



14TH INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH CONFERENCE

“ Security, Stability and National Development in the New Normal ”

09TH - 10TH SEPTEMBER 2021

DEFENCE AND STRATEGIC STUDIES

ABSTRACTS



GENERAL SIR JOHN KOTELAWALA DEFENCE UNIVERSITY



14TH INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH CONFERENCE

**SECURITY, STABILITY AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
IN THE NEW NORMAL**

DEFENCE AND STRATEGIC STUDIES

ABSTRACTS



General Sir John Kotelawala Defence University
Ratmalana, Sri Lanka

This book contains the abstracts of papers presented at the Defence and Strategic Studies Sessions of the 14th International Research Conference of General Sir John Kotelawala Defence University, Ratmalana, Sri Lanka held on 9th and 10th of September 2021. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form, without prior permission of General Sir John Kotelawala Defence University, Ratmalana, Sri Lanka.

Published by

General Sir John Kotelawala Defence University
Ratmalana
Sri Lanka

Tel: +94-11-263-5268

e-Mail: irc2021@kdu.ac.lk

Website: <http://library.kdu.ac.lk/irc2021/>

ISBN 978-624-5574-26-1

Published on

9th September 2021

Printed by

KSU Graphic (Pvt) Ltd

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Message from the Chief Guest



It is with great pleasure that I send this message to the publication of selected conference papers, under a theme that seems more relevant today than ever.

Throughout the history, security has always been the central notion of our existence as a nation. It will continue to be, as long as the geographical realities that define the country's location remains so. This centrality causes our development paradigm to always have a nexus with security, undeniably linking itself to the overall stability of the country.

As the world was compelled to enter into a 'new normal' with the COVID-19 pandemic, the traditional focus on maintaining the hard component of security was overshadowed by the need to replenish its soft component. The world has recently witnessed struggles of global powers with the highest military might, to maintain and uphold their health security. The less-talked about soft security has emerged to overshadow its counterpart, calling us to re-think and re-define the security-development nexus.

COVID-19 posed an unprecedented challenge to Sri Lanka and all developing economies, calling those States to experiment with new ways for achieving national development while managing the novel challenges to their security and stability. In this backdrop, I am delighted to see that the KDU has made allowance for this paradigm shift and hosted its International Research Conference - 2021 along the theme, 'Security, Stability and National development in the New Normal'.

I congratulate all scholars who have contributed to the conference, in particular, those who have shared their research and findings. My heartiest appreciation goes to the Vice Chancellor, Faculty and the staff of KDU whose undying commitment has made this event a reality, even during the pandemic situation.

Steering a country forward in turbulent times is a task that needs meticulous inputs from the country's intellectual body. I am certain that the KDU Research Conference - 2021 has made its mark in this endeavour.

Mr Lalith Weeratunga

Principal Advisor to His Excellency the President of Sri Lanka

Message from the Secretary, Ministry of Defence



It gives me immense pleasure to forward this message on the occasion of the 14th International Research Conference of the General Sir John Kotelawala Defence University (KDU). At the outset, I must appreciate the leadership and guidance which the Vice Chancellor has rendered to maintain the continuity of this highest academic event of the University despite times of great national and international challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic which has devastated the world.

This year's conference theme: 'Security, Stability and National Development in the New Normal' has taken the current realities of our time into the consideration and how to achieve security and development in times of instability. In this context, I strongly feel that this is an important and commendable approach with innovation demonstrated by the KDU in focussing the attention towards a timely pertinent theme.

The national developments reiterate the importance of a Defence University especially when our motherland is facing unprecedented challenges due to the pandemic. Therefore, I must highlight that our ministerial guidance and blessings, have given the potential for the KDU to actively dwell on a developmental approach to research with Security and Stability as core drivers. This approach will enable the KDU to reach a leading position to guide and influence policy decisions through the knowledge and insights gained from its expansive research programmes.

Furthermore, I believe that the great minds that will lead research deliberations at this conference should actively contribute to aid the great endeavour of steering our beloved motherland towards greater heights in the security and economic spheres, as it is the ultimate responsibility of all Sri Lankans at this time of concern. Finally, I wish that the KDU IRC 2021 will provide a sheer guidance and lead the way towards national development mitigating all current and emerging challenges posed by this devastating pandemic situation. As I extend my sincere well wishes towards the Vice Chancellor, his team and all the participants of this conference for its successful execution and for their future endeavours, I would like to assure that my blessings and support will be with KDU at all times.

General Kamal Gunaratne (Retd)
WWV RWP RSP USP ndc psc MPhil
Secretary
Ministry of Defence

Message from the Vice Chancellor



As the KDU celebrates its 40th anniversary, the International Research Conference is entering its 14th year and adapting to the new normal conditions and unprecedented challenges that have forced many programmes to be called off indefinitely. The evolution and continuity of the research conference into the successive 14th year adapting to challenges bears testimony for the success of the KDU as a seat of learning that can withstand any challenge national or international in nature.

The sheer number of papers that the conference received this year demonstrates the enthusiasm shown by presenters both locally and internationally even at a time of a grave crisis that has put educational institutions under severe stress, and it affirms the faith scholars have had on KDU. As the only defence university in Sri Lanka, KDU has been committed to research and knowledge production that will influence and shape the policy deliberations of security and development. These are core pillars of the stability and existence of any society, and it is our national responsibility to provide such insights through the organization of premier research dialogues.

This year's theme 'Security, Stability and National Development in the New Normal' bears witness to the civil military fusion that KDU has created and its commitment to achieving balance and resilience in times of global crises to safeguard and advance the security and developmental interests of the motherland.

KDU IRC is a platform of cooperation and diplomacy, and it encourages academic collaboration across Sri Lanka's higher education institutions. Research conferences are the ultimate networking events, and we are proud to provide these spaces of engagement where Sri Lankan and international scholars can present their findings and deliberate on the way forward for the nation and for the global community to thrive at a time humanity's resolve is tested by the pandemic. I wish all the very best for the academics, practitioners and policy makers who want to showcase their research and experience at our research conference.

Finally, I appreciate the dedication and hard work of all those who worked tirelessly over the last several months contributing in diverse ways to make the KDU IRC 2021 a reality under the trying circumstances, especially the IRC Chair, the Secretary, and the organizing committees headed by the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Defence and Administration).

Major General Milinda Peiris

RWP RSP VSV USP ndc psc MPhil (Ind)

Vice Chancellor

General Sir John Kotelawala Defence University

Message from the Conference Chair



KDU International Research Conference in its 14th iteration is held amidst celebration of its 40th anniversary and situated in local and global environment that is challenged by a new form of microbial security threat in the form the Covid19 outbreak. KDU stands strong and unbowed to maintain the continuity of this apex academic event this year on the theme, Security, Stability and National Development in the New Normal.

Challenged with the most potent wave of the pandemic, we remain undeterred thanks to the leadership of the Vice Chancellor. The organizing committee has put their heart and soul into adapting and evolving the conference formats that could withstand and confront the new normal conditions in organizing the international research conference.

