

Tamil Ethnic Problem and Indo-Sri Lanka Relations



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Abstract

Indian and Sri Lanka are geographical neighbours and as such their relations are important from geo-political point of view. The Tamil minority of Sri Lanka has been the reason for a long standing political problem which took the form of an ethnic conflict escalating into an insurgent movement. India has been adjusting and readjusting its policy towards the Sri Lankan crisis in the larger interest of peace and stability in the region comprising the Indian subcontinent. Successive Indian governments have demonstrated maturity and farsightedness in dealing with the contentious related to the minority Tamil and the majority Sinhalese community according to the changing political realities. The paper tries to contextualize such shifts in the Indian policy ranging from the initial support to Tamil rebels in the early years, the efforts at conflict management to the policy of non interference as the situation in Sri Lanka changed with the passage of time. During the fourth Eelam War which was a period of a very powerful offensive against the LTTE the Indian government was faced with a dilemma. During this period the Indian government explored all possible diplomatic means to find a way of minimizing human rights violations and war crimes while at the same time not openly interfering in the internal affairs of Sri Lanka. As a more powerful and geographically larger country India contributed significantly to the humanitarian effort. Thus, it can be said that India approach to the ethnic problem is characterized by balance between providing support to Sri Lanka in dealing with an ethnic conflict and at the same time showing consideration towards the sentiments of the South Indian Tamil communities. The India-Sri Lanka ties bear testimony that India has worked for the stability and peace in the region.

Keywords: Tamil Minority, Ethnic Problem, Palk Strait, elamwar, LTTE.

Introduction

Geographically, India and Sri Lanka¹, are separated by a narrow stretch of water called Palk Strait. The history and mythology of the two countries are inter-related and the social ties between the two are old.² Their relations can be traced as far back as 2,500 years of history and there is a legacy of intellectual, cultural, religious and linguistic intercourse. However, the relationship has been deeply affected by the question of the legitimate rights and welfare of the Tamil minority. Soon after independence, the major problem hounding both the countries was the issue of citizenship of the persons of Indian Origin resident in Sri Lanka. Most of these people had migrated to the Island as indentured labour during the British period to work in the coffee and tea plantations.³This problem has remained intractable and solution has remained elusive. The breakthrough in this field was achieved with the conclusion of the Srimavo-Shastri Pact of 1964. This Pact is a landmark in India-Sri Lanka relations as it symbolized the beginning of the end of a problem. Now the period specified in the Pact is over. But the achievement so far at the expiry of the stipulated 15 years has been only 55 per cent.⁴

Aim of the Study

1. To study the nature of Indo-Sri Lanka ties particularly in the context of the issues and problems related to the Tamil ethnic community in Sri Lanka.
2. To arrive at an understanding of the various different historical periods and stages in Sri Lankan experience of ethnic conflict.
3. To analyze the shifts in Indian policy towards Sri Lanka in relation to the ethnic conflict at different periods of time.

4. To affirm the contribution of Indian in peace and stability of the region.
5. To understand the Indian concerns in the context of the rise of China as a major regional power.

Ethnic Problem in Sri Lanka

The ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka is rooted in discrimination against the Tamil minority by the Sinhalese majority after the end of British colonial domination. This conflict escalated into a civil war in 1983. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, formed in 1976 under the leadership of Velupillai Prabhakaran, emerged as the face of the insurgent movement of the Tamil. The body had separatist aspirations and demanded an independent state for Sri Lanka's Tamils in the island's Northeast. Their fight against the Sri Lankan state led to an armed conflict that lasted for 26 years. The war was marked by phases of high intensity (Eelam War I: June 1983-July 1987; Eelam War II: June 1990-January 1995; Eelam War III: April 1995-February 2002; Eelam War IV: July 2006-May 2009). Several efforts were made to resolve the conflict but all efforts proved to be futile.

