

INTERNAL WAR AND INTERNATIONAL INTERVENTION: A STUDY IN THEORY AND PRACTICE

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The objective of this paper is to discuss the interaction between internal war and international intervention, both in theory and practice. Part one of the paper briefly reviews the theories of international intervention in civil strife, while the second part deals with the relationship between the 1971 insurgency in Sri Lanka and the external powers.

The analytical framework of the paper demands the definition of the two basic categories of our concern, i.e., 'internal war' and 'international intervention'. Harry Ekstein, one of the few Western scholars who have given serious attention to the study of internal war, has given the following definition of it:

It is a kind of social force that is exerted in the process of political competition, deviating from previously shared norms, 'war like' in character (that is, conducted practically without mutually observed normative rules) and involving serious disruption of institutional patterns.¹

This characterisation of internal war emphasises its negative aspects while in effect ignoring its positive attributes. And, therefore, it is unsatisfactory. Generally speaking, internal war can be defined as a violent encounter or a duel between two factions in a domestic society on issues relating to change or the preservation of the existing structure of political power and socio-economic institutions. Depending upon the causes and the issues, the major aspects of internal war such as its scope, the degree of violence and its duration may tend to vary.

The concept of intervention has been extensively used in the literature of international relations. Yet, it has not been given any satisfactory definition.² However, having taken into account the differences between the interventionary behaviour and the other behavioural patterns of the nation-state and the universal recognition of the principle of national sovereignty, it can simply be defined as a course of action designed to achieve some well-defined objectives, carried out systematically by one sovereign state in another sovereign state in contravention of the latter's sovereignty as defined by its legitimate authorities.

PART I

Theories of International Intervention in Internal War: A Critique

The frequent occurrence of internal violence and its international repercussions have been fundamental to the process of world politics in the post-war era. Yet, there is virtually a vacuum in the academic scholarship devoted to the subject; there is only one study devoted specifically to this issue.³ This is not accidental, however. There has been a great awareness of the importance of internal violence.⁴ Nevertheless, in the field of international

relations this has been taken not as a problem of political analysis but as a challenge to traditional strategic doctrine and policy. Though rarely stated explicitly, therefore, internal war and its relationship with the world political system has largely been the concern of writers on strategy.

The fundamental argument of our discussion in this section is that the theories of limited war, which were intended to provide the most important operational aspects of the western strategy in the nuclear era, have completely misrepresented internal wars and their implication for international political processes. Basic to this argument is the assumption that the meaning or the efficacy of any strategic doctrine should be judged not only in respect of its intent but also in relation to the international set-up in which it is advocated.

The basic rationale of the concept of limited war is clear enough: since the threat of massive retaliation is not viable in a context of mutual deterrence between East and West in respect of both enhancing the credibility of the nuclear deterrence and confronting "lesser aggressions", there should be an alternative to it; given mutual deterrence, for the West, dangers can only arise from the "lesser aggressions" and "local conflicts", so the rationale goes, engineered by the socialist powers, particularly by the Soviet Union; the fundamental challenge to the military strategy is to confront this problem; this can only be met by creating "a diversified military capability" or "an ability to meet a whole spectrum of challenges"; these capabilities, the strategic writers go on to advocate, must be created in relation to conducting effective limited warfare.⁵

By the early sixties theories of limited war had been perfected to a great extent. The basic task that Thomas Schelling and Herman Kahn, who counselled MacNamara's Pentagon, undertook in their celebrated works on the strategy of escalation⁶ was to further elaborate the operational aspects of limited war, in a context which, in their view, was threatened with a general war involving the two mutually antagonistic blocs. The gaps that existed in the theories of limited wars were filled by the advocates of counter-revolutionary warfare.⁷ The difference between these and the exponents of limited war was, that while the latter explained their theories against the larger context of world bloc conflict, the former dealt with the battlefield problems, taking the larger context for granted.

Considered from the vantage point of view of this paper, two aspects of the theories of limited war stand out. The first is that they are based on the political assumption that there exists an all-embracing, basically static, conflict between the Soviet and the Western blocs which manifests itself in the form of Communist aggression in the "gray areas" and "potential danger zones" in the Third World.⁸ The advocacy of the strategy of limited war was not just a response to the Korean war or a possible Soviet military intervention in Western Europe, but a general answer intended to meet this challenge as well. The second aspect is that the limited war strategy was expected to function not in isolation but as an inalienable part of the overall strategy of the West in this nuclear era; it was presented not as an alternative to the strategy of deterrence but as a complement to it. Kissinger has put the relationship between the two succinctly;

The purpose of a strategy of Limited War... is first to strengthen deterrence and second, if deterrence fails, to provide an opportunity for settlement before the automation of the retaliatory forces takes over.⁹

Thomas Schelling presents the same view differently;

War no longer looks like just a contest of strength. War and the brink of war are more a contest of nerve and risk taking of pain and endurance. Small wars embody the threat of a large war; they are not just military engagements but 'crisis diplomacy'.¹⁰

