

Trincomalee Harbour and its Strategic Significance in Contemporary Geopolitics

JPKP Kumara

Sri Lanka Navy
jpkp-kumara@navy.lk

The growing significance of the strategic location of Trincomalee has several potential positive and negative implications as there are geopolitical choices for Trincomalee. If envisioned strategically, Trincomalee has the potential to revive its lost opportunity of becoming a geo-economic hub in Sri Lanka. But if it is allowed to be used purely as a geopolitical asset of other countries, it would not only become a threat to Sri Lanka's sovereignty, but would also be the centre of a future geopolitical conflict in the Indian Ocean region. An extensive literature survey reveals that Trincomalee has the greatest potential to become geopolitically and geo-economically the most significant hub in the Indian Ocean in the 21st Century. However, actualisation of this potential depends first on maintaining friendly geopolitical relations with all major powers in the Indian Ocean; secondly, on adopting open investment-friendly economic and fiscal policies not limiting Trincomalee exclusively to one or another state; thirdly, on development of infrastructure within Trincomalee and with Colombo (high speed railway, expressway, international airport, developed harbour (including Tambalagam Bay); and fourthly, on developing a cooperative relationship between Provincial Councils and the central government giving priority to Sri Lankan national interests.

Keywords: Geopolitics, Indian Ocean Region, Sri Lanka, Trincomalee