

Soft Power Politics of China: A Study of China-Sri Lanka Relations

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Abstract – This paper examines the soft power politics of China in China-Sri Lanka relations focusing on the economic, political and military dimensions of the ties between the two countries. Sri Lanka's strategic location in the centre of the Indian Ocean has attracted China's attention. China aims to achieve global control over the Indian Ocean by using Sri Lanka. The concept of 'Soft Power' rests on a country's ability to recognize the preferences of other countries in its international relations. This concept was adopted under the leadership of Chinese president Hu Jintao during the post - 2000 period. Over the last two decades, China has emerged as a vital force that shapes Sri Lanka's military, economic, political, and social development. The perceivable reason for Sri Lanka to choose China as a friendly country is largely due to the hard approach adopted by the United States of America and its western allies in their interactions and exchanges with Sri Lanka. However, China's huge and generous military and economic aid to Sri Lanka has created suspicions and apprehensions in India. The relationship between China and Sri Lanka is not just a friendly bilateral relationship but one that is significant and strategic for geopolitical reasons.

Keywords - *Culture, Foreign policy, Political values, Relationship, Soft power, Straterry*

Introduction

According to Gamini Navaratne (1976), merely analyzing the chronology of the historical events regarding the ties between Sri Lanka and China cannot provide us a complete picture of the early relationship between the two countries. We need to discover the central principle of this very active and dynamic relationship. Discovering the mutually friendly diplomatic and strategic relationship between these two countries will enable one to make sense of the reality of this connection. An important finding of my research is that in the last two decades there has been a very close relationship between China and Sri Lanka. It is very interesting that China, which is nearly 3, 850 nautical miles away from Sri Lanka (Colombo) (Avery 2012) and not even a close neighbour, exerts

tremendous political, economic, trade and military influence over Sri Lanka today.

Objectives

The main aim of this study is to understand the increased impact and the role of China in the political, economic, and military spheres of Sri Lanka. An effort is also made to analyze key interlinked issues in the context of contemporary international relations, especially with reference to the post-war period. Against this background, the following objectives are set:

- To examine and evaluate Sri Lanka's strategy towards China
- To evaluate how China pursues its interest through a Soft Power Strategy in its relations with Sri Lanka.

Methodology

This research offers an interpretative and descriptive analysis based on the materials gathered from secondary sources of the Governments of China and Sri Lanka. Besides, this paper will use academic resources to gain an understanding of the situation in China and Sri Lanka concerning China's foreign policy and the effects of its soft power policies. This study will examine the Chinese government's plan for infrastructure development in Sri Lanka, considering the agreements signed by both countries. Besides, a range of other data will be used to examine the international impact of China's soft power policies, including research articles and various government reports. These documents will be critically analyzed. These resources provide a current overview of different perceptions and arguments surrounding these issues, enabling a more comprehensive and accurate conclusion to be reached. It should be noted, however, there is a transparency issue when dealing with China, making it difficult to assess China's national interests in the Indian Ocean region. However, this study follows the what, why, and how methods to find out China's interests in Sri Lanka.

Literature Review

Soft Power, China's Emerging Strategy in International Politics (2009), written by Mingjiang Li is a compilation of essays which examines the origin and evolution of China's soft power policy and its limitations. It extensively analyses the theory of soft power and its significance. Moreover, China's competition in global politics and its approaches are well discussed, in addition to analyzing the

inherent weakness of the strategy of both China and the US. It, however, does not deal with maritime strategy in relation to international politics.

China and The Developing World, Beijing's Strategy for The Twenty-First Century (2007), written by Joshua Eiseman, Eric Heginbotham and Derek Mitchell, exposes China's diplomatic relationship with developing countries in relation to China's offer of political, economic, and military aid to those countries. The political leadership, as noted by another researcher, has also aided this process in Asian, African, and Latin American countries initiating a soft power foreign policy especially implementing the economic diplomacy that boosts the trade, commerce and geopolitical strategic position of China.

The Chinese Connection, A study of Sri Lanka China Relations in the Modern Period, (1976) written by Gamini Navaratna, deals with China - Sri Lanka relations from its early years to the 20th century. It has eleven chapters and all of them cover China - Sri Lanka relations, effectively encompassing cultural relations, trade relations, and maritime relations. It points out that during the SLFP period, China - Sri Lanka relations increased compared to the UNP period highlighting the Maritime Transport Agreement signed on the 25th July 1963 that paved the way for a cohesive military relationship between both countries. It also notes that the Rubber - Rice agreement signed in 1952 initiated trade relations and strengthened further the diplomatic relations, which are not generally to the liking of the Tamils. Although this study compiles historical details extensively, it does not critically examine the various issues associated with this topic.

