks the state falling under the clutches of a regional power (Tang, 2009). Traditionally, the threat perception from India among smaller states and the fear of Indian hegemonic behaviour in the post-colonial phase have dominated the bilateral relations between the smaller neighbouring states and India. While some states bordering India decided to create a close relationship with it, others such as Pakistan, distanced themselves from New Delhi and attempted to formally align with states outside the region. Pakistan's alignment first with countries of the Arabian Peninsula and later with the west, was perceived by India as an attempt to 'attain parity with India and to challenge the natural power hierarchy of the subcontinent' (Cheema, 1992: 55).

Ceylon also followed the latter course to a certain degree and developed a close relationship with Britain primarily through a defense agreement and external affairs agreement in 1947. However in contrast to Pakistan, Ceylon was also able to maintain an amicable relationship with India although her prime focus was on deepening ties with the United Kingdom. Finally, in my examination of Ceylon, stress is laid on the concept of 'power vacuum' which is perceptible in south Asia following Britain's withdrawal from the region. The British withdrawal is reflected by the granting of independence to many of its former colonies. As outlined by Denny Roy, a power vacuum or security vacuum 'applies to the following scenario: as the influence of the dominant country is seen to recede in a given region, at least one of the other regional states, previously restrained by the erstwhile hegemon, attempts to expand its power. This expansion is rapid and purposeful, based on the perception of a window of opportunity, rather than gradual or evolutionary' (Roy, 1995: 46). How was this concept manifest in South Asia? India's geographic size, military and economic strength in comparison to her neighbours

were identifiably greater and patently the British withdrawal from south Asia resulted in the resurgence of India as a powerful regional hegemon.

#### *B. The Process of Obtaining Independence*

Ceylon obtained her independence from Britain in 1948, a year after India and Pakistan. Her independence 'struggle' was a non-violent one, beginning and ending primarily through constitutional reforms and formal requests made to the British government. In the context of obtaining independence in 1948, the island has much to owe to the combined efforts of the 'triumvirate' – D.S Senanayake, Sir Oliver Goonetilleke and Sir Ivor Jennings. Subsequent to her independence, the island faced countless difficulties, both internally and externally. In terms of conceptualizing the island's foreign policy during this time; considerable weight falls upon the Prime Minister and the political party which he belonged to, on ascending to power. The United National Party (UNP) tended to maintain strong links with their colonial masters and more often than not, had a noticeable leaning towards the capitalist camp in general and towards the United Kingdom in particular.

'The UNP leadership looked upon the country's defense policy largely from the point of view of Indian dominance in the country's immediate defense and strategic environment....This combined with a) the close community of interests they found with the west and b) the then emerging cold war conflict led to a general strategic alignment between Ceylon and the west during the first decade of independence.' (Gajameragedara, 2011: 50)

Sri Lankan historians and academics habitually categorize the foreign policy, followed under the UNP at the time of independence, as being 'pro-west'. They also attribute this term to the first three prime ministers of Ceylon although a closer examination of the context of each prime ministers' term is generally not taken into substantial consideration.

'This view was based mainly on the interpretations given first, to the Defense and External Affairs Agreements; second, to the membership the Commonwealth; third, to the rhetoric of foreign policy' (Karunadasa, 1992: 71).

In seeking to clarify the reasons behind D. S Senanayake's decision to veer towards Great Britain I concentrate on the threat perception; specifically in terms of territorial security, which emanated from India at the time of Ceylon's independence. However before such an examination could take place an analysis of the difference between a 'pro' and inclined foreign policy is in order.

### C. An 'Inclined' Versus 'Pro' Foreign Policy

Throughout this paper 'inclined' refers to a decision to maintain close relations with a country due to externally based threat perceptions; while a 'pro' policy towards a state would exclusively necessitate a personal disposition of the leader towards that particular state. A 'pro' foreign policy would have influenced Ceylon to align with a stronger or weaker power and formulate linkages of an economic, security and political nature solely due to Senanayake's personal whims. Thus, in the case of a 'pro' relationship, idiosyncratic variables triumphs over systemic variables and in the case of an 'inclined' relationship systemic variable surpass idiosyncratic variables. This however does not mean that systemic variables determined Ceylon's foreign policy under Senanayake in entirety. On the contrary while systemic variables was the biggest push factor for a relationship with an extra regional power; the hue of 'inclined' over 'pro' was adopted due to Senanayake's consideration of India's security concerns following an extra regional powers involvement in south Asia.

