

Safeguarding National Security through Neo Realistic Approach

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Abstract— *The concept of National Security is an inevitable factor in every country which aims protecting and securing the survival of state. In that context neo realism can be used to identify international (Macro) and Local (Micro) security challenges especially in multi ethnic countries. Neo Realism is usually associated the writings of Kenneth Waltz, who states that power is a key concept in realist theories. It holds the idea that the nature of state is defined by anarchy and distribution of capabilities. Especially an island like Sri Lanka which situated in a strategic location lives in a world of anarchy where states seek to maximise their power relative to other nations for their own survival. Even though we have achieved peace in 2009 still there is a challenge to survive in regional scenario due to multiple threats. Security of a state is about its own survival and when a new security issue emerged, it would justify the use of extraordinary measures to handle them. Therefore it is important to analyse these security challenges through the perspective of neo realism and formulate security policies depending on cooperation and coalitions. This type of method demonstrated the Barry Buzan’s concept of securitization which is a tool of identifying and analysing the challenges of security threats.*

The research problem of the study is to examine how domestic and external factors influence for National Security in Sri Lanka. The paper will offers a brief description of the strategic concerns of Sri Lanka which provides a base for the subsequent discussion. It is expected to elaborate research findings at the conclusion. Data will be collected from secondary sources such as books, articles, journals and websites. In the light of contemporary understanding of security this research will focus on importance of addressing national security in Sri Lanka.

Keywords— Anarchy, Neo-realism, National Security

I. INTRODUCTION

Neo Realism, which is the most influential approach in International Relations can be considered by examining contemporary National Security threats of the country. The concept of Neo Realism was first outlined by Kenneth Waltz in his book “Theory of International Politics” in 1979. According to Neo Realism, each and every nation state in the international system pursue power in order to achieve their own National Interests. National Interest means “what a

nation feels to be necessary to its security and well-being”. (Brookings Institute, 1950). It reflects security is the core national interest in every country. Especially after World War II all nation states engage in strengthening their national security in order to tackle security threats. As neo realists highlighted this may create power competitions among states. It means according to Waltz states try to maximize their share of world power. But if one state attempts to gain too much power, the whole system will collapses. Therefore it is essential to minimize uncertainty among neighbouring countries and identify external threats in a strategic manner.

As a small island nation Sri Lanka was struggling with terrorism since 1980. But after the military victory in 2009 against terrorism and separatism, permanent peace was established in the country. Even though in this post war context peace was established within the country, still Sri Lanka faces tremendous threats and challenges in safeguarding her National Security. National security is defined as the situation of freedom from harmful threats to a given state. It consists of freedom from military attack or coercion and freedom from the erosion of the political, economic and social values. This phenomenon always deals with the ability of a nation to protect its internal values from external security threats.

II. THE APPLICABILITY OF NEO REALISM FOR SRI LANKA

Experience related to the thirty years conflict in Sri Lanka showcased the importance of having sound security policies. Barry Buzan who is a Neo Realists stated that security deals with the pursuit of freedom from threat and the ability of states to maintain their independent identity. Those two main features can be gained through a peaceful and solid international environment. According to Buzan security is a relational phenomenon and because of that relational behaviour national security of any given state cannot be grasped without understanding the regional implications of security. Within this regional level Sri Lanka has the prime responsibility to maintain external relations via friendly means. Kautilya, who is an Indian philosopher has mentioned that enemies of enemy is a friend of an enemy. It also shows the significance of the handling foreign relations in a strategic manner.

The strategic environment of any country is based on the understanding of threats to its own survival. Security is about survival; it is when an issue, presented as posing an existential threat to a designated referent object, justifies the use of extraordinary measures to handle them (Buzan, Weaver and de Wilde, 1998: p.21). This conceptualization named as a process of social construction of threats which includes security measures. Further it legitimizes the use of extraordinary measures for the neutralization of particular threats. This type of strategic practices were followed by Sri Lanka since her independence. As an example the first Prime Minister of post-independence Sri Lanka, D.S Senanayake signed an agreement with the British under the Ceylon Independence Act on 4 February 1948 to preserve intact British air and sea bases in the country. The hidden reason for that agreement was to preserve British air and sea bases in the country. At that time period Britain was considered as an enemy to their sovereignty and independence by India along with the influences of Mahathma Ghandi. Therefore Senanayake implemented his foreign policy in a strategic way to protect the country from external threats. As a wise political leader Senanayake considered the agreement as a safety measure to safeguard the country against Indian influences.

(status quo states). Waltz has defined in his book “Man, State and War” that is based on the anarchical situation. This means there is no centralised authority in an anarchical system. Accordingly states are seen to be in constant fear of the intentions of other states. On the other hand anarchy is a condition of possibility for or “permissive” cause of war. Within an anarchical international system conflicts between states are inevitable.

Due to this behaviour wars occur because there is nothing to prevent them. When it comes to the local context Sri Lanka should formulate her strategies with the understanding of strategic concerns of India which is the big brother of the region. Otherwise the fear between these two states leads to ideological conflicts. Within this scenario the prime motive of any state is survival and employs it to study as to how small states strive for their survival in regional sub-systems of the international system while perceiving ‘a possible threat from the larger states’ (Walt, 1987). According to this perspective Sri Lanka is constantly facing threats from India which is the powerful neighbor in the country. For an instance during the Tamil insurgency in the early 1980 The United National Party (UNP) government perceived the Indian support of the Sri Lankan Tamil militants as a policy of ‘backing the secessionist insurgency. To counter the Indian influence on Sri Lanka, the UNP government began to cultivate closer ties with the West (DeVotta, 1998: p,462-463). It is interesting to note that since 1990s, the Western threat has significantly widened the scope of the security paradigm of Sri Lanka.

