



SRI LANKA NAVY JOURNAL

November 2024

Volume 10

NAVAL RESEARCH WING

SRI LANKA

SRI LANKA NAVY JOURNAL

Sri Lanka Navy Journal is a bi-annual publication which provides the opportunity to discuss matters relevant to Maritime, Strategic and Global Affairs. It serves as a potent medium for all serving members of the Navy to present ideas, express opinions and share insights on subjects of national and global importance whilst enabling them to improve writing skills and broaden the horizon of knowledge.

The journal publishes papers and articles of professional interest to the Sri Lanka Navy.

Articles published in this journal reflect only the opinions of the authors and not necessarily those of the Sri Lanka Navy.

Copyright of all published articles rests with the Editorial Board of the Sri Lanka Navy Journal.

Reproduction of the articles published, in whole or in part, may be done only with the written concurrence of the Chief Editor.

Sri Lanka Navy Journal is registered with the National Library and Documentation Services Board (NLDSB) under the International Standard Serial Number (ISSN) 2448-9409.

All Rights Reserved.

Editorial Board

Chief Editor

Commodore JMBSB Jayaweera, USP, psc, MDS, MSc in Maritime Affairs, PG Dip in IR, BSc (DS) Hons, MNI, MICS, AFNI, JP (Whole Island)

Editorial Committee

Commander (N) CRP Walakuluge, USP, MPA (NUS)

Major (VNF) MWR Marasinghe, Dip in English (PNCOE), LLB

Lieutenant DES Jayakody

Reviewers

Commodore HK Dassanaikie, USP, ndc, psc, MDS, MPA (PIM-USJ), BSc (DS) Mar Eng Hons), CEng (SL), CEng (I), MIE (SL), MIE (I), MCPM

Commodore R Joseph, RSP, USP, NWC, psc, MCPS, BSc (DS) Hons, Dip in D & WA

Commodore JMBSB Jayaweera, USP, psc, MDS, MSc in Maritime Affairs, PG Dip in IR, BSc (DS) Hons, MNI, MICS, AFNI, JP (Whole Island)

Publication

Sri Lanka Navy
Naval Research Wing
SLNS Gemunu
Welisara
Ragama

T:P - SSO (NRW) 011-7196502

E-mail: nrw@navy.lk

Printing

Naval Printing Unit
SLNS Thakshila
Welisara
Ragama
Sri Lanka

All right reserved. No material in this publication may be reproduced without the written permission from the publisher.

Disclaimer

The views expressed and the informations contained in the papers included in this publication are the sole responsibility of the author/s, and do not bear any liability on the Sri Lanka Navy.

ISSN 2448 - 9409

FOREWORD



The 13th Edition of the Sri Lanka Navy Journal (SLNJ) is published at a time when the South Asian region and the world as a whole is experiencing considerable shifts and turbulence in the geo-political, security and economic spheres. Indeed, as an island nation and given our recent past, we cannot rule out the impact of such peripheral issues to our core. In this context, the journal provides a collection of empirical work, point of views and reviews into contemporary issues that yearns our attention. Furthermore, the contents reflect the evolution of naval thought within the Navy as a learning organization and the depth of academic vigor, skill and professionalism within. The journal is also a cross-sectional display of thought, analysis and logic among various ranks predominantly driven by experience, expertise, knowledge and wisdom of each individual author. In this sense, I'm delighted to witness the dedication and clarity of thought among the young guns as well as the perseverance of the senior ranks.

This edition of the SLNJ also marks a significant milestone of the publication since its inception, where the journal henceforth shall be published annually. The decision resonates the belief in producing high quality manuscripts encouraging future leaders to share their thoughts and insights into matters that considerably impact and influence the future Navy's development trajectory. In the age of AI, it is my firm belief that training our cognitive faculties will be indispensable in keeping phase with the creative disruptions that are taking place around us at an unprecedented scale. Thus, creative and analytical writing will be a most sought out skill for the future as we are drawn into each other's spheres of influence as the world progresses.

I'm also of gratitude for the evaluators of the Navy Journal for their valuable, voluntary contributions in accessing, selecting and refining the journal articles. Indeed, this is an endeavour that you have undertaken despite your busy work schedules and merits my highest personal appreciation. Further, my profound appreciation is also extended to the Head of the Naval Research Wing (HNRW) and his able staff in realizing this crucial milestone and meticulous execution of the associated tasks involved. My sincere kudos is also extended to the Area Authorities, Head of Departments and Commanding Officers for their efforts in encouraging all ranks in their worthy contribution towards this publication.

On a concluding note, whilst congratulating the authors of the ten essays in this journal, I'm of the belief that more and more ranks will be inspired in contributing to this academic discourse.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Perera', written over a horizontal line.

UVMP PERERA, RSP**, USP, ndu, psc
Vice Admiral
Commander of the Navy

Message from the Editor-In-Chief

It is with great enthusiasm that I welcome you to the 13th edition of the Sri Lanka Navy Journal (Volume 10, November 2024). This edition of the Sri Lanka Navy Journal (SLNJ) marks its evolution into an annual publication. This year's edition consists of ten essays including two prize winning essays of the Admiral Clancy Fernando essay competition.

As we continue our journey through the ever-evolving landscape of maritime security, geo-politics and international relations, I am both honored and excited to present a diverse and thought-provoking collection of research and insights.

In this issue, you will find a range of articles that reflect the latest advancements, emerging trends, and significant discussions. Our resource persons have worked diligently to present their findings, and I am confident that their work will not only inform but also inspire further inquiry and dialogue.

This issue highlights several key areas of interest:

- Civil military relations and dimensions of National Security
- Indo-Pacific Strategy and its implications on Sri Lanka
- Evolving trends and threats with the advent of autonomous weapons
- Naval modernization

Our commitment to advancing knowledge and fostering scholarly exchange remains steadfast. We are continually striving to enhance the quality and impact of our publication, and your feedback plays a crucial role in this process. I encourage you to engage with the content, participate in discussions, and contribute to the ongoing development of the SLNJ.

I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to the Commander of the Navy for his consistent encouragement, support and words of wisdom in the success of this edition. Much appreciation is also extended to our authors, reviewers, and editorial board members. Your dedication and expertise are the foundation of our journal's success. A special appreciation also goes to our readers and supporters, your engagement is invaluable.

As we look ahead, the Naval Research Wing (NRW) is excited about the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead. Together, we can continue to push the boundaries of knowledge and make meaningful contributions towards the progress of our Navy. Thank you for your continued support and readership. We look forward to your feedbacks and contributions to future issues.

CONTENTS

CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS AND NATIONAL SECURITY

01

Rear Admiral Buddhika Liyanagamage, RWP, RSP, USP, ndc, psc, MA SS (CT: P&S) USA, MSc (DS) Mgt, BSc (DS) Mech Eng, AFNI, JP (Whole Island)

STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS OF SRI LANKA'S NAVAL DIPLOMACY IN THE U.S. INDO-PACIFIC STRATEGY

14

Commander (ASW) Amila Prasanga, psc, BSc (DS), MBA, MSc (D&SS), MCPS

HOW SRI LANKA'S STRATEGIC LOCATION IN THE INDIAN OCEAN HAS IMPACTED HER NATIONAL IDENTITY

28

Commander (H) Dhananjaya Abeygunawardhana, RSP*, psc, M.Sc (Hydrography), BNavalSt (Maritime Warfare)

THE ETHICS OF AUTONOMOUS WEAPONS (AWs) ON ANTI-PIRACY OPERATIONS

38

Lieutenant Commander (G) Iranga Swarnahansa, BSc (DS), MTS

RED SEA CONFLICT: OPPORTUNITIES, THREATS AND CHALLENGES TO SRI LANKA NAVY

48

Lieutenant Commander (CDO) Pradeep Kumara, psc, B.Sc. Special (Chemistry) Hons

ENHANCING MARITIME SECURITY IN THE INDIAN OCEAN REGION: SRI LANKA'S STRATEGIC IMPERATIVES

56

Lieutenant Commander (ASW) Bandara Wijesinghe

NAVIGATING THE WAVES OF PROGRESS: THE SRI LANKA NAVY'S PATH TO MODERNIZATION

67

Lieutenant Prageeth Sahan

NAVIGATING SRI LANKA'S MARITIME AND STRATEGIC LANDSCAPE

76

Sub Lieutenant Maduranga Tennakoon

COMMANDER & ABOVE CATEGORY - 1ST PLACE

"INDO-PACIFIC STRATEGY, HOW IT WILL BE BENEFITTED TO SOUTH ASIAN COUNTRIES"

Captain (G) Dinesh Silva, RSP, psc, psc (j), MSc (D&SS), MSc (Mgt), MA in DS (UK), PG Dip in DM

85

LIEUTENANT COMMANDER & BELOW CATEGORY - 1ST PLACE

"INDO-PACIFIC STRATEGY HOW IT WILL BE BENEFITTED TO SOUTH ASIAN COUNTRIES"

Commander (N) Preshan Perera, psc, MCPS, MBM (UoC), MSc (D&SS), MSP, BSc (DS) MTS,
MIM (SL)

93

CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS AND NATIONAL SECURITY

Rear Admiral Buddhika Liyanagamage, RWP, RSP, USP, ndc, psc,
MA SS (CT: P&S) USA, MSc (DS) Mgt, BSc (DS) Mech Eng,
AFNI, JP (Whole Island)



Abstract

Civil-military relations have been a continuing strength in Sri Lanka's state-making process. Yet it has remained under appreciated in the context of multiple war narratives and skepticism. The Sri Lankan military and the police have supported democratic Civil-Military Relations (CMR) since independence, especially during the 1962 attempted military coup, during the two JVP insurrections, in the time of the uprising of Tamil militants and the LTTE, during the Humanitarian Operations, at times of natural disasters, and during the recent pandemic situation. Even though the military and police assisted in CMR to restore civilian administration in affected areas, some quarters such as the opposition politicians, Tamil political parties, and some NGOs viewed this CMR negatively. On the contrary, the tri-services and the police are well-trained and equipped professionals in Sri Lanka, and the political leadership and the district administrators should utilize their versatility in times of disaster/eventuality. There is a substantial misconception of militarization in Sri Lanka whenever the government deployed its military during a crisis. However, every time, the military has effectively answered these criticisms by remaining neutral and carrying out the given tasks promptly, professionally, and timely. Furthermore, there is an unsubstantiated fear among the politicians of the military taking power in the country. But other than two failed/suspicious military coups in 1962 and 1966, the military/police remained neutral and stayed away from politics. Moreover, the military almost every time has remained loyal to the Civilian leadership. This draft policy paper provides essential guidelines for the military and police leaders to maintain high-level collaboration/coordination with respective stakeholders maintaining effective CMR.

Keywords: Civil-Military Relationship, Militarization, Armed forces, Politics, Police

Introduction

Civil-Military Relations (CMR) is a discipline in the field of social science that explores the connection between military commanders and civilian rulers or in other words, the connection between the military and institutions. Samuel P Huntington in his book 'the soldier and the State' opined that CMR is one aspect of national security policy and civilian control is elemental to it (Huntington, 1957). The primary aspiration of the national security policy is to augment the safety of the nation from external threats to its social, political,

and political institutions. Nonetheless, these connections are often antagonistic and nations progressing through democratic phases will experience civilian supremacy (Alagappa, 2001). In Sri Lanka after having relative peace since 1948 in the post-colonial era, ethno-nationalism and religious identities were used as a means to mobilize political power. Despite substantial military popularity in Sri Lanka after defeating the LTTE in 2009, civilian leaders still carry on control mechanisms to maintain their supremacy over the military.

The first armed clashes in Sri Lanka, since independence, the 1971 JVP insurgency had its roots not in ethno-nationalism but in economic and class differences. The consolidation of CMR happened when the then government gave autonomy to the police and the military to suppress the uprising in which both the police and military were successful in overruling troubled areas' public administration system (Bandarage, 2009). Thereafter, during the times of the emergence of Tamil militancy, evolving of the LTTE, and the internationalization of the conflict, during the second JVP uprising, throughout the final phase of the humanitarian war till the end of terrorism in 2009, the transition of the military for post-war nation-building, and during the Covid-19 pandemic times; the military and the police were predominantly occupied to maintain law and order, Thus focusing the CMR strategy for state coercion and subjective control. Moreover, similar to the tri-services, Sri Lanka Police also has launched a community policing programme aiming to enhance community-police relations in order to reduce crimes and build trust and confidence.

Research Question and Methodology

The Sri Lanka government has engaged its military and police during uprisings, insurrections, nation-building, reconciliation efforts, disaster management, pandemic handling, and restoring civil administration. This excessive military and police involvement in the civil administration and civilian sector work is viewed negatively by some quarters of society. Moreover, there were two unsuccessful attempts of military coups in 1962 and 1966 and both of them lacked characteristics of a successful coup. However, with no such history replete with military ruling in the country, there is an increasing tendency to look at seeking military assistance and expertise in the civil administration with suspicion and criticism. This paper sets out to unpack the following uncertainties the civilian sector has and asks the questions: Whether it would lead the military to take advantage of CMR? Whether CMR would jeopardize civilian supremacy? and whether this situation affects national security? In other words, if the military stays away from CMR, whether the civilian sector can effectively coordinate disasters, nation-building, pandemic handling and other evolving crises? This study will specifically recommend the most viable policy options available for the Ministry of Defence to implement by involving the military and the civilian sector in Sri Lanka for CMR. The research was carried out as a study. Secondary sources such as books, published journals, papers, and web articles were

referred to recommend policy options for the Sri Lanka military and police to engage in CMR without political affiliations.

Literature Review

Civil-Military Relations (CMR) explores the connection between military commanders and civilian rulers. Moreover, it is one aspect of the national security policy of a country that harnesses military professional power to serve vital national security interests. Nations developing a balanced pattern of CMR have a great advantage in national security and Nations that fail to develop a balanced pattern of CMR run into uncalculated risks (Shukla, 2012). Hence, a complex balancing of power and attitude among the civilian and military sectors is essential as the interaction between military and civil components determines key issues of national security and statecraft. A vibrant and robust connection put together a process that is wise to the use of military power and alive to the nuances of national security. Consequently, unambiguous political control of the military is essential (Charlie Dunlap, 2019).

The CMR has both subjective and objective civilian control and has both priorities in contemporary security challenges and democratic consolidation. During the post-cold war period, many countries identified the requirement of having a well-equipped military to face the evolving challenges. The role of the military in the CMR has three components: (1) civilian control by the military; (2) effectiveness of the military to fulfill its tasks; and (3) efficiency of the military in executing given tasks with minimum costs (Matei, 2015). However, the growing popularity and the influence of military participation in CMR by military attracts many and they viewed this negatively thinking of an imbalance in civil-military relations. Hence, it is very important to identify the missions and roles of the military and civilian rulers should assign them strategically and effectively to the military for accomplishment.

Consolidation of post-independence CMR at a large scale occurred with the 1971 JVP insurgency. The second JVP insurrection in 1989 and the civil war with the Tamil militants enabled further expansion and equipped the Sri Lankan military and the police. Both Army, Navy, and Air Force transformed into well-equipped forces capable of countering unconventional warfare from ceremonial forces. The ethnic representation in the military which is predominately occupied by the Sinhalese was also crucial in providing subjective control as the growing ethno-nationalist ideology always aligned with the ruling government. In other words, the political priorities of the military personnel matched with the civilian state. In general, since the military especially the senior officers had many benefits, there were no reasons for them to challenge the rulers. Still, the CMR was always under the subjective control of the President of Sri Lanka.

Peter D Feaver in his book *Armed Servants* builds a model that draws a 'Principle Agent Theory' to address problems between civilian superiority and subordinates. Feaver points out that continuing strategic interaction between political leadership and military agents is essential for a country. He also opined that this theory would; (1) Prevent the military from exercising coercion on society or on the ruling government; (2) Civilians established monitoring mechanisms to control the military; and (3) the military will respond either on material incentives or fear of punishment. Furthermore, in a country, Legislative, judicial systems, and bureaucratic institutions monitor militia which enables the military to stay away from politics (Feaver, 2003).

Despite civilian control of the military elsewhere in the world, the post-war nation-building and reconciliation efforts in Sri Lanka were mainly undertaken by the military in accordance with standard tools & guidelines of the International Labour Organization, UNICEF, and ICRC. Similarly, the Sri Lanka police also undertook community policing programmes to enhance police-community relations to ensure substantial police accountability on safety and security issues (Rebert, 2017). While the tri forces involved in providing national security other than their involvement in CMR, the police under the community policing initiative, took steps to prevent/reduce crimes and fear of crime, build trust and confidence in the society with the police and ensure more accountable police service by improving police-society relations. However, excessive military and police involvement was judged by society as an advantage/privilege for the armed forces and the police which would threaten civilian supremacy over the military. Moreover, there is an ongoing debate in society about whether the post-conflict CMR affects the national security of Sri Lanka mainly because of the control mechanisms.

Cristiana Matei illustrated six major security roles civilian authorities exercise over the military which cover the entire gamut of CMR: (1) Wars; (2) Internal Wars; (3) Terrorism; (4) Crime; (5) Humanitarian Assistance; and (6) Peace Operations (Matei, 2012). The Sri Lankan military expanded to provide humanitarian support and counter-terrorism. During the time of Tamil militancy, the government expanded its military from 16,000 to 40,000 to face the emerging threats by 1987 (Blodgett, 2004). The majority of these recruits were Sinhalese from rural villages who joined the military. This ethnic representation in the military enhanced the CMR and subjective control. Moreover, Buddhist representation in the tri-services and in the police also significantly increased. Similarly, the military expanded massively by 80% during the final phase of the humanitarian battle from 2006 to 2009 which rose to 375,000 tri-service personnel (Sarvananthan, 2011). For a small island nation, maintaining such a huge armed force is a challenge to the government. Since the majority of these youths are Sinhalese, the ethno-nationalism, family, and cast bond ensured loyalty in the military with the government leaders, especially with the President.

The growing popularity and the strength of the military after the defeat of the LTTE were a considerable concern for civilians. However, subjective control, objective control and military professionalism as opined by Samuel P Huntington enhanced the CMR. Moreover, many loyal officers received higher positions in the military (Huntington, 1957). Some senior officers went for posting in diplomatic missions. The remaining officers received very good overseas training. Furthermore, military expansions created more job opportunities and promotions. The recruits received good salaries and welfare initiatives by the government ensured civilian supremacy. Hence, there was no reason for the military to confront the government (Wijayaratne, 2015).

Despite the loyalty of the military to the civilian leadership, there are a few attempted/alleged military coups in Sri Lanka. In 1962, due to the recruitment pattern which politicized the military, an unsuccessful military coup was launched. Thereafter, the civilians have begun heavy subjective control over the military and consolidated their power using loyalty and increased ethno-nationalism based CMR. In 1966, the Commander of the Army was arrested over another alleged/failed military coup also known as the 'bathroom coup'. Moreover, at the time of the recent elections, political leadership/civilians feared that the military would take the power from coups after the defeat of the political leadership especially when the former Commander of the Army contested for presidency, and lost the presidential election in 2010. However, during all instances, the military remained neutral to a large extent because of loyalty, military professionalism, fear, subjective and objective controls, and the competition of senior officers for higher positions in the military (Jayawickrama, 2019).

Within the weeks of the revolutionary 'Aragalaya' and during the tensions due to energy crises, the tri-services, and the military have had mixed consequences. It was evident during the 100 days of struggle, that the Sri Lanka Police was unable to control the tense situations alone to bring back law and order. Hence, most of the time, the military aided the police or the military completely took over the responsibilities to gain control over the protestors. For the most part, though the military was able to consolidate law and order, their actions/deployment of resources were viewed and often misinterpreted by many as militarization. Despite these concerns, the military maintained a strong strategic level dialogue with the political leadership exhibiting good CMR. Similarly, during the Covid pandemic times, the military completely took over the task of establishing quarantine centers, converting hospitals, and vaccination programme from the civil administration. Moreover, when certain segments of medical staff went on strikes, the military covered up their work.

Despite undertaking almost all tasks, there were few concerns on the civilian side over the military leadership in the National Operation Centre for Prevention of COVID-19 and a large number of military personnel in the President Task Force. Here again, some sections of the locals and the Tamil diaspora neg-

actively viewed this situation as military militarization (PEARL, 2020). However, Thesara Jayawardane in her research on the ‘role of the defence forces of Sri Lanka during the Covid-19 outbreak for nations branding’ highlighted the fact that “obtaining the maximum cooperation from the defence forces is one of the most important factors for surviving COVID-19” (Jayawardane, 2020). All in all, the Sri Lankan military and the police despite the political influences have maintained their neutrality over civilian control. This action of conduct by the armed forces and the police enabled Sri Lanka to have near flawless CMR in the country.

Analysis

Based on the above findings, this draft policy paper will critically examine the positive and negative consequences of military involvement in CMR and find out possible guidelines that the military and police decision-makers should follow to maintain effective CMR in Sri Lanka.

a. Positive Consequences of CMR – After reviewing the literature, the study group identified the following positive consequences of CMR in Sri Lanka.

- A divided political setting prevents military/ police from entering into party politics
- Military professionalism keeps the military away from politics
- Achieving civilian supremacy through subjective and objective control
- Continuing interaction between political leadership with military hierarchy prevents the military from exercising coercion
- Fear of punishment enables strengthening CMR
- Non-intrusive monitoring of military leaders controls CMR
- Discipline of the military/police stays away from politics
- Military/police consisted of a majority Sinhalese and their political priorities matched that of civilian leaders
- Military/police provide job security for many Sinhala youths
- Power the President has as the Commander-in-Chief and Minister of Defence under the new constitution
- Military/police higher positions given to loyal officers
- Lucrative positions in diplomatic missions/government civil administration enhanced CMR
- The benefits the military/police get also prevent them from challenging the government

- Welfare programmes such as 'Api Wenuwen Api' improved CMR
- Military/police positively involved in reconciliation efforts
- Nation-building was successful
- Military/police roles during the pandemic time were commendable
- Vaccination programme undertaken by the military has a very positive outcome
- Military covered up health workers' jobs during strikes
- Excessive manpower in the military paid dividends
- CMR could have been better during the present tensions
- Civilians are afraid of taking responsibility during disasters

b. Negative Consequences of CMR- Similarly, there are a few negative perceptions of CMR in Sri Lanka. Most of the negative observations have not come from scholars, but from certain anti-government elements and from the diaspora.

- Retaining approximately 350,000 armed forces personnel after the war ended in 2009
- Use of the military for many nation-building projects loose civilian job opportunities
- Heavy subjective control mechanisms to subordinate military under civilian control
- Retired senior military leaders contesting for elections using military popularity
- Ethno-nationalism in the military leads to military alignments with the ruling Sinhala majority
- Minority Tamils in the military and police face anti-Tamil segment challenges
- Freedom of act /military influence leading to isolated HR abuses
- Corruptions in the military were not investigated due to military autonomy
- Use of military to intimidate opposition during elections
- Possible military coup to remain in power
- Sending pre-mature retirement/retirement when opposing military orders

- Duplication of civil administration work/undermining their duties
- Losing career appointments of senior officers due to politicizing military
- Heavy military deployment (vehicles) in peacetime jeopardizes CMR

Draft Policy Guideline

The findings and the analysis of this on the civil-military relations and national security of Sri Lanka study identified that Sri Lanka must have a written policy guideline on CMR taking all stakeholders in the country to a common platform to perform its absolute potential when in need. For this process, the line ministries, especially the Ministry of Defence (MOD) have to take the lead along with the Ministry of Disaster Management, Ministry of Health, and the remaining ministries which would enhance the CMR between the military/police and the civil administration set up. Hence, this research has identified the following policy options for the military and police leaders to follow and will also recommend three policy options out of the many to provide a convincing and detailed account of the way forward for the CMR in Sri Lanka.

- Military according to Huntington should never be involved in domestic affairs
- However, in small countries, the military presents labour in peacetime
- Use military assets as the last resort
- The 'distinction' between CMR and military roles in security and relief must be clearly explained
- Military leadership should have a plan on what aspects they will be involved in domestically (HADR, reconstruction, reconciliation, etc)
- The military and civil defence assets of forces engaged in combat shall not be used to support CMR activities
- CMR oversight committee should have a civilian leadership from the national level
- Considerations on civil-military coordination must be guided by a commitment to 'do no harm'
- Military should work with the local district of authorities for nation-building projects
- Must have a plan to bring in all stakeholders (including the opposition) when engaged in projects
- Create a body in the military that checks out the military's presence in local projects

- Where appropriate, coordinate joint civil-military interventions
- Eliminate inconsistencies/overlaps in CMR
- Armed forces to remain apolitical
- Execute only legal orders and refuse illegal orders
- Civilian authorities retain control over all aspects of security policy
- Decisions to accept military assistance must be made by humanitarian organizations, not political authorities
- Senior military officers can be called before the elected leaders of parliament to testify on military strategy and operations
- The right-sizing military is essential
- CDS should be given more power to enhance jointness
- Create the appointment of a National Security Advisor to strike a balance between CMR

Conclusion

Based on the literature and analysis, the research identified certain lapses and positives in the CMR in Sri Lanka. The excessive military cadre maintain after the defeat of the terrorism in the country in 2009 has more benefits during disasters/crises mainly because the other stakeholders such as the disaster management department, irrigation, forestry, coastal conservation, fire department, etc do not have well trained and sufficient manpower to mitigate crises. Moreover, it has been a real menace in the government sector trade unions to go on unethical strikes even at times of disasters when their duty is most needed. Military at every time covered up their work. Hence, the government should have a viable plan to segregate the military for national security policy and defence roles. A soundly written policy document would enable military leaders and civil administrators and political leaders to effectively utilize the military to get rid of the labeling of militarization and positively engage them for disaster relief, nation-building, aid to the civil power, and other related CMR activities to enhance national security. Finally, by enhancing military professionalism, political leaders can avoid the military being politicized to do away with the dilemma of military popularity and coups.

Draft Policy Options

The findings and analysis of the study clearly identified the necessity to have better CMR in the country as a driving mechanism. Moreover, a comprehensive policy framework is needed to iron out the negative consequence of military involvement in civilian work. Considering the need of the country, the research has formulated two policy options for the tri-forces and the police hierarchy/

political leadership/ civil administrators to appraise to maintain effective CMR in collaboration/coordination with the relevant stakeholders in Sri Lanka.

