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China's Military Foreign Policy toward Sri Lanka (2005-2019)

CHEN Ou¹

¹ Postgraduate Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Peradeniya, Peradeniya, Sri Lanka. E-mail: copulk@gmail.com

Abstract

Military foreign policy is an important component of China's foreign policy toward Sri Lanka. Since China and Sri Lanka announced to establish "all-round cooperative partnership" in 2005, China has pushed forward its closer relations with Sri Lanka through its shifting military foreign policy. In this period, China's "national defense policy of active defense" in the new era outlines the principle for China's military foreign policy toward Sri Lanka. China's military foreign policy toward Sri Lanka aims at three major objectives: to raise China's military soft power in Sri Lanka, to make preliminary prepare for potential further development of Sri Lanka to be an important oversea military of China, and to develop Sri Lanka into a stable and growing consumer of China's arms trade. In diplomatic practice, China has depended on military exchange, military trade and military assistance to further develop the China-Sri Lanka military diplomatic relations in this period. On the whole, China has carried out a friendly and pushy military foreign policy to make a significant contribution for the all-round and deep development and enhancement of the China-Sri Lanka relations in this period.

Keywords: Military Foreign Policy, Military Diplomacy, China-Sri Lanka Relations, China's Foreign Policy toward Sri Lanka

1. Introduction

In the past decades of the China-Sri Lanka diplomatic relations, China's military policy toward Sri Lanka has long been an important part of China's foreign policy toward Sri Lanka. Entering the 21st century, China has shifted its foreign policy to a kind of strategy-expansory foreign policy for its forming global development strategy. In the process, Sri Lanka has significantly risen its strategic significance on China's diplomacy. In 2005, China and Sri Lanka announced to establish "all-round cooperative partnership." And in 2013, China and Sri Lanka upgraded their relationship to "strategic cooperative partnership." Military diplomacy has been an important developmental direction for "all-round" and "strategic." From the following three main aspects, this study aims to discuss and outline China's military, foreign policy toward Sri Lanka in this period from 2005 to 2019.

2. China's "National Defense Policy of Active Defense" in the New Era

Benefiting from the various experiences and lessons from the five-thousand-year history of the Chinese Civilization, contemporary Chinese profoundly recognizes, "even if a country may become strong, bellicosity

will lead to its ruin" and "considering peace and harmony as fundamentals," thus contemporary Chinese has essentially disagreed such a logic of "strong power must be seeking hegemony" (Xi, 2015). Since the establishment of New China in 1949, China has long pursued a kind of "national defense policy of active defense"—"adherence to the unity of strategic defense and tactical offense" (State Council Information Office of China, 2015). China's national defense policy of active defense reflects in the following four aspects.

First, it reflects in China's commitment on national defense. As a great power with powerful national strength, China solemnly announced "never seeking hegemony" as early as the Mao Zedong era. By 2019, China further promised "never seeking hegemony, expansion or sphere of influence" (State Council Information Office of China, 2019) on its white paper *China's National Defense in the New Era*. In addition, China solemnly pledged "No First Use" of nuclear weapons at any time and any circumstances at its first explosion of atomic bomb in 1964. Until today, China has still been the only one of the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council to carry out "No First Use" of nuclear weapons policy.

Second, it reflects in China's military strategic guidance. China has adhered the military strategic guidance of "the principles of defense, self-defense and post-strike response" (State Council Information Office of China, 2000). Another more familiar expression of the military strategic guidance is "we will not attack unless we are attacked, but we will surely counterattack if attacked" (State Council Information Office of China, 2015). This famous political slogan was first put forward by Mao Zedong in 1939. This is a reasonable explanation why new China defined its only four wars (Note 1) after 1949 as "war of counterattack in self-defense."