India's Involvement

India played a significant role in this conflict as Sri Lanka's dominant neighbour. In the early 1980s, the Government of Tamil Nadu and the Central Government under Indira Gandhi supported Tamil rebel groups by providing them tacit military help in Indian territory⁵. However, after the assassination of Indira Gandhi, Rajiv Gandhi tried to play peacemaker and officially discontinued military support for Sri Lankan Tamil rebels. Instead, India clearly assumed a conflict-management role and mediated between the conflict parties in the 1980s (Rao, 1988). However, mediation was not effective in resolving the issue. On July 29, 1987, negotiations between the Indian and Sri Lankan governments led to the signing of the Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement (ISLA) and, shortly thereafter, India deployed its Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) in the North and the East of the island with the task of supervising the ceasefire and disarming the LTTE. The IPKF mission soon turned out to be a disastrous episode. The LTTE, which had not been invited to the ISLA negotiations, resisted being disarmed and launched offensives against the IPKF⁶. It soon became apparent that the IPKF was not adequately trained for a guerrilla war (Rajagopalan, 2008), India withdrew its troops. The IPKF proved to be a debacle and thereafter India adopted a policy of non-intervention.

The second main event shaping India's policy towards the Sri Lankan conflict in the following years was the assassination of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi by a suicide bomber in Tamil Nadu in May 1991. It was an act of revenge for the IPKF operation, the LTTE was classified as a terrorist organization in India, and its leader, Prabhakaran the most wanted terrorist.⁷ The assassination of Rajiv Gandhi

influenced the overall approach and orientation of the Congress-led government in power from 2004 to 2009, Sonia Gandhi, remained the president of the Indian National Congress Party from 1998. The Indian government remained hostile towards the IPKF and at the same time New Delhi foreclosed the possibility of any direct contact with the Tamil Tigers.

Thus, India was forced to pursue a "hands-off" policy towards the civil war in Sri Lanka. In the context of its more cooperative regional policy under the Gujral Doctrine, the Indian government accepted the involvement of external actors in Sri Lankan affairs. Starting in 2000, Norway acted as a mediator between the LTTE and the Sri Lankan government. Eventually this mediation led to the signing of a ceasefire in 2002 and provided for the establishment of the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM), composed of "Nordic" states charged with monitoring the ceasefire. Despite its non-involvement, however, India kept a watchful eye on the developments in Sri Lanka and was continuously kept informed by Norway about the latest developments in the peace process (Höglund/ Svensson 2009: 181).⁸

Eelam War IV

The so-called Fourth Eelam War was the upshot of a gradual breakdown of the 2002 ceasefire. In April 2003, the LTTE announced its unilateral withdrawal from peace negotiations after the LTTE was categorized as a terrorist organization.⁹ Later, in 2004 an undeclared war between LTTE and government forces broke out again¹⁰. By July 2006, the ceasefire had collapsed completely.

The election of Mahinda Rajapaksa as Sri Lanka's executive president in November 2005 in a coalition with hardline Sinhalese parties became the reason for a much tougher stance against the LTTE. Rajapaksa strengthened Sri Lanka's military capabilities and established a "highly personalized, authoritarian regime, in which extreme nationalist views [were] widely accepted"¹¹. In the emergent situation the government seemed to be keen on a "fight to the finish"¹²: "What was new in the Rajapaksa administration's approach was the goal of defeating, as opposed to weakening, the LTTE militarily and then making the LTTE irrelevant to any political solution to the ethnic conflict"¹³.

Through a military offensive, Sri Lankan government forces gradually re-conquered the territories under LTTE control.¹⁴ On January 2, 2009, the city of Kilinochchi, which had been the Tigers' administrative capital since 1995, fell into the hands of the government forces after a long siege. LTTE rebels used the civilians as human shields¹⁵. By mid-January 2009, the LTTE had been confined to a small jungle area in the Mullaithivu district. Finally the LTTE's military defeat and the death of its leadership in May 2009 brought an end to the battle.

