

Documents

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Unraveling the Nexus: Politics, National Security, and the Securitisation of Islam in the Aftermath of Easter Sunday Attacks

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Abstract

A group of religious fanatics, inspired by the ISIS ideology, blew themselves up in high-rise hotels and Churches in several parts of Sri Lanka on 21st April 2019, killing 269 innocent civilians. This event, known as the Easter Sunday Attacks, led the Sri Lankan state to frame Islam, Islamic religious expressions and activities as a security threat. As a result, the government imposed several regulations and policies that restricted the religious space of the community on the pretext of safeguarding national security. Against this background, this study aims to dissect the entire process of how the state constructed Islam as a security threat after the Easter Sunday Attacks, exploring the primary actors, their actions, and the discursive context. To that end, the main argument of the study is that the securitisation of Islam in Sri Lanka is an outcome of an effective cooperation between political and state elites and ultra-nationalist majoritarian forces in the country. Furthermore, as the study highlights, the state has been successful in securitising Islam because it has capitalised on the multi-layered discursive ecosystem, such as Sinhala Buddhist nationalism, the dominant security studies paradigm, the ex-Muslim phenomenon, and unintended consequences of Islamic revivalism, to legitimise its claims. Finally, this qualitative study utilised both primary and secondary sources to gather data and the thematic content analysis method was employed for data analysis. Copyright © IIUM Press.

Author Keywords

Gotabhaya Rajapakse; national security; religious extremism; Sinhala Buddhist Nationalism; Sri Lankan Muslims

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