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## A CRITICAL ANALYSIS ON MR. S. W. R. D. BANDARANAYAKE'S VIEW (BETWEEN 1956 N 1959) ON THE SUBJECT FOREIGN POLICY OF SRI LANKA

**Bandara, W. M. S. C.**

Temporary Lecturer, Department of Political Science, University of Kelaniya, Kelaniya, Sri Lanka.

### ABSTRACT

*Foreign Policy is a very important topic, which comes under discussion within a political system of any country. When bringing under analysis the foreign policy of our country, a thing that can be noted very clearly, is how from the period of the past, different leaders of the state, made the foreign policy of our country, subject to various changes. The foreign policy of a country, is so much like a mirror that reflects its National policy to the rest of the world. When reflecting on the previous era's foreign policies of our country one may note very clearly, as one which was once more or less dependent on the British and again it's stance looked detached from the British and more independent and one other instances, more allegiant to Western Governments. During such eras there had been some prominent features in the foreign policies of each of them, and in which direction it was inclined depended on the concept and views of the political leaders who were controlling the foreign policies representing the Governments in power. The objective of the article we are engaged in presently, is to conduct a critical analysis of the foreign policy adopted by Mr. Bandaranayake during his tenure as the Head of State. The information provided for this study, was based on Secondary information. Mr. Bandaranayake made certain constitutional changes to the foreign policy of our country. He was a unique leader who introduced and they adopted non - aligned procedures which were neutral, and that were different to the existing policies. Due to this reason, Mr. Bandaranayake held an important position and was accepted with great honor among the Leaders of the State, both locally and internationally.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Foreign Policy, Mr. Bandaranayake, Leaders of the State, National Policy, Sri Lanka*

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Under the present social system, no country in the world can isolate itself, without getting involved in International affairs. It should be followed up in a manner, an in conformity with the principles of Foreign Policy in that particular state, as it will direct how those governments should negotiate when dealing in matters connected internationally. A country's foreign policy is like a mirror reflecting, its national policy to the rest of the countries in the world. The foreign policy of a state will reflect the nature of the relationship that particular country has with the countries of the rest of the world. On the foreign policy some commentators say, it is the expression of it's internal policy seen from outside, in the image of it's foreign policy. Ratna Swamy's view of the foreign policy is "It is the expression of principles and other activities which one country uses

for it's own advantage, when negotiating with other states around the world.

"Nirman Hill's opinion of what foreign policy is "When one country starts negotiating with other countries, in order to fulfill their wants they make certain attempts. These when summarized and presented as their foreign policy." When viewed under such contexts, the foreign policy of a country is nothing but a extended arm of that country's Internal Policy (Alahakoon, 1997). When deciding on the foreign policy matters of Sri Lanka, there are outside influences which are using pressure though many other factors, to enforce it's final outcome. Apart from those, there are other decisive factors such as our country's geographical location, relations with India and our country being one freed from colonial rule, the nature of the countries physical resources, the stability of the country's political situation,

technological knowledge, strength of its armed forces are all important factors brought under considerations when forming our foreign policy.

## 2.0 FOREIGN POLICY OF SRI LANKA

When inquiring into the current situation on the Foreign Policy of Sri Lanka, it can be very clearly seen, how it had withstood and overcome certain important periods. When Sri Lanka was under the British Colonial period, and at that time when the first rules of our country, appears to have been forced to submit to the terms of that Foreign Policy tabled. As such even after gaining independence, the outlook of the Foreign Policy was more inclined towards the demeanor of the Western countries. However this Foreign Policy introduced soon after gaining Independence, was not based on any logic nor did it have any vision to reach any objective, but simply was a policy designed to achieve, what was only beneficial for the Capitalist class. For this very reason, in the international arena this was no straight forward or stable policy and all these portrayed it was nothing but a policy more inclined to meet the demands of the Western countries and it began to evolve in a number of ways.

Accordingly the year 1956 could be recalled as an important turning point, in the evolution of the Foreign Policy of Sri Lanka. The main impact behind this change was caused, when at the General Elections held in March 1956, the United National Party which was in power since Sri Lanka gaining Independence, was defeated by the coming into power of the Peoples United Front, led by Mr. S. W. R. D. Bandaranayake. As this was supposed to be a radical political change then, and it paved the way, to introduce many changes to the Foreign Policy of our country, too. Let us bring to attention, the other various factors which motivated those changes.