Academic communities in the world are beacons of hope and resilience and given the sheer number of research papers that were submitted to the conference this year is a testament that KDU remains a space of hope for such communities and a sacred ground where research is encouraged even at trying times.

The theme of this year was a conscious decision to confront the realities that Sri Lanka and the world had to encounter since March 2020, that Covid 19 was a harbinger for a new reality. Universities are centres of resistance and renaissance and the KDU in Sri Lanka sets an example to all other institutions to emphasize the will to confront any challenge.

In this context KDU research conference is nourished by the presentations and deliberations of esteemed plenary speakers and research presentations that will provide vital insights into the key themes of security, stability, and national development. I extend gratitude and best wishes to all presenters who believe in the research culture evolved by the KDU and may you be treated to the finest KDU hospitality that transcend from physical to the cyber space and may you all be contributors to a greater cause for the sake of all humanity.

Dr Harinda Vidanage
PhD (Edin)
Conference Chair

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ORAL PRESENTATIONS

Introducing Iron Man: Exoskeletons in Warfare

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The article looks at the development of exoskeletons for use in warfare. It attempts to address two major research gaps in the literature – (i) While there are essays on where individual countries are in terms of military exoskeleton research, there is currently no primer or overview where all the available data from various countries are collated into one coherent analysis. It will thus offer the first truly global look at the latest developments in this field as of 2021, comparing the progress made by major military powers such as the USA, Russia, China, NATO, India, etc. and (ii) There is very little discussion on the implications this technology might hold for the battlefields of the future. Since it would be radically new and an untested entity if used in modern warfare, it is vital that security scholars ponder the consequences of deploying such innovations in contemporary theatres of operation. The article attempts to rectify that gap as well, with a brief look at the potential changes in warfare exoskeletons could bring about.

Keywords: *military technology, exoskeleton, future of warfare, global security*

Nuclear Hazards of Sri Lanka: Myths and Realities

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Sri Lanka's nuclear hazards could be emanating from either internal or external sources. The internal sources are very minimal. The worry is about external sources such as nuclear power plants located near Sri Lanka. Ensuring nuclear safety to non-nuclear states should be the ethical responsibility of the nuclear states. However, according to the researcher's view, it will be very difficult for a nuclear state to offer such a guarantee to a non-nuclear state because human error and organizational failure can occur at any moment of civilian nuclear properties. In such a scenario the aftermath of a nuclear disaster could become the sole burden on the hapless non-nuclear state. Therefore, it is always advisable for a non-nuclear state to be prepared in advance to deal with any possible nuclear disaster. This paper scientifically analyses realistic nuclear security concerns of Sri Lanka, which could be stemming from either local sources or Southern Indian nuclear power plants closely located to Sri Lanka's north and northeast.

Keywords: *nuclear safety, nuclear energy, non-nuclear states*

Military Combatting an Invisible Enemy: Securitizing the COVID-19 Threat in Sri Lanka

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The COVID-19 global pandemic has presented numerous non-traditional security threats to many countries in the world. In the face of the deteriorating health crisis, several countries including Sri Lanka have conceded to increase their military engagements remarkably in health-related undertakings despite growing criticism from various parties. However, the reasons for such extreme employments remain virtually unexplored. Thus, this article aims to analyse Covid-19 from the perspective of security studies and to identify reasons and typologies of associations between military role and the national response mechanisms during the COVID-19 in Sri Lanka (March 2020 to June 2021). In this qualitative research, the author uses primary data such as interviews/discussions with subject matter experts from military and civilian sectors, and secondary data such as newspaper articles, reputed web articles, and journal articles. The content analysis is used for systematically evaluating the symbolic contents of every form of recorded communications. The author identified eight distinct descriptive categories of reasons for the employment of the military in COVID-19 response measures extending across five analytical themes. Most noticeable themes included how armed forces lead the national COVID-19 response mechanism, together with context-specific military-political legacies, military repatriation and evacuation, and sustenance of varied public systems. The author claims that the COVID-19 enabled state actors to securitize the threat, sanctioning substantial military engagements that generated several positive and negative outcomes. The study highlights that deployment of the military was largely in the interest of political and armed forces hierarchy, which also facilitated the military to expand their operational readiness, remain relevant, increase their social standing, and support societies with their expertise.

Keywords: *securitization, security, non-traditional, COVID-19*

Is the German 'Blitzkrieg' Military Strategy a Feasible Tactic in Modern Day Warfare?

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The 'Blitzkrieg' strategy was a well-formulated approach to rapid victory through the swift and simultaneous movement of multiple armoured, mechanical and infantry divisions during the Second World War. The research delves into the very principles of the Blitzkrieg strategy and attempts to discuss the feasibility of this military tactic in modern warfare environments. The research utilises the work of various experts in military strategy and operational art, as well as through primary approaches to persons of military status. The overall purpose of this study is to effectively conclude and recommend developments that can be made to the traditional Blitzkrieg strategy for the adaptation and improvisation of this tactic into modern warfare. The content of this paper also provides a comprehensive analysis of the operational doctrine of the Blitzkrieg strategy and the various developments that this strategy has been transformed through. The research also attempts to provide reasonable ground to make comparative stances of this strategy used in modern warfare including the Gulf War and the Israeli 6-day War. Moreover, the paper discusses the issues that have emerged in the utilisation of this strategy in unconventional warfare, including crises with guerrilla fighters and resistance groups, including operations in the Sri Lankan civil war against the LTTE terrorist force. The study reveals that multiple developments have been made to the traditional Blitzkrieg strategy in modern day warfare and tactical recommendations have also been provided throughout the paper, including armour defensive capabilities, terrain compatibility and historically accurate tactics to achieve air superiority.

Keywords: *blitzkrieg, military strategy, conventional warfare, modern war*

Automated Assassins: Utility of Drones as Suicide Carders in Modern Warfare

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Due to modernization and technological advancement, belligerents and opponents (such as terrorist/rebels) adopt novel tactics and weaponry to meet the ends. Since opponents such as terrorists are free from international laws and boundaries, they adhere to variety of tactics which can vary from simple to complex and they can also differ from conventional to unconventional. However, suicide terrorism is considered as the most destructive form of all unconventional tactics of terrorism which deter the opponent, even if they lose the popular support sometimes. The danger of modern warfare is that, with the advancements in technology, instead of person who is willing to carry the bomb can be replaced by a flying drone. Even if this requires sufficient expertise, the investment is worth the effort due to its accuracy, non-human involvement without being captured in mishap. Recently, on 1st April 2021, Yemen's Al Houthi Movement (a Shia terror group) has claimed a drone attack on Riyadh, in Saudi Arabia. The same terror group on 14th September 2019 has claimed responsibility over the drone strike on state-owned Saudi Aramco oil processing facilities at Abqaiq. Looking at how drones have been utilized by terror groups such as Al Houthi Movement substituting suicide missions, this research emphasizes the mounting danger of drones been replaced as suicide carders due to its cost benefit factor and due to the effectiveness without any compromise. Further, this research highlights why this threat needs more attention as a national security priority in a rapidly enhancing technological environment.

