

External Compulsions on Sri Lanka's Socio-Economic Crisis

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During Sri Lanka's colonial rule, the island was reliant on an export-oriented economy, which was driven by the trade that prospered with the colonials exploiting the island's resources. This reliance on an export-oriented economy remained even after Sri Lanka gained independence, as maintaining sound relations with Sri Lanka's export destinations or markets were deemed imperative for the country's survival. However, the maintenance of these relations has not always benefitted Sri Lanka, as it did not promote local businesses and instead was more focused on appeasing the economic interests of investors and export destinations. Therefore, this paper examines the extra-regional dynamics of Sri Lanka's socio-economic crisis. It raises questions about the role of regional and great-power competition in the present crisis; whether regional and extra-regional powers could have prevented the current crisis in Sri Lanka; and what role these powers could play in assisting the island-state in overcoming this crisis. Accordingly, the paper argues that Sri Lanka neglected its own national well-being in attempting to appease other countries and their requirements to engage in Sri Lanka, thus resulting in the country's socio-economic crisis in the early 2020s. Moreover, the mishandling of its own non-aligned policy permitted the country to be entangled in the intense power rivalry in the Indian Ocean between China, India, Japan, and the United States. Therefore, various powers were able to 'use' Sri Lanka for their own gain in their competition for power, as Sri Lankan leaders miscalculated its economic development and the needs of its people.

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