

India-Sri Lanka-Ink: A Bond of Heritage and Strategic Gravitas for Free, Open and Inclusive Indo-Pacific

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Abstract

A critical review of India-Sri Lanka relations is done in an analysis of their complex historical linkages through their civilisational, cultural and strategic connections whilst contextualising them based on an evolving Indo-Pacific. Moreover, these connections are shaped by historical and current geographies as well as theories of constructivism, realism and liberal institutionalism.

Examining the contemporary dimensions of India-Sri Lanka partnerships such as through trade, maritime connectivity, defence cooperation and developmental assistance and Sri Lanka's move towards economic recovery through strengthened bilateral ties with India contribute towards positioning India as the most important partner in supporting Sri Lanka's regional integration efforts. However, significant challenges persist within these partnerships such as the fisheries issue, the trade imbalance and China's growing strategic presence within Sri Lanka.

Despite any challenges to date, the study concludes that India-Sri Lanka relations are fundamentally strong, based upon the principles of shared values and mutually beneficial interests. Strengthened partnerships through dialogue, joint sustainable development efforts, stability within the maritime domain will assure a free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific which features both shared heritage and strategic vision.

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Introduction

The similarity and similarity factor between India and Sri Lanka appear to be verisimilitude, a veritable association and a bond between one of the oldest and most erudite alliances in South Asia. While the association and relationship between the two countries involve a diplomatic relationship, they also involve a civilizational bond, which represents a synthesis of spiritual heritage and geopolitical importance.

As the festival of Diwali lights up the sky in the Indian subcontinent, the light also represents a gentle reminder of the bond and the relationship that continues to exist and endure between the two nations. The epic Ramayana, which links Ayodhya in the state of Uttar Pradesh in India to Lanka in Sri Lanka, represents a universal truth to the citizens of both nations, a truth that continues to endure in the world much longer than conflicts and wars. These associations and links continue to shape the relationship between India and Sri Lanka today.



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The India-Sri Lanka relationship is built on a profound and enduring historic and civilizational continuity which transcends the geographic aspect altogether. This enduring connection has come to complement strong political and economic ties, with India playing a vital role in the infrastructural, educational, healthcare, technological, and whatnot development in Sri Lanka. All these activities have only added to the interdependency of India and Sri Lanka, while the interaction between civil societies via tourism, academic exchanges, and above all the Tamil Diaspora have helped build trust and understanding between the two nations, making the connection not just commercial but one of heritage, strategy, and enduring friendship, leading to innovation and sustainable cooperation. However, despite the abiding heritage and abiding engagements and cooperation, the India-Sri Lanka relationship has been on a bumpy ride. Maritime boundaries, the fishing rights issue, trade imbalance, and especially regional security issues require constant negotiations and diplomacy. Differences exist over political priorities and the role and influence of external powers in the region and the Indo-Pacific region. These issues notwithstanding, the relationship is not defined by these issues but by the abiding heritage and abiding cooperation. India and Sri Lanka relationship is easily understood and comprehended as a tapestry woven around historical and civilizational engagements and pragmatism. The historical, cultural, and spiritual relationship that fosters cooperation and engagement between India and Sri Lanka throws an important light on their contemporary relationship, while the contemporary nature and fluidity of trade, security, and diplomacy define their engagements.

Establishing Rapport

Thus, as may be deduced from the annals of history pertaining to civilizational connectivity between nations, a contemporary partnership represents a harmonizing element of history along with the exigencies of contemporary statecraft. The strengthening of ties between India and Sri Lanka has been a

complex interplay of history, as well as political influence, in addition to other factors. Thus, as may be deduced from the civilizational and cultural contexts that have prevailed for thousands of years between these two nations, contemporary ties between these two countries as independent nations are characterized by elements of cooperation as well as confrontation, which are determined by a multitude of factors.

Since the beginning of history, there has been a close cultural and religious affinity between the Indian subcontinent and Sri Lanka. With the spread of Buddhism from India to Sri Lanka mainly during Emperor Ashoka's reign in the 3rd century BCE is a cornerstone for civilizational affinity. However, the contemporary epoch has redefined the ties between these two countries.

