

## **CHINESE DIPLOMACY OF BILATERAL RELATIONS: AN ANALYSIS OF CHINA- SRI LANKA RELATIONS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

To comprehend the dynamics and character of modern bilateral interactions, one must study their historical context. To comprehend the dynamics and character of modern bilateral interactions, one must study their historical context. This paper examines the evolution of the China –Sri Lanka relationship since ancient times in four parts. The first section deals with the nature of the relationship in the ancient period, followed by the developments in the post-independent period of Sri Lanka that occurred with the arrival of UNP (United National Party) in power and their formulation of foreign policy which determined the initial attitude of independent Sri Lanka towards China. It was observed that the initial stage of Sri Lanka's foreign policy is deeply rooted in anti-China sentiments due to the legacies of British colonial rule. However, the mutually beneficial Rubber Rice Deal between China and Sri Lanka paved the way for the melting of anti-China feelings among SriLankan officials. Domestic political development along with the arrival of SLFP (Sri Lankan Freedom Party) into power and their pro-China attitude helped to strengthen the relationships between the countries. Chinese investment and aid policies towards Sri Lanka are vital factors in the relationship.

**Keywords:** SLFP, UNP, IPKF, LTTE

### **Introduction**

Academics and researchers throughout the world now include China in their discussions and debates because of the country's remarkable and steady economic growth. Academics and scholars have paid significant attention to China's investments and ties with emerging, underdeveloped, and developed nations because of the diverse ways China operates with other countries. New opportunities for other Asian countries emerged as a result of competition between China and India for the hegemonic position in Asia. China and India compete to strengthen their relationship with other countries and to gain their vested interests. China

strategically intrudes into South Asia, which India considers its vital sphere of influence, to challenge Indian influence in the region. Recent developments in the China-Sri Lanka relationship should be viewed in this scenario. China successfully strengthened its ties with Sri Lanka by using ancient linkages with them, thereby creating tensions in Indian security and its bilateral relationship with Sri Lanka.

### **The nature of relationships in the ancient period**

China and Sri Lanka have had a close relationship since ancient times. The old Silk Road from China to Europe provided land and sea routes for transporting silks, spices, and precious stones, demonstrating Sri Lanka's importance and strategic location between East and West. Archaeological excavations revealed troves of Roman and Chinese coins, proving seafaring merchants of the time ventured to Sri Lanka, now known as Sri Lanka, to exchange goods and barter for merchandise. (Zhang, 2019)

The foundations of ancient interactions were cultural and religious bonds rather than commercial ones. In 411, while King Mahanama was reigning, the Chinese wandering monk Fa Xian visited Sri Lanka, marking a significant turning point in these connections. Fa Xian spent nearly two years in Sri Lanka as part of his numerous journeys to propagate Buddhism. He thought Sri Lanka was wonderful and dubbed it the "Island of the Lions." The situation of the country and associated issues of Buddhism were investigated by Fa Xian when he was in Anuradhapura. According to folklore, he gave the Abhayagiri monastery a golden-inlaid, ivory-handled fan made of white silk before he sailed off for China. This first milestone was not only accomplished by King Mahanama (406-428), but records also state that he sent an agent to the Qin Dynasty courts in China with a statue of the Buddha and a message to Emperor Hiao-ou-ti. In 430 and 435, respectively, the two envoys reached China. Stasiampillai (1990). Chinese politics in the Ming Dynasty shaped Sri Lankan politics in the 14th and 15th centuries. Cheng Ho, a Chinese commander who had visited Sri Lanka in 1405, was instructed by the Chinese emperor to return home with the holy Tooth and Bowl of the Buddha. Sri Lankan King Veera Alakeswara insulted Cheng Ho. Consequently, Cheng Ho took the Sri Lankan monarch and his family prisoner in 1411 and sent them to China. However, the monarch and his family were allowed to return to Sri Lanka by the emperor of China.