- **Draft Policy Option 1.** Reduction of the quantum of security forces using the ‘right sizing’ method to modernize the military to effectively engage in ensuring national defence in Sri Lanka while keeping the remaining troops as a reserve force for civil-military engagements. This would enable the professional military component including military equipment, vehicles, and other related military hardware to concentrate on defence-related matters.
- **Draft Policy Option 2.** Military to remain neutral in politics and avoid exercising substantial authority in CMR as the military should not be the first to involve and has to be the last option. This could be achieved through military professionalism which makes the military apolitical. Further, this option would enable civilian leaders to take more responsibility for civil-military engagements and would also eliminate misconceptions of ‘excessive military involvement’.
- **Draft Policy Option 3.** Enhance the professionalism of the civilian sector by proper training in order to respond to any eventualities and call up the military if they failed to do so only. Moreover, the available resources in the military could be effectively utilized for post-disaster and post-war reconstructions under a proper steering committee that includes both civil administrators and military leadership to ensure transparency and accountability.

REFERENCES

Alagappa, M., 2001. *Coercion and Governance: The Declining Political Role of the Military in Asia*. 9 ed. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Amand, G. A. S., 1994. *CLAUSEWITZ AND THE GULF WAR: THE POLITICAL-MILITARY DYNAMICS IN BALANCE*. [Online]
Available at: <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/ADA440958.pdf>
[Accessed 08 April 2022].

Bandarage, A., 2009. *The Separatist Conflict in Sri Lanka: Terrorism, Ethnicity, Political Economy*. 1 ed. New York: Universe/Authors Choice Press.

Bassford, C., 1994. *John Keegan and the Grand Tradition of Trashing Clausewitz: a Polemic*. 3rd ed. New York: Sage Publications, Inc.

Berger, G., 2013. *Is Clausewitz or Sun Tzu More Relevant to Contemporary War?*. [Online]
Available at: <https://www.e-ir.info/2013/04/03/is-clausewitz-or-sun-tzu->

more-relevant-to-understanding-contemporary-war-2/
[Accessed 27 April 2022].

Blodgett, B., 2004. *Sri Lanka's Military: The Search for a Mission*. 1 ed. San Diego: Aventine Press.

Charlie Dunlap, J., 2019. Why an apolitical military is so important in an era of an "All-Volunteer" force. [Online]
Available at: <https://sites.duke.edu/lawfire/2019/09/21/why-an-apolitical-military-is-so-important-in-an-era-of-an-all-voluntary-force/>
[Accessed 18 September 2022].

Coker, C., 2002. *Waging War Without Warriors? The Changing Culture of Military Conflict*. London: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Feaver, P. D., 2003. *Armed Servants: Agency, Oversight, and Civil-Military Relations*. 03 ed. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Fergusson, O., 2013. Clausewitz and Modern Interstate Warfare (1990-2012): The Continuing Relevance of Clausewitz?. [Online]
Available at: <https://mspace.lib.umanitoba.ca/bitstream/handle/1993/22156/Owen%20Fergusson%20Thesis-%20August%2019,%202013%20-%20Final%20copy.pdf?sequence=1>
[Accessed 04 April 2022].

Hardwick, N.-A., 2011. Is Clausewitz or Sun Tzu more relevant to understanding contemporary war?. [Online]
Available at: <https://www.e-ir.info/2011/03/30/is-clausewitz-or-sun-tzu-more-relevant-to-understanding-contemporary-war/>
[Accessed 04 April 2022].

Huntington, S. P., 1957. *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations*. 1 ed. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Jayawardane, T. V., 2020. *ROLE OF DEFENCE FORCES OF SRI LANKA DURING THE COVID-19*. [Online]
Available at: https://www.seu.ac.lk/jom/publication/v15n2/JM_15_2_06.pdf
[Accessed 23 July 2022].

Jayawickrama, I., 2019. *Civil Military Relations of Sri Lanka*. [Online] Available at: https://www.academia.edu/39719708/Civil_Military_Relations_of_Sri_Lanka [Accessed 20 July 2022].

KUO, L.-S. A., 2007. *SUN TZU'S WAR THEORY IN THE TWENTY FIRST CENTURY*. [Online]

Available at: <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/ADA470026.pdf>
[Accessed 05 April 2022].

Matei, C., 2012. Role of the Military. In: C. H. T. C. B. Florina Cristiana Matei, ed. *The Routledge Handbook of Civil - Military Relations*. New York: Routledge, p. 401.

Matei, F. C., 2015. A New Conceptualization of Civil -Military Relations. In: T. C. Bruneau, ed. *The Routledge Handbook of Civil-Military Relations*. New York: Routledge, pp. 26-38.

McNeilly, M. R., 2001. *Sun Tzu and the Art of Modern Warfare*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Miller, S., 2012. Are Clausewitz and Sun Tzu Still Relevant in Contemporary Conflicts?. [Online]
Available at: <https://www.e-ir.info/pdf/23969>
[Accessed 13 April 2022].

Oldemeinen, M., 2012. Is Clausewitzian Thought Really Timeless as Some Have Claimed?. [Online]
Available at: <https://www.e-ir.info/2012/01/24/is-clausewitzian-thought-really-timeless-as-some-have-claimed-discuss-with-reference-to-the-war-on-terror/>
[Accessed 27 April 2022].

PEARL, 2020. Militarisation of Government COVID-19 Response - OHCHR. [Online]
Available at: <http://www.ohchr.org>
[Accessed 24 July 2022].

Rebert, J., 2017. Community policing in Sri Lanka: a foundation for wider police reform?. [Online]
Available at: <https://eu-civcap.net/2017/03/01/community-policing-in-sri-lanka-a-foundation-for-wider-police-reform/>
[Accessed 10 July 2022].

Sandoval, D., 2019. Sun Tzu's Art of War and the Vietnam War. [Online]
Available at: <https://sckool.org/sun-tzus-art-of-war-and-the-vietnam-war-extended-essay-in-hist.html>
[Accessed 01 April 2022].

Sarvananthan, M., 2011. Sri Lanka: putting entrepreneurship at the heart of economic revival in the north, east, and beyond. [Online]
Available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09584935.2011.565313>
[Accessed 21 July 2022].

Shukla, R., 2012. Civil Military Relations in India. [Online]
Available at: https://www.claws.in/static/MP36_Civil-Military-Relations-in-India.pdf
[Accessed 18 September 2022].

Sidoti, A. F., n.d. The Relevance of Carl Von Clausewitz in Operation Iraqi Freedom. [Online]
Available at: <https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/Portals/10/ASPJ/journals/Chronicles/sidoti.pdf>
[Accessed 07 April 2022].

Sloan, E. C., 2017. Modern Military Strategy An Introduction. 2nd ed. Oxon, New York: Routledge.

Theyagu, D., 2020. Think Critically with Sun Tzu's Art of War Stratagems. [Online]
Available at: <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/think-critically-sun-tzus-art-war-stratagems-daniel-theyagu/>
[Accessed 03 April 2022].

Wijayaratne, C., 2015. Civil-Military Relations in Post Conflict Sri Lanka: Successful Civilian Consolidation in the Face of Political Competition. Monterey: Naval Postgraduate School.

Wright, D. P., n.d. Deception in the Desert: Deceiving Iraq in Operation DESERT STORM. [Online]
Available at: <https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Books/Browse-Books/iBooks-and-EPUBs/Deception-in-the-Desert/>
[Accessed 09 April 2022].

Strategic Implications of Sri Lanka's Naval Diplomacy in the U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy

Commander (ASW) Amila Prasanga, psc, BSc (DS), MBA, MSc
(D&SS), MCPS



Abstract

In the rapidly evolving Indo-Pacific landscape, maritime security cooperation is crucial for addressing the complex and shared challenges of the region. Sri Lanka, with its strategic location at the crossroads of major sea routes and its formidable naval capabilities, emerges as a pivotal player within the U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy. This paper explores Sri Lanka's role in regional maritime security, employing a qualitative approach that integrates Barry Buzan's Comprehensive Security Framework. Through primary data collection and expert interviews, the study reveals Sri Lanka's potential to significantly bolster regional maritime security cooperation through proactive naval diplomacy. The research highlights the importance of strengthening bilateral and multilateral engagements, building capacity, and fostering knowledge sharing among regional partners. Key recommendations include establishing a Second Global Humanitarian City and Logistics Center in Hambantota to enhance security multilateralism and advocating for Sri Lanka to host the Indian Ocean Treaty Organization (IOTO) as a cornerstone for regional collective security mechanisms.

Keywords: Maritime Security Cooperation, Indo-Pacific Strategy, Sri Lanka Naval Diplomacy, Regional Security

Introduction

The Indo-Pacific region is experiencing rapid transformation, characterized by complex geopolitical shifts and evolving security dynamics. Nations have increasingly recognized the interconnectedness of interests and the pressing need to address shared maritime security challenges, highlighting the critical importance of maritime security cooperation (Parasasti et al., 2023; Pant & Saha, 2020; Bueger & Edmunds, 2017). In this dynamic setting, Sri Lanka occupies a unique and pivotal position, strategically situated at the crossroads of the Indian Ocean. Operating within the framework of the U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy, Sri Lanka's role is crucial in navigating these complex challenges and contributing to regional stability.

Maritime security in the Indo-Pacific is of paramount importance, given the persistent threats such as piracy, illegal fishing, drug trafficking, human smuggling and maritime terrorism (Sakhuja, 2023). Safeguarding the region's crucial sea lines of communication is essential for global trade and commerce, prompting a call for cooperative and collective efforts to address these complex challenges (Rossiter, 2022; Premaratna & Thrishali, 2020).

Sri Lanka's geostrategic location, expansive maritime territory, and formidable naval capabilities place it at the epicenter of the Indo-Pacific's security concerns (Kandaudahewa, 2023; Madutharanaga, 2023). Aligned with the U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy, which seeks to uphold a rule-based international order and safeguarding navigation freedom, Sri Lanka emerges as a key player in ensuring regional security and stability (Kandaudahewa, 2023). This highlights the necessity of understanding Sri Lanka's unique contributions within the broader Indo-Pacific security framework.

However, a significant knowledge gap exists regarding specific role and potential of Sri Lanka's naval diplomacy within the context of the U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy. Existing literature does not fully explore the unique advantages Sri Lanka's naval diplomacy brings to regional security enhancement. This research seeks to address this gap by examining Sri Lanka's naval diplomacy in the context of the U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy, providing new insights into regional security cooperation. Further; it aims to offer strategic recommendations for policymakers, scholars, and naval strategists, highlighting how Sri Lanka's maritime potential can be effectively utilized to strengthen regional security within the U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy.

Literature Review

Evolution of the Indo-Pacific Strategic Landscape and Role of Naval Diplomacy

According to the ancient Indian strategist Kautilya, also known as Chanakya, classical Indian political thought significantly emphasizes diplomatic and economic strategies. Kautilya's strategic imperatives in the Indo-Pacific advocated for a balance of power and alliances to safeguard maritime interests (Gupta et al., 2019). Admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan, a renowned naval strategist, argued for the critical role of maritime power in global geopolitics. In the context of the Indo-Pacific, Mahan's theories underscore the strategic importance of naval dominance and the control of key sea routes to enhance a nation's geopolitical influence (Tarapore, 2020). Additionally, contemporary strategic analyst Robert Kaplan (2011) provides valuable insights into the modern challenges faced by the Indo-Pacific region. Kaplan's analysis emphasizes the necessity of adopting multidimensional strategies to navigate the intricate geopolitical landscape of the area.

The U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy has undergone significant evolution since the post-World War II era, reflecting growing strategic importance of the Asia-Pacific region (Krishnan & Subramanian, 2023). The introduction of the "Rebalance to Asia" policy in the early 2010s marked a pivotal historical development in U.S. foreign policy, aiming to enhance U.S. presence and influence within the region (Katagiri, 2019). This strategic shift highlights the Indo-Pacific's central-

ity to global affairs. However, despite these advancements, challenges remain in fully understanding the implications of this evolving strategy. As argued by Thuy Hang (2016), the Indo-Pacific's increasing prominence in global geopolitical discourse underscores the need for continued adaptation and engagement in U.S. foreign policy. Nevertheless, the ongoing transformation of the U.S. approach reflects the region's critical role in shaping future international relations.

The Indo-Pacific region has emerged as a pivotal theater in global geopolitics, largely due to its economic vitality and strategic significance (Rauf, 2023). The region's critical sea lanes are essential for facilitating international trade, underscoring its global importance for stability and security (Dachi & Yurianto, 2023). Yoshimatsu (2023) further asserts that the Indo-Pacific is crucial for global energy transportation. Nevertheless, despite its economic and strategic importance, the region faces numerous security challenges that could impact its role in global affairs. Yet, understanding and addressing these challenges is essential for maintaining the region's stability and continued economic prosperity.

Naval diplomacy is instrumental in maintaining the strategic significance of the Indo-Pacific region (Dalalat et al., 2021). By leveraging maritime capabilities, naval diplomacy not only enhances international cooperation but also safeguards national interests (Agastia, 2021). Within this context, naval diplomacy plays a vital role in managing cooperation, competition, and conflict avoidance, thereby aligning with the core principles of the U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy (Putra, 2023). Nevertheless, the effectiveness of naval diplomacy in addressing regional security challenges remains contingent upon the evolving geopolitical dynamics and the commitment of regional actors to collaborative efforts.

However, a comprehensive analysis is needed to understand how specific nations, such as Sri Lanka, engage in naval diplomacy and its impact on the broader Indo-Pacific security landscape (Rondeau et al., 2023). Investigating Sri Lanka's naval diplomatic role within the framework of the U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy is crucial for a deeper comprehension of the region's strategic dynamics. This inquiry is essential for assessing how Sri Lanka's maritime engagements contribute to regional stability and influence within the context of global security arrangements.

Current Establishment and Core Principles of the U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy

The U.S. Indo-Pacific Maritime Security Initiative (MSI), initiated by Section 1263 of the FY 2016 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), initially scheduled for five years, aims to enhance maritime capabilities among partner nations. Extended through December 2025 by the FY 2019 NDAA, the Indo-Pacific MSI focuses on South Asia, including Sri Lanka, aiming to bolster maritime security and Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) capabilities. Its primary objective is to facilitate collaborative monitoring and operational contributions, creat-

ing a comprehensive Regional Maritime Picture for more effective management of maritime domains (U.S. Department of Defense, 2019).

The Global Peace Operations Initiative (GPOI), a crucial element of the U.S. Department of State's collaboration with the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, involves 12 key partners, including Sri Lanka. The initiative aims to strengthen regional partnerships by improving readiness, deployment, and sustainment capabilities for U.N. peace operations. Its objectives include advancing peace, strengthening regional cooperation, foster confidence-building measures, and professionalize security forces across the Indo-Pacific (U.S. Department of Defense, 2019).

In line with these initiatives, the U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy emphasizes defending its interests and urges allies and partners to contribute to regional security through defense investments, support for regional partners, adherence to international laws, ensuring response access, promoting interoperability, and participating in Indo-Pacific initiatives.

Collaborating with like-minded allies, the U.S. remains dedicated to upholding the rule of law in the Indo-Pacific. The Department of Defense (DoD), alongside U.S. agencies, regional entities, and partners, works towards shaping a secure, prosperous, and peaceful future for the region, prioritizing the rule of law for sustained stability. The current U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy, outlined in 2022, centers on following five objectives each in concert with allies and partners, as well as with regional institutions (U.S. Department of Defense, 2022).

- **Advance a Free and Open Indo-Pacific.** Ensuring the region remains accessible and governed by international laws and norms.
- **Build Connections Within and Beyond the Region.** Strengthening alliances and partnerships to enhance cooperation and mutual benefits.
- **Drive Regional Prosperity.** Promoting economic growth and stability through trade, investment, and innovation.
- **Bolster Indo-Pacific Security.** Enhancing military capabilities and cooperation to maintain peace and stability.
- **Build Regional Resilience to Transnational Threats.** Addressing challenges such as military conflicts, territorial disputes, and cyber security threats collaboratively.

Significance of the U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy on Island States'

Island states, such as Sri Lanka, occupy a pivotal position within the U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy, grappling with multifaceted challenges encompassing

maritime security, trade, and geopolitical dynamics. Recognizing their strategic significance, the strategy endeavors to bolster cooperation and coordination with these nations (Wallis & Batley, 2020). Highlighting the imperative for heightened engagement with island states, the strategy advocates for concerted efforts to address shared challenges collaboratively (Scott, 2021).

Sri Lanka's strategic location at the crossroads of major sea routes endows it with a critical role in safeguarding maritime passages and maintaining regional stability (Kumara, 2021). According to Madutharanaga (2023), Sri Lanka's position in the Indian Ocean situates it as a vital nexus within the broader Indo-Pacific region, underscoring its strategic centrality. This centrality, nevertheless, draws the attention of global powers such as the United States, China, India, and Japan, thereby positioning Sri Lanka as a pivotal actor in the region's geopolitical dynamics (Attanayake & Atmakuri, 2021).

The development of Sri Lanka's naval capabilities is closely tied to its strategic significance. Liyanagamage (2018) argues that the Sri Lankan Navy, equipped with surface combatants and offshore patrol vessels, plays a crucial role in maintaining regional maritime security. By actively participating in various maritime security initiatives, the Navy not only secures national interests but also enhances Sri Lanka's standing in the Indo-Pacific (Madutharanaga, 2023). Sri Lanka's adept naval diplomacy capitalizes on its strategic location and maritime strengths, fostering alliances with both regional and global powers to enhance overall security and stability (Smith, 2019). Nevertheless, despite the critical role it plays, existing literature often falls short in offering a comprehensive analysis of Sri Lanka's naval capabilities and its nuanced contributions to the U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy, underscoring the pressing need for a deeper understanding of its potential to sustain the strategic significance of the Indo-Pacific region.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research approach to thoroughly explore Sri Lanka's naval diplomacy within the U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy (Marshall & Rossman, 2019). Diverse theoretical framework of Barry Buzan's Comprehensive Security Framework (Buzan et al., 1998), is integrated to analyze regional security dynamics. The research involves a systematic literature review focused on Indo-Pacific security and naval diplomacy, supplemented by stakeholder interviews to gather firsthand insights (Okoli, & Schabram, 2015). Thematic analysis is utilized as the data analysis technique. Rigorous strategies, such as data triangulation and multiple analysis rounds, are implemented to ensure the robustness of qualitative interpretation and mitigate potential biases (Webster & Watson, 2020; Maxwell, 2012).

Sri Lanka's Naval Diplomacy within Barry Buzan's Comprehensive Security Paradigm

Barry Buzan's Comprehensive Security Framework provides a sophisticated approach to analyzing Sri Lanka's naval diplomacy within the complex security landscape of the Indo-Pacific. This framework, which emphasizes the interconnectedness of military, political, economic, environmental, and societal security dimensions, moves beyond a narrow definition of security and recognizes its multifaceted nature across different sectors (Buzan et al., 1998).

Sri Lanka's naval collaborations significantly enhance maritime security in the Indo-Pacific by fostering regional stability, conducting joint exercises, and securing maritime borders against potential threats (Sri Lanka Navy, 2023). This active naval presence is crucial for protecting vital sea lanes, enhancing security cooperation, and contributing to stability in the region. These naval engagements not only serve military purposes but also build economic alliances and ensure political stability through joint patrols and cooperative initiatives with regional navies (Acharya, 2004). By safeguarding trade routes, promoting economic cooperation, and participating in regional alliances, Sri Lanka's naval diplomacy strengthens economic resilience and political harmony across the Indo-Pacific.

The Comprehensive Security Framework also underscores the importance of environmental factors in security considerations. In this regard, Sri Lanka's naval diplomacy plays a pivotal role in environmental protection by combating maritime pollution and promoting sustainable practices. A notable example is the 12th Indo-Pacific Environmental Security Forum held in 2023, co-hosted by the Sri Lanka Navy and the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command. The forum, themed "Environmental Resilience through Cooperation," highlighted the importance of collaborative efforts in strengthening communities, protecting natural resources, and ensuring security across the Indo-Pacific.

Furthermore, Sri Lanka's naval diplomacy is committed to safeguarding the well-being of seafarers and coastal communities, addressing maritime threats that could destabilize the region. This focus aligns with the societal resilience aspect emphasized in Buzan's framework. Collaborative efforts with neighboring nations to combat transnational crimes such as human trafficking and drug smuggling are central to enhancing societal security in the Indo-Pacific (Acharya, 2009). By integrating military, environmental, and societal elements into its naval diplomacy, Sri Lanka contributes to a comprehensive security approach that supports regional stability and resilience.

Therefore, Sri Lanka's naval diplomacy, as seen through the lens of Buzan's Comprehensive Security Framework, is instrumental in anchoring stability and fostering cooperation within the Indo-Pacific, addressing a wide spectrum of security concerns from military threats to environmental and societal challenges.

Sri Lanka's Naval Diplomacy in the U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy

Naval diplomacy, as Rondeau et al. (2023) argue, involves the strategic use of maritime resources to achieve foreign policy objectives. This includes port visits, training sessions, joint exercises, bilateral staff talks, and international missions. Sri Lanka's approach to naval diplomacy aligns with the core principles of the U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy, thereby contributing to enhanced regional stability and cooperation.

Sri Lanka's geographical location is of immense significance within the Indo-Pacific region. According to the Sri Lanka Navy (2020), the nation's vast maritime domain, which includes an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) spanning 517,000 square kilometers and a coastline stretching 1,340 kilometers, underscores its strategic maritime capabilities. This expansive territory is crucial not only for safeguarding vital sea routes but also for fostering maritime collaborations.

The Sri Lankan Navy, as noted by the Sri Lanka Navy (2023), plays a pivotal role in ensuring maritime security through a diverse fleet that includes surface combatants, offshore patrol vessels, and specialized assets. Equipped to combat transnational crimes within regional waters, the Navy actively participates in a range of maritime security initiatives with neighboring states, highlighting its commitment to regional stability.

- **South Asia Cooperation and Training (SEACAT).** According to the U.S. Department of Defense (2019), the South Asia Cooperation and Training (SEACAT) exercises represent a significant collaboration between the U.S. Navy and the Sri Lanka Navy, initiated in 2002. These exercises underscore the importance of regional cooperation and knowledge exchange, with 21 exercises conducted to date. SEACAT focuses on advancing mutual maritime security objectives, bolstering regional cooperation, countering maritime threats, and improving interoperability among South Asian naval forces. The exercises not only enhance collaborative efforts but also foster a collective understanding of shared security challenges, promoting a rule-based framework in the South Asian maritime domain.

- **Balance/Flash Style Exercises.** The Balance/Flash Style Exercises, initiated in 1997, exemplify the long-standing collaboration between the U.S. Navy/Army Special Warfare Forces and the Sri Lanka Navy's Special Boat Squadron (SBS) and 4th Fast Attack Craft Flotilla (FAF4). Over 36 exercises, this partnership has demonstrated a consistent commitment to building interoperability and enhancing tactical prowess. The recent exercises focused on refining joint operational capabilities, fostering interoperability, and strengthening responses to common security challenges. According to Putra (2023), these exercises are

vital for enhancing mutual understanding, trust, and cooperation, which are crucial for addressing security threats in the Indo-Pacific.

- **Cooperate Afloat Readiness and Training (CARAT).** The CARAT exercises between the U.S. Navy and the Sri Lanka Navy, which began in 2017, emphasize a steadfast commitment to maritime cooperation. As documented by Madutharanaga (2023), these exercises have been pivotal in furthering collaborative efforts in maritime readiness, with four exercises conducted to date. CARAT aims to enhance MDA and operational readiness, strengthen coordination in addressing non-traditional security threats, and promote understanding and trust between naval forces. The improved interoperability in naval operations and the reinforced commitment to a rule-based international order in the Indo-Pacific are tangible outcomes of these exercises.

- **Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC).** Initiated in 1992, the Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) exercises symbolize multinational collaboration between U.S. Marines and Sri Lanka Navy SBS/Marines. With ten exercises conducted, RIMPAC addresses evolving security dynamics in the Indo-Pacific. The exercises aim to foster collaboration among Indo-Pacific nations for regional resilience, enhance capabilities in joint amphibious operations, and promote understanding of diverse regional security perspectives. As Agastia (2021) notes, the outcomes of RIMPAC are evident in strengthened ties and cooperation among participating nations, enhanced capabilities for joint operations, and shared insights into regional security challenges.

- **Cultivating Strategic Collaborations.** Strategic collaborations between the Sri Lanka Navy and the Institute of Security Governance (ISG) in the U.S. signify an important step towards enhancing institutional capacity. Workshops focusing on tactical doctrine development, MDA improvements, and optimizing human resources management align Sri Lanka with U.S. values and methodologies, advancing the broader objectives of the U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy. Furthermore, the welcoming of U.S. Navy vessels during port calls in Sri Lanka fosters cultural exchange and goodwill, reinforcing Sri Lanka's commitment to nurturing cooperation and regional stability. Progress in U.S.-Sri Lanka military relations, particularly with the Sri Lankan Navy since 2015, has been marked by significant milestones. Events such as the 2017 port visit by the USS NIMITZ Carrier Strike Group and the inaugural bilateral CARAT Exercise in 2017 highlight enhanced collaboration aimed at boosting naval readiness and reinforcing security frameworks in the Indian Ocean region (U.S. Department of Defense, 2019). These engagements underscore Sri Lanka's dedication to fostering regional stability, reinforcing partnerships, and building collective capacity to address security challenges in the Indo-Pacific. By actively participating in these strategic endeavors, Sri Lanka sig-

nificantly contributes to the objectives of the U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy, enhancing interoperability, fostering a collective understanding of security challenges, and building capacity in the region.

Findings: Sri Lanka's Naval Diplomacy and Strategic Alignment with U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategic Objectives

The analysis of Sri Lanka's strategic alignment with the U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy reveals a clear synergy, reflecting the nation's commitment to key strategic objectives that underpin the strategy. According to Barry Buzan's Comprehensive Security Framework, security is multifaceted, encompassing military, political, economic, environmental, and societal dimensions (Buzan et al., 1998). Sri Lanka's naval diplomacy, therefore, plays a crucial role in addressing these diverse security dimensions, particularly in the context of the U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy.

- **Strategic Collaborations in Maritime Security.** Sri Lanka's naval diplomacy actively promotes a free and open Indo-Pacific, a core objective of the U.S. strategy. Through strategic collaborations, including intelligence sharing and joint exercises, Sri Lanka bolsters regional maritime security, thereby reinforcing regional stability. These initiatives are crucial in maintaining the accessibility of the Indo-Pacific, ensuring that it remains governed by international laws and norms.

- **Strengthening Naval Capabilities through Collaboration.** Sri Lanka's partnerships, especially those focused on training, technology transfer, and infrastructure development, align with the strategy's aim to bolster Indo-Pacific security. By enhancing its naval capabilities, Sri Lanka not only improves its maritime security but also contributes to regional prosperity. This collaboration ensures that Sri Lanka is better equipped to respond to emerging maritime threats, thus driving regional stability and security.

