

5 Sri Lanka and the Gulf States

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The underlying theme of this publication is to explore the linkages between the South Asian regional security complex (RSC) and the Gulf subcomplex, drawing on insights from regional security complex theory (RSCT). This chapter analyses the degree of security interdependence and securitisation between the Gulf, Iran and Israel (GII) on the one hand and the South Asian Island of Sri Lanka. By examining the degree of security independence between the two—from a Sri Lankan standpoint—the authors conclude that Sri Lanka and the GII differ in their perceptions of threats and tend to politicise—more often than securitise—common threats. The chapter delves into several types of security threats ranging from global threats (climate change) to regional threats (terrorism within the region).

Securitisation and regional security complex theory

Securitisation, a product of the Copenhagen school of thought, finds its clearest expression in the work of Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver and Jaap de Wilde (1998). In their view, securitisation occurs “when a securitizing actor uses a rhetoric of existential threat and thereby takes an issue out of what under those conditions is ‘normal politics’” (1998, pp. 24–25). A securitised issue is framed either as a special kind of “politics” or as above politics. A spectrum can therefore be drawn, ranging from “non-politicised public issues (‘the state does not deal with it and it is not in any other way made an issue of public debate and decision’), through politicised (‘the issue is part of public policy, requiring government decision and resource allocations or, more rarely, some other form of communal governance’) to *securitisation*” (in which case an issue is no longer debated as a political question, but dealt with at an accelerated pace and in ways that may violate normal legal and social rules) (Buzan et al., 1998, p.23). Simply put, securitisation, refers to the process of presenting an issue as an existential threat, thereby justifying extraordinary measures to deal with it.