

## Indo-Sri Lanka Relations with Special Reference to China's Cultural Diplomacy in Sri Lanka

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### Abstract

Cultural diplomacy serves as a form of soft power, fostering understanding and collaboration between nations and civilizations through cultural exchange, creative expression, and other modes of cultural communication. Recently, the Chinese government integrated culture as its third soft power pillar within the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), aiming to enhance its global reputation and reinforce its position in the power struggle with India. Sri Lanka, with its rich cultural heritage, has become a primary focus of Chinese cultural diplomacy. This research aims to investigate the impact of Chinese Cultural Diplomacy on Indo-Sri Lanka relations. To achieve this, a deductive approach utilizing qualitative methodology was employed. The study relied on secondary qualitative data from journal articles, newspapers, and Indian news outlets such as Gravitas and NDTV. Through thematic analysis, it was found that China primarily employs two methods-Confucius Centers and Buddha Diplomacy-to disseminate its culture in Sri Lanka. However, due to the longstanding cultural ties between India and Sri Lanka, India has effectively countered China's influence. Further, China's attempts to exert control over Sri Lankan society and improve its tarnished image resulting from the BRI and the ongoing economic crisis have been met with resistance. The study offers recommendations emphasizing the importance of Sri Lanka adopting a balanced foreign policy, particularly regarding cultural matters that carry significant emotional weight and consequences. Sri Lanka should exercise caution when welcoming Chinese infrastructure projects as part of Buddha Diplomacy. Additionally, it is crucial for Sri Lankan monks to avoid politicizing China's Buddha diplomacy.

**Keywords:** *Sri Lanka Relations, Chinese Cultural Diplomacy, Belt and Road Initiative, Soft Power, Confucius Centers, Buddha Diplomacy*