

## Sri Lanka's Foreign Policy Shift:

### United States-Sri Lanka Relations since 2009

Peshan R. Gunaratne

Department of International Relations, University of Colombo

Robert D. Kaplan in his book *Monsoon* (2010) transpired, "one diplomat told me that the West should ostracize the Rajapaksa regime and not worry about it becoming a linchpin of Chinese great-power strategy. As he saw it, hundreds of billions of dollars of Chinese money invested in the U.S. economy was more central to American interests than one more Chinese-built port in the Indian Ocean which, in any case, was of greater concern to the Indian and Japanese navies than to Americans" (p.337). However, the diplomat's calculations seem to be palpable contradictions since the completion of the general elections. Hence, the above remarks about Sri Lanka being strongly entrenched within the Chinese orbit and the U.S. being less interested in Sri Lanka's geostrategic significance are profoundly flawed. Given the most recent developments in the US- Sri Lanka nexus, it is credible to deduce the fact that Colombo has made rapid progression in recalibrating its foreign policy since the fall of the Rajapaksa administration. The visit of John Kerry juxtaposed with the proposed visit of Barrack Obama in December evidently reflects the foreign policy trajectory of the current government. However, the author attempts to examine the reasons which prompted the Sirisena administration to adopt a pro-American foreign policy contrary to non-alignment. Nevertheless, the objective of the author is to examine Washington-Colombo ties since 2009 from a foreign policy perspective, based on the answers to the following research questions. Is Sri Lanka's foreign policy change attributable to the developments in Geneva? Is America's growing influence in Sri Lanka a result of strategic inroads made by China since 2009? Or has Washington changed its policy towards Colombo since the defeat of the Rajapaksa administration? The foreign policies of the two countries will be examined from a Realist Perspective while assimilating George Modelski's (1962) and Geoffrey Stern's (1995) views. Further, primary and secondary sources shall contribute to qualitative research given the absence of an experimental design. Hence, the author shall produce content based analysis primarily through archival research.

Keywords: Washington, Colombo, Foreign policy, Geostrategic, Realism.