- **Commitment to a Rule-Based International.** Order Sri Lanka's unwavering adherence to international maritime laws underscores its commitment to a rule-based international order, a fundamental principle of the U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy. This commitment highlights Sri Lanka's role in preserving regional security, particularly in the Indian Ocean, which is a critical maritime corridor for global trade. By upholding these international norms, Sri Lanka contributes significantly to the strategic objectives of the Indo-Pacific Strategy.

- **Driving Regional Prosperity through Naval Diplomacy.** Naval diplomacy in Sri Lanka also supports the objective of driving regional prosperity by securing trade routes and fostering economic cooperation. Through its strategic maritime engagements, Sri Lanka strengthens eco-

conomic resilience in the region, contributing to broader economic growth and stability, key components of the U.S. strategy.

- **Building Regional Resilience to Transnational Threats.** Sri Lanka's naval diplomacy, as part of its broader alignment with the U.S. strategy, also focuses on building regional resilience to transnational threats. By participating in regional alliances and joint exercises, Sri Lanka enhances its capacity to address challenges such as military conflicts, territorial disputes, and cybersecurity threats, thereby contributing to collective regional security. Sri Lanka's alignment with the U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy is evident in its collaborative efforts, robust capacity-building initiatives, and commitment to a rule-based order. By embracing the principles of naval diplomacy and adhering to the strategic goals of the Indo-Pacific Strategy, Sri Lanka solidifies its role as a key player in fortifying regional maritime security and fostering cooperative relationships within the Indo-Pacific region.

Implications: Charting the Course for Regional Security

The integration of theoretical frameworks and empirical data on naval diplomacy provides significant policy implications for enhancing engagement within the Indo-Pacific region, particularly in the context of Sri Lanka's alignment with the U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy. The following recommendations aim to strengthen this partnership through mutual cooperation:

- **Fostering Indo-Pacific Stability through Addressing Non-Traditional Security Threats.** To enhance regional stability, it is recommended that Sri Lanka supports the United Nations' initiative to establish a global humanitarian city and regional logistics center in Hambantota. This center, modeled after Dubai's International Humanitarian City, would consolidate resources at Hambantota Harbour and Mattala International Airport. By centralizing disaster response and relief operations, this initiative aligns with the U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy by promoting regional coordination and enhancing the role of southern Sri Lanka in addressing non-traditional security threats. This development will help diffuse concentrated power dynamics and facilitate collaborative regional solutions.
- **Forging Indo-Pacific Security through Collaborative Maritime Architecture.** Sri Lanka's alignment with the U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy underscores the importance of a collaborative approach to regional security. Establishing a robust security architecture in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) is essential. It is recommended to pursue the creation of the Indian Ocean Treaty Organization (IOTO), with active involvement from the U.S., its allies, and regional bodies such as IORA, SAARC, and BIMSTEC. Given Sri Lanka's strategic location and its chairmanship of

IORA, the country is well-positioned to host IOTO. This initiative would enhance maritime connectivity and security across the IOR.

- **Strengthening U.S. – Sri Lanka Maritime Security Collaboration.**

To align Sri Lanka’s naval diplomacy with the U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy, it is crucial to strengthen diplomatic and military ties. This includes increasing joint exercises and intelligence sharing. Supporting Sri Lanka’s naval modernization, particularly in MDA technology and ocean exploration, is vital for comprehensive surveillance, which is critical for the Blue Economy and regional security. Expanding multilateral engagements to address shared security concerns while allowing Sri Lanka to maintain a non-aligned foreign policy stance is essential. Effective collaboration and strategic alignment will provide a solid foundation for navigating the evolving security landscape in the Indo-Pacific.

Conclusion

This study highlights the alignment of Sri Lanka’s naval diplomacy with the U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy, emphasizing the importance of regional stability and adherence to a rule-based maritime order. Sri Lanka’s strategic location and naval capabilities position it as a key player in enhancing Indo-Pacific security. Sustained collaboration between the U.S. and Sri Lanka is crucial for capacity-building and strengthening maritime security through multilateral engagements.

The research underscores the significance of the Sri Lanka-U.S. relationship within the U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy, contributing to the broader discourse on Indo-Pacific security. Key initiatives, such as establishing a global humanitarian city and regional logistics center in Hambantota and founding the IOTO, are vital for improving maritime connectivity and security in the Indian Ocean Region. Additionally, supporting Sri Lanka’s naval modernization, especially in MDA technology and ocean exploration, will be crucial for effective surveillance and harnessing the Blue Economy’s potential.

REFERENCES

Acharya, A. (2004) ‘How Ideas Spread: Whose Norms Matter? Norm Localization and Institutional Change in Asian Regionalism’, *International Organization*, 58(2), pp. 239-275.

Acharya, A. (2009) *Whose Ideas Matter? Agency and Power in Asian Regionalism*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Agastia, I. G. B. D. (2021) 'Maritime security cooperation within the ASEAN institutional framework: A gradual shift towards practical cooperation', *Journal of ASEAN Studies*, 9(1).

Attanayake, C. and Atmakuri, A. (2021) 'Navigating the Sino-Indian power struggle in the Indian Ocean: the case of Sri Lanka', *Journal of the Indian Ocean Region*, 17(1), pp. 114-133.

Bueger, C. and Edmunds, T. (2017) 'Beyond seablindness: a new agenda for maritime security studies', *International Affairs*, 93(6), pp. 1293-1311.

Buzan, B., Wæver, O. and De Wilde, J. (1998) *Security: A new framework for analysis*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Chang, Y. C. (2018) 'The "21st century maritime silk road initiative and naval diplomacy in China', *Ocean & Coastal Management*, 153, pp. 148-156.

Dachi, E. T. and Yurianto, M. (2023) 'The Indo-Pacific Context: Maritime Security Challenges and Diplomacy of Asian Countries', *International Journal of Humanities Education and Social Sciences (IJHESS)*, 2(6).

Dalalat, M., Mirzaei, M. and Amani, A. (2021) 'Environmental Diplomacy from Conflict to Cooperation: Overview of the Need to Develop Maritime Diplomacy to Protect the Marine Environment', *International Journal of Maritime Policy*, 1(1), pp. 130-159.

Gupta, S., Mullen, R. D., Basrur, R., Hall, I., Blarel, N., Pardesi, M. S. and Ganguly, S. (2019) 'Indian foreign policy under Modi: A new brand or just repackaging?', *International Studies Perspectives*, 20(1), pp. 1-45.

Kandaudahewa, H. (2023) 'Sri Lanka's Strategic Dilemma: Navigating Great-Power Rivalry in the Indo-Pacific', *Journal of Indo-Pacific Affairs*, 6(6).

Kaplan, R. D. (2011) *Monsoon: The Indian Ocean and the future of American power*. New York: Random House Trade Paperbacks.

Katagiri, N. (2019) 'A critical assessment of the Asia rebalance', *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, 12(1), pp. 35-60.

Krishnan, T. and Subramanian, P. (2023) 'The Role of the Navy in Serving the Security, Prosperity and Order at Sea: An Overview of the Indo-Pacific Construct', *Zulfaqar Journal of Defence Management, Social Science & Humanities*, 6(1).

Kumara, J. S. (2021) 'The Sea Power of Small States: A Case Study of Sri Lanka', *European Scientific Journal (ESJ)*, 17(2), pp. 151-169.

Liyanagamage, B. (2018) *Future Maritime Security Concerns of the Sri Lanka Navy: Challenges Versus Solutions*. Doctoral dissertation. Monterey, CA: Naval Postgraduate School.

Madutharanaga, K. S. (2023) 'Nonaligned Foreign Policy A Defense Diplomacy of Sri Lanka in the Indian Ocean Territory', *Jurnal Diplomasi Pertahanan*, 9(1), pp. 126-142.

Mahan, A. (1890) *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660-1783*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company.

Mahan, A. (2010) *The Influence of Sea Power Upon the French Revolution and Empire, 1793-1812*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Marshall, C. and Rossman, G. B. (2019) *Designing Qualitative Research*. 6th edn. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Maxwell, J. A. (2012) *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach*. 3rd edn. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Mazzucotelli, F. (2023) 'India and the Gulf: The Indo-Pacific Strategy Goes West', in *India's Foreign Policy and Economic Challenges: Friends, Enemies and Controversies*. Cham: Springer International Publishing, pp. 199-212.

Okoli, C. and Schabram, K. (2015) 'A guide to conducting a systematic literature review of information systems research', *MIS Quarterly*, 44(3), pp. iii-xiii.

Pant, H. V. and Saha, P. (2020) 'India, China, and the Indo-Pacific: New Delhi's recalibration is underway', *The Washington Quarterly*, 43(4), pp. 187-206.

Parasasti, M. A., Warka, I. W. and Adriyanto, A. (2023) 'The Urgency of the Diplomatic Role of the Indonesian Navy in Supporting Security Stability in the Indo-Pacific Region', *AURELIA: Jurnal Penelitian dan Pengabdian Masyarakat Indonesia*, 2(1), pp. 321-328.

Premaratna, S. P. and Thrishali, A. (2020) 'Sri Lanka and the Geopolitics of Indo-Pacific: Perceptions, Opportunities and Challenges', *Journal of Polity and Society*, 12(2).

Putra, B. A. (2023) 'The rise of paragonboat diplomacy as a maritime diplomatic instrument: Indonesia's constabulary forces and tensions in the North Natuna Seas', *Asian Journal of Political Science*, 31(2), pp. 106-124.

Rauf, A. (2023) 'The Impact of China's Maritime Expansion on Regional Security', *Journal of Global Peace and Security Studies (JGPSS)*, 4(1).

Rondeau, A. E., Twomey, C. P., Dutton, P., Schofield, C., Leveringhaus, N., Gingeras, R. and Singh, A. (2023) *The New Age of Naval Power in the Indo-Pacific: Strategy, Order, and Regional Security*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press.

Rossiter, A. (2022) 'The Indo-Pacific's evolving strategic landscape: Geopolitics as a framework for grand strategy?', in *Indo-Pacific Strategies*. Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 22-40.

- Rowlands, K. (2012) “DECIDED PREPONDERANCE AT SEA” Naval Diplomacy in Strategic Thought, *Naval War College Review*, 65(4), pp. 89-105.
- Sakhuja, V. (2023) *Maritime Security Complexes of the Indo-Pacific Region*. Indian Council of World Affairs and Centre for Public Policy Research.
- Scott, D. (2021) ‘Small Island strategies in the Indo-Pacific by large powers’, *The Journal of Territorial and Maritime Studies*, 8(1), pp. 66-85.
- Smith, J. (2019) ‘Sri Lanka: A Test Case for the Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy’, *Backgrounders*, 3393.
- Sri Lanka Navy (2020) *Maritime Doctrine Sri Lanka (MDSL) SLN-BR1: To Nurture a Stable Environment at Sea*. Naval Research Wing (NRW), Naval Complex. Welisara, Sri Lanka. ISBN 978-955-9339-15-1.
- Sri Lanka Navy (2023) *Sri Lanka Naval Operations*. Available at: <https://www.navy.lk/> (Accessed: 1 November 2023).
- Tarapore, A. (2020) ‘Building Strategic Leverage in the Indian Ocean Region’, *The Washington Quarterly*, 43(4), pp. 207-237.
- Thuy Hang, N. T. (2016) ‘The US Rebalance towards the Asia-Pacific: Really Realist?’, *Journal of Asian Security and International Affairs*, 3(3), pp. 291-306.
- U.S. Department of Defense (2019) *Indo-Pacific Strategy Report: Preparedness, Partnerships, and Promoting a Networked Region*. Washington, D.C.
- U.S. Department of Defense (2022) *U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy Report*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- Wallis, J. and Batley, J. (2020) ‘How does the ‘Pacific’ fit into the ‘Indo-Pacific’? The changing geopolitics of the Pacific Islands’, *Security Challenges*, 16(1), pp. 2-10.
- Webster, J. and Watson, R. T. (2020) ‘Analyzing the past to prepare for the future: Writing a literature review’, *MIS Quarterly*, 44(3), pp. iii-xiii.
- Yoshihara, T. and Holmes, J. R. (2020) *Strategy in the Second Nuclear Age: Power, Ambition, and the Ultimate Weapon*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press.
- Yoshimatsu, H. (2023) ‘Japan’s Indo-Pacific strategy: Free and open Indo-Pacific as international public goods’, in *Handbook of Indo-Pacific Studies*. Abingdon: Routledge India, pp. 390-404.

HOW SRI LANKA'S STRATEGIC LOCATION IN THE INDIAN OCEAN HAS IMPACTED HER NATIONAL IDENTITY

Commander (H) Dhananjaya Abeygunawardhana, RSP*, psc, MSc
(Hydrography), BNavalSt (Maritime Warfare)



Abstract

This paper discusses how the strategic location of Sri Lanka in the Indian Ocean has impacted its national identity as a maritime nation. Indeed, it has been proven that throughout history to date, due to the strategic location of Sri Lanka, maritime affairs have created a significant impact in various ways on the country's national identity. Importantly, since the ancient era to date strategic location of the country has become vulnerable to enhance the strategic affairs with various nations and organizations in the world. However, the interest of foreign nations and organizations in Sri Lanka, have created a significant impact on the country's national identity and it has created long-term and short-term positive as well as negative impacts in various ways. Finally, it is understood that a significant strategic location is vulnerable to grabbing opportunities for the country to strengthen its strategic affairs with state and non-state actors to emerge the country as a strong maritime nation.

Keywords: Strategic location, National identity, Impact

Introduction

It is important to highlight that, Sri Lanka is an example of a small island state strategically located in the Indian Ocean. Also, it is an island off India's southeast coast which is separated from the mainland by the Palk Strait and the Gulf of Mannar. Moreover, Sri Lanka is bordered on the East by the Bay of Bengal, and on the West by the Arabian Sea.

Indeed, the national identity is shaped by the interlacing of various factors of history and collective decisions. Furthermore, national identity can be considered as collective cohesion of factors represented by particular traditions, cultures, and languages. In particular, Sri Lanka's geographical location within the middle of the Indian Ocean has strategic importance over the entire history of the country.

Furthermore, Sri Lanka's strategic location at the southernmost tip of the Indian mainland, on the world's east-west highways, has drawn many people to its historic island wide natural harbours since ancient times. Indeed, due to the interest in trade and business, initially, it attracted the Greeks, Persians, Romans, and Arabs, as well as the Portuguese, Dutch, British, Chinese, French and Indians.

On the one hand, India consistently had a significant and enduring historical, political, social, and cultural influence on Sri Lanka. In contrast, Sri Lankan maritime trade has been linked with East and Western countries since ancient history. For instance, Gokanna (Trincomalee), Mahathiththa (Mannar), Galle and Godavaya were the attractive harbours in the ancient period (Devendra & Muthucumarana, 2013).

More importantly, the utilization of trade winds, monsoon and ocean current patterns caused sailing ships to easily navigate towards Sri Lanka in ancient times. However, the arrival of the Portuguese in 1505, the Dutch in 1658 and the British in 1796 significantly contributed to the creating a tangible impact on the national identity of the country which is influencing until today in numerous disciplines.

For instance, Sri Lanka's politics and foreign relations have been heavily influenced by its strategic location in the Indian Ocean. Moreover, at the turn of the new millennium, South Asia and the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) have emerged as a major source of worldwide concern. Accordingly, at present, Colombo harbour is playing a significant role in global maritime trade.

On the other hand, the world-famous Trincomalee harbour has proven in history, her strategic vulnerability for docking huge fleet safely and undetected. With that background, the USA, China, India, and Japan including Australia as a middle power country have much interest in Trincomalee Harbour.

In particular, this paper will discuss the strategic location of the country and how it has impacted her national identity. Also, the paper will explore, during pre-colonial and colonial periods how the strategic location of the country was impacted by the influence of her national identity. Finally, this paper illustrates during the post-colonial period how the strategic location of the country impacted the country's national identity and recommendations were formulated to explore the significant geographical location for emerging countries as a strong maritime nation.

Aim

This paper discusses how Sri Lanka's strategic location in the Indian Ocean has impacted on her national identity.

Strategic Location of the Country

Importantly, Sri Lanka is geographically located at the intersection of key maritime routes to South Asia, the Far East, Europe, and America making it a suitable maritime hub and airfreight services. Importantly, with prominent ports available Sri Lanka becomes one of the major maritime hubs in the Indian

Ocean. Below figure one, denotes the strategic location of Sri Lanka in the Indian Ocean and the world's busiest maritime routes passing the Sri Lankan waters.



Figure 1: Strategic Location of Sri Lanka in the Indian Ocean

Source: Somasunderam, 2001

Moreover, Sri Lanka is a vital strategic location and forward base for function naval bases in order to conduct naval power projection in the IOR. Indeed, in history also it has proven that, Sri Lanka is an ideal location for a naval outpost to monitor the Indian Ocean and its increasingly congested maritime lanes.

In particular, developing maritime traffic in the Indian Ocean connecting the entire globe has generated nations to increase interest on the IOR. For instance, the USA naval historian Admiral AT Mahan explained that “Whoever has control over the Indian Ocean has control of Asia and the fate of the globe in the twenty-first century will be decided on its waterways.”

Furthermore, natural ocean current and gyres circulating in the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea create two main Monsoons to the country. Indeed, it is also a significant natural phenomenon factor that occurs due to her strategic location in the Indian Ocean which helps ships to navigate towards Sri Lankan ports using sails with the help of monsoon winds.

Importantly, the strategic geographic position of the country has given many opportunities for foreigners to land in Sri Lanka in history, today and in the future as well. However, the arrival of people from foreign nations has affected the national identity of the country.

Impact of Strategic Location on Sri Lanka's National Identity During the Pre-Colonial and Colonial Period

Attanayaka, (2021) explained that archaeological discoveries show that Sri Lanka's maritime trade ties were crucial in preserving international relations between the East and the West in terms of religious, cultural, social, economic, and political channels. Indeed that has aided the country to become more civilised and flourishing in terms of culture and business affecting the national identity. On the other hand, Cassim (2018) explored that, the significant shipwrecks discovered at Manthai, Gokanna, Godawaya, and Kirinda give many details regarding Sri Lanka's old trading associations. In particular, for the Romans, Greeks, Persians, Chinese, Russians, and inhabitants from the Gulf, the little island called Taprobane (Sri Lanka) in the Indian Ocean was strategically and economically important from the 2nd to the 1800 A.D. (Madanayaka, 2022).

Furthermore, there are many pieces of evidence that denote how the language, culture and economy of the country are influenced by the mixing of overseas trading in history. In addition, there are cities, villages and locations in the country which were named according to the foreign influence.



Figure 2: Over 2000 years old shipwreck found at the ancient port Godawaya

Source: Cassim, 2018

Moreover, Sri Lanka also has maintained ties with West Asian countries via the maritime Silk Route. Importantly, Sri Lankan shipbuilding has been steadily improving for generations. In particular, Pliny an Egyptian writer from the first century B.C., claimed that Sri Lankan ships could carry 3000 'amphora,' or 75 tons. For instance, Sri Lanka has produced larger ships, according to the Arabian geographer Al Idris (1155 AD), and foreign merchants came to the country in request of shipbuilding supplies. For example, in chronicles such as the Mahavamsa, Digha Nikaya, trip diaries, and historical epigraphs, the history of Sri Lanka's maritime affairs is mentioned (Sadeen, (n.d.).

Indeed, since at least the 2nd century BCE, Sri Lanka's strategic geographic location has permitted maritime transactions in terms of both economic and cultural exchanges, according to a variety of sources. For instance, Alexandria's world map made by Ptolemy depicts the country's importance in global trade at the time and below figure three indicates the map of Sri Lanka cartographic by Ptolemy.



Figure 3: Ptolemy map of Thaprobana

Source: Attanayaka, 2021

More specifically, a variety of maps and mariner's trip diaries attest to the significance of Sri Lankan port towns and cities along the ancient Silk Roads. In fact, the arrival of Prince Vijaya to Mahathitha harbour was significant in Sri Lankan history which started a new era in the country and country recognized as Sinhalese's country. Subsequently, the arrival, of Buddhism from India caused to change in the national identity of the country significantly labeling the country as a Buddhist country. Likewise, from time to time intervention by South Indian, Kerala, Pandya and Chola kings also influenced long-term multi-sectoral impacts on the national identity of the country (Chauhan, 2020).

Moreover, the invasion of Sri Lanka by the south Indian Kin 'Kalinga Magha' in 1215 AD was significant in pushing Tamil-origin people towards northern and eastern Sri Lanka while Sinhalese were pushing southward. Indeed, this unique demarcation has created a significant impact on Sri Lankan national identity until today.

In particular, the mountain Adams Peak was a well-known touchdown place for Arab seamen who referred to Sri Lanka as 'Serendib' Island. Similarly, on the map of Serendib created by the geographer Al-Idvisi in the 12th century CE, it occupied a prominent place. Also, in the 14th century, Iban-Batuta listed several cities and important harbours of the country in his writings. Subsequently, Sri Lankan harbour towns and cities appeared on many historically significant cartographic documents from antiquity to the 16th century and functioned

as a key destination for Silk Roads exchanges. However, while Sri Lanka became more popular among the world mariners, the national identity of the country was also impacted in many ways.

In contrast, the arrival of the Portuguese, the Dutch and the British converted the country to a colony and it created a huge impact on changing the national identity. Moreover, for almost 350 years the country was ruled fully or partially as a colony of Europeans. In particular, colonisation has significantly changed the country's legal system, economy including culture. For instance, the country's economy has been converted to an export and import economy which has changed the national identity of the country while making Sri Lanka a brand name for supplying tea, rubber, cinnamon and coconut.

For example, Somasunderam (2001) explained that Colbert, the French Minister of Finance, envisioned a French Empire in the East, centred on Sri Lanka. In 1672, under the command of Jacob de la Haye, a huge French fleet was dispatched, and the French administration obtained permission from the King of Kandy to utilise the Trincomalee Harbour. Indeed, during the two World Wars country was a British colony, and her strategic location was significant for the elite forces. In particular, during World War II, the Imperial Japanese Air Force's invention of Trincomalee and Colombo harbour is unique in identifying how it has affected the Country's national identity.

Lastly, it has identified the culture, ethnicity, political system, religion and economy including many disciplines of the country that have been impacted in various ways due to the arrival of foreign nations with an interest in commerce and maritime trade.

As a result, Tamil people from South India, Aryans from North India, Muslims from Arab countries, Burgher people and African people along with fever minor groups also mixed with Sri Lankan society and at present more than 16 minor ethnic groups are living in Sri Lanka. Indeed it is evident that those settlements and blendings with the Sri Lankan community created deeper impacts on the country's national identity.

Impact of Strategic Location on Sri Lanka's National Identity During Post-Colonial Period

In contrast, after independence from the British because of its position, Sri Lanka had tremendous geostrategic importance during the Cold War and was wanted by both enemy camps. Likewise during the 1971 Indo-Pakistan war country's strategic location became vulnerable and it still impacted bilateral relations in the region.

Trincomalee port is ideal for deploying warships and submarines which creates continuous interest for world superpowers and middle-power countries. Furthermore, the south of Sri Lanka was an ideal location for deploying submarines in preparation for a nuclear strike on both the Soviet Union and China (Ramkishan et al, 2021)

As a result, all three states such as the United States, the Soviet Union, and China, attempted to influence the country, which grew in importance in the international geostrategic battle. Moreover, Sri Lanka had a strong pro-US stance, as evidenced by the US flotilla stationed in Sri Lankan ports during the Korean War.

Furthermore, its proximity to India is a factor that binds it to Indian defence plans at a time when naval deployment became a critical component of the military balance. Another point to consider is that the power balance in South Asia is currently shifting between India and China and both states have a great impact on Sri Lanka due to its location (Bandaranayake et al, 2003).

Indeed, since ancient history, China's interest in the Indian Ocean has never reduced due to the silk route. Importantly, at present, China's major goal in South Asia is to consolidate its control over the Indian Ocean, through the concept of Belt and Road initiatives. China was able to gain the advantage of the strategic location of Sri Lanka acquiring the Port of Hambantota and Colombo Port City constructions and in the Jetty in the Colombo Harbour as well.

Conversely, the USA also continuously attempts to make its foothold in the country. Indeed, it is evident that the Indian interest in Sri Lanka has never changed since ancient history to date. In particular, strategic valuable, Colombo, Hambantota, Trincomalee, and Kankesanthurai harbours are already operating with a foreign foothold. For instance, strategically valuable Trincomalee harbour operates with, the presence of the USA, Japanese and Indian companies. In addition, Australia also started to strengthen its relationship with Sri Lanka.

Importantly, it is identified that since history, until today many maritime nations have made a great impact on the national identity of the country. Importantly, it is observed that a huge amount of Chinese and Indian Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) along with their workforce at various levels kept mixing the cultural, ethnic, and economic sectors in the country during the post-colonial period and it has increased since the last decay.

Indeed, it has been observed that during the post-colonial period until today, the interest of various states and non-state actors in the Sri Lankan significant geographical location has increased rather to the pre-colonial and colonial periods. It is important to highlight the interest of the non-state actors in FDI in Sri Lanka has significantly increased during the post-colonial period in various domains and it also impacted the national identity of the country.

Recommendations

To grab the opportunity of the significant strategic location it is required to enhance the provision of port and harbour facilities, shipbuilding and repairs, enhance maritime trade and empower the maritime community as a maritime hub which has been done in ancient history as well.

Continue to practice non-alliance foreign policy and grab opportunities from various state and non-state actors to emerge country as a maritime hub while attracting FDI and maritime infrastructure developments and marketing the country as a maritime hub.

Conclusion

Indeed, it was explored that the strategic location of Sri Lanka in the middle of the Indian Ocean has greatly impacted to the country's national identity throughout history until today. In particular the national identity is shaped by the interlacing of various factors of history and collective decisions. Furthermore, national identity can be considered as collective cohesive which is represented by particular traditions, cultures, and languages.

Importantly, various archaeological sites and written historical documents such as maps and mariner's records prove the country's significance in history as a maritime hub. In particular, trade winds, monsoon winds, ocean currents and gyres in the IOR facilitated sailing ships to easily navigate to Sri Lanka due to the geographical location.

Moreover, the arrival of merchant mariners such as Greeks, Persians, Romans, and Arabs, as well as Indians because of commercial trades during the pre-colonial period also influenced the national identity of the country whilst blending the language, culture, religion and many more disciplines. For instance, the arrival of Prince Vijaya influenced the national identity of the country as Sinhala Kingdom whilst the arrival of Buddhism labelled subsequently country as a Buddhist country.

Indeed, the arrivals of the Portuguese, French, Dutch, and finally the British have made a greater impact on the country's national identity in various ways and it is still visible all over the country. Moreover, the economic sector, political sector, and ideology including the thought process of the Sri Lankans were blended with Western practices. Importantly, with that many historic values that were carried with the society disappeared from the country. On the other hand, the legal system, governing system, economy and culture have been deeply affected due to colonization while changing the national identity of the country.

