



NONALIGNED FOREIGN POLICY A DEFENSE DIPLOMACY OF SRI LANKA IN THE INDIAN OCEAN TERRITORY

(KEBIJAKAN LUAR NEGERI NONALIGNED SUATU DIPLOMASI PERTAHANAN SRI
LANKA DI WILAYAH LAUT INDIA)

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Abstract: This article tries to elaborate the strategic position Indian Ocean in the current international relations. This region has become a crucial theatre for the global sea lanes of communication with pivot to Asia policy. As a littoral country in the Indian Ocean, Sri Lanka relies heavily on the SLOCs in the Indian ocean. Against this background, this article also elaborates the implementation of defence diplomacy by Sri Lanka adopting nonalignment as the governing principle of its foreign policy. The thesis presents two possible scenarios: the successful adoption of nonalignment, balancing Sri Lanka's geostrategic interests with major Indian Ocean Region (IOR) power players to enhance maritime capabilities and confidence building activities related maritime domain in order to establish maritime security in the region.

Keywords: defence diplomacy by Sri Lanka, nonalignment as the governing principle, Sri Lanka's geostrategic interests, enhance maritime capabilities and confidence building, establish maritime security in the region.

Abstrak: Artikel ini mencoba mengelaborasi posisi strategis Samudera Hindia dalam hubungan internasional saat ini. Kawasan ini telah menjadi teater krusial bagi jalur komunikasi laut global dengan kebijakan poros ke Asia. Sebagai negara pesisir di Samudera Hindia, Sri Lanka sangat bergantung pada SLOC di Samudera Hindia. Dengan latar belakang tersebut, artikel ini juga menguraikan implementasi diplomasi pertahanan oleh Sri Lanka yang mengadopsi nonblok sebagai prinsip yang mengatur kebijakan luar negerinya. Tesis ini menyajikan dua skenario yang mungkin: adopsi nonblok yang berhasil, menyeimbangkan kepentingan geostrategis Sri Lanka dengan pemain kekuatan utama Wilayah Samudra Hindia (India Ocean Region/IOR) untuk meningkatkan kemampuan maritim dan kegiatan membangun kepercayaan terkait domain maritim untuk membangun keamanan maritim di wilayah tersebut.



Kata kunci: diplomasi pertahanan oleh Sri Lanka, ketidaksejajaran sebagai prinsip yang mengatur, kepentingan geostrategis Sri Lanka, meningkatkan kemampuan maritim dan membangun kepercayaan, membangun keamanan maritim di kawasan.

Introduction

Sri Lanka is now dominated by a huge number of foreign nations investing financially in Sri Lanka due to its geopolitical position in the Indian Ocean. In comparison to other South Asian countries, Sri Lanka occupies a critical strategic position in the Indian Ocean. Sri Lanka is at a fantastic location. Only 6 to 10 nautical miles separate the island of Sri Lanka from the main east-west shipping route. More than 60,000 ships, two-thirds of the world's oil, and half of all containers pass via this route each year. Along with Sri Lanka, India's market is gaining traction. Sri Lanka is a major base for military bases and maritime security in the Indian Ocean. Sri Lanka is a very important place to establish a naval base to monitor the Indian Ocean and the increasingly busy shipping lanes. No other country in the South Asian region can match the geographical location of Sri Lanka. Countries like Pakistan, Bangladesh, and the Maldives have their geographical and strategic importance. But from a naval strategic point of view, Sri Lanka is reaping more benefits, including the protection of Sri Lanka's strategic qualities, coastline, and maritime traffic. Sri Lanka's geographical location can play an important role in maintaining India's security. Sri Lanka is located at the centre of maritime trade routes in West and East Asia, as well as in the middle of Africa, the Arab, and Eastern worlds.(Malik, 2013).

The Indian Ocean is a stage on which the world's main naval nations seek to project their power in pursuit of their various national goals. The developing Indo-Pacific geopolitical landscape, as well as the significant strategic focus on it by major powers, both regional and extra-regional, have brought complexity and stress to countries such as Sri Lanka. Because of the strategic reach of key maritime powers in the IOR, the situation will remain difficult. With a well-articulated foreign policy posture developed by the country, Sri Lanka's priceless geographical location will



become an economic benefit. The emerging new dynamics of the Indian Ocean will demand SLN to modernise its naval force in terms of shaping our naval fleet, sensors and training in order to undertake various threats by understanding ways and acquiring means to face the challenges in future. Naval diplomacy entails the use of naval forces in support of foreign policy objectives to build 'bridges of friendship' and strengthen international cooperation on one hand and to signal capability and intent to deter potential adversaries on the other (Sri Lanka Navy, 2020).