Third, it reflects in China's "new security conception." With the end of the Cold War, since 1996, China has frequently advocated to cultivate new security concept instead of demodod security conception based on the idea of "zero-sum." In *China's Position Paper on the New Security Concept* submitted to the foreign ministers' meeting of the ASEAN Area Forum in 31st July 2002, China formally put forward its "new security conception" which has the core of "mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality and coordination" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China, 2002) Based on new security conception, China has made efforts to "build a new-model security partnership featuring equality, mutual trust and win-win cooperation" (State Council Information Office of China, 2019) in China's military diplomacy. Thus the new-model security partnership demands China to "continue to develop military-to-military relations that are non-aligned, non-confrontational and not directed against any third party" (State Council Information Office of China, 2015).

Fourth, it reflects in China's self-defining "global significance" for its military forces. China has long self-defined its military force as an important balance force to maintain world peace and anti-hegemony. With the fast development of China's national strength including military strength, China found the fast growing possibility to shift from "to think global significance according to China's understand" to "to design global significance according to China's understanding." On the Report to the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in 2012, China formally put forward its new "global mission" - "build a community of shared future for mankind." Later, the new "global mission" quickly became the highest-ranking mission of China's foreign policy including military foreign policy. In the white paper *China's National Defense in the New Era* issued in July 2019, China formally put forward "in the service of building of a community with a shared future for mankind" is "the global significance of China's national defense in the new era" (State Council Information Office of China, 2019). The global significance of China's national defense demands China's military forces to "fulfill their international responsibilities and obligations, and provide more public security goods to the international community to the best of their capacity" (State Council Information Office of China, 2019).

Entering the 21st century, under the confluence of "growing global economic and political interests, rapid technology-driven changes in modern warfare and perceptions of increased strategic-level external threats" (Defense Intelligence Agency of the US, 2019), China has gradually and profoundly shown more "active" contents of its "national defense policy of active defense." Since 2000, China's military forces have gradually shifted "from 'offshore waters defense' to the combination of 'offshore waters defense' with 'open seas

protection” (State Council Information Office of China, 2015). In its white paper *The Diversified Employment of China's Armed Forces* in 2013, China first put forward, “protect the security of strategic Sea Lines of Communication and overseas interests” (State Council Information Office of China, 2013). In its white paper *China's Military Strategy* in 2015, China first put forward: “China's armed forces will strengthen international security cooperation in areas crucially related to China's overseas interests, to ensure the security of such interests” (State Council Information Office of China, 2015).

3. Main Objectives of China's Military Policy toward Sri Lanka

Due to far geographic distance and limited national strength (particularly military strength), China had long holistically maintained a friendly but not very close military relationship with Sri Lanka since the establishment of the diplomatic relations in 1957. By the 1980s, the China-Sri Lanka military ties began to substantially “warm up” by continuous light-arms trades. Entering the new century, particular after the establishment of “all-round cooperative partnership” in 2005, the bilateral military relations have “suddenly” become growingly close. Behind the closeness, what are the main objectives of China's military policy toward Sri Lanka?

China clearly defines its fundamental goal of national defense in the new era as “resolutely safeguarding China's sovereignty, security and development interests” (State Council Information Office of China, 2019). China's military policy toward Sri Lanka naturally follows the fundamental goal. Since 2005, China has aimed to build to an all-round cooperative partnership with Sri Lanka. Thus in its military policy toward Sri Lanka, China's core objective was to develop Sri Lanka into China's military cooperative partner. The core objective can be further divided into at least three specific objectives of China's military policy toward Sri Lanka.

For the first specific objective, China has aimed to raise China's “military soft power” in Sri Lanka through military policy. In 2014, Chinese scholar Huang Jianguo created the conception of “military soft power” in his article “Military Soft Power Theory” published on *Journal of National Defense University* (China) (Chen, 2012). After the chairman of the Military Commission Hu Jintao specially made an instructor to strengthen the PLA soft-power-building work on 20 May 2006, “military soft power became a major research topic of the PLA and is regarded as an important component of China's holistic national soft power strategy” (Yang & Liu, 2008: 3). Since then on, the PLA has drawn more attention to China's military soft power – implement non-coercive measures to realize military strategic objective. In the China-Sri Lanka bilateral relations, China naturally set “praise China's military soft power” as its objective of military policy toward Sri Lanka.

