



## A CRITICAL ASSESSMENT ON THE ROLE OF RAW ACTIVITIES IN SRI LANKA AND ITS FUTURE CHALLENGES

*Dr. Punsara Amarasinghe*  
*Institute of Law, Politics and Development*  
*Scuola Superiore Sant Anna,*  
*Pisa – Italy*  
[punsaraprint10@gmail.com](mailto:punsaraprint10@gmail.com)

### **Abstract**

*This article is an investigative attempt in analyzing the history of RAW activities in Sri Lanka from the very beginning. Based on the geopolitical needs of India, RAW formulated its policy towards Sri Lanka, which consisted of sabotaging and destabilizing island's polity. This article emphasizes Sri Lanka's failure in ignoring the geopolitical ambitions of its closest neighbor and also this article traces how Sri Lanka drifted away from its non-alligned foreign policy, which led to antagonize India. However, the focal point of the article critically examines how current plans of RAW would be challengeable to achieve in Sri Lanka with the growing influence of the Chinese presence. The content of the article compares the RAW activities in past and present under the gamut of the geopolitical shifts in South Asia.*

**Key Words:** India, Sri Lanka, Geopolitics, RAW, China

### **Introduction**

The development of espionage is old as the development of state itself and both dimensions remain imbued as inseparable factors. The hypothesis for this article is stemming out of the development, occurred between India and Sri Lanka regarding the geopolitics and bilateral security discourse that had arisen in the post-colonial epoch when both states emerged independent from the British Raj (Reynolds, 1984). It was by no means a mere phobia that stuck in the minds of the Ceylonese national leaders such as D.S Senanayake as the question on Ceylon played a crucial role in the Indian nationalist struggle in its very last stage. In particular, certain rhetorical remarks made by Indian idealist C.M Parrikar on the forming an immediate cooperation between India and Ceylon as a need for a “realist policy of Indian defence” was inimical to the development of Indo-Lanka relations even before the advent of the independence of both nations.( Panikkar 1945). It was in this context, Ceylon's first Premier D.S Senanayake willingly opted for a defence pact with Britain as a security guarantee for Ceylon from any possible future Indian threat and equally, it reflects the contention of Herbert Fisher on the behaviour of the small states as he argues “Small states seek to offset to their weakness by an association of alliance with other powers, great and small” Fisher (1914).



Undoubtedly the relations existed between the national leaders of India and Sri Lanka were always congenial, blended with the shared civilizational trust. Within three years after the independence, Indian Premier Nehru visited Colombo as a gesture of good faith, but this visit was followed by the establishment of a station of the Indian Intelligence Bureau in Colombo. Regardless of Nehru's idealism, in the eyes of the Indian bureaucrats, Sri Lanka continued to be a larger concern for the stability of the region.

The birth of RAW (Research and Analysis Wing) comes to the fore in the aftermath of the Indo-China war, which ended as an unmitigated disaster for the state apparatus of India. RAW was founded in 1968 as the masterpiece of India's celebrated spy master R.A Kao, organized on the same line as Force 136 of the British intelligence agency (Raman 2012). Sri Lanka, which had been covered by the IB (Intelligence Bureau) from 1953, was replaced by RAW operatives in 1970 and it can be marked as the turning point of RAW's entry into the internal politics of the island (Gunaratna 1993). However, it was evident that the rapport maintained by then Indian premier Mrs Indira Gandhi and Sirmavo Bandaranaike staved off the grip of RAW influence until Sri Lanka's unexpected assistance to Pakistan to refuel its aircraft in Colombo during the Indo-Pak War in 1971 (Dixith 1996).

