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MVSD/01/15

**“SLINEX” RECOMMENDATION TO ENHANCE SRI LANKA INDIA NAVAL
COOPERATION ENGAGEMENT**

INTRODUCTION

1. The relationship between India and Sri Lanka are going back to many years. India is Sri Lanka's closest neighbor. The relationship between the two countries is more than 2,500 years old and both sides have built upon a legacy of intellectual, cultural, religious and linguistic intercourse. And till present time with ups and downs still we consider as India as our big brother and the relationship continues. India being the closes land mass to Sri Lanka, shares historical record of Political, Economical, Social and Cultural relationship. Both countries are very close to each other, geographically separated by sea and historical record indicate it had connected by Adam’s bridge just 32 Km. Similarly both countries were invaded by British’s. The colonial control introduces the new political, administration, economy, education and military systems with similar characteristics to both states.

2. Navies of both countries are derivation of Royal Navy. Because of this Indian Navy (IN) and Sri Lankan Navy (SLN) possess almost similar characteristic of Common wealth Navies and still followed British way. Indian Navy been large force had developed to carry out three dimension warfare. SLN is an island nation Navy fought almost 3 decades with a dangerous terrorist group and with the end of terrorist activities in the country it also in transforming stage. Even though Sri Lanka and India political relations have ups and downs, throughout the years Naval cooperation of India and Sri Lanka has being positive one. It

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would appear that both countries would continue to tread carefully in their bilateral naval cooperation. This seems to reflect longstanding mutual agreement on pursuing security cooperation without causing detriment to any third party. The main purpose of a Naval cooperation is to build, mutual cooperation, exchange of knowledge and diplomacy.

3. Sri Lanka and India are in geographically important place in Indian Ocean. This Geo strategic location promotes the requirement of Naval cooperative engagement to the both countries. Trade via the sea in today globalized world has been subjected to multiple threats such as piracy, human trafficking, smuggling, gun running are some of the examples for that. Security of oceans is not only affected to the region but to the entire world. Today many countries have Naval cooperation and Naval symposium to challenge these issues. Sri Lanka and India surrounded by vast sea area and countries vest with responsibility to protect Sea Lane of Communication (SLOC). Navies can play huge role in humanitarian aids, Naval diplomacy, IUU fishing and colossal devastation of the littorals environment¹.

AIM

4. The Aim of service paper is to discuss the importance of SLINEX and recommendations to enhance Sri Lanka – India Naval cooperative engagement.

¹ DR. W Lawrence S Prabhakar. 'India's Maritime Issues, Concerns and Challenges in the Indian Ocean Region' (Sri Lanka: Paper presented at Galle Dialog 2010, 06th August 2010).

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**PRESENT STATE OF SRI LANKA – INDIA NAVAL COOPERATIVE
ENGAGEMENT**

5. At present state of naval cooperation can be discussed under following topics in different sub areas:

a. **Training.** Sri Lanka Naval officers and sailors are being trained by Indian Navy for days back to early sixties. Most of the courses covering Long courses for Executive branch, Engineering, Electrical and advanced courses are awarded by Indian Navy to SLN. India offered to train Sri Lankan naval personnel as part of ongoing defence cooperation between the two countries. Indian Navy would be afforded priority though there was a great demand for the courses from many countries. The offers were made by visiting Indian Navy chief Admiral D K Joshi when he called on HE the President Mahinda Rajapaksa during the international naval maritime conference (Galle Dialogue) held in southern port town of Galle². And Sri Lanka too training Indian Officers in Asymmetric warfare course conduct by SLN Special Boat Squadron.

b. **Combined Exercise.** In the year 1950s and 1960s, many navies took part in Joint Exercise (JET) every year at Trincomalee in Sri Lanka (then Ceylon). The countries participated for JET was India, Pakistan, Britain, Australia, New Zealand and then Ceylon. There was a silent period without any sound combined exercise with IN till, SLN ship participation for ‘Milan’, the gathering of Navies of Indian Ocean region from 1995 to 2010. SLNS Sayura took part in the, Indian Navy hosted

² Daily Mirror. ‘India Offers to Train Sri Lanka Navy’. Sri Lanka. Daily Mirror daily newspaper 29 November 2014.