In addition, a prince from Sri Lanka was dispatched to China as an ambassador in the 15th century, under the reign of King Parakramabahu VI. A different prince, however, usurped his position in Sri Lanka while he was in China. So, Fujian province became the prince's permanent home. The young Chinese woman he wed is still alive and well today; her family hails from Fujian province and Taiwan. (Kelegama, 2014). (Deyshappriya, 2016)

Trading between the two kingdoms began in the first and second centuries as a result of diplomatic connections and religious links between the rulers of the two states. Zheng, a Chinese navigator, made many journeys to Sri Lanka in the first century CE, laying the groundwork for commerce with the island nation. Merchandise trades predominated in commerce between 406 and 762. Silk from Sri Lanka, sandalwood from India, aloe from Indonesia, clove wood from Malaysia, and expensive gems from China would normally be traded. After the "Malay empire of Sri Vijaya" began regular trading with China in the ninth century and beyond, trade between the two countries began to dwindle. Midway through the fifteenth century, commerce between China and Sri Lanka sprang up again, and the two nations traded cotton textiles, rattan goods, golden orioles, black pepper, and herbal remedies.

One way to analyse China's influence on Sri Lanka in the 15th century, when commerce between the two countries resumed, is to look at the overt and covert ways China convinced the island nation to acknowledge its rule. Bastianpallai cites Chinese records that state in 1409 a group of Chinese men under the leadership of Yung Lo and Cheng Ho attempted to establish a record of Chinese presence in southern Sri Lanka by means of an inscription. The Ming Emperor of China has dispatched this ambassador to get the priceless Tooth Relic and bring it back to China. After delivering the bribes and presents, the Chinese Ming Emperor allegedly attempted to contact the monarch of Sri Lanka through his close nobles, according to Bastianpallai. After becoming aware of this audacious deed and hidden ambitions that endangered China's imperial might, Alagathkonara, king of Sri Lanka, sought to apprehend Cheng Ho. Thus, during an argument in early 411, Cheng Ho captured Alagathkonara and his family. What followed was the Chinese emperor's attempt to find a new ally to succeed Alagathkonara. Following Sri Lanka's unification in the middle of the 15th century under King Prakramabahu IV, China refrained from meddling in the country's internal affairs.. (Arangalla, 2017)

### **The era following Sri Lanka's independence**

Beginning with a fundamental disadvantage, China's strategy toward Sri Lanka evolved. Because of its early and elevated familiarity with Western institutions and ideas, Sri Lanka's foreign policy owes a great debt to the legacy of British rule. Sri Lanka gained its independence on February 4, 1948, but in its formative years, it was unable to shake off its small state syndrome and remained tied to the metropolitan power. The independence package and Ceylon-UK military pact formally show the connection. It is possible to summarise the conflicting contract provisions as follows:

1. Reciprocity clause of extending military assistance in the case of security threats
2. Permission granted to U.K. to use Sri Lankan air base at Katunayake and Trincomalee

naval base

Because of agreements, the first decade of United National Party dominance in Sri Lankan politics, the foreign policies of all its three prime ministers, D.S Senanayake, Dudley Senanayake, and Sri John Kotelawela were characterized by collaboration with the West and antipathy to communist countries including PRC. In addition to the Soviet Union blockade of Sri Lankan entry to UNO with questioning of Sri Lankan credentials as an independent state, the growth of communist parties of Sri Lanka in the mainstream of domestic politics of Sri Lanka added fire on aversion to communist countries. The hostility was remarkably revealed through activities like discouraging diplomatic relations with China, banning any imports of communist books, magazines, and films, and even charging communist states guiding and funding Sri Lanka's communist groupings and Sri Lanka ties with Guomintang (KMT) government of Chiang Kai Shek. Even though Sri Lanka recognized the PRC on January 5, 1950, exchange ambassadors with Beijing did not occur until February 7, 1957. The intensity of anti-China sentiments in the initial years is revealed through the denial of Premier Zhou En Lai's request to allow visits by the Chinese goodwill mission.