Arms Trade with Sri Lanka Global Business, Local Costs (2011) written by Jonas Lindberg, Camilla Orjuela, Siemon Wezeman, and Linda Akerstrom highlights the advantages of Lanka's strategic relations with super powers and its keen interest in military trade. The arms that China has given to Sri Lanka, as mentioned by them, helped Sri Lanka defeat the LTTE. They also note that the military aid to Sri Lanka from China is on a continuous basis and thus provides an anchor to Lanka's military enabling it to find a military solution to the ethnic issue. It examines the interests of many countries selling arms to Sri Lanka and their interests in the ethnic conflict. However, it does not deal with peace, human rights and reconciliation processes needed to attain political as well as economic gains.

The basic features of soft power diplomacy clearly and transparently show its conversion in the world's political phase. Any concept in its initial stage gets formed based on the principle of position. Its features were recognized through

its status in the political structure. Joseph Nye is a foundational theorist when it comes to the concept of soft power. He emphasizes three things, namely its culture, its political values and its foreign policy (Nye 2004).

China started to use the concept of soft power directly in the year 2000. Chinese theorists, media persons, and economic experts desired to emphasize soft power as the primary objective in their foreign policy. China's President Hu Jintao, on January 4, 2006, stated that the rise in China's international status and influence depends both on hard powers which involve the country's economy, science and technology, and defence, and on soft power which includes culture. Hu again highlighted soft power in his political report in October 2007, stressing the urgent need to build China's cultural soft power to meet its domestic needs and increasing international challenges (Li 2009). But in 1993, Professor Wang at Fudan University evaluated Nye's theory regarding the resources of soft power (Bonnie 2006). Not only that, Chinese universities, experts, media and research institutes (CASS, SIIS, SASS) started conversations about soft power (Li 2009). The Chinese Communist Party has begun to focus more on formulating policies for China's future generations.

Soft Power

After the end of the cold war, the concept of Soft Power has been much discussed among journalists, experts, academics and international political leaders. The concept of hard power started to decline and lose its glamour and power day by day and this can be visualized clearly in the dominant nations. But ideas and snippets about soft power were put forward by several political commentators and theorists. The Great British realist, E.H. Carr, classified international power into three categories: military, economic and power over opinion (Nye 2004). Nye argues that political leaders and leading countries constantly try to spread the concept of soft power in order to become powerful at the world stage.

Thus, the concept soft power which rests on the ability to shape the preferences of others, is defined (Nye 2004) as the ability to affect others through the co-operative means of framing the agenda including by persuading and eliciting positive attraction in order to obtain preferred outcomes (Nye 2011).

Culture

In some contexts, culture can be an important soft power resource. It is the pattern of social behaviours by which a group transmits knowledge and values. Culture exists at multiple levels (Nye 2011). Culture has more than one

dimension. It is limited to a national boundary, but spreads globally. Such cultures belong to a certain section of people or to a particular society. Cultures of a few countries are capable of creating a political culture. Culture is bound to constant changes, but it always exists. When two or more cultures clash or blend, there occurs a possible transformation. But Islamic culture which is against changes always clashes with western culture which is always amenable to change. But we can decipher the inevitable change which is about to occur.

There are two transformational chances when culture handles the idea of soft power. Relationship basically starts from hereditary concepts like religion, race and language. Cultural identities were formed by specific plots like the Islamic belt, European belt, Mongolian belt and Hindu belts. More than that there also exists western culture. Eastern culture is considered as savage culture by westerners. Eastern culture develops in Asia, Africa and in the Latin American countries. It also develops within emerging nations like India, China, Brazil, and South Africa and grows steadily.

Next, modern culture imitates the western model. Younger generations tend to identify themselves with the western world and this act makes a newer relationship among nations. America, China and Japan are the pioneers in attracting younger generations and their actions (Nye 2011). Popular cultures and high cultures deliver more new items to attract the people of different nations.

The factor that controls the production and marketing of Mc Donald is culture. Products like clothes and cosmetics which have an American logo or Chinese logo or Hollywood movies and Pop music are great agents in spreading culture and connect nations without requiring much effort. Technological advancements of the post-modern era have the capability of uniting nations with cultural efforts. China and the US rely mostly on products to spread their cultures. The way they spread their cultures has increased their influence on other nations. The tool soft power, which aims at uniting nations, occurs without any mass effort. Almost all nations intake the cultures of other nations rapidly. When people were connected through modern means of communication, the influence of the respective nations rises to a new height. Thus, culture acts as a powerful source in the concept soft power.