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8th International fleet review in Mumbai 2001 and Indian naval ship participated for SLN 60th anniversary in year 2010. Sri Lanka India Naval Exercise (SLINEX) was started from year 2000 with the aim of annual bilateral naval exercise. And out of that SLINEX-II was the largest joint fleet exercise between the Indian and Sri Lankan Navies, conducted in Sri Lanka, which was held under the guidance of the Secretary of Defence of Sri Lanka and the directives of the Commander of the Sri Lanka Navy, concluded successfully on 23rd September 2011³. Also IN ship regularly making port calls to SL ports. During these visits IN ship embark the SLN personnel onboard for ship rider programme training activities.

c. **Naval Assets.** SLN obtained naval platforms such as; Off Shore Patrol Vessel (OPV) from IN in year 2000 SLNS Sayura (Flag ship of SLN, EX INS Saryu), 2006 SLNS Sagara (Ex- ICG Varaha) and year 2008 SLNS Sayurala (Temporarily Basics, Ex- ICG Vigrha). SLN comprising vintage Elam war era Naval assets and Lacking effective and agile naval platforms. Therefore a bilateral agreement was signed with it for the construction of OPVs. The ship will construct according to the navy's requirements. Goa dockyard Ltd India is in the process of constructing two OPVs for SLN⁴. Indian Navy also in the possess of obtaining small boat (similar to SLN IPC craft) from private boatyard named SOLAS. Bombay dockyard provides the docking facilities to SLN vessels. The technical support also provided to upkeep the machineries and other systems onboard ships. And there is a plan of obtain IPC's build at CDL (Colombo Dockyard Ltd) By Indian navy.

d. **Diplomatic Relation.** From ancient time both countries had good relations with each other's. In every quarter Sri Lanka Navy, Indian Navy and Indian Coast

³ Wijayapala, R., 2011. SLINEX 2011, Highlighted Lanka's and India's prowess, [e-journal], Available at: www.sundayobserver.lk [Accesses 12 Aug 2015].

⁴ Ibid, p 167-168.

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Guard regularly conduct IMBL meeting to address the fishing issues, refugee issues and other maritime related issues between both countries. During Tsunami in year 2004 Indian Navy launches an Operation 'Rainbow' to assist Sri Lankan Government in disaster management. Even though there are ups and downs in diplomat's relations mainly due to Tamilnadu Factor and fishermen issue and due to some bad foreign relations with India cause major issue for New Delhi's decision to vote for the U.S. resolution. These political situations too have been largely affected to both navies too. And it effected to conducting of SLINEX and there was a period for 6 consecutive years to stop this SLINEX exercises⁵. Also it cause to reduce the foreign Naval training gives from Indian navy to Sri Lankan navy But with the change of governments there is making of good foreign relations between two countries and this will immensely help for carry out SLINEX in regular basis. That would be a great assets to country like ours. The immunity of Naval ships always an asset for diplomacy. Thus it has become imperative to study issues of bilateral concern in a broader regional framework without ignoring the trials and tribulation of domestic politics in both the countries.

GENERAL CONSTRAINTS TO CONDUCT SLINEX

6. The future of Sri Lanka and India Naval combined naval exercises (SLINEX) may have following constrains:
 - a. **Availability of Resources**. The first reason why the IN and SLN is seeing less naval cooperation among themselves than the IN with ASEAN countries may

⁵ Civil Services Times, 2011. India and Sri Lanka: joint naval exercise Slinex II. [online] Available at : www.civilservicetimes.com [Accessed 12 August 2015]

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have to do with the interaction of a strong principle of sovereignty and the unevenness in development. For instance, there are sharp differences in economic stability, divergent resource allocations and threat perceptions. These different developmental stages mean SL Navy with more focused on inward security. Specially interested at their territorial waters. And many naval missions were based on that except destroying of floating armouries of LTTE. But India is progressive maritime nations in the region with advanced Naval capabilities and more outward outlooks towards naval missions. The availability and operational state of SLN fleet is limited. Hence, in recent times, cooperation and collaboration, especially during the SLINEX- 2013 it is felt and when it is held at India off Goa SLN could send one vessel (SLNS SAGARA)⁶. Because we had only limited number of large platforms are available with Sri Lanka navy



INS Talwar and SLNS Sagara during SLINEX 2013

⁶ Ministry of Defence Sri Lanka, 2013. "SLINEX 2013"-Indo – Lanka joint Naval Exercise in progress. [online] Available at: www.Defence.lk [Accessed 12 August 2015].

