

**China's soft power and its cultural implication for Sri Lanka: Exploring
Students' perspectives**

Master's Degree Programme in East Asian Studies

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Abstract

As China is now influential in most aspects of international politics, it has found a mean to enhance and strengthen its influence peacefully. China's relations can be seen almost every region in the world, particularly in Southeast Asia, Africa, Latin America and Central Asia to enhance its influence in these regions and to project itself as a benign nation. Last decade it has rapidly expanded into the South Asian countries following an integrated strategy of economic engagement, development assistance and cultural exchanges. Chinese initiatives in all these respects in the region have expanded through the concept of soft power. The Soft power initiative now became an increasingly important role in Chinese foreign policy strategies.

China's growing presence in Sri Lanka as a south Asian country can be seen notably through the soft power initiative. This study examines the China's growing presence in Sri Lanka in Cultural, Economic and Public diplomacy. The main focus of this study is to identify the implications of cultural diplomacy as a soft power tool. Therefore, as the study population, the present study has selected the University students of Sri Lanka. A judgmental sampling had been performed to collect the data with a structured questionnaire. The method employed for the data collection was quantitative and a correlational exploratory research design. The study reveals, there is a strong relationship between the influencing factors and the China's soft power. All three sub-dimensions, Cultural diplomacy, Economic diplomacy and Public diplomacy were jointly and individually influencing Sri Lanka as the Soft power tools. Necessary recommendations were identified to increase the level of diplomatic relations between the two countries.

Key words: China's Soft Power, Cultural diplomacy, Economic Diplomacy, Public Diplomacy, Sri Lanka.

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1 Introduction

Throughout the 21st century, the world has witnessed China's rise as a world superpower politically and economically as a result of a combination of factors since its reoriented production within global capitalism in the 1980s (Smith, 2021). When China opened its economy to the world in the late 1970s under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping, it has achieved huge economic growth. As per the article 'the world's largest economies' on the WorldData information site, China is currently the world's second-largest economy, and it leads as the number one product exporter and also the world's second leading product importer after the United States. Moreover, China has also become the largest trading nation in the world. This significant economic growth has brought China into a prominent position in International Politics. Furthermore, today China is positioned to challenge the post-Cold War unilateral world order where US hegemony remains unassailable (Rengma,2010). China's position has led to varying opportunities for many Asian and African developing countries, such as Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Angola, Ethiopia, etc. Whereas powerful nations, including the USA, and India view it as a threat to their national interests (Xin, 2009).

As China is now influential in most aspects of international politics, it has found a means to enhance and strengthen its influence peacefully through soft power. Therefore, to understand the China's peaceful rise, it is necessary to identify the concept of soft power. Nye (2017) states that Soft power is the ability to obtain one's preferred outcomes by attractions rather than coercion or payment. Jain (2017) defines soft power as a tool for foreign policy and diplomacy to advance and broaden its national interests overseas. China uses its soft power in almost every region in the world, particularly in Southeast Asia, Africa, Latin America, and Central Asia to enhance its influence in these regions and to project itself as a benign nation (Kurlantzick, 2006). In recent years Chinese government has taken several measures to improve its cultural, economic, and development relations with South Asian nations too. Chinese presence in the South Asian region was increased because of its geographical and geostrategic location. China is concerned about the Indian Ocean since their trade and commerce are largely dependent on Indian Ocean sea lines of communication (Lim, 2020). Many South Asian countries like India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka are located in the Indian Ocean and it's led China to expand its soft power with those countries. The Chinese Premier Li Peng once declared that "along with the South Asian countries, China is ready to write a new chapter of friendly

relations and cooperation”. This is research is about China’s growing presence in Sri Lanka, especially about the Chinese soft power initiatives in the country.

1.1 Background of the Study

1.1.1 China’s concern in the Indian Ocean

Since Song dynasty (960-1279), China’s socio-economic and cultural contribution has been developing by sea as a nation closely linked with the ocean (Schottenhammer, 2015). At the present, China’s maritime trade continues to contribute to its prosperity, with over 80% of its international trade being exported through the Indian Ocean.

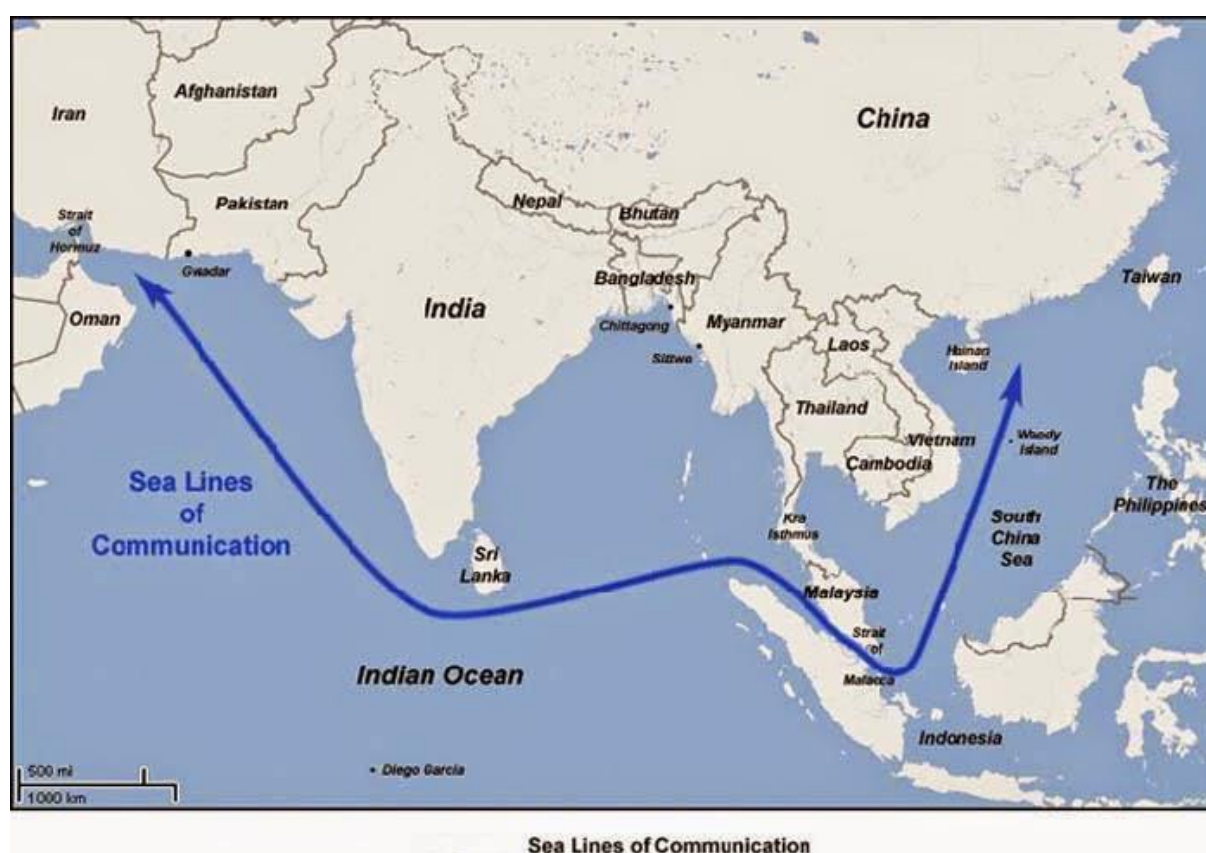


Figure 1: Sea Lines of Communication in Indian Ocean. Figure: Naval news and analysis, 2014.

As the leading importer of oil, 70% of China’s oil requirements are also imported through the Indian Ocean, the Malacca Strait, and the South China Sea (Weber, 2019). As the third largest ocean in the world, the Indian Ocean became more vital to sustaining economies because it has major choke points including the Strait of Malacca, the Suez Canal, the Strait of Hormuz, Babel Mandeb (Djibouti-Yemen), and sea lines of communication (The world factbook, 2023). Its

maritime routes fuel the economic engines of rising Asian powers like China and India, as well as the industrialized world. Chinese officials have sought out supplies of oil and gas as far away as the Persian Gulf and the Horn of Africa. The security of the waterways stretching from China's coastlines to the Indian Ocean has taken on special policy importance for China.

1.1.2 China's interest in South Asia

According to the World Bank and World Fact Book, the South Asian Region comprises eight countries: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. South Asia is China's close neighbour in the southwest. The region is more important in China's foreign policy, as it becomes more crucial to the stability and development of China in several ways. Malik (2001) states that South Asia ranks third in importance after the North East and South East Asian regions in China's Asia policy. In fact, China shares borders with five South Asian countries, including Afghanistan, Bhutan, India, Nepal and Pakistan. Additionally, for many South Asian countries including India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Maldives, the principal boundary is the Indian Ocean. Because of this geostrategic location, the South Asian region gain more attention from China for its security concerns.

1. China's South Asian Maritime hubs

When China introduced its concept of peaceful rise in the early 2010s, it followed a policy of building economic and diplomatic relations with South Asian countries. China's maritime silk route initiative aimed to advance the rising Chinese geopolitical influence from the South China sea through the Strait of Malacca, across the Indian Ocean, and the Arabian Gulf (Chung, 2018). With the term Maritime silk route, China plans to connect with other Asian countries, Africa and Europe (Hu et al., 2022). Under this initiative, China invests in massive maritime infrastructure projects in some South Asian countries to build strategic relationships with partner countries and to secure China's presence along sea lines of communication (Wang & Ye, 2019). Under this strategy, China built and developed port facilities in Pakistan (Gwadar port), Sri Lanka (Hambantota and Colombo port city) and Bangladesh (Chittagong port) (Hu et al., 2022).

