

Sri Lanka Terror Attack Targets Belt and Road

by Dean Andromidas

April 27—On Easter Sunday, ten suicide bombers attacked three luxury hotels and three Christian churches in Sri Lanka, killing more than 250 people and wounding 500 others, in the worst terror attack in South Asia since the horrific Mumbai, India attacks in 2008, when ten members of the Pakistani Lashkar-e-Taiba Islamic terror group killed 174 and wounded three hundred. The Easter attack was one some security experts suggested would have taken years to organize, but is being attributed to a little known Islamic extremist Sri Lanka-based group called the National Thowheeth Jama'ath (NTJ), under the direction of the Islamic State terror group.

The intensity of the attacks has left everyone asking the difficult questions: “Why?” And “How could such an attack occur?” But now ask the question: “*Cui bono*—who benefits?” That will steer you towards the British Empire, the enemy of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), China’s great global economic development policy.

Sri Lanka is one of China’s main Belt and Road partners, and has become major hub for all of South Asia on the New Maritime Silk Road, for which it has earned it the hatred of the British-led anti-Chinese forces. Sri Lanka has been a major target of the British “debt trap” propaganda. Now this terror attack all but kills the country’s tourist industry, which is its third largest foreign exchange earner. The expected loss of tourist revenue could create serious problems in making debt payments. This report will demonstrate why Sri Lanka is being targeted for major destabilization because of its participation in the Belt and Road Initiative.

Why Target Sri Lanka?

The British and their stooges have been targeting Sri Lanka for months for its cooperation in the BRI, with

claims that it is now caught in the clutches of China’s “debt trap,” and is being turned into nothing less than a vassal state. This is, of course, absurd. Such a view is expressed in the claim that China now wants to turn the Hambantota Port on Sri Lanka’s southeast coast into a naval base. The reality is quite different.

First, the military question. The 99-year leasing of Hambantota Port to the Chinese state-owned and Hong Kong-based China Merchants Port Holdings, for \$1.12 billion, is a commercial deal and does not resemble the



19th century 99-year lease of Hong Kong to the British Empire. Sri Lanka retains full sovereignty and has made clear it is fully responsible for security. Nor has China asked for basing facilities for its naval fleet. The fact is that Sri Lanka maintains a strict non-aligned policy and has no reason to alter it. All three of its major ports are open as ports of call to almost any nation’s naval ships.

Last month alone, an Indian Naval Ship, the *INS Cora Divh*, came to the Trincomalee Port on a goodwill visit. The same week, the Russian navy’s frigate *Admi-*



CC/Deneth17

China financed the development of Hambantota Port, Sri Lanka, which is able to accommodate the largest container ships.

ral Gorshkov and Japan's *JS Asagiri* (DD-151) destroyer were moored in the Colombo harbor. Last month Sri Lanka held a joint naval exercise with Australia called Indo-Pacific Endeavor 2019, during which two Australian naval ships visited Colombo and two other ports.

As for Hambantota, the crazed geopoliticians make claims that the Chinese want to make this into a submarine base. Yet only this month, U.S. warships were hosted in the port for the week-long, joint U.S.-Sri Lanka naval exercise known as Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training (CARAT), which began on April 20 and was "focused on building inter-operability and strengthening relationships" between the armed forces of the two countries. This exercise has been held every year for the last 25 years. While no Chinese submarine or warship was present, the guided-missile destroyer *USS Spruance*, expeditionary fast transport ship *USNS Milinocket* and a U.S. Navy submarine-hunting P-8 Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft were all made welcome by the port services of the China Merchant ports!

Sri Lanka Is a South Asia Hub on Maritime Silk Road

The British are always trying to claim that Sri Lanka is caught between the big competitors in the region, India and China. There is an element of truth to this within certain political circles in all three countries, but economic necessity demands that all three countries es-

tablish—and they are establishing—a cooperative and win-win policy among themselves.

Sri Lanka serves as a key trans-shipment hub for cargoes from all over the world travelling to and from South Asia, most especially India; that is why China made loans to the country to build the Hambantota Port, which is capable of accommodating the largest of the world's container ships.

While oil tankers and bulk carriers always travel to a single destination, the huge container ships of such companies as China's COSCO, France's CMA CGM, and Denmark's Maersk make multiple ports of call. The largest of their ships stop almost exclusively at trans-shipment ports such as Singapore, Piraeus and Rotterdam. Sri Lanka's Colombo Port and Hambantota Port are trans-shipment ports and China has chosen these ports as their hubs for South Asia. Most of

India's ports, including Mumbai and Kolkata, do not have the depth to accommodate the deep drafts of the huge container ships.