For the second specific objective, China has aimed to develop Sri Lanka into an important oversea military base of China. Since the birth of new China in 1949, in the logical conception of China's national military policy of active defense, “oversea military base” has long been regarded as an obvious symbol of imperialism, colonialism and hegemonism. Entering the new century, China's national interests have gradually pervaded the world. In the white paper *China's Military Strategy* published in 2015, China also formally defined "safeguard oversea interests" as a strategic task of China's military forces. China has begun to frequently provide international public security goods, such as the normalized sea escort in the Indian Ocean, oversea rescue, anti-piracy, protect oversea Chinese citizens, etc. It became an urgent objective necessity to establish China's oversea military base in China's strategic transition from near seas defense to far seas protection. Under this background, China began rethinking of its logic conception of between oversea military base and "imperialism, colonialism and hegemonism." "To establish oversea military base through legal approach will not make change the fundamental principles of China's foreign policy and defensive national defense policy" (Liu, 2018). In the first two decades of the 21st century, China has heavily invested in the construction of ports in the golden maritime line of the Indian Ocean. The Colombo Port Project and the Hambantota Port Project may be considered as a potential part of China's oversea military base plan. In consideration of Sri Lanka's political reality and international factors, the two ports in Sri Lanka have most likely only played the role of China's military replenishment node for a future time.

For the third specific objective, China has aimed to develop Sri Lanka into a stable and growing consumer of China's arms. Due to national financial limitation and geography of island state, Sri Lanka has usually prepared a very small amount of budget for national defense. Thus, Sri Lanka has never been a big market in international armed trade. But because the "time-tested close friendship" between China and Sri Lanka and China's loose arms export policy, China has always been one of a few main arms exporters of Sri Lanka since the 1980s. Entering the 21st century, with a serial of technology breakthrough in research and development of own advanced military arms and weapons, China has fast developed into a world's main arms exporter. According to *SIPRI Yearbook 2015* (2015: 16), China has also become the third largest arms supplier in the world. But as newcomer, China has still mainly paid hope on the arms market of the developing countries. Though Sri Lanka is a "mini" arms market to China, a stable and growing arms export to Sri Lanka may play a good exemplary role in attracting other developing countries to import arms from China.

4. Practice of China's Military Policy toward Sri Lanka

In order to build a military cooperative partnership between China and Sri Lanka since 2005, China has made efforts to practice its military policy toward Sri Lanka. This section focuses on China's practice in military policy toward Sri Lanka from three main aspects: military exchange, military trade and military assistance. Table 1 lists main events related to the China-Sri Lanka military relations in this period.

Table 1 Main Events of China-Sri Lanka Military Relations (2005-2019)

Year	Main Events
2005.08	In her state-visit to China, President Kumaratunga specially met with Vice Chairman of the PLA Cao Gangchuan in Beijing.
2005	Sri Lanka totally imported 28 million USD worth of military arms from China.
2006	Sri Lanka totally imported 49 million USD worth of military arms from China.
2007.02	In first his state-visit to China, President Rajapaksa specially met with Chinese Minister of National Security and military forces.
2007	Sri Lanka totally imported 48 million USD worth of military arms from China.
2008	China delivered six F-7G fighter aircraft to Sri Lanka.
2009	With China's support, Sri Lanka became the first batch "dialogue partner" of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.
2010.03	China donated demining equipment to Sri Lanka (cost of 2,000,000 CNY).
2010.09	Chinese PLA Chief of the General Staff Chen Bingde met visiting brother of President Rajapaksa, Secretary of the Ministry of Defense Gotabaya Rajapaksa.
2010.12	Chinese PLA naval destroyer took part in the 60th Anniversary Celebration of Sri Lanka Navy.
2010	Sri Lanka totally imported 4 million USD worth of military arms from China.
2012.01	President Rajapaksa met a Chinese military delegation led by Deputy Chief of Joint Staff Ma Xiaotian.
2012.03	Brother of President Rajapaksa, Secretary of the Ministry of Defense Gotabaya Rajapaksa led a military delegation to visit China. State Councilor and Defense Minister Liang Guanglie met the delegation.
2012.06	Sri Lankan Army Commander Jayasuriya led a military delegation to visit China. State Councilor and Defense Minister Ligang Guanlie met the military delegation.
2012.08	Chinese State Councilor and Defense Minister Liang Guanglie visited Sri Lanka.