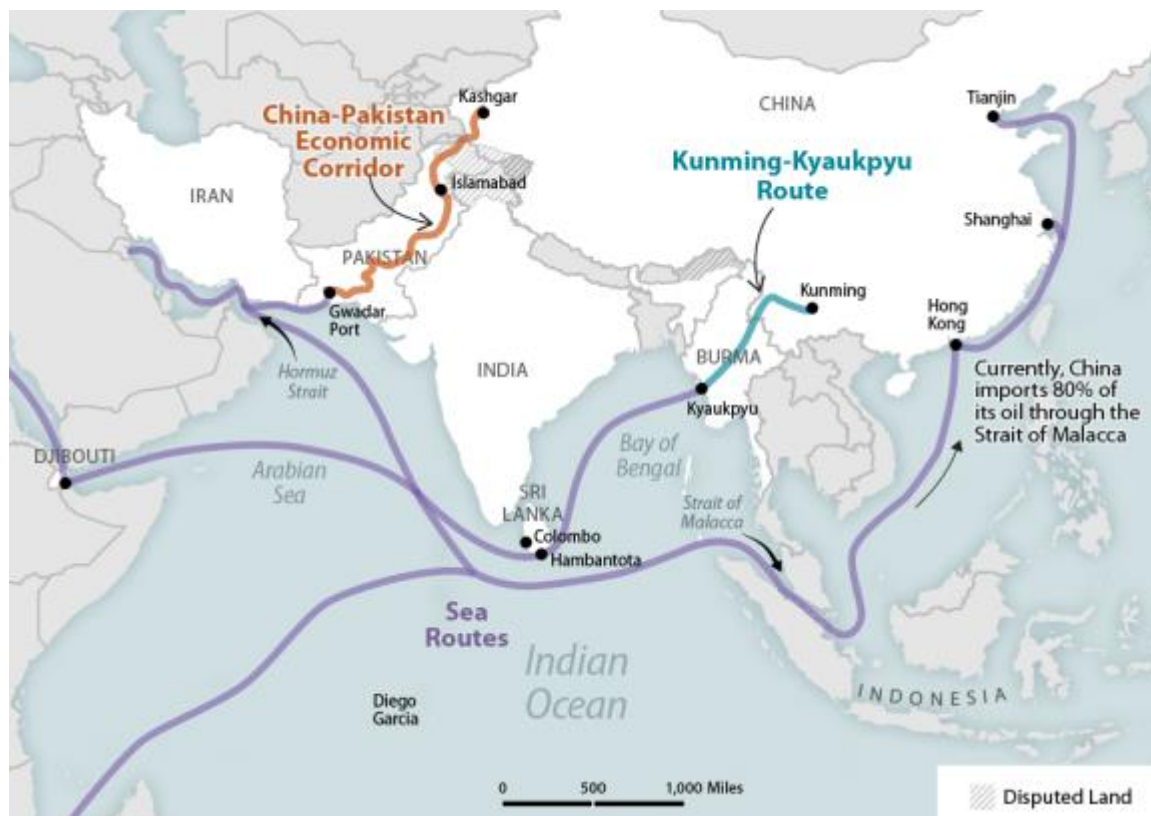


Figure 2: China's maritime investments in South Asia. Source: CRSreports.congress.gov.

i. Gwadar, Pakistan

As shown in the Figure 2, Gwadar's strategic location serves multiple objectives for China. It is located on the Iranian border and overlooks the Strait of Hormuz. This port is a win-win prospect for both Pakistan and China. Gwadar port serves as an energy hub to carry oil from Gwadar to Xinjiang province in China by an oil pipeline. Therefore, Gwadar port is an important port for China and it is expected to provide strategic storage and transport facilities, as well as road and rail links to China (Wang & Ye, 2019). Beijing and Islamabad have signed \$46 billion China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) agreement which include, energy projects, building of new roads, railway lines, and a network of oil pipeline to connect Kashgar, China to Gwadar (Yousafzai, 2016). It was also known as the China-Pakistan economic corridor.

ii. Hambantota, Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka's geostrategic location is important to China. Sri Lanka is located at the centre of maritime trade routes in West and East Asia, as well as in the middle of Africa, the Arab, and Eastern worlds, further, Sri Lanka has been an active player in maritime cooperation in the

region and the world. (Awad & Todkar, 2021, p. 4090). Therefore, China built a major port in Hambantota Sri Lanka, and invested heavily in the Hambantota Development Zone. Yu & Wallace (2021) in their article argue that China is using debt-trap diplomacy in the maritime silk route concept as a part of a manipulative global strategy, funding infrastructure projects in developing countries with unsustainable loans, then using the debt to gain the advantage over those governments. Further, they mentioned that Hambantota port in Sri Lanka is the best example for this since it was handed over to China on a 99 years lease in 2017 where China gets more benefits while Sri Lanka pays more for it.

iii. Chittagong, Bangladesh

Chittagong port in Bangladesh is another Chinese development project under the maritime silk road initiative. Chinese funds and investments allocated to upgrade the Chittagong port facility and to link it by road to Yunnan province in China via Myanmar (Ramachandran, 2016).

2. China's concern on India

India launched its market-oriented economic reforms in 1991, which have contributed to maintaining higher rates of economic growth and greater engagement in the global economy, including steady increases in trade with China for decades. However, this scenario is not uniformly positive from the perspective of the Chinese government. India continued to expand and improve its military capabilities, particularly its nuclear, naval, and missile forces, that is, capabilities with the potential to threaten or challenge China (Kanwal, 2012). India has continued to expand and strengthen its relationships with the United States and other nations on China's periphery (Malik, 2012). China needs to counter this threat; therefore, it is trying to maintain close and cordial relations with nations on India's periphery by taking advantage of India's neighbours' desire to enlist China's assistance to counterbalance the strongest country in the region.

1.1.3 China's relations with Sri Lanka

Relations between China and Sri Lanka dating back over 20 centuries, have historically been strengthened by shared religious and cultural values (Kelegama, 2014). The initial foundations for trade and cultural exchanges between the two countries were laid by Zheng He, a Chinese navigator of the Ming Dynasty who sailed to Sri Lanka many times (Wang & Ye, 2019). For centuries, Sri Lanka served as a key nexus of Chinese maritime trade in the Indian Ocean because of its geographical position and became a 'pearl' of China's maritime silk route. Sri

Lanka's location at the virtual centre of the Indian Ocean region continues to provide strategic and economic benefits to many countries, including China (Chung, 2018). Although both countries had a relationship during the past period, significant relationships can be seen after 2007, completing a milestone of 50 years of established diplomatic relations between the two countries (Embassy of PRC in Sri Lanka, 2017).

During the culmination of Sri Lanka's civil war in 2009, India's reluctance to support the Sri Lankan government led Beijing to gain a firm foothold in the country. Over the Western allegations of human rights violations during the last stages of the civil war, Beijing continuously supported Sri Lanka and used its vote against the US-sponsored UN resolution on Sri Lanka in 2009, 2012, 2013, and 2014 (Blanchard, 2014). China has reiterated that Sri Lankan military operations do not affect international peace and security. Appreciating Beijing's support former Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa once stated that they suffered for 30 years and with Chinese help they managed to defeat terrorism ("China pledge to support", 2014).

In recent years, Beijing has taken several measures to improve its relations with Sri Lanka. China is a state with an export-oriented economy, characterized by a pressing demand for energy expansion, maintaining the security and access to the Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs) is therefore vital for China (Khan & Imran, 2019). Consequently, Sri Lanka is more important to China as a trade, commerce, and naval base. Today, China is the number one lender, number one importer, and key investor in Sri Lanka (Deyschappriya, 2019). With the implementation of the Maritime Silk Route initiative, China has invested in massive infrastructure projects in Sri Lanka: the Hambantota port, Mattala International Airport, highways, railway lines, and Colombo port city (Pasricha, 2022). Moreover, Sri Lanka has become an attractive tourist destination for Chinese tourists, and China has become the second-largest tourism partner of Sri Lanka in terms of tourist arrivals (Deyschappriya, 2018). In 2021, during the pandemic, China granted humanitarian aid to contain the spread of the coronavirus and also donated vaccines to Sri Lanka when needed (Huaxia, 2021). China has been successful in expanding its relations in Sri Lanka-like culture, humanitarian aid, and economic assistance by playing a major role as a development partner (wignaraja et al., 2020).

The following Table 1 shows the major infrastructure and development projects signed by China under many fields in Sri Lanka.

Table 1: Massive infrastructural and development projects granted by China over the past decade

Category	Infrastructure projects
Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hambantota sea port • Colombo International Container Terminal of Colombo Port (CICT) • Mattala International Airport • Colombo-Katunayake Expressway • Colombo outer circular highway • Central Expressway • Southern Expressway • Matara - Kataragama Railway
Water Supply	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Katana Water supply project • Greater Kurunegala Water supply project • Moragahakanda development project
Energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Norochcholai coal power plant
Urban development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Lotus tower, Colombo • Nelum Pokuna Auditorium, Colombo • Mahinda Rajapaksa Convention Centre in Hambantota
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supplying MRI & other medical equipment to Ragama Teaching Hospital • Construction of Out Patient Department of National Hospital Sri Lanka

1.2 Research problem

Contemporary states have focused on enhancing their soft power along with their hard power tools. The term ‘Soft Power’ is largely used in international affairs for progress at the national and global levels. Most developed countries are now paying particular attention to building soft power. China is also a rising power that vigorously cultivates soft power to portray it as a peace-loving, benign, and cooperative nation, and that her ascendancy will not harm the peace and stability of the world.

China is now influential in most aspects of international politics, and it has found a way to peacefully rise to great power status by using its soft power resources. China’s growing presence in Sri Lanka has been significant over the last decade, and the use of soft power tools to expand its relations with Sri Lanka is significant. Notably, China’s soft power in Sri Lanka

can be seen in Chinese cultural diplomacy, economic engagement, and development assistance toward Sri Lanka.

Due to the lack of background studies in the Sri Lankan context, it is not very clear about the effect of soft power tools and their performance. It may have an impact on the country in terms of how China pursues its goals and objectives. Moreover, it is still doubtful in the international arena whether the implications are good or bad for Sri Lanka. Therefore, this research examines China's soft power implementation in Sri Lanka to identify its assistance and connectivity through the perspective of Cultural diplomacy to answer the following research questions:

- i. What are the soft power tools China tries to deploy in Sri Lanka?
- ii. Has China attempted to enhance its culture through bilateral relations with Sri Lanka?
- iii. What are the implications Sri Lanka obtaining from China's cultural activities from the perspective of Sri Lankan University students?

1.3 Purpose of the study

In the past decade, China has embarked on several projects that have puzzled and alarmed many governments worldwide, including the United States. Chinese are building infrastructural developments and promoting their culture around the globe, and have stated that these projects are in line with their goal of peaceful development, and have reiterated their policy of non-alignment and non-interference. These developments and projects can be identified as the deployment of China's soft power.

China's growing presence in Sri Lanka can be seen in many ways such as massive infrastructure projects, humanitarian aid (as mentioned above donation of vaccines during the COVID-19 period), and most significantly in Cultural activities. The purpose of this study is to identify the implications of these soft power initiatives in Sri Lanka.

1.4 Objectives of the study

- i. To analyse the effect of Cultural, economic and public diplomacy on China's soft power.
- ii. To examine the current level of China's soft power tools (Cultural, economic and public diplomacy) in Sri Lanka.

- iii. To identify the most influencing factors that affect China's soft power in Sri Lanka.

1.5 Organization of the research

Chapter 1: Chapter one outlines an introduction and presents a description about China's interests in South Asia and its concern in Sri Lanka. Further, it will provide a description about Research problem and the objectives of study.

Chapter 2: The literature review will outline the concept and definitions that the study has used to explain the topic. This chapter will discuss the theory of Soft power in detail and the China's contemporary use of Soft power.

Chapter 3: This chapter explains the research methodology that the study has intended to establish, being guided by the empirical evidence of literature review based on the conceptual framework as a quantitative study. A structured questionnaire has been used to collect data in a non-random sample method.

Chapter 4: Chapter four discusses the statistical data analysis procedure to address the research objectives and derived hypotheses based on the study.

