



"Whoever controls the Indian Ocean dominates Asia. This ocean is the key to the seven seas in the twenty-first century, the destiny of the world will be decided in these waters."

- The theory of Alfred Thayer Mahan

NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR SHAPING SRI LANKA'S FOREIGN POLICY

Strategi Nasional Untuk Membentuk Kebijakan Luar Negeri Sri Lanka

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Abstract

The Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka is taken as an example to describe the national interests, ends, means, and ways of the foreign policy analysis of the country. This analysis tries to identify the spectrums of foreign policy challenges currently faced by Sri Lanka today. The spectrum is based on national interests, national security, and the strategic environment (domestic and international) of Sri Lanka. The conceptual framework is based on Terry Deibel's strategic logic approach to analysis of Sri Lanka's national strategy options. In the national interests, the means, and the ways of foreign policy that should be taken by Sri Lanka and assess how the above elements interact with each other in the foreign policy decision-making process. This paper further discusses external and internal actors, core issues, and strategic options available for Sri Lanka based on its, geostrategic location, national security, and national interest. Having understood that this paper discussed: National Strategy (Options) for shaping Sri Lanka's Foreign Policy – Managing Domestic and International Challenges and Opportunities for the future.

Keywords: *Deibel's strategic logic approach, National security, Foreign policy, National strategy options, Defence, Geostrategic location, Decision-making process.*



Abstrak

Republik Sosialis Demokratik Sri Lanka Diambil Sebagai Contoh Untuk Menggambarkan Kepentingan Nasional, Tujuan, Sarana, Dan Cara Analisis Kebijakan Luar Negeri Negara Tersebut. Analisis Ini Mencoba Mengidentifikasi Spektrum Tantangan Kebijakan Luar Negeri Yang Saat Ini Dihadapi Sri Lanka Saat Ini. Spektrum Didasarkan Pada Kepentingan Nasional, Keamanan Nasional, Dan Lingkungan Strategis (Domestik Dan Internasional) Sri Lanka. Kerangka Konseptual Didasarkan Pada Pendekatan Logika Strategis Terry Deibel Untuk Menganalisis Opsi Strategi Nasional Sri Lanka. Dalam Kepentingan Nasional, Sarana, Dan Cara Kebijakan Luar Negeri Yang Harus Diambil Oleh Sri Lanka Dan Menilai Bagaimana Unsur-Unsur Di Atas Berinteraksi Satu Sama Lain Dalam Proses Pengambilan Keputusan Kebijakan Luar Negeri. Makalah Ini Lebih Lanjut Membahas Aktor Eksternal Dan Internal, Isu-Isu Inti, Dan Pilihan Strategis Yang Tersedia Untuk Sri Lanka Berdasarkan, Lokasi Geostrategis, Keamanan Nasional, Dan Kepentingan Nasional. Setelah Memahami Bahwa Makalah Ini Membahas: Strategi Nasional (Opsi) Untuk Membentuk Kebijakan Luar Negeri Sri Lanka – Mengelola Tantangan Dan Peluang Domestik Dan Internasional Untuk Masa Depan.

Kata Kunci: Pendekatan Logika Strategis Deibel, Keamanan Nasional, Kebijakan Luar Negeri, Opsi Strategi Nasional, Pertahanan, Lokasi Geostrategis, Proses Pengambilan Keputusan.

1. INTRODUCTION

Sri Lanka is an island formerly known as Ceylon, lying in the Indian Ocean and separated from peninsular India by the Palk Strait. In 1948 Sri Lanka got her independence from British rule. As per the 1978 constitution, Sri Lanka is a Free, Sovereign, Independent, and Democratic Socialist Republic and shall be known as the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka. The Republic of Sri Lanka is a sovereign Unitary State. Sri Lanka exercises peoples' sovereignty through an executive presidency, parliament, and judiciary. The legislative power of the people is exercised by the Parliament, consisting of elected representatives of the people, and by the people at a referendum. The executive power of the people, including the defence of Sri Lanka, is exercised by the President of the Republic elected by the people. The parliament exercises the judicial power of the people through courts, tribunals and institutions created and established, or recognized, by the constitution, or created and established by law (Sri Lanka Constitution of 1978, 2010).