The final phase of the war was characterized by massive violations of

international humanitarian law on both sides,¹⁶ there were also at least 300,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Sri Lanka.¹⁷ Approximately 250,000 IDPs were put in militarily controlled refugee camps. Even though many countries persuaded Colombo, they did not manage to induce a policy change on the part of the Sri Lankan government. China and Japan, along with Russia and Vietnam, prevented the UN Security Council from discussing the Sri Lankan issue, defined as an internal matter of Sri Lanka.¹⁸ India supported the Sri Lankan government in the entire affair.

President Rajapaksa, strengthened by his military victory, quickly consolidated his position by winning the presidential election of January 2010 and, with his party, the general election of April 2010. Rajapaksa repeatedly refused an international investigation of war crimes and human rights violations, as he argued they violated Sri Lanka's sovereignty.¹⁹ Since then, the Sri Lankan regime assumed increasingly authoritarian character, which was exemplified by the power concentrated in Rajapaksa's family's hands²⁰, about 10,000 Sri Lankan citizens being held for over a year for assumed involvement in LTTE activities²¹, an increasingly militarized governance culture²², and no signs of willingness to find a political situation providing for a meaningful devolution of power to the Tamil minority.

India's Approach to Sri Lanka during Eelam War IV

At the beginning of the period under analysis, India followed the same approach that it had followed after the LTTE was banned after Rajiv Gandhi's assassination. However, India was not indifferent to what happened in Sri Lanka. It was clear that India also had its own priorities for the resolution of the civil war. Since the 1980s²³, New Delhi was keen to find a political solution to the ethnic conflict. Despite the failures of the IPKF,²⁴ in the 1980s from 2003 to 2009 India repeatedly expressed the desire for a "negotiated political settlement" that would meet "the aspirations of all communities."²⁵ More specifically, India had a clear respect for the "unity, sovereignty and integrity" of Sri Lanka,²⁶ as India itself feared secessionist movements in Indian states, most notably in Tamil Nadu. Therefore the sanctity of "the unity of Sri Lanka in a federal system" reiterated²⁷

Overall, it can be said that India was anxious not to give the impression of interfering with the internal affairs of Sri Lanka.²⁸ Correspondingly; its diplomatic efforts to persuade the Sri Lankan government to seek a peaceful solution to the conflict were carried out in an extremely moderate tone in the years 2003-2006. However, things changed slightly in the period 2007-2009, when the escalation of violence in Sri Lanka and the growing pressure from Tamil Nadu induced New Delhi to put some degree of pressure on the Sri Lankan government concerning its approach to civilians in the war. On October 6, 2008, Indian National Security Advisor Narayanan summoned the Sri Lankan deputy high commissioner

to protest Sri Lanka's conduct of the war,²⁹ and ten days later, India actually made an explicit (though unspecified) threat, when the external affairs minister stated that India would "do all in its power" in order to improve the humanitarian situation in Sri Lanka.³⁰ However, New Delhi, even in the altered circumstances India refrained from making its threat more unequivocal. Sri Lankan government responded with an appeasement policy characterized by reassurances about the "safety and wellbeing of the Tamil community" and by minor concessions,³¹ while the military campaign against the Tigers continued in the same way.

At the level of diplomatic interactions India continued to reiterate its preference for both a peaceful termination of the civil war and a political settlement of the underlying conflict. India did not pursue an aggressive policy of engagement. Rather it resorted to an ad hoc response to the course of events by radically changing its policies: In 2007 India began to abandon its rigorous non- involvement approach and assumed an indirect but highly significant role in the military conflict. This new approach was manifested, on one hand, in the crackdown on LTTE networks in Tamil Nadu, which helped the Sri Lankan government in its fight against the Tigers, and, on the other hand, in the provision of military hardware, mainly in the form of "defensive" equipment, and in other forms of military cooperation with the Sri Lankan government.

