

Prospects of Improving Civil-Military Integration to Address Maritime Drug Trafficking in Sri Lanka

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Abstract— Centrality of its location in east west sea lanes has placed Sri Lanka in both advantageous and disadvantageous positions in the context of national security. Though Sri Lanka does not have an immediate threat for her national security in the form of a traditional way, expansions in non-traditional security issues cannot be ruled out easily. Drug trafficking has become one of the serious non-traditional security threats and the existence of the issue is so complex that military alone cannot address it effectively. Therefore, the researcher examined and explored the problem of identifying lapses in civil-military integration in countering drug trafficking and has brought out certain recommendations to enhance such integration. Since this issue mostly affects the Sri Lankan society, the survey method has been used and experts in both military and civil sector in maritime security as well as drugs and narcotics fields have been interviewed to gather primary data. The qualitative approach facilitated the researcher to better analyse their opinions and subsequently test and compare their validity with available literature such as drug apprehension reports, journals and articles. It was revealed that the level of integration between civil and military is at a very lower level in this context. Thus, understanding the gaps between civil and military and their abilities at having effective counter drug mechanisms would benefit society as it is able to have a peaceful, uncorrupted and secure environment. Certainly, this healthy integration would not only be applicable for a drug trafficking scenario, but also to have better counter actions for other non-traditional security issues as well.

Keywords- *Attitudinal Changes, Civil-Military Cooperation, Maritime Domain Awareness, Non-traditional Security Threats*

Introduction

Ensuring 'maritime security' of a country not only allows a stable and peaceful socio-political background in a country, but also a better foundation for the maritime industries to foster sustained productivity. Even though Sri Lanka does not have an immediate threat for its sovereignty and territorial integrity by means of maritime terrorism, it is of utmost importance that we understand the non-traditional security threats which may emerge as transnational crimes due to the strategic location of Sri Lanka in the Indian Ocean. Due to the centrality of its location, Sri Lanka continues to be utilized as a transit point for drug trafficking through the East-west sea lanes (Senaratne, 2015). Certainly, 'Maritime drug trafficking' stands among top positions in the list of non-traditional security threats and recent drug apprehension incidents indicate how serious this issue is.

Undoubtedly, these illegal and immoral activities related to drugs and narcotics cause numerous social, cultural, political, financial and security issues in the country. Along with the trade of illicit drugs, other illegal activities such as money laundering, terrorism, human smuggling become widespread not only within a single country, but in the region. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) terms this route as the 'Southern Route' and it involves the movement of drugs by sea across the Indian Ocean from the Makran Coast to East Africa and the key attraction of the southern route for drug trafficking is the lack of enforcement capacity on the high seas (Cole, 2014).

On the other hand, being a littoral State, the involvement of local fishermen in maritime drug trafficking cannot be easily ruled out. Proper security measures in the entry and exit points to the country are vitally important in controlling maritime drug trafficking issue. According to the

annual report published by the Fishery Department, Sri Lanka consists of a fishing fleet having more than 50000 boats. It includes more than 4000 multi day fishing trawlers capable of operating from 22 fishery harbours around the country. In addition, there are approximately 70 identified fishing vessel landing sites around Sri Lanka. When comparing the strength of the Sri Lanka Navy fleet with the number of fishing fleet and their entry/exit points, it is noteworthy to understand that military alone cannot address the issue effectively. In order to have an effective, efficient and reliable solution for the issue, the cooperation and coordination between military, public and law enforcement entities in the country are of vital importance. The concept of 'Civil-Military integration' is comprehensively being used by many countries to address their numerous challenges. Even though it is being widely used in situations such as disaster management and nation building in Sri Lanka, such integration is observed to be very low in the context of controlling maritime drug trafficking in the country.

