

There is a obduracy about President Mahinda Rajapakse that singularly helped him to squash the LTTE while his predecessors could not. The same obduracy has contributed to his failure in post-war management. Post-war management demands entirely different attitudes and skills.

Said the Economist: "SRI LANKA suffered an embarrassing defeat in the UN's Human Rights Council on March 22nd. A clear majority of the council's members backed an American-led initiative....Despite an exhaustive, sometimes aggressive, Sri Lankan campaign lobbying against the initiative, the Geneva-based council's 47 members voted by, 24 to 15, for a resolution urging the government to implement the recommendations of its own Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission and to start a credible investigation into allegations of widespread human-rights abuses. Eight of the member-countries abstained."

Both embarrassing and worrying was the decision of our big brother India, next door, to vote against Sri Lanka for the first time. Previously India had been abstaining-at worst.

For the first time Sri Lanka formally enjoys a dubious international reputation of being on the dock in the world forum. Our great post-war failure is the failure to pre-empt this serious situation. We could have done that had we used foresight and insight. However, obduracy by definition blocks such mental potential.

Obduracy signifies a single-minded, simple-minded and even naive focus on a specific goal that ignores all attendant ramifications and consequences. Such a mind passes over complexities. This fixed focus has the advantage of producing a unique energy to go for one's chosen target at any cost. While all previous leaders kept on analysing, deliberating, consulting, and working around peace talks Mahinda Rajapakse was hell-bent on the task of Tiger annihilation somehow, some way. Act now and think later. The problem is that he didn't even think later. That required a different mindset.

The haste and callousness to consequences in the conduct of the war during the last stages has been part of the source for the international charges. It is easy to assume a false patriotism and deny that HR violations did not take place during these stages and that the "Killing Fields" of Channel 4 was a total and unadulterated lie. When the

President said there were zero civilian casualties he stood exposed.

It would have been a more intelligent course to face up to the charges with maturity, and explore the exonerating circumstances that may have led to extreme behaviour by our armed forces. Wars are wars where lovemaking cannot take place. Those who enter the field know that it is simply arduous to control unwarranted behaviour on the part of those fighting under severe stress. Abuse and rape etc have occurred in Iraq, in Afghanistan and elsewhere by American-allied forces. The difference is that the West had at least instituted credible-looking panels of investigation to make offenders accountable. At least the outward forms of credible enquiry

been a little longer. But obduracy has no patience and subtleties.

What of post-war? The Darusman Report came out with serious "credible" charges and it recommended that Sri Lankan government hold its own investigations into accountability. We slandered Darusman as though the latter was a tourist sea-bathing in Tangalle. Darusman was operating at the highest international level and he should have been taken seriously. The government got Wimal Weerawansa, one of its own ministers not known for brilliance, to carry out a "fast unto death" in front of the UN office.



Shyamon Jayasinghe

drawn up between India and Sri Lanka. This meant a recognizable devolution arrangement that would give the Tamil community a place of dignity in governance. On his several visits to India previously President Rajapakse was prodded to go ahead and give effect to the 13th

amendment. He promised but did nothing. He replaced the 13th Amendment by the draconian 18th Amendment that in effect gave him absolute power that would have made any devolution moves sterile.

All these angered India and particularly Tamilnadu which had a Tamil population three times the total population of Sri Lanka. That Tamil population breathes close to us and so it is unrealistic to violate their sensibilities.

The chauvinist backers of the government led by some intemperate and misguided Buddhist monks and laity denounced any attempt at devolution. History was repeated as Rajapakse, like Bandaranaike before him, went under the influence of these visionless, narrow-brained fighters. Unlike Bandaranaike, however, Rajapakse is somebody who never has a vision or ideology of any kind. The upshot of all this is that the LTTE Diaspora got easy fodder to work

for their enterprise. The latter worked on Tamilnadu and pushed the latter to press on Delhi. Public sentiment was aroused. Tamilnadu's one-time filmstar beauty, Jayalalitha, did just that. The relations between Tamilnadu customs officials and the Sinhalese coming from the island kept getting sore by the day. The pressure has been so great that Delhi, despite the huge moneymaking opportunities obtained from the Sri Lankan government, had to yield to coalition demands. The situation is now developing to the point that the Indian Federation can break up if Delhi fails to act more decisively on Sri Lanka. Remember it was Delhi that trained the Tamil Tigers on their soil.

In the meantime, the government of Rajapakse thinks it has found a practical solution by placing army barracks all over the North and East to keep potential Tamil rebels at bay. This is another tunnel-visioned approach to a complex human problem. Soldiers are an unwelcome presence and they instil fear among the civil community. There is an invasiveness about the whole thing. Several complaints are being made of abuse, assault and kidnapping-most of them made up.

## LET'S SORT OUT THE TAMIL QUESTION OR FACE INDIAN INTERVENTION



processes were adhered to. In addition, the Allied Forces employed embedded journalists to watch the progress of the war and this is how we know that excesses did occur.

None of these measures were taken by an obdurate administration. Government went pell-mell chasing away even the Red Cross. Misinformation took the place of information and unsavoury lies and exaggerations may well have been spread by the Tiger sympathizers. Had we followed the norms, the Sri Lankan forces under General Sarath Fonseka could have yet won the war although the day of victory would have

Since then, the government kept on inviting and encouraging the public to protest against the UN initiatives and overtures. Those in Lanka who tried to input some sense were decried as "traitors." The United Nations is the supreme world body and it is only foolish people who would call them "imperialists." Particularly over the last few weeks daily protests and abusive language had been hurled against "imperialists." The flag with Obama's portrait was publicly burnt in the presence of the Deputy of Foreign Affairs, Naomal Perera. As he walked into Geneva one of the first utterances made by Foreign Minister GL Peiris (who should have known better) was to attack the Americans for their own alleged war crimes.

After much delaying the LLRC was appointed to undertake an investigation and make recommendations. This body was a creature not of the UN or of any world body but of the Sri Lanka government itself and it was staffed by persons who enjoyed the confidence of the President. The Commission, as expected, sidetracked the war crimes issue but went on to make some valuable proposals on various war-related issues and particularly on the Tamil question. The Commission wanted the government to find a solution around the 13th Amendment that was

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