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China's Relations with Sri Lanka and the Maldives: Models of Good Relations among Big and Small Countries

Sithara N. Fernando

China's contemporary relations with both Sri Lanka and the Maldives have been described as 'models of good relations between small and big countries'. China has been an important trading partner for Sri Lanka, with a large and growing trade surplus in China's favour in the last few years. At the same time it has also been a significant source of investment and foreign economic assistance to Sri Lanka. Similarly, while China enjoys a large surplus in its trade with the Maldives as well, it is also a significant source of economic assistance and tourism for the Maldives. Given that India is in many ways the preeminent power in South Asia, China's relations with Sri Lanka and the Maldives in the South Asian regional context have been analysed in terms of two 'strategic triangles': China–India–Sri Lanka and China–India–Maldives. What emerges from this analysis is that the sustenance of the cooperative momentum in the China-India relationship is crucial to the improvement of China's relations with South Asia as a whole.

INTRODUCTION

In China's foreign policy towards South Asia, India and Pakistan have generally taken 'pride of place'. However, given that all members of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) enjoy equal voting rights and China has recently acquired 'observer status' in it, to the extent that China's policy towards South Asia has to do with SAARC, smaller countries such as Sri Lanka and the Maldives may come into positions of greater prominence. Moreover, as island countries in the Indian Ocean, Sri Lanka and the Maldives are also likely to assume importance when it comes to China's maritime strategy.

The first two sections of this article will detail China's contemporary bilateral relations with Sri Lanka and the Maldives. Given the fact that in many ways India is the preeminent power in South Asia, it will then analyse these bilateral relations in

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the South Asian regional context using the theory of a strategic triangle. Finally, in the concluding section, the article will address China's so-called 'string of pearls' strategy which has been linked to China's maritime strategy, and with which Sri Lanka and the Maldives have also been associated.

CONTEMPORARY CHINA–SRI LANKA RELATIONS

Sri Lanka, which won independence from Britain in February 1948, recognised the People's Republic of China (PRC) in January 1950. The two countries established full diplomatic relations and exchanged ambassadors in February 1957. In between, the China–Sri Lanka Rice–Rubber Agreement, signed in April 1952 formed a constitutive part of China–Sri Lanka economic relations and was renewed several times. The first Agreement on Economic and Technological Cooperation between China and Sri Lanka was signed in 1962 and a Maritime Agreement in 1963. A Sri Lanka–China Society was formed in 1981, while the Joint Trade Committee formed in 1982 and the Economic and Trade Cooperation Committee formed in 1984 were amalgamated in 1991 to form the Sino–Lanka Joint Commission for Economic and Trade Cooperation. The Sri Lanka–China Business Cooperation Council (SLCBCC) was later formed in 1994 (Kelegama 2009: 3–4). These developments suggest that throughout this period, China has been an important trading partner and a significant source of foreign economic assistance to Sri Lanka.

The Sri Lankan Defence Minister Tilak Marapone paid a week-long visit to China in June 2002. During this visit China and Sri Lanka signed an agreement in which China pledged to provide Sri Lanka with necessary weapons supplies and to assist in upgrading the Sri Lankan navy to prevent weapons smuggling by the Sri Lankan terrorist group the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam (LTTE) (Singh 2003: 244). Since then China has emerged as the major provider of military equipment and assistance to Sri Lanka, and has cooperated with Sri Lanka to modernise and expand Sri Lankan defence forces (Kelegama 2009: 23).

From 26 February to 4 March 2007 President Mahinda Rajapaksa of Sri Lanka made a landmark state visit to China on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of full diplomatic relations between China and Sri Lanka. During the visit Rajapaksa held talks with the Chinese President Hu Jintao, and met with other senior Chinese officials. According to the joint communique issued by the two countries at the end of this visit:

In a friendly atmosphere, the two sides exchanged views on bilateral relations as well as regional and international issues of mutual interest and reached broad consensus. The two sides agreed that in the 50 years since the establishment of diplomatic relations, China–Sri Lanka relations have continued to strengthen despite changes in the international environment and enjoyed healthy and smooth