After the Korean war a similar type of conflict did not take place either in the Third World or in Europe. The conflicts which did occur thereafter in the under-developed countries resulted fundamentally from domestic sources. The role, accordingly, of the theories of limited war has been to provide intellectual justification for the military intervention on the part of the Western powers in such situations. This was quite convincingly demonstrated by the massive U.S. involvement in Vietnam since 1961. The predominant tendency on the part of writers on strategy to portray the violent upheavals in the Third World as a manifestation of a communist global design has led them to over-estimate their impact on the world balance. On a political level they believed that the struggle between the two opposing social systems was going to be determined by the armed encounters in the under-developed areas of the world. On a strategic plane they presented such eventualities as a metaphor in a process of escalation leading to thermonuclear war. Thus, Herman Kahn, in elaborating his concept of escalation in relation to a local conflict, or in his own words "agreed battle", concluded;

...in any escalation two sets of basic elements are in a constant interplay: the political, diplomatic and military issues surrounding the particular conflict, and the level of violence and provocations at which it is fought. The latter merges with those considerations raised by the possibility of escalation to higher or more extensive levels of violence, including the possibility of deliberate, provoked or inadvertent conflict eruption leading to central war.¹¹

For Thomas Schelling, Vietnam was a "third species of limited war"¹² (the other two being Korea and Cuba) and accordingly he has taken it as a good case to illustrate the "principles of diplomacy of violence".¹³

The misplaced importance thus attributed to the local conflicts has led the strategic writers to recommend to the Western powers a policy of generalised intervention in such eventualities irrespective of their variations.¹⁴ In fact, as Bernard Brodie has pointed out, the very presence of these theories helped the U.S. involvement in Vietnam.¹⁵ It was only after America's defeat in Vietnam became clear that the strategic writers began to reassess their theories.¹⁶

The international repercussions of any internal war depend on (a) its political and ideological character and (b) the place of the country in which it takes place in the world balance. Given these factors the extent to which an internal war becomes an internationally significant event depend on the global context in which it takes place. The writers on strategy have replaced the need for the substantive analysis of these phenomena by preconceived theoretical notions through the prism of the bipolar conflict.

The other factor which explains the fallacy of the strategic theories is the way in which their advocates formulated the central problem of the Western, that is to say the American strategy. They concluded that the necessity to use force discriminately in a nuclear context constitutes the basic problem of both military strategy and the foreign policy of the United States of America. "The dilemma of the policy maker", Morton H. Halperin writes in his *Military Strategy*, "is how to apply or resist force to attain the objectives of (the United States) without running undue risks of all-out nuclear war. This is the central concern of this study."¹⁷ Robert E. Osgood presents the point thus: "How can the United States employ military power as a rational instrument of foreign policy when the destructive potentialities of war exceeds any rational purpose? To answer this question is the supreme task of American foreign policy".¹⁸ Thomas Schelling's formulation of the problem is much more operational:

The threat of war has always been somewhere underneath international diplomacy but for the Americans it is now much nearer the surface.....Military strategy can no longer be thought of as the science of military victory. It is now equally, if not more, the art of coercion, of intimidation and deterrence. Military strategy whether we like it or not has become the diplomacy of violence.¹⁹

The very attraction to the theory of limited war emanated from this formulation of the central problem of military strategy and the world policy of the United States. The precise task of the advocates of the strategy of limited war and the related strategy of 'competition of risk taking' has been to provide strategic justification for the use by the Western leadership of excessive military power discriminately, in disregard of the dynamics of the changing world.

The significance of this can well be understood if one considers the relationship between the diplomacy and strategy on the one hand, and foreign policy on the other. The former two categories are the two facets of political relations among nations. Although force remains the *ultima ratio* of foreign policy and there is no dichotomy between the application of strategy and diplomacy; the strategic questions arise only after diplomacy fails because the actual use of force must be taken as a contravention of the international order. The whole question about policy arises only in relation to objectives that are defined as against national and international circumstances. That is to say, the success or failure of any foreign policy (i.e., the application of diplomacy and strategy designed to achieve the objectives) is predicated upon the way in which it is related to the objective conditions of the domestic society and the world. What the advocates of limited war have done, however, is not to relate their strategies to such conditions, but to relate them to their pre-conceived strategic notions. As far as the international impact of the internal wars are concerned it could very well have been dealt with in accordance with the maxims of the traditional military strategy.²⁰

B. The Intervention Model of George Modelski and James N. Rosenau

George Modelski is the first scholar to treat our subject specifically taking it on its own right.²¹ After analysing what he calls "the two sets of political structures which emerge in the course of internal war"(that is, the insurgents and incumbent), Modelski goes on to "identify the mechanisms which account for the existence of the external components and which therefore 'internationalize' internal wars" in accordance with two theoretical models, namely, "the theory of foreign policy" (based on two countries - war - torn country and a second country) and "the theory of the international system".²²

According to Modelski's second theory "the processes whereby the international system influences the internal wars" are as follows:

- (a) "diffusion encouragement", i.e., strengthening the insurgents and isolating and demoralising the incumbent;
- (b) "suppression", i.e., the international system intervenes against the insurgents; and
- (c) "reconciliation", i.e., neutralisation.

