

India – Sri Lanka Relations: Managing the Ups and Downs

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India and Sri Lanka, despite having past common colonial experiences, have certain strategic imperatives, and differing policies dictated by national interests, at times conflicting with each other. One such differing phase emerged after 2009 with the decimation of the LTTE. In a triumphant mode, the Rajapakse regime started turning a deaf ear to India's suggestions on ethnic reconciliation. It also started playing the 'China card' disregarding India's strategic and security interests.

As a result, bilateral ties hit rock bottom in every aspect of the relations. However, the surprise victory of Maithripala Sirisena in an untimely presidential election has brought the bilateral ties on track. The new coalition government has started going slow on China. It is taking serious corrective measures on ethnic reconciliation and political settlement. As a result, India-Sri Lanka relations have improved to the level of cordiality, but are yet to realise their full potential.

The story of bilateral ties between India and Sri Lanka is the story of ups and downs. Nevertheless, one factor or the other has come to the fore to salvage the course before it hit rock bottom. The objective of this paper is to identify those factors that have pulled the relations back on track to put the current state of India-Sri Lanka relations in perspective.

'Pangs of Proximity'

During the colonial period, the concept of 'strategic unity' between India and Sri Lanka emerged as the British regarded the possession of Sri Lanka an imperative to the defence of India. Sri Lanka feared that India would retain the British imperial legacy in South Asia after independence. The fear of a possible Indian domination after Britain's departure perhaps, prompted

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Sri Lanka to seek the protection of their former colonial master through a Defence Agreement and also to lay emphasis on the connection with the Commonwealth. Mindful of these apprehensions, Nehru took a highly accommodative approach despite his disappointment with the newly independent Sri Lankan leadership and its handling of certain issues like sudden lay-off of Indian labour in Colombo and de-enfranchisement of Indian Origin Tamils (IOTs) etc.

When S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike became the Sri Lankan Prime Minister in 1956, he relegated the Defence Agreement to the status of a mere paper and transformed Sri Lanka's foreign policy from alignment to non-alignment. The fear of India's domination went into oblivion, at least at the higher political level. His deep knowledge on world affairs, his 'neutralist' and socialist world view and emphasis on international cooperation and disarmament gelled very well with Nehru's. As a result, personal relations and rapport especially between Bandaranaike and Nehru, and later between Mrs Sirimavo Bandaranaike and Indira Gandhi came to shape bilateral relations. This trend continued till late 1970s when most of the bilateral issues and irritants were sorted out mostly by personal diplomacy. Two significant issues are worth noting: the status of Indian Origin Tamils, and the demarcation of maritime boundary.

Immediately after independence, fearing the rising electoral strength of the 'Plantation Tamils', the Government of Sri Lanka virtually made the community both stateless and vote-less. India had to intervene by signing two agreements to bring about a compromise on sharing the stateless IOTs without taking into consideration the wishes of these people. Both countries signed maritime agreements in 1974 and 1976 to delimit maritime boundaries along the Palk Bay, the Gulf of Mannar and the Indian Ocean. The ownership of the Island of Katchativu, a barren uninhabited island used by fishermen from both countries for drying nets, was given to Sri Lanka. This was once again done mainly due to the personal equation between Mrs Bandaranaike and Indira Gandhi despite opposition from Tamil Nadu. Although, through Article 5 of the 1974 Agreement, the traditional rights of Indian pilgrims and fishermen 'to enjoy access' to the island was safeguarded, in practice there have been difficulties due to ethnic conflict and intense monitoring of smuggling of goods by the LTTE from India. Innocent fishermen were caught in between. Even after the demise of the LTTE, the condition of the fishermen did not improve.

‘Democratic Dilemma’

With the eruption of ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka in the early 1980s, strains in bilateral relations surfaced and it turned out to be the most difficult phase. India has indeed been the most important external actor in the Sri Lankan ethnic issue that was determined by its geo-strategic interests, internal political factor and as a responsible regional power that was sincerely trying to help find a permanent settlement to the ethnic conflict in its neighbourhood. India was caught in the ‘dilemma’ of finding a solution that met the sentiments and rights of the aggrieved Tamil community, but it had to be done without affecting the unity and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka.

