

Reporting on Port City Colombo in Sri Lankan Newspapers

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ABSTRACT

Launched in 2014, Port City Colombo is arguably the most contentious and ambitious development project in Sri Lanka's post-independence history of over 75 years as well as the Port City is the single largest foreign investment in Sri Lanka's history. It is being developed by CHEC Port City Colombo Pvt. Ltd. (CPCC) with the support of the Government of Sri Lanka under the BRI. In the BRI, Sri Lanka occupies a more important position due to its positioning in the middle of the Maritime Silk Road connecting the East-West continents. "The Port City Colombo" project was launched in 2014 and during the last 9 years it has passed many milestones. This project suffered a severe setback for a while due to the suspension of its operations caused by Sri Lankan political issues in March 2015, but it recommenced its operations in September 2016. The purpose of this research is to study how to report on "the Port City Colombo" in the Sri Lankan newspapers. In this case, the nature of how to report events of Colombo Port City on newspapers feature articles was studied. Four Sinhala newspapers and a Tamil and English newspapers were selected out of those having a top-level of rating. During the period from September 17, 2014, when the project started to the end of the year 2022, the content of features of 20 days was selected under the purposive sampling method, and framing theory was used for the analysis. The conclusion is that government media creates a positive image of the port city compared to the privately owned Media and English and Tamil Newspapers portray a positive frame compared to Sinhala Newspapers.

Keywords – Sino Sri Lanka relations, BRI, the port city Colombo, maritime silk road, Sri Lankan media

INTRODUCTION

Sino-Sri Lanka relations have been a significant factor in the international relations of Sri Lanka. The friendly exchanges between China and Sri Lanka have a long history. China and Sri Lanka do not border each other, but the two countries have engaged in trade since at least the third century BCE, during China's Han dynasty (206 BCE-220 CE) in China, as recorded in "the Book of the Han Dynasty" (Han' Shu) and "ancient Roman history" books. (Gunaratna, 1986). In 410 AD, Fa Xian, an eminent monk of the Jin Dynasty, went to Sri Lanka to study and retrieved Buddhist classics and wrote the book "Buddhist Kingdom" (Elman & Liu, 2017). Ambassadors from the kings of Sri Lanka often visited China in the first and second centuries and such visits grew even more frequent after the fourth century (Senaveratne, & Lévi, 1915). Ming Dynasty navigator Zheng visited Sri Lanka many times during his voyages to the West. In the 15th century, Prince Siyi visited China and settled in Quanzhou, Fujian on his way back to China. He was given a surname by the emperor of the Ming Dynasty and his descendants are still living in Quanzhou and Taiwan. (MOFA, PRC, 2007)

Current diplomatic relations also date back to 66 years. Relations with China were renewed following Sri Lanka's recognition of the People's Republic of China in January 1950. The People's Republic of China

(PRC) was founded in Beijing on October 1, 1949. On January 7, 1950, the Ceylon government relayed to the PRC government through W. G. Graham, the then British ambassador to China, that the Ceylon government recognized the PRC and informed the ROC's Consul in Ceylon that its relationship with the ROC was suspended. This was the beginning of bilateral relations between the PRC and Sri Lanka (Jiang, 2017). This made Sri Lanka one of the first countries to recognize Communist China. Sri Lanka also supported China's accession to the United Nations. Even before diplomatic relations were established between the two countries, Sri Lanka and China entered the historic Rubber-Rice Barter Agreement in 1952. It was one of the first agreements that the People's Republic of China signed with the first non-communist country in South Asia. Sri Lanka was among the first countries to recognize the People's Republic of China (PRC), having established formal diplomatic relations in 1957. China has become a particular partner of Sri Lanka in the latter's cause of maintaining national independence and development (Samaranayake, 2019). Today, China occupies a large part of the world economy (Wang, & Ye, 2019). Compared to the other countries in the region, it is evident that Sri Lanka has maintained strong relations with China which have benefited Sri Lanka in several ways. During the period of war, the reduction of aid by the Western governments due to various allegations of human rights violations caused further strengthening of Sri Lanka's friendly ties with China (Wang, & Ye, 2019). An increase in the arrival of Chinese tourists, aid granted by the Chinese government, investment in large-scale projects such as the Port City Project and various student exchange programs bear ample testimony and evidence for the strong bilateral relations between the two Countries. Meanwhile, Sri Lanka has been an important political and diplomatic partner to China in the Third World (Wang, & Ye, 2019). According to De Alwis, (2010) China is going to be the next superpower and only China can make a difference in Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka has become a special hub in the Maritime Silk Road and is part of the bigger development strategy known as the BRI. It is mastering the Old Silk Road concept by Chinese President Xi Jinping. He, visiting Kazakhstan and Indonesia, proposed his strategic vision of the "New Silk Road Economic Belt" and "21st Century Maritime Silk Road" in September and October 2013 respectively. Since then, the "Belt and Road" initiative has attracted international attention. Currently, 166 countries are involved, and the Green BRI organization has five main goals. Those goals are bigger than the American Marshall Plan. All countries have different cognitions and reactions to the "Belt and Road" initiative by reason of some aspects such as geopolitical benefits and cultural differences. This is currently the largest active international project in the world. In this case, Sri Lanka has a great value in the port economy. Sri Lanka is involved in this project under the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road Phase. Sri Lanka was also an important trading entre pot and Centre on the ancient Silk Road in the middle of the Indian Ocean.

Colombo Port City is the single largest foreign investment in Sri Lanka's history. It is being developed by CHEC Port City Colombo Pvt. Ltd. (CPCC) with the support of the Government of Sri Lanka. According to the Forbes Index, the Colombo Port City Project is ranked as one of the five new city projects that can make a great impact on the future as well as the one being implemented to fill the gap between the international financial centers of Dubai and Singapore, the Colombo Port City Project Social Responsibility Report said. Xinhua reported that Colombo Port City is the largest project between China and Sri Lanka under the China-proposed BRI, especially the 'Twenty-first Century Maritime Silk Road' (Haimin, 2017). Launched in 2014, Port City Colombo is arguably the most contentious and ambitious development project in Sri Lanka's post-independence history of over 75 years. This project suffered a severe setback for a while due to the suspension of its operations caused by Sri Lankan political issues in March 2015 but recommenced its operations in September 2016. During the last 9 years, it has passed many milestones. Sri Lanka is in a very important geopolitical location of the twenty-first Century Maritime Silk Road under the BRI. Situated in the middle of the East-West Sea route, as such, Sri Lanka has great potential to benefit from this project. The port city project was selected for this study because it is the largest project ever launched in Sri Lanka and is directly related to China-Sri Lanka relations. Meanwhile, with the commencement of this port city

project and Hambantota port, the Chinese debt trap myth that was purposely fabricated and spread in the society by the media under Western influence caused a threat to the positive image of China in the Sri Lankan society.

Specially during the 2015-2020 political regime, there were much political criticism and discussions over this project, because this is being done as a Chinese investment. Western media and Indian media paid much attention to it. Not only the Western media reports but also the local media reports about the Port City project misled us. In such a media context, propaganda as well as agenda-setting are widely expanded in society.

Media Context in Sri Lanka

Without an understanding of the media's political functions and their influences on nations, it is not possible to provide a comprehensive picture of their impacts on State and international relations. Thus, in this context explained by Kuhn the five political functions of the media have included that information provision, agenda setting, public watchdog, political mobilization, and regime legitimating (Kuhn, 2007:21). Government departments, individual officials, and ministers use mass media as direct channels to explain the matter to their nations and overseas public. Therefore, the media seems to enable the reputation to spread in the international society of a country by disseminating information that builds bridges between groups and individuals around the world. Non-state activists and forces, such as multi-national groups and corporations in the international arena are using media to deal with the increasing importance of the international political economy. BRI is a new international context. The Port City being built under it is a project with geopolitical potential. The international media was interested in it. Meanwhile, positive as well as negative frames on the Port City Project are being created in the media. Furthermore, there has been wide and significant media coverage of the Port City Project by both international and local media, but there is a dearth of academic or empirical research on the impact of the local media context.

At present, Sri Lanka has over 20 daily newspapers in addition to approximately 50 weekly and 30 monthly publications, 20 Television Stations and 50 Radio Stations have been active in Sri Lanka as are hundreds of news and gossip websites. (Verite Research, Media, and Owners Database, 2022) The media in Sri Lanka can be classified as public or private. Today, private Television Channels are among the topmost-watched channels in the country. Sri Lankans most frequently consume news from television, radio, word of mouth, and newspapers, respectively, with television regularly consumed by 96% of the population. (Verite Research, Media, and Owners Database, 2022).

