

Survival of a State in the Face of International Hegemony; Sri Lankan Perspective

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Abstract- *Sri Lanka encounters many challenges due to significance of geographical positioning in the Indian Ocean. As a result of this geopolitical situation time to time this littoral state's tranquility was hampered by the great powers. In the end there were numerous hardships to its citizens and damages to wealth and properties of the country. However, in the recent defeat of the separatist terrorism movement in year 2009 is paving a path towards stability again to the country. It is important to understand that victory was a hardship of all patriotic and peace loving peoples of the country, whatever the ethnic and religious affinities.*

Most significant focus at this juncture should be to foresee and to articulate strategies' for survival as a stable country in the world stage. To have that, country's security paradigm plays a major role. Analyzing the past and present of the country's history with the contemporary events in the country, region and the world shows the difficulty of facing the mounting hegemony against a small nation.

Keywords: Geopolitics, Security, Hegemony, International Relations, Sovereignty

I. INTRODUCTION

Power is the ability to influence the behavior of others to get a desired outcome. Historically, power has been measured by such criteria as population size and territory, natural resources, economic strength, military force, and social stability. Soft power is the ability to attract people to our side without coercion. The post war Sri Lanka is a case that is interesting to study. There is a lot of dynamism in political environment of Sri Lanka by the virtue of domestic issues having spillover effects. Sri Lanka has achieved considerable progress since the independence. However it is visible and rational think that Sri Lanka is facing the influence of hegemony from other states due to

many reasons. When dealing with the analysis of power relations in the world, hegemony is one of the most commonly used concepts. Hegemony refers to different issues like the predominance of one state upon other states. Differences also arise from the fact that the term is used by critical as well as conservative ideological strands. There are four approaches of Hegemony according to International relations. They are:

- a. The Conventional Approach
- b. The Neo Liberal Approach
- c. The Gramscian Approach
- d. The Radical Approach

The author of this paper intends to bear the all four approaches in mind when analyze the international hegemony as a conceptual base.

Sri Lanka as a small littoral State in the Indian Ocean, is aspiring to be a Hub in Asia in the areas of Naval, Commercial, Air, Energy and Knowledge. Due to obvious opportunities arise after defeating the terrorism from the entire country. Ambitions of the country are very much entangled with opening up of the country to the rest of the world. To do that there are some primary conditions that Sri Lanka has to full fill. If Sri Lanka is conceptually supportive towards the Grand Strategies of the superpowers it will be too difficult to attract their positive attention towards the country. In such case there is an importance in thinking of designing a strategy supportive towards the United States strategy which influences most of the security concerns of the present day world. As a responsible stake holder in the present world, Sri Lanka has a state responsibility to extend support to curb international terrorism whenever and wherever could! On the other hand country is in a strategic location that impacts the security of the entire international system. When facing the hegemony of

superpowers Sri Lanka has to consider following elements:

- a. Preserving the Sri Lankan Identity
- b. Maintaining the Balance of Power in the region
- c. Drawing equilibrium between the Concepts of Liberal Economics and State Welfare.

Sri Lanka is an island with a written history of 2500 years. Heritage consciousness in Sri Lanka has been gaining momentum since the revival of interest in its ancient Buddhist civilization. Grand strategy of a state is a collection of plans and policies that comprise the state's deliberate effort to harness political, security, diplomatic, and economic tools together to advance the state's political characteristics and Cultural characteristics of elites.

According to Pakistani security scholar Pervais Iqbal Cheema Global developments of far reaching consequences made it imperative to broaden the traditional concepts of national security in order to include areas like rapid depletion of resources, increasing population, poverty and environmental issues. For the developing world as well as for those facing aggressive policies of neighboring countries, two other areas need to be incorporated into the new definition of security. Among them the economic related problems and social inequalities the broadened concept of security. Expanded definition is usually referred as the concept of comprehensive security. (Cheema:2012)

State's national interest is national survival which finally amounts to national security. Strategic Culture can provide ideational explanations of state behavior. During the 1980s and 1990s an academic concern emerged about the relationship between strategic culture and strategy. The Strategic Culture of a state is influenced by the important historical experiences, Philosophical, characteristics of the security sentiment of a state. Dynamics of strategic behavior of a state is connected with the notions of rationality and irrationality of any strategic culture reflects the reality that they faced shows their preferences and justifies how the strategic choices of a nation are made.

After three decades of internal conflict; Sri Lanka is at crossroads to develop a Grand Strategy including security strategy that caters to indigenous security and development sentiments of the people. In such

scenario understanding the evolution of the Sri Lankan security thought, which is the foundation of Sri Lanka's strategic culture, seems important. Ancient symbolism visible in archaeological and historical evidences provides means to understand the strategic culture of a nation.