2. METHOD

In this study, the method used is a qualitative research methodology that focuses on the quality of exploration of phenomena that occur from the meaning of existing publications by using literature studies. As a key instrument, the author analyzes qualitative data and information based on Terry Deibel's strategic logic approach to making a journal report.

3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

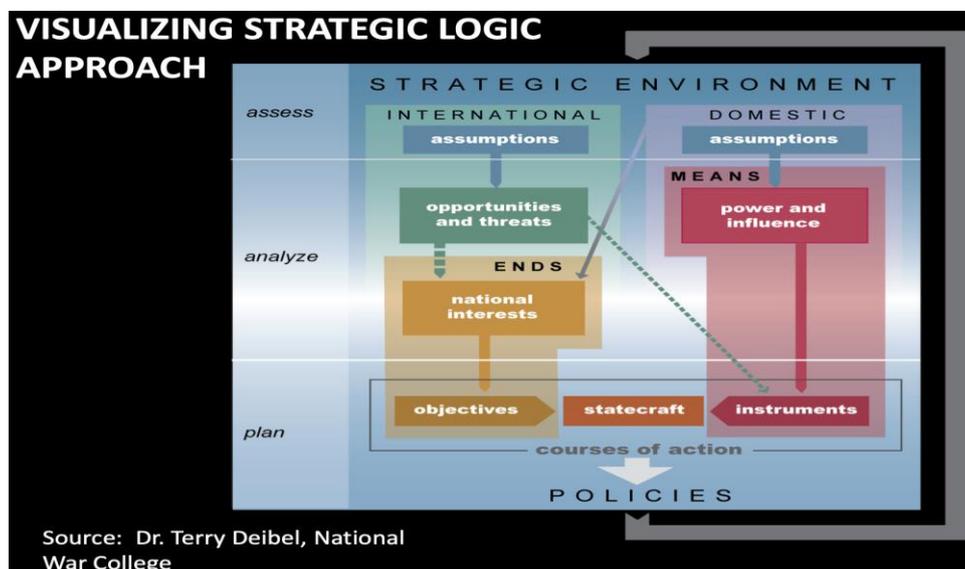


Figure: 1 The conceptual framework is based on the Terry Deibel's strategic logic approach.

4. NATIONAL SECURITY SRI LANKA'S PERSPECTIVE

National security from a broader perspective is safeguarding the national core values and interests of a nation-state against any prevailing or perceived threat. National security is the ultimate and inalienable duty of a legal government of a Sovereign State. In the present context, national security is no longer limited to traditional aspects of protection against military attacks or revolutionary actions by



external/ internal actors. The modern concept of national security encompasses all forms of deliberate threats emanating across a broad spectrum of threats from adversaries to security threats hazards emanating from a full spectrum of non-traditional threats. In this context, Sri Lanka's national security is the main pillar that interacts with each other in the foreign policy decision-making process and national core values and interests.

4.1. SRI LANKA'S GEOSTRATEGIC CONTEXT

As an island and maritime nation, Sri Lanka is heavily dependent on the secure access of Sea Lines of Communications. Thus, Sri Lanka's defence outlook is persistently affected by its unique geo-strategic location. Meanwhile, the ensuing embryonic geopolitical situation also elevates the country as a regional flashpoint. The global geopolitical and economic landscape is in rapid flux and thus the only constant variable in articulating viable defence and foreign policy thinking for Sri Lanka is its geography. Sri Lanka is an island and her foreign policy, defence, security, development, and future challenges should be looked at through the premise of her as a maritime nation. Sri Lanka's location in the Indian Ocean region as an island State is of geostrategic importance to all major global powers. It is also a strategically important maritime hub in the Indian Ocean in the Silk Road and also a prominent port city in the Chinese One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative.

