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### Invisible Hands Of Sri Lanka

Ravindra Ranasinha discusses the growth of **totalitarianism in Sri Lanka** through propaganda machines which has kept the population silent and infringed the right to information. Also in his analysis he shows the contribution of China in the acceleration of war and the Chinese strategic intervention in making Sri Lanka another Georgia.



**Sri Lanka** is now shown to the world as a country where peace prevails. After the three decade long war, everyone is now breathing fresh air, as it seems, but the hoardings round the country tells of a story that is completely different. The hoardings, the tools for image building has brought about a new era in the history of Sri Lanka. It is all about making the country a totalitarian regime.

The recent elections in the country proved that only the rulers could put up image building hoardings and the opponents or rival factions were attacked in numerous ways in order to ensure the rulers become the rulers again. This is nothing but suppressing the freedom of thought and speech of the opponent, a violation of a political right. The Presidential and General Elections brought results making President Rajapakse a hero in the history of Lanka and his rival Fonseka, the Army General responsible for the crushing of LTTE had to face repercussions. Fonseka kept on saying that vote rigging took place at both elections; however, his mouth was shut by an order given to arrest him.

These heroes or the great leaders are not the creation of the people even though there is so much talk going on to say that the people backed Rajapakse to win. In fact, the game of politic or let us term it as the art of politic functioned not anywhere else but on massive hoardings. Even now those who travel round the country could see how the hoardings have been placed in every junction making the minds of the people to turn towards the one and only hero. This is a violation of election laws but they were displayed and the minds were influenced to accept Rajapakse and his clan as the heavenly saviours of the Sri Lankan community. Setting the minds of the people to gain power is the strategy of the politico who aspires to become the ruler of the island for a longer period enjoying all the perks of which burden unknowingly falls on the shoulders and the belly of the poor citizen.



It is time for us to think of Göbbels, Minister of Propaganda under the Nazi regime of Adolf Hitler who popularised this psychological effect during the Second World War: "A lie repeated thousands of times, becomes the truth."

What is this lie? Answering this question demands the reader to enter into the realm of disillusionment. It is the great lie which tells that the so-called politicians are the saviours of the nation. Lie is the agenda of the dictator. It is the agenda of the elite who run the island. This lie is daily poured into the minds of the people through newspapers, radio and television channels. This is the making of the mind for the ease of the ruler. This is the lie that has been accepted by the majority in the country. This is nothing but patriotic colonisation of the Sinhala mind.

The War is the war in the minds. Minds were manipulated to hide political opportunism and all propaganda in creating heroism became the ONLY Truth. So the truth is that the conflict was utilised through a massive propaganda machine for the political gains of the rulers. False patriotism was vastly disseminated to maintain the reputation of the ruler in the island. The propaganda machine never showed that the population was under the iron boots of the soldiers but the truth was that in every part of the country the army was seen patrolling with machine guns in their shoulders and it is still the same — an image of an ideal totalitarian regime. This is to prove that repression is in action to keep the population silent!

Osip Mandelstam who was murdered by Stalin wrote a poem titled 'We Live, Not Feeling' (1934) which really befits the present Sri Lanka:

We live, not feeling the country beneath us,  
Our speech inaudible ten steps away,  
But where they're up to half a conversation —  
They'll speak of the Kremlin mountain man.

His thick fingers are fat like worms,  
And his words certain as pound weights.  
His cockroach whiskers laugh,  
And the tops of his boots glisten.

And all around his rabble of thick-skinned leaders,  
He plays through services of half-people.  
Some whistle, some meow, some snivel,  
He alone merely caterwauls and prods.

Like horseshoes he forges decree after decree —  
Some get it in the forehead, some in the brow,  
some in the groin, and some in the eye.  
Whatever the execution — it's a raspberry to him  
And his Georgian chest is broad.