Political Values

Political values are basic features for a nation to function in a particular manner. They include the behaviour and attitude of the people towards their nation. A nation tries to have a cordial relationship with another country only by

seeing that its policies are implemented. Relationships between nations develop through such ideas. There can be a rule wherein the people can express their views to administer a country better with their contribution. People obey and follow the law and contribute to the progress of the nation. When it is shared with other nations, the relationship between states will further develop (Nye 2004). Soft power emphasizes these things primarily. Only the people-friendly attitude of nations can create a cordial atmosphere. Powerful nations adopt human rights, democratic values, rule of law and relationship with other nations as primary tools to develop soft power attitudes (Nye 2011). When policies followed by governments reflect the sources of soft power, their rule and relations are seen as friendly. This method helps people attain their most liked political policies. This will further develop the relation between the people and their government. This feature is one of the essential criteria in the race for super power. Nations which follow this policy seem to be very transparent with people and expect the same transparency from other nations too.

Human rights are considered the primary feature present in the governments of the past two generations. Economic embargos were imposed on few countries. Nations which violated human rights were listed out and disciplinary actions were executed against them. These occurrences could be reported as primary features of soft power. Political values and policies should be people-centered and that is the aim of soft power. Nations which follow this policy try to soften their mechanisms of local governance and insist the citizens follow the rules and regulations to form a model of perfect governance. Through these activities, governance within the political boundary gets strengthened and takes a stable form in the international arena. The UN and its other international institutes help the countries in need directly and provide relief measures. The US, UN and many nations and institutes of international importance were very much active in executing their desired plans through the tool soft power (Nye 2004). Political values are the soul of the citizens; their strength puts the nation in the front row in the race for super power. Policies of a few nations may attract other nations to have a relationship with them. For that to happen, the opinion of citizens on politics is very important. Relationship between the citizens and their ability to understand the context will strengthen ties between nations.

Foreign Policy

When it comes to soft power, the primary strength is a nation's foreign policy. It can be further described as a nation's attitude or approach towards other nations. When a nation's foreign policy relates to political, economic, military and

cultural dimensions, it will be much easier for that nation to gain increased strength (Nye 2004). Such attractiveness happens along with the flow of foreign policy. Understanding between governments helps during disasters and emergencies; financial help becomes a powerful tool to form relationships. A soft power strategy followed by the US and Russia was more like hard power. But compared to those two countries, China adopts a softer approach in their foreign policy than their counterparts. Though US follows the same ideology. The German analyst *Josef Joffe* once argued that America's soft power was even larger than its economic and military assets (Nye 2004).

Nations which are in competition for super power almost follow the same foreign policy to attract other nations. Social theorists argue that while adopting a foreign policy every nation should follow international morality and respect the law of the land within and outside its borders in order to maintain a healthy relationship within and outside the state (Nye, *Power in the Global Information Age from Realism to Globalization*, 2004). Self-determination, authorization, defense, recognizing individual human rights, and respecting the responsibilities of other nations are also primary features to be adopted while framing a foreign policy. There is also an argument that every nation does not frame its foreign policies. It is commonly held that nations follow the foreign policies adopted by super powers and regional powers. During the period of the Cold War, this attitude was followed by many small nations. Joseph Nye says that a large number of nations started to adopt their own policies after the end of the Cold War and soft power is the reason for such a change among those nations (Nye 2004). The main reason is governments and government policies changed vastly and constantly. Support for soft power was encouraged and changes in their attitudes started to become visible. It is true that firms, universities, foundations, churches and other non-governmental groups develop a soft power of their own that may reinforce or be at odds with official foreign policy goals (Nye 2004). In the era of information technology, there occur many changes. If a nation avoids this idea and adopt its policies, there will be a great impact on soft power. Weakening the basic political platform and spoiling the relation between nations should not be a country's foreign policy. The heads of governments should not indulge in such acts. Foreign policy will be strengthened by public and representative opinion, justifiable policies and recognized approaches. These processes are empowered by the concept of soft power. These are the primary objectives of foreign policy participation.