Keywords: *drones, suicide terrorism, modern warfare, technology*

Civil Military Interdependency to Counter Terrorism: A Case Study of Sri Lanka

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Terrorism has become a major threat to many countries worldwide and has made it difficult to maintain world peace whereas some countries find it difficult to manage due to the destructive terrorist activities of various terrorist groups with innovation. Terrorism is an issue that Sri Lankan military and the communities consider as a security threat. Since Easter Attacks, Sri Lankan military and law enforcement authorities have been increasingly tasked with preventing, responding to, and investigating extremist movements and terrorist organizations. The aim of this article is to examine the importance of building relationship between military and local communities, creating an information highway in order to counter terrorism. Data collected from secondary sources and existing literature confirmed the findings of the article on this topic. The findings explain the importance of Human Intelligence (HUMINT) and how to utilize a maximum output to the intelligence services from the local communities by developing a civil military interdependency. In order to build that, building trust is a major component. This also focuses on strengthening information sharing through better relationships. This demands that Military and law enforcement agencies to establish a system of public participation in the countering terrorism measures by working closely with their communities. The conclusion of the article demonstrates suggestions to build better relationship among the military and civil society which namely are initiating the concept of civil joint task force and inculcating community building and education. Some broader implications were also extracted for the Sri Lanka Military from a realistic point of view.

Keywords: *terrorism, law enforcement, intelligence, civil military cooperation.*

Clash of Strategies in the Indo-Pacific: Challenge of Preserving the Equilibrium

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The Indo-Pacific is witnessing a fierce strategic competition among players to gain pre-eminence using different tools. The Free and Open Indo-Pacific strategies are used as a means to exert pressure on the competitors and to gain support from others in achieving strategic objectives. The Indo-Pacific strategies continue to clash tilting the geostrategic balance in one's favour and dividing the strategically critical ocean space led by the US and China. As no other maritime space has a diverse geostrategic and geopolitical environment similar to the Indo-Pacific, these strategy clashes have the potential to impact global peace and stability. It is in the above context that this research focuses on analysing how the clash of Indo-Pacific strategies among the leading players could impact the Indo-Pacific equilibrium leading to global instability. A combination of descriptive, analytical, qualitative, and empirical research types was adopted in analysing respective Indo-Pacific strategies and initiatives. The impact of major players led by the US, China, regional organizations and other players was analysed to comprehend the resultant impact on the Indo-Pacific stability. The study found that there are strategic implications on maritime security, trade, regional cooperation, strategic options of regional players, and Indo-Pacific equilibrium with adverse influence on global stability. The challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic have further complicated the already complex Indo-Pacific geopolitical setting. Further, no comprehensive study has focused on the regional and global implications of existing Indo-Pacific strategies and initiatives. The findings will also help Sri Lanka to better position in the Indo-Pacific.

Keywords: *Indo-Pacific, Indo-Pacific strategies, regional stability*

Reflecting on US-China Rivalries in Sri Lanka in a Post-COVID World

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Sri Lanka is once again on the radar of the world's great powers. The decade since the end of the thirty-year civil conflict in Sri Lanka has coincided with heightened geopolitical competition between great powers, with the US seeing China's rise as a threat to its global economic and military dominance. Worsening great power relations during the COVID-19 global pandemic has prompted talk of a second cold war and preparedness for decoupling between the US and China. Bitter disputes exist between the great powers in areas such as trade, investment, technology, security, Hong Kong and the origins of the coronavirus. Moreover, US-China rivalries have radiated to Sri Lanka with both attempting to incorporate the country into their sphere of influence. The US withdrawal of a large Millennium Challenge Corporation grant, China's Belt and Road infrastructure investment and China's smart pandemic diplomacy during COVID times have led some to suggest that Sri Lanka is tilting towards China and abandoning its cherished non-aligned status. However, there is little comprehensive research unpacking Sri Lanka's economic ties and security cooperation with great powers with a view to drawing lessons from Sri Lanka's experience. This paper reflects on Sri Lanka's engagement with the US and China since the end of conflict. It looks at why great powers might be interested in Sri Lanka. Then it analyses important aspects of Sri Lanka's engagement with great powers in areas such as trade and foreign direct investment (FDI), development assistance and security cooperation. It concludes by drawing some lessons from the Sri Lankan experience on engagement between small powers and great powers for a post-COVID world.

Keywords: *US-China rivalry, Sri Lanka, post-COVID world*

Security Implications of Quad and BRI in South Asia

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As the growth shift from West to East, and as China emerge as the rising power that is challenging the existing status quo, security architecture of the Indo-Pacific region is changing rapidly. China proposed the ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), hoping it would lead to common prosperity. Instead of improving connectivity, it has mounted criticism and scepticism of possible Chinese territorial expansion. In response, other players in the Indian Ocean introduced new initiatives and different strategies, the latest being the Quadrilateral Dialogue or the Quad. This has intensified the power struggle in the Indian Ocean region. It also suggests emerging security architecture that would challenge and transform the existing systems. Using publicly available qualitative data including the policy documents, official statements and information, this paper examines how BRI and Quad redefine regional security architecture in the Indian Ocean region. It will look into the externalities derived from the security challenges in the area and look into how small countries in the Indian Ocean region should respond and mitigate them.

Keywords: *Belt and Road initiative, quadrilateral dialogue, Indian Ocean security, maritime security architecture*

Effective Application of International Refugee Law: The Impact on Palestinians

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Since the establishment of Israel in 1948 that was supported by both Balfour Declaration in 1917 and the United Nations Partition Plan, also referred to the UNGA Resolution 181, Palestinians have been denied their right to be sheltered securely and return to their habitual places. This whole process mainly follows by Israeli's forceful evictions and expropriation of properties of Palestinians which violate basic rights that exist in the International Refugee Law. It is obvious that the 1948, 1967 and 1973 wars gave birth to largest Palestinian refugee flows in the modern history. Palestinian refugees and their descendants comprise any persons whose normal place of residence was British mandatory Palestine during the period of 1 June 1946 to 15 May 1948 and who lost both his home and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 conflict. However, those parameters are now extended as the displacement of Palestinians has been passed through generations by causing a Protracted Refugee Situation in the region. Though number of International mechanisms including the UN General Assembly Resolution 194, UN Security Council Resolution 237, General Assembly Resolution 2535 have pointed out the fact that Palestinian refugees need to be permitted to return to their homes at the earliest practicable date and to compensate those who decide not to return, those mechanisms have not yet made an effective contribution to ensure the rights of Palestinians. Within this landscape, this paper concludes that the issue of the Palestinian refugees has become intensified due to the lapses in implementing international legal procedures which have been adopted so far. The Qualitative methodology is utilized in the study to analyse secondary data collected from books and journal articles.

