

BRI, Myth Creation and Geostrategic Positioning of Sri Lanka in Indo-Pacific Theatre

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The island nation of Sri Lanka began to increasingly feature in discussions on the Indo-Pacific geopolitical environment in recent years, particularly in light of Chinese-led Belt and Road Initiatives and as a nation which has been occupying a strategic location in the Indian Ocean lines of communication. The paper raises an objection to the scholarly argument that ‘the Belt and Road Initiative has constructed the geopolitical position of Sri Lanka’ and looked at the geopolitical behaviour of island nation throughout the history based on its strategic location in the Indo-Pacific region while providing a Sri Lankan perspective on its regional role. Many scholars, including Miller, have argued that the external powers recognised the strategic importance of Sri Lanka due to the decision of the government of Sri Lanka to adjoin with Chinese-led BRI projects. Sri Lanka has been attracting the interests of major powers such as India, China and more recently, Japan and the United States of America have increased their engagement with Sri Lanka to deter the geostrategic supremacy of China in the Indian Ocean. Naturally, this has generated speculation on whether Sri Lanka is poised to play a new role on Asia’s rapidly changing geopolitical stage. However, much of this commentary proceeds from an outside-in perspective rather than calculating the historical function and positional insights into how Sri Lanka itself looks at the evolving regional context, and how it evaluates its role therein. To justify these research objectives and the outcomes, the research has utilised the case study method, and it is based on a wide range of sources, both primary and secondary. The primary sources include the official documents. In addition to the primary resources, the study has also used a variety of secondary resources that include journal articles, books, reports, and other online resources.

Key words: Geopolitics, Geostrategy, Indian ocean, BRI, Maritime security