Indeed, as with any other foreign intelligence service, the cardinal objectives of RAW are rooted in securing the national security interests of India and advancing India's foreign strategic interests. The development of RAW activities in Sri Lanka is a task, that needs to be understood parallel to the national security interests of India and its changing concerns. Notwithstanding the stringent nature of cultural and civilizational ties that prevailed between the states, Indian policymakers showed their extreme concern over Sri Lanka whenever the island nation tried to move steps out of the orbit of Indian polity. The statement made by RAW's first chief Kao to Rohan Gunaratna aptly shows the Indian attitude towards Sri Lanka in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. In his exclusive interview with Mr. Gunaratna, referring to the national security of India vis a vis Sri Lanka, Kao stated:

*"We had not regarded Sri Lanka by itself as a threat to us. But, not in our perception, Sri Lanka became a seat for outside influences which we consider not very friendly towards us. Naturally, it caused some concern". (Gunaratna 1993).*

These very words uttered by India's celebrated Spy master is akin to the continuity of RAW's current influence on Sri Lankan affairs. It is in this context, the rationale for this research paper begins. The premise of this paper traces the development of RAW activities in Sri Lanka parallel to the geopolitical interests of New Delhi and it further debunks the ostensible foreign policy outlook of India under the guise of non-intervention as a farce. This task of this article contains twofold objectives. First, I argue the growth of RAW influence in Sri Lanka as an offshoot for contemporary geopolitical interests of India and incompatibility of Sri Lankan state apparatus to fathom them before the end of the Cold War. This RAW's infancy development in Sri Lankan affairs should be understood in the context of Sri Lanka's ambivalence towards non-alignment, J.R Jayewardene's hobnobbing with the West and the rise of militant Tamil separatism. This article shows the astute mechanisms



adopted by RAW when Sri Lanka attempted to move astray from Delhi's orbit and in the second half of the paper, I argue how RAW shifted its Sri Lankan interests after the culmination of the Sri Lankan civil war in 2009. The two-time periods that this paper unfolds between 1977-1992 and 2009-present are indispensable factors in understanding the changing nature of RAW activities in Sri Lanka under the national interests of Delhi. The juxtaposition of these two-periodical analysis unveils the inability of Sri Lankan foreign policy makers in comprehending the geopolitical interests of the immediate neighbour and also it raises the major question regarding how RAW would confront the China's factor. The outcome emerging from this article will indicate how national interests of India captures changing dimensions of Sri Lanka to carve for Delhi's strategic interests and how it utilizes the policy of destabilizing and it traces what would Sri Lankan foreign policy makers realize from its dealing with bigger powers.

## **Analysis**

The development of RAW activities in Sri Lanka was mainly galvanized after the formation of Bangladesh in 1971, which turned into be a triumphant moment for Kao's strategic affairs, but, the unexpected assistance given by Colombo to Islamabad during 1971 war took RAW's attention towards Sri Lanka as a matter of concern regardless of the cordial relations between Mrs. Bandaranaike of Sri Lanka and Mrs. Indira Gandhi of India. Nevertheless, the robust development of RAW interests towards Sri Lanka was born out of the domestic and foreign policy decision made by J.R Jayewardene, who secured absolute political power in Sri Lanka in 1977.

Despite his long-established links with Indian nationalist struggle and personal affinity with Nehru-Gandhi family, Jayewardene showed a natural flair for the West in his foreign policy mechanism, which intended to be an anathema for the Non-Alignment doctrine of the previous government of Mrs. Bandaranaike. Following the riots of July against the Tamil minority in Sri Lanka in 1983, there were parallel developments carried out by RAW in Sri Lanka regarding monitoring the domestic and foreign policy of J.R Jayewardene. The information gathered by Colombo RAW chief Romesh Shanmugam from an army officer contained the details of J. R's governments' future plans in obtaining external military supports from the United States, Israel and the involvement of the British elite mercenary force Keenie Meeny Service in Sri Lanka (Miller, & Macnamara, 2020, October 8).