### 2.1 The factors that motivated a constitutional change in Bandaranayake's Foreign Policy

In the formation of the foreign policy of political alliance represented by Mr. Bandaranayake, the other main factors which had a main bearing on it were, his individuality, the political concepts and opinions held by him, and the influences that played various roles internally and externally in bringing him into place of power. When examining these factors one by one separately, it can be clearly noted that there had to be made certain change with regard the existing foreign policy. What those changes had been can be seen in the historical records of Sri Lanka's foreign policy. The reason behind those continues changes, had been the desires and expectation's, each country had on an individual basis, to get them fulfilled, from time to time.

#### 2.1.1 Mr. Bandaranayake's Political Environment

The Political alliance called the People's United Front, was formed with the Lanka Marxist Communist Party led by the SLFP and Lanka Socialist Trotskyist Party. Both these parties totally

condemned the Foreign Policies inclined to the west and unanimously decided to join hands with the other Socialist countries. But the concept held by Mr. Bandaranayake who led the Sri Lanka Freedom Party was, to continue relationship with the western countries but at the same time establish diplomatic and commercial relationships with the socialist countries as well (Karunadasa, 2003: 84). Mr. Bandaranayake who appreciated the principles of Democracy was not like the Senanayake, father and son, duo who in tolerated socialism. Mr. Bandaranayake well understood the economic system of Socialism but realized the difficulty in transforming it, all at once, from the Capitalist system. He identified the need to do so in the practical manner instead of achieving it through revolutionary means. He knew that the life, line of Sri Lanka's economy depended on the trade and economic ties with the Western Countries. Therefore He took firm steps to continue as it was the friendship he had with Britain and other Western Countries and made attempts to form fresh ties with socialist countries. Therefore when Mr. Bandaranayake introduced his initial policy statement in the Parliament on his government's foreign policy, he made it clear his government is not aligned to any particular camp and it was a friendly policy, showing its friendship towards all countries.

#### 2.1.2 The concepts and opinions held by Mr. Bandaranayake

So much of publicity was given to keep the public informed of the concepts and political opinions held by Mr. Bandaranayake on the matters of foreign policy. That was the period he severed his ties with the United National Party and joined the opposition. Mr. Bandaranayake who took over the leadership of the opposition, made certain important remarks during a parliamentary debate held on foreign policy, on June 17, 1952. Among the suggestions voiced by him were,

- 1) Small countries such as ours as far as possible, should play an important role, when it comes to International affairs.
- 2) The policies adapted on International affairs, should be important.
- 3) We should bring our economic problems, before the attention of the international community.
- 4) The foreign policy of our country should be utilized for the benefit of our own country (Karunadasa, 2003: 86)

#### 2.1.3 The Individuality of Mr. Bandaranayake

Mr. Bandaranayake comes from a privileged and noble family and he is a highly educated individual and held a Degree from the Britain's Oxford University. Mr. Bandaranayake was very fluent in both English and Sinhala languages and he was a well-known "Nationalist" among the People during that era. Mr. Bandaranayake copied the nationalistic ideas of the well-known business men

who lived in Europe at that time, gave the First place to the Sinhala Language, and made it the theme in his political campaigns. And all these made the People of country drown to him in a strong way. Also he had the strategic dexterity to form a united and strong force comprising five main sections in the society known as Bhikkus, Doctors, Teachers, Farmers and Workers. Because of his intelligence he got majority of votes in the Parliamentary elections, because of leftist parties such as the Communist Party and Sama Samaja Party who joined hands to unitedly support him to power. And with the People placing the trust in the new Political party, leadership and it's policies, he was able to use pressure to make changes in both the foreign policy and the Internal policy of our country.

#### **2.1.4 Internal political Environment**

There were two main factors that contributed internally, to make changes in the foreign policy. The first of it was the existence of two British bases in Katunayake and Trincomalee which were within the territory of Ceylon. Even from a period before the victory at the local Elections, there was pressure to remove those two military bases. But as the Marxist parties believed the presence of these Military bases owned by the British as an emblem of dependence for Sri Lanka, with the victory received at the elections, became a critical issue (Karunadasa, 2003: 87)

The second reason was, Sri Lanka had a vision to widen its foreign trade market, within the first few years after gaining independence, because of the trade depression caused mainly due to the Korean War. The main reason behind such a motivation was, because until then Sri Lanka had made no diplomatic or trade relations with those countries which could be advantageous to its economy.