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b. **Cost.** Cost is the main constrain when planning a SLN cooperative engagement with IN. The allocation of money through defence budget for regional naval cooperation is limited. Also for a naval exercise considerable amount of money need to be invested. Hence for a developing country like Sri Lanka cost matters.

c. **Tamil Nadu Government.** Tamil Nadu government provides considerable represent in Lok Saba (39 seats). With the defeat of terrorism and due several disputes the closes land mass to Sri Lanka the state of Tamil Nadu at present oppose the Indian Naval cooperation with SLN. Tamil Nadu Chief Minister requested not to send Naval units for SLN and Indian Coast Guard fleet exercise which was held off Trincomalee few years back. Chief Minister J Jayalalitha statement, "This is in complete and callous disregard of the strong views and emotions of the people of Tamil Nadu clearly and unambiguously conveyed in my earlier letters to the Prime Minister, through Assembly resolutions and through protests, agitations and demonstrations by the people of Tamil Nadu"⁷. Even though till today central government of India maintain cordial relationship with Sri Lanka and despite strains, India, Sri Lanka deepen naval ties.

BENEFITS OF NAVAL COMBINED EXERCISES

7. Maritime nations and Navies now live in a new strategic era, technological military revolution, the advent of transnational terrorism and maritime affairs. Hence India Sri Lanka Naval cooperation will benefit for both the countries. These must be seen as reassuring

⁷ Ceylon Today. 'Jayalalithaa writes to PM to protest Sri Lanka-India naval exercise'. Sri Lanka. Ceylon Today daily newspaper, 21 December 2013. Available from <http://www.ceylontoday.lk/> . Accessed [20 August 2015].

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facilities of cooperative engagement by those who shares common interest. The benefits of Naval cooperation can be discuss under followings sub headings:

a. **Regional Cooperation.** Navies can play a vital role in regional cooperation and act as diplomats. Given the extent of maritime domain and the range of challenges to the country. As well as the political sensitivities, legal limitation posed by the reality of national sovereignty and sovereign rights either extend or claimed at sea. Island nation when visited by any of the country Naval unit it flash over the country. It has great impact on mutual trust and cooperation. Even with heavy restrain by Tamil Nadu government not to send vessel to Sri Lanka when Indian ship visited it has sounded and given the message to world that India and Sri Lanka are good friends. Naval cooperation is an opportunities for enhanced the regional cooperation.

b. **Strategical Importance of IOR.** Defence secretary of SL stated during 2013 Galle dialogue “Overall security and stability of the entire Indian Ocean region is critical for the global economy, and Sri Lanka is proud to play its part by fulfilling its responsibilities in its maritime domain”⁸ .The interest towards IOR by many Navies in the world recently increased. Navy is the only sustainable unit which can provide silent defence at sea. The protecting of Sea Lane of Communication (SLOC) major task assigned to SLN. All alone SLN cannot provide the requirement, to have such capabilities Indian and Sri Lankan Naval cooperative engagement is much needed.to do this it is very much essential to carry out combined naval exercises.

⁸ Defence Secretary Mr. Gotabaya Rajapaksa. ‘Sri Lanka seeks constructive, meaningful economic cooperation and the strengthening of genuine diplomatic relationships with its allies’ (Sri Lanka: Key note Address at Galle Dialog 2013, 25th November 2013).

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c. **Practical Knowledge.** Indian Navy can provide vast wealth of practical experience to SLN. IN been sailing around the world it is capable of providing such assistance to SLN. At present SLN officer and sailors possess theoretical knowledge hence the gaining a practical exposure can be achieve through exercise with IN.

d. **Mutual Trust.** The most benefited issue is the enlargement of mutual trust between both countries. Navies can utilize to improve the bond between two nations. And the trainees who are in India also can show their friendly hands and show the good relationship with Indian population that also can gain a massive advantage of improving mutual trust between two nations.

IMPROVEMENT REQUIRED

8. Sri Lanka India Naval Cooperative Engagement requires a lot of improvement. Even Indian Navy provides training aid, the practical exposure need lot of improvement.

a. **Frequent Exercises.** Presently only SLINEX is held annually. The time period to be reduced at least twice a year the frequent exercise should be held. The SLN can participated for frequent fleet exercise held by IN.

b. **SLN Ship Visit to India.** The nearest foreign port to SLN is the Indian ports. It is the best available means to SLN to practice and get exposure with most economical way.

c. **Mutual Understanding/ Trust.** Both countries required to tighten it relationship. Navy can propose the government and can advice the government about

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the benefit of such Naval cooperation. Countries carryout comprehensive bilateral naval cooperation by means for power projection and to enhance the mutual trust among countries.

d. **Financial Aspect.** The investment towards Naval Cooperation should improve. It is worth to spend considerable budget for Naval cooperation. The cost of SLN ship to sail to India will be similar to patrol carried out by OPV. The point is that then SLN can manage to send vessel to Indian ports with mutual cooperation. The result of such visit is worth than money and as discuss it provides great impact on mutual trust.

e. **Onboard Training.** As technical officers already trained on practical by IN the executive officers also can be train onboard as follows:

(1) **Cadet Sea Training.** SLN Cadet can be trained in Indian Naval ship for more practical training. Occasionally SLN Cadet had being trained onboard IN ships, where it should be continued with consistency.