Keywords: *forceful evictions, international refugee law, protracted refugee situation*

The Taiwan Issue: Exploring the Possible Standoff between QUAD and China

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This paper aims to explore the stance of the present governments in each member nation that is part of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) if China invades Taiwan in the near future. However, the author wishes to state that Chinese invasion of Taiwan would not be a direct military assault but a carefully calculated machination in which the island-nation would be subdued into submission without firing a single bullet. Nevertheless, securing Taiwan's independence would be the first formidable challenge the nations of QUAD would face since the sole mission of this union is to contain Chinese influence and expansion into the Indian Ocean and Asia Pacific regions. Therefore, the research question outlying this paper is if QUAD will intervene to save Taiwan from an imminent Chinese invasion? To answer this question, this research identifies two objectives. The first is to gather information on the nature of the diplomatic relationship maintained by QUAD member states with China. The second objective on the other hand, is to explore academic and defence related material available on strategies that QUAD may apply to prevent Chinese consolidation of Taiwan. When exploring the resources available on this scenario, it appears that there are a number of factors to consider by each member state before they all agree on defending Taiwan from China. Similar for China, it is a question of whether the Communist Party of China believes that its military is capable to confront the united forces of four economic powerhouses. Nevertheless, despite the reservations of Japan, India and Australia, The United States would be compelled to come for Taiwan's aid if USA wishes to maintain its superiority in Asia Pacific, even if it fails to prevent China ultimately consolidating Taiwan into PRC. The methodology applied on this paper was based purely on qualitative research and on secondary sources.

Keywords: *USA, China, Japan, India, Australia, Taiwan, QUAD*

The Geopolitics of Russia: A Struggle Linked to Geography and Global Dominance

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In June 2021, the most important global political event was the face to face bilateral meeting between President Vladimir Putin of Russia and President Joe Biden of the United States in Switzerland. The focus of the above meeting was to discuss an array of issues that have created an uneasy political atmosphere between Russia and the West for a long time. There was a geopolitical rivalry between Russia and the West for centuries and it was Sir Halford Mackinder's introduction of 'Heartland Theory' in the early twentieth century that laid the foundation for conflict between Russia and the West based on geography. Russia is the world's largest country and based on Mackinder's heartland theory it owns much of the area of the heartland with an abundance of natural resources that can be used to improve its power and thereby dominate the world. Russia as the largest country in the world needs buffer states with a sphere of influence over them to protect it from external aggression and further if it needs to spread its dominance to the rest of the world. However, the United States and the West's decision to expand the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) after the Cold War towards the traditional Russian sphere of influence in Eastern Europe has created a geopolitical struggle between Russia and the West. This paper argues that the ongoing geopolitical rivalry between Russia and the West is connected to the geography of Russia. This is an exploratory research based on secondary sources.

Keywords: *Heartland theory, geopolitics, Russia, West*

Will ISIS Resurrect the Caliphate in Afghanistan?

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Despite major losses and military setbacks in Iraq and Syria, ISIS shows potential of gaining momentum in Afghanistan by exploiting the political uncertainty and volatile security environment in the country, in order to achieve its goal of resurrecting their so-called 'Caliphate'. While competing with the Afghan Taliban and Al-Qaida who are fighting for dominance in the regional Jihadist landscape, the ISIS Afghan affiliate group, which is currently branded as the Islamic State-Khorasan Province (IS-K) has been conducting a steady drive of radicalization and recruitment of the local Afghan population, while engaging in building key alliances with Salafi Jihadist militant groups in the Central and South Asian region, as part of the transnational terror group's strategy to consolidate its position in the war-torn nation. ISIS has also been attracting large numbers of foreign fighters to Afghanistan which could become the new battle-ground to resurrect the so-called Caliphate, which was previously established in Iraq and Syria, which will signal a shift in the centre of gravity of ISIS operations. Following the defeat of ISIS in multiple theatres of conflict which led to the group losing territory in Iraq and Syria, the transnational terror group has maintained resilience by evolving through its affiliates spread across the globe. This paper will provide an in-depth analysis on the regional security implications of the US and NATO withdrawal from Afghanistan and the possible attempts made by ISIS to resurrect its so-called caliphate in the war-battered nation which will once again evolve into a hub for transnational terrorism.

Keywords: *ISIS, IS-K, Taliban, Jihad, counterterrorism, caliphate, Wilayat, Afghanistan, transnational terrorism*

Sole Representatives in Tamil Politics: A Case Study of the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) in Post-Conflict Sri Lanka

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This paper examines the hitherto unexplored subject of a political party seeking the status of sole political representatives. Why do some political parties seek the status of sole political representatives? What strategies do they employ to achieve the status of sole political representatives? Is the status merely symbolic, or does it fetch tangible benefits? These research questions are explored by treating Sri Lanka's Tamil political party TNA as a case study. Primary and secondary data formed the basis of the analysis. The TNA seems to use three strategies to achieve a dominant character within Tamil politics. They are (1) disproportion of rival political groups, (2) incorporation of some political parties/alliances, and (3) efficiency of political manifesto. The TNA used sole Tamil political representation to ensure bilateral talks with the government and foreign representatives, get the Tamil diaspora support, and dominate the administrative structure, especially in the north. The strategy worked to a great extent in post-conflict Tamil politics since the end of the armed conflict in 2009, but it partially experienced a downfall in the 2020 general election. This research analyses the level of optimism of the TNA that it is the sole political representative of Sri Lankan Tamils and its political future.

Keywords: *sole political representative, TNA, post-conflict Tamil politics*

Mawanella in the Balance: Roots of Indoctrination of Muslim Youth: Preliminary Results of a Field Study

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This presentation covers the preliminary results of a qualitative field study in Mawanella in the aftermath of the Easter Sunday suicide bombings in Sri Lanka. The Presidential Commission of Inquiry into the Easter Sunday Attacks heard that there were three critical networks, based in Kattankudy, Colombo, and Mawanella that helped stage the Easter Sunday attacks in 2019. The Muslim community in Mawanella had not been suspected to breed extremism and fundamentalism hitherto. Therefore, it is important to find out the causes and roots of indoctrination and subsequent radicalisation of some Muslim youths in Mawanella, which has a relatively better educated Muslim population. These preliminary results reveal shrinking of space for inter-communal interactions and social cohesion in Mawanella over the past two decades. It also reveals the indoctrination of Muslim youths over a long period of time by orthodox and fundamentalist sectarian groups such as the Jamaat-e-Islami.