India tried its diplomatic skills in helping the two contending parties to arrive at a mutually acceptable solution, but in vain. On the other hand, the level of violence in northern Sri Lanka increased. India entered into an accord with Sri Lanka in July 1987 ‘to establish peace and normalcy’ in the island. The dominant consideration was strategic: to prevent the foothold of any extra-regional powers inimical to Indian interests in Sri Lanka. As part of the Accord, India sent its troops (Indian Peace Keeping Force – IPKF) to the island. Though the Accord was hastily signed between the two governments, at that point of time, it had fair provisions acceptable to all parties involved in the conflict. But, the Accord faced difficulties from day one because of resistance from some quarters of Sri Lankan government and most importantly, the LTTE that took up arms against the Indian forces. However, the Accord was able to bring almost all non-LTTE Tamil militant groups to the political mainstream. Moreover, most importantly, it could make the island to devolve powers with a province as a unit of devolution.

Lions, Tigers and the Elephant

Though India maintained an informal ‘hands off policy’ post withdrawal of IPKF and assassination of Rajiv Gandhi, it kept a keen watch on the developments in the island. The LTTE now became a ‘common enemy’. With the change of regime in Sri Lanka in the mid-1990s under Chandrika Kumaratunga Bandaranaike, bilateral relations took a positive spin. India continued to stay out of the ethnic question, except to give its support and blessings to any negotiated political settlement. It welcomed Norway’s efforts to facilitate the peace process.

With the assumption of the new government in Colombo under Mahinda Rajapakse in 2005, and partly due to LTTE’s intransigence, peace process

started falling apart. Although it discouraged Colombo from exercising war option, India did not restrain from providing 'non-lethal' military supplies to Sri Lanka, training of Sri Lankan security personnel, and sharing of crucial intelligence against the LTTE. Colombo also effectively used the 'China card' against New Delhi. This was where India was caught in a dilemma: to maintain good relations with Sri Lanka in all spheres to keep away extra-regional powers from gaining a foothold in the island. At the same time, India had to take into consideration sentiments of Tamil Nadu and the interests of Sri Lankan Tamils. The Tamil Nadu factor had come as an intervening variable as and when New Delhi wanted to upgrade its relations with Sri Lanka.¹ At the same time, Tamil sentiments in India did not prevent India either in extending the ban on the LTTE or on cracking down on the Tigers' supply lines from its soil.

Despite ups and downs in relations on the ethnic issue, cooperation in economic and cultural fields improved tremendously during this phase. Economic relations, especially, received a big boost in 1998 with the signing of a bilateral Indo-Lanka Free Trade Agreement. The implementation of this agreement started in March 2000. In a few years, India became Sri Lanka's largest trading partner. Sri Lanka became India's largest trading partner in South Asia. India became the fourth largest investor in the island. The largest number of tourists was from India. This increased people-to-people contacts as well, resulting in enormous economic and social interests to sustain the relations.

Current State: With Lions, Without Tigers

The current state of bilateral ties is dominated by three main issues: the ethnic question, the fishermen issue, the China factor.

Ethnic Question

When the Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapakse announced the end of 'Eelam War IV' on 18 May 2009 it had already claimed the lives of over 20,000 civilians, about 6500 troops and nearly 15,000 Tigers. This did not include the thousands of injured in all the three categories. The conflict also displaced thousands of civilians. With the military defeat of the LTTE, for the first time in over three decades India-Sri Lanka relations are being conducted without the militant group in the picture. New Delhi's broad concerns have been resettlement, the development of post-war Sri Lanka, and bringing a lasting political settlement of the ethnic issue.