As in the case of the second country in the first model, Modelski maintains that there is "no alternative of non-activity or non-intervention" for the international system as well.²⁴

Professor James N. Rosenau, one of the leading Western theorists of international relations, "supplements" Modelski's model in two respects.²⁵ In the first place, he gives an affirmative answer to a question that the latter does not raise, that is, whether the external consequences of internal war are substantially different from those that accompany non-violent transformations within the nation-states. He points out three differences between violent and non-violent transformations, namely, "morbidity"(sustained and elaborate attention and publicity that internal wars are bound to get), "amorality of reactions" of the outside powers to violence, and "explosiveness" (the rapidity and uncertainty of violent changes²⁶). In the second place, whereas Modelski tends to treat internal war as a constant rather than a variable factor, Rosenau identifies "three basic types of wars and attempts to trace how the process of internationalization varies from one type to another." The types which he distinguishes from each other are "personal", "authority" and "structural" wars. The different international repercussions of these variations of internal violence have been considered firstly in relation to the reactions of "other nations" and secondly from the point of view of their effects upon the "international system as a whole."²⁷

Such are the structural aspects of the Modelski-Rosenau theoretical model. Whatever the elegance of this model it has some serious shortcomings. The soundness or otherwise of any theoretical model must be judged not only against its ability to take into account all the major variables of a given phenomenon but also in relation to the guide it provides to the understanding of their inter-relationships. The Modelski-Rosenau model is basically an

attempt to quantify the elements of their subject as in the case of model building in the social sciences which has become a highly fashionable enterprise today. It is based on the theoretical assumption that the factors of internal war are independent variables and that those of international system are dependent variables. Rosenau says: "The scope, duration and origin of internal war..... will be treated as independent variables - as causes- and developments in other nations or international system as dependant variables - as effects".²⁸ Notwithstanding this theoretical assumption both he and Modelski do not try and locate the organic linkage between internal war and the behavioural patterns of the interventionary powers. To say as the latter does that "internal wars logically and necessarily have external components in their structures", "simply" because "internal wars occur not only within a political system but also within an international system"²⁹ is, while analytically misleading, pregnant with disastrous policy consequences. To the key question whether internal war is a result of interevntion or whether the latter is dependent on the former, the two theorists do not provide a convincing answer. Modelski's answer to that question is conspicuous for its ambiguity: in the context where he discusses the "active" and "passive" variants of the "mechanisms" of internationalisation of interna! wars, he says: "Needless to say the most realistic cases lie somewhere between these two extreme variants of the intervention model".³⁰ Rosenau is of the view that "little is gained" by trying to take a stand on the question whether internal war is a result of "external instigation" or whether they result from 'internal collapse'.³¹ This however has not prevented our authors from taking up an articulate practical position on the question. This position contradicts the basic theoretical assumption of the model. Modelski, at the seminar where a study project on our subject was structured, argued that "external variables were primary determinates of the onset, course and termination of internal wars".³² Rosenau, having stated that he would consider the factors of internal war as independent variables and the developments in "other nations" as dependent variables, like Modelski goes on to make the following obviously contradictory statement:

Proceeding in this manner, however, does not imply agreement with the view that 'foreign governmental intervention more often is the result of domestic violence than is domestic violence the product of foreign intervention'. A case might well be made for the contrary argument that the nature and length of internal war are more a consequence rather than a source of developments abroad.³³

As both Rosenau and Modelski take up the position that internal wars result from foreign policies of the external powers, they might well have gone on to build a model based not on internal war but on imperialism designed to transform domestic societies.

Rosenau's attempt to identify variations of internal wars is a useful one because it quite appropriately draws our attention to their differential international ramifications. Yet his deliberate refusal to investigate their origin and thus their objective nature considerably reduces its significance. Rosenau also does not try to identify the kinds or classes of internal wars although it is very necessary in respect of evaluating their international impact. He merely proceeds to show differences in degrees between the three types he discusses in the model. His following comment on "structural wars" exemplifies that: "It is difficult to

imagine structural wars which are not also not personal and authority wars and, therefore, this is the most comprehensive type."³⁴ According to Rosenau's definition of "authority" wars, struggles for independence from colonial powers by the Afro-Asian countries and attempt to replace dictatorships by democracies would not result in decisive consequences for the international system. But the cases such as Algeria, Spain and Vietnam do not confirm this proposition. The impact of the 'personal wars' on the world system, from the point of Rosenau, would be minimal. But in his own discussion of the effects of the duration of internal wars he comes out with significant international aspects of such civil strife.³⁵

The picture of the international system embodied in the theoretical model of our concern is one of static character as in the case of the theories of limited war. Whereas Modelski implicitly assumes that the bipolar conflict in the world is of an unchangeable character,³⁶ Rosenau states it explicitly.³⁷ Similarly, just as in the case of strategic writers, both Rosenau and Modelski envisage the inevitable involvement of the major powers in internal wars.³⁸ The obvious policy implication of this for the Western Powers is that there should be a generalised intervention policy on their part in respect of civil strife in the Third World.

