

04

China's Buddhist Influence in Sri Lanka

CHULANEE ATTANAYAKE, *Research Fellow, Institute of South Asian Studies (ISAS), National University of Singapore (NUS), Singapore.*

Abstract

Religion has emerged as one of the critical soft power tools for many countries worldwide, including China. China has a long history of integrating religion and religious outreach in its foreign policy and diplomacy. This chapter explores China's use of Buddhism as a soft power tool in Sri Lanka enabling closer ties. It looks at China's activities in the island state and identifies how Buddhism is used as a foreign policy and diplomatic tool. While China's use of Buddhism as a soft power tool is a choice and a necessity for the Communist Party of China's foreign policy objectives, given the nature of China's economic statecraft, its Buddhist activities are viewed with some reservations.

Recommended citation:

Attanayake. C. (2023). China's Buddhist Influence in South Asia. In Xavier, C. & Jacob, J. T. (Eds). *How China Engages South Asia: Themes, Partners and Tools* (pp. 47-55). Centre for Social and Economic Progress. Retrieved from <https://csep.org/aLjLQPH>

Introduction

Religion has emerged as a critical soft power tool for many countries. Today, religion and religious outreach activities are integrated into the state's foreign policy and diplomatic strategy. The manifestations of this soft power tool vary. While some make informal efforts to cultivate religious solidarity and a shared identity through historical and cultural similarities, others use more direct forms such as deploying religious institutions and actors to realise specific foreign policy goals. Countries in the Middle East use Islam to pursue foreign policy objectives (Mandaville & Hamid, 2018a, 2018b). Russia uses the Orthodox Church to expand its cultural and political influence (Petro, 2015; El Ghouli, 2015). India, especially under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has been using Buddhism as an important element of its soft power (Mazumdar, 2018; Scott, 2016; Kishwar, 2018).

This chapter explores how Buddhism is emerging as an important soft power tool in China's statecraft strategy with Sri Lanka. It also attempts to identify if the use of Buddhism has helped China realise its foreign policy goals. The chapter uses publicly available information to trace China's activities in Sri Lanka.

China's Buddhist diplomacy

China has a long history of using Buddhism as a tool of diplomacy. Even though religions were vehemently attacked after the Communist Party rose to power in 1949, and its adherents persecuted during the Cultural Revolution, Mao Zedong used Buddhism to persuade foreign nations that the religion was thriving under communist rule, hoping that their Buddhist constituencies would push their respective governments to adopt pro-China foreign policies (Zhe, Fisher, & Laliberté, 2019, p. 27). It was with this objective that the Buddhist Association of China (BAC) was set up in 1953 (Zhang, 2013).

With China's opening up in 1978, the government became more tolerant of religious faiths and slowly employed them in statecraft to boost Chinese soft power. During the post-Mao era, Beijing employed Buddhism as a diplomatic tool to enhance its relationship with South Korea and Japan, when China organised a Buddhist Friendly Interaction Conference between the three countries (Scott, 2016; Zhang, 2012). Communist Party of China's (CPC) party leaders since Jiang Zemin have openly supported the development of Buddhism, making public appearances alongside temples (Ji et al., 2019). Jiang, in 2001, acknowledged that religion could act as a stabilising force in society and could be mobilised as a positive force for national development (Zhang, 2013). Hu Jintao approved the organisation of the World Buddhist Forums in 2006, 2009, and 2012 (Zhe, Fisher, & Laliberté, 2019).

Under Hu's successor, Xi Jinping, China has accelerated the use and mobilisation of Buddhist diplomacy (Ramachandran, 2019). In 2006, during his time as party secretary of Zhejiang, Xi promoted the first World Buddhist Forum. In 2014, he welcomed the first World Fellowship of Buddhists meeting in Baoji. In March 2014, addressing the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in Paris, President Xi praised how Buddhism had impacted China. He went on to say that after the religion spread from India, it went through an extended period of integrated development with Confucianism and Taoism. He noted that Buddhism in China had "Chinese characteristics" and has profoundly impacted religious beliefs, philosophy, literature, art, and customs (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2014).