Indeed, during the post-colonial period also the country has great influences from the various nation-states and developing influences from the non-state actors as well due to its strategic location. Importantly during the Cold War period also country was significant for both enemy camps due to its strategic location and national identity being impacted as a pro-USA country. Subsequently, the nonalignment of foreign policy of the country also impacted time to time while influencing the political system of the country such as pro-USA, pro-China, pro-India and pro-Europe due to the interest of foreign nations on the strategic location of the country.

Importantly, to grab the opportunity of the significant strategic location of Sri Lanka in the Indian Ocean it is required to enhance the provisions of port and harbour facilities, shipbuilding and repairs, enhance maritime trade and empower the maritime community as a maritime hub which was practiced even in since ancient history.

Also, it requires the continuation of practicing the non-alliance foreign policy and grabbing opportunities from the various state and non-state actors who are interested on Sri Lankan strategic locations to emerge country as a maritime hub while attracting FDI and maritime infrastructure developments.

Overall, this study found that the strategic location of Sri Lanka in the Indian Ocean created a greater impact on her national identity. Likewise, there have been positive impacts on the economic sector since ancient history, which is still bonded with the maritime sector. However, due to the strategic location, the arrival of various foreign nations to the country while influencing and dominating the country longer period has created a distinct impact on the national identity of the country. Indeed, it has affected all disciplines of the country and causes to impact national identity.

More importantly, not only in history but in the contemporary era also world powers have a great interest in this geographical high-value land and creating various impacts on national identity within the country and away from the oceans as well. Finally, it was examined that by grabbing various opportunities offered by state and non-state actors due to the interest of geographical location Sri Lanka can build a unique national identity emerging as a main maritime hub in IOR.

REFERENCES

Attanayaka, C. (2021) Maritime Sri Lanka: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives – NUS Institute of South Asian Studies (ISAS). Available at: <https://www.isas.nus.edu.sg/books/maritime-sri-lanka-historical-and-contemporary-perspectives/> (Accessed: 08 February 2024).

Bandaranayake, S. Dewaraja, L. Silva, R and Wimalaratne, K, G, D. (2003) Introductory Note: Sri Lanka and the 'Silk Road' of the Sea. Colombo: Central Cultural Fund.

Chauhan, K. (2020) Sri Lanka's Geopolitics in the Indian Ocean. Available at: <https://thekootneeti.in/2020/09/02/sri-lankas-geopolitics-in-the-indian-ocean/> (Accessed: 09 February 2024)

Cassim, A.M. (2018) Exploring Sri Lanka's maritime history and heritage. Daily-Fit. [online] 17 Mar. Available at: <https://www.ft.lk/FT-Lite/Exploring-Sri-Lanka-s-maritime-history-and-heritage/6-651421> [Accessed 05 February 2024].

Devendra, S., and Muthucumarana, R. (2013) [online] Maritime Archaeology and Sri Lanka. Available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43491299> [Accessed 03 February 2024].

Madanayaka, S. (2022) The Strategic Importance of Sri Lanka in Indian Ocean Region: Reference to String of Pearls Strategy. [online] Ir.kdu.ac.lk. Available at: <http://ir.kdu.ac.lk/bitstream/handle/345/1728/021.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y> [Accessed 06 February 2024].

Ramkishan, M., Awad, S., and Todkar, B. D. (2021) 'And Importance Of Sri Lanka', Palarch's Journal Of Archaeology Of Egypt/Egyptology, 18(8), pp. 4089-4098. Available at: <http://www.mackinnonshipping.com/>

Somasunderam, R. (2001) The Strategic Significance of the Island State of Sri Lanka [online] Available at: <https://dro.deakin.edu.au/eserv/DU:30023168/somasunderam-strategicsignificance-2003.pdf> [Accessed 04 February 2024].

Sadeen, H. (n.d.) Did You Know?: Sri Lankan Harbour Cities and the Maritime Silk Roads. [online] <https://en.unesco.org/silkroad/content/did-you-know-sri-lankan-harbour-cities-and-maritime-silk-roads> [Accessed 08 February 2024].

THE ETHICS OF AUTONOMOUS WEAPONS (AWs) ON ANTI-PIRACY OPERATIONS

Lieutenant Commander (G) Iranga Swarnahansa, BSc (DS), MTS



Abstract

Piracy continues to plague maritime trade routes, posing a significant threat to global security and economic stability. While traditional anti-piracy operations have achieved some success, their limitations necessitate the exploration of innovative solutions. The emergence of autonomous weapons (AWs) presents a potentially transformative force in maritime security, raising both expectations and concerns. This journal examines the potential impact of AWs on anti-piracy operations, analyzing both their potential benefits and the associated ethical and legal challenges. On the one hand, AWs offer the promise of increased effectiveness by patrolling vast areas more efficiently, deterring pirate activity through constant presence and potentially neutralizing threats with immediate action. They can also reduce risk to human life by removing personnel from dangerous situations and provide enhanced situational awareness through real-time data collection. However, the use of AWs in anti-piracy operations raises significant ethical concerns by accountability for unintended civilian casualties, lack of transparency in decision-making algorithms and the potential for escalation of conflict. Additionally, legal uncertainties surrounding the legality of autonomous weapons in warfare and international law create further complications. Furthermore, technical limitations in reliability, adaptability and decision-making capabilities need to be addressed before widespread deployment. Finally, accessibility and affordability issues could limit the participation of many coastal states in utilizing AWs for anti-piracy operations.

Introduction

Autonomous weapons, often called “lethal autonomous weapons systems” (LAWS) or “killer robots,” (Apr 23, 2013) are a type of military technology that can independently search for and engage targets based on programmed constraints and descriptions. (Wendell Wallach and Colin Allen - 2013) This means they have the ability to make lethal decisions without human intervention in the final moments of attack.

The vast areas of the world’s oceans remain vulnerable to the strain of piracy, threatening vital trade routes, disrupting economies and risking lives. Despite persistent international efforts, the fight against piracy remains complex and ongoing, demanding innovative solutions to adapt to evolving tactics and technologies. In this dynamic background, the emergence of AWs presents a potential game-changer, exciting both optimism and ethical anxieties. This journal explores into the unfamiliar waters of the potential impact of AWs on anti-piracy operations, navigating the possibilities and difficulties of this emerging technology.

On the surface, AWs offer fascinating prospects. Their ability to tirelessly patrol vast expanses of ocean could offer a significant improvement over traditional, resource-intensive human-operated patrols. The potential for immediate real-time data collection, autonomous responses raises hopes for enhanced situational awareness and more decisive countermeasures against pirate activities. Furthermore, proponents argue that AWs could significantly reduce the risk to human life by removing personnel from inherently dangerous confrontations. However, beneath this potential benefits lies a sea of ethical and legal uncertainties.

The deployment of AWs raises profound questions about accountability. Who bears responsibility for unintended civilian casualties or collateral damage caused by autonomous systems? The opacity of decision-making algorithms embedded in AWs further fuels ethical concerns, potentially leading to situations where actions lack human oversight and transparency. Moreover, the threat of escalation remains a chilling possibility. Could the autonomous nature of these weapons blur the lines of engagement, leading to unintended clashes and unforeseen consequences?

Beyond ethical questions, legal uncertainties cloud the use of AWs in anti-piracy operations. The international legal framework governing the use of autonomous weapons in warfare is still evolving, creating ambiguities and potential legal challenges. Additionally, concerns exist regarding the accessibility and affordability of such advanced technology, potentially intensifying existing power imbalances among nations engaged in anti-piracy efforts.

This journal embarks on a critical exploration of these intricate issues. Drawing upon academic literature, reports from international organizations and recent developments in AWs technology, it paints a balanced picture of the potential impact and ethics of AWs on anti-piracy operations. By meticulously analyzing both the potential benefits and the associated ethical and legal challenges, the journal aims to contribute to a well-informed discussion on harnessing the potential of this technology while mitigating its risks. Ultimately, it argues for a cautious and responsible approach, emphasizing the need for international cooperation, clear legal frameworks and strong ethical guidelines.

Use of Autonomous Weapons in Present World

While the development and testing of AWs (June 08, 2023) is ongoing for various military applications, no known instances of fully AWs, capable of independent target selection and engagement are actively deployed in anti-piracy operations. The potential use of AWs in warfare raises a multitude of ethical, legal and technical concerns that demand careful consideration before any widespread deployment. (Aug 10, 2020)

Table 1: Widespread projects of Autonomous Weapons in the world

COUNTRY	FOCUS AREA	KEY PROJECTS
UNITED STATES	Primarily defensive applications	THAAD anti-ballistic missile system (some autonomous capabilities)
		MQ-9 Reaper drone (autonomous missions & target engagement within designated areas)
		Manticore- robot (autonomous ground vehicle for reconnaissance & bomb disposal)
RUSSIA	Offensive applications	S-400 missile defense system (autonomous target acquisition & engagement)
	Brielle Hill (2024) Defensive applications	Poseidon nuclear torpedo (autonomous underwater drone for long-range missions) Uran-9 combat robot (autonomous ground vehicle with weapons)
CHINA	Air defense	Wing Long drones (autonomous recon & strike capabilities)
	Anti-ship warfare	Sharp Sword UCAV (autonomous air-to-air combat)
	Border security	Autonomous patrol boats (navigation & surveillance)
SOUTH KOREA	Border security	Sentry UGV (armed UGV for border patrol & surveillance)
	Potential offensive applications (Dec 27, 2022)	KAI-500 drone (under development, recon & strike missions) SGW-1 maritime patrol drone (autonomous surveillance, potential anti-submarine warfare)
ISRAEL	Primarily defensive applications (Jan23, 2023)	Iron Dome air defense system (autonomous components for target acquisition & interception)
		Harop kamikaze drone (autonomous target identification & engagement)
		Autonomous ground vehicles (border security & potential offensive operations)

Source : Michael T. Klare, Dec 2023

Emerging Technologies and Systems

While fully autonomous weapons haven’t been deployed in anti-piracy operations, several Autonomous and Remotely Controlled Systems (ARCS) show promising potential for combating piracy. These systems offer potential benefits for surveillance, data collection and even non-lethal deterrence. But carefully considerations on ethical, legal and technical limitations are more important. (Michael T. Klare, Dec 2023).



Figure 1: Autonomous Surface Vehicles (ASVs) Autonomous Surface Vehicles (ASVs)

Source - <https://www.oryxspioenkop.com/2022/10/meet-turkiyes-indigenous-unmanned.html>

Autonomous Surface Vehicles (ASVs) are making waves in the fight against piracy, offering extended surveillance, data collection and potential deterrence capabilities. However, navigating the waters of this technology requires careful consideration of both its potential and limitations.

Extended Surveillance, unlike human-operated vessels, ASVs can patrol vast swathes of the ocean tirelessly, covering significantly more ground and providing crucial eyes on areas prone to pirate activity. This continuous presence can act as a potent deterrent, discouraging pirates from attempting attacks in the first place.

Data Collection, equipped with advanced sensors and data-gathering tools, ASVs can collect valuable information about pirate movements, locations and activities in real-time. This comprehensive data stream can be used to inform decision-making, improve situational awareness and track suspicious vessels.

Certain ASVs can be equipped with non-lethal deterrents such as water cannons or sonic blasts. These measures aim to disorient or disable pirate vessels without causing harm, offering a potentially less provocative response compared to traditional methods.



Figure 2: Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs)

Source - https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:USS_Nashville_LPD-13_with_Fire_Scout.jpg

Unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), often called drones, have taken flight in the fight against piracy. These versatile birds of a feather offer a unique perspective, providing real-time intelligence and target identification from the skies. However, like any technology, they come with their own set of limitations. Let's explore the ups and downs of UAVs in anti-piracy. (Sylvie Zhuang, Sept 25, 2023).

UAVs can soar high above vast stretches of ocean, offering a panoramic view that traditional ships simply can't match. This wider field of vision allows for comprehensive surveillance, spotting suspicious activity from afar and track-

ing pirate movements in real-time. UAV's/Drones are conducting aerial surveillance over the ocean. Equipped with advanced sensors and cameras, UAVs gather crucial data and intelligence. They can identify suspicious vessels, monitor pirate activity and even provide weather updates, all in real-time. This information empowers authorities to make informed decisions and take swift action. (June 13, 2015)

Zoom in on specific vessels with high-resolution cameras and zoom lenses. UAVs can provide detailed identification of suspected pirate boats, allowing authorities to assess the situation and make informed decisions about potential interventions. While offering extended coverage compared to manned aircraft, UAVs have limited flight times, typically ranging from 30 minutes to several hours. This necessitates strategic deployment and frequent battery swaps. Additionally, weather conditions can significantly impact their flight capabilities, limiting their effectiveness in storms or strong winds.

The use of UAVs for surveillance raises concerns about privacy, particularly in areas with high civilian activity. Striking a balance between effective anti-piracy measures and respecting individual privacy rights remains a challenge. Like any connected device, UAVs are susceptible to cyber-attacks. Malicious actors could potentially hijack their control systems, manipulate data feeds, or even use them for unintended purposes. Robust cyber security measures are crucial to mitigate these risks.

Despite the limitations, UAVs offer significant potential for enhancing anti-piracy operations. Technological advancements are constantly improving flight times, weather resistance and cyber security. Responsible use, coupled with clear regulations and international cooperation, can ensure these aerial assets contribute to a safer maritime environment.



Figure 1: Autonomous Underwater Vehicles (AUVs)

Source - <https://oceanexplorer.noaa.gov/explorations/16carolina/background/auv-sentry/auv-sentry.html>

Submersible drones enable covert underwater surveillance, search for suspicious activity and potentially counter mines. However, challenges include limited communication range, high costs and ethical concerns about offensive capabilities. AUVs are robotic submarines revolutionizing the way we explore

the vast underwater realm. In the fight against piracy, they offer valuable capabilities. Imagine an agile robot silently gliding beneath the waves, undetected by pirates. AUVs equipped with sonar, cameras and other sensors can gather crucial intelligence on hidden vessels, underwater activity and potential threats.

AUVs can map the seabed, scan for hidden objects and track suspicious underwater movements. This ability to explore vast areas, often inaccessible to divers, is invaluable in anti-piracy operations. Some AUVs are equipped with mine detection and neutralization capabilities, offering a safer alternative to human divers for dealing with these deadly threats. However, ethical concerns arise as their offensive potential needs careful consideration.

Underwater communication can be challenging, limiting the range over which AUVs can transmit data and receive instructions. This necessitates careful mission planning and potential relay systems. Manufacturing and maintaining these sophisticated robots is expensive, posing challenges for resource-constrained nations involved in anti-piracy efforts. Equipping AUVs with offensive capabilities raises ethical dilemmas. Ensuring responsible use and preventing unintended harm requires careful consideration and international regulations. Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) [Yoav Goldberg - 2021] are increasingly used to analyze data from various sources (sensors, cameras) to identify suspicious activity, predict pirate movements and support human decision-making in anti-piracy operations.

Potential Benefits

The vast swathes of the world's oceans pose a significant challenge for traditional anti-piracy operations. Patrolling these immense areas efficiently and deterring pirate activity often requires significant manpower and resources. Autonomous weapons (AWs) have the potential to revolutionize this background, offering several potential benefits: (The Future of Life Institute, 2024)

- **Increased Effectiveness.** Unlike human-operated vessels, AWs can patrol vast areas tirelessly and consistently, covering significantly more ground than traditional methods. This constant presence can act as a potent deterrent, discouraging pirates from attempting attacks in the first place. Additionally, AWs equipped with advanced sensors and AI-powered decision-making capabilities can react swiftly to threats, potentially neutralizing them before they escalate into dangerous situations.
- **Reduced Risk to Human Life.** Engaging with pirates often carries inherent risks for personnel involved in anti-piracy operations. AWs, by virtue of being unmanned, can remove human beings from these perilous situations, minimizing the risk of casualties and injuries. This not only protects valuable lives but also reduces the psychological and emotional impact of facing potentially violent encounters. (Lauren Kahn, June 8, 2022).

- **Enhanced Situational Awareness.** Real-time data is crucial for effective anti-piracy operations. AWs equipped with advanced sensors can gather and transmit valuable intelligence on pirate movements, locations and activities in real-time. This comprehensive data stream can inform decision-making, enabling targeted responses and improving overall situational awareness for naval forces and coastal authorities.

Potential Challenges

While the potential benefits of AWs in anti-piracy operations are undeniable, their deployment also presents several significant challenges:

- **Ethical Concerns.** The use of autonomous weapons raises profound ethical questions. Concerns regarding accountability for unintended civilian casualties, the lack of transparency in decision-making algorithms and the potential for escalation of conflict into uncontrollable situations require careful consideration. The ethical implications of delegating life-or-death decisions to machines in the context of anti-piracy operations need thorough exploration and robust ethical frameworks to ensure responsible use.
- **Legal Uncertainties.** The legal background surrounding AWs in warfare remains murky. International law currently lacks clear regulations on the use of autonomous weapons, creating potential legal challenges and risks. Determining accountability, adhering to existing treaties and navigating potential loopholes demand careful legal analysis and international cooperation to establish a clear framework governing the responsible use of AWs in anti-piracy operations. (March 20, 2024)
- **Technical Limitations.** Current AW technology, while rapidly advancing, still faces limitations. Issues with reliability, decision-making capabilities in complex scenarios and adaptability to diverse situations need to be addressed before widespread deployment. Ensuring the technical robustness and responsible use of AWs is crucial to mitigate risks and maximize the effectiveness of anti-piracy operations.
- **Accessibility and Affordability.** Developing and maintaining advanced AWs can be expensive, potentially limiting access for some countries involved in anti-piracy efforts. Addressing affordability concerns and exploring collaborative development or leasing options are crucial to ensure equitable access to this technology and prevent widening the gap between developed and developing nations in the fight against piracy.

Conclusion

The potential impact of autonomous weapons on anti-piracy operations remains a complex and hotly debated topic. While autonomous and remotely controlled systems like ASVs, UAVs and AUVs offer promising capabilities for surveillance, data collection and even non-lethal deterrence, their deployment raises significant ethical, legal and technical concerns.

Human oversight must remain paramount. Operators wielding the ultimate decision-making power ensure accountability and ethical considerations are prioritized. However, the development of fully autonomous weapons continues and their potential future use in anti-piracy (or broader military applications) necessitates careful navigation. (Brett Scharff. 2018)

Balanced View of the Potential Impact

a. Positive Impacts

- **Increased effectiveness.** Autonomous systems could patrol vast areas tirelessly, potentially deterring and disrupting pirate activity more effectively than traditional methods.
- **Reduced risk to human life.** Removing human personnel from dangerous situations could minimize casualties and injuries during anti-piracy operations.
- **Enhanced situational awareness.** Real-time data from these systems could provide valuable intelligence on pirate movements and locations, improving overall decision-making.

b. Negative Impacts

- **Ethical concerns.** The use of autonomous weapons raises profound questions about accountability for unintended harm, transparency in decision-making and the potential for escalation of conflict.
- **Legal uncertainties.** The legal framework governing the use of autonomous weapons in warfare remains unclear, creating potential legal challenges and risks.
- **Technical limitations.** Current autonomous weapons technology faces limitations in terms of reliability, decision-making capabilities and adaptability to complex scenarios.

While the UN General Assembly expresses (Oct 05, 2023) concern about the ethical and legal implications of autonomous weapons (AWs) through annual discussions and the Group of Governmental Experts, the Security Council hasn't explicitly addressed them in anti-piracy resolutions. Proponents advocate for responsible development and use, citing potential benefits, while opponents raise ethical, legal and accountability concerns. The Secretary-General urges a ban, highlighting the moral and political unacceptability of fully autonomous weapons. Achieving consensus on international regulations remains a challenge due to diverse national interests, technical complexities and balancing security with ethics. Continued dialogue and negotiations within the UN are crucial to shaping the future of this complex technology. (UNIDIR), (2024).

REFERENCES

Bellingcat, (June 13, 2015). Russia's Kamikaze Drones in Ukraine <https://www.bellingcat.com/news/uk-and-europe/2015/06/13/the-russian-forpost-drone-shot-down-in-ukraine/>

Brett Scharff (2018). Weapons of the Future: The Militarization of Artificial Intelligence by https://www.researchgate.net/publication/372795214_Routledge_Handbook_of_the_Future_of_Warfare

Campaign to Stop Killer Robots, (Apr 23, 2013). Stop Killer Robots calls for new international law on autonomy in weapons systems. <https://www.stopkillerrobots.org/news/campaign-launch/>

GAO-23-106059 Government, (June 08, 2023). DOD's Efforts to Develop and Employ Autonomous Weapons Systems <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-23-106059>

Gregory C Allen and Brielle Hill (2024). Approach of Ukrain-Russia Autonomous Weapons <https://www.csis.org/analysis/new-perspectives-foreign-policy-issue-14-fall-2017>

Human Rights Watch, (Aug 10, 2020). Country positions on banning fully Autonomous Weapons and rating human control. <https://www.hrw.org/report/2020/08/10/stopping-killer-robots/country-positions-banning-fully-autonomous-weapons>

Hyonhee Shin, (Dec 27, 2022). South Korea to Develop AI-Powered Drones for Border Patrol <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/south-koreas-yoon-vows-advance-creation-military-drone-unit-2022-12-27/>

- Jane's Defence Weekly: Israel's Harop Loitering Munition: A Glimpse into the Future of Warfare? <https://www.iai.co.il/p/mini-harop>
- Jerusalem Post (Jan23, 2023). Israel's Iron Dome: A Case Study in Autonomous Weapons, <https://www.jpost.com/tags/weapons>
- Lauren Kahn, (June 8, 2022). The United States and Autonomous Weapons. <https://www.cfr.org/blog/refreshed-autonomous-weapons-policy-will-be-critical-us-global-leadership-moving-forward>
- Michael T. Klare, (Dec 2023). Autonomous Weapons Development <https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2023-12/news/un-address-autonomous-weapons-systems>
- Sylvie Zhuang (Sept 25, 2023). South China Morning Post: "China's Killer Drones: A Looming Threat?" <https://www.scmp.com/topics/drones>
- The Future of Life Institute, (2024). A contest for the best creative educational materials on super intelligence, its associated risks, and the implications of this technology for our world. <https://futureoflife.org/>
- The report of United Nations General Assembly Resolutions on Autonomous Weapons (Oct 05, 2023) <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/note-correspondents/2023-10-05/note-correspondents-joint-call-the-united-nations-secretary-general-and-the-president-of-the-international-committee-of-the-red-cross-for-states-establish-new>
- The report of The International Committee of the Red Cross law and policy on Autonomous Weapons (March 20, 2024). Humanitarian Challenges and Legal Uncertainties <https://www.icrc.org/en/war-and-law/weapons/autonomous-weapon-systems>
- United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), (2024). Helping Geneva's newly arrived disarmament diplomats get their bearing, <https://unidir.org/helping-genevas-newly-arrived-disarmament-diplomats-get-their-bearings/>
- Wendell Wallach and Colin Allen (2013). An Introduction on Autonomous Weapons Systems: <https://philpapers.org/rec/WALFRA>
- Yoav Goldberg (2021). The Age of the Algorithm: How AI and ML Data Colonialism. <http://www.trustworthymachinelearning.com/trustworthymachinelearning.pdf>

RED SEA CONFLICT: OPPORTUNITIES, THREATS AND CHALLENGES TO SRI LANKA NAVY



Lieutenant Commander (CDO) Pradeep Kumara, psc, BSc. Special
(Chemistry) Hons

Introduction

The Red Sea, the maritime route connecting the Mediterranean Sea to the Indian Ocean, is increasingly important due to its role in global trade, particularly as a vital route for oil transportation (Policy Center, 2024). It has recently become a hotspot of geopolitical tensions and conflicts since the multiple attacks conducted by Iranian-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen against merchant shipping. Sri Lanka Navy (SLN) has deployed its assets in support of United States-led multinational military operations, i.e., Operation Prosperity Guardian, to ensure safer transits by combating Houthis in the Red Sea region, according to the Government of Sri Lanka’s (GOSL) political will to provide the “Good Order at Sea”. As the modern school maritime strategist Geoffrey Till explains, good order at sea must be sustained by interests expressed through political decisions supplemented by maritime awareness, maritime policy, and integrated maritime governance backed by naval force (Sea power, 2004). Accordingly, this discussion paper explores the opportunities, threats, and challenges posed to the SLN in the context of the Red Sea conflict.

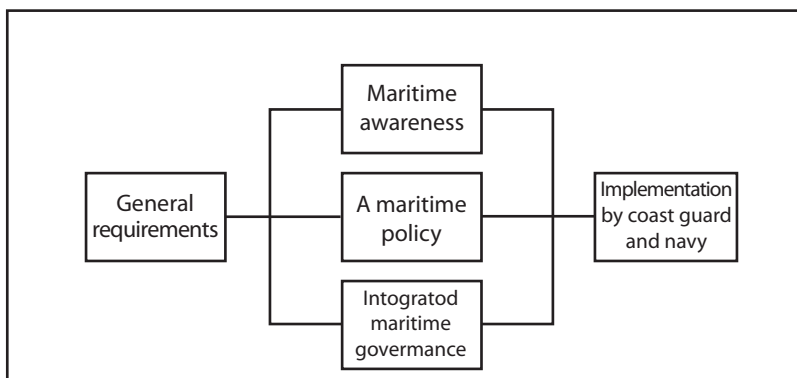


Figure 1: Requirements for Good Order at Sea
Source : Extracted from sea power Seapower (2004)

Background

The Red Sea connecting with the Suez Canal creates the world’s busiest shipping lane and substitutes for the shipping route around the African continent, preserving multiple states’ geo-political and economic interests. The area’s ongoing conflict disturbs free navigation and impacts the energy crisis line with elevated shipping costs involving regional and extra-regional actors. With this backdrop, SLN has deployed its surface assets as joined under the guidance of the existing Combined Task Force 153 (CTF 153) (Willett, 2023). Thus, the fol-

lowing effort will discuss the opportunities, threats, and challenges faced by the SLN, which has limited blue water capabilities.

Opportunities

The SLN has proven its ability to quickly transform against asymmetric war tactics, which successfully destroyed the LTTE floating warheads on the high seas in the last phase of the Eelam war. With the 2025 maritime strategy [MDSL], SLN has broadened its horizons by seeking to achieve blue water capabilities. With these competencies owned by SLN, the direct deployment in Operation Prosperity Guardian seeks wider opportunities for SLN's status among the global vital actors.

a. Enhanced Naval Diplomacy. According to Geoffrey Till [Sea power], naval diplomacy is present via humanitarian or expeditionary operations. It is a peacetime bonus for a maritime force in maritime power projection, which is the capacity of a state to deploy and sustain military forces outside its territory. This naval presence is subjected to coercion, picture-building and coalition-building (Sea power, 2004). Hence, GOSL can leverage its geo-political posture across naval diplomacy by contributing to conflict resolution in the Red Sea, which could enhance the country's image in the international community.

