

Neorealism versus two level games theory in explaining Sri Lanka’s foreign policy towards the external compulsions.

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Abstract

The enduring debate over the structural and domestic political explanation of international relations has created the motivation for this paper. The main objective of this paper is to provide a theoretical explanation to Sri Lanka’s foreign policy and the need for such analysis arises from the fact that the existing literature lacks in such theoretical interpretation of Sri Lanka’s foreign policy. The neorealism and two levels games theory that explain two different approaches to a country’s external policy making had been tested on the Sri Lankan context through this paper. The literature survey depicts that the previous research on Sri Lanka’s foreign policy had not attempted to analyze it through the application of theories even though few scholarly efforts have only referred to the two theories in their writings. At the same time the validation of these two theories to find the most appropriate still exists as a research gap in literature.

One of the limitations of this paper is it looks at the foreign relations of Sri Lanka based on its ethnic crisis and how it affects the dealings with the outside world. To meet these theoretical requirements in foreign policy literature of Sri Lanka as a small power with special reference to its ethnic crisis, the data triangulation method has been used for the data collection from the secondary sources and the three levels analysis has been used as the main analytical model. The direct qualitative content analysis has been the data analyzing method that has been used in this paper. But the implementation of Indian proposals that came through the form of Indo-Lanka Peace Accord proved to be a failure as a result of domestic constraints that obstructed the smooth relations between India and Sri Lanka. As a result Sri Lanka had to accept the Indian hegemony proving the fact that small state’s policy making is largely constrained by the external pressures in the international system. But the domestic win-set at the Level II negotiation sabotaged the Indo-Lankan Peace Accord causing a humiliation for India on its failed diplomatic efforts as a mediator and guarantor of preserving peace and security in Sri Lanka. The voluntary and involuntary defection of the Sri Lankan policy makers obstructed the smooth functioning of Indian proposals at home. The public opinion, party politics, and pressure groups of the Sri Lankan polity constrained the implementation of Indian proposals agreed at the Level I negotiation. Those domestic constraints influence the policy makers for involuntary defection. This paper analyzed the systemic pressure and domestic pressures impact on the foreign policy making of a country through the Sri Lankan experience. The security dilemma that prevailed in the system continues to exist even after the Cold War with the rise of non-traditional threats such as terrorism and fundamentalism. All the states strive hard to secure their position in the system to maintain the balance of power and India achieved its goal of securing the regional dominancy. India intervened to the Sri Lankan ethnic issue to ensure its

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