

Indian think tank calls for 'help Lanka' policy. (1994, November 20).  
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## Indian think tank calls for 'help Lanka' policy

One of India's top foreign policy experts has called on the Rao government to recognise 'that a messiah of peace with complete national support behind her' has emerged in Sri Lanka to settle the ethnic conflict.

Bhabani Sengupta, director of the newly set up think tank -- Centre for Research on International Change, New  
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for arms and each was denied and advised to work with India. This created an impression that the US was giving India a regional role. There is no documentary evidence of this. This is all verbal diplomacy and perception of realities.

All that has changed now. There are no regional leaders anymore because regions are going towards integration. The new political language is the European Union, NAFTA, APEC and perhaps at a very low key the South Asian Preferential Trade Agreement. There is an international perception that in the second or third decade of the next century there will be six world powers. Three of them - Japan, China and India are from Asia. If that happens a three to four hundred year old historical imbalance between the West and Asia will be rectified.

India should reassure the Sri Lankan leadership that India will be prepared to help in whatever way it can. But it should come forward only if it is asked to in the process of peace.

Let's take few concrete issues. If there are few LTTE remnants in Tamil Nadu who are likely to indulge in acts of hostility towards Sri Lanka, India must severely deal with them after giving them a chance to respond actively and speedily to the peace process.

Secondly India should extend to Sri Lanka, economic cooperation, particularly investments and joint ventures in areas where Sri Lanka wants such cooperation. It should not be India's business to tell Sri Lanka how it should manage its economy.

Thirdly there is a long memory of a relationship which gave a foul smell. That stench should be jointly eliminated and a new climate based on principles of mutual benefit without the application of reciprocity will have to be realised. I reiterate that prevailing upbeat mood in Sri Lanka must get across to Tamil Nadu and New Delhi.

**Q: But whatever said India can pull the strings or scuttle the peace process once the government establishes links with LTTE chief Velupillai Prabhakaran. I mean that India by demanding the extradition of Prabhakaran can render the whole peace exercise futile. What is your view?**

**A:** Regarding the problem of Prabhakaran India must realise that his presence in Sri Lanka is very important for success of the peace process. As long as this process continues, India should not ask for Prabhakaran's extradition. On the contrary it must use its influence, if it has any influence, on Prabhakaran and his friends to respond positively and promptly to the peace process.

However, if Prabhakaran turns his back on the peace process and returns to hostility India must push for extradition because whether it is in Sri Lanka or India, the man deserves to be punished for the damage he would be doing to Sri Lanka, to Sri Lanka-India relations and to the whole region of South Asia.

**Q: A few years ago, India was behaving like a regional bully in South Asia. What is India's policy today vis-a-vis its neighbours?**

**A:** The so-called regional role before 1991 is not the regional role after 1991 - that is the world without the cold war. The regional role during the cold war era had implied connotation of being a policeman like Iran under Shah in the Persian Gulf. The United States never gave India formally that kind of a regional role.

But after a major breakthrough in Indo-US relations in 1983, the US appeared to be inclined to discourage the smaller nations of South Asia from a policy of confrontation with India. In 1985, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bangladesh asked US