Drug Trafficking Scenario in Sri Lanka

Continuous drug apprehension incidents in littorals of Sri Lanka during past few years indicate that Sri Lanka can no longer considered be as a soft transit point for drugs. As per the year annual report of the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB), Cannabis and Heroin are listed as major drugs, transiting through Sri Lanka via east-west sea lanes (International Narcotics Control Board, 2016). The Sri Lankan Government with the association of other entities has taken numerous measures to control the drug trafficking in Sri Lanka in various capacities. For example, Sri Lanka Police Narcotics Bureau (PNB) was introduced in order to strengthen the law enforcement process thus expecting to curtail the spread of illicit drugs in the country (Senaratne, 2015). Further, the Sri Lanka Coast Guard has been vested with powers through its act no.41 of 2009 to act as the main entity of maritime law enforcement.

Despite numerous counteractions taken by the Government, unremitting drugs apprehension incidents in littorals of Sri Lanka indicate that the issue has not been addressed effectively. Since the issue encompasses non-traditional security issues and subsequently the national security of the

country, the focus should go beyond military measures and preferably be a combination of both military and non-military bodies. Therefore, it is significant to study ways of integrating military with non-military stake holders in possible directions such as better surveillance off the seas, real time intelligence sharing, training on equipment and technology in order to address the issue in a broad spectrum.

The drug trafficking scenario in Sri Lanka is mainly attributed to several internal and external factors. The strategic but vulnerable location in the center of the Indian Ocean having close proximity to the 'Golden Triangle' and 'Golden Crescent' is one of the key external factors which cannot be ruled out easily. The Golden Crescent in Asia comprises of Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran and the Golden Triangle comprises of Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam. These two regions are considered as global hubs for heroin as well as related opiate production and trafficking and Sri Lanka continues to be utilized as a transit point for drug smuggling from the 'Golden Triangle' and the 'Golden Crescent'.

The phenomenon of illicit drug trade, drug circulation and drug addiction is not new to the country, but it has reached a level which the Government cannot simply neglect. Not only for Sri Lanka, it has also become a serious issue for regional as well as extra regional countries despite numerous counter mechanisms. In the Sri Lankan scenario, it is not only identified as a serious social and health issue but also a huge challenge to national security due to the wide range of criminal activities related to drugs.



Figure 1: Golden Crescent and Golden Triangle

Source: The Journal 'Maritime Executive'

Scholars have defined the term 'national security' in numerous ways under many perspectives. According to Smith (2005), national security encompasses not only traditional threats, such as organized crime and terrorism, but also threats to economic stability, public health, and impact towards the way of life. This was further proven by an Indian academician Paleri (2008) listing a few major components of national security such as food security, demographic security, geostrategic security, military security, economic security, disaster security, resource security, health security, cyber security and ethnic security. Therefore, it is imperative to understand the impact of drug related issues on these elements to identify the real threat to national security of the country. As per the records available in the National Dangerous Drug Control Board (NDDCB, 2017), 1762 crime incidents were reported after illicit drug use and those were related to grave and minor crimes. In addition, drug rehabilitation programs incur a financial loss of Rs. 77,182.39 per month for a single drug patient which creates a huge impact on the economy of the country (Hewawaduge and Dorabawila, 2015).

It is usually argued that some of the results of the production, trafficking and consumption of narcotic drugs are to "undermine national institutions, weaken Government authorities, encourage corruption and contribute to political instability" (Mansfield and Whetton, 1996). While accepting this view, it can be argued that the reverse can also be true. That is, corruption, political instability and a weakened State can be a cause for production, trafficking and consumption of narcotic drugs as well. Even the experiences of Afghanistan and Myanmar would support this view. Thus, it is clear that this is a vicious circle.

Maritime Security Concerns in Sri Lanka

The bitter lessons learnt by Sri Lankans from its irregular warfare over three decades certainly opened the forum to think differently to face future challenges. As an island nation largely depending on the sea, the importance of maritime security towards achieving its national objectives cannot be easily ruled out. Ensuring maritime security by preventing unlawful elements use our oceans in the present scenario will have a significant influence on the future generation too.

Bueger (2015) states that Maritime Security is strongly related to four concepts; national security, marine environment, economic development and human security and those are interconnected with each other like a matrix. Most importantly, he has pointed out that 'Drug trafficking' has close relationships with human security and economic development.

A. Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA)

Maritime domain awareness is predominantly a security matter which encompasses all maritime related activities. Scholars have defined it in many ways and most commonly it is defined as 'effective understanding of anything related to the maritime domain that could influence the safety, security, economy and environment'. Further, it describes that the purpose of MDA is to facilitate the commander's ability to make informed, timely and accurate decisions in support of the full range of military operations (Hutchins *et al.*, 2009).

The concept of Maritime Domain Awareness is not a very old phenomenon even for modern countries. Therefore, countries such as Sri Lanka are not widely using this concept in order to address maritime security challenges in present context. However, Sri Lanka Coast Guard is in the process of enhancing MDA by strengthening relationships with private stake holders and regional Coast Guards. Since Sri Lankan Coast Guard possesses law enforcement authority, it has better opportunities to reach the community through better coordination and cooperation.

Though most navies had not paid much attention to 'Maritime Domain Awareness' in the past it must be addressed much broadly in present day scenario due to its complexity and diversity. The sea borne attack on Mumbai in year 2009 is the best example for difficulty in implementing proper MDA and it was a clear eye opener for all maritime nations how terrorists managed to use routine fishing boats for their missions without getting detected. However, the Government of India has taken a number of steps to strengthen their boarder security just after this incident and those steps were published in the article released by the Press Information Bureau of the Ministry of Defence, on the topic of 'Initiative to Strengthen Coastal Security' (Indian Navy, 2018). According to that, the Indian Navy and Coast Guard have conducted many regular exercises with the

participation of other state agencies and could be able to enhance the inter-agency coordination, between nearly 15 national and state agencies. In the year 2014 alone, the Indian Navy and Coast Guard have conducted many awareness campaigns for fishermen in the West border and their cooperation was considered as 'eyes' and 'ears' for Defence forces and they were indispensable for national security in the country.

B. Intelligence and surveillance operations

Due to its emerging strategic environment in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), Sri Lanka is under numerous non-traditional security threats which need to be addressed in a comprehensive manner. However, at the moment, Sri Lanka does not contain with any MDA systems and it does several surveillance operations in coordination with Sri Lanka Airforce. Yet, several methods such as human intelligence, coastal observation points (radar stations) and maritime patrols are being conducted by the Sri Lanka Navy at present in order to monitor and prevent illegal maritime activities in littorals of Sri Lanka.

C. Role of the fishermen in MDA

According to the statistics published in the official website of the Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Department (2018), Sri Lanka is comprised with a larger fishing fleet with 32,025 motorized boats including 4,447 boats which are being fished offshore. In addition, there are 21,963 non-motorized boats which are operating in marine fishing. Further, the fisheries sector of Sri Lanka accounts for more than 1.8% of its national GDP. Therefore, fishing operation activities play a major role in this island nation which needs to address it in a very sensitive manner (Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, 2018).

Most of the scholars believe that the supply reduction strategies through narcotic drug law enforcement are totally inadequate in Sri Lanka. Only 2.7% of the total supply of heroin is detected. Besides only about 54% of the heroin detections are at the point of entry and the rest in the course of domestic distribution and or consumption. Sarvanathan (1999) argues that being an island state, it should be relatively easier to cut off supplies at the point of entry itself. However, he believes that the lack of effective maritime domain awareness has hampered detection of sea-borne heroin smuggling. Yet, present day role of the Sri Lanka Navy with its limited number of large

vessels in addressing the issue is undoubtedly commendable.

Civil-Military Integration

There are numerous tasks and responsibilities that the military has to carry out which are not exactly in the conventional nature of a military. Those situations put more emphasis on civil-military cooperation. However, there is a considerable difference between the terms civil-military relations (CMR) and civil-military cooperation (CIMIC). The concept of civil-military relations is much more extensive and comprehensive whereas civil-military cooperation is regulated by certain specific agreements. However, it is clear that the term 'civil-military relations' is rarely defined and more often it is referred to as the relationship or integration between civilian and military institutes aiming to solve each other's problems.

Lavallee (2010) identifies the globalizing of the defence industrial sector through the concept of civil-military integration as a significant policy of the Government of the United States after the 9/11 attack. In his paper he describes the merits and limitations of integrating a commercial sector with military. Integration between the private sector and military on the process of industrialization can be adapted into the maritime sector through the procurement of advanced systems which can be utilized for monitoring vast sea areas.