However, the era of an ardent anti-communist mindset overcast Sri Lanka's domestic politics and foreign policy with the arrival of the Rubber-Rice Agreement of April 1952, which was a unique breaking point for China's leaders. It was considered a deeply cherished chapter in the annals of bilateral relations. This agreement compelled Sri Lanka to stand against the U.S. embargo on selling strategic materials to China. Sri Lanka's stand against the U.S. was justified through the explanations of successive prime ministers. For Sri Lanka, the deal was more attractive and boosted its surplus rubber products, and it paved the way to access low-priced food grains so much in need. Britain's formal recognition of the PRC in 1950 was a model for Sri Lanka, following the legacy of British rule. Besides this, India and Pakistan recognized the PRC by December 1949 and May 1951, influencing Colombo's perceptions of dealing with the PRC.

### **The Rubber Rice Deal**

The China-Sri Lanka Rice-Rubber deal of April 1952 was a beginning and turning point in the relationship between these countries, even though similar proposals with the U.S. had failed to settle prices and qualities. China utilized the failure of the U.S. with highly favorable conditions. The deal gradually leads to the following changes in their bilateral relations and policies:

PRC was allowed to setup its trade agency in Colombo without any diplomatic status.

Anti-China sentiments among UNPs were reduced and started to continue pro-China sentiments in the coming years.

The predominance of Stalinism among communist parties was shifted to peaceful co-existence with the West and for the third-world bourgeois regime as a prelude to democratic socialism.

The Sri Lankan Communist Party started to cooperate with non-communist groupings. It was to become part of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party's coalition government that replaced UNP in the general election of April 1956, which was the first significant momentum in the evolution of China's Sri Lanka relationship. (Singh, 2003)

Through this deal, China projected itself as an attractive business partner to Sri Lanka through their mutually beneficial conditionalities of agreements and Chinese willingness to invest in projects in Sri Lanka. The deal became the foundation of the relationship between the countries through the eroding anti-China feelings and sentiments among the public politicians.

### **Domestic politics in Sri Lanka and Relationship with China**

SLFP (Sri Lankan Freedom Party) was the major proponent of the Rice Rubber deal with Beijing as the opposition in those days. SLFP leaders S W R D Bandaranaike (1956) and Sirimavo Bandaranaike (1960-65) were the backbone of the renewed deal and changed Sri Lanka's foreign policy. The essential changes that took place were as follows;

Firstly, asserting a genuine non-aligned policy, British bases in Trincomalee and Kautanayake were closed in 1957, though the UK-Ceylon Defense agreement was never formally abolished. Secondly, Colombo agreed with China to build diplomatic ties in September 1956, followed by Premier Zhou En Lai visiting Sri Lanka in February 1957 and again in 1964. Thirdly, in the long run, this drift was to be reflected in SLFP's aversion to being drawn into Indian and Western criticism of China's military operations in Tibet as well as on the China-India war of 1962, though they also kept a low profile on the Dalai Lama's flight to India which had aggravated India China ties (Silva, 1992)

Many Buddhists in Sri Lanka were quite critical of the SLFP for its stance in favour of China. Protests were staged by Buddhist organisations, who demanded that the Prime Minister call an Asian regional conference to address the plight of the Tibetan people and the Sri Lankan conflict. To assist Tibetan refugees in India and to extend an invitation to the Dalai Lama to visit Sri Lanka, Maha Bhikshu Sangamaya has organised the collecting of public monies. The United Nations People's Party (UNP) has spoken out against the government's stance on China's role in the India-China conflict and the July 1963 China-Sri Lanka Maritime Agreement, which granted preferential treatment to commercial ships operating between the two nations or a third country. All of these factors, both domestic and foreign, as well as the incumbent government's pro-China stance, were utilised by the UNP throughout their 1965 election campaign. The SLFP raised concerns over Bandaranaike's non-alignment policy and accused the government of giving the

Trincomalee base to the Chinese, citing the fact that the majority of Chinese boats had been anchored in the vital port..