The rhetorical trope of identifying Ceylon's foreign policy as 'pro-British' may lead to a myopic understanding of the islands foreign policy under its first Prime Minister. Such rubric has important implications in an appreciation of small states' security considerations in the backdrop of a potent regional power. The sections below reason that at the time of independence, Ceylon faced significant threat perceptions from India, primarily of a military/security nature. This aspect led Ceylon to chart a foreign policy that was decidedly set on building ties with an extra regional power to offset its fears of India. In doing so Ceylon turned towards Britain as its choice.

### D. Ceylon: The Complexity Of Chartering A Foreign Policy

Ceylon's strategic position in the Indian Ocean and the relative ease of managing the island in comparison to the larger geopolitical entity of India; made it difficult to convince the British to grant independence following the end of the Second World War. Constant negotiations and deliberations between Ceylon and Britain eventually led to the attainment of dominion status on February 4<sup>th</sup> 1948. The manner by which Ceylon secured independence was especially significant as:

'It was for the first time in the history of decolonization that a non-white colony was granted independence through negotiations between the national political leader of a British colony and the imperial British government.'(Karunadasa, 1997: 12)

Agreements including the defense and external affairs agreement were signed by Ceylon on November 11<sup>th</sup> 1947. They subsequently came into effect following

independence on February 4<sup>th</sup> 1948. Although termed as a 'sine qua non' (Kodikara, 2008: 30) by some academics and as an 'integral part of the independence package' (Keerawella and Siriwardena, 1992: 236-37) by others, Ceylon's defense agreement with the United Kingdom brought significant benefits to the island in the context of an emerging India. This was because, in the milieu of a stronger geo-political neighbour, Ceylon was compelled to acquire an insurance of its security through a closer relationship with a much stronger extra regional power. Ceylon possesses a land area of 65,610 square kilometers, a territorial sea of 12 nautical miles and a contiguous zone of 24 nautical miles. (The World Fact book –CIA) Its close presence to the southern tip of India has - in the past - led to many foreign interventions (both peaceful and violent) since the establishment of an autonomous civilization (De Silva, 2008: 18-141). Many of these foreign interventions were conducted by various Indian regional rulers in ancient times and the impact of this is still latent in the psyches of certain sections of its citizens. Urmila Phadnis confirms this by claiming that 'The geographical contiguity of a small country with a big one, through which it had often been conquered in the past, prompted the Ceylonese leaders to attempt to balance their dependence political, military or economic-by developing cordial relations with another power as large and powerful as India' (1963: 189).

With a security vacuum emerging, following the gradual removal of Britain from south Asia, Ceylon anticipated the incipient rise of India as the regions' hegemon. As a small state closely located beside an inchoate regional hegemon, Ceylon had to negotiate the rise of India and maintain a favourable relationship with it, without which its independent status would be at risk. Thus Ceylon had to factor both the gradual removal of Britain from the region and the rise of India in the heated climate of the cold war. These concerns were compounded by apprehensions relating to the political, economic and social condition of the country.

'In fact at the time of independence Sri Lanka had many problems not shared by other commonwealth partners. Most prominent among these were the lack of armed forces for self-defence, lack of machinery for conducting external relations, non-membership in the United Nations, local communist activities and problems of economic development' (Karunadasa, 1997: 25-26).

Literature dealing with India's rise to power and its relationship with Ceylon has a tendency to discount the image of India as non-threatening and as less influential than it assumes to be. Sankaran Krishna (2000: 28) discloses that 'Although Indian self-fashioning had always

aspired to the legacy of the British as sub continental gendarme, it remained largely rhetorical until 1971'.

Nevertheless as the following section explains, Ceylon perceived a military threat from India largely due to India's actions and the scholarship of Indian writers at the time. Unable to effectively deal with the mounting tensions among the Sinhalese community, particularly in the central upcountry (due to the presence of Indian migrant laborers) D.S. Senanayake had to correspondingly contemplate the threat to the national security of the island. It was here that the needs of both the British 'Whitehall' and UNP met. 'Profound suspicion of India (which became) the dominant strand in his external policy', (De Silva, 2008: 623) led Senanayake to seek reassurance through an alignment with Britain.