On account of the political pressure from Tamil Nadu, open military support for Sri Lanka in the fight against the LTTE was not possible for India. At the same time India had removed Sri Lanka from its blacklist for arms exports in the aftermath of the 2002 ceasefire agreement³². The Sri Lankan government was always interested in gaining India's military support in its fight against the LTTE and had tried to promote the idea of a defense-cooperation agreement.³³ However, due to the political pressure from Tamil Nadu, the deal was ultimately not finalized, and in 2005 India rejected a renewed offer of a defense pact made by President Rajapaksa.³⁴ The Sri Lankan government's repeated proposals to jointly patrol the Palk Straits with Indian ships were also clearly opposed by the Tamil Nadu state government.³⁵

However, the discovery in 2007 of a huge weapons-smuggling network led to increased activities by the Tamil Nadu state police against the LTTE infrastructure in India³⁶. As a consequence of these operations, India declared its readiness to train the police personnel of the Tamil Nadu Coastal Security Group to patrol the Palk Straits and to increase surveillance along the maritime boundary.³⁷ In the years 2006-2009, the Indian and Sri Lankan navies carried out coordinated operations that led to the destruction of at least ten "floating warehouses" of the LTTE³⁸. The Indian Navy was involved through reconnaissance missions

and the provision of intelligence to the Sri Lankan Navy.³⁹

At the level of military hardware, India provided the Sri Lankan government with so-called life-saving equipment such as flak jackets, but also, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI),⁴⁰ with an offshore patrol vessel in 2007 and, according to an Indian reporter, with five helicopters “quietly gifted” to the Sri Lankan Air Force in 2006.⁴¹

Most importantly, however, Sri Lanka was the single largest recipient of Indian military training,⁴² and in 2008 India further extended the annual training slots for the Sri Lankan armed forces.⁴³ Moreover, an informal exchange mechanism between high-level Indian and Sri Lankan delegations (two of Rajapaksa’s brothers and his secretary, on the Sri Lankan side, and the national security advisor, the foreign secretary, and the defence secretary, on the Indian side) was reportedly established, and the two delegations met frequently in this capacity in the years 2007-2009.⁴⁴

Overall, therefore, the assistance provided by India to Sri Lanka was “significant,” according to the International Crisis Group (ICG 2008: 20).⁴⁵ Despite the repeated calls for a negotiated political settlement of the ethnic conflict, it seems that India at a certain point started believing that the military solution adopted by Rajapaksa was the right way to deal with the LTTE. Since the LTTE was a prohibited organization and its leader Prabhakaran was persecuted in India, the following attitude began to prevail, according to an Indian government official: “The process of destroying the LTTE is [...] a legitimate activity.”

This shift in India’s approach was made public, to a certain degree, in a statement by the then External Affairs Minister Mukherjee in January 2009, which basically legitimized the strategy pursued by the Sri Lankan government: “[...] military victories offer a political opportunity to restore life to normalcy in the Northern Province and throughout Sri Lanka, after [...] years of conflict.”⁴⁶

This, mostly tacit, support by India for Sri Lanka’s military campaign was in line with New Delhi’s desire for stability and peace in the region. In fact, it can be said that New Delhi started following President Rajapaksa’s approach on issues directly affecting Sri Lankan Tamils and human rights.

Though External Affairs Minister Natwar Singh had expressed India’s preference for a federal solution in 2004, a remarkable shift in India’s attitude towards a convergence with the Sri Lankan government took place in 2008. After coming into office, Rajapaksa had established the All-Party Representative Committee (APRC), a body expected to elaborate a power-sharing package representing a “southern consensus” (ICG 2007: 22-25). Several drafts were

elaborated by the APRC in 2007, proposing the relatively progressive solution of devolving powers to the provinces.⁴⁷ APRC’s final report, titled “Action to be taken by the President to fully implement relevant provisions of the present Constitution as a prelude to the APRC proposals,” was disappointing for all observers who had hoped for a real solution to the devolution of powers and was criticized by moderate Tamil representatives.⁴⁸ The report simply recommended that the government should implement the 13th amendment to the constitution, a by-product of the Indo-Sri Lankan Agreement of 1987 which had never been put into practice.⁴⁹ Interestingly, in January 2008 the Indian government defined the APRC interim report as a “welcome first step,” and in the following months New Delhi continued to call for its implementation. Therefore, on the issue of power devolution we can observe a convergence between India’s and Sri Lanka’s preferences, with New Delhi adopting the position put forward by the Sri Lankan government.