(2) **Long Course Officers.** In future the SLN will start Long course for officers. But with that the even though they good in theory officers will lack of knowledge in practical aspects specially subjects like ASW and Gunnery. Hence to get hands on training onboard ship is much needed. On completion of long course to get practical exposure officers can be attached to IN vessels. So at lest they can see what is the instrument and use of it.

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CONCLUSION

9. In today's world joint naval exercises carry out by almost all the navies in the world. It will provide opportunity for all navies to rehearse the concept of joint naval exercises, and enhance own skills. The SLINEX provide professionalism and share the high tech and skills possessed with Indian navy and Indian navy will obtain how to deal with asymmetric warfare. So the both navies get immense knowledge. SLINEX reflects the long ties of goodwill, friendly relations and mutual cooperation that exist by between India and Sri Lanka. And hope it will long last for ever.

RECOMMENDATIONS

10. Future of India and Sri Lanka Naval cooperative engagement will continue in progressive manner. It is going to be depending on many factors and these factors can be improved through following recommendations. Also in here specially concerns about how this will apply by our navy and what are the areas that can be improved by Sri Lankan Navy.

- a. **Achieve Regional Co-operation with both Navies.** Sri Lankan Navy has to collaborate with regional forces as well as Indian Navy, Indian coastal guard. And carry out combined military exercises. And carry out SLINEX exercises regularly. Moreover both countries can combined with another powerful naval force in IOR region such as Chinese Navy and Australian Navy and carry out combined exercises for achieve regional cooperation with other countries too.

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b. **Joint Naval Operation.** It is recommended that in the post war scenario, the role has to be focused in order to maintain and ensure territorial defence and act against internal and international challenges. One of the main focuses of the role is to execute against sea piracy. Not only piracy both Navies should act in order to blockade the international illegal arms business on the territorial waters, block illegal migrants and asylum seekers, block cargo theft and human smuggling and cease drugs⁹ and weapon smuggling. After highlighting above bilateral maritime issues, cooperation between India and Sri Lanka may include measures such as joint naval patrolling. This will led to control of smuggling and piratical activities, and the strengthening of communication networks. Through cooperation, both can exploit and prevention from about activities and combat maritime terrorism, which are the responsibilities of every country.

c. **Military-technical collaboration.** Compared to naval training and exercise arrangements India is militarily and technically equipped with high technical equipment, weapons and platforms. Therefore SL Navy should gain new and latest technology which is useful for deep sea operations.

d. **Engage in Intelligence Sharing.** SLN should share the intelligence with Indian Navy and regional navies. We saw how much this effected for destroy LTTE floating armouries.

e. **Develop the SLN Fleet.** The SLN fleet should develop strengthen as to operate in deep sea and become blue water navy

f. **Improve the Coast Guard Service.** The coast guard service of SLN should be developed and the necessary legal powers should be granted. And having

⁹ Chaudhury, R R. (2000). India's Maritime Security. Institution for defence studies and analysis, p 66.

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proficient coast guard in India, India can fund and give hand to develop our coast guard to be more proficient coast guard.

g. **Political Considerations.** It is recommended to have a good political relation between two countries otherwise this all efforts will not come a true. Sri Lankan new government have understand this and Indian government also have understand the importance of Sri Lanka been their closest neighbour from sea. Sri Lankan President Mr Maithripala Sirisena visit to India the two sides have agreed to start a National Security Advisor level dialogue between the countries in an effort to re-energise the strategic component¹⁰ of the relationship that has hardly progressed despite strong economic relations.

11. After highlighting these issues, I am suggest that SLINEX and cooperation between two Navies may include measures not only in security such as exploit living and non-living resources, ship-building, weather forecasting and prevention of pollution, which are the responsibilities of every country. And finally recommended to have to carry out this friendship of both Navies for today and for tomorrow.

Trincomalee

23 Aug 15

Word count - 3265

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Lieutenant Commander

Distribution: The Commandant Naval and Maritime Academy

¹⁰ Nataraj G and Sekhani R. 2015. A new era for India–Sri Lanka relations? East Asia Forum [online] Available from <http://www.eastasiaforum.org/> . Accessed [23 August 2015].

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