PART II

The Case of Sri Lanka: The 1971 Insurrection

The hub of our problem concerns the organic linkage between the two internal war parties and the interventionary outside powers. I shall therefore deal in the first place with the relationship that emerged between the then government (The United Front) and the insurgents (The Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) or the People's Liberation Front) and, in the second place, the way in which the outside powers became involved in that duel.

A. The Insurgents: The Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna

The failure of the successive governments to handle socio-economic problems inherent in the country's historically determined under-development led to a general discontent among the people, particularly since the early sixties. Unemployed educated youth who were representatives of the numerically strong youth population with well-defined petty bourgeois aspirations, constituted the most important political aspect of the socio-economic reality. The ideological rifts which took place within the Communist Party and the *Lanka Sama Samaja Party* in 1964 and the subsequent formation of a coalition consisting of these two parties and the Sri Lanka Freedom Party led to a steady disintegration of the support base of the traditional Left, particularly at the rural level. The result was the alienation of a section of the revolutionary and radical activists from the mainstreams of the country's politics. Led by these elements, the JVP emerged as an alternative to the traditional Left, largely supported by the unemployed educated youth.

The JVP was nonetheless devoid of a logically consistent political orientation. But its general politico-ideological orientation and the declared objectives had far reaching implications for the country's domestic and foreign policies. Ideologically, the leaders of the JVP

identified themselves with such revolutionary leaders as Mao Tsetung, Che Guevara and Kim Il Sung and ardently opposed 'modern revisionism' and 'social-imperialism' of the Soviet Union. They characterised Sri Lanka as 'a typical neo-colony of Anglo-American imperialism' and claimed that the country was increasingly coming under the influence of 'Indian expansionism'. The declared objective of the JVP, accordingly, was to "liberate the oppressed people from Anglo-American neo-colonialism and Indian expansionism",³⁹ and to "usher in a socialist society according to the principles of Marxism-Lennism and the thought of Mao Tse-tung".⁴⁰

Nor was there a revolutionary situation (i.e., the complete erosion of the legitimacy of the existing government and widespread mass discontent) in the country when the political bureau of the JVP met on April 2, 1971 to take an affirmative decision on the necessity for an armed attack. What then determined the outbreak of violence three days thereafter was the combination of two factors, namely, the inherent propensity for violence in the JVP and the disposition of the United Front government to provide a military solution to a political problem arising from political assertion by the country's misguided radicalised youth. Before 1971, the JVP was essentially a clandestine revolutionary activist organisation fundamentally geared to capture state power forcibly. From the very inception its activities were confined to recruiting members by persuasion and indoctrination and providing ideological and military training to some selected members in a generally *ad hoc* atmosphere. At no stage did the JVP make any attempt to win the support of the ordinary people and the organised working class. Its violent attempt to overthrow the government was accordingly not a revolutionary war as it is generally understood but a left-wing putsch. During the late sixties, when it became clear that there was a well organised clandestine movement the then government handed the task of dealing with it to the country's police. The United Front government initially adopted a liberal attitude towards it. But soon this attitude was replaced by a policy of repression. The resulting situation confronted the JVP with its greatest dilemma, that is, whether it should allow the policy of repression to go unchallenged or whether it should resort to arms on its own conditions. On April 5 it put into effect the strategy of island-wide armed insurrection designed to capture power within a day. For the government it presented the question of survival. The outside powers were presented with two possible eventualities viz. a new international alignment of Sri Lanka and a possible destabilising effect on the countries in South Asia.

B. The Incumbent: The United Front Government

The counter insurgency policy of the United Front government was conditional upon several factors. They were, stated briefly, the degree of its legitimacy, the strength and the competence of the armed forces, the ideological orientation of its declared domestic and foreign policies and, above all, the nature and the changing magnitude of the insurrection. The way in which these factors conditioned the counter-insurgency policy will be referred to in the ensuing discussion.

Feeling confident with its land-side victory at the 1970 general election, the United Front firmly denied any legitimacy to the JVP. On the one hand, this denial was accompanied by a conspiratorial view of the origin of the insurgents; on the other hand by a policy of repression. Both these aspects carried international implications. The more it appeared that the JVP was going to be a formidable challenge to its authority, the more the government tended to resort to the use of force; the more it was compelled to resort to the use of force, the more it was driven to depend on external military support. Thus, one can see the propensity of Sri Lanka's war to become an international development had been inherent in the dialectical relationship between the government and the insurgents.