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growth, serving as a model of good relations among small and big countries. The development of China-Sri Lanka good-neighbourly and friendly relations not only served the common interests of the two peoples but also contributed to peace, stability and development in the region. The two sides noted with satisfaction the positive progress achieved in all areas of cooperation including political affairs, economic and trade relations, culture, tourism and education. The two sides would make joint efforts to push forward their all-round cooperative partnership of sincere mutual support and ever-lasting friendship. (MOFA, PRC 2007)

The joint communique also designated the year 2007 as the 'China-Sri Lanka Friendship Year'. According to the communiqué each side declared support to the other with regard to their major national concerns. Sri Lanka declared firm support to the 'One China' principle and China's efforts to achieve national reunification with respect to Taiwan, while China reaffirmed its support to Sri Lanka in its own efforts to safeguard its sovereignty, national unity and territorial integrity from separatist terrorists. China also welcomed the positive steps taken by the government of Sri Lanka to reach a peaceful resolution of ethnic issues through negotiations. The two sides resolved to combat the 'three evils' of terrorism, separatism and extremism, and to increase consultation and coordination on regional and international counter-terrorism action.

ECONOMIC RELATIONS

Total trade between Sri Lanka and China has been steadily increasing over the years almost doubling from US\$ 660 million in 2005 to US\$ 1,138.3 million in 2008. While Sri Lankan exports to China have grown over the last five years, imports from China have grown at a faster rate than exports, resulting in an expanding trade deficit for Sri Lanka, which stood at US\$ 1,044.7 million in 2008. These figures are further enlarged when Sri Lanka's trade with the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) of China is also considered. Total trade between Sri Lanka and China including Hong Kong stood at US\$ 1,937.3 million in 2008. In that year, China and Hong Kong together provided Sri Lanka's second-largest source of imports, exceeded only by India, and thirteenth largest destination for exports. Sri Lanka's major exports to China include raw coconut coir, apparel items, tea, natural rubber, diamonds and other precious stones, titanium ores and concentrates, and bicycles and other cycles. Sri Lanka's major imports from China include electrical machinery and equipment, boilers and machinery and parts, cotton, iron or steel and its articles, man-made staple fibres, knitted or crocheted fabrics, fertilizers, railway locomotives and inorganic chemicals. In 2008, Sri Lankan exports to China and Hong Kong accounted for 1.9 per cent of total Sri Lankan exports, while Sri Lankan imports from China and Hong Kong accounted for 12.8 per cent of total Sri Lankan imports. One of the ways in which the massive trade imbalance in Sri Lanka-China trade can be addressed is through

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the utilisation of further tariff concessions in Sri Lanka's favour under the Asia Pacific Trade Agreement (APTA, formerly known as the Bangkok Agreement) (Kelegama 2009: 6–13). Another way is for Sri Lankan exporters to focus on increasing the export of value added products.

However, it has also been argued that the Chinese trade surplus should be understood in the proper perspective at least on three counts. First, some of the imports are used to manufacture exports, such as textiles from Hong Kong which are used to manufacture garments for export. Second, China provides an affordable source of consumer durables such as cameras, air-conditioners, televisions and washing machines. Finally, China compensates for the trade surplus by providing investment and economic assistance to Sri Lanka (Jayasekara and Tennakoon 2007: 48, 50, 63, 69).

China has become a major investor in Sri Lanka. China and Hong Kong invested US\$ 101.211 million in 2008, which provided the fourth largest source of foreign direct investment (FDI) into Sri Lanka in that year.¹ Presently, sixteen Chinese businesses have invested in garment, leather, telecommunications and electronics manufacturing facilities in Sri Lanka. All of these sectors have significant importance in the Sri Lankan economy as export items and in overall economic performance. Entrepreneurs from China have been provided with an exclusive Export Processing Zone (EPZ) at Mirigama in the western province, and depending on the progress additional space will be given at Godagama in the southern province and in the eastern province. All Chinese entrepreneurs who invest a minimum of US\$ 25 million are to be provided with a Sri Lankan passport on the basis of a 'second home' passport. China appears to be the only country to which Sri Lanka has granted such a facility. Hong Kong-based conglomerate Huichen Investment Holdings Ltd. has committed to investing US\$ 28 million to develop the EPZ at Mirigama. China's Huawei Technologies has also invested heavily in Sri Lanka and has agreements with all of Sri Lanka's telecommunications companies (Kelegama 2009: 14–16).