There arises a new dimension for foreign policy due to the impact of soft power. Due to the advancements in communication systems, relations between nations become stronger. A properly designed foreign policy will shape the internal politics, economy, and culture of a nation. Border problems are possibly being resolved through peace talks. Not only in the international arena, but issues in other forms can also be resolved through peace talks and hence we can feel the importance of peace talks. Therefore, the government's contribution to foreign policy through soft power is much important (Segal 2012). While framing its foreign policy by means of soft power, a nation can prove its authority easily and successfully in the international stage.

Discussion

According to one retired Sri Lankan diplomat, excellent foreign policies adopted by Sri Lanka is the primary reason for the stable relations between Colombo and Beijing that we observe today. There have been several visits by Mahinda Rajapaksa to China since 2005, although Premier Wen Jiabao only once visited Sri Lanka in 2005. Altogether there have been 35 high level meetings of Chinese and Sri Lankan officials between 2004 and 2016 (Campbell 2012 and Deysaperia 2020). In 2007, the 'China – Sri Lanka Friendship Year' was announced to mark 50 years of full diplomatic ties and a series of deals were signed, followed by even more in December 2009 and June 2010. In addition, former president Rajapaksa visited China that year to sign two bilateral agreements: the Economic and Technical Cooperation Agreement, and the Friendship City Relationship Agreement between the city of Guangzhou in China and the district of Hambantota in Sri Lanka (Deysaperia 2020).

At the same time, several MoUs were officially signed between the Chinese and Sri Lankan governments on radio, film, television, Red Cross society, academics and foreign education, investment facilitation and economic matters. In addition to these official agreements, Sri Lanka's relations during the period of Former President Rajapaksa can be considered as being one grounded in soft politics. It contributed to China centric infrastructure development. Especially China became a key sponsor for most of the mega infrastructure development projects in Sri Lanka. China has funded the Norochcholai Power Station, Mattala Airport, Hambantota Port, Southern and Katunayake Expressways, Lotus Pond Theatre (Nelum Pokuna), the Lotus Tower in Central Colombo, the Colombo Port City (now renamed the International Financial City) project, and the road rehabilitation projects in the North (Deysaperia 2020).

According to one estimate, the value of China's projects underway in early 2010 or the years since has totalled US\$ 6.1 billion, which is higher compared to the value of the projects initiated by any other country or international organization. Indeed, as early as March 2010, China claimed to have provided more than half of all the construction and development loans obtained by the Sri Lankan government (Kellett 2010). Former President Rajapaksa stated that, "...it will be right to say that relations between China and Sri Lanka are at the highest levels of friendship and understanding" (Campbell 2012). The former President's brother, Defense Secretary, Gotabaya Rajapaksa, (Now President in Sri Lanka) noted "We have understood who is important to us". In 2010, in all-round cooperation, the two countries conducted frequent high-level interactions. In the same year, many key leaders of China visited Sri Lanka and all the visitors met with former President Rajapaksa and Prime Minister Jayaratne. Sri Lanka has become a highly significant country for China (Kumar 2006).

In October 2012, former President Rajapaksa attended the opening and closing ceremonies of the Summit Forum of the Shanghai World Expo. Premier Wen Jiabao met him. In July, former Prime Minister Jayaratne attended the National Pavilion Day of Sri Lanka at the Shanghai Expo and the Poverty Alleviation Conference of the International Conference of Asian Political Parties in China, and took part in a group meeting with former Vice President Xi Jinping. In August, former Foreign Minister G. L. Peiris visited China. Former Vice Premier Li Keqiang met him and Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi held talks with him (Kumar, 2006). Rajapaksa visited China every year since he assumed power in 2005. He considered China more important than other countries, including India. Also, in 2015 Chinese president Xi Jinping visited Sri Lanka for the first time which was a significant occasion.

China moved closer to Sri Lanka. Colombo allocated an exploration block in the Mannar Basin to China for exploring oil resources. This implies the emergence of Chinese presence a few kilometres away from India's southern tip. This has caused India strategic discomfort (Kumar 2006). In economic terms, this would end the monopoly held by Indian oil companies in this area, placing them in competition with the wealthy Chinese oil companies. Chinese were building bunkering facilities and an oil tank farm at Hambantota, the southern coast of Sri Lanka.