As the humanitarian situation unfolded in the immediate aftermath of 'Eelam War IV', India extended massive assistance to address the crisis. This came naturally as it did during numerous occasions when the island was affected by any disaster. New Delhi immediately pledged \$100 million for the relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction purposes.² The Government of Tamil Nadu gave a separate package of assistance worth \$5 million. In addition to the monetary assistance, India also sent 10,400 tonnes of galvanised steel sheets to Sri Lanka to construct shelters for families living in relief camps.³ India also announced aid in addition to 400,000 bags of cement for the construction of 50,000 houses for the IDPs. The Indian army ran a medical centre in the island's northeast region to treat those affected by the war.⁴ New Delhi also has supported revival of the local economy through a wide-ranging programme for agricultural renewal with funding worth \$6 million. Apart from genuine concern for the displaced, another motivation for the Indian assistance is to gain the lost goodwill of the Sri Lankan Tamil community and also to silence critics from Tamil Nadu that the 'interests of their brethren are ignored in favour of good neighbourly relations'.

Realising the importance of overall development of the island, India has been extending credit to Sri Lanka, especially for infrastructure development. Apart from a credit of \$167.4 million for repair and upgradation of the tsunami-damaged Colombo-Matara rail link, India has extended a credit of \$800 million for reconstruction of railway lines from Medawachchiya to Madhu, Madhu to Talaimannar, and Omanthai to Pallai in Northern Sri Lanka. India is also assisting with the restoration of the Kankesanthurai Harbour and the development of the Palaly airfield as a civil airport.⁵

On the lasting political settlement of the ethnic issue, India's consistent position has been in favour of 'a politically negotiated settlement acceptable to all sections of Sri Lankan society within the framework of an undivided Sri Lanka and consistent with democracy, pluralism and respect for human rights'.⁶ India has been pushing for the implementation of the 13th Amendment as an interim measure until a final solution is reached.

However, President Rajapakse, who initially committed to go 'beyond 13th Amendment' through APRC (All Party Representative Committee), changed track later by holding that 'there is no ethnic issue, but only development issue'. The focus then shifted to the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC) submitted in November 2011 that made 285 recommendations.⁷ Yet, to India's disappointment, the implementation of recommendations of the LLRC has been lethargic, despite gentle reminders.

It was in this context that India had to support the US-sponsored resolution at the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC). The move was not to upset Colombo but with positive intentions to take the process of reconciliation forward. India was convinced that a successful reconciliation is the first step in arriving at a meaningful long-term solution to the ethnic issue.

However, finding a long-term solution was side-tracked when the Sri Lankan government appointed a Parliamentary Select Committee (PSC) to review the whole 13th Amendment arrangement. But, the PSC remains a non-starter because of non-participation of Opposition parties. Hard-line parties like the Janata Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP), the National Freedom Front (NFF) and the Jathika Hela Urumaya (JHU) have also opposed the existing Provincial Council system. On the other hand, a dominant section of the present UPFA (United People's Freedom Alliance) government including President Mahinda Rajapakse support dilution of the Provincial Council System, termed as the '13th Amendment Minus' framework. This irritated India, which thought rightfully so that the 13th Amendment was the best bet in the interim, and going beyond the arrangement is the long-term solution to the ethnic question.

However, the Sirisena government in January 2016 has presented a plan for a new constitution aimed at devolving power. As per the plan, the Government promised to strengthen democratic rights, promote national reconciliation, guarantee fundamental rights and freedom that assure human dignity, promote a responsible and accountable government, and respect the rule of law. Given the history of such accommodations, the move is not without challenges especially from the Sinhala hardliners.

Fishermen Issue

With the termination of the 'Eelam War IV' in May 2009, the dynamics of the fishermen issue became different. Post the end of civil war, the Sri Lankan navy has been performing its primary task of patrolling the island's maritime borders. The monitoring is also aimed at preventing possible return of LTTE cadres who fled from the island during the height of the conflict in 2009, to revive the insurgency all over again. There is a fear in the security establishment of Sri Lanka that the Tiger remnants may try to regroup. After the victory over the LTTE, Sri Lanka has become all the more assertive of its sovereignty and territorial integrity. Seen in this backdrop, movement of fishing vessels from Tamil Nadu in Sri Lankan territorial waters is approached not without suspicion by the Sri Lankan naval forces.

