Infrastructure Diplomacy as a Tool for Regional Influence by China and India: A Case Study of Myanmar

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DECLARATION

I declare that the thesis entitled "Infrastructure Diplomacy as a Tool for Regional Influence by China and India: A Case Study of Myanmar" submitted by me for the award of the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy** of Jawaharlal Nehru University is my own work. The thesis has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other university.

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We recommend that this thesis be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

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List of Abbreviations

AAGC: Asia Africa Growth Corridor

ADB: Asian Development Bank

AEP: Act East Policy

AH: Asian Highway

AIFFP: Australian Infrastructure Financing Facility for the Pacific

AIIB: Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank

ALTID: Asian Land Transport Infrastructure Development

APEC: Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation

ASEAN: Association of Southeast Asian Nations

AUKUS: Australia United Kingdom United States of America

B2B: Business to business

BBIN: Bangladesh Bhutan India Nepal

BCIM-EC: Bangladesh China India Myanmar Economic Corridor

BCIM: Bangladesh China India Myanmar

BDN: Blue Dot Network

BRF: Belt and Road Forum

BRI: Belt and Road Initiative

BRICS: Brazil Russia India China South Africa

BRO: Border Road Organization

CADP: Comprehensive Asia Development Plan

CAR: Central Asian Republic/Region

CBM: Confidence Building Measure

CDB: China Development Bank

CIA: Central Intelligence Agency

CID: Complex Interdependence

CIPEC: China Indochina Peninsula Economic Corridor

CITIC: China International Trust Investment Corporation

CMEC: China Myanmar Economic Corridor

CNOOC: China National Off-shore Oil Corporation

CNPC: China National Petroleum Corporation

CPAFFC: Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries

CPB: Communist Party of Burma

CPC: Communist Party of China

CPEC: China Pakistan Economic Corridor

CPR: Center for Policy Research

CREC: China Railway Engineering Corporation

DD: Development Diplomacy

DoNER: Development of Northeast Region

DPA: Development Partnership Administration

EAM: External Affairs Minister

EoDB: Ease of Doing Business

ECOSOC: Economic and Social Council

ED: Economic Diplomacy

EnD: Energy Diplomacy

ESCAP: Economic and Social Commission for Asia Pacific

EU: European Union

EXIM Bank: Export Import Bank

FAWC: Foreign Affairs Work Conference

FDI: Foreign Direct Investment

FOCAC: Forum for China Africa Cooperation

FWO: Frontier Works Organization

G2G: Government to Government

GAIL: Gas Authority of India Limited

GDP: Gross Domestic Product

GIF: Global Infrastructure Facility

GMS: Greater Mekong Sub-region

GQP: Golden Quadrilateral Project

HSR: High-speed railway

ICCR: Indian Council for Cultural Relations

ICP: Integrated Check Post

ICT: Information and Communications Technology

ID: Infrastructure Diplomacy

IBSA: India Brazil South Africa

IDSA: Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses

IFS: Indian Foreign Service

IGA: Inter-Governmental Agreement

IMF: International Monetary Fund

IMTD: Institute of Multi-Track Diplomacy

INSTC: International North South Transport Corridor

IO: International Organization

IPGPL: India Port Global Private Limited

IR: International Relations

JICA: Japan International Cooperation Agency

JSG: Joint Study Group

KMT: Kuomintang

KMTTP: Kaladan Multi-modal Transit Transport Project

LAC: Line of Actual Control

LCS: Land Custom Station

LEP: Look East Policy

MDG: Millennium Development Goal

MEA: Ministry of External Affairs

MGC: Mekong Ganga Cooperation

MHA: Ministry of Home Affairs

MNC: Multinational Corporation

MoFA: Ministry of Foreign Affairs

MoU: Memorandum of Understanding

MSDP: Myanmar Sustainable Development Plan

MVA: Motor Vehicle's Act

NAM: Non-Alignment Movement

NDB: New Development Bank

NEG: New Economic Geography

NER: Northeast Region

NESIDS: North East Special Infrastructure Development Scheme

NESRIP: North Eastern State Road Investment Programme

NFP: Neighbourhood First Policy

NH: National Highway

NIEO: New International Economic Order

NIP: National Infrastructure Pipeline

NLD: National League of Democracy

NSA: National Security Advisor

NSE: National Stock Exchange

NTPC: National Thermal Power Corporation Ltd.

OBOR: One Belt One Road

ODA: Official Development Assistance

ONGC (V): Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (Videsh)

OVL: ONGC Videsh Limited

P2P: People to people

PD: Public Diplomacy

PLA: People's Liberation Army

PM: Prime Minister

PPP: Public Private Partnership

PQI: Partnership Quality Infrastructure

PRC: People's Republic of China

PSC: Production Sharing Contracts

PSU: Public Sector Undertaking

PWC: Pricewaterhouse Cooper

RCS: Regional Connectivity Scheme

ROC: Republic of China

SAARC: South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation

SAGAR: Security and Growth for All in the Region

SAGQ: South Asian Growth Quadrangle

SAP: Structural Adjustment Program

SARDP-NE: Special Accelerated Road Development Programme for North East

SDG: Sustainable Development Goal

SEZ: Special Economic Zone

SME: Small and Medium Enterprises

SLORC: State Law and Order Restoration Council

SOC: Social Overhead Capital

SOE: State owned enterprises

SPDC: State Peace and Development Council

SRF: Silk Road Fund

TAPI: Turkmenistan Afghanistan Pakistan India

TAR: Trans Asia Railways

TDO: Trade Development Office

TLH: Tri-lateral Highway

TNC: Trans-national Corporation

TPCL: TAPI Pipeline Company Limited

UDAN: Ude Desh ka Aam Nagarik

UN: United Nations

UNCTAD: United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

UNESCO: United Nations Economic and Social Council

USA: United States of America

USDP: Union Solidarity and Development Party

VSNL: Videsh Sanchar Nigam Limited

WB: World Bank

Chapter 1- Introduction

Brief Background

The economic ascendency of China and India since the 1990s has proliferated studies that compare both the countries on various fronts, abetting the competition between them. In recent times, the one domain where this competition has largely witnessed a China led transformation is that of building infrastructure and modes of connectivity. It is through infrastructure investments and creation of physical linkages, particularly in Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Maldives and dozens of other states, that China has influenced geopolitics in India's peripheral regions. India has also begun to realize the need for focusing on infrastructure more recently. Indeed, both China and India have deployed the practice of using infrastructure building and investment as a way to influence various states in the neighbourhood.

Despite the lack of any formal perusal by either China or India of a diplomatic tool in this regard, it can be noted that a new found niche, 'infrastructure diplomacy' (ID), for furthering their national interests, access and influence, has been resorted to. At a theoretical level, infrastructure investments and foreign aid for building connectivity projects have long been looked at as a part of economic and development diplomacy. This remains so even today. But, the increasing size of infrastructure investments, even within the ambit of economic diplomacy and development diplomacy, conducted by states has called for the need to focus on the specific issue area termed as infrastructure diplomacy (ID) in this thesis. Further, ID touches upon issue area within diplomacy such as energy diplomacy and connectivity diplomacy in particular. Infrastructure diplomacy may be looked at as a sub-set of economic or development diplomacy, yet one that has rapidly evolved with features of its own. Especially as foreign policies of states have focused on building infrastructure, connectivity and economic corridors, countries have begun using infrastructure diplomacy in their own ways to compete for strategic goals and furthering national interests.

Infrastructure has always played a crucial role in international relations (IR). In colonial times for example, the British built railways and roads to further their economic interests rather than ameliorate the backward conditions of their colonies like India, that once

included Myanmar. In post-colonial times, investments have been made in the infrastructure sector largely through multilateral economic and developmental agencies like the World Bank (WB), Asia Development Bank (ADB) and others. These have also been read within the diplomatic literature as a means through which developed states have sought to sustain their access and influence. Today, infrastructure diplomacy stands out as an increasingly growing practice, particularly in the aftermath of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

In the backdrop of a continued global economic slowdown since 2007 and announcements like that of former US President Donald Trump's 'America First' policy, focus of international politics has shifted from the Trans-Atlantic to the Asia-Pacific. While countries such as Japan, Singapore, South Korea have helped in developing the Asian economic network since the early 1970s, it is China and India that have lately thrust themselves as the dominant players of the region. The 'World in 2050' Report by PricewaterhouseCoopers predicts China to be the number one economy by 2050 with a GDP of about USD61 trillion, followed by India with an economy worth USD42 trillion (PWC Report 2017). But unlike in the great games of earlier times, states cannot achieve their interests only through military might and need to apply more acceptable diplomatic means. In this context, it has become a pattern to garner geo-economic and geo-strategic advantages through infrastructure diplomacy that seem to promise rapid development for recipient nations and hopes to interconnect the various centers of growth around the globe.

President Xi Jinping's BRI launched in 2013 aims to take China towards fulfilment of the 'Chinese Dream', while India with its policies such as 'Neighbourhood First' and 'Act East' has also enhanced its engagements at both bi-lateral and multi-lateral levels. Announcements like the Asia-Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC), touted as an alternate Maritime Silk Road by India, Japan and others have catalyzed debates about infrastructure being used as a tool for asserting influence. China is said to have invested more than USD50 billion in multiple connectivity projects across Asia, Africa, Eurasia and Latin America and aims to pump in up to USD3 trillion in the coming years delivering 283 projects (The Second Belt and Road Forum 2019). India remains, as yet, far behind but has responded to the growing demand for infrastructure investment across its neighbourhood. In this race, a southward thrust by China towards the Indian Ocean

has triggered an increasing interface with a growing eastward thrust by India, particularly in Myanmar, a state that has itself undergone a decade of opening up followed by doubtful democratization.

In an ongoing race for regional influence through infrastructure diplomacy, one country where both India and China have come to have direct interfaces as foreign players is Myanmar, a state that lies strategically at the intersection of South and Southeast Asia. The geo-strategic and geo-economic interests that China and India pursue in Myanmar have also had a great impact on their respective bilateral relations as well as on China-India race for influence in their peripheral regions. Myanmar stands as a resourceful destination, providing an outlet to two regions in Asia, namely South and Southeast Asia. Rich in energy resources and having a contiguous border with both China and India, Myanmar is a gateway to fulfill Indian and Chinese interests in the larger regional context as well. Chinese ambitions in the Indian Ocean through Myanmar have been visible through their policies that go back to 1980s (Qi 1985). China legalized border trade corridors in 1988 and began to invest in building roads, rail and air networks (Singh, 1997). With the aim to connect landlocked Southwest China to the Indian Ocean, China began to develop sea ports and naval bases in Kyuakpyu, Yangoon and Hainggyi in the 1990s and broadened its maritime networks thereafter (Egreteau 2008:8). Various investments have been made by Beijing to develop Special Economic Zones (SEZ) and to connect Yunnan through Mytkyina up to Thailand by rail and road. With investments in infrastructure touching billions of dollars as China remains the largest foreign investor in the country as well as the largest trading partner of Myanmar, focusing on the Chinese footprints in Myanmar has provided much ontological fodder for scholars studying the region.

India too has engaged with Myanmar from the early 1990s, particularly as a reaction to the growing Chinese influence in its eastern periphery. By 1999 the Kunming Initiative was started, that has since evolved into the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar (BCIM) economic corridor, suggesting a changed Indian disposition towards its east. India also built the 160km long Tamu-Kalewa-Kalemyo road as a part of the larger Trans-Asian Highway network, where even China is involved. Paying greater attention to connecting India's Northeast region to Myanmar through roads and railways, India started the Kaladan Multimodal Transit and Transport Project (KMTTP), while developing a SEZ

in Sittwe. This race for influence became the highlight in 2007 when Myanmar, exasperated with India's lax behavior, surpassed a major gas deal involving Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (Videsh) Ltd. and handed it over to PetroChina instead (Gupta 2013:85). But Myanmar has also been cautious. This was noticeable after the Thein Shein government suspended the Myitsone dam project with China in 2011, besides other such examples. Myanmar has indeed been luring other powers to balance the Chinese grip effectively.

In this backdrop, this study analyzes how 'infrastructure diplomacy' has been used by both China and India to gain influence in their peripheral regions, especially Myanmar. It seeks to examine the increasing interfaces of China and India through the respective use of ID and observes how this impacts their bi-lateral relations as also their regional influence game. It brings Myanmar under the scanner, not simply as a playground for its giant neighbours, but also as a country that under changing circumstances has begun to play a greater role in regional geopolitics.

Literature on the Subject

Before one begins research on any subject, a survey of the available literature enables to fulfil two aims. First, to get a grasp of the ongoing debates and discussions on various aspects of the study in focus. The topic 'Infrastructure Diplomacy as a Tool for Regional Influence by China and India: A Case Study of Myanmar' has many elements within it (the three variables are mentioned in the methodology section). From gauging the use of infrastructure in IR to going through the literature on differing practices of diplomacy, the need to find one's way about the legion topic of studying China-India bilateral relations is daunting. The case study thereon requires special attention in context of various projects that China and India have invested in or built in the country, Myanmar in this context. If there is no review of literature done, each of these aspects of the study may stray away from the idea of the research into disassociated categories making it difficult to prove the hypotheses of the study. Second, a literature review helps bring out the puzzles one aims to solve during the research more clearly. Whether it is a gap that needs to be filled or it is a refinement/rejection of earlier theories and problems, it becomes easy to identity the same. This in turn helps understand the value addition one's research is going to make in the field.

In keeping with the various aspects of the research topic, the literature review that follows is divided into five sections. The first section briefly discusses about the writings on diplomacy and the role of infrastructure in IR. It points out to some articles under the title of 'infrastructure diplomacy', largely pertaining to China's infrastructure investments under the BRI, being used in recent writings. The second section is a discussion on China-India interfaces in Asia in pursuit of regional influence. The third section brings out writings that show the importance of Myanmar in Asian geopolitics followed by a detailed section discussing the presence of China and India in Myanmar and their forays into the infrastructural developments of that country. The fifth section discusses the impact of these interfaces on China-India relations. The gap in literature is evident thereafter, briefly highlighted at the end of the section.

Diplomacy and the role of infrastructure in IR

Classical and traditional realist theories of IR and diplomacy as explained by Hans Morgenthau in 1946 or Henry Kissenger's work *Diplomacy* (2012) and few others, speak of the importance of state as the prime unit of politics. Diplomacy is viewed as the means to moderate hard power and sustain peace in world politics. As Kissenger puts it, diplomacy is the art of restraining power. When Woodrow Wilson spoke about abolishing secret diplomacy by 1919, the aim of diplomacy remained focus on creating peace through conflict resolution, negotiation and international deliberations. Such reflections on diplomacy can be found in the works by scholars such as Randolf Bourne (whose famous quote from 1917 is widely used), G.R. Berridge (*Diplomacy: Theory and Practice*, 2005; 2015), Alan James (whose review article in the *Review of International Studies*, 1993, is valuable) and others, who have added much to the literature on the subject emanating from the West. In the East, the oriental aspects of diplomacy since ancient times can be found in works of Kautilya (*Arthashatra*), Sun Tzu (whose classic work, *The Art of War,* is increasingly viewed as a source of Chinese soft power) and Persian scholars, among others. In recent times, writings by Kishan Rana (2011; 2020), Ramesh Thakur (et al. 2013) can be counted among some of the most interesting contributions on the the changing practice of diplomacy.

As IR as a subject began to change, with the world becoming an interdependent and global village induced by technological and communication linkages as a result of globalization, the works of Josephy Nye — *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of*

American Power (1990) and *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (2004) — added to the literature on diplomacy, by redefining the meaning of power itself. From club diplomacy there was a shift to network diplomacy. From bi-lateral and Track 1 diplomacy, a visible diversification occurred. The Institute of Multi-Track Diplomacy popularized various modes to conduct diplomacy in the modern world (see Chapter 2). One book that has largely catered to contemporary needs in this context is the *Oxford Handbook on Modern Diplomacy (OHMD)*, co edited by Andrew Cooper, Jorge Heine and Ramesh Thakur (2013). From discussing the main actors to enumerating the various modes, tools and instruments of diplomacy, the book focuses on the widening issue area of diplomatic discussion ranging from security, arms control, food and human rights to even health and sports in diplomacy. This study would hope to see the added area of infrastructure diplomacy within such discussion on modern means of diplomacy in the coming times.

The literature on diplomacy is too vast to be comprehensibly noted within such limited space. Yet, in context of the rise of infrastructure diplomacy, there is a need specially to go back to the discussion on economic diplomacy as an important means of conducting foreign policy, from the mid 20th century onwards. The rise of the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) states added to the spurt of economic diplomatic activities. India too opened its economic diplomatic division within the Ministry of External Affairs by the mid-1960s. China by then had become involved in investing in infrastructure projects, especially in Africa, which gained momentum from the mid-1980s (see Chapter 3). Green shoots of infrastructure investments and thereafter diplomatic efforts to conduct economic diplomacy and development diplomacy were evident. There is a chapter in the *OHMD* on economic diplomacy written by Stephan Woolcock and Nicholas Bayen. Additionally, their book *The New Economic Diplomacy: Decision Making and Negotiations in International Economic Relations* (3rd ed. 2012) is a valuable source in preparing to locate infrastructure diplomacy within such related fields, without being limited to it however.

Much like any other idea, infrastructure too has evolved from being anchored in traditional economic terms to being studied as a useful area of strategic studies and IR. Infrastructure, in the traditional sense is understood as critical to the sustenance of society. It came to prominence during the second world war and became drawn into the

literature on development by economists. In practice, the Marshall Plan can be cited as an example of how the USA rose to greater prominence as the superpower by providing western Europe with a recovery and reconstruction plan, essentially trough economic aid. Providing for infrastructure and growth was necessary for the sustenance of many countries in the region at the time. In theory, Albert. O. Hirschman as well as Hans W. Singer implied through the use of the word 'economic overhead', and 'social overhead capital', infrastructure investments like transport, power and water supply, that cannot be imported but require heavy installations and public assistance and form a basis of an economy (1951). Similarly, making use of this understanding, other economists such as Ragnar Nurkse (1961), Walt W. Rostow (1962), V.K.R.V Rao (1968) and others studied the world economy by analysing models of investments in infrastructure. A post colonial perspective on IR bring out how infrastructure is used to built roads and railways as a way to penetrate into deeper markets of developing countries. At a micro level too, the role of infrastructure in IR has been discussed. For instance, Eriz Davytan (2014) talks about this with a case study on the South Cacasus. There are many such examples found in the literature today.