Jayewardene's proclivity towards the West was a stark contrast to the non-align commitment that India determined to peruse at the height of the Cold War and it was completely natural from Delhi's perspective to suspect Colombo's motives. In particular, the case of Israeli's involvement in Colombo appeared to have risen from various local sources in Sri Lanka that informed Delhi, the Israel Interests Section of the US Embassy was opened on the advice of the US General Vernon Walters to covertly channel US military assistance to Colombo (Amarasinghe, 2021). From a vantage point of view, one can argue that the security trajectory set up by the RAW activities arose from Colombo's own apathy and the inability of JR Jayewardene's government to fathom the interests of New Delhi. In the view of President Jayewardene, Sri Lanka's future was much safer at the hands of the Western powers and



it proved to be a miscalculation in the long run. Especially, the old school bureaucrats in Colombo seemed to be adamant in their conviction on the US's interest in Trinco Harbour of Sri Lanka and they further dwelled in a whimsical idea that Western powers would support Sri Lanka if India tries to bully her (Jha, 1994). This was a naïve idea without any substantive strategic clue on the US South Asian policy.

The conspicuous geopolitical doctrine espoused by the US towards South Asia was visible in the writings of Stephen Cohen, who happened to be America's leading South Asian specialist. According to Cohen, Washington upheld a three-stand policy towards South Asia along with the US national security doctrine (Cohen; 1975, February 13). In this three stand policy, first, the US supported Pakistan due to the USSR intervention in Afghanistan. Secondly, the US acknowledged India as a major power in the region, Thirdly, the US encouraged India and Pakistan to normalize relations with India. By all means, the US interests in South Asia during the Cold War were built in the line of American national security consensus and Washington was reluctant to alter its plan for peripheral need of an island state like Sri Lanka.

Colombo's overestimated analysis of the strategic significance of Trinco harbour for the Western powers was equally disturbing RAW concern over Sri Lankan affairs as there were frequent correspondents over the US involvement in Sri Lanka (Gunaratna, 1993). The formation of Voice of America in Iranavila and the plans on leasing the Trinco harbour to the US cause a stir in Delhi and was bolstered by different analyses. For instance, the article published by a pro-Russian Indian weekly created the following picture.

“Colombo: In the implementation of its military and strategic designs in South Asia, the Pentagon attaches major importance to its position in Sri Lanka. Washington wants to fill in the gap between the US Naval Base Bay in Trincomalee in the North Eastern part of Sri Lanka. U.S. Defence Secretary Weinberger used his recent visit to Colombo to pressurise Sri Lanka to increase its involvement in America's military, political and economic plans aimed at penetration into South Asia, undermining the Non-Alignment Movement from within this region. Informed circles state that Weinberger's visit to Colombo pursued the aim of studying the possibility of moving the headquarters of the Central Command to Lanka after the setting up of the US Naval Base in Trincomalee Bay” (Reynolds, 1984).

Contemporary political history demonstrates that when Indira Gandhi came to office, she came as a fierce leader accustomed to using the art of realpolitik. Especially, the pro-Western foreign policy harboured by J.R Jayewardene irked Mrs. Gandhi, which was further worsened by Jayawardene mode of seeking political revenge from India's long-term ally Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike (Kodikara, 1991). All these external and internal trajectories had paved the path for deteriorating Indo-Lanka relations and the outbreak of 1983 ethnic riots in Sri Lanka appeared to be the culmination of this haphasaderoz process. At the outset, RAW had no direct plans in separating the state of Sri Lanka as it would escalate certain severe geopolitical consequences in the region, which might inevitably boomerang on India, but, there was direct patronage from RAW in arming and training the Tamil



militant groups. The sources pointed out by Rohan Gunaratna indicate that the RAW involvement in destabilizing Sri Lanka by assisting the Tamil militant groups remained concealed as the operation was hatched and executed in utmost secrecy. Gunaratna further states” According to senior RAW sources, during the time only six people in the Prime Minister’s office and about ten others in the entire government, including those in the RAW, knew about the whole operation” (Gunaratna, 1993).

