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An Analytical Study of Sri Lanka's Geostrategic Importance in the India-China Power Rivalry

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Abstract

Even today, Sri Lanka has become a point of interest in the Indian Ocean due to geo strategically attractive position. Because Sri Lanka being a small state strategically placed between two powerful states India and China. The research topic is, an analytical study examines Sri Lanka's geostrategic significance within the intensifying power rivalry between India and China. This research problem is Why is Sri Lanka's geostrategic location important in the ongoing power rivalry between India and China? The main purpose of this writing research paper critically examine how Sri Lanka's geostrategic influences and shapes the power rivalry between India and China. In additional sub purposes are examine the importance of Sri Lanka's geographical and maritime contexts, specially within the Indian Ocean Region, analyze the strategic values of China and India such as military, economic and political interests in Sri Lanka., compare India- China strategic competition in Sri Lanka and how Sri Lanka balance its relationships both India and China. The writing of this article uses qualitative method. Under the qualitative method using literature resources for this. Specially analysis technique based on previous researchers' findings. The island of Sri Lanka is a main center for communication, global trade naval movement military and Maritime security in Indian Ocean. After analyzing data, these findings can be identified regarding why Sri Lanka's geographic location is important to the power rivalry between India and China.

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Keywords: Sri Lanka, China, India, Power rivalry, geostrategies

1. Introduction

Sri Lanka's Geo Strategic importance has deeply historical background for many centuries. The Island located in the center of the Indian Ocean . Therefore, it has valuable interest from major powers. According to early record Sri Lanka had strong connections with both India and China. China and India both ancient link with Sri Lanka for more than 1000 years. Specially Buddhism was introduced to Sri Lanka from India . It helped to develop religion, culture and language in Sri Lanka. And also, Chinese Buddhist monks Fa- Hsien visited Sri Lanka in ancient time and during the Tang and Ming period, Sri Lanka was an important stop on the Maritime Silk Route.

During the colonial period, the Portuguese (16th century), Dutch (17th century) and British (18th -20th century) all recognized Sri Lanka position as essential for controlling Indian Ocean trade and safeguarding sea routes to their colonies in Asia. (Abeyasinghe, 2021) ^[1]. During the colonial expansion into the Indian Ocean, Trincomalee was occupied by the Danish, Portuguese, Dutch and French and finally by the British who used the natural harbor extensively. In British rule period of Sri Lanka, Trincomalee port served as main military bases. Chinese.

India and Arab traders frequently used Sri Lankan ports since past days. Such as Island became a major trading hub due to location of Sri Lanka. (Alahakoon, 2015)

After independence in 1948, Sri Lanka tried to maintain a neutral foreign policy, but its strategic location continues attract interest from major powers. After independence Sri Lanka maintained close cultural and economic relations with India. As well as China established diplomatic relations with Sri Lanka in 1957. And also, The Rubber – Rice act (1952) became a strong foundation relation between Sri Lanka and China. India is neighborhood country and important for regional security for Sri

Lanka. In addition, China contributed development project in Sri Lanka. Both Countries have had crucial relationship from the past days.

In 21st century, Sri Lanka has become a point of interest in the Indian Ocean due to geo strategically attractive position. The study focuses primarily on how Sri Lanka's geo strategic location affect the power competition India and China. Sri Lanka's geo strategic location important as India and China expanded their influence in the region (Wakkumbura, 2023) [6]. Major Infrastructure projects funded by China in Sri Lanka as importance of geo-strategies. During Sri Lanka's economic crisis, India provided financial assistance. Which helped it gain significant good will and strategic ground, offering a counterbalance to China's influence. Both countries give financial contribution for Sri Lanka based own power competition in Indian Ocean.

Sri Lanka's geography place it at the heart of the Indo- China geopolitical competition. Even today, Sri Lanka has become the decisive factor that balances the power of the two major powers between India and China due to the geo strategic importance of Sri Lanka.

2. Problem formulation

Why is Sri Lanka's geostrategic location important in the ongoing power rivalry between India and China?

3. Literature search

Sri Lanka's geographical location can play an important role maintaining in the competition between India and China to become a regional power. This research, which address the question of Why Sri Lanka's location is important to India and China, identifies two primary theoretical areas that need to be addressed. Accordingly, the literature review can be conducted based on the theoretical fields of Sri Lanka's geopolitical positioning and realism. The geo political importance of Sri Lanka and regional powers is a topic that

4. Method

This study adopts a qualitative research design to explore Sri Lanka's geostrategic significance in the China-India power

rivalry. The methodology that has used for the study is qualitative in nature and descriptive analysis method has been followed to analyze the gathered data. For the study only secondary data sources have been used. The theoretical framework has been featured with the realism and Sri Lanka's geopolitical positioning. Conceptual wise, the concepts of maritime security, geopolitics and balance of power have been applied for the study. The study also employs a comparative analytical framework to examine the differing approaches and interests of China and India in Sri Lanka, highlighting the interplay of economic, political and security factors.