Nevertheless, the SLFP remained steadfast in its position, dismissing the Tibetan question as a Chinese domestic affair. It also refrained from denouncing Beijing or advocating for a global campaign against China. Across the country, people took to the streets in protest of the 1962 India–China War. A six-nation summit of non-aligned nations was forced upon the administration to arbitrate between New Delhi and the other parties. It was the government's duty to initiate mediation between New Delhi and Beijing through the six-nation conference of non-aligned nations. It was also in the government's interest to mediate between New Delhi and Beijing. What is now known as the Colombo plan was later explained in person by Sirimavo Bandaranaike during a 1963 visit to Beijing. But none of that could get China and India to sit down and negotiate. Sri Lanka's mediation role in the matter not only elevated Sirimavo's profile as a non-aligned leader, but it also deepened ties between her country and China. In 1976, she hosted the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) conference, which was a major step in her career.QF (Kodikara, 1992)

China has surpassed the Soviet Union and other communist nations as Sri Lanka's largest donor. The SLFP had also established diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union. Colombo agreed to spend the same amount in its rubber plantation in exchange for SLRs 75 million in economic help from China in 1957. In September 1958, a subsequent deal was reached to extend a loan of SLRs. Fifty million at 2.5 percent interest was later converted to an interest-free loan, which could be paid in any third country's currency. In 1972 and 1984, again, China provided two more interest-free loans worth SLRs. 50 million and SLRs. Twenty million respectively to purchases from China.

The relationship between Sri Lanka and China suffered after the United National Party (UNP) returned to power in 1965 under Prime Minister Dudley Senanayake. Although the UNP had previously been anti-communist, it was unable to do so due to the considerable economic participation of China and the consequent goodwill among Sri Lanka's power elite. During the past five years, there have been conflicting notes in the relationship between China and Sri Lanka. For example, there have been multiple confrontations between the UNP leadership and the Chinese Embassy in Colombo. Colombo rejected Beijing's candidate for ambassador to.

Colombo, and China remained without an ambassador to Colombo for a significant portion of the subsequent four years. Because of the Cultural Revolution and other domestic problems in China, China's policy has become more inward-looking, which affects the relationship between China and Sri Lanka. The nations' hostilities were exacerbated when UNP's plan to join the newly established ASEAN was perceived as anti-Chinese in operation. When the China-Sri

Lanka Trade Agreement was up for renewal in July 1965, China made clear that it did not want to participate in ASEAN, which Colombo was using to further its interests. Given Sri Lanka's economic dependency on China, Prime Minister Senanayake's early enthusiasm in joining ASEAN was quickly overshadowed by the limits of heading a coalition government. The matter was then buried without fanfare. Sri Lanka's 1981 official bid for ASEAN membership was denied. So, even when things were going badly for Sri Lanka, China's influence remained strong thanks to the November 1967 decision of Colombo's non-participation and the continuation of the mentioned trade pact. (Behera, 1999)

The pro-China attitude of the SLFP government made drastic changes in their foreign policies of Sri Lanka, thereby accepting China as an attractive trade partner and friend against West-oriented policies and anti-China sentiments of the earlier government of UNP because of the deep-rooted legacies of the British colonial period.

### **Boom in the relationship**

The decade of 1970 was regarded as a golden age in the China-Sri Lanka relationship due to the following reasons:

Firstly, the return of SLFP to power in 1970 paved the way for the domination of China in foreign relations with the help of left parties in the coalition government. The initial year of the new government faced setbacks for the China-Sri Lanka relationship through the insurrection led by Janta Vimukti Peramuna (JVP) during 1971, which was widely suspected of having links with China, which was operating through its proxy, North Korea. China's prudent response to the criticism created an influential pro-China faction within the SLFP. The fact that this faction was led by Bandaranaike's elder daughter, Sunethra, and her first husband, Kumar Rupesinghe, created controversies and led to the recall of China's ambassador, Ma Tzu Ching, in 1974.

Secondly, the creation of Bangladesh in the South Asian region compelled Sri Lanka to make further conscious of its need for strong ties with Beijing, thereby facilitating China's engagement with Sri Lanka.