After the initial years, it was evident that RAW intensified its activities in supporting the Tamil militants at covert level and in a situation where Jayewardene’s promise of implementing the devolution package was at stake, RAW was determined to repeat the success of the Bangladesh operation in Sri Lanka (Bultjens, 1987). The overarching development of RAW activities in Sri Lanka in the initial years of Sri Lanka’s ethnic strife was more or less attributed to Sri Lanka’s own security dichotomy, which lacked the acumen to understand the regional strategic issues. According to RAW’s first director RN Kao, India security concern regarding Sri Lanka emerged from Sri Lanka’s own original sin of titling the West (Gunaratna, 1993). Moreover, the major development in the North province of Sri Lanka after the 1983 saw a huge influx of Tamil refugees from Sri Lanka to the Southern parts of India, which created certain political concern in national politics (Raina, 1981).

Notably, the whole gamut of RAW assessment in handling Sri Lankan affairs in the 80’s till the Indo-Lanka pact of 1987, which resulted in the arrival of Indian Peace Keeping Forces was based on the long term analysis of destabilizing the island. RAW was well aware of the fact that Sri Lanka would eventually look for India’s support as the mediator or a reconciler and that crucial factor was intended to be used for India’s advantage. Given all these salient objectives that India strived to fulfil, it was Sri Lanka’s sheer strategic ignorance that its leaders were obsessed with seeking Western intervention in Sri Lanka’s own ethnic conflict.

However, the trajectory that I discussed above becomes fundamentally different in examining the developments that occurred after the end of the Sri Lankan civil war in 2009. India’s own commitment to combat terrorism was a spontaneous reaction to the Mumbai terror attack in 2008, which eased up the military campaigns to crush the LTTE without any significant pressure from Delhi. Thus, the defeat of the LTTE appeared to be a foregone conclusion in 2009. The geopolitical ambitions and stances of India had clearly been altered since the end of Cold War and the robust economic development embraced by a closer link with the US shifted India to be another emerging global power (Vaidya, 2017). Unlike the turbulent 80’s, the India’s disfavour towards the West had drifted away and the advent of new US-Indo Pacific strategy was certain to cope with the rise of China.

It is in this pivotal context that resonates with new geopolitical shifts and changing strategies, that one needs to examine the novelties of RAW towards Sri Lanka after 2009. The development strategy implemented by Mahinda Rajapaksa’s government in the aftermath of the military victory mainly focused on the rapid infrastructure development in the North-Eastern provinces and there was a steady tilt towards improving relations with the People’s Republic of China (Gokhale, 2015). Unlike the US in the 80’s, who showed no burning interest in Sri Lanka’s strategic location, the Beijing’s ambition





towards Sri Lanka took a serious shift with the changing nature of China's geopolitical interests in the Indian Ocean. In particular, China's awakened interest in consolidating its naval ambition is a stark realization of what America's grand strategist of the 19th century Alfred Thayer Mahan coined in his idea on naval supremacy at sea (Amarasinghe, 2023).

On the other hand, the conventional legitimacy occupied by India over the Indian Ocean based on its archaic historical legacy was not affirmed by China as the geopolitical influence over the Indian Ocean becomes a cardinal concern for Chinese aspirations. Sri Lanka's need for economic development and the international challenges that emerged after the war victory was quickly grasped by China, which ultimately resulted in forming a stronger connection between the Mahinda Rajapaksa administration and Beijing. In fact, it was in 2008 that one Indian naval officer predicted China's "String of Pearls" as a geopolitical dilemma for India in the Indian Ocean Region and within three after the initial hypothesis, China's interest in Sri Lanka as an indispensable location grew fervently (Khurana, 2008). The unprecedented waves of foreign policy decisions made by Colombo, which were extremely favorable to China made India realize the new geopolitical challenge that looms in her backyard.

In 2012, then the secretary of Defence Gotabaya Rajapaksa, at the third Galle Dialogue on Maritime Security Dialogue publicly stated that Hambantota Port would not be utilized as a part of China's "String of Pearls" strategy to encircle India or keep the US away from the Indian Ocean (Fernando 2014). Regardless of the ostensible pretext given by Colombo, it was conspicuous that the Chinese would gradually increase its influence in the island nation and Sri Lanka's accession into Belt and Road Initiative was the crescendo of the events. In the geopolitical nexus of China, Sri Lanka's presence is not different from Taiwan to the mainland and according to Sri Lankan born US academic Patrick Mendis Sri Lanka is a potential "Aircraft Carrier" for China (Mendis, 2022, July 11). The mercurial presence of China in Sri Lanka, particularly in the activities of Hambantota port created a visible unrest among the Indian bureaucratic circles from the very beginning. The article authored by Alok Kumar and Isshwarya Balakrishna to the Indian Journal of Political Science states:

*"The port also happens to be very close to India, which is a cause for the security concern of the nation. The construction of this port will bring China within breathing distance of India's southern coast where sensitive installation including power plants are present. It could also help China in keeping a track of India's nuclear, space and naval establishments in South India and also serving as a listening post." (Kumar, 2010).*

The growing fear of India on Sri Lanka's rapport with China was quite a resemblance of India's initial disinclination to J.R Jayewardene drifting away from the doctrine of Non-Alignment in the 80's. But, ironically the role of India in the global arena had become much more decisive than it used to be during the Cold War period. Especially, the US strategic alliance with India for its South Asian policy has aggrandized India's role in the global affairs, which largely legitimized India's concern over Sri Lanka after 2009. Nevertheless, foreign policy making in Colombo seemed to have made the same



blunder as in the 80's by moving astray from country's longstanding policy of neutrality to a China favored one, which further deteriorated Indo-Lanka relations. Rajapaksa's political rhetoric, which depicted India's as the brother and China as a friend was not a realistic stance from Sri Lanka's side to blow off India's distrust, which continued to grow when Sri Lanka entered into more close development projects with China such as the development of Mattala airport, the port city project in Colombo and the Lotus Tower (The Times of India, 2014, December 30).

### **RAW's tactical position in Sri Lanka after 2009**

It is a fact beyond any conjecture that the specific policies pertaining to RAW are often connected to the contemporary geopolitical ambitions of India, in which former carves its operations to fulfil the wider objectives of the later. Given this specific premise, one needs to ascertain the development of RAW activities in Sri Lanka as a subtle reaction for the geopolitical asymmetries that grew after 2009. Right after China embarked on its strategic enterprises in Hambantota in Sri Lanka, there was a predominant alacrity in India to form its consulate in Hambantota town. In drawing an analysis to evaluate the foreign policy anomaly of post war Sri Lanka, one needs to revisit Robert Putnam's "Two Level Game Theory", which focuses on the deep connectivity between domestic and international politics (Putnam 1988). For instance, the international challenges that encompassed Rajapaksa regime after 2009 regarding the human rights protection needed to be supported by a strong international ally, which was fulfilled by Beijing in vetoing all the efforts against Sri Lanka at UNHRC in 2013. In response, Mahinda Rajapaksa government expanded closer ties with China by allowing a considerable Chinese presence under the guise of the development projects in Sri Lanka, which ultimately contained China's geopolitical pursuits. This is a classic scenario showing the relations between domestic actors and international politics for certain means.

Involvement of RAW in the domestic political context of Sri Lanka was increased after Sri Lanka entered China's ambitious geopolitical nexus "Belt and Road Initiative" in 2013 and the following year Sri Lanka welcomed Chinese leader Xi Jinping in a grand scale ceremony, where Chinese leader remarked that China resolutely opposes any move by any country to interfere in Sri Lanka's internal affairs under any excuse (Panda 2014). By 2014 China outmatched the USA as Sri Lanka's second-largest trading partner and in the same year disputed the visit of Chinese submarine Changzheng 2 along with the warship Chang Xing Dao to Colombo port gobsmacked Delhi as it displayed Chinese geopolitical interests in the island nation (Chansoria, 2016). Within three months after the submarine hullabaloo occurred, Mahinda Rajapaksa met his Waterloo in the Presidential election at the hands of his long-time political acolyte Maithripala Sirisena in 2015 January. Thus far, there have been many speculations made on the alleged involvement of RAW in changing the power regime of Sri Lanka during the presidential election.