Chapter 5: This chapter concludes the study with a discussion on findings and recommendations. It reveals the findings of the study concerning the research objectives and discusses the degree of China's soft power and the Cultural diplomacy in Sri Lanka. The recommendations will be made based on the research findings and it will help future research endeavours.

2 Literature Review

The purpose of this chapter is to review the important scholarly literature on the concept of soft power and the role of how it works in Chinese foreign policy strategies. Further, it explains the Cultural, Economic, and public diplomacy as the main elements of soft power which China uses to expand its relations with Sri Lanka.

2.1 Introduction

In recent years, the academic studies in China has definitely become a more popular field of study, which also investigates China's external affairs from many different dimensions and related writings. The studies in China's use of soft power initiatives are no exception. As soft power has become a crucial element in the contemporary political arena which offers new theoretical insights to achieve targets more smartly, the academic literature on it is steadily growing.

When it comes to China's soft power, scholars concentrate on Chinese soft power deployment in Southeast Asia and Africa. Literature on China's engagement with South Asia is limited and mostly has been written about China's relationships with India and Pakistan, the two largest economies in the region. Pant (2013) examines the direction of contemporary Sino-Indian relations from India's perspective and argues that a problematic history with the structural uncertainties triggered by their simultaneous rise is driving the two Asian giants onto a course that they might find difficult to navigate in the coming years. Further, Kumar (2018) in his book review on "China's soft power diplomacy in South Asia; myth or reality" explains this engagement in light of China's economic rise and its strategic goals in the region. The book explains China's growing presence in the region from the perspective of India, the dominant nation in the region. However, analysis of China's engagement with other small nations in the region, particularly its soft power initiatives in South Asia, and the views of the small states about China's growing presence in the region have received less attention. There are very few works on the China's way of using soft power initiative and its impacts on Sri Lanka.

2.2 Definition of Soft power

As countries attempt to be dominant nations in International Politics, soft power has emerged as a significant tool for enhancing and strengthening their influence peacefully. Present-day power has become one of the main concepts in international politics and there can be seen many

definitions for it. The general concept of power is the ability to exercise influence over other actors' behaviour to achieve the outcome one desire (Buse, 2012). Barnett and Duvall (2005) defined power as "how one state uses its material resources to compel other states to do something it does not want to do." Joseph S. Nye, Jr. argues that power is the ability to influence the behaviour of others to get a desired outcome. According to Nye there are three basic ways to affect the behaviour of other actors: coercion, payment, and attraction. Use of coercion and payment related to Hard Power. In contrast, soft power is based on the ability to attract others.

The term "Soft Power" was first coined in 1990 by Joseph S. Nye, Jr in his book *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power*. Nye stated that in the post-cold war global order growing importance of non-coercive tools of foreign policy can be clearly seen and he defines the term "Soft Power" as: 'Soft Power rests on the ability to shape the preferences of others....it is the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments' (Nye, 2004, p.11). According to Nye, a country's soft power mainly relies on three basic resources: its culture (in places where it is attractive to others), its political values (when it lives up to them at home and abroad), and its foreign policies (when others see them as legitimate and having moral authority) (Nye, 2011).

However, soft power has its limits and shortcomings. For instance, popular culture is more likely to produce soft power in the sense of preferred outcomes in situations where cultures are somewhat similar rather than widely dissimilar (Nye, 2011). Moreover, Nye agrees that economic resources can also generate soft power resources as well as hard. A successful economic model not only produces the latent military resources for exercise of hard power, but it can also attract others to emulate its example. The soft power of the European Union (EU) at the end of the cold war and the soft power of China today are enhanced by the success of their economic models (Nye, 2011, p.52). Simply imposing sanctions, removing payments, cutting off aids are related to use of economic resources as hard power, on the contrary, economic resources can also produce soft power resources by providing payments and aids. Furthermore, Nye explains that a country that suffers economic and military decline is likely to lose not only its hard power resources but also some of its ability to shape the international agenda and some of its attractiveness.

2.3 China's perspective on Soft power

Soft power has become a good example to show how the more a concept travels, differently translated concepts will emerge. Because the context around it was changed from country to

country. China's use of soft power has gained a tremendous popularity not only among Chinese scholars, but also among western scholars such as Nye (2011), Kurlantzick (2006), Shambaugh (2015), Paradise (2009), and Breslin (2007). Before identifying the Chinese definitions of soft power, it is important to understand the context and the reasons behind the adoption of the concept of soft power in the official corridors of the CPC.

Suzuki (2010) mentioned three primary reasons for the acknowledgment of soft power in Chinese foreign policy discourse. First, with the rise of China, most Chinese officials are interested in elements of power, particularly what makes a state a great power in international politics. They see soft power as one of the major constituents that plays a major role in the process of becoming a great power in the international political arena. Second, increasing economic and cultural globalization and interdependence have made war too costly and obsolete. Third, the Chinese have perceived the significance of attractiveness and are attempting to enhance their soft power tools along with their hard power elements. Raghavan (2007) argued that China is expanding its use of cultural, educational, and diplomatic tools to increase its appeal across the world. Finally, China has adopted the concept to fight against the China threat theory, which is crucial for China's foreign policy. China argues that the progress of the human race can be achieved only through the road of peaceful development (Kurlantzick, 2007). Therefore, it is clear why China recognizes the concept of soft power in its foreign policy discourse, and why it tries to vigorously enhance its soft power elements.

2.3.1 Definitions on China's soft power

The concept of soft power has become popular in China, as is evident from inclusion the term into China's official language and great number of publications in the People's Republic of China on Soft Power. China's interpretation of soft power is not completely different from Nye's definition. After analysing the concept of soft power, Chinese scholars have started to develop their own view for the concept. They have suggested that China could enhance its popular appeal in the world through acting as a 'responsible great power' on the world stage; advocating a 'harmonious world' and 'peaceful rise'; demonstrating the virtues of the Chinese path of economic development; expanding its foreign assistance; and developing its own discourse in world affairs (Lai & Lu, 2012).

Li (2008) underlines that the discussions of soft power in China are wider in scope and sometimes emphasize areas that Nye paid little attention to. In his paper "Soft Power in Chinese Discourse: Popularity and Prospects", Li underlines that the influence of China's own domestic

culture, economy, and politics are shaping China's soft power. He further stated that some Chinese scholars regard anything that would be helpful in boosting China's international influence, including Chinese traditional medicine, its economic success, Chinese sports culture, and educational exchange programs as an important element of its soft power. Many Chinese scholars, including Li Mingjiang, agree that soft power must be developed not only internationally through the promotion of Chinese culture overseas, public diplomacy, and pursuit of peaceful development but also at home by making China's culture, as well as economic and political values, attractive to both Chinese and international audiences (Glaser & Murphy, 2022). Kurlantzick (2007) declared a broader idea of soft power. When he delineates Chinese soft power, he adds not only popular culture, and public diplomacy but also economic and diplomatic levers such as aid and investment and participation in multilateral organizations as important constituents of Chinese soft power.

Gill and Huan (2006) examined China's soft power resources in the areas of culture, political values, and diplomacy, pointing out that China's soft power in these areas is increasing, but Beijing faces serious restraints in translating these resources into desired foreign policy outcomes. Further, Cho and Jeong (2008) analysed discussions, resources, and prospects for soft power in China, focusing on the so-called Beijing Consensus, foreign policy, and civilization. They proposed that the recognition and application of soft power to national policies is an important element in explaining China's increasing influence in Asia. Schambaugh's 'China's Soft-Power Push: The Search for Respect' (2015) argues that Beijing is using the strongest instrument in its soft power toolbox: money to improve its global image. He further argued that soft power can be earned when citizens are allowed to interact directly with the world rather than being controlled by authorities.

Gupta (2013) points out that the United States, China, and India are considered as prime examples in the field of soft power, though the nature, intent, and fruition of soft power vary in each country. With respect to economy as the elements to understand the nature of Chinese soft power. Li (2008) argues that soft power is still a weak link in China's strategic planning and it should be an important component in China's rising strategy. Moreover, he points out that soft power is largely perceived as a tool for defensive purposes in China's international politics and a means for various domestic goals and Chinese soft power strategy is still in its primary stage. Nye (2011) agrees that China's impressive economic growth, along with its Confucian culture has enhanced China's soft power in the region. Nonetheless, it has a long way to go to equal the power resources of the United States and still faces many hurdles to development.

2.4 Main tools of China's soft power

According to these definitions, one can apprehend that China considers its economic strength, public diplomacy, and its unique culture as main elements of its soft power. Consequently, also this research discusses broadly about china's way of using above elements and from the chapter 5 it will discuss how these elements impact on Sri Lanka.

2.4.1 Cultural diplomacy

Culture is one of the main resources of soft power. "Culture" is the pattern of social behaviours by which groups transmit knowledge and values, and it exists at multiple levels (Nye, 2011). Cultural contacts can attract others and it can improve relations between nations. China's ancient and rich cultural heritage is one of its key instruments of soft power. It has been actively exporting these different aspects of culture through various cultural engagements and exchanges. In this research, Cultural diplomacy is discussed under the three categories which have been introduced by Lai & Lu (2012) in their book *China's soft power and International Relations*. These three categories are Formal official programs, international cultural exchange programs and promotion of cultural exports and thirdly, the promotion of learning Chinese language and studies of China.

1. Formal Official Programs

As per Lai & Lu (2012) these programs aim to enhance the international image of China and its cultural influence. The direction of these programs not only on the USA or European countries but also on third world countries. With the popularity of cultural movements, China has started to plan countless events in international cultural centres all over the world; Chinese festival events (new year, Mid-autumn), Chinese cultural weeks, traditional Chinese acrobatics shows, traditional cuisine and food festivals, Chinese movie events, Art exhibitions and many more. With the success of these events, Chinese culture became has more popular among international communities. In 2005, Chinese cultural minister Sun Jiazheng mentioned that China is promoting its culture based on a people centred policy to build a harmonious society (Embassy of the PRC in the republic of Singapore, 2005). Later He stated that culture had become the third pillar of China's diplomacy, after politics and economy. To increase its image China started to use many cultural platforms consisting of expos, books and art exhibits, scholarly exchanges, tourism, and sports. To implement these programs China started to establish Chinese Cultural Centres (CCC) around the world. As per the CCC web site, there are

20 active Chinese cultural centres in Europe, Asia, Africa and South America. CCC are very active in promoting Chinese culture through Chinese painting exhibitions, food fairs, tea parties and martial arts training in South Asia too including Sri Lanka, Pakistan, and Bangladesh.

2. Selling the Chinese Culture: religions, movies, sports and tourism

China started gradually promote their cultural elements to the international arena and those elements took their interest. For example, China, an officially atheist country, took steps to hold international Buddhist forums where more than 1000 prominent Buddhist monks, experts, and scholars from over 50 countries attended (CGTN, 2018). As a religion, Buddhism has a peaceful and harmonious image, therefore it's useful for China to highlight it in their peaceful rise. Movies and music programs are also important conduits for cultural values and ideas, and can be easily spread via television and other media (Vyas, 2011). In recent years, Chinese movies have got nominated in several international award ceremonies such as the Oscars, Cannes, and many more. China's film industry has had a rapid growth of global audience and it contributes to China's GDP as well. Furthermore, Chinese TV shows have gained popularity constantly in the last few years and many of them reflect Chinese traditional and contemporary culture and lifestyles.