While the framework was being setup as early as 1947 it was only in 1955, at the Bandung Conference, that Sri Lanka embraced the spirit of international co-operation amongst new nations. This would eventually translate into the Non-Aligned Movement, of which Sri Lanka was one of the original members. But now scholars in a view that, Sri Lanka has subscribed to both the Indo-Pacific and China's BRI, promising a 'neutral' foreign policy posture. Its successive governments have rhetorically claimed a 'neutral' and 'balanced' foreign policy with non-aligned principles but have failed to translate rhetoric into action due to China's strategic inroads in the nation.

The relationship between China and Sri Lanka, which dates back to at least the first century CE, has grown in importance to Sri Lanka in terms of bilateral commerce and financial assistance in the post-independence period. China's financial aid to Sri Lanka in the early post-independence period, from 1950 to 1975, totalled approximately \$130.7 million over a quarter century, whereas in the post-late-independence period, from 2005 to 2015, China's financial aid to Sri Lanka exceeded \$ 5 billion, nearly 38 times more than in the early post-independence period. Sri Lanka's foreign relations in the early post-independence period featured neutrality and nonalignment, whereas Sri Lanka seems to be becoming more beholden to China in the late post-independence period, mainly because of its heavy indebtedness. This status quo in which Sri Lanka is diverting from nonalignment and becoming more aligned with China has been negatively viewed by the two other power players in Indian Ocean geopolitics the United States and India. (Priyantha, 2017)



The Sri Lanka Navy (SLN) is retooling its maritime strategy to face the evolving and emerging security challenges in its maritime domain, including illegal unreported and unregulated fishing, drug trafficking via sea routes, human smuggling, the illegal exploitation of natural resources, maritime terrorism with asymmetric tactics, and piracy. In addition, climate change and rising sea levels also threaten security in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). This paper reviews security dilemma in the Indian Ocean region perspective of Sri Lanka strategic location and then, we attempt to seek Implementation of defence diplomacy by Sri Lanka Navy dealing with regional and extra regional naval powers. Finally, we attempt to seek success of capacity building and confidence building measure with Non-Align foreign policy perspective.

2. Literature Review

Mostly overlooked for the entire 20th century, the Indian Ocean, or sometimes named the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), has garnered significant attention from the world's great and emerging powers due to its geopolitical importance.(Bagus Dharma Agastia & Agung Banyu Perwita, 2016). Sri Lanka is a small nation that is nevertheless very strategically placed, at a critical location within the Indian Ocean and this has focused the attention of many powers. In this context, SLN should determine to maintain progressive, positive relations with all the concern stakeholders in maritime operations in line with our national interests. As an island nation with this strategic location, SLN has a huge task and responsibility in protecting the territorial, the contiguous and the EEZ with the added responsibility of a large search and rescue region and in the near future an even a large area after ratification of the continental margins.(Sri Lanka Navy, 2020)

Foreign policy is a policy taken by the government of a country or other political community in relations with the state and non-state actors at international level. According to Walter Carlsnaes, foreign policy is actions directed at targets, conditions and actors (both government and non-government) that are outside of their territorial area that they want to influence. These actions are expressed in the form of goals,



commitments and/or directions that are stated explicitly, which are carried out by government representatives acting on behalf of sovereign states or communities.(Terzyan, n.d.)