The first tip was exposed by *Sunday Times*, a leading newspaper in Sri Lanka in December 2014 about RAW's involvement in promoting Maithripala Sirisena as the common candidate against might Mahinda Rajapaksa. (Chalmers, & Miglani, 2015, January 5). The report written by a special



correspondent revealed how Indian RAW agents in Colombo played a crucial role in unifying all the opposition forces as one front against Mahinda Rajapaksa. Especially the support extended by the Tamil political parties to Sirisena was assumed to be an outcome of RAW's tireless work in Colombo.

The news exposed by *Sunday Times* was not a hyperbole as Sri Lankan government asked New Delhi to call back the RAW chief in Colombo K Illango due to his alleged involvement in supporting the joint opposition candidate and Illango was accused of playing a dubious role in manipulating then opposition leader Ranil Wickremesinghe to not to contest in order to facilitate Sirisena (Venkataveshwaran, 2015). The expulsion of RAW chief in Colombo created a huge diplomatic fracas regardless of the official denial from Delhi. In addition to Illango's incident in 2014 December, there was a meeting held between India's national security advisor Ajith Doval and the joint opposition candidate Sirisena was a palpable reflection of Delhi's interest in toppling Rajapaksa regime, which eventually became a reality on the 8<sup>th</sup> of January in 2015.

### **Recommendations**

The strategy of arming separatist groups to destabilize the Island in the 80s became changed into a more advanced mode as RAW penetrated the internal political organs of the country. In comparing the role of RAW in Sri Lanka during J.R Jayewardene's time with the event that took place after 2009, I find both periods strongly convey the same message. It is the message that echoes Sri Lanka should stay within the orbit of India in conducting its foreign relations. This stark realist argument, clearly indicated by Sri Lanka's neighbour has not been properly comprehended by Sri Lankan statesmen from J.R Jayewardene to Gotabaya Rajapaksa in shaping their affairs with India. The history of RAW involvement in South Asia shows us several examples of RAW's capability of destabilizing countries when the governments of those countries peruse policies which are contrary to the expectations of India. Both in the formation of Bangladesh in 1971 and the annexation of Sikkim to the Union of India, RAW accomplished the goal of securing the territorial stability of India and its foul play in the Bhutanese election in 2013, RAW prevented the Himalayan kingdom from falling into a pro-Chinese government (Muckherjee, 2014, June 18). The strategic advantage for India was the key feature for all those alleged involvements by RAW in the region and it is the same "*Mantra*" valid for the case in Sri Lanka.

The fall of Gotabaya Rajapaksa in 2022 is another political enigma remains unanswered as the events that led to his power decline contains certain questions. Even though his administration tried to win India's favour by adopting "India first policy" in 2020, the gradual shift towards China was visible and by viewing the external relations of Sri Lanka through the prism of growing Chinese power, one can affirm that Sri Lanka lacked balanced foreign policy during Gotabaya Rajapaksa's period (Amarasinghe, 2021). When the protesters of *Aragalaya* stormed the President's House in 2022 July, the Chinese embassy in Colombo made no statement and tweet, which was viewed by some international commentators as China's failed bet in Sri Lanka (Rowand, 2022). In general, the biggest unwise move made by the foreign policy makers in Sri Lanka from J.R to Rajapaksa was their





inability in understanding Sri Lanka's strategic geopolitical significance for India. During Cold War period, J.R Jayewardene clung to Western powers by displeasing Indira Gandhi's administration and Rajapaksa's made the same blunder by allowing a strong Chinese presence in the backyard of India. In both instances RAW activities in Sri Lanka grew stringer which resulted in extreme internal chaos, wherein the first instance gave birth to a separatist militant movement and the later ended the political hegemony of Rajapaksa family. The clandestine and dubious activities carried out by India's external intelligence agency in Sri Lanka manifests what I termed "Thucydidian Reality in Sri Lanka", which shows the vulnerability of Sri Lanka in terms of coping with the geopolitical challenges risen out of Sri Lanka's own mismanagement of foreign affairs. In the famous Melian dialogue in Thucydides' "The History of Peloponnesian War", Athenian delegate expected uncompromised subordination from the inhabitants of the island of Melos by not allowing them to rely on the morality of their choice and that historical process is rather akin to what India anticipates from Sri Lanka in handling its external affairs (Amarasinghe, 2023). The activities carried out by RAW, in short embodies the central objectives of India and they have been further improvised under the timely analysis of RAW in accordance with the internal socio-political and economic factors within Sri Lanka.