Relevant to this study, there is also a growing discussion about infrastructure, especially related to connectivity, within the field of economic geography, where spatial models were explicated by Paul Krugman in 1991 (where he brought out the impact of infrastructure on development within a region, forming core-periphery) (Wilburn 1988) among others. In recent time, the new economic geography (NEG) models touch upon the impact of infrastructure projects across regions and therefore become relevant for research on infrastructure diplomacy in IR. Armin Schmutzler (2002), Robert Carlsson (2019), Jim Hall (2016) have contributed to the NEG literature which has been found useful for this study.

On another note, investment in developing infrastructure, as a foreign policy tool used by states, found discussion as a part of a larger concept of soft power given by Joseph Nye in the 1990s. He argued that since soft power enables achieving the desired outcome by attracting others, states increasingly make use of this means rather than coercion and payment (2004; 2007; 2009). Though some like Leslie Gelb disagreed with this and persisted on the use of military power (2009), a debate had heightened as to finding the effective means to pursue national interests of states. Meanwhile, the increasing use of

the term development diplomacy as well as economic diplomacy since the 1970s showed how investments in infrastructure enabled developed states to garner geo-economic gains, particularly through the institutions of the World Bank (WB) and International Monetary Fund (IMF) that rolled out the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP) in the 1990s. The literature on diplomacy has been froth with writings on economic and development diplomacy since.

In recent years, particularly with China's BRI and its initiation into the constitution of People's Republic of China (PRC) in 2017, writings on what roughly was understood as economic or development diplomacy has gained deeper discussions with the use of the word 'infrastructure diplomacy' (see following paragraphs). This word has increasingly appeared in the context of investments by China, Japan, Australia and other states in their attempts to engage with countries that either lack infrastructure such as railways, roadways, ports, etc. or are in need of modernizing it. Interestingly, most of these writings emanate from Asia and revolves around the region ontologically. For example, writing for the *Nikkie Asian Review*, Vijay Sakhuja, an Indian scholar, in an article in 2015 described the various Chinese investments and foreign aids under the banner of infrastructure diplomacy. Similarly, in 2017, Eric Wicaksono from Indonesia, while discussing the issue of Indonesia's huge infrastructure gap, largest among the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) member countries, talks about the 'art of infrastructure diplomacy' and the role of China in it. It is looked at as a means through which China is gaining economic leverages while aiding Indonesia to overcome its infrastructure problem. Jagannath Panda uses the word infrastructure diplomacy to describe Prime Minister Sinzo Abe's attempts at creating a 'quality coalition' through the Blue Dot Network initiative (2020).

In an Edward Elgar publication titled *Understanding China's New Diplomacy Silk Roads and Bullet Trains,* though ID as a term was not used directly, the author, Gerald Chan, has urged for forming a deeper understanding of China's 'new' diplomacy pursued through infrastructure investments, like silk roads and bullet trains (2018). Importantly, this so called new diplomacy draws our attention to the rise of Chinese expertise in the high-speed railways (HSR) technology, once a monopoly of the Japanese, being exported to various countries to gain influence. The next year, an article published by Taylor and Francis in the *Journal of Contemporary Asia,* written by Laurids S. Lauriden, reiterates

the importance of the same in the context of the Sino-Thai railway project. Therefore, a number of articles and commentaries that have written about infrastructure diplomacy (see Chapter 2) have made this author reflect on certain questions around the topic, the most intriguing one being — is there a niche practice area within diplomacy that should be separately studied as infrastructure diplomacy today? This remains one of the research questions this study has aimed to find an answer to.

Writings that directly use the word infrastructure diplomacy began to be penned more frequently from 2018. For instance, Fanqi Jia and Mia Bennett (2018) talked of Chinese infrastructure diplomacy in Russia and the geopolitics of projects, type and scale that follow. This has overlapping aspects with studies of NEG. Similarly, Wilson Jeffrey writing in an article in the *Australian Journal of International Affairs* discusses how infrastructure diplomacy has been used to diversify Australia's investments in the Indo-Pacific. He further writes using the term ID to talk about the cooperation in the area between Australia and Japan (Jeffery 2020). However, it is to be noted that nowhere in any of these writings, has there been substantial theoretical discussion on the word, which is used but loosely, as 'infrastructure diplomacy'. Instead, many use infrastructure diplomacy and economic diplomacy interchangeably as concepts, creating the need to distinguish the two even more so. For instance, though Laurids S. Lauridsen's article, published in the *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, talks about how the BRI has become indispensable for Beijing's economic diplomacy and looks into how the Sino-Thai high-speed rail negotiation can be understood, the work is parsimoniously titled 'Drivers of China's Regional Infrastructure Diplomacy: The Case of the Sino-Thai Railway Project' (2019). There is no attempt to explain what the author means while using ID and ED in the same piece.

China's BRI has pushed scholars to try and understand the new developments in the infrastructure and connectivity sector that surely can be read as a diplomatic move to pursue national interest. Karolina Zielinska (2016), Tanoubi Ngangom (2018), Thomas Wheeler (2012) and many others have written about the multipronged investments by China since 2012 as a means of diplomacy to gain influence in the region. Johnathan Hillman's work on 'Influence and Infrastructure' for the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) is an extremely useful work in the context of this study (also published into a book in 2020). However, it is yet to be studied if China's foreign policy

and implementation of BRI as well as the (counter) responses by other countries in Asia can be understood as falling within the ambit of a developing concept as that of infrastructure diplomacy or is it being overdrawn as an argument and can be simply understood as what Nye termed as 'smart power' (2003).

China-India interface for regional influence in Asia

Neville Maxwell writing in 1970 about China-India, started a debate on who was to be blamed for the 1962 war between them. He attached the victim card onto China and blamed India. The other end of the debate is best brought out by Bertil Lintner when he reversed the idea of 'India's China War' (Maxwell 1970) to 'China's India War' (2018), claiming that it was indeed China that was responsible for the debacle in its aggressive pursuance of territorial gains. This blame game goes on to aggravate the portrayal of China-India relations into a binary complex that provides the context for many scholarly writings.

Bilateral relations between China and India in the 1970s and 1980s were marked largely by cooperation at a diplomatic level (though not collaboration), and yet the tensions caused by the border war remained. In the 1990s, the China-India comparison became further galvanized. If India was the modern state that embodied distinct civilizational qualities in Asia, China was the other (Cohen 2001:9). Both emerged as prominent actors in global politics and opened up their economies to the world. China was seen as the next superpower by many such as Bill Gertz (2000), Geoffrey Murray (1998), Randall Peerenboom (2007), while others such as Gordon Chang (2001), Minxin Pei (2016) have expressed scepticism. This rise created ripples in the west with China's ascendency seen as a threat (Gertz 2000). The string of pearls theory brought this threat to India's doorsteps. It is this geo-strategic disadvantage that has motivated India to develop more infrastructure projects to compete with China in the region. The case of Sittwe port as an answer to Kyaukpyu in Myanmar, Chabahar port in Iran as a response to Gwadar in Pakistan are among some of the many ways in which an infrastructure competition manifested between the two powers in their attempt to have advantage and influence in the region. A spur of literature began to bring out how China had cast its shadow in its neighbourhood including Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Myanmar. For example, Pramod Jaiswal and Geeta Kochar (2016) wrote about the India-China complex in Nepal, C. Raja Mohan (2012) wrote about the tussle for power in the Indo-Pacific,

while Gurmeet Kanwal (1999) explained about 'China's long march to world power status and its strategic challenges for India'. It became evident that a China-India contest for influence and power in Asia was taking shape and it found manifestation at many levels of the relationship. Indeed, a 'protracted contest' had been drawn out during the twentieth century (Garver 2001).

At a multilateral level, China and India interacts in pursuit of national as well as regional gains at different forums. The Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), for example became a platform through which a China-India interface in Asia has gained traction. Amitabh Acharya explicates these interactions that are taking place in 'East of Asia, South of China' with ASEAN as a centre point (2017). Sukh Deo Muni elaborates on China's strategic engagement with ASEAN (2002), while S. Narayan and Laldinkima Sailo (2015) put forth the opportunities and challenges in 'Connecting India to ASEAN'. Efforts also exist at a sub-regional level to find ways to positively interact with various states. The Kunming Initiative was an endeavour that was discussed in journals during the early 2000s (*Frontline,* April 2000; *South Asian Survey*, 2001). Patricia Uberoi (2010; 2016) explains through her many writings on the topic about how the initiative eventually bloomed into the BCIM forum that is in want of fresh vigour. Another example of a cooperative endeavour to link various regions in Asia is the Asian Highway Project that China and India are part of. Therefore, there is also an element of constructive engagement between India and China that finds place in the literary discussions.

However, with the announcement of China's BRI in 2013, infrastructure began to be increasingly considered as a diplomatic tool and a means for asserting power as influence, that has since further catalysed the China-India tussle in the region. The idea, outreach and implications of the BRI have been unremittingly written about. A non-Western perspective includes writings by Wang Yiwei (who has explained the BRI from a Chinese perspective, 2016; 2018), Srikanth Kondapalli and Xiowen Hu (2017, who summarize the growing connectivity installations through OBOR, as well as the implications that follow not only for China but for other countries and regions at the same time) and others. B.R. Deepak (2016) writes on the contemporary scenario of forging relations with Asian countries in this power struggle, particularly through investments in infrastructure by bilateral and multilateral forums alike. Among western scholars, the recent books by Peter Frankopan (2018), Bruno Maçães (2019), Johanthan Hillman

(2020), Richard T. Griffiths (2019) add updated information on this wide and overarching phenomenon called the BRI. All of these works focus on the Belt and Road and indicate how China took the lead in infrastructure projects, that in turn stimulated other countries' actions in the domain, including India.

There is a growing Indian desire to create connectivity linkages across the Asia-Pacific to compete with China. C.S. Kuppuswamy (2000) talks about how India's Look East Policy (LEP) has led to greater connectivity with Southeast Asia. Since then there has been an extension of connectivity projects or formulation of new ones, such as talks of stretching the tri-lateral highway to Indochina (Sharma 2017). A look at some primary sources available in the Ministry for Development of North East Region (DoNER 2010; 2011), detail the infrastructural thrust that took place in the late 2000s ushering trade and development of NER and debates to rejuvenate the historical Stillwell road which stays neglected due to security concerns in New Delhi. These developments were noted in the literature of the time but more or less remained overshadowed by Chinese presence in the region. From a zero-sum perspective, a major part of the puzzle then boils down to what Kishor Mahbunani has asked in his recent work, — *Has China Won?* (2020). Though the book delves into the power struggle between USA and China, seen as the most important players in the 21st century, it reminds us of the competitive paraphernalia around China's rise in the region, something that India has to monitor at all times.

Myanmar in Asian geopolitics

Among other countries that have witnessed the China-India interface in the infrastructure sector in particular, Myanmar stands out as an important and crucial state (See Chapter 5). Myanmar has had a tumultuous history and has grappled with many problems, especially pertaining to political instability. The military coup of February 2021, the third since its independent history, is a case in point. While Burma (the name used till 1988) as a country has had civilizational and political ties with India, it remained illusive as a nation for mainstream scholars and writers for long in the country. Indian historians and political scientists have pondered over the Buddhist linkages and cultural norms with its neighbour, often being limited by it during bi-lateral discussions. The socio-political overlap of tribes from India's northeast region and Burma has also found attention in the literature. However, the international studies literature on the country has remained relatively restricted for long.

As a British colony, Burma came to focus in the early 1940s due to Japanese invasion of the region during the Second World War. It was also the time when the British built the Burma road, a reminiscence of what remains as the Stillwell road in India. In international politics, Burma became visible as part of the Non Alignment Movement (NAM), only to exit from it in 1979 (Mishra 1981). Some of the Chinese writings speak of Burma as the land where the southern silk road trailed. Though the communist problem between China and Burma was visible in the 1950s and 60s, it was in the 1980s that China paid attention to Burma, particularly as a development strategy for Yunnan and a geo-strategic plan to reach out to the Indian Ocean, something that has regained attention. As a result, the literature on Myanmar has leapfrogged in the context of IR studies, especially as Myanmar became part of ASEAN in 1997 and entered a larger geopolitical frame.

Inder Pal Khosla (1998) discusses how Myanmar reacted in the 1990s when the tide of liberal politics and globalization swept across Asia. The problems of cohesion in the country has always remained an issue. 'The making of modern Burma' therefore was not easy (Myint 2001) and the failure of development since 1962 quite evident (Perry 2007). Sudhir Devare describes Myanmar as a challenging frontier (2006), while L. Reiffel (2010) notes the impact of domestic challenges on its foreign policy. Therefore, in 2012 when the military rule was replaced with a democratic government, an array of work on the new possibilities and changing contours in the strategically located Myanmar were published. Nehginpao Kipgen (2016), Maria Lall (2016), Renaud Egreteau (2016), Rajiv Bhatia (2015), Nick Cheeseman and Farrelly Nicholas. (2014) debated the changes that democratization brought about at various levels in Myanmar.

What also gained perspective was Myanmar's role in Asian geopolitics of the 21st century. Bertil Lintner (2015) delves into the making of a 'Great Game East' (2012) between India and China that finds manifestations in Myanmar. Lintner's writings have been most valuable and forms a vast pool of resource on studies about Myanmar. He elaborates on how Myanmar has attracted power politics in the region with implications that reverberates in the whole of Asia. USA, Japan, India, China, North Korea have all nurtured links with Myanmar that makes it a volatile territory. Supporting this perspective, while Roman Vakulchuk (2017) writes about Myanmar's energy sector as a

promising ground for attracting foreign investments, Thomas Wheeler (2017) considers Myanmar a key component of China's BRI. The China connection has been strong in Myanmar and is particularly getting stronger in the context of geopolitics in the Indian Ocean (Selth 2003).

Further, there are writings about the China-Myanmar economic corridor (Nilar 2018) and challenges facing Myanmar in its attempt at integrating with the world through improved connectivity and economic linkages (see De 2017 for example). These leave the ball in the court of the researchers to enrich the literature on Myanmar's role in the region under brewing global politics in the Asia-Pacific.

China and India in Myanmar: Pursuit of influence through infrastructure diplomacy

Books and articles by B. Pakem (1992; 1999), Renaud Egreteau (2003; 2008), Swapna Bhattacharya (2007), Nehginpao Kipgen (2016), Rajiv Bhatia (2015), Marie Lall (2006), Preet Malik (2015) form part of the growing literature on the subject. Similarly, the literature on China-Myanmar relations include writings by I.S. David and F. Hongwei (2012), M.P. Callahan (1995), Bertil Lintner (2017). Renaud Egreteau (2003) is a valued source to understand the overall background of the interplay of relations between India, Myanmar and China. Egreteau hypothesises that when the relationship between China-India in Myanmar is reassessed, the rivalry between the two can only be termed as limited in nature (2012). A survey through the writings on this topic during the 1990s reflects the magnanimity of the China factor in Myanmar, particularly as most of them appeared in reputed strategic and defence journals.

Bertil Lintner, has written profoundly on the geo-strategic and geopolitical aspects of Myanmar vis-à-vis that of India and China, including in vernacular newspapers such as *Pratidin Time* of Assam, *Xinhua* of China and others that give out crucial information on the volatility of the region. Lintner's hypothesis looks at Myanmar as a localized illustration of a larger tussle at the global level (2012; 2015). Further, Mohan J. Malik (1994;1997) shows that there indeed exists a Sino-India rivalry that has been fostered by Myanmar and that Myanmar has advantaged itself from it. In contrast some others reject such a view. Andrew Selth (1993), for example, claims that the Sino-India rivalry is based on perceptions rather than facts.

India's position in this triangulation has changed in more ways than one. In the earlier phase of India-Myanmar rapprochement, the China-factor appeared to be the driving force in most of the writings of that time. A comparison of some of the titles of the influential pieces in the 1990s with that of more recent times makes clear the point being discussed. Academicians and experts like Phunchok Stobdan (1993), Mohan Malik (1994; 1997), Swaran Singh (1997), Bertil Lintner (1994), Dipanker Banerjee (1996), Mya Maung (1994) and others showed concerns through their work about Chinese presence in Myanmar. However, more recently, India has managed to gain some favour in Myanmar that in turn has led to a growing resentment of Chinese dominance. It is not surprising that articles read titles like "Myanmar is Pivoting away from China" (Jaishanker 2015). Ranjit Gupta (2013) highlights that though China has had a vision for itself in Myanmar for much longer than India, it is also a state that has faced dislike from Myanmar and increasingly so. With the change in domestic politics in Myanmar, it is likely to follow a more equidistant policy towards its neighbours. C. Raja Mohan (2007) for example states that India should find areas of convergences with China and cooperate with it in Myanmar. This provides a scope for India to be a security partner for Myanmar, if not a security provider, a valid point noted by Sampa Kundu (2015). Particularly in the maritime context, India can harness the advantages it has over China, something that finds mention in the writing of David Brewster (2016), Khriezodilhou Yhome (2014) and others.

As regards the infrastructure, as early as 1985, Pan Qi wrote about the need for China to connect to the India Ocean through the Irrawady that flows along the length of Myanmar, and presented the outline of railheads in northern Myanmar from Myitkyina through Lashio, bolstering various connectivity undertakings in the region (Qi 1985). The Chinese developments that took place thereafter in Myanmar (and other countries) have been projected as economic in nature (Jinxing 2013). Yet the inherent nature of these investments, particularly formation of intertwining linkages has concerned many. Lintner proposes that through aid in infrastructure in Myanmar, China has sought to tighten its control (1993). This leads Myanmar to be drawn into the Chinese shadow (Mang 2018). Swaran Singh (1997) explained that through infrastructural build up like the Myitkiyana-Sadon-Sailaw-Mangmin Road, the two 'gun bridges', the rail lines aiming to link Kunming to Bangkok through Myanmar and such other initiatives China aimed to provide an outlet for the landlocked Yunnan province and increase trade in Southeast

Asia. This Chinese influence through infrastructure diplomacy has been 'alive and well' in Myanmar, as it is in most part of Asia (Sakuja 2015).

