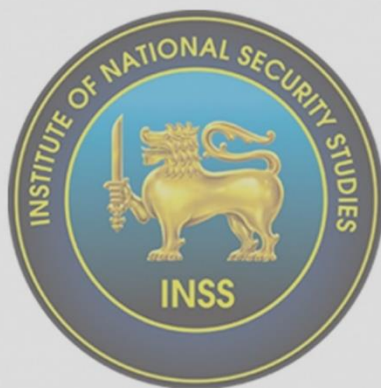


INSS

NATIONAL SECURITY

PAPERS

Volume VI





INSTITUTE OF NATIONAL SECURITY STUDIES

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ABOUT THE JOURNAL

Institute of National Security Studies (INSS) explores and researches on an array of issues pertaining to the national security of Sri Lanka. This journal is a compilation of such valuable academic work produced by the staff of INSS doing their tenure of employment over the past few years. The aim of this publication is to build awareness on pressing national security issues and threats, challenging Sri Lanka and proposes analysis and recommendations to decision makers and public leaders for addressing those challenges as viewed by authors of each paper. The journal of national security papers will no doubt meet research needs and as such are compiled with authentic materials with quality content on various facets of national security. All papers included in this publication have already been published elsewhere either online or in printed form in newspapers or publications of other academic organizations and have been reproduced by obtaining the final draft sent for its initial printing by each author.

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Research Assistant

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FOREWORD



As the Overlooking Director General of the Institute of National Security Studies (INSS), it gives me great pleasure to share a few words about the 6th volume of our publication, titled “National Security Papers Vol. VI.” This volume comprises 20 papers authored by INSS staff during their tenure, reflecting a unique and encouraging trend of increased participation in scholarly activities within our institute.

The content of this publication offers a rich exploration of various facets of national security. Commander Amila Prasanga, a Military Research Officer at INSS representing the Sri Lanka Navy has made a significant contribution with his research paper. This paper delves into a critical topic, “Fostering Maritime Connectivity in South Asia: Role of Regional Organizations”. Notably, this paper was presented at renowned conferences including the Biennial International Conference of the Indian Association for South Asian Studies (IASAS) 2023. Commander Prasanga's articles, namely “Sri Lanka’s Quest for Strategic Equilibrium” and “Lead the Fight against Climate Change and Transnational Crime in the Indian Ocean,” offer a unique perspective on national security. These insights significantly contribute to the discourse, offering valuable viewpoints on strategic equilibrium and the challenges posed by climate change and transnational crime in the Indian Ocean region.

W. D. S. Madhavi, an Intern (Research) at INSS and a graduate student specializing in international relations at the University of Colombo, explores the critical issue of “Food Insecurity: An Apex Threat to National Security”. This article sheds light on the profound implications of food insecurity as a primary threat to national security.

Lieutenant Colonel Nalin Samaranayake, a Military Research Officer at INSS representing the Sri Lanka Army, contributes significantly to the national security discourse through three articles. These articles cover some critical topics, including the “Trail of Plastic Pollution across Sri Lanka,” “Deforestation and Biodiversity Loss in Sri Lanka’s Rainforests,” and “Balancing Domestic Imperatives/Global Dynamics in Sri Lanka.”

Chamathka Sewmini, an undergraduate with a background in international relations, served as a Research Intern at INSS. She has authored two timely articles: “Sri Lankan Perspective on Insecurity Dilemma” and “Urgent Need to Regulate

Sri Lanka's Cryptocurrency Market.” Chamathka provides valuable insights into the nuanced challenges the nation faces, offering a comprehensive examination of the insecurity dilemma from a local standpoint. Additionally, she explores the critical importance of regulatory measures for the country's cryptocurrency market, addressing contemporary issues in the financial landscape.

Thamindu Devinda, a student of Metropolitan College with a background in international relations, served as an Intern (Research) at INSS. His article, titled “Changing Dimensions in Power: The Role of India, China, and Sri Lanka's Predicament”, delves into the evolving dynamics of power in the global arena, particularly focusing on the roles played by India and China.

Helani Yapa Bandara, an undergraduate of the General Sir John Kotelawala Defence University with a background in social sciences served as an Intern (Research) at INSS, has made significant contributions with two insightful articles. The first article, “Human Security Implications of Discrimination against Women in the Workplace,” critically examines the broader implications of gender-based discrimination within professional settings, particularly focusing on its impact on human security. In her second article, “Climate Change: A Red Flag for Environmental Security in Sri Lanka,” Helani explores the environmental dimensions of national security, highlighting the critical role climate change plays in posing challenges to Sri Lanka's environmental security.

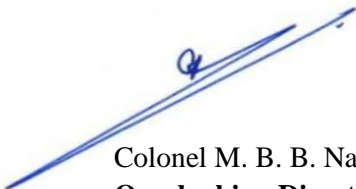
Thusitha Bulathgama, a current Research Assistant at INSS, provides insightful commentary on his work titled “Climate Change: An Alarming Security Threat”. Through a comprehensive analysis, his commentary underscores the urgency of recognizing climate change as a significant and alarming security threat, emphasizing the imperative for proactive measures to address its far-reaching implications on national and global security. Thusitha has also published an article titled “Artificial Intelligence: The New Way of Solving Crimes,” exploring the innovative role of artificial intelligence in modern crime-solving methodologies.

Military Research Officer Wing Commander Udith Pathirana, representing the Sri Lanka Air Force at INSS, contributes comprehensive insights through his two articles. In "Strengthening Financial Resilience and Ensuring Public Welfare," he addresses strategies to enhance financial resilience for societal well-being, emphasizing the interconnectedness between financial stability and public welfare. In his second article, "Implications for Society and National Security," Wing Commander Pathirana explores the broader societal and national security repercussions of contemporary issues, offering a nuanced perspective on the

multifaceted challenges faced by the country.

Charani Patabendige, Acting Research Analyst and Research Assistant with a legal background, makes significant contributions through three articles. In her work on lessons learned from Aragalaya 2022, she reflects on the implications of a key event, offering valuable insights for future considerations. Additionally, her exploration of human security perspectives in hate speech and analysis of "Psychological Motives Behind Investing in Pyramid Schemes Jeopardizing Security" provide a unique legal lens on these critical societal `with hate speech and financial security threats. Charani's diverse expertise is further recognized as she holds the position of Honorary Associate Research Fellow at INSS.

I express my sincere appreciation and also congratulate all the authors for their hard work. Their contributions not only strengthen the government's understanding of threats to national security but will also undoubtedly influence future generations. This publication by the INSS is a valuable addition to the ever-expanding body of knowledge, available free to all, especially to students, military professionals, researchers, and academia in the field of national security, both in Sri Lanka and abroad.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'M. B. B. Nalin Herath', is written over a series of parallel diagonal lines.

Colonel M. B. B. Nalin Herath RSP
Overlooking Director General

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Fostering Maritime Connectivity in South Asia: Role of Regional Organizations

By Commander Amila Prasanga

Published on 3rd Biennial International Conference of the Indian Association for South Asian Studies (IASAS) 2023, Nagananda International Institute for Buddhist Studies (NIIBS), 25th July 2023

Abstract

Maritime connectivity plays a vital role in fostering economic growth, regional integration, and geopolitical stability in South Asia. The efficient flow of goods, services, and ideas through maritime routes is crucial for the region's economic development and integration. However, there are various challenges that need to be addressed to ensure security and sustainability in the maritime domain. Regional organizations have emerged as key actors in fostering cooperation and connectivity among countries in South Asia. The primary objective of this study is to examine the importance of maritime connectivity in South Asia and explore the role of regional organizations in promoting collaboration and integration in the region. To achieve the objectives of this study, a qualitative research approach (i.e., content analysis) is utilized. The findings reveal that maritime trade plays a significant role in the South Asian economy, with a substantial share of the region's exports and imports being handled by South Asian ports. Challenges faced include political tensions, inadequate infrastructure, and bureaucratic hurdles that impede the progress of maritime connectivity. Regional organizations, such as the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), and Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), play a vital role in promoting maritime cooperation and connectivity in South Asia. These organizations serve as platforms for dialogue, cooperation, and coordination among South Asian countries. They facilitate initiatives to enhance maritime connectivity, including infrastructure development, port connectivity, maritime security, and capacity building. Successful initiatives, such as the establishment of transnational shipping routes and the harmonization of trade regulations, have positively impacted maritime connectivity in the region. To further strengthen the role of regional organizations in fostering maritime connectivity, several strategies need to be implemented. They include 1) enhancing institutional frameworks within these organizations to ensure effective implementation of maritime connectivity initiatives; 2) promoting information sharing among member states and relevant stakeholders for enhancing understanding and cooperation on maritime connectivity issues, and 3) facilitating investment and technology transfer in maritime infrastructure development. Additionally,

encouraging public and private investments in ports, logistics facilities, and connectivity projects can significantly enhance efficiency and sustainability. Technology transfer and capacity building programs can further enhance the region's maritime capabilities. Fostering people-to-people exchanges through cultural exchanges, educational programs, and tourism initiatives can contribute to building trust, understanding, and cooperation among the people of South Asian countries. Most importantly, strengthening maritime security cooperation is essential to address piracy, smuggling, and maritime terrorism. Collaboration among regional organizations, navies, and coast guards can enhance maritime security measures and ensure the safety and stability of maritime routes. In conclusion, regional organizations play a crucial role as catalysts for fostering maritime cooperation and connectivity among countries in the South Asian region. However, given the complexity of maritime security challenges in the region, there is a pressing need for the establishment of an Indian Ocean Treaty Organization (IOTO) as a mechanism to further strengthen efforts in fostering maritime connectivity and security in South Asia and the broader region. The IOTO would provide a comprehensive platform for member states to collaborate on maritime security matters, address common challenges, and ensure the safety and stability of maritime routes.

Keywords: *Maritime Connectivity, South Asia, Regional Organizations, Indian Ocean Treaty Organization*

1. INTRODUCTION

Maritime connectivity plays a pivotal role in fostering economic growth, regional integration, and geopolitical stability in South Asia. With extensive coastlines and a strategic location, the efficient flow of goods, services, and ideas through maritime routes is vital for the region's economic development and integration into the global economy (UNCTAD, 2022). Regional organizations have emerged as key actors in promoting maritime connectivity by facilitating collaboration, fostering trade, and addressing common challenges (Islam, 2021). However, despite the growing importance of maritime connectivity in the region, there is a research gap regarding the specific role played by these organizations in fostering maritime connectivity in South Asia. This study aims to address this research gap by exploring the contributions of regional organizations and proposing strategies to strengthen their role in enhancing maritime connectivity.

The research problem at the heart of this study is to comprehensively examine the role of maritime connectivity in promoting regional development in South Asia. While it is well-established that maritime connectivity is crucial for economic growth and regional integration, there is a need to delve deeper into the specific ways in which maritime connectivity contributes to the region's development. Additionally,

the study seeks to understand the challenges and opportunities faced by regional organizations in enhancing maritime connectivity, and how these organizations can effectively address the barriers to foster greater connectivity.

1.1 Research Objectives

Based on the research questions, the objectives of this study are as follows:

- I. To examine the role of maritime connectivity in promoting regional development in South Asia by analyzing its impact on economic growth, trade facilitation, and regional integration.
- II. To identify the challenges faced by regional organizations in enhancing maritime connectivity.
- III. To propose actionable recommendations for strengthening the role of regional organizations in fostering maritime connectivity in South Asia.

1.2 Significance of the Study

This study holds significant implications for policymakers, researchers, and stakeholders in the field of maritime connectivity and regional development in South Asia. By comprehensively examining the role of maritime connectivity and the contributions of regional organizations, the study will offer valuable insights into how enhanced connectivity can bolster economic growth, promote regional integration, and strengthen geopolitical stability. The findings will aid policymakers in formulating effective strategies to leverage maritime connectivity for the region's development and prosperity.

Furthermore, understanding the challenges faced by regional organizations in promoting maritime connectivity will enable policymakers to address these obstacles more effectively, leading to more efficient and coordinated efforts in fostering connectivity. The proposed recommendations will serve as actionable steps for regional organizations and governments to enhance their roles and cooperation in promoting maritime connectivity in South Asia.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study follows a qualitative research approach, to explore the significance of maritime connectivity and the role of regional organizations in fostering cooperation in South Asia. This qualitative research technique involves a systematic examination of existing literature, reports and policy documents and stakeholder interviews relevant to maritime connectivity and regional organizations in South Asia. The content analysis serves as the primary method for data analysis.

The study concentrates on three prominent regional organizations: the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), and the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC). Focusing on these organizations allows the research to gain valuable insights into their initiatives, challenges, and impact on fostering maritime connectivity in South Asia.

In the process of selecting the regional organizations for analysis, purposive sampling methods are employed. Purposive sampling enables the researcher to intentionally choose organizations that align with the study's objectives. Through content analysis, the study identifies key themes, patterns, and insights that shed light on the challenges and opportunities associated with maritime connectivity in the region. This approach ensures to provide relevant and meaningful information about the role of these key regional organizations in promoting maritime cooperation and connectivity in South Asia.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Maritime connectivity is a critical factor in the economic and geopolitical landscape of South Asia, a region marked by extensive coastlines, strategic maritime positions, and a growing emphasis on trade and regional integration. As the region seeks to leverage its maritime advantages, numerous questions arise regarding the contributions, challenges, and strategies related to maritime connectivity.

To underscore the significance of maritime connectivity in South Asia, recent statistics are illuminating. In 2021, South Asian ports played a pivotal role in handling the region's trade, accounting for approximately 42% of the area's exports and an even more substantial 64% of imports (UNCTAD, 2022). Moreover, the East-West shipping routes, especially those connecting Asia, Europe, and the United States, constituted a significant share of global containerized trade at around 40% in the same year (UNCTAD, 2022). These figures not only emphasize the crucial role of South Asian maritime links in the global trade network but also underscore the economic relevance of maritime connectivity for the region itself.

South Asia stands out as one of the world's fastest-growing regions, boasting a formidable combined GDP that exceeds a staggering \$3.5 trillion (World Bank, 2022). This economic vitality is intricately tied to the region's pivotal role as a major global trade hub, a fact underscored by its contribution of approximately 3.5% to world merchandise exports (WTO, 2022). This bustling trade landscape hinges heavily on the activities of major ports in the region, with over 90% of South Asia's international trade being expertly handled by key ports like Mumbai, Colombo, and Chittagong, as reported by UNCTAD in 2022. These ports serve as vital conduits for



the exchange of goods and commodities, underlining their critical significance to the region's economic dynamism and global trade interactions.

3.1 SAARC's Contribution to Advancing Maritime Connectivity in South Asia

SAARC Agreement on Coastal Shipping (1993): SAARC has played a pivotal role in fostering maritime connectivity through initiatives such as the SAARC Agreement on Coastal Shipping (SAARC Secretariat, 1993). This agreement has been instrumental in promoting coastal shipping activities among member countries, facilitating the smoother movement of goods and fostering closer economic ties within the region.

SAARC Multimodal Transport Study (2006): Another significant milestone in SAARC's efforts to enhance maritime connectivity is the SAARC Multimodal Transport Study (SAARC Secretariat, 2006). This study reflects SAARC's commitment to exploring comprehensive integration among various modes of transportation, including road, rail, air, and maritime routes. By doing so, it aims to significantly improve regional trade dynamics and overall connectivity.

Promotion of Regional Connectivity Projects (2006): SAARC has also been at the forefront of promoting transformative regional connectivity projects (SAARC Secretariat, 2006). These projects have included the development of transnational shipping routes and the establishment of direct sea links between member countries. Such endeavors have been essential in not only enhancing maritime connectivity but also in strengthening economic collaboration among South Asian nations.

SAARC's proactive involvement in these initiatives underscores its dedication to catalyzing maritime connectivity in South Asia. These efforts have not only facilitated the smoother flow of goods and services but have also contributed significantly to the economic growth and development of the entire region.

3.2 BIMSTEC's Contribution to Advancing Maritime Connectivity in South Asia

BIMSTEC Coastal Shipping Agreement (2017): BIMSTEC, recognizing the critical role of coastal shipping in bolstering maritime connectivity, has actively promoted this mode of transport among its member countries (BIMSTEC, 2017). Through the BIMSTEC Coastal Shipping Agreement, member nations have worked together to facilitate the seamless movement of goods and passengers along their coastlines. This initiative has not only enhanced maritime connectivity but has also contributed to regional economic growth and integration.

BIMSTEC Master Plan on Transport Connectivity (2018): A significant milestone in

BIMSTEC's commitment to improving regional connectivity is the BIMSTEC Master Plan on Transport Connectivity (BIMSTEC, 2018). This comprehensive plan encompasses the development of road, rail, air, and maritime transportation networks. By integrating these various modes of transport, BIMSTEC aims to significantly enhance regional trade and connectivity. This initiative underscores BIMSTEC's dedication to fostering robust maritime connectivity.

Maritime Security Cooperation (2022): BIMSTEC has also recognized the importance of addressing maritime security challenges to ensure the safety and stability of maritime routes (BIMSTEC, 2022). The organization has taken significant steps to enhance maritime security cooperation among its member states. By doing so, BIMSTEC not only ensures secure sea lanes but also strengthens the foundation for increased maritime connectivity and trade within the South Asian region.

BIMSTEC's proactive involvement in these initiatives highlights its commitment to catalyzing maritime connectivity in South Asia. By promoting coastal shipping, developing comprehensive transport plans, and addressing maritime security challenges, BIMSTEC plays a pivotal role in fostering closer economic ties and facilitating the movement of goods and people across the region.

3.3 IORA's Initiatives in Advancing Maritime Connectivity in South Asia

Blue Economy Promotion (2014): IORA has placed a significant emphasis on promoting the blue economy—a strategy that encourages the sustainable utilization of marine resources (IORA, 2014). By advocating for responsible and environmentally conscious use of maritime resources, IORA contributes to the long-term viability of South Asia's oceans and coastal areas. This focus on the blue economy fosters economic growth and regional integration while ensuring the preservation of marine ecosystems.

IORA Action Plan (2017): IORA's commitment to enhancing maritime connectivity is evident in its comprehensive Action Plan (IORA, 2017). This plan outlines various initiatives aimed at fostering greater cooperation and connectivity among member states. By implementing projects that promote maritime infrastructure development and trade facilitation, IORA actively contributes to strengthening the maritime links within South Asia.

Information Sharing and Capacity Building (2017): Recognizing the importance of building maritime capabilities, IORA has prioritized information sharing and capacity building among its member states (IORA, 2017). Through these efforts, IORA enhances the technical and operational skills of its members, which are vital for safe and efficient maritime operations. This focus on capacity building ensures that South

Asian countries can maximize the benefits of maritime connectivity.

Maritime Safety and Security Working Group (2018): IORA has established a dedicated Maritime Safety and Security Working Group to address maritime security challenges (IORA, 2018). By fostering collaboration among member states and developing strategies to combat threats such as piracy and smuggling, IORA contributes to the safety and stability of maritime routes. This, in turn, ensures that South Asia's maritime connectivity remains resilient and secure.

IORA's multifaceted approach, encompassing the promotion of the blue economy, the implementation of action plans, capacity building, and maritime security initiatives, underscores its pivotal role in advancing maritime connectivity in South Asia. Through these efforts, IORA contributes to economic growth, regional integration, and the sustainable development of the region's maritime resources.

3.4 Challenges to Maritime Connectivity in South Asia

While maritime connectivity offers immense potential for South Asia, it is not devoid of challenges. A series of interrelated factors hinder the region's full exploitation of its maritime advantages.

Security Concerns: Maritime security challenges, such as smuggling and terrorism, have emerged as significant threats to the safety and stability of maritime routes in South Asia (Smith, 2022). These security threats not only disrupt trade but also jeopardize the lives of sailors and passengers, impacting the overall maritime environment.

Diverse National Interests: The diverse national interests of South Asian countries can complicate the alignment on maritime connectivity initiatives (Johnson, 2021). Economic disparities, varying geopolitical interests, and distinct trade priorities often hinder collective efforts aimed at promoting regional integration.

Resource Constraints: Limited financial resources and budget constraints pose formidable challenges for investing in maritime infrastructure development (Brown, 2020). The scarcity of funding can result in the sluggish development of ports, logistics facilities, and connectivity projects, thereby undermining the efficiency of maritime trade.

Lack of Regional Coordination: A noticeable lack of coordination among member states and regional organizations has been observed, leading to delays in the implementation of maritime connectivity policies and the execution of joint initiatives (Smith, 2022). The absence of effective coordination mechanisms exacerbates these

issues.

Intra-regional Trade Barriers: Tariffs, non-tariff barriers, and trade policies among South Asian countries often obstruct intra-regional trade and disrupt the smooth flow of goods through maritime routes (Brown, 2020). Addressing these trade barriers is crucial to fully realize the potential of maritime connectivity.

External Influences: Geopolitical dynamics, including the involvement of external powers, can significantly influence regional projects and initiatives (Smith, 2022). The actions and interests of external actors may impact the overall cooperation and coordination among South Asian countries in promoting maritime connectivity.

Lack of Political Will: Limited commitment and political will among some member states can slow progress in prioritizing maritime connectivity (Johnson, 2021). A unified and strong political commitment is essential to overcoming these challenges and driving collective efforts in the region.

Maritime connectivity is an indispensable driver of economic growth, regional integration, and geopolitical stability in South Asia, as highlighted by recent statistics. However, it is also accompanied by a complex web of challenges that demand careful consideration. Regional organizations are pivotal in addressing these challenges, providing a platform for dialogue, cooperation, and coordination. Through a series of strategic initiatives and policy frameworks, these organizations seek to enhance maritime connectivity and, consequently, regional development in South Asia.

3.5 Best Practices to Foster Maritime Connectivity in South Asia

1. **Regional Cooperation:** The foremost best practice is to encourage collaboration among South Asian countries. Regional cooperation paves the way for shared goals, mutual benefits, and coordinated efforts in enhancing maritime connectivity.
2. **Infrastructure Investment:** Investment in the development and modernization of maritime infrastructure is vital. Upgrading ports, logistics facilities, and connectivity projects significantly improves the efficiency and capacity of maritime routes.
3. **Regulatory Harmonization:** Achieving regulatory harmony, including aligning trade regulations and customs procedures, simplifies cross-border trade and streamlines the flow of goods.

4. **Public-Private Partnerships:** Engaging private sector stakeholders is essential for mobilizing resources and expertise. Public-private partnerships can drive investments in maritime infrastructure and innovative solutions.
5. **Technology Adoption:** Embracing digitalization and technological advancements is imperative. Implementing modern technologies, such as digital cargo tracking and automated port operations, enhances the efficiency and transparency of maritime processes.
6. **Capacity Building:** Enhancing the skills of maritime professionals is crucial. Capacity building programs should focus on training and knowledge transfer to ensure a competent workforce.
7. **Maritime Security Cooperation:** Collaboration on maritime security challenges is paramount. Collective efforts to combat piracy, smuggling, and maritime terrorism ensure the safety and stability of maritime routes.
8. **Inclusive Growth:** It's essential to ensure that the benefits of maritime connectivity are distributed equitably among all stakeholders. Inclusive growth policies can address disparities and promote balanced development.
9. **Research and Knowledge Sharing:** Promoting research and knowledge sharing allows countries to learn from successful initiatives and adapt best practices. It fosters a culture of continuous improvement in maritime connectivity.
10. **People-to-People Exchanges:** Cultural understanding and trust-building through people-to-people exchanges, educational programs, and tourism initiatives contribute to stronger regional bonds and cooperation.
11. **Engagement with Regional Organizations:** Collaborating with established regional organizations like SAARC, BIMSTEC, and IORA is vital. These organizations provide platforms for dialogue, cooperation, and coordination, amplifying efforts to enhance maritime connectivity.

4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, regional organizations have a significant role to play in fostering maritime connectivity in South Asia. By facilitating collaboration, promoting joint initiatives, and addressing common challenges, these organizations contribute to economic growth, regional integration, and geopolitical stability. However, addressing political tensions, improving infrastructure, and enhancing institutional

mechanisms are vital for maximizing the impact of regional organizations in enhancing maritime connectivity.

Recommendation: Indian Ocean Treaty Organization (IOTO) to Foster Maritime Connectivity

Establish a Comprehensive Maritime Security Framework: IOTO should create a robust and comprehensive maritime security framework, drawing inspiration from NATO's successful collective defense approach. This framework should address piracy, maritime terrorism, and other security challenges specific to the Indian Ocean region. By implementing these recommendations, the IOTO can play a pivotal role in fostering maritime connectivity, security, and cooperation in South Asia and the broader Indian Ocean region, mirroring the successful model of NATO in the Atlantic region.



Commander Amila Prasanga is a Military Research Officer at the Institute of National Security Studies (INSS) the premier think tank on national security established under the Ministry of Defence. The opinions expressed in this article are her own and not necessarily reflective of the institute.

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Food Insecurity: An Apex Threat to National Security

By **W. D. S. Madhavi**

Published on Ceylon Today, 23rd August 2023

The food crisis has become an increasingly pressing problem in not just Sri Lanka, but also in the majority of developing countries in the world. Due to the heightened severity of this issue caused by economic instability as a result of pandemic effects, the disclosure related to food insecurity has garnered particular focus following the Covid-19 scenario. According to the United Nations (UN), sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and Latin America are the three regions with the highest rates of food insecurity in the globe.

In considering the global trends towards food insecurity, the UN has ranked the African region has been designated as a hunger hotspot in the globe. When it comes to South Asia, 330 million people in the region are experiencing food insecurity. World Food Programme (WFP) – 2022, points out that more than 30% of Sri Lanka’s population is deprived of food and requires humanitarian assistance for food. Therefore, it is clear that the food crisis is an acute issue in the majority of developing countries, including Sri Lanka. (<https://www.wfp.org/countries/sri-lanka>)

Food Insecurity in the Case of Sri Lanka

Although history has positioned Sri Lanka as a ‘Granary of the East’, the country now encounters food insecurity as a result of the failure to implement a viable strategy. This issue of food insecurity in Sri Lanka has posed national security threats in a variety of ways, challenging the health, economic, and political aspects of the country. However, not only the existing economic crises, but also different historical reasons caused the path for the platform of transparency on food insecurity gradually. Department of Census and Statistics highlighted that food expenditure decreased from 53.6% in January to 49% in February 2022 and food inflation was 30.6% by April 2023 in Sri Lanka. As per WFP (2023), 17% of the population is in moderate acute food insecurity in Sri Lanka, especially in Northern, Eastern, and Central Provinces indicating an improvement compared to 2022 as well as 36% of households in Sri Lanka are food insecure, while 76% have resorted to food-based coping strategies, while 8 out of 10 households constantly utilise food-based coping strategies. The 10 households are either pawning items or formally borrowing money to be able to afford food as well as food prices also remain a primary concern for 9 out of 10 households according to WFP. When it comes to middle-class households, 80% of their earnings are spent on food, and consumption of sufficient diets has the

highest prevalence of acute food insecurity; which was reported in tea plantation communities in the estate sector and among daily wage employees. However, it is obvious that economic insecurity has contributed to the food crisis in Sri Lanka as well as individual economic situation, on the other hand, has an impact on food insecurity at the domestic level.

According to United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), (2022) over 5.7 million people, including 2.3 million children, require humanitarian assistance in Sri Lanka as well as World Bank statistics (2023) have depicted that Sri Lanka ranked the second worst affected country in South Asian region for malnutrition. As per the Family Health Bureau in Sri Lanka, all forms of malnutrition rates increased in 2022 after a steady drop since 2016. Therefore, it is obvious how food insecurity has adversely affected the health security and also the quality of life of Sri Lankans. UNICEF (2022) stated that this situation has had a terrible impact on female-headed families and estate communities as well whereas people who are in urban and rural areas experience lower levels of acute health security.

According to WFP “Food security exists when all people, at all times have physical and access to sufficient safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.” Food and Nutrition Technical Assistance (FANTA) has mentioned there are three main dimensions of food security. They are; Food availability: The availability of sufficient quantities of food of appropriate quality, supplies through domestic production or imports (including food aid), Food access: Access by individuals to adequate resources (entitlements) for acquiring appropriate foods for a nutritious diet as well as Utilisation: Utilisation of food through adequate diet, clean water, sanitation and health care to reach a state of nutritional well-being where all physiological needs are met. The extent to which these pillars have been engulfed in the Sri Lankan context as a result of food insecurity, however, has been demonstrated nationally and internationally. Thus, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) highlights that access to and availability of food are the key contributors to Sri Lanka’s current state of food insecurity.

The Government of Sri Lanka and other stakeholders have already put several programmes into action to prevent this disaster. International organizations have launched humanitarian projects aimed at the nation’s most vulnerable groups as a crisis reaction. In Colombo’s impoverished neighbourhoods, the WFP has already started distributing food vouchers to pregnant women. In addition, FAO and WFP have just completed a Crop and Food Security Assessment Mission (CFSAM) and are actively monitoring the state of Sri Lanka’s food security.

Additionally, the government anticipates putting into action the country’s strategic plan for 2023–2027, which aims to enhance nutrition and food security by

strengthening domestic capacity and reducing vulnerability through a programming strategy that layers and sequentially implements nutrition-sensitive resilience. Further, it has adopted a number of programmes to address food insecurity, such as *Ekwa wawamu rata dinwamu, api wawamu rata nagamu* as well as taken steps to improve agriculture among those who live in urban areas by promoting the concept of urban agriculture. The Ministry of Health too, has implemented a Nutrition Plan for 2022 – 2024. Under this Project, vulnerable groups such as low-income pregnant mothers, lactating mothers, women-headed families, children under five years and adults suffering from malnutrition are identified and the food security of these groups is addressed and ensured. And also, WFO implements many valuable food programmes such as unconditional food assistance through means of cash or kind; school meals and nutrition support programmes for children under 5 years and pregnant women. However, Sri Lanka is still saddled with food insecurity regardless of the number of efforts made by both government and non-government stakeholders.

Loopholes of Food System in Sri Lanka

The food system is the way in which food is produced, processed, transported, sold, and consumed both farmers and customers have to encounter difficulties such as there being no proper market price for their food in Sri Lanka. There is a huge demand, but inadequate supply in Sri Lanka's increasing food insecurity. There is a circumstance where intermediaries exploit this weakness as a result due to this reason, food consumers cannot get food at a reasonable price, while intermediaries have gained a lot of advantages in this system, while farmers and consumers suffer the worst.

Conversely, farming in Sri Lanka has also been discouraged due to the poor way of life brought about by it. As a result, the younger generation has stayed away from agricultural practices crippling the future of the agricultural sector in Sri Lanka. No one needs to become a farmer, but they always need to have blue-collar jobs due to the competitive educational system and seeking a luxurious lifestyle. The tragic situation is that a new trend has emerged in Sri Lanka whereby even people with less education are resorting to particular vocations such as tricycle driver jobs instead of farming. On the other hand, although Sri Lankan universities offer some degree related to farming and agriculture, these graduates have stayed away from the field due to the country's significant underemployment rates related to the field and lack of opportunities to use their knowledge in practice to enhance the agricultural sector in Sri Lanka.

Way forward

In order to minimize food insecurity in Sri Lanka, the Sri Lankan Government should

join forces with 'Zero Hunger', one of the Sustainable Development Goals (SGD) by 2030, the Zero Hunger Programme envisages eradication of hunger and assurance that everyone has access to enough wholesome food. Ending all forms of malnutrition and fostering sustainable agriculture are further components of this SGD. Sri Lanka ought to endeavor to achieve this objective.

Further, the responsible parties should take action against the intermediaries who take unfair advantage of this system. Further policies should be formulated to encourage farmers by extending optimum assistance including fixing fair and reasonable pricing on their crops. Such a policy should also cover benefits to consumers as well. The government should take decisive action in this regard since it has already taken unsatisfactory measures to maintain affordable prices for consumers, especially on almost all essential commodities and utilities. Even while there is a common belief in our society that a farmer is 'suitable for the throne if the mud is removed', this belief hardly comes into play for any action plan. So, it is vital at this stage of food insecurity to take the necessary steps to encourage and develop farming as a privileged profession. The Agricultural sector could be certainly developed with the involvement of our energetic youth who with guidance and necessary training have potential to raise farming to a level of innovation. Countries like Thailand use innovative strategies and Sri Lanka can learn lessons from them. Failing which, Sri Lanka's Agriculture sector would be bleak. The other factor is employing and/or obtaining the services of Professionals who are knowledgeable in the field of Agriculture and make use of their knowledge and skills for educating and guiding the farming community in the right direction including in techniques and strategies that need to be adopted for preventing post-harvest losses.

Food is a must for human survival and if no constructive action is taken to counter food insecurity the country may face a situation of famine in the near future. Our fervent wish is to see Sri Lanka retransform itself as the 'Granary of the East' to ensure food security and thereby national security.



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Trail of Plastic Pollution across Sri Lanka

By Lieutenant Colonel Nalin Samaranayake

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Plastic pollution has emerged as a prominent and pressing environmental concern in Sri Lanka, presenting a perilous challenge to the nation's remarkable natural scenery, thriving urban centres, and coastal regions. The aesthetic attractiveness and ecological integrity of previously pure tourist destinations have been compromised due to the existence of plastic garbage. Moreover, metropolitan areas have not been exempted from the adverse consequences of plastic pollution. Streets, parks, and other public places have become inundated with plastic waste, resulting in the creation of visually unappealing and unclean surroundings.

In addition, the coastal regions, characterised by their rich variety of marine habitats and their significance as sources of sustenance for several communities, have seen substantial repercussions as a result of plastic pollution. The proliferation of plastic debris along coastlines and throughout marine ecosystems presents a significant peril to aquatic organisms, the environment and public health. The widespread prevalence of plastic pollution in Sri Lanka has emerged as a significant issue, demanding urgent measures to address its detrimental impact on the environment and the well-being of the population. The issue of plastic garbage has become a pervasive concern in this idyllic island nation, spanning from the foggy mountainous regions to the captivating azure coastlines. Its pervasive infiltration extends to every corner and crevice, ensuring that no nook or cranny remains unaffected by its ubiquitous presence.

The Ubiquitous Menace

The issue of plastic pollution in Sri Lanka has become widespread, affecting not only urban areas but also other regions. The destructive impact of this phenomenon has extended to even the most remote and pristine areas, affecting every corner of the country. A study by the Marine Environment Protection Authority (MEPA) has unveiled a substantial influx of plastic garbage, specifically amounting to 1,500 metric tonnes, into the coastal seas of Sri Lanka annually. The accumulation of plastic debris on isolated islands such as Mannar has experienced a notable increase of 40% over a span of five years. The concerning pattern demonstrates the environmental consequences of plastic waste in rural areas. The increase in plastic garbage has resulted in a concerning ecological catastrophe, which presents a significant danger to the various marine species residing in these regions and disrupts the intricate equilibrium of their ecosystems.

Urban Centres and Plastic Proliferation

The problem of plastic trash is particularly salient and consequential in bustling and densely inhabited urban regions. According to research findings, it has been shown that urban regions are accountable for approximately 75% of the whole quantity of plastic trash produced on a global scale. The urban centre of Colombo, functioning as the administrative and economic hub of Sri Lanka, is presently confronted with notable predicaments stemming from the pervasive utilization of plastic materials. The accumulation of plastic garbage is a significant consequence associated with this issue, frequently resulting in the obstruction of drainage systems inside urban areas. Consequently, this phenomenon further intensifies the issue of floods, specifically in the monsoon season.

The confluence of plastic garbage with heavy precipitation engenders a perilous circumstance, as obstructed drainage systems become inadequate in regulating the flow of water, so exacerbating instances of inundation across diverse urban areas. The aforementioned outcomes underscore the pressing necessity for the implementation of efficacious strategies to tackle the problem of plastic trash in Colombo, hence mitigating its adverse effects on the city's drainage infrastructure and general ability to withstand monsoons. The presence of a considerable quantity of plastic garbage inside the municipal waste of the city is a notable obstacle for waste management authorities. The problem is further aggravated by the extensive utilization of disposable plastics in all facets of everyday existence.

Tourism's Toll

The Sri Lankan tourism sector is experiencing significant growth, but it is also facing the issue of plastic pollution. The accumulation of plastic debris in coastal areas, particularly in beach destinations like *Unawatuna* and *Mirissa*, has negatively impacted the industry. Clean and aesthetically pleasing environments are highly valued by tourists, with 85% of them choosing travel destinations based on cleanliness. However, the widespread presence of plastic debris undermines these desirable attributes, impeding visitors from fully experiencing their intended tourism activities.

A survey by the World Wildlife Fund revealed that plastic pollution introduces 8 million metric tons of plastic into aquatic environments annually, impacting marine habitats and affecting around 90% of seabird populations. This pollution undermines the visual appeal of tourist destinations and engenders feelings of dissatisfaction and disillusionment among visitors. The detrimental effects of plastic pollution extend beyond its visual appearance, posing a significant threat to fragile ecosystems, such as marine life.

Impact on Biodiversity

Plastic pollution has significant ecological implications, affecting marine taxa such as sea turtles, dolphins, and seabirds. The presence of plastic contamination contributes to the annual mortality of around 100 million marine organisms. Seabirds, in particular, consume plastic waste in 90% of marine ecosystems. These organisms often mistake plastic waste for nourishment, leading to health complications. Additionally, they can become ensnared in various types of plastic debris, such as fishing nets and containers, causing physical damage, asphyxiation, or even fatality. The adverse impacts of plastic pollution on marine animals highlight the need for efficient strategies to mitigate plastic waste and protect marine ecosystems. A study in the Marine Pollution Bulletin revealed that 87% of sea turtles in Sri Lanka consumed waste products, highlighting the harmful effects of plastic pollution on marine organisms, particularly sea turtles. The infiltration of plastic particles into the food chain also poses a threat to marine ecosystems. Consuming seafood contaminated with plastic particles poses a potential hazard to human well-being, as the average person ingests around 11,000 microplastic particles per year, which can harbour harmful chemicals and poisons. This issue is crucial as it highlights the indirect ramifications of plastic pollution on our overall welfare.

Government Initiatives and Grassroots Movements

The Government of Sri Lanka has recognized the significance of the problem and has implemented a range of steps to tackle the issue of plastic pollution. In 2017, a notable measure was undertaken to mitigate environmental pollution through the enforcement of a prohibition on the utilization of disposable plastic bags. The purpose of this restriction was to mitigate the adverse effects of these bags on our ecosystems. After the aforementioned initial step, additional strategies were implemented to address various categories of disposable plastics, encompassing straws and containers made of Styrofoam.

The aforementioned activities were formulated to broaden the extent of plastic waste mitigation and advocate for sustainable alternatives. Notwithstanding the advancements achieved, there persist obstacles in the realm of efficiently executing and upholding specific measures or rules. The presence of these challenges has the potential to impede the successful implementation of plans and initiatives, hence potentially constraining their overall impact and effectiveness. Addressing these hurdles is crucial to assure the attainment of the desired goals. Alongside broader-scale activities and projects, there has been a discernible rise of grassroots movements and community-led initiatives in many regions of the nation. Several environmental programmes have been implemented to specifically target the issue of plastic pollution.

One such campaign is organizing beach clean-up drives, which involve mobilizing volunteers to actively participate in removing plastic garbage from coastal regions. An alternative method entails the implementation of plastic waste recycling initiatives, wherein the gathering and treatment of plastic materials are conducted with the intention of subsequent reuse or repurposing. Furthermore, educational initiatives serve a pivotal function in enhancing public consciousness regarding the detrimental effects of plastic pollution. These campaigns seek to disseminate knowledge and educate consumers about the adverse repercussions of plastic waste on the natural environment, with the ultimate goal of motivating them to embrace more environmentally-friendly behaviors.

Conclusion

Plastic pollution in Sri Lanka is a matter of considerable concern, emphasizing the urgent necessity for a comprehensive global response to address this issue. The issue affects various geographical settings, from remote islands to densely populated urban regions. A comprehensive and inclusive strategy across all societal domains is essential. Government policies and laws play a crucial role in determining Sri Lanka's natural landscapes and biodiversity. However, the responsibility of accountability lies not solely with the government, but also with the collective efforts of the populace, commercial entities, and local communities.

Individuals can contribute to the conservation of Sri Lanka's biodiversity by practicing mindfulness, adopting sustainable choices, and adopting responsible waste management strategies. Business enterprises can also play a crucial role in safeguarding Sri Lanka's natural resources by adopting ecologically conscious measures, preserving water resources, and establishing sustainable supply networks. Communities also play a crucial role in the preservation of Sri Lanka's natural aesthetics by actively participating in conservation programmes, coordinating clean-up initiatives, engaging in reforestation, and disseminating information to enhance public understanding of biodiversity conservation.



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Sri Lanka's Quest for Strategic Equilibrium

By Commander Amila Prasanga

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Sri Lanka is the name given to the island of Ceylon, situated on the Southern-most extremity of the Indian Subcontinent. While at first glance it appears to be a landmass that has eroded and split off from India, resting in the Ocean within what would be Indian territorial waters, thereby seeming like an island belonging to India, however, there are factors that have created a space permitting it to be defined as an independent sovereign territory.

Geologically, models of continental movement based on the plate tectonics theory depict Ceylon forming as a piece of land separated from present day Indonesia. It moved towards the Indian Subcontinent until it reached its current position, just a few kilometres away from India. Historically, the island developed under the British empire, functioning as an entrepôt and a strategic outpost, which later became the headquarters of the British South East Asian command during World War II. Its financial sustenance came from global markets for products of the British built plantation industry, supported by ports, roads, and railways. For an entrepôt to function effectively, weak sovereignty, dependent on guarantees from patrons, is required. Thus, independence from India and other regional and global powers is essential for realising its potential.

The island is home to diverse groups with distinct histories, cultures, languages, ethnicities, and religions. These groups welcome tourists and are gearing up to showcase their lifestyles, culture, and heritage. Native villages, sustained by tank-based irrigation networks, agricultural production, and artisan craftsmanship, are scattered throughout the island. Visitors can immerse themselves in these communities and experience the various prevailing cultures and lifestyles. The island's offerings include beaches along the coasts, historical sites, forests and wildlife, delectable cuisine, vibrant pageants, indigenous orchestras, captivating handicrafts, dancers, and exotic rituals. Exploring the island can take months without exhausting its repertoire of sights, sounds, climates, and scenery.

The British bestowed welfare measures upon the natives, promoted education and modernisation, and introduced liberal democratic values. Various ethnic groups were intricately mingled, with Burghers being prominent in railways, the Police and armed forces' officers, and the plantation industry's superintendents. Native Tamils were engaged in Government administration, agriculture, fisheries, and education. Indian

workers were concentrated on plantations, while Indian immigrants took up various professions. Moors engaged in trade and livestock rearing, and the Sinhalese were involved in agriculture, transport, arrack production, fisheries, artisan craftsmanship, the media, and business.

Post-World War II, developmental dialogues between the Government and multilateral institutions culminated in the decision to develop organised, large-scale commercial tourism as a developmental pillar for the island's economy. This move aimed to generate employment and boost United States Dollar revenue flows. In 1966, supporting legislation was adopted, followed by the construction of the first five-star tourist hotels in the early 1970s. Large tourist agencies began marketing the island as a prime tourist destination. Tourist revenue grew to 6.4% of the gross domestic product (GDP) in 2018, only to drop to 1.3% last year (in 2022) due to the post-pandemic and global economic climate.

In an era of post-civil war development, China extended a substantial offer to lend funds to the Sri Lankan Government for constructing infrastructure components that were already earmarked for the island's development by multilateral developmental institutions. These projects also encompassed significant elements of China's Belt and Road initiative. All these endeavours were financed through loans from China, with the Sri Lankan Government committing to repayment. This implies that Sri Lanka would essentially be funding critical aspects of China's Belt and Road initiative.

Notably, at the entrance to the Colombo Port, China utilised its technological expertise to establish a Port City on reclaimed land from the Ocean. The citizenry envisions this City becoming a vibrant regional stock market hub, complete with its own Securities and Exchange Commission and Company Registry. This ambitious vision aims to facilitate large scale regional operations for listing, capital raising, and the establishment of regional headquarters.

The overarching dream involves transforming the island into an offshore banking service provider. This would be underpinned by stern legislative frameworks to prevent, detect, and penalise tax evasion and money laundering, coupled with enticing financial, geo-strategic, legislative, political, and cultural incentives. The aspiration includes attracting financiers and major investors, while the Port City is anticipated to become a source of employment and a hub for advanced human resources training worldwide. Envisaged also is the island drawing high net worth individuals, making it their recreational centre and retirement destination. Their presence is seen as bringing goodwill and accrued expertise.

Alongside the Port City, a strategic network of highways is currently under

construction, aimed at connecting key ports and cities across the island. Furthermore, China has established an Airport at Mattala in proximity to the Hambantota Port and the Weerawila Air Force base. The Port of Hambantota has emerged as a site teeming with developmental potential. Sri Lankans hold aspirations for this location to host the second international humanitarian city, serving as a logistics centre and supplies base for humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) operations across regions linked by the island. Moreover, it is poised to serve as a pivotal logistical support centre for China's Belt and Road initiative. This involved a complex at Hambantota, encompassing the Harbour's potential, forming the nucleus of concerns due to its strategic implications. While the undeniable strategic potential surpasses initial appearances, the reasons behind the concerns it generates warrant careful scrutiny and responses.

Thus, let us endeavour to identify the roots of this unease. The evolutionary processes within the human species have given rise to institutional structures ranging from individual to family, State, empire, and global levels. These structures operate at personal, local, territorial, regional, and planetary scales, essential to supporting and sustaining the species through resource extraction, agriculture, manufacturing, services, and distribution.

The inherently unequal global distribution of resources, coupled with the uneven progression and the cultivation of multiple identities tied to geographical locations and personal allegiances, inevitably leads to conflicts that necessitate containment and resolution. The movement of these identities and their influence on geographical locations is commonly perceived as colonisation.

Historically, these conflicts revolve around the persistent endeavour to secure global acceptance of an emerging set of core values, principles, processes, and their supporting institutional structures, sciences, and technologies. These elements are considered the bedrock of civilisation, within which the diverse activities of the species can be accommodated. This historical pattern reveals that attempts by various group identities to reject these elements and resist integration have frequently led to acts of genocide. The spectre of such events recurring invokes a sense of fear within the species.

China has opted to diverge from integrating the set of core values, processes, structures, and the dominant civilisation's system. Instead, China is embarked on constructing a global strategic network tailored to bolster the security of its distinct system. It can be argued that the prevailing global civilisation, often referred to as the "world capitalist system" now confronts the challenge of accommodating an alternative system and engaging in a competition for global dominance. This dynamic

hinges on whether a single world civilisation, as opposed to multiple, is deemed necessary for the continued evolutionary progress and survival of the species within the framework of planet earth.

The possibility of opting for competition over accommodation has evoked widespread concern, particularly pronounced in Sri Lanka and the regions connected by this island. Consequently, the Non-Aligned Movement articulated in its Lusaka (Zambia) Declaration in September, 1970, that the Indian Ocean region (IOR) should be declared a zone of peace. Given Sri Lanka's potential, straddling vital maritime routes, boasting one of the world's largest natural harbours, and functioning as a hub linking regional organisations, the island is primed to house the strategic function of the global developmental process as it impacts these regions. This role necessitates Sri Lanka to play a pivotal part in balancing geo-strategic equations within the IOR.

To fulfill this role effectively, Sri Lanka requires firm assurances from all stakeholders that its sovereignty will remain intact, allowing engagement with both the core principles of the prevailing global civilisation and those of the resurgent Chinese system. This leverage is crucial for effectively addressing the interests of diverse stakeholders. Additionally, the establishment of a second international humanitarian city in the Southern Sea Port of Hambantota, functioning as a logistics and supply base for HADR operations across the region, can contribute to structuring the island's potential function as a platform. This platform could foster a mechanism similar to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), involving maritime powers across the Indian Ocean, collaborating to establish an Indian Ocean Treaty Organisation (IOTO). Such an Organisation could facilitate vessel movement and security among member countries, ensuring the unimpeded flow of vital resources.



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Sri Lankan Perspective on Insecurity Dilemma: National Security A Shield for Regime Politics?

By **Chamathka Sewmini**

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The intricate web of National Security is woven with the threads of diligent responsibility of the civilians in the country to preserve their nation. Thus, the decisions and actions of the political regime are mostly substantial as the pioneers of decision-making in Sri Lanka. Therefore, it draws the concern that either the party in power or the opposition parties are promoting national security or their own regime interests behind the shades of National Security. Consequently, as emphasized by Lyons (1993) the “Insecurity Dilemma”, deliberates how the regime leaders attempt to acquire undue advantages from the existing bottlenecks in the realm of national security. Furthermore, the undue advantages would cause weakening the national security of third-world countries in the long term (Acharya, 2020). Hence, every decision and action that they implement in the name of National Security must serve the National security of Sri Lanka. Despite that, it questions whether the reflection of every action that the regime initiates absolutely aiming at ensuring the national security of Sri Lanka.

Existing Issue

National Security is the foundation on which the nation’s sovereignty, integrity and safety are born. Moreover, the crucial decisions that persist to National Security are taken by the political leaders. Hence, it is significant to have a specific mechanism consisting of a policy framework in Sri Lanka to examine and determine whether the specific national security concern has been addressed through the decision taken by them which was implemented under the name of National Security, which Sri Lanka is lacking at present. Consequently, this mechanism will determine whether the political leaders are pursuing their interests under the shade of national security. Thus, this bottleneck is still unraveled as no one can specifically point out that National Security has been used as a shield to justify the deeds of political leaders.

Discussion

Sri Lanka as a country situated in a significant geostrategic location, has always encountered numerous threats from domestic as well as external entities. LTTE tormented Sri Lankans for more than three decades. Rather, domestic concerns on economic, political, and social concerns have also been raised which the country had to encounter economic crisis, political instabilities including plethora of human security concerns. Thus, these security concerns, either hard notion or soft notion

persist to the entire nation of the country. Further, these concerns themselves are the main requirements of the civilians of Sri Lanka that it needed to be addressed in order to have better living conditions that every citizen is willing to have. Hence, these national security concerns open up a pathway for politicians to advocate at times of elections which easily grasp the feelings of the public. Consequently, winning people's hearts emphasizing these requirements, to get their willingness is mainly a competition among political parties where every party pledges in the name of national security. The Crux of propaganda of every political regime, in pre-elections, mainly circulates around National Security (Stokke, 2011) thereby misleading the public that National Security can only be preserved by the specific political party while ill-defining National Security as a regime capability.

In between the distinction between imaginary and reality, offering a glimmer of hope to people and the actual deeds after coming to power, social upheavals may come into the limelight. Thus, in 1980, after two years of the election in 1978, General Strike came into the limelight which demanded worker's rights, job security and better living conditions. Rather, in 2021, two years after the appointment of the new government, protests were raised island-wide due to the fertilizer ban. Furthermore, in 2022 'Aragalaya' led a revolutionary change in the existing government at that time. Evidently, in most occasions, the cause for the protests was the inability to meet the Human Security concerns related to the Economy, Political, Social, Food and Health paradigms. Hence, it is evident that the specific national security concerns have remained unaddressed during the specific time periods up to the point that mass mobilizations escalated. This draws concern on whether the Sri Lankan regime leaders are fostering the national security requirements of the nation that they advocated at the times of election.

Furthermore, there lies a rationale in declaring a state of emergency in an extreme phenomenon where it is necessary to impose a state of emergency in order to maintain the stability of the country addressing an urgent situation. Though it still remains the lacunas that need to be addressed in the ER in Sri Lanka. Further, as Udagama (2015), emphasized that the Emergency Regulations (ER) can be used against the public themselves since the public holds very little knowledge where a complete ER gazette is unavailable, and one has to wade through numerous gazettes while even some Gazettes are unavailable.

Moreover, it is praiseworthy that the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA), aims at addressing Terrorist activities while seizing the pathway to future terrorism. Furthermore, the PTA was significant in apprehending the terrorists' network in the Easter Sunday Attack. Despite that, there are loopholes where it needed to be addressed which the lacunas may be used to pursue the political agenda. Firstly, the



Act does not provide a definition for terrorism resulting a vagueness. Moreover, Regulation No.01 of 2021 on 09th March 2021 further expanded the PTA allowing for two years of detention without any trial or lawsuit causing “religious, racial, or communal disharmony or feelings of ill will between communities to be rehabilitated at reintegration centres” (Patabendige, 2021). Further, such prolonged detention is unreasonable where if by any chance the person is innocent it is an irremediable injustice done to the person (Patabendige, 2021). Hence, the PTA must ensure that the detention centres are not a place where perpetrators are abused. Further, it must be assured that Human Rights are not subjected to breach since the government is duty-bound to preserve civil liberties. This draws the concern where it needed to maintain a balance between civil liberty and national security interests without leading the arena to justify the regime agenda behind the national security interests. Consequently, this emphasizes that it must clearly distinguish the national security and the regime interests without mingling with each other.

Deep down the issue

Promoting regime interest behind the shade of national security leads the way to undermine the real security threat that persists to the entire nation. The actual threat will remain unidentified increasing the vulnerability of the country leaving the entire nation exposed to threats at any time. In the arena of regime competition, the true requirements of national security may remain unnoticed. When it decreases the attention towards absolute national security threats, it definitely may strengthen the power of belligerents and terrorists if the real threat remains unnoticed for a long time period.

Furthermore, regime leaders exaggerate certain issues specifically the perceived threats aiming to create a sense of urgency centered on a specific matter in order to rally public support furthering their agenda. This will overshadow the actual threat leading to a sense of misjudgment and eventually, the priorities will be miscalculated without implementing the action plan at the time it must be done.

Notably, many of the government institutions, committees and initiatives are stagnant while staggered around a specific issue, consuming the privileges and recognition that they are getting on behalf of their position. Thereby, existing institutional capabilities would definitely weaken. Corollary, the regime in power, focuses on strengthening its capabilities, enhancement and strengthening the vote base which ultimately weakens the strategic focus with regard to national security requirements. Consequently, it may have rigorous implications for the stability of the country.

Finally, it is unfortunate that the realm of political governance blended with regime interest is recurrently intertwined with the actions that compromise the National

Security of Sri Lanka. Consequently, this tendency will hinder every opportunity that fortifies the National Security of Sri Lanka. Subsequently, this sophisticated scenario could lead the way to grave consequences which hold the potential to yield extreme repercussions, jeopardizing the safety, stability, unity and integrity of the country. Thus, it becomes of the utmost significance to earnestly confront the prevailing decencies that extend across the entire spectrum of the nation.

Way Forward

The hidden rationality of the insecurity dilemma specifies the loopholes within the scenario that new implementations must be born. Moreover, as every dark cloud contains a silver lining, there exists a lengthy array of hopes which can be implemented to mitigate grave consequences.

Implementing a policy framework: Sri Lankan regime holders utilize national security as the way they could is a grave scenario which could merely arise due to the absence of a policy where they have been restricted in misusing the national security, consisting of full-fledged transparency with legislation that regime holders are bounded.

Addressing the lacunas of the PTA: It is essential to revise the provisions of the PTA and addressed the lacunas. Moreover, there must have a monitoring mechanism to guarantee non-violence in the detention centres.

Strengthening institutions: It is a multifaceted approach to strengthen the government institutions and initiatives that are established in order to while monitoring to ensure that the expected outcome is delivered.

Fostering the political literacy of the public: It is pivotal to enhance the political literacy of the public since it will create a more responsible and well-informed electorate which promotes better governance and holds a stronger sense of civic duty.



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Changing Dimensions In ‘Power’; The Role of India & China & Sri Lanka’s Predicament

By **Thamindu Devinda**

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Introduction

Political scientist Joseph Nye has explained power as “an ability to affect others to achieve the outcomes one wants” (Pandit, 2018). Hence, any method used to control or influence others can be mentioned as examples of different power methods, whether it is soft or hard. As a result of the creation of the United Nations in 1945, and the disfavour for the use of hard power in the international system, states are no longer engaging in military battles to increase their power, except for a few incidents such as Russian – Ukraine war. Yet, is it possible to say that the states, especially the superpowers, are not having power fights with each other? They are clearly engaging in power fights with one another but not using coercive methods anymore. So, what is this change? Power dynamics in the contemporary world remain highly complex and multifaceted especially due to the advancement of technologies. This advancement of technologies including many other soft and smart power strategies have made it very rare to see countries engaging in use of coercive methods to increase and maintain their power. In this article it will be discussing about how the dimensions of power have changed and the power fight between India and China and the predicament of Sri Lanka in this aspect and how it affects the National Security of the island nation.

From Hard Power to Soft Power

The Thirty Years War in Europe, World Wars, and even the war fought between the Sri Lankan government and The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) are some examples of the use of coercive power methods to achieve different goals. However, with the end of the Second World War, the dimensions of power began to change. The use of propaganda, misinformation and disinformation, and the use of cyber-attacks to attack the opponent were used even during the Cold War period changing the dimensions of power from hard to soft. As political scientist Joseph Nye has described, soft power is “a country’s ability to influence the preferences and behaviours of various actors in the international arena through attraction or persuasion rather than coercion” (Thomson, 2020). Business, Trade, Culture and Heritage, Education, Diplomacy and the use of Technology (Thomson, 2020) are the most common soft power methods that countries are using nowadays.

Information Warfare: Introduction

Technology is the latest soft power tool that nations around the world use to increase their power and influence over other nations. Many countries around the world, especially the superpowers are often using these Information Warfare strategies to manipulate others. The use of Information Warfare strategies includes the dissemination of false, misleading information, the use of propaganda and manipulating and influencing social norms, political affairs, and public opinion through social media and digital platforms to achieve certain goals (Ahuja and Diwan, 2023) whether it is political, social, economic or any other. Nazi Joseph Goebbels has used, “Repeat a lie often enough, and it becomes the truth” to describe propaganda (Stafford, 2016). This is what exactly happens in information warfare. One country spread modified, false or exaggerated information about another country through various methods to manipulate the ideas of people and at some point, people tend to believe that the modified, false or exaggerated information is the truth. Anita D DeVries in her article (Information Warfare and Its Impact on National Security, 1997) has stated, “Theoretically, if you can functionally disrupt or destroy an opponent’s information, computer information systems, or infrastructure control systems using information warfare, you may sever the head off from the body of the snake by isolating the leadership from the rest of the nation or armed forces. You can possibly win a victory without physical destruction of national assets”. In other words, information warfare is a cost-effective method and it is easy to disrupt the opponent’s systems, potentially leading to victory without physical destruction. We can never know when Information Warfare between different parties begins, ends, and how strong, effective and destructive it is.

Information Warfare between China and India

In the contemporary context, apart from Business and Trade, both China and India are using their Cyber Power to fight each other and influence other countries around the world. A number of Cyber related attacks between India and China have been reported throughout the years. For example, China, during the Covid 19 pandemic, had been engaging in a disinformation campaign which aimed at undermining the efficacy of India – made Covid 19 vaccines as well as spreading false information about the origin of the virus (Ahuja and Diwan, 2023). India on the other hand, in act of espionage, using state-backed Indian hackers, coordinated a wave of phishing emails targeted at Wuhan organizations and hospitals during the Covid-19 outbreak. (Whitmore, 2021).

Technology of China and its impact on Sri Lanka

The ongoing Cyberwarfare rivalry between India and China has a significant impact on Sri Lanka. It may be direct or indirect. Both India and China have been engaged in the technological development of Sri Lanka and a key example is China’s

contribution to the establishment of 5G Technology. In collaboration with Huawei Technologies, Dialog and Mobitel took their first steps towards the implementation of 5G networks, making Sri Lanka the first South Asian country to commercially test 5G (Munasinghe, 2023). In addition, China has a significant influence over the country due to investment projects and loans. Further worsening the situation, the ongoing tension between China and India could lead China's further involvement in Sri Lanka into a situation where Sri Lanka might have to tackle with its immediate neighbour: India (Uluwaduge, 2022).

We never know what kind of capabilities China has as a technological giant in the world. China has been accused by a number of countries around the world for using its advance technologies to spy on them. For example, the United States has accused China for using its spy balloon to gather intelligence from sensitive US military sites (Kube and Lee, 2023). In the same way, China might even use its technologies to spy on Sri Lanka which can be a great threat to our National Security, if highly confidential and private data were exposed to unknown and unauthorized parties.

Technology of India and its impact on Sri Lanka

The use of technology as a soft-power method by India poses concerns to the National Security and Sovereignty of Sri Lanka. The war between the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE group strained relations between Sri Lanka and India. Despite the victory of Sri Lanka in the war, there is a huge propaganda spreading around the world, created by pro-LTTE supporters including those who are in India, saying that Sri Lanka has committed 'Tamil Genocide' during the civil war (eelamview, 2022). Apart from that, certain members with extremist ideologies in the Indian Tamil community as well as some people in the Northern Province of Sri Lanka still commemorate the death of Velupillai Prabhakaran and the Mullivaikal Massacre (Mohammed, 2023), which they falsely claim and believe to be conducted by the Sri Lanka government during the war. In the aspect of National Security, there is a possibility for these commemorations to escalate into violence, posing a significant threat to the national security of Sri Lanka.

Conclusion

As for the conclusion, the dimensions of power have been rapidly changing throughout the time and the methods of power that are being used by countries at present are not the same methods that the countries were using 20 – 30 years ago. The use of technology as a soft power method has increased, especially among global superpowers to achieve their desired outcomes and smaller nations such as Sri Lanka, with or without our knowledge, are being subjected to the power struggle of these nations. Information warfare which at present is highly being used by nation-states as a soft power strategy poses a significant threat to the national security of all the

nations around the world especially due to the unpredictable and unidentifiable nature of information warfare and cyber-attacks. We can never know when Information Warfare between different parties begins, and ends, and how strong, effective and destructive it is.

Recommendations

Being at the middle of the two big powers, Sri Lanka seems to be experiencing a tough situation where it has to be very careful when maintaining these relationships. As it has been spoken, written and mentioned in many situations, here as well, it is recommended that Sri Lanka should follow a balanced relationship with China and India as well as with other major powers as it will not result in a good way if Sri Lanka tends to be biased towards a certain nation. Furthermore, as this article has discussed about technology as the latest soft power method, Sri Lanka can also give more priority to advance its technologies, such as the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the governmental sector, as well as for security purposes. It would greatly help in understanding and identifying potential threats to the country's national security. Policymakers of the country in collaboration with other responsible parties can also provide proper training to those who are in the relevant fields, as well as implement proper policies to ensure the national security of Sri Lanka against modern threats.



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Human Security Implications of Discrimination Against Women in Workplaces

By Helani Yapa Bandara

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As per UNICEF (2017), women discrimination refers to the unjust and prejudicial treatment of individuals based on their gender, typically favouring one gender over another or limiting opportunities and rights based on gender; accordingly involves the unequal treatment, expectation or assumptions about the abilities, roles and worth of individuals due to their gender. Those discriminations can occur in various aspects of life including education, employment, healthcare, social interaction and access to resources. Typically, this is rooted in stereotypes and biases associated with traditional gender roles and expectations. You may have a fair question; Why we are particularly focused on addressing women's discrimination? Because there are historical and systemic oppressions; means throughout history, women have faced systemic discrimination and oppression based on their gender. This includes limited access to education, economic opportunities, political participation and reproductive rights and especially gender equality is a fundamental principle of human rights. It is enshrined in various international conventions and declarations, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. By focusing on women's discrimination, the majority aim to ensure that all individuals, regardless of their gender, have equal rights, opportunities and protections under the law. Thus, it is important to note that addressing women's discrimination does not mean neglecting or ignoring other forms of discrimination, equality and justice require us to address discrimination and oppression in all its forms and strive for a society where everyone's rights are respected and protected. Gender discrimination can occur in any place at any time, but has deep-researching effects on employees in the workplace; the reason when we consider an individual, he/she spends a significant amount of time in the workplace. In addition, it is also pivotal to identify and understand women's discrimination in the workplace, as a human security issue as pronounced by United Nations.

(Ketchiwou and Dzans, 2023) In their work titled "Examining the impact of gender discriminatory practices on women's development and progression at work" has stated that, "Many women still suffer from gender discrimination and remain at the bottom of organisational structures despite their efforts to ascend. Globally, women encounter more challenges in their career advancement than men, even though the number of women in senior positions has increased worldwide, women are still underrepresented at the top levels." Moreover, this article mentions the challenges that women face in the workplace. Accordingly, challenges are discrimination based

on gender in the hiring or firing process, losing a promotion because of gender; also known as the 'glass ceiling', receiving less pay than a male worker doing the same job, being a victim of sexual harassment including unwanted sexual advances and request for sexual favours, being given less paid sick leave or denied employee benefits on account of gender, being written up for behaviour that does not result in disciplinary action when performed by an employee of another sex, being referred to by a name or gender that you do not identify with (e.g. a transgender man is referred to as 'Miss' or 'Mrs.'), becoming the target of discriminatory or offensive words because of being a female. Although the aforementioned barriers are crucial, other factors include status in society, religion, level of education, and financial status.

It is extremely important to investigate whether the personal and organisational characteristics of working women are more susceptible to discrimination based on gender. Depending on her place of work (position), location, and other distinguishing qualities of herself and her coworkers, a woman may suffer different types of discrimination at work. Many women face barriers to advancing within organisational structures despite their efforts and qualifications. Deeply unshakeable societal biases and stereotypes about gender roles and capabilities can influence decision-making processes within organisations. According to M. Somers (2022), these biases can lead to women being undervalued, overlooked for promotions, or relegated to certain roles seen as traditionally feminine, thereby limiting their upward mobility. For example, when we consider about Board of Directors in a Club; a woman always holds the Secretary position while a man maintains the President position of the same Club.

According to Kagan (2022), the glass ceiling refers to the invisible barriers that prevent women from reaching top leadership positions in organisations. Gendered norms and expectations about leadership styles and behaviours can create barriers for women seeking advancement, as they may face bias and resistance when attempting to break through these norms. Women often face a lack of access to mentorship and sponsorship opportunities, which are crucial for career advancement. Having mentors and sponsors who can provide guidance, advocacy and growth opportunities can significantly impact a person's career path/ trajectory. As per Starnowski et al (2015), some organisations may have policies or practices that unintentionally or intentionally disadvantage women. This can include biased performance evaluations, unequal pay practices, limited flexible work arrangements or lack of support for family-friendly policies.

Many countries across the world define women's discrimination in the workplace differently under their respective laws and regulations. In the United States, gender discrimination is explicitly prohibited under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, a Federal Law that prohibits employment discrimination in the workplace on

statements of colour, race, sex, religion, and national origin. Although this landmark labour law has given nationwide protections for employees and applicants for several decades, discrimination based on gender still occurs in contemporary workplaces, disproportionately affecting women of colour and transgender women. Gender discrimination against workers is illegal under Federal Law. However, there are no currently federal workplace protections for employees who are discriminated against based on gender identity and sexual orientation.

Women's discrimination is a crucial human security issue in Sri Lanka. So, there are some actions taken by the Sri Lanka Government to prevent or reduce women's discrimination within the workplace environment. For example, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) was ratified by the Sri Lankan Government in 1981; this Act provides measures to eliminate discrimination against women and promote gender equality in various spheres of life. Secondly, the Protection of Women's Rights (Act No. 22 of 2005) provides legal protection and remedies for women against various forms of discrimination, including sexual harassment, gender-based violence, and workplace discrimination. Thirdly, the Employment of Women and Children's (Act No. 47 of 1956) establishes regulations and safeguards related to the employment of women, young persons, and children. This Act prohibits discrimination against women in recruitment, working conditions, and equal pay. Finally, the Women's Charter outlines a comprehensive framework for promoting and protecting women's rights by the Sri Lankan Government in 1993. This Charter covers various areas, including health, education, and political participation of women, especially women's employment in the labour force. However, women's discrimination cannot be stopped by Laws or Acts alone as law follows society and often women victims should have the courage to make use of the legal framework. According to Patabendige (2023), men and women are different biologically, and due to those biological reasons, decision-making is affected. Problems in the eyes of a man will be different from problems in the eyes of a woman. Even though they may have the same point, the way they perceive things is different. When there is a gender-sensitive matter or concern about women, the decision should be weighed, debated, and perceived by women. However, unfortunately, as organisations and the majority of decision-making bodies consist of male counterparts, the interests and grievances of the females are therefore unheard of, unreported, and rarely discussed. Nevertheless, Triana and Jayasinghe (2019) also found that gender discrimination had an opposite relationship with work-related outcomes, job attitudes, physical health outcomes and behaviours. So, addressing challenges requires a multi-faced approach that involves individuals, organisations, and society as a whole. On the other hand, workplace discriminations impact on the woman's personal life. Every man needs his wife to be educated and good in her career progress so that they can build a better lifestyle.

Every parent needs their daughter to be good in her life. Undoubtedly, as soon as she undergoes workplace harassment, she cannot maintain good mental health. So how she can maintain a good family responsibility; as a daughter, as a wife, as a mother and as a sister? It affects her work-life balance. As a result, everyone around her will be unhappy. Thus, women's discrimination should not arise in any form at any time within organisations.

To address women discrimination in the workplace considerable changes are required, such as ensuring equal pay and benefits for working women, promoting leadership diversity, equal and flexible organisational policies for every worker, fair hiring and firing practices, having effective monitoring and measuring processes, promoting better mentorship, encouraging work-life balance and encouraging to maintain a cordial relationship with co-workers. In detail, efforts should focus on, raising awareness and challenging unconscious biases and stereotypes, promoting diversity and inclusion in organisational policies and practices, providing mentoring and sponsorship opportunities for women, implementing transparent and fair performance evaluation processes, supporting work-life balance through family-friendly policies such as 'family care' leave, reduced working hours for working parent, flextime and flexible work arrangements, encouraging women's leadership development and skill-building programmes. Accordingly, organisations could implement such changes in the form of short-term and long-term action plans. Thereby women's safety and security could be ensured in the workplace. Furthermore, each organisation must deeply understand the importance of women's participation, duly recognise their contribution towards the overall objective of the organisation and reward them for their outstanding performances and most importantly, treat women equally in the workplace and pay due attention to their human security concerns.



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Climate Change: An Alarming Security Threat of Concern

By Thusitha Bulathgama

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Climate change has emerged as one of the most pressing issues of our time, not only because of its environmental and humanitarian impacts but also due to its implications for global security. As the planet's climate rapidly changes, the consequences extend beyond environmental concerns, affecting various aspects of our society, including the security related infrastructure. The changing climate is posing unprecedented challenges that threaten peace, stability, and human well-being worldwide. Per Z. Kanga's "Climate change is a national security issue", the worldwide threat analysis issued by the former Director of National Intelligence of the United States (US), Daniel Ray Coats mentioned that "global environmental and ecological degradation, as well as climate change, are likely to fuel competition for resources, economic distress, and social discontent".

Climate change is widely regarded as one of the greatest threats to peace and security in the 21st century. The lives and livelihoods of people all around the world are being impacted by prolonged droughts, rising sea levels, more frequent and violent storms, and global warming. Additionally, climate change will lead to many issues such as energy shortage, food and drinking water shortage, the proliferation of numerous diseases, which in their turn, will lead to a large number of migrations, the increased number of failed States, the empowerment of violent non-State actors, and overall instability in the world. Due to these interconnected issues, this article aims to raise awareness about the significant implications of climate change on global security and to highlight the urgent needs for concerted actions to address this multifaceted challenge.

Security Threats posed by Climate Change

Climate change has already made many people leave their homeland and move to other countries to obtain a better life. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change identified that migration will be one of the main repercussions of climate change. Every year, 20 million people are displaced by natural disasters, especially weather-related events. One in 10 houses in the US were affected by natural disasters in 2021. Property damage from these catastrophes cost US Dollars (\$) 56.92 billion in total. These natural disasters, which have rocked the country more frequently than ever, include hurricanes (\$ 33 billion in property damage), wildfires (\$ 1.46 billion in property damage), severe weather like tornadoes, hailstorms, and wind events (\$ 7.46

billion in property losses), and winter storms (\$ 15 billion in property damages). Climate change is threatening the livelihoods of many people. Extreme weather events, slow onset environmental changes like soil salinisation and the rising of the sea level have long term effects for the income, health and safety of those residing in the areas affected. By 2050, the World Bank (WB) predicts that 216 million people will migrate within their own countries due to climate change.

Additionally, another primary security risk associated with climate change is environmental insecurity driven by resource related scarcity. Extreme weather events cause crop failures, water shortages, and population displacement as they become increasingly frequent and intense. These circumstances may exacerbate competition for scarce resources like food, water and arable land which could increase the likelihood of violence within the nation as well as between them.

Yemen, a country heavily dependent on agriculture, which contributes to 17% of its total gross domestic product, has seen drought, poverty and violence. Apart from that, per F. Wehrey and N. Fawal's "Cascading climate effects in the Middle East and North Africa: Adapting through inclusive governance", conflict over scarce resources and agricultural land has been connected to prolonged droughts in places like the Middle East and the Sahel in Africa. Similar to how territorial disputes and immigration issues could exacerbate the tension in sensitive areas, the rising sea level endangers the sustainability of small island nations. Because small islands are becoming more vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change and there is nowhere to go as the sea rises, there is nowhere to hide when extreme weather events such as hurricanes arrive. In addition to that, the balance between freshwater and the nearby sea is fragile, and if fishing decreases, economies that depend on the oceans could be severely harmed. These examples highlight how social, economic and political instability are sparked by climate change, endangering global security.

Threat Multiplier

Furthermore, climate change can also create fertile ground for extremism and terrorism. Communities are more vulnerable to radicalisation as a result of the effects of climate-related disasters, economic problems and resource-related scarcity. Extremist organisations frequently use this feeling of hopelessness of people to attract new members and carry out violent acts. As per the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, competition over scarce resources have been linked to civil war in places like the Lake Chad Basin, where it is evident that climate change has made the situation worse. Climate change is referred to as a potential "threat multiplier" in security studies. As the waters of Lake Chad recede, fish stocks decrease, agricultural land disappears and other economic opportunities are also lost. However, it is crucial to identify that while climate change can indirectly impact social and political

situations, it is just one of several factors contributing to the complex issue of terrorism. Economic disparities, political grievances and cultural tension also have significant roles to play in this complicated issue.

In the context of Sri Lanka, per J. Selvachandran's "Preparing for the impact of climate change in Sri Lanka", the country is relatively well-positioned to meet its obligations in combatting climate change. Besides that, for Sri Lanka, as one of the top 65 countries at high risk from climate change's effects, doing nothing would put the country's environment, health and education at risk. This report also advocates immediate and efficient actions. In addition to that, another report by the WB has identified that Sri Lanka is especially vulnerable to climate change's impacts, due to the collection of political, geographic and social factors. Among these effects are rising temperatures, which are predicted to have the greatest impact on Sri Lanka's most vital industries, including manufacturing, commercial agriculture, and tourism. On top of that, the country will be more susceptible to unanticipated catastrophes due to an increase in the spread of diseases and natural disasters. Concerning the above facts, the country is easily affected by fast changes in the climate, and it is in danger of facing security problems like economic crisis, political uncertainty and social instability.

The Way Forward

To mitigate the challenges arising from climate change and its effects on migration, resource-related scarcity and extremism, it is imperative to implement a range of effective actions across different levels of society. When it comes to migration, strengthening disaster preparedness and response is a must. To protect communities, making investments in early warning systems to identify natural disasters, evacuation strategies and robust infrastructure is essential. Apart from that, supporting vulnerable communities impacted by climate change should be provided with development assistance, opportunities of employment, and access to healthcare and education and other services, which will empower them to withstand climate-related challenges.

Promoting the sustainable management of natural resources, such as water and arable land, is one of the best ways to manage resources and protect scarce resources. Water conservation and forest preservations and responsible agriculture also can be used as a factor of encouragement with regard to resource management. Additionally, international-aid-based cooperation is another effective solution to resource management. Developed countries can offer vulnerable nations financial and technical support to help them build resilience and deal with the effects of climate change.

On the other hand, tackling the root causes of extremism and terrorism including

poverty, inequality, and the lack of opportunities will help to ease the situation. This could be done by countering radicalisation by strengthening community engagement and making dialogue.

Moreover, many countries undergo climate-related risks and since the topic at hand is interconnected to other sectors such as the economy and politics, therefore, immediate and efficient actions to protect the environment will also strengthen public health and the economic sector to an extent. To reduce the impacts induced by climate change, several measures can be taken such as enhancing the health and disease control mechanism to mitigate the potential increase in the spread of diseases due to climate change, educating communities regarding climate change resilience, the adaptation of strategies and sustainable practices to prevent potential consequences and to strengthen social safety nets to support vulnerable populations during climate-related crises and natural disasters.

In conclusion, climate change is a serious security threat that must be addressed seriously. It is not merely an environmental issue. Also, climate change is a complex and multifaceted challenge, requiring a comprehensive and integrated approach. Realising how critical this situation is, makes it obvious that climate change is not just an environmental issue but also a serious security concern that needs to be addressed on a worldwide scale. As we stand at this crossroads, it is incumbent upon us to weave together the threads of cooperation, innovation and sustainable practices to safeguard not only the planet that we live but also the stability and prosperity of future generations. The repercussions of inaction are too serious to ignore, thus the time to act is now. Let this moment serve as a starting point for profound shifts and a testament of resiliency for the times to come.



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Strengthening Financial Resilience and Ensuring Public Welfare

By Wing Commander Udith Pathirana

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A pyramid scheme constitutes a deceitful strategy for generating monetary gains, hinging upon the recruitment of an expanding group of “investors”. Initially, promoters attract individuals to become investors, who subsequently draw in additional participants, perpetuating the cycle. The Central Bank of Sri Lanka (CBSL) has prohibited pyramid schemes by issuing a red notice to the general public on 24 August 2023 highlighting companies that were identified as pyramid schemes (CBSL, 2023). Accordingly, the undermentioned entities/companies/money schemes were indicated by the CBSL.

1. Tiens Lanka Health Care (Pvt) Ltd.
2. Best Life International (Pvt) Ltd.
3. Global Lifestyle Lanka (Pvt) Ltd.
4. Mark-Wo International (Pvt) Ltd.
5. V M L International (Pvt) Ltd.
6. Fast 3Cycle International (Pvt) Ltd (F3C).
7. Sports Chain App, Sports Chain ZS Society Sri Lanka.
8. OnmaxDT.
9. MTFE App, MTFE SL Group, (Hiru News, 2023; SL MIRROR, 2023) and MTFE DSCC Group (Pvt)Ltd.

It was evident that these illegal entities were actively promoting their illicit business through both public and social media platforms. Unfortunately, it was evident that the MTFE sponsored a team in the Cricket Team in the Sri Lankan Premier League (SLPL) (SL MIRROR, 2023). In the past, these prohibited illicit entities used psychological manipulation to entice individuals to join its network by promising rewards or benefits in exchange for recruiting new members, rather than offering legitimate investment opportunities or engaging in the sale of goods. Moreover, they employed deceptive tactics, including false claims about processes such as reinvestment, partnerships with foreign firms, and investment security through insurance schemes, all of which attracted a significant number of unsuspecting individuals.

Furthermore, these pyramid businesses have exploited the power of social media activities, public sponsorships, and social events to greatly enhance their recruitment

efforts. At present, there exists a multitude of victims in Sri Lanka who have suffered financial losses due to the fraudulent activities of the aforementioned institutions. In contrast, only a small fraction of participants managed to accumulate substantial wealth through the same pyramid scheme. Despite the recurring nature of these frauds in Sri Lanka, only a few responsible individuals have faced legal action leading to the confiscation of assets in recent times (FATF APG, 2015, 2019, 2021). This lack of prosecution unquestionably contributes to the escalation of financial crimes, perpetuating a cycle of creating new variations of pyramid schemes.

Existing Problem

Illegal pyramid businesses such as OnmaxDT and MTFE were proven to have financial transactions, collections and gains of over a Billion Sri Lankan Rupees which were transformed through both banking and non-banking mechanisms. Further, the Daily Mirror Eye Investigation report published on 22 September 2021 comprehensively underscores the severe loopholes in the financial crime prevention mechanism of Sri Lanka where even having identified suspicious transactions reports (STR) raised by the Banking Sector in 2008 against the Best Life International (Pvt) Ltd, they continued to expand their business until 2016 without having any direction of termination of the account which the same bank has to file the second STR in 2016 (Fonseka, 2021). Nevertheless, since the submission of the STR, respective legal authorities have failed to take prompt and adequate actions such as prosecutions and confiscations against the perpetrators of the Best Life International (Pvt) Ltd up to date.

Recently, Sri Lanka has enforced a ban on pyramid schemes, which function as a business model by enticing individuals with promises of compensation or services in exchange for enlisting others into the scheme, rather than engaging in legitimate investment activities or product sales. However, it has become evident that a significant number of financial transactions have been routed through Sri Lanka's established banking system, which unfortunately failed to discern the origins of these funds and their ultimate destinations. Ethically speaking, this scenario has paved the way for instances of money laundering (ML), resulting in the illicit movement of funds to their intended endpoints. Consequently, the implementation of legal measures against financial crimes within Sri Lanka has been notably delayed, leaving the general populace exposed and susceptible to victimisation.

Discussion

The exposure of Sri Lankan pyramid schemes and the deficiencies within the countermeasures, as highlighted by Fonseka (2021), provides a comprehensive account of the ineffectiveness inherent in our financial apparatus. Furthermore, the proceeds and illicit activities stemming from these schemes have given rise to

enduring financial and societal predicaments for the broader populace, while only a select few reap the utmost rewards, enabling them to indulge in lives of opulence. Compounding the issue, the pursuit of legal remedies has been significantly delayed by the prevailing mechanism resulting in the enhancement of its network and assets base. In some instances, the attribution of accountability for these actions remains vague, contributing to a cycle of deferral as responsibility is shifted from one party to another such as Banks, CBSL and Legislative Authorities (Fonseka, 2021).

Additionally, pyramid schemes tend to disguise their activities, often presenting themselves as legitimate business ventures. As a result, they might not raise the same red flags that are typically associated with more overt forms of financial fraud. Their deceptive nature can make it challenging for banks to detect these activities solely through transaction monitoring. Moreover, the funds involved in pyramid schemes might not flow exclusively through traditional bank accounts where those actions might use various channels, including cash transactions and informal payment methods, further complicating the detection process within the confines of conventional banking oversight. However, leaving the identified cases unattended or delayed in legal actions would create numerous financial and social issues.

Importantly, a comprehensive in-depth analysis would reveal that a major portion of these instances can be linked to a selected group of recurrent actors who have transformed such activities into their primary income source, allowing them to lead opulent lives through the illicit acquisition of hard-earned money from victimised individuals. Despite the presence of an array of legal statutes and segments in Sri Lanka designed to prosecute and probe such illicit undertakings, the unfortunate reality is that the growing trend in such activities highlights the inefficacy of the entire system, which ultimately favours the perpetrators to loot the hard-earned money of innocent citizens. Nonetheless, it is unbelievable that pyramid businesses are functioning under the established financial network of Sri Lanka during a situation where CBSL has banned the use of cryptocurrencies.

Top of FormBottom of FormOnmaxDT has proven to be doing transactions since 2020 in the Sri Lankan market, but the legal mechanism has failed to curtail or ban the particular illicit business until the end of 2022 (Hettiarachchi, 2022). Instead, pyramid schemes rely on recruitment and the flow of funds between participants, which might not be captured by standard banking monitoring mechanisms. Hence, MTFE has reached its hands to the level of publishing and sponsoring SLPL demonstrating the actual financial audition of the nation which does not inquire about the legitimacy of the source of funds generated during transactions, sponsoring, and publishing.

Most unfortunately, the Sri Lankan anti-corruption mechanism has failed to secure

the general public from the criminal activities performed by these illegal businesses. Further, the illegal funds acquired through these means serve as a resource for criminals to evade legal proceedings or even abscond from the country with their unlawfully obtained gains, employing diverse methods of ML for this purpose. Nonetheless, delaying legal actions, lack of prosecution and delayed confiscation would cause the government barriers to the asset recovery of victims which ultimately becomes a social issue that could affect the national security.

The predominant composition of pyramid groups largely comprises individuals positioned at the bottom of the socioeconomic hierarchy. Regrettably, they face a dearth of opportunities to engage with banking institutions and fundamental financial services, primarily due to poverty and limited knowledge of the financial activities of the globe. Nonetheless, the development of the mobile industry has offered an opportunity to extend both social and financial services utilising mobile networks which is invariably beneficial to expanding pyramid businesses (Sultana, 2009). Further, CBSL in a statement reminded the general public “Participating in a pyramid scheme is a punishable offence” which has made victims be threatened by the pyramid perpetrators to refrain from filing complaints against the particular agents. As a result, victimised personnel would find themselves trapped in a condition where recovering diligently earned capital becomes an insoluble challenge that leads to significant social problems such as economic instability, increased inequality, diminished trust in financial systems, and financial imbalance in domestic life.

Therefore, addressing this social issue is deemed necessary by direct involvement of the government which otherwise would ultimately affect the national security of Sri Lanka. Overall, conventional financial traces are less in pyramid schemes that are considered to be complex in nature which makes it difficult to identify solely through traditional banking mechanisms. Therefore, addressing such issues might require a more holistic approach that involves governing agencies, law enforcement, public awareness campaigns at the mass level, and fostering effective collaboration among various stakeholders of the legal and financial sectors that would shield the general public from the perils of pyramid schemes while promoting a secured financial landscape.

Way Forward

Fighting against pyramid schemes requires a concerted effort from all sectors of society. Therefore, implementing the undermentioned recommendations could aid in mitigating the negative impact of pyramid schemes by protecting the public and preserving the integrity of the financial sector of the nation.

- Strengthen the Legal Framework: Establish a dedicated mechanism to swiftly

prosecute and penalise individuals and entities engaged in pyramid schemes. Further, it requires speeding up cases associated with pyramid schemes to ensure swifter justice for victims and discourage perpetrators.

- **Effective Regulatory Oversight:** Cooperate with worldwide financial regulatory bodies to learn from best practices and augment cross-border cooperation in recognising and tackling pyramid schemes.
- **Heightened Public Awareness:** Launch widespread awareness campaigns with the involvement of mass media to educate the general public about pyramid schemes and the probable risks of investing.
- **Strict Source-of-Funds Verification:** Impose severe Know Your Customer (KYC) and source-of-funds verification requirements for all financial activities counting sponsorships and propaganda to prevent the legitimisation of illicit gains.
- **Swift Confiscation of Assets:** Streamline the procedure for the swift confiscation of assets acquired through pyramid schemes to demotivate perpetrators and preserve financial integrity.
- **Continuous Monitoring and Adaptation:** Continuously monitor the growing tactics of pyramid schemes and adapt governing and legal tactics following new schemes.



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Unleashing the Potential of Political Literacy for Informed Participation: Lessons learned from “Aragalaya 2022”

By C. L. C. M. Patabendige

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According to Bertolt Brecht, “The worst illiterate is the political illiterate; he doesn’t hear, doesn’t speak, nor participates in political events. He does not know the cost of life, the price of beans, fish, flour, rent, shoes, and medicine; all depends on political decisions. The political illiterate is so ignorant that he proudly avoids politics. The fool does not realize that, from his political ignorance, arise prostitutes, abandoned children, and the worst thieves of all, the corrupt politicians, flunkies of national and multinational companies.” This quote illustrates how political literacy is vital for existence, stability, and progress in society.

Before delving into political literacy, it is crucial to understand literacy itself. UNESCO’s Institute for Statistics defines literacy as “the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate, and compute using printed and written materials within various contexts. Literacy encompasses a continuum of learning that enables individuals to achieve their goals, develop knowledge, and participate fully in their community and society, including numeracy, the ability to make simple arithmetic calculations. Political literacy extends beyond basic literacy, involving essential competencies and knowledge for active citizen engagement in governance. It requires comprehending how government functions, understanding fundamental societal challenges, and possessing critical thinking skills to appreciate diverse perspectives. Political literacy includes voting for elected representatives, attending public meetings, researching and evaluating candidates, understanding elected officials’ roles, contributing to legislation, and identifying plans affecting taxation and governance. Ultimately, it equips individuals with the tools to actively participate in government and make informed decisions.

Political literacy is crucial for citizens to exercise their human, constitutional, and political rights effectively. For example, individuals have the right to choose public representatives and engage in referendum. These rights are enshrined in conventions as well as in treaties. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), in Article 21, emphasizes every person’s entitlement to participate in their nation’s governance, either directly or by electing representatives. It also guarantees equal access to governmental services within their country. Additionally, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), in Article 25, emphasizes every citizen’s right

to participate in public affairs, vote, be elected in genuine elections, and access public services on an equal basis. In the Sri Lankan context, the 1978 Constitution states in Article 3 that sovereignty resides in the people and is inalienable. Sovereignty includes governmental powers, fundamental rights, and franchise rights. The legislative power rests with Parliament, consisting of elected representatives and, when necessary, the people through referendums. The President, elected by the people, exercises the executive power, including national defense. Judicial power is wielded by Parliament through the court system. In essence, the people exercise the entire administrative, legislative, executive, and judicial system through their franchise.

Political literacy not only empowers individuals to make crucial decisions but also holds government policies accountable. People's representatives are answerable to the public, who have the right to question the credibility and accuracy of decisions made by those in power. Therefore, political literacy empowers individuals to influence the governing system for the better. An example of people demanding their rights can be seen in the first half of 'Aragalaya 2022' [English term is "struggle"] in Sri Lanka, which was driven by the best interest in demanding justice. In the initial part of 'Aragalaya 2022,' a peaceful protest occurred where people, irrespective of their social class, status, religion, or ethnicity, took to the streets to demand answers regarding the fate of their money, protest against financial mismanagement, and address the economic crisis. This historic moment marked a landmark juncture in the political atmosphere where people questioned the people in power as to why they breached trust and misused their power by holding them accountable. This is a fine example, which demonstrates how political literacy goes beyond voting. 'Aragalaya 2022' was a lesson learned for people in power as well as for those who are yet to come into power because they understood how much strength and power people bear in them.

However, when looking deeper, 'Aragalaya 2022' was an outcome of prolonged hardships where people burst out their bottled-up anger. The genuine 'Aragalaya 2022,' which is the first part of it, was a resultant effect of inflation, the rise in commodity prices, prolonged power cuts, long fuel queues, food insecurity, as well as the country's indebtedness. One single incident cannot be judged as the best example of political literacy. The issue is whether people will react the same way if their basic needs are covered but long-term goals are concealed. Will people be prudent enough to prioritize sustainability? In reality, the majority of people are unaware of their fundamental rights and their potential to thrive genuinely. This also results in people being manipulated to follow the majority's demands rather than influencing positively.

The question is, does being politically literate mean being anti-governmental or a fan of the opposition. Unfortunately, this is the perception: you criticize because you are not a part of it, and on the other hand, you cannot question because you choose them. For this, a change in attitude is vital. This highlights that political literacy is incomplete and requires a lot of attention and necessary action. To achieve a more complete understanding of political literacy, it is imperative to look into existing hurdles, security implications, and to consider possible recommendations. One of the key hurdles is the challenge of digitalization and its impact on information space. In today's digitalized world, content can be accessed anytime without any trouble, making it easier for some individuals to engage in hate speech, disinformation, and false news regarding governmental decisions and national security concerns. Such actions can destabilize the stability and security of the country. Therefore, both the public and people in power must be equipped with the necessary skills to recognize what is false and what is not. To achieve this, instilling information literacy and digital literacy must be a priority. These skills will contribute to social cohesion and reduce the likelihood of civil unrest or conflicts. Governments should encourage community engagement and ensure access to information, which are essential steps towards a politically literate society. Furthermore, it is essential to empower the youth and foster critical thinking skills. Empowered youth are an asset to society and a shield against security failure since they will be future leaders, decision-makers, as well as an informed public. In addition, fostering an environment of open dialogue and constructive criticism is indispensable. Encouraging citizens to engage in respectful and empathetic discussions, even when they hold opposing opinions, will lead to a more informed and rational society. Such engagement in constructive criticism, rather than mockery, contributes to the growth of political literacy and a stable country.

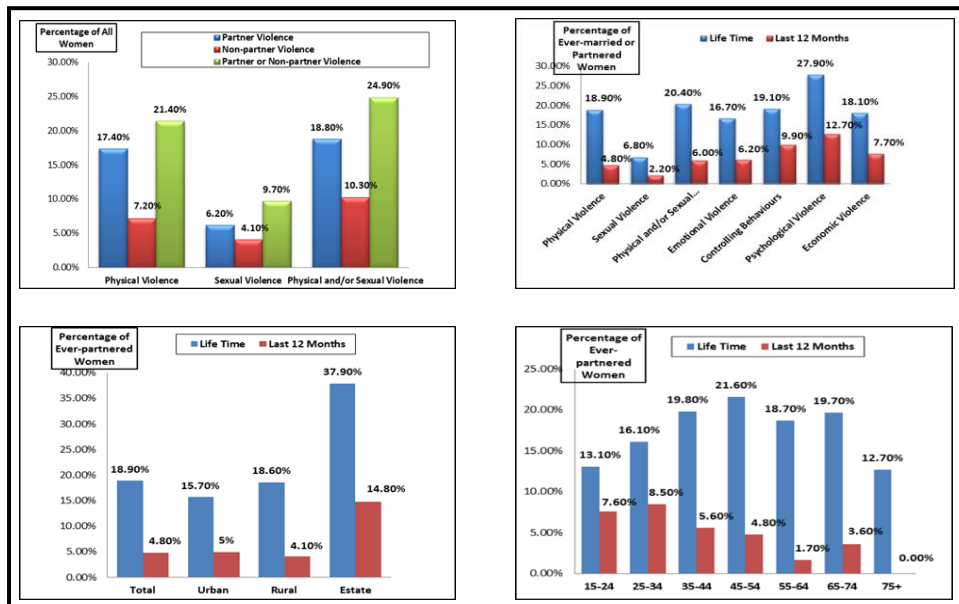


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Escalation of Domestic Violence Against Girls and Women in Sri Lanka

By Kalpani Gunathilaka Danangalage

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Source: Women's Wellbeing Survey, 2019, DCS

The widespread infringement on the human rights of Girls and Women through acts of violence stands as a prominent issue globally. This problem transcends societal, financial, and geographical divisions. Such acts of violence compromise the well-being, respect, safety, and independence of those affected, yet they persist amidst a prevailing atmosphere of unspoken concealment. There have been accounts of a rise in domestic violence in Sri Lanka in the recent past, attributed to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and an unparalleled economic downturn.

National security is often invoked to safeguard against various threats, encompassing defence against both internal and external attacks and infiltration. The duty of upholding this security falls upon the defence and security forces. The issue of domestic violence has surfaced due to the competition for political power and economic resources, resulting in adverse consequences for the overall peace and security of the nation. While physical and financial insecurities exacerbate domestic violence, the presence of such violence further magnifies these insecurities. Consequently, it is imperative to seek remedies for this problem that poses a

significant threat to national security.

Present status of Domestic Violence in Local and Global Context

Domestic violence specifically, represents significant public health issues and a breach of women's fundamental human rights. Domestic abuse, in other words, intimate partner violence is commented by the United Nations as "a pattern of behaviour in any relationship that is used to gain or maintain power and control over an intimate partner." In addition, domestic violence is defined in Sri Lanka Prevention of Domestic Violence Act No. 34 of 2005 as "an act which constitutes an offence specified in Schedule I; any emotional abuse, committed or caused by a relevant person within the environment of the home or outside and arising out of the personal relationship between the aggrieved person and the relevant person".

It negatively affects women's mental, physical, sexual and reproductive health and in certain contexts, it may increase the risk of HIV infection. Domestic violence encompasses a wide range of actions, such as physical, emotional, sexual, economic, or psychological, and threats of actions controlled by another individual. These actions include behaviours that terrorise, frighten, manipulate, degrade, oppress or maltreat, injure, blame, or wound someone. Domestic violence can affect anyone, irrespective of age, gender, race, social class, sexual orientation, faith, education level or socioeconomic background. It can occur in various types of relationships, including couples who are living together, married or dating.

According to data from the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2021, approximately one out of every three women (30%) worldwide encountered instances of physical or sexual violence from either a partner or non-partner in their lifetime. Additionally, an estimated one out of every seven women had encountered physical or sexual violence from an intimate partner within the last 12 months.

The Women's Wellbeing Survey in 2019 conducted by the Department of Statistics is the recent source for obtaining data on violence against Sri Lankan women and girls. Accordingly, Sri Lankan women subjected to physical violence by their partners during their lifetime are more than double (17.4%) compared to violence from anyone else (7.2%). Similarly, the occurrence of sexual violence from partners (6.2%) is also higher than sexual violence from non-partners (4.1%). These data reveal that Violence perpetrated by partners is comparatively high in the context of Sri Lanka.

While it falls below the global average (30%), approximately one out of every five (20.4%) women who have ever been in a partnership have encountered physical and/or sexual violence from their intimate partners during their lifetime. Controlling behaviours are the form of partner violence that is reported the most frequently in Sri

Lanka as psychological violence is the blend of controlling behaviours and emotional violence. Furthermore, the survey has revealed that physical violence by a partner is relatively higher in the estate sector rather than in urban and rural sectors as well and women aged 45-50 during their lifetime and 25-34 during the last 12 months are the most abused through physical violence by their partner.

How the Covid-19 Pandemic and Economic Crisis affect Domestic Violence

The economic prospects of Sri Lanka have been significantly compromised by the Covid-19 pandemic, worsening an already difficult macroeconomic landscape characterised by sluggish growth rates and substantial fiscal strains. Due to this economic downturn of the country, poverty and unemployment largely increased and thereby most of the vulnerable families fell into so many financial issues. It exacerbated domestic tension and escalated domestic violence in Sri Lankan families. Reporting higher unemployment rates, mainly due to the adverse economic consequences of the pandemic in Sri Lanka, the country has witnessed a loss of over half a million jobs in the employment sector between 2021 and 2022. This circumstance creates a range of stressors, including financial strain, social stigma, and various other factors. Such stressful situations contribute to an increase in domestic violence.

Additionally, due to female unemployment, their reliance on spouses or partners further exacerbates the issue. This financial dependence often creates challenges for women in leaving their abusers, leaving them more vulnerable to domestic violence, particularly in the context of lockdown measures. Although economic recession, poverty and unemployment do not cause the creation of domestic violence, these factors may surge the risk of domestic violence. Renishka Fernando has declared in the Sunday Times on 28 November 2021 that the number of daily complaints surged to 100-200 after the outbreak of Covid-19, with over 70% of the grievances related to domestic violence, and 15% involving rape, family disputes and cyber-violence. Amidst the Covid-19 pandemic, there has been a surge in documented instances of sexual and gender-based violence as a result of lockdowns and limitations on travel.

According to the findings of the Women's Wellbeing Survey in 2019, there is a consistent correlation between a low household socioeconomic status, specifically poverty, and elevated occurrences of partner violence. It means women with the stress of poverty or low financial background suffer a lot of violence from their partners. Furthermore, compared to women with low-level household assets, women with middle and higher levels of household assets had a relatively lower risk for partner violence.

However, some are of the view that domestic violence is not directly linked with the

effects of family economic background. There is no doubt that domestic violence is happening in all the families who are rich, poor, educated or uneducated. There are several reasons for domestic violence. It differs from one family to another. Although rich families are well with financial backgrounds, they may have other issues like addiction to drugs and mental issues etc. but, the majority of poor families suffer from domestic violence due to their financial difficulties, lack of education and other pressures from society or relatives.

Other Factors affecting the Escalation of Domestic Violence

Demographic attributes, prior incidents of violence, attitudes towards spousal abuse (woman), behaviours of woman's partner, socioeconomic background, household wealth, number of children, woman's social capital and residential sector in which the individuals are situated are taken into consideration as the possible factors that increase the risk of experiencing physical or sexual violence.

Women's Wellbeing Survey in 2019 has exposed that young age and 'young at marriage' is considered as the age where there is a higher risk of violence for women due to their relative inexperience and low relationship power in that age. And, women who rely on their partner for financial support face an increased likelihood of experiencing partner violence. Higher levels of education and employment among women should be connected to a decreased risk of current partner violence. However, it is important to note that certain aspects of women's empowerment, such as economic independence and ownership of assets, have been shown to offer protection in some contexts. Another factor affecting domestic violence is the alcohol consumption of the partner. If a woman's partner uses drugs, the risk of reporting domestic violence is over twice compared to the women whose partners have never used drugs. Social isolation has a strong relationship with partner violence while women's family and social networks are negatively associated. Residential status also shows a significant influence on the occurrence of domestic violence. Compared to the women who are living in urban areas, women living in rural and estate areas are at a higher risk for domestic violence.

Existing Measures to Curb Domestic Violence in Sri Lanka

In Sri Lanka, the legal structure addressing the prevention and punishment of domestic violence primarily relies on several key laws. These include the Code of Criminal Procedure Act No. 15 of 1979, the Penal Code Ordinance No. 2 of 1883, and the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act No. 34 of 2005. To aid in the coordination and oversight of efforts against abuse and violence, the Sri Lanka Police has the main responsibility to act against domestic violence and the National Child Protection Authority, established by Act No. 50 of 1998, plays crucial roles, particularly concerning the safeguarding of children. According to Section 23 of the

Domestic Violence Act, domestic violence encompasses the infliction of emotional or physical harm by a spouse, former spouse, or partner with whom one cohabits. Section 2 outlines the provision that allows the affected party to seek a Protection Order from a Magistrate's Court in response to such mistreatment. However, looking back at the year 2020, it becomes evident that women faced significant barriers in reporting such violence due to being confined to their homes during the lockdown, making it nearly impossible for them to seek help.

Another measure is establishing a National Policy Framework and Action Plan to address Sexual and Gender-based Violence. This was designed by the Ministry of Women and Child Affairs in association with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to tackle Sexual and Gender-based Violence (SGBV) in 2016. The Plan aims to create a society in Sri Lanka where women and children can live without violence, emphasising zero tolerance for SGBV. Notably, this comprehensive Plan was developed through a multi-sectoral approach involving key Ministries from nine sectors.

Conclusion and the Way Forward

There are a number of reasons for domestic violence such as demographic attributes, prior incidents of violence, attitudes towards spousal abuse (woman), behaviours of woman's partner, socioeconomic background, household wealth, number of children, woman's social capital and residential sector etc. Nevertheless, numerous studies indicate that the recent surge in domestic violence against women and girls is closely linked to the economic crisis. Those who are financially vulnerable among women have borne the brunt of this increase. Violence against women can be prevented if all parties work responsibly for it. The healthcare sector has a crucial responsibility to offer comprehensive healthcare services for protecting women who have faced violence, serving as a gateway to connect them with additional support services they may require.

The Centre for Women's Research (CENWOR) conducted a research study in 2019 with the collaboration of the National Police Commission and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) regarding gender equality in Sri Lanka Police. They revealed that an approved cadre of 11,263 female officers exists, but at present, only 8,878 women officers are actively serving. And it is 11.7% of the total cadre. Furthermore, they identified that women Police officers play a crucial role in enhancing the police response to violence against women and they are indispensable in addressing challenges like domestic violence, human trafficking, and other enduring issues that predominantly impact women and children. Hence, it is needed to appoint sufficient female Police officers in every Police station, particularly in rural regions. Sometimes, women are reluctant to report domestic violence cases to male

Police officers.

Hence, it is vital to increase female Police officers, especially in rural areas as most of the cases are in the rural areas. Additionally, there is a need for further development of awareness among Police officers regarding providing advice and taking appropriate actions when responding to reports of domestic violence, to prevent its recurrence in the future. There is a requirement for the establishment of a systematic and official monitoring mechanism for all families identified as vulnerable. Moreover, additional financial resources should be allocated to support both governmental and non-governmental organisations in their efforts to prevent domestic violence.

After the 2019 Women's Wellbeing Survey published by the DCS, there is no further survey conducted to identify the present status of domestic violence in Sri Lanka. However, cases of domestic violence are increasing day-by-day due to several various reasons. Therefore, it becomes necessary to conduct a comprehensive survey to collect data on domestic violence in Sri Lanka and to take prompt remedial action. To prevent domestic violence that occurs due to the economic and financial issues of the country and directly impacts households, a speedy recovery of the Sri Lankan economy is vital to provide relief to vulnerable families.

As well as Employment opportunities should be created and provided to the women who depend on their partners for financial support. Furthermore, enhancing educational prospects for girls represents a significant stride in the broader perspective. Bridging the gender disparity in education provides women with increased economic autonomy and reduces their susceptibility to male influence and control. Implementing these measures will safeguard Sri Lankan girls and women from domestic violence and contribute to improving the social standing and reputation of the country as well.



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Deforestation and Biodiversity Loss in Sri Lanka's Rainforests

By Lieutenant Colonel Nalin Samaranayake

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A Critical Analysis of the Consequences and Implications

The rainforests of Sri Lanka, predominantly situated in the South Western and Central areas of the nation, have been widely acknowledged as significant hubs of global biodiversity. Nevertheless, the processes of urbanisation, the expansion of agriculture, and forestry operations have resulted in substantial deforestation, posing a severe danger to the fragile equilibrium of these ecosystems.

The Determinants of Deforestation

Deforestation in the rainforests of Sri Lanka is influenced by a multitude of factors. The encroachment of land for agricultural purposes, particularly for the establishment of tea and rubber plantations, presents a significant peril to the natural ecosystem. Furthermore, the detrimental practice of illegal logging, aimed at procuring valuable timber and firewood, serves to expedite the process of habitat destruction. Urbanisation and the implementation of infrastructure development projects can result in the fragmentation of habitats and the disturbance of wildlife corridors.

Effects on Flora and Fauna

The loss of rainforest habitat in Sri Lanka has profound implications for the diverse flora and fauna of the island nation. With its unique geographical location and rich biodiversity, Sri Lanka's rainforests are home to over 3,000 species of flowering plants, including numerous endemic and endangered species. These lush forests provide vital habitat for a wide range of fauna, including 120 species of mammals, 435 species of birds, 242 species of butterflies, and countless other insects. However, the alarming rate of deforestation poses a significant threat to these precious creatures and their delicate ecosystems.

The Sri Lankan leopard, a critically endangered species, has been steadily declining due to habitat loss caused by rampant deforestation. The purple faced langur, another vulnerable species, is found exclusively in Sri Lanka's rainforests. Habitat fragmentation, which breaks up large, continuous habitats into smaller, isolated patches, has become a significant threat to biodiversity worldwide. This phenomenon disrupts the natural connectivity between habitats, leading to the isolation of populations and a subsequent reduction in genetic diversity.

Deforestation has become alarmingly prevalent, affecting various ecosystems across the globe. For example, in the Amazon rainforest, large scale deforestation has resulted in the fragmentation of once vast forested areas. In North America, the disruption of ecosystems can have far reaching consequences for the delicate balance of predator-prey relationships and the intricate web of plant-animal interactions.

In a disrupted ecosystem, the decline of a predator species can result in an unchecked increase in the prey populations, leading to overgrazing or the overconsumption of resources, putting immense pressure on the ecosystem's vegetation, and potentially causing habitat degradation. Conversely, the loss of a prey species due to disruption can have cascading effects on predator populations, causing them to struggle without an adequate food source.

Biodiversity Loss and Environmental Security

The alarming phenomenon of biodiversity loss in rainforests poses a grave threat not only to the survival of individual species but also to the delicate balance and stability of entire ecosystems. The intricate web of life within these lush and diverse habitats is being disrupted at an alarming rate, with far reaching consequences that extend beyond the boundaries of the rainforest itself. Rainforests are renowned for their unparalleled biodiversity, housing an estimated 50% of the world's plant and animal species despite covering only 6% of the earth's land surface. However, this astonishing richness is now under severe threat. According to recent studies, rainforest ecosystems are experiencing a staggering rate of species extinction, estimated to be between 1,000 to 10,000 times higher than the natural background extinction rate. The loss of individual species within rainforests is not an isolated event.

Rainforests, with their lush and diverse vegetation, play a crucial role in maintaining the balance of our planet's ecosystem. One of the most significant services that they provide is carbon sequestration, which refers to the process of capturing and storing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. Rainforests are exceptional at this, as they absorb vast amounts of carbon dioxide through photosynthesis, helping to mitigate the effects of climate change. Rainforests are estimated to store approximately 25% of the world's carbon.

This incredible capacity to sequester carbon makes the detrimental consequences resulting from the loss of these crucial services far reaching and have profound implications for Sri Lanka's environmental security. Climate patterns, which play a pivotal role in determining weather conditions and long-term climate trends, are significantly affected by the absence of these services. This disruption can lead to erratic weather patterns, such as an increased frequency and intensity of extreme

weather events like storms, droughts, and floods.

Furthermore, the availability of water, a vital resource for various sectors including agriculture, industry, and domestic use, is severely impacted by the loss of these services. Sri Lanka heavily relies on water resources for irrigation purposes, and any disruption in the natural water cycle can have dire consequences for agricultural productivity. Reduced water availability can lead to crop failures, decreased yields, and even food shortages, exacerbating food security concerns in the country. The overall environmental security of Sri Lanka is intricately linked to the health and functioning of these services.

Conservation Efforts and Sustainable Solutions

The Sri Lankan Government has taken a proactive approach in combating deforestation and biodiversity loss, focusing on preserving its natural resources and safeguarding its rich biodiversity. By implementing strict regulations and policies, the country has reduced deforestation rates by 50% between 2000 and 2020. This achievement can be attributed to the Government's commitment to enforcing strict penalties for illegal logging activities.

To safeguard rainforest ecosystems, the Government has established numerous protected areas and national parks, with a significant portion dedicated to rainforests. These areas serve as sanctuaries for flora and fauna, ensuring their long-term survival and promoting biodiversity preservation. Reforestation projects, which involve planting trees in degraded areas, aim to restore the ecological balance and engage local communities in sustainable management practices. Deforestation has a devastating impact on the planet, with an estimated 18.7 million acres of forest lost each year. Reforestation projects help restore natural habitats for species, promote biodiversity, and create a healthier ecosystem. Trees also act as carbon sinks, absorbing carbon dioxide.

Ecotourism can also generate economic incentives for rainforest preservation by attracting tourists interested in experiencing the diverse ecosystems. The economic impact of ecotourism on rainforest preservation cannot be understated.

Conclusions

Deforestation and habitat destruction in Sri Lanka's rainforests pose a significant threat to the country's rich biodiversity, which includes a diverse range of ecosystems and unique flora and fauna. These forests provide habitat for rare and endangered species, such as the Sri Lankan leopard, the purple faced langur, and the Sri Lankan frogmouth. The consequences of these actions extend beyond ecological impacts, impacting environmental security and the overall well-being of the nation. The

International Union for the Conservation of Nature reports that around 25% of plant and animal species are at risk of extinction due to human activities.

Deforestation not only leads to the loss of habitats for countless species but also significantly contributes to climate change, as trees play a crucial role in absorbing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

The Food and Agriculture Organisation estimates that an estimated 10 million hectares of forest are lost each year, equivalent to an area roughly the size of Iceland. This rapid deforestation has destroyed approximately 80% of the earth's original forests. Preserving the rich biodiversity of Sri Lanka's rainforests is of utmost importance, as it not only serves as an ecological imperative but also plays a vital role in securing a sustainable future for generations to come.



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Psychological Motives Behind Investing in Pyramid Schemes Jeopardizing Security

By C. L. C. M. Patabendige

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Pyramid schemes are popularly known for promising easy money without legitimacy. Napoletano and Curry (2023) define pyramid schemes as follows: 'A scam where a so-called marketing company promises to help you earn big profits in exchange for recruiting new participants into the scheme'. There are also schemes done in the form of gift programs. On the surface, a pyramid scheme appears to be a legitimate company selling products or services, but the core goal is always to grow the number of participants in the scheme rather than increase product sales. New participants are typically referred to as investors, salespeople, agents, or distributors, or some variation of these titles. These pyramid schemes have emerged as a significant threat to the security of Sri Lanka, jeopardizing various aspects of security. Sri Lanka has also fallen victim to pyramid schemes, with people from different backgrounds becoming victims, while only a select portion of society benefits from them. In Sri Lanka, the Central Bank has recognized two types of schemes which are Naked Pyramid Schemes, which involve recruiting only with an entry fee, and Product-based Pyramid Schemes, which recruit people by selling products or services. The tragedy is that despite knowing the insecurity and illegality of these investments, people continue to invest in these schemes. Due to these reasons, pyramid schemes are prohibited in Sri Lanka, as stipulated in Section 83(C) of the Banking Act No. 30 of 1988.

Pyramid schemes jeopardize the security of the country economically, financially as well as it has social implications. In terms of economic and financial security, these schemes attract hard-earned money from individuals into a bogus scheme, and with the collapse of the pyramid, individuals will lose their income. This loss is always substantial because individuals incur an opportunity cost that could have been used for their retirement plan or invested in capital. Additionally, since pyramids collapse, this puts indebted people in even more financial distress, as some individuals take loans officially or informally to invest in schemes or liquidate their assets to earn more. Furthermore, after the collapse of pyramid schemes, people resort to litigation, which also leads to an extra burden and erosion of income. Moreover, people end up depressed and unstable, incurring health costs. In summary, pyramid schemes

jeopardize both financial and economic security by affecting savings, income, assets, legal expense. In addition, pyramid schemes have sociological implications as well. Most of the time, the breadwinner or the counterpart of the family does not disclose their investment in the pyramid scheme to their spouse. Due to this, when the pyramid collapses, a family also collapses, causing chaos. The spouse who was not aware of the investment then feels devastated due to trust being broken and might have had dreams of building a house together or sending children overseas. This breakdown of the family has serious consequences for society because family is the basic unit in the society. Consequentially, this leads to people becoming isolated and hopeless which are mental health implications which would also lead to high suicide rates. This situation can be seen in Sri Lanka and the tragedy is it is escalating only. An example is, as reported by (Sri Lanka Mirror, 2023) a sports instructor from Walasmulla, who became entangled in an online pyramid scheme, sadly took his own life in the school's sports room, according to police reports”.

To address this situation effectively, it is essential to recognize that litigation, government circulars, fines, and imprisonment are not the sole mechanisms available. Instead, it is crucial to consider this issue as a psychological concern to understand why individuals act with short-sightedness, believing that it will yield long-term benefits. According to Hock and Button, there are participant-dominant and organizer-dominant reasons for joining pyramid schemes. Participant-dominant reasons for joining pyramid schemes include the appeal of a unique investment opportunity that promises substantial returns for modest effort and offers flexibility. Furthermore, the growing influence of social media has enabled pyramid schemes to expand rapidly. As per the authors, these schemes have the potential to grow exponentially when large groups of like-minded individuals are encouraged to promote them among others. Success stories from individuals who have profited significantly from the scheme are often used to inspire others to believe that similar outcomes are achievable. Organizer-dominant reasons for joining pyramid schemes involve high-pressure tactics. These tactics are described in detail by Snook (2005) and include using family members, friends, or trusted acquaintances to contact potential associates about an exciting business opportunity. Inviting these associates to an event or meeting, often scheduled once in the local area, where highly persuasive and pressured sales presentations are conducted. Finally, during these events, individuals are offered a unique, sometimes "time-pressured" opportunity to join the scheme. Understanding these psychological motivations behind participation in pyramid schemes is essential to developing more effective strategies for prevention and intervention.



These two methods are facilitated, promoted, as well as encouraged for many reasons. Therefore, it is crucial to look into the psychological reasons behind such investment irrespective of collapses in those schemes. After speaking with different individuals in the society, the following factors were derived. The most prominent reason is it is easy money. You invest a certain amount, and your success is dependent on recruiting new investors. Therefore, it is collecting people rather than spending money. The rationale behind going behind easy money is one of the basic instincts in people, which is greed. Some people mentioned that they feared being left out because the majority are a part of it. The fear of missing out and the mentality that 'I will lose a luxurious opportunity' drives people to invest in pyramid schemes. The majority of the people who are in schemes or who were invited to schemes were by friends, relatives, coworkers, or superiors. There is always faith and trust among each other. Due to the feeling of knowing the other people invest in schemes as well. In addition, peer pressure also kicks in job relationships and among friends because 'we all do it, why don't you do it?'

Another reason which came to light was that investments were made due to the manipulative market strategies utilized by these schemers. These pyramid scheming people often post pictures in luxurious clothing, travel frequently, and associate with influential individuals. The desire to thrive and be exclusive like them draws people like a moth to a flame. When speaking with people who were schemers before but left out after a collapse of the pyramid, they mentioned that they invested because of the initial success. Some individuals claimed that they were drawn to it because they overestimated themselves, thinking they could recruit many. Strikingly, some people stated that they kept investing in schemes because they were reluctant to admit defeat. They hoped they could prove it was not a failure but a success story. On the other hand, there are people who became victims of schemes because they are financially illiterate. They lacked the knowledge, and they thought this was legitimate. When asked why so? And why didn't you question, people mentioned that schemes appeared to be legal and genuine, and investors were well-to-do people in society. The majority of low-income earners and people in debt mentioned they invested in these schemes because they were desperate to find a way out of the economic crisis situation. Due to financial hardships at that time, they thought this was the best option.

With all being said, it is evident that a pyramid scheme, which appears to be lucrative, is a short-sighted investment that results in repercussions. It disrupts the economy, finances, mental well-being as well as the whole society. Since a pyramid scheme is driven by confidence, passion, interest, and curiosity, to deter and prevent pyramid

schemes, laws, circulars, resolutions, and government directives are not the only facets to be adhered to. At this point, understanding psychological motives can be regarded as the first step in comprehending the root causes behind pyramid schemes and the path towards eliminating them.



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Urgent Need to Regulate Sri Lanka Crypto Currency Market

By **Chamathka Sewmini**

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In the digital age, Cryptocurrency (Crypto) has evolved as a revolutionary monetary concept that challenges the very fabric of the traditional financial system. Crypto is a virtual currency format which is only available on online trading platforms. In its crux, Blockchain technology is the technological infrastructure that facilitates Crypto while Cryptography employs secure transactions. Moreover, world-famous top companies such as Microsoft, Shopify, Tesla, Bitrefill, PayPal, Starbucks, AT&T and Travala accept Crypto payments. Crypto has shaken up the traditional transaction methods at present. Accordingly, many countries, specifically the West including the European Union (EU), the Middle East pioneering United Arab Emirates (UAE) and even some Asian countries including Singapore have incorporated Crypto transactions into their economy further regulating their Crypto market according to their national requirements.

Particularly, in Sri Lanka, according to Directions No. 3 of 2021 under the Foreign Exchange Act, No.12 of 2017 issued by the Department of Foreign Exchanges of CBSL, Electronic Fund Transfer Cards (EFTC) are not allowed for payments with regard to Crypto (CBSL, 2021). Indeed, Crypto is not considered a legal tender in Sri Lanka. Moreover, the Central Bank of Sri Lanka (CBSL) has declared Crypto as an investing platform associated with significant risks of financial, legal and operational through press releases in 2018, 2021 and 2022 (CBSL, 2023) and investors have been warned by the CBSL on the growing number of financial scams. As Aljazeera revealed in 2022, many Sri Lankan investors have been defrauded, swindling millions of rupees. Some of them had mortgaged their properties. Despite the financial insecurities, Crypto is used islandwide with a user base of 320,000 at present.

Existing Issue

Crypto has been the fastest-growing monetary network in Sri Lanka. Consequently, as mentioned by Danny Stag, Director of 'Paxful', one of the leading P2P Crypto trading platforms, it recorded a growth of over 730 per cent only from Sri Lankan Crypto traders during the economic recession, with the devaluation of the Sri Lankan Rupee (Kumar, 2022). Despite its popularity, Crypto has neither been considered legal nor has the Crypto market been banned by the Sri Lankan Government. Rather, the Sri Lankan Crypto market is in a significant era where many countries have already accepted Crypto transactions at present while implementing a policy

framework to regulate the Crypto markets according to their national requirements.

On the other hand, along with the increasing popularity of the Crypto market in Sri Lanka, Crypto-related illicit activities have raised financial insecurities in the country. Consequently, CBSL has recently banned nine pyramid schemes that have been operated in Sri Lanka (CBSL, 2023). Indeed, declaring a ban is a positive step towards ensuring the financial security of the country, but at the same time how the culprits will be charged needs to be addressed while facilitating a way to return defrauded money to investors. The existing issue in the Sri Lankan Crypto market is hidden behind the issues that have been clearly seen which emphasise the need for a regulatory framework which Sri Lanka is lacking at present.

Financial Risks associated with Crypto

Sri Lankan Crypto investors face a plethora of issues that endanger their investments losing billions. Therefore, it is vital to understand the Financial Insecurities that the Sri Lankan Crypto market faces at present.

- **Ponzi/Pyramid Schemes:** Ponzi/ Pyramid Schemes are fraudulent schemes that promise investors high returns in a fleeting period of time based on their recruitment of new participants into the scheme. Thus, pyramid schemes are prohibited in Sri Lanka under Section 83 (C) of the Banking Act, No. 30 of 1988 where if any person is found guilty of being engaged in the prohibited Crypto Scheme, they will be charged with imprisonment not exceeding three years or a fine not exceeding LKR 1,000,000.
- **Fraudulent Initial Coin Offerings (ICO):** Refers to the issuance and sale of digital tokens to investors under false pretences which further exploits the hype and excitement of Crypto deceiving the investors and making them believe that they are contributing to legitimate trading.
- **Untraceable Transactions:** Crypto is associated with techniques that enhance Privacy and anonymity such as 'Mixing and CoinJoin', 'Ring Signatures' and 'Stealth Addresses'. Consequently, these techniques have made it difficult to trace the transaction in the Crypto arena due to the anonymity. Moreover, this anonymity itself facilitates illicit activities, even terrorist financing.
- **The volatility of the Crypto assets:** Volatility refers to the rapid and significant fluctuation that Crypto assets can experience over a short period of time. Thus, due to the Market maturity, Liquidity, market manipulation, technology and adoption, global economic events, and macro-economic

trends fluctuation rate of Crypto assets is decided. Moreover, Crypto assets are subjected to continuous fluctuations.

- **The anonymity of the Crypto Wallets:** Crypto wallets hide the user identity as well as the transaction history by making it easier to engage in illicit activities obstructing law enforcement from tracing the criminals.
- **Fake Wallets:** Fake Wallets are the type of scams in which malicious actors create fraudulent applications or websites that trick users into revealing their private keys or sensitive information ultimately leading to the theft of their Crypto holdings.
- **Market Manipulation:** Market manipulation refers to the strategies that are used to reduce the economic efficiency of the market by reducing the liquidity of the market risk for transfer. Pump and Dump schemes (PnD Schemes), Wash trading, Order Book, Front Running, Insider Trading, and Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attacks are the manipulation tactics that have been used in the Crypto arena.
- **Lack of deposit insurance:** Thus, due to the decentralised nature of Crypto, no government-backed authority ensures the safety of the deposited money. Rather, no institution is obliged to reimburse the money if it faces bankruptcy.
- **Exchange Rate Risk:** Due to the volatility of the Crypto, the potential which the value fluctuates, when it is exchanged for another Crypto type or Fiat currency type.

The Crypto market worldwide is still in a developing state. Similarly, Sri Lanka is also an amateur in the Crypto arena. Hence, depending on that there still remains a plethora of issues that need to be addressed in the Sri Lankan Crypto arena.

The Way through the Financial Risks

Consequently, the financial bottlenecks of the Crypto market that need to be addressed sooner, depict multifaceted adversary impacts that can have the possibility of impacting the nation's economic landscape. These financial risks when it remains unchecked, hold the ability to permeate a plethora of aspects of the economic infrastructure of the country.

Further, since Crypto is not backed by any tangible reserve, the imaginative bubble of the belief that holds the value of the currency is the main driving force for which the specific Crypto type exists. Hence, if by any chance, the bubble gets destroyed,

the money that one invested in the specific trading platform will eventually get devalued leading to a huge investment loss. Moreover, this investment loss in Crypto will ultimately lead to public outcry from the Crypto arena.

Thus, due to market manipulation in various ways, Crypto can cause huge financial losses for individuals especially when engaged in pyramid schemes. If a large number of the public invests in such schemes, this may lead to severe economic consequences in the country as in 1997 when the Albanian Government collapsed due to the mass general public investment in Crypto. This further caused widespread financial ruin in the country marking a tumultuous period at that time. This remarked a manifest demonstration of the potentiality of the destruction that the Crypto can cause if the arena is not properly governed.

On the other hand, if the proper taxation method is not applied for Crypto transactions, the sudden increase in Crypto could lead to capital flight where investors move out their assets of the country within the traditional financial system. This may further weaken the currency of the country while eroding the confidence in the Government's ability to manage and balance the economy. Moreover, the anonymity and excessive financial independence in the Crypto arena would even facilitate terrorist financing, money laundering and funding political pressure creating political instability within the country. Accordingly, this could undermine the Government's efforts to maintain the rule of law leading to crucial national security concerns.

Consequently, Crypto can be a cause of rigorous consequences leading to critical national security concerns, if it lets the Crypto market behave in its own way. Thus, the Crypto market needs to be regulated to ensure the financial security of Sri Lanka. Through that, the Financial Governance of the Crypto market can be established by mitigating the myriad threats associated with it as some countries have already implemented. Regulating the Crypto arena can be an economic strategy for Sri Lanka, which further can serve as a hedge against inflation where it allows the transaction despite the local value of the currency. Further, Crypto can facilitate asset diversification for investors which even holds the potential of being an alternative store of value, financial inclusion of underbanked population, improving transparency with the Blockchain technology and faster transactions from anywhere at any time can further the economic security of the country if the Crypto market is strategically regulated.

Finally, since the foundation of the resilient nation rests upon the pillars of financial security, it is of paramount importance to mitigate the threats that persist to the financial security of the country. Accordingly, the Sri Lankan Crypto market poses financial insecurities that may lead to extreme repercussions for the nation's economy

and financial instability with a broader economic landscape. At the same time, Crypto can enhance the economic capabilities of the country, if strategically managed. Thus, Sri Lanka demands a proactive approach towards Crypto to safeguard financial security which spontaneously fosters the financial capabilities of the country.

Way Forward

The domain of Crypto is evolving and transformative. Thus, the financial insecurities that were born out of the Sri Lankan Crypto market are evolving day by day. Despite that, the financial insecurities of the Crypto market are mitigable. As rough seas make good sailors, these financial insecurities give rise to new implements that further fortify the national security of Sri Lanka.

- **Introducing a regulatory framework:** It is of paramount importance to introduce a regulatory framework for the Sri Lankan Crypto market with a Crypto licence for both Consumers and Service providers with a locally registered number to ensure that the Government holds all relevant details of the Crypto dealers in the Crypto market at present.
- **Strengthening the Know Your Customer (KYC) and Anti-Money Laundering (AML) regulations:** It is pivotal to strengthen the KYC and AML to ensure market integrity in compliance with the legal and regulatory frameworks.
- **Taxation of Crypto transaction:** Taxation of Crypto will be important to prevent excessive speculation and market volatility which will further promote a stable investor environment. Moreover, this will prevent the risk of tax evasion.
- **Establishing an institution responsible for Crypto:** It is massively important to establish a governing body with an advisory council for Crypto in Sri Lanka consisting of industry experts to examine and monitor Crypto-related activities.
- **Establishing Penalties and Enforcement:** It is of paramount importance to establish penalties and enforcement for investor protection and mitigate illicit activities with regard to Crypto increasing the regulatory creditability and minimising market manipulation.
- **Enhancing the financial literacy of the people:** Empowering the public by educating them on the risks, rewards and best practices when dealing with

Crypto can make well-informed and strategically equipped Crypto traders who do not easily get cheated by fraud schemes and scams associated with Crypto.



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Human Security Perspectives on Hate Speech

By C. L. C. M. Patabendige

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As readers of this article, including myself as the writer, we have all likely encountered hate speech, sometimes without even realizing it. The way each of us perceives hate speech can vary, and its impact on individuals may also differ. This recognition leads us to acknowledge that both you and I have been victims of hate speech at one point or another. The challenge arises in whether we can classify what we've experienced as 'hate,' or if it was simply 'speech' that caused discomfort. Regardless of its nature, severity, or impact, hate speech is harmful and acts as a barrier to the well-being of our society.

What is Hate Speech?

What constitutes hate speech? According to the UN Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech, it is defined as 'any form of communication in speech, writing, or behavior that attacks or employs derogatory or discriminatory language towards an individual or group based on their characteristics, such as religion, ethnicity, nationality, race, color, descent, gender, or other identity factors.' The strategy emphasizes that there's no universally agreed-upon definition of hate speech within international human rights law. Furthermore, it clarifies that hate speech can take various forms of expression, including images, cartoons, memes, objects, gestures, symbols, and can be disseminated both offline and online.

Digital Age as a Challenge

In contrast to the past, today's society is deeply entrenched in the digital realm. Consequently, social media has emerged as a prominent platform for communication. However, not all forms of communication on these platforms promote healthy discourse. Due to their wide-reaching usage, accessibility, and constant availability, even radicalized individuals, terrorists, and separatists have harnessed these platforms to further their agendas. While some employ social media to express genuine emotions, foster unity, and engage in constructive debate, others employ it to manipulate, mock, belittle, or denigrate individuals and specific groups.

As noted by Research Outreach, 'The digital age has facilitated the sharing of online speech and content, often anonymously and without considering the consequences. While online publishing is instant, the mechanisms designed to regulate speech are frequently cumbersome and slow. In traditional media, editorial oversight from someone other than the author has historically served as an effective check on hate speech—a safeguard that doesn't apply to self-published content on social media

platforms.' Additionally, as highlighted by Thorleifsson and O Düker, 'Online environments have proven to be fertile ground for violent extremism, enabling socialization, recruitment, and accelerated radicalization. These digital spaces are often referred to as "virtual communities" or "radical milieus," where information dissemination and involvement are actively encouraged. Even lone actors find connections within these virtual communities, sharing their worldviews and interpretations.

Impact of Hate Speech on Human Security

Before delving into what is hate speech and its impact on human security, it is pivotal to discuss briefly what human security is. Undoubtedly, society has changed and evolved and due to that reason concerns and priorities have also taken a change. Unlike in past, where military security is about the military forces and protection from intervention, at present security, includes notions which deal with human existences, such as human rights, food, water, energy, cyber and politics. As per the (Human Security Handbook, 2016), In 2012, the adoption of General Assembly resolution 66/290 marked a significant moment in the promotion of human security. The resolution outlined Basic Rights which means that people have the right to live in freedom and dignity, without getting subjected to poverty or despair. These rights apply to all, particularly vulnerable groups, ensuring freedom from fear and want and equal opportunities for all. The approach is as follows people-centric, context-specific, and prevention-focused. In addition, it is important to merit attention to Interconnectedness, where Human security recognizes the interconnected nature of peace, development, and human rights, encompassing civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights. Another point is, it is Distinct from the Responsibility to Protect and is non-Coercive. Another important element is, National Ownership, as Human security is based on national ownership, acknowledging the diversity of conditions across countries.

Therefore, hate speech violates human rights since it impacts the dignity and rights of human beings. The impact of hate is disastrous. The word "hate" itself is derogatory since it is prejudicial, angry and also condescending. The words "hate speech" go a step beyond. Some hate speech can be made at an instance, some can be more systematic, coordinated and pre-planned. Hate speech's impact is multi-faceted and it is hard to rank it since hate speech is psychological. Firstly, it is crucial to note that hate speech affects the mentality of the person. According to, (Pluta et al, 2023) "the widespread ubiquity of hate speech affects people's attitudes and behaviour. Exposure to hate speech can lead to prejudice, dehumanization, and lack of empathy towards members of outgroups". According to (SELMA partners, 2019) "more specifically, victims of online hate speech may show low self-esteem, sleeping disorders, increased anxiety and feelings of fear and insecurity".

The said hate speech does not stop from inflicting pain on the mind only, it goes beyond. The reason is, that hate speech can be against a specific ethnicity, race, gender or religious community, which will result in division resulting in the erosion of social cohesion. In addition, the violence incurred on the mind of the individuals transcends to physical violence where hatred will result in riots and bloodshed.

An example of hate speech based on race is the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda, which involved ethnic discrimination. According to the United Nations, decades of hate speech exacerbated ethnic tensions in Rwanda. This was achieved by spreading unfounded rumors and dehumanizing ethnic Tutsi citizens. The hate propaganda was disseminated through the infamous Radio Libre des Mille Collines, which incited the Hutu majority to commit violence against their fellow Tutsi citizens. Another example can be found in the Srebrenica genocide in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The role of hatred and disinformation campaigns in inciting and legitimating war crimes during the Bosnian war (1992–1995) has been established. In Serbian majority areas, constant nationalist propaganda was disseminated through party-controlled media. This demonized the Bosnian Muslim population and other groups, portraying them as violent fundamentalist enemies plotting against the Serbs.

Another example involves hate speech directed at gender. One prominent instance is Gamergate, an online harassment campaign that occurred in 2014–15, targeting women in the video game industry. This campaign was mainly attributed to white male right-wing gamers who opposed the increasing influence of women and feminism in the industry. Notably, Gamergate acted as a recruitment tool for the emerging alt-right movement and played a role in propagating the online "Pizzagate" conspiracy theory, which later gave rise to the broader QAnon conspiracy movement. Another instance of hate speech related to culture and ethnicity is the Christchurch Mosque Shootings. Just before his deadly attack on Muslims in Christchurch, New Zealand, the perpetrator posted a 74-page manifesto on 8chan titled "The Great Replacement." This manifesto referred to a conspiracy narrative outlined by Renaud Camus in his book 'Le Grand Replacement.' In the manifesto, the attacker justified mass murder as necessary to defend Europe against what he saw as an ongoing "cultural and ethnic genocide" caused by multiculturalism and mass immigration. In his post, he urged others to spread his message, create memes, and engage in online activities. This serves as a stark example of how virtual platforms can be exploited to promote hate speech.

Measures

Internationally as well as domestically, there are laws against hate speech. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), in Article 19(1) states that "everyone shall have the right to hold opinions without interference". 19(2)

mentions about “freedom of expression”. In addition, this can be “either orally, in writing or print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice”. However, these rights can be curtailed as provided by law and are necessary, (a) For respect of the rights or reputations of others, (b) For the protection of national security or of public order or public health or morals. Article 20 states that “any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence shall be prohibited by law”. International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) in Article 4 mentions that “States Parties condemn all propaganda and all organizations which are based on ideas or theories of superiority of one race or group of persons of one colour or ethnic origin, or which attempt to justify or promote racial hatred and discrimination in any form, and undertake to adopt immediate and positive measures designed to eradicate all incitement to, or acts of, such discrimination and, to this end, with due regard to the principles embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.” In Sri Lanka, there are four laws against hate speech. Namely, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights Act 56 of 2007, The Penal Code Ordinance No. 2 of 1883, The Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act No. 48 Of 1979 and regulations under it as well as the Police Ordinance (No. 16 of 1865).

There are social media regulations as well. For example, Transparency Center, states that on Facebook, “We’re committed to making Facebook a safe place. We remove content that could contribute to a risk of harm to the physical security of persons. Content that threatens people has the potential to intimidate, exclude or silence others and isn’t allowed on Facebook.” An example of a global initiative is, the United Nations Population Fund. It is a (UNFPA) “global movement to address gendered hate speech online. It co-convenes the Advisory Group to the Global Partnership for Action on Gender-Based Online Harassment and Abuse, and issued the UNFPA Guidance on Safe and Ethical Technology for Gender-Based Violence and Harmful Practices.”. An example of another global initiative is, Social Media 4 Peace, which was “Initiated in January 2021 in three pilot countries, with the support of the European Union, this UNESCO project aims to strengthen the resilience of societies to potentially harmful content spread online – in particular hate speech inciting violence – while protecting freedom of expression and promoting peace through digital technologies, notably social media.”

Persisting Issue

In spite of all the measures in place, the prevalence of hate speech in our daily lives continues to escalate, and this is a genuine tragedy. Therefore, it is imperative that we do not merely react to hate speech but take proactive steps to prevent it from occurring. Addressing hate speech in the 21st century requires a multifaceted approach that involves all stakeholders and paradigms. To enhance the effectiveness

of hate speech prevention, several additional measures can be employed. For instance, governments worldwide should prioritize media literacy, enabling individuals to critically evaluate information. Furthermore, it is essential to promote counter-narratives to counteract hate speech campaigns. Additionally, educational initiatives should be strengthened to instill good practices and nurture empathetic individuals.



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Lead the Fight against Climate Change and Transnational Crime in the Indian Ocean

By Commander Amila Prasanga

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There are vital Indian Ocean insights regarding small island states, strategic vulnerabilities related to transnational crime caused by climate change, and the usefulness of U.S. naval operations that merit the next CNO's attention. These insights align with the commitment to ensuring the U.S. Navy remains the preeminent global fighting force and a trusted defender of rules-based order.

Small island states in the Indian Ocean region face unique geopolitical and environmental challenges. Their limited landmass, vulnerability to rising sea levels, and dependence on maritime resources create a delicate equilibrium that can be disrupted by climate change. It is essential to recognize that these states often find themselves in the crosshairs of great power competition, making them susceptible to both geopolitical pressures and environmental threats. Understanding their circumstances and forging partnerships based on mutual interests and security is crucial.

Climate change is transforming the security landscape in the Indian Ocean. It is having a profound impact in fomenting transnational maritime crimes, particularly illegal fishing, human trafficking, smuggling, and piracy. Small island states are particularly vulnerable to these crimes, which often exploit their maritime boundaries and limited capacity. Recognizing these strategic vulnerabilities and their potential to destabilize the region is paramount.

The U.S. Navy's enduring commitment to maintaining rules-based order is commendable. In the context of the Indian Ocean and its challenges, it is imperative to adapt U.S. naval operations to address transnational threats driven by climate change. This includes enhancing maritime domain awareness, fostering regional cooperation, and developing capabilities for Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HA/DR) operations. Additionally, considering the dynamic nature of these challenges, agility and innovation must be integral to U.S. Navy readiness.

The U.S. Navy's global reach extends to the Indian Ocean, where it operates alongside allies and partners. Strengthening these relationships is essential to ensuring regional stability. Collaborating with regional maritime forces, international

organizations, and small island states can bolster the U.S. Navy's collective ability to address security challenges arising from climate change.

As the next CNO leads U.S. naval operations into this decisive decade, I request that they closely consider the intricate web of challenges and opportunities presented by the Indian Ocean region. It is a space where U.S. naval power can make a significant difference, not only in terms of security, but also in fostering stability, prosperity, and resilience among small island states. By acknowledging these complexities and acting with foresight, the U.S. Navy can continue to be the world's most powerful force, securing U.S. interests and promoting peace across the seas.



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Implications for Society and National Security

By Wing Commander Udith Pathirana

Published on Ceylon Today, 11th October 2023

The Central Bank of Sri Lanka (CBSL) issued a red notice to the public on 24 August 2023 by banning nine pyramid businesses in Sri Lanka (CBSL, 2023; Pathirana, 2023). However, legal action against the respective alleged perpetrators has been delayed to date and it is evident that most of the perpetrators in the upper tiers of the pyramid business are fleeing the country to abscond from legal proceedings. Moreover, delays would cause the prosecutors to recognise the illegal gains and assets of the leading characters of the pyramids which ultimately affect the lower-tier majority who have been victimised in losing their hard-earned money.

Further, in a pyramid business, most of the top-tier characters have acquired an unbelievable wealth of gains through the high-arched ladder which ultimately drained the money of the public in the lower-level tiers. Accordingly, delaying the confiscation of such illegal gains would directly restrict the recovery of the money of the victimised majority in the long term. This issue has created numerous socioeconomic problems in the country such as suicide attempts, family issues, increased divorce cases, disruption of children's education etc. This exploration delves into the multifaceted social issues created by pyramid businesses, shedding light on the human costs, emotional toll, and broader societal impact by leaving a trail of victims grappling with financial ruin and emotional distress.

Existing Issue

Delaying legal action against perpetrators would result in difficulty in disclosing the illegal gains of the perpetrators in higher tiers of the pyramids who have gained the wealth to live their opulent lifestyles through looting the money of the lower-level majority. Moreover, most pyramid businesses presently use cryptocurrency as a mode of their illegal business to disguise the Counter Financial Fraud Mechanism in Sri Lanka and to recruit new members. Hence, transactions through cryptocurrency are banned by the CBSL which makes both investors and business officials commit an

offence under the financial act of Sri Lanka. However, the same reason causes the victims to restrain from taking legal action against perpetrators which ultimately ends up in creating numerous social issues. Nevertheless, very few investors have gone to the legal authorities to complain about victimised pyramid businesses, but a larger portion has refrained from complaining by accepting the loss or trying to sort out the matter through illegal means with the personnel in the upper tiers.

Most importantly, banning the pyramids by the CBSL would not suffice to serve justice to the public to mitigate the social issues where it requires stern action to be taken by the legislative authorities to prosecute perpetrators and confiscate their illegal gains without delay. Without such measures, banning one pyramid business merely paves the way for perpetrators to resurface under different names, perpetuating the cycle of defrauding the public to sustain their luxurious lifestyles.

Discussion

The propagation of pyramid schemes in various parts of the world, including Sri Lanka, has not only raised concerns regarding financial security but also caused major anxiety over the social fabric of affected communities which directly affects national security. Even though the negative implications of pyramid schemes are well-documented and researched by scholars and financial experts globally, the lack of knowledge and the technique of using psychological manipulation to entice new members by promising rewards or benefits rather than offering legitimate investment opportunities (Pathirana, 2023). Hence, the social consequence stemming from these fake enterprises is highly significant to consider as a national security issue that ultimately affects the economic security, human security and the social well-being of the people.

Further, social issues created from illicit pyramid scheme victimisation could be considered wide-ranging while having long-term consequences for victimised individuals, families and their communities. Therefore, preventing the public from pyramid schemes and providing recovery assistance to victims is crucial in mitigating the undermentioned social issues created through illicit pyramid schemes.

Financial Hardships of Victims Victims lose considerable amounts of money/wealth due to pyramid schemes which lead to domestic financial instability, debt, and even bankruptcy. Sometimes, this situation can lead to an inability to acquire basic needs for the sustainability of victims' domestic fronts, creating numerous issues.

Emotional Distress of Victims Losing hard-earned financial assets could lead to different psychological issues such as stress, anxiety and depression. Further, these victims may experience different psychological statuses such as a sense of betrayal, shame and guilt for being Straining the Family Relationship. It is evident that financial difficulties could strain relationships and pull families apart. Moreover, victims would be unable to share their predicament amongst themselves and would face isolation even within households.

Social Isolation

Victims may have used to enjoy any social lifestyle, but the new normal of lack of financial capabilities would create shame or embarrassment in dealing with society.

Loss of Trust

Losing the trust in financial mechanisms, government regulations, law and order and victims' own ability to make profound financial decisions could cause long-term implications on their financial well-being.

Legal Consequences

Some victims may face legal repercussions if they unknowingly participated in illegal activities as part of the scheme. Legal issues can further compound their challenges. The responsibility of safeguarding Sri Lanka against financial corruption lies jointly with the Government and the Central Bank of Sri Lanka (CBSL), which serves as the primary regulatory authority. In a notable move, CBSL banned nine pyramid schemes on 24 August 2023 in accordance with Section 83C of the Banking Act No. 30 of 1988 for conducting and/or having conducted pyramid schemes, emphasising the recognition of the gravity of the issue. However, what raises concerns is the common delay in legislative authorities to take profound legal action against the masterminds

behind these pyramid schemes in Sri Lanka.

Undoubtedly, these pyramid schemes did not materialise overnight where some had established their presence in Sri Lanka for extended periods. Evidently, as revealed by (Fonseka, 2021) and (Pathirana, 2023) even after the detection of pyramid businesses by the banking sector in the year 2008 a pyramid business named ‘Best Life International (Pvt) Ltd’ was in active operations until prohibition in 2023 by CBSL which accounted for a calculated period of approximately 15 years. Consequently, the leaders at the upper tiers of these schemes have collected substantial wealth by exploiting the financial resources of individuals at the lower levels. Thereby, the delay in initiating legal action not only raises questions about the possibility of these perpetrators escaping the grasp of justice but also underscores the urgency of prompt and decisive measures to protect the public and curb financial corruption through the anti-corruption mechanism of the Government.

Indeed, it is the foremost responsibility of the Government to swiftly and effectively safeguard the social well-being of its citizens. However, the absence of timely prosecutions against identified pyramid scheme masterminds has increased the legitimate concerns regarding the effectiveness and credibility of Sri Lanka’s anti-corruption mechanisms. Nevertheless, this lack of decisive action not only jeopardises the financial security of the public but also creates an environment conducive to more financial crimes. Therefore, it is essential that the Government, in collaboration with regulatory bodies and law enforcement agencies, takes robust steps to address this issue comprehensively, thereby fortifying the nation’s financial system and ensuring the protection of its citizens from the perils of pyramid schemes and other financial fraud. Finally, it is required to take proactive steps to prevent pyramid schemes and concurrently offer assistance to victims by the respective authorities of Sri Lanka to mitigate the deep-seated social issues created by pyramid schemes. Therefore, this comprehensive approach seeks not only to curb financial fraud but also to heal the damaged social fabric by the distressing effects of pyramid schemes.

Way Forward

Combatting pyramid schemes and safeguarding the social well-being of citizens necessitates robust legislative action. Therefore, executing the following could protect the affected community in due course.

- **Immediate Legal Action against Masterminds**

By streamlining the legal process and reducing delays in prosecuting pyramid scheme cases, authorities can send a strong message that such fraudulent activities will not be tolerated. This, in turn, can act as a deterrent to potential perpetrators while providing much-needed closure and restitution to the victims of these schemes.

- **Global Approach to Confiscation of Assets**

Cooperate with global financial regulatory bodies and take necessary measures to seize assets purchased from foreign countries with illicit gains from pyramid schemes.

- **Utilisation of Mass Media to Expose Pyramid Businesses**

It is required to use mass media, NEWS, and other available modes of communication to highlight the identified pyramid schemes and create awareness campaigns for the public for protection.

- **Swift Confiscation of Assets**

Authorities can interrupt the financial incentives for engaging in pyramid schemes by expediting the confiscation of illicit gains. As a result, it significantly preserves the financial well-being of the affected individuals and communities while reinforcing the message that pyramid schemes will not go unpunished.

- **Protection of Whistleblowers**

Whistleblower protection is essential to expose perpetrators of these fraudulent schemes. Further, it would directly augment the early detection and prevention mechanism while safeguarding the public trust.



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Balancing Domestic Imperatives / Global Dynamics in Sri Lanka

By Lieutenant Colonel Nalin Samaranayake

Published on Ceylon Today, 17th October 2023

Sri Lanka, a strategically positioned island nation in the Indian Ocean, grapples with multifaceted security challenges that demand constant adaptation and a holistic approach to safeguard its national interests. This article examines the intricate interplay between domestic imperatives and global dynamics in Sri Lanka's national security landscape, incorporating diverse perspectives and the most up-to-date data available.

The Complex Humanitarian Landscape

Sri Lanka's national security is intrinsically linked to its complex history, particularly the three-decade-long ethnic conflict between the Sinhalese and Tamils (South Asia Journal, 2020). While the conflict officially ended in 2009, addressing its aftermath is crucial for stability and reconciliation. Recent statistics reveal that over 290,000 people were displaced during the civil conflict, with 74% of displaced families having been resettled (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2021). This displacement has disrupted lives, strained resources, and exacerbated social and economic inequalities.

Environmental Security in a Changing Climate

Sri Lanka's vulnerability to climate change and natural disasters adds a layer of complexity to its national security considerations. The country's strategic location in the Indian Ocean exposes it to rising sea levels, extreme weather events, and the potential displacement of coastal communities. Incorporating environmental security measures into its national security strategy is vital for ensuring long-term resilience.

The Evolving Cybersecurity Landscape

In the digital age, cybersecurity is paramount for national security. Sri Lanka must address cyberthreats and protect critical infrastructure from potential cyberattacks. Enhancing cybersecurity capabilities and collaborating with international partners on cybersecurity initiatives are essential for safeguarding the nation's digital assets.

Regional Dynamics and Collaboration

Beyond bilateral connections and SAARC engagement, Sri Lanka's national security plan encompasses a larger range of regional dynamics and collaborations with security-focused organisations. Sri Lanka works with organisations in the South

Asian region such as the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) and the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC). These organisations are crucial for tackling common security concerns, maritime safety, and economic cooperation. Participation in regional dialogues and forums also promotes multilateral engagement on topics such as counterterrorism, intelligence sharing, and disaster management, improving Sri Lanka's regional security posture even more. Balancing these joint efforts within the framework of South Asia is critical to Sri Lanka's complex national security strategy.

Public Perception and Involvement

Understanding public opinion and sentiment regarding national security is crucial. The government's efforts and policies in this realm should align with the expectations and concerns of its citizens. Public engagement and transparency can enhance the effectiveness of national security measures.

Global Dynamics: Navigating the Power Play

Sri Lanka's strategic location in the Indian Ocean region has attracted global players seeking influence. Its strategic position along major international shipping routes makes it a maritime trade and connectivity hub. Its proximity to sea lanes like the Strait of Hormuz and the Strait of Malacca offers an advantage for countries seeking economic and geopolitical interests. The growing competition among major powers in the region, such as China and India further emphasises Sri Lanka's strategic importance. The country's geographic location and interest in important world powers like India, China, and the United States significantly impact its foreign policy decisions. India's economic and military prowess, along with its regional influence, make it a crucial player in India's strategic calculations. The country's relationship with China, a global economic powerhouse and rising military force, also plays a pivotal role in shaping its foreign policy decisions. Maintaining a delicate equilibrium between these relationships while safeguarding Sri Lanka's autonomy and independence is a significant challenge. China is Sri Lanka's largest trading partner, with a bilateral trade value of over USD 5 billion. Total investment under China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in Sri Lanka reached USD 8 billion, contributing to infrastructure development and economic growth.

Counterterrorism and Security Measures

Sri Lanka faces a pressing threat of terrorism, which poses significant challenges to its national security landscape. The Easter Sunday bombings in April 2019 highlighted the need for comprehensive and effective counterterrorism strategies. The attacks targeted churches and luxury hotels, causing the deaths of hundreds of innocent people and causing injuries to a large number. It is believed that the attacks were carried out by the local extremist group National Thowheed Jama'ath (NTJ),

with support from the Islamic State (IS). To effectively combat terrorism, Sri Lanka must strengthen intelligence-sharing mechanisms, enhance border security, and promote interfaith dialogue. These strategies help authorities avoid potential threats and identify terrorist networks more efficiently. By implementing advanced technologies for screening procedures at airports, seaports, and land borders, Sri Lanka can effectively monitor and control the movement of people and goods across borders, preventing the infiltration of terrorists and the smuggling of weapons and illicit materials. Sri Lanka allocates approximately 20% of its Annual Defence Budget to counterterrorism efforts, demonstrating its commitment to safeguarding its citizens.

Maritime Security and Geostrategic Concerns

The maritime domain of Sri Lanka is a crucial aspect of the country's development, offering significant economic opportunities while also posing certain security challenges. With its strategic location in the Indian Ocean, Sri Lanka's maritime territory encompasses a vast area that includes important shipping routes, valuable natural resources, and potential for maritime trade and tourism. Economically, Sri Lanka's maritime domain plays a vital role in the country's trade and commerce. The Port of Colombo, located in the commercial capital, is one of the busiest ports in South Asia. Foreign investments in strategic ports, including Hambantota, have garnered special attention due to their potential military implications. Notably, China has been a prominent investor in these ports, which has raised concerns among various stakeholders. The Hambantota Port in Sri Lanka has been a focal point of this investment trend. China's interest in Hambantota Port dates back to 2007 when the Sri Lankan Government sought assistance to develop the Port's infrastructure. In 2010, China Merchants Port Holdings (CMPort) entered into a 99-year Lease Agreement with the Sri Lankan Government, acquiring a 70% stake in the Port. This move was part of China's broader Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), aimed at enhancing connectivity and trade across Asia and beyond. The Hambantota Port's strategic location, situated along major international routes, and effectively managing investments to maximise economic benefits while safeguarding national sovereignty are complex and pressing tasks. Sri Lanka's maritime trade accounted for approximately 30% of its GDP in 2021, underscoring its economic significance.

Future Challenges and Strategies

As we look ahead, it's imperative to anticipate future challenges. Emerging threats, such as hybrid warfare, transnational terrorism, and cyber espionage, require proactive strategies. Sri Lanka's national security apparatus should be agile and adaptable to navigate these evolving challenges.

Conclusion: A Holistic Vision for Sri Lanka's National Security

Sri Lanka's national security landscape is marked by its rich history, diverse

challenges, and evolving global context. To ensure the nation's stability and prosperity, it must adopt a holistic approach that addresses humanitarian concerns, environmental security, cybersecurity, regional dynamics, public perception, and emerging threats. Balancing domestic imperatives and global dynamics remains the key to guarding national security in Sri Lanka.



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Climate Change: A Red Flag for Environmental Security in Sri Lanka

By Helani Yapa Bandara

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What comes to your mind when you think about “Climate change”? Today, the topic of climate change is one of the major problems that people face. People are calling it is the crisis of our time. In the past decades, natural causes such as volcanic eruptions, variations in solar radiation, and natural changes in the Earth’s orbit and axial tilt have influenced to these changes of climate but currently, human activities have rooted to increase the issue of climate change. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), “Climate change refers to a “long-term alteration of Earth’s average weather patterns and the resulting shifts in temperature, precipitation, wind patterns, and other aspects of the climate system”. Importantly, United States Environmental Protection Agency (2023) has stated that greenhouse gases are primarily driven to the changes of climate, by releasing numerous gases such as carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane (CH₄), and nitrous oxide (N₂O) to the Earth’s atmosphere. Accordingly, these gases are form due to various anthropogenic activities especially the deforestation and burning of fossil fuels including coal, oil, and natural gases etc.

According to the International Climate Alliance (ICA), International Climate Action Network (ICAN) and Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the current trend of global warming is primarily driven by human activities connected to the industrialization and high demand in consumptions and consumerism patterns. The evidence for this includes the close correlation between rising greenhouse gas concentrations and rising temperatures, as well as the use of climate models that account for both natural and human factors. The rate and scale of temperature increase observed in recent decades are unprecedented in natural climate history and align closely with the increase in greenhouse gas emissions.

According to Buhaug et al (2023), Climate change is widely regarded as one of the greatest threats to peace and security in the 21st century. Additionally, in Sri Lankan context, per Jeevethan Selvachandran in his work titled “Preparing for the impact of climate change in Sri Lanka” has stated that “...the country is relatively well-positioned to meets its obligations in combatting climate change.”. Except, Sri Lanka was listed among the 65 countries most vulnerable to the effects of climate change, which threaten health, education and the environment, and called for immediate and effective action.

Climate Change as a Significant Environmental Security Threat to Sri Lanka

Climate change is a significant and growing threat to environmental security. It poses a range of risks and challenges to ecosystems, natural resources, and the stability of nations and communities. The destabilization of the ecosystem, triggers resource scarcity, and intensifies extreme weather events cause to amplify the vulnerabilities in societies. Likewise, rising temperatures, shifting precipitation patterns, and sea-level rise cause to disrupt agricultural practices as well as, exacerbate food and water insecurity, and displace the populations. Ecosystem disruption and biodiversity loss further strain natural resources and livelihoods. Extreme weather events damage infrastructure, increase economic risks, and challenge emergency response capabilities, often leading to human displacement and heightened insecurity. Thus, as the effects of climate change have grown more obvious, it has taken centre stage in the conversation. What is not at all evident is the situation in which climate change might end up becoming a danger multiplier that causes environmental security.

Environmental security is a concept that encompasses the preservation of the environment as a fundamental component of national and international security. Environment security is a major part of national security in a country. According to the United Nations Environment Programme (2023) Environment Security addresses threats caused by environmental events and how those threats impact on individuals and the entire community. Additionally, Giovanni Zurlini (2008) stated that environment security is “the major challenge concerns the global environmental change, focusing on the interactions between ecosystems and mankind, the effects of global environmental change on environmental degradation, the effects of increasing social request for resources, ecosystem services, and environmental goods.” The importance of environmental security is the ecological framework required for sustainable development. It includes considerations of how environmental security and climate change are related, more general global policy challenges that relate resources and international relations to the need for new approaches to development and security. Further, recognizing climate change as an environmental security threat is crucial for fostering global stability and resilience amidst the rapidly changing climate.

In Sri Lanka, due to the geographical position and dependence on climate-sensitive sectors like agriculture, fisheries, and tourism, climate change presents a complex and multifaceted challenge with significant implications for the country’s environment, economy, and society. Asian Development Bank in their work title “Climate Risk Country Profile: Sri Lanka” (2020) has stated that, one of the most pressing concerns in Sri Lanka is the increasing frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, including heavy rainfall, floods, and landslides, which have become more common in recent years.

Climate change impacts are exacerbating existing environmental issues in Sri Lanka, such as deforestation, habitat degradation, and water pollution. These challenges have implications for biodiversity conservation, freshwater availability, and overall environmental health. Deforestation and habitat degradation disrupt the delicate balance of ecosystems, reducing their resilience to climate impacts and contributing to resource conflicts. Loss of forests not only releases stored carbon into the atmosphere, worsening climate change, but also diminishes the capacity to absorb excess rainfall, elevating the risk of floods and landslides. Similarly, habitat degradation further weakens natural defenses against climate-related disasters. Additionally, water pollution compounds these challenges by affecting both terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems. Polluted water bodies not only harm biodiversity but also exacerbate climate change through methane emissions and increased energy consumption for water treatment. Therefore, the environmental security implications underscore the urgent need for comprehensive climate adaptation and mitigation strategies in Sri Lanka to safeguard the well-being of its population and protect its natural resources and ecosystems.

Further, climate change issues such as rising temperatures and changing precipitation patterns are also affecting the country's agriculture sector, which is a significant source of livelihood for a large portion of the population. Erratic rainfall and prolonged droughts can lead to reduced crop yields and food insecurity, while temperature increases may promote the spread of pests and diseases. Sea-level rise and coastal erosion are threatening Sri Lanka's coastal communities and vital infrastructure along the coastline. Rising sea levels not only inundate coastal areas, displacing communities and causing loss of arable land, but also lead to saltwater intrusion, contaminating freshwater sources. coastal erosion, exacerbated by sea level rise, erodes shorelines and vital infrastructure, including roads and buildings. Furthermore, coastal ecosystems like mangroves and coral reefs, which provide essential habitat and protect against erosion, are at risk. Addressing sea level rise and coastal erosion is paramount for Sri Lanka's environmental security, necessitating sustainable coastal management strategies and adaptation measures to protect its coastal communities and ecosystems.

The Role of Responsible Government Bodies in Climate Change

Climate change is an ongoing global issue that affects all countries around the world, including Sri Lanka. On the other hand, Climate change considered as an Environment security threat under the soft notion of national security in a state. Therefore, many organizations play a significance role to protect Environment. Especially, the Ministry of Defence in Sri Lanka actively participate in addressing the security and strategic implications of climate change.

Firstly, the Ministry of Defence is often involved in disaster response and relief efforts. As climate change causes increasingly frequent and severe extreme weather events, coastal erosion, and environmental security threats including increased risks of flooding, landslides, droughts, and displacement of communities. According to the Extraordinary Gazette No. 2289/43 dated 12th July, 2022 under table No. 01, Column 1 para 18, 19, 20, 21, 22 and 23 have highlighted that Ministry of Defence is responsible for “Provision of weather and climate related services”, “Meteorological surveys and research”, “Landslide disaster management and related research and development”, “Forecasting natural disasters and sensitizing relevant sectors regarding them”, “Coordination of awareness programmes on natural and man-made disasters” and “Conduct rescue operations during natural and man-made disasters”. Accordingly, the Ministry of Defence has established departments and institutions to address and prevent disaster risks including Department of Meteorology, National Disaster Management Council, Disaster Management Centre and National Disaster Relief Services Centre.

Therefore, the Ministry of Defence has a responsible for disaster management that cause to Climate Change, essential infrastructure protection, and vulnerable area security. In addition, the ministry is active in humanitarian aid and disaster relief activities, since climate-change-related disasters necessitate quick reaction and relief measures. By working to improve climate resilience in defense infrastructure, supporting climate adaptation strategies, and participating in international cooperation on climate security issues, Sri Lanka’s Ministry of Defence contributes to the country’s efforts to mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change, protecting the well-being and security of its citizens and resources.

Climate Change is a Barrier to Achieving Sustainable Development Goals

Climate change poses a formidable barrier to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030, as outlined by the United Nations. Rising global temperatures, increased greenhouse gas emissions, and associated climate impacts cut across multiple SDGs in various ways. Sustainable Development Goal 13 (SDG 13), “Climate Action,” is a direct response to the pressing global challenge of climate change. Thus, it emphasizes the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, increase climate resilience, and mobilize international cooperation to address climate change. Further, this goal recognizes that climate change is a defining issue of our time and calls for urgent and ambitious measures to combat it. Accordingly, achieving SDG 13 is crucial for safeguarding the planet, protecting vulnerable communities, and ensuring a sustainable and secure future for all, making it a linchpin in the broader sustainable development agenda.

Moreover, climate-induced extreme weather events and natural disasters disrupt economic activities, damage infrastructure, and lead to loss of lives and livelihoods hampering progress towards SDG 1 (No Poverty) and SDG 2 (Zero Hunger). Climate change also affects water resources, impacting SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation) and exacerbating sanitation challenges in vulnerable areas. Increased frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, including hurricanes and floods, pose threats to human health and well-being, undermining progress towards SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being). Furthermore, sea-level rise and coastal erosion endanger coastal communities and infrastructure, affecting SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) and SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure) and importantly SDG 16 (Inclusive Peace). In sum, climate change acts as a significant impediment to the achievement of multiple SDGs, emphasizing the urgent need for integrated climate action and sustainable development strategies to ensure a more resilient and equitable future for all.

The Way Forward

Climate change in Sri Lanka needs a complex and comprehensive response that involves environmental protection hazards mitigation, adaptation, and long-term development initiatives. From the start, Sri Lanka should prioritize initiatives to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, such as shifting to renewable energy sources, improving energy efficiency, and adopting regulations that encourage sustainable land use and transportation. This helps to contribute to global mitigation efforts while also strengthening the country's resilience to climate consequences.

Sri Lanka should invest in increasing climate resilience across sectors in terms of adaptation. This involves strengthening infrastructure in order to endure harsh weather conditions and better managing water resources. Protecting coastal regions through nature conservation techniques such as mangrove regeneration and better land use planning can help minimize the consequences of sea level rise and coastal erosion.

Furthermore, improving early warning systems and disaster preparedness is critical for protecting communities from climate-related disasters. Investing in climate education and awareness initiatives can help communities adapt to and minimize their vulnerability to climate change. It is vital for equitable climate resilience to ensure that climate policies are inclusive and meet the needs of vulnerable people such as women, rural communities, and those living in informal settlements. Sri Lanka should participate in global climate talks and seek climate financing to fund adaptation and mitigation programs.

As stated before, a comprehensive policy is required to ensure environmental protection in the face of climate change in Sri Lanka. In order to serve as carbon sinks and buffers against climate change, the country should emphasize the protection and restoration of natural ecosystems such as forests, wetlands, and coastal regions. Land and water management activities such as reforestation, forestry, and safe agriculture should be encouraged. Climate resilient infrastructure and disaster preparedness measures, particularly for vulnerable coastal areas, should be established. Emissions can be reduced by encouraging the use of renewable energy and energy efficiency measures.

Also, it is critical to increase climate policy, laws, and international collaboration. Continuous monitoring and research on local climate effects will give important data for informed decision-making, eventually protecting Sri Lanka's environment and people's livelihoods in the face of climate change. Climate change challenges such as water resource management and disaster risk reduction may be addressed through collaborative efforts with neighboring countries in the region.

Finally, addressing the environmental security threats posed by climate change in Sri Lanka necessitates a combination of mitigation, adaptation, and sustainable development strategies, supported up by international cooperation and inclusive policies that prioritize the well-being of all Sri Lankans and the protection of the country's natural resources.



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Artificial Intelligence: The New Way of Solving Crimes

By Thusitha Bulathgama

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The advancement of contemporary technology has ushered in novel experiential dimensions every day. Current technology uses advanced tools, techniques, and processes developed through scientific and engineering research. This technology has made our lives easier, more convenient, and more productive. From smartphones and tablets to social media and cloud computing, modern technology has transformed how we communicate and access information. In this context, Artificial Intelligence (AI) plays a vital role. AI applications can be found in many areas of our lives, from agriculture to industry, communications, education, finance, service, medicine, and transportation. The most significant thing is that even public safety and criminal justice benefit from AI.

AI is a rapidly advancing major field in technology that has the potential to revolutionize various industries and sectors. In the mid-1950s, John McCarthy, credited as the father of AI, defined it as “the science and engineering of making intelligent machines”. According to the article titled “Using Artificial Intelligence to Address Criminal Justice Needs” by Christopher Rigano, AI is a machine’s ability to perceive and respond to its environment independently and perform tasks that would typically require human intelligence and decision-making processes without direct human intervention.

The new report, “Artificial Intelligence and Robotics for Law Enforcement,” which has been published by the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI), Centre for Artificial Intelligence and Robotics, and Innovation Centre of the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), examining use cases by national law enforcement agencies at various stages of development shows the contributions AI and robotics can make to policing. It demonstrates that their use is a fact rather than a distant possibility.

Due to the interconnectedness of crime and AI, this article aims to enhance understanding of how modern technology like AI can contribute to solving crimes in society and, at the same time, highlight the risks of using AI technology. As we all agreed, every situation may encompass both positive and negative impacts.

How does AI Contribute to Solving Crimes?

Image and Video Analysis

Crimes occur frequently in society. In the present-day scenario, AI can help resolve or reduce crime by acquiring information about people, objects, and actions to support criminal investigations through video and image analysis. Law enforcement and criminal justice communities use this technology, which requires significant investment and personnel with subject-matter expertise.

For instance, researchers in Malaysia are currently developing AI software for CCTV cameras to reduce the number of street crimes in the country. This software autonomously detects crimes by only analyzing the footage in the security camera. According to these researchers, the software can perform several tasks, such as determining whether a person in the video is holding a weapon, inspecting if the suspect is displaying ‘aggressive actions,’ and informing the law enforcement authorities if the crime is suspected.

Nevertheless, rapid technological advancement and a sufficient number of experts in the field have led to vulnerabilities in video and image analysis due to human errors. With the development of AI, these human-induced errors associated with technology have been overcome. Traditional software algorithms mostly require human support and can only generate limited data such as eye shape, eye colour, and distance between eyes from facial recognition or demographic information from pattern analysis.

AI video and image algorithms learn complicated tasks and generate and determine their own independent, complex facial recognition feature parameters to complete these tasks. This is much beyond what humans are capable of. These algorithms can

match faces, identify guns and other items, and detect complicated incidents such as accidents and crimes.

Deoxyribonucleic Acid (DNA) Analysis

Another field that AI can use to resolve crime is by analysing DNA-related criminal activities. Biological materials such as saliva, blood, semen, and skin cells can be transmitted during a crime through contact with people and objects. Since the beginning of DNA evidence in forensics in 1986, investigating crimes has become more accessible and tangible. DNA processing improves as AI technology advances.

Advances in DNA technology can now detect even small amounts of DNA, making it possible to find DNA from multiple people, even in small quantities. However, this presents a challenge for crime labs. When susceptible methods are used on evidence, they can sometimes pick up DNA from multiple individuals, including those not connected to the crime. This creates a problem in figuring out whose DNA is whose, and it is crucial to separate and identify individuals' profiles to help law enforcement with their investigations.

To explore this area further, researchers from Syracuse University and partners from the Onondaga Country Center for Forensic Sciences and the New York City Office of Chief Medical Examiner's Department of Forensic Biology worked together to explore a new method for separating mixed DNA samples. They used a combination of human analysts and AI algorithms supported by the NIJ research award. This hybrid approach aimed to overcome the limitations of using only one method. While further evaluation is necessary, research indicates that AI technology can be a valuable tool in helping analyze complex DNA mixtures.

Gun Shot Detection

Detecting gunfire is another advancement of AI technology that can be used to identify unknown shootings. Sensors are doing their best to accomplish this mission. For example, sensors can be installed in municipal infrastructure. These sensors linked to a cloud-based program can reliably detect pinpoint gunshots. These sensors

record when and where guns are fired, which can be helpful in investigations. They also aid in determining the location of the shooter. This data is forwarded to the police stations and displayed as a pop-up notification on a computer or mobile device. AI technology to detect and warn police about gunshots can improve their reactions to such situations, even if they are not recorded.

Can ChatGPT - 4 be a crime solver?

ChatGPT - 4 extends many capabilities to various forensic techniques, including fingerprints and facial recognition, age progression, toxicology, digital forensics, and biological evidence analysis. Within this scenario, a criminal investigation can benefit significantly from using ChatGPT- 4 in numerous ways. For instance, it can assist investigators in determining the cause of death in poisoning cases, but its capacity to interpret and handle complex toxicology data ChatGPT- 4 can also be used for DNA analysis, suspect identification, and linkages between victims and offenders. Regarding the non-medical context, ChatGPT-4 can sift through text data from emails, online forums, and social media posts to find hidden links between suspects and victims and possible plans and motives.

ChatGPT - 4 could be used within investigation tools or platforms to successfully collaborate with human investigators or law enforcement organizations. This would allow investigators to smoothly interact with the system, enhancing their own expertise. Furthermore, constant oversight, verification, and validation by human investigators and domain experts would be required to verify the accuracy, reliability, and ethical usage of its output. Regular feedback loops and continued contact with law enforcement authorities can aid in the system's refinement and improvement over time.

Risk of AI Use in the Criminal Justice System

Even though, as outlined above, the AI's benefits in crime-solving are immense, addressing the ethical consideration of privacy issues that affect criminal investigation procedures is essential. Hence, it is crucial to initiate clear guidance and regulations that govern applications in criminology to avoid AI being misused or

causing unexpected harm. Furthermore, this AI technology is not a well-structured mature technology in many applications. With that, the data derived from AI related to criminal justice and law enforcement incidents might not always be accurate. Although AI technology is operating without any human intervention, it is created by humans, and in this context, it implies a particular room for errors.



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