Both nations decolonized from the yoke of British rule (India in 1947 and Sri Lanka in 1948), with initial warmth based on shared anti-colonial ideals and sheer commitment to the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) in the 1960s. Jawaharlal Nehru and D. S. Senanayake had pursued a pragmatic neighborhood policy underscoring friendship and mutual respect. This formative period can be better understood through constructivist theory, which gives emphasis on shared norms and identities as main drivers of international relations. The two nations considered each other as partners in the decolonization process rather than being antagonists in regional power politics per se.

However, the relationship between the two sovereign states began to traverse realist undertones as domestic politics along with regional security dynamics have metamorphosed. The 1954 Nehru- Kotelawala Pact and 1964 Sirimavo-Shastri Pact, appealing to the status of Indian-origin Tamils in Sri Lanka, reflected India's endeavor to balance matters pertaining to humanitarian concerns with sovereignty sensitivities. Realism, emphasizing the pursuit of national interests by states and maintaining sanctity of the legal state sovereignty, was quite evident as both sovereign states sought to evade external interference while at the same time managing minority issues within their territorial jurisdiction.

The moment of change was in the 1980s with the eruption of the Sri Lankan ethnic conflict between the Sinhalese-majority government and Tamil separatist groups. India's hands-on experience, particularly through the support extended to Tamil militant groups in Tamil Nadu and later the deployment of the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) in 1987 under the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord (also known as Rajiv-Jayewardene Accord), unraveled the unease between realist and liberal approaches. From a realistic frame of reference, India aimed to prevent external powers (notably the U.S. and Pakistan) from gaining a foothold in its strategic backyard (Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean). The liberal lens, however, highlights India's endeavor to use diplomacy and institutional cooperation (through the Accord) to achieve peace. The non-success of the IPKF and the subsequent assassination of Rajiv Gandhi in 1991 exposed the deficiencies of idealist and interventionist approaches, leading India to adopt a more cautious, non-interventionist posture in Sri Lanka's internal affairs.

The post-Cold War period witnessed the gradual normalization of relations between the two countries. India's foreign policy realignment in the 1990s, primarily towards economic liberalization and regional cooperation in the form of SAARC and BIMSTEC, is an instance of the 'Liberal Institutionalism' approach. Economic diplomacy has been the cornerstone of cooperation, with trade, connectivity, and investments being used as tools for influence.

The India Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement (ISFTA) was signed on 28th December, 1998, which came into effect on 1st March, 2000, with the sole purpose of facilitating and improving trade relations between the two nations. This was the first Free Trade Agreement India entered into with any country in the world and marked a significant shift in its foreign policy. This period saw the application of the 'complex interdependence theory,' which focuses on multiple dimensions of interaction between two states.

During the conflict between Sri Lanka and LTTE (2006-2009), India's foreign policy vis-a-vis Sri Lanka followed 'Neoclassical Realism' to a large extent, with a fair element of prudence. Despite being anti-terrorist by official

definition, India refrained from any direct involvement in the war due to its internal politics with regard to the state of Tamil Nadu. This fine balancing act reflects India's attitude in dealing with its complicated situation with Sri Lanka. After 2009, India's foreign policy approach has clearly shifted its focus towards reconstruction assistance, capacity-building, and engaging with all ethnic groups in Sri Lanka, which is a synthesis of Liberal and Constructivist approaches aimed at influencing Sri Lankan politics.

Since 2014, the political dialogue between India and Sri Lanka has been quite robust, which clearly reflects the strength of their relationship. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has visited Sri Lanka three times: in March 2015, which marked the first standalone bilateral visit by an Indian Prime Minister since 1987; in May 2017 as the chief guest for the inaugural International Vesak Day hosted by Sri Lanka; and in June 2019 in response to the Easter Sunday attack in Sri Lanka. And at the ministerial level, the External Affairs Minister of India visited Sri Lanka seven times since 2019. During these visits, deliberations were held on different issues between the two countries. It is worth mentioning that in October 2024, the External Affairs Minister visited Sri Lanka first as the first foreign dignitary after the new Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Disسانayake took office.

