

Parliamentary Diplomacy and the Role of Parliament in Crisis: Analysing Sri Lanka's 9th Parliament Amidst Political and Economic Crises (2020- 2024)

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Abstract: This study examines the role of Sri Lanka's 9th Parliament (2020-2024) amid concurrent political, economic, and internal crises, including the sovereign debt default and mass protests. Drawing on Hansard reports, constitutional provisions, and neoclassical realism, the research investigates Parliament's performance in three key areas: constitutional oversight, parliamentary diplomacy, and institutional resilience. Findings reveal that, despite formal powers under Articles 75 and 148 of the Constitution, Parliament functioned largely as a reactive body, marginalised by executive dominance and procedural opacity. While opposition figures frequently raised critical issues, particularly on IMF negotiations, debt restructuring, and public accountability, these interventions were largely rhetorical, with minimal influence on policy outcomes. The study concludes that internal structural weaknesses and external pressures constrained Parliament's capacity to act as a democratic safeguard, thereby undermining both domestic legitimacy and international credibility. It contributes to broader debates on crisis governance, parliamentary sovereignty, and foreign policy-making in hybrid democracies.

INTRODUCTION

Parliamentary systems in post colonial democracies have long been crucial tools for democratic representation, institutional checks and balances, and public accountability. In Sri Lanka, the evolution of parliamentary governance traces back to the British colonial era, beginning with the Colebrooke-Cameron Reforms of 1833, which introduced a rudimentary legislative council. The Westminster model was introduced by the Soulbury Commission in 1944. The Parliament consisted of the Queen (represented by the Governor - General) and two Houses, namely the

Senate and the House of Representatives,¹ and the 1972 and 1978 constitutions successively localised and restructured the framework, ultimately resulting in a unique hybrid model of executive presidentialism nested within a parliamentary democracy.²

While Sri Lanka has experienced various institutional transformations, Parliament has remained a cornerstone of its democratic legitimacy. However, the legislature's performance has often fluctuated with broader political developments. Sometimes operating as a robust check on the executive, and at other times reduced to a passive, procedural body. The period between 2020 and 2024 under the 9th Parliament represents a critical episode in this fluctuating trajectory, marked by the most severe combination of political, economic, and international crises in the country's post independence history.

The 9th Parliament was convened following the August 2020 general election, which gave a clear parliamentary majority to the Rajapaksa family-led Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP). The SLPP secured 145 out of 225 seats in Parliament, achieving a two-thirds majority³. Thereafter, Sri Lanka faced a huge economic crisis, and this crisis was the result of the influence of multiple factors. Among the causes were fiscal profligacy, compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic, which set off a predictable chain of outcomes higher budget deficits, higher public debt, increased foreign debt, credit downgrades, a rise in the cost of external borrowing, loss of access to international markets for foreign loans, depletion of foreign currency (FX) reserves, a balance of payments (BoP) crisis, currency depreciation, rising inflation, and eventual external debt default⁴. This triggered widespread civil unrest in 2022 and international interventions. The culmination of these pressures was a democratic rupture in mid 2022, when mass protests called the *Aragalaya* compelled the resignation of both President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa⁵.

¹ Parliament of Sri Lanka. 'Evolution of the Parliamentary System'. Accessed at: <https://www.parliament.lk/en/handbook-of-parliament/evolution-of-the-parliamentary-system>.

² V. K. Nanayakkara, 'From Dominion to Republican Status: Dilemmas of Constitution Making in Sri Lanka'. *Public Administration and Development* 26(5) 2006, pp. 425–437, p. 425.

³ Parliament of Sri Lanka. 'General Election 2020'. Accessed at: <https://www.parliament.lk/election-2020/>

⁴ L. P. Samarakoon, 'What Broke the Pearl of the Indian Ocean? The Causes of the Sri Lankan Economic Crisis and Its Policy Implications'. *Journal of Financial Stability* 70 2024, p. 1.

⁵ A. Perera, 'Sri Lanka: Chased Out by Protesters, a Political Dynasty Plots Its Comeback'. *BBC*, 16 September 2024. Accessed at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cr5n51ym19jo>.

These overlapping crises created a unique test case for parliamentary performance. Theoretically, in moments of democratic stress, legislatures are expected to act as stabilising institutions that scrutinize executive behaviour, legislate with prudence, and represent public sentiment. Moreover, in the age of globalised governance, parliaments are increasingly actors in diplomacy, participating in inter parliamentary networks, human rights dialogues, and economic negotiations. However, the Sri Lankan Parliament's response during this period raised critical questions about its institutional capacity, autonomy, and relevance.

This study is situated at the intersection of legislative politics, and international relations, seeking to interrogate the role played by the 9th Parliament during this exceptional period. Hence, the primary objective of this research is to gain an understanding of the role of the Sri Lankan Parliament during the period from 2020 to 2024, amidst the political, economic, and international crises the country faced. Accordingly, this study focuses on how the parliament at the time responded to these crises, particularly during periods of heightened external and internal pressure, and whether it safeguarded or challenged constitutional oversight and democratic norms. This article argues that the Sri Lankan Parliament, despite being constitutionally empowered to act as a democratic safeguard, played a diminished and often reactive role in crisis governance. It failed to assert its fiscal oversight functions, participated only peripherally in shaping foreign policy, and suffered from a legitimacy crisis due to perceived alignment with an increasingly centralised executive authority. This article contends that such institutional weakness not only undermined domestic democratic norms but also eroded Sri Lanka's credibility internationally.

Three research questions have been formulated to guide the thesis statement. These are as follows:

1. How did Sri Lanka's 9th Parliament respond to the political, economic, and international crises between 2020 and 2024, particularly with regard to its constitutional oversight responsibilities?
2. What role did the Parliament play in the country's overall parliamentary diplomacy efforts?
3. To what extent did internal institutional limitations and external pressures affect the Parliament's capacity to influence crisis management and foreign policy decisions during this period?