With the popularity of Cinema, Chinese martial arts have also gained more audience worldwide. For example, Kungfu has become a significant symbol around the world, and Shaolin temples and martial arts have become a new trend among many international communities. Since martial arts are part of China's cultural heritage, Beijing promotes it to popularize culture and build a positive image of China around the world. Bruce Lee, Jackie Chan, and Jet Li were known as powerful figures in the cinema world for promoting these trends (Shimin, 2013).

Tourism has the potential to enhance a country's soft power and convey its values and culture. Recent studies regarding Chinese diplomacy have suggested that the Chinese government also uses tourism as a form of soft power in its dealings with other countries. With its rapid economic growth, large number of Chinese have begun to travel overseas. As tourism can encourage the People-to-People contact and occur cultural exchanges, China is very active in promoting their inbound tourism as well as outbound tourism. China perceives that it is difficult to attract equivalent number of tourists and secure equivalent economic returns from less-developed countries. Therefore, Beijing has offered Approved Destination Status (ADS) for developed countries as well as for many developing countries to promote their destinations in China with the intention of enhancing its cultural ties with them (Chen and Duggan, 2016). Further, they

stated that China uses its outbound tourism as a mean of enhancing its soft power and China's usage of outbound tourism, particularly in African countries allows Beijing to reach its political aims is not just economic but also cultural.

3. Promoting the Chinese Language and studies of China

China's ancient and rich cultural heritage is a key instrument of soft power. These different aspects of culture have been actively exported through various cultural engagements and exchanges. China has established the Confucius Institute to teach its language and promote its culture, and it has become a key medium for promoting the Chinese language and culture around the globe. With economic growth, the demand for this language has gradually increased, leading many international students to learn Chinese as a foreign language. Therefore, the demand for Confucius institutes has dramatically expanded worldwide. Hanban or the Chinese National Office for Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language is responsible for the Confucius Institute program. China opened its first Confucius Institute in November 2004 in Seoul, South Korea. Before the COVID 19 pandemic lockdowns, China had established 548 Confucius Institutes and 1193 Confucius classrooms around the globe (Statista, 2018). In South Asia, apart from Bhutan and Maldives, in every country there are Confucius institutes. Further, in order to enhance cultural and educational links with these countries, China Radio International (CRI) is launching on-air Confucius Institutes in many regions including South Asian countries of Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Nepal.

Table 2: Confucius Institutes in South Asia

Data compiled by author from the Confucius Institutes around the world, 2023.

Country	Confucius Institutes	Confucius Classrooms
Afghanistan	At Kabul University	-
Bangladesh	At University of Dhaka At North South University	Confucius Classroom in Dhaka
India	At University of Mumbai At Vellore Institute of Technology At O.P. global University At Lovely professional University	-
Nepal	At Kathmandu University At Tribhuvan University	CRI Confucius classroom at Nepal China Public Friendship Council

Country	Confucius Institutes	Confucius Classrooms
		Classroom at LRI (Learning Realm International College)
Pakistan	At National University of Modern Language, Islamabad At University of Karachi At University of Agriculture, Faisalabad At University of the Punjab. At University of Sargodha	CRI Confucius Classroom at Pakistan DX council
Sri Lanka	At University of Kelaniya At University of Colombo	CRI Confucius Classroom at Lumbini College, Colombo

As shown in Table 2, it becomes very clear that China has succeeded in establishing Confucius Institutes in many states of the region.

With the expanding of Confucius institutes and language learning in the recent years, China has become one of the top study destinations for international students. As per the statistical report of Ministry of Education China 2019, 258 122 international students were enrolled in various degree programs in higher educational institutes all over China (Ministry of Education PRC, 2018). Through the Confucius institutes, international students are able to get scholarships to study in China, and in exchange programs with China to study Chinese language, culture, science, medicine and technology and to pursue their research in China. In addition, the Chinese government has introduced a state policy of providing direct scholarships for students who follows higher degrees in developing countries. Statistical report on international students in China for 2018 stated that more than 63 000 students received Chinese government scholarships to study in China (Ministry of Education PRC, 2018).

Moreover, the Chinese government conducts the Chinese proficiency test (HSK) to measure language skills and it helps international students to display their language level in the job market. Hanban, the headquarters of Confucius institute also conduct “Chinese bridge” competitions to college students who learn Chinese all over the world. These elements motivate many students to participate and the number of participants shows the progress of spreading the language and culture as a soft power tool.

2.4.2 Economic Diplomacy

Economic resources can also produce both soft and hard power. They can be employed to attract as well as coerce. According to Palit (2010), there are two dimensions of the use of economic

tools as foreign policy instruments. Economic sanctions that restrict trade and other economic exchanges reflect the deployment of hard power. The soft version of economic diplomacy provides development assistance through grants and loans and carries out bilateral or regional trade and cross-border economic investments. Beijing has realized that if it can portray its economic growth and create benefits for other countries, it can boost its appeal to foreign nations. Chinese officials perform this by providing trade, investment, and development assistance.

1. Trade and Investments

Beijing has realized that if it can portray its economic growth as beneficial also for other countries, it can boost its appeal in foreign nations. Consequently, China uses its soft version of economic diplomacy over many regions such as Asia, Europe and Africa and it has been dramatically increasing over the last few decades. In 2021, China-Africa trade value became USD251 billion, and South Africa, Nigeria, Angola can be seen as the main partners for China (China Africa research Initiative, 2023). China largely imports oil, minerals and metals from Africa and also imports agricultural products and manufacturing goods. Africa mainly imports electronics, Clothing and technology from China (Subban,2022).

When it comes to Europe, China was the third largest export partner for EU countries in 2021 and the largest import partner (Eurostat, 2023). As per the Eurostat data, Germany is the largest EU trading partner for China with EUR 237 billion. EU's top import goods to China are telecommunications equipment and electrical machinery and equipment. In contrast, EU's top export goods to China includes motor cars and vehicles, auto components, electronic tubes and valves (Huld, 2023).

China's bilateral trade with South Asian countries has also grown considerably during the last decade. Currently China is the largest trading partner of many South Asian countries, including India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Nepal. Bilateral trade value between China and South Asian countries has become USD 188 billion by 2021 (Zhou, 2023).

Not only trade but also Chinese FDI has increased in every region in recent years. China's FDI flows to Africa increased gradually over the last few years. It has risen from USD 75 million to USD 5 billion in 2021 (China Africa research Initiative, 2023). South Africa, Zambia, Guinea, and Kenya are the main countries China FDI flows. Moreover, China's investments in EU countries significantly increased from 2010. China largely invest in energy and technology in

EU countries such as UK, Germany, and France (Percy, 2019). Chinese outward FDI to South Asia also dramatically grown over the last decade. In 2020, USD 71 billion Chinese FDI flows into the region (UNCTAD, 2022).

2. Development Assistance and Infrastructure Development Programs

Apart from being one of the major trading partners and investors to many countries, China has also emerged as an important source of development and technical assistance in many regions including Africa, Southeast Asia, and South Asia. China has aided infrastructure development, power, telecommunication, energy exploration, and mineral extraction in many states in different regions. With the new maritime silk road initiative China assist several massive infrastructure projects in African and Asian region. Among South Asian countries, China is providing economic and technical assistance to build network of highways, railways, and pipelines accompanied by energy, industrial, and other infrastructure development projects to Pakistan. According to Pakistani government these projects are covered by low or zero- interest concessional loans that include financing from China's Export-Import Bank (Exim Bank) and the China Development Bank (Wolf, 2013). China has further provided financial assistance for the development of Gwadar port, an ultra-strategic port located 520 kilometres from the Strait of Hormuz which handles 20 percent of the global oil trade, and vowed grants and interest free loans for several projects in Gwadar, including the East Bay Expressway Project, coal power plant, and Gwadar International Airport project.

Chinese development assistance in Africa is also significant. China has assisted Africa with hydropower stations, hospitals, schools, and textile factories and health equipment (Samy, 2010).

2.4.3 Public Diplomacy

As an element of soft power, public diplomacy is an instrument that states use to mobilize certain values to attract another country's citizens via mass media, public information, cultural exchanges, and political actions (Nye, 2008). In recent years, China has developed many activities to create an effective public diplomacy policy and attract more attention from China's domestic and international public. It has become important for China's soft power to promote foreign policy objectives and expand its influence across countries.

Through mass media, China started to expand its public diplomacy and addressed the international audiences. To decrease the negative image of China, the Chinese government

encourages the media to promote China's vision of a peaceful rise among the international community. Economic development is concerned as the primary aim of China's foreign policy and for the better growth of its economy China is more considerate of its foreign image. With the help of these implements, China's bilateral and multilateral relations were rapidly increased during the past few decades.

Major goals of China's public diplomacy can be divided into three parts (d'Hooghe, 2007). First, the government aims to develop a harmonious society and narrow the gaps to make a better life for Chinese people. Secondly, China wants to be seen as an honest and stable economic partner for foreign countries and it is necessary for China as a rising economic power. China tries to appear as a peaceful nation and it shows that it is opposed to conflicts. This helps China to increase its ties with the international community. Third, China tries to maintain its image as an active member in World peace in the international political world and appear as a responsible member.

3 Methodology

To test the hypotheses and to answer the research questions in this study, the research follows a quantitative correlational approach in a non-experimental situation. The main emphasis of a correlational study is to discover or establish the existence of a relationship, association, or interdependence between two or more aspects of a situation or phenomenon. (Kumar 2014) The current study focused on the relationship between the independent factors (China's cultural diplomacy, economic diplomacy, and public diplomacy) and China's soft power in Sri Lanka.

3.1 Conceptual Framework

Based on the theoretical and empirical evidence which have been identified from previous literature, this study has created a conceptual framework. The dimensions of soft power: Cultural, economic, and public diplomacy have been taken as the independent variables and China's soft power in Sri Lanka has been identified as the dependent variable. The conceptual framework was developed to examine the correlational effect of subdimensions of soft power (cultural, economic, and public diplomacy) on China's soft power in Sri Lanka.

3.2 Constructing Hypotheses

The current study has developed three hypotheses based on the empirical evidence of China's soft power initiatives in Sri Lanka. The importance of these hypotheses lies in their ability to bring direction, specificity, and focus to the problem statement. It has helped the study to understand what specific information to collect and thereby provide greater focus. The testing of the hypothesis allows for a conclusion to be drawn about what is true or what is false in the study, thus contributing towards a theory formulation.