The SLCBCC has played an important role in facilitating Chinese investment in Sri Lanka through organising high-powered business delegations to China and receiving business delegates from China, seminars on 'how to do business in China' for local business persons, trade fairs and exhibitions for Chinese business organisations and establishing a 'Chinese Products and Service Information Desk' at the National Chamber of Commerce of Sri Lanka. Through its bilateral business councils the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce provides such services to China as well as to a number of other countries. An investment facilitation agreement was signed between the China Development Bank (CDB) and the Central Bank of Sri Lanka (CBSL) in July 2009. Under this agreement the CDB will initially place a US dollar deposit with the CBSL, and then progress towards long-term economic ties between the two institutions (Kelegama 2009: 16, 30).

¹ By comparison, India invested US\$ 125.925 million, providing the second largest source of FDI into Sri Lanka in the same year (Kelegama 2009: 15).

China provided significant assistance to Sri Lanka following the Indian Ocean tsunami disaster in December 2004. US\$ 1.5 million was provided in monetary support and relief goods. China also undertook reconstruction work in tsunami-affected areas, which included a China-Sri Lanka Friendship Village, a China-Sri Lanka Red Cross Village and three fisheries harbours. At present, China is funding a large number of projects in Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka's relations with China have been getting strong over the last few years as Western governments began cutting aid due to alleged human rights violations. China has increased its aid to Sri Lanka from a few million dollars in 2005 to about US\$ 1 billion in 2008. In August 2009, Sri Lanka signed agreements relating to two key developmental projects, the Colombo–Katunayake expressway and Hambantota bunkering project, worth US\$ 350 million with the Exim Bank of China. The signing of the two agreements will pave the way for infrastructure requirements which will have an immense impact on the socio-economic development of Sri Lanka. China has also agreed to provide railway passenger carriages, railway engines and power sets to help modernise Sri Lanka's railways. From 2007, Sri Lanka has also been trying to launch a communications satellite, and negotiations are currently underway for China to provide financial and technical assistance for this project. China has also contributed to important projects in the energy sector. Increased assistance from China of late is extremely valuable to Sri Lanka, given the drying up of funds from the US and the European Union, and the lessening of access to concessionary finance from multilateral donors (Kelegama 2009: 22–23).

China has emerged as the single biggest lender to Sri Lanka in 2009 lending about US\$ 1.2 billion out of the US\$ 2.2 billion total foreign aid to Sri Lanka. Project loans accounted for US\$ 1.9 billion of the total, with another US\$ 279.6 million in grants (*Daily Mirror* 2010a). The Sri Lankan Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced in March 2010 that China's Exim Bank had agreed to lend US\$ 290 million to Sri Lanka for the financing of a new international airport and to revive the railway network (*Daily Mirror* 2010b).

CONTEMPORARY CHINA–MALDIVES RELATIONS

The Chinese and Maldivian ambassadors to Sri Lanka started visiting each other in the early 1960s. China supported the Maldives in its struggle for national independence and the two countries established diplomatic relations in October 1972 with the Chinese ambassador to Sri Lanka concurrently accredited to the Maldives. In 1981, China and the Maldives started economic and technological cooperation, and in 1982 restored direct trade. Starting from 1985 Chinese companies began entering the project-contracting market in the Maldives (MOFA, PRC 2003).

During September 2000, on the invitation of China's Central Military Commission (CMC), the Maldivian Defence and National Security Minister Abdullah Satar Anmair

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paid a ten-day goodwill visit to China. This was followed by a visit by China's General Fu Quanyou, People's Liberation Army (PLA) chief and member of the CMC, to Maldives in April 2001. These visits signaled the emergence of stronger defence ties between the two countries (Singh 2003: 300).

Among the several high-level exchanges that took place between both countries was Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji's visit to the Maldives in May 2001 (*People's Daily* 2001). During this visit China and the Maldives once again extended their Economic and Technological Cooperation Agreement and Zhu also attended the inauguration ceremony of Phase IV of the Male Housing Project. This project had been running since 1988 with Chinese assistance and has been described as being the most critical 'building block of China-Maldives friendship'. Zhu also reiterated China's condemnation of the US rejection of the Kyoto Protocol on global warming given the fact that Maldives considers environmental threats and global warming to be its chief security concern (Singh 2003: 298, 300). In January 2010, during a visit by Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi to the Maldives, the Maldivian president, Mohamed Nasheed, and the Chinese foreign minister pledged to work closely on climate change (*China Daily* 2010). Following the Copenhagen Accord on climate change negotiated in December 2009, Nasheed has been approving of China's and India's approaches to the issue, but critical of that of the US (Barkham 2010).