Traditionally, the executive branch dominates foreign policy decision making; however, in shaping, legitimizing, and responding to international crises, the Sri Lankan Parliament plays a crucial role. Thus, in the face of the 2022 economic and political crises, Parliament was weakened by both internal and external pressures and encountered numerous challenges in performing an active role. Although the Parliament holds fiscal oversight powers, the failure to exercise these powers effectively intensified the aforementioned crises. It was expected that, during the peak of these crises, Parliament would serve as a democratic anchor, scrutinizing

executive decisions, managing public accountability, and facilitating international engagement with the IMF. However, in practice, excessive centralisation of executive power, ad hoc policy responses, and a lack of transparency in foreign negotiations restricted the Parliament's role.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Contextualising Institutional Transformations

The 20th Amendment to the Constitution was passed into law on 22 October, with 156 of the 225 parliamentarians voting in favour of the amendment⁶. Scholars note that systemic reform in 2020 restored presidential supremacy at the expense of legislative balance (Twentieth Amendment). This consolidation aligns with what the Centre for Independent Studies terms a 'return to hyper-presidentialism,' dismantling gains from the 19th Amendment, especially in executive-legislative accountability⁷. However, Sri Lankan Parliament's power of oversight and scrutiny is exercised in three main areas: (1) scrutiny over government policies, (2) oversight of public finance, and (3) scrutiny over legislations⁸.

Most importantly, the Sri Lankan Parliament has been granted financial control powers under Article 148 of the Sri Lankan Constitution. Accordingly, it states:

*Parliament shall have full control over public finance. No tax, rate or any other levy shall be imposed by any local authority or any other public authority, except by or under the authority of a law passed by Parliament or of any existing law.*⁹

⁶ 'Sri Lanka: Newly Adopted 20th Amendment to the Constitution Is Blow to the Rule of Law'. *International Commission of Jurists*, 27 October 2020. Accessed at: <https://www.icj.org/sri-lanka-newly-adopted-20th-amendment-to-the-constitution-is-blow-to-the-rule-of-law/>.

⁷ A. Nadaradjane, 'Sri Lanka: Democracy in Crisis'. *The Centre for Independent Studies*, 28 November 2022. Accessed at: <https://www.cis.org.au/publication/sri-lanka-democracy-in-crisis/>.

⁸ N. Tennakoon and T. K. Jayathilake, 'Policy and Legislation Evaluation and Scrutiny by Parliament of Sri Lanka'. *Journal of Southeast Asian Human Rights* 5(2) 2021, pp. 154-175. P. 156.

⁹ *The Constitution of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka* (as amended up to the 21st Amendment), art 148, p. 149.

Thus, while such financial control powers are vested in Parliament, a trio of committees operates to oversee and manage these functions. These committees are:

- The Committee on Public Accounts (COPA), established in 1921. As per the Standing Orders of Parliament, COPA is mandated with the examination of the accounts of public corporations.
- The Committee on Public Enterprises (COPE), introduced in 1979, following the significant increase in COPA's workload after Sri Lanka's independence.
- The Committee on Public Finance (COPF), established in 2015. It is entrusted with reviewing the appropriations contained in the Appropriations Act for the current year, the transfer of appropriations, unexpected balances, and the implementation of the Appropriations Act for the current year.¹⁰

Accordingly, these committees provide Members of Parliament the opportunity to scrutinize government policies and activities.

The Role of Parliament in Crisis Governance

Parliaments are expected to act as bulwarks of democracy, particularly during moments of crisis when executive overreach and public unrest threaten institutional stability. In theory, legislatures function as representation, legislation, deliberation, scrutiny, budget setting, making and breaking governments, and Redress of grievances¹¹. But parliaments are under greater pressure to demonstrate strong oversight during times of national upheaval, because they are bound to uphold the sovereignty of their country. However, in many states the executive decided to accelerate the legislative process by constraining parliamentary control. Governments, exposed to international pressure, frequently prioritised the interests of financial markets over those of their own voters¹². In this context, international pressure denotes external financial constraints arising from global capital markets and creditors, rather than domestic political or electoral considerations. Moreover, aside from these varied (and, to be sure, constantly evolving) experiences, it has also been clear that threats to derail or undermine democratic progress or even to revert to authoritarianism are ever-present,

¹⁰ Tennakoon and Jayathilake, 'Policy and Legislation Evaluation and Scrutiny by Parliament of Sri Lanka', p. 157.

¹¹ K. Coghill, P. Holland, A. Kinyondo, C. Lewis and K. Steinack, 'The Functions of Parliament: Reality Challenges Tradition'. *Australasian Parliamentary Review* 27(2) Spring 2012, pp. 55–70, p. 56.

¹² A. Maatsch and I. Cooper, 'Governance without Democracy?: Analysing the Role of Parliaments in European Economic Governance after the Crisis: Introduction to the Special Issue'. *Parliamentary Affairs* 70(4) 2017, pp. 645–654, p. 646.

particularly as new democratic norms are slow to take hold and replace entrenched institutional practices, power structures, and political culture¹³.

In the Sri Lankan context, the political framework of Sri Lanka has progressively concentrated authority within the executive branch, thereby eroding the essential checks and balances that are fundamental to a robust governance system.¹⁴ The shift towards co-governance allowed the executive to implement major decisions without seeking prior approval from Parliament. This was evident in 2019, when several key policies, later identified as contributing factors to the economic crisis, were introduced unilaterally by the newly appointed Gotabaya Rajapaksa administration. Notably, these included the drastic reduction of the Value Added Tax (VAT) from 15% to 8% in November 2019 and the complete ban on the import of chemical fertilisers in 2021. Combined with external shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the 2022 Russia-Ukraine conflict, these policies pushed Sri Lanka into a severe economic crisis¹⁵. The situation tested the Parliament's capacity to serve as a check on executive power. Although Sri Lankan Parliament formally exercises the key functions of representation, legislation, control of public finance, and oversight¹⁶, the 9th Parliament was widely criticized for its limited engagement and its failure to respond proactively to the crisis as it unfolded.

Parliamentary Diplomacy and International Engagement

Parliamentary diplomacy could be defined as individual or collective action by parliamentarians aimed at 'catalysing, facilitating and strengthening the existing constitutional functions of parliaments through dialogues between peers on countless open policy questions across

¹³ D. A. H. Shah, 'Dismantling Democratic Change in Asia: Modalities and Weapons of Choice'. *International Journal of Constitutional Law* 22(4) 2024, pp. 997–1030, p. 997.

¹⁴ S. Thapa, 'Sri Lanka's Political Crisis: Realist Insights on Governance, Economy, and Lessons for Small States'. *SUPRA Centre for Research and Publications* 1(1) 2024, pp. 1–8, p. 2.

