SEA POWER OF ISLAND NATIONS IN THE 21ST CENTURY: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SRI LANKA

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Abstract-This paper discusses the importance of applying the maritime concept of Sea Power as a pragmatic strategy to counter non-traditional maritime security threats to Sri Lanka. The researcher, as a practitioner as well as a scholar in the field of maritime security, argues that the lack of coherent functionalism between maritime strategies and practices is a key to the maritime security problems faced by countries such as Sri Lanka. This is a research conducted by studying the maritime concept of Sea Power, maritime practices of small state navies and challenges and opportunities with special reference to Sri Lanka. Sea Power is broadly defined as the military and civil maritime capabilities of a country. Sri Lanka is more vulnerable to non-traditional maritime security issues such as drug trafficking, gun running, terrorism, piracy, poaching, marine pollution, human smuggling, illegal transfer of item and Illegal Unregulated and Unreported (IUU) fishing activities. Therefore, counter strategies should be developed by taking the maritime theories and practices into consideration. The research problem highlighted the inadequacy of addressing the social reality in the field of maritime security in Sri Lanka. Further, it is intended to examine how these maritime strategies could be applied as a practice to strengthen the national security of the country. This puzzling issue highlights the significance of understanding the concept of Sea Power and its usage. The objective of this paper is to draw attention to understand the necessity of transition of maritime strategies to practitioners to take effective actions. The researcher has selected qualitative research method with collecting data from secondary sources and this includes scholarly articles, books, case studies, journals, etc. Further, the researcher use data collected through his personnel observation. A theoretical review is discussed with the broad theoretical framework of 'Strategy as Practice'. The requirement of affiliation between maritime theoreticians, developers and practitioners is seen as the primary need to address the national maritime challenges of the day.

Keywords- Sea-power, Island Nations, Strategy as Practice

I. INTRODUCTION

Sea power generally covers the area of the military and civil maritime capabilities of a country. Sea power defined as the capacity to influence the behavior of other people by what you do at or from sea (Till, 2013, p.87). With the geographical location of Sri Lanka all the main sailing lanes in the region are running closer to her. Adams Bridge is a barrier for sailing, which connects Sri Lanka with Indian sub-continent. These geographical features of Sri Lanka faced horrific consequence when transferring people and goods in India throughout the history. In an island nation, the Navy is the most vital maritime security component. Further, navies and coast guards are the main constituents of sea power. Therefore, coastal states deem to strengthen with, importantly, military naval capabilities.

Sri Lanka being an Island nation, land power and air power needed to be coordinated with sea power. Strategies need to develop with the understanding of the prime requirement of national security. Therefore, strategies needed to be conducted to understanding the suitability of the practice, maritime perspectives and its philosophy. Sri Lanka has the advantage of maritime geography and long existing maritime community. However, there are many challenges in the area of non-traditional maritime security issues in the country. For an example, most of the illegal physical infiltrations are flowing into the country via maritime environment. Therefore, Sea Power of a small nation such as Sri Lanka helps to counter maritime threats and challenges.

Security strategies have been developed by the maritime nations throughout the history based on the perspective of maritime environment. They have given prominence to sea, land and air power domains. "What should be the strategic objective of a coastal state?" is the prime question before the strategic elites of any coastal state. It is essential to understand the significance of maritime resources, maritime economy and maritime people when understanding the strategic objective of a coastal state.

Establishing of a 'Sea Power' was one of the maritime strategies experienced and succeeded by the great maritime empires such as England. Admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan of the US navy, highlighted the importance of sea power by mentioning, six basic elements. They are geography (access to sea routes), physical conformation (ports), and extent of territory, population, character of the people and character of the government. These strategies needed to be understand by strategists. Contemporary Sri Lankan maritime security environment faces the threat of transnational crimes such as Drug smuggling, Human smuggling and gun running. There are reported incidents of Sri Lanka continues to be utilized as a transit point for drug smuggling from the 'Golden Triangle' and the 'Golden Crescent'. Further, heroin is routed via Sri Lanka from Pakistan or India on a big scale by sea, by containers and mechanized fishing craft (Wijegunarathne, 2012). Since the threat is prevalent, countering strategies should be implemented as practices. The absence of proper strategies would be addressed in this research based on the theory of 'Strategy as Practice', through the view of 'Sea Power'.

II. METHODOLOGY AND EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN

This research is about the social behavior of maritime security components by applying of strategies into practice of maritime affiliations. This broader area of social science needs to prove with logical reasoning of theories based on laws of cause and effect. The researcher will be using qualitative methods to collect data. This will be collected from the secondary source of books, articles, journals, website releases, dissertations, video and audio materials and published data of expertise in the field of maritime security and researcher's own observations.