2012.11	Brother of President Rajapaksa, secretary of the Ministry of Defense Gotabaya Rajapaksa led a military delegation to visit China. State Councilor and Defense Minister Liang Guanglie met the delegation.
2013.05	Chinese State Councilor and Defense Minister Liang Guanglie visited Sri Lanka.
2013.11	A Chinese military delegation of China's PLA University of Science & Technology visited Sri Lanka.
2014.02	The PLA naval vessel stopped off the Colombo Port for the task of escorting Syria's chemical weapons.
2014.05	The PLA Vice Chairman Xu Qiliang visited Sri Lanka.
2014.06	The PLA University of National Defense visited Sri Lanka.
2014.09	The PLA Vice Chairman Xu Qiliang met Secretary of Sri Lankan Ministry of Defense and Urban Development Gotabaya Rajapaksa in Beijing.
2014.09-11	Chinese naval submarine(s) has stopped off Sri Lanka for supply for some times.
2014.09.24	The First China-Sri Lanka Defense Cooperation Dialogue held in Beijing. Brother of President Rajapaksa, secretary of the Ministry of Defense Gotabaya Rajapaksa led a military delegation to visit China. Vice Chairman of the Central Military Commission General Xu Qiliang met the delegation.
2015.03-04; 2015.06-07	Chinese Armed Policy Force and Sri Lankan Ground Force conducted the "Silk Road Cooperation-2015" jointly anti-terrorism training.
2015.04	At Sri Lankan governmental request, China's warship carried 45 Sri Lankan citizens evacuated from upheaval Yemen.
2015.07	Sri Lanka Navy Commander Perera visited China.
2015.10	A Chinese military delegation led by General Li Zuocheng visited Sri Lanka.
2016.01	The Second China-Sri Lanka Defense Cooperation Dialogue held in Beijing. China announced to offer military aids to help Sri Lanka purchase Chinese made military equipment.
2016.09	The PLA took part in the 2016 International Joint Special Operation Exercise Cormorant Stick VII in Sri Lanka.
2017.03	Sri Lanka President Sirisena met visiting Chinese State Councilor and Defense Minister Chang Wanquan.
2017.06	The PLA far-sailing fleet visited Sri Lanka. The fleet dispatched 16 military doctors to Sri Lankan disaster district to treat 508 local patients.
2017.08	The PLA naval hospital ship "Peace Ark" first visited Sri Lanka for the "Harmonious Mission 2017" task. During the four-day visit, the military doctors on the ship provided free medical service for local people. In addition, China and Sri Lanka conducted a joint international humanitarian medical assistance exercise.
2017.11	The PLA Navy ship (Qi Jiguang) arrives at the port of Colombo for a goodwill visit.
2018.12	China handed over China's first military construction aid project to Sri Lanka - the office and auditorium complex of the Sri Lankan Military Academy. The building covers an area of 7,200 square meters.
2018.04.26	The PLA National Defense University awarded Master Degree to Sri Lanka Air Army Commend Air Marshal Kapila Jayampathy. Recently, the PLA National Defense University has annually trained 6 or 7 Sri Lankan high-ranking military officials with Brigadier General and above.
2019.06.10	China gifted a frigate "053H2G" to the Sri Lanka Navy.

2008-2019	Since 2008, China has normalized to send its escort navy fleet to the Indian Ocean. China's escort navy fleet has often docked at Sri Lanka for supply.
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Source: Author according to various news and reports such as China and Sri Lanka's Ministry of National Defense website, etc.