This arrangement of having Sri Lanka as the transfer hub serves India well, especially since India Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "Make in India" economic policy aims at expanding exports of manufactured goods, which will require an efficient logistical system. Indian exporters will want to be able to put containers on those large and fast ships. Therefore Sri Lanka is a key link in the Maritime Silk Road.

Sri Lanka's internal consensus on China policy is shown by the fact that Chinese development of Hambantota Port was commissioned under the previous President, Mahinda Rajapaksa, of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party. The 99-year lease was arranged with China after it was found—by current Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe of the United National Party—that the port was losing money.

There has also been much talk about the Chinese-financed-and-built Mattala Rajapaksa International Airport (MRIA), located 18 kilometers north of Hambantota Port, having become a "white elephant," that is, useless and unwanted but difficult to dispose of. Although it was conceived as part of a government plan to develop the region around the port for industry and tourism, no air carriers currently use it. Nonetheless, the Sri Lankan government is in negotiations with the Airports Authority of India (AAI) to enter into a joint

venture with Sri Lanka's civil aviation department to operate the \$201 million airport. The plan now is to create an air cargo hub that could function in parallel with the Hambantota Port.

While some crazed geopoliticians claim the Indians want the airport in order to observe possible Chinese military activities in the nearby port, the reality is that China is planning to work with Sri Lanka to implement its "port-park-city" model, where an industrial park and a city will come in after the initial development of the port. Therefore the now unused airport will no doubt have a bright future.

Already in 2017, the "Sri Lanka-China Logistics and Industrial Zone Office" was inaugurated within the Ruhunu Economic Development Area, which lies alongside Hambantota. The 50 square kilometer industrial zone is integral to the Hambantota Free Trade Zone.

Sri Lanka has two other deepwater ports. Colombo Port is on the west coast, where the Chinese are involved in the \$1.4 billion Colombo Port City development plan. India has an interest in investing in the transshipment terminal of this port, since about 80% of the cargo handled there is meant for India. The other deepwater port is Trincomalee Port on the north-east coast.

Trincomalee, one of the largest natural deepwater ports in the world, was the British Empire's Far East Fleet's naval base before independence. It is less developed because of the long state of war with the Tamil Tigers, and because it does not lie along the historic trade routes between South and Southeast Asia and the Middle East.

It is now being developed, and the Indians have expressed an interest in investing over \$200 million. It is ideally located for servicing India's east coast. Also of interest is that Trincomalee Port would be close to a proposed bridge that would directly link Sri Lanka with India across a submerged natural land bridge, the ancient Adams Bridge. A 23 km railway and road bridge would connect India's Pamban Island—which already has a rail connection to the continent—with Sri

Lanka's Mannar Island, which is connected to Sri Lanka with a bridge as well. Although not yet on the agenda, in 2015 the government of India revived the project and is drafting a feasibility study. It is expected to cost \$3.6 billion.

The Adams Bridge would be a South Asian logistics game-changer. It is part of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of interconnecting all the countries of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), including Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, the Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

More than Just Ports

In addition to the Hambantota Port, the Chinese are involved in several rather productive projects including the \$1.35 billion Norocholai Coal Power Plant project.



Terminal Building of the Mattala Rajapaksa International Airport in 2013.

CC/Adbar

Other projects include building 40,000 houses in Jaffna, the contract for which was won by China Railway Beijing Engineering Group Co., Ltd. Jaffna is the major city in the north which suffered extensive damage during Sri Lanka's 26-year struggle against the Tamil Tiger separatists. The Chinese plan large investments in the country's plantation industry and are already negotiating an investment of \$30-40 million.

India is also investing in Sri Lanka, especially in the ethnic Tamil north where the population shares the language and culture of the people of Tamil Nadu in India, across the strait separating the countries. India is constructing 50,000 houses at a cost of \$270 million across Northern Province, which was ravaged by the war. It has restored the Jaffna-Colombo railway link and up-



<http://powermin.gov.lk>

The Norocholai Power Station is the largest in Sri Lanka.



CC/Adam Jones

Construction work underway in 2014 on the war-ruined Jaffna Railway Station.

graded the Kankesanthurai harbor and the Palaly airfield. In addition, India provides rehabilitation assistance to small businesses, has set up an industrial estate in Jaffna, and has constructed and equipped hospitals, clinics, and water supply projects.

Creating Chaos and Confusion

A narrative of chaos and confusion is being created over the huge Easter Sunday terror attacks in Sri Lanka. But it is a fact that this is one of the largest terror operations to hit South Asia, way out of proportion to the capabilities of the two-bit Islamic extremist organization on the island nation. What is not being discussed in the media is who stands to benefit from such attacks? While the narrative of yet another Islamic State terrorist operation is unfolding, it would be a fatal mistake to ignore the British Empire's interest in this attack. After all, South Asia had been the heart of the Empire for more than 200 years.