III. RESULTS

A. Theory of 'Strategy as Practice'.

Policy makers in the field of security build strategies to maintain the behavior of security organizations and transfer to practitioners in the field of maritime security. The strategy is there to understand as an activity or practice. Strategic management is the art or science, of governing an organization with the aim of implementing intentions (Golsorkhi et al., 2010). The researcher argues that, practitioners have to be assigned to formulate and implement security strategies, reproduce them whenever needed by doing the necessary changes. This process has to be managed by the national security organization organisation of a country.

Sri Lanka's main security decision-making body is the Security Council, which is headed by HE the president. The strategic decisions are taken at the frequently held SC meetings in order to delegate the authority to the respective security stakeholders to implement those strategies on ground. Military heads of Sri Lanka Navy and Coast Guard are delegating these strategies to ground level practitioners for implementation. This is the general procedure of flow of security directives to practitioners in the field of maritime security.

Practice is a very special concept and by studying about the practices will enable the researchers to examine the issues that are relevant to those are dealing with developing the strategies. This process further helps to understand suitable theoretical background to address particular issues (Golsorkhi et al., 2010,p. 1). Therefore, there should be a fine amalgamation of maritime security and its uses on ground. The concept of sea power as a maritime strategy in Sri Lanka should be deeply studied and discussed before developing security policies and the same must come to the agendas of practitioners.

B. Concept of Sea Power

Sea power supersedes land power and air power on the concept of maritime security. The maritime historians; Admiral Mahan, Julian Corbett and modern maritime experts such as Robert Kaplan are eminent figures of maritime or sea power. The term 'sea power' is a relative concept and the researcher prefers to utilize this term in the context of investigating Sri Lankan maritime capabilities.

At a closer look, it is evident that maritime security lies over all the five sectors of security. Admiral Michael Mullen, U.S. Navy admiral and 17th Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, points out that

'Where the old maritime strategy focused on sea control, a new one must recognize that the economic tide of all nations rises not when the sea is controlled by one, but rather when they are made safe and free for all' (Till,2013,p.36).

However, defining of Sea Power becomes a contradictory and a debatable topic as vice Admiral William Crowe said 'You are absolutely correct, we are victims of our syntax…some of the things we write in the Navy are not necessarily understandable' (as cited by Till, 2013, p.23). A comprehensive study of the concept of Sea Power is a boosting force to this research. Geoffrey Till, the book of Sea power – *A Guide for the Twenty First Century* is a third updated edition of the book. This book is essential for the study about naval power and maritime security. Under the topic of '*In Search of Sea Power*' states, humankind did not take the sea for any one single cause, but for a variety of reasons linked to the four attributes of the sea itself, each of which is intimately connected with one another. The four attributes are the sea as resources, the sea as a medium of transportation, the sea as a medium of information, the sea as a medium for domination. This book itself gives a broader idea about Sea Power. The researcher found interesting definitions of sea power and it can be elaborated as in the diagram below.

Navies are integral parts of the maritime domain of a state. In the context of Island nation's navies and coast guards should be the predominant security bodies to provide

Figure 1. Sea power and its setting (Till, 2013,p.24)

maritime security. England, Australia, New Zealand and Japan could be taken as example for strong island nations which have the ability to provide strong maritime security. To an island nation significance of maritime domain is unquestionable. In the IOR island nations such as Mauritius, Sea Shells and Sri Lanka are increasingly recognized as opportunity countries to maritime domain offers (Malcolm, 2017).

The constituent of Sea Power link together and help to determine the development of country naval and maritime power (Till, 2013,p.88) and it can be elaborated as in the diagram below.

Establishing of Sea power in a country is directly helpful to strengthen the national policies. Sea power is a collective effect of military and civil maritime capabilities of a country. Military maritime capabilities can be achieved via naval operations and civil maritime capabilities can be achieved via commercial operations. Military maritime capabilities are basically naval ships, craft, naval surveillance systems and costal protection units. Under civil maritime capabilities, merchant shipping, fishing, marine insurance, ship building and repairs can be taken into consideration. To establish sea power the combination between these two elements are essential.

The geo-strategic importance of the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) was understood by the great maritime historian, Alfred Thayer Mahan. During the cold war United State of America was a maritime power and the USSR was a land power. Lack of maritime expansion became a losing point for USSR to dominate USA in the Cold War Admiral Mahan's' maritime concepts were so influential in the field of maritime studies, most of the contemporary maritime security architectures are designed based on those concepts. These historical examples prove the gamut of nature, of a concept called, 'Sea Power' and Sri Lanka being an island nation, these strategies must incorporate with security policies of the country.

