

India's Changing Role in Regional Peacebuilding: Case of Sri Lanka

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Extended Abstract

The external role in peacebuilding for post-war reconstruction is a well-established international trend where states use such cooperative interactions for better relations. The states that suffer immense consequences from internal wars require peacebuilding support from outside states, predominantly in reconstruction and development areas. Geographic proximity and cultural ties have become the key distinct causes of India's and Sri Lanka's long-standing relations. This paper examines the nature of India's peacebuilding role in Sri Lanka after ending the civil war in 2009. The paper highlights previous literature about India's peacemaking intervention during the early phase of the ethnic problem and internal conflict in 1980s—the Indian government's decisive political standpoint about finding a political solution for the Sri Lankan Tamils was the use of external (regional level) cohesive intervention over domestic affairs. In this regard, Sri Lanka's Tamil problem was regionalized several times, and India's peacemaking was crucial in the years 1983, 1987, and until 1989—India withdrew its Indian Peacekeeping Forces positioned in Jaffna peninsula, Northern part of the island. The paper compares India's traditional interventionist approach to peacemaking and peacebuilding with their current approach to comprehensive cooperation in humanitarian relief—particularly India's current peacebuilding role as a new form of cooperation. This paper is primarily based on a qualitative literature review examining the nuances of India's changing role in Sri Lanka's postwar recovery since 2009. The several sections carefully chosen for examination compare and contrast the features of India's peacebuilding initiatives prior and after the civil war in Sri Lanka. The paper reveals that India's current peacebuilding focus is centered on three leading areas: humanitarian aid, reconstruction of houses for Tamil communities and development sector, as well as the diplomatic cooperation that India has been a voice for Sri Lanka at the UNHRC sessions. Furthermore, India's regional directives are influential through their foreign policy principles '*South-South Cooperation*' and Indian PM Narendra Modi's policy of '*Neighborhood First*.' Therefore, one can argue that India's peacebuilding role in Sri Lanka's post-war recovery is beyond forming bilateral relations that it enables the reframing of (new) forms of regional cooperation. This is seen as an approach for India's transformative peacebuilding interest, where possibilities are explored for stronger regional peacebuilding, where Sri Lanka becomes a promising case study.

Keyword: *India, Peacebuilding Intervention, Peacemaking, Post-war Recovery, South-South Cooperation, Sri Lanka*

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