The surprise armed attack launched by the JVP on April 5 inevitably resulted in the government's almost complete dependence on external assistance for its survival. Within a few days the youth radicals virtually destroyed the organised state power in several provinces and thereby compelled the armed forces to make a 'strategic retreat' to Colombo, 'the seat' of the state apparatus. They were, nevertheless, proved to be incapable of carrying out their offensive to the point of achieving their objective. Starting from about April 9, being apparently unaware of the battlefield situation and devoid of an operational co-ordination of their strategy, the insurgents almost involuntarily retreated to the triangular area of the country covered by Vilpattu, Matale and Trincomalee consisting of jungles and hills. In the meantime the government forces were preoccupied with defending the capital city from a possible attack from the JVP. This strategic defensive continued until the foreign military supplies changed the balance in the battlefield in their favour after April 13. The vulnerability of the government during this crucial period can well be illustrated by the statements made by its leadership. Premier Mrs Bandaranaike stated on the 9th of April: "My government will fight these terrorists in the remote areas, will fight them in the provinces and will fight them everywhere but will not surrender my right to govern....."⁴¹ Mr. Felix Bandaranaike subsequently informed the House of Representatives: "In fact, we ran pretty close to a situation in which it was a question whether terrorists would run out of ammunition before we did. It will not happen any longer but it could have happened."⁴²

During this crucial period of the insurrection the government took two steps to facilitate the establishment of an organic linkage between the country's insurrectionary situation and the external powers. First, just after the outbreak of violence, as Mr Felix Dias Bandaranaike divulged in an interview with Frank Giles of the *Sunday Times* (London), the government "hurriedly drew up a shopping list of arms" and requested all the "friendly" countries to supply arms and ammunitions in accordance with the policy of non-alignment.⁴³ On April 12 it ordered the North Korean diplomatic personnel in Colombo be kept in protective custody and asked them to leave the country four days thereafter. When this action was taken no explanation was given. But the authorities subsequently denied any foreign involvement in support of the JVP.⁴⁴ The meaning of this action can only be understood in the context of the government's predicament during the decisive period of the JVP's insurrection.

Until about April 9 the government maintained that the JVP was an agency of the international reaction, supported by the domestic reactionary forces that were defeated at the 1970 General Election. This could not prevent the JVP's military offensive nor did it

enable the government to obtain much needed foreign military supplies once it was eventuated. Until about April 13 efforts taken by the authorities to suppress the insurgency had been "largely unsuccessful"⁴⁵ or, at best, was in a "stand-off state".⁴⁶ Further, it was perceived in Colombo during this period that the security forces had been outnumbered by the insurgents to the ratio of three to one, and the military balance in battlefield was markedly favourable to the latter. Worse still, no foreign assistance was forthcoming as was expected by the government; whereas the Chinese either deliberately or inadvertently had failed to supply arms, India's response was unexpectedly delayed.⁴⁷ The decision to expel the North Korean embassy personnel reflected this conjuncture of events and forces. It was a diplomatic signal, the first of its kind, in Sri Lanka's foreign policy, on the part of the government to procure much needed arms and ammunition by implicating a possible Chinese involvement through the North Koreans in support of the JVP. The meaning of the arrest of N. Shanmugadasan, the leader of the pro-Peking Communist Party, who had consistently opposed the JVP, must be understood in relation to this diplomacy. It could well be true that the government might have suspected the distribution of money by the North Korean embassy. However, in this connection it should be borne in mind that during this acute period of the insurrection that everyone from Pyongyang to the Pentagon was suspected depending on one's own point of view.

Beginning from about April 15-16 the balance in the insurrectionary situation steadily changed in favour of the security forces due partly to the retreat of the insurgents and partly to the arrival of India's military supplies. Since then the course of action adopted by the government was geared towards achieving the following objectives:

- (a) to avoid a politically and economically disastrous protracted involvement in counter-insurgency warfare;
- (b) to reinstitute the balancing strategy of the country's foreign policy which crumbled under the stress of the JVP's attack; and
- (c) to re-establish the credibility of the United Front as a socialist government.

The final outcome of the internal strife was determined by the interaction between the policy of the government based on these objectives and the responses of the outside powers.

C The Responses of the Foreign Powers

The responses of the external powers in respect of the Sri Lankan crisis were neither automatic nor inevitable as the theorists of intervention maintain. Their actions were very much of a calculated nature, designed to favour well-defined interests, deriving invariably from Sri Lanka's intrinsic importance and from their relationship to one another in the world balance. We can therefore go on to identify their role taking the individual powers separately.