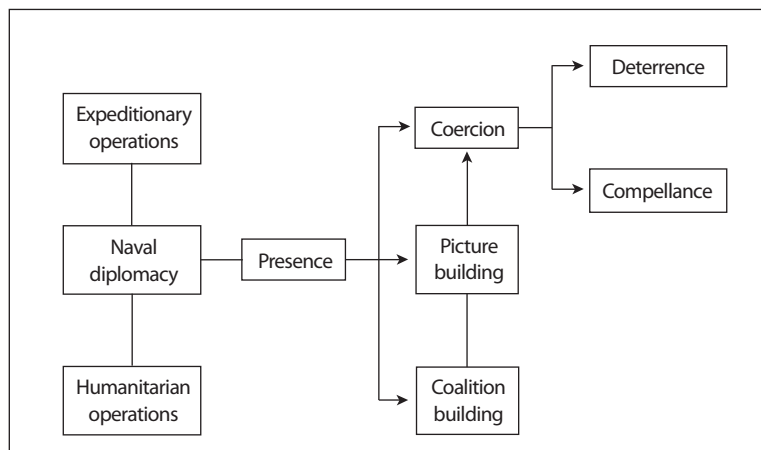


Figure 2: Components of Naval Diplomacy

Source : Extracted from sea power (2004)

b. Enhancing Interoperability. Collective effort alone with diverse partners hones its interoperability capabilities, developing international norms and standards for naval operations. Accordingly, the Joint multinational operation Prosperity Guardian contributes to enhancing the interoperability of the SLN by fostering C4I in the SLN as follows:

- **Procedure Standardization.** Multinational communication procedures, tactical instructions, maneuvering procedures, Rules of engagement...etc, can be standardized to ensure seamless coordination among naval forces to increase interoperability.
 - **Unified C2 Structures.** Unified command structures from different navies promote efficient decision-making and coordination by enhancing interoperability.
 - **Interoperable Technology.** Compatibility and interoperability of equipment, sensors, and communication systems from varied naval platforms with modern technologies promote integration and ensure seamless integration between maritime assets. Further, the shared technology allows SLN to familiarize the equipment, procedures, and tactics of diverse partners with each other's capabilities and limitations.
 - **Information Sharing.** Establishing common databases, communication networks, and information-sharing protocols ensures naval forces can exchange critical information in real-time, enhancing situational awareness and effectiveness.
 - **Personnel Exchange Programs.** Programs designed to exchange personnel between navies during joint operations help to enhance interoperability to a greater extent while allowing naval personnel to gain experience in operating procedures and cultures of partner countries.
 - **Doctrine Harmonization.** Seamless integration and cohesive operation in a joint environment promote the aligning and harmonizing operational doctrines that facilitate information sharing, joint training exercises, and technology transfer, ultimately bolstering the SLN's capabilities. Additionally, aligning operational doctrines ensures consistency and clarity in mission objectives, optimizes resource utilization, and promotes a unified approach to maritime challenges, enhancing the SLN's strategic posture and influence in the maritime domain.
- c. Broaden Security Partnerships.** The planned operation "Prosperity Guardian" is the largest-scale multinational maritime mission under the aegis of the CTF 153, a united effort of over ten key allies (Willett, 2023). The evolving situation consequently allows SLN to strengthen security partnerships with nations invested in maintaining regional stability. This application in safeguarding the attributes [Resource, transportation, information, and dominion] of the sea would create maritime cooperation emphasizing naval roles (Sea power, 2004). Perhaps the collaborative efforts can enhance the capabilities and knowledge of the SLN across the joint maneuvers.

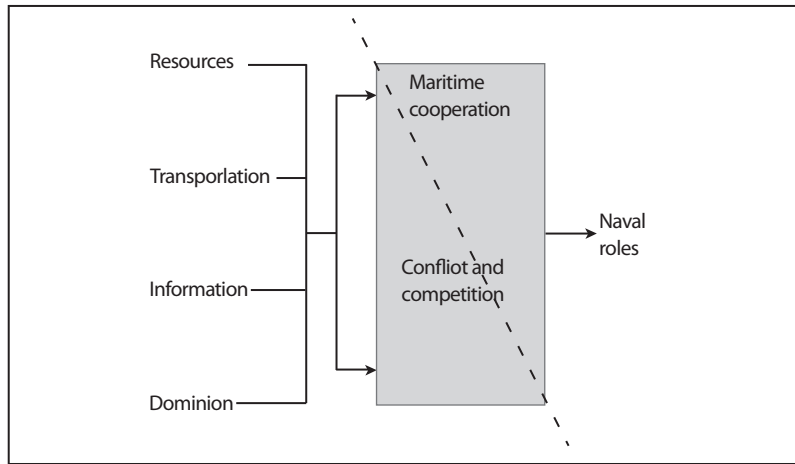


Figure 3: Attributes of the Sea

Source : Extracted from sea power (2004)

d. Economic Opportunities. The reputation built across the responsibility can create future opportunities where the military can have more deployments in multinational missions. Thus, SLN has the potential to capitalize on this opportunity as a future economic opportunity as Bangladesh military earns from UN peacekeeping (Newagebd.net, 2024). Hence, it offers a platform for the SLN to showcase its reliability and professionalism, fostering trust among international partners and potentially unlocking lucrative economic opportunities for the GOSL.

The positive impacts of SLN deployment are always associated with the negative consequences that could be identified as threats to the GOSL decision. Hence, this discussion paper has highlighted the following threats to the organisation that shall be recognised in the strategic hierarchy of the state.

Threats

The states that seek freedom of navigation have been threatened by ballistic missiles and Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) [asymmetric tactics] on merchant vessels in the Red Sea area. Hence, the good order at sea must be sustained by interests expressed through political decisions backed by naval force (Sea power, 2004) that have imminent threats on life and assets. The author highlighted the following threats the SLN could face during the deployments.

- **National Security Challenges.** The escalated tensions in the region may lead to increased non-traditional security issues, i.e., piracy, terrorism, and associated other security threats like trafficking and smuggling that directly seek the SLN involvement. Hence, the SLN must be prepared to address these challenges to safeguard its maritime interests in its waters effectively while deploying its assets in extra regions.

- **Resource Strain.** While the Advanced Offshore Patrol Vessels (AOPV) are instrumental in addressing emerging maritime threats, their deployment in high-priority areas may inadvertently lead to a reallocation of resources, diverting attention and assets away from routine responsibilities assigned to the SLN that could strain the SLN's resources.
- **Strategic Vulnerabilities.** The naval deployment with the Western powers against the Iran-backed Houthis may create new strategic vulnerabilities for Sri Lanka that might affect the country's export market (e.g., Tea) or internal energy crisis subjected to development based on oil imports as geopolitical dynamics evolve one of a prompt threat need for careful navigation of alliances and strategic engagements.

The deployment of global responsibility for freedom of navigation may create national security threats that require proactive measures laid on the SLN's shoulders (Sunday Times, 2024). However, veterans who employ SLN's strategies face challenges.

Challenges

The deployment of AOPVs against Houthis' asymmetric tactics creates numerous repercussions in the country. Since this is the first time that SLN is deploying its surface assets for a prolonged joint military operation that would generate considerable challenges, as the SLN spokesman highlighted:

"Prior to deployment, we need to arrange logistic supplies. We also require a robust weapon outfit for this kind of a deployment. To enhance our vessel's security, an air defense system is imperative." (DM Editorial, 2024).

Hence, the author has identified a few of the challenges SLN would face with this strategic decision.

- **Operational Adaptability.** The SLN should be able to modify the mode of operandi and prioritize adverse asymmetric tactic response according to the joint environment to overcome unexpected obstacles or political realities. Thus, SLN must accept new operational challenges offered by the Red Sea deployment, including increased air surveillance, information acquisition, and system updates for potential joint operations.
- **Communication Challenges.** Effective communication is vital to establish interoperability among the maritime forces, facilitating seamless coordination and collaboration across the units and allied nations. However, distinct communication procedures and tactics, including language barriers, varying communication protocols and systems in com-

pactness, hinder effective coordination, thereby creating probable challenges in interoperability for SLN fleet units deployed.

- **Diplomatic Balancing Act.** Using SLN assets to achieve further national goals is a part of naval diplomacy. Nonetheless, it is essential to recognize that additional powers are played behind the scenes. Hence, in this situation, the GOSL must maintain an impartial, neutral diplomatic posture while avoiding sides that would negatively impact its international relations with the actors to prevent negative future repercussions that pose a considerable challenge to SLN.
- **Technological Upgradation and Integration.** For SLN to properly engage in or respond to the Red Sea conflict, it must keep up with the rapid advancement of naval technologies that can link up the C4I, surveillance and reconnaissance systems of different navies much more quickly than possible. However, investing in contemporary equipment and training in this state's current economic crisis is challenging. Further, integrating platforms with different technologies is challenging since incompatibility issues amid diverse naval systems may impact the effectiveness and coordination of joint operations.
- **Complexity on Logistics.** In maritime forces, logistics and supply chain management involve coordinating resources, personnel, and equipment across vast distances and diverse environments to ensure operational readiness and mission success. Maintenance, fueling, and food supplies for naval forces from different states with diverse equipment and requirements would lead to delays or inefficiencies that would be a massive challenge for SLN fleet units.
- **Financial Burden.** The expected cost to bear of Rs. 250 million every fortnight by GOSL for deploying and maintaining (DM Editorial, 2024) in the operational area, given assurance to safeguard freedom of navigation and subsidize regional stability, will be a burden for the nations that would create a negative repercussion caused to drop the public support that would negatively affect on the SLN upon the present economic crisis creates challenges on recruiting even.

Recommendations

Based on the opportunities, threats, and challenges of SLN based on the Red Sea deployment, this discussion paper presents the following recommendations for the strategic level of the SLN hierarchy. Hence, by addressing these recommendations, SLN would effectively steer the opportunities, threats, and challenges posed by its involvement in the Red Sea conflict.

- **Improve Naval Diplomacy.** Actively engaging in naval diplomacy to contribute to conflict resolution in the Red Sea region is recom-

mended to enhance Sri Lanka's image in the international community and strengthen state diplomatic ties.

- **Strengthen Security Partnerships.** It is recommended that the opportunity to strengthen security partnerships with other nations involved in maintaining regional stability be seized through collaborative efforts that can enhance SLN's capabilities through joint maneuvers and knowledge-sharing.
- **Explore Potential Economic Opportunities.** Exploring the potential economic opportunities arising from the deployment, it is recommended that SLN identify avenues for future financial benefits.
- **Address the National Security Challenges.** Effective deployment of SLN assets in coordination with other allied navies is recommended while dealing with modern non-traditional security threats in its waters.
- **Manage the strain on resources.** It is recommended that effective resource allocation be used while fulfilling its routine responsibilities in its waters to avoid strain on modern SLN platforms.
- **Manage the Strategic Weaknesses.** Carefully assessing and mitigating potential strategic vulnerabilities resulting from SLN deployment is recommended, considering the negative impact on the state export market and energy security due to evolving world geopolitical dynamics.
- **Maintain Operational Adaptability.** Modifying SLN's mode of operandi and prioritising response strategies based on the joint environment is recommended to enhance SLN's operational adaptability and respond effectively to asymmetric tactics.
- **Preserve Diplomatic Equilibrium.** It is recommended that SLN and GOSL maintain a neutral diplomatic posture while engaging in the Red Sea conflict to avoid taking sides that could negatively impact Sri Lanka's international relations and future repercussions.
- **Invest in the Advancement of Technology.** It is recommended that investments in technological upgrades, including upgrading surveillance and reconnaissance systems, be prioritized, and contemporary equipment and training should be invested to minimize economic challenges.

In contrast, the strategic recommendations outlined above present a comprehensive approach for the SLN to navigate the complexities of its involvement in the Red Sea conflict, safeguarding both Sri Lanka's interests and its position on the global stage.

Conclusion

The engagement of the SLN in the Red Sea conflict, as delineated throughout this discussion paper, highlights a multifaceted approach to international maritime security and underscores the implications of geopolitical dynamics on national naval strategies. The involvement of the SLN in the Red Sea marks a significant stride towards enhancing Sri Lanka's maritime diplomacy and international standing. It underscores the intricate balance between leveraging geopolitical opportunities and mitigating associated risks and vulnerabilities. The strategic deployment in the Red Sea, aimed at combating maritime threats and ensuring the free flow of global trade through one of the world's most vital maritime chokepoints, serves as a testament to SLN's evolving capabilities and strategic vision in blue water operations. This deployment aligns with Geoffrey Till's assertion that sustaining good order at sea necessitates a comprehensive approach encompassing political will, maritime awareness, and practical naval force application.

The opportunities for the SLN, including enhanced naval diplomacy, interoperability, security partnerships, and economic benefits, reflect the potential for strategic advancement and international collaboration. These opportunities augment SLN's operational capabilities and contribute to a positive image of Sri Lanka on the global stage, fostering trust and cooperation among international maritime partners. However, the threats and challenges highlighted, ranging from national security concerns, resource strain, strategic vulnerabilities, and operational and logistical hurdles to financial burdens, underscore the complexities of engaging in such a volatile and strategically sensitive region.

Addressing these challenges necessitates a nuanced understanding of the geopolitical landscape and a proactive approach towards strategic planning, resource management, and international cooperation. The recommendations offer a roadmap for the SLN to navigate these complexities, emphasizing the importance of naval diplomacy, strengthening security partnerships, exploring economic opportunities, and investing in technological advancements. These strategic imperatives aim to mitigate the risks associated with the SLN's deployment in the Red Sea and envision a future where the SLN can effectively contribute to regional stability and global maritime security.

In conclusion, the SLN's involvement in the Red Sea conflict underscores the critical role of naval forces in addressing contemporary maritime challenges and safeguarding international trade routes. The experience and insights gained from this deployment could serve as valuable inputs for refining Sri Lanka's maritime strategy, enhancing operational capabilities, and positioning the SLN as a critical player in international maritime security efforts. As the geopolitical landscape evolves, the SLN's adaptability, strategic foresight, and commitment

to international cooperation will be pivotal in navigating the complexities of maritime security and contributing to a stable and secure maritime domain.

REFERENCES

DM Editorial (2024). SL Navy conducts feasibility study for Red Sea deployment. [online] Dailymirror.lk. Available at: https://www.dailymirror.lk/main_image/SL-Navy-conducts-feasibility-study-for-Red-Sea-deployment/346-274476 [Accessed 2 Aug. 2024].

Dr Lee Willett (2023). International Coalition Builds Deterrence Capacity against Red Sea Shipping Threat - Naval News. [online] Naval News. Available at: <https://www.navalnews.com/naval-news/2023/12/international-coalition-builds-deterrence-capacity-against-red-sea-shipping-threat/> [Accessed 2 Aug. 2024].

Newagebd.net. (2024). Bangladesh military earns Tk 27,900cr from UN peacekeeping in 23 years. [online] Available at: <https://www.newagebd.net/article/216615/bangladesh-military-earns-tk-27900cr-from-un-peacekeeping-in-23-years> [Accessed 2 Aug. 2024].

Policy Center. (2024). Red Sea Risks: Security Challenges and the Global Trade Equation. [online] Available at: <https://www.policycenter.ma/publications/red-sea-risks-security-challenges-and-global-trade-equation> [Accessed 2 Aug. 2024].

The Sunday Times, Sri Lanka. (2024). Deployment of SL Navy advanced offshore patrol vessel to the Red Sea still under discussion. [online] Available at: <https://www.sundaytimes.lk/240107/news/deployment-of-sl-navy-advanced-offshore-patrol-vessel-to-the-red-sea-still-under-discussion-544478.html> [Accessed 2 Aug. 2024].

Seapower. (2004). Available at: <https://www.navedu.navy.mi.th/stg/databasestory/data/youttasart/youttasarttalae/bigcity/Sea%20power/Seapower%201st%20Ed.pdf> [Accessed 2 Aug. 2024].

ENHANCING MARITIME SECURITY IN THE INDIAN OCEAN REGION: SRI LANKA'S STRATEGIC IMPERATIVES

Lieutenant Commander (ASW) Bandara Wijesinghe



Abstract

Maritime security within the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) is a matter of utmost prominence, considering its critical importance in global trade and geopolitical landscapes. This literature scrutinizes the strategic necessities of Sri Lanka in boosting maritime security, accentuating its distinctive geographical location, naval capacities, and cooperative endeavors within the vicinity. It evaluates the complexities presented by cross-border threats and examines the involvement of the Sri Lanka Navy in protecting maritime interests. Furthermore, the document deliberates on potential pathways for enhancing regional collaboration to effectively tackle shared security concerns.

Introduction

The Indian Ocean Region (IOR) stands as a focal point of strategic significance due to its crucial sea lanes, rich natural resources, and geopolitical importance (Samaranayake, 2012). This region's maritime security has become increasingly critical as global maritime operations expand and evolve (Cordner, 2014). Positioned at the intersection of major maritime routes connecting Asia, Europe, and Africa, Sri Lanka is uniquely situated to influence and safeguard these vital corridors. The island nation faces a spectrum of maritime security challenges, including piracy, illicit fishing, maritime terrorism, and narcotics trafficking (Krishnasamy, 2018).

This paper provides a comprehensive examination of Sri Lanka's strategic approach to maritime security within the IOR (Swan, 2017). It begins by exploring Sri Lanka's geographic advantage, which positions it as a key maritime hub with significant influence over crucial shipping lanes (Amarasinghe, 2020). The paper then delves into the capabilities of the Sri Lanka Navy (SLN), highlighting its role in deterrence, response to maritime incidents, and capacity-building efforts (Athas, 2016).

Furthermore, the paper analyzes Sri Lanka's active engagement in bilateral and multilateral collaborations aimed at enhancing maritime security (Weerasinghe, 2017). This includes participation in regional forums, cooperative patrols, and joint initiatives with neighboring countries and international organizations (Bhaskar, 2018). Through these efforts, Sri Lanka not only addresses its own security challenges but also contributes to the broader regional stability and security framework (Davis, 2021).

By investigating these aspects, this paper highlights Sri Lanka's comprehensive strategy to counter maritime threats and enhance regional collaboration. It emphasizes the country's dedication to preserving a secure and stable maritime environment in the Indian Ocean, reinforcing its position as a key contributor to global maritime security (Wignaraja, 2017).

Sri Lanka's Strategic Imperatives

Sri Lanka's strategic imperatives in enhancing maritime security reflect the island nation's pivotal role in safeguarding the vital sea lanes of the Indian Ocean region (IOR). Situated at the nexus of major maritime routes connecting Asia, Europe, and Africa, Sri Lanka's geographic location bestows upon it a unique responsibility and opportunity to ensure the safety and stability of these critical waters (Peiris, 2017). In recent years, the increasing complexities of maritime threats, including piracy, terrorism, and illicit activities, has underscored the imperative for Sri Lanka to adopt a multifaceted approach to maritime security (Perera, 2018). This introduction sets the stage for a comprehensive exploration of Sri Lanka's strategic imperatives, highlighting the multifaceted dimensions through which the country addresses maritime security challenges and contributes to regional stability. From bolstering defence capabilities to fostering international cooperation and promoting sustainable development, Sri Lanka's efforts in enhancing maritime security are integral to the broader dynamics of global maritime governance and security architecture. Thus, understanding the diverse facets of Sri Lanka's strategic imperatives in maritime security is essential for comprehending its evolving role as a key player in the maritime domain of the Indian Ocean region.

Geographic Advantage

Sri Lanka's strategic location at the nexus of major maritime routes makes it a critical player in ensuring the security and stability of the IOR (Senaratne, 2019). The island nation serves as a key maritime hub, facilitating trade and transit between East and West (Brewster, 2018).

- **Critical Maritime Routes.** Sri Lanka has considerable influence over improving marine security due to its advantageous location at the intersection of important maritime routes, such as the East-West shipping lane (Smith, 2019). Given that the Indian Ocean passes through a large amount of the world's oil exports, these routes are essential for international trade. Because of this, Sri Lanka is in a prime position to protect these vital water lanes from a variety of marine threats, including terrorism, piracy, and illicit trafficking (Rosen, 2016).
- **Maritime Hub.** Sri Lanka's strategic imperatives to improve marine security are further reinforced by its status as a major maritime hub (Kariyawasam, 2018). Major transshipment hubs linking Asia with Africa,

Europe, and the Middle East are the nation's ports, especially the Colombo Port (Weerasinghe, 2017). Sri Lanka makes a substantial contribution to preserving the uninterrupted flow of global trade and commerce across the Indian Ocean by guaranteeing the safety and security of these ports and the related maritime activities (Amarasinghe, 2020).

- **Regional Cooperation.** Due to its advantageous location, Sri Lanka offers potential for regional cooperation to improve maritime security. Sri Lanka can be a key player in fostering cooperative projects and alliances meant to tackle shared maritime issues because of its close proximity to other littoral states in the Indian Ocean (Swan, 2017). This includes cooperative patrols, channels for exchanging information, initiatives to increase capability, and planned reactions to marine dangers.
- **Economic Benefits.** Sri Lanka's geographic advantage is not only strategically significant but also yields significant economic benefits that can be utilized to improve maritime security. The nation's shipping industry, marine logistics, and port-related businesses all provide substantial contributions to the maritime sector's GDP. By allocating resources towards enhancing its marine infrastructure and competencies, Sri Lanka fortifies not just its domestic economy but also its ability to make valuable contributions to regional maritime security endeavours (Peiris, 2017).
- **Diplomatic Influence.** Due to its advantageous geographic position, Sri Lanka can exert diplomatic influence in regional and global forums pertaining to marine security. Sri Lanka may support programs and policies that encourage harmony, collaboration, and observance of international marine treaties and laws as a significant player in the Indian Ocean. Through proactive engagement with neighbouring governments, regional powers, and international organizations, Sri Lanka can influence the conversation surrounding maritime security and further its strategic objectives within the Indian Ocean Region (Wignaraja, 2017).

Naval Capabilities

The Sri Lanka Navy, with its modernized fleet and trained personnel, plays a central role in maritime security operations. From patrolling territorial waters to conducting human-smuggling missions, the SLN maintains a robust presence to deter threats and respond effectively to maritime incidents (Brewster, 2015).

- **Deterrence of Threats.** The Sri Lanka Navy (SLN) deters possible maritime threats in the Indian Ocean Region with its updated fleet and well-trained personnel. Through conspicuous presence and frequent patrols within its exclusive economic zone (EEZ) and territorial seas, the

SLN successfully discourages illicit activities including smuggling, illegal fishing, and piracy, which pose a threat to the region's maritime security and stability. In addition to defending Sri Lanka's marine interests, this proactive approach enhances the IOR's general security climate (Bhasker, 2018).

- **Response to Maritime Incidents.** The SLN's capabilities enable it to respond swiftly and effectively to maritime incidents within its jurisdiction and in collaboration with regional partners. Whether its search and rescue operations, maritime pollution incidents, or counter-narcotics efforts, the SLN plays a vital role in ensuring timely and coordinated responses to emergencies at sea (Athas, 2016). This enhances maritime safety and security, mitigates potential risks to life and the environment, and fosters confidence among maritime stakeholders in the region.

- **Counter-Terrorism Operations.** With the support of its regional partners, the SLN can react to maritime situations under its jurisdiction quickly and efficiently thanks to its capabilities. The SLN is essential to enabling prompt and well-coordinated responses to maritime emergencies, whether they include search and rescue missions, occurrences involving marine pollution, or counter-narcotics activities. This improves marine security and safety, reduces possible hazards to people and the environment, and builds trust among regional maritime stakeholders (Samaranayake, 2012).

- **Capacity Building and Training.** Beyond operational readiness, Sri Lanka's naval capabilities include measures for capacity building and training meant to improve neighbouring governments' marine capabilities in the IOR. The SLN supports regional navies by offering training, technical support, and maritime security experience through bilateral and multilateral cooperation initiatives. This fosters a cooperative approach to addressing shared maritime concerns and strengthening collective security in the Indian Ocean (Peiris, 2017).

Collaborative Initiatives

Sri Lanka actively engages in bilateral and multilateral partnerships to enhance maritime security cooperation. Through initiatives like the Galle Dialogue Symposium and the Trilateral Maritime Security Cooperation among India, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives, the nation fosters dialogue and collaboration to address common security challenges.

- **Bilateral Partnerships.** One of the most important ways Sri Lanka is improving maritime security in the Indian Ocean is through its participation in bilateral partnerships. Sri Lanka improves its ability to

successfully handle common marine issues by working with important maritime partners including India, the US and other regional nations. Joint patrols, intelligence sharing, help with capacity-building, and coordinated responses to marine threats are all common components of bilateral ties, which support regional maritime security and stability (Wignaraja, 2017).

- **Multilateral Forums.** By taking part in multilateral forums, Sri Lanka opens up opportunities for further cooperation on matters pertaining to marine security. Programs like the Galle Dialogue Symposium, which unites warships from the multiple states of the world, provide forums for discussion, information exchange, and the formulation of cooperative solutions to problems pertaining to maritime security. By actively participating in these forums, Sri Lanka helps regional parties gain trust and confidence, which creates a favourable atmosphere for coordinated action to improve maritime security in the IOR (Cordner, 2014).

- **Information Sharing and Intelligence Cooperation.** To improve maritime domain awareness and coordination among regional states, Sri Lanka has been an active proponent of information sharing networks in the IOR (Athas, 2016). Participation in programs like the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP) and the Indian Ocean Tsunami Warning System is evidence of the nation's dedication to improving marine security through real-time information sharing and coordinated efforts (Samaranayake, 2012). These networks enable quicker reactions to maritime threats and improve regional capacity to handle crises (Weerasinghe, 2017).

Challenges and Responses

Maritime security in Sri Lanka has been a central concern since ancient times, shaped by a rich tapestry of historical events and contemporary challenges. From the early maritime trade routes that crisscrossed the Indian Ocean to modern-day transnational threats, the island nation's strategic significance has remained paramount. Despite concerted efforts, Sri Lanka grapples with a multitude of challenges in safeguarding its maritime domain.

Transnational Threats

The proliferation of transnational threats such as piracy, maritime terrorism, and illicit trafficking represents a significant challenge to maritime security in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). Sri Lanka recognizes the gravity of these threats and adopts a comprehensive approach to counter them effectively, aligning with its strategic imperatives to enhance maritime security in the region (Brewster, 2015).