Also, after the ethnic war, relaxation of fishing restrictions along Sri Lankan coasts has led Sri Lankan fishermen to venture into the seas around. The Indian fishermen, who thus far enjoyed monopoly of resource-rich waters, have now got competitors in the form of their Sri Lankan counterparts. This has led to confrontation between the two fishing communities and has in turn, drawn intervention of either of the naval forces. The main complaint of Sri Lankan fishermen has been against mechanised Indian trawlers that indulge in pair, mid-water, pelagic, and bottom trawling that end up severely damaging not only marine resources, but also the sea bed. The main issue is the disproportionate growth of bottom trawlers in Tamil Nadu.

When these trawlers scrape the seabed, the breeding grounds of a variety of species – sea cucumber, chanks (conch), crabs, squids, coloured fishes, sea animals, turtles, etc. are affected.⁸ As a result, the trawlers have completely depleted fishing grounds on the Indian side. The Sri Lankan waters, on the other hand, have an abundance of marine resources for two reasons: one, prohibition imposed by the Sri Lankan Government on bottom trawling; and two, fishermen from Sri Lanka are proportionately much fewer to tap the entire territorial waters; they use only small boats.⁹ Thus, the Sri Lankan waters remain resource rich and attractive to Indian fishermen.

The trawler sector in Tamil Nadu is also politically influential and financially sound making it more obdurate to solutions. The stakeholders always wished to see high profit margins from trawlers. The issue also has an electoral dimension to it. Victory or defeat of political parties in assembly and parliament constituencies of 14 coastal districts of Tamil Nadu depends largely on the stand and action taken on the issue by the contestants. Therefore, there is immense pressure from Tamil Nadu on New Delhi to act decisively. Colombo also has its own domestic political compulsions that include electoral considerations in provincial, parliamentary and presidential elections.

Straying of fishermen also takes place inadvertently due to ignorance of imaginary marine boundaries, engine failure or even due to sudden turbulence at seas. Such incidents are not many. To be fair to Sri Lanka, not all Indian fishermen who stray into Sri Lankan waters are arrested or shot. Some are warned and sent back; some lose their nets and vessels; and some get warning shots.

Sri Lankan fishermen, who venture on high seas for ‘multi-day fishing’, are also caught poaching in Indian waters off coasts of Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Andaman and Nicobar Islands and even Odisha. They are,

however, not shot at, but arrested and prosecuted. These fishermen, however, are predominantly Sinhalese. Similar to the expansion of trawler fleets in Tamil Nadu, multi-day off-shore fishing vessels in Sri Lanka have grown in number in response to Colombo's liberal subsidy policy to encourage deep sea fishing as against traditional coastal fishing. Tamil fishermen from northern Sri Lanka by tradition are not into multi-day fishing. They are small boat operators. Also, the Sri Lanka government's subsidy on fishing boats did not reach them partly due to ethnic conflict.

Appreciably, both the governments seemed to have understood all the contentions and nuances of the fishermen issue. A Joint Working Group on Fisheries (JWG) was constituted in November 2004 with the aim to deal with issues related to straying fishermen, working out modalities for prevention of use of force against them, the early release of confiscated boats, and exploring possibilities of working towards bilateral arrangements for licensed fishing in the Palk Bay and the associated area of the Bay of Bengal and the Gulf of Mannar.¹⁰ The Group was mandated to meet once a year alternatively in India and Sri Lanka to evaluate the situation and make recommendations to the respective countries. The issue, however, is the infrequent meetings of the JWG.

Interestingly, the governments agreed to encourage a continued dialogue process between the fishermen communities of the two countries through regular meetings. In addition to this, India and Sri Lanka have 'agreed to put in place practical arrangements to deal with bonafide Indian and Sri Lankan fishermen crossing the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL)'¹¹ like no firing on Indian fishing vessels, and carrying of valid registration/permit for Indian fishing vessels. Both governments have indicated moves to establish a mechanism to enable early release of fishermen, especially those from Tamil Nadu who inadvertently enter Sri Lankan waters. It will be on the lines of a mechanism that is being worked out between India and Pakistan.¹²

Despite the existence of these mechanisms and understandings at the government level, it is surprising that the issue continues to remain intractable. In that case, either the aforementioned agreements have not been followed in letter and spirit or the solution lies elsewhere, away from the governmental mechanisms.