China is also involved in the Common Text Project undertaken by the International Council for the Day of Vesak under the stewardship of Maha Chulalongkorn University in Thailand (Asian News International, 2018). It is active in international Buddhist organisations such as the World

Fellowship of Buddhists and the World Buddhist Forum. It hosted the 5th Session of the World Buddhist Forum in 2018 in Fujian with over 1,000 Buddhists, scholars, and representatives from 55 countries and regions (Ramachandran, 2019).

Buddhism represents one of the pillars of the Chinese tradition, which the CPC claims it aims to preserve (Laliberté, 2011). As a result, China is introducing a Buddhist narrative into its diplomacy despite being a self-proclaimed atheist country.

Historical China- Sri Lanka Buddhist relations

China and Sri Lanka's shared Buddhist relations are centuries old. They have continued throughout different historical periods and kingdoms of Anuradhapura (377BC - 1017AD), Polonnaruwa (1017 - 1232 AD), Yapahuwa (1273 - 1284AD), Kurunegala (1287 - 1332AD), Kotte (1412 - 1597AD), and Kandy (1469 - 1815AD).

The earliest Buddhist connection between the two countries was when the Chinese monk, Fa Xian visited ancient Sri Lanka. According to his travel journal, *Records of the Buddhistic Kingdoms* (also known as *Fo Guo Ji* or *The Travels of Fa-hsien*), he spent two years in the monastery of Abayagiri Viharaya of Anuradhapura studying Buddhism. According to local legends, Fahian Gala cave (also known as Pahiyanigala) and Fahian Temple in Kalutara allegedly got their names as Monk Fa Xian spent his days here during his visit to the island.

Inspired by Monk Fa Xian, another scholar-monk, Xuanzang (664 AD), set off on a voyage to Sri Lanka during the Tang dynasty. Even though he could not make it to Sri Lanka, his travelogue made frequent references to the island nation (Mendis, 2017). Both Monk Fa Xian and Monk Xuanzang's travelogues became crucial sources of information for archaeologists in the nineteenth century to

unearth Buddhist sites and unveil Buddhist history (Zhang, 2013). The inscription on the stele found in 1911 of Zheng He's mission states that he paid tribute to a local Buddhist temple on the mountains of Sri Lanka (which could possibly be Adam's Peak according to historians), which is yet another example of the historical Buddhist links between the two countries (Senanayake, 2018; Wang & Ye, 2019; Daily FT, 2012). Sri Lanka was among the destinations where the emperor Zhu Yuanzhang (1368-1398) of the Ming dynasty sent two diplomatic missions led by Buddhist monks (Zhang, 2013). Similarly, a Sri Lankan monk Dharmaduta voyaged to Nanjing during the reign of Emperor Xiaowe (471-499 AD) (Senanayake, 2018; Bastiampillai, 1990).

Dual ordination procedures transmitted to China from Sri Lanka provide evidence of Sri Lanka's influence on the development of Buddhism in China. More than a dozen Sri Lankan Buddhist nuns arrived in Nanjing through a mercantile ship and ordained 300 Chinese nuns in the fifth century, establishing the Bhikkuni order in China (Zhang, 2013; Bianchi, 2019; Heirman, 2001).

It is to be noted that Buddhist ties between the two countries were dormant during the period when Sri Lanka was a colony under the European powers—Portuguese (1597 - 1619), the Dutch (1658 - 1796), and the British (1796 - 1948). Since gaining independence, Sino-Sri Lankan relations have been revived, but Buddhist ties have not experienced the same progress. This could be a result of the political changes within China. The Cultural Revolution, waged between 1950 and 1979 in China, featured anti-religious campaigns, and all churches, mosques, and temples were closed. In recent years, the gradual development of Buddhist exchanges between Sri Lanka and China reflects changes in religious policies in post-Mao China. For instance, when modern China looked to re-establish dual ordination in the 1980s, China turned towards Sri Lanka again (Bianchi, 2019, p. 163). Additionally, in November 1986, five student monks from the Buddhist

Academy of China were invited to study in Sri Lankan universities for five years and received bachelor's and master's degrees with distinctions (Zhang, 2022, p. 15).