A M Sayers and A C Banfield, 'The Evolution of Federalism and Executive Power in Canada and Australia'. *Federal Dynamics: Continuity, Change, and the Varieties of Federalism* 2013, pp. 185–191, p. 191.

N Bolleyer and O Salát, 'Parliaments in Times of Crisis: COVID-19, Populism and Executive Dominance'. *West European Politics* 44(5–6) 2021, pp. 1103–1128, p. 1105.

¹⁵ W. Fred, G. Divya, M. Roshni, K. Rajni and G. C. Attayanake, *Sri Lanka's Evolving Crisis: Implications on Rule of Law and Constitutional Democracy* (Institute of South Asian Studies, 2023), p. 7.

¹⁶ Tennakoon and Jayathilake, 'Policy and Legislation Evaluation and Scrutiny by Parliament of Sri Lanka', p. 155.

continents and levels of governance¹⁷. Unlike traditional diplomacy (formal, institutionalised, and state-centric conduct of international relations by authorized government representatives), which is hierarchical and state-centric, parliamentary diplomacy is dialogical, deliberative, and grounded in peer to peer engagement. Also, parliamentary diplomacy is a continuation of engagement on national issues and is inspired by domestic constitutional values.¹⁸

However, parliamentary diplomacy is analytically distinct from traditional diplomacy in terms of its actors, authority, and mode of engagement. While traditional diplomacy is conducted by the executive branch through the President, Cabinet, and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, parliamentary diplomacy refers to the international engagement undertaken by legislatures and individual parliamentarians. It is typically informal, dialogical, and norm driven rather than legally binding, operating through inter parliamentary networks, committee exchanges, international parliamentary forums, and oversight related engagement with external actors.

Scholars argue that parliamentary diplomacy enhances the means of promoting democracy, accountability, and the legitimacy of intergovernmental institutions.¹⁹ This function is especially vital in crisis situations, where domestic legitimacy is strained and executive behaviour may provoke international concern. For example, parliamentary diplomacy has played an active role in acting as moral tribunes and provides mechanisms for appraising the legitimacy of regional and global governance.²⁰ In this sense, parliamentary diplomacy functions as an extension of representative democracy, allowing legislatures to compensate for declining domestic trust by demonstrating accountability and pluralism beyond the executive.

Despite these opportunities, in many Global South contexts, including Sri Lanka, parliamentary diplomacy remains underdeveloped. Structural limitations, party system, democratic weaknesses, and political centralisation often prevent legislatures from developing consistent

¹⁷ S. Stavridis and D. Jančić, 'Introduction: The Rise of Parliamentary Diplomacy in International Politics', in *Brill / Nijhoff EBooks*, 2017, pp. 1–15, p. 6.

¹⁸ Stavridis and Jančić, 'Introduction: The Rise of Parliamentary Diplomacy in International Politics', p. 2.

¹⁹ L. Gil-Besada, 'A Literature-Based Framework for Analysing Parliamentary Diplomacy in Conflict Settings: European Responses to the Russia-Ukraine War'. *The Journal of Legislative Studies* (forthcoming 2025), pp. 1–45, p. 2.

²⁰ Stavridis and Jančić, 'Introduction: The Rise of Parliamentary Diplomacy in International Politics', p. 8.

and strategic diplomatic engagement.²¹ Hence, article 33(1)(f) of the *Constitution of Sri Lanka* states:

The President shall have the power to... appoint and receive ambassadors, plenipotentiaries and other diplomatic agents, and to conduct and regulate international affairs, and to enter into and ratify treaties and agreements with states and international organizations.

This clause confirms that the President holds exclusive constitutional authority over the conduct of foreign relations, including treaty making and international negotiations. Although Parliament may legislate or debate foreign affairs, there is no constitutional requirement for treaties to be approved by Parliament, except in cases where the treaty requires changes to domestic law. This means: Parliament's role is limited to ratification via domestic legislation. Most foreign agreements, including loan negotiations and multilateral arrangements, do not require prior parliamentary approval unless they directly contradict or amend existing law. Therefore, the 9th Parliament rarely initiated or led diplomatic engagements, even as Sri Lanka faced severe international scrutiny and economic dependence on global actors.

This reflects the disconnect between the potential and practice of parliamentary diplomacy in Sri Lanka and speaks directly to the study's second research question: How did the Sri Lankan Parliament engage in, or fail to engage in, diplomatic efforts during a period of intense international pressure?

Neoclassical Realism and Domestic Institutions in Foreign Policy

To analyse the behaviour of Sri Lanka's Parliament in foreign affairs and crisis response, this study adopts the theoretical framework of neoclassical realism. First developed by Gideon Rose, a theoretical framework that bridges systemic international structures and domestic-level dynamics. Unlike classical or structural realism, neoclassical realism contends that foreign policy is not a direct response to the international system but is mediated through unit-level factors such as state-society relations, the nature of their domestic political regimes, strategic

²¹ X. Nuttin, 'Challenges for Parliamentary Diplomacy in South and South-East Asia and Europe: A Practitioner's Perspective', in S. Stavridis and D. Jančić (eds), *Parliamentary Diplomacy in European and Global Governance*. Leiden: Brill | Nijhoff, 2017, pp. 230–247, pp. 238–239.

culture, and leader perceptions.²² This framework is particularly useful in understanding cases like Sri Lanka, where institutional dynamics such as constitutional amendments and elite entrenchment significantly mediate foreign policy behaviour.

Unlike neorealism, which treats the state as a rational, unitary actor, neoclassical realism incorporates internal variables that shape a state's ability and willingness to respond to international stimuli. As Foulon explains, neoclassical realism 'bridges the spatial (domestic-international), cognitive (matter-ideas), and temporal (present-future) divides' in international relations theory.²³ This 'triple bridging' makes it uniquely suited to explore how institutions like Sri Lanka's Parliament process and respond to international crises, such as IMF negotiations. According to Ripsman, domestic actors, including parliaments, can act as either 'facilitators or inhibitors of systemic responses,' depending on their autonomy and cohesion.²⁴

In practice, this means that while international economic pressures, such as those from the IMF may objectively exist, a state's response is shaped by internal factors like elite preferences, legislative capacity, and political legitimacy. As noted by Foulon

*a perceptual layer at the level of state policymakers affects the operationalization of structural constraints.*²⁵

This is evident in the Sri Lankan case, where the executive branch's dominance, particularly after the 20th Amendment, limited Parliament's capacity to influence or initiate diplomatic responses. The legislature's inability to assert oversight in economic or foreign policy spheres underscores what neoclassical realists describe as a 'bounded' or 'constrained' state response due to domestic political fragmentation.²⁶

Moreover, the theory's emphasis on elite perceptions²⁷ aligns with the Sri Lankan context, where crisis management was heavily shaped by presidential framing and elite narratives of sovereignty and anti-Western resistance. Even as the international system imposed fiscal and

²² N. M. Ripsman, 'Neoclassical Realism', *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of International Studies* (2011). Accessed at: <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190846626.013.36>, p. 1.