Thirdly, this period had also been witnessed at the beginning of the US-China entente, and the U.S. trying to counter India during the Bangladesh war had indicated how significant powers seemed to agree about the need to balance, if not contain, New Delhi that had emerged such a strong power in South Asia by mid-1970s. Also, Colombo was now free to engage China as India's counterweight in South Asia without annoying Washington. This encouraged Colombo and Beijing to work together to strengthen South Asia's local balance of power. For example, Bandaranaike did not extend its official recognition to Dhaka until the last of Indian troops had not left Bangladesh. The fact that India viewed it as if Colombo was toeing the China line, which

had links to Sri Lanka, having earlier allowed Pakistan over-flight and landing/refueling facilities during the India-Pakistan wars of 1965 and 1971 - was only further to facilitate Sri Lanka's drift towards China. (Silva K. M., 1996)

In contrast, Sirimavo Bandaranaike spared no effort in her efforts to normalise ties between China and Sri Lanka. She signed the Agreement for Cultural Exchanges, met with Chairman Mao, and later called the relationship between Sri Lanka and China "a model of inter-state relations" during her well publicised 1972 visit to Beijing. In addition, she argued persuasively for the establishment of a Peace Zone in the Indian Ocean. Among the many loans and projects that ensued, China presented the Sri Lankan Navy with five high-speed naval boats in July 1972. In May 1973, China completed the Rs.35 million Bandaranaike Memorial International Summit Hall in Colombo as a gesture of kindness. The hall would later host the 1976 NAM conference. The Supreme Court buildings in Sri Lanka were supposed to be built by the Chinese in the early 1980s. In the 1970s and 1980s, the Soviets believed that China's rising might was preparing the country to expand into the Indian Ocean. When it came to the interpersonal relationships between Mrs. Bandaranaike and Mrs. Indira Gandhi, India was less worried. Due to the brief interlude of years after Mao's death, China-Sri Lanka ties remained irregular and low profile during the early years of Deng Xiaoping in China, Jayawardene in Sri Lanka, and Morarji Desai in India. The arrival of Soviet forces in Afghanistan also played a role, opening a new chapter in this region's interstate relations for much of the 1980s and 1990s.(Navaratane, 1976)

Financial aid and infrastructure development support of \$130 million were provided to Sri Lanka by China in the early post-independence era. As shown in Table 1, China has planned for Sri Lanka to participate in its financial assistance programme, making it the second-largest receiver of Chinese aid to non-communist Asian nations. The primary financial assistance programmes are summarised in Table 2, which also shows the types of financial help and the projects that were developed between the two nations.

**Table1: Aid from China to Non-Communist Asian Nations 1957to 1973**

Nation	Amount (US \$Millions)	Percentage
Cambodia	97.5	10.4
Nepal	44	4.7
Indonesia	126	13.4
Sri Lanka	130.7	13.9
Burma	86.2	9.2



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Laos	32	3.4
Pakistan	342	36.6
Afghanistan	75.5	8.1
Total	993.9	99.7

Source: (Arangalla,2017)

### **JAYAWARDENE POLICY**

The decimation of SLFP and UNP coming to power during the July 1977 elections did not make much difference for China-Sri Lanka's relations because of the US-China entente since the early 1970s. The first thing Jayawardene chose to do was turn Sri Lanka's parliamentary system into a presidential system, and the fact that the first visit that his prime minister, Premadasa, undertook in September 1979 was to China showed the importance that UNP attached to strengthening ties with Beijing. Two other policy decisions that reflected Sri Lanka's continued proximity to China were (a) Colombo's strong condemnation of Soviet intervention in Afghanistan and (b) their refusal to recognize the Heng Samrin government in Cambodia. Both perfectly echo Chinese views on these issues and oppose India's views on these issues.