In such a situation, the impact of local media on “the Port City Colombo” was studied. In this study, it was possible to raise an experimental approach to media policies as well as the influence of media in Sri Lanka on BRI. Media reporting of international relations can be used as a yardstick to sustain Sri Lanka's foreign policy. So far, there had been no study of media reporting being done related to projects in Sri Lanka with reference to the BRI initiative and in this context, it was possible to gain a theoretical understanding of how local media influence international relations. Mainly this research intends to discover framing strategies applied by the news bulletins from Sri Lanka reporting on the port city. Thus, this study is supposed to depict Sino Sri Lanka relations accordingly to rate negative and positive frames published in the Sri Lankan media. One of the objectives of the study is to examine how Sri Lanka media policies Port City are projected in the electronic media. Finally, the study explores how the selected media framed the strategic process of reporting on Port City.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Since Chinese President Xi Jinping first presented it, the BRI has increased in visibility in the global media

(Mitic, 2017). BRI will increase connectivity with China across African and Eurasian landmasses and benefit trade and commerce among many countries. Consequently, it is predicted to contribute to the GDP and support infrastructure-led growth in those countries. (Harris, 2018). The study about Mapping China's Belt and Road Initiative in Albanian has taken an initial step towards understanding China's BRI image covered in the Albanian online news contexts (Sylaj, 2020). However, they show that there is an increasing trend of the BRI mentioned in TV, radio, print, and online media and that the overall perception of BRI cooperation is positively framed (Sylaj, 2020).

Tran (2018), in one such study, found that the media framed the BRI to be mutually exclusive to China and her partners. The study, which focused on Radio China International and Voice of Vietnam, observed that while the Chinese broadcaster framed BRI as China's effort to promote regional integration, the Voice of Vietnam framed the Initiative as having considerable potential for the Vietnamese economy. Similarly, Tai (2018) examined the different lenses through which BRI is viewed. This included the media narrative and concluded that the media had reported it with optimism in many instances. News media plays an important role in strengthening diplomatic relations or friendships between countries. As such, Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is a symbol of diplomatic relations between Sri Lanka and China. Hence, when dealing with diplomatic relations, the question of how the media portrays the messages of their countries' communities is the major concern of this study.

A positive attitude of media towards BRI in different countries, especially in developing countries in Asia and Africa, has been cited in various literature. The positive attitude towards BRI stretches from Fiji to Tanzania (Chitty et al. 2018; Karlsson 2020; Szadziewski, 2020). The low press freedom, media in countries such as Turkey, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka mostly echo their respective governments' voices toward BRI (Ahmed, Rojratanakiat, & Taekasem 2019; Bahoo and Alon 2020; Özsu & Binark, 2019).

Western media and their acolytes in the non-West are critical of BRI (Zhang and Wu 2017, 29–43). For example, BRI in the USA and India is considered riskier than an opportunity (Jan, Mehmood, and Hussain 2018, 31–48). BRI, often in the international media, is branded as a 'debt trap' (Mendis and Wang, 2019) for economically impoverished countries. In other words, the representations of BRI cannot be homogenized in a country. The allegation of a 'debt trap' in connection with BRI has been treated as a myth by Hameiri & Jones (2020). Instead of a debt trap, BRI should be seen as a win-win situation for the West (Gao 2019; Xiao, Li, & Hu, 2019, p68). Referring to the case of Malaysia and Sri Lanka, Hameiri & Jones (2020) claimed that these two countries are seen as the victims of the Chinese debt trap; however, this debt problem has more to do with the poor coordination and the mismanagement of the projects in the respective country (Hameiri & Jones 2020). Chitty et al. (2018) also claimed that instead of seeing BRI as an economic opportunity, it is seen as a security threat for a country like India. Analyzing newspapers from various Indian Ocean countries such as South Africa, Kenya, Iran, Pakistan, India, Singapore, Indonesia, and Australia, Chitty et al. (2018) found positive, negative, and neutral framing of BRI. Because of the media houses' divergent policies and ideologies, different newspapers might portray BRI differently within the same country (Chitty et al. 2018).

In studying the reporting of BRI in Sri Lankan media, According to Nelanga (2023) Wijeya newspapers have published more articles than the government media as a private ownership media. It is another specialty that it has been found that articles published in English media newspapers are more than Sinhala articles. Research has revealed that there are many articles based on events. His research shows that most of the articles are based on unofficial sources. (Nelanga, 2023) In this study by Nelanga (2023), the framework was identified and not subjected to content analysis. He has used for analysis two government English and Sinhala language newspapers and two private media English and Sinhala newspapers. The BRI studies conducted in Sri Lanka have not directly targeted the relationship between the port city and the media. But among the BRI projects currently underway in Sri Lanka, the most influential project is the Port City

project. jayarathne (2023) says the local government channels reported the positive side of the OBOR projects and about China. However, there are a few private channels which were against the local government in Sri Lanka, and they try to negatively influence the Sri Lankans about China and its relationship with Sri Lanka. But instead of the political vision and the connection of the OBOR project the media reporting about the Chinese culture is highly interested by the local audience. Further, the foreign news telecasting in local media channels has been explained about China, daily with its special news. Recently with the project of Hambantota harbor and the Colombo port city, China became the most famous country among the Sri Lankans than all the countries in the world. Therefore, the decisions made by the Chinese government became very important news to the Sri Lankan audience. Moreover, the news of local channels explained the aid given by the Chinese government to Sri Lanka. Therefore, the free vaccines, sanitary items, and stationaries given by the Chinese government to Sri Lanka, and explained in the local media news.

Examining the theoretical background of research papers that have been reviewed, it is evident that framing theory (Azlili& Ismail, Mahadee & Makdin, Hairol &, Azlina, 2020) have been widely used. According to (Bahoo & Alon, 2020) the media framing analysis of China's BRI cannot be generalized to the large population of international news journalists and media companies, but it provides essential insights into how international media is reporting and covering the BRI to build public opinion (Bahoo & Alon, 2020).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Content analysis is used in this research to organize the sample and create a qualitative description of the patterns and characteristics identified in the sample. Therefore, this research is qualitative Content Analysis to study newspaper feature articles in Sri Lanka. The qualitative content analysis examines the relationship between the text, and it would be audience's meaning, recognizing that media texts are open to multiple different meanings to different readers and trying to determine the would-be meaning of texts to audiences. It pays attention to audience, media, and contextual factors not simply to the text. Qualitative content analysis of texts is necessary to understand their deeper meanings and likely interpretations by audiences. Neuman (1997) describes it as: "A technique for gathering and analyzing the content of the text. The 'content' refers to words, meanings, pictures, symbols, ideas, themes, or any message that can be communicated. The 'text' is anything written, visual or spoken that serves as a medium for communication" (Neuman, 1997, pp. 272–273).

Based on the reliability and popularity of the newspaper, we selected certain content concerning port city Colombo. This study analyzed the editorials, news features and opinion features of 6 newspapers in Sri Lanka (four Sinhala and one English and Tamil). According to the Sri Lanka Media Audience Study 2019 report published by <https://www.mediasupport.org/>, 39% of the newspapers is used as a regular news source for gaining current information by the public. Print media is the oldest type of media in the country. At present, Sri Lanka has over 20 daily newspapers, in addition to approximately 50 weekly and 30 monthly publications. Although there are over 100 printed publications regularly produced in the country, the readership share is concentrated among four news organizations: They are Wijaya Newspapers Limited, the Associated Newspapers of Ceylon Limited (ANCL/Lake House), and Upali Newspapers (Pvt.) Limited and Ceylon Newspapers (Pvt.) Limited. ANCL is a State-owned Media Network while the other three are privately owned ones. Specially, the print media are not free from political affiliations. Today, at least 6 Companies are either directly owned by an individual holding political office or by persons related to individuals in political positions. In the print media, the top four owners (the Wijewardene Family, the Government, the Welgama Family, and the Alles Family) have a combined readership share of 75 %. In this media sector, the gap between the market leader and the remaining outlets is exceptionally high, with the Wijewardene Family alone reaching almost half of all readers. Veerakesari is the most-reading Tamil-language newspaper.

These newspapers were selected as per the Sri Lanka Media Audience Study 2019 report published by IMS and considered the media ownership report in 2018 published by verité Research. Verité Research is a private think tank that provides strategic analysis for Asia and International Media Support (IMS) is a non-profit organization working to strengthen the capacity of media to reduce conflict, strengthen democracy and facilitate dialogue in Denmark. Its main research divisions are economics, politics, law, and media. According to the media ownership report, 78.97% of the newspaper Audience is concentrated on the top 5 companies.

