

The notion of positioning Sri Lanka as a hub in modern political history is slowly becoming the national ideology that will power the development plans in post war Sri Lanka.

Transforming into a hub is a challenge in itself for any state and for many critics an utopia or a myopic political plan. Sri Lanka's position as a strategic location based on its geographical position has been a recurring point of reference for a multitude of analysts and scholars. The acceptance of this position will give greater impetus in the country's transformation into a global hub.

The notion of a hub

The term hub can be approached in a multi dimensionally from the financial perspective to a cultural definition of what sets trends and make the Avant garde in the cultural dominance of the globe. Simply, the term hub consists of the fundamental quality of unprecedented realms of connections. The current global order has made connection to the system of globalized conditions a vital aspect of development and sustainment.

Thus Sri Lanka is now really looking for connections, and the notion of the hub is a manifestation of this pragmatism of the Rajapaksa regime, which many critics see only as making linkages with states such as Iran, Libya, Pakistan and China. What the president has outlined is that he clearly is interested in making connections but pragmatically highlighting the need for firewalls to secure these connections.

The impending threats

Sri Lankan diplomatic outlook has to be extremely strategic in articulation and deep in comprehending both the changes in the philosophy of the operation of global organizations such as UN and the EU and the new paradigm of global politics that are not limited to international politics. Global politics is an ensemble of political forces and movements which are beyond pure inter-state relationships. They encompass transnational movements, agents, and organizations that have the ability to influence political, economic and even legal frameworks of states and international organizations. Thus the recent comment by the External Affairs Minister G.L. Peiris of not taking the 'transnational government' may seem the right thinking in the traditional diplomatic approach to the issue. In traditional diplomacy virtual threats were not taken seriously but in a world where a simple error in face book privacy setting can cause a global uproar, transnational forces are gathering strength and is an area where states have to be extra cautious and prepare the necessary knowledge think tanks with the capacity to advice the state on global trends that may miss the radar of foreign affairs apparatus.

Bio political dimensions

The recent diplomatic engagement with the western political powers has been broadly set on the issue of allegations of bad human rights records based on war crimes and general human rights conditions. The state is expected to be blatantly rigid and respond to these allegations directly but the state also needs to read the underlying currents that have affected the Western states to unleash such allegations.

There is a shift in the approach to internal crises or conflicts by International organizations, from a state centric view to a citizen centric view. Thus the doctrines of R2P and intervention are now based on the bio political dimension and not purely limited to the state sovereignty dimension. In this context sovereignty which is a broadly contested concept in modern day politics is more about bio political securities and fears rather than the security or integrity of statehood.

Application of the above philosophy is not uniform nor universal as it does not apply to killings that take place on a daily basis in the North Warzistan province bordering Afghanistan and Pakistan in the name of seeking out militants.

For one militant killed, the drones eliminate 20 to 30 innocent civilians. There is no fixed count of civilian casualties leading up to the last 12 months of drone attacks. When the United States and its allies invaded Iraq in 2003, the military might of the tank battalions was such they just rolled over the Iraqi soldiers and the phosphorous ordnance used in the battle for Fallujah are all symbols of the non adherence to the notion of bio-security.

It is in this light we need to justify and juxtapose our human rights records against such violations and engage the West. We simply cannot move into the hub concept by trying to disconnect, disengage or completely shutting out one part of the world; the hub is a central strategic concept with its economic opportunities that will have a broader potential to engage the West.

The state needs to be aware of the geo political interests of the global players and the bio political regimes of control and pressure the new global forces have put together. We cannot afford to resuscitate the anti western ideology that has plagued the nationalist bloc in the country. What we need is politics of engagement and diplomacy of critical manoeuvre. Only with these two fundamentals working smoothly and simultaneously will the hub concept be a reality and Sri Lanka be a node or centre in a world dominated by network, flows and assemblages from UNO to Original design manufactures in China.

Post LTTE or something else?

What is problematic is to prevent or to manage the resuscitation of the LTTE as a transnational global entity. This is further complicated by the security outlook of the state, are we as a state on the lookout for a re-emergence of the LTTE or creation of a new movement.

A movement capable of decentralised operation and inherited with a certain amount of political disposition strong enough to unsettle affairs of a sovereign nation. Sri Lankan Tamil Diaspora

itself is at crossroads and they are in a critical juncture in relation to post war Sri Lanka. The Diaspora factor needs to be handled delicately and intelligently. The LTTE had a strong presence in the Tamil Diaspora but the Tamil Diaspora is not an aggregate of the LTTE beyond Sri Lanka.

The transnational polls by the pro LTTE Diaspora groups have prompted several responses and the defence secretary pragmatically has placed this as a network that needs to be dismantled while the external affairs minister thinks otherwise. The security dilemma from the Sri Lankan point of view is how the state deciphers these new developments beyond its borders. Yes there is a serious impending threat from such activities and the assemblages of Diaspora organizations and other sympathetic networks and agents.

The critical factor being, have we identified properly the shape and form of this emerging threat? The security analysis on a possible pro LTTE or revival of the LTTE is partially correct. The reason being the emergent threat factor is much more different and has a different type of threat potential. This threat potential is locking on to the very foundation Sri Lanka aspires to be in the post war context. This new threat is very clearly trying to disconnect or unplug the country from being a hub and is aimed at pushing Sri Lanka to isolation. Isolation is the preferred national defeat these new assemblages of terror seek to inflict on Sri Lanka to avenge the defeat of the LTTE.

Thus the state needs quickly to do two things, first get to grips with the new forms and structures of threats and secondly to identify their origins. The state should be looking at the new faces or names we are yet to come across who will be the new leaders of this movement.

Dayan Jayatileka in an article recently pointed out the large number of second generation and third generation Tamil Diasporas working for vital political offices in the congress along with internships and employment in the European parliament.

It not just about the Tamil Diaspora, it's about the linkages and the assemblages the diasporas have established which spans from office of the US congress, United Nations, European Union to powerful global media networks, influential universities and think tanks. Their functions results in the cumulative impact on Sri Lanka which is channelled through the Western States. Thus by responding to these states negatively we are falling into the trap placed for us tactically engineered by this new terror assemblage. They want Sri Lanka to sever ties with Europe while spiralling into a vortex of self imposed isolation by falling out with every important Western state.

Finally, the dream of Sri Lanka to become a Hub should not be just the dream of President Rajapaksa it is the way forward for development and the much needed stability of the country. Sri Lanka from its ancient history was never a nation of isolationists we have reached out and many people have graced our soil. Indeed it is a land and culture shaped by a multitude of interactions of cultures and people let the future be the same.

~ Dailymirror.lk ~ By Dr. Harinda Vidanage

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