China's recent Buddhist diplomacy in Sri Lanka: Engaging with the community

The slow and steady growth in China's and Sri Lanka's Buddhist engagements and exchanges synchronises with Beijing's use and mobilisation of Buddhist diplomacy during President Hu's tenure. It also coincides with Beijing's gradual foray into Sri Lanka since 2005.

One of the most important meetings was in March 2007, when President Mahinda Rajapaksa visited China at the invitation of President Hu, commemorating the 50th anniversary of establishing diplomatic relations. During the visit, the two countries discussed increasing exchanges in the form of Buddhist activities, including sending Sri Lankan delegations to the World Buddhist Forums. The Chinese welcomed Sri Lanka's proposal to establish an International Buddhist Zone (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2007). Since then, there have been numerous interactions and exchanges between Buddhist communities in Sri Lanka and China. For instance, in May 2018, a senior delegation led by the Sri Lanka Buddhism minister visited Beijing. Both sides promised to strengthen Buddhist exchanges and cooperation (Zhang, 2022, p. 17).

There is limited information available in the public domain on the frequency and regularity of exchanges between the Buddhist communities in the two countries. However, the limited existing information shows an increase in the number of exchanges. These exchanges are mainly of two kinds: interactions between the Buddhist monks from China and Sri Lanka and Chinese engagement with the Buddhist community through the Sri Lanka-China Buddhist Friendship Association (SLCBFA).

Interactions among Buddhist monks

Since 2015, there has been a significant improvement in Buddhist ties between the two countries. This could be attributed to President Xi's state visit to Sri Lanka in September 2014 and the 60th anniversary of establishing diplomatic relations in 2017.

In 2015, an exchange programme organised by the Chinese Embassy in Sri Lanka facilitated 100 Chinese Buddhists to visit Sri Lanka and 150 Sri Lankan Buddhist monks to visit China (The State Council of The People's Republic of China, 2015). In the same year, on October 24th and 25th, a 25-member delegation from Sri Lanka participated in the 4th World Buddhist Forum jointly organised by the BAC and the China Religious Cultural Communication Association in Wuxi, Jiangsu Province of China. The Sri Lankan delegation included representatives from the Asgiri, Malwathu, and Amarapura Chapters, which are the leading Buddhist monastic fraternities of Sri Lanka (news.lk., 2015). Athuraliye Ratana, a parliamentarian and an influential monk in Sri Lanka's domestic politics, was part of the delegation. Since then, the Sri Lankan delegation has frequently participated in World Buddhist Association events.

2015 also saw several visits by Chinese delegations to Sri Lanka. In May 2015, Ming Sheng Thera, vice president of the BAC and president of Guangdong Provincial Buddhist Association of China, visited Sri Lanka with a 30-member delegation. They met with Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena and the chief prelate of the Ramanna Nikaya (Embassy of The People's Republic of China in the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, 2015).

In 2016, a Sri Lankan delegation attended the first "Summit Forum of Theravada Buddhism" that was held in Xishuangbanna, Yunnan (Zhang, 2019). The forum is considered an important beginning for revitalising Theravada Buddhism in China, and this visit,

therefore, marks an important landmark in growing Buddhist ties between Sri Lanka and China. Given the involvement of Sri Lanka's leadership in practising and promoting Theravada Buddhism globally, this emerged as a new avenue for the two countries to engage. In 2017, Chinese monk Yin Shun led a delegation to take the relic of a Chinese Buddhist monk, Benhuan, to Sri Lanka to be worshipped (Zhang, 2022, p. 17). Monk Benhuan is a Chan master and a religious leader, the first abbot of the Hongta Temple in Shenzhen, and the honorary president of the BAC between 2010 and 2012 until his death. In the same year, a nine-member delegation led by Guangquan, the deputy secretary-general of the BAC, the dean of the Hangzhou Buddhist Academy, and the abbot of Lingyin Temple in Hangzhou, and Qingyuan, director of the Tibetan and Southern Buddhism Office of the BAC visited Sri Lanka on the invitation of the Buddhist and Pali University of Sri Lanka (shandongfojiao.cn, 2017). In 2018, during the visit by Sri Lanka's Buddhism Minister Gamini Jayawickrama Perera to pay homage to the Lord Buddha's Relics at the Ling Guan Temple in Beijing, he met with senior Chinese Buddhist monks (Sri Lanka China Buddhist Friendship Association, n.d.c).