After the end of the war, India also diplomatically supported Sri Lanka in international forums. On May 28, 2009, a special session of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) was held to investigate the reported war crimes and atrocities committed by both the LTTE and the Sri Lankan armed forces. Two motions were discussed: one requesting an international investigation, and the other one elaborated by the Sri Lankan government, which urged the international community to support Sri Lanka’s reconstruction efforts. Not only China, Russia, Pakistan, and several Arab and African countries supported this motion, but also India voted for it. While this voting behavior corresponds to India’s traditional preference for non-involvement in other countries’ internal affairs, it again calls into question India’s concern about the fate of Tamil civilians and further highlights to what extent New Delhi came to follow the Sri Lankan government’s position.

China - Sri Lanka Axis and India’s Concerns

In the face of the efforts of major powers for gaining economic and military footholds in the island, Sri Lanka finds itself vulnerable to major power incursion. China and Pakistan’s strategically-oriented designs on Sri Lanka’s defence and economic activities have also worried Indian policymakers. The supply of defence equipment to a Sri Lankan military at war provides one of the major in-roads for China and Pakistan to expand strategic influence within Sri Lanka. The security community in India sees China as posing the most formidable challenge to its influence in Sri Lanka. There are many factors that lead to this conclusion. China’s vast resources; its desire to guarantee itself access to the world’s principal oil shipping lanes;⁵⁰ its veto power on the UN Security Council; its professed emphasis on non-interference; and its aversion to holding others to account on human rights and

governance issues. Beijing has long been Colombo's largest arms supplier but its support rose from a few million dollars in 2005 to roughly \$1 billion in 2008⁵¹. Chinese weapons, such as F-7 fighter jets as well as ammunition and radars, were vital.⁵² Political support from China, as well from other countries, prevented any meaningful discussions of the war in the Security Council despite the humanitarian crisis in Sri Lanka. Beijing's backing allowed the Sri Lankan government to win the war while avoiding India, ignoring the West and blatantly violating the Geneva Conventions. After the war, China strongly opposed the UN Secretary-General's establishment of a panel of experts on accountability for alleged war crimes, pointing out that the Sri Lankan government had already set up its own commission in May 2010.

Sino-Lankan ties with China have strengthened over the years with China replacing Japan as Sri Lanka's top donor. In 2013, President Mahinda Rajapaksa along with Chinese President Xi Jinping agreed to upgrade the relationship between the two countries from friendship to *strategic cooperation*. Presidential Spokesperson Mohan Samaranayake is quoted saying, "China has been a consistent friend of Sri Lanka even before full diplomatic relations were established in 1957. It was elevated to a high level to reap maximum benefits to the country due to President Rajapaksa's far sighted diplomatic policy and understanding of current global order"⁵³.

There is no denying that the West and India are concerned with the extent of China's presence in Sri Lanka, due to geostrategic and security implications. This could be because of the tendency of the current Modi administration to perceive issues from a traditional security perspective rather than from threats to security from political developments.⁵⁴

In May 2013 China's Development Bank stated that Sri Lanka was a top priority country when providing developmental aid. The strong financial ties were furthered when the Sri Lankan cabinet approved a US \$580 million loan from China. China-Sri Lanka trade is based on the economic, social, tourism and construction fields and Chinese investment has also been intrinsic in the development of Sri Lanka's infrastructure development. In August 2013, a US \$500 million Chinese-built port opened in Colombo. The port, the first of its kind in Sri Lanka is designed to handle mega-ships and is key in making Sri Lanka the regions shipping hub.⁵⁵

Beijing's importance to Sri Lanka, and the challenge it poses for New Delhi, is economic as well as political and military. Development assistance has seen an exponential rise since the end of the war with an infusion of donations, grants, investments and loans. For example, in 2009 China was, in terms of commitments, Sri Lanka's biggest aid donor, responsible for \$1.2 billion out of a total of \$2.21 billion offered.