### *E. Threat Perception from India*

This section argues that the D.S. Senanayake administration, during the latter 1940s and early 50s, was wary of India and inculcated a sense of anxiety towards her large geopolitical neighbour. Eminent writers of Indian foreign policy such as K.M. Panikkar declared that a 'realistic defense policy' of India needs to take into consideration the prerequisite of consolidating maritime supremacy. Such a foreign policy appears to have been inherited by the early British administration of India. Panikkar (1960: 23) goes on to say that:

'An integrated conception of the defense of India and a doctrine of Indian defense supported by a consistent foreign policy are among the two major contributions of Britain to the Indian People'.

Ceylon harboured fears of Indian expansionism because such a military policy, if executed, could threaten the national security of the island (Kodikara, 1993: 10 – 15; Kodikara, 1965: 24). Panikkar identified himself with the 'British lake view of Indian security and proposed a defense system which would be based on the same logistical principle' (Mendis, 1983: 389). Such a policy would entail New Delhi's dominance in the Indian Ocean as well as complete control over all maritime activities. In '*India and the Indian Ocean*', Panikkar propounded the idea of 'strategic unity' between India, Sri Lanka and Myanmar, as one of the pre-requisites to a 'realistic policy' of Indian defense and even observed the strategic significance of the Trincomalee harbor in relation to India's conceptualization of maritime defense (Panikkar, 1951; also see Balkrishna, 1949). Wiggins (1965: 377) also pointed out the possibility of Indian occupation of key strategic locations in Ceylon; testifying that: 'If Indian security was threatened from the Indian Ocean or in a combined attack from the Nepal area and the sea, Indian occupation of Trincomalee would be likely'.

Ramachandra Rao (1954) only added to these apprehensions by asserting that Ceylon lies within the Indian defense perimeter. Vaidya (1949: 30) avers India's right to dictate terms to small states in the region, insisting that 'the first and primary consideration is that both Burma and Ceylon must form with India a basic federation for mutual defense whether they like it or not.' Contentions by Panikkar (1951: 84) such as: 'The Indian Ocean must therefore remain truly Indian,' may have served only to kindle fears among the Ceylonese leadership as to what the true intentions of India may be. Statements by the soon-to-be Indian leader, Jawaharlal Nehru before independence, did not assuage this mounting tension. In 1944 Jawaharlal Nehru stated that: 'The small state is doomed. It may survive as a cultural autonomous area but not as an independent political unit.' In the following year he added that Sri Lanka would be inevitably drawn into a closer union with India 'presumably as an autonomous unit of the Indian federation' (Kodikara, 1992: 25).

However after independence, Nehru desisted from rhetoric that would augment the ambience of fear and uncertainty; and instead attempted to ease the tension surrounding India's intentions, especially vis-à-vis Ceylon (Nehru, 1950). The rhetoric by the Indian premier belied actions. India's act of taking over princely states such as Hyderabad (1948), which wished to remain independent, only exhibited the behavior of an aggressive regional power (see: Hilali, 2001: 36; Maxwell, 1974: 637–638; Thomson, 2013). Moreover, New Delhi's decision to militarily threaten Pakistan by amassing troops on the Indian border in 1950 and 1951 also served to increase the unease among its neighbouring small states (Werake, 1992: 264). Naturally such actions may have influenced any leadership to subscribe to the notion that the actual intentions of India appeared to be threatening, despite the rhetoric by the Nehru government suggesting otherwise. Thus applying the 'strategic-relational approach' in this context demonstrates how D.S. Senanayake would have to factor such changes in the regional environment of Ceylon; ensuring that relations with India was kept under amicable terms. However the actions of India in both cases mentioned above, would attest to the contestation that India was assuming to be the regional hegemon of south India and that a balance of threat theory would necessarily have to be applied by Ceylon.

'On the one hand, the inherent fear combined with the vulnerability of their island country, necessitated the Ceylonese leadership to have a friendly policy towards India. On the other hand, because of their fear and perception of the vulnerability of their island country, they were not prepared to press this friendliness to the extent

of forging a close political link with India' (Gajameragedara, 2011: 133).