And at the ministerial level, India's External Affairs Minister (EAM) has toured Sri Lanka seven times since 2019, engaging in deliberations on various bilateral issues. Notably, in October 2024, EAM was the first foreign dignitary to pay a visit to Sri Lanka after President Anura Kumara Disسانayake assumed office.

The very last year in December 2024, President Anura Kumara Disسانayake visited India marking his first overseas trip as President. Earlier, in July 2023, President Ranil Wickremesinghe toured India, and in June 2024, he also attended the swearing-in ceremony of the new Indian government. In April 2025, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's two-day visit to Sri Lanka further strengthened India's Neighbourhood First Policy and its strategic focus on the Indian Ocean. During the visit, seven MoUs were signed with President Anura

Kumara Dissanayake covering defence, energy, infrastructure, connectivity, aviation, and cultural cooperation.

During this year, on August 28, 2025, the Lok Sabha Speaker Shri Om Birla met a 24-member Sri Lanka-India Parliamentary Friendship Association delegation led by Dr.Nalinda Jayatissa (Sri Lanka's Minister of Health and Mass Communication). Speaker Birla also emphasized that Sri Lanka holds a special place in India's 'Neighbourhood First' policy and 'Vision SAGAR,' accentuating the deep historical, cultural, and civilizational bond between the two nations. He further welcomed the establishment of the India-Sri Lanka Parliamentary Friendship Association in Sri Lanka's Parliament, considering it as a testament to the resilience of bilateral ties. The delegation's visit per se underscores the intensification of institutional cooperation and sheer commitment to democratic values shared by both countries.

And in the recent past mainly in October 2025, Sri Lankan Prime Minister Dr. Harini Nireka Amarasuriya paid a visit to New Delhi to further give boost to India- Sri Lanka ties. During her visit to Delhi, on October 16, also visited NITI Aayog, considering India's initiatives inter alia infrastructure, education, tourism, skill development, and AI, highlighting the ETCA, PM Gati Shakti, and National Education Policy 2020. Her visit underscores a shared vision for strategic partnership and sustainable development.

On October 17, she met Prime Minister Narendra Modi to enhance cooperation in education, technology, innovation, development, and fishermen welfare.



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Sri Lankan Prime Minister Harini Amarasuriya meets Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in New Delhi on October 17, 2025.

The Prime Minister, Mr. Narendra Modi, reiterated India's stance regarding cooperation, reminded the President of his state visit to Sri Lanka back in April 2025, and wished good regards to President Anura Kumara Dissanayake. This state visit underscores a continuing trend of cooperation that the two nations have been involved in for years. Such diplomatic meetings represent the evolving nature of India-Sri Lanka political relations characterized by mutual respect and common interests towards regional development and stability.

PM Modi's Visit Tight-knit Collaboration

The Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi undertook a significant visit to Sri Lanka that lasted for two days in April 2025, which marked his first visit abroad since achieving a historic third term.

President Anura Kumara Dissanayake bestowed the Sri Lanka Mitra Vibhushana Award, the highest national award presented to a foreign leader, on Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India, on 5th April 2025. And for the very first time, an Indian leader is honored with such an award. By accepting the award gracefully on behalf of 1.4 billion people of India, Prime Minister Narendra Modi dedicated the award to the unique relationship and long-standing connections that exist between the citizens of both countries. During the visit, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Anura Kumara Dissanayake signed seven Memorandums of Understandings (MoU).

A major highlight of the visit was signing the MoU by India and Sri Lanka for implementing the HVDC interconnection that would help in importing and exporting of power to and from the two countries. Apart from that, the MoU was signed between India's Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology and Sri Lanka's Ministry of Digital Economy to share digital solutions successfully.

Across the energy landscape, a trilateral MoU involving India, Sri Lanka, and the United Arab Emirates was signed to upgrade Trincomalee (a port city in Sri Lanka) as a regional energy hub. Furthermore, a defense cooperation MoU was



wrapped up, striving to elevate bilateral defense ties and ensure regional stability.