Pathak and Surendra (2011) introduces few theories of civil-military relations and their three pillar theory is well emphasized as it can be exercised through institutions ranging from natural laws that empower the Ministry of Defence, to supervision committees and executive bodies such as military, police forces, and intelligence agencies. Thus, it is important to survey the feasibility of applying concepts of civil-military cooperation of the Sri Lankan context.

Allied Joint Doctrine for Civil-Military Cooperation

As one of the military facilitators, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has identified a comprehensive approach for the civil military cooperation and produced it as a doctrine. This permits the military to reach their

desired objectives by coordinating, harmonizing, synchronizing and de-conflicting the activities with civil actors, consequently linking military maneuvers with political objectives (Lavallee, 2010). Initially, it has identified the evolving strategic environment and incorporated threats and implications for military objectives. Therefore, several principles for the Civil-Military cooperative mechanism have been identified below.

- i. Understand the environment.
- ii. Understand the objectives of the civil and military actors.
- iii. Gain trust and respect.
- iv. Integrated planning.
- v. Effective communication.
- vi. Operate within the law.

The Coast Watch System of the Philippines

Philippines, an archipelago state in South East Asia has been under threat of many non-traditional security issues due to its vulnerable location. In order to address the issue, the Philippine Government with the assistance of Australia and US has initiated a new concept titled 'Coast Watch System (CWS)' which was conceptualized in year 2006. Its vision is to promote synergy and collaboration among actors while managing resources to achieve common objective. With the idea of having effective and efficient counter mechanisms, a few key functions such as developing a common operating picture, collecting, consolidating and integrating all data relevant to maritime security, providing real time information among all stake holders, were taken care of by the National Defence Research Institute of Philippines (Rabasa and Chalk, 2012). The whole system was coordinated by the Maritime Research Information Center and presently Philippines is in the process of developing a maritime group that will be responsible for law enforcement procedures. This MDA mechanism also specifically counters non-traditional security issues such as maritime drug trafficking, having an effective collaboration between MDA centers belonging to military and non-military sectors of the country.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The primary objective of this study was to identify the prospects of enhancing Civil-Military integration which can be a positively influence on

maritime drug trafficking within the Sri Lankan context. Scholarly articles, journals and reports taken from various institutions comprise secondary data and special emphasis was given to joint civil-military doctrine of NATO and the Coastal Watch System of the Philippines.

The dynamic, complex and unorthodox environment of a problem in this nature requires a comprehensive approach with a common sense of purpose, shared understanding, effective collaboration and appropriate resourcing among both civil and military stake holders under one central authority. Identifying each other's working environments, their strengths and weaknesses and their responsibilities would ensure the reaching of this common goal in time. Following are the recommendations of this study.

i. To have a Government sponsored central authority to carry out effective coordination among all the stake holders including national and international actors in every activity related to counter maritime drug trafficking.

ii. In order to have a comprehensive joint approach for the issue, developing a policy plan containing the following aspects is recommended;

(1) To create the understanding and clear perception that this threat is a common enemy and that they are all working towards a common objective appreciating their own areas of responsibilities.

(2) To conduct campaigns, awareness programmes, common forums, joint exercises with the purpose of building confidence, respect, trust and mutual understanding among all stake holders.

(3) To encourage practical cooperation among all stake holders at all levels such as integrated planning efforts and conducting joint operations.

(4) To have a national level mechanism to gather, process and disseminate all pertinent information and intelligence at an appropriate time with relevant stake holders.

(5) To facilitate access to technology and resources in both civil and military when necessary.

iii. To re-define the legal powers entrusted on military as well as the Sri Lanka Coast Guard, in

order to have speedy and transparent legal actions.

iv. To implement a 'Ship Rider Agreement' to facilitate civilian authorities to have better understanding and access to maritime security concerns of the country.

e. To provide opportunities for military to participate in civil forums /discussions like SARICS (South Asian Regional Intelligence sharing Council) and SRP (Southern Route Partnership).

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