On the eve of a dyeing unipolar world and the emergence of regional power centers based on manufacturing hubs, Sri Lanka has been overshadowed by the global and regional trade and power interests of China, India, and the US. The increase of the Chinese footprint in Sri Lanka has forewarned not only India, even US and its close allies like Japan and Australia. India has become the main US tool to twist and contain Chinese efforts in the region and to dominate Asia Pacific Region. Thus chances of Sri Lanka becoming an appealing hotspot for a proxy of any major



regional or global powers cannot be precluded due to its geo-strategic location in the Indian Ocean.

Due to its location close to India and in the direct sphere of Indian influence, Sri Lanka has always experienced sociopolitical and economic ramifications from India throughout history. Cross-border terrorism, influences on ideological transformations, illegal trading, and drug trafficking are a few shortlisted ones from a long list. Consequently, Sri Lanka is prone to non-traditional invasions in the form of religious/ violent extremism and destructive ideologies which are inspired by interested state and non-state actors. If not properly managed, these elements can be easily transformed into geostrategic tools by interested powers to twist countries' political, economic, and security situations in favor of them. Such destructive extremist elements could become uncontrollable when used by an external power to manipulate the internal affairs of the country for its advantage. After the Easter Sunday attack, Covid 19 situation in the year 2020 and 2021, and economic mismanagements make the existing debt and economic crisis in Sri Lanka. At present Sri Lanka is suffering a great economic setback after her independence in 1948, economic outlook is highly uncertain due to fiscal and external imbalances.

4.2. NATIONAL SECURITY ENVIRONMENT

Sri Lanka's national security environment is an extension of the complex global geostrategic landscape. Hence it's impossible to analyse Sri Lanka's national security environment in isolation. The national security challenges faced by Sri Lanka today have become increasingly complex as Sri Lanka has been swinging between external power centers due to its geo-strategic location in the Indian Ocean and the existing debt/ economic crisis. Further, various forms of interventions by non-state actors like religious extremist bodies, INGOs, NGOs, and multinational commercial entities have become extremely critical for the national security of Sri



Lanka. Following national security challenges amply denote the complexity and sensitive nature of the national security landscape of Sri Lanka:

4.2.1 Post-war situation/ National Unity. After the end of the Eelam war in 2009 numerous ethnic and religious alienation and extremist beliefs and organizations are immerged and the adoption of alien cultural practices is of great security concern in the present security landscape of Sri Lanka. These issues have created friction in social cohesiveness and continue to hinder Sri Lanka's aspiration in creating a progressive society for all Sri Lankans.

4.2.2 Extremism and Terrorism. Sri Lanka is striving to consolidate the gains of military victory recorded in 2009 against the vicious LTTE Terrorism. After the war, there are more than 12000 rehabilitated Ex-LTTE cadres underwent the national reintegration process successfully. Regrouping attempts to conduct sporadic attacks and sabotage activities with the influence of Tamil diaspora elements cannot be ruled out even after 13 years of ending the war. Following the 2019 Easter, Sunday attack carried out by violent extremists, symptoms of evolving global religious extremism has become visible in Sri Lanka as well. Radicalization and extremism coupled with political instigations have tainted national security to a great degree and have challenged national integration.

4.2.3 Refugees and Harmful Immigrants. Border unrest between Pakistan and Afghanistan, the US precipitated withdrawal from Afghanistan, and the Middle East conflicts have caused a massive influx of migrants seeking refugee status in Sri Lanka. This situation could provide sanctuaries for internationally banned extremist religious activists. But due to the existing economic crisis, this situation will be changed in the future.



4.2.4. Arms, Ammunition, and Explosives. Three decades-long internal conflicts in Sri Lanka have increased the degree of accessibility to illegal arms, ammunition, and explosives for interested parties. This is a greater challenge to the law and order situation in the country.

