

REIMAGINING NATIONAL SECURITY FOR SRI LANKA:

Emphasising both Territorial Integrity and Individual Welfare



Shahane De Silva



Centre for Policy Alternatives

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Image: Galle Face on 9th July 2022 by Noopura Liyanage

Table of Contents

- Foreword..... 4
- Executive Summary 6
- Introduction 9
- Countering Terrorism: Addressing Security and Intelligence Weaknesses..... 12
- Confronting Extremism and Preventing the Resurgence of Conflict 16
- Optimising Defence Expenditure and Restructuring the Military 22
- Tackling Digital Vulnerabilities: Enhancing Cybersecurity Capabilities..... 27
- Rising Temperatures, Growing Threats: Combatting Climate Change..... 31
- Intersections between Economic Recovery, Sustainable Development, and National Security ... 37
 - The Need for Good Governance at Home 37
 - Navigating the Indian Ocean: Economic (Inter)Dependence and Regional Geopolitics..... 39
 - Avenues for Sustainable Development: Green Finance and the Blue Economy 47
- A Summary of Recommendations 53
- Conclusion 58
- Bibliography 59

Foreword

This Policy Brief is an investigation of the many facets of national security facing contemporary Sri Lanka and proposes exploration of those facets relatively unexplored or neglected.

Fundamental to this investigation is the question of – National security for whom? Traditional international relations discourse has posited an international system made up of sovereign and equal states with no inquiry as to the situation within states. States interact in this system like billiard balls on a billiard table pursuing their national interest, which puts them in competition or conflict with their peers. Conflict within states is not explored and as a consequence, internal threats to security are insufficiently integrated into a holistic concept of national security.

The issue of internal threats to national security is pertinent to all states but especially to those who have undergone internal conflict and continue to face these tensions in a post-conflict as opposed to a post-war situation. A post-conflict situation requires that the sources of conflict are not reproduced and that new sources of conflict are not created and inflamed.

Accordingly, this Policy Brief integrates discussion of the internal challenges threatening the security of the citizen with the challenges affecting the collectivity of society and by extension the state. Security at the end of the day is about a feeling of well-being, of non-discrimination and a sense of trust and confidence in the government and state to ensure this for all the peoples that inhabit the territory of the state. Whilst it is about threats which may require the threat and the use of force and global issues such as climate change, it is fundamentally about threats that create tension and conflict within societies between the multiple identities that inhabit them. The structure of power, the adherence to a notion of unity in diversity in multiethnic and religious societies therefore is of pivotal importance. Government has the overall responsibility for ensuring order and stability, but not at the cost of the democratic rights of the population.

By no means comprehensive, this Brief is intended to initiate the conversation about a new and integrated concept of national security for Sri Lanka, through constitutional and legal reforms and budgetary allocations as well as international commitments, that would in turn adapt our institutions and processes towards a truly secure democratic society.

Finally, I would like to thank Shahane De Silva for his commitment and extensive research.

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Executive Summary

A reimagination of what national security means and, thereby, encompasses for Sri Lanka is vital to better encapsulate and understand the contemporary security concerns that it faces. This Brief calls for a reimagination of national security that necessitates securing the territorial sovereignty of the state whilst simultaneously securing its constituents as well, thereby defining national security as ‘a low probability of damage to the acquired values of the state and its constituents, and the absence of fear that such values will be attacked’. This is a synthesis between the traditional and human security approaches, the former entailing the security of the territorially sovereign state with the latter prioritising the individual welfare of the constituents of the state with respect to the seven core values of economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community, and political security.

The value here is two-fold. Firstly, it is recognised that securing the territorial sovereignty of the state does not necessarily secure its people, though it is a prerequisite for doing so as ensuring the protection of any of the seven core values of the human security approach would not be possible if the territorial sovereignty of the state was compromised. Secondly, the human security approach allows for addressing many contemporary security concerns that fall outside the scope of the traditional security approach.

Such an approach in Sri Lanka’s present context translates to several key areas of consideration, namely: terrorism; extremism and conflict resurgence; defence expenditure and the armed forces; cyberspace; climate change; the economy and regional geopolitics. In order to counter terrorism effectively the National Security Council, as the apex national security decision-making body, must be given statutory basis and its own secretariat that is led by a National Security Advisor. Additionally, a legal framework, alongside a judicial or quasi-judicial enforcing body, providing for surveillance powers under certain conditions should be established. It is also imperative that the Prevention of Terrorism Act be repealed in favour of counter-terrorism legislation in line with international best practices and Sri Lanka’s obligations under international human rights law. Lastly, the need for a Public Prosecutor’s office that is separate and independent of the government

having the sole responsibility to indict and prosecute gained further currency in the wake of culpability in the Easter Sunday Attacks of 2019.

Sri Lanka is no stranger to extremism and conflict, and so shrinking the space for extremism and conflict resurgence is crucial. Therefore, addressing the push and pull factors for extremism is a must. This entails ensuring: the independent and impartial functioning of the public service, law enforcement, and the judiciary; equality of opportunity in recruitment and nominations to government bodies and institutions regardless of religious, ethnic, linguistic, and/or cultural background; government bodies and institutions having some representation of the stakeholders affected by its objectives. Moreover, civic, cross-cultural, and cross-religious education in primary and secondary educational institutions is an imperative to create a citizenry that is respectful of human rights, democracy, and Sri Lanka's religious, ethnic, linguistic, and cultural diversity. Furthermore, the spread of misinformation, disinformation, and hate speech must be mitigated and those responsible for it and other acts of extremism must be held accountable. Lastly, an effective system of provincial devolution would be valuable in addressing a continuing ethno-religious grievance that was at the heart of Sri Lanka's protracted and brutal civil war.

The excessive and wasteful expenditure on defence must be reduced and optimised. This involves reducing the number of active-duty troops and increasing the number of reserves by curtailing recruitment and a voluntary retirement scheme where those that do retire but need alternative employment are aided in that transition. Additionally, the lion's share of resources must be redirected from the army to the navy as the sea is the frontier of defence for Sri Lanka. This has spillover benefits for addressing maritime piracy and terrorism, human and drug trafficking, and IUU fishing as the navy would be better resourced. Relatedly, addressing the challenges of cyberspace requires improving the cybersecurity capabilities of the military, in addition to the government needing to enhance its cybersecurity capabilities to protect its digital infrastructure, as the increased incorporation of digital development into conventional military hardware brings with it vulnerabilities that can be the target of a cyberattack. The military should also establish a branch dedicated to threats emanating from cyberspace. Moreover, the government must also develop new and/or update national policy and legislation on subjects pertaining to cyberspace.

The threat that climate change poses to national security cannot be exaggerated. It is an issue that necessitates greater pragmatism in policy formulation and, as it is a cross-cutting issue across government, extensive coordination in policy implementation. Furthermore, given Sri Lanka's heightened vulnerability to the impacts of climate change there is a need to prioritise conservation and climate change adaptation over mitigation. Both conservation and adaptation efforts would benefit from decentralised governance through the devolution of powers to the provinces as the provincial level is closer to the people and better situated to understand the unique challenges each province faces. Relatedly, in order to pursue sustainable development whilst aiding Sri Lanka's recovery from national insolvency, green finance and the blue economy represent engines of growth for the Sri Lankan economy.

Finally, in navigating the geopolitics of the Indian Ocean Sri Lanka must tread carefully to ensure that it is not dependent on a single state or bloc for its economic recovery and development to prevent undue external influence over the country. Additionally, a Parliamentary Select Committee for foreign policy formulation and revision should be established for a more bipartisan and consistent Sri Lankan foreign policy alongside an effective foreign service that has the capacity to expand and build on Sri Lanka's relationships with other countries. The latter requires the foreign service to be depoliticised, and better staffed and resourced. Lastly, legislation on political financing must be strengthened to limit the role of foreign powers financing election campaigns in Sri Lanka with state intelligence services having the capacity to enforce such legislation.

By no means is this an exhaustive list of what should be taken into consideration nor do the recommendations wholly address what should be done in any of these areas. However, they do demonstrate the scope of issues that are relevant to the reimagined conception of national security asserted in this Brief, the similarities and differences in how these issues affect the Sri Lankan state and the Sri Lankan people respectively, and how these issues interact and relate to each other.

Introduction

Sri Lanka's past has arguably seen no greater political buzzword than national security. Unfortunately, on the contrary, there is a dearth of understanding over what national security should encompass for Sri Lanka. As such, national security requires reimagination to better encapsulate contemporary security concerns in the Sri Lankan context. This requires a general understanding of national security followed by its contextualisation into several key areas of consideration for Sri Lanka.

According to Arnold Wolfers, security, in an objective sense, "measures the absence of threats to acquired values" and, in a subjective sense, "the absence of fear that such values will be attacked" (Romm 1993: 5). The phrase "absence of threats" is rather ambiguous leading David A. Baldwin to reformulate the phrasing to read "a low probability of damage to acquired values", whilst leaving the remainder of the definition unchanged (Baldwin 1997: 13). In practice, for instance, this entails a state developing deterrence policies in response to threats of military attack to lower the probability that such an attack would occur (*ibid.*). Whilst providing much needed clarity to the concept of security, the additional value in this definition is that it treats security as a policy objective and invites further specification for defining policies in the pursuit of the objective (*idem*: 12). Subsequently, the further specification of security requires addressing the four questions which follow: security for whom, for which values, from what threats and by what means (Baldwin 1997: 12-16; Lahiry 2020: 187-188).

In considering national security, the answer to the aforementioned questions have had a longstanding set of traditional concerns. However, in contemporary times, an evolved set of concerns under the human security approach have also emerged and cannot be ignored. With regard to traditional security, national security would entail ensuring the security of the territorially sovereign state from threats such as war, through diplomatic and military means (MacLean 2006: 92). On the other hand, in the human security approach, national security would entail ensuring the security of the constituents of the state (*idem*: 90). In other words, it places the individual before the state (*ibid.*). This is important as it redirects attention from territory to the

individual and recognises that, beyond the protection of the state, individual welfare and well-being is also vital to national security (ibid). It highlights how a “secure state does not necessarily mean a secure people” (ibid.).

As a result, the areas considered under the human security approach are more expansive than a narrow focus on maintaining the integrity of borders and protecting territorial sovereignty. Human security entails the security of seven core values comprising: economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security, and political security (Lahiry 2020: 187). Economic security entails an individual being able to derive a basic income through compensable work or from a social safety net (ibid.). Food security involves an individual’s physical and economic access to basic food obtained through employment, a guaranteed basic income, or assets (ibid.). Health security necessitates that an individual has access to basic healthcare and protection from disease and illness (ibid.). Environmental security demands that every country formulates policies for the preservation of the planet’s ecological balance and the maintenance of a healthy physical environment (idem: 187-188). Personal security entails how an individual can save themselves from threats, among others of a similar nature, originating from the state, ethnic violence, crime, domestic and street violence, suicide, drug abuse and child abuse (idem: 188). Community security usually provides an individual with a group identity, which can be that of a family, community, organisation, ethnic or racial group, providing a set values and mutual support to members of that community (ibid.). Political security refers to the protection and respect for basic human rights of every individual (ibid.). Ensuring the security of these core values requires an additional set of responses beyond that of traditional security concerns.

The importance of the human security approach cannot be overstated for the South Asian region and, thereby, Sri Lanka. South Asia is appropriate for discussions on the shifting discourse on security as it is a religiously, ethnically, linguistically, and culturally diverse region where tensions have arisen between states and between non-state actors in different states, lending itself to traditional security concerns, and within a state, lending itself to the more contemporary human

security concerns (idem: 189-190). Tensions between the state and non-state actors within the state also lend themselves to a shift in approach for ensuring national security.

Furthermore, this religious, ethnic, linguistic, and cultural diversity challenges the applicability of the concept of the nation-state in South Asian countries, particularly in Sri Lanka. This requires an opening of the black box that is the nation-state when considering what national security for Sri Lanka entails. In other words, instead of taking it for granted that Sri Lanka constitutes a single unified nation-state, this is to suggest that Sri Lanka as a state is comprised of more than one nation. In 1948, upon gaining independence, Sri Lanka (at the time Ceylon) inherited a territory but did not inherit a unified nation and, therefore, given the competing Sinhalese and Tamil nationalisms that have existed (Stokke 1998) it is appropriate to argue that Sri Lanka as a state is comprised of more than one nation. The failure to accommodate and compromise on differing nationalist visions for the country resulted in a brutal and protracted civil war along ethno-religious and linguistic cleavages between the Sinhalese dominated state and the Liberation Tamil Tigers of Eelam (LTTE). Consequently, there is a need for a reconciliation dimension not only to resolve any remaining grievances that may spark conflict again, but also to ensure harmony and collaboration between the multiple nations that make up the Sri Lankan state. Given that, the human security approach gains further currency for understanding what national security entails for Sri Lanka.