These exchange visits have paved the way for the two countries to reminisce about their long history and build good relationships and friendships among the countries' Buddhist societies. They have opened avenues for China to build a fraternity within the Theravada Buddhist community.

However, what is most important is how these exchanges have led to the building of connections between Buddhist fraternities that have access to and influence domestic politics in Sri Lanka. Asgiriya Maha Viharaya is one of the chief Buddhist monasteries and

the custodians of the sacred tooth relic of Buddha kept in Sri Dalada Maligawa. It is also the headquarters of the Asgiriya Chapter of Siyam Nikaya.¹ These temples and fraternities significantly influence Sri Lanka's domestic politics.

The BAC is similarly established in China and operates under the patronage of the Chinese government. While it may have a limited influence on Buddhist citizens in foreign countries, its local temples, devotee associations, and delegations have used their contacts and exchange visits to develop relationships and fraternity with other Buddhist communities (Zhe, Fisher, & Laliberté, 2019, p. 24). For example, Sri Lanka was invited to the meeting hosted by China to discuss cooperation among Buddhist communities in the Lancang-Mekong region to combat COVID-19 and improve people's livelihoods (*Xinhua*, 2021).

Engagement with the Buddhist community via the Sri Lanka-China Buddhist Friendship Association

China's Buddhist diplomacy has even gone beyond engaging with monks and religious leaders. In 2015, SLCBFA was established (Pal, 2021). According to its website, it was inaugurated in the presence of Sri Lanka's chief monks from all Nikayas and Ming Sheng Thero during his visit in 2015. The website notes that the SLCBFA "has embarked on a journey to develop historical Buddhist friendship between Sri Lanka and China that spans the gulf of time, harkening back to several centuries" (Sri Lanka-China Buddhist Friendship Association, n.d.a).

The Association is engaged in various charity services and activities such as providing dry

¹ Sri Lanka has three main Buddhist orders or Buddhist fraternities; namely Siyam Nikaya, Amarapura Nikaya, and Ramanna Nikaya. The Amarapura Nikayas and Ramanna Nikaya were unified to form the Amarapura-Ramanna Nikaya on 16 August, 2019. Following this unification, the Amarapura-Ramanna Nikaya has become the largest Buddhist fraternity in the country. Siyam Nikaya has two major divisions or chapters called Malwatta and Asgiriya. These two chapters are the custodians of the sacred Tooth Relic. They have two separate *maha nayakas* or chief monks. There are five sub divisions within the two major units of Malwatta and Asgiriya.

rations and IT equipment to poor families and communities (Chinese Embassy in Sri Lanka, 2020; Sri Lanka-China Buddhist Friendship Association, n.d.b). It also carries out small public service projects such as providing purified drinking water (Sri Lanka-China Buddhist Friendship Association, 2016, n.d.d). The Association also promotes Dhamma education in the country by providing materials and equipment such as public address systems, chairs, and desktop computers with printers (Sri Lanka-China Buddhist Friendship Association, n.d.b). According to the SLCBFA website, it receives financial assistance from the Embassy of China to carry out these projects. Representatives from the embassy often inaugurate these projects.

Additionally, the SLCBFA enables Chinese Buddhist temples, societies, and organisations to extend their charity work to Sri Lanka. In 2016, following a massive flood in Sri Lanka, students and families from three schools in the heavily affected Kegalle district received financial assistance worth 300,000 yuan (jjfj.com, n.d.). A total of 130 families benefitted from the stipends and donations provided by Kaiyun Temple in Fuzhou, Kaiyun Temple in Quanzhou, Kaiyuan Zhiye Culture and Education Charity Foundation in Fuzhou, and Kaiyuan Temple Poverty Alleviation and Disaster Relief Public Welfare Association in Quanzhou. The donation was organised by Benxing, the executive director of the BAC, the vice president and secretary-general of the Fujian Buddhist Association, and the abbot of Kaiyuan Temple (jjfj.com, n.d.). More recently, in December 2021, the Association facilitated the distribution of 2,500 gift packs from the China Charity Foundation to students from Dhamma schools.