²³ M. Foulon, 'Neoclassical Realism: Challengers and Bridging Identities'. *International Studies Review* 17(4) 2015, pp. 635–661, p. 635. Accessed at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24758570>.

²⁴ Ripsman, 'Neoclassical Realism', p. 5-6.

²⁵ Foulon, 'Neoclassical Realism: Challengers and Bridging Identities', p. 636.

²⁶ Ripsman, 'Neoclassical Realism', p. 4-5.

²⁷ Ripsman, 'Neoclassical Realism', p. 5-10.

human rights expectations, domestic leadership framed external involvement as intrusive, reinforcing executive control over foreign affairs. This reflects the neoclassical realist argument that

*unit-level factors such as executive dominance, elite cohesion, and state-society relations determine how systemic constraints are interpreted and acted upon.*²⁸

Therefore, the Parliament's reactive and constrained behaviour cannot be fully understood without accounting for these domestic institutional and perceptual filters.

Neoclassical realism emphasises that foreign policy outcomes are not simply deviations from systemic expectations, but rather intentional navigations between international demands and domestic constraints. Taliaferro, Lobell, and Ripsman argue that

*foreign policy is the product of both systemic incentives and the capacity of the state to extract and direct societal resource.*²⁹

In contexts where legislative bodies lack institutional strength, as was often the case in Sri Lanka's 16th Parliament, executive overreach and political inertia can lead to suboptimal or even detrimental foreign policy outcomes. Therefore, neoclassical realism provides a valuable explanatory framework for understanding how and why Parliament failed to play a significant role in foreign policy decision-making during periods of overlapping crises.

Importance of the Research

This research is of particular significance as it seeks to examine the performance of some of the most severe economic, political, and international challenges in its history between 2020 and 2024, during the 9th Parliamentary term. The way in which the Sri Lankan Parliament operated during this period and how it utilised parliamentary democracy is explored. Furthermore, this study offers a new conceptual perspective within the framework of neoclassical realism in parliamentary studies. It investigates how domestic and external influences affected parliamentary operations and their parliamentary statecraft. This research

²⁸ J. W. Taliaferro, S. E. Lobell and N. M. Ripsman, 'Introduction: Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy', Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009, pp. 1-41, pp. 4-5.

²⁹ Taliaferro, Lobell and Ripsman, 'Introduction: Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy', p. 30.

also creates an opportunity to gain new knowledge about the influence of these factors on Sri Lanka's parliamentary practices and procedures

Identified Gaps

The reviewed literature provides a rich conceptual foundation to understand parliamentary behaviour under crisis conditions.

Despite this, existing research lacks empirical depth on Sri Lanka, particularly regarding its Parliament's behaviour during the 2020-2024 crisis period. Most studies focus on executive foreign policy, mass protest movements, or constitutional reforms, leaving the legislature's diplomatic and oversight roles underexplored. This study contributes by filling that gap, analysing how a formally empowered legislature can become politically marginalised, how it fails or succeeds in representing democratic norms internationally, and how its internal weaknesses exacerbate crisis mismanagement.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative approach to examine the performance of Sri Lanka's 9th Parliament during the political, economic, and international crises between 2020 and 2024. Hansard reports from the Parliament of Sri Lanka (2020-2024) serve as the principal dataset. These verbatim transcripts of parliamentary sessions provide a reliable record of debates, interventions, and oversight activities during the crisis years. Accordingly, for the purpose of content analysis, statements made within Parliament by one prominent government representative and one prominent opposition member were selected for each of the years 2020, 2022, 2023, and 2024. From the opposition, speeches by Leader of the Opposition Sajith Premadasa, Ven. Athuraliye Rathana Thero, and Attorney at Law Lakshman Kiriella were selected to represent the critical viewpoints raised against the government during the crisis period. On the government side, the analysis includes statements made by then Minister of Finance Ajith Nivard Cabraal (2020) and Prime Minister and President Ranil Wickremesinghe, whose remarks from 2022 and 2024 reflect the government's evolving position on economic recovery and parliamentary oversight. These contributions were selected based on their relevance to fiscal oversight, foreign policy decisions, and the constitutional role of Parliament, thereby forming the core dataset for qualitative content analysis in this study.

Secondary sources include scholarly articles, policy briefs, and credible media reports, which are used to triangulate findings and provide context. These sources support a holistic interpretation of parliamentary discourse and performance during the crisis period.

The selection of documents is guided by relevance to the study's themes: fiscal oversight, foreign relations, and democratic accountability. Specific keywords such as 'IMF', 'sovereignty', 'executive power', 'crisis management', and 'parliamentary diplomacy' are used to extract relevant records from Hansard.

Data Analysis Methods

CONTENT ANALYSIS

This study uses qualitative content analysis to systematically examine Hansard transcripts and parliamentary speeches. Content analysis helps identify recurrent themes, rhetorical patterns, and implicit assumptions embedded in legislative discourse. Codes are developed both deductively based on the research questions and inductively as patterns emerge from the data.

SWOT ANALYSIS

To evaluate the strategic capacity of the 9th Parliament, a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) is employed.³⁰ SWOT is particularly effective in institutional research as it maps internal capabilities and external constraints in a structured format. For this study, SWOT categories are constructed from content analysis findings and enriched with secondary commentary and legal constitutional texts.

Validity and Limitations

The study ensures validity through triangulation, cross-verifying data across Hansard, secondary sources, and scholarly commentary. This mitigates potential biases inherent in official government documents. Furthermore, the transparency and public accessibility of parliamentary data enhance the reliability of the primary sources.

Nevertheless, the study is constrained by the lack of access to internal parliamentary caucuses and closed door committee deliberations, which may limit understanding of informal decision making processes. Additionally, limited real time data on inter parliamentary diplomatic engagements restricts empirical depth in that area, a limitation noted in other developing country parliamentary studies as well.