International relations, each country has its own national interests. Oftentimes, national interests of a country intersect and even clash with the interests of other countries. This condition has the potential to cause friction and, in some cases, conflict in the country. The state employs diplomatic tools to protect or advance its national interests. Diplomacy is often associated with soft power, whereas military might is associated with hard power. In the advance learner's dictionary of current English, it is stated that "Diplomacy is a skill in making a cleverness in dealing with people arrangement so that they remain friendly and willing to help." While Sir Ernest Satow, defined it as "The application of tact and intelligence to the conduct of foreign relations between government and independent states." It can be inferred that diplomacy is a skill in determining how to win our interests without having causing hostility. In regard to defence, defence diplomacy can be a meaningful way to win national interest through the use of military/defence as a tool or resource without using it to incite hostility.(Sudarsono et al., 2018)

The expansive definition offered by Andre Cottey and Anthony Forster who posit defence diplomacy as "the peacetime use of armed forces and related infrastructure (primarily defence ministries) as a tool of foreign and security policy." Martin Edmonds echoes this approach, defining modern defence diplomacy as "the use of armed forces in operations other than war, building on their trained experience and discipline to achieve national and foreign objectives abroad". While these authors do emphasize specific activities like military assistance in their respective works, simply stating defence diplomacy exists as the use of the military as a foreign policy asset in an operation other than war does little to enrich our understanding of the concept.(Winger, 2014). Further, Spanish Ministry of Defence's documents have given out one of the latest proposals for the definition of defence diplomacy, which describes it as "a diverse international activity based on dialogue and cooperation, implemented bilaterally by



the defence ministry with allies, partners and other friendly countries to support the achievement of goals of defence policy and Spanish foreign policy (Drab, 2018). With above interpretation defence diplomacy is a tool of achieving goals of defence policy align with foreign policy of a country.

Defence diplomacy can also be defined as a series of activities carried out by representatives of the defence department or other government agencies in order to gain national interest in the field of security and defence, with the use of negotiation and other diplomatic instruments taking precedence. Military usage in state diplomacy is no longer viewed solely as the use of violence, as many countries have changed their military function into one of the weapons of diplomacy to achieve goals while avoiding the use of violence or hostility. Many countries have exemplified how the military has become one of the diplomatic packages whose use is not only limited to defence and security affairs. Sri Lanka being a small state strategically placed between two powerful States India and China, the island nation is significant for India as closest maritime neighbour and on the other hand China has become an all-weather friend to Sri Lanka who has not interfered into the internal political issues and a supportive character in international politics. Sri Lanka has been sandwiched between great power politics of these powerful nations since U.S. is carrying out its strategy using strategic alliance of the United States, India, UK, Japan and Australia to counter the growing influence of China. (Chaminda K, 2022)

Defence Diplomacy Theory Defence diplomacy is all means and strategies through various aspects of cooperation such as economics, culture, politics, defence and diplomacy so that countries can have friendships, can further cooperate with each other, and, most importantly, increase trust. Defence diplomacy is used as a tool to achieve the goal of a country's foreign policy. (Pedrason, 2000). Gregory Winger in *The Theory of Defence Diplomacy* explained that Defence diplomacy is a nonviolent use of military, e.g. exchange of officers, visits of warships, joint military exercises, in order to achieve the international interests of a country. Still in the writings of Winger, Andre Cottey and Anthony Foster stated that Defence diplomacy is the use of military in the



time of peace as a tool for security and foreign relations policies. This is reinforced by Martin Edmons who defines Defence diplomacy as the use of military for operations other than war by utilizing training experience and discipline to achieve national interests both inside and outside the country.(Winger, 2014)

The involvement of Sri Lanka armed forces in state diplomacy is carried out with various roles. In safeguarding world peace, Sri Lanka has become one of the permanent participants in the UN peacekeeping mission ranking 31 position (troops supplying to UN missions) in the world. In the South Asian region, considering vast maritime boundary of Sri Lanka armed forces also plays an active role in establishing communication with the military of friendly countries through meeting forums such as the Defence dialog, Galle dialog which is a forum that aims to establish shared perception among the armed forces various countries and their partners on regional security. This has increased mutual trust and identified new fields of cooperation which is an international communication forum that addresses the issue of world security. This is in line with one of the aspects of defence diplomacy, namely confidence building measures. From the description of the role of Sri Lanka armed forces, the involvement of armed forces in state diplomacy is still limited to diplomacy that is directly related to national interest in the field of defence and security. The involvement of Defence forces in the diplomatic process of other fields, especially economy and politics, is still not significant. The less maximized involvement of the military in the country's total diplomacy certainly has causes and backgrounds.(Sudarsono et al., 2018)