Has been the subject of much debate, and in focusing on it theoretically, it has been possible to identify a number of studies conducted through various approaches. The author collects information through the research journals that discuss this problem.

5. Data Evaluation

The author evaluates the contents of the research journal obtained so that the research data to be discussed can be in accordance with what is desired.

5.1 Data analysis and interpretation

The author analyzes the research data obtained so that it can then be summarized and rewritten in the resulting article.

The data analysis technique used by the author is the content analysis technique where the author will analyze the results of research that has been carried out based on suitability with the topic discussed and the time of implementation of the research.

6. Results and Discussion

6.1. Results

Based on the results of the literature search conducted by the author, there were 5 research journals found that discussed the topic of Sri Lanka's geostrategies importance of India China power rivalry. The research data obtained from these journals can be presented in the following table.

Table 1: Results of the Sri Lanka's geostrategies importance of India and China power rivalry

No	Title	Year	Writer	Research result
1.	<i>Sri Lanka's strategic location and foreign policy response towards India and US on Chinese investment in Sri Lanka</i>	2022	Chaminda Kosala Wijekoon [9]	The results of this paper showed Sri Lanka being a small state strategically placed two powerful states India and China according to this. As well as results of this describe importance of neutrally foreign policy. In addition, in this research paper explain what are the geostrategies importance of Sri Lanka. Such as describe well maritime security natural resources and natural ports. But some strategies not deeply. Such as blue economy
2.	<i>The Geopolitical Rivalry of India and China in the Indian Ocean as a crucial determinant of the future Of littoral states: Case study of Sri Lanka</i>	2023	Menik Wakkumbura	This study has explained deeply If gain power of Indian ocean, Sri Lanka is most important center for that. Specially Sri Lanka's geography place it at the heart of the Indian ocean. Due to maritime security . Furthermore, discussed Sri Lanka has low military capacity so it is a threat for external sovereignty. In addition, explain in this situation Sri Lanka should maintain foreign affairs carefully both countries
3.	<i>Balancing India and China ; A case study of Sri Lanka</i>	2024	Subhashini Abeysinghe [1]	According to this research paper show main results is, Sri Lanka geo strategically location in the Indian ocean help to balancing power among two Asian giants(China and India). And also, other results of this, explain importance of China dual-use theory in Sri Lanka(economy investment and military investment). But not explain well India and China invest financial facilities in Sri Lanka based on geostrategies values of Sri Lanka. Such as port city project.
4.	<i>Tightrope Balancing in a Time of rising great power competition; An assessment of</i>	2023	Shakthi De Silva	When study this paper identify some results related my topic. One of them, Sri Lanka situated in key sea lanes of Indian ocean. Therefore, Sri Lanka should manage to thread between the two Asian powers. As well as other

	<i>Sri Lanka's relations with India and China.</i>			result, busiest port Colombo port increasing geostrategic competition in Sri Lanka. But not clearly describe, India always fears geographically location of Sri Lanka either China gains regional power of Indian Ocean base on geolocation of Sri Lanka or a powerful actor threatening India's Security seeks to strengthen Sri Lanka's naval capabilities.
5.	<i>Chinese Investment and the BRI in Sri Lanka</i>	2020	Ganeshan Wignaraja, Dinusha Panditaratne, Pabasara Kannangara and Divya Hundlani ^[8]	The study focuses based on Sri Lanka's geolocation China launch project in Sri Lanka. China's expansive Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has led to greater Chinese out bound investment in Asia, including Sri Lanka. And also, China will use ports and other projects for military purpose are, in part driven by geopolitical strategies. In response, Sri Lanka has naval presence at the Hambantota port. According to study China invest in Sri Lanka based on geo values.
6.	<i>Sri Lanka's caught in the crossfire of India-China maritime rivalry.</i>	2024	Chulanee Attanayake ^[2]	This study has explained maritime order of Sri Lanka why important for China and India both countries. Furthermore, describe as a small nation strategically located between the powers Sri Lanka faces challenges in maintaining neutrality and protecting its maritime interests. This study mainly focuses on importance maritime boundaries in Sri Lanka how it threats for Sri Lanka from other powers.

Although many scholars have examined the Sri Lanka between the China and India, there is still limited research specifically addressing how Sri Lanka's unique all geostrategic choices shape this competition. A literature gap exists when previous studies have not fully explored an important part of a topic. Through all the above-mentioned papers discussed why important Sri Lanka geo strategies for India and China power rivalry. But all the geographical factors of Sri Lanka that influence this have not been discussed. Otherwise, they have not been discussed in deeply, and only those points have been mentioned or limited discussed. After discussing each of those papers or material the research gap relevant to this topic has been showed one by one in each paragraph. By identifying this research gap and filling that void, this study will be conducted.