Keywords: *Muslim extremism, Muslim youth, Mawanella*

Lone Wolf Terrorism: Identifying Possible Future Threats in Sri Lanka

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Lone wolf terrorism is arguably becoming one of the most attractive trends in terrorism. Identifying a growing pattern of a 'domino effect' after a terrorist attack, post- Easter Sunday attack tenure in the present Sri Lanka seems a high possibility of inspiring radicalization for a future 'lone wolf terrorist attack'. Moreover, the current COVID-19 pandemic seems to facilitate the grooming of lone wolves due to isolation policies, increased usage of social media and further even to launch an attack since the attention of the 'National Security' has shifted away from terrorism to health and safety. In this backdrop, problem statement of this paper focuses on answering whether Sri Lanka's next terrorist attack would be a lone wolf attack. In order to find feasible solutions, the methodology adopted in this paper is qualitative based on both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include in-depth discussions with intelligence officers and the secondary sources include media and internet. The main objective of this study is to prevent the next terrorist attack in Sri Lanka. In order to achieve this objective, the research reveals an action-plan to prevent possible attacks and emphasize the importance of civil-military nexus in State intelligence.

Keywords: *lone wolf terrorism, threats, Sri Lanka*

Countering Terrorism: Striking a Balance Between National Security and Human Rights

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Domestic, as well as international audience, criticizes the Prevention of Terrorism Act. The provisions of PTA are regarded as discriminatory, breaching human rights law as well as fundamental rights. However, the purpose of PTA is to ensure national security by combating terrorism. Therefore, it is imperative to strike a balance between the interests of National Security and Human Rights. The research is library-based research, which is also known as doctrinal research. It has used existing sources to arrive at conclusions. Both primary sources and secondary sources are equipped. The paper discusses the strengths and weaknesses of the PTA. The Act itself has inconsistencies as well as lacunas, which is detrimental to national security. The paper addresses the drawbacks accordingly, proving the necessity of upholding national security whilst adhering to international standards and protecting human rights. Consequently, the paper has provided an array of recommendations.

Keywords: national security, human rights, terrorism

Building a Virtual Military Force for National Security, Stability and Development of Sri Lanka

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The aim of this research paper is to explore the novel interpretations for building a Virtual Military Force for National Security, Stability and Development of Sri Lanka. The Virtual Arms Room, as a battle learning system, provides secure, distributed version control and data management empowered by AI on cloud platforms. The research discusses the importance of developing demanding interpretations and vital concepts to build a Virtual Military Force. The study was conducted in a qualitative approach in reviewing of 64 research papers by meta-synthesis method followed by Mata - Thematic Synthesis and Critical Interpretive Analysis. It reveals that, Virtual military capabilities will ensure that the Army is gained the competitive advantage to win the real wars over its contemporary adversaries. The results also suggest synergistic effects of building a Virtual Military Force for National Security, Stability and Development of Sri Lanka is important due to it guarantees the national interest, freedom and the preservation of our way of life, formidable for future. Moreover, it demonstrates that Virtual War is the more strategic, enduring and powerful form of conflict as it is capable of creating affective overmatch, which enables the exploitation of human cognitive behaviour. This paper analyses various concepts and develop novel interpretations future scopes of significant as the practical application that vital to build a Virtual Military Force for National Security, Stability and Development of Sri Lanka.

Keywords: *virtual, digital, war, military, weapons, learning, training, synthetic-immunity, artificial intelligence, machine learning*

Digital Minds into National Security: Artificial Intelligence for Threat Analysis

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The evolution of technology in the digital age is diverse and rapid. This brings humans to a juncture of choice between machine and man. It is proven that machines can be more accurate than humans and humans are better in cognition. The world is slowly moving to the application of Artificial Intelligence (AI), which is a combination of best in both humans and machines. Technical application of rule engines, algorithms along neural engines and neural networks have increased in AI; making the platforms sapient and sentient. This combination had proven application in many areas, especially in the domains of information and statistics. Therefore, a debate for its application in recognition and assessment of threats came into motion in the realms of security and defence. Many advanced nations have successfully experimented and implemented AI programs, which proved themselves by generating tremendous results over time. This study will focus on the suitability of AI, in the fields of national security and threat analysis for Sri Lanka. This will also focus on the existing application of digital threat analysis AI in Sri Lanka versus potential applications of AI in the domains foresaid. Thereby assessing the possibility of improving the capacity strategic security by recognition of possible threats; ensuring better strategic preparation through AI.

Keywords: *artificial intelligence, national security, threat analysis*

Non-Kinetic Next Generation Terrorism in Post Conflict Sri Lanka: Importance of Countering Double Front Propaganda from LTTE and ISIS

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After the thirty years of ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka, the country was expected to flourish with thriving economic growth without any disturbance from violent extremism. However, the anti-Muslim riots in 2014, 2018 and the Easter Sunday attacks in post war Sri Lanka highlight that the country is now experiencing an altered form of violence to separatism, and it has pushed the diverse societies towards ethno-religious polarization. Online propaganda mechanisms such as 'Voice of Hind', Green Bird Telegram Channel, Amarq Media Centre etc. constantly provide the necessary ideological support to gather scattered Islamist extremists to function through regional cooperation under specific regional coordination and leadership. On the other hand, the remnants of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in overseas with the Sri Lankan Tamil Diaspora community are coercing the Sri Lankan government against 'war crimes' committed during the 30 years of war, especially referring to Eelam war IV. Even if the allegations against Sri Lanka are baseless, the network of the Sri Lankan Tamil Diaspora have achieved substantial recognition for their grievances from the international community. With the UNHRC resolution and recent bills in parliaments in Toronto and Ontario, depicts the success of the disinformation campaigns spearheaded by LTTE front organizations. Hence, it is evident that Sri Lanka is exposed to two different fronts of information war mounting from LTTE front organizations and Islamist extreme organizations. Consequently, this research emphasizes on 'why' Sri Lanka has to consider 'double front' propaganda war mounted by LTTE and ISIS, as a Critical Vulnerability (CV) to national security and 'how' this threat can be mitigated.

Keywords: *propaganda war, ISIS, LTTE, national security, counter terrorism*

Use of Visual Media by LTTE Front Organisations to Influence Post-war Sri Lanka

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In May 2009, following a thirty-year armed conflict, Sri Lanka's territorial integrity was restored. However, the LTTE International Network's information warfare against Sri Lanka has not yet ended, and the LTTE continues to engage in cyber-hostilities and cyber-information warfare. The true objective of such operations is to radicalize the minds of people, particularly young people who have not yet seen the ravages of war and are therefore susceptible to manipulation. Hence, the purpose of this study is to examine the patterns of visualizing utilized by the International network of LTTE, which are the front organizations to influence communities and foster misconceptions. The study shall be conducted as Doctrinal research. Data shall be obtained through primary and secondary resources and shall be analysed qualitatively. To be more specific, open-source material found on social media, printed and visual media shall be utilized in gathering the requisite data. The principal objectives of conducting this study are as follows. Firstly, the paper shall explore how disinformation that is disseminated through visual media affect international communities and radicalize youths. Secondly, this shall examine the potential consequences of radicalization through the media, which might degrade the community's tranquil existence now and in the future. Finally, the paper shall address the legal implications of using visual media as a medium of communication. Concerning international law, the author shall provide recommendations on several elements of strategic policymaking.