It should be emphasised that traditional security concerns remain important as ensuring the protection of any of the seven core values of the human security approach would not be possible if the territorial sovereignty of the state was compromised. Both approaches are complementary to each other as they “both defend against adversity felt by either the person or society” (MacLean 2006: 90) and, in fact, the human security approach builds on the traditional security agenda. Both approaches should be taken together to provide a more holistic understanding of what national security should entail in securing both the territorially sovereign state and its people. Consequently, with respect to Wolfers and Baldwin, national security is understood as ‘a low probability of damage to the acquired values of the state and its constituents, and the absence of fear that such values will be attacked’ henceforth. As such, when accounting for the context of Sri

Lanka, securing Sri Lanka as a territorially sovereign state and its people boils down to several key areas of consideration, namely: terrorism; extremism and conflict resurgence; defence expenditure and the armed forces; cyberspace; climate change; the economy and regional geopolitics.

Countering Terrorism: Addressing Security and Intelligence Weaknesses

On the 21st of April 2019, Sri Lanka experienced one of the worst terrorist attacks in its history. At the hands of an Islamic extremist group, the National Thowheed Jama'ath (NTJ), three Roman Catholic churches and three hotels were bombed resulting in the deaths of 269 people (excluding the eight suicide bombers) and left over 400 people injured (PSC 2019: 13). Regrettably, the flaws in the security and intelligence architecture of the state allowed a tragedy, broadly believed to have been preventable, to happen (idem: 1-5). This demonstrates how ill-equipped Sri Lanka is in tackling terrorism, highlighting how significant legislative and structural reform is required to prevent the future threats that terrorism poses, especially to individual personal security.

Firstly, the National Security Council (NSC), the “apex national security decision-making body” of the state (idem: 30), needs to be given a statutory basis and requires key structural reforms to improve its functioning and efficacy. With regard to the former, the current basis of the NSC is derived from Gazette No. 1081/19 issued on the 27th of May 1999 under Section 5 of the Public Security Ordinance by then President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga, where the NSC was “charged with the maintenance of national security with authority to direct security operations and matters incidental to it” (idem: 40). This is insufficient. As Professor Sujit Choudhry argues, legislature that formalises the NSC and its functioning while outlining its mandate, powers, composition and when it meets is fundamental (Groundviews 2019). The lack thereof allowed then President Maithripala Sirisena to politicise intelligence by leaving out key individuals from NSC meetings and be negligent in having these meetings in an ad hoc and infrequent manner in the lead up to the attacks (PSC 2019: 3). In order to prevent such malpractice repeating itself in the future and the devastating implications it brings, the NSC must be given a statutory basis. The establishment of the NSC along with its framework and mandate was a recommendation of the

Parliamentary Select Committee (PSC) that investigated the Easter Sunday Attacks of 2019 as well (idem: 150).

With regard to structural reform of the NSC, the introduction of a National Security Advisor (NSA) is broadly conceived to be of paramount importance (Alphonsus 2021: 55-56; Groundviews 2019; PSC 2019: 148-149) alongside a well-resourced secretariat. The NSA would be a person with vast security and intelligence expertise who would be responsible for leading the secretariat and regularly keeping the government abreast of security issues (Alphonsus 2021: 55-56; PSC 2019: 148-149). The secretariat, comprised of a staff with the relevant expertise and experience, would be responsible for calling for meetings on a regular basis, preparing agendas and briefings, keeping minutes of meetings, and compiling analytic reports on key issues (ibid.). Additionally, there is a need to develop formalised inter-agency coordination between all agencies involved in security, intelligence, and law and order for the purposes of policy formulation that is headed by the NSC under the leadership of the NSA (Alphonsus 2021: 55-56).

Secondly, a judicial or quasi-judicial process for approving surveillance should be considered for Sri Lanka. This is important for uncovering any threats that Sri Lanka may face from terrorism in order to take the appropriate preventive measures. This requires a legal framework, such as a national intelligence statute, that would establish a legal basis for surveillance, provide for surveillance powers and set conditions upon surveillance (Groundviews 2019), lest these powers be abused. It should also establish a judicial or quasi-judicial body that enforces this legal framework governing surveillance (ibid.). It must be emphasised that there must be adequate procedural safeguards governing intelligence powers as it has not been uncommon for successive governments to abuse similar provisions in the name of national security at the expense of human rights.

Thirdly, there is a need for alternative legislation for countering terrorism that is in line with international best practices and Sri Lanka's obligations under international human rights law, which the current counter-terrorism legislation, the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA), is inconsistent with. In 1979, the PTA was introduced as a temporary provision (CPA 2023: 3).

However, in 1982, this was amended when Section 29 of the PTA, that made it a temporary provision in place for three years, was repealed by Act No. 10 of 1982 resulting in the PTA becoming a permanent piece of legislation (ibid.). The PTA is known for its draconian provisions, most notably: the detention of suspects without charge for up to eighteen months, allowing the Minister of Defence to arbitrarily restrict freedoms of expression and association with no right of appeal in courts, allowing confessions to be admissible in court and a suspect having to prove to a court that a statement was made under duress (Amnesty International 2019: 2). After his mission to Sri Lanka in 2017, Ben Emmerson, then UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, noted that “the PTA had been used to commit some of the worst human rights violations, including widespread torture and arbitrary detention, in the run-up to and during the conflict, particularly to target minorities and suppress dissent” (idem: 2-3).

In 2015, under the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) Resolution 30/1, the Sri Lankan government committed itself to replacing the PTA with counter terrorism legislation that was in “accordance with contemporary international best practices” (idem: 3). Unfortunately, the Counter Terrorism Act (CTA) proposed in 2018 and the Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA) proposed in 2023 do not constitute a significant improvement from the PTA as they lack sufficient checks on their use, provide space for abuse and allow for suppressing dissent with over-broad and vague definitions of offences (CPA 2023: 3). A viable alternative to the PTA must narrow its applicability to genuine acts of terrorism and introduce extensive procedural safeguards, given the history of repeated abuse of the PTA by successive governments, while having respect for human rights to ensure the political security of individuals.

Fourthly, the Attorney-General’s department requires structural reform in separating its function of legal advice to and defence of the government, and its function as chief prosecutor. Given that the Attorney-General’s department is a department of the Ministry of Justice, both the department and the office of Attorney-General are closely linked to the executive (IMF 2023: 131-132). Thus, not only is the Attorney-General’s department overburdened in having to perform its many functions simultaneously (PSC 2019: 170-171), but it also constitutes a lack of prosecutorial

independence in Sri Lanka and a real or perceived conflict of interest (IMF 2023: 129-130; PSC 2019: 170-171). In the event that the government is the object of prosecution, the Attorney-General's department cannot prosecute the government and act as its legal defence. In 2016, during her mission to Sri Lanka, Monica Pinto, then Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers, studied the role of the Attorney General's department and expressed her concern of its aforementioned dual role and the general perception of it as defending the interests of government and not the public interest, undermining the independence and credibility of prosecution in Sri Lanka (UNGA 2017: 10-11). Hence, the establishment of a Public Prosecutor's office that is separate and independent of the government having the sole responsibility to indict and prosecute is imperative, leaving the Attorney-General's department responsible solely for legal advice to and representation of the government (PSC 2019: 170-171).

Relatedly, the establishment of a Public Prosecutor's office is important in the realm of security in the wake of culpability in the Easter Sunday Attacks of 2019 (idem: 127-128). Many key individuals of the state security and intelligence architecture failed in their responsibilities resulting in this tragedy. Noteworthy are the failures of the Director of the State Intelligence Service (SIS) and then President Maithripala Sirisena. The PSC argued that the former bears the greatest responsibility for the attacks (ibid.) as he failed to "inform and share intelligence information, call for a NSC meeting and take necessary steps to mitigate and prevent possible threats" (idem: 128) while the latter left the NSC defunct as discussed previously. The threat of prosecution would breed greater ownership of responsibility and accountability. At the very least, it would ensure justice is done by prosecuting those who did not fulfil their role to the severe detriment of human life.

Lastly, there is a need to address the root causes of extremism and violent extremism, which may constitute a terrorist threat in the future, instead of only taking measures to counter terrorism. Given that extremism in Sri Lanka has largely stemmed from ethnoreligious cleavages this overlaps with resolving ethnoreligious grievances to prevent the resurgence of conflict and promote peaceful cohabitation and harmony amongst the religiously, ethnically, linguistically, and culturally diverse communities of Sri Lanka.

Confronting Extremism and Preventing the Resurgence of Conflict

In the interest of national security, it is imperative that the factors driving extremism, including the grievances of ethnoreligious minorities, be eliminated, lest these factors contribute towards radicalisation and extremism or result in the resurgence of conflict. Confronting extremism necessitates addressing the factors which push individuals, especially the youth, towards violent extremism. These include, but are not limited to, inequality, discrimination, exclusion, the denial of civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights, unemployment, corruption in the public sector, poor and unaccountable governance, and ethnoreligious-centric politics (CPA 2021: 17). There are also pull factors which attract individuals to engage in violent, extremist activities. These involve violent extremist groups providing individuals a sense of assurance of protection from discrimination and marginalisation, creating opportunities for a fair hearing, hope of relief from injustice, economic support for those in poverty, among other factors (idem: 17-18). Both sets of factors must be addressed for extremism and violent extremism to be sustainably resolved.

In light of that objective, any future constitutional reform process should provide for greater constitutional safeguards that protect and promote religious, ethnic, linguistic, and cultural pluralism (idem: 20). Furthermore, there are numerous reforms of government institutions required to reduce factors contributing to extremism and violent extremism. The government must take the necessary steps towards strengthening the independent functioning of the public service, law enforcement and the judiciary (ibid.). There is also a need to review and resolve unintentional and intentional structural discrimination at all levels of government (ibid.). Both public institutions and officials must uphold principles of good governance in the discharge of their duties such as “impartiality, fairness, equality before law and accountability in exercising public power” (ibid.). Taken together, these reforms would reduce corruption in the public sector and promote good governance, which is essential as the lack thereof contributes to the appeal of extremism.

Moreover, many government institutions do not reflect the demographics of the country, especially the public service (ibid.). A census of public and semi government sector employment

conducted by the Department of Census and Statistics in 2016 revealed that 87.9% of central government employees are Sinhalese (Department of Census and Statistics 2018: 23) and 84.4% are Buddhist (idem: 24). There must be steps taken to improve the representation of minorities in these institutions. Additionally, there must be greater attention on the composition of public institutions that are mandated to take decisions affecting the multi-cultural sentimentalities of people (CPA 2021: 20). For instance, the Presidential Task Force (PTF) for Archaeological Heritage Management in the Eastern Province, appointed by then President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, consisted of members who were all Sinhalese when the Eastern Province is dominated by the Tamil and Muslim communities (NewsWire 2020; Fuglerud 2022: 321). It was widely seen as an effort to ‘Sinhalese’ areas dominated by ethnoreligious minority communities. Instead, there should be equal opportunity for those belonging to these communities to be included and hold decision-making positions in such bodies or institutions (CPA 2021: 20). As a result, minorities will no longer experience exclusion from government bodies or institutions or face a lack of representation, removing yet another factor driving extremism.

Educational reforms constitute another avenue through which extremism can be addressed as misunderstandings of and scepticism towards other religious and ethnic cultures and practices have led to extremism in the past. It is necessary to inculcate and effectively teach civic education subjects within primary and secondary education curriculums to “nurture a culture of respect for human rights, democracy, diversity, pluralism and peace” (ibid.). Also, there must be time devoted to the comparative study of religions for all Sri Lankan citizens to have a basic understanding of the different religions of Sri Lanka (idem: 21). This will create a citizenry that is more tolerant of pluralism and eliminate discrimination and marginalisation of ethnoreligious minority communities as factors that drive extremism.

Addressing the dissemination of misinformation, disinformation and spread of hate speech is critical. In the past, the government has not been effective in this regard as there were no actions taken to stop the spread of hate speech and violent extremist sentiment disseminated in public speeches or on social media by Zahran Hashim (PSC 2019: 83-87), the radical and violent Islamic preacher who is now believed to have been the orchestrator of the attacks, or extremist elements

of the Sinhalese Buddhist community. Consequently, the government must hold those who spread misinformation, disinformation and hate speech, thereby fanning the fires of ethnoreligious tensions and inciting violence, accountable (idem: 164). This especially should apply to political, religious and community leaders. In addition, the government must have media organisations provide regular training to their media personnel, reporters and journalists on ethical reporting and sensitivities when dealing with those affected and take strict disciplinary action when codes of ethics/conduct are not adhered to (idem: 165). This would help prevent inaccurate reporting on or sensationalising of incidents (ibid.). Also, as there is currently no proper mechanism in place to effectively regulate social media, there is a desperate need to establish a framework to combat the wildfire spread of misinformation, disinformation and hate speech on social media platforms (CPA 2021: 21).