4.2.5 Human Trafficking. Uncontrolled access to Sri Lankan shores via different sea routes is a threat to national security. Organized human trafficking cartels have been using Sri Lanka as a transit hub to traffic humans to Europe and destinations in the Pacific Ocean via unconventional sea routes.

4.2.6 Smuggling. The smuggling of drugs, counterfeit brands, and controlled goods via different sea routes is a grave threat to national security. Government loses considerable tax income due to the smuggling of counterfeits.

4.2.7 Money Laundering. Money laundering is a serious challenge to national security as the act of money laundering provides benefits to many wrongdoers. The money laundering process facilitates the linking of different illegal outfits into a common network, thereby increasing the threat of collaborative criminal acts by those outfits. Recently, the Central bank of Sri Lanka has enforced numerous measures to prevent such acts including “Hawala” transactions.

4.2.8 Cyber Security. Cyber security is a challenge for any state irrespective of its size and capacity. Sri Lanka is under constant threat from cybercriminals, and it will continue to grow in the future. Lack of technical infrastructure and



state influence is widening the gap between ever-increasing usage of the Cyber domain and its security.

4.2.9 Human Security Concerns. Due to the existing debt situation of the country inflation is increasing day by day and the demand for essential commodities is growing rapidly. Natural disasters in the country and various other external issues in other countries may create serious energy and food supply issues with existing economic situations. Food, energy, and health security involve not only the daily food and medical demand of the country; it involves an emergency, food and medical items supply stocks/reserves of the nation too.

4.2.10 Energy Security. The energy sector is one of the most threatened sectors of the country today. A crisis in the energy sector could jeopardize many other aspects of national security. Sri Lanka is heavily dependent on fossil energy in addition to limited hydropower generation. Due to existing policies, and decisions, it's a challenge for a country to develop its capacity to use alternate energy sources such as solar power or wind power.

4.2.11 Disasters and Pandemics. Natural/ man-made disasters and pandemics could seriously challenge the security of a nation like the Covid-19 pandemic situation in the last two years. It's required a long-term effort of a nation to build up its capacity to face different disastrous situations.

5. NATIONAL INTEREST - THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

National interest is one of the most vital components of a state's foreign policy. It can be a guide in the direction of attaining a nation's desires (Weldes, 1996: 276; Edmunds, Gaskarth, and Porter, 2014: 504). The national interest concept strongly relates to a realistic view of international relations, in which security will



become the primary goal (Humphreys, 2015: 571). Realism said that war or even conflict amongst countries is appropriate to achieve national interest. This type of view has emerged as the mainstream in international relations (IR) both theoretically and practically. However, it does not suggest that realist views are a great approach to discussing foreign policy and national interest. Liberalism and worldwide humanism can be used as alternative approaches to talk about it. From the perspective of liberalism and international humanism, foreign policy is not only reflecting national interest but additionally offers human and global interests. By focussing on the issues of economic globalization, democracy, human rights, and the environment, the strategies of liberalism and global humanism show that those issues have now turned out to be part of foreign policy and the national interest of countries. It means that if it involves human and global interests, then countries choose to cooperate globally rather than to involve in struggle or war (Munafrizal Manan, 2015: a hundred seventy-five-189).

National interests are the cornerstone of the foreign policy of any of the countries. The pursuit of national interests domestically and internationally is the legitimate goal of a state's foreign and defense policy. The National interest is the primary concern of the military and diplomatic professions of any country in the formulation of a national strategy and the calculation of national power to support that strategy. The foreign policy of a country is designed based on national strategy and elements of national power to protect and promote the national interest externally. Further domestic policy is formulated to protect and promote the national interest domestically within the country. After identifying existing threats to Sri Lankans national security and the existing geopolitical environment derived national interests of Sri Lanka are as follows:

5.1 NATIONAL INTEREST SRI LANKA'S PERSPECTIVE



Sri Lanka's geostrategic location within the Indian Ocean region is a blessing as an island being astride one of the world's busiest sea lanes of communication that connect East and West. It has great potential which may be exploited to outshine the Indian Ocean region. Sri Lanka being the connector of East-West shipping lines the interest within the Indian Ocean has emerged as a topic of "new geography" due to the massive hydrocarbon energy deposits and a sea passage to carry out the desired energy resources for the future world.