4.1 Military Exchange

In China's military policy toward Sri Lanka, military exchange plays a positive role in enhancing mutual military and political trust and cooperation. Since 2005, under the framework of "cooperative partnership," China and Sri Lanka have strengthened the bilateral military ties. In 2013, the contents of "to strengthen friendly exchange and pragmatic cooperation between the two countries' armies" was added to the joint communique to establish "strategic cooperative partnership." On the *Action Plan of Deepening Strategic Cooperative Partnership Between the People's Republic of China and the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka* signed in 2014, the two countries put forward to "strengthen defense cooperation, and to maintain the momentum of visits between the two defense authorities and military forces at all levels, intensify the cooperation in military training, training of personnel and to cooperate in the areas of defense-related science and technology, exchange of military academics, and provide logistic support" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China, 2014). This section focuses on two outstanding aspects of the bilateral military exchange: high-level military personal exchange and military training exchange.

First, high-level military personal exchange. Since the establishment of the diplomatic relations in 1957, China has always laid emphasis on the bilateral high-level military personal exchange as an important part of the bilateral high-level personal exchange. Since the establishment of "all-round cooperative partnership" in 2005, although the two countries have shown an increasingly close military relations, it has obviously experienced two different stages of the China-Sri Lanka high-level personal exchange in this period. In 2005, the war in Sri Lanka broke out again after a few-year ceasefire since 2000. As to the war in Sri Lanka, China has long pursued "non-interference" and "non-participation" foreign policy. For avoiding to be accused of "China's directly military intervention in Sri Lankan civil war," China seemed to suspend to send its high-level military personal to Sri Lanka. Reviewing public news reports on the China-Sri Lanka military exchange in the period from 2005 to 2011, it hardly finds any public news report on China's high-level military delegation's visit in Sri Lanka. As the war in Sri Lanka was no more "hot news" in the international community, China has restored to send its high-level military delegations to Sri Lanka since 2012. Table 1 also supports this point.

Table 2 Sri Lanka's Arms Import (1986-2018) (USD: million)

Country/Year*	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2013	2014	2017	2018	Total	
China	4	50	3	4		137	19		23	15	52		28	18	29	21	3	8	18	28	49	48	59		4						618	
China Total**	1861	2605	1411	1041	941	1312	700	1436	1105	1010	768	429	353	332	299	515	525	700	413	286	668	509	644	1140	1478	1252	2047	1160	1227	1040		
Of China Total	0.21	1.92	0.21	0.38		0.10	4.2	7.1	0.2	0.8	1.49	6.77	0.7	0.93	5.42	9.7	4.08	0.57	1.14	4.36	9.79	7.34	9.43	9.16	0	0.27	0	0	0	0		
Czechia											9	2			9	18	1	6													45	
India		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	16	0	0	0	0	0	10	21	11					37	37	133		
Israel		16	16							5	75	12	12	29	134	35	30	18	18	30	18	19		21	11						497	
Russia							20	41					28	18		63										20					190	
Ukraine								6	43	63			10		54	18					21										214	
UK	3	1	1		3	7									43	6															64	
USA	20	15			15							36	6		10		9	3	13			2				10					54	192
Total***	27	110	19	5	19	166	22	35	74	64	210	50	85	64	297	161	45	35	49	58	97	89	71	21	4	21	20	5	45	99	2069	
China/Total	14.8	45.5	15.8	80	0.82	5.86	4	0.31	1.23	4.24	8	0.32	9.28	1.9	7.6	13	6.67	22.9	36.7	48.3	50.5	53.9	83.1	0	100	0	0	0	0	0	29.87	

*: In 2012, 2015 and 2016, Sri Lanka did not import arms. **: China's total export amount. ***: Includes all arms exporters to Sri Lanka.

Source: Author according to the data-tables generated from SIPRI Arms Transfers Database (Generated: March 10, 2019).

The records on China's high-level military delegation visiting Sri Lanka in Table 1, there are seven records after 2011 but only zero records before 2011. Particularly, it is very rare that China's Minister of National Defense consecutively visited Sri Lanka in 2012 and 2013, then higher-ranking Vice Chairman of the Central Military Commission visited Sri Lanka in 2014. "The leader of the two countries have attached great importance to military-to-military ties," Vice Chairman of the Central Military Commission Ma Xiaotian said: "The Chinese

military is willing to strengthen pragmatic cooperation in various fields with the Sri Lankan military" (Daily News, 2014). In addition, China and Sri Lanka constructed a bilateral military cooperation negotiation mechanism. In 2014 and 2016, the two sides held two times of the China-Sri Lanka defense cooperation dialogue in Beijing.

