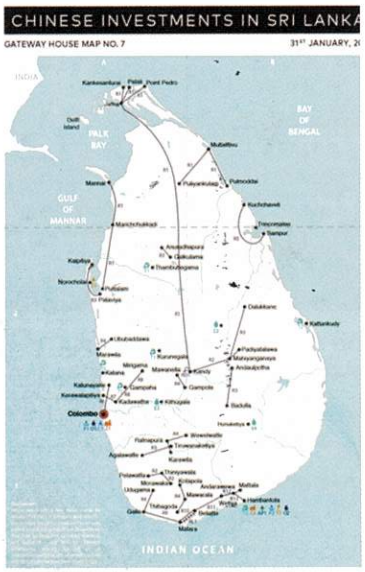
# Why Does Sri Lanka Need a "National Securitism" Oriented National Security Policy?

By Kasuni Ranasinghe

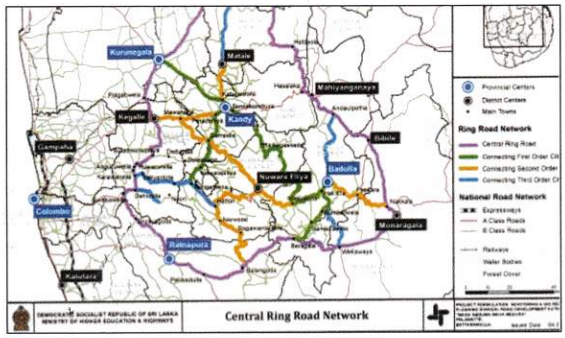
"National Security" was one of the main discussion points in the propaganda campaigns of all major contenders of the Presidential election. War-time Defence Secretary, Gotabaya Rajapaksa, was elected as the 7th president of the country, stressing the security gap. The Easter Sunday attack brought attention to the security of the country that appeared as religious fundamentalism and extremism again after a decade of the end of the 30 years brutal war. Many have pointed this as a failure of the government and accused of dismantling the military intelligence service. Even the report of the select committee of parliament on the Easter Sunday attack (21st April 2019) has accused the President, former Secretary Defence as the Director of SIS and IGP as failed in fulfilling duties. "..... the PSC observes that the President failed on numerous occasions to give leadership and also actively undermined government and system including having ad-hoc NSC meetings and leaving key individuals from meetings.....".




And regarding Defence Secretary and others, PSC noted as "that whilst the greatest responsibility remains with the Director SIS, others too failed in their duties. Within the security and intelligence apparatus, the Secretary MOD, IGP, CNI and DMI failed in their responsibilities. All were informed of the intelligence information before the Easter Sunday attacks but failed to take necessary steps to mitigate or prevent it..." However, now former Defence Secretary Hemasiri Fernando and IGP Pujith Jayasundara are arrested for further investigations. The victims are not pleased with the solutions tabled by the government, which created a trust deficit between the government and citizens.

Meanwhile, the country is in an alarming debt trap with China and a drastic economic downturn. India's interest over strategic infrastructures such as Mattala Airport, newly open Jaffna International airport and Trincomalee harbour is becoming a challenge to the sovereignty and peace of the country. Also, other threats (apart from interest over infrastructure) coming from India are crucial, and that has historically proven. South India seems to be the key customer of Jaffna International Airport, and at the same time, the Southern Province of India is one of the primary breeding grounds for ISIS as well as for the LTTE. Thus the potential of the airport to be a floodgate for Islamic extremists and LTTE is high if the immigration is not carefully monitored.

Meanwhile, proposals are coming from USA such as Status of Forces Agreement-SOFA, Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement – ACSA and now with the Millennium Challenge Cooperation- MCC. None of these agreements is completely evil, and the theory of conspiracy is not directly applicable to any of them. All pros and cons are visible if terms and conditions are prudently appraised. Practically,




implementations of SOFA and ACSA are challenging to Sri Lanka as the power of negotiation with the USA is limited. The MCC is an important initiative addressing two of the crucial issues of the country; transport development and digitalizing land titles. Both are identified as key parameters of poverty reduction and human development initiatives of the government. However, the security concern is with the proposing GIS and CCTV monitoring systems with the potential of accessing personal information of individuals. The closure or termination is also problematic for the country. Sri Lanka has no potentials to terminate the agreement, if a case, the grant will be converted to a loan and has to repay the grant, interest, earnings as well as assets. In case of a breach, the country will be financially trapped with USA and consequences will be similar or worse than the cancellation of the Colombo Port City project of China. Sri Lanka will be another significant case study digitalising to Djibouti of how massive investments go wrong for the hosting country and becoming a regional facilitator for Military bases. The results would be terrible if the SOFA has signed with no reviews.

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***Full article can be accessed at***
*https://www.colombotelegraph.com/index.php/why-sri-lanka-needs-a-national-securitism-oriented -national-security-policy/*

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