In summary, this methodology combines qualitative content analysis with strategic institutional assessment through SWOT analysis to evaluate the role of Sri Lanka's 9th Parliament during a period of acute national crisis. By grounding the analysis in primary sources such as Hansard reports and official speeches, and triangulating these with scholarly and media-based secondary data, the study ensures both depth and reliability. This methodological framework allows for a holistic understanding of how internal institutional limitations and external systemic pressures interacted to shape Parliament's diminished role in oversight,

³⁰ R. W. Puyt, F. B. Lie and C. P. M. Wilderom, 'The Origins of SWOT Analysis', *Long Range Planning* 56(3) 2023, pp 1-24, p. 1.

diplomacy, and governance. The insights gained will not only inform assessments of Sri Lanka's democratic resilience but also contribute to broader discussions on parliamentary functionality in crisis-affected hybrid regimes.

DISCUSSION

This chapter analyses the Sri Lankan 9th Parliament's role and responses during the period 2020-2024, a time marked by simultaneous political, economic, and international crises. Drawing on Hansard reports and debates from 2020, 2022, 2023, and 2024, the analysis focuses on Parliament's constitutional oversight responsibilities and evaluates how effectively it fulfilled its democratic mandate amidst growing executive centralisation and technocratic governance.

Diminishing Parliamentary Role in Economic Oversight (2020)

The parliamentary exchanges in 2020, particularly between Finance Minister Ajith Nivard Cabraal and Opposition Leader Sajith Premadasa, illustrate a shift away from participatory oversight toward executive-driven economic governance. Cabraal's speech emphasised a forward looking domestic financing model, dismissing Fitch Ratings' debt sustainability warnings as unfounded and politically biased:

*We are looking forward and they are looking backward*³¹.

Premadasa, however, highlighted the government's failure to present a credible fiscal consolidation strategy or a transparent debt management plan. He stressed that the government had not disclosed its economic program, despite international downgrades: 'The government has not yet been able to clearly disclose its economic program'³². Nonetheless, these criticisms remained rhetorical as Parliament lacked procedural leverage to shape or veto executive decisions, revealing a significant gap in constitutional oversight.

³¹ Ajith Nivard Cabraal, Sri Lanka, *Parliamentary Debates*, Parliament of Sri Lanka, 2 December 2020, pp. 1545-1554, P. 1547.

³² Sajith Premadasa, Sri Lanka, *Parliamentary Debates*, Parliament of Sri Lanka, 2 December 2020, pp. 1543-1545, P. 1544.

Table 3. Content Analysis of Government and Opposition Leader’s Parliamentary Speech on Economic (2020)³³

Theme	Government framing	Opposition framing	Analytical Observation
Fiscal Strategy	Shift to domestic borrowing; optimistic on low interest rates	No credible debt strategy; revenue plans unclear	Government offers a surface level justification; opposition points to lack of substance
Response to Credit Ratings	Fitch & Moody’s dismissed as backward-looking	Downgrades reflect economic mismanagement	Govt delegitimizes international critique; Opposition uses it to expose policy weaknesses
Use of Economic Projections	Highlights future FDI, Port City, Hambantota projects	Criticizes speculative, vague economic promises	Govt relies on narrative of future growth without detailed planning or accountability
Role of Parliament	Platform to defend policy and discredit critics	Venue for demanding transparency and credibility	Shows parliamentary marginalization despite the opposition’s attempt to restore its role
International Comparisons	Defensive nationalism implied	Compared to countries like Congo and Suriname	Opposition raises reputational stakes; government avoids international benchmarking
Transparency & Deliberation	No detailed disclosures; dismisses dissent	Highlights lack of openness in budget planning	Reveals a gap between executive narrative and parliamentary accountability mechanisms

³³ Source: Author’s own compilation.

Institutional Asymmetry and Performative Consensus (2022)

During the height of Sri Lanka's economic collapse in 2022,³⁴ the proceedings of 22 June demonstrate how Parliament was further reduced to a reactive institution. Opposition MP Athuraliye Rathana Thero critiqued the government's claim of forming an all-party administration, stating:

*It is clear that this is a government with a group of Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna MPs and Ranil Wickremesinghe as the Prime Minister.*³⁵

He warned that the lack of inclusivity undermined both domestic legitimacy and international credibility. Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe, in contrast, emphasised the necessity of IMF negotiations as the only viable path forward:

*There is no other path before us. We have to go that path.*³⁶

This technocratic framing relegated Parliament to a symbolic role, lacking in mechanisms for policy co-creation. While Wickremesinghe invited all parties to participate in recovery efforts, no structural reforms were introduced to empower parliamentary input.

Rathana Thero's demand for concrete actions to address food insecurity and fuel shortages remained unanswered, demonstrating the disconnect between public accountability and elite economic decision-making.

Table 4. Contrasting Opposition and Government Narratives in 2022: A Content Analysis of Rathana Thero and PM Wickremesinghe³⁷

Theme	Government framing	Opposition framing	Analytical Observation
Legitimacy of Governance	Deflects critique, calls for unity	Critiques false claim of 'all-party' government	Parliament's consensual legitimacy eroded;

³⁴ W. Fred, G. Divya, M. Roshni, K. Rajni and G. C. Attayanake, *Sri Lanka's Evolving Crisis: Implications on Rule of Law and Constitutional Democracy* (Institute of South Asian Studies, 2023), p. 10.

³⁵ Athuraliye Rathana Thero, Sri Lanka, *Parliamentary Debates*, Parliament of Sri Lanka, 22 June 2022, pp. 1016-1019, P. 1017.

³⁶ Ranil Wickremesinghe, Sri Lanka, *Parliamentary Debates*, Parliament of Sri Lanka, 22 June 2022, pp. 1025-1032, P. 1026.