The British effectively utilized this uncertainty in the relationship between the two countries to obtain a military presence in the coveted Indian Ocean. The British administration, instead of lessening such fears as undue suspicions, sought to heighten the existing unease. They conveyed plausible threats which Ceylon may face from India in their official texts. In a 1947 report by the chief of staff committee of the British government, such fears were expressed in the following manner:

'A threat to the territorial integrity of Ceylon is likely to come only from India.....The danger of India (particularly congress India) interfering with Ceylonese internal politics.....is a real one' (Bhasin, 2001: Xviii – xix).

Another latent yet duly discerned portent was the possibility of south India separating from the Indian government and establishing a separate country (Jeyaraj, 2009). Assuming that south India was to separate, the possibility of it amalgamating the north and east of the island was conceivable due to the ethnic linkage that exists between the south Indian and Tamil population in the north of Ceylon. Not only would such a separation of India create a new geopolitical entity that Ceylon would be forced to interact with, but the likelihood of it incorporating parts of the island which had an ethnic affinity with southern India meant that the country faced a tremendous national security threat. According to the strategic-relational approach, this would complicate the structure of south Asia by adding another state in-between India and Ceylon creating a loss of land from both states. Thus, survival as an independent island would be at risk if such a geopolitical alteration was to take place.

Distinctions and divergence between India and Ceylon became even stronger after independence. While India forged ahead to create an autochthons constitution (Shivprasad, 2013), Ceylon continued to maintain its Soulbury constitution until 1972. This constitutional development in India in contrast to Ceylon's tenacity with the Soulbury constitution strengthened the growing divergence between the two countries. The strong antipathy towards certain British colonial policies among Indians in comparison to the lack of such feeling towards the British among Ceylon's 'elitist' leaders only assisted to create a divergent attitude among the two governments. Unlike India, whose leaders had been forced to follow a tortuous path to independence, 'Sri Lanka had negotiated its freedom from Britain in a largely amicable way and to Senanayake as to the other leading members of the new government; Britain was a safe and trustworthy ally' (Samaraweera, 1997: 338).

Advising the Nehru government of the attitude of small peripheral states such as Ceylon another Indian writer suggests:

'the first and foremost task before New Delhi is to direct its energies to dissipating the prevailing distrust and suspicions of India among the smaller neighbors, particularly Nepal, Ceylon, and even Bangladesh, who are all mortally afraid of a possible Indian domination over them' (Mankekar, 1974: 21).

Eminent personalities such as Sir Ivor Jennings considered India a 'friendly but potentially dangerous neighbor' (1951: 113). As the most immediate 'neighbor' to the island; the possibility of India incorporating Ceylon under its defensive command if it desired to follow the British maritime policy was feasible to Sir Jennings. Under such circumstances the D.S Senanayake administration, in order to ensure the territorial integrity and political autonomy of the island, may have been decidedly prone to sign a defense agreement with a strong naval power. 'He held the view that the best guarantee of Ceylon's independence was the goodwill of the power which had granted it. He therefore concluded agreements with the United Kingdom' (Hulugalle, 1975: 201).

Owing to the fact that Ceylon did not possess a strong tri-force; the defense agreement with the British became a 'safety net' (Devendra, 2015: 185) to ensure Sri Lanka's survival against a potentially aggressive India.

'The country's survival in the post-independence situation was foremost in Prime Minister D. S. Senanayake's thinking. His survival agenda was shaped by the belief that India was the most likely threat to Sri Lanka's independence' (De Silva, 1995: 17). Having established the threat perception from India to Ceylon, the paper consequently analyzes the reasons why Ceylon was impelled to choose Britain to aid in protecting her, instead of any other 'Great' power.

#### *F. The Choice Of Great Britain*

Ceylon cemented her post-independence ties with Great Britain through agreements which came into effect on 4th February 1948. Under the impression that Ceylonese independence could only be 'safeguarded' (Nissanka, 1984: 11) through a closer connection with the United Kingdom, such agreements were concluded a year before independence. Although carrying significant benefits to the British; the defense agreement and the Commonwealth membership agreement became the mainstay of Ceylon's survival strategy.

