

Building Resilience in the Indo-Pacific: A Holistic Defence Approach for the United States and Sri Lanka

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Abstract

The US and Sri Lanka mutually agree that a “free and open” Indo-Pacific that is secure, prosperous, and resilient should be the goal of future engagement with each other and other states in the region. Concerning their defence posture, both countries have expressed and demonstrated the strength and necessity of defensive capacity- building and maritime domain awareness measures focused on addressing counterterrorism, drug and human trafficking, illegal fishing, and disaster risk management. US strategy on “rebalancing” Asia and its regional defence dilemma lies in how to productively engage the smaller littoral states of the region, like Sri Lanka, to promote a “secure” Indo-Pacific without compromising its interests and actual capacities to maintain its operations. This research aims to find the answer to how a complex power strategy of defence cooperation might be balanced with soft power diplomatic strategy, which is critical for a holistic approach to the 75-year relationship between the US and Sri Lanka. This study is significant in that this paper will hopefully serve as a starting point for a new era of mutual defence relations. The project methodology will focus on an analytical literature review of international and domestic writings in research journals and scholarly articles, and formulating recommendations for the future of US-Sri Lanka defence relations. Findings of the study discuss Sri Lanka’s dilemma on expanding the capacities of its forces to deal with domestic and external threats through innovative budgetary and defence reform without surrendering its principle of non-alignment and jeopardizing its necessary relationships with considerable regional powers. Further, the findings suggest that the U.S. and Sri Lanka are required to work together to promote a positive, modern-facing, and capacity-building-centered defence strategy, intent on addressing critical domestic and regional security challenges while at the same time exercising a strategy of “restraint” so as not to overextend their respective capabilities and interests and compromise their relationships with other regional partners.

Keywords: *US-Sri Lanka Relationship, Indo- Pacific Strategy*