Sri Lanka is in close proximity to India, Sri Lanka comes under the sphere of influence and hegemony in India that is cautiously addressed through practicing the foreign policy due to the fact that India also is aware of the importance of Sri Lanka and vice versa. Sri Lanka is covered within the Chinese One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative primarily based on the String of Pearls or the historical Silk Road, consequently making the island significant for them. Sri Lanka's proximity to India has usually been a matter of influence in Sri Lankan affairs. The second-largest ethnic community, Tamils have an ethnic affiliation with the South Indian Tamilnadu province. Sri Lanka has been subjected to invasions by various Indian kings and they have ruled Sri Lanka for decades followed by the invasions. As per the ancient records also, Sri Lanka is a part of the Indian strategy and the main trade partner of Sri Lanka. Sri Lankan lifestyle, economic system, and most aspects are influenced by India. Sri Lanka needs to be very cautious in dealing with the Indian sphere of influence because the silliest mistakes we do concerning the national interest and foreign policy may have deteriorating effects on Sri Lanka.

History teaches us such lessons about the Indian influence as India threatened Sri Lanka in the early 1990s by dropping dhal by means of invading the Sri Lankan air space. "Black July" in July 1983 is likewise the biggest mistake that Sri Lanka has ever had in its bitter history which does not still cure. It isn't a secret that being a regional power with nuclear capability, India aspires to be the leader of the Indian



Ocean region. Indian maritime strategy as an emerging superpower within the Indian Ocean and Indo Pacific is expansive with its aspiration and its greater competition with China. India doubted that Sri Lanka might also fall within the strategy of China with the rising infrastructure improvement that occurred in Sri Lanka, especially the Hambantota harbour, Matthala international airport, and port city project. India doubts the Chinese aid for Sri Lanka is only for peaceful or military intentions in the Indian Ocean region which led them to open consulate offices in Jaffna, Kandy, and Hambantota by showing the national interest, political, and diplomatic dominance of India over Sri Lanka.

A country will not open diplomatic offices unless they do not have an interest in its country or nationals. It seems that India wants to ensure that Sri Lanka won't slip away from its sphere of influence due to Chinese OBOR initiatives and the existing debt crisis. India was also excited about the Chinese submarine and ships visited Hambantota port in recent years. Because of that, Sri Lanka needs to be very balanced and careful in maintaining the foreign policy with India.

On the other hand, initiatives taken by India after the war to showcase their monopoly within the Sri Lankan market by introducing various Trade Agreements like the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA)/ Economic and Technology Cooperation Agreement (ETCA) between India and Sri Lanka has alarmed the business and various segments in the community. However, the challenge for Sri Lanka, as earlier, is to establish a state of relative equilibrium in its relations with India and China. Even if Sri Lanka is willing to provide equal space to India and China on its maritime periphery due to the power inflicted by the two economic giants, Sri Lanka most of the time drifts towards the one with more power and leverage since it's a 'small state' with less power to bargain. Despite recognizing its special relationship with New Delhi, however, Sri Lanka has been helpless in the



face of a mounting China debt with more than a third of government revenue going toward servicing Chinese loans.

At present, the Sri Lankan government has had few options but to prioritize China's geopolitical interests due to the existing debt crisis in the country. Although early efforts to restore strategic balance in a three-sided relationship with the US, New Delhi, and Beijing, Sri Lanka has found its options severely constrained. In this context, India's actions seem to be not proactive and have adopted a wait-and-watch approach in the neighborhood by closely monitoring China's developments.