In 2007, Chinese banks funded US\$ 360 millions for the first phase of the Hambantota port project, which was completed in March 2011. Located less than 10 nautical miles off the major shipping lines, the port is able to berth the largest

ships in the world, and has the capacity to handle 20 million containers annually. Over 100, 000 ships (nearly 300 a day) pass the port every year (Cory 2011). More than the economic spin-off, Sri Lanka's strategic location has prompted Beijing to develop a strategic relationship with Colombo. However, the statistics are not in favour for Sri Lanka. According to a report, the number of ships berthed at Hambantota in 2012 was 34 and 3,667 ships were berthed at Colombo port. In 2017, the number of ships using Hambantota port increased to 183. The port has proved to be a non-profitable one (Gunjan 2018).

Trade Cooperation

The other point of great significance is that the year 2007 was declared Sri Lanka - China friendship year. It is rationally appropriate to commend the trade relations between the two countries. Since 1952, with the rice-rubber agreements and accelerated development initiatives, China has indisputably become a giant in trade and industry during this century. In fact, Sri Lanka is fortunately located between the shipping lane and the String of Pearls, a strategic position that has attracted China's attention and in turn has spurred the expansion of trade relations in the recent past (Deyshapperya 2020). Sri Lanka's exports to China have in the recent past increased tremendously reaching US \$ 415 million in 2017 from US \$ 199 million in 2016. Import from China to Sri Lanka also increased to US \$4, 272 million in 2017 from US \$ 4, 191 million in 2016. Total trade between Sri Lanka and China has increased in 2017 as could be seen from the following table.

Sri Lankan Exports, Imports, Total Trade & Balance of Trade with China.2015-2019

Year	2015(us\$)	2016(us\$)	2017(us\$)	2018(us\$)	2019(us\$)
Export	293.05	199.15	415.14	230.54	228.94
Import	3731.64	4273.58	4191.44	4121.07	4033.58
Total Trade	4024.69	4472.73	4606.36	4351.61	4262.52
Balance Trade	-3438.59	-4074.43	-3776.08	-3890.53	-3804.64

Source: Department of Commerce, June, 2020

Trade between the two countries is still at an early stage but is very important given the size and depth of China's market. This would be enormously beneficial for Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka's major exports to China are natural products,

especially tea, gems and jewellery, rubber and rubber-based products, coir fiber and coconut-based products. They also include garments, fisheries products, handicrafts, gift items, spices and fruits.

Financial Assistance

China's engagement in Sri Lanka today is nonetheless overwhelmingly defined by its role in financing economic development: it was the country's largest lender in 2009 and 2010 giving US\$ 1.2 billion and US\$ 821 million respectively. In 2009, it accounted for 54 percent of total foreign finance and 25 percent in 2010 (Campbell 2012) and over US\$ 400 million since 2012.

While some have seen this only as a recent post-war development, China was in fact Sri Lanka's largest financer in 2005, several years before its role received serious attention. In 2011, China was again the largest financer, already by July, providing US\$760 million in loans, followed by Japan's US\$ 413 million and US\$ 105 million from the World Bank (Campbell 2012). The Chinese Development Bank announced in June 2012 that it would finance infrastructure projects amounting to US\$ 1.5 billion over three years. In fact, following in the footsteps of past Asian donors, such as Japan and Korea, most of the Chinese funding goes to infrastructure development in Sri Lanka, except North.

Using statistics issued by the Government of Sri Lanka, it is possible to see an increase in Chinese aid from 2003, when it was minor, to smaller amounts between 2004 and 2006 and then rapidly increasing from 2007 onwards. Most of the increase in aid has been concessional loans. Grant aid has remained at the same relatively small levels. But it is not aid that has made China the country's largest foreign financer. As the list of projects shows, much of what is often characterized as Chinese aid is in fact commercially priced loans and export credits from state-owned policy banks, especially China Exim Bank (Campbell 2012). In July 2018, the Chinese government announced a \$295 million gift to Sri Lanka. In 2017, the Chinese foreign direct investment in Sri Lanka accounted for 35% of the total FDI.

While providing funding for the Government of Sri Lanka, infrastructure projects and concessional and non-concessional loans also serve to subsidize the entry of Chinese businesses into the Sri Lankan market. As dictated by financing terms, Chinese firms are usually lead contractors for the entire Chinese-funded

infrastructure projects and normally at least 50% of the procurement must come from China. A Chinese academic stated, “We do not seek to simply transfer aid to host countries like Sri Lanka, but we hope to help them improve their economic opportunities and ours too. It is not a donor-recipient relationship, but a win-win economic co-operation” (Campbell 2012).