Table 01 – Newspapers reading concentration of Media Ownership in Sri Lanka

Ownership	newspaper	%	
		Sri Lanka Media Audience Study 2019	Media Ownership Report (verité Research,2018)
Wijaya newspapers (Pvt) Ltd	Lankadeepa(Sunday+daily)	41.5(54 +27)	27.1+5.3
Government of Sri Lanka Sinhala	Silumina+dinamina	9.5(9+10)	1.9 +0.7
Government of Sri Lanka English	Sunday observer + daily news	–	2.18+0.57
Upali newspapers (Pvt) Ltd	Divaina (Sunday+daily)	11(10+12)	6.9+1.3
Ceylon newspapers (Pvt) Ltd	Maubima (Sunday+daily)	10.5(12+9)	7+0.9
Express Newspapers (Ceylon) (Pvt) Ltd	Veerakesari (Sunday+daily)	11+?	3.7+0.93

Sri Lanka Media Audience Study 2019 and Media Ownership Report (verité Research,2018)

Feature articles are the most widespread form of reading items in newspapers. Nick Morrison cited in Pape and Featherstone 2006:2, says that features are often used to provide background to an existing news story and to go into more depth. It can be argued that as a news story tells you the what about an incident, a feature article explains the why. A feature article can be recognized by its length which can range from 600 to 2000 words and its use of facts, pictures, graphics, and illustrations (Masuku,2023).A feature article is different from hard news in many ways. First and foremost, a feature article is timeless and has a human interest written with a deep insight of the writer. It is designed to entice the reader’s eyes and minds forcing them that the story is worth reading. The article dataset consists of news features and opinion features, which contain the keyword, “port city Colombo”. news features and opinion features are included in the dataset as they represent public opinion (Ross, 2003) about social issues, events, and projects.

The purposive sample method is used in this research. Purposeful sampling is widely used in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information-rich cases related to the phenomenon of interest (Palinkas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan, Hoagwood,2015). Purposeful sampling is a technique widely used in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information-rich cases for the most effective use of limited resources (Patton,2002). Accordingly, the six highest-rated newspapers were selected from among the Newspaper Companies which have the highest circulation in Sri Lanka. Major news releases of 20 days by those six newspapers were analyzed. On September 17, 2014, from the date of laying the foundation stone for the construction of the Colombo Port City under the BRI project, the

temporary suspension of the construction of the Colombo Port City project, its resumption, signing of the new agreement, completion of land reclamation, adding to the territory of Sri Lanka, hearing of petitions of Port City Commissions Bill, the passage of the Act in Parliament etc. were taken into consideration. Feature articles on the Colombo Port City Project of 20 days published by the 120 newspapers were analyzed, Headlines, quotes, personal statements, data reports, narratives created by the journalists, use of photographs and pictorial illustrations, videos or graphics, language use, nature of sources, the manner of presenting data and information were considered as being the content in this study.

FINDINGS AND RESULTS

Between 2014 and 2022, 120 feature articles were selected from 6 Newspapers under this situation. Among these Newspapers, Sunday Observer is a weekly English-language Newspaper that is published by the Associated Newspapers of Ceylon Limited (ANCL/Lake House), which is owned by the State and is the widely-read Sunday English Newspaper. The daily English edition of the paper known as Daily News, has an audience share of 0.57% (verité Research, 2018). Silumina can be introduced as the Weekly Sinhala Newspaper published by the government-owned Associated News Paper Company Limited (Lake House). Mawbima is a popular Sinhala Language Newspaper published daily and weekly (Sunday Mawbima), and its current owner is Mr. Tiran Alles, Sri Lanka Free People's Alliance (SLPFA) Member of Parliament, Minister of Law and Order and businessman. The Weekly Sunday Lankadeepa Newspaper and its daily edition Lankadeepa Newspapers are published by Vijaya Newspapers Limited, a media network owned and managed by Mr. Ranjith Wijewardene. Upali Newspapers (Pvt.) Limited was founded by late Mr. Upali Wijewardena and is currently managed by Mr. Nimal Welgama who is the Managing Director of the Company. Mr. Nimal Welgama served as the Chairman of Sri Lanka Telecom from 2011 to 2014, and he also held the post of Chairman of the Finance Board of Sri Lanka. Mr. Kumara Welgama, United National Party Member of Parliament is the brother of Nimal Welgama. Weerakesari Newspaper published by Express Newspapers (Lanka) (Pvt.) Company Limited is the newspaper with the largest circulation in Sri Lanka (verité Research, 2018).

Accordingly, this point was analyzed under the following categories i.e., political affiliation, exploratory reporting, nature of sources (nature of people being quoted and interviewed, using foreign media sources, statistical data reports and other sources), use of special phraseology and words and headlines, journalist's interpretations, presenting information and data through graphics and photographs are unique among them. The Silumina Newspaper used for this study is the government's weekly Sinhala Newspaper with the largest circulation and highest sale. The Lanka deepa, the Divaina and The Maubima are the other Sinhala Newspapers used for this study and they are privately owned Newspapers with the highest sale. The largest selling Government Newspaper is the Sunday Observer which is published in the English Language medium. The highest selling Tamil newspaper is Veerakesari newspaper. 120 articles published with 20 feature articles in each newspaper were analyzed. The nature of the sources, special words and phraseology used and headlines, data and information presentation, journalist's interpretation etc. were analyzed. When considering the nature of the sources, the main points that can be identified are individual citation, conversations with individuals and the use of foreign sources. The Indian Media influence, Western Media influence and Chinese Media can be mainly categorized among Foreign Media sources.

Corresponding to the themes analyzed, the reporting on the Port City was framed along 3 frames. They are Positive Frame, Negative Frame and Neutral Frame. The themes that foster the observed positive frame are outlining the importance, benefits, needs and future of Port City, quoting individual statements with responsible study, engaging them in conversation, citing accurate data and reports, responding to opposing views, use of special phraseology and wording and use of headlines etc. Those of the negative themes are quoting and interpreting wrong and misleading political statements reliance and dependence on Western and Indian media, political bias, and unsubstantiated interpretations by the journalist. The other framework that

can be identified in the articles published on the Port City is that of neutral reporting. They can be largely identified as the journalist’s interpretations.

Table 03 – Numbers and percentage of the nature of news frames

Newspaper	Positive (n)	Positive %	Negative(n)	Negative %	neutral(n)	%
Government newspaper (English)	18	90%	0	0%	2	10%
Divaina	16	80%	0	0%	4	20%
Government newspaper (Sinhala)	16	80%	2	10%	2	10%
Veerakesari (Tamil)	16	80%	2	10%	2	10%
Lankadeepa	14	70%	2	10%	4	20%
Maubima	8	40%	2	10%	10	50%
Total	88	–	8	–	24	–
average	14.6667	73%	1.33333	7%	4	20%
SD	3.19	–	0.94	–	2.82	–

According to this above chart and compared to the two government newspapers that creates a positive image of the Port City, it can be observed that the privately owned newspapers add less weight in their attempt to create a positive image on the Port City in the mind of the reader. Compared to English and Tamil Media Newspapers, it can be recognized that the content of articles written on the Port City in Sinhala Media Newspapers is less positive. Those facts can be analyzed one by one.

Nature of Sources

When looking at the sources used in the sample for this study, foreign media citations, personal statement citations, various numerical data and research and other report citations and the journalist’s interpretations can be identified.

Quoting foreign media

It seems that there is a lack of Chinese media being quoted or responding to Western or Indian media, and some newspapers seem to have focused on quoting Chinese media. For example, Veerakesari Newspaper has translated and published a Chinese Xinhua Newspaper Report. The Sinhala translation of the article titled Colombo’s Port City, “City of the Future rising from the sea” written by the writer Xinhua (Xinhua) Tang Luand published on 12.26.2021 has been published on 31.12.26 as “Colombo Port City – City of the Future rising from the sea” Mr. Sanjeeva Alwis, an engineer of the Port City Project has been quoted in this article. He has been a Project Engineer of the ‘Port City Colombo Project’ of China Harbor Engineering Company (CHEC) who has spent six years in China in the 1980s and studied Electrical Engineering and Automation at Tsinghua University. This feature article has been written with attractive illustrations, photos, and narration. Mr. Alwis says in this article, “I am proud to be a part of the Port City Project to build my mother country with the knowledge I have gained from China.” It is also very special thing that this article, which was a very impressive one, was not published in the Sinhala Newspapers. The English Newspaper Daily ft ,published in Sri Lanka had carried this article on 28. 12.2021. Another article published on October 17. 2020 from Xinhua News Agency being quoted by Weerakesari Newspaper is “The largest Foreign Direct Investment in the History of Sri Lanka! An annual Income of 80 million US dollars” The article titled “Six (6) years on, Colombo Port City set to boost Sri Lanka’s economic growth”, published on 26. 09. 2020in Xinhua News website has been quoted and published this way.

The Veerakesari Newspaper on October 09. 2019 has presented an analysis of the intervention and interference made by India and China in Sri Lanka’s development activities based on an article quoted from

The Hindu Newspaper. It is stated in this article that compared to India; China has acted progressively in Sri Lanka in recent times. Here, criticism levelled against India is presented and it is pointed out that China's intervention in Sri Lanka is optimal. This article has been written based on an article published in The Hindu newspaper on September 30, 2019 under the title. "Two Asian powers and adivaina: Unlike China, India has not accomplished much in Sri Lanka in the Sirisena years. The Divaina Newspaper on January 10, 2022 has quoted the Shanghai Observer Newspaper. Mr. Hu Xisheng, a member of a research group attached to China's Ministry of State Security, has told the Shanghai Observer Newspaper that despite the efforts made by the powerful countries in the South Asian region to agitate and stir up a hornet's nest against China, Sri Lanka has been more moderate in its stand." Hu Xisheng was quoted as saying in the Shanghai Observer newspaper that "China needs to consolidate and develop relations and solidarity with friendly countries to shatter and smash the "anti-China network".