International shipping lanes, marine trade, and the security of seafarers are all at risk from piracy, which was historically widespread in several areas of the Indian Ocean. The strategic imperatives of Sri Lanka recognize the need to fight piracy in order to maintain the unhindered and secure flow of marine commerce (Swan, 2017). The nation actively takes part in international initiatives to guard commerce vessels through dangerous passageways, patrol high-risk areas, and carry out anti-piracy activities. Furthermore, Sri Lanka works with regional and global partners to bring criminal charges against pirates, break up their networks, and fortify legal frameworks to thwart similar attacks in the future (Samaranayake, 2012).

Another international concern that compromises security and stability in the IOR is maritime terrorism. Due to its lengthy civil war and experience with terrorism, Sri Lanka is more cognizant of the risks associated with terrorist organizations using marine routes for illegal activity (Athas, 2016). Sri Lanka uses a variety of strategies, such as intelligence sharing, maritime patrols, and capacity-building projects, to counter this threat. Sri Lanka hopes to identify and stop terrorist activity at sea, stop extremists from infiltrating, and protect important maritime infrastructure and assets by strengthening maritime domain awareness and collaborating with regional allies (Cordner, 2014).

In the Indo-Pacific region, illicit trafficking poses a complex and dynamic challenge to maritime security. This includes the smuggling of weapons, drugs, and people. Sri Lanka understands that in order to counter these illegal operations, which not only put lives in peril but also encourage organized crime and jeopardize regional stability, a robust and coordinated reaction is required (Senaratne 2019). To effectively combat illicit trafficking, Sri Lanka's strategic imperatives place a high priority on interagency collaboration, information sharing, and capacity-building initiatives. To improve border controls, stop smuggling networks, and prosecute traffickers, the nation collaborates extensively with law enforcement, customs, and international organizations (Rosen, 2016).

Sri Lanka's all-encompassing strategy to improve marine security not only targets specific transnational threats but also includes more general activities to raise knowledge of the maritime domain, develop institutional capacity, and promote collaboration within the region (Amarasinghe, 2020). Sri Lanka understands that a comprehensive approach incorporating a range of components—such as legal frameworks, diplomatic engagement, and monitoring and reconnaissance capabilities—is necessary for effective maritime security (Peiris, 2017). Sri Lanka aims to improve its marine capabilities and make a positive impact on a safer and more secure maritime environment in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) by investing in technology, training, and infrastructure development (Smith, 2019).

In addition, Sri Lanka actively participates in multilateral and bilateral alliances to advance regional stability and enhance cooperation in marine security. Sri Lanka's dedication to cooperative security efforts is demonstrated by programs like the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) and trilateral maritime security cooperation with surrounding nations. Through communication, information exchange, and cooperative exercises, Sri Lanka collaborates with its partners to address shared issues and foster confidence among regional players (Davis, 2021).

Illegal Fishing

Illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing poses a significant threat to maritime security and the sustainability of marine ecosystems in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). Sri Lanka recognizes the detrimental impacts of IUU fishing on its coastal communities, marine biodiversity, and economic interests, and as such, adopts stringent measures to combat this illicit activity as part of its strategic imperatives to enhance maritime security (Peiris, 2017).

Due to its location in the Indian Ocean, Sri Lanka's waterways are vulnerable to IUU fishing operations, which also include unapproved use of marine resources and unlawful foreign vessel incursions (Bhasker, 2018). The nation's strategic imperatives place a high priority on safeguarding its marine ecosystems and maritime domain, both of which are essential to the livelihoods of coastal populations and the long-term viability of its fishing industry (Perera, 2018).

Sri Lanka employs a multifaceted strategy that incorporates regulatory measures, enforcement operations, and surveillance to effectively combat IUU fishing (Rosen, 2016). Sri Lanka is able to identify and discourage illicit fishing activity in its waters because to increased surveillance measures, which include the use of satellite monitoring systems, aerial surveillance, and maritime police boats. Sri Lanka seeks to stop illegal vessels from abusing its marine resources and breaking its maritime laws and regulations by keeping a watchful presence and monitoring fishing activity (Samaranayake, 2012).

In addition to surveillance, Sri Lanka takes decisive enforcement actions against perpetrators of IUU fishing, including the apprehension and prosecution of illegal fishing vessels and their crew members. Through coordinated operations conducted by its naval and law enforcement agencies, Sri Lanka intercepts and apprehends IUU fishing vessels, confiscates illegal catches, and imposes penalties on offenders in accordance with its domestic laws and international obligations. These enforcement actions send a strong deterrent message to potential violators and reinforce Sri Lanka's commitment to combating IUU fishing (Brewster, 2015).

Strengthening Regional Cooperation

Strengthening regional cooperation is a cornerstone of Sri Lanka's strategic imperatives in enhancing maritime security in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). Recognizing the interconnected nature of maritime security challenges and the importance of collective action, Sri Lanka advocates for closer collaboration with neighboring states, international organizations, and maritime stakeholders to address evolving threats effectively (Amarasinghe, 2020).

The development of platforms for information exchange is a crucial component of Sri Lanka's strategy for enhancing regional cooperation. Sri Lanka and its regional partners can better detect, monitor, and respond to security threats including maritime terrorism, illicit trade, and piracy by exchanging timely and pertinent marine intelligence (Davis, 2021). By means of bilateral agreements, cooperative patrols, and involvement in regional forums like the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) and the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS), Sri Lanka enables the sharing of knowledge, skills, and optimal methodologies to enhance maritime domain awareness and foster a mutual comprehension of mutual security predicaments (Wignaraja, 2017).

Another essential element of Sri Lanka's attempts to improve regional cooperation in marine security is capacity-building. Through training programs, technical support, and technology transfers, Sri Lanka works with international partners and neighboring nations to improve the maritime capabilities of littoral states in the IOR (Swan, 2017). Sri Lanka makes a significant contribution to the construction of a more capable and robust marine security architecture in the area through investing in the development of institutional frameworks, infrastructure, and human resources (Cordner, 2014). In order to solve shared security concerns and advance mutual trust and confidence, Sri Lanka cultivates deeper ties with its neighbors through programs like the Trilateral Maritime Security Cooperation with India, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives (Athas, 2016).

Another important tool for enhancing regional collaboration in maritime security is joint marine operations (Kariyawasam, 2018). Sri Lanka takes part in international maritime security exercises and operations carried out in the Indian Ocean Rim (IOR), including the Combined Maritime Forces' (CMF) biennial Exercise MILAN and operations with an Indian Ocean focus (Rosen, 2016). Through these cooperative efforts, Sri Lanka will be able to improve communication amongst regional navies, exchange operational knowledge, and create coordinated responses to marine threats. Sri Lanka contributes to the development of a stable and safe marine environment in the Indian Ocean Rim by cooperating with regional partners, thereby demonstrating its commitment to collective security (Davis, 2021).

Conclusion

In conclusion, Sri Lanka's strategic imperatives in enhancing maritime security in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) reflect a comprehensive and multi-faceted approach aimed at addressing a wide range of challenges and promoting regional cooperation. Through its unique geographical position, naval capabilities, and collaborative efforts, Sri Lanka plays a pivotal role in safeguarding shared maritime interests and fostering stability in the IOR.

Sri Lanka's ability to protect vital sea lanes and marine infrastructure is bolstered by its advantageous location at the intersection of important maritime routes, which facilitates the seamless movement of global trade and commerce. The Sri Lanka Navy (SLN) is a vital component of the region's overall security architecture because of its updated fleet and well-trained personnel that help it thwart threats, respond to maritime disasters, and carry out counterterrorism operations.

Furthermore, Sri Lanka actively participates in multilateral and bilateral alliances to advance regional stability and enhance cooperation in marine security. Sri Lanka's dedication to cooperative security efforts is demonstrated by programs like the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) and trilateral maritime security cooperation with surrounding nations. By means of discourse, information exchange, cooperative exercises, and capacity-building programs, Sri Lanka cultivates stronger relationships with its regional allies and plays a part in the establishment of a cooperative and inclusive maritime security framework within the Indo-Pacific region.

Despite concerted efforts, Sri Lanka acknowledges the persistent challenges posed by transnational threats such as piracy, maritime terrorism, illegal fishing, and illicit trafficking. However, through a combination of proactive measures, enforcement actions, and regional cooperation, Sri Lanka remains committed to addressing these challenges effectively and promoting a safer and more secure maritime environment for all stakeholders in the Indian Ocean Region.

REFERENCES

Amarasinghe, M. (2020). *Maritime Security and Strategic Imperatives in the Indian Ocean Region: A Sri Lankan Perspective*. Colombo: Centre for Strategic Studies.

Athas, I. (2016). 'Sri Lanka's Naval Modernization and its Role in Maritime Security', *South Asia Defence & Strategic Review*.

- Bhaskar, R. (2018). 'Enhancing Maritime Cooperation in the Indian Ocean Region: Sri Lanka's Strategic Role', *Indian Ocean Security Review*.
- Brewster, D. (2015). *India's Ocean: The Story of India's Bid for Regional Leadership*. London: Routledge.
- Cordner, L. (2014). 'Indian Ocean Maritime Security: An Australian Perspective', *Security Challenges*.
- Davis, A. (2021). 'Sri Lanka's Role in Indian Ocean Maritime Security', *Maritime Affairs*.
- Kariyawasam, L. (2018). *Sri Lanka's Maritime Strategy in the Indian Ocean: Navigating a Turbulent Region*. Colombo: *Maritime Affairs Journal*.
- Peiris, H. (2017). 'Sri Lanka's Strategic Position in the Indian Ocean Region', *Strategic Analysis*.
- Perera, S. (2018). 'The Blue Economy and Sri Lanka: Opportunities and Challenges', *Marine Policy*.
- Rosen, M. (2016). 'Securing the Indian Ocean: Challenges for Regional Stability', *Naval War College Review*.
- Samaranayake, N. (2012). *Sri Lanka's Role in Maritime Security in the Indian Ocean Region*. Washington, D.C.: Center for Naval Analyses.
- Scott, D. (2017). *The Indian Ocean: Geopolitical Context and Strategic Security*. London: Routledge.
- Senaratne, S. (2019). 'Enhancing Maritime Domain Awareness in the Indian Ocean: A Sri Lankan Perspective', *Indian Ocean Studies*.
- Smith, A. (2019). *Maritime Security Challenges in the Indian Ocean: Strategic Concerns and Regional Cooperation*. New York: Springer.
- Swan, S. (2017). 'Sri Lanka's Naval Strategy in the Indian Ocean Region', *Journal of the Indian Ocean Region*.
- Weerasinghe, K. (2017). *Maritime Security and Regional Cooperation in the Indian Ocean: Sri Lanka's Strategic Imperatives*. Colombo: Institute of Policy Studies.
- Wignaraja, G. (2017). 'Sri Lanka's Economic Diplomacy and Maritime Strategy', *Global Policy*.

NAVIGATING THE WAVES OF PROGRESS: THE SRI LANKA NAVY'S PATH TO MODERNIZATION

Lieutenant Prageeth Sahan



Introduction

In the world of maritime security, it's crucial for countries to update their naval forces to protect their national interests and maintain control over their waters. Sri Lanka, located strategically in the vast Indian Ocean, has long understood the importance of having a strong navy. Over time, the Sri Lankan Navy (SLN) has been working hard to modernize. They aim to strengthen their fleet, acquire top-of-the-line ships, and improve their operational abilities. This perspective article explores the efforts made by the SLN to modernize its naval assets, including adopting new technology, building ships locally, and acquiring advanced maritime systems. Having a modern navy is particularly important for countries like Sri Lanka, which sit at important points along key maritime routes. Recognizing this, Sri Lanka is dedicated to modernizing its navy to better defend its waters, enhance surveillance capabilities, and assert its presence in the regional maritime domain.

The strategic significance of maritime security is underscored by the countless challenges and opportunities that characterize the contemporary maritime landscape. From the creation of non-traditional security threats to the intensification of geopolitical rivalries, the imperative for a capable and technologically advanced naval force is abundantly clear. In this context, the Sri Lankan Navy's modernization endeavors represent a proactive response to emerging security dynamics, aimed at enhancing operational readiness, fostering interoperability, and ensuring the safeguarding of national interests in the maritime domain. Through a strategic amalgamation of technology transfer initiatives, and strategic procurement endeavors, the Sri Lankan Navy has endeavored to transcend conventional paradigms of naval capabilities. These concerted efforts underscore the SLN's unwavering commitment to navigating the complex currents of maritime security, while simultaneously reinforcing Sri Lanka's stature as a formidable maritime power within the Indian Ocean region. (Latest in the News Sphere, The Morning, 2024)

Discussion

Understanding the need for Modernization

- Situated strategically within the expansive boundaries of the Indian Ocean, Sri Lanka assumes a pivotal role in the regional dynamics of maritime affairs. Its maritime boundaries sprawl over a vast expanse, spanning more than 8,000 kilometers, accentuating the nation's profound connectivity to the sea. This geographical positioning not only bestows

upon Sri Lanka a sense of maritime prominence but also underscores the integral nature of its maritime domain to the nation's economic prosperity, security, and overarching strategic interests. The maritime expanse surrounding Sri Lanka serves as a conduit for trade, commerce, and connectivity, facilitating the movement of goods, resources, and people across diverse international waters. As such, the nation's economic life-line is intricately intertwined with the health, security, and sustainability of its maritime domain. The bustling ports, bustling ports, vibrant maritime trade routes, and bustling fishing communities bear testimony to the indispensable role played by the sea in shaping Sri Lanka's socio-economic fabric.



Figure 1: Maritime Zones OF Sri Lanka

Source : www.researchgate.net (2024)

- However, amidst the opportunities presented by its maritime bounty, Sri Lanka also confronts a spectrum of challenges that imperil the stability and security of its maritime domain. From the scourge of piracy that looms over the horizon to the illegal fishing and smuggling activities, the maritime realm is fraught with multifaceted threats that demand vigilant oversight and robust countermeasures. In this context, the imperative for a modernized navy emerges as an imperative necessity, as Sri Lanka endeavors to safeguard its territorial integrity, protect vital maritime assets, and preserve the sanctity of its maritime borders. The Sri Lanka Navy (SLN) has made notable strides in modernizing its fleet and enhancing its maritime capabilities in recent years. However, when compared to the vessel technology of other nations' navies, particularly those with greater resources and larger budgets, there are several areas where the SLN could focus on improvement to further enhance its effectiveness and operational capabilities. (Latest in the News Sphere, The Morning, 2024)

- By fortifying its naval capabilities, enhancing surveillance mechanisms, and fostering collaborative partnerships, Sri Lanka needs to fortify its maritime defenses and assert its presence within the dynamic maritime landscape of the Indian Ocean region. Through proactive measures aimed at countering maritime threats and promoting maritime security cooperation, Sri Lanka endeavors to chart a course towards a safer, more secure maritime future, one where its strategic interests are safeguarded, its economic prosperity is assured, and its maritime heritage is preserved for generations to come.

Strategic Imperatives and Goals

- At the core of the modernization efforts undertaken by the Sri Lankan Navy lies a strategic imperative deeply rooted in the nation's commitment to fortifying its maritime security apparatus, safeguarding the integrity of its territorial waters, and projecting influence across the broader regional expanse of the Indian Ocean. These strategic goals serve as guiding beacons, illuminating the path towards a more resilient and capable naval force capable of meeting the multifaceted challenges and opportunities that characterize the contemporary maritime environment.
- Central to this modernization drive is the concerted endeavor to enhance the navy's surveillance capabilities, thereby bolstering its ability to monitor and assess maritime activities within and beyond Sri Lanka's territorial waters. By investing in cutting-edge surveillance technologies, advanced sensor systems, and real-time data analytics, the Sri Lankan Navy needs to aim cultivate a comprehensive understanding of maritime dynamics, detect potential threats, and respond swiftly to emerging security challenges. (Liyanagamage, 2018)
- Augmenting maritime domain awareness represents another pivotal objective underpinning the modernization agenda of the Sri Lankan Navy. Through the establishment of robust information-sharing mechanisms, collaborative partnerships with regional and international stakeholders, and the deployment of maritime reconnaissance assets, Sri Lanka seeks to enhance its situational awareness across the vast expanse of the Indian Ocean. By cultivating a network of maritime domain awareness, the navy aims to mitigate risks, anticipate threats, and uphold the sanctity of its maritime borders. Furthermore, the modernization drive of the Sri Lankan Navy is underscored by a commitment to fostering interoperability with both regional and international partners. Recognizing the inherently transnational nature of maritime security challenges, Sri Lanka endeavors to cultivate collaborative relationships with neighboring states, strategic allies, and multilateral organizations. By harmonizing operational procedures, conducting joint exercises, and sharing

best practices, the navy seeks to enhance its ability to operate seamlessly within broader maritime coalitions, thereby amplifying its collective capacity to address shared security concerns. (The Asian Forum, 2021).

Technology Transfer and Collaborations

- A foundational pillar within the Sri Lankan Navy's overarching strategy for modernization lies in the strategic pursuit of technology transfer achieved through collaborative endeavors with allied nations and esteemed defense contractors. These collaborative ventures not only enable the acquisition of cutting-edge naval platforms, equipment, and technologies but also serve as conduits for the exchange of knowledge and the enhancement of indigenous capacity. These collaborative initiatives stand as exemplars of the symbiotic relationships fostered between Sri Lanka and its allied partners. Noteworthy among these endeavors is the procurement of offshore patrol vessels (OPVs) from both India and China, each representing a significant stride towards bolstering the SLN's maritime capabilities. Through these acquisitions, Sri Lanka not only gains access to advanced naval assets but also benefits from the transfer of expertise and technical know-how from its collaborating partners. (Liyanagamage, 2018)
- Furthermore, the transfer of maritime surveillance systems and radar technology represents another crucial facet of the SLN's modernization drive. By leveraging collaborative arrangements with technologically advanced nations and defense contractors, Sri Lanka aims to enhance its maritime domain awareness and surveillance capabilities. These systems, characterized by their sophistication and reliability, serve as force multipliers, empowering the SLN to maintain a vigilant watch over its maritime domain and respond effectively to emerging threats. Beyond the tangible acquisitions of naval platforms and equipment, these collaborative ventures contribute to the broader objectives of knowledge exchange and capacity building. Through joint training exercises, technology workshops, and personnel exchanges, Sri Lanka stands to benefit from the wealth of expertise and experience possessed by its allied partners. This collaborative synergy not only enhances the proficiency of SLN personnel but also strengthens the nation's indigenous capabilities in maritime defense technology and innovation. (The Asian Forum, 2021).
- In essence, the pursuit of technology transfer through collaborative partnerships represents a cornerstone of the Sri Lankan Navy's modernization endeavors. By leveraging the expertise, resources, and technological prowess of allied nations and defense contractors, Sri Lanka endeavors to fortify its naval capabilities, elevate its strategic standing in the region, and ensure the safeguarding of its maritime interests for generations to come.

Procurement of Advanced Maritime Systems

- In response to the dynamic landscape of evolving threats and technological advancements, the Sri Lankan Navy (SLN) has adopted a strategic imperative focused on the procurement of advanced maritime systems. This forward-looking approach underscores the SLN's commitment to maintaining a cutting-edge naval force capable of effectively addressing emerging challenges and safeguarding Sri Lanka's maritime interests. Central to this modernization strategy is the prioritization of investments in a diverse array of advanced maritime systems, encompassing sensors, communication equipment, and weapon systems. By harnessing the latest advancements in technology, the SLN endeavors to enhance its operational capabilities, bolster situational awareness, and elevate its response agility in the face of evolving maritime threats.
- At the core of these procurement efforts lies recognition of the critical role played by state-of-the-art technology in bolstering the SLN's effectiveness and efficiency. By investing in advanced sensors, the SLN aims to augment its ability to detect, track, and classify maritime targets with precision and accuracy. Similarly, advancements in communication equipment enable seamless interoperability among naval assets, facilitating coordinated responses to dynamic operational scenarios. Furthermore, investments in cutting-edge weapon systems equip the SLN with the requisite firepower and deterrence capabilities to effectively counter maritime threats and safeguard Sri Lanka's maritime sovereignty.
- Collaborations with international suppliers play a pivotal role in facilitating access to cutting-edge solutions tailored to the SLN's unique maritime defense needs. By leveraging strategic partnerships with leading defense contractors and technology providers, the SLN gains access to state-of-the-art systems and expertise, thereby enhancing its technological prowess and operational effectiveness. In essence, the SLN's prioritization of advanced maritime systems represents a proactive response to the evolving security landscape, aimed at equipping the navy with the requisite tools and capabilities to navigate the complex challenges of the maritime domain. Through strategic investments in technology and collaboration with international partners, the SLN reaffirms its commitment to ensuring Sri Lanka's maritime security and upholding its sovereignty in an ever-changing maritime environment.

Regional Dynamics and Collaboration

- The modernization endeavors of the Sri Lankan Navy are intricately intertwined with the evolving geopolitical landscape and security architectures within the region. Against the backdrop of dynamic regional dynamics, collaborative initiatives with neighboring countries such as India

and Maldives serve as linchpins in bolstering maritime security cooperation and nurturing mutual trust. These partnerships not only facilitate the sharing of information, intelligence, and best practices but also enable coordinated efforts to address common maritime challenges effectively. (PTI, 2022).

- Moreover, the SLN's active participation in multilateral forums and joint exercises plays a pivotal role in enhancing interoperability and strengthening the collective response to maritime threats. The SLN has prioritized training and capacity building initiatives to enhance the skills and proficiency of its personnel. Specialized training programs are conducted to equip SLN personnel with the knowledge and expertise required to operate modern naval platforms and effectively respond to maritime security challenges. By engaging in collaborative exercises and training programs with regional and international partners, the SLN not only hones its operational capabilities but also fosters greater cohesion and coordination among maritime stakeholders. These interactions not only contribute to enhancing the SLN's operational readiness and effectiveness but also promote broader regional stability and security. Through proactive engagement and collaboration, the SLN reaffirms its commitment to promoting peace, stability, and cooperation within the Indian Ocean region. (PTI, 2022).



Figure 2: Mini CARAT-2024 Bilateral Exercise held on April, 2024 SLN Marine HQ Sampoor

Source : Sri Lanka Navy (2024)

Recommendations

While the Sri Lankan Navy (SLN) has made commendable strides in its modernization efforts, the journey is fraught with challenges and constraints that hinder the timely realization of objectives. Main among these impediments is are fiscal limitations, bureaucratic hurdles, and geopolitical sensitivities, which collectively undermine the expeditious implementation of modernization projects. The constraints imposed by budgetary constraints often necessitate prioritization and compromise, potentially delaying the acquisition of critical assets and technologies.

Additionally, bureaucratic inefficiencies can impede the efficient execution of modernization initiatives, leading to delays and cost overruns. Geopolitical sensitivities further exacerbate the challenges, particularly in the context of strategic partnerships and procurement arrangements with international actors. Moreover, concerns regarding transparency, accountability, and adherence to procurement protocols present significant governance challenges. Instances of corruption, mismanagement, and lack of oversight can undermine the effectiveness of modernization efforts and erode public trust. Addressing these governance issues requires comprehensive reforms aimed at enhancing transparency, strengthening accountability mechanisms, and ensuring adherence to established procurement protocols. Only through concerted efforts to overcome these challenges can the SLN successfully navigate its modernization journey and realize its full potential as a modern and capable naval force.

One area that warrants attention is the modernization of naval vessels. While the SLN operates a fleet of patrol vessels, offshore patrol vessels (OPVs), and smaller craft, there is room for improvement in terms of the sophistication and capabilities of these vessels. Compared to the naval vessels of major powers, SLN vessels may lack advanced sensor suites, communication systems, and firepower. Upgrading these systems and integrating more advanced technology could enhance the SLN's ability to conduct a wide range of maritime operations, including surveillance, interdiction, and search and rescue missions.

Moreover, the SLN has to adopt unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) for maritime surveillance and reconnaissance missions. These UAVs provide a cost-effective and efficient means of monitoring vast maritime areas, complementing the SLN's manned aircraft and surface vessels. Equipped with high-resolution long range cameras and sensors, UAVs enhance the SLN's surveillance capabilities, particularly in remote or inaccessible maritime regions. Additionally, the SLN could benefit from investing in more advanced maritime patrol aircraft (MPAs) and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) because while MPAs and UAVs play a crucial role in enhancing maritime domain awareness and surveillance capabilities, the SLN's current platforms may not match the capabilities of similar assets operated by larger navies. Upgrading to more capable MPAs and UAVs with longer endurance, greater sensor payloads, and advanced communication systems could significantly improve the SLN's ability to monitor and protect its maritime domain.

Also, the SLN has to invest in advanced radar surveillance networks to bolster its maritime domain awareness. These radar systems, strategically deployed along the coastline, provide real-time tracking of maritime vessels, enabling the SLN to detect and intercept suspicious activities effectively. By enhancing situational awareness, these radar networks can contribute significantly to Sri Lanka's maritime security efforts.

Furthermore, the SLN could focus on improving its anti-submarine warfare (ASW) capabilities. As submarine technology continues to advance, the ability to detect, track, and neutralize submarines is becoming increasingly important for maritime security. Investing in ASW technologies such as sonar systems, ASW helicopters, and underwater surveillance networks could enhance the SLN's ability to counter the submarine threat and protect Sri Lanka's maritime interests.

Another area for improvement is the development of indigenous shipbuilding capabilities. While the SLN has undertaken initiatives to build some vessels domestically, further investment in indigenous shipbuilding infrastructure, technology, and expertise could reduce reliance on foreign suppliers and enhance the SLN's ability to tailor vessels to its specific operational requirements. Developing a robust indigenous shipbuilding industry would also create economic opportunities and contribute to national security by ensuring a sustainable and self-reliant naval capability.

Furthermore, advancements in cyber defense, electronic warfare, and information fusion are identified as critical areas for maintaining superiority in the maritime domain. As the cyber threat landscape evolves and becomes increasingly sophisticated, the SLN recognizes the importance of robust cyber defense measures to safeguard critical infrastructure, communications networks, and sensitive data. Incorporating these technological advancements into its operational framework, the SLN aims to stay at the forefront of maritime security, adapt to emerging threats, and uphold its mandate of safeguarding Sri Lanka's maritime interests in an ever-changing environment. Through strategic investments in emerging technologies and continuous innovation, the SLN reaffirms its commitment to ensuring the safety, security, and sovereignty of Sri Lanka's maritime domain.

Conclusion

In summary, the modernization journey undertaken by the Sri Lankan Navy encapsulates a multifaceted endeavor aimed at ensuring maritime security, safeguarding national interests, and fostering regional stability. By leveraging a combination of strategies including technology transfer, indigenous shipbuilding programs, and the acquisition of advanced maritime systems, the SLN is positioned to reinforce its capabilities and emerge as a formidable naval force in the Indian Ocean region. However, addressing challenges, nurturing strategic partnerships, and fully harnessing the potential of modernization initiatives demand concerted efforts. With an unwavering commitment to excellence and innovation, the Sri Lankan Navy is poised to steer towards a future marked by enhanced safety, security, and prosperity within its maritime domain.