Globalization, energy security, non-traditional threats, and climate change have become the principal determinants of India's security role in the Indian Ocean. Stressing the importance of combined operations, regional partnerships could only be successful if states took an integrated view of the region, recognizing local patterns of relations and interactions. In this context maintaining a nonaligned foreign policy is required for Sri Lanka to give equal space to India and China. This article is based on Terry Deibel's strategic logic approach to analysis of Sri Lanka's national strategy options for managing domestic and international challenges and opportunities for the future are as follows:

6. TERRY DEIBEL'S STRATEGIC LOGIC APPROACH

6.1. DEFINE THE ENDS

Interest - Connectivity of national interest and ends.

- a. Priority to the National Security from direct, indirect, internal, and external threats.
- b. Friendly non-aligned foreign policy to all.
- c. Diplomatically manage the main external actors in the Indian Ocean, China, the USA, and India.



- b. Development of physical resources and human resources.
- e. Sustainable Environmental Management.
- f. Disciplined, Law Abiding, and values-based society.
- g. Economic development and sustainability.

Political Aim - Productive citizen, a happy family, a disciplined society, and a prosperous nation”.

Specific Objectives – Strategic ends.

- a. Specific Objective 1 - Priority to National Security.
- b. Specific Objective 2 - Economic, health, and energy security of the country
- c. Specific Objective 3 - Friendly, Non-aligned, Foreign Policy.
- d. Specific Objective 4 - An Administration free from corruption.
- e. Specific Objective 5 - New Constitution that fulfills the People’s wishes.
- f. Specific Objective 6 - Productive Citizenry and a vibrant Human resource.
- g. Specific Objective 7 – People-Centric Economic Development.
- h. Specific Objective 8 – Technology-Based Society.

6.2. DETERMINE THE MEANS

What are the resources needed or available?

- a. **Elements of Power** – Armed Forces, International reputation, Industry, Economy, Human Resources, Geography, Natural Resources, Infrastructure, Governance, Technology, alliances, and agreements.



b. **Institution and Actors** – Armed Forces, Government Agencies, INGOs, NGOs, Empowered Individuals, Media, Business, Civil society, Academia, Foreign employees.

c. **Instrument of Power** –

i. **Diplomatic** – Representation, Negotiation, Implementation

(1) Accepting Indian hegemony and cordial relationship with India and SAARC countries.

(2) Diplomatically manage the US, China, and Indian interests in the Indian Ocean region protecting Sri Lanka's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

(3) Friendly and Non-aligned foreign policy for all.

(4) Promoting good governance and religious harmony. Achieve social harmony and reconciliation through coexistence, and mutual respect; protect human rights and better understanding among communities.

(5) Use of national diplomatic missions effectively.

(6) Promoting hybrid diplomacy (traditional and digital diplomacy) to promote and maintain the country's national interest and overcome the present economic crisis.

ii. **Information** - Perceive, Inform, Manipulation

(1) Implementing sustainable programmes to raise public awareness of the importance of religious and ethnic harmony for social cohesion.

(2) Effective controlling / monitoring of cyber domain / social media content.

(3) Effective use of media, platforms, and e-diplomacy.



(4) Promote E-governance.

iii. **Military** - Force, Threat of Force, Force Enabling

(1) Maintaining a safe and secure environment from direct, indirect, internal, and external threats.

(2) Strategic defence forces deployment in sensitive areas based on the perceived threats.

(3) Capacity by restructuring and well-equipped defence forces with required military gear.

(4) Enactment of the National Security Act and Intelligence Act.

(5) Army, Navy, and Air Force rightsizing and modernization 5-year plan based on the country's present economic requirement.

(6) Navy and Coastguard new platforms and capability developments to protect 200 NM EEZ.

(7) Deploy military forces for nation-building efforts.