However, a benign picture is potrayed through a survey of Chinese literature on China's intent in Myanmar. Any threat from the Chinese infrastructure expansion is contested by Chinese scholars and officials. Liu Jinxing (2013) explains that China's bridgehead strategy from Yunnan has no militaristic undertone but aims to increase international trade and deliver long-term regional security. Additionally, scholarly work on the BRI has been focused on the trade and economic angle rather than a strategic one (Yue 2018). Articles in newspapers such as *China Daily*, *South China Morning Post* and other sources from China provide a sense of the positive links that have developed between China-Myanmar-India.

Myanmar as a neighbouring country grew in importance in the Indian context, finding enough space in many books, especially in view of the China angle. There is talk about linking Northeast India to Southeast Asia through Myanmar in hope for a geo-economic linkage with the ASEAN countries. Udai Bhanu Singh and Shruti Pandalai writes about the need for infrastructure integration in Myanmar (2012), while Nirupama Subramanium provides a glance into how India tries to built on gains in Myanmar in the connectivity and energy sector. Literature available in Indian government websites of the Ministry of External Affairs (2010) and DoNER (2008; 2010) enumerates the various projects India has been working on in Myanmar and is thus very resourceful. Though India has lagged behind and lost opportunities due to incompletion of projects (like KMTTP) there is an increased sense of engagement and greater stakes with Myanmar today. As a result, we see experts pursuing various research on related topics. For instance, Jiadeep Chanda's recent book, *Irrawady Imperatives* (2021), reveal that India's Kaladan project was rooted in a memo in 1968 (Bhaumik 2021).

Impact on China-India Relations

Renaud Egreteau (2003) brings out the affect Myanmar has had on India-China relations at not just the strategic level but also for the socio-political milieu of NER and Southwest China. Within its scope it also touches upon the nature of the various trading routes in the region, especially between China and Myanmar that have played an important role in developing the economy of the border areas and Chinese influence, particularly in Upper

Burma. The impact of this growing China-Myanmar nexus, including military deals between the two, was felt on India as it began to seek rapprochement with Myanmar, though India's Myanmar policy was marked with great ambiguity in the 1990s. Yet, Egreteau makes a reassessment of relations and goes on to highlight that Myanmar provides opportunities of cooperation to both India and China. China has indeed sought Indian cooperation in developing the Stillwell road, a part of which traverses through Myanmar up to Yunnan as the Burma road (Egreteau 2012:59).

Others like Mohan Malik believes that Myanmar has played a role in providing a clash point for India and China (1994;1997). Not all agree. C. Raja Mohan (2014) opines that India should find areas of convergences with China and cooperate in Myanmar. Another perspective is provided by Ranjit Gupta who opinions that India guided Myanmar's China policy in the initial years since 1948. But its generous moves were not acknowledged or reciprocated, and with China drawing Myanmar into its fold, India was made a non-entity (2013). It had a negative impact on India-China relations through the 1990s that has became moot points for many scholars like Lintner and others. The Myanmar-PetroChina deal of 2007 became an irritant in China-India relations that was covered by many national dailies in India besides being debated by scholars and experts in the field.

Missing Links in the Literature

Since the turn of the century in particular, there has been a host of studies showcasing multiple perspectives about the simultaneous rise of China and India in Asia and how they have competed and engaged with each other for regional influence. However, with the advent of BRI and a spur of infrastructure projects and connectivity corridors, a new genre of diplomacy influencing geopolitics has emerged. It is using infrastructure diplomacy as a tool of foreign policy to gain leverages. The concept of infrastructure as a diplomatic tool however, remains as yet a work-in-progress. While Fanqi Jia and Mia Bennett in their 2018 article carve out a definition for ID, they accept that ID has not been "seriously theorized or explored beyond China and a handful of other countries" (2018:3). Though the existing literature highlights the growing Chinese infrastructural forays in Asia, India's role in this context is only beginning to be noticed. The literature has studied India's engagement with Myanmar in a limited way, largely pertaining to the Act East Policy. Similarly, when it comes to infrastructure investments as part of foreign

policy, countries like China, Japan and USA have been the focus, without taking into account how the increased role that infrastructure projects and investments by India have altered the way the the Asian great game is shaping up. This study aims to fill such a gap in the literature in China-India studies to show how both the countries are making use of infrastructure diplomacy as a tool for influencing the region. It aims to make a value addition and bring out the growing importance of Myanmar for China and India, as well as for larger Asian geopolitics. Theoretically, it also attempts to explicate the concept of ID.

Definition, Rationale, Scope and Methodology

The basic idea about any topic of research is obtained by finding response to the golden questions — what, how and why. While the brief background given in the previous pages provides partial answers to the what question about this study, the how and why questions will be elaborated in this section.

What and why of the study

Despite the overall background provided earlier, it is futile to try grasp all the variables of the topic at one go without outlining the definition of the concepts used and without laying down the boundaries as well as the limitations of it at the onset. Further, if one is unclear why the specific topic is important or relevant and is not sure whether it contains theoretically or practically unsolved propositions, the purpose of choosing the research topic may be invalidated. Therefore, the definition, rational, scope as well as methodology of the study must be clear to pursue an ontologically and epistemologically valuable research.

In the context of this study, there is already an array of work on diplomacy, on China-India relations from varying perspectives, on the increasing importance of Myanmar as well. In that case, the need to specify what definition of diplomacy is being focused upon is useful to begin with. Additionally, since there is a growing genre of geo-strategic and geo-economic works anchored on infrastructure studies, it becomes essential to define clearly what this study means by terms such as infrastructure diplomacy or influence.

Chas Freeman looked at diplomacy as the ‘art of power’ (1997). Stating that Henry Kissenger’s definition of diplomacy as the ‘art of restraining power’ is not apt, Yoav

Tenembaum wrote ‘diplomacy is the art of enhancing power’ (2017). In this sense, diplomacy is considered a means to enhance soft power in the interdependent world today. While Koehane and Nye (1977) spoke of power as influence in such as interdependent world, this study draws from such definition to state that modern nation states of the 21st century make use of diplomatic tool to influence other states to gain power. No doubt that economic diplomacy is seen as one of the most useful of such foreign policy tools (see Chapter 2). Yet, in recent years the practice of infrastructure diplomacy has gained momentum.

Infrastructure in a broad sense may include categories that range from critical military infrastructure to social infrastructure aimed at development, to even digital infrastructure in the age of technology. However, for the purpose of this study, the definition of infrastructure is narrow and refers to projects and installations that support and facilitate transportation (of goods, resources or any other product) and allow connectivity between two or more places. At the same time, while referring to infrastructural investments, projects related to connectivity and those that enable to form physical linkages remains the focus. Without undermining the significance of social infrastructure, it is noted that when studying geo-strategic and geopolitical relevance of infrastructure in IR, it is the connectivity linkages that support military or economic needs of a country that stand out as more important. Having said that, there is an increase in infrastructure investment even in the social sector to great extents (see Chapter 2 and Chapter 4). Yet, the scale of those are small compared to investments in roads, railways and other connectivity corridors.

Combining the aforesaid ideas, this study defines ‘infrastructure diplomacy’ as pertaining to efforts of a country to aid or invest in another country’s infrastructure (largely aimed at physical connectivity) i.e. roads, railways, seaways, river ports, airways as well as pipelines and its likes to pursue individual national interest, but not limited to it. It is thus understood as a means for asserting influence in inter-state relations through the attempt of forming new partnerships. The scope of the study is therefore somewhat narrow in its definition.

Coming to the question on why China, India and Myanmar, there are several doubts that may come to mind. Most certainly does, the question about why choose India over other countries that invest much more in the infrastructure sector, Japan for instance. Further,

why consider Myanmar over Bangladesh or any other state in the region. The rationale for these are twofold. Firstly, though Japan has made large foreign infrastructure investment, initiated collaborative projects such as the AAGC and has in fact had expertise in modern infrastructure technology such as the high-speed railways even before China came into the picture (Pavlievi and Agatha 2017), Tokyo has remained rather aloof, signalling no desire to compete with China in this sector, with the fervour that New Delhi has shown or made to show as part of the larger geopolitical game in the Indo-Pacific. It is the economic ascendancy of China and India due to which the global focus has gradually shifted from the Trans-Atlantic to Asia-Pacific, and now the Indo-Pacific. Within the region, it is China and India that have had a rather competitive relationship which was catalysed with the announcement of BRI since 2013. Though China has taken a lead in this domain and is not seen as competing with India on its own, the spur in infrastructural investments and connectivity network building is seen as a new way through which states have begun to assert their influence and leverage geo-strategic and geo-economic gains. In line with this, India has made its infrastructural pursuits and has increasingly responded to China, albeit slowly. Particularly visible has been India's eastward thrust towards Southeast Asia that has come to intersect with China's southward thrust towards the Indian Ocean. This brings us to the second aspect of the study — Myanmar.

Myanmar has itself gone through democratic transition in recent times and is still politically volatile. Besides being rich in hydrocarbon resources and hydroelectric capacity that has the potential to fulfil the growing energy needs of the two big neighbours, Myanmar is also strategically located at the crossroad between South and Southeast Asia and has open access to the Bay of Bengal and Indian Ocean. This makes Myanmar stand out in the region. Further, both China and India share boundaries with Myanmar that bring them together into a contiguous complex, unlike Bangladesh or Sri Lanka for instance. By that logic, Pakistan falls within this category. However, Pakistan does not fit in on its own for the study of this research for two reasons. First, the complex political nature of India-Pakistan relationship and the 'all weathered friendship' between China and Pakistan make Pakistan a biased case study for the research. Second, emanating from this is the fact that the huge infrastructure (and other) investments by China in Pakistan cannot be juxtaposed with the Indian context as it does not offer a level playing ground for India the way Myanmar does. Though India may be concerned about

the close Sino-Pakistani ties, it does not seek to respond to it in the infrastructure context in the country. Instead India has done so through other states such as Iran and Afghanistan. Therefore, focusing on the infrastructural forays of both China and India in Myanmar particularly and gauging the impact of this, if any, upon their bi-lateral relations is deemed apt for this study.

There are certain other rationales for the study. It is important to point out that the focus of the research remains on studying China's and India's ways to increase influence through infrastructure diplomacy in the regions that fall within its periphery, particularly South and Southeast Asia. Though China has invested in other regions including Central Asia, Africa and Latin America, India's infrastructural contributions in these regions are only taking shape and are in no comparison to China's. Neither do these regions provide as much strategic and geographical advantages (including due to proximity) that Myanmar offers. Especially since the Indo-Pacific has emerged as a courtyard for both geopolitical and maritime power games, focusing on the peripheral regions of China and India provides the ability for deeper study of the topic. Otherwise, the scope of the topic is such that it may overshadow certain crucial elements in lieu of being holistic and all encompassing. Similarly, the rationale for limiting the scope to infrastructure projects, as distinct from the broader developmental projects, as a way to conduct diplomacy, is to enable deeper research of the aspect, motivated by China's BRI.

Once the scope of the study is understood, it can be added that greater focus has been given to adjacent Chinese and Indian regions that physically connect to Myanmar, namely India's northeast and South West China. The socio-political and other problems of the border areas of India-Myanmar-China such as insurgency, drug trafficking, immigration etc. is only mentioned
so as to provide certain nuances to the case, but which otherwise fall beyond the research scope.

How is the study done?

As pedagogy in teaching impacts the way knowledge is utilized and imparted, methodology in research impacts the outcome of it in a similar way. It is an important aspect of research, very often the most challenging and crucial part of it, for a faulty method may generate results that are not only misguiding but are invalid.

This study revolves around three main variables. Infrastructure, understood as a modern tool of diplomacy, China-India relationship and Myanmar. The first, exclusively called infrastructure diplomacy, is treated as the independent variable. An independent variable causes change in the dependent variable, in this context, the relationship between China and India. The latter is affected or explained by distribution and changes in the former. Hence a co-relation must exist. In this study, the aim is to find out if any such co-relation exists. If it does, how much of investment and focus on the infrastructure sector in a third country by China and India individually, or between China and India bi-laterally, impacts their overall relations. In simple words, the effect of infrastructure diplomacy will be gauged on relations between China and India in their interface for regional influence, the dynamics of which will be determined as per the findings of this research. On the other hand, the case study here presents itself as the intervening variable. Myanmar does not simply link the two, but impacts the nature of bi-lateral relationship between China and India as well. In doing so, while in the 1980s and 1990s, Myanmar may have been a more biased case in this context (as it was said to be Sinocized in many ways when India was aloof), it sits well as a rather neutral case today despite many arguing about the Chinese clout present. At least, Myanmar no more looks like a 'vassal state' of China that some like Bertil Lintner argued it to be in the 1990s. As such, all the three variables of the study are well attuned to produce valid results.

While what is to be measured and studied is understood, the next step is to enumerate the methods and techniques that is put to use for the same. Methodologically speaking, a qualitative approach is the essence of the research. Yet, a crucial part of it is based on data collected through a quantitative approach, including an online survey, some interviews conducted (most of which had to be limited to interactions online) and field trips to Yangon in January 2019, to Guwahati from 2017-2019 and some parts of Kathmandu in January 2020. Most of the findings from these processes of data collection have been attached as Annexures at the end of this thesis.

As mentioned, while many have used infrastructure diplomacy as a term, there is no theoretical study on the emergence of it. It was therefore meaningful to find out the scope, meaning and validity of such a practice of diplomacy through a survey (the questions to which are attached in Annexure I and details discussed in Chapter 2). The respondents

were limited to diplomats, scholars and experts on the field of study pertaining to diplomacy, infrastructure investments as a topic in IR and earnest observers of regional geopolitics. For this a purposive sampling technique was employed where the survey was circulated within relevant people keeping in mind the objective of the study. At the same time, the survey results would be skewed if adequate respondents from both China and India were not engaged. Admittedly, due to the pandemic in 2020, the problem of non-response was multiplied (see Conclusion chapter). The sample frame stood at 75 respondents, of which a quota was fixed at 25 for samples from China, 25 from India and 25 others. However, only 30 responses were received overall. With a 40% response rate, the online survey had to be shut due to lack of time thereafter. In any case, methodologically therefore, a non-probability sampling was used with a mix of quota and purposive technique for the survey.

For the quantitative part of the study, data collected on various aspects of infrastructure projects of the case study, such as number of rail, road, air and seaways that China and India have invested in or built in pursuit of their respective interests, time period and cost of project, and other such information were tabulated for analysis. Largely, secondary sources were useful for this as a lot of work has already been done on this aspect. Yet, while this tabulation and assessment needed manual work, the survey conducted through the software app called *SurveyMonkey* presented the data digitally, reducing the efforts otherwise required for quantification and analysis. To sum up, this research is a product of a mixed method approach.

As regards the sources, the list of references attached at the end of this work is reflective of the vast literature available. As already stated in the literature review, existing literature on the topic has been studied from differing viewpoints that explore a comprehensive understanding, particularly in regard to the case study in context. The attempt has been to refer not simply to the mainstream literature available but also to vernacular sources from northeast India as well as writings and opinions from China and Myanmar and of experts from across the globe, some of which needed translation with external help. A major part of information and data was obtained through primary sources such as government websites from the countries in question and official portals of companies involved in infrastructure projects in Myanmar and a few other states in Asia. For example, online access to speeches available at the Ministry of External Affairs

(MEA) and project information uploaded in the Ministry of the Development of Northeast Region (DoNER) in India, news updated via the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) in China, data mined from various portals of companies dealing with infrastructure projects were unavoidable and immensely beneficial for the study. Further, the open ended questions presented to interviewees ranging from diplomats, scholars and experts on the subject enhanced the quality of this study as well the experience of it.

Puzzles and proposals

Daniel Headrick, in his book *The Tools of Empire: Technology and European Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century,* contented that 'technological advances not only permitted imperial expansion but stimulated it as well' (1981). His focus revolved around the creation of gun boats by the British East Indian Company, the use of sophisticated weapons to gain advantage over more primitive technology used by Africans and the availability of quinine prophylaxis to survive tropical diseases as means that helped British domination in the century. While the advent and possession of nuclear weapons gave thrust to the superpowers in the latter 20th century, the 21st century proved extremely complex due to the breakdown of many compartmentalized boxes in the art of statecraft, in any form. Great games as played in the earlier centuries can no longer be played and won by using a single means or tools. Moreover, power and influence are sometimes illusive, ephemeral and unquantifiable. With such variability, how do countries then manage to rise to great power positions, geopolitically, geo-strategically and geo-economically? Further, since the position of the US as the sole superpower is now contested, increasingly challenged by China in the last decade, researchers have tried to assess how this situation came about in international studies.

Though US continues to lead in matters of hard power advantages, China has overtaken it in the various sectors of geo-economics. Strikingly, one aspect of China's deep footprints in the world map has been its investments in the infrastructure/connectivity area and its attempts at creating a world order different from a west-centric one. It crosses one's mind then, if Britain used tools such as railways, roads and gunboats to gain dominance and China has made a difference thorough its mega infrastructure projects, how important therefore is infrastructure as a variable in IR? Drawing from this, and given that hard power alone is insufficient to gain influence, if not dominance, how much of focus should lie on pursuing foreign policy thorough nurturing soft power means such

as infrastructure diplomacy? This study has therefore highlighted these puzzles and asked certain related questions, putting it within the context of the variables of this study. Some of them are enumerated below:

1. What has been the role of infrastructure and connectivity projects in international relations?

2. Can we observe the rise of a niche issue area in diplomacy that can be termed as 'infrastructure diplomacy', distinct from established concepts such as economic diplomacy and development diplomacy?

3. Has 'infrastructure diplomacy' emerged as a tool in contemporary times through which countries seek to assert influence, regionally or globally?

4. If so, how are China and India, the two Asian giants making use of infrastructure diplomacy and how is it impacting their bi-lateral relationship?

5. With the eastward thrust of India towards Southeast Asia and the southward thrust of China towards the Indian Ocean, does their infrastructure diplomatic engagement in Myanmar as an intersecting point, have any impact on their relationship, individually or bi-laterally?

The study aimed at answering these questions proceeds by laying down three main propositions. It hypothesizes that:

1. With increased international engagements by states in an interdependent world, 'infrastructure diplomacy' has emerged as a niche foreign policy tool, largely used by countries to assert influence.

2. With increased interactions of China and India in its peripheral regions, pertaining to the infrastructure sector in particular, the competitiveness in their bilateral relationship has been aggravated manifold thereof.