REFERENCES

Latest in the News Sphere, The Morning. (2024). Maritime security - Technology, capacity building and collaboration the way forward: Vice Admiral Perera.

Liyanagamage, B. (2018). Future Maritime Security Concerns of the Sri Lanka Navy: Challenges Versus Solutions.

PTI (2022). Sri Lanka, India discuss common maritime challenges faced by their navies in Indian Ocean.

SLN Web unit (2024). Sri Lanka Navy - Home. [online] Navy.lk. Available at: <https://www.navy.lk/>. [Accessed 27 Apr. 2024]

The Asian Forum. (2021). Southeast Asian Naval Modernization and Hedging Strategies. [online] Available at: <https://theasianforum.org/southeast-asian-naval-modernization-and-hedging-strategies/>.

NAVIGATING SRI LANKA'S MARITIME AND STRATEGIC LANDSCAPE

Sub Lieutenant Maduranga Tennakoon



Abstract

Sri Lanka's strategic location in the Indian Ocean has long established it as a pivotal hub in global maritime trade and connectivity. This paper elucidates the multifaceted significance of Sri Lanka's geographic position, tracing its historical maritime connections and analyzing its contemporary geopolitical dynamics, economic imperatives, maritime security concerns, and regional diplomacy. Emphasizing the centrality of maritime affairs to Sri Lanka's foreign policy, it highlights the country's efforts to balance relations with regional and global powers while safeguarding its sovereignty and national interests. The paper also delineates the current challenges and opportunities facing Sri Lanka in its maritime domain, including piracy, smuggling, environmental threats, and economic development initiatives like the Belt and Road Initiative. Furthermore, it elucidates Sri Lanka's proactive measures to enhance maritime security through naval patrols, international cooperation, and investments in maritime infrastructure. Ultimately, Sri Lanka's strategic investments in maritime infrastructure aim to bolster its economic growth, strengthen regional integration, and contribute to peace and stability in the Indian Ocean region.

Keywords: Sri Lanka, Maritime, Strategic, Indian Ocean, Geographical, Trade, Ports

Introduction

Sri Lanka, located strategically in the Indian Ocean, holds a pivotal position connecting major maritime routes between the East and the West. Positioned off the southern tip of the Indian subcontinent, it serves as a crucial link between the Middle East, Africa, Southeast Asia, and beyond. Its central location along key shipping lanes, including the East-West shipping route and the north-south route along the eastern coast of Africa, underscores its importance as a maritime crossroads.

The island nation's geographic features further enhance its strategic significance. Sri Lanka boasts a natural deep-water harbor at Trincomalee on the east coast and the bustling port of Colombo on the west coast. These ports have historically served as vital hubs for maritime trade, facilitating the movement of goods and vessels between regions. Additionally, Sri Lanka's proximity to major energy chokepoints, such as the Strait of Hormuz and the Strait of Malacca, amplifies its role in global energy security and trade dynamics.

Beyond its maritime connectivity, Sri Lanka's geographical position has also shaped its cultural and historical landscape. The island's rich heritage reflects influences from diverse civilizations that traversed its shores over millennia, contributing to its unique identity as a melting pot of cultures and traditions. Overall, Sri Lanka's geographical significance in the Indian Ocean region is characterized by its central location along major maritime routes, natural harbors, and historical ties to global trade networks. Understanding this significance is essential for comprehending the country's role in regional affairs and its evolving strategic priorities.

Geopolitical Dynamics

Maritime and strategic affairs play a fundamental role in shaping Sri Lanka's foreign policy due to the island nation's unique geographical position and historical context. Sri Lanka's location at the crossroads of major maritime routes in the Indian Ocean grants it strategic significance that extends far beyond its borders. As such, the country's foreign policy is intricately linked to its maritime interests and security concerns.

Sri Lanka's strategic location has historically attracted the attention of regional and global powers vying for influence in the Indian Ocean region. As a result, the country's foreign policy is often shaped by the need to balance relations with various factors, including neighboring India, rising powers like China, and traditional partners such as the United States.

Economic Imperatives

The maritime domain is vital for Sri Lanka's economic prosperity, given its reliance on maritime trade and connectivity. Ports such as Colombo and Hambantota serve as crucial nodes in global shipping networks, contributing significantly to the country's revenue through transshipment, logistics services and port-related activities. Therefore, Sri Lanka's foreign policy priorities often revolve around fostering trade partnerships and attracting foreign investment in maritime infrastructure projects.

Maritime Security Concerns

Sri Lanka faces a range of maritime security challenges, including piracy, illegal fishing, and transnational crime. Ensuring the security of its maritime domain is thus a top priority for the country's foreign policy agenda. Sri Lanka collaborates closely with regional and international partners to enhance maritime security capabilities, engage in joint patrols, and participate in initiatives aimed at combating maritime threats.

Regional Diplomacy

Sri Lanka actively engages in regional forums and multilateral organizations to address common maritime challenges and pursue shared objectives. Participation in organizations such as the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) and the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) allows Sri Lanka to coordinate with neighboring countries on issues related to maritime safety, sustainable development, and disaster management.

Sovereignty and National Interest

At the core of Sri Lanka's foreign policy is the protection of its sovereignty and national interests. This includes safeguarding territorial integrity, asserting control over its maritime domain, and promoting peace and stability in the Indian Ocean region. Sri Lanka's strategic calculus is guided by a pragmatic approach that seeks to maximize its advantages while minimizing risks and external dependencies.

Historical Context

Exploring Sri Lanka's historical maritime connections and trade routes offers a fascinating insight into the island nation's rich heritage as a pivotal hub in global commerce. Here's a detailed description. Sri Lanka's historical maritime connections date back millennia, with the island strategically positioned along key trade routes linking the East and the West. As early as the ancient period, Sri Lanka, known historically as Taprobane, served as a crucial waypoint for maritime traders navigating between Asia, Africa, and Europe. Its strategic location in the Indian Ocean facilitated the exchange of goods, ideas, and cultures, shaping the island's identity as a melting pot of civilizations.

Sri Lanka's maritime history dates back thousands of years, with evidence of seafaring activity recorded as early as the prehistoric period. The island's strategic location along major trade routes in the Indian Ocean enabled it to become a vital hub for maritime commerce. Ancient civilizations, such as the Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa kingdoms, engaged in trade with distant lands, exchanging goods such as spices, gems, pearls, and textiles etc.

Current Challenges and Opportunities

In the 21st century, Sri Lanka faces both challenges and opportunities in its maritime domain. Challenges include maritime security threats such as piracy, illegal fishing, and narcotics smuggling, as well as environmental concerns like marine pollution and climate change. However, Sri Lanka also seeks

to leverage its strategic location to promote economic growth, attract foreign investment, and enhance regional connectivity through initiatives such as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

Sri Lanka occupies a pivotal position in the Indian Ocean, strategically positioned at the crossroads of major maritime routes connecting Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. Situated off the southern tip of the Indian subcontinent, the island serves as a natural bridge between the East and the West, making it a vital waypoint for maritime trade. Sri Lanka lies along the historic East-West trade route, which spans from the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea to Southeast Asia and beyond. Ships traversing this route pass through the Indian Ocean, making stops at Sri Lankan ports such as Colombo and Trincomalee for refueling, repairs, and transshipment of cargo. This strategic location enables Sri Lanka to capitalize on the flow of goods and vessels between major trading partners in Asia, Europe, and Africa.

Additionally, Sri Lanka is situated along the north-south shipping lane that runs along the eastern coast of Africa, connecting ports in the Arabian Sea with those in the Bay of Bengal and beyond. This maritime corridor facilitates trade between South Asia, East Africa, and the Middle East, with Sri Lanka serving as a key node for maritime connectivity and logistics operations. Sri Lanka's strategic location provides access to critical energy chokepoints in the Indian Ocean, including the Strait of Hormuz, the Strait of Malacca, and the Bab el-Mandeb Strait. These narrow sea passages are vital for the transportation of oil and natural gas from the Persian Gulf to markets in Asia and beyond. Sri Lanka's proximity to these chokepoints enhances its geopolitical significance and underscores its role in global energy security.

Maritime Security Threats Faced by Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka faces a range of maritime security threats that pose challenges to its territorial integrity, economic prosperity, and maritime safety. Here are some of the key maritime security threats faced by Sri Lanka.

- **Piracy.** Piracy remains a significant maritime security concern in the waters surrounding Sri Lanka, particularly in the Gulf of Mannar and the Bay of Bengal. Somali pirates, operating in the broader Indian Ocean region, have targeted commercial vessels passing through these waters, hijacking ships for ransom and threatening maritime trade routes. While international naval patrols have helped mitigate piracy off the coast of Somalia, the threat persists, necessitating continued vigilance and cooperation among regional navies.

- **Smuggling.** Sri Lanka's porous maritime borders make it vulnerable to various forms of smuggling, including narcotics, arms, contraband goods, and human trafficking. Smugglers take advantage of gaps in maritime surveillance and enforcement to engage in illicit activities, posing threats to national security, public safety, and law enforcement efforts. The smuggling of drugs, in particular, has become a pressing concern, with Sri Lanka serving as a transit point for drug trafficking networks operating in the Indian Ocean region.

- **Illegal, Unreported and unregulated fishing:** IUU fishing poses a significant threat to Sri Lanka's maritime resources, marine ecosystems, and fisheries industry. Foreign and domestic vessels engage in illegal fishing activities, such as poaching, overfishing, and using banned fishing gears, depleting fish stocks, damaging coral reefs, and undermining the livelihoods of local fishermen. IUU fishing not only threatens the sustainability of Sri Lanka's marine environment but also contributes to tensions with neighboring countries over maritime boundaries and resource management.

- **Environmental threats:** Sri Lanka's maritime environment faces various environmental threats, including oil spills, marine pollution, illegal dumping, and habitat destruction. Accidental oil spills from shipwrecks or maritime accidents can have devastating impacts on coastal ecosystems, marine biodiversity, and coastal communities, requiring coordinated response efforts to contain and mitigate environmental damage.

Additionally, industrial pollution, untreated sewage discharge, and plastic waste contribute to marine pollution, posing risks to human health, marine life, and coastal ecosystems.

Efforts Taken by Sri Lanka to Enhance Maritime Security

Sri Lanka has undertaken various efforts to enhance maritime security, recognizing the importance of safeguarding its maritime domain against threats such as piracy, smuggling, illegal fishing, and maritime terrorism.

- **Naval patrols and surveillance.** The Sri Lanka Navy plays a central role in maritime security operations, conducting regular patrols, surveillance, and reconnaissance missions to monitor maritime activities, deter illicit behavior, and respond to security threats. Naval vessels are deployed along the country's coastline and in key maritime zones to enforce maritime laws, protect territorial waters, and safeguard maritime assets.

- **Coastal security and low enforcement.** In addition to the Sri Lanka Navy, other maritime law enforcement agencies, such as the Sri Lanka Coast Guard and the Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, contribute to coastal security and maritime law enforcement efforts. These agencies conduct patrols, inspections, and interdictions to combat illegal fishing, smuggling, and other maritime crimes, collaborating closely with the navy and other relevant authorities.
- **International cooperation and partnerships.** Sri Lanka actively engages in international cooperation and partnerships to enhance maritime security and combat transnational maritime threats. The country participates in joint naval exercises, multilateral maritime security initiatives, and regional forums to exchange information, share best practices, and coordinate responses to maritime challenges. Collaboration with neighboring countries, regional organizations, and international stakeholders strengthens Sri Lanka's maritime security posture and promotes collective efforts to address common maritime concerns.

Investments in Maritime Infrastructure

Sri Lanka has made significant investments in maritime infrastructure to enhance its port facilities, promote maritime connectivity, and capitalize on its strategic location in the Indian Ocean.

- **Colombo Port expansion.** Colombo Port, the largest and busiest port in Sri Lanka, has undergone extensive expansion and modernization efforts to accommodate growing maritime trade volumes and larger container vessels. Major development projects include the construction of new terminals, expansion of existing facilities, and deepening of berths to accommodate mega-container ships. The Colombo International Container Terminal (CICT) and the South Asia Gateway Terminal (SAGT) are key components of the port's modernization plans, offering state-of-the-art container handling capabilities and enhancing efficiency in cargo operations.
- **Hambantota Port Development.** Hambantota Port, located on Sri Lanka's southern coast, has been transformed into a multipurpose deep-sea port and logistics hub through extensive infrastructure development initiatives. The port features modern container terminals, bulk cargo handling facilities, and specialized berths for roll-on/roll-off (Ro-Ro) and vehicle transshipment operations. Hambantota Port aims to attract transshipment traffic and serve as a strategic maritime gateway for international trade between Asia, Africa, and the Middle East.

- **Trincomalee Port Rehabilitation.** Trincomalee Port, situated on the northeastern coast of Sri Lanka, is undergoing rehabilitation and expansion to unlock its full potential as a strategic maritime asset. Development plans for Trincomalee Port include the construction of new terminals, dredging of harbor basins, and enhancement of port infrastructure to accommodate larger vessels and increase cargo handling capacity. Trincomalee Port's natural deep-water harbor and strategic location offer opportunities for transshipment, bulk cargo handling, and naval operations.
- **Maritime Connectivity Projects.** Sri Lanka is actively involved in maritime connectivity projects aimed at improving maritime transportation links and enhancing regional integration. Initiatives such as the Colombo Port City project, the Hambantota Port Industrial Zone, and the Southern Expressway Extension aim to strengthen maritime connectivity between Sri Lanka's ports and hinterland areas, facilitate trade and investment, and promote economic development along coastal regions.
- **Multimodal Transportation Networks.** Sri Lanka is investing in the development of multimodal transportation networks to enhance connectivity between its ports and inland logistics hubs. Infrastructure projects such as the Colombo-Kandy Expressway, the Central Expressway, and the Matara-Kataragama Railway Line Extension improve connectivity between major ports and industrial centers, facilitating the seamless movement of goods and passengers across different modes of transportation.
- **Smart Port Technologies.** Sri Lanka is embracing smart port technologies to optimize port operations, enhance efficiency, and improve customer service. The adoption of digital platforms, automation systems, and real-time monitoring solutions enables Sri Lankan ports to streamline cargo handling processes, reduce turnaround times, and enhance transparency in port operations. Smart port initiatives contribute to enhancing Sri Lanka's competitiveness as a maritime logistics hub and attracting investment in port related industries.

Conclusion

Sri Lanka's investments in maritime infrastructure, including port development and maritime connectivity projects, hold immense economic benefits and strategic implications for the country and the wider Indian Ocean region. These infrastructure projects play a pivotal role in transforming Sri Lanka into a dynamic maritime hub, capitalizing on its strategic location at the crossroads of major maritime trade routes. Economically, the modernization and expansion of ports such as Colombo, Hambantota, and Trincomalee stimulate economic growth, create employment opportunities, and attract foreign investment. By facilitating international trade and commerce, these projects bolster Sri Lanka's

competitiveness in global markets and contribute to the country's sustainable development.

Strategically, Sri Lanka's maritime infrastructure projects elevate its geopolitical significance and strengthen its position as a strategic transit hub in the Indian Ocean. Enhanced connectivity and trade routes promote regional integration, foster diplomatic ties, and support efforts to maintain peace and stability in the region. Moreover, investments in port security and naval capabilities enhance Sri Lanka's ability to safeguard its maritime interests, protect sea lanes of communication and address maritime security threats effectively. Overall, Sri Lanka's strategic investments in maritime infrastructure underscore the country's commitment to harnessing the economic potential of its ports, promoting regional cooperation, and leveraging its maritime assets for sustainable development and prosperity. By embracing a holistic approach to maritime development, Sri Lanka aims to capitalize on emerging opportunities in global trade and logistics, strengthen its strategic position in the Indian Ocean, and contribute to the prosperity and stability of the region.

REFERENCES

Hettiarachchi/publication/329556028NAVIGATION SOCIAL JUSTICE published by the centre for Society and Religion

Australian Journal of Maritime & Ocean Affairs Chulanee Attanayake

The Role of Navies in the Contemporary Era Francois Vreÿ and Mark Blaine

Opportunities, Challenges, and Solutions in Expanding the Blue Economy in Sri Lanka: Special Reference to The Fisheries Sector

E. A. Ekanayake Ministry of Trade, Commerce and Food Security, eraaryanz@gmail.com

B.S. Galdolage University of Sri Jayewardenepura, sandamali@sjp.ac.lk

Sage journals

Negotiating Postcolonial Spaces: A Study of Indo-Sri Lankan Fishing Dispute

Neutrality policy and non-alignment foreign policy Challenge's analysis of Sri Lanka: during the post-war period in Sri Lanka. P.K.B. Isuru Premarathna University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka

Baruah, D.M., 2016. Expanding India's Maritime Domain Awareness in the Indian Ocean. *Asia Policy*, 22(1), pp.49-55

Maritime Security in the Indian Ocean: Strategic Setting and Features" by Rajat Ahlawat and David Brewster

**ADMIRAL CLANCY FERNANDO
ESSAY COMPETITION 2023**



1ST PLACE OF EACH CATEGORY

INDO-PACIFIC STRATEGY, HOW IT WILL BE BENEFITTED TO SOUTH ASIAN COUNTRIES



Captain (G) Dinesh Silva, RSP, psc, psc (j), MSc (D&SS), MSc (Mgt), MA in DS (UK), PG Dip in DM

Introduction

The Indo-Pacific region has become a focal point of world powerhouses such as the United States of America (USA), China, Japan, and Australia. Geographically, this is a combined region covering the Indian Ocean, the Pacific Ocean, Southeast Asia, Northeast Asia, and South Asia. The Indo-Pacific strategy has been announced by the USA as a way of projecting its power claiming to promote economic well-being and security in the region. The Indo-Pacific region is critically important to the USA, mainly because of its economic potential and military significance. This strategy is a geographical as well as geopolitical approach aiming to address the re-alignment of power across the Asia Pacific region and beyond. Most importantly this strategy focuses on counter-balancing China's rise and serving the interests of the USA and its allies. Thus, the recent shift in the USA's foreign policy towards the region has caused a significant impact on the regional dynamics. South Asia stands as a vital part of this strategy. In contrast, South Asia has become a stage for competition between the USA and China. As a result, this strategy poses numerous challenges to the regional countries. Thus, this strategy has received criticism accusing the USA of using the strategy to contain China. This has put South Asian countries in a dilemma, as they are now caught between the two major powers, each competing for dominance in the region. China is an emerging superpower and the USA is a declining superpower caught in a Cold War. The interests of India as a regional power is also intensely intermingled. The current situation demands a profound approach from South Asian countries, where they can balance their interests with those of the USA and China. The objective of this paper is to analyze the implications of the Indo-Pacific strategy and examine how South Asian countries can be benefited from it.

The Advent of Indo-Pacific Strategy

The concept of "Indo-Pacific" was highlighted by Japan's Prime Minister, Shinzo Abe in his speech "Confluence of the two seas" while addressing the parliament of India in 2007 (Abe, 2007). After some deliberation, in 2013 an Australian white paper reflected the importance of such a combination. However, the Indo-Pacific strategy was first officially introduced by President Donald Trump in 2017 (Scott, 2018). It emerged as an overarching concept that promises to enhance cooperation between the USA and its allies in the Indo-Pacific region. However, this strategic pivot to Asia seems to counter China's growing dominance in the region. Seemingly, China has already expanded its economic,

political, and military influence across the region. The USA and its allies wanted to address the emerging Chinese influence. The USA has openly labeled China a strategic competitor and has initiated some steps including economic sanctions to limit its influence regionally as well as globally (Goldstein, 2020).

Considering the growing influence of China in the region, the USA wanted to strengthen its traditional ties with allies such as Australia, Japan, and South Korea. Similarly, the United States sought to expand its relationships with other ASEAN countries and regional powers such as India, Indonesia, and Vietnam. Through this initiative, the USA hopes strengthening the “Indo-Pacific Economic Corridor (IPEC)”. Therefore the main objective of the strategy is to create and solidify a network of “country to country” partnerships to maintain regional dominance and counter the influence of China (Das, 2019).

Recently, the USA adopted an inclusive strategy to enhance its presence and influence in the region. The current strategy is based on the premise that “the USA needs to maintain its position as the world’s pre-eminent superpower and a dominant player in the region” (Das, 2019). It emphasizes the “free and open region”, in which all enjoy prosperity and regional stability. The strategy calls for augmented security, economic growth, and democratic values through “rules-based international order”.

Impact of Indo-Pacific Strategy on South Asia

Through the strategy, it reflects the growing recognition of the South Asian region in the new global order. The USA expects to foster partnerships with Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka (Datta and Chacko, 2020). To analyze the impact, it is required to understand the nature and rationale of the Indo-Pacific strategy, its potential impact on South Asian countries, the opportunities, and the challenges.

The strategy has been formulated on the immense economic and geopolitical potential of the region, which has a combined population of over 1.8 billion people and is the fastest-growing economy in the world. India is widely regarded as a key pillar of the strategy (Ladwig and Mukherjee, 2019). The strategy aims to capitalize on the strategic link between the USA and India, especially the shared geopolitical interests.

The strategy also seeks to enhance the United States’ engagement with other South Asian countries, such as Pakistan, which is viewed as an essential cooperator in stabilizing the Afghan region. Then, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, and the Maldives are also seen as important partners, given their strategic location and their potential to act as economic and maritime hubs in the region.

This strategy has several implications for South Asia, both positive and negative. Hopefully, the strategy could lead to closer economic ties and improved security cooperation between the USA and regional countries, helping to promote regional security. As an example, closer military cooperation between India and the USA could lead to greater military integration in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR); joint and combined exercises; sharing of intelligence and technology (Pant and Joshi, 2017). This kind of broader economic engagement possibly leads to greater investment, transfer of technology, and creation of jobs.

In contrast, this strategy could lead to tensions and risks for regional countries. For instance, China perceives the strategy as an act of containment (Hu and Meng, 2020). Similarly, Pakistan is skeptical that the strategy is an initiative to limit its strategic space in the region. This situation could lead to further aggravated rivalry, geopolitical tensions, as well as the risk of conflict. Furthermore, some countries see the USA as a distant power with little historical or cultural ties to South Asia, which could restrict the effectiveness of the initiative. The USA has not had much of a reputation in South Asia. For instance, the approach of the USA during the Covid pandemic has received a lot of criticism. Whereas, China was able to influence through the so-called “vaccine diplomacy” winning the hearts and minds of the regional countries.

Potential Opportunities through the Indo-Pacific Strategy

This strategy proposes to promote freedom, openness as well as inclusive order in the region. The strategy focuses on four main aspects: economics, governance, security, and values. It is aimed to achieve economic growth by promoting free and fair trade. Then, the establishment of good governance is anticipated through improved transparency and the ‘rule of law’. The stability and security in the region are expected through military alliance and shared information. It is aimed to promote values such as respect for human rights, democracy, and pluralism in the region.

South Asian countries may benefit from the strategy in several ways. Economic growth and development seem to be the key. The USA would invest in infrastructure development, creating jobs and new trade opportunities. Since the strategy promotes free trade, South Asian countries may get the opportunity to expand trade ties with the USA and its allies. Further, this strategy may be instrumental in helping South Asian countries to promote transparency, anti-corruption, and accountability in their public institutions. The US-led investments are mediated through World Bank and IMF and generally work as condition-based financial lending which promotes the financial disciplines of developing countries. On the other hand, there will be a more conducive environment to enhance maritime security, protect sea lanes, prevent illegal fishing and piracy, and deal with the threat of terrorism in IOR. Also, the strategy has promised to support human rights and democracy in the region, which can help South Asian coun-

tries to promote respect for human rights and democracy. Mainly, countries that go along with the USA may get favorable hearings from global institutions such as the Human Rights Commission.

The region encompasses a vast expanse of land and sea and is home to some of the world's largest and fastest-growing economies. South Asian countries, in particular, are seen as key strategic partners due to their geopolitical and economic significance. As a result, the USA has launched several initiatives under its Indo-Pacific strategy targeting South Asian countries. Even though several initiatives were not successful as expected, the USA was able to mark its footprint quite effectively in the region. The USA aims to deepen its ties with India. The partnership between the two countries is based on shared interests. The USA and India have signed several agreements to enhance cooperation in defense and security, trade and investment, and science and technology (Ladwig and Mukherjee, 2019).

The development of ports and infrastructure in the region is an important window of opportunity. The USA is investing in critical infrastructure in South Asian countries, including India, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka. This investment aims to facilitate trade and commerce while seeking a competitive advantage against Chinese influence as well. Further, Japan and Australia may also join in infrastructure development through the QUAD initiatives. The strategy also promotes renewable energy in South Asian countries which is more likely to get more regional acceptance and attraction (Murshed, Abbass and Rashid, 2021). Moreover, the United States is expecting to improve regional security through military partnerships and alliances. The USA has long-standing defense partnerships with several South Asian countries, such as India and Bangladesh. The USA has several ongoing efforts to enhance maritime security and counter transnational threats such as terrorism, piracy, and illegal fishing. Thus, the strategy may open several windows for South Asia.

Challenges and Risks of the Indo-Pacific Strategy

Despite the potential opportunities, South Asian countries run into several challenges and risks through this strategy. The strategy has been criticized for promoting a containment stratagem against China. Many South Asian countries have strong economic ties with China, and the Indo-Pacific strategy could jeopardize these economic ties (Li, 2020). Furthermore, the strategy could increase the tensions between the USA and China, which could lead to regional instability.

Then, the Indo-Pacific strategy has been condemned for stimulating a "Cold War" mentality. Most of the countries including India have been reluctant to be drawn into a "Cold War" between China and the USA. The Indo-Pacific strategy could exacerbate tensions between these two superpowers, which could also lead to instability in the region.

The USA urges an “open and free” region, which has raised many questions about the region’s future. One of the challenges is that South Asia is a diverse and multicultural region. Each state in the region has its unique history, value, culture, and identity showing a clash of civilizations. Furthermore, the region is characterized by a complex web of allegiance, rivalries, and disputes that make it hard to harmonize. India’s economic policies are geared towards protectionism, and this may limit its ability to fully participate in the strategy. The USA aims to create a level playing field, where all countries can enjoy equal opportunities. However, among South Asian countries there are plentiful economic disparities.

