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Recent Lectures

- Understanding the Sri Lankan Government Strategy in Eelam War IV, Inaugural lecture at Social Science Festival organized by The Bangalore Social Sciences Forum at National College, Bangalore, December 12, 2011.
- Rise of China and the Indian Ocean: Concerns and Challenges for India at International Conference on Ocean and Geopolitics, organized by University of Malaya, Malaysia, December 8-9, 2011.
- Crossing Borders: The Political-Economic Drivers in Migration of Sri Lankan Tamils at International conference on Crossing Borders, Traversing Boundaries: Bridging the Gap between International and Internal Migration Research and Theory, organized by the Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore, October 13-14, 2011.
- Ethno Nationalism and other challenges to India’s Security at National Seminar on Democracy and Discontent organized by the Department of Political Science, Annamalai University, Chidambaram, February 11-12, 2011.
- India and Its Neighbours (special focus on Sri Lanka), Invited Lecture at Manidha Neyam Institute, Chennai, January 24, 2011.
- India’s Look East Policy, Invited Speaker at Malaysia Armed Force Staff College, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, April 5, 2010.
- Sri Lanka: Recent Developments and Its Implications, Guest Lecture for Indian Foreign Service Probationers at Foreign Service Institute, New Delhi, India, February 18, 2009.

Recent Publications

"Pakistan", has the warmest goodwill towards Ceylon, and I am sanguine that the good feeling which exist between our two people will be further strengthened as the years roll by and our common interests, and mutual and reciprocal handling of them, will bring us into still closer friendship.

Mohammad Ali Jinnah, Governor-General of Pakistan, 4 February 1948

Introduction

Responding to the tensions with India on Tamil question, Colombo has been bolstering ties with other players including Pakistan from time to time. Indeed, Colombo and Islamabad have enjoyed a close and mutually beneficial relationship since their independence in 1948. Their partnerships are evidently comprehensive: economic, political, and socio-cultural and defence. Pakistan has long provided Sri Lanka with major military, technical, and economic assistance since 1980s, including the offering the service of Pakistan Air Force pilots in the operation against the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). In fact, analysts were of views that growing relations between the Sri Lanka and Pakistan (other than Sri Lanka’s closer ties with China) had ultimately prompted India to push for even stronger hard-line policy against its southern neighbour, Sri Lanka.

Political Relations

Sri Lanka and Pakistan have historically enjoyed a close and cordial relationship based on mutual trust, supporting each other in the crucial moments. In fact, their common fear of India, particularly the strong influence of India or ‘Indian-ness’ have fused them together. Sri Lankan Prime Minister Sir John Kotelawala was reported as saying in 1954: “...I can visualise that in twenty years time we will be sitting in Delhi as part of India.” It was the fear of India that led Sri Lanka along with Pakistan, to embrace Western powers in the 1950s and 1960s. Undeniably they were sensitive to guard their identity and sovereignty against bigger and stronger India. Again the words of Prime Minister Kotelawala summarize the above point in a nutshell, referring to Pakistan he was of the view that “how closely related our problems are and how similar is our outlook”. Thus, Pakistan and China were apparently a paramount alternative to Sri Lanka against India.

Unlike their relations with India, the two countries enjoyed a problem-free mutual relationship which did not complicate their ties. Consequently Colombo and Islamabad have rendered mutual assistance whenever needed including in the fight against terrorism and separatist...
in late 2000. Notably, Sri Lanka provided transit and refuelling facilities to Pakistani planes irrespective of knowing that they will be employed against India in Bangladesh during the 1971 India-Pakistan war.\textsuperscript{4} Also Colombo publicly backed Pakistan on the Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan apart from playing an important role in restoring Pakistan to the Commonwealth.\textsuperscript{5} Pakistan’s closeness with China has also helped Sri Lanka to an extent not only in getting aid and assistance from both the countries, but also in keeping India in check.

Sri Lanka-Pakistan relationship though seeks to lessen Indian pressure they were however, never tried to forge a strategic alliance against India so far. The Sri Lankan policy on Kashmir issue is a case in point where Colombo has adopted a strictly neutral posture. In 1956, when Prime Minister Bandaranaike, on returning from Pakistan, was asked to comment on Kashmir question, he said: “that is not my business.”\textsuperscript{6} The Sri Lanka’s fervent to preserve a distinct foreign policy could be a rationale for the Colombo strategy.

