

AMITY OR ENMITY: INDIA-SRI LANKA BOUNDARY RESOLUTIONS

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Relations between Sri Lanka and India have been tense since the beginning of the written history of Sri Lanka. At various occasions, the relations had positively and negatively affected the functioning of the two countries. Being geographically and historically in close proximity to each other, there is an unbreakable bond between the two countries. There are notable features that both the countries share: Maritime boundary that divides the two nations is a good example. However, this study is aimed at finding out whether India-Sri Lanka boundary resolutions reflect peace or hostility. Further, the study explores the legal background behind the demarcation of the boundary and the issues that have arisen due to the boundary. A qualitative content analysis using secondary sources was utilized mainly to carry out the study which encompasses three major cyclical processes as describing, classifying and connecting. The agreements of 1702, during the Dutch colonial times, Sri Lanka maintained a three-mile territorial sea which was within the reach of a cannon shot, the 1921 demarcation of “Fisheries Line”, the agreements of 1974 and 1976 that had legally demarcated the boundaries between the two countries were instrumental in defining the relationship between the two nations. Both countries have signed bilateral agreements on the maritime boundary as declared by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. (UNLOS). However, three major boundary-related issues were identified: the ownership of the Kachchathivu island, poaching of fishermen and refugee problem. But what was evident during the analysis was that India-Sri Lanka boundary resolution has gone beyond an issue between the boundaries and turned into a political contest between the two countries. The problems created due to the boundaries have been aggravated by geo-political tension between the countries. Results further affirm that, there is a clear legal demarcation of territories between the two countries. Yet, India-Sri Lanka boundary resolutions show enmity due to the very issues created by the boundary demarcation. With the political interferences, it has now taken a political dimension which has hindered the amicable relationship between the two countries.

Keywords: Boundary resolutions, Demarcation, Political dimension