Second, military training exchange. In this period, China has encouraged China military forces to carry out various bilateral or multilateral military cooperative activities with Sri Lankan military forces. Firstly, in this period, China has dispatched more naval ships to visit Sri Lanka. Although Sri Lanka was the second stop of the first overseas visit of China's naval warships as early as in 1985 (Xinhua News Agency, 2017), the PLA had still occasionally appeared in the Indian Ocean due to its limited naval strength during the next twenty years. By 2008, China began to send its naval warships to participate in international joint escort action in the Indian Ocean. Since then on, China's naval warships began to normalize visits to Sri Lanka every year. Particularly in 2014, Sri Lanka approved China's naval submarine(s) to stop off in Sri Lankan port. It is a symbol of the mutual trust in military between China and Sri Lanka. Secondly, in this period, China and Sri Lanka have upgraded the bilateral military cooperation. After the first China-Sri Lanka Defense Cooperation Dialogue in 2014, the two sides began planning and conducting some pragmatic military cooperation projects. For example, Chinese Armed Police Force and Sri Lankan Ground Force conducted the "Silk Road Cooperation-2015" jointly anti-terrorism training in 2015. Chinese PLA took part in the 2016 International Joint Special Operation Exercise Cormorant Stick VII in Sri Lanka in 2016. China and Sri Lanka conducted a joint international humanitarian medical assistance exercise in Colombo in 2017.

4.2 Military Trade

Before the Reform and Opening-up, China had seldom engaged in arms export trade. Since the 1980s, China has become a major arms supplier in international military trade market. By analyzing the data on China's arms export to Sri Lanka from the SIPRI Arms Transfers Database, China has maintained stably exporting arms to Sri Lanka since the mid-1980s. (See Table 2) China has three main points of its military trade policy: "China does not use trade in weaponry to interfere in sovereign states' internal affairs," "the export of such weapons should help the recipient nation increase its appropriate defense capacity," and "the transfer must not impair peace, safety or stability regionally or globally" (State Council of Information Office of China, 1995). In the past decades, China has always adhered to the above military trade policy to engage its arms trade toward Sri Lanka.

In the past decades, China has become one of the main military trade partners of Sri Lanka. Table 2 shows the total amount of China's arms export to Sri Lanka from 1986 to 2018 has added up to 618 million USD, accounting for nearly 29.87% of the total amount of Sri Lanka's arms import from 1986 to 2018. Particularly in the final three years of Sri Lanka's long civil war, China's shares occupied more than half (even 83.1%) of Sri Lanka's total arms import amount. For all military trade contracts, it has rarely heard that China has made use of its military trade to threaten Sri Lanka to do or not do something. In fact, China has often timely supplied necessary arms or weapons to Sri Lanka to raise its capacity of national defense as needed.

For instance, in 2007, the separatist force's successful air attacks toward Colombo had heavily terrified the whole country. Sri Lankan arm force was in urgent need of anti-aircraft arms, but the western countries already conducted arms embargo to Sri Lanka and India also offered limited military assistance. At the beginning, China had hesitated whether to supply arms to Sri Lanka because China was not willing to involve Sri Lanka's internal affairs and also worried about international opinion. But the fretful Rajapaksa administration had constantly detailed explained the critical situation of Sri Lanka's civil war and emotionally recalled the traditional relationship between Sri Lanka and China. Chinese leadership eventually agreed to supply a batch of arms including J7-MG fighters and JY-11 air search radar equipment (China Aviation News, 2013; Note 2) to Sri Lanka after a balancing consideration. The fact proved that the batch of arms not only fast helped the Sri Lankan government reverse the passive situation in war but also became one of the critical factors to end the war and restore national peace.

