

Geopolitics in the Indian Ocean: Importance of Sri Lanka to maintain a non – aligned foreign policy towards India, China and USA

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Abstract

In the global scenario, Indian Ocean is the ocean where the global superpower USA and emerging global powers, India and China have their keen interest on. This is due to the strategic importance of Indian Ocean in military and economic wise and all these countries want to make a tight relationship with Sri Lanka because of its strategic importance of the location situated at the heart of the Indian Ocean. This study intends to examine how Sri Lanka can peruse a very tactful foreign policy to balance diplomatic relations with all these countries while defending and achieving its economic goals and development. This research is a qualitative study based on secondary data sources relating to Lakshman Kadirgamar Institute Foreign policy forum and also from scholarly articles, books, online journals, and magazines. It is crucial for India to have Sri Lanka by its side due to the growing Chinese influence in the South Asian region. The Indian Prime minister Narendra Modi's recent visits to Sri Lanka indicate that India wants to keep close ties with Colombo. China's presence also shows that Sri Lanka has good relations with China and certainly it has become an important investor in Sri Lanka. Major investments such as Hambantota port and Colombo port city show how strong economic partnerships they maintain with Sri Lanka. On the other side, the USA's 'The Nimitz Carrier Strike Group' recent visit to Colombo, for the first time an aircraft carrier has visited Sri Lanka after 1985 shows their interest on Sri Lanka. It is vital to understand that India, China and USA are three countries with different strengths and weaknesses. Balancing New Delhi, Beijing and Washington should be the priority of Sri Lankan foreign policy. This research shows how Sri Lanka should maintain a non – aligned, balanced foreign policy with equal measures to all the powers and it is the best way for Sri Lanka to balance these powerful countries. Sri Lanka has to understand its capabilities and capacities where, it has to maintain a tactful foreign policy while being in a neutral position and to get the maximum out of the opportunity it has been given.

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