According to the country's Board of Investment, Beijing is its biggest investor, too. Much of the Chinese assistance appears to have few strings attached, and there is little transparency about the financial terms of the deals and how the money is being spent.

It is important to remember that historically, Sri Lanka's bilateral relations with Pakistan and China are better than Indo-Sri Lankan relations. Economically however, Sri Lanka's relations with India are more valuable to Sri Lanka than its relations with China or Pakistan. So, while India's relationship with Sri Lanka will not preclude relationships Sri Lanka has with other external powers, India hopes that as economic interaction between the two countries expands Sri Lankan foreign policy attunes to Indian sensitivities to meddling by foreign powers.

China's strategic clout in Sri Lanka is increasing every day. These will have serious connotations for India's national security and maritime security. Political perceptions of President Rajapaksa are likely to favour China as a counterpoise to reduce his dependence upon India. The strong anti-Sri Lankan flavour of Tamil Nadu politics has caused serious damage to India.

Futures Prospects

Post-LTTE Sri Lanka has emerged as a far more peaceful country and the prospects of Indo-Sri Lankan relations are good. There are certain challenges in the form of the unsettled ethnic question, presence of extra-regional powers in the island, issue of fishermen and balance of trade. These are, however, manageable. There is a sincere acknowledgement in Sri Lanka that it needs India for its own peace and long-term development. For Colombo, India's fast growth and rising stature have great significance. India also knows well that its own rise as a world power depends largely on peace in its neighbourhood. It cannot afford to remain isolated as an island of stability for long when its immediate neighbourhood is in turmoil.

It goes without saying that India's role in resolving Sri Lanka's ethnic issue is important. New Delhi should take periodic reviews of the needs of the conflict-displaced and must consider providing more aid as and when necessary. Disbursing the aid directly to the affected people and areas of the island instead of routing it through the government is appropriate just to make sure that it reaches the intended beneficiaries. India should also persuade more countries to come forward to help, but directly, in all aspects of reconstruction of the war-ravaged north-east. This will go a long way in resettling the displaced Tamils in their place of origin. Decent resettlement of the IDPs will also take care of the hue and cry in Tamil Nadu over the humanitarian issue.

Rehabilitation of former LTTE cadre is yet another short-term role that India could take up seriously. Given the economic situation of Sri Lanka, providing suitable employment to the demobilized LTTE cadres is not going to be an easy task. In this regard, India could provide specific aid for the rehabilitation of former rebels. Indian schools and universities could be thrown open with sufficient scholarships to former child soldiers. Sri Lanka Donor Conference countries, which include the United States, the European Union, Japan and Norway, can be persuaded to invest, especially in the north-east, in manufacturing and services industries that could offer numerous job opportunities to the Tamil youth. Dignified rehabilitation of all surrendered LTTE cadres will convert them into non-fighters once and for all. Revival of the LTTE in any form is not in the interest either of Sri Lanka or India or the rest of the world.

For lasting political settlement, India should at the outset make sure that the recent military victory over the LTTE does not result in triumphalism in the Sinhala-dominated regime vis-à-vis the Tamil minorities. It should rather be converted into a political opportunity. India has to exercise maximum leverage on Sri Lanka to deliver a meaningful devolution package to the minorities, both Tamils and Muslims.⁵⁶

The issue of straying of fishermen from both countries into the other country's territorial waters and the consequent harassment by the naval forces requires urgent attention. Despite the existence of certain practical arrangements to deal with the issue of bonafide fishermen of either side crossing the international maritime boundary line, firings on fishermen continue. A comprehensive and humane approach needed to solve the problems.