China Factor

China has emerged as one of the important external factors in the India-Sri Lanka relations. In the present context, the bilateral relations between China

and Sri Lanka are cast within the broad structure of the ‘China-Sri Lanka All-round Cooperation Partnership of Sincere Mutual Support and Ever-lasting Friendship’ proclaimed in 2005. Sri Lanka is seen as ‘an important hub on the Maritime Silk Road’ by China.¹³ The Chinese involvement in Sri Lanka ranges from infrastructure development, economic aid, oil exploration, investments, trade, and a strong diplomatic support to the island state when in need, especially in the wake of the human rights accountability issue that emerged after the end of ‘Eelam War IV’.

Infrastructure development having wider strategic ramifications is the main Chinese footprint in Sri Lanka that has attracted considerable attention of India. Some of the important infrastructure projects developed by China in the island state include the Hambantota port, the Katunayake-Colombo Expressway, the Norochcholai Coal Power Project, Maththala Airport, and the Colombo South Harbour Expansion Project. Statistically speaking, funding from China accounts for more than half of Sri Lanka’s construction and development loans.

The most talked about project is the Hambantota port, which includes a high-quality passenger terminal, cargo handling, warehousing, bunkering, provisioning, maintenance and repair, medical supplies, and customs clearing facilities. Colombo tries to project that ‘the Chinese interest in the Hambantota port is purely commercial’.¹⁴ However, the harbour is strategically located not only for the Chinese merchant vessels and cargo carriers sailing to and from Africa and the Middle East to make a stopover, but can also be used by any military fleet. It may not be difficult for China to closely monitor all ships, military and non-military, that shuttle between east and west coasts of India encircling Sri Lanka. Ironically, Colombo had proposed building the Hambantota port as a joint venture with India, but while the talks were on China grabbed the opportunity. According to Sri Lanka, ‘China offered the best terms’, and ‘we don’t have favourites’.¹⁵ India’s reaction time in decision making could be better.

Sri Lanka is not alone where China’s presence is increasingly seen. Beijing has for long been building maritime and other linkages with countries of eastern Africa, Seychelles, Mauritius, West Asia, Pakistan, Maldives, Bangladesh, Myanmar, and Southeast Asian countries, apart from Sri Lanka. The main objective behind it is to ensure the security of its sea lanes, and unhindered flow of critically-needed energy supplies from Africa and West Asia. At the same time, these linkages have doubled up as virtual encircling of India, which some experts call as ‘String of Pearls’.

Although India's presence in the reconstruction of post-war Sri Lanka is huge, China's involvement is also notable. Beijing has provided \$1 mn for humanitarian needs.¹⁶ As far as economic engagement is concerned, the volume of trade between China and Sri Lanka reached nearly \$4 billion in 2015. Of this figure, Sri Lankan export was mere \$300 million as against China's \$3.6 billion.¹⁷ The balance of trade is hugely in favour of China. The deficit is expected to widen when both countries conclude FTA in early 2017. Yet Sri Lankans are not complaining.

During 'Eelam War IV', China liberally supplied requisite arms and ammunition to Sri Lankan troops: Jian-7 fighter jets, anti-aircraft guns, Type-85 heavy and Type-80 light machineguns, Type-56 rifles, 152mm howitzer, 81mm mortar shells, and RPG-7 rockets.¹⁸ Sri Lanka justified arms procurement from China on two counts: lack of option and price worthy. These fetched China tremendous good will from the Sri Lankan government and the Sinhalese in general. On the other hand, India insisted on providing only 'non-lethal weapons' to Colombo during the war considering domestic political implications, especially from Tamil Nadu. The same pressures have stalled the long-pending Defence Cooperation Agreement between the two countries.¹⁹

Sri Lankans appreciate tremendously, China's diplomatic support to Colombo against the West-led call for international investigations on war crimes committed during 'Eelam War IV'. China, along with India and Russia, was instrumental in defeating the UN resolution in May 2009 censuring Sri Lanka. However, in March 2012, not satisfied with Colombo's sincerity in carrying forward assurances on reconciliation and in finding long-term political settlement, India was compelled to vote in favour of the US-sponsored resolution. However, China once again supported Sri Lanka in voting against the resolution. Sri Lanka's disappointment with India was very much conspicuous when India voted in favour of the UNHRC resolution in March 2013 as well.²⁰