Military Cooperation

China has been a major supplier of weapons to the Sri Lankan government for many years. By the 1990s, a large part of the Sri Lankan inventory was of Chinese origin. In 1993, Nariño, one of China’s main producers and exporters of vehicles, small arms, light weapons, and artillery ammunition (Jonas 2011) even set up an arms warehouse in Galle in southern Sri Lanka from which it could supply weapons at very short notice. This arrangement ended in mid-2007, only to be replaced by a similar agreement with another Chinese company called Poly Technologies, offering similar products. As an indication of the importance of China as a supplier, it was reported in 2003 that the warehouse stored equipment worth no less than US\$ 130 million and that by mid-2002 Sri Lanka had US\$ 60 million in arrears with payment to Nariño. By mid-2007, this debt increased with the purchase of grenades from Pakistan, which were delivered from Pakistani army stocks. At the same time, a US\$ 5 million deal for artillery and mortar shells for delivery within one month was agreed upon. However, very soon after the victory over the LTTE, Sri Lanka reportedly cancelled orders from China and Pakistan worth US\$ 200 million (Riazhaq 2009).

Chinese Defence Minister and 23 officers arrived in Colombo on 29 August 2012 for an official goodwill visit at the invitation of the Sri Lankan Defence Ministry. It is also the first visit by a Chinese Defence Minister to Sri Lanka. During the visit, Defence Minister Liang Guanglie also had discussions with the former Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa who thanked the government and the people of China for standing by Sri Lanka at times when it was facing various challenges internationally and for extending cooperation in the fields of economy and culture (Harikaran 2012). In March

2017, Chinese Defence Minister Chang Wanquan visited Colombo as military cooperation China and Sri Lanka continued to remain strong.

The Chinese military participation in the Sri Lanka joint exercise “Cormorant -3” was held from 10 – 25 September, 2012 in Vakarai in the Eastern Province of Sri Lanka. In this exercise, the military personnel of Sri Lanka participated side by side with military personnel from China, Pakistan, and the Maldives and Bangladesh (Harikaran 2012). Most of the participants were from South Asian countries except India.

According to SIPRI data (2010), a fairly small share of China’s total arms trade was with Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka, in fact, cancelled a large arms order from China at the end of the conflict, at the same time as receiving a credit line for Russian arms (Jonas 2011). Since then, the only known transfers have been four aircraft delivered from the China National Aero Technology Import and Export Corporation (CATIC) in 2010–11. Some observers in Sri Lanka claim that the Government of Sri Lanka is still paying off debts to Chinese companies, partially explaining why the military budget remains so high.

Beijing is concerned with the growing US presence in the region and the Indo-US naval cooperation in the Indian Ocean. Besides cushioning the impact of Indo-US strategic cooperation in the region, China wishes to enhance its influence over the sea lanes for communication between Europe and East Asia and the oil tanker routes from the Middle East to this region. Its attempts to craft an 'arc of influence' around India are well known. With Pakistan (Gwadar), Myanmar (Sittwe) and Bangladesh (Chittagong) forming a part of this strategic circle (Bhatia 2012), Beijing wants to complete this arc around India by integrating Sri Lanka into it to curtail India's presence in South Asia and the Indian Ocean region. Sri Lanka is also strategically important to India for its Indian Ocean strategy and for networking with its partners in the Indian Ocean Rim Countries (IOR). The Chinese presence would thwart the Indian Navy which has to circle the island nation to transfer its naval fleets between the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea. Besides, military cooperation between Beijing and Colombo, especially to resolve the Sri Lankan ethnic strife, would seriously affect India's stakes in this issue.

Conclusion

China has a deep relationship with Sri Lanka because of its importance with regard to location and Sri Lanka’s significance in the Indian Ocean region. The renovation of the Hambantota port will create 21st century’s most important

sea route for national and international purposes. This is of great benefit to China affecting India's strategic interests. Using this, China can have dominance over the Indian Ocean region. In the Indian Ocean, strategically Sri Lanka has always been of interest to the world's super powers. The Indian Ocean has been a contested territory for the United States of America, India and China. Since the Indian Ocean is a geopolitically strategic location, China has always considered Sri Lanka important. Sri Lanka's favouritism towards China is to counter Indian and US politics. This puts pressure on Sri Lanka in the arena of international politics. This factor has damaged Sri Lanka's political economy. China's debt and credit policies are another factor for Sri Lanka's current economic woes. The relationship between China and Sri Lanka is linked to profit and strategically it's not a traditional relationship. China's win-win strategy has succeeded in its expansion within Sri Lanka. This victory catapults China to the status of a world superpower.

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