China's motivations

China's religious diplomacy aims to promote international understanding and acceptance of its religious policy (Zhang, 2013). Using slogans such as building a "harmonious world", China advocates for religious activities and attempts to improve its image. In recent years, China has been using Buddhism as a

convenient diplomatic resource (Scott, 2016).

There is both domestic and international impetus for the CPC to promote Buddhism. Domestically, promoting Buddhism internationally would have a strong political appeal for the more than 100 million Buddhist followers in the country. Buddhism is historically rooted in the country and is largely a localised religion. Its doctrines and teachings have become a part of China's national mentality, bearing strong "Chineseness" or Chinese identity in its cultural diplomacy (Zhang, 2012). Given the importance of the Buddhist demography in Asia, it is reasonable to assume that the flourishing of Buddhism in China could influence Buddhists elsewhere in the region to adopt the view that their coreligionists thrive in China. Therefore, they may conclude that what is good for China is good for Buddhism (Zhe, Fisher, & Laliberté, 2019).

Internationally, Buddhism is seen as a convenient resource given that many Asian countries have a large number of Buddhists (Wuthnow, 2008). China's desire to use Buddhism as a soft power tool derives from the desire to maintain and expand its leadership role within the third world and reassure other states that its rise is non-threatening and that it is acting as a responsible, system-maintaining power (Wuthnow, 2008). It has used Buddhism to connect with smaller countries like Thailand, Myanmar, and Sri Lanka. Given the prominence of Buddhist communities in these countries, China has invoked Buddhism to identify itself as the most prominent Buddhist country in the world. The Chinese leadership may believe that it can sway public opinion through international religious networks and that Buddhism can play a role in promoting positive relations between China and Asian Buddhist countries like Sri Lanka.

Most importantly, connecting with Buddhist communities is viewed as a way of promoting the Chinese version of Buddhism and counterbalancing the influence of the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan cause outside China.

According to critics, China's single-most important motivation behind its Buddhist public diplomacy is to counterbalance the global popularity of the 14th Dalai Lama and the spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhism (Ramachandran, 2019). They emphasise that China has vilified the Dalai Lama as a "wolf in monk's robes" intent on "splitting up China and wrecking ethnic unity to exert strict control over Tibetan political, social, and even religious life" (Ai & Li, 2010; *Xinhua*, 2011).

That China has spread this message in Sri Lanka is an important aspect of China's Buddhist diplomacy. Sri Lanka has repeatedly clarified that it will not contradict China's position on the Dalai Lama. Despite the Dalai Lama being considered the most sacred spiritual leader for Buddhists worldwide, Sri Lanka has repeatedly refused his request to visit the Sacred Temple of Tooth-Relic in Kandy. The Dalai Lama was also not allowed to participate in the Buddha Jayanthi (the year commemorating the 2,600th anniversary of the Enlightenment of the Buddha) celebrations held in 2012. China in 2015 praised the Sri Lankan government for not allowing the Dalai Lama to visit the country (Press Trust of India, 2015). Even the Jathika Hela Urumaya, the country's only Buddhist-monk-driven political party, seems to ignore the question of inviting the Dalai Lama to Sri Lanka. The former leader of the party, Ellawela Medananda Thera, commented that "in any event, the Dalai Lama is from the Mahayana school of Buddhism, and not from the Theravada form practised in Sri Lanka" (Sunday Times, n.d.). Notably, Sri Lanka emphasises its Theravada identity in its engagement with the Dalai Lama but promotes and engages with Chinese monks who follow a different sect of Buddhism.