The Indian Ocean offers prime SLOCs linking with Europe, Middle East, Africa, Asia and Americas through Europe. It provides 40% of petroleum from the Persian Gulf oil fields and Indonesia. Large hydrocarbon reserves from Middle East, Iran and Western Australia combined with energy reserve of Central Asian Republics (CARs) have caught the attention of all regional and extra regional key players for the „New Great Game“. The sailing of comparatively superior flow of energy vessels has invited the piracy at African Coast. Strategically Indian Ocean can be divided into three separate regions.(Malik, 2013).The security concerns in the IOR are multidimensional



and can evolve at any time. The connectivity it provides to the Pacific and the Atlantic oceans, and the large volume of trade and energy transfers it supports, have made the Indian Ocean a strategically important hub for trade and energy. Additionally, the Chinese debt-driven model of influencing maritime nations for power supremacy has enabled China to become the regional power, ousting India and shifting the Indian Ocean naval balance. (Liyanagamage, 2018)

3. Methodology

This article is qualitative in nature. This study applies the qualitative technique, which is described as a research method that aims to comprehend a phenomenon experienced by a subject in a holistic manner, including behaviours, perceptions, motivations, actions, and so on. The findings will then be communicated organically and through various scientific methodologies in the form of words and language. The article subjects were informants who were involved in their respective fields of duty, the object of this research is the role of SLN in defence diplomacy, the capacity and capability of SLN in diplomacy.

4. Discussion

Sri Lanka is being an island and her defence, security, development, and future challenges should be looked 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 this context, it very important for Sri Lanka as a small country in a geostrategic location to maintain good bilateral and multilateral relations with regional powers and as well as the superpower. Sri Lanka's One of the main national security policy objective is to Strengthening partnerships and relations for regional, and international security and stability. (Sri Lanka Navy, 2020)

Sri Lankan foreign policy changed from non-aligned status to aligned status and vice versa. The present government that came to power in 2015 revised the foreign policy of Sri Lanka, favouring a more balanced posture. Table 1 summarizes the



different foreign policies Sri Lanka has had with the United States, India, Pakistan, and China.(Liyanagamage, 2018).

Tabel 1

United National Party's and Sri Lanka Freedom Party's governments' alignment since independence.

Duration	Government	Foreign Policy
1948–1956	United National Party (UNP)	Pro-British
1956–1959	Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP)	Non-aligned status
1960	UNP	Non-aligned status
1960–1965	SLFP	Non-aligned status, but strong relations with China
1965–1970	UNP	Non-aligned status
1971–1977	SLFP led coalition government	Non-aligned status, but strong relations with China
1977–1994	UNP	Pro-United States and West
1994–2001	SLFP	Non-aligned status
2001–2004	UNP	Non-aligned status
2005–2015	SLFP led coalition government	Pro-China
2015 to 2019	UNP/SLFP coalition	Pro-United States and India, but strong relations with China

In addition to relations with present allies, Sri Lanka's foreign policy is very sensitive to its future relationships. Wijesinghe states that Sri Lanka should take Israel as an example because of its "correct foreign policy and vision. Sri Lanka must build partnerships with likeminded nations to prosper economically and militarily to ensure



security in the IOR. Wijesinghe opines: “Our country needs a Sri Lanka friendly foreign policy aiming at the developments and the prosperity of the Nation, not necessarily prompting any group or ideology.

4.1 The Role of SLN in Defence Diplomacy

On the role in defence diplomacy, the deployment of peacekeeping forces and the appointment of Defence Attachés will be the sole focus. According to the progress report published by the Ministry of Defence in year 2021, the Sri Lanka Navy deployed only three defence attaches, namely India, Australia, and Indonesia, to conduct military assistance programs. They were mostly deployed in maritime nations to enhance maritime security through coordinated efforts. Furthermore, just two naval personnel from the navy and UNFIL participated in the peacekeeping effort in West Sahara. From the foregoing, it is clear that the Sri Lanka Navy lacks the execution of defence diplomacy in peacekeeping missions and the placement of defence attaches in regional and extra-regional maritime nations.

The following is the quantitative summary of the training courses, workshops, seminars, exercises attended by Sri Lanka Navy personnel and ship for confidence building and capacity building activities 2018, 2019 and 2020 as per the performance report of the ministry of defence each year.