³⁷ Source: Author's own compilation.

			governing coalition lacks true inclusiveness
Parliamentary Inclusion	Policy decisions taken outside Parliament invite others post-facto	Asks direct questions on social issues, urges an all-party structure	Parliament is excluded from policy design, involved only for post-legitimation
Opposition Role	Frames opposition boycott as irresponsible	Defends presence despite boycott by major parties	The executive uses rhetoric of cooperation, but offers no structural role to the opposition
Policy Transparency	Gives a macroeconomic lecture focused on the IMF and the dollar crisis	Raising 7 specific socio-economic questions	A disconnect between local concerns and macroeconomic focus
Institutional Reform	Promotes the 21st Amendment and committee reform	Demands immediate committee formation	Reform framed as conditional and tactical, not truly structural or empowering

Technocratic Drift and Legal-Institutional Erosion (2023)

By 2023, parliamentary discourse was dominated by issues surrounding the IMF program and legislative manoeuvring. Sajith Premadasa demanded transparency regarding commitments to the IMF and criticized the growing tax burden: ‘What promises were made to the IMF? Will they be revealed to the country one by one?’³⁸. He also exposed legal ambiguities in the Prevention of Corruption Act that hindered the appointment of anti-corruption commissioners.

State Minister Shehan Semasinghe responded with a managerial report detailing completed benchmarks and pending goals: ‘47 out of 51 agreed activities were completed by August 2023’³⁹. However, he also accused opposition parties of attempting to derail reforms by appealing to the courts. This narrative reframed judicial oversight and dissent as obstructionist.

³⁸ Sajith Premadasa, Sri Lanka, *Parliamentary Debates*, Parliament of Sri Lanka, 3 October 2023, pp. 50-54, P. 51.

³⁹ Shehan Semasinghe, Sri Lanka, *Parliamentary Debates*, Parliament of Sri Lanka, 4 October 2023, pp. 271-277, P. 272.

Opposition MP Lakshman Kiriella countered by asserting the constitutional right to judicial review and accused the government of shielding IMF related reforms from scrutiny through parliamentary privilege: ‘This is how you have been acting in a roundabout way’⁴⁰.

Table 5. Contrasting Opposition and Government Narratives in 2023: A Content Analysis of Sajith Premadasa, Lakshman Kiriella and State Minister Shehan Semasinghe⁴¹

Theme	Government Framing	Opposition Framing	Analytical Observation
IMF Transparency	Shows technical progress and court-related delays	Demands full disclosure of commitments	Government limits details; opposition seeks accountability
Parliamentary Oversight	Reforms passed via Parliament	Claims that Parliament used to bypass the court	Parliament was used more for approval than debate
Taxation and Public Burden	Justifies tax hikes as IMF requirements	Criticizes the impact on professionals and the public	Burden placed on citizens; benefits to elites questioned
Judiciary & Constitution	Blames the opposition for legal delays	Defends court action as a right	Tension between law and political tactics
Anti-Corruption Reform	Acknowledges the IMF's concern over corruption	Argues reforms are symbolic without structural correction	Legal flaws weaken reform credibility
IMF Engagement Timing	Emphasizes the delay was due to the crisis	Blames the late action for bankruptcy	Both support the IMF now, but differ on timing
Opposition Role	Calls court actions political	Defends role in oversight	Opposition asserts checks; government frames obstruction

Leveraging Debt to Strengthen Executive Control (2024)

By mid 2024, President Wickremesinghe claimed significant progress in economic stabilisation and debt restructuring. He outlined a four-point action plan and detailed international agreements reached with bilateral creditors:

⁴⁰ Lakshman Kiriella, Sri Lanka, *Parliamentary Debates*, Parliament of Sri Lanka, 4 October 2023, pp. 278-279, P. 278.

⁴¹ Source: Author's own compilation.

*We will have a grace period until 2028 to repay the principal loan... the interest rate has been significantly reduced.*⁴²

However, while these speeches projected a narrative of success, they offered limited space for parliamentary scrutiny.

Opposition Leader Sajith Premadasa challenged the official narrative by referencing faster debt restructuring processes in countries like Argentina and Ecuador:

*We were hoping that the President would present these statistics to Parliament today... but suddenly they withdrew it yesterday.*⁴³

He also highlighted discrepancies between IMF recommendations and actual agreements:

*Even though the IMF said that debt repayments should be implemented from 2033, it was actually signed to implement it from 2028.*⁴⁴

Premadasa further criticized the lack of transparency regarding IMF Technical Assistance Reports and omitted Chinese loan data, pointing out 'To date, not a single report has been tabled'.⁴⁵ Thus, despite frequent appearances by the executive in Parliament, oversight was once again limited to rhetorical confrontation without institutional tools for verification or intervention.

⁴² Ranil Wickramasinghe, Sri Lanka, *Parliamentary Debates*, Parliament of Sri Lanka, 2 July 2024, pp. 1539-1549, P. 1542.

⁴³ Sajith Premadasa, Sri Lanka, *Parliamentary Debates*, Parliament of Sri Lanka, 2 July 2024, pp. 1550-1553, P. 1550.

⁴⁴ Sajith Premadasa, *Parliamentary Debates*, 2024, P. 1551.

⁴⁵ Sajith Premadasa, *Parliamentary Debates*, 2024 P. 1553.

Table 6. Contrasting Opposition and Government Narratives in 2024: A Content Analysis of President Wickremesinghe and Opposition Leader Premadasa⁴⁶

Theme	Government Framing	Opposition Framing	Analytical Observation
Debt Restructuring Progress	Highlights milestones, grace periods, and reduced interest	The process was slow compared to peers	Government presents optimism; opposition questions comparative performance
Creditor Agreements	Emphasizes deals with India, Japan, France, and China EXIM	Points to gaps, omits China Dev. Bank & full Chinese debt	Government frames partial success; opposition calls it incomplete
Transparency & Data Disclosure	Cites steps taken and promises to submit documents	Accuses the government of withholding reports and figures	The government offers selective data; the opposition demands full disclosure
Start of Repayment Timeline	Emphasize repayments begin in 2028 with reduced burden	Claims IMF suggested 2033; blames the govt for the earlier date	Conflicting interpretations of the IMF guidance expose negotiation weakness
Parliamentary Inclusion	Notes, speeches, and updates were given in the House	Criticizes the sudden cancellation of the debt debate	Parliament informed post-fact; lacks real-time involvement
Comparative Framing	Frames Sri Lanka as progressing well in a difficult context	Uses Argentina, Ecuador, and Ghana as faster restructuring cases	Opposition uses international benchmarks to challenge local claims

A review of the Hansard debates across the four years reveals consistent patterns in Parliament's response:

⁴⁶ Source: Author's own compilation.