3. It is in Myanmar where India has found a level playing ground to respond to China's infrastructure diplomacy influence in its peripheral region. Especially given the transition phase Myanmar is undergoing, how the country engages with the infrastructure diplomacy moves by China and India is defining their overall inter-state relationships.

With these clear propositions and objectives in mind, the study branches out into four substantive chapters, each dealing with different aspects of the topic and tappers at the end to make an assessment about the inter-play of the variables of this research.

What lies ahead?

The growth of the Asian Tigers economies by the 1990s showed the potential that states like South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore had for the future. While the first two were among the biggest electronic manufactures, the latter were leading financial hubs. By the turn of the millennium, the rise of China was what took the attention away from these states as it rose as the largest growing economy in the region. The financial crises in 2008, after the housing bubble burst in the US, left many western states weak both economically and politically, while the rise of China as well as India in the last decade proved the 21st century is indeed an Asian one.

While this introduction already has brought forth the research design, including defining the scope, rationale, methodology and the essential questions that are being asked through this study, the chapters that follow need mention here to enable a brief glance into the essence of what follows from here. Chapter 2, begins with a discussion on diplomatic history and the role of infrastructure in IR. Titled 'Diplomacy and Infrastructure as a Tool for Influence in International Relations', it examines the concept of infrastructure diplomacy in IR and aims to answer the what, why and how questions surrounding it. It is rationalized through a narrative discussion on how infrastructure as a tool of diplomacy has been used since colonial times of the British in Asia in pursuit of self interest, to its understanding within the context of economic and development needs of the 20th century, before discussing the rise of infrastructure diplomacy in contemporary times. It conceptually details the topic by describing its features and strengths as well as by delineating the various challenges around it, both theoretically and practically.

Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 deal with China's and India's use of infrastructure diplomacy respectively. The former discusses the way Chinese investments in infrastructure projects can be read under the light of its larger aims of influencing the Asian region and beyond, particularly by explicating on BRI implementation in many countries such as Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Nepal, etc. Importantly, it carries a chronological evolvement of Chinese diplomatic practices in the recent past before analysing how this influence is actually being garnered. It then proceeds to detail out Chinese infrastructure involvement in Myanmar. Similarly, Chapter 4 is a discussion of how India has increasingly responded and challenged China's role in Asia by investing in connectivity and infrastructure projects in many of the smaller economies in its peripheral region. However, India's domestic requirement for infrastructure and its negotiations with foreign players to fill that gap at home has been discussed in the chapter, something that differs from the China story. Nevertheless, India's growing ID, at home and abroad, with both push and pull factors, have been reflective of the competitive geopolitical milieu between the two Asian giants and is pertinent to the idea of understanding how infrastructure diplomacy has come to occupy a crucial place in IR. Chapter 4 too ends with an analysis of the case study on Myanmar, from the Indian context. These chapters taken together aim to test the hypothesis that states how countries (China in this case) use infrastructure diplomacy to pursue its national interest in the global context (with India following suit). How much of it has been successful is a question dealt with later.

The second hypothesis of this study that contends about the increased competitiveness between China and India, mostly hinged upon the infrastructure sector, is assessed in Chapter 5. It examines this proposition from the narrow context of the case study to see how bilateral relations have been impacted due to interfaces in Myanmar, as well as in the broader sense of the Asian geopolitical games of the contemporary times. The chapter also deals with the third hypothesis on Myanmar as a level playing ground in regional geopolitics. The summary of this research along with its findings are put forward in the concluding chapter, facilitating this research to come to a coherent and cogent end.

Prima facia, the rise of infrastructure diplomacy has given a new momentum to globalization itself, that has deeply impacted the geo-economic and geo-strategic aspects of IR in the 21st century. In such dynamic environment it is worthwhile to see how two

of the most powerful states in Asia have made use of soft power means, such as infrastructure diplomacy, to influence states within their periphery. This research on China-India infrastructure diplomacy, in Myanmar particularly, examines the strategic and economic impact of these developments on their inter-state relationships as also on Asian geopolitics and hopes to be a valuable addition to the literature on the subject.

Chapter- 2

Diplomacy and Infrastructure as a tool for Influence in International Relations

Introduction

To any layman, International Relations (IR), in its simplest form, is understood as the study of interactions between states. Even though the inherent difficulties of defining IR in state-centered terms, the very ontology of theories based on a critical approach, is missed out at the elementary level, there is an acknowledgment as to the increasing complexity of understanding IR in an interconnected and interdependent world that exists in the 21st century. The actors of IR, the issue areas on which inter-state relations are conducted as well the means through which it is done have all metamorphosed into interlinked categories. Globalization largely changed the way interaction between states take place at multiple levels, through multiple means, on issues that go beyond the interest of a single sovereign nation state. State heads and diplomats as representatives are often supplemented by people ranging from business executives and private entities to Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and technical experts at international meetings, discussions on territorial topics very often get replaced by global concerns about impact of climate change, clauses of nuclear treaties or implications of inter-continental transport corridors on geopolitics and geo-economics. While Ambassadors and government officials are no more the only ones engaging in diplomacy, the nature of diplomacy itself has become multi-pronged, transitioning from what is called 'club diplomacy' to 'network diplomacy' (Heine 2013).

Yet, no matter if one is attuned to a rationalist explanation of international studies or not, it has been widely accepted that since ancient times, one of the most overarching needs to have contact with another state has been largely driven by traditional military or economic interests. In the ancient times, the Romans sought to interact with neighbouring kingdoms and beyond with desires of territorial expansion. The Chinese encouraged interactions with the aim to spread their silk trade. During the medieval times, the European powers hoped to gain both politically as well as economically from their colonial exploits in Asia, Africa and beyond. Similarly, in modern times the desire to influence or have power to do so over others through the pursuit of efficient tools of foreign policy continues. No matter if one looks at IR from a Western perspective, said to be rooted in a materialistic understanding of international events, or from a non-

Western perspective that is observed to be spiritually motivated[*], one cannot deny the pursuit of power or the desire for influence in the conduct of inter-state relations throughout history. Though in traditional IR studies, an artificial gap between high politics of the state and lower politics of the economy emerged, it became challenged by the mid-20th century. What is power, which power is important, how to exercise it have remained some of the most debated topics in IR.

If globalization has changed the way states interact, it has also brought about changes in way states exercise power. Once we agree on the fact that IR has become more complex, we are bound to pay attention to how power, traditionally understood as hard resources of the state, has given way to power as influence. Robert Koehane and Joseph Nye's explanation of how power understood as influence over 'outcome' becomes more important than power derived from 'resources', in the world which is not simply interconnected but also interdependent (1977), is one of the many ways in which power in IR can be understood in the changed settings. Further, Joseph Nye's formulation of soft power managed to give a reasonable alternative to the traditional meaning of power understood in state-military terms (2004). It attempts to explain how states influence another state without using military coercion as a means of foreign policy. It is precisely to understand such evolving means of foreign policy conduct in the dynamic international structure that we need to narrow our focus of study by entering the field of practice in IR, the field where inter-state relations are truly conducted, the field of diplomacy in IR.

Diplomacy as a means of conducting foreign policy negotiation, mediation, promotion or as a tool of influence has been discussed extensively in the discourse of IR (see for example Nicolson; Rana 2002; 2011). From the ancient times when proxeni and envoys conducted inter-state diplomacy in the Greek city states, to the ambassadors of medieval Italy to diplomats of the modern era, the world of diplomacy has come a long way. Interestingly, not only has there been a change in who conducts diplomacy, on what issue, but also in how it is conducted. The Institute of Multi Track Diplomacy (IMTD) enumerates how diplomacy, in the context of conflict resolution in particular, is practiced through eight modes in modern times. If that is not indicative of the broad range of

[*] Rabindranath Tagore wrote about the 'common bond of spiritualism' among Asians in his 1918 publication, *Nationalism*, London: Macmillan. This has been widely considered and cited thereafter.

diplomatic practices, one can get into a debate about the various types of agenda and issue areas of diplomatic discussions. Some of them are broad categories such as economic diplomacy, development diplomacy, cultural diplomacy, public diplomacy, health diplomacy etc. Others are narrower and relates to a specific context for conducting diplomacy, such as ping pong diplomacy (between US-China in early 1970s), vaccine diplomacy (during COVID pandemic), cricket diplomacy (between India-Pakistan in 1987), panda diplomacy (used by China) to name a few. Each state may make use of these broad categories from its diplomatic toolkit, that in turn may comprise sub-categories from within the narrower ones. At the same time, to achieve a certain objective, states may employ more than one of them to form an overlapping filed of practice, something that reflects the proliferation of network diplomacy in modern times of a complex interdependent world.

One such sub-category of diplomacy, elevating its use, importance and effectiveness, especially since the 1990s is what is called as infrastructure diplomacy (ID) in this thesis. Falling largely within the broad categories of economic diplomacy and development diplomacy, though not entirely so, infrastructure diplomacy has emerged as a niche practice area today. Infrastructure has not only played a major role in international politics and history, but has catalyzed the way powerful states, whether with motives of colonialism or not, accrue power and political influence, particularly in the host countries. Infrastructure, especially, and increasingly those that support connectivity, has become a coveted asset across continents. It has in fact become a via media to harness the resources that in turn facilitates one state to gain power over another. It is noted that states with better connections to the global network of data, trade, finance and people grow 40% more than those that are not so connected (Manyika et. al. 2014). In this context, when state interests are being defined by infrastructure needs, it is important to point out how states have covertly, if not exclusively, begun the the practice of infrastructure diplomacy — both as a process and as an opportunity — aligned to their national interests and aimed at increasing their influence by this means.

On that note, this chapter forms the theoretical crux of the thesis on infrastructure diplomacy as a tool of influence. It attempts to explain how power and diplomacy has transitioned from its traditional understanding to its modern complex avatars. Besides it also delves into understanding the idea of infrastructure diplomacy as a tool of influence

in the 21st century that stands out within the concepts of economic diplomacy and development diplomacy, that in turn took shape in the mid 20th century. The first section narrates the evolution of diplomacy and brings out the idea and practice of various categories of diplomacy in modern times. Importantly, it lays down the linkage between power as influence, resonating with the school of complex interdependence theorists in IR, and diplomacy. Focus of the second section remains on the emergence of the niche area of infrastructure diplomacy, with emphasis on it as a sub-category of economic diplomacy and development diplomacy (pertaining to the Social Overhead Capital sector), though ID does touch upon various other aspects as well. It delves into the importance of infrastructure as a tool of influence as seen through history and then explicates the ideas of ID, its features and use by various states. The third section backs up part of one of the hypothesis of this study that states, with increased international engagements by countries (China and India in this case), infrastructure diplomacy has emerged as a distinct foreign policy tool used by them to assert influence in their peripheral regions. This is supported by an explanatory survey conducted for this purpose, which suggests the need to understand and study the emergence of ID as a niche foreign policy tool of IR in the 21st century.

Power as Influence and Diplomacy in IR

Power in an interdependent world

> The traditional agendas of international affairs — the balance among major powers, the security of nations — no longer defines our perils and possibilities…Now we are entering a new era. The world has become interdependent in economics, in communications and in human aspirations (Kissenger 2012).

This sentence by Henry Kissenger aptly touches upon the diminishing nature of compartmentalized notions in inter-state activities, duly induced by the process of globalization. With not simply an interconnected world, but an interdependent one, a distinction highlighted by Robert Koehane and Joseph Nye (1977), many concepts that hitherto dominated IR as a subject, underwent architectonic shifts and changes.

Observing many of the changes that were taking place by the middle of the 20th century, Keohane and Nye formulated the theory of Complex Interdependence (CID). Revising the realist understanding on world politics, among other things, they outlined three

characteristics that help understand notions such as power and influence in the subject. For one, describing world politics as a 'seamless web', they stated that the traditional hierarchy between high and low politics has been diffused. The former associated with the notions of military power of the state has been challenged as the definition of power itself has undergone changes (Walker 2013). This has led to varying political processes depending on the issue area. Secondly, agenda setting and control over this process, a crucial aspect of world politics, becomes complicated as the hierarchy between issues merge, along with the stark lines between domestic and international politics. This implies that agendas of international discussions and deliberations are decided by those in power, power understood as agency of the state comprising of many aspects of the interdependent world. Hard power or military force alone is insufficient. Thirdly, there exists multiple channels of contacts, from transnational to trans-governmental, that helps conduct and navigate inter-state relations across a wide field of practice.

If one is asked to define the concept of power, the response often commences with the phrase that it is an 'essentially contested concept' (much like the word security, as described by W.B. Gaille using this phrase in 1956). By 1957 Robert Dahl's work, *The Concept of Power*, laid down the well known intuitive understanding of power — A has power over B if A manages to get B to do something that B will not otherwise do. Though simple and widely used as a definition, critics have pointed out to the inadequacy of it and argued for the addition of a few aspects to fully grasp the concept. For example, the source or base of power for A, the means or tools of that power, the amount of it, as well as the scope of it are all necessary factors. With time, each of these aspects of power have seen alterations. Like many other concepts, power too has moved away from traditionally being understood in terms of objective or material power of the state.

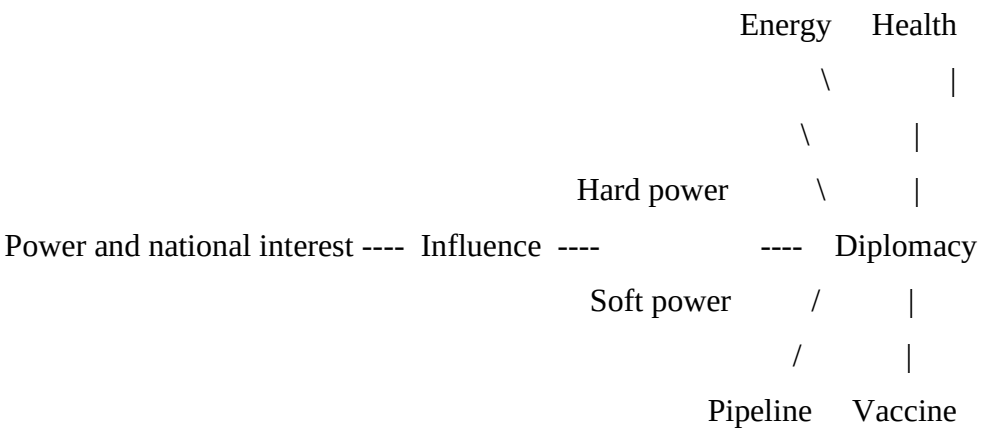
The complex interdependence theorists deliberate on the notion of power that provides states with actual 'influence over outcomes' rather than focusing on the resources that give them a potential ability to do so. Robert Kohane and Josephy Nye wrote, in *Power and Interdependence* (1977), that often states seek to translate this potential into actual effect. That is what political bargaining is designed for. This was read to imply that in an interdependent world therefore, negotiation and diplomacy plays a very crucial role, one that in turn becomes a source of power meant to compliment traditional sources such as military strength. Further, Joseph Nye's formulation of the idea of 'soft power' in this

seminal work *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power* (1990), resonated well with the realities of the time. By 2004, when the concept was explicated in the book *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, not only did it become evident that soft power was essential in the new era of interdependence, but also how a country projects its soft power, through what means, became an indispensable part of power politics. It was keeping with these developments that diplomacy as a means of influence became recognized as one of the most essential tools through which foreign policy began to be projected.

Traditionally, diplomacy is associated with power politics. G.R. Berridge defines diplomacy as "an essentially political activity and, well resourced and skilful, a major ingredient of power. Its chief purpose is to enable states to secure the objectives of their foreign policies without resort to force, propaganda or law" (2015). The Britannica Encyclopaedia, making use of Chas Freeman's understanding of diplomacy as 'arts of power' (1997), defines diplomacy as "the established method of influencing the decisions and behaviour of foreign governments and peoples through dialogue, negotiation, and other measures short of war or violence". As the concept of power has evolved over time, so has the practice of diplomacy. The diagram below helps understand the interconnections between these essential concepts of IR and to contextualize the statement that 'diplomacy today takes place among multiple sites of authority, power and influence' (Cooper, Heine and Thakur eds. 2013:1).

Diagram 2.1

Relationship between Power, Influence and Diplomacy



Source: Author

Evolution of Diplomacy

The word diplomacy is a fairly recent term. It is said to be given by Edmund Bruke in 1796 (Berridge 2015). It is derived from the Greek word 'diploma' which means official paper or documents of the state. People who were in charge of organizing the diplomas were the first namesake diplomats. The journey of inter-state interaction can be traced back to the times of ambassadors (a word used thorough recorded history) and the exchange of such officials in the 4th-5th century BC. By the 7th century BC, proxenoi in the Greek city-states became prominent. Resident consuls settled in another state and conducted diplomacy and foreign relations as a highly regarded vocation (though resident diplomacy widely began to be practiced in Italy by the 15th century). The Romans too were highly trained professional diplomats and emissaries. Many diplomatic practices akin to modern times were introduced by them, such as international arbitration and diplomatic immunities, among other things.

In the East, envoys have held important positions since ancient times. Accounts from India and China in particular are well documented. The *Arthashashtra* of Kautilya written in the 3rd century BC highlights the role of ambassadors and the importance of diplomacy by stating that "a king who understands the true implication of diplomacy conquers the

world" (Spegele 1987: 189). It mentions six forms of diplomacy and remains a reflection of the significance of the institution at the time. There have been evidences of diplomatic correspondence in 14th century BC Egypt in the Middle East, while Persia has noted practice of diplomacy included in their folklore tales and political history alike.

Diplomacy in the modern sense began to take shape in post Renaissance Europe. As modern nation states were pronounced under the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, a transformation of the conduct of inter-state relations ensued. In the 17th century 'diplomatique' was a termed used more narrowly to refer to those dealing with matters and documents of inter-state relations. By the 18th century, old idea of ambassadors and envoys gave way to those who came to be referred to as diplomats, in Italy and elsewhere. A traditional meaning of diplomacy which persisted till the 20th century is well written within the following definition:

> Diplomacy at its essence is the conduct of relationships, using peaceful means, by and among international actors, at least one of whom is usually governmental. The typical international actors are states and the bulk of diplomacy involves relations between states directly, or between states, international organizations, and other international actors (Cooper, Heine and Thakur eds. 2013: 23).