Keywords: *LTTE, visual media, radicalization, second generation, Tamil diaspora*

Effects of Digital Technologies on Health Service Delivery and Quality Management in Sri Lankan Health Care Systems

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Quality of health service in accordance with professional standards and client expectations is important and the first step for it is a quality improvement in existing health service. The main purpose of this study was to get an idea about the quality healthcare attributes and its effectiveness with regards to the traditional systems in health care in Sri Lanka. Further, discuss and analyse the quality attributes of digital health systems in Sri Lanka. Higher healthcare quality results in satisfaction for the clients specially patients, community other stakeholders like health sector employees, health suppliers, and better performance for the health-related organisations. During the Covid-19 global pandemic situation, the usability of digital health facilities increased as a spike to overcome the problem of reaching doctors physically. If the quality of healthcare services improves, costs decrease, productivity increases and better service would be available for clients, which in turn enhances organisational performance and provides long-term working relationships for employees and suppliers. This study was carried out through the administration of a questionnaire addressed to 385 walk-in patients in Sri Lanka during the time period of 15th January 2021 to 15th February 2021. Data were analysed using the descriptive statistical method. The findings replicate positive feedbacks to engage with new digital platforms in the global pandemic situation. Moreover, the findings above affirm the lack of reaching the digital infrastructure, insufficient skills and technical knowledge in dealing with e digital innovations as well as new applications, it is impossible to successfully adopt digital health resources in health care delivery in order to improve the effectiveness and quality of the existing system.

Keywords: *digital health systems, quality, effectiveness*

Pragmatic Response for Maritime-Air Security, a Way Forward: A Conceptual Framework from a Strategic Aerial Perspective

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The underlying concept of airpower is an ability of a nation to achieve its objectives and secure its interests through the means of air and associated capabilities. The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in a weak economy thus making Sri Lanka vulnerable to different security and sustainable development challenges. This situation will continue until the world is completely recovered from the COVID-19 pandemic. Sri Lanka has a greater blue economic potential considering its huge oceanic resources compared to the land area which is yet to be exploited. In new normal conditions, the exploitation of natural treasure inherited in our seas would be a great benefit for the developing economy of the Island nation. Already the geostrategic advantage and marine resources of Sri Lanka are being utilized by various state and non-state actors in the region and extra-region. Hence, the development of maritime security structure through an integrated system comprising all aerial and maritime stakeholders would be of utmost importance in future exploitation of these sea frontiers whilst ensuring national security. As a remedy, smart, stretched re-fleeting of assets, formulation of the conceptual maritime-air command structure, and conduct of joint training were recommended to address maritime security challenges Sri Lanka is facing at present in order to conduct effective and efficient maritime-air operations in the future.

Keywords: *airpower, maritime-air operations, national security*

Maritime Terrorism in South East Asia: An Assessment

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This research evaluates the possibility of an increase in maritime terrorist violence in Southeast Asia, based on a recounting and analysis of some of the most recent past incidents in these waters. Through the research objective, it tries to identify the challenges facing states in the region in maritime terrorism and the emerging trends in maritime terrorism. It also studies the emerging terrorists in Southeast Asia and their potential. Further, it pays particular attention to how geo-strategic issues in Southeast Asia are confronted. The research was based on qualitative methodology, and only secondary data were used. Secondary data were collected by means of a literature review and reference sources such as legislation, international treaties, academic literature, newspaper articles and sources. Maritime terrorism is seen as a critical threat to maritime safety in Southeast Asia. According to research, maritime security challenges in Southeast Asia are relatively high compared to other Asian regions, and maritime terrorism has grown significantly. Terrorist attacks in the maritime domain are worrisome because of their potential flow on trade effects. In South-East Asia, maritime terrorism by vile non-state actors takes place primarily in the Sulus and Celebes seas, with the Abu Sayyaf group considered the main author.

Keywords: *maritime terrorism, maritime security, South East Asia*

Conceptualising an Air Diplomacy Framework for Air Strategy of Small Air Forces to Strengthen Foreign Policy Aspirations: Sri Lankan Perspective and Way Forward

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The term air diplomacy first came into limelight in the first half of the 20th century amidst the advent of air power. The air diplomacy is the employment of air power elements in support of the foreign policy. The study explored how an air diplomacy framework could be incorporated into the air strategy with object to strengthen country's foreign policy aspirations; further, it is benefitted to bolster the tangible and non-tangible capabilities of the SLAF. The contemporary world has seen regional/global air forces have been attempting to leverage air power in quest of protecting national interests and human capital beyond its seashores. Although, it is observed that Sri Lanka has not been exploiting the air diplomacy to the fullest extent, in quest of attaining foreign policy aspirations irrespective of the governments in power. Hence, it is imperative to bridge this gap and employ the air diplomacy in order to attain desired ends while supporting the regional stability/cooperation. Researchers have derived the conceptual framework based on the review of theoretical studies. The exploratory study accustomed with inductive approach and interpretivism research philosophy while conducted as a qualitative study. Eventually, researchers have developed an air diplomacy framework which could, schematically be imbedded into SLAF's air strategy, whilst aiming to support country's foreign policy aspirations, subsequent to recognised current government's foreign policy imperatives, where the air diplomacy could be employed. The two spheres of SLAF's engagements within the air diplomacy spectrum explored as kinetic and non-kinetic engagements.

Keywords: *foreign policy, air strategy, air diplomacy*

The Port Policy of Small Island Powers: Sri Lankan Perspective

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This paper discusses the requirement of reorienting the port policy of Sri Lanka. The port policy directly concerns national interest and the fundamental values of the state that are strategically significant for acquiring, managing, and controlling the global power strategy. At present, Sri Lanka is expanding port policies due to the shift in the power of the global economic arena. Therefore, Hambantota and Colombo port have given significance to Sri Lanka and made them maritime influencers in their own rights. In this context, each of the global powers will see a threat to itself if the Government of Sri Lanka is to favour one over the other. Even though Sri Lanka has applied the non-alignment policy approach, the littoral state, port policy of Sri Lanka faces the dilemma of balancing or bandwagoning strategy with the state and non-state actors. The objectives of the present research are to explain the geo strategic importance of Sri Lanka in terms of port power and to critically examine the challenges to the port policy of Sri Lanka, to investigate the positive and negative impact of challenges to the port security of Sri Lanka. Research methods of the present research deal with both descriptive and analytical in nature. The study is mainly based on secondary sources. This research found the unstable port policies with the frequent change of domestic government resulted in chaos in the economic stability. Observation has made the reluctance of co-operation and difficulty of managing and understanding maritime agreements, and lack of coherent functionalism in the port policies. Thus, a non-aligned strategic approach would be the best port policy for Sri Lanka. Further, the structure of the international system is influential, and Sri Lanka must not persuade the individual character of the leader where port policies must base on an in-depth understanding of the maritime concepts and theories and apply them into function.

