

Hambantota as an emerging geopolitical hub

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“Geopolitics is the study of states in the context of global spatial phenomena”. The field of geopolitics basically concentrates on understanding the power bases of state power and the nature of states ‘interactions with one another. Sri Lanka is an island nation situated in the center of the Indian Ocean region. Geopolitically, Sri Lanka has not received much attention and is not considered as a powerful state in the world system. It is a small state, which is basically under the sphere of influence of India given its close proximity to India. Even though Sri Lanka has a locational advantage being centrally located in the Indian Ocean, she has never utilized it. Being an economically poor and geopolitically less significant small state, Sri Lanka has become more dependent on the regional super powers.

In this context, the main objective of this paper is to identify and critically evaluate the geopolitical significance of Hambantota as an emerging growth center. Conventionally, Sri Lankan geopolitics has been completely shaped by the interests of India as a regional super power. Even though Sri Lanka has not properly understood its’ geopolitical potential India for a very long time has realized the geopolitical potential of Sri Lanka. However, in the recent years, Sri Lankan geopolitics has entered into a new phase as another Asian regional power -China has got involved in Sri Lanka. Establishment of a friendship city in Hambantota district and the construction of the harbor can be considered as land marks in not only in Sri Lankan but also South Asian geopolitics. During the last five decades, India’s geopolitical interest in Sri Lanka was never challenged. Entry of China into the Sri Lankan geopolitical space thus signals a new era of South Asian geopolitics.

In this paper, I will explore the following questions to figure out the dynamics of this new era of South Asian geopolitics. I will first examine as to how would India take this challenge and how will it affect relations between India and Sri Lanka? Second, I will examine the potential expectations of China as an Asian super power? Since the relations with China have just begun, it is rather difficult to draw definitive conclusions. The paper will be concluded with informed speculations on the future of the Sri Lankan geopolitics centered on the emerging geopolitical hub in Hambantota.