This definition and understanding of diplomacy dovetailed well into the realist understanding of power in world politics where state as a unit in IR was sacrosanct. When E.H. Carr (1939) and Hans Morgenthau (1948) propounded the laws of international politics as being driven by national interests of states in a hierarchical and anarchical world order, diplomacy was crafted to achieve these hard power objectives. The agenda of diplomacy was limited to state centric goals, while the mode of contact remained governmental and formal, maintained by few officials trained for the job. Most often than not, diplomacy at a bi-lateral level resulted in solving inter-state disputes thorough mediation and negotiations, producing written agreements and rules of conduct in the international sphere. Yet, diplomacy failed to stop states from warring.

Founded by the need to prevent Napolean's expansion and conquests, the Concert of Rome was one of the holistic attempts in Europe through the conduct of multilateral diplomacy and discussion to maintain peace. After the First World War, the League of Nations formulated international rules of diplomacy via the endorsement of Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Point document of 1919 which promoted the principle of 'open covenants to be openly arrived at'. Nevertheless, the conduct of secret diplomacy and

pacts fueled the problems that led to the Second World War. The effectiveness of diplomacy and the need for it was questioned. By 1946 Hans Morgenthau wrote:

> …traditional diplomacy, must give way to a new conception of diplomatic intercourse appropriate to the new relations established between nations. If the end of the state is power, the character of its diplomacy will be adapted to that end. If the end of the state is the defense of international law, a different type of diplomacy will serve the end. (1946:1069)

It was also the time when power became increasingly hinged on economic might. At the time, the field of diplomacy witnessed formation of economic linkages via different entities at multiple levels. The USA as the economic hegemon held sway over new international institutions in the 1940s and 1950s. Within a few decades, new actors came into the picture. By the 1960s, the Organization of Economic and Cooperation and Development (OECD) nations as an inter-governmental conglomerate gave a push to economic diplomacy as an important practice area. By the 1970s the rise of the Asian tiger economies of Japan, South Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan drew attention to the need to have good economic relations with them. When globalization as a phenomenon became ubiquitous by the 1990s, many countries like Brazil, China, India and others highlighted the importance of economic diplomacy (Chin 2013).

The concept of development in economics was also discussed exclusively. Development refers to the area of the subject that deals with improving financial and social condition by focusing on sectors such as health, education, market conditions and other parameters of human growth. As such development and economics are mutually reinforcing fields. Same is the case with diplomacy pertaining to development and economics. The aftermath of the Second World War had witnessed development problems in many parts of the world that needed special attention to their development needs. Economic aid was one way thorough which demands were met. The US's Marshall Plan of 1948 is one such prominent example from the last century. China's BRI is being pointed at as the one of this century. Whether that is true or not is a debatable fact. Yet, that development aid mushroomed thorough the various multi-lateral agencies since the 1960s asserted the intertwining nature of both economic and development diplomacy. The establishing of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in 1964 juxtaposed the issues of economics and development into one single category and brought out the way for achieving those goals under an intergovernmental set up, thus promoting the notions of development diplomacy along with the then discussed agenda

of economic diplomacy. Therefore, as discussion on finance, commerce, trade augmented, the notion of furthering development, most of all that is sustainable in nature, thorough diplomacy came to the fore. The various diplomatic engagements and negotiations around achieving not only the Millennium Development Goals (MGD) but also broadening the developmental agenda into the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) is a case in point for the growing field of development diplomacy.

Meanwhile, new institutions were being formed and new actors in IR were being recognized. The establishment of the United Nations itself had opened up many avenues to conduct diplomacy, essentially with the aim 'to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war' (Preamble, UN Charter). Efforts were already underway to codify rules for diplomatic conduct and practices as formalized through the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations later in 1961. But beyond establishing peace, the UN system mandated to ensure 'obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law' and also 'promote social progress and better standards of life' (Ibid.). In line with such norms, new rules were written into the system where issue areas of international discussion began to proliferate. In particular, the economic thrust of the US as a superpower and expanding avenues of trade and military intercourse between nations proved critical for geopolitics and geo-economics alike. To manage this reality, the number of international organizations increased manifold which in turn further accelerated the inter-state interactions among states, over time, at various levels. It is noted that the number of international organization stood at about 37 in 1909, jumping to 123 in 1951. By turn of the millennium, this number reached 7000 (Cooper, Heine and Thakur eds. 2013:9).

In the 1990s, it was widely acknowledged that globalization changed the face of inter-state relations as well of how diplomacy was conducted. The development of information and communications technology (ICT) systems as well as of extensive linkages enabled by air travels had provided ways through which statesmen and diplomats were reaching out to the public in their own country and citizens in another, indirectly, via TV, radio and even frequently through direct interactions with the audiences.

The 1990s was also the decade when the Joseph Montville took note of the inadequacy of traditional Track One governmental modes of diplomacy in solving inter-state disputes

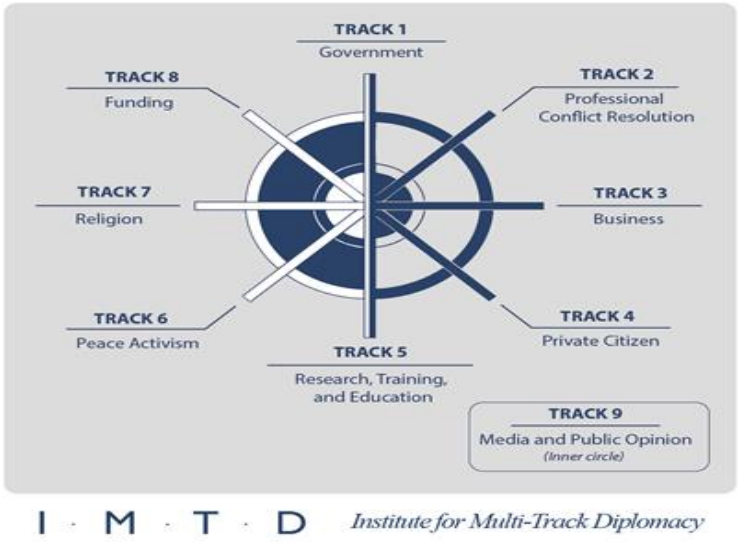
that were on a rise. To deal with this problem he invented Track Two Diplomacy. It included private individuals into the mediation process and infused diplomacy with more interpersonal settings. Yet, this too was not sufficient to deal with the advanced pace and tempo of direction inter-state relations and negotiations were taking. Louise Diamond, founding the Institute of Multi-Track Diplomacy (IMTD) that popularized the Multi-Track diplomacy model thereafter. Additionally, John McDonald, a diplomat from the US, split Track Two into four and increased 'tracks' to make diplomacy inclusive in practice. Image 1.1 explains the various routes through which diplomacy is presented by the IMTD. Each of these routes may further involve more than one of three levels of the Waltzian framework of theorization of the international system, i.e. individual, state and the international (1959). For example, Track 2 mode may include state officials but also private individuals as negotiators and ambassadors. Similarly, Track 5 may include scholars from official think tanks representing the government or private individuals and experts, along with groups from internationally founded programmes to deliberate upon a given problem.

Along with these various modes discussed above, *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Diplomacy* (2013) lists a few more topics that brings out the nature of diplomacy evident in the interconnected world. Besides a generic range of bi-lateral and multi-lateral diplomacy, the rise of conference diplomacy (Groom 2013; see also Abiodun Williams 2021) and summit diplomacy is notable. The former is said to emanate from events such as the Congress of Vienna in 1815 and progressed through times of the League of Nations to the UN members requesting for such meeting from the General Assembly or the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), since the 1960s in particular (Groom 2013:269). The latter on the other hand, sometimes considered risky, has gained prominence in recent times. While in the 15th century, the Burgundian diplomat, Philippe de Commynes is noted to have remarked that "two great princes who wish to establish good personal relations should never meet each other face to face" (Britannica web 2021), in the 1930s head of states and government getting in touch directly became a norm. Winston Churchill urged for a summit meeting in the mid 1940s in context of the UN disarmament commission, which only took place in 1955 however (Britannica web 2021a). By the 1960s the 'hot line' was made popular which allowed leaders to speak to each other over a phone call. This is a clear example of how technology changed the practice of diplomacy, something that has found renewed vigour with the rise of the

online modes of diplomacy during the time of COVID-19 pandemic. The virtual Quadrilateral Summit held in March 2020 is a case in point. What can be considered a midway between conference and summit diplomacy is shuttle diplomacy, practiced by Henry Kissenger especially in the 1970s. This too has found resonance as recently as in 2017 when Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi announced that he would conduct shuttle diplomacy between Pakistan and Afghanistan to reduce tension between the two states where China has been involved in building infrastructure and trade exchanges (PTI 2017).

Diagram 2.2

Multi-track diplomacy



Source: Institute of Multi Track Diplomacy, 'What is Multi Track Diplomacy', URL: https://imtdsite.wordpress.com/about/what-is-multi-track-diplomacy/.

Today, the volume and scope of negotiation ranges from inter-state disputes, economic matter, geopolitical strategies to more universal problems such as climate change, terrorism, threat from nuclear proliferation etc. Diplomacy has become a complex instrument of statecraft. It has become a means of soft power projection through various practices and modes. This quantitative explosion has led to validation of one of Hegel's three laws of dialectics, in the field of diplomacy. Much like Hegel explained, an increase in the quantity has an overall impact on the quality of things. In the same sense, the

transition facilitated by globalization had not just a quantitative impact, but also a qualitative one on the various aspects of diplomacy. This has been captured well by the thematic distinction between traditional (if not classical) club diplomacy and the new age network diplomacy in the interdependent world (see Table 2.1).

Table 2.1

Club and Network Diplomacy

	Club diplomacy	**Network diplomacy**
No. of players	Few	Many
Structure	Hierarchical	Flatter
Form	Mostly written	Mostly oral
Transparency	Low	High
Main purpose	Sign Agreements	Increase bilateral flows

Source: Borrowed from Heine, 'On the Manners of Practicing the New Diplomacy', p.6; also see, *OHMD,* (2013), p.23.

The 21st century is contested as the post Westphalian period (Vaughan 2011; Little 2005). The nation-state as the sole actor in IR has become a problematic proposition as the rise of various international organizations (IO), transnational and multinational organizations (TNC and MNC) have weakened the concept of sovereignty. This has had crucial impact on the way diplomacy functions. It is therefore certain that both power and conduct of diplomacy is froth with theoretical as well as practical shifts.

Infrastructure Diplomacy in IR

Infrastructure as an important variable

In the 1997 blockbuster film 'Titanic', when Jack Dawson (played by Leonardo DiCaprio) dines in first class with royalty, one diner assumes him to be extremely rich and remarks "you must be an heir to a *rail road* fortune perhaps". The statement though unimportant for the plot of the movie, leaves the earnest viewer with a clue about the

affluence that investment in the railways and roadways can bestow on an individual at the time. The movie is set to the timeline of the West of 1911.

The 18th century industrial revolution had boosted the development of cities, towns and countries based on the use of the new technologies such as steam engines and electrical telegraphs, which named alone however, does no justice to indicate the range of innovative production processes and machinery prowess achieved in history of the time. This furthered the way for a European takeover in world politics in the century to come. The role that infrastructure building, largely facilitated by the impact of industrial revolution, played in conquest and domination is often highlighted. It is known that in the 19th century British colonial pursuits had already made inroads within the third world countries in Asia and Africa, connecting various regions through the introduction of railways and telegraphs. No matter what the colonizers suggested, as Daniel Headrick notes, a publication in the *Economist* in 1857 made it clear that railroads would spread "English arts, English men and English opinions" in India (1981:182). The influence Britain would have through infrastructure, the railways in this context, was defining for international power play.

Speaking about the importance of the railways as not simply an economic or political tool for the British Raj but an emotional and nationalist symbol for the Indian population, Chritian Wolmark writes:

> After a slow start in 1853, the construction of the railway network envisaged by Lord Dalhousie was sped up rapidly after the 1857 Rebellion. The railways were an instrument of control. The stations became fortresses, the white and, later, the Eurasian, staff became an auxiliary army, and the tracks became lines of communication in the event of conflict. The 1857 Rebellion, coming as it did at a crucial stage in railway development, had an enormous impact on the railways' eventual shape and the attitude of the British colonial rulers to their Indian subordinates. This was a nakedly military project, but not solely one. There were immeasurable economic benefits, too, and though the very design of the railways was as conduits to and from the ports to help British imports and exports, inevitably the Indian economy received a stimulus through their construction. (CSIS 2017, *Reconnecting Asia*)

The importance of the railways as an instrument of control (power as influence) is clearly visible from the above paragraph. The significance of ports is evident from it. The case of British imperialism was one of the glaring examples of how infrastructure was used to transform the game of international politics on a global chessboard of the ruled and the rulers. If infrastructure is often understood as a sub-set of economics and development (or even economic/development diplomacy), the aftermath of the industrial

revolution led to the growth of economies and development of societies largely because of the growing use of infrastructure.

The French had done the same in Indo-China from the 1890s. With the aim of exploitation and influencing the markets for monopoly, the French built highways, roads, canals, bridges etc. in Vietnam and also in Cambodia, though not as much in Laos. In 1898, under the supervision of Governor General Paul Doumer, France granted a 200 million franc loan for 'public work', a term used to describe the broad range of infrastructure development projects, including areas such as sanitation, irrigations, etc. along with roads, canals, railways (Burlette 2007). By 1912, there was further debate in France on whether to grant the 90 million franc loan for more infrastructure in Indo-China. Though some credit them, or rather French administrators such as Pierre Paul Paris, for being people oriented and averting corruption in the implementation process (Ibid.), the fact that Vietnam, for example, resisted such projects in the infrastructure sector indicates the power motives of the rulers behind building infrastructure in the colonies. The railway line from Phnom Penh to Battambang on the Thai border, is described as "the climax of the French achievements in the colonial age" (Crane 2016). Yet, that such achievement is understood more as influence and conquest is well acknowledged.

Another important example of the role of infrastructure as an important variable in power politics is that of the Suez Canal. The significance of the canal and the influence derived from control over it is abundantly clear. In fact, the March 2021 Suez crisis caused by a ship stuck in the canal brings forth the value of it as critical infrastructure. The French occupation of Egypt in the 18th century led to the first surveys of the possibility of restructuring a canal (part of it there since ancient times) through the isthmus. Much like contemporary examples of leasing infrastructure facility, the Hambantota port to Chinese company for instance, in 1856 the Suez Canal Company was granted a 99 year lease to operate it after construction. The company was a joint stock one, with holdings by France, Said Pasha of Egypt at the time and eventually by Britain. When Egypt, under President Gamal Nasser, nationalized the canal in 1956, 13 years before the lease expired, the importance of the role of such valuable infrastructure projects were understood manifold better as the Suez crisis ensued, becoming a crucial lesson in world history and IR alike. Hence, it is understood that infrastructure has remained an important aspect of power and

influence in IR and has emerged as an indispensable aspect of international politics and economics in the 21st century.

The importance of infrastructure found prominence in political economy, especially by the mid 20th century. Brian Larkin defines infrastructure as "built networks that facilitate the flow of goods, people, or ideas and allow for their exchange over space" (2013:328). In the traditional sense infrastructure is understood in the military terms of hardware installations, mostly pertaining to war-time usages. Yet, a non-classical meaning would include infrastructure ranging from hard military, to physical connectivity to social development to even digital infrastructure. Depending on the circumstances, any of these could be named critical for a states' normal functioning or as essential for national interest. Yet another understanding of infrastructure is found in the assertion made by Prud'homme, that it is a "space shrinker, it enlarges markets, and operates like the lowering of trade barriers" (2004:1). This fits well within a globalized context of interdependent states. The increasing investments in various connectivity projects across the globe today help support this definition.

Though infrastructure is understood in economic terms as fixed asset and capital goods, it has varied nuances within it. In this sense, infrastructure is meant to be the lifeline along which society functions normally. In propounding the theory of unbalanced growth as a strategy for underdeveloped states, A.O. Hirschman along with Hans Singer, W.W. Rostow noted that infrastructure such as road, transport and communication, irrigation, etc. can be called a divergent series of investment and are essential sectors for growth. Hirschman classified them as Social Overhead Capital (SOC), explaining that investment in such strategic sectors will automatically spur growth in other sectors described as Direct Productive Activities (DPA). Perhaps, this, among other things provides rationale to China's mammoth investment in the infrastructure sector alone in the last decade (see Chapter 3). It is often based upon such definition that governments identify critical infrastructure of the country. It is these critical infrastructures that are sometimes target during war by non-state actors and belligerent groups, for it forms one of the most vital aspects of society. Avoiding such a situation in turn becomes part of negotiation over project location and conflict resolution, which is what has paved the way for infrastructure diplomacy to be increasingly used as a foreign policy means by modern nation states where infrastructure is an important issue area. As infrastructure

investments have increased, it has become an indispensable variable in the growth of nation states, and hence in IR, the stakes involved within it have gone up. Therefore, the emergence of infrastructure diplomacy is full of opportunities and challenges in the future.

Infrastructure Diplomacy in theory and practice

> There are in international relations a great number of delicate or irritating questions: it is the function of diplomacy to resolve them (Morgenthau 1946:1072).

As narrated in the previous sections and as the above statement denotes, with the number of issue areas in IR having multiplied over time in the interdependent world, so have the complications of conducting diplomacy. Having said that, because infrastructure has emerged as one of the most important aspects of international economics and politics, there is no doubt that negotiations, mediation, conflict resolution pertaining to this field is bound to surface. In doing so, infrastructure diplomacy, in a narrow sense of its process, is understood as the peaceful way through which states obtain bargaining power to influence other states by investing in the infrastructure sector. Randolph Bourne's definition of diplomacy as "disguised war, in which states seek to gain by barter and intrigue, by the cleverness of arts, the objectives which they would have to gain more clumsily by means of war" (1917), juxtaposed upon the variable of infrastructure, seems useful in the context. This is one way of understanding infrastructure diplomacy in practice.