Table 2
Training courses received from foreign countries in year 2018 to 2021(Source Ministry of defence performance report 2018 to 2020)

Sr no	Country	Training courses											
		General			NDC			Staff			Long Term		
		2018	2019	2020	2018	2019	2020	2018	2019	2020	2018	2019	2020
1	USA												05
2	India	77	108	97						02			05
3	Pakistan	57	23	05	02	01	01	06	03	01			
4	China	27	23		03	02							
5	Bangladesh			01	01	01	01	01	03	01			
6	UK												01
7	Indonesia												01



8	Malaysia								01				
9	Switzerland												
10	Philippine				01								
11	Other												04
	Total	161	154	103	07	04	02	07	07	04			16

Table 3

Non schedule training/ Foreign Visits in year 2018 to 2021(Source Ministry of defence performance report 2018 to 2020)

Sr no	Training/ Visits					
	Non scheduled			Visits		
	2018	2019	2020	2018	2019	2020
1	68	107	56	78	135	125

In 1972, the navy's strategic goal shifted from a ceremonial navy to a fighting force capable of success in counter-insurgency operations. By predicting future dangers, the post war navy is considering how it wishes to recast itself in the developing maritime picture. Admiral Ravindra Wijegunaratne, the former navy commander and the former Chief of Defence Staff, plans to form a 'Hybrid Navy' for year 2020 comprising frigates, OPVs, FGBs, FACs, arrow boats, and Inshore Patrol Craft. The former navy commander has proposed the establishment of a naval aviation capability or a Sri Lankan Air Force fleet air arm with surveillance equipment. Wijegunaratne has stated, "I strongly believe that the littoral navies will be greatly benefitted if they could bring in smaller vessels to their fleets in order to increase the manoeuvrability, fire power, penetration capabilities, flexibility and agility in the face of modern maritime security challenges.(Liyanagamage, 2018)

Table 4

The proposed 20-ship fleet of the SLN

Ship	2016	2018	2020	2022	2025	Total
Frigates	--	01	--	01(02)	--	02
Corvettes	--	01	--	01(02)	--	02
OPVs	04	01(05)	01(06)	01(07)	01(08)	08
Fast Missile Vessels	02	01(03)	--	01(04)	--	04
Fast Patrol Boats	02	--	01(03)	--	01(04)	04
Total						20

The SLN accessioned only five ships after 2009, two of which are 'Bay Class' patrol craft gifted by Australia. In addition, the SLN purchased two Offshore Patrol Vessels (OPV) from Goa shipbuilders in India, the SLN received one used OPV from the Indian Coast Guard in 2017 at no cost, and the Ex-U.S. Coast Guard Cutter 'Sherman' obtained 2019, and from China Ex frigate obtained SLN in same year. Further latest addition from US coast guard Ex USCGC Douglas Munro joined SLN fleet on 02 November 2022. With above statistical data we can analyse that SLN vision 2025 achieved success in some extent with implementation of defence diplomacy with non-align foreign policy. Further due to COVID 19 pandemic existing economic crisis hampered SLN effort to enhance the capabilities.

The SLN established the Directorate of Naval Foreign Cooperation (DNFC) to maintain maritime relations with other navies and international organizations, to liaise with Sri Lanka's Ministry of External Affairs and Ministry of Defence on maritime issues, to represent and promote Sri Lanka's maritime interests, and to organize and support foreign naval events involving the SLN. In order to improve maritime cooperation, the DNFC is a member of regional organizations such as the IONS, the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against



Ships in Asia (ReCAP), and the Western Pacific Naval Symposium (WPNS). Furthermore, as shown in Figure 10, the SLN engages in international naval exercises to improve regional cooperation and interoperability (Liyanagamage, 2018).

Table 5
The international naval exercises in which SLN participates

EXERCISE	COUNTRY
AMAN	Pakistan
LIMA	Malaysia
IMDEX	Singapore
IMMSAREX	Bangladesh
DOSTHI	Maldives
MILAN	Andaman and Nicobar
SLINEX	India and Sri Lanka
KAKADU	Australia
KOMODO	Indonesia
IFR	India, Thailand