C. Identifying the constituent of Sea Power and maintain good order at sea.

According to figure 2, navies are linked with constituent of Sea Power and interlinked to each other. These constituents have been used in early Sri Lankan maritime domain. Sri Lanka had a great history as a maritime nation with archaeological prove of the voyagers of
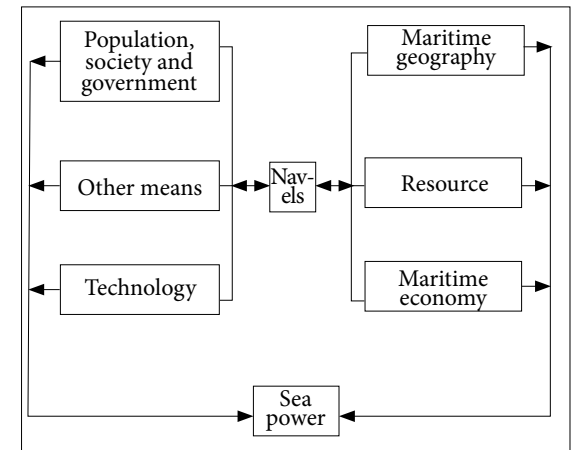

Figure 2. The constituents of sea power (Till, 2013, p. 88)

King Parakramabahu I in the kingdom of Polonnaruwa (Karannagoda, 2008). In a maritime nation, people, society and government are contributing to maritime domain development. Sri Lanka is a small state which, has greater opportunity to contribute to maritime related activities. It is the responsibility of the respective government of Sri Lanka to admire this and strength civil and military maritime capabilities.

When comes to the technology, Sri Lanka Navy, Coast Guard, Air Force air surveillance should be developed with modern technology and government has to take a strategic approach to facilitate maritime security stakeholders and maritime people. The location of Sri Lanka in IOR gives excellent maritime geographic opportunity of coasts, harbors, proximity of important sea lines of communication and ease of access to the open ocean. When comes to maritime economy, Sri Lanka required to give prominence to shipbuilding and repair, the fisheries, marine insurance and ports. Eighteenth century Royal Navy grabs their opportunity to be a strong Navy in the world. Therefore, it is a matter of choice to government of Sri Lanka to decide, how much money a country chooses to spend on Navy.

The main attributes at sea are key pillars to maintain good order at sea. In 21st century maritime security divide into a 'home' game and an 'away' game (Till,2013.p.283). Internal security issues could be addressed by the partnership of government departments, agencies and international partners, whereas to address external threats, holistically international maritime collaboration
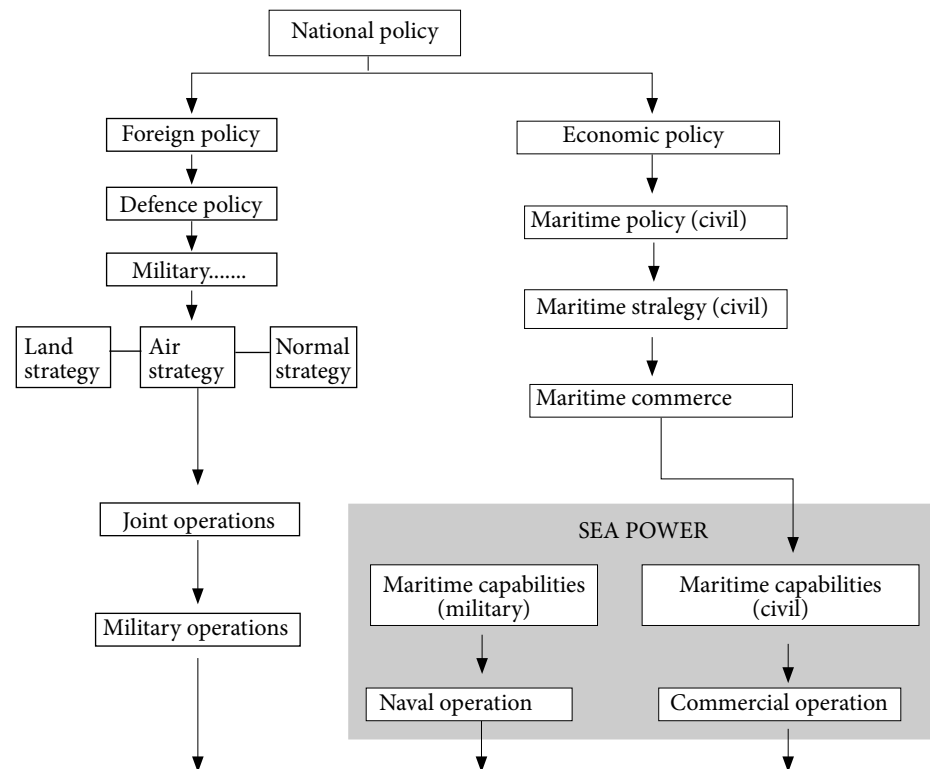
is required. The reason is present day non-state actors who are engaged with transnational maritime crimes aren't considered any national boundaries in their operations.