Also in November 2001, Brigadier Mohamed Zahir, Chief of Staff of the Maldivian Ministry of National Defence and National Security Services undertook a visit to China, during which he held discussions with top Chinese leaders regarding China-Maldives cooperation in the context of international terrorism. On this occasion Chinese leaders underlined their opposition to interference in another country's internal affairs, a comment that was no doubt aimed at India (Singh 2003: 300-01).

Again in the same year, there were reports that China was planning to lease the Maldivian island of Marao for twenty-five years, and that under the cover of setting up an observatory to monitor weather conditions throughout the year to determine climate changes the Chinese were planning on establishing a submarine base there. Given the fear that due to sea-level rises resulting from global warming the Maldives may be submerged by 2040, the reports claimed that Marao is one of the few islands that may survive, and that even if it were to be submerged it would still be a good location for a submarine base. By 2004 it was being reported that premature publicity had scuttled this project in 2001 and that the Chinese were attempting to revive it again (*Dhivehi Observer* 2005).

Maldivian President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom visited China in September 2006 meeting with his counterpart Hu Jintao and other senior Chinese officials and thanked China for the assistance given in the aftermath of the Indian Ocean tsunami. Hu described China-Maldives relations as a good example of state-state relations between big and small nations (*People's Daily* 2006a, 2006b).

In July 2007, Maldivian Foreign Minister Ahmed Shaheed visited China and met with the Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi. Following talks, the two ministers

signed an agreement once again extending economic and technological cooperation between their countries (*People's Daily* 2007). Shaheed visited China again in May 2008 to attend the opening ceremony of the Embassy of Maldives in China and also met with Chinese state councilor Dai Bingguo and his counterpart Yang. In his meeting with the Chinese foreign minister, the Maldivian minister donated US\$ 50,000 to assist victims of the massive earthquake that hit China's Sichuan province that year (*Xinhua* 2008).

In February 2009, the Maldivian Minister of Defence and National Security Ameen Faisal visited China and met with Chinese defence minister and state councilor Liang Guanglie. During their meeting, Liang said that China looked forward to further developing friendly relations between the two defence ministries and armies. He said that China was committed to developing long-term friendly relations with South Asian nations and that China hoped to see SAARC playing a bigger role in regional affairs. The Maldivian minister briefed his Chinese counterpart on the social and economic development of the Maldives since the president, Mohamed Nasheed, assumed office in November 2008 (*China Daily* 2009).

In September 2009, Zhang Gaoli, a member of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the CPC visited the Maldives and in October 2009, upon an invitation from the CPC a delegation of the ruling Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP) led by Hassan Afeef, Political Advisor to the President, visited China (Embassy of Maldives in China). In December 2009, the special envoy of the government of China and Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs Hu Zhengyue led the Chinese delegation at the Fourth Round of Bilateral Consultations between China and the Maldives. The Maldivian delegation was led by Ahmed Naseem, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Maldives 2009).

On the economic side of things, interactions are limited but China has become the Maldives' fastest growing tourist source country since 2008, with visitors hitting 40,000 a year (Raman 2010). Meanwhile, China Union Pay (CUP) began cash withdrawal services for card holders in 95 per cent of automatic teller machines in the Maldives after launching a partnership with the Bank of Maldives in March 2010 to better serve Chinese visitors.