Furthermore, several international naval and coast guard ships visit Sri Lanka, which supports the country's non-aligned stance. Soon after the end of civil war in 2009, 406 foreign naval and coast guard ships visited Sri Lanka, including 66 foreign ships in 2017 alone, which further confirms its non-aligned status. In addition, visits of foreign naval and coast guard ships help the SLN to share its own experiences on littoral warfare and to exchange interoperability programs with them. (Liyanagamage, 2018) Furthermore, periodic fleet exercises with much larger navies improve the SLN fleet confidence building. Currently, the SLN conducts staff talks with the militaries of Australia, China, India, Japan, Maldives, Pakistan, and the United States to strengthen cooperation to foster an effective maritime security environment and safer SLOC. Table



6 illustrates SLN's cooperation in recent years with these seven countries.
(Liyanagamage, 2018)

Table 6

SLN's cooperation with regional countries and with powerful nations

Country	Events
Australia	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Developed SAR capabilities under Search and Rescue Capability Partnership Program with Australian Maritime Safety Authority.- Counters human smuggling efforts.
China	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Offers training opportunities in China for officers and sailors.- Makes frequent ship visits and naval exercises.- Foresees gifting a large naval ship.
India	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Makes frequent ship visits, training squadron exchanges.- Offers training opportunities in India for officers and sailors in Indian training establishments.- Conducts bilateral naval exercise SLINEX.- Offers Staff Talks such as IMBL (biannually), Navy to Navy (annually), and India - Sri Lanka defence dialogue (annually).- Offers SLN participation in MILAN naval exercise in Andaman and Nicobar.- Gifted an Offshore Patrol Vessel to the SLCG.
Japan	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Offers frequent training assistance on HADR and oil spill management for SLN and SLCG.- Extends training opportunities onboard Japanese Maritime Self Defence Force ships.- Offers training opportunities for SLN and SLCG officers in Japan.
Maldives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Participates in Tri Lateral exercise DOSTI with Indian, Sri Lanka, and Maldives Coast Guards.- Accepts training and assisting of Maldivian defence forces by the SLN.
Pakistan	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Offers considerable number of training berths to SLN.- Hosts annual defence staff talks.- Encourages Navy to Navy staff talks.- Proposes to gift a floating dock to SLN.- Makes regular ship visits to Sri Lanka.- Invites SLN participation in AMAN naval exercise in Pakistan.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Participates in instructor exchange programs.
United States	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Strengthened cooperation with SLN greatly after 2015 elections in Sri Lanka.- Hosted two Pacific Partnership programs in Sri Lanka, most recent being in May 2021.- Held NOLES (Non-Lethal Weapons Executive Seminar) in Sri Lanka.- Held CARAT (Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training) in Sri Lanka.- Allowed visit of Nimitz Carrier Strike Group.- Transferred a U.S. Coast Guard ship to the SLN.- Provides more training opportunities to SLN.- Helped to establish first battalion of the SLN Marine Corps.

Overall, the SLN plays a vital role in addressing regional maritime security concerns and serving as an interface between enemies for interoperability with the goal of maintaining peaceful waters. The SLN contributes to global maritime security by attending all regional seminars and improving capability and capacity with friendly navies and coast guards. Furthermore, strong maritime cooperation is critical in establishing and maintaining strong partnerships across countries.

Despite the difficulties of transformation, the SLN is on the right track. The new administration in Sri Lanka has allowed the SLN to work more closely with the US, India, and other countries rather than only with China. So far, the SLN has received ships from the United States, India, China, and Japan, increasing its operational capability in deep seas enhancing defence capability of the SLN.

5. Conclusion

SLN undertook a confidence-building, capacity-building, and strategic partnership among the world's most powerful navies. Fleet exercises, crew exchange programs, overseas training for officers and sailors in the United States, India, Pakistan, China, and Japan, a new naval strategy, Naval staff talks, defence talks, the annual



Galle Dialogue International Maritime Conference, overseas goodwill visits for SLN ships, membership and close collaboration with the IONS, ReCAP, WPNS, and interaction with the United States on HADR operations, partners and interaction with the United States on HADR operations The formation of the first-ever SLN marine battalion and the hydrographic unit has helped to alleviate the severe non-seagoing personnel shortage. Regardless of new developments, the SLN must "right size" and collaborate with every maritime nation in order to ensure maritime security in its area. On the international level, SLN still has a long way to go in terms of integrating the global maritime axis as part of its non-alignment foreign policy in order to improve defence diplomacy and achieve maritime security in the region.

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