The attack occurred while Sri Lanka was undergoing a serious political crisis. For nearly a year, President Maithripala Sirisena has been completely at odds with Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe, who also serves as defense minister. The men come from different parties. The President is from the Sri Lanka Freedom Party and the Prime Minister from

the United National Party (UNP). These two parties are in a national unity government, with the UNP holding more seats in the Parliament. Only a few months ago, there was a constitutional crisis when the President tried to oust the Prime Minister and appoint former President Mahinda Rajapaksa from the Sri Lanka Freedom Party.

The crisis was resolved when the ouster was ruled unconstitutional. While Wickremesinghe was reinstated, the national unity government became all but dysfunctional with Wickremesinghe, who is both prime minister and defense minister, not being invited to the National Security Council meetings.

South Asia has always been a mosaic of ethnicities and religions, which the British manipulated to pit one against the other and thereby control their far-flung Empire. They're still at it. In the case of Sri Lanka, they have pitted the Tamil Hindus against the majority Sinhalese Buddhists. Sri Lanka suffered a 25-year war with the terrorist Tamil Tigers (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, LTTE), a ruthless terror group that operated an insurgency inside the country while maintaining an organized crime network with a broad international reach. It openly operated front organizations in Great Britain, enjoying the pa-



UN/Cia Pak

Maithripala Sirisena, President of Sri Lanka.

tronage of leading British parliamentarians. The Tamil Tigers were finally crushed in 2009, leaving the north of the country in tatters.

Now the British are trying to do the same with the Muslim minority that numbers less than 10% of the population and has lived peaceably with its neighbors. At least one of the bombers was said to have been radicalized while in Australia and Great Britain.

President Maithripala Sirisena told a press conference:

We do not believe these attacks were carried out by a group of people who were confined to this country. There was an international network without which these attacks could not have succeeded.

In a report on the Easter bombings, China's *Global Times* compared the situation to the one in Xinjiang province in China's far northwest, where terrorist separatists among the Uyghur Muslim minority, supported by those backing the Islamic State, have been carrying out terrorist attacks. As usual, Western No-Good Orga-

nizations (NGOs) and governments claim China is committing war crimes against the Uyghurs. About this, *Global Times* wrote:

Xinjiang has been cooked to be a hot topic in the West, which now should understand how important the security issue is to safeguarding people's safety and economic development. China has invested a huge amount of manpower and material resources into Xinjiang to combat terrorism. Those efforts are absolutely necessary... No deadly attack like the coordinated bombings in Sri Lanka has been allowed to happen [in Xinjiang] in recent years... Regardless how much pressure is put on China, Xinjiang will stick to its own path.

If today the British hand wears a Muslim glove, tomorrow it might find a Sinhalese one and once again try to throw Sri Lanka into a nightmare of communal violence. Or, the British might choose a provocation in India or in another country on the Belt and Road. The security services must deal with the glove but they must never forget the hand.

NEW RELEASE, **Volume II**

The New Silk Road Becomes the World Land-Bridge:

A Shared Future For Humanity

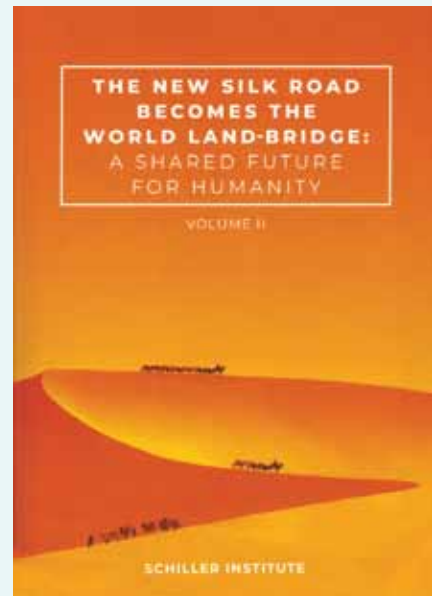
The spirit of the New Silk Road is changing the world for the better. The exciting overview in this new 440-page Volume II report updates the roadmap given in Volume I, on the coming into being of the World Land-Bridge for development and peace. BRICS countries have a strategy to prevent war and economic catastrophe. It's time for the rest of the world to join!

Includes:

Introduction by Helga Zepp-LaRouche, "A Shared Future for Humanity"

Progress Reports on development corridors worldwide, spurred by China's Belt and Road Initiative. Features 140 maps.

Principles of Physical Economy by Lyndon LaRouche, especially his "Four Laws" for emergency action in the Trans-Atlantic.



Soft cover (440 pages)

Domestic Price: **\$60**. Shipping cost included in price.

Foreign Price: \$60. Add \$15 per copy for shipping.

Order from newparadigm.schillerinstitute.com

Tel 1 703 297 8368