But President Jayawardene's reassertion of ties with Western nations, especially his new and fruitful initiatives in opening relations with Japan, had also caused severe concerns in Beijing. Later, Jayewardene also signed the India-Sri Lanka Accord of 1987 to change China's profile completely, unnerving Beijing and compelling them to rethink their South Asia policy. This downtrend in China-Sri Lanka ties was to become visible from the early 1980s, with this period witnessing Sri Lanka bilateral trade sliding from \$ 157 million in 1979 to a mere \$ 48 million in 1983, i.e., much before the beginning of Sri Lanka's ethnic crisis and the India-Sri Lanka Peace Accord of 1987. This was partly the result of China's shift from a politico-strategic-dominated foreign policy to a more pragmatic geo-economic approach to foreign policy, where national interest had gradually replaced ideology as the parameter for bilateral ties. (Alamanac of China's Foreign Economic Relation and Trade, 1984)

### **INDIA-SRILANKA PEACE ACCORD**

While their economic engagement has been the strongest pillar of China-Sri Lanka ties, the ethnic strife in the name of Tamil homeland - and the consequent India-Sri Lanka Peace Accord - was to become their most significant stumbling block in evolving mutually beneficial and lasting close relationship. However, these ethnic crises in Sri Lanka also create some opportunities. To begin with, the escalation and internalization of Sri Lanka's Tamil ethnic insurrections since July 1983 had since turned successive SriLankan regimes inwards, and this not only slowed down Sri

Lanka's economic growth and development but slowed down China's ascendance in Sri Lanka's foreign policy since the early 1980s. China's ascendance was also affected because India had since become virtually the single most influential external factor in Sri Lanka. Given that both superpowers had taken the position that Sri Lanka could not resolve this conflict without India's support, China (also Pakistan) had remained generally silent on this subject. (Silva C. R., 1992)

However, China did not wholly abandon Sri Lanka during this crisis period. These years, therefore, saw some high-level visits where they signed joint statements exhorting that no nation should exploit another's ethnic conflict to achieve its aims. But none of these ever had any direct reference to India, nor did China ever openly express support for Jayewardene's fight against Sri Lankan Tamils. This was partly because China recognized India's pre-eminence. Its attention was now diverted to a more active Southeast Asia and its increasing participation in global multilateral activities since the late 1980s. Besides, with the improvement of India-China ties, Beijing was less inclined to support any anti-India rhetoric by smaller states on India's periphery.

Nevertheless, throughout this period, both Pakistan and China continued to be major suppliers of arms to Sri Lankan forces, while India was accused of supplying and training Tamil separatists. Indeed, National Security Advisor Lalith Athulathmudali was known to be in close touch with senior intelligence experts in China who coordinated their internal security operations. (Gunaratana, 1993)

At least to ensure that Sri Lanka is not seen as India's satellite, President Jayewardene also continued to be seen as engaging other countries. Indeed, following the exchange of presidential visits by Li Xiannian and Jayewardene in May 1984, there were rumors about the two signings of a defense pact. And, at the end of 1984, the two were to make public their agreement for China, supplying Sri Lanka with five Shanghai-class patrol craft, assault rifles, and training of experts, which implied armed forces. However, given India's pre-eminence during this period and excellent India-China relations, Beijing was not inclined to openly play the counterweight to New Delhi, which, as it is, enjoyed the support of most other powers. President Jayewardene had to concede finally signing the 1987 India-Sri Lanka Accord to facilitate Indian Peace Keeping Forces (IPKF) operations in Sri Lanka during 1987-1990. (Dixit, 1998)

### **Benefits of China**

The IPKF's failure served to open the door once again for Chinese ambitions. It is now thought that the erroneous counsel was used to oppose and base the India-Sri Lanka pact. The Sinhalese, the Tamils (on both sides), and most Indians saw this coming and knew it would fail. All the South Asian countries were going to hold India in low regard after the IPKF, which was supposed to finish as a major disaster. The issue was carefully managed by the Sri Lankan and

Indian governing regimes, who naturally had their disagreements, pressures, and misunderstandings; furthermore, China never publicly voiced its disapproval of IPKF activities in Sri Lanka. The theories that Colombo is a key link in China's strategy to surround India have been renewed because of this. There has been substantial improvement in Sri Lanka's military's performance against Tamil insurgents and the JVP since the mid-1990s, thanks in large part to the continuous supply and training of troops by China and Pakistan. Ever since then, Sri Lanka and the Tamil Tigers have been working together to attempt to reach a peace deal, and Beijing has been completely behind these efforts. While in China for a week in June 2002, Sri Lankan Defense Minister Tilak Marapana signed an agreement in which China agreed to supply Sri Lanka with weapons and improve the Sri Lankan Navy to stop the smuggling of arms by Tamil insurgents. The Sri Lankan defence minister has not visited China in seventeen years before to this trip.