Finally, it is crucial that the government holds perpetrators of extremism accountable for their actions, even if they belong to the Sinhalese Buddhist majority. As argued by the PSC, this is vital in maintaining the rule of law and ending a worrisome trend of laws being used selectively against minorities (PSC 2019: 165). Failure to do so will only breed counter extremist elements from communities that are victimised as they may not see any other form of recourse. Unfortunately, such a failure worsened Islamic extremism in Sri Lanka. There have been numerous attacks on the Muslim community at the hands of Sinhalese Buddhist extremists. More recently, these include the Mawanella riots of 2001, Aluthgama riots of 2014, Gintota riots of 2017, Ampara and Digana riots of 2018 and further victimisation of Muslims in parts of the North-Western Province in 2019 (idem: 94). These riots left Muslim homes and businesses vandalised and burnt down along with the deaths of a few people (ibid.). As perpetrators who were arrested were not prosecuted or convicted for their actions, these events contributed to the radicalisation of elements of the Muslim community and pushed them towards violent extremism, (ibid.). In fact, Zahran Hashim initially had little success in radicalising Muslim youth until the Ampara and Digana riots of 2018. Subsequently, he was able to recruit many pointing to the incident and the Aluthgama riots of 2014 preaching that countering Sinhalese Buddhist extremism required taking up arms (idem: 27).

On another note, a grievance of the Tamil community that must be addressed separately stems from their desire for a measure of self-governance in the northern and eastern parts of Sri Lanka. This was an issue that dominated politics in the post-independence years (Guruge and Welikala 2010: 12). Initially, soon after independence, this took the form of territorial sovereignty within the framework of a federal Sri Lankan constitution (ibid.). In the 1970s, having had no success in securing federal autonomy, Tamil nationalism adopted the vision of a separate Tamil state which encompassed the Northern and Eastern Provinces (ibid.). In the 1980s, as there was no accommodation of the Tamil community's desire, armed conflict erupted between the state and Tamil militant groups, primarily the LTTE (ibid.). This demonstrates the danger of leaving such a grievance unresolved and, in the interest of preventing the resurgence of conflict, requires a solution amicable to both the state and the Tamil community.

A feasible solution for addressing this grievance is the devolution of powers to the provincial level. The Indo-Lanka Accord, a bilateral agreement between India and Sri Lanka aimed at addressing the core issues surrounding the conflict, provided a constitutional vision for Sri Lanka where Sri Lankan society is seen as requiring protection on the basis of equality given its religious, ethnic, linguistic, and cultural diversity (idem: 13-14). Additionally, it accommodated the Tamil traditional homeland in the Northern and Eastern provinces (ibid.). Therefore, on the 14th of November 1987, in accordance with its commitments under the Indo-Lanka Accord, a system of devolution to the nine provinces of Sri Lanka was established by way of the Thirteenth Amendment to the 1978 Constitution and the Provincial Councils Act, No. 42 of 1987 (ibid.). The devolution of powers to the provinces took place within the framework of a unified Sri Lanka (idem: 11). This meant that the central government remains the pre-eminent level of government and can unilaterally revoke any devolution of powers, even against the will of the provinces (ibid.). However, it still allows for the powers and functions of government to be exercised at a level closer to the people and allows for governance according to the needs and wants of the people of the respective provinces. As a result, this fulfils the Tamil community's desire for a measure of self-governance, albeit not in the federal framework they envisioned as the rest of the country is opposed to the term and extent of federalism.

The institutional arrangement provided by the Thirteenth Amendment and the Provincial Councils Act provides for legislative powers to each province through the establishment of the Provincial Councils (*idem*: 23-24). As the legislature of the province, it enjoys law-making powers over the subjects enumerated in the Provincial Council List and shared law-making power with the central government over subjects enumerated in the Concurrent List (*ibid.*). Executive power at the provincial level is exercised by the Governor, the Chief Minister, and Board of Ministers (*ibid.*). Finally, rather than devolving judicial power to the provinces, the administration of justice is decentralised by establishing a High Court for each province (*ibid.*).

Regrettably, this arrangement does not constitute any meaningful devolution of powers to the provinces as it is encumbered by a multitude of structural flaws that must be addressed. This entails reducing the intrusive powers of the Provincial Governor over the elected Provincial Council and Board of Ministers. The former is the result of a provincial statute drafted by the Provincial Council only coming into force with the Provincial Governor's assent (*idem*: 33). The latter is a consequence of the Provincial Governor being the *de facto* provincial Minister of Finance and having control of the provincial public service (*idem*: 47). The vesting of financial powers, central to the exercise of other provincial executive and legislative powers in the Provincial Governor who is appointed by the President and remains in office at the President's pleasure and not by the people of the province is incompatible with the principle of devolution. The independence of the provincial public service is also undermined as a result of the Provincial Governor's power over it (*ibid.*). Overall, the powers of the Provincial Governor must be reduced as they are arguably "the biggest political obstacle to the exercise of devolved powers" and constitutes central interference in the province as the Provincial Governor is an agent of the President (*idem*: 59).

Furthermore, the meaningful devolution of powers to the provinces necessitates re-evaluating the distribution of subjects across the Reserved, Concurrent and Provincial Council Lists to reduce Parliament's ability to legislate even on subjects in the Provincial Council List, and better address concurrency where law-making power is shared between the national and provincial level over certain subjects (*idem*: 34-38). Regrettably, the refusal or failure by successive central governments to implement sections of the Thirteenth Amendment, particularly provincial police and land

powers, has also contributed to vulnerable system of devolution (idem: 43). There is also a need to restructure the public administration to complement rather than undermine the effectiveness of the provincial administration, given that the central government operating directly at the District, Divisional, and Village levels through the District Secretaries, Divisional Secretaries, and *Grama Niladharis* respectively forms “a parallel, and often competing, administrative structure” (idem: 48). Lastly, the constitutional and legal framework by which the provinces are provided the finances to meet their expenditure responsibilities, address the disparities in economic development and wealth between provinces, and ensure the delivery of roughly the same standard of public services across the country requires revisiting (idem: 68-69).

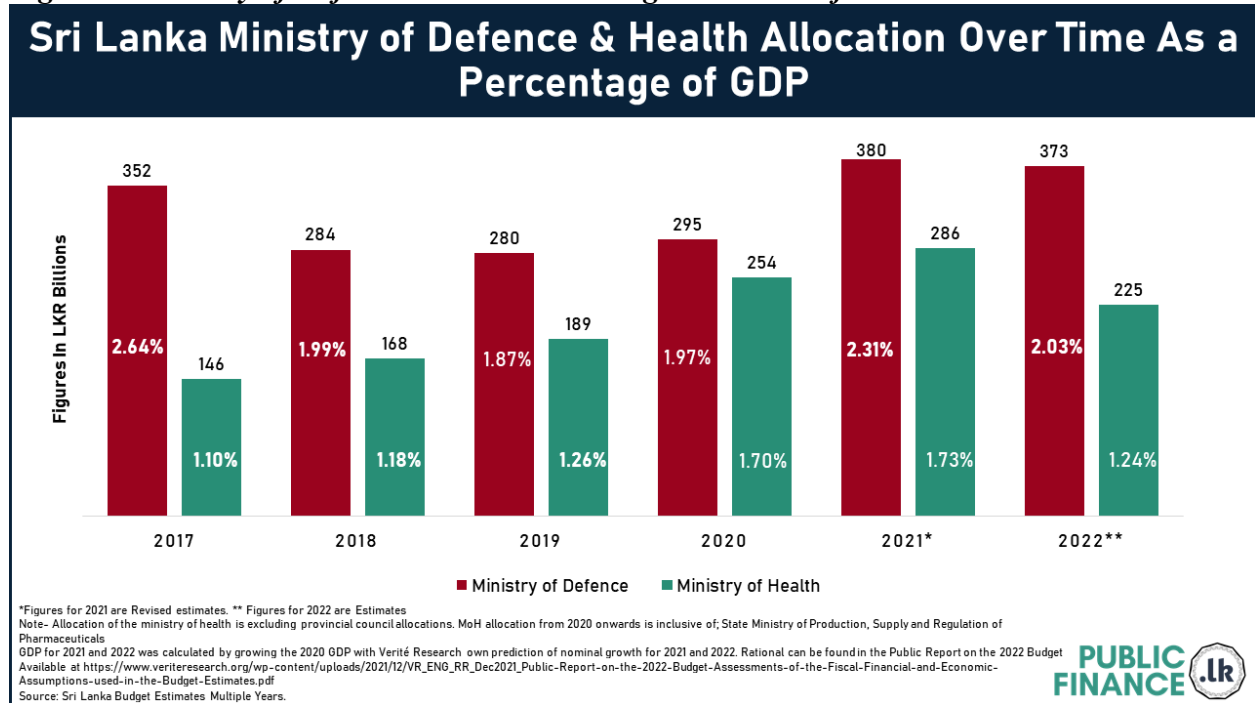
These shortcomings must be addressed if there is to be a sustainable and effective settlement to the desire for self-governance by the Tamil community and prevent the past failures of pluralism management, the consequence of which was a civil war lasting nearly three decades. Unfortunately, successive governments have instead heavily militarised the Northern and Eastern Provinces supposedly to prevent the resurgence of conflict which in reality “has the constant potential for exacerbating ethnic tensions and retarding post-war development” (TISL 2023: 36-37). Consequently, the Civil Society Governance Diagnostic Report on Sri Lanka by the Civil Society Initiative on Anti-Corruption Reform for Economic Recovery calls for the demilitarising of the North and East of Sri Lanka as one of its recommendations, especially since it also constitutes unnecessary defence expenditure (ibid.) which is elaborated on further in the section to follow. The meaningful devolution of powers to the provinces is a far more effective solution as it addresses the grievance that led to the conflict at the root itself and, therefore, must be pursued. On the other hand, it also has merit in improving how issues in certain policy domains are tackled which is exemplified later in the case of climate change adaptation.

Optimising Defence Expenditure and Restructuring the Military

A review of national security would be incomplete without a review of defence expenditure and the armed forces. In considering Sri Lanka's economic troubles and a rapidly changing security environment, it is of critical importance to re-evaluate domestic defence expenditure and to what purposes these funds are allocated. In 2021, Daniel Alphonsus concluded that the defence budget was too high and was spent inefficiently (Alphonsus 2021: 4) and, as evidenced by successive government budgets, not much has changed since. President Ranil Wickremesinghe himself emphasised the need to reduce defence expenditure and restructure the armed forces (Presidential Secretariat 2022).

By applying historical and comparative benchmarks it is clear that Sri Lanka is spending excessively on defence. The history of Sri Lanka's defence expenditure can be divided into three distinct periods that can be compared to each other (Alphonsus 2021: 17-19). The first period stretches from 1948 to 1982 and was a period of relative peace (ibid.). The second period covers the escalation of the conflict between the central government and the LTTE in 1983 to when the latter was defeated in 2009 (ibid.). The third period considers defence expenditure between 2009 and 2017 (ibid.), after all conventional threats to the state had ended. Given that the fighting had ended, one would expect that defence expenditure in the third period to reflect a similar level to that of defence expenditure in the first period. However, while defence expenditure dropped from 3.3% of GDP in the second period to 2.4% of GDP in the third period, it was still three times higher than in the first period where defence expenditure was steady at 0.8% of GDP (ibid.). Unfortunately, this has not changed in recent years either as the Ministry of Defence was allocated roughly 2% of GDP between 2018 and 2022 (PUBLICFINANCE.lk 2022). Hence, historical benchmarks suggest that Sri Lanka's current levels of defence expenditure are too high.

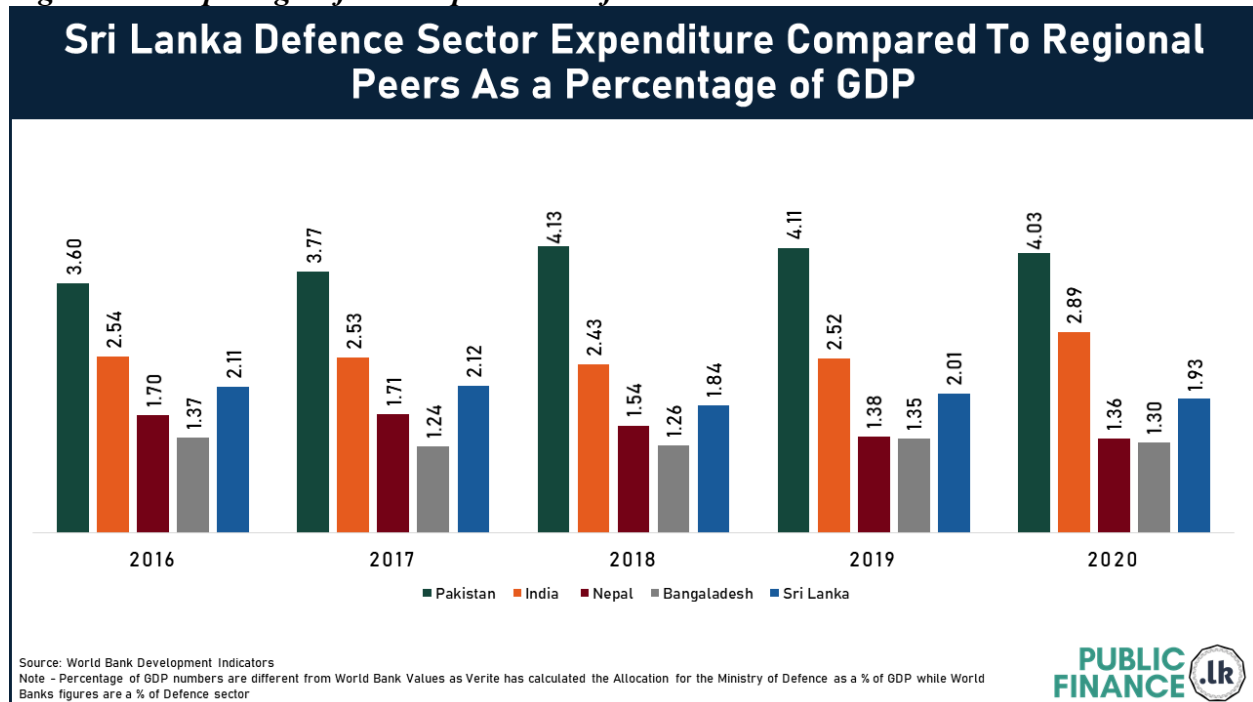
Figure 1: Ministry of Defence Allocations Averages at 2.03% of GDP Between 2018 and 2022



Source: PUBLICFINANCE.LK (2022)

The application of comparative benchmarking also supports the aforementioned conclusion. When comparing Sri Lanka to that of peer states sharing certain commonalities, Sri Lanka’s defence expenditure as a percentage of central government expenditure is significantly greater than states which: have a similar population, are post-conflict states, and belong to South Asia (Alphonsus 2021: 21-22). In fact, Sri Lanka’s defence expenditure remains similar to that of fragile and conflict affected states despite the civil war having ended in 2009 (ibid.). Likewise, between 2016 and 2020, Sri Lanka’s defence expenditure was significantly greater than other countries in South Asia apart from India and Pakistan, both of which are nuclear powers (PUBLICFINANCE.lk 2022). Taken together, this suggests that Sri Lanka’s defence budget is too high and must be reduced.