Lankadeepa Newspaper translating Al Jazeera news report into Sinhala has published a feature article on 02.17.2023 titled, "Does Sri Lanka need an artificial beach? Quoting Port City management and opposing parties of the Port City. It is a negative report on the Port City. In addition to this, although it is impossible to identify instances of foreign media quoting in the analyzed content, media has reported how foreign media affects the Port City. The Diva in a Newspaper states how the Indian media reports on the port city. There have been critical reports being published in the Indian media on the focus of the Port City. The Diva in a Newspaper reports on India's influence in its article published on June 21, 2021. as" It seems that India has taken up arms again against this... Deputy Chief of the Indian Navy, Vice Admiral G. Ashok Kumar had said that the opening of Sri Lanka's Ports to the Chinese Army is a great threat to India. "Making such statements by the Commander of the Indian Navy in the midst of this heat, the Delhi government's opposition towards the Port City Concept is further confirmed." The Diva in a Newspaper report further goes on to say that the "The Hindu" Newspaper had reported that the spokesperson of the Indian Ministry of External Affairs, Erindam Bagchi had said that "India is on alert for what is happening to the security of our country." The article published in the Diva in a Newspaper on June 21, 2021, under the headline "The Port City – Colombo Government... India's Commotion and Turmoil" has further mentioned the effect and influence of the Indian Media on the Colombo Port City Project. Chatura Pamunwa, editor of Diva in a Newspaper says that India facilitates the debate on whether there is or no danger from Sri Lanka becoming a Chinese Colony due to the Colombo Port City Project. An opinion held by Dr. Dayan Jayathilaka, who is a close adviser to Mr. Sajith Premadasa, the leader of the Samagi Janabalawegaya, has been quoted by the BBC Sinhala website (4 May 2021). It says that "China Sri Lanka diplomatic relations are exceeding other diplomatic relations resulting in the decline or overlap of Indian relationship." The Diva in a Newspaper reports that Palki Sharma, an Indian journalist in her report on 'A Chinese Colony in India's backyard' presented through Vion TV has said that the Port City is a serious threat to India's security. The report further goes on to say that Palki Sharma has said that this Port City could be a serious threat to India's security and this journalist had warned that upon completion of the Colombo Port City Project, India may face a serious security threat through Chinese Companies located there. The Diva in a Newspaper has further stated in this article that the Vion TV really is strongly an anti-Indian media network which expresses a strong pro-India opinion and stance. The Sunday Observer Newspaper too has also mentioned about the influence exerted by India as "The first allegation was made by the American Centre in Colombo and India. Some other so-called rebellious parties in Sri Lanka as well made several attempts to sabotage the project." (11 July 2021).

When examining how the quoting of foreign sources in the newspaper feature articles is done, it appears that Veerakesari Newspaper has used Chinese and Indian sources to build a positive picture of the Port City, while the foreign sources quoted by Lankadeepa Newspaper and Al Jazeera, do not paint a good picture of the Port City. The Diva in a Newspaper has also shown a keen interest in quoting foreign sources and has pointed out that the Indian Media in particular has made a negative influence on the Port City. The Government Newspapers such as the Silumina and the Sunday Observer do not seem to have shown much

interest in quoting foreign sources.

Use of personal statements

In order to determine the frame, nature of the people used in the respective articles has been particularly influential. For example, the use of a renowned and recognized scholars has been used specifically to construct positive frames. In considering the nature of the individuals selected for discussion and their statements brought published in all the newspapers, more academics have been used than politicians. The Silumina Newspaper has paid more attention to the statements of subject experts and authorities and other responsible officials such as Prof. Samitha Hetty of the University of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, Dr. Priyath Bandu Wickrama, Secretary of the Ministry of Water Supply and Drainage, who is an expert in the Port and Marine Sector and former Chairman of the Sri Lanka Ports Authority, Dr. Suratissa Dissanayake of the Department of Environmental Science and Zoology, University of Colombo (2021/04/24) and Lawyer Hirantha Herath (2021/06/12/, 2021/06/19). In many cases, the statements made by Mr. Kassapa Senarath, Public Relations Officer of Port City have been quoted (10.10.2020, 12.09.2020, 27. 11. 2021, 15.01.2022). In addition, the Lankadeepa Newspaper has published an article on 27.06.2020 with his comments being included under the headline “A new beach in Colombo, beyond the Galle Face Green.” His statements can also be found in Newspapers such as the Diva in a (January 16, 2022) Maubima (2021/09/19) and in the Government English Newspaper (31 October 2021) In addition, Mr. Thulci Aluvihare, CHEC Port City Colombo (Pvt.) Assistant Managing Director has been quoted in the government English Newspaper (January 2, 2022), Veerakesari (10/17/2020) and Mawbima (2021/06/20) Newspapers. As both are bureaucrats associated with the Port City Project, these articles reveal a clear picture of the Port City

The Government’s English newspaper has also drawn its attention in quoting Chinese representatives. For example, the article under the headline titled “Colombo on par with top world cities” written and published with the information retrieved from a press briefing held by Liang Thow Ming, (Chief Sales and Marketing Officer of the CHEC Port City Colombo (Pvt.) Ltd) in Beijing in 2017 is a good example. The Sunday Observer Newspaper has published the articles of opinion by academics, responsible officials, and diplomats such as Lawyer Hiranth Herath, (2021.07.04, 2021.07.11) Professor A. Rameezin Sociology in the Southeastern University of Sri Lanka. (25 April 2021) Sirimal Abeyratne, Professor in Economics, University of Colombo and Chairman, Monetary Policy Consultative Committee, Central Bank, Sujeeva Samaraweera, Chairman, Sri Lanka National Arbitration Centre, Past President National Chamber of Commerce of Sri Lanka, and a leading Logistics Service Provider, (1 March 2020) Engineer Nihal Rupasinghe, Secretary to the Ministry of Megapolis and Western Region Development(2016/05/01)

The article titled “Colombo Port City that will make the next generation happy,” published in the Weerakesari Newspaper on December 14, 2019 has been presented by incorporating the views held by Rasmin Zahari, the Reception Officer, Mr. Silva, Marine Engineer, Mr. Sanjeeva Alwis, Mechanical Engineer and Thulanie Palihawadana, General Secretary and Records Controller, all of who are employees of the CHEC Port City Colombo (Pvt.) (Ltd.) Company.

The Sunday Observer Newspaper has reported on 16 August 2020 a lengthy and comprehensive description of the book with the same title “Foreign Policy Perspectives after Covid-19”. This article has analyzed the chapters published in that book by Ambassador Dayantha Laksiri Mendis, former UN Legal Expert and Legal Draftsman to several Caribbean and African countries, the Executive Director of the Lakshman Kadirgamar Institute of International Relations and Strategic Studies, Dr. Palitha Kohona, (Ambassador of Sri Lanka to China, former Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs from 2006 to 2009 and Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka to the United Nations in New York from 2009 to 2015) etc. Comments such as “stresses the need to attract investors to the Port City and Colombo International Financial Centre (CIFC), taking into consideration the fears that it will end up as a ghost city (under the assumption that Lankans do not have the capacity and the know-how to deal with such a financial Centre) and the opposite argument that

this will never be so because there is a prime need for a financial Centre in the Indian Ocean to serve South Asia.” made by Mr. Dayanta Laksiri Mendis on the importance of the Port City in the fifth chapter of this book are very supportive and helpful in creating a positive picture and image of the Port City. Quoting the chapter in this book by Mr. Palitha Kohona, the importance of China-Sri Lanka relations and the rise of the Chinese economy have been presented.

Lankadeepa Newspaper article dated 06.26.2017 under the headline “Construction of Houses on the land filled land will commence under ‘Port City.” has quoted Mr. Nihal Fernando, Port Project Director. The article with the headline “Will Colombo buildings sink with the construction of the ‘Port City?” published on 13.02.2018 has been composed and written based on a discussion with Mr. Patali Champika Ranawaka, the then Minister in Charge of the Port City Project, and Emeritus Professor Kapila Dahanayake of the Department of Geology of the University of Peradeniya. This article has been written as a counter argument to the article published on 04.02.2018 in the Ravaya Newspaper titled “Colombo is in danger of sinking due to the Port City”. Lankadeepa Newspaper on April 26. 2021 reports under the headline “Questioning about the Port City with Sense of Intelligence” quoting Dayanta Laksiri Mendis, that to say that Colombo remains a Colony of China being made by the Colombo Port City Act is extremely false and incorrect and instead it will pave the way to the recognition of Sri Lanka by countries from the West to the East. Professor Charita Herath has published an article in Lankadeepa Newspaper on May 28, 2021, as well, and the comments made on June 12. 2021 by Ajith Nivard Cabral, State Minister were published in the feature article “This is how the Port City works”. The article titled “The good and the bad aspects of the Port City “is a feature article presented on 23.09.2014 using Port Development Authority Chairman Priyat Bandu Wickrama and United National Party MP Dr. Harsha de Silva. These writers and commentators are of a political background.