It is said that 'Modern totalitarian regimes made their appearance with the total effort required by the... War. The reason for this is quite simple — war required all institutions to subordinate their interests to one objective at all costs: victory. The individual had to make sacrifices and so their freedoms, whatever they might have been, were constantly reduced by increasing government intervention.... Governments had to intervene and the great event which made this notion of intervention a necessity was the... War. 1

The war...a war that was accelerated by the Sinhala chauvinism against a nation within the State brought the island to this level of dictatorship. As one writer 2 puts it, "There is no commercial business more profitable than the political industry, the system opens an immense space for the greatest beneficiaries of the war to climb the pyramid of power and reach the summit. The leaders of a regime that centralises power are regarded as outlaws, belonging to the narrow circle of the capitalist class, with traffickers, people who launder money and punters who sit next to them to exploit the common good. Such a system opens a huge space to the biggest war profiteers in their race to the top of the power pyramid, the leaders of the power centric regime are merely gangsters, belonging to the inner circles of the capitalist class, with smugglers, money launders, brokers, sitting next to them, ready to exploit common wealth."

The big business of the totalitarian regime is now opened with China. It started with the civil war. As Brahma Chellaney<sup>3</sup> said "Chinese military and financial support — as in Sudan, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Uzbekistan, North Korea, Burma and elsewhere — has directly aided government excesses and human rights abuses in Sri Lanka. Still, the more China insists that it doesn't mix business with politics in its foreign relations, the more evidence it provides of cynically contributing to violence and repression in internally torn states. Sri Lanka is just the latest case demonstrating Beijing's blindness to the consequences of its aggressive pursuit of strategic interests."



Beijing began selling larger quantities of arms, and dramatically boosted its aid fivefold in the past year to almost \$1 billion to emerge as Sri Lanka's largest donor. Chinese Jian-7 fighter jets, anti-aircraft guns, JY-11 3D air surveillance radars and other supplied weapons have played a central role in the Sri Lankan military successes against the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (or "Tamil Tigers"), seeking to carve out an independent homeland for the ethnic Tamils in the island's north and east. Beijing even got its ally Pakistan actively involved in Sri Lanka. With Chinese encouragement, Pakistan — despite its own faltering economy and rising Islamist challenge — has boosted its annual military assistance loans to Sri Lanka to nearly \$100 million while supplying Chinese-origin small arms and training Sri Lankan air force personnel in precision guided attacks.

China has become an enabler of repression in a number of developing nations as it seeks to gain access to oil and mineral resources, to market its goods and to step up investment. Still officially a communist state, its support for brutal regimes is driven by capitalist considerations (my emphasis). But while exploiting commercial opportunities, it also tries to make strategic inroads. Little surprise thus that China's best friends are pariah or other states that abuse human rights.<sup>1</sup>

It is very correct when Chellaney says that China's best friends are States that abuse human rights since Sri Lanka as China's best friend has targeted in silencing the nation muzzling the media and making several independent-minded journalists to disappear. This is nothing but control of information as an instrument of totalitarianism. Right to information is a right of every citizen, however, with the threats directed towards media the citizen is compelled to be silent. The truth behind the highways, ultra-modern airports and harbours with the Chinese assistance is nothing but the whole secret: as the above Professor of Strategic Studies put "China has been particularly attracted by that country's vantage location in the center of the Indian Ocean — a crucial international passageway for trade and oil. Hambantota — the billion-dollar port Chinese engineers are now building on Sri Lanka's southeast — is the latest "pearl" in China's strategy to control vital sea-lanes of communication between the Indian and Pacific Oceans by assembling a "string of pearls" in the form of listening posts, special naval arrangements and access to ports."

So, it is clear with this analysis that Chinese assistance is a global military strategy and the Sri Lankan minds are not set for such disillusionment. In every manner this truth is covered, especially, the linguistic play which surreally highlights on economic development, infrastructure development and peace for all communities hide the realities that have encircled the Sri Lankan life. Thus the turn the country has taken subsequent to the crush of LTTE is still not visible for the Sri Lankan mind.

1 <http://www.historyguide.org/europe/lecture10.html>

2 Ranasinghe, S. 'Sri Lanka, political industry at the service of a totalitarian regime'

3 'China fuels Sri Lankan war', <http://search.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/ea20090304bc.html>

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