(8) Obtaining UN peacekeeping and peace enforcement opportunities for try forces and police to support the country's economy.

(9) Promoting Sri Lanka's geostrategic interest and military experience with other countries.

(10) Exchanging military training opportunities and joint military exercises with regional and extra-regional partners to have a safe and secure Indian Ocean region.

iv. **Economic** - Assistance, Trade, Finance



- (1) Exploration of natural gases and oil reserves in Mannar Bay with relevant partners without hindering Sri Lanka's national security and economic interests.
- (2) Bilateral and multilateral trade agreements with main trade partners to promote the Sri Lankan economy.
- (3) Promoting lush tourism and hospitality sectors in the country.
- (4) Developing Sri Lanka as a key service provider to international trade in the Indian Ocean.
- (5) Exploring maritime resources and natural resources in 200 NM EEZ in the Indian Ocean.
- (6) Protecting GSP plus facility to the European market and improving quality garment trade manufacturing capacity.
- (7) Developing renewable energy sources to manage the existing energy crisis in the country.
- (8) Obtaining UN peacekeeping and peace enforcement opportunities for try forces and police to support the country's economy.
- (9) Effective utilisation of diplomatic missions to promote Sri Lanka's national interest and economic interests. Further, diplomatic missions are to be tasked to obtain more employment opportunities for Sri Lankan professionals and others.
- (10) Promoting made-in Sri Lanka products domestically and internationally giving loans, tax reductions, and relevant government support.



(11) Colombo port city project trade agreements with relevant partners without hindering Sri Lanka's national security and economic interests.

6.3. FORMULATE WAYS

How should resources be effectively used?

- a. Democracy and maintain law and order in the country and promote a free and fair environment for investors.
- b. Non-aligned foreign policy - Failure of SAARC and India's drifting to the west of IOR and China's rising power in the IOR.
- c. Developing free trade agreements and secure GSP plus trade facility to the European market.
- d. Colombo port city project trade agreements with relevant partners without hindering Sri Lanka's national security and economic interests.
- e. Developing Colombo harbor with China and India without hindering Sri Lanka's national security and economic interests.
- f. Promoting Sri Lanka's defence diplomacy and military experience with other countries.
- g. Exchanging military training opportunities and joint military exercises with regional and extra-regional partners to have a safe and secure Indian Ocean region.
- h. Exploring maritime resources and natural resources in 200 NM EEZ in the Indian Ocean.
- i. Promoting lush tourism and hospitality sectors in the country.
- j. Promoting and maintaining Good governance and safe and secure environments for citizens.
- k. Developing renewable energy sources to manage the existing energy crisis in the country.



- l. Obtaining UN peacekeeping and peace enforcement opportunities for try forces and police to support the country's economy.
- m. Effective utilisation of diplomatic missions to promote Sri Lanka's national interest and economic interests. Further, diplomatic missions are to be tasked to obtain more employment opportunities for Sri Lankan professionals and others.
- n. Promoting made-in Sri Lanka products domestically and internationally by giving loans, tax reductions, and relevant government support.
- o. Developing Sri Lanka as a key service provider to international trade in the Indian Ocean.
- p. Promoting hybrid diplomacy (traditional and digital diplomacy) to promote and maintain the country's national interest and to overcome the present economic crisis.
- q. New Constitution that fulfills the People's wishes.

6.4. ASSESS THE RISKS COSTS

Is this strategy viable?

- a. Managing US, China, and Indian interest and maintaining friendly, non-aligned foreign policy.
- b. Managing Indian and Chinese investments without hindering Sri Lanka's national security and economic interests.
- c. Exploring maritime resources and natural resources in 200 NM EEZ in the Indian Ocean with transparency, environment friendly, and protecting the economic interest of the country.



- d. Obtaining IMF lending arrangements facility and lone support from friendly countries for restructuring existing debts and economic conditions and severe balance of payments problems.
- e. Maintaining political stability to face an existing economic crisis while assuring essential commodities and law and the order situation of the country.