## **Conclusion**

The major argument that I developed in this paper was based on analysing how New Delhi perceived the foreign affairs dimension in Sri Lanka in the post-independent context parallel to the geopolitical interests of India. The activities involved in RAW in Sri Lanka from 1983 to present has shown how foreign policy decision making body in Sri Lanka has not been able to fathom Indian interests. The example of J.R Jayewardene's affinity with the West in the 80's was not much different from the way how Rajapaksa administration allowed China to enter as both policies antagonized India.

However, a greater question emerging from the present context of Sri Lanka's geopolitical entanglement is whether RAW activities can endure for its ultimate objectives as they succeeded in the 80's by arming and training the Tamil militant groups. Unlike the US and the West that showed no genuine interest in harbouring JR Jayewardene's government, the Chinese have legitimated their presence in Sri Lanka beyond a point of no return. The vast amount of capital and other resources that China invested in Sri Lanka denotes China's long term strategic ambitions in Sri Lanka as Sri Lanka plays a key role in the Belt and Road Initiative. Given the extreme relevance of Sri Lankan context, it is not prudent to assume that Chinese presence is likely to reduce in the island, but it can certainly move for future escalations with India. The biggest difference that RAW would face in formulating its Sri Lankan activities under present context is the existence of solidly established Chinese policy towards Sri Lanka, which continues as a major part of overall Chinese strategy covering Indian Ocean under the BRI. This was not the scenario that existed in the 80's regarding the West's relations with JR Jayewardene, in which the US policy towards Sri Lanka depended on Washington's clear policy towards India. As mentioned above, the US had no agenda in antagonizing India for sake of Trincomale harbour, thus Americans tactically avoided in interfering with island's internal issues, which increased RAW's capacity in realizing their goals in Sri Lanka at a larger scale.



But, it should be noted that the Chinese are unlikely to reverse their geopolitical projects based in Sri Lanka. For instance, even after the fall of the Rajapaksa regime in 2015, China's presence in Sri Lanka remained a significant factor and by the end of 2017, the Hambantota harbour was finally leased to China for 99 years during pro-Indian Sirisena's rule in Sri Lanka. The project initiated by China in Colombo called "Colombo Port City" continues amidst the opposition from various actors and is likely to continue towards its completion, which will inevitably create territorial issues for Sri Lanka in future.

All in all, it become evident that RAW activities grew out of India's national interests from 80s to present have played a major role in major political changes in Sri Lanka and success attributed to RAW is largely an offshoot of Sri Lanka's own inability of understanding her neighbour. But, the current objectives enshrined within RAW would be rather arduous with the static attitude shown by China towards Sri Lanka. Despite its notoriety in influencing upon the local political scene, RAW will face major challenges in the long run as China is unlikely to subdue.