Some scholars of foreign policy argue that the actions of Ceylon during this period of time reveal a 'pro' west, 'pro' British foreign policy. They contend that the UNP, because of its 'pro-Western and comprador character entered into a defence arrangement with the British in 1947' (Lenka

and Pattanaik, 1979: 54). Such propositions draw attention to the external affairs agreement and the defense agreement with the British as reason to suggest that the foreign policy of D. S Senanayake was 'pro' west. This paper argues that the agreements were signed due to the threat perceptions that Ceylon faced from India at the inception of independence. The section above clearly elucidated the actions undertaken and statements echoed in India which reflected it in the light of a regional hegemon. This section argues that such threats were grounds to initiate an 'inclined' foreign policy with the British. It also inspects the motives as to why the Prime Minister chose to strengthen Ceylon's ties with the British instead of any other regional or extra regional power(s). During the late 1940s many of the regional powers of the Indian subcontinent were emerging from the shackles of colonization. Colonization had taken a significant toll on the domestic economies of the states, which were contingent on producing primary agricultural products. Such production activities required low skilled employees and more often than not; a large portion of the domestic economy rested on the revenue of such products. Ceylon was no different to this economic model as its economy was closely tied to the British market.

'In the economic sphere, Sri Lanka was dependent for tea export on London. Most of the tea of Sri Lanka was sold through the London tea auction. This linkage with London also had its influence on Sri Lanka's relationship with Britain' (Patnaik, 2014: 59).

This close linkage with the British market and other western markets in Europe and America helped solidify ties with the west. If India post-independence, sought to attain the naval prowess of the British, it would seek to extend its authority throughout the Indian Ocean. Under such circumstances - assuming that Ceylon exhibited a foreign policy that was not in favor of India - the possibility of the latter preventing maritime trade and implementing a blockade crippling the Ceylonese economy was worryingly conceivable.

Nayani Melegoda acknowledges Ceylon's level of dependency with regard to foreign trade in the following manner:

'D.S Senanayake knew from experience during the Second World War how necessary it was to keep Ceylon's sea and air bases free from obstruction in order to bring in the essential imports like food stuffs, without which the people would starve. Nearly one half of all food consumed was imported, one half of Ceylon's rice was from abroad, 99% of curry stuff, pulse, and dried fish important for curries and 100% of wheat and sugar were also purchased abroad' (2000: 79).

In this context, the defense agreement can be regarded as an organic extension of the existing trade relationship between Ceylon and the United Kingdom. Additionally the choice of Britain gets further impetus when one takes into account the fact that Britain was the dominant naval power in the Indian Ocean during this period of time. John Kent's chapter on the British policy following the end of World War 2, in the comprehensive study 'Origins of the Cold War', admits that Britain was still dominating the maritime region in the Indian Ocean even at the beginning of the Cold War (1994: 155-65). The choice of Britain naturally appealed to Ceylon as it would become an effective deterrent to any possible military action that India could take against Ceylon, post-independence. Thus the overwhelming naval superiority of Britain could channel Indian hopes of expansionism away from Ceylon by underscoring the possibility of Britain coming to the aid of the island. Since Britain was conceding territory by granting independence to its former colonies, the British appeared to be far removed from expansionist tendencies that had characterized their colonial exploits in the preceding century. Moreover with the bi-polar Cold War taking shape in the late 1940s, Senanayake assumed that a relationship with Great Britain would be an indication personifying Ceylon's willingness to side with the democratic camp despite professing to be on the 'middle path'. As Ceylon 'ideologically identified itself with the west' (Jayawardane, 2004: Xxxii), maintaining an inclined policy with Britain appears to be a natural progression of the Ceylonese government. However, this does not warrant a classification of Ceylon's foreign policy as 'pro' west. Ceylon chose to incline towards Britain and the western camp due to genuine threat perceptions from many sources, principally stemming from India.

Any state aligning itself alongside the capitalist camp by siding with the United States of America would certify the antipathy of the Soviet Union to be directed towards it. Although the following case could be considered a conjecture, if the Soviet Union became closely allied with India (as it later did in the 1970s), the Soviet Union may perhaps support an action by India to invade the island, if such an opportunity to descend upon Ceylon emerged. This would adversely harm the island and therefore being inclined with the British seemed to be the best way forward. Even prior to independence Ceylon's leaders had a strong working relationship with British parliamentarians and knew much of the designs of Whitehall.<sup>2</sup> Having a strong rapport with Britain enabled Ceylonese politicians at that time, to believe that differences and disagreements between Ceylon and Britain could be ironed out through discussions and negotiations. This also showed Britain in a favourable light to Ceylonese leaders and henceforward Britain became the go-to-choice of Ceylon in ensuring its security.