Symbolism representing strategic culture shows the Sri Lanka's Social contract and security sentiment is majorly based on the qualities of Buddhism. Social contract seems to be different in societies since the background and the ambitions of the parties to the contract are different. The Sri Lankan social contract is also unique due to its tri party manifestation that is political elite, priests and layman. The Socio-Political and Politico-Religious atmosphere of the Sri Lankan social contract paved the way to the existence of a sustainable governing system that served local society for almost two millennia. The idea of a King or a strong benevolent ruler is established in the culture with the advent of Buddhism.

When great Mahinda thero, encountered King Devanampiyatissa he stated about the social contract of that is ideal for a Buddhist society.

"O great king, the birds of the air and the beasts have as equal a right to live and move about in any part of the land as thou. The land belongs to the people and all living beings; thou art only the guardian of it.

This earth and its vegetation are yours, but they should be protected not only for your benefit but also for the benefit of future generations. A ruler is only a temporary trustee and not an owner of your children's heritage"
(Mahawansa)

In this kind of strategic culture we could imagine the gap between the western security ideology and our own security ideology. In most of the occasions we can find that the west is trying to imply their social theories on us without understanding the roots of our strategic behaviors.

When we turn ourselves to the modern period we can see that Sri Lanka's post 9/11 international role is very important due to Post 9/11 world order was born with war against terrorism. Though traditional Terrorism features guns and bombs the

contemporary world order has more complicated threats to face. Post 9/11 war against terrorism or Sri Lanka's view highlights that the post 9/11 as a new Era in international relations. Having all these factors on board USA based capitalist block is trying to send a message across world that if any country is going to act against US wishes that country will be perished. The use of force in Iraq by the United States, Britain and Australia was justified by those states as an act of self defense, based on the threat posed to them by Iraq's and possession of weapons of mass destruction and its association with terrorists. The case of Libya is not different. Paradoxically in all these occasions evidence shows that the principle of interventionism has been applied unjustly and irrationally and it was not implemented in others; even in situations of compelling need. In contemporary, studies shows, bifurcation of treats to countries concern, with keeping national interest of the powerful countries'. I.E. When it's come to Israel and how different to Syria and like vice to Sri Lanka. No standardization. Despite being a small state in the International System Sri Lanka has shown the character of more than a small state in handling the matters in politics it's much interest to study the pattern and strategies' of survival in present context.

It is important to look at the security environment of Sri Lanka and the bond (Social Contract) that people having with the state which as has unique characteristics. These sentiments have molded the security psyche of Sri Lankans over the past centuries. When Sri Lanka has to open up to the world in order to achieve the economic development she has to adopt the cooperative security approach of the international system. As a littoral state there are countries which gain prosper to the greater level and the same way countries which have had failed in the time of passage. Countries that attained the prosperity in the contemporary world have followed a grand strategy to face any challenges to survival in the field of Homeland Security concept. Henceforth Sri Lanka too needs to identify her strategies to maintain stability, which is major requirement to attain prosperity to the country and people. In this regard the challenges to the country for her existence in new world order built upon the security sentiments of the international system. This can be further identified the security reconciliation with the existing world system.

II. MAINTAINING THE BALANCE OF POWER IN THE REGION

Every nation state must act with an understanding of their role in international System. Post 9/11 world order is significant to any country since it restructured the thinking of foreign policy experts to a considerable extent. In this backdrop the author assumes that in contemporary issues of international relations Sri Lanka is more in to balancing regional powers that are backed or resisted by the USA homeland security policy by our non-aligned foreign Policy.

The strategic location of Sri Lanka plays a major role in molding international character. Today Sri Lanka is considered as an emerging nation in South Asia with one of the South Asia's strongest land forces to protect its soil and with South Asia's fastest growing economy. Sri Lanka's balance of power mindset is influenced by many factors such as the Raj Mandala Model of Diplomacy presented by ancient philosopher called Kautilya (370 B.C.to 283 B.C.) This great philosopher Kautilya advised a balanced equation of power to remain between states particularly his own state in the context to Emperor Chandragupta of Maurya dynasty in present day India.