## References:

- Amarasinghe, P. (2021). Melian dialogue syndrome in the Indian Ocean: A critical appraisal of Sri Lanka's "small state dilemma" in the context of Indo-Sino rivalry. *Open Military Studies*, 1(1), 129-140
- Amarasinghe, P. (2023). Thucydidian reality in Sri Lanka. *New Zealand International Review*, 48(1), 10-11.
- Bultjens, R. (1987). *Windows on India, Observations 1977-1987*, New York: Express Books. <https://roundtable.org/class/course/world-politics-with-professor-ralph-buultjens-june-2023>.
- Chalmers, J. & Miglani, S. (2015, January 5). Indian spy's role alleged in Sri Lankan president's election defeat. *Reuters*. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-sri-lanka-election-india-insight-idUSKBN0KR03020150118>.
- Chansoria, M. (2016). Chinese Naval Presence in the Indian Ocean Region. *Indian Foreign Affairs Journal*, 11(1), 17-22.
- Cohen; S. P. (1975, February 13). Security Issues in South Asia. *Far Eastern Survey*; 15 (3): 202–214. doi: <https://doi.org/10.2307/2643372>
- Dixith M. (1996), *Colombo Assignment*: Vicas Books, 67.
- Fernando, S. (2014). *The Galle Dialogue and Maritime Cooperation*. Sir John Kothalawala Defense University Conference.
- Fernando, S. (Ed.). (2015). *United States-China-India Strategic Triangle in the Indian Ocean Region*. KW Publishers Pvt Ltd.
- Fisher, H. A. L. (1914). *The Value of Small States* (No. 17). Oxford University Press.
- Gokhale, N. A. (2015). Sri Lanka and the India-China conundrum. *Indian Foreign Affairs Journal*, 10(1), 9-13.
- Gunaratna, R. (1993). *Indian intervention in Sri Lanka: The role of India's intelligence agencies*. South Asian Network on Conflict Research.
- Jha, N. N. (1994). India-Srilanka Relations. *India Quarterly*, 50(1–2), 53–62. <https://doi.org/10.1177/097492849405000104>
- Khurana, G. S. (2008). China's 'String of Pearls' in the Indian Ocean and its security implications. *Strategic Analysis*, 32(1), 1-39.
- Kodikara, S. (1991). *Dilemma of Indo-Lanka Relations*, Colombo: Bandaranaike Centre for Internat,
- Kumar, A. Balakrishna, S. (2010). Will China overmatch India?, *Indian Journal of Political Science*. 34(1).
- Mendis, P. (2022, July 11). Will China subdue the US without a fight to dominate the Indian Ocean, *Harvard International Review*. <https://www.lankaweb.com/news/items/2022/07/17/will-china-subdue-the-united-states-without-a-fight-to-dominate-the-indian-ocean/>
- Miller, P. & Macnamara, L. (2020, October 8). Keenie Meenie – Britain's Private Army. *Declassified UK*. <https://declassifieduk.org/keenie-meenie-britains-private-army/>.
- Muckherjee, A. (2014, June 18). The China-India Tug War over Bhutan, *Geopolitical Monitor*. <https://www.geopoliticalmonitor.com/india-china-tug-war-bhutan/>



- Panda, A. (2014, September 16). China Courts Sri Lanka, *The Diplomat*. <https://thediplomat.com/2014/09/china-courts-sri-lanka/>
- Panikkar, K. M. (1945). *India and the Indian Ocean: An essay on the influence of sea power on Indian history*. Allen & Unwin.
- Putnam, R. (1988). Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two Level Games, *International Organization*, 42(3).
- Raina, A. (1981). *Inside RAW: The Story of India's Secret Service*. Vikas Publishing House Private.
- Raman, B. (2012). *The Kaoboy & RAW: Down Memory Lane*, Lancer Publishers: Delhi.
- Reynolds, C. H. B. (1984). KM de Silva: A History of Sri Lanka. xx, 603 pp. London: C. Hurst and Co.; Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, [1982]. £ 18.50. *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 47(2), 395-396.
- Rowand, M. (2022, July 13). China made a failed bet on Sri Lanka's Rajapaksa Family, *Foreign Policy*. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/07/13/china-sri-lanka-rajapaksa-family-corruption/>.
- The Times of India, (2014, December 30). India is a relative, China is a friend: Mahinda Rajapaksa, *Times of India*. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/chennai/india-is-a-relative-china-a-friend-mahindra-rajapaksa/articleshowprint/45682638.cms>
- Vaidya, A. (2017). The 26/11 Mumbai Terror Attack. *World Affairs: The Journal of International Issues*, 21(4), 98-109.
- Venkataveshwaran, R. (2015). Why even murmur that India's RAW interfered in Sri Lanka's elections is dangerous?, *Scroll.IN*, 01.19 <https://scroll.in/article/701176/why-even-the-murmur-that-indias-raw-interfered-in-sri-lankas-elections-is-dangerous>.