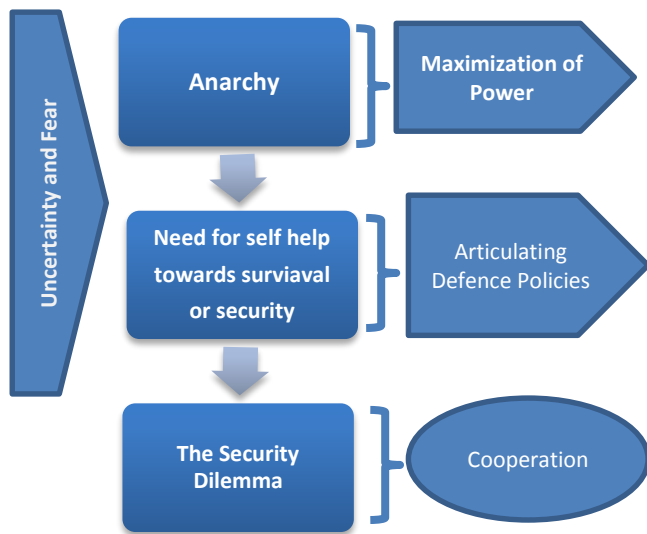


Figure1. The implications of Neo Realism

As shown in figure 1, every states want to know whether other states are determined to use force to alter the balance of power (revisionist states), or whether they are satisfied with it that they have no interest in using force to change it

In any anarchical situation self-help of Nation State ensures their own survival. It means due to the absence of higher authority states face potential threats. In this phenomenon states have no choice rather than put their own interests ahead along with defence policies. Developing a defence policy involves establishing an approach to security issues, prioritizing security threats and making major decisions about the security sector. It always links with the defence policies of the country. It consists of maintaining effective armed forces, implementing civil defense and emergency preparedness measures using intelligence services to detect and defeat or avoid threats and espionage. In addition Neo Realists have identified that balance of power systems have certain conditions in common which are a multiplicity of sovereign states unconstrained by any legitimate central authority. Moreover a defence policy must link with the balance of power as well. Otherwise it will create security dilemma. Security dilemma can be explained as a situation in which states’ action to attain security from a potential attack. Waltz, argue that within this security dilemma more power obtain by one state will make other state insecure and then seek to increase its power as well. That anarchy

forces states to enter recurrent security competition. Herz introduces several aspects of the security dilemma which are the lack of a higher unity, uncertainty and fears about each other's intentions to do harm under anarchy, generates a cycle of power competition through accumulating more power. In the case of Sri Lanka, her close proximity to India seems to have created a specific psychology of insecurity. As K. M. de Silva demonstrates that the country's survival in the post-independence situation was foremost in Prime Minister D. S. Senanayake's thinking. His perception was shaped by the belief that India was the most likely threat to Sri Lanka. Despite these views K.M. Pannikar a historian and a diplomat in India once opined that the internal organization of India on a firm and stable basis with Ceylon and it was the essential prerequisite to a realistic policy of the Indian defence. It emanates that peaceful relations between these two countries are an inalienable requirement for the well-being of both countries. From this point of view the international cooperation which was highly recognized by the neo realists is important to safeguard National Security of these two countries. This approach can be significantly used to resolve issues of illegal poaching between these two countries. Even during the LTTE reign South Indian fishermen violated the International Maritime Boundary Lines to gain more fishing harvest from the territorial sea of the county. The dangerous thing is that Indian fishermen have used internationally banned bottom trawling methods for fishing. Due to bottom trawling, adverse effects were increased especially by causing damages to the sea bed and resources. Moreover destroying of fishing gears of local fishermen by the Indian fishermen creates unrest among local fishing community. Other than that politicians in Tamil Nadu are also trying to create issues regarding a settled bilateral agreement between the two countries. It means a territorial dispute between India and Sri Lanka over the uninhabited island of Kachchathivu which lies in the Palk Strait came into light in 1956. In 1974 an accord was reached between India and Sri Lanka whereby a boundary line was agreed which runs from the Palk Straits to Adam's Bridge. As a result of this accord, the island of Kachchathivu fell within the jurisdiction of Sri Lanka. To resolve the above, Sri Lanka should articulate sound National Security Strategy based on the national military strategy, long-term perspective plan, and force development at the local level. Also policy makers of the country must have a domain knowledge of all aspects of national security including emerging challenges posed by geo-political alignments, developments affecting the nature of foreign policy.

III. CONCLUSION

Sri Lanka required to play a more proactive role in the strategic environment of the region. The geographic,

economic and cultural proximity between Sri Lanka and India always present security challenges for the country. Hence it is essential to have a well-defined security policy which touches the major concepts of Neo Realism. It should focus on policy formation with respect to the decisions including national defence, ethnic issue and maritime issues. As the conclusion it is very clear that no state can survive alone in the current competitive world without making friends and countering enemies. It means no state in the international system including Sri Lanka can deny the maximization of power to cope with the national security challenges. In that sense not only the defence policies but also the alliances are often useful for dealing with dangerous adversaries.

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