Mustafa Tüter in an article published in the *International Journal of Political Studies* in 2019 attempts to provide a theoretical grounding to infrastructure diplomacy along the lines of the above definition. Titled 'China's Infrastructure Diplomacy in Southeast Asia: Explaining Asymmetric Bargaining with four ASEAN countries', the article claims that since China's infrastructure investments, notably focused on connectivity oriented sectors (like SOC area, as explained by Hirschman) it is "motivated by both overall strategic calculations and domestic demands, its vital need for political support from the developing countries provide weaker states bargaining leverage" (2019:61). In order to bargain (can be read as negotiate), China uses methods like coercion, inducement, persuasion or payment and resorts to almost 'buying influence' (what is now called 'debt' diplomacy for example), something that Scott Kastner elaborates in context of Beijing's ability to change the position of unwilling trade partners (2014). But importantly, even if

infrastructural commonalities are recognized between two states or more, there are many conflicting interests that exists, whether in terms of location of the project, vitality of financing for borrower and lender states, scale of it, and such other concerns, which creates a cooperative bargaining situation between them (Nash 1950; Tüter 2019:62). In such a situation, not only the lender/source, but also the borrower/host/recipient state may have expanded threat credibility (fallback option), especially depending on its strategic location or alternate foreign partners (Ibid.). It is in addressing these eventualities that states, in any capacity, may practice infrastructure diplomacy.

If diplomacy understood as a process involving negotiation and mediation for cooperation in the infrastructure sector is one way of looking at the rise of infrastructure diplomacy, there is yet another broader and a more common understanding of infrastructure diplomacy — as the opportunity through which states further their foreign policy goals. As such, infrastructure diplomacy is a soft power means that in turn helps accrue hard power gains and provides strategic leverages to countries practicing it. In this sense, infrastructure diplomacy is simply the increasing opportunities of interactions and interfaces between states around the SOC sectors in modern times. While the lender/source may use financial weight (also an important part of soft power) to deploy means such as infrastructure diplomacy, the borrower/host may project its ease of doing business (EoDB) or large potential in the infrastructure market as a route to attract states to indulge in infrastructure diplomacy. The opportunity cost may be important in this case. For example, speaking at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit in Beijing in 2014, Indonesian President, Joko Widodo called for increased investment, particularly in the infrastructure sector in the country. Soon after the country ranked 60th out of 138 countries in its quality and supply of infrastructure as per the World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Report 2016-17 (Schwab 2016). Discussing about 'The Art of Infrastructure Diplomacy', Eriz Wickasono wrote in *Strategic Review* that because Indonesia is calling out for infrastructure investment, "countries are pursuing infrastructure diplomacy in Indonesia" (2017). By 2016, he noted, that President Joko had said, "we aren't just serious about building infrastructure, we're very serious". Further:

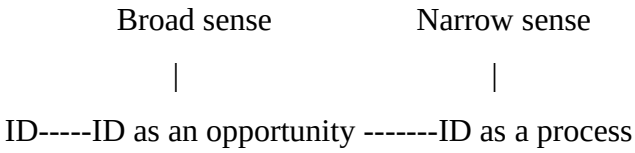
> …not only does Indonesia have the largest economy and population in Southeast Asia, official government policy welcomes foreign investment [in infrastructure]. The concept of infrastructure diplomacy lies beyond the boundary of just infrastructure

> financing, to the planning, construction and operation of the project itself. This spurs bi-lateral agreements and cross border cooperation among companies. (Ibid.)

This explains that the call for investment in infrastructure leads to Indonesia indulging in ID. The same may be the case of various other recipient states. The simple fact that there is scope to interact over infrastructure matters, increases the chance of infrastructure diplomacy. The following diagram shows the way ID can be understood in its broad and narrow sense.

Diagram 2.3

Scope of Infrastructure Diplomacy



Source: Author

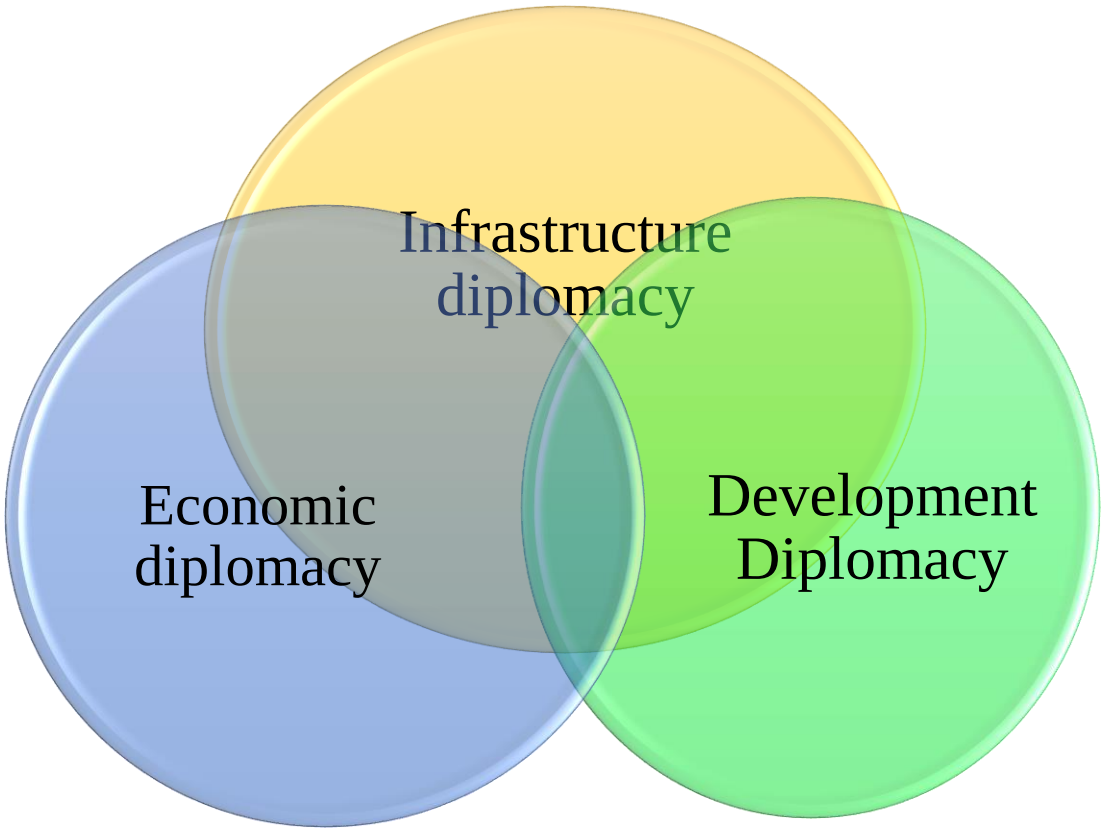
Unlike what ID has been commonly linked to, i.e. the Chinese infrastructural forays via the BRI and at best a cursory theoretical explanation to reason out such a phenomenon, this study explains ID as something more broad that allows even smaller or less powerful states to indulge in ID. As a process, for ID to take place even smaller states have better agency to negotiate as a recipient country, in most cases because it has increasing fall back options. However, no doubt the lender is at a more advantaged position, especially if the infrastructure building is through a loan or any other means that does not leave much scope for recipient states to really negotiate. This is where China gains through ID as a tool of influence (dealt with in Chapter 3). On the other hand, ID as an opportunity is more equal in nature and may even advantage a recipient state over a lending one. For example, the reason a lender seek opportunities of engagement abroad could be because they lack something at home, a maritime boundary or a certain resource etc. In such a case, if the recipient state is at a strategic advantage, despite its size or international status, it may have a better option for choosing between competing lenders and infrastructure

builders, in turn increasing its case of practicing ID as an opportunity. The case of Myanmar is obvious in this regard.

While some who use the term ID attempt to define the concept, however superficially, others leave it enmeshed with economic diplomacy and conflate meanings. Fanqi Jia and Mia Bennet defines ID as something that "involves the international provisioning of capital goods by state representatives or state-owned enterprises from one country (the source) to another (the host)" (2018:5). On the other hand, Laurids Laurisden use ED and ID interchangeably to explain China's growing economic clout as a result of the BRI (2019). This is what is being clarified in this thesis where the concept of ID is understood both as process as well as an opportunity. It refers to it as the attempt by a country to exert influence in another country by investing in infrastructure projects, particularly those that allow connectivity or transportation through roads, highways, rails, sea and river routes, airways and energy pipelines. It is a foreign policy tool largely used by states for building network and physical linkages to obtain easy access to foreign resources and markets, to thereby assert influence at a regional or global level. Even though infrastructure diplomacy still falls within the ambit of economic or development diplomacy and neither ED nor DD nor ID can be considered in isolation and as independent practice area, much like many other means of diplomacy that are indeed interlinked at various levels (see Diagram 2.4; see also Rana 2020), yet it can be pointed out that infrastructure diplomacy has witnessed a rise in the last decade because of China's active and aggressive perusal of it.

Diagram 2.4

Relationship between Economic Diplomacy, Development Diplomacy and Infrastructure Diplomacy



Source: Author

Over the last decade, it has been acknowledged that it is in recognizing the concept of ID that China launched the BRI in 2013. China's BRI is said to be the way through which Beijing seeks to achieve its grand strategy (Levette and Wu 2017). The BRI is projected as a 'win-win' bargain for all and appears to be the means to achieve a goal that China is striving for by 2049. Since the military alone cannot provide hegemony (as some claim is China's aim) despite its foreign policy becoming more assertive, a new type of diplomacy had to be adapted to by China to serve this end of achieving power, as influence. It is said that:

> …it takes more than economic power to transform the international system. If China does not possess the requisite power capabilities, either hard or soft, to transform the international

> system, in the longer run, its rise can contribute — along with the rising role of other great powers (emerging like India and Brazil or re-emerging like Russia) — to a gradual shift of the international system toward a more multi-polar balance of power, possibly characterized by multi-cultural pressure on the Western core principles, rules and practices at the international level. But this is a very different process of transformation and entails completely different power dynamics from a traditional scenario of hegemonic transition. (Ambrosetti 2012).

Countries aiming to escalate the power ladder need to therefore keep in mind the growing importance of infrastructure diplomacy, no matter its mastery over economic or development diplomacy earlier. ID though largely comprises of ED and DD, it is not limited by it however. The need for people-to-people contact, the burgeoning energy resources, the challenges of climate change and many other aspects, either domestic or international, are heavily dependent on robust infrastructure for becoming viable and more meaningful. China seems to understand these realities well and have begun to cope by creating widespread infrastructure linkages as well as controlling those links to benefit economically and strategically. It is no surprise that China has become the leading exporter of infrastructure.

There are other states that have taken to this means as well. Of the them, Japan stands out as an example, especially when compared to China. Japan began to invest in infrastructure in Southeast Asia in the 1970s. By 1990s the Japanese Government came up with a vision for infrastructure connectivity through its 'Comprehensive Asia Development Plan' (Tüter 2019:69). Even though Japan discussed a Silk Road Diplomacy plan back in 1997, it was in 2004, that Japan popularized it when focusing on Central Asia and the Caucasian region. Japan has been involved in creating infrastructure linkages and investing in railways, funds and projects since the 20th century. In fact, Japan had already built the high speed railway (HSR) before China, as early as the 1960s, though it does not seek to compete with others the way China or USA does. Japan's infrastructure engagements are said to be developmental in orientation rather that geostrategic (Len and Tomohiko et. al. 2008:11). True that Japan's use of ID to keep China from dominating the regional geopolitics has been visible more recently. At least in the ASEAN context, Japan's ID "cannot be seen merely as a strategic response to the growing Chinese influence, but the logic of market sharing also stimulates Japan's temptation to make business in the region" (Ciorciari 2009). But Japan is increasingly responding and becoming competitive towards China. As part of its foreign policy in the Central Asia, Japan provided USD21.91 million government development assistance for

building the SOC sector in 2012 (Japan: Silk Road Diplomacy, 2020). Notably, it seemed to respond to China's BRI by announcing the Partnership for Quality Infrastructure (PQI) plan in 2015. Under this, Tokyo set aside USD200 billion of capital for investment (by 2020) (Wilson 2020). The same year, Prime Minister Sinzo Abe promoted the 'Central Asia Plus Japan' dialogue while visiting the region, where he announced cooperation in transportation and logistics sector. Later the PQI to was upgraded to Enhanced PQI (EPQI). It was read as a strategy to counter China in the region. With the Blue Dot Network (BDN) launched in 2019, this became even more clear that Prime Minister 'Sinzo Abe's Infrastructure Diplomacy' (Panda 2020) was here to stay.

The BDN indicated the fact that China's BRI had competitors in the region. As a multilateral venture between Japan, USA and Australia, this plan acts as a screening mechanism for all infrastructure projects to bring about quality and transparency in ID, given that the BRI which mushroomed across the region, faced major backlash due to its tight and opaque Chinese grip over project negotiations. Nevertheless, though the BDN looks like being aimed at China's dominance in the area, considering it as purely so is incorrect. Most powerful countries acknowledge the importance of infrastructure as well as the role that ID can play in their foreign policy interests. It is this realization that has led states to act towards building a sustainable and robust infrastructure regime, one that merges well within the economic and developmental agendas of the international community. For example, in 2016, states such as Japan, US, India, New Zealand, South Korea and even China committed to cooperate in infrastructure development in East Asia through the Vientiane Declarations[*].

Such multilateral initiatives are complimented by individual initiatives of states that seek to promote interconnections by conducting infrastructure diplomacy more bi-laterally or as a unilateral effort. In the maritime domain for example, Indonesia took the lead in garnering support for its Global Maritime Fulcrum (GMF) that looks at engaging states

[*] On 6 September, 2016 the Vientiane Declaration on Promoting Infrastructure Development Cooperation in East Asia was signed by 8 states on the occasion of the 11th East Asia Summit in Laos. Recognizing the need to invest in quality infrastructure to obtain some of the developmental objectives and economic efficiency in the region, it welcomes the progress made in implementing the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity (MPAC) adopted in 2010 as well as 2025 as well as the Global Infrastructure Hub launched in Australia in 2014. URL: https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Vientiane-Declaration-on-Promoting-Infrastructure-Development-Cooperation-in-East-Asia-Final.pdf.

by improving maritime connectivity and trade via the sea. This seems to emanate from the renewed focus that the maritime domain received and importance of the 'blue economy' that grew, especially after the maritime component of the BRI was unveiled in Indonesia in 2013. With the Indo-Pacific becoming a geo-economic and geo-strategic theatre of international politics, other states have begun to focus on ID in this region as well. In 2016, Australia, launched the Pacific Step-Up program and recognized the infrastructure needs of the Pacific Island countries. In this regard, the Australian Infrastructure Financing Facility for the Pacific (AIFFP) with a corpus of USD2 billion was set up in July 2019 (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australian Government).

Revealingly, both China and Japan, the top infrastructure investor in the region, have maintained a G2G (government to government) model for infrastructure projects. Most of Japan's investment go through a the G2G route, largely as Official Development Assistance (ODA). By the 1990s, Japan had become the largest aid donor in Asia (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan 2020). In 2017 and 2018 Japan committed USD15 billion and USD14 billion of ODA respectively (Donor Tracker 2020). G2G is also the Chinese way of ID, where State Owned Enterprises (SOEs) are involved in investment deals. There is growing involvement of the private sectors as well, with increased PPP (Public Private Partnership) transaction along with hybrid PPP models. The Pricewaterhouse Cooper Infrastructure Series Report 1 makes a detailed study of the various issues related to such aspects of infrastructure financing and operations, mostly with case studies from among the ASEAN countries (PWC Report 2020). With the growing role that international financial and monetary agencies have in making ID a reality, studies on various aspects of infrastructure investment are regularly conducted by them. Similarly, the ADB Report titled 'Meeting Asia's Infrastructure Needs' (2017) examines developing Asia's infrastructure requirements through 2030 and estimates that it will need USD26 trillion to meet the current gap. A global perspective on the same is provided through the McKinsey Global Institute's 2016 report titled 'Bridging Global Infrastructure Gaps' (Woetzel, J., Nicklas, G. et al. 2016). The proliferating literature on infrastructure only well proves the contention that infrastructure has become one of the most important variable in IR, in turn broadening the horizons for conduct of ID.

Critical concerns

Infrastructure diplomacy has certainly emerged as a niche area today. Having said that, it is essential to point out certain challenges facing ID, both as a concept as well as in practice. Since ID is intrinsically intertwined with ED and DD, it often gets subsumed within these frames. This problem emerges especially when finance is provided by a foreign donor for building roads and bridges, that enable it to undertake economic and development activities. Consider the case of China for instance. While China launched the BRI as a 'win-win' strategy, showcasing economic and development benefits for all countries involved, it has been widely perceived as a range of connectivity and infrastructure projects across the globe. It is then written about sometimes as China's ID, at other times as ED and DD, and further evoking terms such as 'pipeline diplomacy', 'debt diplomacy', 'cement diplomacy' and so on. Though the BRI has singlehandedly managed to draw international attention to the need for infrastructure like never before, it has started debates about the scope and dimensions of it, thus creating the need to outline what ID is and complicating the process of doing so at the same time. Indeed, it is difficult to argue a black and white case for ID. The important question to ask then becomes, is there a need to exclusively define ID at all? The answer may be negative, provided the significance of ID is adequately recognized and highlighted, while remaining a sub-part of something else.

ID compliments ED in many ways and visa versa. To elaborate its importance, one can consider a scenario where ED fails. When the tool of diplomacy or interaction is economic in nature, suppose a trade agreement, it is achieved through economic diplomacy. If the tool is removed, i.e. if economic sanctions are used to alter any positive interaction between the contracting states or terminate the deal due to strained diplomatic ties, then negative impact follows. In such a scenario, if ID is recognized as a separate niche area of diplomacy, a formal line of interactions can be maintained, where efforts are placed at using the route of that trade (may be a port or a road largely used for transportation of goods) to encourage travel or simply people to people contact. The focus can thus shift from economic linkages to something else, via the medium of proper infrastructure in place. This may encourage other forms of economic, cultural or any meaningful activity in turn. Take the example of the Tamu-Moreh border between India-Myanmar for instance.

Let us assume, given the current political turmoil in Myanmar, that ED is made dysfunctional or discouraged between the India and Myanmar. As known, because some of this takes place through the integrated check posts (ICP) as well as the Indo-Myanmar Friendship road at the border, the significance of these facilities may be reduced in terms of its relevance for trade. However, when infrastructure is acknowledged as a niche issue area and ID is highlighted, even where there may be a halt in ED (at least as an opportunity), it could help to keep the interactions between India and Myanmar intact, as well as the spirits high for people-to-people movement, thus encouraging normal inter-state relations. If there is no robust infrastructure in place, other forms of interactions also suffer. To put it simply, the importance of infrastructure goes much beyond economics. Therefore, to treat the former (even when only the SOC sector is taken into consideration) as only a sub-part of the latter (or DD) alone is insufficient. If one aspect of diplomacy area fails, there still remains another, an equally relevant issue area, to provide cushion for the various interactions and activities ongoing in the SOC sector. That alternate but relevant issue area is that of infrastructure, which is turn also narrows the adverse impact on development as a result of a possible failed ED.

