

# Sri Lanka's Relations with China from 1948 to 1995: A Neoclassical Realist Analysis

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Post-independent Sri Lanka fostered state-level economic ties with China at a time it was not envisaged. However, once established, trade relations expanded and even influenced other areas of Sino-Lanka relations. Hence, the objectives of this research are to analyse why Sri Lanka opted to establish unconventional relations with China and to examine what factors influenced this decision. Towards this end, the research employs a Neoclassical Realist lens which underscores the importance of domestic-level variables such as leader perceptions and a state's strategic culture in the formulation of its foreign policy, in its analysis. As a descriptive study, the research utilises the case study methodology. Accordingly, the research identifies that Sri Lanka's post-independence foreign policy illustrates how a country's domestic political situation can have a profound impact on a country's foreign relations. This is especially true with regard to the initial years since independence, where the perceptions of pro-Capitalist leaders and the party ruling the country contained expanding Sri Lanka's relations in the global arena. However, due to certain domestic realities, Sri Lanka engaged in relations beneficial for the growth of the country. Therefore, it can be concluded that Sri Lanka's post-independence foreign policy illustrates how a country's leaders and its domestic political situation influence its foreign relations. Hence, it can be underscored that, similar to domestic requirements in commerce and trade underpinning ancient Sino-Lanka relations, the era from 1948 to 1995 have been influenced by the perceptions maintained by the head of government and the country's strategic culture.

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