

Indo-Lanka Fishery Dispute: Transnational Maritime Crimes

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Sri Lanka and India are two states of the Indian Ocean, separated by a narrow strip of water consisting of Palk Strait and Gulf of Mannar. The fisheries dispute on poaching between them is a persistent problem that has caused both states much distress and conflict. Albeit maritime demarcations are not as straightforward as land demarcations, the territorial waters between the two countries were demarcated and designated in 1974 and 1976 through a bilateral agreement between the two nations to establish the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL). Accordingly, transgressing the IMBL into Sri Lankan waters to fish illegally using internationally banned and sanctioned methods is a violation of agreements governed by the United Nations Convention on the Law of Sea (UNCLOS). However, the Indian fishermen's crossing into Sri Lankan waters for illegal fishing, using banned and illegal fishing methods such as bottom trawling, continues persistently to date. The objective of this study is to identify areas of transnational maritime security threats to Sri Lanka and critically evaluate this in the backdrop of Indo-Lanka fishery dispute. This study is guided by the exploratory research methodology and data are collected through qualitative interviews of stakeholders to the problem and available credible literature, while Grounded Theory is used for data analysis. The unresolved and persistent fishery problem between the two states and associated transnational crimes pose threats to involved states as well as to humans, with consequences of grave traditional and human security threats to both India and Sri Lanka.

Keywords: Fishery Dispute, Transnational Organised Crime, Traditional and Non-traditional Security