Britain

Britain, the country's historical defence partner and the traditional source of military supplies and strategic doctrine, was the first foreign country to respond positively to Sri Lankan government's request for military assistance. Lord Home, the then Foreign Secretary, explained in the House of Commons: "..... I felt that when Mrs Bandaranaike asked for immediate help it was right that we should give it."⁴⁸ The degree of the British assistance, however, was of a very limited scale, and it was easily overshadowed by such assistance provided by other countries. During the most crucial period of the insurrection, Whitehall merely let the Sri Lankan government to employ an Air Ceylon Trident to secretly bring in some small arms and ammunition from the British bases in Singapore without any British involvement in it. In mid-April the British government at Colombo's request mediated to enable Sri Lanka to purchase six Bell helicopters from the U. S. In addition, several Scout Cars, evidently in the range of 12-18, were supplied somewhere between April 20-25.⁴⁹

The assistance thus provided was not only of a limited nature but also it was carefully defined. There was no sign whatsoever of any unequivocal commitment on the part of the British government to provide military assistance which the Sri Lankan government could have taken for granted. The Foreign Secretary, referring to the assistance that had been given, assured the House of Commons that he would "keep the situation closely under review of course".⁵⁰ Micheal Lake of *The Guardian* (London), commenting on the British attitude in respect of Sri Lanka's request for the purchase of U.S. helicopters, observed: "..... Britain has no wish to become embroiled through supplies of such spectacular weapons as helicopters in a political disturbance which may have massive support and its roots deep in social and economic unrest."⁵¹ The main significance of the British assistance was of a political nature; in a context where the Sri Lankan government's very survival hung in the balance, and no other country had come to its help, the role of Britain was instrumental in providing a degree of legitimacy for its counter-insurgency policy. As far as the military equation in the duel between the JVP and the government is concerned, it was undoubtedly the timely arrival on India's military supplies that decisively transformed it in favour of the latter.

India

No other outside power was more deeply concerned about the Sri Lankan insurrection than India. For it brought home to everybody not only the serious possibility of an explicitly anti-Indian alignment of Sri Lanka which the Indian leaders have all along considered as a vital link in India's defence perimeter, but also the success of an apparently Maoist-type revolution at her door-step. Moreover, in a spectacularly changing context of the balance in Asia and the world, it provided a good opportunity for the Indian leadership to show their good-neighbourliness towards Sri Lanka and India's assertiveness in South Asia to the outside powers interested in the region.

The Indian military supplies, however, did not come to Sri Lanka until April 13. This was entirely due to ineffective communications; when Sri Lanka's request reached New Delhi, the Indian authorities promptly and unreservedly responded; they dispatched a large quantity of small arms and ammunition, six helicopters with the crew, 150 Gurkha soldiers

and four naval frigates, reportedly, with 2500 military personnel.⁵² From the point of the officials in New Delhi, this assistance was of "a token nature intended to help Sri Lankan armed forces in some special spheres"; and the government of Sri Lanka itself had not asked for anything more because it felt "reasonably confident" that it would be able to deal with the insurgency "on its own".⁵³ It was speculated in Colombo that India also provided counter-insurgency intelligence but there is no evidence to sustain this. On June 21 India's Defence Minister informed the Lok Sabha that the "cost of services rendered by the Indian armed forces at the request of the Ceylon Government may not be recovered from that Government".⁵⁴

Soon after the arrival of the Indian military supplies, they were all employed in vital areas of counter-insurgency operations. Small arms and ammunition were the first and foremost requirement of the Sri Lankan forces fighting the insurgency. The helicopters and the crew were employed in reconnaissance missions as well as in combat operations.⁵⁵ The naval frigates with their personnel were deployed to protect the Sri Lankan shores, particularly with a view to preventing foreign arms supplies to the youth rebels, which was then believed to be a strong possibility. The much tested Gurkha forces were employed to look after the Katunayake airport.

It was undoubtedly the Indian military assistance combined with the inherent weakness of the JVP that transformed the United Front's counter-insurgency strategy from a defensive to an offensive one. It has evidently left a permanent imprint upon the relationship between the two countries. The eagerness and the effectiveness with which India came to the rescue of the United Front government reflected her deep and ever-present concern about Sri Lankan developments. In addition, it was a manifestation of a basic characteristic in India's foreign policy formation, namely the assertion of Indian power in South Asia. An Indian writer justifiably commented on India's response to the Sri Lankan crisis; "The era of an ostrich-like adherence to the purely negative aspects of non-alignment in the name of non-interference is now over....."⁵⁶ The Indian policy in respect of the parallel Bangladesh crisis not only confirmed this, but also it resulted in the establishment of India as the paramount geo-political power in South Asia.

The United States

There was no question on the part of the United States of responding either automatically or spontaneously to Sri Lanka's request for military assistance as was the case in respect of such situations during the pre-Vietnam period. The State Department refrained from attributing the disturbances in Sri Lanka to any Sino-Soviet design keeping in line the the kind of global equilibrium which had then been envisaged according to the Nixon-Kissinger foreign policy strategy. The closure of the North Korean Embassy by the Colombo authorities failed to bring about any change in this attitude. Sri Lanka's request for military aid was considered by the State Department from the point of view of the Nixon Doctrine⁵⁷ because according to the officials there it raised the question whether the U. S. was going to "get involved" in the counter-insurgency operations.⁵⁸ The assistance she rendered during the period of the insurrection, therefore, was of a very limited nature. In addition to supplying the six Bell helicopters through Britain on a commercial basis, she delivered some helicopter spare-parts somewhere around April 14.