As far as development is concerned, various activities commenced, such as the launching of the revamped Maho-Omanthai rail service and Sampur Solar Power Project. Such activities are expected to facilitate transportation and sustainable energy development. Alongside, a MoU for multi-sectoral grant assistance to Eastern Province of Sri Lanka was inked, which certainly

suggests that development and infrastructural improvement would be accorded priority.

In addition to this, in the cultural arena, a grant was provided by India for the preservation and promotion of culturally rich heritage sites, such as the Thirukoneswaram Temple at Trincomalee, Sita Eliya Temple at Nuwara Eliya, and Sacred City Complex in Anuradhapura.

The other point made through PM Modi's visit includes capacity building, as there was a plan for a full program involving the provision of 700 scholarships per year to Sri Lankan citizens. It is intended to improve learning and developmental opportunities for the recipients. Moreover, there was a deduction for debt restructuring plans, implying a spirit of economic collaboration between the two nations. The examples above illustrate an improvement in the Indo-Sri Lankan relationship, which has been marked by cooperative ventures in fields such as energy, military, development, and culture.

Symmetry Forged on Common Purpose

India-Sri Lanka have established set-in-stone, multi-faceted relations in the domains of trade, connectivity, development cooperation, defense and security, culture, capacity building, and people-to-people relations. Of the members of this group, defense, connectivity, and trade relations have come to the forefront as the strongest pillars of the contemporary relationship. The twin countries are united not only by their geography and heritage but also by their growing economic and strategic relations, which have come to serve as a bulwark of regional security and economic well-being in the Indian Ocean region.

The domain of connectivity is at the heart of the relationship between the two countries, as it has come to serve as the physical and digital backbone of the relationship, thereby directly feeding into trade, tourism, and regional integration. A series of key projects have come to strengthen the connectivity between the two countries, including the Nagapattinam-Kankesanthurai ferry

service launched in October 2023, the resumption of Chennai-Jaffna air services in 2022, and the rollout of India's Unified Payments Interface (UPI) in Sri Lanka in February 2024.

A series of prominent initiatives include a grant of USD 61.5 million by India for the development of Kankesanthurai port, and India is working with Sri Lanka on power grid interconnection and a proposed India-Sri Lanka multi-product pipeline. Enhanced connectivity has breathed new life into tourism as India remains Sri Lanka's largest tourist source, contributing 416,000 visitors in 2024, nearly 20 % of all arrivals. These networks not only improve economic efficiency but also enhance people-to-people contact, which strengthens mutual understanding and goodwill.

Trade and commerce carry on as a cornerstone of India-Sri Lanka bilateral relations. In FY 2023- 24, total merchandise trade reached USD 5.54 billion, with India's exports at USD 4.11 billion and Sri Lanka's exports at USD 1.42 billion. India persists as one of Sri Lanka's largest investors, with cumulative FDI of USD 2.25 billion up to 2023, including USD 198 million in 2023 alone, spanning sectors such as energy, hospitality, infrastructure, manufacturing, telecom, and banking.



Talks for the Economic and Technology Cooperation Agreement (ETCA) began in 2023 with the objective of increasing the scope of trade in goods and services as well as technology cooperation between the two sovereign states in the context of their economic interdependence.

India is Sri Lanka's third-largest export market with export earnings of USD 883.65 million in 2024. It is the second-largest source of imports with earnings of USD 3,756.49 million. Sri Lanka's export earnings from India have increased by 6.5% in 2024, while imports from India have grown by 18.43% compared to the previous year.

Some of the key Sri Lankan exports to India include pepper, animal feed, pulp of wood, petroleum oils, non-alcoholic beverages, areca nuts, women's outerwear, waste/scrapped paper, furniture & seats, and insulated wires and cables. The imports from India include petroleum oils, woven and knitted fabrics, pharmaceutical products, sugars/confectionery, yarn, chilies, and paper products. The figures clearly show that economic activity is the key driver of economic prosperity.

The joint development initiatives taken by India in the context of Sri Lanka complement the economic activity between the two countries by providing economic infrastructure. The Indian government provided over USD 7 billion in credit assistance and over USD 780 million in grant assistance towards housing, digital identity initiatives, railways, and renewable energy.