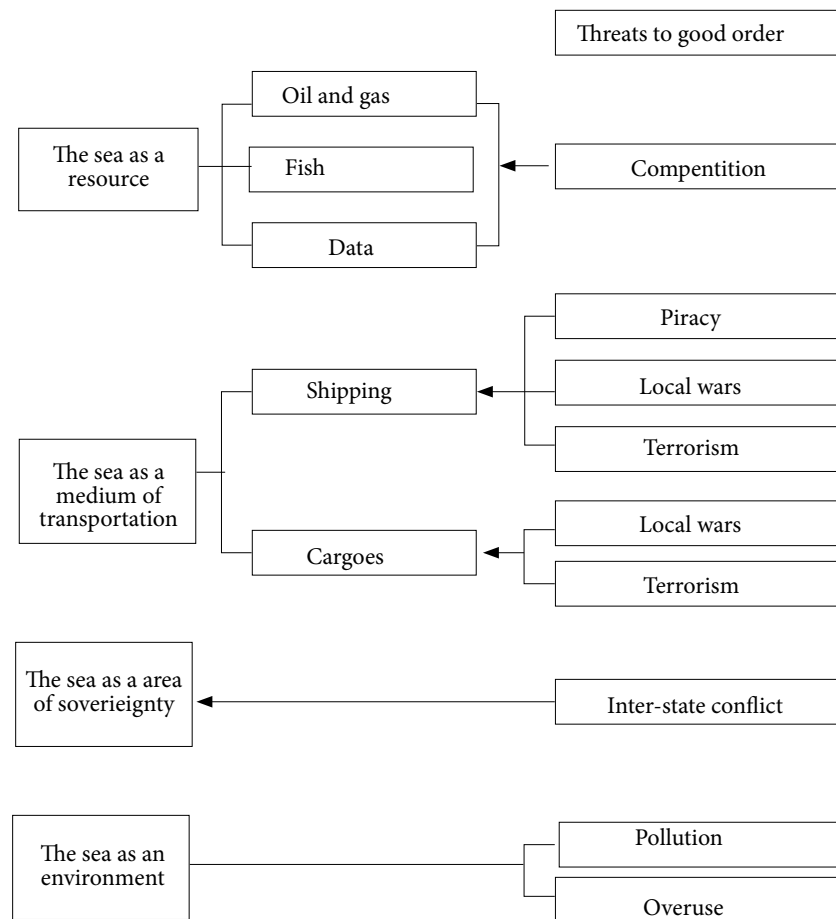The following figure illustrates the main attributes and threats to good order at sea.

Figure 3. Threats to the attributes and good order (Till, 2013, p.284)

According to figure 3, Sri Lankan maritime security architecture must be strong enough to counter threats to good order at sea. The location of Sri Lanka in IOR has the mammoth of opportunities to use the sea as are source to harvest fish, explore oil and data transit. On the contrary rivalry between state and non-state actors to the interest over maritime resources are notable in the IOR. As an example LTTE exploited Indian fishing trawler fleets, which were engaged in IUU fishing in northern waters of Sri Lanka to ferry their cadres, fuel, explosive and other war fighting materials mainly from South India

to Northern, North Western coasts of Sri Lanka. IUU fishing is linked to transnational maritime crimes, money laundering and illegal trafficking of drugs (Colombage, 2017). Therefore, there are many opportunities to smugglers to use IUU fishing as a shield to transfer illegal items into Sri Lankan Waters

Sri Lanka is situated adjacent to one of the busiest shipping lanes in the world. Around four nautical miles (one nautical mile = 1.852 km) south of the Dondra head of Sri Lanka 'Traffic Separation Zone' is marked (Haslam, 1987)

and it gives the directions and laws to the ships to operate in a heavy ship traffic area. With the geographical location of Sri Lanka all the main sailing lanes in the region are running closer to her. Therefore, the naval responsibility of providing maritime security and Search and Rescue (SAR) operation assistance is the main role.