#### **2.1.5 External Political Environment**

At the time Mr. Bandaranayake, came into power, there were many changes that were taking place with in the world political environment. Among them the changes that took place in the year 1953, in both the Soviet as well as the American political leadership, can be treated as very unique. In 1953 Republican candidate Isan Hower was elected as the American foreign policy which was under the Democratic Party and which was not very agreeable, not under the Republications, turned a new leaf, by being friendlier in nature. Running parallel to this turn of events, the International relations, within the Soviet Union, were subjected to a different political philosophy, with the death of their leader Stalin. He introduced the concept "Peaceful co-existence" to Soviet Union's foreign policy (Karunadasa, 2003: 88)

Because of this change in the philosophy of foreign policy adapted by the Soviet Union, the third world countries, which have won their freedom from colonialism, began to accept what the Soviet Union, Krushev and Buljanin, in order to impress the International community, made official visits the third world countries such as India, Afghanistan and Burma and made way for the "winds of change", to

blow right across the world, to all countries. America also began to change their attitude towards the third world countries of the world, and extended their friendly hands towards them. The formation of the Asian countries who have won their freedom, into one body in the year 1955, had its beginnings in the summit Conference held in Colombo in 1944 and the outcome, of the summit Conference held at Bandung, Indonesia, was displayed before the rest of the world by the co-operation established between Asia and Africa from then onwards (Nissanka, 1978).

And another very special feature was, the acceptance of SriLanka and 16 other countries who have won their freedom, as members of the Organization of United Nations, in the month of December 1955, all these countries were accepted as Members. Among those who were convicted that in order to safeguard the Independence they have recently won, they have to introduce and implement their country's foreign policies independently without further adhering to their unchanging one sided views, were Sukrano of Indonesia , Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia, Nikruma of Ghana, Makorius of Cyprus and our own Bandaranayaka of Sri Lanka. Also they came to the conclusion, they also should implement foreign polices impartially and honour them, by following Nehru, Nassar and Tito as examples. As such the external political environment which kept on changing, influenced Mr. Bandaranayake to form his own Foreign Polices on behalf of our country.

#### **3.0 HOW MR. S. W. R. D. BANDARANAYAKE PUT THE NON-ALIGNED POLICY INTO ACTION**

Mr. Bandaranayake was known popularly, as a person who respected the non – aligned policy, even before he came into power. Even on the election platforms and after coming in to power also, he brought into focus, that an unbiased foreign policy should be adapted. Some commentators compared the non – aligned policy to a response, shown towards the mere silent war situation. But this cannot be justified. The African and Asian countries, who gained freedom from Imperialism and became independent states, longed to get involved in world politics in the manner most suited for them. Accordingly there three main features that could be identified within their state legislatures.

- I. Freedom to think and act accordingly.
- II. The need to stay away from power block politics and military alliances.
- III. Peaceful co-existence (Nissanka, 1978)

These three main features were clearly evident in Mr. Bandaranayake's foreign Policy. In July 5<sup>th</sup> 1956, addressing a group of newspaper reporters in London he pointed out what he felt was important to him. Those were, as a non-aligned state, his country has the freedom of choice to adapt what change is best suited for his country from any country which came under the two Power blocks, to enjoy the freedom and active participation, as a country which obtained its independence from colonialism. The

bottom line being, the other States should not set up obstacles, in achieving these targets by the other Governments, Mr. Bandaranayake emphasized, that every state has a responsibility to create world peace, by living according to these principles.

A notable feature in his Foreign Policy is his view on Zonal Co-operation. Here his emphasis was on the need of the new States, such as those in Asia and Africa, who have recently received Independence to co-operate with one another. He pointed out that as states manufacturing raw materials, the Asian and African Governments should not complete with one another and that should arrive at a official agreement to work with Co-operation. When he represented himself as the leader of Ceylon in 1947 at the Conference on Co-operation between Asia countries, he placed emphasis on the need introduce a plan to unite Asian and African countries.

Mr. S. W. R. D. Bandaranayake, showed more emphasis on the Declaration made in Bandung, about Zonal Co-operation. There they once emphasized, that this Declaration comes second only to the United Nations. Manifesto, Mr. Bandaranayake from his position and view on the Asian and African Co-operation, paid great respect to Nehru's view and policies. He regarded Nehru, as a figure, and as a leader of state, who committed himself to unite Asian and African countries together (Karunadasa, 1998). Due to this reason Bandaranayake is considered different to Sir John Kothalawala. At the Bandun Summit Conference held in 1955, Mr. Bandaranayake, while criticizing Sir John Kotalawala, pointed this out. What Mr. Bandaranayake emphasized was, when strengthening the co-operation between Asia and Africa, it was necessary to maintain a close relationship with China and India. On many instances he brought to one's remembrance that Ceylon should follow after Switzerland. What he meant by that statement was that Colombo, should be converted as the City Centre for importantly for Asia. The bottom line of his vision was to stick to policy to be friendly with all nations and not to have any enemies. He insisted the if impartiality take a firm root, the two British Military camps, set up in Sri Lanka should be removed. This shows his determination to create an impartial environment.

