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UNIT-III

TOPIC NAME-INDIA'S RELATION WITH THE SRI LANKA



INTRODUCTION

- **India–Sri Lanka relations** are diplomatic relations between India and Sri Lanka. Only 4% of Sri Lankans have a negative view on India, the lowest of all the countries surveyed by the Ipsos GlobalScan.^[1] The two countries are also close on economic terms with India being the island's largest trading partner^[2] and an agreement to establish a proto single market also under discussion at an advanced stage.^[3] There are deep racial and cultural links between the two countries. India and Sri Lanka share a maritime border. India is the only neighbour of Sri Lanka, separated by the Palk Strait; both nations occupy a strategic position in South Asia and have sought to build a common security umbrella in the Indian Ocean.^[4] Both India and Sri Lanka are republics within the Commonwealth of Nations. They have been however tested by the Sri Lankan Civil War and by the controversy of Indian intervention during the war. In recent years Sri Lanka has moved closer to China, especially in terms of naval agreements. India has signed a nuclear energy deal to improve relations. India made a nuclear energy pact with Sri Lanka in 2015.[†]

WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INDIA AND SRI LANKA?

- There are deep racial and cultural links **between** the two countries. **India and Sri Lanka** share a maritime border. **India** is the only neighbour of **Sri Lanka**, separated by the Palk Strait; both nations occupy a strategic position in South Asia and have sought to build a common security umbrella in the **Indian Ocean**.

HISTORY

- In the 1970s–1980s, private entities and elements in the Research and Analysis Wing and the state government of Tamil Nadu were believed to be encouraging the funding and training for the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, a separatistinsurgent force.^{[6][7]} In 1987, faced with growing anger amongst its own Tamils, and a flood of refugees,^{[8][9]} India intervened directly in the conflict for the first time after the Sri Lankan government attempted to regain control of the northern Jaffna region by means of an economic blockade and military assaults, India supplied food and medicine by air and sea. After subsequent negotiations, India and Sri Lanka entered into an agreement/13th amendment. The peace accord assigned a certain degree of regional autonomy in the Tamil areas with Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF) controlling the regional council and called for the Tamil militant groups to lay down their arms. Further India was to send a peacekeeping force, named the IPKF to Sri Lanka to enforce the disarmament and to watch over the regional council.^{[6][10][11][12]}
- According to Rejaul Karim Laskar, a scholar of Indian foreign policy, Indian intervention in Sri Lankan civil war became inevitable as that civil war threatened India's “unity, national interest and territorial integrity.”^[13] According to Laskar, this threat came in two ways: On the one hand external powers could take advantage of the situation to establish their base in Sri Lanka thus posing a threat to India, on the other the LTTE's dream of a sovereign Tamil Eelam comprising all the Tamilinhibited areas (of Sri Lanka and India) posed a threat to India's territorial integrity

HISTORY

- The Indo-Sri Lankan Accord, which had been unpopular amongst Sri Lankans for giving India a major influence, now became a source of nationalist anger and resentment as the IPKF was drawn fully into the conflict. Sri Lankans protested the presence of the IPKF, and the newly elected Sri Lankan president Ranasinghe Premadasa demanded its withdrawal, which was completed by March 1990.^[6] on May 21, 1991, Rajiv Gandhi was assassinated and the LTTE was alleged to be the perpetrator. As a result, India declared the LTTE to be a terrorist outfit in 1992. Bilateral relations improved in the 1990s and India supported the peace process but has resisted calls to get involved again.^[21] India has also been wary of and criticised the extensive military involvement of Pakistan in the conflict, accusing the latter of supplying lethal weaponry and encouraging Sri Lanka to pursue military action rather than peaceful negotiations to end the civil war

WHAT DO INDIANS THINK OF SRI LANKANS?

- **Indians** know that **Sri Lankans** are Buddhists. Some uninformed people **believe** that **Sri Lankans** worship Ravana, and that is their religion. After all he was a great man once. Just like every other nation, **Sri Lanka** too has its problems.

INDIAN SHRI LANKA TRADE RELATION

- India is Sri Lanka's largest trading partner globally, while Sri Lanka is India's second largest trading partner in the SAARC. It is the number one source of supplies accounting for twenty percent of Sri Lanka's total imports and third largest export destination for Sri Lankan products absorbing six percent of total exports. Among tourists, Indian visitors make the largest single group having a share of twenty seven percent of total arrivals. In the investment field, India is among the top five foreign investors in Sri Lanka. Trade between Sri Lanka and India has grown rapidly after the entry into force of the Indo-Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement in March 2000. The value of bilateral trade increased from US\$658 million in 2000 to US\$ 3.6 billion in 2013.
- Sri Lanka's exports growth has largely been under the ISFTA, whereas India's exports have remained mostly outside the ISFTA. In average, over 70% of Sri Lanka's exports to India continue to be under the ISFTA, while India's exports to Sri Lanka under the ISFTA remains only around 25%. Sri Lanka could export more than 4000 product lines to the Indian market on duty free basis. The noteworthy aspect of the growth of exports under the agreement is the broader product diversification, which took place following the FTA.
- Major exports from Sri Lanka under the ISFTA includes; apparel, furniture, MDF boards, glass bottles, processed meat products, poultry feed, insulated wires & cables, bottle coolers, pneumatic tires, tiles & ceramics products, rubber gloves, electrical panel boards & enclosures, machinery parts, food preparations and spices etc