Table 7. Shifting Dynamics of Executive-Legislative Relations During Sri Lanka's Economic Crisis (2020-2024) ⁴⁷

Year	Executive Strategy	Parliamentary Role	Oversight Mechanisms	Dominant Narrative
2020	Fiscal nationalism, dismissal of critics	Rhetorical opposition	Absent	Defensive economic sovereignty
2022	Technocratic inevitability (IMF path)	Performative, fragmented	Circumvented	National unity vs. parliamentary boycott
2023	Procedural managerialism	Legal critique, rhetorical dissent	Legally contested, obstructed	Reforms vs. obstruction
2024	International debt diplomacy and optics	Symbolic presence, dissenting, absence of parliament diplomacy	Post-hoc disclosure only	Executive success vs. lack of transparency

The content analysis clearly shows that the 9th Parliament did not effectively assert its constitutional oversight responsibilities during the 2020-2024 crisis period. While opposition members consistently raised concerns, the executive marginalised these interventions through technocratic framing, legal manoeuvring, and narrative control. Parliament's role was reduced to symbolic endorsement rather than substantive co-governance. This erosion of parliamentary sovereignty undermined democratic norms and accountability, leaving Sri Lanka vulnerable to elite driven crisis governance.

Parliamentary Diplomacy and Its Constraints

Content analysis of parliamentary debates from 2020 to 2024 reveals that Sri Lanka's legislature played a marginal and reactive role in parliamentary diplomacy, with the executive dominating foreign policy engagements, including negotiations with the IMF and bilateral creditors. Parliamentary diplomacy, traditionally understood as legislative involvement in

⁴⁷ Source: Author's own compilation.

shaping foreign relations, international negotiations, and projecting national interests abroad, was largely symbolic during this period.

While the President and Finance Ministry frequently invoked foreign engagements such as agreements with India, China, Japan, and the IMF,⁴⁸ these were often presented as post-facto briefings rather than outcomes of deliberative parliamentary consensus. For instance, in 2024, President Wickremesinghe announced the signing of debt restructuring agreements, claiming:

*Officials authorized by the Cabinet signed these agreements... I addressed the nation... I would like to briefly reveal the current situation before this House.*⁴⁹

This illustrates a pattern where Parliament was informed rather than involved, with no prior debate, consent, or scrutiny of international financial commitments.

Opposition members, particularly Sajith Premadasa, repeatedly demanded transparency and inclusion, querying: 'Will (the IMF promises) be revealed to the country one by one?'⁵⁰ and questioning why 'not a single (IMF Technical Assistance) report has been tabled'.⁵¹ These interventions highlight a performative form of parliamentary diplomacy, where the legislature voiced concern about international agreements but lacked institutional authority or access to shape their content or direction.

Further, debates also revealed that calls for national consensus in international engagement were ignored or reframed as political obstruction. In 2022, Rathana Thero stressed that 'we first need a national consensus before going to the IMF and the World Bank'.⁵² Yet, Wickremesinghe's response emphasised executive inevitability: 'There is no other path before us. We must go that path.'⁵³ This technocratic framing effectively excluded the legislature from meaningful diplomatic participation, reducing its role to retroactive approval and rhetorical commentary.

⁴⁸ Peter Breuer, Sandesh Dhungana and Mike Li, *Sri Lanka's Sovereign Debt Restructuring: Lessons from Complex Processes*. Washington, DC: International Monetary Fund, 2025, pp. 1–42, pp. 23–25.

⁴⁹ Ranil Wickramasinghe, *Parliamentary Debates*, 2024 P. 1539.

⁵⁰ Sajith Premadasa, *Parliamentary Debates*, 2023, P. 51.

⁵¹ Sajith Premadasa, *Parliamentary Debates*, 2024 P. 1553.

⁵² Athuraliye Rathana Thero, *Parliamentary Debates*, 2022, P. 1017.

⁵³ Ranil Wickremasinghe, *Parliamentary Debates*, 2022, P. 1026.

Thus, the Parliament's diplomatic function during the crisis was limited to:

- Raising concerns over executive led international engagements.
- Demanding access to international agreements and technical reports.
- Criticising the exclusion of opposition voices in statecraft and representation.
- Offering alternative narratives in public debates, particularly around IMF conditionalities and geopolitical alignments.

However, these functions did not translate into institutionalised parliamentary diplomacy; there were no cross-party foreign affairs committees empowered to engage external actors, no parliamentary delegations leading international outreach, and no formal mechanisms ensuring legislative review of international agreements.

Altogether, content analysis indicates that parliamentary diplomacy in Sri Lanka from 2020-2024 was constrained by executive dominance, procedural opacity, and institutional asymmetry. Parliament remained a discursive space rather than a diplomatic actor, undermining its potential to serve as a pluralistic channel for foreign engagement and international cooperation. Its reactive posture diminished the democratic legitimacy of Sri Lanka's foreign policy at a time when international credibility and public accountability were crucial.

SWOT Analysis on Institutional and External Constraints

During the crisis years between 2020 and 2024, the Sri Lankan Parliament's capacity to influence crisis management and foreign policy decisions was fundamentally constrained by both internal institutional limitations and external pressures. These constraints are traceable both in the constitutional design and in the patterns of executive-parliamentary interaction observed in Hansard reports.

On paper, Sri Lanka's Constitution offers a robust role for Parliament in matters of public finance and legislation. Article 148 states that 'Parliament shall have full control over public finance', suggesting significant oversight capacity over fiscal policy and foreign borrowing. Furthermore, Article 75 empowers Parliament to make laws for the whole country. However, this legal authority is undermined in practice by the overwhelming powers vested in the executive. Article 33(2)(h) and Chapter VII give the President substantial authority in matters of foreign policy and economic stabilisation, leaving Parliament in a secondary, consultative role at best.

The Hansard data confirms this institutional imbalance. Parliamentary debates from 2022 and 2024 repeatedly show that critical decisions, such as IMF agreements and debt restructuring plans were presented to Parliament after executive negotiations had concluded. President

Wickremesinghe's 2024 announcement of a finalised agreement with bilateral creditors is one example: 'Officials authorized by the Cabinet signed these agreements'.⁵⁴ The legislature was asked to acknowledge, rather than interrogate or shape, such milestones.

