

Geopolitics of Indo-Sri Lanka relations vis-à-vis Sri Lanka's relations with China in the 21st century

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India and Sri Lanka received independence from the British rulers in the aftermath of the Second World War. India inherited a large country from the British Raj that represented more than three fourths of the land and population of South Asia which provided it with the regional power status. On the contrary, Sri Lanka emerged as a small state within close proximity to India, making the island fall within India's Sphere of Influence. Since the independence era, Indian strategists and policy makers have highlighted the strategic importance of Sri Lanka vis-à-vis its external relations. Sri Lanka's close relations with Britain in the immediate time period after independence, the Non-Aligned Foreign Policy era, tilted towards the West in 1980's and Sri Lanka-China relations in the 21st Century has resulted in Indian foreign policy responses at different levels. At present, the growing Chinese influence on Sri Lanka as part of altered relations to the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has made India develop geopolitical concerns regarding Sri Lanka's external relations. India's major concerns are associated with the worry that Sri Lanka may become a part of the 'string of pearls strategy' as it became a base of containment against India in the 21st century. This research will examine the nature and influence of Chinese development projects on Sri Lanka and the strategic concerns and reactions of India.

Keywords: regional power, small state, sphere of influence