Additionally, Ceylon believed that among the states that it could turn-to for defense; Britain was among the first of a very few. D.S Senanayake voiced this sentiment when he commented: 'Around countries of the world, I see at this moment, only one country with sufficient interest to defend us at their own expense, and that country is Britain' (Hazard, 1947: 445).

The prospect of India allowing Ceylon to ally herself with a country that may auger alarm among Indians was inconceivable. The then Congress President Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramaya declared in 1949 that: 'India and Sri Lanka must have a common defence strength and common defence resources. It cannot be that Ceylon is in friendship with a group with which India is not in friendship...' and in light of this, one can determine that 'This led India to accept Sri Lanka's defence arrangement with Britain as India did not have any conflicts with London' (Patnaik, 2014: 63). As Ceylon's increase of power (through her relationship with Britain) did not stir fear in India, it would ensure that her power as a state increases while at the same time; not generating a security dilemma among Indian political circles. This demonstrates a foreign policy analogous to teachings of Defensive Neo Realism.

Gamini Keerawella alludes to another likely reason why Ceylon's inclination towards Britain benefited the island. Until the early 1960s considerable amount of weapons and armaments required by India was imported from Britain. Not only does this suggest that India did not have any unease regarding the United Kingdom but also that India was ready to request the assistance of Britain to supply it with the necessary resources for its own defense. (Keerwella, 1992: 428). Likewise, Appadurai confirmed the trust and healthy relationship that existed between the two countries in the post-independence phase by disclosing that 'India (is) now dependent on Britain for the bulk of her essential military stores' (1949). Thus the consolidation of ties between Ceylon and Britain - leading to an inclined policy towards the latter - became the central feature of Ceylon's foreign policy in the 1940s and 50s. Not only did Ceylon ensure her security by affiliating herself with the strongest naval power in the Indian Ocean region through a defense agreement, but she also ensured that the inclination towards an extra regional power did not produce a security dilemma between India and Ceylon. Joining the Commonwealth became propitious to Ceylon in 1948, as the island obtained international recognition as a sovereign state; in the backdrop of a soviet veto that denied it the same in the United Nations. Ceylon also represented the region of south Asia within the Commonwealth; alongside Pakistan and India, allowing for increased opportunities to interact with state leaders. Ceylon's membership in the Commonwealth also

conferred the tacit acceptance of parity (by India and Pakistan) as a sovereign entity.

Senanayake's desire to join the Commonwealth corroborates the assumption that Ceylon chartered a foreign policy that was closely inclined towards the British. Evincing D.S Senanayake's desire, Wiswa Warnapala observes that the Prime Minister:

'Was obsessed with the belief that the membership of the Commonwealth would help the island to preserve its newly won freedom. The safeguarding of the islands security was the most important consideration and the fear was that Sri Lanka would be left defenseless after the departure of the British forces' (1992: 149). Thus Ceylon's decision to become inclined with Britain appears to have been a natural production of the islands concern over India and its intentions. Through this 'inclination' Ceylon navigated the unfamiliar waters of the international system in a bi-polar world - all the while - ensuring that the national security of the island was preserved through ties with the British government. While all possible avenues of strengthening ties with the United Kingdom were pursued by Senanayake, India was not forgotten in the process. In fact Ceylon welcomed the Indian Prime Minister in 1950 and discussions became frequent between the parties as the years went on. However this relationship was an 'arm's length' relationship focused on neither irritating nor overly trusting her larger geographic neighbour.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

This paper outlined the Indian military threat which the small state of Ceylon had to factor, when forming the islands foreign policy. It ascertained that the threat to the security of Ceylon principally emerged from India and the need to manage such apprehensions, led the island to incline itself with an extra regional power. The paper also argued that Ceylon's choice of the extra-regional power was a sentient effort to refrain from irritating the rising power of India. For this purpose Ceylon chose Britain. However Ceylon's foreign policy was not a 'pro- British' foreign policy but an 'inclined' foreign policy. Ceylon's preference was Britain since a relationship with Britain was seen to be, among other reasons, non-threatening to India while at the same time, significantly increasing Ceylon's defense capabilities. As a result Ceylon was able to balance the threat from India by 'inclining' towards a state that India was not apprehensive of. Thus Ceylon was able to ensure her survival as a newly independent sovereign country at the inception of independence through an inclined foreign policy with the British and an 'arms-length' foreign policy towards India.

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