Figure 2: Comparing Defence Expenditure of South Asian Countries



Source: PUBLICFINANCE.LK (2022)

Additionally, there is the question of whether Sri Lanka’s defence expenditure is efficient where for every unit of defence expenditure the level of defence or security obtained is maximised (Alphonsus 2021: 22). Data on defence expenditure and military capability from the Asia Power Index 2018 illustrates how Sri Lanka’s military capability is below the level predicted for its defence expenditure (idem: 22-23). This means that “compared to its Asian peers, Sri Lanka gets less bang for every defence buck it spends” (ibid.). For instance, despite spending more on defence than New Zealand Sri Lanka’s military capability is considerably lower (ibid.). The application of historical and comparative benchmarks reveals that this is due to excessive expenditure on military personnel. One would expect that the composition of defence expenditure would have changed after the defeat of the LTTE. However, not much has changed as spending on military personnel accounted for 60% of defence expenditure between 2010 and 2017 alike that of 2005 to 2009 (idem: 25). In more recent years, this has not changed significantly as spending on military personnel has roughly stayed the same (Grevatt and MacDonald 2021). Sri Lanka’s defence expenditure has not reflected its evolved security environment and requires rectification.

A comparative diagnostic reinforces the argument that Sri Lanka spends excessively on manpower. On average, states spend 40% of their defence budget on military personnel, while Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) and Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) states spend a little over 50% (Alphonsus 2021: 26). On the other hand, Sri Lanka spends 60% or more of the defence budget on military personnel (ibid.). This is because the Sri Lankan military has far too many active-duty troops and too few reserves (idem: 29-30). Regarding the former, in 2018, Sri Lanka's armed forces as a percentage of the population were double that of the ASEAN, IORA and world averages (ibid.). Regarding the latter, in 2018, the world average for reserve contribution to total manpower was close to 60% whereas for Sri Lanka reserves amounted to less than 4% of manpower strength (ibid.). Taken together, the data illustrates how Sri Lanka's overly high defence expenditure is spent excessively on manpower to little avail. Besides, the pursuit of a political solution to preventing the resurgence of conflict in the devolution of powers to the provinces, rather than the militarisation of the Northern and Eastern provinces, diminishes the rationale for excessive manpower in the military.

Consequently, there is a need to reduce the defence budget and ensure that funds are allocated towards areas which are of greater importance in improving defence capabilities. These include, among others, investments in improving command, control, communication, computers, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (C4ISR) capabilities, and air-defence and surface fleets (idem: 24). Overall, the navy, rather than the army, should receive the lion's share of resources given that Sri Lanka is an island and "the sea is the vital locus of external and internal defence" (idem: 27).

Bolstering the navy is also necessary to address maritime piracy and terrorism, human and drug trafficking in the maritime domain, and illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, given that these crimes are argued to be present in the Indian Ocean (CUTS International 2023: 3; Melegoda 2023: 24-26). While such maritime crimes are relatively less pervasive in the vicinity of the Indian subcontinent (Melegoda 2023: 26), there should still be adequate measures taken to be prepared for such instances. This necessitates Sri Lanka diverting resources away from the army towards strengthening its maritime security capabilities, thus entailing the enhancement of the

naval forces, coast guard agencies and law enforcement capacities (idem: 56). If Sri Lanka invests in modern technology, intelligence sharing mechanisms and the like, it will improve its ability to detect and deter maritime crime (ibid.).

Furthermore, regional initiatives of the Indian Ocean can complement such efforts. Firstly, IORA can promote regional cooperation amongst its member states to combat maritime crime in the Indian Ocean (idem: 41), especially since IORA prioritises maritime safety and security (idem: 48). Sri Lanka has a pivotal role in the association's effectiveness in this matter given that it assumed chairmanship of IORA on the 10th of October 2023 (News First 2023a). Secondly, the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) brings together navies from Indian Ocean littoral states for a number of reasons. It serves as a platform for exchanging ideas and best practices in maritime affairs (Melegoda 2023: 43). It facilitates coordinated patrols among participating navies resulting in an increased naval presence in the region thereby deterring and improving responses to maritime crime (idem: 49-50). The IONS also promotes legal cooperation amongst its members for the effective prosecution of maritime crimes (idem: 50).

Lastly, the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP) facilitates information sharing, arrangements for joint patrols and coordination with the shipping industry amongst participating agencies to address the persistent issue of piracy and armed robbery against ships in the Indian Ocean region (ibid.). Taken together, these platforms can facilitate cooperation, information and resource sharing and collective strategising among countries in the Indian Ocean region to combat illegal and irregular crime in the maritime domain (idem: 56). Ultimately, this all goes to suggest that there should be more emphasis on the navy rather than the army and that Sri Lanka must engage in regional initiatives on maritime affairs and security.

Nonetheless, the starting point for the reduction of the defence budget and the restructuring of the armed forces begins with reducing active-duty troops and increasing reserves. This can be achieved by curtailing recruitment and a voluntary retirement scheme (Alphonsus 2021: 48-49). The latter could include financial compensation, vocational training and a job in the construction

or tourism sector (ibid.). A reduction in the number of active-duty troops would have additional positive spill over effects on the economy. Given that the armed forces as a percentage of the labour force is considerably higher in Sri Lanka than other parts of the world (idem: 29), this would reduce labour shortages in the labour market, especially in the construction and tourism sector (idem: 48-49). Moreover, these reforms would be beneficial macroeconomically in reducing the government budget deficit significantly, one of the primary reasons for Sri Lanka's current economic crisis. For instance, 15% of total recurrent expenditure of the government will be spent on salaries for government employees for the year 2023, according to the budget estimates (PUBLICFINANCE.lk 2023). As a percentage of the total estimated cost of paying state salaries, the Ministry of Defence alone accounts for 36.75% (ibid.). Hence, a reduction in military personnel will be a significant saving of the government budget in salaries alone. Therefore, the government's plan to reduce the number of army personnel by a third to 135,000 within this year and 100,000 by 2030 (Al Jazeera 2023a) is welcome provided that those not at retirement age are aided in their transition to other employment.

In summary, the defence budget can be reduced significantly to reduce the government budget deficit and allow for the reallocation of funds to other sectors where government funds are needed more. This would not come at the cost of lower defence capabilities as more can be done with less by reducing military personnel and spending the defence budget more efficiently in the appropriate areas, such as the navy.

Tackling Digital Vulnerabilities: Enhancing Cybersecurity Capabilities

In 2023, a massive ransomware attack on the state email domain 'mail@gov.lk' resulted in the loss of all email data between the 17th of May and the 26th of August 2023 and corrupted the online backup system of all government offices using it, including the Cabinet Office (The Sunday Times 2023). This instance is only one of many across the globe, revealing how the digital sphere has increasingly come under threat and has emerged as a significant non-traditional security challenge in contemporary times (CUTS International 2023: 5). Evidently, this demonstrates how Sri Lanka

must reckon with the challenges of cyberspace and the threats that cybercrime and cyberwarfare pose.

Taking the view of the United States Department of Homeland Security, illegal activities undermining the safety of the national cyberspace by exploiting its vulnerabilities constitutes a loss of cybersecurity (Senaratne 2017: 93). These activities can be undertaken by individuals skilled in information and communications technology, thereby making cyberspace a viable medium through which both non-state and state actors can threaten national security (ibid.). This necessitates that the state protects its national cyberspace from all forms of cybercrime or cyberwarfare committed by non-state or state actors respectively for the sake of national security.

With regard to cybercrime, in adopting the definition of the International Telecommunication Union, it can be understood as illegal activities targeting “the security of computer systems and the data processed by them” and as “any illegal behaviour committed by means of, or in relation to, a computer system or network, including such crimes as illegal possession and offering or distributing information by means of a computer system or network” (ibid.). More succinctly, cybercrime entails both computer crime and computer-related crime (ibid.). The nature of such crimes is diverse ranging from harassment, phishing, malware transmission and hacking to crimes against the government or society at large (ibid.). Additionally, a variety of traditional crimes such as child pornography, financial crimes and more are also being committed via cyberspace which requires mitigation (ibid.).















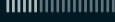


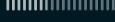


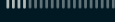
On the other hand, regarding cyberwarfare, it can be argued that it largely correlates with information warfare (ibid.). In reference to James Adams, information warfare can be categorised into the three areas “perception management, where information is the message, systems destruction where information is the medium, and information exploitation where information is the opponent’s resource to be targeted” (ibid.). As such, the increased adoption of digital technologies by individuals, businesses and government also brings with it vulnerabilities that must be protected against, lest they be exploited by nefarious actors to damage critical digital infrastructure and interfere with the national cyberspace.

Regrettably, given its vulnerability to the ransomware attack in 2023, Sri Lanka has not demonstrated the capacity to deal with threats emanating from the digital sphere. Two and a half months of email data from numerous government offices was lost because the email facility used had not been upgraded since 2014 and at the time of the ransomware attack was “obsolete, outdated and vulnerable to various types of attacks” according to Mahesh Perera, the CEO of the Information and Communication Technology Agency (ICTA) (The Sunday Times 2023). Sri Lanka desperately needs to improve its ability to protect its domestic digital infrastructure and national cyberspace, and develop its cyber capabilities.

In comparing Sri Lanka with other countries the argument that Sri Lanka’s cyber security capabilities leave little to be desired gains further currency. Sri Lanka ranks 83rd out of 176 countries in the National Cyber Security Index (NCSI), held and developed by the e-Governance Academy Foundation (NCSI 2023). This is startling when considering how Bangladesh and India respectively rank 35th and 36th on the index (ibid.). Despite having the highest level of digital development amongst the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) countries, Sri Lanka’s cyber security capabilities do not stand out in the region and significantly falls behind that of Bangladesh and India (ibid.).

In fact, it is important to highlight how Sri Lanka’s cyber security development is just barely ahead of its digital development according to the index (ibid.). This is especially worrisome in light of the government’s plans to increase e-Governance in 2024 (MOT GOSL 2023), which reflects increased digital development for Sri Lanka while its already unimpressive cyber security capabilities lag behind. In February 2023, Mr. Kanaka Herath, the State Minister for Technology, stated that all payments and charges of government organisations are to be implemented solely via digital electronic payment facilities from March 2024 onwards (ibid.). Given that the ransomware attack on the state email domain happened a few months after this announcement, it does not appear as if the government has taken significant steps towards improving its cyber security capabilities to go along with its plans for increased digital development for the country.

Figure 3: Cyber Security Capabilities Amongst SAARC Countries

Rank	Country	National Cyber Security Index	Digital development	Difference
36.	 India	67.53 	40.02 	27.51
35.	 Bangladesh	67.53 	33.11 	34.42
83.	 Sri Lanka	44.16 	43.02 	1.14
85.	 Pakistan	41.56 	32.23 	9.33
109.	 Nepal	28.57 	30.58 	-2.01
121.	 Bhutan	23.38 	36.90 	-13.52
145.	 Afghanistan	12.99 	19.50 	-6.51

Source: NSCI (2023)

More specifically, Sri Lanka falls behind in the following areas: cyber security policy development; cyber threat analysis and information; protection of digital services; protection of essential services; E-identification and trust services; and cyber crisis management (NCSI 2023). Therefore, the aforementioned areas all constitute areas of improvement for Sri Lanka to improve its cybersecurity capabilities to address threats to national security emanating from the digital sphere. A starting point, especially in addressing the lack of cyber security policy development, would be to amend or replace the Computer Crime Act No. 24 of 2007 as it is outdated and no longer suitable in addressing contemporary threats emanating from the digital sphere. Likewise, despite having ratified numerous international treaties, Sri Lanka does not have a national cybersecurity policy for implementing internationally recognised cybersecurity standards (Senaratne 2017: 95).