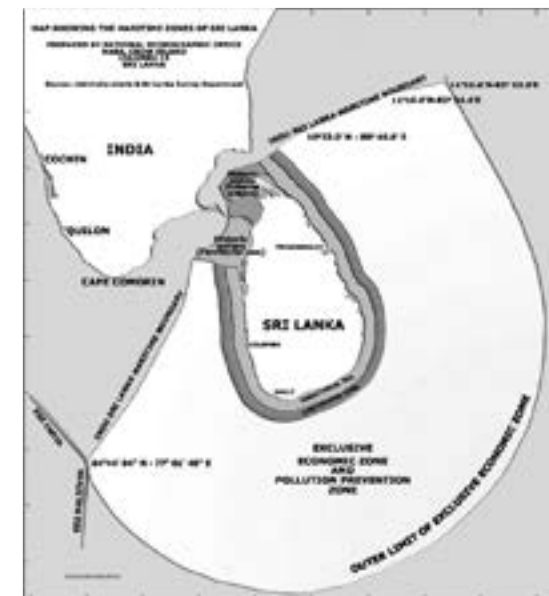**Sri Lanka has clear demarcation of maritime boundaries around the country.**

Figure 4. Maritime Zones (Sri Lanka Survey Department)

According to figure 4, the demarcation of maritime zones around Sri Lanka is very clear. However, North and North West sea of Sri Lanka are vulnerable to the encroachment by Indian fishermen to do Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing. Even though IMBL has imposed by law, still there are discrepancies over fishing rights in the balk bay by Indian and Sri Lanka fishermen. Therefore, sovereignty could be challenged by this issue.

The Sri Lankan coastal area is also vulnerable to sea erosion, deterioration of coral reefs, mangrove, sand mining, etc. Overuse of these natural resources could be negatively affected to the maritime environment. Further, pollution due to massive sea transportation could be a greater challenge to Sri Lanka. Therefore, to counter aforesaid maritime security threats and challenges,

required to develop a security mechanism to maintain the good order at the sea.

Developing of Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) is a key requirement to maintain good order at the sea. Maritime domain is encompassed " all areas and things of, on, under, relating to, adjacent to, or bordering on a sea ,ocean, or other navigable waters, including all maritime related activities, infrastructure, people, cargo, vessels and other conveyances" (NMDAP, 2013). Maritime Domain Awareness is basically an effective understanding of anything which associated with maritime domain which could impact security, safety and economy of a country (Department of the USA Navy, 2009, p.2). Sri Lankan maritime security environment Navy and Coast Guard are the outermost defence layer. Therefore, they are the practitioners who fulfil the requirement of MDA. It is the responsibility of maritime policy makers to implement integrated maritime governance in order to apply the strategy into practice. However, many non-traditional maritime security issues are still penetrating to country with giving huge impact to national security.

Non-traditional maritime security issues are the most notable in the present security environment in Sri Lanka. Conceptual understanding of maritime strategies is important to take a policy decision by military decision makers. However, researcher has observed lack of understanding of concepts and theories into practice in this study. To maintain good order at sea, these maritime concepts must implement an Island nation like Sri Lanka.

IV. CONCLUSION

The comprehensive understanding of maritime concepts and theories are very important in the field of maritime warfare. The conceptual understanding of these theories is the key success for practical implication in maritime operations. The concept of 'Sea Power' is the main area of study in this research. Under that, researcher comprehensively discussed about main attribute at sea and constitutes of sea power. Understanding of these concepts by maritime security policy makers are essential to counter, non-traditional security issues and to maintain good order at the sea. Further, theory of 'Strategy as Practice' given a theoretical value to this research. Naval warfare is an art and deep study of military strategies by policy makers and practitioners.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations suggest to implement to strength maritime security in Sri Lanka.

a.   Develop a Sri Lankan maritime doctrine.

b.   Establish a joint operation center to look into matters related to maritime domain with a domestic cooperative security strategy. This would be helpful to operation commander to take prompt action to a particular situation.

c.   Establish an academic maritime security center to cooperate policy analysts, policy makers and scholars in the field of maritime security.

d.   Political decision should take to give priority to spend on Navy and Coast Guard to provide maritime security.

The existing maritime security structure in Sri Lanka lacks the proper study of maritime theories and concepts. The effort of understanding the context should include the understanding of the work of practitioners in the field of maritime security. The significance of national contribution to strengthen the maritime security of Sri Lanka clearly needs to be identified by the maritime security policy makers.

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VI. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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