After winning the war Sri Lanka became one of the culprits in the eyes of the West. However, same way witness how those strategic alliances, were ignore their concern in the recent turmoil in the Gaza strip calamity. Even though the winning over LTTE should be interpreted as a great achievement in the cause of War against terrorism the west never interpreted it in such a way. Although post 9/11 strategies are towards anti-terrorism. Instead they started to find faults with Sri Lankan action. However the strength of Sri Lankan foreign policy lies in balancing the two giant states i.e. India and Sri Lanka in favor of Sri Lanka's national interest. In past decade India shows the world that she is the closest ally of United States in South Asia. Therefore Sri Lanka's foreign policy reconciling with USA in case of Homeland Security is a matter done through more or less the policy reconciliation with India. Ideal to pursue USA's five pillars grand strategy (Paul D. Miller- 2012)

Arun Prakash in reviewing Robert Kaplan's book, '*Monsoon: The Indian Ocean and the future of American Power*', relates the '**String of Pearls**'

theory, advocated by the US intelligence by stating that China neither seeks nor needs “naval bases” in the Indian Ocean but rather “access” to friendly harbours, such as Hambantota port and Gwadar port in Pakistan. Kaplan asserts that these ports will essentially be innocent “dual-use, civil-military facilities where basing arrangements will be implicit rather than explicit.” (Prakash:2010) This is backed by Daniel Kostecka’s assessment of Beijing’s use of Colombo. He asserts that China is not likely to pursue a formal agreement with Sri Lanka for the “use of Colombo as a place to replenish its naval forces operating in the Indian Ocean.” (Kostecka:2011)

Even though this theory is being raised eyebrows of US Homeland security elites we can observe that in the last decade there existed an economic and political strategy between Sri Lanka, India and China. On the other hand China’s policymakers deny such allegations. Professor Xu-Jian explains that Chinese foreign policy towards regional cooperation does not desire dominance. (Jayasekara and Tennakoon:2007) Sri Lanka’s policy is to balance itself with both nations and in this context Sri Lanka has shown that the ability to balance Asia’s giants. Sri Lanka seeks to enjoy the best of both nations politically and economically, thereby keeping the two systems integrated and maintain balanced relationships with both - that is a balanced integration of both China’s state-controlled system and India’s open economy system. Under President Rajapaksa’s leadership two prong strategy in the foreign policy is visible (Jeganathan) It is to restrict Western influence in the Island owing to the negative views and current allegations by them, and strengthen ties with China as much as possible given its support extended in international forums and decisive influence in the UN Security Council.

III. MARITIME SECURITY

Maritime security environment in the region is another theatre of balance of power. The Maritime Security environment in the India Ocean is epitomized by four principle trends. (Berlin: 2008)

- a. The ongoing efforts by the United States and other international partners(India, Australia, Singapore, Japan France Canada) to maintain and strengthen their command of the sea, in the Indian ocean. Broadly speaking to block the influence of certain

continental powers (often China, Iran, and Russia) to ensure the unrestricted access to oil reserves, and also to counter Islamic militancy.

- b. Efforts of States like China, Iran, Pakistan and Russia to strengthen their Maritime security by increasing their capacity to counteract potential naval or expeditionary threat by foregoing US influenced coalition.
- c. More targeted efforts by Indian Ocean littoral states to strengthen their maritime security vis-à-vis specific rivals in their own sub regions.
e.g. Some of the maritime challenges faced by Singapore and Malaysia.
- d. Efforts made by the states of the Indian Ocean Region to deal with Trans national security issues. This includes environmental challenges, illegal unregulated fishing, the protection of offshore oil, illegal migration people smuggling and piracy.

India’s strong relationship with the United States after end of bipolar order has become a key element in the evolving security trend in the Indian Ocean. The current Indian Policy in the region shows that India wants to move forward with the USA as its security ally. India’s top foreign and security priority is its immediate neighborhood, notably Pakistan and China. Correspondingly, India’s military strategy has stressed border defense. After the end of the cold war Indian Ocean countries have abandoned its traditional idealistic security policy features. The states are more concern of now becomes more pragmatic which also concerns about the future economic ties. The world has begun to recognize India as a major regional and world power. Her economic security is hugely dependant on her international political behavior. India’s relationship with US has five elements that could be identified as important factors of the regional security which will influence the maritime domain as well.

The United States interest as a world Super Power is a leading factor for their hegemony in any Ocean. It is interesting to see the US ambitions on the Indian Ocean under Indo- U.S. Framework for Maritime Security Cooperation. According to this,

both countries are consistent with their global strategic partnership and the new framework for their defense relationship. The US has enhanced their policy through Indian Ocean through their aligning with India.

The United States expects to maintain indefinitely a strong security presence in East Asia and in the Persian Gulf as well. It would like this presence to be regarded favorably by India, and it would like India at least to understand and preferably to share its view of how to strengthen the security of the region around the Indian Ocean. In contrast to the network of alliances that characterized the Cold War, the United States is developing a set of strong relationships without the formal or military character of an alliance. It recognizes that it will have important policy differences with the countries in this network, like India, but expects to isolate the problems and work cooperatively on shared interests.