Furthermore, as part of optimising defence expenditure, there is a need to reallocate some of the defence budget towards improving the cyber capabilities of the military for two main reasons. Firstly, conventional weapons increasingly use modern technology for communication within the system itself (ibid.). The incorporation of digital development into conventional military hardware brings with it vulnerabilities that can be the target of a cyberattack (ibid.). Hence, the military must improve its cyber capabilities as it invests in more technologically advanced military hardware to

protect it from potential cyberattacks. Secondly, the military must be empowered to assess and counter threats emanating from the fifth domain of warfare that is cyberspace (idem: 94, 96). Many other countries like the USA and China, and those closer to home such as India have dedicated agencies or branches of the military to deal with cybersecurity threats. These constitute only a few immediate areas that need to be addressed for protecting the country's cyberspace and overall represents how there is much to be done for Sri Lanka's critical digital infrastructure and national cyberspace to be protected in an age of breakneck digital innovation and transformation.

Rising Temperatures, Growing Threats: Combatting Climate Change

At this juncture of the Earth's existence, it is indisputable that the planet's climate system is heating. This is due to an increase in the concentration of greenhouse gases (GHGs) in the Earth's atmosphere driven by anthropogenic activity, such as the burning of fossil fuels and deforestation, geared towards development and economic growth. GHGs, such as carbon dioxide and methane, trap infrared radiation emitted by the Sun in the Earth's atmosphere, thereby causing global heating. This is a grave problem as climate change poses an existential multifaceted threat for the security of states and their people. Specifically, climate change will exacerbate environmental, food, health, and economic insecurity globally, thereby undermining national security in how it is understood here. Sri Lanka is particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change as, according to the ND-GAIN Country Index of the University of Notre Dame which in part summarises a country's vulnerability to climate change, Sri Lanka is the 62nd most vulnerable country out of 185 countries as of 2021 (ND-GAIN 2021). Hence, the Sri Lankan state and Sri Lankans must be secured against the effects of climate change and that requires understanding the multidimensional threat that it poses to national security.

On the one hand, Sri Lanka faces overall rises in temperature, and an increased incidence of chronic heat stress and heatwaves even if there is immediate robust mitigation of GHG emissions (WBG and ADB 2021: 2). The increased incidence of chronic heat stress, let alone heatwaves, will drive up heat-related mortality as certain estimates project that without measures to adapt to the

changing climate annual heat-related deaths in the South Asian region will increase by 149% by 2030 and by 276% by 2050 (idem: 23), which constitutes a significant worsening of health security. Similarly, higher average maximum and minimum temperatures correlate with greater dengue incidence, so an increase in the capacity for dengue fever transmission should be expected as an additional detriment to health security (ibid.).

Overall rises in temperature will not only worsen health security as they will act as a downward pressure on agriculture and fishing yields (idem: 18-19). For instance, the yield of rice, a staple in Sri Lankan diets, is vulnerable to rises in temperature, especially elevated minimum temperatures at night which Sri Lanka will experience (ibid.). Fishing yields are projected to decline due to climate change, specifically owing to rising temperatures and ocean acidification (ibid.). This will contribute to regional and national food insecurity which has obvious spill over effects for health security. It also spells increasing economic insecurity for those reliant on these sectors for their livelihood. Sri Lanka's significant tourism sector will be adversely affected as well as it will be hard to attract tourists if the country is plagued by chronic heat stress and heatwaves (idem: 20-21), delivering a blow to the country macroeconomically and depriving many communities who are economically dependent on tourism.

Sri Lanka is already plagued by river, flash and coastal flooding, and the frequency and severity of these events will only increase with time due to climate change (idem: 2). Flooding poses a considerable threat to health security as it results in landslides (idem: 14) and enhanced disease transmission (idem: 24). The latter is a given due to the increased potential for the transmission of water-borne diseases after flood events especially in urban areas owing to insufficient drainage and sewage systems (ibid.). Moreover, the economic cost of flooding borne by the Sri Lankan state, and by extension the Sri Lankan people, is enormous. In 2019, the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) estimated that flooding causes an annual loss of USD 240 million for Sri Lanka, constituting almost two thirds of its total annual loss due to natural disasters (idem: 14). Presently, this figure is bound to be higher since flooding events have only grown in frequency and severity.

Likewise, cyclones pose yet another threat to human life and constitute a sizeable portion of annual losses due to natural disasters, second only to the annual loss incurred due to flooding (ibid.). While cyclone frequency in Sri Lanka has seen a decline over the 20th century, there has been an increase in the intensity of tropical cyclone events that do take place, particularly in the Bay of Bengal, stressing how disaster risk reduction for cyclone events remains a priority (idem: 15). Overall, Ruwan Wijewardene, Presidential Advisor on Climate Change, revealed that Sri Lanka had incurred damages nearing USD 7 billion from 1990 to 2018 due to extreme weather and that the cost of damages would greatly increase in the future (Daily Mirror 2024a).

The impact of flooding is most pronounced in coastal regions. The country's coastal regions are vulnerable to the combined effect of storm surge and sea-level rise giving rise to coastal flooding (WBG and ADB 2021: 17). Eventually, this may require permanent relocation of vulnerable coastal communities which is no simple feat given that a sizeable portion of the country's population reside in coastal areas. Additionally, coastal agriculture is being abandoned due to soil salinisation reducing soil fertility (ibid.). The same applies to the degradation of water sources for human consumption due to salinisation of groundwater in coastal zones (ibid.). In the same vein as the impact of rising temperatures on tourism, the increased frequency and severity of coastal flooding will have disastrous consequences for tourism as the coastal regions arguably hold the biggest attraction for tourists (idem: 21), thereby yielding further detriments to economic security.

It is worth highlighting how spatially heterogenous the impacts of climate change are. The coastal regions serve as a valuable case study in this regard. These regions, and the communities which inhabit them, are arguably the most vulnerable in the country. The aforementioned issues threatening the security of coastal communities such as the abandonment of coastal agriculture, decline in yields from fishing, potential decline of tourism, among others, are not experienced to the same degree and/or effect in other regions of the country. An additional example would be how the north of the country has been identified as a hotspot for extreme heat exposure and, therefore, will experience issues related to temperature rise, such as heat-related mortality, to a greater degree than other regions (idem: 13). Given the regionally heterogenous impacts of climate change, the provincial level is better situated to address adaptation to said impacts as it can take

locally appropriate and responsive measures and compensate for inaction at the national level if the situation arises (Fenna et al. 2023: 4). Certainly, this is contingent on a meaningful devolution of powers to the provinces with effective vertical and horizontal coordination between the national and provincial levels. With regard to climate change adaptation specifically, the provincial level requires expertise, resources, and a degree of autonomy to act in this particular policy domain.

The impacts of climate change and the ability to adapt to those impacts are dependent on socio-economic status and gender as well (WBG and ADB 2021: 22). Unfortunately, the impacts of climate change will disproportionately affect the poorest in Sri Lanka as they will be the worst off in adapting to the changing climate (idem: 21). Examples of this are manifold from manual labourers, who are simultaneously paid relatively little and are most at risk of productivity losses due to chronic heat stress, and poorer farmers and communities who are the “least able to afford local water storage, irrigation infrastructure, and technologies for adaptation” (ibid.). On the other hand, gender-based differences in use of time, access to assets and credit, treatment by formal institutions, among other factors, result in a difference in vulnerability to climate change between men and women (idem: 22). Consequently, when approaching conservation, mitigation, and adaptation for combatting climate change, it is not only necessary to tailor these efforts to the climate change impacts most applicable to Sri Lanka but to also tailor them accounting for within-country differences in climate change impacts. In other words, different approaches to conservation, mitigation and adaptation must be taken depending on the region or category of people being addressed.

In November 2023, the Climate Change Secretariat of the Ministry of Environment published a long overdue update to the National Policy on Climate Change (NPCC) adopted in 2012 that is to be implemented alongside other national policies (MOE GOSL 2023a: 4), most notably the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) Implementation Plan for 2021-2030 and the Carbon Net Zero 2050 Road Map and Strategic Plan, both of which were published in 2023 as well (idem: 3). Fortunately, taken together, the aforementioned national policies reflect the understanding of climate change impacts outlined prior, especially how they constitute a multifaceted threat to environmental, food, health, and economic security of the country and of which the impacts are

heterogenous across regions, and socioeconomically and gender dependent. Collectively, they mainly encompass, though not limited to, mitigation of GHG emissions, adaptation to the changing climate, and addressing loss and damage caused by climate change (MOE GOSL 2023a: 5; MOE GOSL 2023b; MOE GOSL 2023c). In particular, the sectors identified for mitigation and adaptation reflect a more holistic understanding of how extensive the impact of climate change is.

Table 1: Identified Sectors for Mitigation and Adaptation

	Sector
Mitigation	Electricity (Power)
	Transport
	Industry
	Waste
	Forestry
	Agriculture (Livestock Included)
Adaptation	Agriculture
	Fisheries
	Livestock
	Water
	Biodiversity
	Coastal and Marine
	Health
	Urban Planning and Human Settlement
Tourism and Recreation	

Source: NDC Implementation Plan for 2021-2030 (MOE 2023b: 5)

Nevertheless, while recognising the merit of the aims outlined in the NPCC and the NDC Implementation Plan for 2021-2030, these policies face the hurdle of successful implementation owing to a few but significant reasons, the first of which is the lack of a concrete plan for financing the strategic actions prescribed in any of the policies. The policies explicitly recognise the need for external financial support (MOE 2023a: 18-19; MOE 2023b: 364), as the required investment for the proposed strategic actions is monumental, and yet they do not identify any sources of climate investment and financing, and how they would make a competitive bid for them given that Sri Lanka is not the only country undertaking initiatives to combat climate change. This shortcoming is exemplified in the Carbon Net Zero 2050 Road Map and Strategic Plan which estimates the total value of investments necessary for the proposed mitigation options in the identified sectors at

approximately USD 140 billion (MOE 2023c: 4) while simultaneously acknowledging that the document contains no roadmap to finance the proposed strategic actions (idem: xi).

Certainly, this is not to underestimate financing for combatting climate change as climate deals of the recent past, such as the Eskom Deal, suggest otherwise. Eskom is South Africa's power monopoly that runs its coal power plants and the Eskom Deal, namely the "Just Energy Transition Partnership", was a landmark international climate finance deal of USD 8.5 billion, to help facilitate South Africa's transition away from its reliance on coal for electricity generation towards a power sector based on renewable energy (Financial Times 2021). This is in the context of coal having accounted for nearly 90% of South Africa's electricity in 2020 (ibid.). As such, financing of this nature represents an opportunity for Sri Lanka to pursue its proposed actions for addressing climate change while simultaneously aiding its economic recovery and development. Consequently, the role climate finance and green finance can play in Sri Lanka is addressed later in the Brief. However, the government's lack of a roadmap to finance any of its proposed actions makes it improbable that Sri Lanka will be able to attract the funds it needs.

On the other hand, given that it accounts for only 0.08% of global GHG emissions as of 2019 (Emission Index 2024), addressing Sri Lanka's severe climate vulnerability through adaptation should be more of a priority than mitigation. Therefore, it is concerning that the government is hoping to attract USD 140 billion solely for its proposed mitigation actions when it should prioritise attracting financing for adaptation. The failure to prioritise adaptation to the changing climate will result in severe environmental, food, health, and economic insecurity. With emphasis on economic insecurity, against the backdrop of the economic crisis, Sri Lanka cannot afford to not prioritise adaptation to minimise the cost of loss and damage caused by climate change.

Furthermore, assuming Sri Lanka has acquired the necessary funds for the proposed actions, there is the issue of national and provincial implementation. The 135 strategic actions of the NPCC identify over 70 government agencies responsible for carrying them out (MOE 2023a: 12-23). While the impacts of climate change extend across multiple sectors, thereby requiring coordination and collaboration between multiple entities, the well documented fragmentation of

responsibilities amongst the excessive number of government institutions in Sri Lanka (Ratnasabapathy 2020) increases the number of entities that would usually be involved even more, often with conflicting mandates. Therefore, the successful implementation of the NPCC requires a high level of coordination and collaboration between the numerous government agencies involved with each agency having a clearly defined mandate that does not overlap with that of another.

With regard to provincial implementation, the NPCC highlights how the government is developing Provincial Adaptation Plans (PAPs) “to ensure the engagement of all stakeholders at all levels in achieving climate resilience” (MOE 2023a: 2). As argued earlier, given how heterogeneous the impacts of climate change are and how extensive stakeholder engagement must be conducted for an equitable green transition, this is a good initiative on the part of the government as the provincial level is closer to the people and is better situated to understand the unique challenges each province faces. However, as discussed prior, the current system of devolution is encumbered by central government overreach and other institutional flaws which must be addressed if the PAPs are to be implemented effectively. Overall, there is a need to prioritise adaptation to address Sri Lanka’s severe climate vulnerabilities over mitigation, and a need for better planning and greater pragmatism on the government’s part when it comes to the implementation of these policies, and the proposed actions they reflect, for effectively addressing the dire multifaceted threat that climate change poses to national security.