Keywords: geopolitics, power, port policies

POSTER PRESENTATIONS



“Online Learning”, its Effectiveness and Challenges Faced by Students

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This paper elucidates the contemporary challenge faced by the educational sectors regarding the security, stability and national development in the new normal. It is witnessed that the world is changing in a short period of time and adapting to its transformations by shifting from conventional methodologies towards the digital platforms. This research highlights the effectiveness of online learning and the psychological status of students facing the challenge of getting online education. Also, this paper portrays issues of proving quality education through online platforms to achieve national development under the new normal conditions. Online education does determine an aspect of national development since it does makes lives easier in several ways moreover, exploring new strategies to determine human development. Further, this document discusses the relationship between security and youth, particularly in relation to their education highlighting the threats towards education.

Keywords: *online learning, national development, new normal*

Nuclear Learning in South Asia

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In the early 1970s India and Pakistan initiated their nuclear programs justifying them as national security concerns. They did not become a part of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) or Nuclear Test-ban Treaty (CTBT). After the nuclear disaster in World War II, the western world continued to discourage the rest of the world from becoming nuclear states; and establishing the treaties is classic evident. Under all these discouragements along with South Asia's various unsettled issues, India and Pakistan became de facto nuclear states. However, utilizing nuclear energy accurately could bring stability to the region by solving numerous issues. The study will attempt to discover what has the South Asian region: focusing on India and Pakistan, learnt from the recent accidents in the nuclear field and whether they have identified the natural danger of nuclear energy; which defines the crux of nuclear learning itself. Sri Lankan Atomic Energy Board, regulatory commission, previous studies on a similar topic and the books written on nuclear learning will be associated in gathering qualitative data. This study will be significant, especially to those states planning to initiate nuclear programs and to the relevant institutes and civil public on nuclear learning. The proposed outcome is to better understand nuclear learning and how the South Asian region interpreted it and used it in their nuclear programs.

Keywords: *nuclear learning, South Asia, proliferation, stability, nuclear disasters*

Diplomatic Immunity in the 21st Century: An Analysis of its Application

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Diplomats enjoy diplomatic privileges under the patronage of the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations (VCDR). Articles 20 to 39 of the VCDR contain privileges that diplomats and their families are entitled to, especially in a receiving state. These privileges are collectively known as diplomatic immunity due to the clauses that free Foreign Service personnel from jurisdiction of a receiving state. While diplomatic immunity is entrusted with protecting the diplomats and their families in a receiving state, recently it has become a factor that sparks controversy due to misappropriation. Several cases point out the unjustifiable acts committed by diplomats who suffered minimum or no consequences at all. Immunity has caused disputes at both national and international levels. Although it is a necessity in the diplomatic field to safeguard the diplomats through these privileges, public distrust has become prominent, which has in turn affected the integrity of the discipline. Therefore, a qualitative study was conducted on the modern usage of diplomatic immunity, using both primary and secondary sources. The research examined the impact it has had on the international order and diplomatic relations in the 21st century, which led to the understanding that the exploitation of these privileges has become much common in recent times. Thus, the author has arrived at the conclusion that some alterations to the clauses of the six-decade old Convention would help minimize the said concerns.

Keywords: *diplomacy, diplomatic immunity, Vienna convention on diplomatic relations*

Threats and Challenges in Drug Trafficking as a Maritime Crime: An Analysis of the Western Indian Ocean Region

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Drug Trafficking can be identified as one of the major maritime crimes in the maritime space. Drug trafficking occurs around two major regions, namely, the 'Golden Crescent' and 'Golden Triangle'. Countries like Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, India, and Sri Lanka are of paramount importance in the Western Indian Ocean Region as producers and consumers of illicit drugs. The 'Golden Crescent' covers Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran. Afghanistan and Pakistan can be identified as the main source countries for drugs in the Western Indian Ocean Region. On the other hand, countries like India and Sri Lanka become either consumers or targeted countries within the region. Sri Lanka is affected by drug trafficking, because it is in a strategic location, which is immediately north of the sea lanes. The illicit drug trade has imposed numerous threats and challenges to the international community. Therefore, collaborative action is necessary either bilaterally or multilaterally. Even though there are many regional as well as international mechanisms that are in place to mitigate the issue on drug trafficking, trafficking of drugs still continues. Violence related to drug trafficking can be highlighted as one of the pivotal threats. Another crucial security threat is the arms trafficking that mingles along with drug trafficking which is already an issue in Sri Lanka. These threats and challenges are limited not only to states but also to the individuals as it challenges health and causes addiction. Therefore, this research mainly identifies the major threats and challenges that affect the peace and harmony of the states and its individuals while identifying measures that have been taken to mitigate drug trafficking. The research was conducted as a qualitative research, utilizing secondary data sources like, books, articles, and journals. The research analysed data from over the past three years to examine the challenges posed to countries in the Western Indian Ocean Region.

Keywords: *drug trafficking, laws, maritime security, western Indian ocean region*

Impact of COVID -19 on Sri Lanka's Tourism Industry: Economic Implications

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Tourism is one of the most important industries in Sri Lanka. The tourism industry contributes to the growth of the economy of Sri Lanka by bringing much needed foreign exchange, creating thousands of jobs, improving the country's infrastructure, and encouraging cultural exchanges between foreigners and its citizens. Recent trends in Sri Lankan Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2019 showed that the tourism sector contributed 12.6%. However, due to the current pandemic situation, Sri Lanka's tourism industry has faced many challenges. According to Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA), the COVID - 19 pandemic was a significant blow to the tourism industry following the closing of airports in March 2020. The objective of this study is to investigate how COVID - 19 affects the tourism industry, broadly the Sri Lankan economy and what measures can be taken to mitigate those effects. The impact on the Sri Lankan economy will be analysed using time-series analyses using data based on 2019 to 2021.

Keywords: COVID-19, Sri Lanka, tourism industry, economic implications

Achieving Sustainable Development Goal 2: Challenges Encountered during the COVID-19 Pandemic

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The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) are 17 goals that countries pledged to achieve by 2030. The second SDG seeks to find permanent solutions to end all forms of hunger and achieve food security. Goal 2 has 8 targets and 14 indicators as measurements. Over the past 1.5 years, the Covid-19 pandemic has created uncertainties surrounding global governance, travel, economic interests, employment and food security. As governments strive to keep their economies afloat, layoffs especially for daily waged workers and in the hospitality industry have contributed to job insecurity. This has caused insecurities surrounding food, as families are unable to provide for themselves. Therefore, this research examines the challenges countries face in achieving SDG goal 2 by 2030 amidst the drawbacks encountered during the Covid-19 pandemic. Qualitative in nature, the research follows the case study method by analysing the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, and the challenges these countries face in achieving food security. The research identified that both developed and developing countries are facing major drawbacks in achieving this goal as the pandemic extends. Furthermore, with the spread of pests that directly affect food crops, the research identified that intergovernmental organisations (IGOs) and national governments have an additional challenge in safeguarding these invaluable crops to feed their populations. Climate change and adverse weather patterns have further burdened countries that are coping with limited economic and physical resources. The research concludes that countries will find it immensely difficult to achieve the targets set out in SDG 2 over the next eight years, with no indication of the Covid-19 pandemic ending.