ECONOMY

- **Commercial ties**Edit
- India and Sri Lanka are member nations of several regional and multilateral organizations such as the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation(SAARC), South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme, South Asian Economic Union and BIMSTEC, working to enhance cultural and commercial ties. Since a bilateral free trade agreement was signed and came into effect in 2000, Indo-Sri Lankan trade rose 128% by 2004 and quadrupled by 2006, reaching US\$2.6 billion.^{[23][24]} Between 2000 and 2004, India's exports to Sri Lanka in the last four years increased by 113%, from US\$618 million to \$1,319 million while Sri Lankan exports to India increased by 342%, from \$44 million to \$194 million.^[23] Indian exports account for 14% of Sri Lanka's global imports. India is also the fifth largest export destination for Sri Lankan goods, accounting for 3.6% of its exports.^[23] Both nations are also signatories of the South Asia Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA). Negotiations are also underway to expand the free trade agreement to forge stronger commercial relations and increase corporate investment and ventures in various industries.^[24] The year 2010 is predicted to be the best year for bilateral trade on record, with Sri Lanka's exports to India increasing by 45% over the first seven months of the year^[25]
- India's National Thermal Power Corp (NTPC) is also scheduled to build a 500 MW thermal power plant in Sampoor (Sampur). The NTPC claims that this plan will take the Indo-Sri Lankan relationship to a new level

CULTURAL RELATIONS

- The People of Indian Origin (PIOs) comprise Sindhis, Gujaratis, Memons, Parsis, Malayalis and Telugu speaking persons who have settled down in Sri Lanka and are engaged in various business ventures.
- Though their numbers (10,000 approx.) are much lesser as compared to Indian Origin Tamils (IOTs), they are economically prosperous and are well settled. Each of these communities has their own groups which organize festivals and cultural events.
- The Cultural Cooperation Agreement has been signed between both the countries.
- The Indian Cultural Centre in Colombo actively promotes awareness of Indian culture by offering classes in Indian music, dance, Hindi, and Yoga. Every year, cultural troops from both countries exchange visits.
- Buddhism is a connecting link between India and Sri Lanka on religious lines.
- Education is another important area of cooperation between India and Sri Lanka. India offers scholarship slots annually to deserving Sri Lankan students.
- Tourism also forms an important link between India and Sri Lanka. India is the largest source of market for Sri Lankan tourism.

DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION

- A number of development projects are implemented under Aid to Sri Lanka funds. In 2006-07, the budget for Aid to Sri Lanka was Rs 28.2 Crs.
- A memorandum of understanding on Cooperation in Small Development Projects has been signed. Projects for providing fishing equipment to the fishermen in the East of Sri Lanka and solar energy aided computer education in 25 rural schools in Eastern Sri Lanka are under consideration.
- India has supplied medical equipment to hospitals at Hambantota and Point Pedro, supplied 4 state-of-the-art ambulances to the Central Province, implemented a cataract eye surgery programme for 1500 people in the Central Province and implemented a project of renovation of OT at Dickoya hospital and supplying equipment to it.
- The projects under consideration are the construction of a 150-bed hospital at Dickoya, upgrading of the hospital at Trincomalee and a US\$7.5 million grant for setting up a cancer hospital in Colombo. India also contributes to the Ceylon Workers Education Trust that gives scholarships to the children of estate workers.
- A training programme for 465 Sri Lankan Police officers has been commenced in Dec 2005. Another 400 Sri Lankan Police personnel are being trained for the course of Maintenance of Public Order.
- Indian governments have also showed interest in collaborating with their Sri Lankan counterparts on building tourism between the two countries based on shared religious heritage.^[35] [Madhya Pradesh CM Shivraj Chauhan](#) in June 2013 stated he was working with Sri Lankan authorities to build a temple dedicated to the Hindu deity [Sita](#) in [Nuwara Eliya](#).^[36] In November 2019, Prime Minister Narendra Modi stated that India will invest \$400 million in infrastructure projects in Sri Lanka amid improving ties after talks with Sri Lanka's new