Despite the fact that China was one of the few countries providing Sri Lanka with military aid, including ammunition and weaponry, the two countries maintained amicable bilateral relations throughout the 1980s and 1990s. Previous bilateral commercial ventures between the two nations continued even after the United National Party (UNP) took over from the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) and adopted amorepro-Western agenda in SriLankan internal politics. Aside from China, the island country of Sri Lanka also became a significant source of weaponry and ammunition during its internal conflict with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in the mid-1980s (LTTE). Aside from providing military assistance, China was the sole country in 1987 to "openly oppose India's engagement" 118 in Sri Lanka over the country's internal unrest. At that time, Indian planes flew into Sri Lankan airspace. During the government's final military effort against the LTTE, it transported food supplies across northern Sri Lanka. Even when China's role as Sri Lanka's primary trade partner diminished in the 1990s, Thomas Wheeler noted that the country remained a significant arms dealer. But bilateral business dealings were maintained under wraps. The cultural and economic ties between the two nations have persisted, as seen in three events that occurred in the1980s and 1990s: Tostart, in 1981, the Sri Lanka-China Society was established with the goal of promoting friendship between the two nations. Secondly, the Joint Trade Committee between China and Sri Lanka was established in 1984. Lastly, the Sri Lanka-China Business Cooperation was established in 1994.

Under Sri Lanka's administration after 2005, bilateral activities between China and Sri Lanka picked up speed, and in the late period after independence, the Golden Jubilee Celebrations of bilateral relations between the two nations became a landmark. When President Mahinda Rajapaksha of Sri Lanka visited China in 2007, he signed eight bilateral agreements and memorandums of understanding, speeding up bilateral activity (MOU). In the years following independence, China extended more than \$3.8 billion in grants and loans. The road building,

electricity and energy, ports and shipping, and aviation sectors have all benefited from the Chinese help that Sri Lanka received, according to the country's 2012 annual report from the Ministry of Finance and Planning. Among these initiatives for infrastructure development are the ones already listed, as well as the repair of the road network, with a focus on the important supply highways in the north. Despite Maithripala Sirisena's efforts to strike a balance between India and China, the relationship between Sri Lanka and China has been on the increase since her arrival in 2015. This is seen in the influx of new projects and investments.

### **Conclusion**

Rather than focusing on trade and economics, the long-standing ties between Sri Lanka and China have always been based on shared religious and cultural practices. Sri Lanka and China's relationship flourished thanks in large part to Buddhism, which also opened new avenues for king-to-king diplomacy. There is a wealth of evidence that shows that trade between the two nations started in the first and second centuries and persisted through the silk route, in addition to religious links and diplomatic interactions between the monarchs of the two nations. The post-independent period of Sri Lanka witnessed UNP domination in the government until 1956, in which anti-China sentiments were scored due to the innate legacies of British colonial rule and Western influence. The Rubber Rice Deal, the arrival of SLFP in power by replacing UNP, and their pro-China attitude laid the foundation of the robust China-Sri Lanka alliance. Sri Lanka sided more with China than with Western nations and India after the Rubber Rice Deal portrayed China as a desirable commercial partner. This was due in large part to China's business-friendly policies. China has become an essential economic and geopolitical partner of Sri Lanka as a result of Chinese aid programs and the sporadic visits of the pro-Chinese SLFP administration. When China invaded Sri Lanka, it created a worrying scenario for India, and now China has effectively countered India's influence there. The deployment of Chinese forces in Sri Lanka has strained relations between China and India, two countries that are geographically close. It is believed that India's foreign security is endangered by China's involvement in Sri Lanka..

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