Conclusion

For China, engagement with Sri Lankan Buddhist monks and the community is a platform to build fraternity and brotherhood with other sects of Buddhism. The Chinese government understands that China's

Buddhist sect is less influential than Theravada Buddhism or Tibetan Buddhism. For this reason, China may not be able to use its form of Buddhism alone as a tool of soft power.

The impact of this use of Buddhism as soft power is so far unclear. In general, the results of soft power influence cannot be seen immediately. In terms of dealing with the issue of the Dalai Lama, China has managed to convince the Sri Lankan government and the chief Buddhist leaders of its stance. Yet, it is unclear whether this has convinced the larger Buddhist community.

It is also unclear if the shared Buddhist identity has convinced the larger Sri Lankan Buddhist community that China is a benign power. In recent years, Sri Lankans have raised concerns and expressed displeasure over China's growing economic and political presence in the country, which is observable in the increased number of protests and opposition to Chinese projects (Shepard, 2017). This may prove that Beijing's Buddhist diplomacy has not been enough to attract, persuade, and appeal to the Sri Lankan community. However, the sources of soft power do not always produce attraction, persuasion, appeal, and emulation (Li, 2011). Culture, ideology, values, and norms also often result in resentment, repulsion, hostility, and even conflict, primarily if a country pursues an aggressive cultural policy (Li, 2011).

For China, using Buddhism as a soft power tool is a choice and a necessity at the moment. For years, Chinese diplomats saw religion as a problem due to the CPC's atheist policies. However, China now uses Buddhism as an asset to enhance relations. China's increasing engagement with the Sinhala Buddhist community will likely enhance its image to some extent. Yet, given how China's economic statecraft is unfolding in the country, its use of Buddhist diplomacy may also be viewed with some reservation.

