

INDO-SRI LANKA RELATIONS SINCE 1987

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In Sri Lanka's foreign relations India occupies a special place. This is not only because of its proximity, size, resource potential and military power, but also India and Sri Lanka have close cultural relations.

Indo-Sri Lanka relations which had been cordial since both gained independence entered a stage of "Crisis relationship" in the 1980^s. Foremost among the factors leading to this development was the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka and India's intervention as a third party mediator after the 1983 ethnic riots in Sri Lanka. However, the relations between these two countries also underwent several phases. India's policy towards her neighbours under Indira Gandhi was elaborated by Bhabmi Sen Gupta as follows:

India has no intention of intervention in internal conflicts of South Asian countries and it strongly opposes intervention by any country in the internal affairs of any other. India will not tolerate external intervention has any implicit or explicit anti-Indian implication. No South Asian government must therefore ask for external military assistance with an anti-Indian bias from any country.

This doctrine has been the guiding principle for the Congress government of Rajiv Gandhi and Narasimha Rao. Only exception was the V.P Singh's National front government. However, when the new National Front government was formed in 1996 under Deve Gowda and later I.K. Gujral, India's policy towards her neighbors also underwent changes. During the course of his speech in September 1996 the then Foreign Minister of India I.K. Gujral said that:

The United Front Government's neighborhood policy now stands on five principles first with the neighbours like Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives and Sri Lanka, India does not ask for reciprocity but gives all that it can in good faith and trust. Secondly no South Asian country will allow its territory to be used against the interest of another of the region. Thirdly none will interfere to the internal affairs of another. Fourthly, all South Asian Countries must respect each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty. And finally, they will settle all their disputes through peaceful bilateral negotiations.

The above five principles known as Gujral Doctrine has already brought rich dividends to India and her neighbours.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the relations between India and Sri Lanka since 1987. The research question is whether the changes in Government in India or Sri Lanka drastically change the foreign policies of India or Sri Lanka. Theory of perception will be the theoretical basis of this study Role of perceptions and misperceptions in foreign policy process has been gaining importance in the recent past. This study will be both descriptive and analytical. Available secondary and primary data in Sri Lanka will be utilized. A trip to India is essential to consult materials available in India.