Because of its geographical and geostrategic location, China has taken several measures to improve its cultural, economic, and public relations in Sri Lanka. As a reliable economic partner, China tries to expand its bilateral ties with Sri Lanka. Therefore, the study has hunched that there are positive effects on the dependent variable from the independent variables in the conceptual framework.

The constructed hypotheses are as follows.

H1: Cultural diplomacy has a positive effect on China's soft power in Sri Lanka

H2: Economic diplomacy has a positive effect on China's soft power in Sri Lanka

H3: Public diplomacy has a positive effect on China's soft power in Sri Lanka

3.3 Operational Definitions to Facilitate the Research

According to Nye (2004) soft power is the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments. Cultural diplomacy, economic diplomacy and public diplomacy has been identified as the common elements of soft power used by China in international relations (Matteussi, 2005). Based on the activities in these three diplomatic fields the present study has operationalized the definition of a soft power according to the following conditions: development assistance, humanitarian aid, investments, infrastructure projects, employment opportunities, student exchange programs, food and cultural festivals, movies, language learning programs, tourism (Zheng, 2009 & Matteussi, 2005).

3.4 Operationalization and Measurements of Variables

Operationalization is the development of a specific research procedure that ensures the results of empirical observations represent the concepts and objectives in the real world (Babbie, 2005). In other words, the variables of soft power and concept of soft power used in social research have a relative meaning according to the operationalization of definitions. Hence the study has defined the measurements of each variable and concept according to the current study.

This section of the thesis clarifies the operational definitions of both independent and dependent variables and their defined scale of measurements which has been identified according to the study.

Table 3 indicates the operationalization of all the matrix variables which are related to both independent and dependent factors. The followings are the highlights of the operationalization of variables.

- i. Indicators for the independent variables were based on the degree of initiation of actions on the dimension.
- ii. The measurement of the variables has been derived from the standard measurement scale introduced by Covin & Slevin (1989).
- iii. The units of measurement of both independent and dependent variables were five-point Likert scales.

Table 3: Operationalization of Variables

Table was Constructed through theoretical studies

Variable	Indicator	Measurement	Unit of Measure
Cultural Diplomacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross-Cultural Exchange • Educational and Scholarly Programs • Cultural Heritage Preservation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation and Reach/ Collaboration and Partnerships • Student and Scholar Participation/ Academic Partnerships • International Cooperation/ Legislation and Policies 	5-point Likert scale
Economic Diplomacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trade Volume • Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) • Economic Aid and Development Assistance • Employment Opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Import and Export values/Trade Balance • FDI source from China/Inflow and outflow/employment impact • Bilateral Aid / Aid Effectiveness / Transparency and Accountability 	5-point Likert scale
Public Diplomacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural exchange • Humanitarian aid • Radio and television • Social media, Internet and Publications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of cultural exchange • Availability of digital media/ conventional media interactions 	5-point Likert scale
Soft power	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall perception of China's soft power influence in Sri Lanka 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rate of overall perception of China's soft power influence in Sri Lanka 	5-point Likert scale

3.5 Target Population of the Study

Students of the University of Colombo, Sri Lanka, and professionals at the Confucius Institute in the University of Colombo were identified as potential participants for this study, using the following criteria:

- i. The respondent should be a university student who has knowledge of international relations to understand the current International political arena.
- ii. The respondent is a public or private sector employee who has joined the Confucius Institute in Colombo.
- iii. The respondent is a student who studies Chinese Language at educational institution in Colombo.

The study mentioned the above students as the population in this study. The sample frame was created by observing the characteristics mentioned in the operational definition of soft power in this section. Currently, the University of Colombo teaches the Chinese Language through the Confucius Institute and conducts proficiency tests. Further, the university provides a bachelor's degree in the Chinese language and grants scholarships for students. As the Capital of Sri Lanka, many Chinese-funded projects are handled via Colombo City, such as the Port City and expressway projects. Therefore, graduates can obtain more job opportunities than those in other cities around Sri Lanka by using foreign languages. Moreover, the Chinese cultural centre is situated nearby, and students get more opportunities to connect with Chinese cultural activities, such as Chinese festivals, traditional tea ceremonies, and food and art fairs. Accordingly, these students have access to experience all diplomatic activities (Cultural, economic and public) between China and Sri Lanka.

3.6 Sampling Method

To achieve the objectives of the study, a quantitative research approach was used and data were collected by a sample survey. Hence, the **non-random sampling** procedure was selected for the sample of the study since there was a target group being determined according to the operational criteria. The selected non-random sampling technique is **purposive sampling**, also known as judgment sampling. This method helped the study to select a sample that is most useful for the study.

3.7 Design of the Questionnaire

Since the aim of this study is to focus on the effects of China's soft power in Sri Lanka, the study has adopted a quantitative correlational research design to meet its objectives. Hence a structured questionnaire has been used to collect data from the respondents. The standard questionnaire format has been used as the base for the questions related to the dimensions of

soft power (cultural, economic, and public diplomacy). The questionnaire used categorical data to collect Sri Lankan students' attitudes toward China's soft power elements. By allowing them to provide their honest opinions, responses provide a valuable vision of how much people in Sri Lanka like China's political system, culture, and economic assistance.

The followings are the main areas of the questionnaire:

Part 1-Demographic factors of the respondent

Part 2- Scale questions related to independent and dependent variables

4 Analysis

The present study aimed to examine China's Soft Power and its cultural implication for Sri Lanka. A primary objective and two secondary objectives have been defined as per the literature review to achieve the target of the study. Three hypotheses were defined as per the empirical studies to identify the effect of each independent variable on the dependent variable. This chapter presents the analysis of the data to test the hypotheses.

4.1 Introduction

The quantitative data have been gathered by using a structured questionnaire survey with an online form. The data has been imported to a comma delimited version (CSV) and then imported to IBM SPSS file format to complete the analysis.

This chapter presents and interprets the data analysis results of the present study. The reliability and factor analysis have been performed to check the reliability and sample adequacy of the observed variables. The demographic data have been analyzed by using descriptive statistics frequencies and the nature of each independent and dependent factor has been tested by using central tendency and dispersion measures. The association among the variables has been tested by using linear regression analysis.

The testing of hypotheses has been performed by using the individual coefficient values of beta under the linear regression results.

4.2 Demographic Data Identification

There were three factors that the study checked under the demographic data of the 51 respondents: gender, education, and occupation backgrounds. The following graphical data visualization reveals the analysis of demographic data.

4.2.1 Gender

The gender distribution among the respondents was well-balanced. There were 26 female respondents and 25 male respondents among the total of 51 sample sizes. Figure 4.1 indicates the gender distribution visualization.

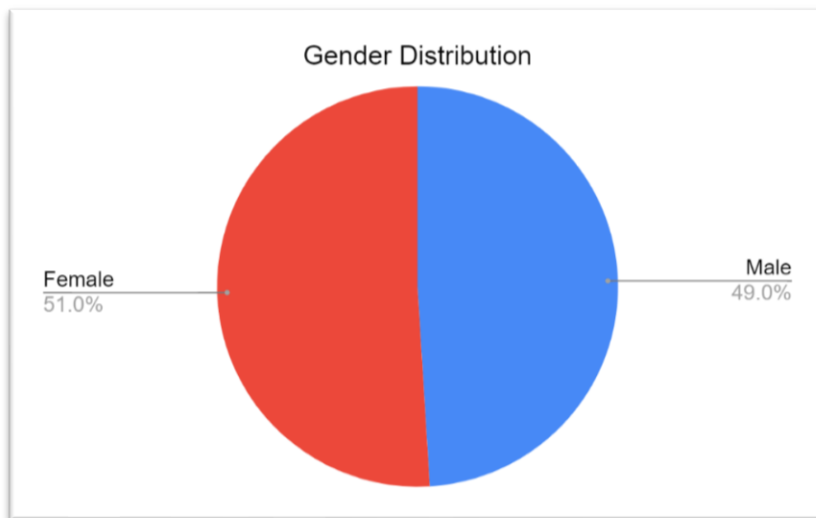


Figure 3: Gender distribution of participants
Data constructed through SPSS

4.2.2 Educational qualifications

The study has categorized the level of education of the respondents into three main areas. That is Diploma level, Bachelor's, and Master's and above. Figure 4.2 visualize the level of education of the respondents. 27 respondents have been educated up to the level of a Bachelor's. There were 10 who have done their master's degree and 14 have completed diploma levels.

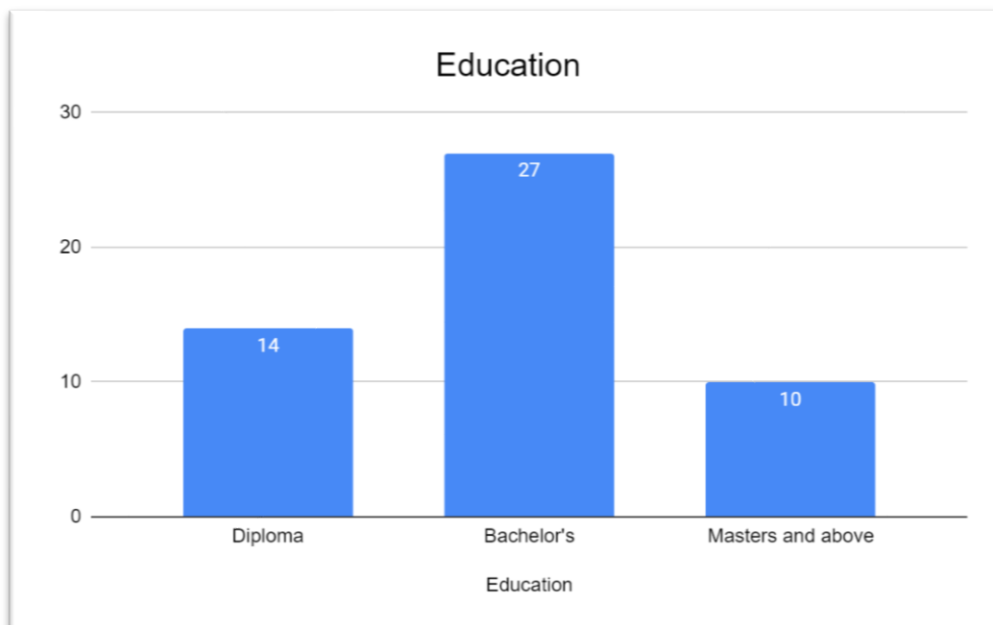


Figure 4: Educational qualifications of participants

4.2.3 Occupation

Empirical research and standard questionnaires of the present study have followed the occupation of the respondents since that have been useful for the recommendations of the study when analysing certain aspects such as one-Way ANOVA. The results of the occupation of the respondents have been visualized in Figure 4.3. There were 25 university students, 12 public servants, 8 private sector employees, and 8 professionals on the list of respondents. There was one unemployed person.

