

# **Intra-Regional Tourism as a Soft Power tool of Small States: Comparative Study of Sri Lanka and Cambodia**

Hashan Wijesinghe<sup>1</sup>

## **Introduction**

It is beyond doubt that power is recognized as one of the central yet problematic concepts in international relations. As identified by Joseph Nye, power is like weather. Everyone depends on it and talks about it, but few understands it (2004, p.04). Power can be simply defined as the ability to achieve one's purposes and goals. In his epic work, "Politics among Nations" Hans J Morgenthau proclaims that international politics like all politics is a struggle for power. Whatever the ultimate aim of international politics, power is always the immediate aim (Morgenthau, 1948, p.13). Nye (2004) distinguishes between two forms of power, namely soft power and hard power. According to him, hard power refers to the ability to use the carrots and sticks of economic and military might to make others follow your will (ibid). On the other hand, soft power is defined as the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payment, which includes culture, values and foreign policies. Soft power rests on the ability to set the political agenda in a way that shapes the preferences of others (ibid). According to Chang (2007), soft power is emerging and getting more influential in today's global information space and it has less hard support. As far as small states are concerned, while there is so much literature available on small states, there is no consensus when it comes to defining small states. According to Chang (2007), small states suffer from a definitional problem in both theory and political practice. However, for the purpose of the study, a small state is defined as a state which can never act alone and make a significant impact on the international system, using its quantitative or tangible elements of power. This inability to influence and attract the international community through tangible elements of power has made small states rely more on soft power as a source of influencing the international community and attaining national interests.

As one of the world's largest economic sectors, travel and tourism creates jobs, drives exports, and generates prosperity across the world (WTTC, 2018). As far as Cambodia and Sri Lanka are concerned, both countries rely heavily on tourism industry. Looking at the numbers, over the years the number of tourists visiting both the countries have increased significantly. Against this backdrop, the main objective of this study is to examine the relevance of intra-regional tourism for small states like Cambodia and Sri Lanka. It compares the where these two countries stand in the context of promoting and attracting tourists from their own regions.

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<sup>1</sup> *virajw@kln.ac.lk, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Kelaniya*