Intersections between Economic Recovery, Sustainable Development, and National Security

The Need for Good Governance at Home

In 2022, Sri Lanka witnessed its worst economic crisis since independence as a result of misgovernance and mismanagement, an already well documented process (IMF 2023; TISL 2023) not to be repeated in these pages. At the height of the crisis the people faced severe food, and health insecurity in the form of power cuts lasting over thirteen hours, shortages in food, medicine, and

other essentials, owing to a lack of foreign reserves for imports, among other difficulties. Moreover, poverty has increased significantly compared to that of before the COVID-19 pandemic and, even after the height of the crisis, many continue to bear significant economic pressures from increased inflation and currency depreciation resulting in widespread economic insecurity. The only way to alleviate this insecurity is for Sri Lanka to undergo a robust economic recovery. For the sake of securing both the Sri Lankan state and its people, the foreign reserves must be rebuilt, national insolvency addressed, access to international financial markets regained, and investor confidence in the country re-established. Sri Lanka's economic recovery and development also has geopolitical considerations relevant to national security that are discussed later.

The completion of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme that Sri Lanka entered in March 2023, the USD 2.9 billion that was approved under the Extended Fund Facility (EFF) Arrangement (TISL 2023: 3), is an imperative for Sri Lanka to recover from the economic crisis and prevent it from falling back into one. The programme enables Sri Lanka to defer its bilateral and private debt service payments for two years and work towards debt sustainability (ibid.). Furthermore, the IMF programme includes governance and anticorruption as a key pillar of the programme thereby entailing a governance diagnostic as well (ibid.). The recommendations of the Governance Diagnostic Assessment by the IMF focus on areas of anticorruption, anti-money laundering and combating the financing of terrorism, fiscal governance (entailing public financial management, tax policy and revenue administration, state enterprise management, and public procurement), central bank governance, financial sector oversight, and enforcement of contract and protection of property rights (IMF 2023: 10). Naturally, as these recommendations address the issues that were at the heart of why Sri Lanka fell into economic precarity, it is important to follow through on them.

With regard to the progress of the IMF programme, according to the IMF Tracker by Manthri.lk, a platform run by Verité Research, of the commitments of the government under the programme, 30% and 15% have and have not been met respectively with progress on 14% of those commitments remaining unknown, as of the 31st of May 2024 (Manthri.lk 2024). Progress towards the remaining 41% of the commitments is still pending (ibid.). Of its commitments due at the end

of May 2024, Sri Lanka has 16 obligations that have not been fulfilled, constituting 25% of its due commitments (PUBLICFINANCE.lk 2024). It is worrisome that Sri Lanka is failing to comply with the IMF programme precisely on the aspects meant to address the diagnosed root causes of the economic crisis as seven were on financial management, six were on financial transparency, and three were on anti-corruption measures (ibid.). The progress on 15 additional commitments was deemed to be unknown as there was not enough data made available to assess their progress (ibid.). The nature and number of commitments that have not been met and for which progress is unknown is significant and, therefore, raises concerns regarding the performance of the government with regard to the programme. Given that a considerable part of Sri Lanka's economic recovery hinges on the programme it is of paramount importance that the government follows through on and is transparent on its progress towards its commitments under the programme.

Moreover, the previously mentioned Civil Society Governance Diagnostic Report on Sri Lanka details complementary measures aimed at enhancing transparency and accountability in existing systems for required fiscal governance outcomes, improving macro-political-economic stability and sustainability, and structural change necessary to significantly reduce corruption risk and impunity (TISL 2023) that must be taken into consideration. The recommendations are concretely and comprehensively explained in the aforementioned reports and, therefore, will not be recounted here. However, it is worth reemphasising their importance for Sri Lanka to undergo a robust economic recovery given the dividends that it will pay towards the national security of the country.

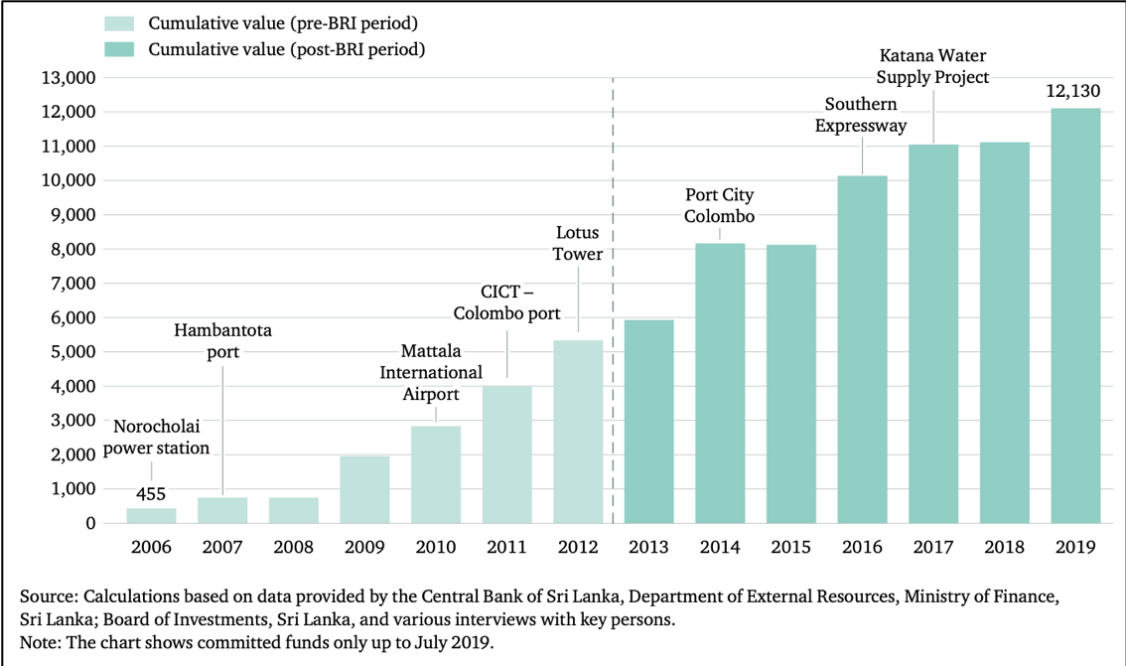
Navigating the Indian Ocean: Economic (Inter)Dependence and Regional Geopolitics

Apart from domestic reform aimed at governance and anticorruption, and the IMF programme, there is an international dimension to Sri Lanka's economic recovery and development that is relevant to national security. The government must be aware as to who has a stake in Sri Lanka's development and to what extent given the implications that such dependencies have on the security of the state. There is significant scholarship on the intersection between economic interdependence and security, as far as it pertains to the security of the state and its ability to pursue its national interests, which is referred to as economic statecraft (Mastanduno 2000: 288). The

bilateral dependencies and dependencies that arise between states in a network structure can be asymmetrical or uneven in the distribution of power among involved states. This provides states that are less dependent on other states or more connected in the network the leverage to coerce the more dependent and less connected states (Farrell and Newman 2019: 54; Mastanduno 2000: 289-310). Hence, it is of paramount importance for the government to be cautious of who and to what extent Sri Lanka is dependent on another country for its economic recovery and development.

The investments of the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) were perceived as such a threat. Between 2006 and July 2019, the value of cumulative Chinese infrastructure investment is estimated to amount to USD 12.1 billion (Hundlani et al. 2020: 5). To put the figure into perspective, this was 14% of Sri Lanka’s GDP in 2018 (ibid.). Figure 4 depicts this cumulative investment, excluding hard infrastructure investment on cultural projects (such as the Nelum Pokuna Auditorium in Colombo and the Mahinda Rajapaksa Convention Centre in Hambantota), soft infrastructure investment (such as trade deals, trade facilitation agreements, and people-to-people exchanges), and defence-related investment (ibid.).

Figure 4: Value of Chinese Infrastructure Investment to Sri Lanka (USD million)



Source: Hundlani et al. (2020: 4)

The cumulative Chinese infrastructure investment into Sri Lanka was necessary at the time and the narrative that Sri Lanka was the poster child for Chinese ‘debt trap diplomacy’ is severely overstated. With regard to the necessity of the investment, in 2014, a World Bank report on infrastructure in South Asia suggested that Sri Lanka required at least USD 36 billion to close its infrastructure gap as an upper-middle-income country (idem: 8). In 2018, this figure made up 40.5% of GDP (ibid.). Given the significant amount required to close this infrastructure gap, it is quite clear that these investments were necessary for Sri Lanka’s development provided they were used effectively. Unfortunately, while some of the BRI projects were worthwhile undertakings, some of them were ‘white elephants’ as they placed enormous debt burdens on the country with little return on investment to show for it.

The Hambantota Port, Rajapaksa International Airport in Mattala, and Colombo Lotus Tower, among others, fall into the category of white elephants. In particular, the way in which the state-controlled China Merchants Port Holdings acquired a stake in the Hambantota Port resulted in narratives suggesting a loss of sovereignty and national security and of Sri Lanka having fallen victim to Chinese debt trap diplomacy (idem: 25-26). In contrast, the reality was that there was no concrete return on the colossal investment the country had made into constructing the port. The Hambantota Port cost USD 1.3 billion and 85% of the cost was covered through loans from the EXIM Bank of China (ECONOMYNEXT 2020). Then Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe argued that the port was a white elephant project stating (ibid.): “Ships didn’t call at the Hambantota port. Investments for factories that were anticipated to flow into Hambantota did not arrive. We did not have an income from the port to pay instalments and the interest due and could not expect to make a profit from the port for at least 30-40 years”. Ultimately, in December 2017, the government was forced to give the state-controlled China Merchants Port Holdings a 70% stake in the port for 99 years in a joint venture with the Sri Lanka Ports Authority to alleviate the enormous debt burden the project had placed on the country with little to no return (ibid.).

As this project was initiated by then President Mahinda Rajapaksa, in addition to the other projects, including the other white elephants, this fiasco reflected more a failure of national governance rather than a strategic plot of China to claim part of Sri Lanka. As Subhashini

Abeysinghe, Research Director at Verité, argues “challenges in BRI projects in Sri Lanka arose due to general intuitional weaknesses and governance weaknesses that predates China’s BRI” (Daily Mirror 2019).

Moreover, Sri Lanka’s debt to China is exaggerated. In their report on “Chinese Investment and the BRI in Sri Lanka”, Ganeshan Wignaraja, Dinusha Panditaratne, Pabasara Kannangara and Divya Hundlani argue against Sri Lanka having fallen into a Chinese debt trap (Hundlani et al. 2020: 2). While China was an important provider of commercial loans to Sri Lanka for infrastructure projects at the time, it only accounted for 15% of foreign debt at the end of 2018 (idem: 11). Sri Lanka was said to be facing a general foreign debt problem but that this had “little to do with Chinese loans” (ibid.). Fast forward to the height of the economic crisis and this argument still holds water. At the end of April 2022, Sri Lanka’s total outstanding foreign debt was USD 34.8 billion of which 30.5% was bilateral foreign debt, the total of which China accounted for 45% (Department of External Resources 2022). In short, China made up only 13.7% of Sri Lanka’s total foreign debt leaving aside its domestic debt. Therefore, perhaps contrary to popular opinion, there is little evidence that Sri Lanka’s economic dependence on China was leveraged by China in a way that was detrimental to Sri Lanka’s national security. This should not be taken to suggest that economic dependence or asymmetric economic interdependence does not carry any risk at all. Rather, it is to suggest that the narrative of Chinese debt-trap diplomacy tends to be overstated and masks the responsibility of the national government in embarking on projects that only served to exacerbate Sri Lanka’s debt crisis.

As of recently, under the pressures of its own economic downturn, China’s financial resources have become restrained and economic relations between itself and Sri Lanka have diminished, providing India the opportunity to re-establish a strong relationship with its southern neighbour. This began with India providing Sri Lanka with approximately USD 4 billion in emergency assistance at the peak of its economic crisis (Al Jazeera 2023b). In Sri Lanka’s hour of need, India provided a monumental sum of financial assistance when no one else was willing to support Sri Lanka at all at the time, let alone to the same degree. While this support was desperately needed,

this alone has shifted the balance of power in the relationship between the two countries to India given Sri Lanka's increased economic dependence on India.

Additionally, in July 2023, India and Sri Lanka announced the "Promoting Connectivity, Catalysing Prosperity: India-Sri Lanka Economic Partnership Vision" aimed at increasing connectivity between the two countries in various domains such as maritime, air, energy and power, trade, economics, and finance (MEA GOI 2023). While there are bound to be some benefits from increased connectivity with India in these varying domains, the government needs to remain alert to the potential risks the increased economic interdependence between Sri Lanka and India poses to national security. This requires a comprehensive assessment of the proposed and approved projects to understand their impact holistically on Sri Lanka and whether they are in Sri Lanka's best interest, an assessment beyond the scope of this Brief.