CHINA'S RELATIONS WITH SRI LANKA AND THE MALDIVES AND THE SOUTH ASIAN REGIONAL CONTEXT

Given the fact that in many ways India is the preeminent power in South Asia the theory of the strategic triangle can be of use in analysing China–Sri Lanka relations in the regional context. According to Lowell Dittmer 'a strategic triangle may be understood as a sort of transactional game among three players', with 'transactions' being understood as 'exchanges'. Dittmer goes on to argue that,

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...three different patterns of exchange relationships are conceivable: the '*menage a trois*', consisting of symmetrical amities among all three players; the 'romantic triangle', consisting of amity between one 'pivot' player and two 'wing' players, but enmity between each of the latter; and 'stable marriage', consisting of amity between two of the players and enmity between each and the third. (Dittmer 1981: 485–89)

Mahinda Werake (1990: 65 cited in V. Suryanarayan 1994: 204, and in Swaran Singh 2003: 232–33) and L.M. Jacob (1988: 172) have argued that China could function as a countervailing power in South Asia. Both Werake and Jacob were making these arguments in the late 1980s when the normalisation of China–India relations after the border war in 1962 was still in the early stages, and India–Sri Lanka relations were going through troubled times due to the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka. At the time, as shown by the section on contemporary China–Sri Lanka relations, the relationship remained as robust as always. Therefore, in the China–India–Sri Lanka triad, both the China–India and India–Sri Lanka dyads were experiencing a significant level of enmity, and only the China–Sri Lanka dyad was experiencing amity. Thus, triangular relations among China, India and Sri Lanka at the time can be characterised as a 'stable marriage'.

However, arguments and pronouncements made in later and more recent years by scholars and policy makers testify to a significant degree of improvement in both China–India and India–Sri Lanka relations. Werake himself has argued that,

... from the point of view of small states in South Asia, the likelihood of a Chinese intervention on their behalf vis-à-vis India has greatly diminished over the years ... the belief that the China factor is a strong countervailing force against India has not been borne out by historical facts... (Werake 1992: 418)

V. Suryanarayan (1994: 212) has argued that the process of normalisation of China–India relations kept China's support to Sri Lanka on a low key during the height of Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict in the late 1980s. R.C.A. Vandergert (2003: 40), Sri Lanka's ambassador to China in the late 1990s, based on his discussions with Chinese officials during the time he was in Beijing, has opined that '...the PRC and India are moving forward slowly to resolve their dispute'. In July 2009, while delivering an address at the China Institute of International Studies (CIIS) in Beijing, then Sri Lankan foreign minister, Rohitha Bogollagama, took a great deal of time and effort to reassure India regarding Sri Lanka's relations with China (*Hindu* 2009). Thus, a significant degree of amity has come to characterise China–India and India–Sri Lanka relations, even as the China–Sri Lanka relationship has retained its amity. Therefore, in recent years China–India–Sri Lanka triangular relations have come to resemble a '*menage a trois*'.

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As in the case of China–Sri Lanka relations the theory of a strategic triangle, in which the triangle is composed of China, India and the Maldives, can also be of use in analysing China–Maldives relations in the regional context. China–Maldives relations have generally been fairly robust. India–Maldives relations have also been generally problem-free. They have been fairly strong since India assisted the Maldives in putting down a coup attempt in 1988. In August 2009, Indian Defence Minister A.K. Antony made a three-day visit to the Maldives during which he held talks with the Maldivian president and the top leadership of the Maldivian government and the Maldives National Defence Force, including the Maldivian Defence Minister Ameen Faisal, on ways to expand defence cooperation between the two countries (*Thaindian News* 2009). Therefore, while prior to normalisation of China–India relations, China–India–Maldives triangular relations tended towards a ‘romantic triangle’ with the Maldives as the ‘pivot’ and China and India as the ‘wing’ players, where there was amity in Maldives–China as well as in Maldives–India relations but enmity in China–India relations, following normalisation of China–India relations, triangular relations have tended towards a ‘*menage a trois*’, with amity in all three dyads.

IS CHINA ENCIRCLING INDIA?

Over the last five years or so, there has been much talk of China’s ‘string of pearls’. This string has grown over time to include Hambantota in Sri Lanka (Mohan 2006: 50; Peiris 2007). Port and airfield construction projects, diplomatic ties and force modernisation form the essence of the ‘string of pearls’. It could enable China to establish a ‘forward presence’ along the sea lines of communication (SLOC) that connect it to the Middle East. Christopher J. Pehrson (2006) one of the first to elaborate on the formulation recognises, however, that the ‘string of pearls’ may not be an explicit strategy of China’s central government, but rather a term applied by some in the US to describe a specific aspect of China’s foreign policy. Therefore, one could argue that the ‘string of pearls’ is a geopolitical construct that has originated in American perception and analysis of China’s strategy and policy. This ‘string of pearls’ construct has a significant overlap with a long-standing Indian geopolitical construct of ‘encirclement’ by China in South Asia (Kanwal 1999 cited in Garver 2001: 31; Arasakumar 2006: 61–62; Mohan 2006: 50) which points towards a commonality in American and Indian perceptions of China’s maritime strategy. However, according to Nihal Rodrigo (2007), Sri Lanka’s ambassador to China in the first half of the 2000s, the economic benefit accruing to China and Sri Lanka is the driving force behind the Hambantota project, although there is of course some ‘imaginative speculation’ about the ‘so-called military and strategic aspects’. Moreover, Peiris (2007) has noted that Delhi does not seem to be overly concerned about the Hambantota project given

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the strength of India's own relations with Sri Lanka. Similarly, while, as mentioned earlier, there has been some speculation about Chinese links to maritime facilities in the Maldives, these have never been confirmed. Meanwhile, stronger defence cooperation between India and the Maldives has been posited as a way in which India can counter 'China's string of pearls' (*Thaindian News* 2009). American and Indian fears and suspicions of China embodied in the 'string of pearls' and 'encirclement' constructs, respectively, is likely to stand in the way of the process of improvement of China–India relations. Given that India is the preeminent power in South Asia, and given that the China–India dyad is common to both the triads considered in this analysis, the fear and suspicion embodied in these two constructs can also vitiate China's relations with South Asia as a whole.

One of China's most important maritime concerns in its relations with South Asia is the security of its seaborne energy imports from West Asia and Africa. As reported by McGregor et al. (2006) in January 2006, China and India signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in the energy sector. Apart from agreeing to cooperate in securing crude oil resources in third countries, it also involved cooperation across the oil industry, from exploration to marketing. You Ji (2008: 54–56) argues that bilateral energy cooperation with India is the most effective way for China to resolve its oil transportation dilemma. Energy cooperation can give each a stake in the other and raise the cost for each of resorting to assertive means for unilateral gains. Energy cooperation can also put a stop to the spiraling costs incurred by both in competing with each other. Therefore, he is of the view that wide ranging cooperation with India in this sector can remove some of the very sources of China's concerns about energy supply security, while being beneficial for both countries.

Jayasekara and Tennakoon's (2007: 71–91) report on a conference on China–Sri Lanka relations held in October 2007 includes a session on China–Sri Lanka cooperation in the context of SAARC. One of the things that emerged from the presentations and discussions in this session was the keenness of both the Chinese and the Sri Lankan side to emphasise the need to ensure that cooperation between them would not be at the expense of the cooperation of each with India. Therefore, in the context of multilateral cooperation in SAARC, a small country like Sri Lanka, which enjoys a healthy relationship with both China and India, can also help to sustain the cooperative momentum in the China–India relationship, and to thus create conditions favourable to the improvement of China's relations with South Asia as a whole.

CONCLUSION

China's current relations with both Sri Lanka and Maldives have both been described as models of good relations between small and big countries. China has been an important trading partner for Sri Lanka, with a large and growing trade surplus in China's favour

in the last few years. At the same time it has also been a significant source of investment and foreign economic assistance to Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka's relations with China have been growing stronger over the last few years as Western governments began cutting aid to Sri Lanka due to alleged human rights violations. It is worth noting that while India had played a leading role in accusing the Sri Lankan government of violating human rights in the late 1980s, in the last few years it has not done so. In the case of Maldives, while China enjoys a large surplus in its trade with the small island nation, it is also a significant source of economic assistance and tourism for the Maldives.

With regard to the regional context, triangular relations involving China, India and Sri Lanka had tended towards a 'stable marriage' with enmity in China–India and India–Sri Lanka relations but with amity in China–Sri Lanka relations in the late 1980s, whereas prior to normalisation of China–India relations, China–India–Maldives triangular relations tended towards a 'romantic triangle'. In recent years, in both instances, triangular relations have tended towards a '*menage a trois*' with amity in all three dyads.

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Author's Address: No. 55/2, M.J.C. Fernando Mawatha, Idama, Moratuwa, Sri Lanka. E-mail: sitharaf@gmail.com

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