6.5. ASSUMPTIONS

The following assumptions are made while assessing the geo-political situation.

6.5.1 Domestic Assumptions

- a. Threats to National Security and Sovereignty - Maintain a safe and secure environment from direct, indirect, internal, and external threats.
- b. Diplomatic policies of the Government will remain constant as stipulated in the Government policy framework.
- c. Existing economic crisis and human security concerns can be managed after securing IMF lending arrangements facility and lone support from friendly countries.

6.5.2 International Assumptions

- a. USSR and Chinese Diplomatic support towards Sri Lanka in the international arena would remain unchanged.
- b. USA smart power influence in IOR may increase with the new AUKUS indo-Pacific trilateral agreement and it will not be affected Sri Lanka's national interest.
- c. Chinese and Indian influences on the country's power politics and the economy will increase and the Government of Sri Lanka able to manage it diplomatically to end the existing economic crisis of the country.



- d. Building Security threats both traditional and non-traditional (dugs, Terrorism, Smuggling, encroachment, etc) in the future.

6.6. Strategy Test. Finally, the suitability, feasibility, acceptability, and sustainability of the strategy are to be tested to ensure it is in line with Sri Lanka's national interest. Then ensure that sufficient means and time are available to implement it; it is cost-effective, well-accepted, and has the flexibility and durability to stay effective in the Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity (VUCA) environment.

6.6.1 Implementing the Strategy.

- a. Determine the key actors regionally and globally in implementing the strategic plan to overcome the existing economic crisis of the country while obtaining IMF lending arrangements facility and lone support from friendly countries for restructuring existing debts, economic conditions, and severe balance of payments problems.
- b. Actions will be based on national interest and non-aligned foreign policy.
- c. Make Human resources responsible for their respective domain for the implementation of the various aspects as designated in each domain.
- d. Monitoring and Evaluation is the final step for further improvement in the formulated strategy of the existing government of Sri Lanka while maintaining transparency and people's aspiration.

7. CONCLUSION

The Indian Ocean Region (IOR) is considered to be important by most of the major players, especially China, India, and the USA due to the sea lines of



communication, which provide energy and economic security to the future world. Sri Lanka is located in the middle of the IOR and is considered a littoral state which harbors the foreign policy of major players in the IOR. Therefore, one can argue that Sri Lanka has become a significant player in IOR not due to its strategic location but because of the power struggle between China, India, and the USA which shapes the geopolitical context of the region. Within such a scramble for power by the major players, Sri Lanka is a 'small state' drifts towards maximum leverage. Hence, it makes the country a weaker state in decision-making and gradually affects sovereignty. Even if the country benefits through this war for dominance by the major players, it will ultimately lead the state to become a 'potential proxy' for the advantage of the stronger actor in the region. Hence, the country will ultimately serve as a territory to exercise war or it will ultimately open up to economic vulnerabilities like today.

Even if Sri Lanka benefits from economic giants such as India, China, and the USA, due to their power struggle in the IOR, Sri Lanka becomes a 'proxy' that allows them to exercise their capabilities to suppress the other. In such a context, if a serious clash occurs between China and India or USA and China, then again Sri Lanka will become the victim since our foreign policy or our defense policy can not contain such powerful influence. Even if, all these multilateral and bilateral cooperation serves the development of the nation-state, one thing to be understood is that the funding for such development is provided not solely to support the country's boom, but to become a 'potential proxy' for either economic giant to utilize when it is necessary.

Therefore, one can assert the point that Sri Lanka is harboring someone else's foreign policy, rather than its own, and will ultimately end up in a 'sandwich state' between China, India, and the USA. Hence, a wise non-aligned foreign policy is



essential to manage the existing geopolitical rivalry not only at present but to ensure the prosperity and security of future generations of Sri Lanka while overcoming existing domestic and international challenges for a better future.

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