It is important that we inquire as to how Mr. Bandaranayake responded during the Hungarian crisis. When Russia invaded Hungary in November 1956, Mr. Bandaranayake made a firm declaration condemning the Soviet Union for the act of invasion over Hungary. When a vote was taken on this issue, Sri Lanka avoided participating in it. On this occasion Mr. Bandaranayake declined to make his own opinion, because he did not want to interfere or get involved in international conflicts. But during the Suez Canal Crisis, Sri Lanka took quite a different stance. Mr. Bandaranayake's point of view was, Suez Canal belonged to Egypt, and invasion of it by France, Britain and Israel as a condemnable act.

A similar situation arose in 1959, where Mr. Bandaranayake tried his best not to damage the good relationship he had built with China. In this instance the Buddhist clergy of Sri Lanka along with other Buddhist social groups, urged him to protest against China's invasion by organizing a Asian Zonal Summit Conference and getting the united Nations. Organization to sort it out through discussions. But Mr. Bandaranayake said that was an internal problem of China and avoided any involvement in it. Therefore his policy was not to get too much engaged when it came to International problems.

#### **4.0 THE NATURE OF RELATIONSHIPS MR. BANDARANAYAKE FORMED WITH DIFFERENT COUNTRIES**

During the post-Independence period it was clearly evident, that our first Foreign Policy had close ties with Western countries, and the ties with Communist countries as limited. But the nature of the relationships Mr. Bandaranayake formed with those countries was somewhat different. A description of t is as follows.

##### **4.1 The nature of Relationships Mr. Bandaranayake formed with Western countries.**

When inquiring into the nature of relationships he had with the Western countries, it is clearly to be seen, that he tried his best to maintain good relationships with those countries. In his Foreign Policy, an important feature that is evident is his maintaining good relationship with America, where until then it was under the control of the United National Party. United National Party upheld good diplomatic relations with America, as they respected Democracy. Mr. Bandaranayake also agreed that as our country trusted in the Democratic way of life the relationship America had with Sri Lanka was much firmer than it had with most other countries.

For this very reason when the issue on the Suez Canal came under discussion in 1956, he commended that the policy adapted by the president of America on this matter, was a very sincere and straight forward one. Also in order to further strengthen the relationship with America, he said in order to find a permanent solution for this issue, he was ready even to face the hostility of his very close friends. He highly commended the policy adapted by President Hoover during the Egyptian crisis. In order to broaden his relationship with America, he told them not to distrust his leadership, because of his maintaining good relations with socialist countries, as it was only because his country's national desire, to be so. Because of this relationship with America, there was opposition from Leftist Parties, but he saw to it, that the Radio Station the Voice of America, to freely broadcast their views. Because of this friendly policy he was able to sign a Treaty with America and in 1958, Mr. Bandaranayake was successful in

obtaining and aid amounting to Rs. 159, 827,000 from America (Kumarasinghe, 2000)

He made a great effort to maintain relationship with Britain. There was a controversial issue that surfaced about the Defense Pact signed between Britain and Ceylon. That was because the majority in the Ceylon Constitution, made a firm declaration that, Military Headquarters should run under the Government of Ceylon. Even during such controversial issues Mr. Bandaranayake held very friendly discussions with the British Government. In order to attend the Commonwealth countries conference held in London, he requested to have talks with the British officials and come into an official settlement about the Defense Pact. As a result of this, Britain agreed to have their military camps removed in a very diplomatic manner without entering into controversies. But in this instant he had to agree with three conditions laid out by the British Government.

- I. In order to remove the camps a sum of Rs. 22,00000 had to be paid to the British Government. And this could be paid within a period of 5 years, at Rs. 4, 40,000 annual installment.
- II. Until 01<sup>st</sup> of March 1962, the British forces should be provided continually with the same facilities enjoyed by them within the camps.
- III. If there is a need, to permit the British forces an extension period, to be in occupation those camps. (Karunadasa, 2003)

As a result of the acceptance of these conditions on the 15<sup>th</sup> October 1957 the Naval Base in Trincomalee and on Nov. 01 1957 the Air Force base at Katunayake were taken over by the Government of Sri Lanka. In this manner, when negotiating with the Western Government Mr. Bandaranayake used very effective diplomatic strategies.

