

INDO - SRI LANKA RELATIONS SINCE 2009: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

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ABSTRACT

India-Sri Lanka relations is recorded more than 2,500 years of history and both sides have built upon a legacy of intellectual, cultural, religious and linguistic intercourse. However, these links have been deeply affected and held hostage by the question of the legitimate rights and welfare of the Tamil minority in Sri Lanka, and the interventionist role of India over neighboring countries. It is to note that within the existing geo-political context and ethnic affinity, India cannot be isolated itself from the developments in Sri Lankan polity. On the other hand, the growing presence of the China in Sri Lanka, when India-Sri Lanka relations are under stress and its disturbing strategic connotations for national security have also being another challenging factor in India-Sri Lanka relations. The fundamental questions of this research are the following: what are the factors affecting relation between India and Sri Lanka? What role by extra-regional power causes smooth relation of these countries? Are there any stemming-blocks in the relations of India with Sri Lanka? The various problems plaguing indo-Sri Lanka relations, ethnic conflict and reconciliation process, fishing problem, China involvement, among others, indicate a common theme underlying bilateral relation: mutual mistrust and suspicion. India's approach to Sri Lanka has so far failed to achieve its stated aims, in the ultimate analysis; India's soft diplomacy succeeded neither in bringing about a political settlement of the Sinhalese-Tamil conflict, nor in bringing down the ethnic tensions.

Keywords: Indo- Sri Lanka Relations, Foreign Policy, Ethnic Problems, South Asian Politics

BACKGROUND

India-Sri Lanka relations is recorded more than 2,500 years of history and both sides have built upon a legacy of intellectual, cultural, religious and linguistic intercourse. However, these links have been deeply affected and held hostage by the question of the legitimate rights and welfare of the Tamil minority in Sri Lanka, and the interventionist role of India over neighboring countries. The most challenging cause is the failure of fulfilling the repeated promises made to India by Sri Lankan President, Rajapaksa at his highest levels that he would implement the devolution of power provided under the 13th amendment to the constitution of Sri Lanka. In addition to that, Indian efforts in assisting Sri Lanka in finding viable solutions were thwarted by lack of will and forethought amongst successive leaders. However, it is to note that within the existing geo-political context and ethnic affinity, India cannot be isolated itself from the developments in Sri Lankan polity. On the other hand, the growing presence of the China in Sri Lanka, when India-Sri Lanka relations are under stress and its disturbing strategic connotations for national security have also being another challenging factor in India-Sri Lanka relations.

On this backdrop, this study focuses on the current crisis of Indo- Sri Lanka relation after end of internal war in Sri Lanka in 2009

OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH WORK

In this paper I highlight some of the important problems and prospects which have a bearing on India and Sri Lanka relations. The fundamental questions of this research are the following: what are the factors affecting relation between India and Sri Lanka? What role by extra-regional power causes smooth relation of these countries? Are there any stemming-blocks in the relations of India with Sri Lanka?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study is based on an interpretive approach. The data were collected from both primary and secondary sources. Secondary sources such as published and unpublished records were also consulted. Finally this study provides appropriate recommendations to improve relations between Sri Lanka and India.

RESULTS AND CONCLUSION

The various problems plaguing Indo-Sri Lanka relations, ethnic conflict and reconciliation process, fishing problem, China involvement, among others, indicate a common theme underlying bilateral relation: mutual mistrust and suspicion. India's approach to Sri Lanka has so far failed to achieve its stated aims. In the ultimate analysis, India's soft diplomacy succeeded neither in bringing about a political settlement of the Sinhalese-Tamil conflict, nor in bringing down the ethnic tensions.

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