When reporting on the Port City, the Diva in a Newspaper has included the statements made by and conversations held with authoritative and recognized intellectuals to foster the positive frame. Mr. Kassapa Senarath, Head of Public Relations of Port City Colombo Private Company (CHEC) (2022/01/16), Professor Suranga Silva of the Department of Economics, University of Colombo (January 17. 2023) has been quoted and in the article published on 07.23.2023 under the heading, “Although there is sea all around the country, but here is a new beach for us...” Robert, who has been a member of the Tang Dynasty Company which is the Chinese Construction Company and who has been working there for 07 years and as the Manager of the company in charge of the artificial beach has been quoted.

There is a dearth of feature articles published in the Maubima Newspaper under the label Port City and in the sample that has been taken notice of, the statement made by Mr. Kassapa Senarath has been quoted in the feature article on 19.09.2021 under the headline “Take a walk along the pedestrian lanes and enjoy the beauty and charm of the Port City” In addition, the article with the statement made by Mr. Namal Rajapaksa published on 30.04.2021 under the headline “The Port City is an oasis and job hub for the educated people of Sri Lanka” can be interpreted as a news rather than a feature article. Mr. Aluvihare has been quoted as saying in the article “Jobs in the Port City will stop brain drain”.

Lawyer Sanjeeva Prasanna Fonseka on September 17. 2021, adducing and delineating the facts in a feature article published in the Dinamina Newspaper says that “Apart from this, the Port City is a Chinese Colony, the land is owned by China, this is a threat to sovereignty and another State is established within a State.” This type of false and vicious propaganda can be considered as strong objections made by the powerful States using their cat’s paw. It may be important for anyone who has doubts such as “Who really has the right of land in Colombo Port City?” to read the judgment delivered by the Supreme Court regarding the ‘Port City Commission Bill’. As stated on its page 20, once a land is filled, it becomes a part of the land of Sri Lanka according to the provisions of the Government Land Ordinance Act, and as such, the Port City too is a part of our land as it becomes a part of Sri Lanka’s land.”Dinamina Newspaper which is the

Government's daily Sinhala Newspaper confirms the facts about the Port City in this way.

When considering the individual statements being made and bringing intellectuals into conversation, Government Newspapers and Newspapers published by Tamil media have mostly used intellectuals and responsible officers. In addition, Lankadeepa Newspaper has focused its attention on intellectuals as well as politicians. In cases where politicians are used, it can be seen how negative views are generated on the Port City. There are not so many instances where people's ideas were broached and discussed in the Newspapers of the Diva in a and the Mawbima

Journalist's Interpretations

The role of the feature journalist plays a vital and crucial part which has a serious impact on creating a positive or negative frame about the Port City. The Diva in a and Maubima Newspapers draws attention as the Newspapers in which journalist's interpretations are seen mostly. In the Silumina Newspaper too which is Government's Sinhala Newspaper, journalist's interpretations could be observed mostly compared to the Veerakesari, Lankadeepa and Sunday Observer.

It is possible to identify instances where the Maubima Newspaper have presented negative views on the Chinese connection. The following news excerpt is an example which confirms and ratifies this fact. There is a story that says, "There are only two best goods in China.", i.e. The Great Wall of China and the prostitutes of China only." The purpose of the Chinese effort is to establish Chinese neo-colonialism through the economy. This statement is included in the article "Debiddo" (August 18, 2022), written under the pseudonym Meghanada. Spreading and propagating wrong data to create a wrong image of China without citing proper sources can also be detected in Maubima Newspaper." They bought General Motors, a well-known automobile company in America on 18.11.2010 for 500 million US dollars and they also bought the G. M. Global Steering Company on 07.07.2010 for USD 450 million. Triple H, Kohl Company was also bought on 12.03.2012 for 541 million US dollars. This way, from 1996 to 2014, China has taken over the possession of 51 large American companies" (August 18, 2022 Mawbima). Although numerical figures are presented here, but no source is cited. Therefore, it implies that from the point of view of journalist's interpretation, this has been written and couched to raise a strong antagonistic and hostile opinion on China. For example, the first point here is that the statement that General Motors was bought is grossly inaccurate and false. According to international media reports including Reuters, only 0.97% of shares have been purchased. Reuters has reported it as follows. "SAIC Motor Corporation on Thursday said that a Hong Kong-based subsidiary had acquired a nearly 1 percent stake in General Motors Co. as part of the U.S. automaker's initial public offering," reports said. (November 18, 2010) According to the Website of the Company, "As well as SAIC Motor Corporation, Limited announced that it is a wholly owned subsidiary SAIC Motor HK Investment Limited acquired 15,151,515 ordinary shares from General Motors (GM), which accounts around 0.97% of GM's total equity, at a price of US\$33 dollars per share, totaling US\$499,999,995 dollars." ([https:// www.greencarcongress.com/](https://www.greencarcongress.com/) 18 November 2010). This piece of information has been confirmed. It is a humorous and ridiculous point to say that the company was bought for a song such as for a mere five hundred US dollars. This same piece of information could also be seen in an article published on June 13, 2014 in Lanka E-News under the headline "Our economy that went to China from thinking or eating food by asking from the China-Lanka Trade Agreement" . It has mentioned that it was written by a special correspondent and no source of information is mentioned. When reading this article, it could be inferred that the same journalist who wrote this article has written that article too. This is a reporting done in gross violation of media principles.

The Diva in a Newspaper is a newspaper that consists of feature articles written with the journalist's interpretations in such a way that a positive picture of China is created. It is well illustrated by the following example. The following paragraph included into the article under the heading "The story related by the international media about the Chinese debt trap" written by the senior journalist Shamindra Ferdinando on

September 12, 2021 is an interpretation by the journalist about the Western opinion on China. “It must be emphasized that the conflict with China, being the emerging world superpower is also implemented in Sri Lanka by the US-led military-political-economic coalition. It is not very difficult to understand that this unholy alliance is launching a scathing attack on Sri Lanka with a political objective. It must also be emphasized that the media operations are an extension of a political-economic-military operation. Many countries have been faced with this terrible situation. The world has not forgotten how the fertile country was invaded in 2003 on the pretext of the concocted story which the Western media repeatedly reported that Saddam Hussein’s country possessed weapons of mass destruction that were never found in Iraq. Even today, such weapons have not been found. The ‘Wion’ video, which highlighted the growing debt crisis in China, had a wider circulation in social media networks with a high response. It is clearly conspicuous that the foreign media working in collusion with the Western forces and the media puppets and stooges of Sri Lanka are targeting a vitriolic attack on China-Sri Lanka relations. It is purely a political project launched to build an opposition and hostility in Sri Lanka against China. It is also true that there has been a media operation against China since some time. The media mechanism and operation launched against Sri Lanka is extremely powerful and potential. The government’s media operations are relatively weak.” Also, in the articles written by Chatura Pamunwa, Shyam Nuwan Ganewatta and others of the Diva in a Newspaper, they have been written and presented with the journalist’s interpretations data to create a positive picture. It is also possible to identify instances where journalists provided interpretations to deny and repudiate the fallacious delusion about the Chinese debt trap. In the featured article published by Chatura Pamunuwa on January 10, 2022, it is mentioned that “As of 2019, less than \$9 billion of Sri Lanka’s total debt out of \$57 billion has been taken from China, so that the allegations that China has ensnared Sri Lanka into a ‘debt trap’ are flatly rejected.” etc.

Use of numerical data and reports

There are many examples and instances of the Port City being reported widely with its related figures and data in the print media. The Newspapers such as the Diva in a, the Silumina, the Lankadeepa and the Sunday Observer bear sample testimony to this fact. It is also possible to observe the citation of numerical data and figures and reports as evidence in the statements made by the scholars who expressed their opinions on this project.

The Lankadeepa Newspaper on December 02, 2020, has presented a feature article citing the first social responsibility report issued by the Colombo Port City Project and its main Company China Communications Construction Company (CCCC). This report consists of the mission carried out by the Company from September 2014 to November 2019 for the people, employees, customers, and the environment.

Silumina Newspaper on 12.9.2020 quotes a research report by Price Water House Coopers. Price Water House Coopers International Limited is a British multinational professional services Brand Name and it is operating under the PWC brand. “PWC (Price Water House Coopers), a Company making an independent study on this project, says due to this Port City, our country will get benefits of 2,36,000 crore rupees per year. Accordingly, in another 20 years, we will also be able to have the opportunity to compete and contend well with neighboring India and China in various fields.”