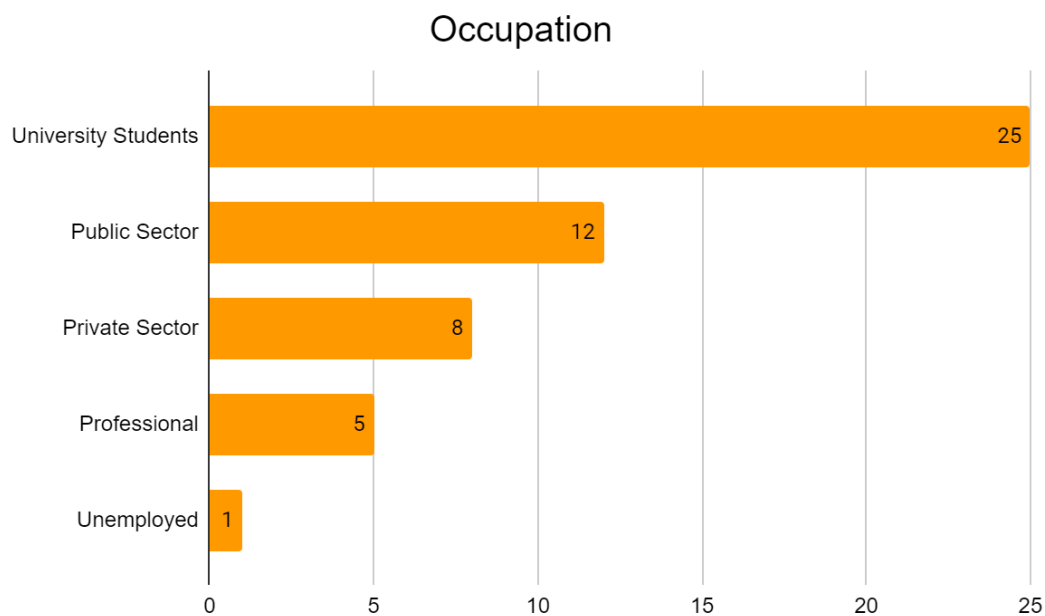


Figure 5: Occupations of participants

4.3 Reliability Analysis

Reliability analysis assists the researchers to check the internal consistency of the observed variables. The higher internal consistency would allow the study to go forward and create latent variables. Then a study would use both descriptive and inferential statistics to meet the research objectives and hypotheses. As a rule of thumb, the reliability analysis coefficient (Cronbach's alpha) value should be greater than or equal to 0.7. A lesser Cronbach alpha value indicates a lower internal consistency among the questions asked in the questionnaire survey.

The following table 4 shows the Cronbach's statistics of this research. According to the values indicated, test is at an acceptable level since all the values are greater than 0.7. The scale for cultural diplomacy in the test is 0.783, this is greater than 0.7, hence it is in an acceptable level.

The scale for economic diplomacy is between 0.8 and 0.9 as the value equals 0.817, Therefore this is in a good state according to the rule of thumb. The Cronbach's statistics of public diplomacy is 0.845, therefore, this is also in acceptable status. The dependent variable carries the highest value of Cronbach's alpha, which is 0.859, hence this is in an excellent position.

Table 4: Cronbach's alpha values of variables

Variable	Elements	Cronbach's alpha value	Remarks
Cultural diplomacy	5	0.783	>0.7: Higher internal consistency
Economic diplomacy	5	0.817	>0.7: Higher internal consistency
Public diplomacy	4	0.845	>0.7: Higher internal consistency
Soft Power	6	0.859	>0.7: Higher internal consistency

4.4 Factor Analysis

Factor analysis helps the study to reduce the number of variables to one given factor. In assist to indicate that several observed variables or questions are measuring one particular factor. The factor analysis results are of two ways:

- i. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value and Bartlett's test to check the sample adequacy.
- ii. Test of factor loading to show the variance explained by the variable on the particular factor.

4.4.1 Kaiser- Meyer-Olkin test and Bartlett's test:

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Test is essential to check the sample adequacy among the observed variables or the questions asked per each variable in the questionnaire survey. Higher sample adequacy is healthier for the survey and as a rule of thumb, the coefficient of the KMO value is 0.7. Bartlett's test should be highly significant simultaneously as the p-value should be less than 0.05. Table 4.2 Indicates the KMO values and Bartlett's test significance of both independent and dependent variables.

As per table 5, the KMO values of all the variables are higher than 0.69, hence the values are acceptable. The value for cultural diplomacy is at a meritorious level since the value is 0.802. The dependent variable (soft power) has the highest value of KMO. It stands at an excellent

level on the scale. All Bartlett's test p values are less than 0.05. Therefore, the sample adequacy is at an acceptable level in this study.

Table 5: KMO values and Bartlett's test of significance of variables

Variable	Observations	KMO value	Bartlett's test Significance
Cultural diplomacy	5	0.802	0.00
Economic diplomacy	5	0.779	0.00
Public diplomacy	4	0.803	0.00
Soft Power	6	0.853	0.00

4.4.2 Factor Loading

Factor loading explains the variance explained by the variable of a particular factor. This means it will show whether a particular set of observations can be represented by one particular factor. As an example, the 5 observations of soft power should load to one variable, since it's supposed to measure soft power.

Table 6 to 9 indicates the factor loading results of each variable. As per the analysis, all the factors were loaded to one particular factor in each case. Hence the factor loading of the present study is successful.

Table 6: Factor loading of Cultural Diplomacy

Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	2.734	54.681	54.681	2.734	54.681	54.681
2	.742	14.847	69.528			
3	.622	12.438	81.965			
4	.492	9.834	91.800			
5	.410	8.200	100.000			

Table 7: Factor Loading of Economic Diplomacy

Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	3.072	61.431	61.431	3.072	61.431	61.431
2	.943	18.855	80.286			
3	.668	13.355	93.641			
4	.222	4.448	98.089			
5	.096	1.911	100.000			

Table 8: Factor Loading of Public Diplomacy

Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	2.758	68.958	68.958	2.758	68.958	68.958
2	.551	13.782	82.740			
3	.365	9.125	91.865			
4	.325	8.135	100.000			

Table 9: Factor Loading of Soft Power

Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	3.552	59.192	59.192	3.552	59.192	59.192
2	.733	12.221	71.413			
3	.575	9.577	80.990			
4	.420	6.998	87.988			
5	.401	6.682	94.670			
6	.320	5.330	100.000			

According to the extraction sum of squared loadings, there is only one row representing all five components in the cultural and economic diplomacy, and 4 components in public diplomacy factor loadings. And the factor loading of the dependent variable (soft power) also carries only one sum of squared loading as per the table. Hence, it was clear that the variance explained by each variable represents only one factor. Therefore, the factor loading is successful in this study.

4.5 Examine the Current Level of Soft Power

The study has identified three factors that would affect China's Soft Power. Descriptive statistics measures have been used to examine the current level of independent and dependent factors. The mean, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis have been checked to understand the nature of each variable. Table 10 indicates the descriptive statistics measures.

Table 10: Descriptive statistics

		cultural_ diplomacy	economic_ diplomacy	public_ diplomacy	Soft power
N	Valid	51	51	51	51
	Missing	0	0	0	0
Mean		3.161	3.294	3.2206	3.274
Std. Deviation		.5382	.7193	.76428	.626
Skewness		.813	.429	.737	.593
Std. Error of Skewness		.333	.333	.333	.333
Kurtosis		-.287	-1.022	-.297	-.954
Std. Error of Kurtosis		.656	.656	.656	.656

As per the descriptive statistics results, it is clear that all the variables are between the Likert scale 3 and 4 closer to 3 (Average level). Hence the independent factors and China's soft power is at an average level as per the perception of the students. The highest standard deviation is belonging to public diplomacy and the lowest standard deviation belongs to cultural diplomacy.

All the skewness values are between -1 and +1 (between 0 to +1 in this case). Hence the data are approximately normally distributed. Since the data are normally distributed the study has applied parametric techniques to go through the inferential statistics

4.6 Bivariate Analysis

In this section, the study presents the bivariate analysis of the relationship between independent variables and the dependent variable by using correlation analysis. Table 11 shows the bivariate analysis results of the study. It shows that all independent variables are having an average positive significant relationship with China's soft power. The positive relationship indicates that both independent variables and soft power are moving towards the same direction.

Cultural Diplomacy is having an almost strong positive relationship as the coefficient of correlation is almost 0.7.

Table 11: Bi-variate analysis

		soft power
cultural_diplomacy	Pearson Correlation	.699**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	51
economic_diplomacy	Pearson Correlation	.659**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	51
public_diplomacy	Pearson Correlation	.621**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	51
Soft power	Pearson Correlation	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	
	N	51

4.7 Multivariate Analysis

The multivariate analysis would indicate the validity of the linear regression model. Table 12 indicates the regression ANOVA table of the current study.

Table 12: Regression Anova Model

ANOVA ^a

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	12.636	3	4.212	28.424	.000 ^b
	Residual	6.965	47	.148		
	Total	19.601	50			

a. Dependent Variable: soft power

b. Predictors:(Constant), public_diplomacy, economic_diplomacy, cultural_diplomacy

The P value of F test statistics of the regression ANOVA table is 0.00, this is less than 0.05, therefore the regression result is highly significant. Hence the model is valid.

As per the model summary (Table 13), the coefficient of multiple correlations is 0.803, Since this value is greater than 0.7, there is a strong positive relationship between the independent factors and the soft power. The coefficient of determination (R square) is 0.645, this means 64.5% of China's soft power has been explained by the model. Hence the model is nicely fitted. The Durbin-Watson Test Statistics is 1.7, this is between 1.5 to 2.5. Therefore, the residuals are independent.

Table 13: Model summary

Model Summary^b					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.803 ^a	.645	.622	.3849537076 19852	1.700

a. Predictors: (Constant), public_ diplomacy, economic_ diplomacy, cultural_ diplomacy
b. Dependent Variable: soft power

4.8 Analysing the significant factors influencing China's Soft Power

Table 14: Individual coefficients of beta

Coefficients^a								
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardize	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	.249	.339		.734	.466		
	cultural diplomacy	.438	.131	.376	3.350	.002	.599	1.670
	economic diplomacy	.279	.094	.320	2.959	.005	.645	1.552
	public diplomacy	.224	.086	.274	2.595	.013	.680	1.471

a. Dependent Variable: soft power

As per Table 14, all three factors, cultural diplomacy, economic diplomacy, and public diplomacy have positive effects on China's soft power. All the factors are highly significant as all the p values are less than 0.05.

Cultural diplomacy has become the highest influencing factor with a positive beta value of 0.376. Economic diplomacy is the second influencing factor with a positive beta value of 0.32. The third influencing factor is public diplomacy with a positive beta value of 0.274.

4.9 Summary of Analysing

This chapter has clearly explained the statistical findings and data analysis of the present study. Graphs have represented the demographical data as a data visualization tool. The reliability analysis has been performed to understand the internal consistency of the observed variables (questions asked in the survey). All Cronbach's alpha values were accepted since the values were greater than 0.7.