In short, as Mrs. Bandaranaike said “Sri Lanka’s foreign policy aspirations are fulfilled in their totality in its relations with Pakistan.”\textsuperscript{7} Since, Islamabad’s backing to Colombo at the time of its need worked as a secondary deterrent to “big brother India”.

**Economic Relations**

The Sri Lanka-Pakistan economic partnership originally began as an enhanced political relationship. Having forged political relationship the two countries decided that fostering an economic partnership would be essential for long-lasting relationships. In line, both concluded a long-term trade agreement in May 1955, which provided for most-favoured nation treatment to each other by the two sides in matters of import and export, shipping and other commercial transactions. The agreement also offered for mutual consultation when necessary on matters related to trade. Within the broader framework of 1955 agreement the two countries also regularly signed annual trade agreements apart from constant exchange of trade and commercial delegations.

Later in August 1984, Sri Lanka and Pakistan signed new trade agreement, replacing the 1955 agreement in order to further promote their trade relations. Under the new agreement the two countries showed their resolute to strengthen and diversify their trade. Also both countries agreed to set up a committee to review the progress in the implementation of the agreement and to recommend measures for the
solution of the problems, if any. They also decided to hold trade fairs in each other's country apart from promoting visits of businessmen and trade delegations.

Meanwhile during Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunge's visit to Pakistan in February 2005 agreement for the Provision of Export Credit Facility of US$10 Million to Sri Lanka was signed between two countries to buy Pakistani products.\(^8\) However, later in 2006 President Mahinda Rajapaksa’s offered a credit line of US$ 10 million to the Pakistani business community to facilitate import of products from Sri Lanka during his visit to Pakistan.\(^9\)

The Sri Lanka – Pakistan Business Council, incorporated on August 30, 1991 and later on February 09, 2005 Pakistan–Sri Lanka Business Forum (PSLBF) was established with the stated aims and objectives of the PSLBF were to encourage, furtherance and promotion of business, mutual understanding and friendly relations between the industrial and business communities of Sri Lanka and Pakistan.

In spite of this, Sri Lanka and Pakistan were reluctant to sign Free Trade Agreement (FTA) reportedly on the issue of scaling down customs duty on their one item each. Apparently Colombo wanted Islamabad to allow at the zero rate import of tea, while Islamabad asked for zero rate export of rice to Colombo under the proposed treaty. Finally on June 12, 2005 two sides signed Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and notably this was the first FTA that Pakistan signed with any country. Under the FTA, both have agreed to offer preferential market access to each others’ exports by way of granting tariff concessions. Also Sri Lanka was offered to benefit from duty free market access to 206 products in the Pakistani market including tea, rubber and coconut. Pakistan, in return, gained duty free access to 102 products in the Sri Lankan market including oranges, basmati rice and engineering goods.\(^10\)

Tea and cocoa remained the largest items of Sri Lanka's exports to Pakistan, followed by natural and synthetic rubber and by betel leaves and pulses. Also Sri Lanka supplies more than three-fourths of the ingredients in the Paan consumed in Pakistan which is a very popular edible item in Pakistan. Cotton, rice, cement, potatoes, fabrics, medicament, textile fibers, electrical machines and apparatus are the major items imported from Pakistan to Sri Lanka.\(^11\)

Pakistan is Sri Lanka's second largest trade partner in the South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation (SAARC) region, behind India. Also
Pakistan was the 26th export destination for Sri Lanka (in 2010) accounting for nearly 0.7% of total exports in value terms while it has been the 10th largest import origin contributing to over 2% of total imports into Sri Lanka in the same year. According to the Sri Lanka Customs statistics, the value of total trade between the two countries which stood at US $ 169 Mn in 2005, has increased up to US $ 345 Mn. in October, 2011 recording a 4.5% average growth during this period.\textsuperscript{12} In 2012 with a 159% rise in trade between Sri Lanka and Pakistan since their 2005 FTA, Pakistan endeavouring to initiate private sector-based joint ventures to boost commerce in jewellery, pharmaceuticals, textiles and granite. At present FTA is weighted heavily in Pakistan’s favour.\textsuperscript{13} In 2012-13, Pakistan’s exports to Sri Lanka amounted dollars 344.71 million and the imports figured dollars 67.06 million.\textsuperscript{14} The figure 1 given below would give depiction of Sri Lanka’s external trade with Pakistan.

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\end{center}

\textit{Source: http://www.slpfa.org/trade.html}

Both the sides have discussed about the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) in order to broaden the scope of the Free Trade Agreement but however due to some political objections from Sri Lanka it seems they would move forward.

\textbf{Cultural Relations}

The civilizational links between Pakistan and Sri Lanka are rooted deep in history. The archaeological sites in Taxila in Rawalpindi district of the Punjab province in Pakistan showed some evidence of conceptual and linguistic exchanges between two countries. Also Pakistan is home to the
remains of the greatest Buddhist civilisation, the Gandhara Civilisation. The presence of small Buddhist minority (about 319,000 in 1947) in Pakistan and a Muslim community in eastern province of Sri Lanka have contributed for nourishing this linkage. For instance, in 1950 Pakistan participated in the first Conference of the World Fellowship of Buddhists (WFB) held in Sri Lanka and subsequently Islamabad commemorate the 2500th anniversary of Lord Buddha in 1956, indeed the first country to do so. In 1958, the Government of Sri Lanka received some portion of sacred Hair Relics of Lord Buddha from Ven. Dipankar Sriganan Mahathro, the then President of Chittagong Buddhist Association and Chief abbot of Chittagong Buddhist Monastery under the guidance of the Government of Pakistan. The holy handing over ceremony was held in Karachi in the year 1958. It was placed in a stupa in Madanpe Sri Lanka. Equally a high powered national committee was set up in Sri Lanka to celebrated Quaid-i-Azam’s birth centenary. Later in December 1976, Colombo Municipal Council named a public ground in Colombo as Jinnah Maidan.

Further to institutionalize cultural cooperation between two countries, several societies and commission were established. Notably, to promote social and cultural relations Pakistan Ceylon Cultural Society was formed in March 1954 with Sri Lanka’s Minister of Finance Sir Oliver Gonnelilleke as its first President and in order to promote tourism South Asian Travel Commission was set up in 1956 with Sri Lanka and Pakistan as its original members apart from India. To facilitate more linkage including promoting tourism Sri Lanka and Pakistan established direct air links between Colombo-Islamabad and Colombo-Lahore. Accordingly, Sri Lankan Airlines started its operations in 1980 with three weekly flights to Pakistan and later have expanded its frequency to a daily flight from Karachi to Colombo. Correspondingly, Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) fly two flights weekly from Islamabad to Colombo. Interestingly in February 2011 when 10th ICC Cricket World Cup was hosted by Sri Lanka, India and Bangladesh, PIA launched a special promotion to encourage Pakistanis to fly into Colombo to witness the World Cup matches. In 2010, Pakistan government decided to put Buddhist tourism back on track in order to attract Buddhist tourist from Sri Lanka and other Southeast Asian countries.

**Defence Relations**

Sri Lanka enhanced its defence cooperation with Pakistan since early 1970s. In 1971 when Sri Lanka witnessed brutal violence during the JVP
insurgency Sri Lankan Prime Minister Bandaranaike asked for military supplies from a number of countries including Pakistan to strengthen its armed forces. Pakistan apart from supplying arms, trained Sri Lankan security personnel. Equally Sri Lanka offered its ports for Pakistani planes and naval ships during India-Pakistan war in 1971. Subsequently as Sri Lanka-Pakistan relations expanded, President Zia-ul-Haq had sent the then Regimental Commander of Special Forces, Brigadier Tariq Mahmood to explore ways and means of enhancing training facilities in Sri Lanka. During his visit Brigadier Mahamood recommended Saliyapura, home of the Gajaba Regiment, as a centre where Pakistan would like to provide intensive training programme for a selected group of Sri Lankan officers-Non Commissioned Officers and junior leaders. Reportedly, Pakistani instructors trained nearly 500 in two batches.

Subsequently with the advancement of bilateral relations between two countries, since 2000 Colombo gained closer cooperation from Islamabad in military matters when it went out for complete extrication of extremist LTTE in northern Sri Lanka. After China, Pakistan in fact emerged as one of the leading weapons suppliers to the Sri Lankan Security Forces. According to, P K Balachandran, The Hindustan Times’ Colombo correspondent, "it was with the help of the multi-barrel rocket launchers (MBRLs) supplied by Pakistan that the Sri Lankan army was able to drive the LTTE out of Jaffna" in 2000. In 2008, Pakistan agreed to supply 22 Al-Khalid Main Battle Tanks (MBT) worth US$ 100 million, besides high-tech weapons during Sri Lankan army chief Lt. General Sarath Fonseka meeting with his Pakistani counterpart General Ashfaq Pervez Kayani.

According to the report, Pakistan supplied weapons and ammunition worth USD 190 million. Also in April 2009, Sri Lanka gave a shopping list $25 million worth of 81 mm, 120 mm and 130 mm mortar ammunition for urgent delivery within a month to Pakistan, and reportedly Pakistani military agreed to supply them on an emergency basis from its War Wastage Reserve maintained in its army depots. Apparently Pakistan was generous and spontaneous in their support to Sri Lanka. In one sentence this gesture can be understood from the Pakistan Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan words that “Ceylon is our friend, Ceylon will not ask for anything unreasonable, give her whatever she wants.”

Pakistan is also provided training to Sri Lankan security personnel at its premier defence colleges, including Pakistan Military Academy. Sri Lankan personnel were in fact was one of the largest in foreign cadets’
category reportedly. Further apparently as part of the cooperation, Pakistan Air Force pilots had participated in several successful air strikes against several military bases of the LTTE in August 2008.\textsuperscript{27} Besides, posting of envoys between two sides since 2000s shows the depth of their defence cooperation. Pakistan sent Bashir Wali Mohamand, former Director General of the Intelligence Bureau as the envoy in 2006, to Sri Lanka when the Eelam War IV in Sri Lanka was at its peak followed by another Air Marshal (Retd.) Shehzad Aslam Chaudhary for the High Commissioner’s post at Colombo. Sri Lanka on its part appointed Air Marshal Jayalath Weerakody as the High Commissioner to Pakistan in 2009 these postings were allegedly meant to help each other and guide the operations against the extremists.

Interestingly, Pakistan’s defence support to Sri Lanka was claimed as a major factor that contributed for the ultimate defeat of the LTTE at the hands of the Sri Lankan army.\textsuperscript{28} Keeping up the momentum, Pakistan seemingly wants to expand defence cooperation with Sri Lanka including help to Colombo on upgradation and rebuilding of T-55 tank engines, incorporation of rubberised tracks on tanks besides modernisation of the fire and tank gun control systems and setting up a nuclear power plant in Trincomalee.\textsuperscript{29}

**Conclusion**

Colombo’s relationship with Pakistan began with a marked desire on both sides to have mutual and cordial relations, their common perception of threat from India, has however cemented their enhanced relationship today. By forging a close relationship with Islamabad, Colombo was apparently able to check Indian authority, with greater political strength. While Pakistan may have a gained certain advantage by its ties with Colombo but its ability to stand on its own in Sri Lanka is doubtful given that Sri Lanka will not be able to completely turn hostile to India. Also the fact that Pakistan which does not have the international clout as India today and it would not be any help in sustaining Sri Lanka’s long term strategic interest. India, on its part, without worrying about the Colombo relations with Islamabad needs to endure its ties with Sri Lanka in order to retain its strategic and security interest in the region.

3. Ibid.
4. When India withdrew landing and overflying rights for Pakistani planes, Colombo granted these rights to Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) at Pakistan's request.
18. Sri Lanka and Pakistan also signed a bilateral cultural agreement in December 1973 with the focus on improving tourism between the two countries. Consequently, in May 1976 both countries agreed to organize and launch joint publicity campaign for tourism promotion and to participate jointly in international tourist and travel conventions and conferences.


28. Ibid.


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