There is no free lunch. However, Colombo does not seem to mind giving more leeway to Beijing in the island to strengthen its economy. Rajapakse's vision was to "reposition Sri Lanka as the 'pearl of the old Silk Route'". In turn, India's interests and concerns are not in Sri Lanka's radars, although the island state tries its best to do the fine balancing act to keep both big powers of Asia in good humour while at the same time benefitting from both. To distinguish India from other players, President Rajapakse observed,

We are a non-aligned country. Our neighbours are Indians. I always say, Indians are our relations. From the time of Asoka, we have had that culture... but that doesn't mean we won't get commercial benefits

from others; from China, or Japan, or whoever. They will come here, they will build and they will go back. India comes here, they will build and they will stay. This is the difference...²¹

Keeping this in mind, development projects are offered to both India and China from time-to-time.

Sri Lanka is in a position to juggle India and China, but is closer to Beijing, which has ‘no strings attached’, at least overtly, to any of the projects implemented or aid granted. Sri Lanka knows well that China will neither demand that the grievances of Sri Lankan minorities be addressed through a reasonable negotiated political settlement, nor will it place restrictions on the involvement of any other country in the island in any manner. Beijing’s interests in Sri Lanka are purely strategic and, to a little extent, commercial.

India is not panicky about China’s footprint in Sri Lanka, but concerned about the strategic implications. The main concern is the possibility of use of infrastructure put in place by China against Indian interests. In the Annexure of the India-Sri Lanka Accord of 1987, India and Sri Lanka have agreed, ‘Trincomalee or any other port in Sri Lanka would not be made available for military use to any country in a manner, which is prejudicial to India’s interest’.²² India trusts that Colombo would abide by this provision seriously. However, caution is better. To flout this provision in the Annexure will not take much time.

Conclusion

Despite differences from time-to-time, ties between India and Sri Lanka have never been so bad as to reach a level of confrontation. Appreciably, both countries have strived to remove those irritants that have come in the way of maintaining cordial ties. Nehru’s maturity in handling diplomacy in the initial years, the personal rapport among the political leadership in the 1960s and 1970s, disappearance of irritants in the ethnic issue in the 1990s, and the emergence of strong economic interactions and people-to-people contacts in the 2000s were the dominant factors that salvaged relations from turning hostile.

In the current phase, three issues dominate the bilateral ties: the unsettled ethnic question, the issue of fishermen, and the China factor.

In resolving Sri Lanka’s ethnic issue India’s role is important. India has to exercise maximum leverage on Sri Lanka to deliver a meaningful devolution package to the minorities, both Tamils and Muslims. Any meaningful devolution

should go beyond the present 13th Amendment framework. The constitutional reforms must also take into consideration, at the macro level, mechanisms such as a supreme parliament, an independent judiciary, separation of powers with checks and balances, justice, freedom, equality, rights, and responsibilities. India can also play a vital role in unifying all the Tamil groups of Sri Lanka to form a common front. India is the only actor that has immense leverage on all Sri Lankan Tamil parties, and New Delhi should not hesitate to make use of Tamil Nadu for this purpose. A suitable reconciliation method could be adopted to construct bridges among all the communities of the island. A broad and inclusive approach is required to transform from conflict to coexistence, and to establish sustainable peace.

It is important to de-politicise the fishermen issue by the concerned provincial governments. Solutions do not lie in electoral politics, but in handling issues in a statesman-like manner. It is baffling to note that political actors in Tamil Nadu make a hue and cry over human rights violations of their counterparts in Sri Lanka, yet when it comes to the fishermen issue they take exactly the opposite stand, against the interest of Sri Lankan Tamils. As and when reconciliation on this front takes place, a significant chunk of the issue will be taken care of. If the fishermen issue is not approached holistically, the marine frontiers between India and Sri Lanka will remain fishy and troubled. It is better if waters between India and Sri Lanka are seen as a common heritage than a contested territory.

