

Ocean Resources and Maritime Strategy for Sri Lanka

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This paper traces the geographical and strategical importance of Sri Lanka in the Indian Ocean with special emphasis on early trade in Sri Lanka before the arrival of colonial powers in the 17th century.

This paper also consider the ocean resources in the exclusive Economic Zone of Sri Lanka and the further extension of the EEZ by delineation of the outer edge of the continental shelf by the year 2009 under the UNCLOS. This new area is supposed to be rich of hydrocarbons, millions of years.

Sri Lanka Maritime strategy should not be limited only to curb LTTE activities at sea and the coastal areas. The role of the Sri Lanka Navy should be limited only to costal surveillance. We should be able to guard our off shore resources specially so with acquiring more off shore sea area and possibility of detecting oil in our sea area.

With the implementation of the Seethe Samudram ship canal project by the government of India the maritime environment has taken a turn in trade, marine environment and defense related issues. Sri Lanka s Maritime strategy has to cater for this new development as well.

The future of our country could depend heavily on exploitation of ocean resources, renewable as well as non renewable. Therefore, our maritime strategy should be capable of protecting those agencies exploiting such resources and assisting in collecting scientific data which would assist in such exploitation projects. Being the guarding of the sea, Sri Lanka Navy has to play a major role in the Maritime strategy of Sri Lanka. This paper examines and suggests a development of a maritime strategy commensurate with our future maritime objectives and the role of the Sri Lankan Navy.

Key Words: Ocean resources; Maritime strategy; Sri Lanka; Economic Zone; Government

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