The USA and China have engaged in a trade war, which has already affected the global economy (Carvalho, Azevedo, and Massuquetti, 2019). The Indo-Pacific strategy may worsen this situation and create additional economic challenges for South Asia. The already expanded USA’s military presence in the region has raised concerns among the regional powers. China sees the USA strategy as a threat to its security and has taken steps to counter it. China is increasing its military presence in the region, particularly in the Indian Ocean. China’s “Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)” would be a significant barrier to the USA strategy. The BRI aims to create a network of infrastructure projects that link China to the rest of the world (Huang, 2016). The BRI has already made significant inroads in South Asia, with several mega projects underway in Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The USA has been critical of China’s presence in South Asia and has accused China of engaging in debt-trap diplomacy. The USA is securitizing China and seeking to promote alternative funding for infrastructure projects in the region, which may undermine China’s influence.

Therefore, the Indo-Pacific strategy has significant repercussions for the USA and South Asia. For the USA, it will require a significant investment in resources and manpower to sustain its presence and influence in the region. The USA will need to continue its sustainment effort over several decades into the future. For South Asia, this strategy provides an opportunity for greater economic integration and prosperity. Therefore, the improved trade ties and investments lead to reduce tensions and enhance regional stability. However, South Asian countries need to rightly identify and capitalize on the offers without getting caught in trade wars.

How South Asia Can Capitalize the Opportunities of the Indo-Pacific Strategy

First of all, South Asia as a region needs to recognize that their strategic importance has risen unprecedentedly. This is due to the geographical situation, natural resources, and the growing markets the region can offer. Thus, they must work hard to leverage their advantageous position to harness more benefits from extra-regional stakeholders. For instance, South Asian countries could negotiate favorable investment and trade deals with external entities, which would

enhance their economic prospects and better bargaining power. This would require South Asian countries to invest in the necessary infrastructure, create favorable business environments, and establish good governance to attract foreign investments. Therefore, South Asian countries need to flex their muscles and be ready to accept the challenges posed by investors as well as intruders.

Then, a balanced diplomatic approach should be adopted by South Asian countries towards the USA and China. South Asian countries must maintain favourable ties with both, engage in dialogue, and work together where possible. This is especially the case for India, which is the key player in the region. India's approach to the USA and China has been so far cautious (Sharma, 2019), but it requires more proactive engagement. Japan could be a great example for South Asian countries; it shows how to maintain good relations with both the USA and China quite successfully.

Next, a bandwagon with powerhouses may not be an ideal way to move ahead in the present multipolar world order. South Asian countries should be cautious and not get interpreted as being pro-USA, anti-China, or vice-versa. It is not a secret that "to counter China, the USA has been seeking support from regional allies" including South Asian countries like India. Nevertheless, some countries are keen to counterbalance China; those countries need to be careful not to provoke the sleeping dragon. For instance, the recent QUAD initiative has been regarded as an attempt to contain Chinese growth (Paik, and Park, 2021). Therefore, South Asian countries need to show that they are not forming an anti-China alliance with the USA.

Further, South Asian countries need to strengthen their security and defense capabilities by enhancing interoperability and interdependency to protect their interests. The naval visits and regular joint exercises would strengthen regional cooperation and maritime power in the region. With the USA increasing its military presence in the region, South Asian countries need to enhance their defense diplomacy and cooperate with the USA and other regional powers. The military collaborations should be based on regional stability such as dealing with maritime security and counterterrorism efforts. Simultaneously, they need to maintain their non-aligned stance, not getting entangled in any military alliance that could compromise their neutrality.

If South Asia wants to harness the real benefits of the strategy, cooperation among countries is very crucial. South Asia is struggling to maintain regional stability, mainly due to Indo-Pakistan rivalry. The conflicting interests among regional countries have dragged the regional development and external powers have taken advantage. Therefore, regional cooperation is the sine-qua-non. Regional organizations and forums should play an important role in this. The initiatives like IORA, IONS, BIMSTEC, and Galle Dialogue have succeeded in getting some form of commonality in the region and the same should be further solid-

ified. However, more active participation of member states as well as observer states in regional affairs is imperative.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Indo-Pacific strategy of the USA is a comprehensive approach aimed to counterbalance China's growth. The strategy reflects the growing importance of South Asia and the immense economic and strategic potential of the region. The strategy seeks to strengthen and expand the USA's partnerships with regional countries. This approach requires a long-term investment in resources and active engagement in the USA. While the strategy may open windows of opportunities for South Asian countries, it is also subject to several critiques and challenges. For better implementation of the strategy, It will require a subtle and context-specific approach addressing the complexity and diversity of regional politics, economic dealings, and security landscape. The USA and South Asian countries need to work closely to develop policies that are sensitive to the needs and concerns of individual countries.

South Asian countries must play a proactive role in promoting regional cooperation and peace. The USA strategy should be capitalized to promote economic growth, security, and democracy in the region. However, all stakeholders must be mindful of the potential consequences of the strategy and work towards constructive engagement to protect regional peace and stability at the forefront without further increasing the tension.

The strategy has the potential to promote containment of China, a Cold War mentality, and a regional power struggle. The USA and individual countries will need to take measures to address these concerns to ensure that the Indo-Pacific strategy is not detrimental to the sovereignty of any country. Ultimately, the success of the Indo-Pacific strategy will be determined by the ability of the USA and South Asian countries to work together to address these geopolitical, economic, and diplomatic challenges.

REFERENCES

Abe, S. (2007). Confluence of the Two Seas: Speech delivered at the Parliament of the Republic of India. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. Available at :<https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/pm0708/speech-2.html> (Accessed:12 May 2023).

Barthwal-Datta, M. and Chacko, P. (2020). The politics of strategic narratives of regional order in the Indo-Pacific: Free, open, prosperous, inclusive?. *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 74(3), pp.244-263.

Carvalho, M., Azevedo, A. and Massuquetti, A. (2019). *Emerging Countries and*

the Effects of the Trade War between US and China. *Economies*, 7(2), p.45.

Choiruzzad, S.A.B. (2020). The confluence of the two seas: The rise of the Indo-Pacific region and ASEAN Centrality. In *ASEAN as a Method* (pp. 52-70). Routledge.

Das, U. (2019). What Is the Indo-Pacific. *The Diplomat*, 13, pp.5-8. Available at: <https://thediplomat.com/2019/07/what-is-the-indo-pacific/> (Accessed 3 May 2023).

Goldstein, A. (2020). US-China Rivalry in the twenty-first century: Déjà vu and Cold War II. *China International Strategy Review*, 2, pp.48-62.

Huang, Y. (2016). Understanding China's Belt & Road initiative: motivation, framework and assessment. *China Economic Review*, 40, pp.314-321.

Hu, W. and Meng, W. (2020). The US Indo-Pacific strategy and China's response. *China Review*, 20(3), pp.143-176.

Ladwig, W. C. & Mukherjee, A. (2019). The United States, India, and the Future of the Indo-Pacific Strategy. The National Bureau of Asian Research. Available at: <https://www.nbr.org/publication/the-united-states-india-and-the-future-of-the-indo-pacific-strategy> (Accessed: 5 May 2023).

Li, M.(2020). The Belt and Road Initiative: geo-economics and Indo-Pacific security competition. *International Affairs*, 96(1), pp.169-187.

Murshed, M., Abbass, K. and Rashid, S., 2021. Modelling renewable energy adoption across south Asian economies: Empirical evidence from Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. *International Journal of Finance & Economics*, 26(4), pp.5425-5450.

Paik, W. and Park, J.J.(2021). The Quad's search for non-military roles and China's strategic response: Minilateralism, infrastructure investment, and regional balancing. *Journal of Contemporary China*, 30(127), pp.36-52.

Pant, H.V. and Joshi, Y.(2017). Indo-US relations under Modi: the strategic logic underlying the embrace. *International Affairs*, 93(1), pp.133-146.

Scott, D. (2018). The Indo-Pacific in US strategy: Responding to power shifts. *Rising powers quarterly*, 2(2), pp.19-43.

Sharma, M. (2019). India's approach to China's Belt and Road Initiative-Opportunities and concerns. *The Chinese Journal of Global Governance*, 5(2), pp.136-152.

INDO-PACIFIC STRATEGY, HOW IT WILL BE BENEFITTED TO SOUTH ASIAN COUNTRIES

Commander (N) Preshan Perera, psc, MCPS, MBM (UoC),
MSc (D&SS), MSP, BSc (DS) MTS, MIM (SL)



Abstract

The Indo-Pacific Region (IPR) is crucial for international commerce, energy security, and geopolitical stability. The US-led Indo-Pacific Strategy (IPS) seeks to preserve a rules-based order and freedom of navigation by establishing a cooperative framework for sustaining regional stability and countering potential threats. Consequently, this essay will analyse the benefits of the IPS for South Asian nations. This article is based on a review of the pertinent research literature. The study found that prospective benefits that could be harnessed for South Asian countries, such as economic, strategic, security, and political and diplomatic benefits, provided the need for aligning regional states' foreign policies to reap maximum benefits. Therefore, the above findings relating to IPS are essential for South Asian countries to open up new trade and investment opportunities, balance relations with major powers, boost maritime security capabilities, and enhance their international standing.

Introduction

Recent global attention has been focused on the Indo-Pacific Region (IPR) due to its strategic importance in trade, energy security, geopolitical stability, and the influence exerted by significant powers such as US, China, Japan, India, and Australia (Thompson, 2019). The region boundaries set from the African East coast to the Americas Western shores and encompasses two of the world's largest oceans, the Indian and Pacific Oceans. It is home to world's largest populated and rapidly developing economies, including China, India, and Indonesia, and will likely remain a significant factor in global expansion in the years to come. The Indo-Pacific region is also home to several minor nations in South Asia. In the current setting, the United States Indo-Pacific Strategy (IPS) has drawn considerable attention, specifically for its potential to shape the region's future. This essay will examine the benefits of the IPS for South Asian nations and how it may help their economic development, diplomatic stability, and strategic and security status.

Role of Key Actors in IPS

IPS, an evolving geopolitical concept, primarily involves four key actors: the US, Japan, India, and Australia. Collectively known as "Quad," these countries have sought to develop a cooperative strategic framework for maintaining regional stability and countering potential threats (Madan, 2022). The United States, under its Indo-Pacific Command, plays a leading role in the strategy, aim-

ing to preserve a rules-based order and freedom of navigation in the region (U.S. Department of Defense, 2023). India, as a major South Asian power, holds a significant position due to its geographical location and growing economic and military capabilities (Jha, 2023). Japan and Australia, important U.S. allies, contribute to the strategy by leveraging their diplomatic influence and military assets in the Pacific (Murphy, 2022; Tow & Kersten, 2023). These four nations, combined influence, and shared interests, form the crux of the IPS.

Overview of IPS

The IPS is a broad framework that aims to foster an Indo-Pacific area where freedom, openness, and prosperity flourish that is inclusive and respects the rule of law. The United States is the leading supporter of the strategy because it has made the Indo-Pacific area at the top of the list of priorities for its foreign policy (Kupchan, 2021). However, rest of the QUAD member states, have also embraced the IPS to promote their regional interests and values.

The Indo-Pacific strategy has several key elements. One of the most important is promoting regional economic integration and connectivity. IPS includes initiatives like the United States Infrastructure Investment Plan for the Indo-Pacific and the Asia-Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC), both of which India/Japan have proposed (Ghoshal, 2021). These initiatives aim to improve infrastructure, trade, and investment links between countries in the region and are seen as crucial for supporting economic growth and development.

Another critical element of IPS is the promotion of maritime security and freedom of navigation in the IPR. This is particularly important given the strategic importance of the region's waterways, which are vital for trade and commerce. The US has conducted a number of Freedom of Navigation Operations (FONOPS) which have been taken as a threat to China's territorial claims in the South China Sea (Huang, 2018). Japan has also promoted maritime security, including its partnership with US in the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) (Zhang, 2018).

Brief Overview of South Asian Countries

South Asia, known for its cultural, historical, and geographical diversity, comprises eight states including Afghanistan (World Bank, 2023). India, the biggest in geography and population, plays a significant role in the region due to its economic influence and political clout (Das, 2022). Similarly, Pakistan and Bangladesh contribute to the region's significance with their large populations and strategic locations. Despite their smaller size, countries like Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan, and the Maldives hold importance due to their unique cultures and strategic locations. Afghanistan, while geographically considered part of South Asia,

has unique political and security dynamics due to its shared history with Central Asian countries (Rashid, 2023). The region as a whole, despite its shared history and geographical proximity, has considerable diversity in terms of languages, religions, and socio-political structures.

Potential Benefits of IPS to South Asian Countries

The IPS offers South Asian nations a variety of future benefits, including economic, security, infrastructure, and diplomatic aspects. South Asian nations such as Sri Lanka, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh have much to gain from active participation in this geopolitical concept as the region becomes more interconnected and dynamic.

Economic Benefits

- Trade Relations and Market Access.** The Indo-Pacific Strategy provides multiple benefits to South Asian countries, particularly regarding trade relations and market access. As the strategy emphasizes free and open trade, it can lead to reducing trade barriers and creating more transparent, rules-based economic systems (U.S. Department of State, 2022). For South Asian countries in the region this could mean enhanced access to lucrative markets in the U.S., Japan, and Australia, fostering increased trade volumes (Choudhury, 2023; Das, 2022; Akhtar, 2023). In addition, the strategy encourages regional economic integration, which can promote intra-regional trade and the development of regional value chains (Rajagopalan, 2023). The focus on connectivity within the strategy can also improve transport and digital links, further facilitating trade and market access (Menon, 2023). Therefore, the Indo-Pacific Strategy could significantly benefit South Asian countries by expanding their economic horizons and promoting greater trade integration.

- Infrastructure Development and Investment Opportunities.** The Indo-Pacific Strategy offers substantial benefits to South Asian countries regarding infrastructure development and investment opportunities. This strategic framework encourages more significant investment in infrastructure projects, including energy, transport, and digital connectivity, which could significantly making contribution to the economic growth and development of South Asian countries (U.S. Department of State, 2022). For instance, initiatives such as the Blue Dot Network, which promotes quality infrastructure investment, could facilitate the influx of capital for infrastructure projects in South Asia (Hillman, 2022). Moreover, the increased presence of major economic powers like the United States, Japan, and Australia in the region could open up new avenues for foreign direct investment (FDI), thereby bolstering economic growth and

development (Rajagopalan, 2023). In particular, manufacturing, services, and technology sectors could witness a surge in investment, creating jobs and stimulating innovation (Menon, 2023). Furthermore, India's participation in the AAGC, which aims to develop a maritime corridor connecting Africa with Asia, could provide new opportunities for trade and investment between South Asian and African countries (Rana, 2020). Thus, the Indo-Pacific Strategy can significantly contribute to infrastructure development and investment opportunities in South Asian countries.

Strategic and Security Benefits

- Enhancing Regional Security.** The Indo-Pacific Strategy can significantly benefit South Asian countries by enhancing regional security. It emphasizes a rules-based order, maritime security, and the peaceful resolution of disputes, all of which are crucial to the stability of the region (U.S. Department of State, 2022). Greater cooperation among the key actors in the Indo-Pacific can help South Asian countries improve their maritime surveillance capabilities, increase their preparedness against non-traditional security threats like piracy and terrorism, and strengthen their disaster response mechanisms (Brewster, 2021; Panda, 2023). For instance, the U.S.'s commitment to freedom of navigation can help ensure the security of crucial sea lanes in the Indian Ocean (Kaplan, 2022). Furthermore, the strategy's emphasis on capacity building can provide these countries with the necessary resources and training to upgrade their defense and security apparatus (Jha, 2023). Thus, the IPS can enhance South Asia's security environment.

- Balance power dynamics with China.** The IPS presents an right set of circumstances for South Asian countries to balance power dynamics with China. Amid China's enhancing economic and military influence, the strategy provides a framework for these countries to collaborate with other regional powers like the United States, India, Japan, and Australia, thereby mitigating potential over-dependence on China (Pant & Joshi, 2022). For instance, the strategy encourages diversification of trade and investment partners, reducing economic vulnerability to any single country (Rajagopalan, 2023). Also, the cooperative security arrangements under the strategy can help South Asian nations enhance their defense capabilities and maritime security, attempting to counter China's exponential military presence in the region (Brewster, 2021; Jha, 2023). Moreover, by participating in a rules-based order advocated by the strategy, these countries can negotiate their interests on a more level playing field (U.S. Department of State, 2022). Hence, the Indo-Pacific Strategy can play a crucial role in helping South Asian countries balance power dynamics with China.

Diplomatic Benefits

- Strengthening International Relations.** The Indo-Pacific Strategy will likely benefit South Asian countries by strengthening their international relations. By creating a network of partnerships based on shared principles and interests, the strategy provides a platform for these countries to deepen their ties with major global powers such as the United States, Japan, and Australia (U.S. Department of State, 2022). It can also foster stronger relations among South Asian countries, encouraging them to work together on common regional issues and opportunities (Das, 2022). Moreover, the strategy's emphasis on multilateralism and regional cooperation allows these countries to enhance their diplomatic influence and participate more effectively in shaping the regional order (Pant & Joshi, 2022). As they engage more intensively in security dialogues, trade negotiations, and development initiatives within the framework of the IPS, South Asian countries can expect to see their international relations grow more substantial and productive (Menon, 2023). Moreover, by promoting economic integration and connectivity, the strategy can reduce the risk of conflict and instability in the region. For example, improved infrastructure links between India and Pakistan could ease tensions between the two countries and promote greater regional cooperation (Hosain, 2020).

- Gaining Greater Global Influence.** The Indo-Pacific Strategy provides South Asian countries with a unique opportunity to gain greater global influence. By engaging in this regional framework, these countries can play a more active role in shaping regional and global norms and rules, thus increasing their influence on the international stage (Pant & Joshi, 2022). For example, as a key player in the IPS, India has significantly enhanced its global profile and is increasingly viewed as a pivotal actor in maintaining regional stability and prosperity (Panda, 2023). Similarly, smaller nations like Sri Lanka and Bangladesh can use their geographic advantage and strategic relevance in the strategy to gain a louder voice in international forums (Choudhury, 2023; Fernando, 2022). The strategy also allows these countries to strengthen their diplomatic relationships and form strategic alliances with global powers like the U.S., Japan, and Australia, further increasing their global standing (U.S. Department of State, 2022). Thus, the Indo-Pacific Strategy can significantly assist South Asian countries in gaining more significant global influence.

- Indo-Pacific Strategy and Possible Benefits for Sri Lanka.**

The IPS has significant implications for Sri Lanka, given its strategic location in the Indian Ocean Region. Economically, the strategy can open up new trade and investment opportunities for Sri Lanka by enhancing its

access to markets in the US, India, Japan, and Australia and by promoting infrastructure development through initiatives such as the Blue Dot Network (U.S. Department of State, 2022; Hillman, 2022). Strategically, the strategy enables Sri Lanka to balance its relations with major powers, given China's significant economic presence in the country (Fernando, 2022). It also provides an opportunity for Sri Lanka to boost its maritime security capabilities and secure its sea lines of communication, a crucial aspect given its reliance on maritime trade (Brewster, 2021). Furthermore, the strategy could enhance Sri Lanka's international standing, allowing it to engage more effectively with global powers and regional organizations (Perera, 2023). Therefore, the Indo-Pacific Strategy can profoundly impact Sri Lanka's economic, strategic, and diplomatic prospects.

- **Need for aligning regional States' foreign policies to reap maximum benefits.** South Asian countries are uniquely positioned to benefit significantly from the Indo-Pacific strategy while maintaining a delicate balance in their foreign policy, not antagonizing major powers. This requires carefully articulating their national interests with the broader objectives of the strategy, such as promoting free and fair trade, enhancing regional connectivity, and fostering sustainable development (Lohman, 2021). For instance, India, a key South Asian country, has been working towards strengthening its economic and strategic ties within the Indo-Pacific region through its 'Act East' policy. This policy exemplifies how South Asian countries can align their foreign policy objectives with the larger Indo-Pacific strategy while maintaining cordial relationships with major powers, including China (Jaishankar, 2021). Similarly, smaller South Asian countries like Bangladesh and Sri Lanka can leverage the strategy to attract foreign investment, enhance their maritime capabilities, and contribute to regional stability (Green, 2021). However, the key to achieving these goals lies in maintaining strong diplomatic relations with all major players and ensuring a balanced foreign policy. This approach will allow South Asian countries to safeguard their interests and negotiate their position within the Indo-Pacific strategy, contributing positively to regional development and stability without compromising their sovereignty or antagonizing major powers (Panda, 2022).

Conclusion

The IPR is a vital economic and strategic arena. The concept of the IPS has gained prominence as a framework for promoting a free, open, and prosperous IPR that is inclusive and respects the rule of law. South Asian countries stand to benefit from the Indo-Pacific strategy in several ways, including increased economic integration and connectivity, enhanced maritime security, and greater po-

litical and diplomatic stability. Overall, the Indo-Pacific strategy offers a promising framework for promoting regional cooperation and prosperity in South Asia and beyond.

The IPS presents significant opportunities and benefits for South Asian countries. These countries, with their unique geographic advantages and strategic sea routes and ports, are central to the strategy's aim of fostering a free, open, and inclusive region. Key actors in the strategy, such as the U.S., India, Japan, and Australia, are working to uphold shared principles of freedom, openness, and respect for sovereignty, which can enhance regional security and balance power dynamics, particularly with China. This strategy could also strengthen South Asian countries' international relations and increase their global influence.

The strategy offers substantial economic benefits for South Asian nations. It encourages free and open trade, potentially reducing barriers and granting these countries enhanced access to lucrative markets. It also supports regional economic integration and improved transport and digital links. Regarding infrastructure development and investment opportunities, the strategy fosters an influx of capital for vital projects and opens new avenues for foreign direct investment.

The IPS provides a pathway to improve South Asian nations' maritime surveillance capabilities, prepare for non-traditional security threats, and strengthen disaster response mechanisms. It emphasizes rules-based order, maritime security, and peaceful resolution of disputes. Furthermore, it can strengthen South Asian countries' international relations and reduce the risk of conflict and instability in the region. Moreover, the IPS provides South Asian countries with an opportunity to gain more significant global influence by playing a more active role in shaping regional and global norms and rules. India, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh can use their geographic advantage and strategic relevance to gain a louder voice in international forums.

Specifically, the strategy can provide economic, strategic, and diplomatic benefits for Sri Lanka, allowing it to balance its relations with major powers, enhance its maritime security, and improve its international standing. In summary, the Indo-Pacific Strategy can profoundly impact South Asian countries, promoting economic growth, strengthening security, balancing international relations, and amplifying their voices on the global stage.

REFERENCES

Akhtar, S. (2023). *Pakistan's Maritime Strategy in the Indo-Pacific*. Islamabad: National Defence University Press.

- Brewster, D. (2021). The Strategic Importance of Indian Ocean Ports. *Asian Security*, 17(1), 40-57.
- Chowdhury, A. (2022). The Maritime Dimension of the Indo-Pacific Strategy. *Journal of Maritime Studies*, 10(1), 45-60.
- Das, S. (2022). *The Role of India in South Asia: Economic and Political Dynamics*. Cambridge University Press.
- Fernando, N. (2022). *Sri Lanka's Role in the Indian Ocean and the Changing Global Dynamic*. Colombo: Pathfinder Foundation.
- Ghoshal, B. (2021). The US and the Indo-Pacific Strategy. *The Diplomat*. Retrieved from <https://thediplomat.com/2021/05/the-us-and-the-indo-pacific-strategy/>.
- Green, M. (2021). *By More Than Providence: Grand Strategy and American Power in the Asia Pacific Since 1783*. Columbia University Press.
- Hillman, J. E. (2022). The Blue Dot Network and the Future of Infrastructure Investment. *The Diplomat*. Retrieved from <https://thediplomat.com/2022/07/the-blue-dot-network-and-the-future-of-infrastructure-investment/>.
- Hosain, M. S. (2020). South Asia's Prospects under the US Indo-Pacific Strategy. *Asia & the Pacific Policy Studies*, 7(3), 366-376.
- Jaishankar, S. (2021). *The India Way: Strategies for an Uncertain World*. HarperCollins.
- Jha, P. (2023). *India's Role in the Indo-Pacific Strategy*. New Delhi: Sage Publications.
- Kaplan, R. D. (2022). The South Asian Sea Lanes: A Geopolitical Analysis. *Foreign Affairs*, 101(1), 76-87.
- Kupchan, C. A. (2021). The United States and the Indo-Pacific. *Asia Policy*, 16(1), 18-24.
- Lohman, W. (2021). *The Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy in Southeast Asia: A Status Report*. The Heritage Foundation.
- Madan, T. (2022). *The Rise of the Indo-Pacific: Quad and Beyond*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.
- Murphy, R. (2022). *Japan's Strategic Vision in the Indo-Pacific*. Tokyo: Japan Center for International Exchange.

- Panda, J.P. (2022). Indo-Pacific Strategy and Climate Change: An Emerging Nexus. *Journal of Indo-Pacific Affairs*, 5(1), 1-15.
- Panda, J. P. (2023). India's Geostrategic Advantages in the Indo-Pacific. *Journal of Asian Security*, 15(2), 123-140.
- Pant, H. V., & Joshi, Y. (2022). *Navigating the Indo-Pacific: Regional Powers and the Future of the International Order*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Perera, S. (2023). *Sri Lanka and the Indo-Pacific Strategy: Opportunities and Challenges*. Colombo: Lakshman Kadirgamar Institute.
- Rana, P. B. (2020). The Indo-Pacific Strategy: Implications for South Asia. In *South Asia's Turn: Policies to Boost Competitiveness and Create the Next Export Powerhouse* (pp. 73- 86). World Bank Publications.
- Rajagopalan, R. P. (2023). The Economics of the Indo-Pacific: Connectivity, Trade, and Development. *Asian Survey*, 63(1), 108-126.
- Rashid, A 2023, 'Political and security dynamics in South Asia', *Journal of International Relations*, vol. 7, no. 2, pp. 45-60.
- Thompson, J. A. (2019). US Indo-Pacific Strategy and Regional Architecture: Five Priorities. *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 73(1), 70-87.
- Tow, W. T., & Kersten, R. (2023). *Australia's Indo-Pacific Strategy: Balancing Act in the 21st Century*. Canberra: Australian National University Press.
- U.S. Department of Defense. (2023). *United States Indo-Pacific Command: Strategic Objectives*. Retrieved from <https://www.pacom.mil/About-USINDOPACOM/Strategy/>
- U.S. Department of State. (2022). *A Free and Open Indo-Pacific: Advancing a Shared Vision*. Retrieved from <https://www.state.gov/a-free-and-open-indo-pacific-advancing-a-shared- vision/>
- World Bank. (2023). *South Asia: An Overview of the Region*. Retrieved from <https://www.worldbank.org/en/region/sar/overview>
- Zhang, Y. (2018). Japan's Indo-Pacific Strategy: Maritime Security and Geopolitical Ambitions. *The Pacific Review*, 31(3), 309-325.