Keywords: *COVID-19 pandemic, food security, sustainable development goals*

An Analysis on Cosmopolitanism in Colonial Sri Lanka with Special Reference to Kandyan Period

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The concept of cosmopolitanism helps us to have a better understanding about the complex identities of communities lived in the past. The external relations of Sri Lanka essentially blended cultures and people together. She was colonized with the arrival of the Portuguese in 1505 AD, after which the country was also colonized by the Dutch and the British respectively. Due to the geographical location Sri Lanka attracted special attention from the Western States. Even before colonization, Sri Lanka was exposed to many Eastern and Western cultures due to trade relations with other countries and foreign invasions also brought considerable cultural and political change towards the island. The trade relations which held a very special place among them. With the advent of colonialism, many cultural, socio-political change leading to cosmopolitanism, incorporating European traditions took place in Sri Lanka. However, much of the analysis on Sri Lanka's historical record does not reflect this cosmopolitan nature. The Kandyan period, which was the last kingdom prior to total surrender of sovereignty to British, would have witnessed the most rigorous cultural blend of Sri Lanka's history. This research study is an attempt to find out those hidden evidence of cosmopolitanism in Sri Lankan history during the colonial period with special focus on Kandyan Kingdom. The main Objective of the study is to find out the historical evidence to show how positive or negative Sri Lankan communities were to adopt, tolerate and respect different cultures. This research will be done majorly based on historical records both primary and secondary. A handful of interviews will also be conducted to get the opinions of expert historians on the subject matter. The aim is to build an environment in which all religions, all races, can coexist in the country by carrying forward only the name of Sri Lanka.

Keywords: *cosmopolitanism, Sri Lanka, colonial period*

The COVID -19 Pandemic in South Asia: An Analysis of China's Medical Assistance

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South Asia is experiencing a severe health crisis due to the COVID-19 pandemic, with the new variants of the virus destabilising existing healthcare systems that are exhausted. This has resulted in medical attention being inaccessible to communities, causing untimely deaths. Some countries are in debt accessing basic amenities and repaying loans, whilst others have not gained access to medical equipment and vaccines on their own. This has caused a reliance on donations from intergovernmental organisations and friendly nations. In 2020, South Asian states received significant medical assistance from China and the United States. However, there are limitations in obtaining vaccines as India abruptly halted its distribution and developed countries accumulated them. In this context, China has increased the distribution of vaccines internationally, whilst inoculating its nationals. Therefore, this research examines how vaccine diplomacy benefits China, and whether South Asian states have an alternative to obtain medical assistance. This research follows the case methodology and thematically analyses the data collected to answer the research problem. Accordingly, the research identified that China is boosting its soft power by donating medical assistance to countries that do not have access to it, indicating that it is sympathetic to the region's interests. Furthermore, as the world's top vaccine exporter, China has called for more inoculation to increase herd immunity. Even though China's behaviour is being criticised as exerting its influence in South Asia, this research identified that South Asian countries are benefiting from China's behaviour, particularly in the absence of alternatives. In conclusion, whilst China boosts its soft power by donating large quantities of vaccines, South Asian states benefit as they now have more options to access medical supplies.

Keywords: *China, COVID-19, medical diplomacy, South Asia*

Russia - Ukraine Relations Since 2014

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Russia–Ukraine relations refer to the relations between the Russian Federation and Ukraine. The legacy of the tsarist Empire and the Soviet Union is one of the crucial factors to understand and explain the current affairs in the post-Soviet space. This is especially true for Russia–Ukraine relations. Relations between the two countries have severely fallen apart since the 2014 Ukrainian revolution, followed by Russia's annexation of Crimea from Ukraine, and over Russia's backing for the separatist fighters of the Donetsk People's Republic and the Luhansk People's Republic. The research mainly focusses on the bilateral relations of Russia and Ukraine from 2014 following Russian annexation of Crimea from Ukraine and how internal and external factors have affected the dynamics of bilateral relations. It falls under the category of descriptive research design, and it was conducted according to both qualitative and quantitative methods. All the information obtained are secondary data obtained from available sources. The research gives an insight into the shifts in foreign relations of Russia and Ukraine also into the impact of the Russo-Ukrainian war on global politics.

Keywords: *Russia, Ukraine, Crimea, Russo-Ukrainian war*

Power Rivalry in the Indian Ocean Region: Examining the Impact on Sri Lanka

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The Indian Ocean Region (IOR) is fast becoming a major area of global political and security interest due to various reasons. Therefore, there are many threats for maritime security of the Indian Ocean region, which could have disastrous consequences on regional countries. The region's political and security context is rapidly shifting mainly due to expanding and competing Chinese and Indian spheres of influence in the region. Traditional security concerns like the maintenance of the freedom of maritime navigation and free access to and transport of vital energy supplies are increasing in importance in the Indian Ocean. This paper describes the interests of these superpowers and the emerging power rivalry in the Indian Ocean Region. The aim of the research is to identify the reasons behind these power struggles in the Indian Ocean Region and the impact of those threats on Sri Lanka. Data collected from secondary sources and existing literature confirmed the findings of the article on this wider topic. The findings reveal that the main sources of traditional threats to the region is Indo China Power rivalry and how it has impacted Sri Lanka being right in the centre of the India Ocean. The conclusion of the article demonstrates different methods in shaping the foreign policy and defence strategy in order to build better relationships with these emerging rivalries. Some broader implications were also extracted for the Sri Lanka Military from a realistic point of view.

Keywords: *maritime security, Indian ocean region, power rivalry*

Victims and Perpetrators: The Plight of the Child Soldiers in the Eyes of Law

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The Sri Lankan government underwent a three-decade war with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and successfully defended the rights of Sri Lankans. Irrespective of the victory, LTTE international networks are using social media, diplomacy, and legislation and falsely accusing Sri Lanka of having committed the Tamil Genocide. The uprising of false information and hate speech is controversial as well as illegal. The false picture painted by LTTE has resulted in doubts in the world about Sri Lanka's guiltlessness. The Sri Lankan government has failed to counter the false allegations successfully. The Paper showcases the plight of LTTE child soldiers who are a threat to national security. It has attempted to identify the laws relating to child soldiers. Moreover, the paper showcases the government's role in the rehabilitation process and it discusses how to use the argument of usage of Child soldiers by LTTE to alarm the world on atrocities committed by LTTE. The research is doctrinal research, which has used primary sources such as existing and laws and policies. It has equipped secondary sources such as reports and journal articles. The atrocities of LTTE in using child soldiers are strictly in contravention of human rights law and humanitarian law. Therefore, the government can successfully use the claim of child Soldiers to show the dark reality of LTTE. The steps were taken by the government to rehabilitate and reintegrate child soldiers into society advocates the guiltlessness of the Sri Lankan Government.

Keywords: *child soldiers, national security, law relating to child soldiers*