It is worth mentioning that such concerns are not baseless given previously approved projects that are still being grappled with. In February 2023, Adani Green Energy (Sri Lanka) Ltd was given provisional approval for two wind power projects of 250 and 234 megawatts in Mannar and in Pooneryn respectively (Daily Mirror 2024b). The project in Mannar entails 52 wind turbines, each with a capacity of 5.2 megawatts, being installed parallelly to the existing Thambapawani wind farm, across most parts of Mannar Island (ibid.). This is expected to generate 1048 gigawatt hours of energy annually which constitutes 6% of Sri Lanka's annual energy requirement (ibid.). This will result in an annual fuel saving of LKR 18 billion and an annual reduction in GHG emissions by 0.8 million metric tons (ibid.). While the project may seem fantastic in meeting Sri Lanka's energy requirements while mitigating GHG emissions, the reality is much less picturesque.

Firstly, there is controversy as to how the project was awarded to the Adani Group as many are lamenting the lack of a competitive tender in awarding the project. There are accounts of then Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa instructing the then Ceylon Electricity Board's (CEB) Chairman M.M.C. Ferdinando to recognise the project "as a proposal from the Indian Government to the Government of Sri Lanka" as much needed foreign direct investment for the country (The Sunday Times 2022). On the 13th of June 2022, Mr. Ferdinando was forced to resign

after having informed the Parliament's Committee on Public Enterprise (COPE) that then President Gotabaya Rajapaksa had summoned him in November 2021 to ask him to clear the Adani project as he was under pressure from Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi (ibid.). Relatedly, having seen the projects awarded to the Adani Group, there has been pressure from Sri Lankan renewable energy companies "urging the government to open up the sector through transparent, competitive tenders" (The Sunday Times 2024). As such, the "lack of a clear and open bidding process raised serious questions about transparency in the project's selection" and "locals and some within the government felt the process lacked fairness and accountability" (Daily Mirror 2024b).

Furthermore, the government has approved a foreign enterprise to harness Sri Lanka's wind, a national natural resource, to generate power that it is then purchasing from a foreign enterprise for the next 20 years at a premium (News First 2024a). The final power purchase agreement with Adani Green Energy (Sri Lanka) Ltd. is USD 0.0826 per kilowatt hour at an exchange of rate of USD 1 equalling LKR 300 (ibid.) when, according to United States Department of Energy, the price of wind energy is down to less than USD 0.02 per kilowatt hour (Pethiyagoda 2024). The aforementioned annual fuel saving has only been replaced by a much larger bill for wind energy written to a company of the Adani Group rather than a Sri Lankan renewable energy company. Sri Lanka does require foreign direct investment, but such a project is not suitable for economic recovery and development. This is worrisome for national security if this fiasco represents an instance where India has leveraged its position in its relationship with Sri Lanka to negotiate for terms on a project favouring its interests at Sri Lanka's expense.

Secondly, the project severely undermines environmental conservation and, thereby, environmental security, negating the value of mitigating GHG emissions. According to Dr. Rohan Pethiyagoda, millions of birds of over 120 species from the Northern hemisphere migrate southwards to Mannar every winter, which is the reason as to why Mannar Island is surrounded by protected areas like Adam's Bridge Marine National Park, Madu National Park, Vankalai Ramsar Sanctuary, Giant's Tank Sanctuary, and Vidataltivu Nature Reserve (ibid.). In fact, the Ministry of Environment has declared the entire region to be environmentally sensitive (ibid.).

The 52 wind turbines, each 220 meters tall, which are to be installed in the busiest bird flyway in South Asia, will be detrimental to the lives of these birds as wind turbines kill thousands of birds every year (ibid.). Moreover, given how delicate Mannar Island's ecosystem is, there are concerns about noise pollution impacting the migratory patterns of the birds, potential harm to marine life due to underwater cables, and loss of habitat (Daily Mirror 2024b). It is worth noting that the project's impact in upsetting the delicate balance of Mannar Island's ecosystem can lead to other forms of insecurity that go beyond environmental. For instance, loss and damage caused by natural disasters triggered by the project exacerbating climate change will result in health and economic insecurity as well.

Thirdly, the project disproportionately impacts the livelihoods of local communities negatively. The installation of the wind turbines on fertile lands will disrupt agricultural practices and their impact on the marine ecosystem will reduce yields from coastal fisheries affecting those dependent on agriculture and fisheries for their livelihoods (ibid.). In fact, residents have already complained that disturbances caused by the project have depleted formerly productive coastal waters thus forcing fishermen further out to sea and driving up their use of fuel amidst rising fuel prices (ibid.). On another note, the fact that Mannar Island will lose all prospects of tourism development cannot be ignored as 52 wind turbines of 220 metres in height are going to drive away tourists (Pethiyagoda 2024). Hence, the project is socioeconomically inequitable to local communities as they are left more insecure in more ways than one. Overall, this is not to say that wind power is not a desirable form of energy generation for Sri Lanka but that this project is deeply flawed given the environmental and socioeconomic deprivation that it will cause. The government must aspire for a more socially equitable transition to green and renewable energy resources for Sri Lanka.

In embarking on any joint ventures with India, or any other for that matter, the government must assess which projects are beneficial for the Sri Lankan state and its people and avoid or protect itself from being pressured into projects that are not. This is why a comprehensive assessment of the proposed and approved projects under the India-Sri Lanka Economic Partnership Vision is of paramount importance, especially in light of the controversy surrounding the wind power project in Mannar. There are projects which hold promise for Sri Lanka economically such as in resuming

passenger ferry services between Nagapattinam in Tamil Nadu, India and Kankesanthurai in the north of Sri Lanka in addition to Rameshwaram in Tamil Nadu, India and Talaimannar in the northwest of Sri Lanka (MEA GOI 2023). Tamil Nadu was India's second largest state economy as of 2021-2022 and is set to become a trillion-dollar (USD) economy by 2034 if it sustains its current average year-on-year 10% growth rate with prowess in manufacturing and exports (DTTILLP and FICCI 2023: 4-6). Therefore, the enhanced maritime and people-to-people connectivity between Tamil Nadu and the north of Sri Lanka, which has fallen behind other parts of the country in its development owing to numerous reasons, has the potential to be extremely beneficial to the latter through increased tourism and other potential developments. Of course, this requires further assessment in addition to assessing the other projects that the India-Sri Lanka Economic Partnership Vision consists of.

On the other hand, the USA has also shown increasing interest in Sri Lanka. In November 2023, the USA International Development Finance Cooperation announced plans to lend USD 553 million to the West Container Terminal of the Colombo Port, which Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone holds a majority stake in (Financial Times 2023). While this constituted a response by India and the USA to Sri Lanka's economic crisis, it was also arguably an initiative to counter China's influence in the Asia Pacific region (ibid.). Evidently, Sri Lanka's strategic position in the Indian Ocean has garnered increasing geopolitical interest, particularly from emerging or great powers such as China, India, and the USA. In summary, given the risks it carries, Sri Lanka must be aware of the degree of its dependence on other states and ensure that its economic recovery and development is not reliant on a single state or bloc in order to prevent undue external influence over the country, especially in the context of heightened tensions in the Indian Ocean. Furthermore, the decision to engage in external financial cooperation must be anchored in a holistic understanding of what is best for the Sri Lankan state and all its people.

Consequently, a bipartisan and consistent foreign policy grounded in the best interests of the Sri Lankan state and all its people and a robust foreign service that helps Sri Lanka understand and shape the foreign policy of those in its strategic neighbourhood is a necessity in navigating the geopolitics of the Indian Ocean. In recent years Sri Lanka's foreign policy has seemingly been

partisan and inconsistent as the nature of Sri Lanka's foreign relations have varied depending on the government of the day. Sri Lanka's foreign policy should be grounded in certain principles that at their core have the flourishing of the Sri Lankan state and its people as its aim and should rid itself of partisan considerations. A measure that can be adopted for increasing bipartisanship and consistency in foreign policy would entail establishing a PSC for foreign policy formulation and revision.

With regard to the need of a robust foreign service, President Ranil Wickremesinghe himself expressed how an effective foreign service with the capabilities to expand and build on Sri Lanka's relationships with other countries while protecting its sovereignty is crucial (Presidential Secretariat 2023). Regrettably, Sri Lanka's foreign service is understaffed, and the quality of diplomats is also poor owing to either politicisation (Daily Mirror 2023) or low wages (Alphonsus 2021: 28). Rectifying this problem requires a few key steps. Firstly, the foreign service must be insulated from politicisation that results in political appointments to diplomatic missions instead of appointments made meritocratically. Secondly, diplomatic missions must be better staffed for them to be effective. This can be resolved by ensuring that diplomats are paid well, thereby making it a desirable line of employment and, subsequently, attracting well qualified applicants to the foreign service.

Likewise, given the increasing attention paid to Sri Lanka by foreign powers, it is crucial to counter any foreign influence. This primarily boils down to ensuring that no foreign power has undue influence over politicians (idem: 35) in the future. This entails strengthening legislation on political financing to limit the role of foreign powers financing election campaigns in Sri Lanka (ibid.). Improving the investigative capabilities of law enforcement and counter-intelligence capabilities of state intelligence entities is imperative for the enforcement of such legislation (ibid.).

Avenues for Sustainable Development: Green Finance and the Blue Economy

Securing the Sri Lankan state and its people economically also requires understanding where the future avenues of economic growth are for the country. Whilst sustaining and improving on the current drivers of the economy such as tourism, agriculture, and textiles, among others, are there

other related or different sectors that can be tapped into as engines of growth for the Sri Lankan economy? This is of critical importance to assess as sustainable economic growth would not only secure Sri Lanka economically but would pay substantial dividends to other facets of national security. While this Brief does not have the space to do an assessment of this nature justice, it can highlight promising opportunities that Sri Lanka can leverage, particularly green finance and the blue economy. Both represent avenues for simultaneously increasing foreign currency inflows and economic expansion whilst addressing Sri Lanka's climate change vulnerabilities, thereby significantly bolstering national security.

As alluded to previously, Sri Lanka can seek external climate financing to help it address climate change and its climate vulnerabilities. Given the increased levels of financing for combatting climate change, as evidenced by cases such as the Eskom Deal for South Africa, Sri Lanka should model itself as a leader in climate change action, especially in conservation, restoration, and climate change adaptation efforts, to position itself favourably for attracting such financing. This is not out of the question for Sri Lanka especially since it has received international recognition for such efforts in the recent past. Sri Lanka was awarded the prestigious World Restoration Flagship Award by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) during the Sixth Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly for its remarkable efforts in rejuvenating mangrove ecosystems (News First 2024b). If Sri Lanka can continue to establish itself internationally in this manner, especially as a model for conservation, restoration, and adaptation efforts, it may be able to secure financing for addressing its climate vulnerabilities similarly to South Africa which obtained financing to transition towards a power sector based on renewable energy instead of coal. Of course, this is yet another reason for having a more robust foreign service that can identify or create external climate financing opportunities to capitalise on.

Likewise, green finance represents an avenue for Sri Lankan enterprises especially to attract financing for initiatives that address climate and environmental issues or are concerned with improving the management of financial risks related to the climate and environment (Abeyratne et al. 2024). In short, green finance is a financial structure designed to achieve environmental outcomes (ibid.). Unfortunately, the full potential of green finance is yet to be tapped into. Ongoing

assessments by the Centre for a Smart Future (CSF) suggest that lenders in Sri Lanka have been “slow to orient themselves to the needs of the market” for green finance such as committing to net-zero emissions and greening lending and investing portfolios (ibid.).

Additionally, financial institutions in Sri Lanka need to develop green finance products innovatively linked to beneficial environmental activities and outcomes so that they gain access to international funds that are linked to sustainability and green financing assets under management for use domestically (ibid.). As Bloomberg reported that sustainability and green financing accounted for approximately 33% of all money in assets under management in 2020 and the likelihood that this number has grown since, the availability of funds is evident, so it is up to the Sri Lankan financial sector to locate and access these funds (ibid.). Fortunately, there are already those capitalising on these opportunities. On the 12th of July 2023, DFCC Bank PLC (DFCC) received accreditation from the Green Climate Fund (GCF) (GCF 2023) giving it access to concessionary funding for climate mitigation and adaptation projects up to USD 250 million in value across Sri Lanka (Daily FT 2023). As of now DFCC is Sri Lanka’s first, and currently only, national direct access entity of the GCF and at the time was only one of 118 institutions globally accredited with GCF (ibid.). Similarly, the rest of the financial sector must follow suit to capitalise on the potential of green finance to be a vehicle for sustainable economic growth in Sri Lanka.

Moreover, green finance in Sri Lanka needs to prioritise adaptation efforts. A majority of green loans provided by Sri Lankan banks tend to be narrowly focused on purchasing energy-efficient equipment and renewable energy generation (Abeyratne et al. 2024). Given how adaptation is arguably more of a priority than mitigation and how international public finance flows solely cannot meet the adaptation finance needs of developing countries (ibid.), private capital must be mobilised for adaptation as well. This entails lending for a range of initiatives from tourism that is nature-positive to manufacturing that adopts circular business models (ibid.).

Lastly, according to demand-side assessments conducted by the CSF, enterprises, especially small and medium-sized enterprises require firm-level upgrading as they often lack investor readiness for green finance opportunities, are unable to meet reporting requirements for green finance

required by financial institutions, are less equipped to handle the lengthy and indeterminate periods for returns on green investments, and find it difficult to establish demand for products and services provided (ibid.). Ultimately, these issues must be addressed for green finance to pave the way for sustainable economic development through supporting enterprise and entrepreneurship aimed at achieving positive environmental outcomes.