After the presidential election in Sri Lanka in January 2015, relation between India and Sri Lanka get new disposition. Sri Lankan premier visit to India not only as described it as a visit "mainly to establish a good rapport with New Delhi but have also gained new direction and momentum"⁵⁷, both sides signed four substantive agreements. Of these, the agreement on Co-operation in the Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy was the most significant as it imparts a new strategic element to bilateral relations. Its decision to move ahead on this front with India shows the maturity of the new Sri Lankan leadership and the importance it attaches to its relations with New Delhi. The agreement envisages "exchange of knowledge and expertise, sharing of resources, capacity building and training of personnel in peaceful uses of nuclear energy". The two sides have also agreed to enhance their defence and security cooperation in the existing trilateral format with the Maldives. The travails of fishermen on both sides of the Palk Bay received attention have agreed to pledging to resolve them in a "constructive and humanitarian" way.⁵⁸

Conclusion

By way of conclusion it can be said that India's relations with Sri Lanka should be seen in the context of India's role as a regional power and the strategic importance of Sri Lanka in India's foreign policy. Besides this India has high stakes in the ethnic conflict as the minority Tamil population are a people of Indian origin. The issue is politically important in the southern states of India and determines popular sentiments of the people. As such India's intervention in Sri Lankan conflict has been characterized by a tactfulness right from the beginning. At the same time Indian policy vis-à-vis Sri Lanka has been marked by conspicuous shifts from one period to the other. While Indian approach to the ethnic conflict took the form of tacit support to Tamil insurgency at one end of the spectrum, the armed intervention of the Indian Peace Keeping Force culminated in the assassination of Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi at the hands of Tamil militants. The last phase during which the LTTE became the target of a ruthless assault by the Sri Lankan government was a period when the Indian government more or less chose the policy of least interference. However, in the end it can be said the overall thrust of the Indian policy towards Sri Lanka has been marked by a desire for regional peace and harmony.

Endnotes

1. *Ceylon's official name was changed to Sri Lanka on 22 May 1972.*
2. *Punjab Journal of Politics, Vol. IV, No.1, January-June, 1980, pp. 96-97.*
3. *India and Foreign Review, Vol. 20, Oct. 1982, p.9.*
4. *Lalith Kumar, India and Sri Lanka: Srimavo-Shastri Pact, Chetana Publications, New Delhi, 1977, p.93.*
5. *Dixit, 2003: 55; dos Santos 2007: 54.*
6. *Bouffard/ Carment, 2006: 162.*
7. *According to Devotta (2010: 46, 59), the LTTE also feared a re-election of Rajiv Gandhi as prime minister and wanted to avenge his assumed role in the dismissal of the DMK government in Tamil Nadu in January 1991.*
8. *At the same time, India refused to take part in multilateral initiatives regarding Sri Lanka, for example in donor conferences. As one interviewee put it, "at the donor conferences India was present as an observer but it would not join a multilateral agreement in its own region!" Interview with expert, New Delhi, November 25, 2008*
9. *See "Exclusion from donors conference undermines peace process", TamilNet, April 4, 2003, at: <www.tamilnet.com/art.html?catid=13&artid=8673>(May 25, 2009).*
10. *HRW 2005.*
11. *ICG 2007: 21.*
12. *Reddy, 2006.*
13. *Uyangoda, 2009.*
14. *Fuller 2009.*
15. *ICG 2010: i.*
16. *For a detailed account, see ICG 2010.*