The article published in the Silumina Newspaper on October 10, 2020, under the headline “Colombo Port City Project gets a world class award” is very important. As mentioned in it, the Engineering News Record (ENR), an International Engineering and Construction Magazine published in America, annually selects the best projects out of the Engineering and Construction Projects launched and done in the world and awards them. The Colombo Port City Project has won the Outstanding Global Project Award at the 8th Annual ENR Engineering Awards. In addition to this, in 2017, we were fortunate enough to bag the Silver Award for Master Planning of the Port City Project at the Singapore Landscape Architecture Awards. We also Received a Gold Award at the Yuan Ye Urban Design Awards held in China in 2018. This award-winning

project is managed by China Harbor Engineering Company. It is also the sole owner of the China Communications Construction Company (CCCC), and it was ranked 04th in the ENR's 2020 Top International Contractors List. Presenting this information is important in the background of a statement which Ms. Teplitz, the American Ambassador to Sri Lanka, made at a press briefing with the journalists which runs as "Since a Company engaged in the development of Port Cities has been included into the blacklist or list of sanctions in the United States of America, it may not be desirable and appropriate to do business with that Company." The Dinamina Newspaper on 2021.09.17 has reported on this statement made by the Ambassador. Accordingly, the above article is a very good counter argument.

In reporting on the Sino-Sri Lankan relationship, the Diva in a Newspaper does a positive and optimistic reporting. A good example of this attitude is the following information taken from the article dated 10. January 2022, "Chinese Foreign Minister's visit to Sri Lanka, an inquisitive and curious third country". "China has become Sri Lanka's largest aid provider. Eighteen (18) million doses of vaccines named Sino pharm have been donated to Sri Lanka by August 29, 2021 after the Covid-19 pandemic, and 10 billion Yuan (about \$1.5 billion) has been granted to Sri Lanka through a currency exchange transaction as a remedy to the dollar crisis. According to the website of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the above information is confirmed (MOFA, PRC, 2007).

In the editorial of Dinamina Newspaper on 01. 12. 2022., the Central Bank reports have been cited to substantiate the facts. "The Chinese Embassy too in Colombo presented a summary of Sri Lanka's debt citing the foreign debt summary published by the Central Bank. Accordingly, the major lenders to Sri Lanka as of April 2021 are Market Borrowing/International Sovereign Bonds (ISB) – 47%, Asian Development Bank (ADB) – 13%, China – 10%, Japan – 10% World Bank – 9 %. These facts have been confirmed by the Central Bank Report. (Department of External Resources 2021 report)

The Silumina Newspaper of June 24, 2023 in its headline "Let's go to the Port City to see Corals" clearly presents statistics on Port City area. "The extent of land area of the Port City of Colombo is only 269 hectares or 664 acres. But the total space including the breakwater and the moat around which we recently walked observing the coral cultivation is 446 hectares or 1102 acres. This entire land has been declared as freehold land or sole property of the Government of Sri Lanka through an Act of Parliament. Out of the 269 hectares of that land, buildings can be constructed only in an area of 178 hectares i.e., 439 acres. The remaining 91 hectares, or 224 acres, is reserved for public infrastructure such as highways, strips of beaches, parks, pedestrian lanes, canals, etc. Of the 178 hectares where buildings can be constructed, only 116 hectares i.e., 286 acres have been given to the Project Company on a 99-year lease basis. The remaining 62 hectares, i.e., 153 acres, is freely available at the discretion of the government for its direct use or to lease it to any other party." In addition to the Silumina Newspaper, other Newspapers such as Sunday Observer, Divaina, Veerakesari and Lankadeepatoo have presented quantitative data about this respectively.

Annexation of politics

According to the ownership of each media outlet, the political allegiance and loyalty of the newspaper seems to be an important and vital factor in reporting on the Port City. There are ample examples of State-owned Media such as Sunday Observer, Silumina and Dinamina Newspapers which can be identified as Newspapers reporting in favour of the ruling government. A very good example of the political allegiance of the State Media is the Dinamina editorial of 20.02.2015 titled "Will 'Port City' work?" The Port City of Colombo is an artificial building. We mayor may not get the economic benefits and advantages out of that building. China's political goals may be different than we think. This particular editorial tries to subtly build a wrong image and picture of China based on political allegiance and party bias. The article published in the Dinamina Newspaper on 07. 05.2018, under the title "Oh! My brother.... (Ayo Malli...) how the country was betrayed, and election done" was also written with the sense of a political allegiance and loyalty.

“Chinese Companies are also known for offering money under the table or providing opportunities for underhanded deals. The China Harbor Company which is said to have allegedly offered money to Mahinda’s team, in the process of doing similar deal of offering bribe in Bangladesh was caught red-handed with the money and expelled from the country. It has been reported that this Company was banned for eight years because of such a similar act done with regard to a World Bank Project in the Philippines. The situation is same with other Companies. This is called ‘Beijing Consensus’ in which it is mentioned how China is taking over various countries around the world.” By observing the written articles after the change of government, it is clear that such articles have been written to glorify the existing government”. Silumina 2021/04/24 Understanding the importance and the value of the Colombo Port City, the government of Good Governance decided to rebuild the Colombo Port City. To take revenge on the Rajapaksas, the authorities of the Good Governance acted to hold the construction of the Colombo Port City in abeyance for about 2 1/2 years. Due to this delay, the loss incurred to the country is billions of rupees.

“Disregarding the point of land rights that would affect the sovereignty of the country, leaving out the study reports of possible potential environmental hazards and allowing China to have a gift deed out of private property would finally open the door definitely to a regional political crisis” (2015.03.15 Silumina). In the Sunday Observer Newspaper article dated 22.02.2015 in its selected sample, it is stated as” The Colombo Port City project is coming under heavy flak as political higher ups and environmentalists were crying foul of the project”. This article emphasizes the fact that the politicians and environmentalists exerted a very strong influence. But there is no reporting done against the project or against the Chinese government. The implication by this is that when compared to the Sinhala media, English media have not formed a negative opinion about the Port City even during the change of government.

In comparison to Government Newspapers, private Newspapers in reporting on the Port City has criticized the present government in a bitter and scathing way with critical and caustic statements that have a negative impact on the Port City and Chinese relations. “Debiddo” is such an article published in Maubima Newspaper on 18.08.2022. It is stated as follows. “The Rajapakshas jeopardized the country and made it vulnerable to China and economically weak by taking unpayable loans and by ceding separate territories free to China. ”It further went on to say, “It is China that became instrumental in the launch of Colombo Port City Project. The work started in a very festive manner with due pomp and pageantry and fanfare.” The advertisements said that the world’s greatest wonder and miracle was happening in Colombo. “A new diva in a for the country.”, “The city opened through heritage to Sri Lankans”, “Colombo (Columbota) is a wonderland, a miracle in a glorious land”, “The greatest leap forward in development is beginning”, “The great source of foreign wealth, and an oasis for new jobs”, “The Commercial Center of the region” etc. Those ads mentioned above were shaped and embellished by exaggerated and embroidered words.” using hyperbole, satire and making mockery out of the Port City Project.

The feature article published in Veerakesari Newspaper on April 26. 2021 quoting Tilvin Silva (a JVP leader) under the headline “JVP explains the reason why Sri Lanka surrendered to China” is fraught within compatible and anti-government statements. Views and opinions such as ‘ It will be a place where black money is laundered.’ ‘ It will be a strategic location that will destroy our culture.’ ‘ The One Country One Law policy has been violated.’ ‘ Although more cities like the Port Cities of Colombo were built, but there was no major development being recorded.’ ‘ The arrival of the investors is skeptical and uncertain.’ ‘ Domestic investors cannot transact in rupees.’ etc. have been presented.

The ownership of Lankadeepa Newspaper is held by the Wijewardena family which paved the way to the founding and origin of the United National Party. Many of the present UNP leaders, including the current President are members of the Wijewardena family. The current owner, Ranjith Wijewardena, is the paternal uncle of Mr Ranil Wickramasinghe. It seems obvious that this newspaper has mostly quoted UNP politicians and articles by UNP politicians when reporting on the Port City. Municipal Development Cabinet Minister Patali Champika Ranawaka, Dr. Harsha de Silva and both of leaders who are in favour and against

this Project have been quoted. In the article published on 23.09.2014 under the title “The Port rises, both good and bad aspects of it”, UNP MP Harsha de Silva, who was an Opposition member at that time was quoted and reported as saying that the Port City Project is a unsuccessful and failed project. The Lankadeepa Newspaper in its article on 2018.02.13 has quoted and reported Mr. Patali Champika Ranawaka, who was the Minister of the UNP government on the Port City as saying, “Will Colombo City buildings sink with the construction of the port city.?”

The article under the headline, “Even if America can’t, China can play any game in Sri Lanka?” published on 30.04. 2023 in the Divaina Newspaper has been composed by connecting national and international politics. “It is no secret that President Rajapaksa followed a pro-China policy. A former Indian foreign secretary, Shivashankar Menon, wrote in 2016, ‘Choices (Inside the Making of Indian Foreign Policy)’ has made a contentious and controversial statement about how that relationship was built. It is clearly conspicuous from this study of the newspapers that the theme of annexation and appertaining politics can be identified in the articles published in the newspapers related to the Port City.

