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Situating India – Sri Lanka Development Co-operation: Attempting to Address Post-Conflict Vulnerabilities?

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Mutual relations between neighbouring countries of India and Sri Lanka run deep, and precede the phase when concepts of nation states and realpolitik determine bilateral relations. In the post-colonial and contemporary phase, the trajectories of this relationship, despite witnessing a few highs and lows, have generally remained at an even keel. The recent years have seen these mutual relations on an upswing, and a very tangible example of this has been witnessed in the Indian developmental assistance extended to Sri Lanka after the cessation of conflict that had affected Sri Lanka for nearly three decades came to an end in the year 2009. Unlike business relationships, the development partnership between India and Sri Lanka extended beyond the trade and profit aspect, and has taken note of the fact that development in a holistic sense also means dignity of life for the common masses that includes education, healthcare, housing and livelihoods, apart from more spectacular and tangible infrastructural overheads. These abovementioned attributes seem to have formed the policy document called the "India-Sri Lanka Joint Declaration of 9th June, 2010", which was signed in New Delhi during the state-visit of the then President of Sri Lanka.

The objective of this paper is to situate the nature of development co-operation between India and Sri Lanka in the specific context of addressing post-conflict vulnerabilities, as per the outlines of the India – Sri Lanka Joint Declaration. The methodology for going about it involves analyzing the broad patterns of relationship between global stakeholders in the name of development, as has been witnessed during different periods, in different parts of the world. This paper looks at the dominant discourses and strives to analyze the case of India – Sri Lanka joint declaration, which despite its progress on the ground in the targeted areas, is nevertheless, a work in progress. While it may be too early as yet to come out with findings as regards the impact (or the lack of it) on the intended beneficiaries, the fact that the implementation of the targets has proceeded unencumbered, with tangible results to show for it, as far as infrastructural activities of the project go, may point to the ongoing robust implementation of the project deliverables.

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