It raises the important question of what is the role that Sri Lanka plays in her in this systemic environment to counter balance this big power influence in the Indian Ocean. We all know that Sri Lanka is an integral part of a Security Policy of India. Its close proximity is one of the factors that have earned her an importance. On the other hand the difficulty for Indian navy to circumnavigate their motherland has made Sri Lanka a very important player in Indian security strategy.

Strategic places like Trincomalee harbour in Eastern coast have earned Sri Lanka a huge strategic importance. Sri Lanka was one of the focal points of the West throughout the history because of the importance of Strategic sea lanes and ports, especially Trincomalee. Valiant British Admiral Horatio Nelson once described Trincomalee harbor of Sri Lanka as *"the finest harbor in the world"*. According to him Sri Lanka, with this natural harbour processes the most strategic point in the whole region.

This has a global significance in the modern nuclear age as well. Trincomalee harbor is placed in a strategic point near the Bay of Bengal and is one of Sri Lanka's "most valuable assets". It is also notable Trincomalee's immense significance in this age of nuclear weaponry and nuclear submarine-based missile systems. Given the depth of the harbour, nuclear submarines are able to dive low within the

inner harbour to effectively avoid radar and sonar detection Hambantota, in southern Coast of Sri Lanka, has made the West (especially US) nervous on Sino- Sri Lanka relations. This situation of US and Indian joint interest on the Indian Ocean maritime domain has provided Sri Lanka with a strategic opportunity in world politics to capitalize on. The first public reference to the prospects of Hambantota providing most favored terms including refueling facilities for the Chinese Navy was made during the the visit of the U.S. Admiral of the U.S. Eastern Fleet to India during his discussions with his Indian counterpart. The industrialist west suspects that China would want to build up a line of strategic port facilities along in the Indian Ocean. Therefore Hambantota has now increased suspensions in Indo-U.S. policy makers. The fact that the Hambantota port project is financed by China is another reason for recent attention of elite officials of India and U.S.

Apart from the above systemic hot beds there could also be few traditional security hegemony environments. The entry in to Indian Ocean is guarded by geographic imperatives. For example, South Asia is a crossroad between East and West through which trade prospered since ancient times. Inevitably perhaps it is also an area where many differing cultures, religions, ideologies and political systems compete and struggle to survive or expand their own interests.

Drawing an equilibrium between the Concepts of Liberal Economics and State Welfare

The so called world *"Liberal Economic System"* also began to tumble in the recent history due to various weaknesses within the system and at present these weaknesses in the capitalism has led to a global economic crisis. Sri Lanka has adopted both the socialist and capitalist systems from time to time after its independence, but we were not able to achieve greater economic development up to 2005. And in 2005 with the failure of both capitalist & socialist systems all over the world and the global finance crisis in 2008 deepening there was a big question mark ahead of us "What Should be Sri Lankas' Economic Policy be in view of the breakdown of the Socialist System and he Capitalist System in the World.

In this regard the present State policies have adopted system that is more based on State

Welfare. In this regard Sri Lanka finds a problem of reconciling the US economic policy that is geared towards privatizing the government ventures. The ideology about privatizing is not a positive concept in the minds of Sri Lankan people. There is paranoia in the mindset in average Sri Lankan that thinking that privatization will lead to exploitation of resources in the country. It further describes under the concept of post modern colonization. However the challenges before the foreign policy makers in Sri Lanka could be identified as three fold:

- a. Should Sri Lanka align with the Western Liberal Economic powers policy that is against the mindset of Sri Lanka's rural mass?
- b. Should Sri Lanka avoid the economic hegemony of Liberal Economic North and totally depend on the South?
- c. Should Sri Lanka reconcile between the economic policies between North and south options?

Any agreement between the state and IMF and World Bank seems to be negatively looked at by the common mass due to indoctrinate fear for quite long. This is due to the idea planted that state is the survivor of the underprivileged people of this society. If government needs to stay in power they have to understand the mindset of the people. In that regard the third policy looks more sustainable and applicable with regard to Sri Lankan Economic Development.

IV. CONCLUSION

There is a plan for the world - a New World Order - devised by an American/European financial elite of immense wealth and power. This new system controls the states, the courts, the educational institutions, the food, the natural resources, the foreign policies, the economies and the money of most nations. And, they control the major media, food habits, culture, language and etc. which is why we know nothing about them. Modern democracy, as we know it, is less than 250 years old. For most of history, except for this brief period, the world has been ruled by powerful states wielded absolute power over their societies, controlled the wealth and resources of their known world, and dominated their people by force. (Oval : 2014)

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