Exploratory and Investigative Reporting

The government media has also paid much attention to exploratory and investigative reporting. Research reports, evaluations based on scholarly opinions, etc., have been presented with special reference to other cities and regions. As an example of people’s reports, “PWC (Price Water House Coopers), a company that conducted an independent study on this last year, says that due to this Port City, our country will accrue benefits of 2,36,000 crore rupees per year. (2020/09/12)” can be indicated. Another example that can be mentioned here is that reporting on the Port City with examples of receiving awards. “The main and foremost award is the Best Global Project Award for the Colombo Port City Project at the 8th Annual ENR Engineering Awards.” Another example of achievement is the Silver Award for the Master Planning of the Harbor City Project at the Singapore Landscape Architecture Awards 2017” The New Port City Development Project will be (2020/10/10), As an example of scholarly comments being made, following is a comment by Dr. Suratissa Dissanayake of the Department of Environmental Science and Zoology, University of Colombo. “Zainbo Oman Industrial City, which is being built on the Arabian Sea at a cost of 10.7 billion dollars, has an area of 11 square kilometers. When considered in this way, such new cities are being built in 40 countries such as Malaysia, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, Ecuador, Oman, Kazakhstan, and Kenya. (2021/04/24) The world’s best and largest graphite deposits are found in North Korea. Although some of the graphite from North Korea which is isolated from the world is transported to China, as North Korea is not in the world graphite market, so that Sri Lanka can be among the top ten graphite producers in the world today (2021/06/12).

The Silumina feature article “Let’s See Corals in Port City” presents a detailed article on the coral reefs in the sea around Port City. It is a successful and convincing article used to refute and deny the negative perception about Port City. It was evidently apparent that Port City Breakwater has all the necessary factors for coral cultivation. That is, clean water, clear sunlight, constant salt concentration and temperature of over 20 degrees Celsius, all of which are the necessary factors for coral growth and for their good survival which are best concentrated in the breakwater zone around this Port City (2023.06.24).

Private Newspapers have also shown a keen interest in publishing articles by academics who present information in an exploratory and investigative manner. The government’s English Newspaper too has taken an exploratory and investigative approach through discussions held with academics. Sunday Observer Newspaper of 2017.07.16 which published the article ‘Colombo on par with top world cities’ quoting Liang Thow Ming, Chief Sales, and Marketing Officer of the CHEC Port City Colombo (Pvt.) Ltd. is an article full of investigative comments and opinions. “When we compare with similar projects globally such as Palm Jumeriah in Dubai (572 HA), Pearl in Doha, Qatar (400 HA), Marina Bay in Singapore (360 HA), the Port City in Colombo (269 HA) and DIFC in Dubai (51 HA), the Port City in Colombo is 20 percent smaller than the Marina Bay in Singapore,” says Liang Thow Ming presenting a detailed description of its Port

Cities. Veerakesari Newspaper is reporting investigative information through foreign sources. It is revealed that the feature articles published in the Divaina, Lankadeepa and Maubima Newspapers are less exploratory and fact finding when compared to the Government Sinhala Newspaper.

Use of special phraseology, words, terms, and headings

Most of the headlines found in feature articles in Newspapers that have reported on the Port City are positive and optimistic. The headlines of the government newspapers take pride of place among them. ‘The turning point of the Sri Lankan economy,’ ‘a world-class wonderland,’ ‘a giant leap in the economy,’ ‘a modern eco-friendly sustainable city concept,’ ‘the port city of Colombo built according to the smart city concept,’ ‘the central center of South Asia,’ ‘the future city’ (Silumina) emerging from the sea,’ ‘a tourist paradise,’ (Lankadeepa) The ‘city of the future’ rising from the ocean, ‘the economic Center of South Asia,’ ‘the largest direct foreign investment,’ (Veerakesari), ‘a lovely friendly city,’ ‘the turning point of Sri Lanka’s economy,’ (Divaina) ‘the financial hub,’ ‘Gateway to South Asia,’ ‘the largest and most ambitious development project ever undertaken in Sri Lanka,’ (Sunday Observer) ‘The center connecting Sri Lanka with the world market,’ ‘the gateway to South Asia, A wonderful Port City that opens to the world,’ ‘the turning point of the Sri Lankan economy,’ ‘the heart of the economy, (Divaina) ‘the way to conquer the world,’ ‘the strategic city of the Silk Road, ‘the first special economic zone to be established in Sri Lanka based on the commerce and service sector,’ ‘Sri Lanka’s Strategic partner’ etc. can be cited as many positive applications and constructive criticism included in Government Newspapers and in Divaina, Veerakesari and Lankadeepa Newspapers respectively. But there is a lack of use of such phraseology, terms, and expressions in Maubima Newspaper.

Table 04 – Newspapers Headlines

Newspaper	Positive Headlines	Positive %	Negative Headlines	Negative %	Neutral Headlines	%
	(n)		(n)		(n)	
Government newspaper (English)	12	60%	0	0%	8	40%
Divaina	12	60%	0	0%	8	40%
Government newspaper (Sinhala)	16	80%	2	10%	2	10%
Veerakesari (Tamil)	12	60%	2	10%	6	30%
Lankadeepa	8	40%	2	10%	10	50%
Maubima	4	20%	4	20%	12	60%
Total	64		10		46	
average	10.66667	53%	1.666667	8%	7.666667	38%

Silumina newspaper used more positive headlines, and to increase its quality, the following types of headlines were used. “A wonderful port city open to the whole world, the turning point of the Sri Lankan economy is the port city of Colombo. The source of foreign exchange earnings is open to the whole world. Let’s freely enter the world of dreams come true. Embrace the attractive and fascinating environment of Colombo Port City, wake up, dream into reality. see”. Compared to that, Sunday Observer, Veerakesari, Divaina newspapers also use significant positive headlines. In Lankadeepa newspaper, the figure is about 40% and in Mawbima newspaper, the figure is 20%. The two newspapers used more neutral headlines because of the low percentage of positive headlines. “Can China play in Sri Lanka even if America can’t? Does Sri Lanka need an artificial beach? Can goods be produced in port city economic zones?” Headlines that make a negative statement can be introduced, and about 38% of headlines imply other things.

Representation of data and information by means of graphics and photographs.

Silumina Newspaper uses mostly graphics in many cases. Sunday Observer and Silumina have used infographics in Newspaper articles. divaina Newspaper reports as ‘We have got a new beach for us although the sea encompasses all around the country’ The article on 2023.07.23 consists of photos that show the fascination, attraction, and charm inside the Port City. The photo of the beach includes photos of people playing in the sea, restaurants etc. located there.

PORT CITY, COLOMBO IN NUMBERS



Source- Sunday observer 2017/07/16

Veerakesiri Newspaper is rated high in terms of the use of photographs and Silumina and Sunday Observer too have a higher rate of using photographs. Compared to this, the use of photographs in other newspapers is remarkably less or low.

Mentioning the Importance, Requirements and Benefits and Highlighting Weaknesses and Shortcomings

The study shows that the employment opportunities generated by this project and the positive impact and effect of this project made on the country's economy have been recorded. A good example of this is the article published by Veerakesari Newspaper citing a Xinhua report about becoming the economic epicenter and hub of South Asia. Having realized the true potential of the projects and its ability to become the core or the catalyst, not only America and India, even the countries such as Dubai and Singapore seemed to be dazed and stunned about the emergence Colombo Port City. Divaina Newspaper article dated January 10, 2022, has mentioned about BRI as “One Belt – One Road” is an attempt to revive the historic Silk Road that passed through the Chinese border and Europe. This concept was first proclaimed by Chinese President Xi Jinping in 2013. China has launched mass scale projects in regional countries such as Pakistan, Indonesia and Cambodia including the Sri Lanka Port City Project. On the whole, BRI is reported and recorded on a very low scale in Sri Lankan newspapers. BRI is hardly mentioned in articles written about the Port City. In an article published in the Divaina Newspaper of June 22, 2014 before laying the foundation stone for the Port City, states that it was the UNP which mooted the proposal for the Port City. “The proposed plan for this also took place during 2001-2004 when the UNP was in Parliamentary power in the country. A report was prepared for that and the Port City has been proposed under the two planning areas of the

“Development Guiding Plan”. According to Sunday Observer Newspaper of 16 July 2017 in 2002, incumbent Prime Minister Ranil Wickremasinghe who was also then Prime Minister initiated a study on this project and a request was made in 2004 for a City Development Project, which included a reclamation of 116 hectares at the same location that we are reclaiming right now etc. According to The Sunday Leader Newspaper, views and opinions on the Port City have also been discussed in the year 2011. This can be confirmed by the chapter in the Sunday Leader Newspaper. The New Port City Development Project will be implemented in March 2011? said the Chairman of Ports Authority, Dr. Priyath Wickrama in an exclusive interview with The Sunday Leader Newspaper. The New Port City is a concept of President Mahinda Rajapaksa who was apparently inspired while out on a visit to inspect the landfill being constructed for the Colombo South port.