It is necessary to highlight the steps that have been taken to guide and support the financial sector in venturing into green finance. In 2019, the Central Bank of Sri Lanka (CBSL) launched its “Roadmap for Sustainable Finance in Sri Lanka” with technical support from the International Finance Corporation (IFC) and funding from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) through its Biodiversity Finance Initiative (BIOFIN) (CBSL 2019: 3). It broadly aims to act as a guide for financial institutions to effectively manage the environmental, social and governance (ESG) risks of the projects they finance and increase support for businesses “that are greener, climate-friendly, and socially inclusive” (idem: 5). In 2022, this was complimented by the CBSL’s “Sri Lanka Green Finance Taxonomy” (CBSL 2022) as it was a classification system for defining and categorising environmentally sustainable economic activity (Abeyratne et al. 2024). However, while these are essential initial steps for establishing financing for climate change action, adoption by financial intermediaries has varied widely as these policies are not mandatory (ibid.). Of course, this must be addressed through policy and regulation alongside the Sri Lankan financial sector adopting international standards, frameworks, and best practices for green finance.

Relatedly, Sri Lanka’s blue economy has garnered increasing attention as another avenue for sustainable development and for good reason. It entails “sustainable use of ocean resources for economic growth, jobs, and social and financial inclusion, with a focus on the preservation and restoration of ocean ecosystems and the services they provide” (UNDP and LKI 2023: 3). In December 2023, the UNDP and the Lakshman Kadirgamar Institute of International Relations and Strategic Studies (LKI) published a position paper on how the blue economy represents “the next economic frontier that can transform sustainable development in Sri Lanka” (idem: 1). Currently, Sri Lanka’s maritime area encompasses approximately 1,640 km of its coastline, the territorial seas, contiguous zones, Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and historic waters (ibid.). The

extent of the EEZ, 200 nautical miles from baseline, is an area of 517,000 square kilometres which amounts to eight times the total area of land (ibid.). Given the sheer size of the maritime area, the living and non-living resources within it, and the products and services that can be provided leveraging the ocean, positioning the blue economy as a cornerstone of Sri Lanka's sustainable economic development is an imperative.

By adopting a blue economy approach Sri Lanka stands to economically grow considerably while meeting its requirements in combatting climate change and addressing its climate vulnerabilities in the coastal areas which are the most vulnerable to the effects of climate change. In fact, the UNDP and LKI argue that it is essential to integrate Sri Lanka's NDCs into the blue economy approach "to promote nature-positive economic recovery in combination with a carbon-neutral, sustainable future" (idem: 5). Where Sri Lanka can sustainably develop economically lies in the potential of its port industry (given Sri Lanka's strategic position in the Indian Ocean and its close proximity to the main East-West shipping routes), sustainable coastal tourism, fisheries and ocean sourced food, aquaculture, ocean renewable energy (offshore wind, solar, tidal wave energy, and geothermal energy), biotechnology, and mineral industries (idem: 2, 6-7).

Furthermore, under the UN Law of the Sea, Sri Lanka submitted a claim for the extension of the continental shelf from 200 to 800 nautical miles further south, beyond the equator, and further north, into the Bay of Bengal (News First 2023b). This would extend the already massive extent of Sri Lanka's maritime area thereby skyrocketing the potential of the blue economy. The claim was accepted by the UN, however, in November 2022, India objected to the claim, as it would mean having to share resources where the maritime areas of both countries overlapped in the Bay of Bengal, pausing proceedings for the time being (ibid.). The Sri Lankan government now must resolve this issue with the Indian government. This is another arena in which the government must be tactful in order to validate its claim, given that Sri Lanka's growing economic dependence on India may result in India having a more favourable bargaining position in negotiations between the two countries. It is of paramount importance that Sri Lanka has its claim recognised given that it would amplify the already significant economic development that would result from Sri Lanka expanding its blue economy.

The UNDP and LKI have outlined considerations for a socioeconomically equitable blue economic policy framework, stressed the need for a marine spatial plan, proposed an integrated national financing framework for financing Sri Lanka's blue economy, and suggested next steps (UNDP and LKI: 17-25). To clarify, a marine spatial plan is aimed at promoting collaboration between public and private stakeholders, facilitating efficient allocation of ocean resources for competing human activities in coastal and marine environments, and supports the development of a strategy to pursue blue economic growth whilst simultaneously promoting biodiversity and climate change adaptation (idem: 19). These insights should be taken into consideration for developing Sri Lanka's blue economy.

Sri Lanka committing itself to adopting a blue economy approach also aligns with its priorities as the current chair of IORA given that the blue economy has been a core cross-cutting issue for the association ever since 2014 (IORA 2024). Within the blue economy, fisheries and aquaculture, seaport and shipping, renewable ocean energy, marine biotechnology research and development, and tourism are focus areas for IORA (ibid.). Hence, Sri Lanka can benefit from the expertise IORA has in these areas, network with the other member states to learn best practices from successful cases and initiate beneficial partnerships to develop its own blue economy.

Sri Lanka can also tap into blue finance in order to develop its blue economy. Maekawa et al. estimate that total public financing for ocean conservation and climate action increased from USD 579 million to USD 3,519 million from 2013 and 2019 consisting of both loan and non-loan-based projects (Maekawa et al. 2022: 56). Between 2013 and 2019, 51% of total public financing went towards Asia and 64% of total public financing went towards small island developing states (idem: 57-60). Again, between 2013 and 2019, 54% of total public financing went towards population adaptation, which are projects aimed at climate change adaptation in coastal areas "such as coastal protection, disaster risk management, and resilience building in industries", and 15% of public financing went towards fisheries (ibid.). The geographic and categorical distribution of financing suits Sri Lanka's needs extremely well and, therefore, Sri Lanka needs to identify and access funding to aid in developing its blue economy. Fortunately, Sri Lanka has already taken steps in this regard as it has been selected to receive support from the Ocean Country Partnership Programme of the

UK's Blue Planet Fund, a fund of GBP 500 million (GOV.UK 2023). The programme is aimed at supporting countries sustainably manage their marine environments especially with regard to marine pollution, sustainable seafood, and marine biodiversity (ibid.). Overall, much like green finance, the blue economy and blue finance represents a promising avenue for sustainable growth for Sri Lanka that needs to be capitalised on to economically and environmentally secure Sri Lanka.

A Summary of Recommendations

At the outset, a reimagination of national security is recommended in the form of a synthesis between the traditional and human security approaches owing primarily to two reasons. Firstly, securing the territorial sovereignty of the state does not secure its people, though it is a prerequisite for doing so. Secondly, there are many contemporary security concerns that fall outside the scope of the traditional security approach necessitating a move beyond it. As such, simultaneously protecting the territorial sovereignty of the state and individual welfare are deemed to be important for national security. Therefore, when accounting for the context of Sri Lanka, securing Sri Lanka as a territorially sovereign state and its people boils down to, non-exhaustively, the key areas of consideration and subsequent interventions discussed below.

Terrorism

- I. NSC:
 - a. The NSC must be given statutory basis.
 - b. An NSA must be introduced to the NSC who will lead the secretariat and regularly keep the government abreast of security issues.
 - c. The NSC must have its own secretariat, led by the NSA, responsible for calling for meetings on a regular basis, preparing agendas and briefings, keeping minutes from meetings, and compiling analytic reports on key issues.

**Extremism and Conflict
Resurgence**

- II. A legal framework providing for surveillance powers and sets conditions upon surveillance is required alongside a judicial or quasi-judicial body that enforces said framework.
 - III. The PTA must be replaced by counter-terrorism legislation in line with international best practices and Sri Lanka's obligations under international human rights law.
 - IV. In the wake of culpability in the Easter Sunday Attacks of 2019, the establishment of a Public Prosecutor's office that is separate and independent of the government having the sole responsibility to indict and prosecute is imperative.
- I. In addressing the push and pull factors for extremism:
 - a. The independent and impartial functioning of the public service, law enforcement, and the judiciary must be strengthened.
 - b. There must be equality of opportunity in recruitment and nominations to government bodies and institutions regardless of religious, ethnic, linguistic, and/or cultural background.
 - c. A government body and institution must have some representation for the stakeholders affected by the objective of the body or institution.
 - II. In order to create a citizenry that is respectful of human rights, democracy, and Sri Lanka's religious, ethnic, linguistic, and cultural diversity civic, cross-cultural, and cross-religious education in primary and secondary educational institutions is crucial.

- III. The spread of misinformation, disinformation, and hate speech must be mitigated and those responsible for it and other acts of extremism must be held accountable.
- IV. Devolution of Power to the Provinces:
 - a. The 13th Amendment to the 1978 Constitution must be fully implemented including provincial police and land powers.
 - b. The intrusive powers of the Provincial Governor, an agent of the President, must be curtailed. These powers include:
 - i. A provincial statute drafted by the Provincial Council only coming into force with the Provincial Governor's assent.
 - ii. The Provincial Governor being the de facto provincial Minister of Finance.
 - iii. The Provincial Governor having control of the provincial public service thereby undermining its independence.
 - c. The distribution of subjects across the Reserved, Concurrent, and Provincial Council Lists must be reevaluated to reduce Parliament's ability to legislate even on subjects in the Provincial Council List, and better address concurrency where law-making power is shared between the national and provincial level over certain subjects.
 - d. The public administration must be restructured to complement rather than undermine the effectiveness of the provincial administration, given that the central government operates directly at the District, Divisional, and Village levels

through the District Secretaries, Divisional Secretaries, and Grama Niladharis parallelly and in competition with the provincial administration.

Defence Expenditure and the Armed Forces

- I. Personnel expenditure must be significantly reduced:
 - a. Recruitment to the military must be curtailed.
 - b. The number of active-duty troops must be reduced with the number of reserves increased.
 - i. A voluntary retirement scheme that provides vocational training for sectors facing labour shortages, such as construction and tourism, should be considered.
- II. Resources should be redirected away from the army to the navy as the sea is the frontier of defence for Sri Lanka. This will also increase the navy's capacity to address maritime piracy and terrorism, human and drug trafficking, and IUU fishing.

Cyberspace

- I. There is a need for new and/or updated national policy and legislation on subjects pertaining to cyberspace.
- II. In order to stay afloat of increasing digital development the government must enhance its capacity to protect its digital infrastructure. The capabilities of the military must also be similarly enhanced given the incorporation of digital development into conventional military hardware bringing with it vulnerabilities that can be the target of a cyberattack.
- III. The military should establish a branch dedicated to threats emanating from cyberspace.

Climate Change

- I. There must be greater pragmatism in policy formulation and coordination in policy implementation as climate change is a cross-cutting issue across government.
- II. There is a need to prioritise conservation and climate change adaptation over mitigation given Sri Lanka's vulnerability to the impacts of climate change.
- III. Given how the impacts of climate change are regionally heterogeneous, the provincial level is closer to the people and better situated to understand the unique challenges each province faces. Therefore, devolution of power to the provinces will benefit climate change adaptation efforts.
- IV. In the pursuit of sustainable development whilst aiding Sri Lanka's recovery from national insolvency green finance and the blue economy represent engines of growth for the Sri Lankan economy.

Regional Geopolitics

- I. There is a need for awareness of the degree of Sri Lanka's dependence on other states and ensure that its economic recovery and development is not reliant on a single state or bloc to prevent undue external influence over the country.
- II. A PSC for foreign policy formulation and revision should be established for a more bipartisan and consistent Sri Lankan foreign policy.
- III. The foreign service must be depoliticised, and better staffed and resourced.
- IV. It is imperative that legislation on political financing be strengthened to limit the role of foreign powers financing election campaigns in Sri Lanka with state intelligence services having the capacity to enforce such legislation.

Conclusion

By no means does this Brief entail an exhaustive list of what should be taken into consideration and the actions required to strengthen national security. However, it does advance a conception of national security that moves beyond a narrow focus on securing the territorial sovereignty of the state to recognise that national security entails securing the Sri Lankan people. This allows for framing other issues that are not traditionally seen through the lens of national security as threats to national security, such as climate change, and allows for analysing the similarities and differences in how an issue affects the Sri Lankan state and the Sri Lankan people.

On another note, the Brief provides substantial evidence as to how issues related to national security interact and relate to each other. For instance, the devolution of powers to the provinces is not only a more effective solution to conflict resurgence as it addresses the grievances that led to the conflict at the root itself rather than militarisation of the north and east. In the absence of the latter, it also negates the rationale for maintaining the excessive number of personnel within the military allowing for reducing and optimising defence expenditure which is important for a country recovering from national insolvency. Additionally, as the provincial level is better equipped to deal with the regionally heterogeneous impacts of climate change, devolution allows for addressing climate vulnerabilities that vary across Sri Lanka more effectively thereby allowing for greater environmental security. Therefore, national security is far more encompassing than what is suggested by the public discourse in Sri Lanka and, consequently, the Brief provides for a more holistic conception of what national security should entail for Sri Lanka.

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