Opposition figures, especially Sajith Premadasa and Lakshman Kiriella, consistently demanded greater transparency, pointing out discrepancies in timelines, reporting, and constitutional procedure. For example, in 2023, Premadasa noted the government's failure to table IMF Technical Assistance Reports in Parliament despite repeated commitments.⁵⁵ Kiriella, meanwhile, criticized the government for using legislative privilege to insulate IMF reforms from judicial review, calling it a procedural manipulation.⁵⁶ Such complaints highlight the marginal role of Parliament, echoing what Almeida calls a 'profound democratic backlash' stemming from a pattern of governance dominated by executive decrees, sidelining legislative engagement.⁵⁷

This institutional weakening aligns with what scholars identify as the expansion of the 'imperial executive' a model where presidents act unilaterally, often bypassing legislative hurdles by exploiting urgency narratives.⁵⁸ The use of executive instruments such as decrees and provisional measures allows leaders to bypass coalitional politics and committee delays, centralising power around the executive.⁵⁹ This concentration of authority, particularly in times of crisis erodes checks and balances, with Parliament and the judiciary assuming deferential and reactive roles rather than functioning as active constraints.⁶⁰

Thus, despite the constitutional framework that theoretically empowers Parliament, both institutional weaknesses and international dynamics during crisis governance limited its role to post-facto discussion and rhetorical opposition. The following SWOT analysis captures these dynamics more systematically:

⁵⁴ Ranil Wickramasinghe, *Parliamentary Debates*, 2024 P. 1539.

⁵⁵ Sajith Premadasa, *Parliamentary Debates*, 2023, P. 51.

⁵⁶ Lakshman Kiriella, *Parliamentary Debates*, 2023, P. 278.

⁵⁷ C. A. Porfiro, 'The Executive Dominance and the Marginalization of Parliaments', in M. Sandberg and T. Hall (eds), *Executive Dominance in Times of Crisis*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2025, pp. 15–30, pp. 15–16.

⁵⁸ C. A. Porfiro, 'The Executive Dominance and the Marginalization of Parliaments', 2025, pp. 16-17.

⁵⁹ C. A. Porfiro, 'The Executive Dominance and the Marginalization of Parliaments', 2025, pp. 16-17.

⁶⁰ C. A. Porfiro, 'The Executive Dominance and the Marginalization of Parliaments', 2025, pp. 17-19.

Table 8. SWOT Analysis: Parliament’s Crisis Role and Foreign Policy Influence (2020-2024)⁶¹

Strengths	Evidence and Legal Backing
Constitutional mandate over public finance	Article 148 of the Constitution; COPE and Committee on Public Finance.
Legislative authority over lawmaking	Article 75 of the Constitution allows Parliament to legislate on any subject.
Capacity to raise public questions and demand reports	Hansard debates show consistent questioning by opposition MPs on IMF terms and debt restructuring (2023-2024).

Weaknesses	Structural Limitations
Executive dominance in crisis and foreign policy	Presidential powers under Articles 33 and 42 limit Parliament's influence.
Procedural marginalization	Key agreements announced in Parliament post-facto (2022, 2024), not beforehand.
Weak enforcement of Directive Principles	Articles 27-29 are non-justiciable, limiting normative oversight.
Legal ambiguities and committee inertia	E.g., the flawed Prevention of Corruption Act discussed in 2023 blocked appointments to oversight bodies.

⁶¹ Source: Author’s own compilation.

Opportunities	External and Comparative Avenues
Leverage IMF emphasis on transparency and accountability	Premadasa's demand for IMF report tabling aligns with global governance norms.
Use global examples of faster, more inclusive debt restructuring	Comparisons made in 2024 to Argentina and Ecuador by Premadasa.
Increased public expectation for accountability post-2022 protests	<i>Aragalaya</i> protests reflected demand for participatory governance.

Threats	External and Systemic Constraints
Technocratic framing of economic policy	Statements like 'There is no other path' shut down debate (2022 Hansard).
IMF and creditors dealing primarily with the executive	Parliament lacked a formal role in negotiating or ratifying deals.
Politicization of parliamentary processes	Opposition court actions dismissed as obstructionist.
Delayed or denied access to critical documents	Technical Assistance Reports never tabled, as of June 2024.

Sri Lanka's experience reflects these dynamics. Despite constitutional provisions that guarantee parliamentary oversight, both structural fragmentation and the external pressures of international financial institutions have diminished its capacity. According to Almeida (2025), the legislature in many democracies often suffers from collective action problems, patronage dependencies, and electoral incentives that discourage institutional self-defense. Parliamentarians are less likely to protect the legislature as an institution when doing so might jeopardize personal political gains or executive favours⁶². This dynamic was evident in Sri

⁶² C. A. Porfiro, 'The Executive Dominance and the Marginalization of Parliaments', 2025, pp. 20-21.

Lanka's Parliament during the crisis period, where legislative responses were largely rhetorical and fragmented, while substantive foreign policy and fiscal negotiations were consolidated within the executive apparatus.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the role of Sri Lanka's 9th Parliament amidst the political, economic, and international crises that unfolded between 2020 and 2024. Drawing on Hansard proceedings, constitutional provisions, and scholarly analysis, the research demonstrated that while Parliament retained formal powers of fiscal oversight and legislation, it was structurally and politically marginalised in practice. The executive's increasing consolidation of authority, often justified under the rhetoric of economic emergency and technocratic necessity, effectively sidelined the legislature from shaping crisis governance.

In addressing the first research question, the analysis showed that Parliament responded to the crisis in a reactive and fragmented manner, with its constitutional oversight role largely reduced to symbolic questioning rather than institutional influence. Despite Article 148 of the Constitution granting Parliament full control over public finance, key decisions, such as debt restructuring and IMF negotiations, were finalised by the executive before being disclosed to legislators.

With regard to parliamentary diplomacy, the second research question revealed that the 9th Parliament played a peripheral and performative role. Engagements with the IMF and bilateral creditors were led entirely by the executive, with Parliament functioning primarily as an audience for post agreement announcements. There was no evidence of pre-negotiation mandates, committee engagement, or structured bipartisan diplomacy.

The third research question underscored how internal weaknesses, such as committee inertia and legal ambiguities, and external pressures, particularly from international creditors, further constrained Parliament's ability to influence foreign policy or crisis decisions. The SWOT analysis highlighted that while certain opportunities existed for parliamentary leverage, these were not institutionally realised.

Overall, this study concludes that the Sri Lankan Parliament during this critical period was politically subordinated and procedurally diminished, raising urgent questions about democratic resilience, institutional checks, and the need for systemic reform in times of national crisis.