As a result, China's military trade policy successfully made the wining Rajapaksa administration regarded China as the most reliable friend of Sri Lanka. After the end of the civil war, the two countries have fast built a closer military cooperative partnership.

4.3 Military Assistance

On the white paper *China's National Defense in the New Era*, China put forward its global significance of China's national defense in the new era – “in the service of building of a community with a shared future for mankind” (State Council of Information Office of China, 2019). This actually declares Chinese military forces will commit more international responsibilities and obligations. Entering the new century, Chinese military forces have provided more and more public security goods to the international community. Sri Lanka is China's cooperative partner based on "time-tested friendship," China has also provided its public security goods to Sri Lanka in this period.

First, China has taken part in vessel protection operations (maritime escort) in the Indian Ocean since 2008. By 2019, China has also dispatched 33 batches of naval ships to perform escort tasks. Through anti-piracy and maritime rescue, China and other participating countries have powerfully and effectively safeguarded the "golden maritime route." It has made great benefits to the countries along the "golden maritime route" including Sri Lanka.

Second, China's military forces have participated in disaster relief in Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka is vulnerable by natural disasters meanwhile it has seriously insufficient capabilities of disaster relief, thus Sri Lanka has often urgently appealed to the international community for disaster relief. Because of the good traditional bilateral relations between the two countries, China's PLA has often taken part in urgent disaster relief at request of the Sri Lankan government. After the Indian Ocean tsunami in 2004, the PLA rapidly delivered Chinese urgent disaster relief material to Sri Lanka on the third day of the tsunami meanwhile dispatched medical teams to Sri Lanka. After Sri Lanka was hit by natural disasters such as mega floods or landslides in 2011, 2014, 2016 and 2017, the Chinese government has ordered the PLA respectively urgently delivered 20 million CNY, 20 million CNY, 20 million CNY and 15 million CNY worth of Chinese humanitarian relief materials to Sri Lanka (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2019). As Sri Lanka was seriously hit by serve floods and landslides in May 2017, the visiting PLA far-sailing fleet immediately donated 1,000 kg rice, 1,000 kg flour, 300 boxes of mineral water, 10 rubber dinghies, and so on, meanwhile dispatched 16 military doctors to Sri Lankan disaster district and finally treated 508 local patients (Xinhua News Agency, 2017).

Third, China's military forces have also provided international humanitarian rescue to Sri Lanka. In April 2015, at the request of the Sri Lanka government, the PLA's warship urgently carried 45 Sri Lankan citizens to evacuate from upheaval Yemen (Liu, 2015). In January 2016, the 21st batch of Chinese naval escort fleet rescued Sri Lankan fishermen in the Bay of Bengal (Cao & Cao, 2016).

5. Conclusion

China's “national defense policy of active defense” in the new era reflects in China's commitment on national defense, China's military strategic guidance, China's “new security conception” and China's self-defining “global significance” for its military forces. It defines the peaceful and friendly keynote for China's military foreign policy toward Sri Lanka in this period. In the framework of the China-Sri Lanka “cooperative partnership” since 2005, China's military foreign policy toward Sri Lanka has aimed at the three specific objectives: to raise China's “military soft power” in Sri Lanka through military policy, to develop Sri Lanka into an important oversea military base of China, and develop Sri Lanka into a stable and growing consumer of China's arms. For the objectives, China has actively push forward the bilateral military exchange, effectively developed the bilateral military trade, and timely supplied military assistance to Sri Lanka in diplomatic practice. Generally, China's friendly and pushy military foreign policy toward Sri Lanka has made significant efforts for the growingly close bilateral relationship between China and Sri Lanka in this period.

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Notes:

Note 1. The four wars here refers to the Korean War in the 1950s, the Sino-Indian Borders War, the Sino-Soviet Borders War in the 1960s and the Sino-Vietnamese Borders War in the end of 1970s.

Note 2. The information is also from the data produced from SIPRI Arms Transfers Database in October 21, 2019, http://armstrade.sipri.org/armstrade/page/trade_register.php.