India has been dealing with the China issue in a more subtle manner. Resettlement, tourism, cultural exchange, and trade are a few areas in which India has a distinct advantage over other countries. What is more important is to positively exploit the aspect of proximity. New Delhi should consciously build constituencies in the neighbourhood and should have dialogues with the civil society. If there are any apprehensions because of China's role in the neighbourhood, there is nothing wrong in dealing with the issue bilaterally with China directly. India has to balance out between regional peace, its own strategic interests and that of long-term peace, and the development of Sri Lanka. The key is to sustain bilateral ties with Sri Lanka in the long run and make up for the lost ground.

India has always stood by Sri Lanka in its difficult times and reiterated its unambiguous support in safeguarding the latter's unity, territorial integrity, and sovereignty. Looking at the trajectory of relations since independence, one can assert that the ties have matured and in the present context, serve as a model of good neighbourly interaction.

Notes :

- ¹ “Vaiko opposes assistance to Sri Lanka”, *The Hindu*, 05 January 2005.
- ² “India earmarks Rs 500 crore for IDPs in Sri Lanka”, *Business Standard*, 22 July 2009.
- ³ “India awaits confirmation of Prabha’s death”, *Daily Mirror*, 09 July 2009.
- ⁴ “Lanka assures India Tamils will return home from camps”, *The Times of India*, 24 June 2009.
- ⁵ Ibid.
- ⁶ Lok Sabha, Statement made by Pranab Mukherjee, the then External Affairs Minister of India, 03 March 2008.
- ⁷ Full report of the LLRC is available at http://www.priu.gov.lk/news_update/Current_Affairs/ca201112/FINAL%20LLRC%20REPORT.pdf, accessed on 22 August 2016.
- ⁸ Parvathi Menon, “A conflict on the waves”, *Frontline*, Vol. 20, Issue 6, 15-28 March 2003.
- ⁹ “Sri Lanka’s dilemma of bottom trawling”, *The Island*, 11 November 2013.
- ¹⁰ The Group was set up following President Kumaratunga’s visit to India
- ¹¹ See Ministry of External Affairs (India), “India-Sri Lanka Joint Statement on Fishing Arrangements”, *Press Statement*, 26 October 2008.
- ¹² Press Information Bureau, Government of India, Ministry of Defence, “Indo-Pak Joint Working Group Meeting”, 12 July 2012.
- ¹³ Full text of the speech is available at <http://www.army.lk/detailed.php?NewsId=5176>, accessed on 25 August 2016.
- ¹⁴ Gotabhaya Rajapakse, ‘Galle Dialogue 2012’, 13 December 2012, full text of the speech is available at <http://www.galledialogue.com/index.php?id=20>, accessed on 05 August 2016.
- ¹⁵ Vikas Bajaj, “India worries as China builds ports in South Asia”, *The New York Times*, 15 February 2010.
- ¹⁶ “China provides US\$1m in aid to Sri Lanka”, *Xinhua News Agency*, 05 May 2009, available at http://www.china.org.cn/international/2009-05/05/content_17726609.htm, accessed on 13 August 2016.
- ¹⁷ Government of Sri Lanka, Ministry of External Affairs, “Sri Lanka - China Trade Relations”, 01 April 2012.
- ¹⁸ Jonas Lindberg, Camilla Orjuela, Siemon Wezeman, Linda Åkerström, *Arms Trade with Sri Lanka: Global Business, Local Costs* (Stockholm: Swedish Peace and Arbitration Society, 2011), p. 46
- ¹⁹ “India calls off annual defence talks with Sri Lanka”, *The India Today*, 18 March 2013.

²⁰ “Gotabhaya deeply disappointed with India’s stand”, *Lankasiri News*, 22 March 2013.

²¹ “India’s views matter, don’t care about the world: Rajapakse,” *The Times of India*, 28 June 2010.

²² Exchange of Letters between the Prime Minister of India and the President of Sri Lanka, From the President of Sri Lanka, Colombo, 29 July 1987, clause 2 (ii).

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