Factor analysis was performed to examine the sample adequacy. The dimension reduction method has been followed to identify any deviating factors. No factor was eradicated since the factor analysis results were successful. Descriptive statistics of each latent variable (computed using SPSS) have been measured to identify the current position of each independent factor and China's soft power (dependent variable). The current position of cultural diplomacy, economic diplomacy, public diplomacy, and China's soft power was in an average level as per the perception of students.

The regression analysis for the model was highly significant and the coefficient of multiple correlation indicated that there is a strong positive relationship between independent variables and the dependent variable. Hence the model was highly valid. The coefficient of determination was more than 60%, hence the model is nicely fitted, and the model has explained more than 64% of China's soft power. Cultural diplomacy was the most influencing factor for China's soft power and economic diplomacy and public diplomacy became second and third influencing factors respectively.

Chapter Five will discuss the findings of the study with suitable recommendations.

5 Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper attempted to answer the listed objectives and derived hypotheses which have been declared in chapter one and chapter three respectively. The study has successfully achieved all the stated objectives of the study. Related to the analysis of data and results interpretation, the study has explained and discussed the true meaning of the data analysis by proving the research objectives. This chapter discusses the major findings of the study related to the research objectives. Finally, the chapter discusses the suggestions for future researches in the field of China's soft power in Sri Lanka, taking the current study as a base.

5.1 The current level of China's soft power tools (Cultural, Economic and Public Diplomacy) in Sri Lanka

The findings of this research identify that China's soft power in Sri Lanka has steadily increased over the past decade. Soft power refers to the ability of a country to influence others through non-coercive means that is cultural diplomacy, economic diplomacy and economic diplomacy (Nye, 2004 & Matteussi, 2005). The results of this study also indicate that the dimensions of soft power; cultural diplomacy, public diplomacy and economic diplomacy are the true factors that influence the soft power.

As per the major findings of the present study, it has revealed that the China's soft power and its dimensions were in an average level in Sri Lanka. Which is a good indication that there is a potential that the soft power can be increased or decrease depending on the magnitude of the influencing factors. The influencing factors (Cultural Diplomacy/Public diplomacy and economic diplomacy) were also at an average rate as per the research findings.

The study shows a strong positive relationship between the influencing factors and the China's soft power. More than 60% of the soft power has been explained by its dimensions. Overall, China's soft power in Sri Lanka has been on the rise in recent years. While there are concerns about the implications of China's growing influence, there is no denying that China has been successful in promoting its interests in Sri Lanka through non-coercive means.

5.2 The effect of Cultural, Economic and Public Diplomacy on China's soft power.

As per the findings of this research, the most influencing factor for the China's soft power is Cultural diplomacy. This means if the cultural diplomacy is higher, it can more influence on

the soft power. It is quite clear that cultural influences are the easiest ways to establish a soft power in Sri Lankan context.

The second influencing factor was economic factors. As a third world nation Sri Lanka has to depend on a lot of foreign loans, imports and assistance. The trade treaties that Sri Lanka has with China has been a very strong influencing factor the establishment of Soft Power.

Public diplomacy was the third influencing factor. The effect of public diplomacy was in a lower level when compared it with the other two factors. Still, the Sri Lankan case shows that it can influence soft power in a significant manner.

5.2.1 China's Cultural diplomacy in Sri Lanka

China's cultural diplomacy in Sri Lanka is the most influencing factor of China's soft power in the country. This has been an important tool in strengthening the relationship between the two countries. Cultural diplomacy refers to the exchange of language, ideas, art, and traditions between countries to promote mutual understanding and cooperation. Moreover, movies, sports and tourism also count under the cultural diplomacy.

The participants revealed that there is a considerable effect in cultural diplomacy to Sri Lanka. Many of them aware that Chinese language can be learn via the Confucius institute and it will give them opportunities to obtain scholarships for their higher studies in China in various fields. Currently, there are two Confucius Institutes in University of Kelaniya and University of Colombo and also there is a China Radio International Confucius classroom in Colombo. It gives opportunities to Students to learn the Chinese language and culture. Moreover, it facilitates students to take Chinese proficiency test (HSK). As per the Confucius Institute in the University of Colombo, in 2022, China granted 36 fully funded scholarships for Sri Lankan students to follow master's degrees and PHDs in Chinese Universities. In 2014, as an aid project, the Chinese Cultural Centre was established in Colombo and it hosts cultural events, art exhibitions, and language classes, providing Sri Lankans with the opportunity to learn about Chinese culture and language. This has helped to create a better understanding between the two countries, and has helped to promote friendship and cooperation.

However, there have also been criticisms of China's cultural diplomacy in Sri Lanka. Some have accused China of using cultural exchange as a tool to advance its political and economic interests. Additionally, there have been concerns about the impact of China's cultural influence on Sri Lankan traditions and customs.

Overall, China's cultural diplomacy in Sri Lanka has been an important tool in strengthening the relationship between the two countries. While there are concerns about the implications of China's growing cultural influence, cultural exchange can play a crucial role in promoting understanding and cooperation between nations.

5.2.2 China's Economic diplomacy In Sri Lanka

China's economic diplomacy in Sri Lanka has been a key driver of the relationship between the two countries in recent years. Economic diplomacy refers to the use of economic resources and policies to promote a country's political and strategic objectives.

One of the main ways China has been practicing economic diplomacy in Sri Lanka is through infrastructure investment. China has provided funding for a number of major projects in Sri Lanka, including the Hambantota port and the Colombo Port City development. These projects have helped to boost Sri Lanka's economy and create jobs, while also strengthening China's strategic interests in the region. China has also been providing economic aid to Sri Lanka in the form of loans and grants. This aid has been used to support a range of initiatives, including disaster relief efforts and the development of the Colombo-Kandy Expressway.

According to the participants, many of them agreed that those infrastructure development projects help to improve Sri Lankan economy. Further, this study identified that people gain more job opportunities from Chinese firms which are operating in Colombo, and in other cities around the country. Moreover, it is admitted by many participants that the role of China's loans and investments are a major part in Sri Lanka's economy developments.

However, China's economic diplomacy in Sri Lanka has not been without controversy. There have been concerns about the impact of China's investments on Sri Lanka's debt levels, with some accusing China of engaging in "debt trap diplomacy". There have also been concerns about the impact of Chinese investment on Sri Lanka's sovereignty, with some accusing China of seeking to expand its political influence in the region.

Despite these controversies, China's economic diplomacy in Sri Lanka has been successful in promoting its strategic interests in the region. The close economic relationship between the two countries has helped to strengthen their political ties, and has provided China with a foothold in the Indian Ocean region.

5.2.3 China's Public Diplomacy in Sri Lanka

China's public diplomacy in Sri Lanka has been an important tool for promoting its image and interest in the country. Public diplomacy refers to the use of communication and outreach strategies to promote a country's policies, values, and culture to foreign audiences (d'Hooghe 2007). Sri Lankan students' opinions of China's presence in the country are average, and it seems that China is more concerned about creating a positive image of its influence on the country.

One of the main ways in which China has been practicing public diplomacy in Sri Lanka is through the use of media outreach. China has been promoting its image and interests through media outlets such as the China Global Television Network (CGTN) and China Radio International (CRI). These outlets provided a platform for China to communicate its policies and values to Sri Lankan audiences.

China has also promoted its public image in Sri Lanka through the provision of humanitarian aid. For example, China aided Sri Lanka following the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, which helped to build goodwill between the two countries. Furthermore, during the COVID-19 pandemic, China donated vaccines to the country (Huaxia 2021). During Sri Lanka's economic crisis in 2022, China granted emergency humanitarian aid including rice, pharmaceuticals, and other essentials (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2022).

However, China's public diplomacy in Sri Lanka also faced criticism. There have been concerns about the impact of China's media outreach on Sri Lanka's media landscape, with some accusing China of attempting to influence Sri Lankan public opinion. Additionally, there have been concerns about the transparency of China's aid programs in Sri Lanka (Mushtaq 2022).

Overall, China's public diplomacy in Sri Lanka has been an essential tool for promoting its image and interest in the country. While there are concerns about the implications of China's growing influence, public diplomacy can play a crucial role in promoting understanding and cooperation between nations.

China's soft power in Sri Lanka has not been without controversy, however, the Hambantota port project has been criticized for being a debt trap, with Sri Lanka struggling to repay the loans it received from China to fund the project. Based on the research, Sri Lankan opinion is China must give a period to repay loans and allege the regulations. There have also been

concerns about China's influence on Sri Lanka's politics, with some accusing China of interfering in Sri Lanka's internal affairs (McDonald and Mallawarachi, 2023).

5.3 Recommendations of the Study

Cultural diplomacy, economic diplomacy and public diplomacy are the three main factors of China's soft power in Sri Lanka. Out of these factors, the most influencing factor is the Cultural diplomacy. Hence the present study has highly focused on the cultural diplomacy between two countries.

5.3.1 To Increase the Cultural Diplomacy

Cultural diplomacy is an important tool for enhancing mutual understanding and fostering strong relationships between nations. China and Sri Lanka have a rich history of cultural exchange, providing ample opportunity to further strengthen their cultural ties. By intensifying cultural diplomacy between the two nations, they can facilitate a deeper appreciation and comprehension of each other's history and culture, creating a more robust basis for their bilateral relations.

To increase cultural diplomacy between China and Sri Lanka, there are several steps that can be taken:

- i. **Cultural Exchange Programs:** One of the best methods for promoting cultural diplomacy is cultural exchange initiatives. The Chinese and Sri Lankan governments can create such programs to encourage the sharing of artists, musicians, and cultural experts. These programs can involve cultural tours, exhibitions, and performances, provide a platform to showcase the cultural richness of both countries and foster mutual understanding.
- ii. **Language Programs:** Language is an integral component of culture, and acquiring proficiency in each other's language can be instrumental in cultivating cultural bonds. Implementing language programs in both nations would facilitate the strengthening of cultural ties. These programs can be delivered to students through educational institutions, language courses, and exchange programs.
- iii. **Joint Cultural Events:** China and Sri Lanka can collaborate to host joint cultural events, such as cultural festivals, exhibitions, and performances. These events would

enable individuals from both countries to directly engage with each other's culture, highlighting the rich cultural diversity of both nations. Such events can be held in both countries and encompass cultural presentations, culinary festivals, and cultural exhibits.

- iv. **Cultural Education:** The inclusion of cultural education in the academic curriculum of schools and universities in China and Sri Lanka can significantly enhance cultural exchange and understanding among the youth. Cultural education can cover a range of subjects, such as history, language, and arts of both countries, and may be facilitated through exchange programs.
- v. **Tourism:** Promoting cultural tourism can enable individuals to immerse themselves in each other's cultures, facilitating a more profound understanding of their respective traditions. Encouraging cultural tourism between China and Sri Lanka can effectively break down cultural barriers, fostering mutual understanding. Cultural tourism activities can involve visits to historical sites, cultural performances, and festivals.