The Indian Housing Project provided housing to 60,000 people in Sri Lanka. A grant of USD 300 crore was provided towards the national digital identity initiative in Sri Lanka. India was the first responder during Sri Lanka's economic crisis in 2022 with over USD 4 billion in assistance. The figures clearly show the importance of Indian economic assistance in the context of Sri Lanka's economic prosperity.

Moreover, defence and security cooperation remains the core of the bilateral relations. Both countries hold regular exercises such as the SLINEX naval

exercise and the army exercise MITRA SHAKTI. Additionally, they hold annual defence dialogues. Moreover, they maintain close coordination between the armed forces. India in June 2024 has commissioned the Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre for the Sri Lankan Navy. India has provided the Sri Lankan Navy with a Dornier aircraft for maritime patrol in 2022. Moreover, India provides the Sri Lankan military personnel with 1,200 annual training slots. These efforts have helped in the safety of the seas, counter-terrorism operations, and the protection of sea routes which are critical for the smooth flow of trade. The partnership and the Colombo security conclave further boost the bilateral relations in the region concerning maritime security, cybersecurity, and humanitarian assistance.

Furthermore, cultural and educational ties add to the bilateral relations. Both countries share Buddhist and linguistic ties. The Buddhist ties have remained the key factor in maintaining the relationship. The Indian Gallery in the Kandy International Buddhist Museum and the renovation of the ancient temple of Thiruketheeswaram represent the close cultural ties between the two countries. India supports the education sector in Sri Lanka by providing more than 700 annual scholarships and 400 ITEC training slots. Additionally, India supports the Sri Lankan civil servants and teachers.

The Indian community in Sri Lanka, supplementarily reinforces these ties. The 1.6 million Indian-Origin Tamils play an enormous role in Sri Lanka's plantation economy. Also, the 10,000 People of Indian Origin and the 7,500 NRIs are involved in business and professional activities. This vibrant Indian community verily acts as a bridge between the two countries, thereby helping in the promotion of economic and social cooperation.

In recapitulate essence, the India and Sri Lanka relationship is an all-encompassing, forward-looking, and yet strategic relationship. Trade and investment provide a boost to economic growth, connectivity and tourism accelerate integration, development cooperation enhances resilience, defence cooperation ensures regional security, and cultural and people-to-people exchanges reinforce trust. In trade worth USD 5.54 billion and FDI worth USD

2.25 billion, and with an aim to elevate defence and connectivity cooperation, the India and Sri Lanka relationship continues to exemplify a model of regional cooperation that is based on shared prosperity and strategic stability.

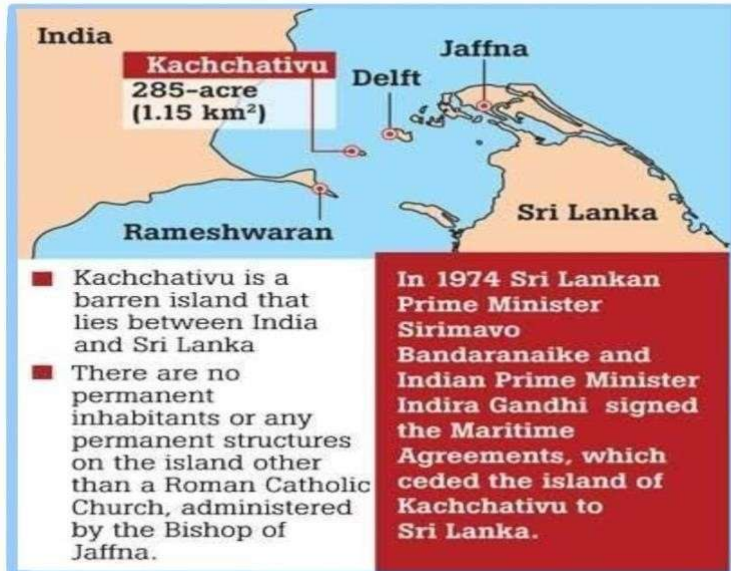
Elephant in the room

Nonetheless, despite all these far-reaching engagements on different fronts like trade, defence and development, certain impediments have continued to overshadow the relationship. Problems relating to trade imbalance, project delays, and geo-political sensitivities tend to put the relationship under test from time to time. Even though there have been positive developments in many areas, two recurrent issues have continued to put pressure on Indo-Sri Lankan relations.



The foremost among them is the matter of the fishermen, which is a longstanding maritime issue that frequently causes disputes around Palk Bay. Disputes regarding Palk Bay or Palk Strait, a relatively narrow maritime passage separating India's Tamil Nadu coast from northern Sri Lanka, focus mainly on disputes regarding fishing rights, environmental considerations, and maritime border patrols. This dispute mainly focuses on Katchatheevu Island,

which was handed over to Sri Lanka by India through a bilateral agreement on maritime borders in 1974, elaborated upon in 1976.



Though India surrendered sovereignty, Indian Tamil- fishermen continue to argue that they retained “traditional fishing rights” in adjacent waters, a claim that Sri Lanka contests under its territorial jurisdiction.

Overfishing along with the rigorous and destructive bottom-trawling by Indian mechanized boats have depleted fish stocks on the Indian side and damaged the seabed, prompting many fishermen to venture beyond the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL) into Sri Lankan waters. Sri Lanka contends such entries as illegal poaching and has ramped up naval and coast-guard patrols, making dozens of arrests and seizing vessels.



As of 22 November 2024, 141 Indian fishermen are held in Sri Lankan custody, of whom 45 fishermen are under trial and 96 are currently serving sentences. And with respect to boats, a total of 198 Indian fishing vessels are in Sri Lankan custody. And in due course, with sustained diplomatic efforts, the Government has been able to secure the release of and repatriation of 363 fishermen.

In the recent past, in October 2025, more than 45 Indian fishermen have been repeatedly detained by the Sri Lankan Navy for “illegal fishing.” Although the number of arrests has remained marginal since 2014, the crisis has continued to escalate.

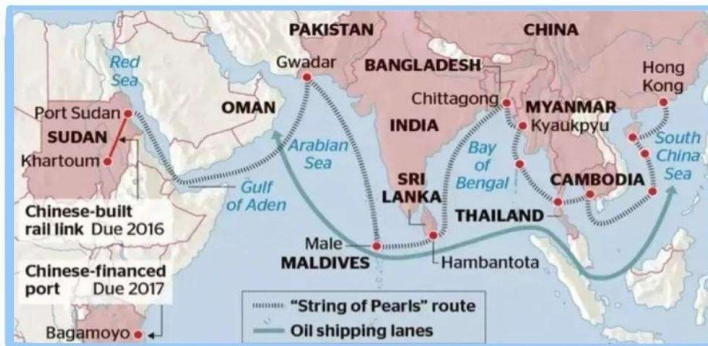
Indian fishermen continue to report threats to their livelihoods, the expense of deep-sea fishing, and boat impoundments. Furthermore, the issue involves the degradation of the environment, security at sea, and humanitarian concerns. Despite bilateral negotiations, continued cooperation, and the international legal framework of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which governs the conduct of both states, a solution is still out of reach due to the competing interests of each side.

There has been no action taken despite both the sovereign nations coming to an agreement to end the bottom trawling practice back in 2016. Efforts need to be made to make the Palk Bay a common heritage by setting up a Marine Authority comprising both experts and representatives of the government in

charge of regulating the catch, fishing equipment, and timings for both the nations. The "vexed" issue will be resolved by making the life of the fishermen the focal point and conducting negotiations involving the governments of both nations.

China's increasing strategic and economic involvement in Sri Lanka forms the next contentious issue between India and Sri Lanka since it throws serious doubt about India's interests and balance of power in the Indian Ocean Region. There has been an exponential growth in China's interests and presence in Sri Lanka ever since the island tried to balance against the regional influence of India. It was clear that during the rule of Mahinda Rajapaksa, the Sri Lankan Government was aligned to China, being supplied arms and getting diplomatic support in the Eelam War IV.

The "String of Pearls," which includes Chinese military ports at Gwadar (Pakistan), Hambantota (Sri Lanka), and Djibouti (Africa), among other locations in the Indian Ocean, is also a source of worry within the context of China's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).



