

**Maritime Security Issues between India and Sri Lanka:  
A Study of Strategic Cooperation in Selected Cases**



**By**

**Sandya Nishanthi Gunasekara**

**BA (Hons) in International Studies, MA in Political Science**

**FGS/03/02/10/2009/01**

**University of Kelaniya**

ප්‍රවේශ අංකය:	854
වර්ග අංකය:	

Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies, University of Kelaniya for the  
award of the

**Degree of Master of Philosophy in International Studies**

**November, 2012**



## **Maritime Security Issues between India and Sri Lanka: A Study of Strategic Cooperation in Selected Cases**

### **Abstract**

India and Sri Lanka formulate policies and strategies on SethuSamudram Ship Canal Project (SSCP), fishermen issue and non-traditional issues at sea which reflect different security perspectives. With reference to the chosen three issue areas, the study inquires the nature of threats, current level of cooperation, reasons why cooperation differ from one issue to other and the strategies that both states can formulate to benefit in long run. To analyze the nature of threat, Barry Buzan's security analysis is used. He classified five sectors comprising national security and to which threats they are vulnerable. The question on current level of cooperation is answered with SWOT method which analyzes negative and positive aspects of cooperation between India and Sri Lanka. Strategies are proposed to reduce the risk factors and increase benefits. Positives are identified as Strengths and Opportunities (S-O) whereas the negatives are identified as Weaknesses and Threats (W-T). Differences in cooperation are analyzed with using three theories namely Realism, Game theory inspired by Axelrod and Keohane's Contractualist theory.

Concerning the SSCP India's conduct has been dominated by unilateralism therefore the level of cooperation between India and Sri Lanka to create peaceful ocean policy in terms of SSCP is "nominal". The strategy proposed for further cooperation between India and Sri Lanka over SSCP is termed as "Negatives Control Strategy". This strategy is based on the joint action of strengths (S) and opportunities (O) in decreasing weaknesses (W) and threats (T), therefore abating overall negatives. The efforts of cooperation between the two states in terms of fishermen issue are relatively high and can be termed "significant". Therefore the strategy proposed is "Strengthening Strategy" which is based on the strengthening of positives, both internal and external to the bilateral area, assuming that by doing so, negatives will be critically abated and bypassed or absorbed by positives. Such a strategy should be applied where it is possible to act on already large, strong, stable strengths (S) and opportunities (O), to spur rest of the system, transforming or mitigating the weight a few, irrelevant weaknesses (W) and threats (T). In terms of non-traditional Issues both states have already expressed their desire to coordinate each other and other powerful states. The main argument is that nation states are concerned first and foremost with absolute gains rather than relative gains to other nations. This means that unilateral effort is not always fruitful. The level of cooperation is in a "modest" level. The proposed strategy to address non-traditional threats is "Mobilization Strategy" for context control which emphasizes the effect of strengths (S) and opportunities (O) on the negative (T) context, which poses serious challenges to the establishment of a positive system. This strategy is appropriate where external threats (T) are so overwhelming or widespread, that it becomes necessary to exploit strengths (S) and opportunities (O) to limit the influence of external threats (T).

**Key Words:** SethuSamudram Ship Canal Project, fishermen issue, non-traditional issues, security, SWOT, cooperation