It was only after the critical period of the insurrection had passed and the arrival of Soviet military assistance, that the U.S. made substantive military aid commitments. On April 21 General Sepala Attygalle disclosed to the Western correspondents in Colombo that the United States had agreed to supply an unspecified number of fixed-wing aircraft to employ in reconnaissance missions as well as in counter-insurgency operations.⁵⁹ In early May, Washington contemplated supplying "several Bell helicopters, mortars, small arms and ammunition and a large amount of medical supplies" from the American Pacific bases,⁶⁰ presumably on a request from the Sri Lankan government to offset the Soviet military supplies, the presence of which had momentarily altered the international repercussions of the insurrection in the third week after its outbreak. The main significance of the military assistance thus provided by the United States was that it marked the mending of the rupture which occurred in the relationship between the two countries in consequence of the implementation of the United Front's left-wing foreign policy and the beginning of a new phase of close friendship between the two.

Today, the policy of the United States in respect of Central America in general and El Salvador in particular, merely signifies the revival of the pre-Vietnam counter-revolutionary interventionist policy in the Third World, making the Nixon Doctrine a passing phenomenon.

The Soviet Union

The Soviet commentators looked upon the JVP as a "terrorist" organisation which had "nothing in common with genuine socialism".⁶¹ In any event there was no possibility whatsoever of the Soviet Union supporting the insurgents who had taken an avowedly anti-Soviet ideological position. However, the assistance from Moscow in support of the United Front did not reach it until April 18, twelve days after the Sri Lankan request for such assistance was made and a few days after the defensive position of the insurgents had become clear.

The assistance that was provided after April 18 included (a) five Mig-17 fighter aircraft and six helicopters (delivered on April 20), (b) pilots and technicians attached to aircraft and helicopters (estimatedly about 60, arrived on the same day), (c) an unspecified number of ground maintenance crew (arrived on April 18), (d) 20 armoured cars supplied on May 5th or 6th and (e) transport facilities for bringing some police communication equipment from the German Democratic Republic.⁶² This was the largest military assistance that the United Front government received from any single country during the period of the insurrection. From the point of view of Moscow, the primary significance of the magnitude of the assistance thus provided was a Soviet desire to demonstrate a willingness to support the Asian countries in the maintenance of peace and stability, the declared major objective of the proposed system of collective security for the Asian region. In addition, it can be presumed that these military supplies were intended to effect a tilt in Sri Lanka's international alignment favourable to the Soviet Union. From the point of the Sri Lanka government, apart from strengthening its military position as against the insurgents, it served the more important political purpose of reviving the balancing strategy of the country's foreign policy which had until now collapsed as a result of the surprise attack of the JVP.

The People's Republic of China

The JVP insurrection symbolically posed to the Chinese the central dilemma of reconciling the divergent considerations emanating from the two basic facets of their international policy that they were pursuing then, namely, the maintenance of normal inter-state relations with all the countries irrespective of their social systems and supporting the revolutionary movements of the world. The JVP was not the kind of revolutionary organisation that would be acceptable to the Chinese. But it was of an apparent Maoist character. Its unanticipated armed attack exposed the military vulnerability of the United Front government, and thereby, it posed the question as to which side they should support. The way in which the Chinese resolved this dilemma can well be understood by judging their actual behaviour in respect of the Sri Lankan crisis.

On April 5, the day on which the insurgency broke out, a Chinese ship carrying arms and ammunition to Tanzania arrived in the Colombo harbour. On the following day, having come to know about this, the Sri Lankan government approached the Chinese ambassador in Colombo to see whether the arms and ammunition in the ship could not be available. "While the negotiations were going on", Mr Thiruchelvam pointed out in the Senate, "the Ambassador said he wished to get authority..... from his home government. And before the authority could be obtained, before any further step could be taken, the vessel left Ceylon."⁶³ About a month later, a government spokesman revealed the contents of a letter from the country's ambassador in Peking and told the Senate: "The Chinese Prime Minister had to regret that China was unable to provide military aid to Ceylon as the Chinese ship carrying arms to Tanzania had left Colombo before Ceylon's request was made."⁶⁴