17. UN 2009a.
18. Nessman, 2009.
19. ICG 2010: 31.
20. Schlütter, 2010: 1.
21. ICG 2010: 31.
22. Senanayake, 2009: 824.
23. Bouffard/ Carment 2006: 168.
24. See, for example, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), India, India–Sri Lanka Joint Statement, June 11, 2002.
25. See, for example, MEA, Working visit of H.E. Mrs Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga, President of Sri Lanka from November 3rd to 7th, 2004, November 2, 2004.
26. This formulation was reiterated in MEA statements throughout the years 2003–2009 with small variations.
27. MEA, India, External Affairs Minister Natwar Singh in joint press conference with Lakshman Kadirgamar, Foreign Minister of Sri Lanka, May 31, 2004. Moreover, India offered to share its “constitutional experience” with Sri Lanka.
28. Minister of Sri Lanka, May 31, 2004. Moreover, India offered to share its “constitutional experience” with Sri Lanka. See MEA, India, On the visit to India of President of the Government of Spain and Foreign Minister of Argentina, visit of Foreign Secretary to Sri Lanka and response to questions on Indian fishermen in Pakistan and sale of F-16s by US to Pakistan, July 3, 2006.
29. “It [India] believes that an enduring solution has to emerge purely through internal political processes.” MEA, India, India–Sri Lanka, Joint Statement, October 21, 2003.
30. MEA, India, On the summoning of the Sri Lankan Deputy High Commissioner by the National Security Adviser, October 6.
31. MEA, India, Statement by EAM on situation in Sri Lanka, October 16, 2008.
32. Sambandan 2003b.
33. MEA, India, On the telephone conversation between President of Sri Lanka and Prime Minister, October 18, 2008; MEA, India, India–Sri Lanka Joint Press Release, October 26, 2008. In October 2008, for example, the Sri Lankan government gave in to Indian pressure and allowed an Indian ship carrying relief material for IDPs to call at the port of Colombo (Reddy 2008a).
34. Reddy, 2007.
35. See, for example, MEA, India, On Bilateral Talks during the visit of the Foreign Minister of Sri Lanka, April 29, 2004.
36. Hariharan, 2007; Jayanth, 2007.
37. See “Karunanidhi opposes joint patrolling of Palk Strait,” *The Hindu*, October 5, 2008, at: <www.thehindu.com/2008/10/05/stories/2008100555320800.htm>(October 13, 2009).
38. Gokhale, 2009: 125.
39. *Ibid.*; Suryanarayan, 2010: 172.
40. See “Indian Navy Strengthens Surveillance Along Sri Lankan Border,” *India Defence*, April 4, 2007, at: <www.india-defence.com/reports-3001> (May 29, 2009).
41. Gokhale, 2009: 121.
42. Information from the SIPRI Arms Transfer Database, at: <<http://armstrade.sipri.org/>>(April 28, 2009).
43. Interview with Sri Lankan diplomat, New Delhi, November 24, 2008. Exact figures are difficult to find. According to Devotta (2010: 52), approximately 800 Sri Lankan officers are trained in India every year.
44. Gokhale 2009: 122-123.
45. See MEA, India, Sri Lanka—Factsheet, at: <<http://meaindia.nic.in/foreignrelation/srilanka.pdf>>(May 30, 2009).
46. MEA, Statement by the External Affairs Minister Shri Pranab Mukherjee in Sri Lanka, January 28, 2009.
47. For a discussion of these different drafts, see ICG (2007: 24) and Reddy (2008g).
48. See, for example, the interview with the leader of the moderate Tamil National Alliance (TNA) B. Sampanthan in June 2008: “I strongly believe that the 13th amendment is not a solution and never be a solution [sic] to the conflict because this was rejected by us in 1988, which is inadequate to address the grievances of the Tamils.” “All Three Communities Must Put Heads Together: Conflict essentially a problem of ours,” *Sunday Observer*, June 29, 2008.
49. Reddy, 2008b.
50. ICG: 2008.
51. Robert D. Kaplan: 2010.
52. *The Economist*: 2010.
53. Manjula Fernando: 2013.
54. Neville Ladduwahetty: 2015.
55. *Daily News*: 2013.
56. N. Manoharan: 2012.
57. *The Hindu*: 2015.
58. *The Hindu*: 2015.