It can be argued that there already exist many alternate issue areas that can act as a buffer. At the same time ED and DD on their own can engage various other issue areas. The energy sector is a good fit in both cases. The need for energy resources for economic growth as well as development of a country is immensely important. That access to and control over energy resources itself results in garnering power as influence is well accepted. The rise of what is called energy diplomacy (EnD as a process) and statecraft through use of energy resource was made clear after the oil shock of 1973. It impacted geo-economics and geo-strategy in the decade that followed. With discussions and negotiations over renewable sources of energy taking place in the 21st century, diplomacy around it, whether through modes such as conference diplomacy (CD) or summit diplomacy (SD), bi-lateral diplomacy (BD) or multilateral diplomacy (MD) have only increased. Is it then possible to discuss the negotiations over energy resource under EnD alone, when it can invoke the means of ED, DD, CD, MD as well? In such an interdependent and complex world therefore, compartmentalized issue areas and isolated diplomatic practices are untenable. Yet, energy diplomacy is recognized as a distinct issue area. It has in turn ramified into other sub-categories. Of them ‘pipeline diplomacy’ is in vogue, between Ukraine and Russia for instance (Blinick 2008).

If we agree to the above propositions and argue for the significance of pipelines and roads for transporting energy sources or goods for trade, it makes us realize that the core of it consists of not just ED and DD but significantly ID. Pipeline, the trade of resources or goods, facilities for development are hinged upon the right infrastructure. Hence, diplomacy around any of these issue areas are never air-tight but yet recognizably distinct. Because, diplomacy is an art, not a science, and comprises of human dimensions, such an overlap and ambiguity is not unavoidable.

There are challenges further to the concept of infrastructure diplomacy. Though not all credit can be given to China's BRI for bringing to light the value and importance of ID in the 21st century, it cannot be refuted that most of the writings that have emerged around the topic are anchored around it. Since so often the topic of infrastructure diplomacy gets defined by how the BRI is evolving, criticisms of the latter get directed towards the former, or at least spills over to it. Consider the statement where US Vice President Mike Spence noted in 2018 that "China uses 'debt diplomacy' to expand its influence" (The Hudson Institute, 4 October, 2018). Similar statements were made by other US officials to refer to the way China conducts its ID. Former U.S. government adviser and director at the Carnegie-Tsinghua Center, Paul Haenle, noted that "some believe China engages in 'debt-trap diplomacy' through the BRI, ensnaring developing countries with debt dependence and then translating that dependence into geopolitical influence" (Meer 2019). The cases of Sri Lanka's Hambantota port, Pakistan's growing debt to China as a result of the infrastructure aid and loan pertaining to implementation of BRI and many other such instances where a country has accumulated its debt to China are now being termed as China's 'debt-trap diplomacy'. Though it may be ridiculous to imagine why a country would float a diplomatic practice around trapping a state through debt, even covertly, the proliferation of such a negative term has taken place. Since debt trap diplomacy is then imagined as a corollary of ID, it in turn dampens the sanguine ideas around ID.

At the same time, terms like 'cheque book diplomacy' or even 'cement diplomacy' (due to the fact that China's infrastructural forays are a result of its overcapacity in the domestic cement industry) (Onnis 2017) have emerged, largely in the context of China's implementation and financing of the BRI. Even though such terms, at best, indicate to a

proliferation of diplomatic jargons than adding to the conceptual basket of diplomacy, the fact that such discussions are taking place in an economic context, but are emanating from the infrastructural activities, indicate that ID has become a crucial area of diplomacy itself. Interestingly, it has in fact shown signs of branching into potential sub-categories of diplomacy, no matter how valid they may appear at its nascent stage. No doubt, there has been skepticism over China's infrastructure investments, through the BRI in particular, in the last few years. This however does not dilute the importance of infrastructure diplomacy as a foreign policy tool used by countries. In turn, it accentuates the fact that infrastructure and connectivity linkages have to be anchored on more complicated and fragile diplomatic exercises for projects and investment to fall in line with changing geopolitical concerns and dynamics. Infrastructure diplomacy will therefore only be gaining currency as we consider its value.

An Exploratory Survey

Diplomacy is an evolving field of practice. As is infrastructure diplomacy as a concept, to categorically write about which, one needs to do more than going through the literature and making observations. It also requires to gauge expert's perception on the subject and take note of whether the hypothesis of the research pertaining to the emergence of the niche area of ID is validated. To fulfil this aim, a quick exploratory survey was conducted, the details for which are provided below.

Questionnaire and data analysis

2020 was the year when COVID-19 restricted movement of people and caused a downturn for global economic actives. A decade which witnessed the blooming of infrastructure diplomacy was transitioning into a new one, now facing a challenge in terms of implementation due to the crisis unfolded by the pandemic. Seven years had gone by to the launch of the BRI. The US-China trade war was on. The Indo-Pacific emerged as the new theatre of geopolitical great games. Australia, Japan, India and many others were concerned about the threats that the rise of China, increasingly showing signs of aggression, as opposed to its claims of a peaceful rise, had caused. Questions were being asked as to why China's cool headedness in diplomacy was turning into a wolf-warrior kind. Was it because the stakes of its investments, mostly in the infrastructure sector, were higher than before, both economically and strategically? China had already made it clear in 2017 itself that the BRI was extremely important for achieving its foreign

policy goals, when it was inserted into the CPC Constitution. Meanwhile, powerful states had begun responding to China's infrastructural proactive moves, multi-lateral or bi-laterally. Most of the countries of the global south as well as the West, had reacted to these developments by bandwagoning or by opposing it. It was not an option to ignore it anyhow. In such as scenario, was it not evident that ID has emerged as a distinct area, where further studies was necessitated? What definition of ID is then acceptable? Is it still perceived as nothing but a sub-part of ED or DD, or is it to be seen as something broader? Were countries making use of ID as a tool of influence? Which countries were doing so and to what extent? Many questions needed to be answered.

Keeping this backdrop in mind, a set of questions were sent to experts to find out their views about the puzzles of this research. From scholars of IR, journalists, lawyers with expertise on the topic to diplomats (mostly retired) were contacted for the same, from across different countries (largely from China and India, given the focus area of this study). Of a targeted 75 samples, 30 responses were received, over a period of six months from September 2020 to February 2021. From the start of 2020, since travel restrictions were already in place, the difficulty of a field work was amplified, and later the possibility of it was altogether made untenable. Therefore, an online survey was created using an app called *SurveyMonkey*. This allowed compiling all the questions into one form, the link to which was then either emailed or forwarded via WhatsApp. It allowed the respondents to answer the questions at leisure.

The questionnaire consisted of 10 questions in total, of which 8 were substantial in nature (see Annexure I). To begin with, the respondents were asked to rate in order of preference from among the options given as to what they understood as the the most practiced meaning of diplomacy in the 21st century (Q2, Q1 being about the country to which the respondent belonged). The rating was ranged as strongly disagree (SD)/ disagree (D)/neither agree nor disagree (NAND)/agree (A)/strongly agree (SA)/don't know or can't say (DKCS). The following options were provided for as answers to the question:

A) Diplomacy is a way to maintain interaction with other states and find means of cooperation. This traditional understanding remains most important even today.

B) Diplomacy is a soft power tool. It is increasingly becoming an instrument of influence to further one's national interest.

C) Diplomacy is (not a tool of influence, but) a tool of negotiation for exploring mutually agreed solutions.

To be noted is the fact that each option had to be rated individually along the SD to DKCS spectrum. Further, option B and C were deliberately left conflicting in nature, to understand if the respondent identified nuances about the practice of diplomacy. While many people either agreed/ strongly agreed (13/14 respondents respectively out of 30) to option A, indicating that a traditional understanding of diplomacy as 'means of cooperation' is still prevalent today, there were interesting responses to options B and C. Respondents were almost equally divided about whether diplomacy is 'an instrument of influence' or not. 63.3% of the respondents agreed/strongly agreed (13/6 respondents respectively out of 30) to B, with 23% rejecting it (7 saying they D/SD). Yet, equally others i.e. 66.7% agreed/strongly agreed (14/6 respondents) to C (but rate of rejecting C was lower than the rate of rejecting B. Only 13% opted to disagree to C and no one opted for SD).

An overall analysis of this question reflect that though diplomacy as a tool of influence, or rather as something that states simply use to fulfil its national interest, is increasingly acknowledged by people, yet, diplomacy continues to be understood more in its traditional form as means of negotiation and cooperation. To put it simply, diplomacy has both a positive (means of inter-state cooperation) as well as a negative connotation (as a tool of power as influence) attached to it. This perhaps also explains why people so easily attached negative variables, such as 'debt trap', to diplomacy or why China refuses to accept that the BRI has anything to do with diplomacy[*].

A few other questions were directed at finding opinions about whether investment in infrastructure helps garner influence. Q3, Q4 and Q5 were interlinked. Q3, to be answered as yes (Y), no (N) or may be (MB), put forth the question — do you think building/funding for roads, railways, pipelines and other infrastructure projects enable a country to gain influence in a recipient/host country? If yes, then one was directed to Q4 that asked reasons for the answer. The reasons provided were:

[*] There is a tendency to keep the BRI away from diplomacy. This was also understood through personal interviews and interaction with Professor Shen Dingli in January 2020 and Professor Wang Yiwei in 2021 and other Chinese scholars.

i) It helps the investor country gain direct access to people, goods and resources of the host country, which then definitely translates into influence through soft power at its disposal.

ii) Infrastructure sector is itself one of the main arteries of growth in the 21st century and investment in it provides an upper hand to the donor country while pursuing its foreign policy with a host country.

iii) None of these

If respondents answered no in Q3, they were directed to Q5 from where reasons for their answer were to be selected from among the following:

i) Even though it helps improve connectivity and increases interaction at various levels, it does not automatically translate to having a means of influence over the recipient country.

ii) Building/funding infrastructure projects, on its own, has no advantage in terms of influence in the 21st century. Inter-relations between states are more complicated and has many facets.

iii) None of these

In this regard, a clear opinion was reflected with 86% (26 respondents) selecting yes in Q3 and no one responding in negative. Except 2 respondents (who opted for MB. 2 respondents skipped the question), the rest admitted that investing or helping build infrastructure provides influencing power, especially for the donor/source country. Both the reasons given in Q4 were mostly agreed upon. Hence, while infrastructure allows access to recourse and may be seen as soft power tool, it is indeed a fact that the infrastructure sector has become one of the main avenues of growth, investments in which allow countries to better pursue their foreign policy goals.

This survey also engaged experts to dwell upon the concept of ID and how it was commonly understood, both in theory and practice. For the latter, Q8*, again to be marked as either Y/N/MB, asked — is there any niche practice emerging in China's foreign policy conduct, particularly after the BRI announcement, that can be termed as 'infrastructure diplomacy'? 17 respondents (56.6%) answered yes, 10 (33.33%) went with MB and only 3 (10%) said no. Thus, an assessment can be drawn that ID is not just a jargon or an

* Please note, Question 6, 7 and 10 of the survey has been discussed later in the thesis.

abstract term, but something that experts seem to relate to, at least in context of China's global infrastructural forays, for very few disagreed with it out rightly.

On the other hand, to explore some theoretical aspects of ID, Q9 asked respondents to rate from among the following definitions given, as to what they thought about each proposition on ID:

A) Infrastructure diplomacy is an emerging new practice in foreign policy conduct of states. It is evolving distinctively from other practices such as economic diplomacy or development diplomacy.

B) Infrastructure diplomacy is nothing but a new garb of conducting economic diplomacy; at best, a sub-part of economic diplomacy.

C) Infrastructure Diplomacy is a broader area of practice which has today engulfed economic diplomacy and development diplomacy as its sub-part.

One rating was to be given to each definition from the range of SD to DKCS (similar to Q2). This questions revealed some interesting insights. Though there seem to be an acceptance of the term ID in practice, pertaining to the various infrastructure related activities around, there was no clear understanding on what ID means, especially when compared with ED and DD. However, a weighted average of 3.17, 3.82 and 3.4 for A, B, C respectively indicated that more experts considered ID as interlinked with ED and DD and not something broader than these already existing concepts. It also shows that the theoretical discussions on the topic are weak and thus unclear. This, then rationalizes the need to work on its theoretical foundations, the gap in the literature, that this study aims to bridge. Admittedly, this question itself was floated with an intention to experiment with the three areas of ID, ED and DD and determine their interplay as understood by experts, with the realization that none of these areas are itself compartmentalized categories, as already mentioned in this chapter.

This survey helped substantiate some of the assertions made about infrastructure diplomacy as an evolving practice area, as a concept and as a dynamic variable in IR. It can be argued that the sample size of this survey, upon which the assessments on ID have been drawn, are inadequate and does not represent the quantitatively diverse opinions that are only growing, making the field of infrastructure studies a legion topic. In that case, the fact that more and more people are engaged with one or the other aspect of this

topic only lends weight that infrastructure is indeed a very important variable in IR and is in need of qualitative analysis as well, from and for perspectives that are varied. It thus makes the rationale of this study only stronger. As briefed earlier, this study seeks to understand how the bi-lateral relations between China-India are impacted when ID is used as a tool of influence, within their interfaces in their periphery. As the study proceeds, some remaining parts of the questionnaire and survey will be discussed accordingly as it will be more meaningful to do so later.

Conclusion

From times of the Greek city-states, through development of modern nation states after the Treaty of Westphalia in 1968, to the interconnections formed between state, non-state and other actors in the globalized world, there has been changes in the actors, topics and means of conducting international relations. What became evident is the fact that hard power means alone is no more adequate to gain power for the so called great games played out. Nor does power mean hard resources of the state alone anymore. It has evolved into what the proponents of complex interdependence theorists call, power as influence. With Joseph Nye's advocacy of 'soft power', how that influence is to be gained became clear. Diplomacy in turn has gained prominence as one of those coveted means to harness power as influence.

Along with the way power in IR evolved, so did diplomacy as a concept and practice area. From the various modes of diplomatic practices, to the increasing issue areas being negotiated, the change is overwhelming. There has also been a crucial transition from matters of state and military as issues of high politics to economic and development issues (among others) starting from the mid 20th century. Therefore, from traditional diplomacy of the states, discussions under economic and development diplomacy began to take place. As the issue areas continued to broaden, so did the field of diplomacy. Some attempted to depict these changes by noting the various 'tracks' through which diplomacy is conducted (like the IMTD), while others have delved into theoretically defining specific issue areas, from health diplomacy, to economic diplomacy to energy diplomacy and so on.

Among the intertwined diplomatic tool kit, an increasingly notable issue area is that of infrastructure, and hence infrastructure diplomacy. The role of infrastructure in IR has been talked about in various research and narratives. Yet, the emergence of a distinct field of infrastructure diplomacy is either mired in muddy jargonistic mesh or being subsumed under more coherent concept of economic diplomacy and development diplomacy. Therefore, the need to define and outline the significance of ID was strongly felt. This study outlines the meaning of ID both as a process involving negotiation, bargaining and mediation ongoing on the infrastructure sector, limited in this context however to the sector defined as social overhead capital, and ID as an opportunity that allows both host and recipient states varying leverages to seek their advantages. It is acknowledged that China's BRI has become a watershed event for the rise of ID, one that however provides opportunities as well as challenges for ID conceptually, if not in practice. It is time that these challenges as well as the opportunities be outlined, as a dynamic field waits in the context of an ever growing infrastructure needs of the world.

Chapter 3

Use of Infrastructure Diplomacy by China

Introduction

During a speech in June 1985 at the Conservative Women's Conference in London, then British Prime Minster, Margret Thatcher said, "You might have heard a lot lately about 'infrastructure'— the new 'in word'. Some of you might even ask exactly what it is. You and I come by road and rail. But economists travel on infrastructure" (Hillman, 2019:1).

More than three decades later, the so called 'in word' gained further momentum. Not only did economists begin to travel on infrastructure, but world leaders across the globe are either already doing so, or are aiming to do so by conducting what has emerged as a niche foreign policy tool, referred to as infrastructure diplomacy in this thesis. The unexpected and unprecedented spread of a pandemic as that of COVID-19, is expected to slowdown the pace of infrastructure diplomacy, for most countries that seek to adopt it. In fact, terminologies and jargons such as 'COVID diplomacy', 'health silk road' have been doing the rounds in an attempt to focus on the new issue areas of diplomacy. Yet, what this resonates is the need to make health an important point in diplomatic agenda, which so far is filled with confusion and inept concerns, something that David P. Fidler and many others have explained under the context of health diplomacy (see for example *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Diplomacy*, 2013). But this does not seem to alter the motive, if not the pace, of the practice of infrastructure diplomacy even in the post-COVID world, at least for China. The example of the Chinese Ambassador in Yangon meeting the Deputy Minister for Planning, Finance and Industry of Myanmar in May 2020, to discuss implementation of the China Myanmar Economic Corridor (CMEC) amidst the concerns of the corona virus spread, is a case in point. Therefore, it is not incorrect to assess that China's use of infrastructure diplomacy is here to stay.

In 2013, President Xi Jinping announced the One Belt One Road (OBOR) programme. With this, a sudden attention was drawn to the various connectivity corridors that had spurted over the last decade, mostly led by China. Not only was it included into China's 13th Five Year Plan 2016-20, but also the much evolved Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) was enshrined into the Communist Party of China (CPC) Constitution during the 19th Party Congress in 2017, increasing the political importance of it for China's perusal of

its ‘Chinese Dream’. At the same time, the two term limitation of the President of PRC was removed, instating Xi Jinping as president for life. These developments indicated that not only was President Xi’s vision for China, as expressed by his Centenary goals, were being defined, but also the process of how to achieve them were already being implemented. It is through China’s ardour in the trade and infrastructure sector that it has managed to rejuvenate, maintain and build geopolitical and geo-economic ties with most of the countries in South and Southeast Asia, and beyond. Infrastructure investments are at the core of Chinese stride in international system that has enabled it to climb up various rung in the hierarchy ladder[*].