SHARED TOURISM

- In the past, ferry services for tourists have been introduced and suspended repeatedly because of their low usage.^[38] The low usage of the old ferry services could be due to the high cost of the former services.^[39] As of now, the only way for tourists to access India from Sri Lanka is by air. In 2019 negotiations about ferry services between Colombo and Tuticorin and between Talaimannar and Rameshwaram began. There is also a proposal to operate a cruise/ferry service between Colombo and Kochi in Kerala. The Indian and Sri Lankan governments are working close together to connect the two neighboring countries better. ^[40] The Sri Lankan minister of Tourism Development John Amaratunga indicates that a ferry service will help tourists from both sides to travel at a very low cost

SECURITY

- India and Sri Lanka signed an agreement allowing for the transfer of criminals serving prison sentences in the other country to be repatriated to serve the balance of their sentences in their home country.^[42] Sentenced persons from Kerala and Tamil Nadu have been transferred under the agreement from Sri Lanka to India.^[43] There are areas of cooperation where people to people contacts are focused. Sri Lanka and India has friendly relations through people's support also. It was seen that A. T. Ariyaratne in Sri Lanka helped in spreading non-violence and community service activities on Gandhian philosophy.
- **Alleged RAW interference**Edit
- In 2015 the Sri Lankan Government expelled country's RAW agent played in role of uniting the opposition for the 2015 presidential election.^{[44][45]} In October 2018, President Sirisena alleged that Indian RAW was plotting his assassination. He made this comment in the cabinet meeting, after CID of Sri Lanka Police arrested an Indian national in September for the alleged assassination of Sirisena and former Defence Secretary Gotabaya Rajapaksa.^[46] After President Sirisena's comment on this, the media reported that the Indian High Commissioner met with the president, and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi had a telephone conversation with the president

WHAT DOES SRI LANKA EXPORT TO INDIA?

- Most of the process to export and import are same. But, the technical terms used for import and export process could be varied from country to country.
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- India is Sri Lanka's largest trading partner globally, while Sri Lanka is India's second largest trading partner in the SAARC.
- Major exports from India to Sri Lanka includes Motor Vehicles, Mineral fuels & oils, Cotton, Pharmaceutical products, Plastic articles, Iron & Steel, Chemicals, Cement, Sugar etc.

INDIA-SRI LANKA: ISSUES AND CONFLICTS

Strategic Issues

- In the period of low profile relationship between the two nations, SL apparently started favoring China over India.
- Over the years Chinese funds started flowing, it has started big buck infrastructure projects in the island nation. The presence of China in Sri Lanka increased significantly in the recent years.
- As part of Maritime Silk Route (MSR) policy, China built two ports, one in Colombo and another in Hambantota.
- China has also collaborated in satellite launching activities with Supreme SAT (Pvt.), Sri Lanka's only satellite operator.
- **India's efforts to counter China**
- In 2014 India abstained from voting on a UNHRC resolution calling for a probe into alleged war crimes by Sri Lanka. And it helped to revamp the century-old relationship with Sri Lanka. (While Pakistan and China voted against the resolution)
- In a sign of a closer strategic partnership between Sri Lanka and India, they signed civil nuclear cooperation agreement which is Sri Lanka's first nuclear partnership with any country.
- In the wake of China's economic dominance in the island, India is also entering into Sri Lanka's mega project business in a big way by focusing on infrastructure development in the Northern and Eastern provinces.
- India is also planning to build Trincomalee Port. The port is envisioned as an Indian counterweight to Chinese developments at Hambantota Port.

INDIA-SRI LANKA: ISSUES AND CONFLICTS

■ Fisherman Problem

- Fishing disputes have been a constant area of concern between the two South Asian neighbors for a long time. Sri Lanka has long expressed concerns about illegal fishing by Indian fishermen within its territorial waters across the Palk Strait. The country regularly arrests Indian fishermen for crossing the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL) that demarcates Indian and Sri Lankan waters. India also detains Sri Lankan fishermen for the illegal fishing.

■ Katchatheevu Island

- It is an uninhabited island that India ceded to Sri Lanka in 1974 based on a conditional agreement called “Kachchativu island pact”.
- Later on, Sri Lanka declared Katchatheevu, a sacred land given the presence of a Catholic shrine
- The central government recognizes Sri Lanka’s sovereignty over the island as per the 1974 accord. But Tamil Nadu claimed that Katchatheevu falls under the Indian territory and Tamil fishermen have traditionally believed that it belongs to them and therefore want to preserve the right to fish there.

CONCLUSION

- India shares a common cultural and security space with the countries in the South Asian region especially Sri Lanka. As a prominent Asian nation with critical national interests in South Asia, India has a special responsibility to ensure peace and stability in its closest neighborhood. India should shed its big brother image and actively take part to rebuild the war-torn country. India needs the support of Sri Lanka to emerge as a Blue water navy in the Indian Ocean and also in pursuing the permanent membership in United Nations Security Council (UNSC). Therefore, the two countries should recognize the legitimacy of each other's concerns and operate in a way which is mutually beneficial.



THANK YOU