References

- Ai, Y., & Li, X. (2010, March 12). Stop separatist activities, Beijing tells Dalai Lama - Chinadaily.com.cn. http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/cndy/2010-03/12/content_9577442.htm
- Asian News International. (2018, December 7). China using Buddhism to increase its influence in South Asia. *Business Standard India*. https://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ani/china-using-buddhism-to-increase-its-influence-in-south-asia-118120700755_1.html
- Bastiampillai, B. E. S. J. (1990). China-Sri Lanka: trade and diplomatic relations including the Voyages of Cheng-Ho. *Ancient Ceylon*.
- Bianchi, E. (2019). "Transmitting the precepts in conformity with the Dharma": Restoration, adaptation, and standardization of ordination procedures. In Zhe, J., Fisher, G., & Laliberté, A. (Eds.), *Buddhism after Mao: negotiations, continuities, and reinventions* (p. 154). University of Hawaii Press.
- Chinese Embassy in Sri Lanka [@ChinaEmbSL]. (2020, November 29). Buddhist Friendship Association called on the newly appointed Chief Prelate of Ramanna Maha Nikaya, Most Ven. Makulewe Wimala Nayaka Thera with warm greetings of Ambassador Qi Zhenhong and donated dry rations & sanitizers sponsored by @ChinaEmbSL to the temple at Mirigama [Images attached] [Tweet]. Twitter. <https://twitter.com/chinaembsl/status/1332916623439769606?lang=en>
- Commemorating Zheng He, the greatest navigator to visit Sri Lanka from China | Daily FT. (2012, February 4). [www.ft.lk. https://www.ft.lk/article/69932/Commemorating-Zheng-He-the-greatest-navigator-to-visit-Sri-Lanka-from-China#:~:text=Zheng%20He%20came%20to%20Sri%20Lanka%20233%20years%20before%20the](https://www.ft.lk/article/69932/Commemorating-Zheng-He-the-greatest-navigator-to-visit-Sri-Lanka-from-China#:~:text=Zheng%20He%20came%20to%20Sri%20Lanka%20233%20years%20before%20the)
- El Ghouli, B. (2015). Protecting Eastern Christianity in the Middle East: Russia's new diplomatic tool? *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, 14(1), 95–102.
- Embassy of The People's Republic of China in the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka. (2015, May 26). Sri Lanka President Sirisena meets with Chinese Buddhist delegation. <https://www.mfa.gov.cn/ce/celk//eng/xwdt/t1267058.htm>
- Heirman, A. (2001). Chinese nuns and their ordination in fifth century China. *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*, 24(2), 275–304.
- Ji, Z., Fisher, G., & André Laliberté. (2019). *Buddhism after Mao : negotiations, continuities, and reinventions*. University Of Hawai'i Press.
- Jinjiang Fojiao Xiehui. (n.d.). 福建佛教界本性法师一行赴斯重灾区赈灾并为学生提供助学金 - 晋江佛教_泉州佛教_闽南佛教. [Master Ben Xing from the Fujian Buddhist circle went to Sri Lanka to provide disaster relief and provide scholarships to students]. Retrieved March 20, 2022, from <http://www.jjfb.com/h-nd-181.html>
- Kishwar, S. (2018). The rising role of Buddhism in India's soft power strategy (Issue No. 228). Observer Research Foundation. https://orfonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/ORF_IssueBrief_228_Buddhism.pdf
- Laliberté, A. (2011). Buddhist Revival under State Watch. *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs*, 40(2), 107–134. <https://doi.org/10.1177/186810261104000205>
- Li, M. (2011). *Soft power : China's emerging strategy in international politics*. Lexington Books.
- Mandaville, P., and Hamid, S. (2018a). Islam as statecraft: How governments use religion in foreign policy. *Brookings*. https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/FP_20181116_islam_as_statecraft.pdf
- Mandaville, P., & Hamid, S. (2018b, December 7). The rise of Islamic soft power: Religion and foreign policy in the Muslim world. *Foreign Affairs*.
- Mazumdar, A. (2018). India's soft power diplomacy under the Modi administration: Buddhism, diaspora and yoga. *Asian Affairs*, 49(3), 468–491.
- Mendis, P. (2017). Can past be a prologue in Sino-Sri Lankan discourse? The Colombo Lotus Tower as a 'Buddhist Way' to navigate geopolitical rivalry between China and India. *Harvard International Review*, 38(4), 31–39.
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China. (2007, March 4). Joint Press Communique of the People's Republic of China and the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka. <https://www.mfa.gov.cn/ce/cejm/eng/xw/t303841.htm>
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China. (2014, March 28). Speech by H.E. Xi Jinping President of the People's Republic of China at UNESCO headquarters. https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/zyjh_665391/201403/t20140331_678150.html
- News.lk*. (2015, October 31). Sri Lankan Buddhist delegation attends 4th World Buddhist Forum in China. <https://www.news.lk/news/world/item/10579-sri-lankan-buddhist-delegation-attends-4th-world-buddhist-forum-in-china>
- Pal, D. (2021). China's influence in South Asia: vulnerabilities and resilience in four countries. *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*.