(<http://www.thesundayleader.lk/2011/01/09/>) This concludes that Sri Lanka has been interested in the Port City even before the concept of its BRI project emerged. Therefore, it is totally incorrect to imply and suggest that the Port City was a burden and problem imposed by China on Sri Lanka. The article published on January 10, 2022 in Divaina Newspaper adduces and outlines the Port City as a solution to the economic crisis that Sri Lanka is currently faced with.” This Port City of Colombo will make a great contribution to overcome the huge challenge of debt repayment until 2025 through developing dollar reserves. A lot of myths aspersion and misinformation on the Port City were also spread across the country during the past.

One of such opinions was that the Port City land had been sold to China and currently it is owned by the China Harbor Company. In fact, such campaigns and bogus and malicious propaganda were carried out by the saboteurs and other destructive elements with the aim of embarrassing and inconveniencing the government in the background of an Act of Parliament which had already passed and recognized that this land of Sri Lanka is the sole property of the Republic of Sri Lanka .In the article “Economic Treasure emerged from the Sea” published on January 17, 2023 in the Divaina Newspaper, Mr. Suranga Silva, Professor of the Department of Economics at the University of Colombo says, “Today, China is a country with a potentially powerful economy. Our transactions and dealings with them are not blind but very logical and rational. Even if China is replaced or substituted by India or America, it should not be rejected either. Any country in Europe can invest here. Bringing foreign investments into the country is the best and only viable and feasible way to overcome the present crisis created in the country at present. It is a very accurate and important decision to get rid of the mentality of dependence and debt and replace it with the concept of investment. Due to the uninterrupted inflow of foreign investments into the country, the development achieved in the fields of technology, knowledge and services is not confined to a limited number of people. The direct, indirect and stimulating effects generated by this will spread across the entire population.” This article is generating a clear understanding of the benefits of the Port City.

The article of Silumina newspaper on 24/08/2019 has tried its best to make the people aware of and to give them a clear understanding about BRI and CHEC. China Harbor Engineering Company Port City Colombo (Private Ltd.) Project, operating under the China Harbor Engineering Company (CHEC) and making an active contribution to the rapid development of Sri Lanka since 1998, is another project of China Communications Construction Company Limited (CCCC), which has completed many a major infrastructure projects in Sri Lanka including Southern Expressway, Outer Ring Road, Hambanthota Port, Mattala International Airport and Colombo South Container Terminal. A 15 billion US dollar project is being built as one step of China’s Belt & Road (BRI) innovation, which is considered the new Silk Road. Upon completion of the Port City project worth 15 billion US dollars being built as one step of China’s Belt & Road (BRI) innovation which is considered the new Silk Road, project it is expected that property values and tax values will increase enormously, especially in the surrounding suburbs of Colombo 1, 2, and 3. “It says.

Government Newspapers as well as other Newspapers have tried to dispel the myth and dogma about the

debt trap. Foreign Minister Ali Sabri’s statement made on 2022/08/04 at the meeting of Foreign Ministers on Cooperation in East Asia in Phnom Penh, the capital of Cambodia, that the Chinese debt trap is just a completely baseless rumor was reported in the press. Flatly rejecting the so-called Chinese “debt trap” claim, the Sri Lankan Foreign Minister emphasized that China owns only 10 percent of Sri Lanka’s foreign debt. He also stated that none of the partners or parties involved in China’s One Belt One Road Project has fallen prey into a debt trap so far. Mr. Ali Sabri, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, while on an official visit to America has stated that every time Sri Lanka requested economic support from China, the Chinese government received us very respectfully and complied with our request and that the concocted story of “debt trap” is a sarcastic, defamatory and insulting expression made by the West” This had been reported on 01. 12 2022 in Dinamina editorial. Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesman Zhao Lijian said on Oct. 13. 2020 that Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa has publicly and flatly rejected the claim that China has set up a debt trap to control Sri Lanka. It was reported by Ada (Today) Newspaper of Vijaya Newspaper Company as a news of the following day issue. (14. 10. 2020, Ada (Today) Newspaper) In addition, Maubima Newspaper caption on 2023.08/23 which ran as “Indian aid China loan trap” emphasizes that the Chinese debt trap is totally fake and false. “However, most of Sri Lanka’s commercial loans are US loans. The amount of commercial loans given by the countries including America, Europe and Japan representing the Paris Group is as twice the amount of loan as mentioned in this debt trap in China. The article in Lankadeepa Newspaper on 01.26.2021 under the headline “Is Sri Lanka a victim of a debt trap?” also emphasizes that what has happened in Sri Lanka is that foreign debt is not properly managed.

According to Dr. Vageesha Gunasekara, the imperialist bloc that dominates the international media and many of the local media cohorts and pawns that are mentally enslaved to it have equated the image of China to that of an unscrupulous money lender or a Shylock. Not only this media but also many academics tell the public that China is trying to snare poor countries in a “debt trap” by lending them money on a mass scale. During the tenure of office of the former American President Donald Trump, the then Vice President Mike Pence who paid attention to Hambantota Port called this as China’s Debt-Trap Diplomacy. She has stated this at a press briefing speaking to Ettha (Truth) Newspaper on 28 March 2021.

The main themes that emerge from the analysis of this content can be categorized under the following themes: Indian factor, China-Sri Lanka relationship, Sri Lanka’s geographical location, global trends of the Port City concept, legal background, benefits and opportunities, social and cultural impact, economic impact, and political background. The content that feeds and nurtures the above themes can be summarized under the following frameworks.

Table 05-Framing of the Content

Positive	Using the Special Phrases	Silumina,dinamina
		divaina
		Virakesari
		Lankadeepa
		Sunday observer
	Mentioning the values, our needs, and benefits of Port City	Silumina,dinamina
		Divaina
		Veerakesari
		Lankadeepa
	Investigative reporting	Silumina,dinamina
		Divaina
	Using the experts’ reviews and the responsible persons	Lankadeepa
Silunina, dinaminavirakeasari Sunday Observer		

	Using the reliable resources and facts and figures	Silumina, Dinamina Lankadeepa
	Counter arguments	Dinamina, Lankadeepa, Divaina
	Mentioning of good ties between China and Sri Lanka	Silumina, Dinamina,
Negative	False information and misleading information	Mawbima
	Irresponsible statements and political loyalty	Mawbima
	Special phrases	Mawbima
	Quoting the Western resources	Lankadeepa
	Negatively Reporting on the Chinese influence	Divaina, Mawbima, Dinamina
Neutral	Reporting the political matter	Mawbima
	Covering only the event	Mawbima
	Political statements	Mawbima, Veerakesari

According to this table, Government Newspapers have stimulated mostly themes that foster a positive frame while Mawbima, Lankadeepa, Dinamina and Divaina Newspapers have stimulated negative themes. Stimulation of moderate themes is seen in Lankadeepa, Veerakesari and Mawbima Newspapers.

CONCLUSION

The main conclusion that can be identified from this study is that in reporting on the Port City in the Newspapers, positive reporting creating a positive image can be seen in almost every Newspaper, but the government media builds a positive image on the Port City compared to the media of private ownership, while English and Tamil newspapers create a positive frame in relative to Sinhala Newspapers. The current existing political context has influenced on the reporting of the Port City in the government newspapers. The negative reporting on the Port City is seen in the first quarter of Good Governance (Yahapalana Government) and then it changes.

Media ownership does not seem to have impacted and influenced much on the reporting on the Port City, but some of the interpretations by journalists have influenced to create a positive or negative image of the Port City. When considering individual statements made on the Port City, critical statements and casting aspersions on the Port City project are not found in the feature articles, while scholars who have written articles present a positive picture of the Port City. These feature articles do not consist of any further reporting on the China Sri Lanka relationship or the BRI project. Journalists from the diva in a Newspaper and the government's Sunday Newspaper Silumina report exploratory and investigative reports on the Port City Project. But the Sri Lankan media had hardly used or had used very little to quote scholars who had a good awareness and understanding of the BRI project and the Port City Project. Even in editorials and articles which consists of political analysis, the absence of citations being quoted from a formal search is particularly noticeable and obvious. A distinctive feature found in articles related to the Port City was the criticism of political allegiance and loyalty and the political process in particular. It is evidently apparent that less attention has been paid to diplomatic matters.

There is a dearth of Sinhala media Newspapers quoting excerpts from foreign media compared to English

and Tamil media. Western and Indian media influence on feature articles is less and deeper exploration into them is not done or obviously seen. The government media has presented more about the benefits and advantages and opportunities. Mostly critical and caustic articles have been published in private media against the Port City. There is a positive nature in the sample considered when the Divaina Newspaper was reporting on the Port City. Choosing the right sources, pointing out the shortcomings of Western sources and highlighting the need for and importance of benefits of the Port City can be cited as good features among those positive features. A special feature that can be observed in the Newspapers such as divaina and the Maubimais that they have included Indian influence in their articles related to the Port City. Compared to other Newspapers, Maubima Newspaper seems to lack positive reporting on the Port City. The reporting has been done from a purely political perspective without understanding the China-Sri Lanka relationship.

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