This deliberate or the inadvertent failure to supply arms, however, combined with the logic of the government's counter-insurgency policy, led to a virtual rupture in the relationship between the two countries during the crucial period of the crisis. On April 15 the Indian frigates were deployed in search of the "mysterious ship" which "vanished" on April 6 or 7,⁶⁵ indicating the suspicions entertained by the Sri Lankan government about a possible Chinese involvement in support of the JVP. The expulsion of the North Korean diplomats and the arrest of Mr. Shanmugasasan confirmed and compounded these doubts and suspicions. The Hong Kong Bureau Chief of *The New York Times*, in a dispatch dated April 14 from Colombo, reported; "As of this morning well-informed sources in Colombo said a possible Chinese Communist role was being investigated....."⁶⁶ The Chinese Premier himself accepted the serious difficulties confronting the Chinese as regards their Sri Lankan policy during this time when he stated on the occasion of Mrs Bandaranaike's visit to Peking during the following year that their relationship "can stand test".⁶⁷ From the point of the Chinese, the problem that was presented was not merely their relationship with Sri Lanka, which they have valued ever since the rubber-rice pact was signed, irrespective of the parties in power in Sri Lanka, but also the possible implications of any failure of their Sri Lanka diplomacy on their Third World diplomatic strategy which emerged as a key component of their general foreign policy after the Cultural Revolution. Therefore, the Chinese vigorously proceeded behind the scenes both in Colombo and Peking to mend the ruptured relationship between the two countries. Chou En-lai's well known letter addressed to Mrs Bandaranaike was the culmination of the effort.⁶⁸

This letter was intended, in the first place, to dissipate the uncertainty and the mistrust that clouded the relationship between the two sides. The Chinese Premier wrote to his Sri Lankan counterpart:

The friendship between China and Ceylon is in the fundamental interest of the two peoples and can stand tests. The Chinese Government and the people highly treasure the friendship between our two countries, and no one with ulterior motives will ever succeed in trying to sow discord and sabotage our friendly relations.

On the question of the Chinese position vis-a-vis the JVP, Chou En-lai made it clear that it was not the type of revolutionary party that was acceptable to China, and went out of his way to give his blanket blessing to Sri Lanka government's suppression of the uprising, even in disregard of some factual situations;

Following Chairman Mao Tse-tung's teachings, the Chinese people have all along opposed ultra 'left' and right opportunism in their protracted revolutionary struggles. We are glad to see that thanks to the efforts of Your Excellency and the Ceylon Government, the chaotic situation created by a handful of persons who style themselves as 'Guevarists' and into whose ranks foreign spies sneaked has been brought under control.

Then the letter went on to refer implicitly to the positions that India and the Soviet Union had occupied in Sri Lanka amidst the insurgency, a factor which was viewed with marked anxiety by the Chinese.

.....the Chinese Government has never interfered in the internal affairs of other countries, and is also firmly opposed to any country interfering in other countries' internal affairs, and particularly to foreign reactionaries taking advantage of the opportunity to carry out armed intervention.

The letter was accompanied by a unique interest-free long-term loan of Rupees 150 million in convertible currency. "As for other material assistance", the Chinese Premier concluded the letter, "please let us know if it is needed".

Conclusion

The dialectical relationship between the two parties in internal war and its interaction with the external powers constitutes the core of the study of our subject. The untenability of the theories that we have discussed lies in the absence of any concrete attempt to analyse these dual patterns of interaction on the part of their authors. They have merely postulated the problem through the prism of the world bipolar conflict. Their discussion of such broad factors as the conflict between the two opposing social systems, nuclear weapons and the instabilities in the Third World has not been to test their basic assumptions but to support their pre-conceived theoretical notions. The Sri Lankan case demonstrates that internal war

results from socio-economic and political problems in the historically determined under – developed societies in the Third World. From this point of view, violent political upheavals in the under-developed countries can be characterised as a manifestation of the revolutionary transformation that is taking place in the Third World in the contemporary era. In the case of Sri Lanka, the involvement of the external powers was neither automatic nor inevitable. They had been carefully designed to achieve well-defined objectives. The view that internal wars constitute a metaphor in an escalatory process leading to the central conflict and that there is no difference between intervention and non-intervention is, in effect, intended to provide intellectual justification and legitimacy for the unilateral intervention on the part of the Western powers in the conflicts in the Third World. The Sri Lankan experience further shows that the mode of termination of internal wars does not necessarily depend on external intervention. The failure of the JVP insurrection was fundamentally due to its inherent strategic and political shortcomings. The virtual lull that emerged in the battlefield after its initial offensive enabled the United Front government to marshal sufficient external support to launch the counter-offensive. In this way, in the Sri Lankan case, the incumbent constituted the organic link between the insurrection and the external powers. The repeated assertion on the part of the United Front government that the external powers of divergent ideological orientations came to its help because of its policy of non-alignment is not a meaningless claim.

The continued practice of Sri Lanka's non-alignment has been possible largely because of its acceptability to these external powers for their own reason. According to our definition of 'intervention' the responses of the outside powers to the 1971 crisis do not amount to interventionary behaviour. Their attitudes and actions were always conditional upon the demands of the United Front government which undoubtedly commanded legitimacy both internally and externally. Revolutionary situations can only arise from the complete erosion of the credibility and legitimacy of the existing governments. That fundamentally depends upon the internal socio-economic and political conditions.⁶⁹

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