In summary, elevating cultural diplomacy between China and Sri Lanka demands sustained efforts from both nations. By fostering cultural exchange and comprehension, the two countries can cultivate stronger bonds and enhance their relationship. Cultural diplomacy can serve as a vital tool in facilitating mutual understanding, forging a robust basis for bilateral relations between China and Sri Lanka.

5.3.2 To Mitigate the Negative Impact of Cultural Diplomacy between China and Sri Lanka

Cultural diplomacy can have diverse consequences on countries, encompassing positive outcomes such as promoting mutual understanding and strengthening relationships, as well as negative ones such as misunderstandings and conflicts. To mitigate the adverse effects of cultural diplomacy between China and Sri Lanka, several measures can be adopted:

- i. **Respect for Cultural Differences:** Cultural diplomacy must acknowledge and appreciate the cultural disparities between China and Sri Lanka, recognizing their distinct cultural values, customs, and traditions. It is crucial to respect these differences and abstain from imposing one culture over the other.

- ii. **Avoiding Cultural Stereotypes:** Cultural diplomacy should abstain from generating stereotypes about each other's cultures as it can lead to misunderstandings and conflicts between the two nations. Rather, cultural diplomacy should concentrate on fostering a more profound comprehension of each other's culture.
- iii. **Sensitivity to Local Issues:** Cultural diplomacy should exhibit sensitivity towards local issues and concerns. Cultural events and programs should consider local sensitivities and refrain from causing offense to local communities.
- iv. **Promotion of Mutual Benefits:** Cultural diplomacy ought to prioritize promoting mutual benefits for both nations, avoiding one-sided outcomes where one country gains at the other's expense. China and Sri Lanka should collaborate to enhance cultural exchange and comprehension, which would benefit both countries.
- v. **Engaging Civil Society:** Cultural diplomacy should involve civil society organizations from both countries. These organizations can significantly contribute to promoting cultural exchange and understanding between China and Sri Lanka by arranging cultural events, language programs, and exchange programs. Such initiatives can establish connections between the two cultures.

To minimize the adverse effects of cultural diplomacy between China and Sri Lanka, a sensitive and respectful approach is necessary. Cultural diplomacy can create a positive impact on the relationship between the two countries by promoting mutual understanding, respecting cultural differences, and avoiding stereotypes. Engaging civil society and promoting mutual benefits can aid in developing cultural ties and building stronger relationships. Overall, it requires a collaborative effort from both countries to create an atmosphere of mutual respect and appreciation for each other's culture.

5.3.3 To Increase the Economic Diplomacy between China and Sri Lanka

To increase economic diplomacy between China and Sri Lanka, here are some steps that can be taken:

- i. **Enhance trade relations:** Both China and Sri Lanka should prioritize the expansion of their bilateral trade by lowering trade obstacles and simplifying customs processes. It is crucial to identify promising areas of collaboration and encourage trade in sectors such as agriculture, textiles, technology, and tourism.

- ii. Strengthen investment ties: Promote Sri Lanka as an appealing foreign direct investment (FDI) destination to encourage Chinese companies to invest. Sri Lanka can entice Chinese investors by providing incentives like tax incentives, investment security, and streamlined administrative procedures.
- iii. Foster infrastructure development: China has actively participated in numerous infrastructure ventures in Sri Lanka, including the construction of ports, roads, and power plants. It is crucial for both nations to sustain their collaboration in infrastructure development, with a focus on ensuring that projects are economically feasible, environmentally sustainable, and mutually advantageous.
- iv. Strengthen financial cooperation: Strengthen collaboration between the financial institutions of China and Sri Lanka, emphasizing the utilization of domestic currencies in bilateral trade and the expansion of financial services. Encourage Chinese banks to establish branches in Sri Lanka, thereby facilitating financial transactions and enhancing economic ties between the two countries.
- v. Support sustainable development: Give priority to sustainable economic progress, which encompasses renewable energy, environmental preservation, and green initiatives. Sri Lanka can leverage China's proficiency in renewable energy technologies to assist its endeavours in this field.
- vi. Deepen diplomatic engagements: Regular exchanges of visits and dialogues between top-level officials from China and Sri Lanka can contribute to the enhancement of economic relations. The establishment of joint economic committees and working groups is crucial to address issues, resolve disputes, and explore new prospects for collaboration.
- vii. Facilitate business matchmaking: Arrange trade exhibitions, business forums, and investment summits to facilitate the convergence of Chinese and Sri Lankan enterprises. These events should serve as platforms for networking, collaboration, and forging partnerships between businesses from both countries.
- viii. Ensure transparency and accountability: Both China and Sri Lanka should give paramount importance to transparency and accountability in their economic cooperation. Emphasizing transparent procurement procedures, well-defined

regulations, and robust governance mechanisms can foster trust and confidence between the two nations.

- ix. **Develop regional economic integration:** Seek possibilities for trilateral or multilateral economic collaboration that involves China, Sri Lanka, and other regional counterparts. Actively participate in regional platforms like the Belt and Road Initiative to foster connectivity, advance infrastructure development, and promote economic integration.

It is crucial to acknowledge that economic diplomacy demands ongoing dedication, consistent communication, and a readiness to tackle potential concerns and obstacles. By implementing these measures, China and Sri Lanka can strive to fortify their economic relations and promote shared prosperity.

5.3.4 To Strengthen the Public Diplomacy between China and Sri Lanka

To strengthen public diplomacy between China and Sri Lanka, the following steps can be taken:

- i. **Cultural exchanges:** Encourage the organization of cultural exchanges, art exhibitions, music festivals, and film screenings that highlight the diverse cultural legacies of China and Sri Lanka. Foster collaborations among artists, musicians, and performers from both countries, providing them with opportunities to showcase their talents and share their artistic expressions in each other's nations.
- ii. **Educational partnerships:** Promote academic partnerships and facilitate student exchanges between universities in China and Sri Lanka. Establish scholarship initiatives that provide support to students from both countries, enabling them to pursue educational opportunities abroad and gain insights into each other's cultures and languages.
- iii. **Language training:** Encourage language training initiatives aimed at facilitating effective communication and fostering mutual understanding between the citizens of China and Sri Lanka. Promote the acquisition of Mandarin and Sinhala languages through language centres, courses, and cultural institutes.
- iv. **Tourism promotion:** Engage in joint tourism initiatives to entice Chinese tourists to visit Sri Lanka and encourage Sri Lankan tourists to explore China. Emphasize the cultural, historical, and natural wonders of both nations through travel expos, advertising campaigns, and online platforms.

- v. Public diplomacy events: Participate in collaborative tourism endeavours to attract Chinese visitors to Sri Lanka and promote Sri Lankan travellers to explore China. Highlight the cultural, historical, and natural marvels of both countries through travel exhibitions, advertising campaigns, and online platforms.
- vi. Social media and digital platforms: Harness social media platforms and digital channels to advance cultural comprehension and engage with the general public. Disseminate narratives, videos, and interactive content that showcase the shared values, traditions, and accomplishments of both countries.
- vii. Diplomatic visits and exchanges: Enable frequent visits and exchanges at the high-level between leaders, diplomats, and officials from both countries. These visits create valuable opportunities for dialogue, negotiation, and the enhancement of bilateral relations.
- viii. diplomacy campaigns: Initiate collaborative public diplomacy campaigns that centre on the common interests and cooperation between China and Sri Lanka. Emphasize the advantages of bilateral collaboration in fields such as trade, investment, tourism, and cultural exchange.

Through the implementation of these actions, China and Sri Lanka can elevate their public diplomacy endeavours, foster reciprocal comprehension, and fortify the connections between their respective people.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Survey Questionnaire

China's Soft Power initiative in Sri Lanka

The following questionnaire is a part of my research project and it is designed to understand the public perception of the relationship between China and Sri Lanka. The findings of this survey would provide insights into the effectiveness of Chinese soft power initiatives in Sri Lanka.

Your responses will remain completely anonymous and this survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. All of your responses will be kept strictly confidential and will be used only for the purposes of my research. I greatly appreciate your willingness to answer in this questionnaire. Your input is essential to the success of this research, and I would be extremely grateful for your contribution.

Sincerely,

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Demographic Information:

1. Gender:

Male

Female

2. Education Level:

Diploma

Bachelor's

Master's or above

3. Occupation:

- University Student
- Private sector employee
- Public sector
- Professional
- Unemployed

China's Soft power diplomacy in Sri Lanka:

1. Are you aware of Confucius institute language learning and scholarship programs for Sri Lankan students?

- To a great extent
- To a large extent
- Somewhat
- Little
- Not at all

2. How do you think about promoting Chinese language and culture through Confucius Institutes, secondary (Ordinary Level & Advanced Level) and higher education in Sri Lanka?

- Very important
- Important
- Fairly important
- Slightly important
- Not important

3. Do you think learning Chinese language can help Sri Lankan students to get more job opportunities?

- Definitely
- Very Probably
- Possibly
- Probably Not
- Definitely Not

4. Do you visit the Chinese festivals, food and cultural fairs held in Colombo or other areas?

- Always
- Very Often
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

5. How do you see China's contribution to Sri Lanka's economic development?

- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neutral
- Dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied

6. Is there any potential risk associated with the Chinese loans to Sri Lanka?

- Definitely
- Very Probably
- Possibly
- Probably Not
- Definitely Not

7. How do you think the people of Sri Lanka feel about China's presence in their country?

Very Helpful

Helpful

Neutral

Not Helpful

Not at all Helpful

8. In which areas do you think China has contributed to strengthening the bilateral ties between China and Sri Lanka? You can choose as many alternatives as you see appropriate.

Economic relations

Science and technology

Development assistance

humanitarian aid

Exchange programs

Defense/security

Language Learning

Other, Specify:

9. How do you see China's overall influence in Sri Lanka?

Very Good

Good

Acceptable

Poor

Very Poor

10. Do you think that China's influence in Sri Lanka is widely visible and noticeable in various aspects of society, such as education, media, cultural exchanges, development assistance?

To a great extent

To a large extent

- Somewhat
- Little
- Not at all

11. Do you agree on following statements?

- i. Sri Lanka designated as a popular tourism destination for Chinese travellers.
- Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree
- ii. Chinese investments have been successful in building closer economic and diplomatic ties between the two countries
- Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree
- iii. Chinese-led infrastructure projects have improved Sri Lanka's economy
- Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree
- iv. During the current economic crisis, China should provide an extension for the loan repayment period
- Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree
- v. China's humanitarian aid to Sri Lanka has been effective and has yielded positive results.
- Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree
- vi. China and Sri Lanka have a potential to develop a strong bilateral relationship in the future.
- Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree
- vii. China's soft power initiatives in Sri Lanka have a significant positive impact on shaping public opinion and attitudes towards China.
- Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree
- viii. China's soft power influence in Sri Lanka is significant and positively contributes to various aspects of society.

Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

ix. China's actions over the previous decade trapped Sri Lanka into a dept trap.

Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

x. China's influence in Sri Lanka is comparable to or greater than that of the other influential countries in the world such as USA, Japan and India.

Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree