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PAPER

State responsibility over SethuSamudram Ship Canal Project: Indo-Sri Lanka Context

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The SethuSamudram Ship Canal Project (SSCP) under consideration of the Ministry of Shipping, Government of India, envisages creation of a canal through dredging/excavation in Adams Bridge and parts of Palk Bay. The project has potential to affect the principle of sovereignty which cannot be exercised by India in isolation because activities of it often bear upon those of others. No measures are being proposed to prevent or reduce the potential impact on Sri Lanka's environment and shipping.

The main objectives of the study are to analyse future threats and challenges posed by the SSCP by using Barry Buzan's dimension analysis and relevant international law obligations, understand level of co-operation between India and Sri Lanka in terms of SSCP and propose a strategy to improve inter-state cooperation by using SWOT analysis.

The study reveals the construction is environmentally, economically, politically and societally harmful to Sri Lanka and the construction violates the principle of territorial sovereignty and causes transboundary environment damage. Some cooperative measures and initiatives have been already proposed by Sri Lanka but such activities are not part of formal plans, policies, processes or programs that would enable the capacity to exit on a reliable and reproducible basis. Therefore, the level of cooperation is "nominal" over the SSCP. Finally the study recommends Negative Control Strategy, which is based on the joint action of strengths (S) and Opportunities (O) in decreasing Weaknesses (W) and Threats (T), therefore abating overall negatives.