The manner Mr. Bandaranayake dealt on the issue connected with the Suez Canal, the Head of State in Egypt was delighted. As a result of it, when Mr. Bandaranayake was returning to Sri Lanka after attending the Summit Conference of the Untiled Nations in 1956, Mr. Bandaranayake was extended an invitation to visit Egypt. But Mr. Bandaranayake very courteously, declined that offer notifying that it was out of his current itenary. However it was not a refusal. But Mr. Bandaranayake personally thought to himself that if he accepted the invitation at that time, it would have had a bad impact on his friendly relations with Britain. This is also an instance, where Mr. Bandaranayake proved of his adherence towards his Government's foreign policies. How he attempted to maintain his friendly relations with the Western block is sufficient evidence, that Mr. Bandaranayake's focus was based on maintaining friendly relations with the western block.

#### **4.2 The Nature of Mr. Bandaranayake's Relations with India**

When one inquiries into the nature of relationships Mr. Bandaranayake maintained with India, It can be noted there is a difference in the nature he maintained his diplomatic ties with it. When Mr. Bandaranayake was elected to power, the Government of India, expressed their delight over it and there was a firm belief that many problem that existed between, the two countries could be resolved peacefully. In 1957 Prime Minister Nehru could be resolved peacefully. In 1957 Prime Minister Nehru did an official visit to Ceylon and Mr. Bandaranayake also visited India, as the Head of State of Sri Lanka.

These visits confirmed the current state of friendship between the two (2) countries. When Prime Minister Nehru visited Ceylon, it was expected that the bi-lateral issues between the two countries could be resolved very amicably and in the best interest of both countries. But strangely no such discussion ever took place. But most scholars on Inter relations matters between were of the opinion that since both of them trusted each other, they would have decided to postpone, solving them at a later date rather than rushing to it. Dr. Sheltan kodikara's opinion on this matter, in his own words were, "There was between the two leaders an unknown understanding apart from their mutual friendship. Mr. Bandaranayake had a dislike to actively engage in any matter within the region, Nehru ruled. What Mr. Bandaranayake thought was, one must really appreciate Nehru's vast dedication, to maintain regional co-operation at any cost" (Kodikora, 1995)

Accordingly, between the two leaders as well as between the two states, there was similarity in the attitudes and actions taken, during the period of Bandaranayake. A good example is, that during the Suez Canal crisis both India and Sri Lanka, expressed a similar stance towards it.

Also a special feature in Mr. Bandaranayake's foreign policy was the closeness he showed towards India. Mr. Bandaranayake felt that when it came to the safety of his country, it was better to have India as ally, rather than trusting in powers outside the region. Even though he showed so much of closeness to India, he saw to it, that it would in no way, affect the ties, Sri Lanka had with Britain. His closeness to India can be measured in how he pioneered the development of Nehru's polices of impartiality by using these strategies. When Mr. Bandaranayake attempted to solve some of the problems of Indian estate workers in Sri Lanka, there were instances of threat to their good relationships. But on such occasions he acted with flexibility, because thought if his relationship with India were strained, it could have a bad impact on Sri Lanka. And because of the friendly relationship attitude that existed between Indian and Ceylon, no serious problem arose about the citizenship of workers in the estate sector, whose origins were Indian. (Kodikara, 1995). Due to this reason, the period Mr. Bandaranayake ruled the

country, the Indo – Lanka relations were improving steadily.

When a comparison is made between the Foreign policy stance towards India, of Bandaranayake and the Foreign Policy stance of the previous regime of Senanayake, it is quite evident that Bandaranayake’s policy was a very friendly one, while the Senanayake policy, distanced India from it. This also paved the way for a structural difference the foreign policy of Sri Lanka.

## 5.0 CONCLUSION

When analyzing the Foreign Policies of different countries, it could be noted well well, that all those countries after gaining Independence, presented their new foreign policies in a way to have a strong positive impact for their own country. During this period different state leaders, presented different philosophies. Among them were the Panchsheela policy of Nehru and the Ujamawada Policy of Tanzania’s Niya- ray-ray and the impartial policy of Ceylon’s Mr. Bandaranayake. According to his own policy Mr. Bandaranayake took decision, impartially without being biased to any power block. His excellent leadership skills were seen, in the manner he handled many International crisis situations, while at the sometime safeguarding his friendly relations with those countries.

And other important factors that contributed to the formation of his foreign policy were, the political alliance he represented, his individuality, his political attitudes and concepts and also the internal and external political environment he encountered when he came to power. Therefore it is clearly evident that under Mr. Bandaranayake Foreign policy there were many practicable changes made to Sri Lanka’s existing foreign policy. He can be called a person who was responsible for newly implementing many practicable changes to the International relation of Sri Lanka and made our foreign policy commendable before the rest of the world. Therefore it is to be seen very clearly that Mr. Bandaranayake’s foreign policy had made a vital structural change in the history of the foreign policy of Sri Lanka.

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