The mere changes and hostile strategies contribute to making China a powerful entity that threatens India's maritime security apart from the stability in South Asia. The increase in the number of naval assets like submarines, destroyers,

and support ships is perceived to be a threat that will eventually surround India and diminish its strategic power.

Economically, India may need to channelize significant resources to defense, potentially hampering growth and destabilizing the South and Southeast Asian region. Beijing's interests are seen in its strategic investments, such as the Hambantota Port lease and Colombo Port City, which further deepened Sri Lanka's economic reliance.

The Hambantota port in Sri Lanka is an exemplification how regional partners may align with China due to economic incentives, challenging India's traditional influence. China turned into Sri Lanka's first bilateral creditor to enter a debt restructuring agreement in October 2023, holding 52 % of the country's \$46 billion external debt, though it verily incurred a loss of \$7 billion in the process.

January 2025 witnessed the signing of the Joint Statement, which is an indication of China's widening strategic and economic relations in terms of infrastructure investments, green and digital development, and increased maritime cooperation. Sri Lanka reiterated the principle of "One China" and the two sides pledged to cooperate in environmental, maritime domain awareness, and rescue activities. This demonstrates that China's influence and augmentation in Sri Lanka and the greater Indian Ocean are increasing continuously.

As per realism, China's policies are power maximizing, posing a threat to India's national interest. To counter this, India needs to implement liberalist policies by enhancing maritime cooperation, diplomatic, and economic relations with Sri Lanka and the other countries in the Indian Ocean. It should maintain a free and open Indo-Pacific by sustaining regional stability. The close association of China and Sri Lanka poses many strategic implications for India. Even though Sri Lanka maintains a neutral foreign policy with "India-first" security considerations, it has occasionally breached its commitments.

Strengthening India-Sri Lanka Ties for a Stable Indo-Pacific

However, despite the remarkable successes attained in various domains – be it in trade, connectivity, defense, or cultural cooperation – there are several stumbling blocks on the way. India and Sri Lanka will need to continue addressing certain obstacles related to the trade balance, problems in implementing projects, and maritime concerns. The external factors such as regional geopolitics, economic matters, and strategic considerations will further complicate the situation for both parties. Nevertheless, as the saying goes, behind every silver lining there is a dark cloud. Through trust-building, dialogue, and greater mutual understanding, all these challenges can be transformed into opportunities for tomorrow.

Looking forward, there will be an increased focus by both sides to contribute to the creation of a rules-based, free, and open Indo-Pacific, emphasizing maritime security, safety, and security of the sea lines of communication, and regional stability. It will not only contribute to safeguarding trade routes but also strengthen disaster preparedness, and simultaneously ensure that the Indian Ocean becomes a region of peace and prosperity. Besides, cooperation in areas such as digital connectivity and energy infrastructure will further increase economic resilience and interdependence.

Through educational, scholarship, cultural and capacity-building programmes, establishing people-to-people connections will help strengthen the human basis for the two nations; thereby fortifying their strategic partnership. Achieving the two nations' goal of "Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Prayas", is achievable through bilateral co-operation. This approach complements the 21st century philosophy "Vasudev Kutumbakam". India must also improve maritime security through enhancing naval patrols and conducting more joint exercises with countries located in the Indian Ocean. Additionally, India must strengthen diplomatic relations with Sri Lanka, Maldives and ASEAN countries to generate a counter force to China's growing influence in the Indian Ocean region. Working towards increased economic development and infrastructure co-operation through initiatives such as the Indo-Pacific

Economic Framework will create stronger links between India and its regional partners and support a free, open and secure Indo-Pacific region consistent with India's strategic interests. The relationship between India and Sri Lanka has transitioned from an idealistic model based on anti-colonial co-operation to a pragmatic one founded on strategic competition in the 21st century. Nevertheless, the relationship has remained premised on recognising their interdependence and shared fate in the Indian Ocean. The evolution of the two nations' relationship from an anti-colonial partnership to a strategic competitor in the 21st century will continue to be sustained through a theoretical synthesis of power, cooperation, and identity.

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