- Petro, N. N. (2015). Russia's orthodox soft power. Carnegie Council for Ethics in International Affairs (2015). <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3172378>
- Press Trust of India. (2015, April 3). China lauds Sri Lanka for not permitting Dalai Lama's visit. The Economic Times. https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/international/world-news/china-lauds-sri-lanka-for-not-permitting-dalai-lamas-visit/articleshow/46794875.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst.
- Ramachandran, S. (2019). Rivalries and relics: examining China's Buddhist public diplomacy. China Brief, 19(5). <https://jamestown.org/program/rivalries-and-relics-examining-chinas-buddhist-public-diplomacy/>
- Scott, D. (2016). Buddhism in current China-India diplomacy. Journal of Current Chinese Affairs, 45(3), 139–174.
- Senanayake, L. M. (2018). Religious relations between Sri Lanka and China. In Sixty Years of China-Sri Lanka Relations 1957-2017 (pp. 51–64). Bandaranaike Centre for International Studies.
- Shandongfojiao.cn. (2017, June 7). ‘一带一路’上的佛教交流与慈善援助——中国佛教代表团访问斯里兰卡佛教与巴利语大学并向斯里兰卡总统国家救灾基金捐赠善款 - 山东省佛教协会. [Buddhist Exchanges and Charity Aid on the Belt and Road—Chinese Buddhist Delegation Visited Sri Lanka Buddhist and Pali University and Donated to the National Disaster Relief Fund of the President of Sri Lanka - Shandong Buddhist Association]. <http://www.shandongfojiao.cn/xinwenzhongxin/duiwaijiaoliu/2017-06-07/719.html>.
- Shepard, W. (2017, January 8). Violent protests against Chinese ‘colony’ in Sri Lanka rage on. Forbes. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/wadeshepard/2017/01/08/violent-protests-against-chinese-colony-in-hambantota-sri-lanka-rage-on/?sh=332a132013dd>.
- Sri Lanka-China Buddhist Friendship Association. (n.d.a). Profile of Sri Lanka-China Buddhist Friendship Association. Retrieved March 20, 2022, from <https://srilanka-china-buddhist.com/about/profile/>.
- Sri Lanka-China Buddhist Friendship Association. (n.d.b). Assistance to develop Dhamma education from China. Retrieved March 20, 2022, from <https://srilanka-china-buddhist.com/event-page/assistance-to-develop-dhamma-education-from-china/>.
- Sri Lanka-China Buddhist Friendship Association. (n.d.c). Minister of Buddhist Affairs Pay Homage to Buddha Relics in China. Sri Lanka-China Buddhist Friendship Association. <https://srilanka-china-buddhist.com/event-page/minister-of-buddhist-affairs-pay-homage-to-buddha-relics-in-china/>.
- Sri Lanka-China Buddhist Friendship Association. (n.d.d). Opening of water purification plant at Anamaduwa. Retrieved March 20, 2022, from <https://srilanka-china-buddhist.com/event-page/opening-of-water-purification-plant-at-anamaduwa/>.
- Sri Lanka-China Buddhist Friendship Association. (2016). ‘Suwa Diviyata Pendothak’ water projects – Padiyathalawa, Anamaduwa, Polpithigama, Embilipitiya. <https://srilanka-china-buddhist.com/News%20Page/suwa-diviyata-pendothak/>
- Sunday Times. (n.d.). News. Sunday Times (Sri Lanka). Retrieved September 1, 2022, from <https://www.sundaytimes.lk/060122/news/8.html>
- The State Council of the People's Republic of China. (2015, October 24). China to boost cultural ties with Sri Lanka: ambassador. http://english.www.gov.cn/news/international_exchanges/2015/10/24/content_281475218804466.htm
- Wang, Z., & Ye, F. (2019). China–Sri Lanka relations in the context of the 21st-century maritime silk road: motives, challenges, and prospects. Asian Perspective, 43(3), 481–503.
- Wuthnow, J. (2008). The concept of soft power in China's strategic discourse. Issues & Studies, 44(2), 1–28.
- Xinhua. (2021, May 19). Buddhist Association of China hosts meeting on cooperation in Lancang-Mekong Region. http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2021-05/19/c_139954378.htm.
- Xinhua. (2011, March 7). Dalai Lama “wolf in monk's robes”: official. http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2011-03/07/content_12131293.htm
- Zhang Juyan (2012). Buddhist diplomacy: history and status quo (Paper 7). USC Centre on Public Diplomacy. <https://uscpublicdiplomacy.org/sites/uscpublicdiplomacy.org/files/useruploads/u35361/2012%20Paper%208.pdf>.
- Zhang Juyan (2013). China's faith diplomacy. In Seib, P. (Ed.), Religion and public diplomacy (pp. 75–97). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Zhang, Y. (2019). Buddhism exchanges in Trans-Himalaya region: development and recommendations. In Proceedings of the 2019 International Conference on Education Innovation and Economic Management (ICEIEM 2019) (pp. 52–55). Atlantis Press.
- Zhang, Y. (2022). Buddhist ties in the Himalaya Region: interactions, impacts, and policy recommendations. In Peng, N., Ali, G., & Zhang, Y. (Eds.), Crossing the Himalayas (pp. 5–23). Springer.
- Zhe, J., Fisher, G., & Laliberté, A. (Eds.). (2019). Buddhism after Mao: negotiations, continuities, and reinventions. University of Hawaii Press.