7. Discussion

Under the discussion analyze secondary data and based on secondary data, describe research topic research problem and theoretical frame depth. The research shows that Sri Lanka's location in the center of major Indian ocean sea lanes makes it highly important in the power rivalry between India and China. It is also strategically important maritime hub in the Indian Ocean. Why important geo strategically values for China and India power rivalry in Sri Lanka when studying this should be discussed that under the main key components.

7.1 Importance of central location in Indian Ocean

When studying how the importance of Sri Lanka's geographical location affects the India-China rivalry, Sri Lanka's location in the middle of the Indian Ocean makes it one of the most important strategic points in the region. The island of Sri Lanka is a major center for communication, trade and naval movement in the Indian ocean region. (Wijekoon,2022) ^[9]. The island situated next to some of the world's busiest sea lanes where thousand of ships carrying oil, gas and manufactured items between the middle east Asia and Africa. Sri Lankan geographical location in the Indian ocean very important for all oil-thirsty countries in East Asia. Travel from the Arab world to almost all countries by sea, passes through the seas of Sri Lanka Because of strategic location Sri Lanka can help countries guide and protect these trade routes. It's central location on major shipping routes. Sri Lanka's location between East Asi, Middle East and South East Asia places it at the mid-point of several key cable

routes connecting. As centralized location in Indian Ocean Sri Lanka is most important for military activities both countries. In this way, Sri Lanka's central position in Indian ocean important for Sri Lanka's power rivalry between India and China.

7.2. Importance for global energy and global trade.

When discuss Sri Lanka's geostrategic competition between India and China in the present context, the first and possibly most important factor is Sri Lanka's location in the Indian Ocean region. More than 80% of the world oil shipments traverse through the Indian ocean and Sri Lanka lies at the fulcrum of East – west maritime trade. Sri Lankan ports are geo strategically important because they lie major sea lanes. Such as Colombo, Hambantota (Silva, 2023). Every day massive oil tankers carrying energy from the middle East to East Asia and cargo ships transporting goods between Europe, Africa and Asia pass just south of Sri Lanka. In this deeply focus Sri Lanka's geo strategic values why important global trade and global energy. Hambantota and Colombo port and sea lanes of communication.

7.3. Important for India's defense

Sri Lanka's location is extremely important for India's security. India also fearing Sri Lanka connect with other power specially China. Therefore, India wants to build good political and military corporation with Sri Lanka (Wijekoon,2022) ^[9]. The Island's ports, coastal areas, and surrounding waters are critical for monitoring naval movements important for India security. India views Sri Lanka as part of its strategic neighborhood, and maintaining friendly relations is essential to protect its southern maritime borders. The island lies just south of India's mainland near the busy sea lanes of the Indian ocean. Therefore, Sri Lanka's geo strategies important for India defense planning.

7.4. China's maritime silk road strategy

China's maritime silk road strategy has a major impact on Sri Lanka and the broader China – India power rivalry. Due to this strategy China invests in Sri Lanka. Such as BRI project. China's Belt and Road Initiative(BRI) the largest infrastructure project. China invests BRI in Sri Lanka because of its strategic geographical location along East-west Sea lanes (Wignaraja et al, 2020) ^[8]. The island located center of China's maritime Silk Road Strategy. Through BRI,

China invests in large infrastructure project such as Hambantota Port Colombo Port city and major highways . India fearing in this situation ports could be used military purpose by China in future. As a results Sri Lanka becomes a strategic battleground between China and India due to maritime silk road strategy.

7.5. Balancing power in Indian Ocean.

Sri Lanka's geostrategic position is important for balancing power between India and China. As Sri Lanka's location heart of the Indian ocean. Close to important global shipping routes that link the Middle East, Africa and Europe with Asia. Therefore, the island a central player in maintaining stability and power balance in the Indian Ocean. According to this situation China India both countries need Sri Lanka support for military and economic purpose in Indian Ocean. Sri Lanka practices a carefully balancing strategy to sustain relationships with both powers India and China. The policy of non – alignment has always favored Sri Lanka for its existence. India and China are highly militarized countries in the region. It will be a threat to Sri Lanka's national security. Therefore, Sri Lanka has to take a lead role in establishing a movement that demilitarizes the Indian Ocean by building a regime for peaceful and cooperation without focusing on one country (Senevirathne *et al*,2023). Sri Lanka must maintain neutrally affairs with China and India both powers. As well as this balancing allows Sri Lanka to gain economic benefits from China's investment, while also ensuring security cooperation and political stability through the India.

8. Conclusion

Sri Lanka's geo strategic importance in the India – China power rivalry arises from its position at the heart of Indian Ocean. Through this study, several findings that power rivalry were identified. These are, Central location in the Indian Ocean, China's maritime silk road strategy, ports with strategical potential, Economic influence through the infrastructure, Control of strategics sea lanes, important for India's defense, Influence over regional stability and securing China's energy supply lines. Based on these factors, it can be concluded that Sri Lanka's geographical location is a main reason for its importance in the India -China power rivalry.

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