This chapter aims to understand the how and what aspects of the hypothesis of this thesis which states that with increased engagements by countries at various levels, infrastructure diplomacy has emerged as a foreign policy tool for China to assert influence, the official announcement of such a policy notwithstanding. Despite China’s attempts at military modernization, hard power leverages have limited real time use today than earlier centuries, though it does possess deterrence quality. In fact, it resonates as an attempt to unilaterally alter the world order which creates a rather negative image of China. China has therefore worked on its diplomatic postures over time. As China’s diplomacy evolved, it has sought to invest in infrastructure for both geopolitical and geo-economic gains, which in turn fulfils their strategic interest and their desire to not only dominate the world (order), but to change it as per Chinese characteristics. First, the chapter attempts to explicate how China has made use of various diplomatic means to achieve its goals over time. It culminates into the fact that China has inducted infrastructure investment as a tool of influence into its system, even before OBOR was formalized and announced in 2013, but most certainly in 2017 with the BRI being included into the Chinese constitution as a future objective. Second, it shows how by investing in infrastructure projects across its peripheral regions, China has sought to influence countries, essentially for its own interest. This has been done by negotiating various clauses of contract with host countries to the advantage of China, which has ultimately led to its influence extending beyond soft power gains and translating into hard power advantages. Further, the case of Myanmar has been highlighted in the

[*] As Kenneth Waltz (1979) states, the ordering principle is what places the various states into hierarchical position in an otherwise anarchical world, depending on the capabilities.

chapter, in accordance with the focus of this thesis. The conclusion follows that though China has no official policy that refers to infrastructure diplomacy as a foreign policy means, it's use of infrastructure diplomacy as a tool of influence is increasingly pointed out in the scholarly circles. At the same time, because China's understanding of the *Tianxia* (天下) system is what drives their officially benign motivations for their infrastructure investments under the aegis of BRI and otherwise, use of diplomatic means becomes more so increasingly important, even though the nature of Chinese diplomacy itself has become more aggressive. It is through such covert means of influence such as infrastructure diplomacy that China aims to ensure the achievement of their geo-strategic goals and Chinese Dreams (*Zhōngguó Mèng*/中国梦) indeed.

Infrastructure and Chinese Diplomacy

China has a long civilizational history. The ancient Silk Road was popularized by the diplomatic and economic ventures of Zhang Qian of the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.- 220 A.D). It brought glory to succeeding rulers, especially the Tang dynasty, during which silk, tea, ceramics and other goods were exported to outside nations. Much before the maritime silk road led into the vast Oceans, the land silk road branched into the north and south route which nurtured the Chinese coffers. As a fabled country of the Orient, many in the West tried to fathom its culture and philosophies even before the modern era began. 'The Travels of Marco Polo' eventually became famous and inspired many. Today, as Wang Yiwei writes, "more than 700 years later, China, the once mysterious Oriental nation, is igniting the Chinese Dream of numerous Marco Polo with its new status and rapid development, as well as the Chinese Dream of the entire world with its Belt and Road Initiative" (2016:10). This transition of China from being a mystery to being a master has been made possible by many visions that the leaders of China have had and have pursued over the last century, that has now been polished into the grand plan of the BRI under President Xi Jinping. But before we delve into that, it is important to swipe a glance at why and how infrastructure became so important for China's growth trajectory.

From the mid 1600s, the Manchau and the Qing dynasty ruled a peaceful China up to the mid 19th century. With time, society and politics became more chaotic. China's population in the 1840s reached up to 410 million, from 140 million a hundred years ago. The growth in resources could not match this growth in population which resulted into

dis-balance in society, something that Europeans took advantage of. It was in 1839 that the Opium War began with Britain. As a result of the Chinese defeat, Hong Kong was ceded to the British who were allowed to trade at some of the ports in the country. Similarly, over time, many European nations had concessions and trading rights in about 80 ports and towns (Lowe 2013:420-21). Besides these, by the last decade of that century, Japan had the Chinese island of Formosa, while Germany, France, Russia had all leased Chinese territory that was no more treated as belonging to China. China as the 'middle kingdom' was left in a sorry state (Ibid.). Added to this was the well-known twenty-one demands made by Japan in 1915 during World War I. It demanded more rights of territory and concessions, including the permission to build railways and roads within China. The Treaty Ports, railway lines and trade related infrastructure became marks of foreign control over China. Therefore, by the first half of the 20th century, mostly as a result of its colonial experiences, the importance of building ports, lines of communications and connectivity infrastructure became evident to the Chinese at an early stage. As James Kynge writes, "China had learned from its own experience that building roads, train lines, energy plants and creating the ecosystem to enable cities to grow does more than just accelerate commercial exchange; it helps lift people out of poverty" (Kynge 2016). This was what China had to achieve for itself.

When the People's Republic of China (PRC) was established in 1949, Beijing started paying attention to building infrastructure shortly after, in Tibet for instance. At that point, even though China at best focused on starting nominal diplomatic ties with foreign states, leave alone with any special focus on infrastructure to influence, it became certain that improving and creating infrastructure was extremely important if China was to become more secure in the future. As Claude Arpi writes:

> Soon after the 18th Army of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) entered Lhasa in September in 1951, the Chinese started building new strategic roads between China and Tibet on a war footing and improving the infrastructure in the region. Mao Zedong knew that the only way to consolidate and 'unify' the new colony was to construct a large network of roads and airstrips. Priority was given to motorable roads, particularly the Sichuan-Tibet and the Qinghai-Tibet highways. Survey work for the Tibet-Xinjiang highway cutting across Western Tibet started at the end of 1951 and the construction began in 1953/54 (2015:105).

Revealingly, on 29 November 1954, *Xinhua* reported that "gang builders and workers, including 20,000 Tibetans, covered over 31,000 *li* on foot in the summer of 1953 and began construction of the 328 km of highway eastwards from Lhasa" (Ibid.). This not only brings out the fact that China was dedicated to achieve its infrastructure build-up

plans at very high costs, at a time when technology was limited, but in hindsight, is also an indication of China's capabilities of the future when both resource and technology acted as catalyst to achieve its grand visions. Literary work on the topic continues to underline how China has built infrastructure in Tibet, and elsewhere, with a strategic view point in mind (Chansoria 2011; Dorjee 2016; Arpi 2020, 2021). But today, what has been underplayed is China's efforts to reach out to its periphery countries and beyond, through diplomatic means by offering infrastructure build up, to nonetheless achieve traditional objectives such as strategic gains and political dominance. The goal remains the same, but the means have altered over time. So has the nature of those means.

Charm diplomacy to Ping-pong diplomacy

During the times of Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai China's foreign policy, put simply, revolved around three issues — "avoid isolation, build solidarity with non-aligned countries, divide the West" (Gokhlae 2020). Even though this portrayal may be too plain, the priority was to achieve such goals, largely mired in ideology, through the kind of charm offensive diplomacy displayed by the charisma and persuasion of Prime Minister Zhou Enlai himself. It managed to catapult China into the world stage, whether it be during the Geneva Conference in 1954 or at Bandung the next year (Acharya 2017:96). In the 1960s however, Chinese foreign policy and diplomacy was at its nadir, in the sense that the Cultural Revolution had a major repercussion on the functioning of diplomats, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) itself was made dysfunctional in China.

After years of being a closed nation, China realized the need to revive its diplomatic set up in order to achieve not just its foreign policy interests but also some of its domestic targets. Bejing began to re-work on its foreign policy through diplomatic efforts in the 1970s. With the US for example, China practiced what came to be known as 'ping pong diplomacy' (*pīngpāng wàijiāo/*乒乓外交), a term that may be put under the category of sports diplomacy. To great extent it enabled rapprochement in Sino-US relationship in the 1970s. This continued to remain a mark of hospitality even after decades, as the 35th anniversary of ping-pong diplomacy was celebrated in Beijing in 2006 with participants from both states (*Xinhua* 2006). But, it is to be noted that during the 1970s China did not have the means nor the aim to invest in building criss-crossing infrastructure linkages with other countries. The economic stagnation in China (though in 1975 the GDP went

up to 8.72%, a number higher than that of 2013 onwards, since when President Xi has been in power) limited its capability, allowing it to pursue only modest goals through diplomacy that did not involve great financial stakes. Today, especially in the context of the BRI, China's goals are not merely ideologically driven. They are strategic and involves higher economic stakes. At the same time, because of its economic prowess, China can afford to conduct strategic foreign policy goals through its diplomatic envoys, over a sea port or an air port notwithstanding its financial viability, as happened in Sri Lanka for instance (see next section). Therefore, over the decades, China's diplomacy evolved as a result of its improved economic status, as also by the need to pursue foreign policy goals with higher economic stakes. Especially after President Xi came to the helm of affairs in 2012 and reiterated the goal of the Two Centenaries (*liǎng gè yībǎi nián*/ 两个一百年) to fulfil the Chinese Dream, China was bound to conduct its foreign policy through more innovative and dexterous means of diplomacy than thorough the means of ping pong exchanges. Though the rise of means such as infrastructure diplomacy or economic diplomacy does not undermine the need for diplomacy such as those of ping-pong to pursue minor objectives, it does throw light on why diplomacy has changed in China. It also explains the more aggressive nature of diplomacy today, the perusal of which requires more expertise and which is also prone to volatility, given the tensed environment created by much higher stakes involved. The story was different earlier.

In 1971, PRC held its first ever Foreign Affairs Work Conferences (FAWC), followed by a second in 1991 (Swaine 2017, note 1). As the need was felt to increase interactions with foreign states, simple diplomatic engagements and a policy of persuasion was kept in mind. This worked well for China in the 1970s. For instance, in February 1972 Zhou Enlai managed to persuade US President Nixon to abandon Taiwan (Gokhlae 2020), also known as Republic of China (ROC), with which PRC continues to be in a diplomatic competition. As a result, US ceased to recognize ROC as China in 1979, though informal relations continued. In this context alone, much has changed. In September 2019, US-Taiwan relations were promoted to consular level diplomatic ties to the utter dislike of China. This can be explained as a manifestation of the increased tensions between US and China at the global level, most of which originated as a reaction to China's infrastructure diplomacy pursued for strategic gains (among others), as also an outcome of the changed nature of Chinese diplomacy itself. Especially at the outset of the COVID

pandemic, not only has there been arguments about China's diplomacy shunning its charm or persuasion tactics, but also an increased level of aggression in the functioning of Chinese diplomats (Ibid.). 'Wolf warrior diplomacy' began to be used as a term, coined to describe Chinese diplomat's belligerent behavior, initially while justifying its stance vis-à-vis Australia over questions raised regarding inspection of the origin of the Corona virus, and later with other countries. Similarly, the diplomatic truce Beijing maintained with Taiwan from 2008 came to an end in 2016. This has turned the PRC-ROC diplomatic tussle to literal attacks, more recently, on Taiwanese officials allegedly by Chinese diplomats in Fiji in October 2020. The trend of wooing foreign partners thorough infrastructure investment by China has certainly to do a lot with its increased bitterness against Taiwan. In such a scenario, it becomes pertinent to understand the reasons for such changes in the nature of China's diplomatic practices as well as study the emerging trends within its diplomatic tool kit.

Panda Diplomacy to Public Diplomacy

In the 1970s itself, China revived the practice of gifting (later loaning) pandas to countries to establish their special bond and goodwill among international players. Though during the Cold War, Chairman Mao had conducted panda diplomacy (*xióngmāo wàijiāo*/ 熊猫外交) with the Soviet Union and North Korea, it was in the 1970s that the practice began to gain more attention because it marked not only China's engagement with foreign partners, especially in the West, but also indicated a change in the way China began to pursue its national interests through diplomatic tools. This gained further sanctity in the 21st century as it became a sign of China's soft power print across the world. It metamorphosed into a 'seal of approval' on some of the important deals that China enters into with countries at the receiving end of a panda loan. As the endangered pandas are loaned at a certain price for fixed years, it also draws the public eyes to see a symbol of China thrive in foreign territory. From 42 pandas in 12 foreign countries in 2015, the number escalated to 70 in 20 countries by 2017 (Anderlini 2017), with additions each year. But conversely, the recalling of a panda marks a signal of Chinese displeasure (as almost an admonition) towards the target country. Nevertheless, today, panda diplomacy remains a viable tool in the Chinese diplomatic basket, as a mark of Chinese soft power.

Meanwhile, Deng Xiaoping had initiated the policy of 'opening up' in China (not the same as the 'open door policy' of China in the late 1800s) by 1978, in the context of the economy in particular. At the same time, he maintained that China should follow the maxim of '*taoguang yanghui'*/ 韬光养晦, in foreign policy practice, meaning China should 'keep a low profile' and bide time. The modernization drive and the move to 'market socialism', did not translate to enhanced interaction with foreign powers necessarily at a diplomatic level, despite the use of certain specific diplomatic efforts, as mentioned above. To elaborate, China's imports over time became quite larger than its exports, which resulted into a decline in its foreign exchange reserves. To mitigate this, heavy duties were placed on imports, that only embittered foreign relations for China with many countries. Added to this was the crack down on democratic symbolism such as the closure of the Democratic Wall in 1979 and the Tiananmen Square incident in 1989. Admittedly, a change had been triggered in China to focus on its foreign policy and to find ways to conduct its diplomacy in a globalized world. At a multilateral level too, by 1980 Beijing had managed to become a part of international organizations such as the World Bank (WB) and International Monetary Fund (IMF). This meant that China had to conduct diplomacy not just at a bi-lateral level, but also at a multi-lateral level to pursue its policies of economic modernization and international engagements. For this, undoubtedly, improving infrastructure had to be prioritized.

The signs of China's infrastructure forays into various directions began to appear from the mid 1980s (see next section). By the later part of the 20th century a foundation for China's incremental rise in the infrastructure sector was already laid as a result of the rapid growth in the industrial sector. As compared to other growing economies, China began to produce surpluses. By 2009, the manufacturing sector showed a growth of 48% of China's GDP (Panda 2010), when Indian industry still stood at a 23% growth rate even ten years later. Simultaneously, the globalized channels in the 1990s enabled as well as mandated the need for countries to reach out to foreign states, including its people within and outside its territory. There was a shift from Deng's opening up policy to Jiang Zemin's 'go out' or go global (zǒu chūqù /走出去) policy formulated by 1999. Chinese companies were encouraged to invest abroad. The government began to interact with the outside world, including its public. In the 2000s the economic growth of China became a sample for the world to study, with a GDP growth rate of 14.2% in 2007 (World Bank

2021). At this point, many arguments were tilted towards the rise of China's economic diplomacy, a term more encompassing than is given credit for.

What was also undergoing change was the definition of power. In 2004 Joseph Nye theorized the concept of 'soft power' which fundamentally changed the idea of hard power as the sole yardstick of dominance in IR. With this, China too had to find ways to enhance its soft power stances, which was doing well due its economic thrusts. Like many other states, China adopted the means of public diplomacy (*gōnggòng wàijiāo /*公共外交) to achieve foreign policy aims. Not only were many scholarly research carried out on the subject in the 2000s (Chao and Kui-zhong 2005; Xing 2010), but as was said "the debate on strategic use of the tool and the professionalization of China's public diplomacy [have] only just begun…the increasing use of the terms 'public diplomacy' and 'soft power' (*ruǎn shílì*/软实力) in official speeches and documents illustrates a growing awareness among China's policy-makers of the possibilities of these tools" (Hooghe 2007:3). For example, Premier Wen Jiabo in an article in *People's Daily* wrote, "we should conduct public diplomacy in a more effective way" (Jiabo 2007). The 2008 the Beijing Summer Olympics can be seen as sheer wielding of China's soft power through public diplomacy at its peak. Further, public diplomacy too had to move beyond a state-to-state network to a more people oriented one. Traditionally, though the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries (CPAFFC) played an important role in people-to-people diplomacy, other organizations in educational and cultural sector, media, academic societies pitched in too (Hooge 2007). This tendency of the practice of public diplomacy by China can be said to emanate from the idea of inter-relationships *(guānxì*/关系) that was being promoted. China's vision of a 'harmonious world', a *tianxia* system, could only be met if people from around the world understood the value of such diplomatic gestures. For a robust and sustainable way to reach out to the people, China had to start by looking at its neighbourhood, its periphery.

Peripheral Diplomacy to Infrastructure Diplomacy

As stated earlier, China's interest in the infrastructure sector as a possible foreign policy agenda arouse earlier than the announcement of BRI. Firstly, in the East, Japan had begun to build bullet trains as early as by 1964 (Chan, 2018:x) and took to exporting modern infrastructure as a foreign policy tool (Yoshimatsu 2017). China was aware of these

developments. China too was involved in building infrastructure and looking at engaging with many states in Africa by1960s itself (Rana 2020). The most obvious example is the Tanzania-Zambia Railways which was completed in the 1970s with Chinese capital and labour, at a time when China was attempting to expand diplomatic ties with foreign players. Though China may not have looked at infrastructure as a tool of influence or as a foreign policy tool then, it is certainly reflective of China's ability and consistency at relying on the importance of infrastructure in international affairs. Secondly, the Vice Minister of Communication in China writing about the need (and aim) to reach out to the Indian Ocean via Myanmar had in 1985 indicated China's need for expansion through building infrastructure (Qi 1985). As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the word 'infrastructure' had already gained currency in the West. In 1988 the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) announced the 10 year programme called 'Integral Study of the Silk Road: Roads of Dialogue' (Yiwei 2016:45), making use of the term Silk Road, that came into vogue again. Thirdly, by the 1990s China became part of regional and sub-regional groupings that focused on linking various states through common networks of railways, river ways and lines of communications. For example, one of the regional commissions under the UN system, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific (ESCAP), acknowledging the increasing scope in the Asian region launched the Asian Land Transport Infrastructure Development (ALTID) in 1992. This eventually led to the formation of the Trans Asian Railway (TAR) Network.

Though China is a member state of ESCAP, its Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) specially signed a Memorandum of Undertaking (MoU) with ESCAP that aimed to enhance the BRI motive to fulfill the sustainable development agenda by 2030 (UNESCAP 2020). Similarly, by 1999 China became part of the Kunming Initiative that aimed to increase regional cooperation by building a network of connectivity infrastructure. This evolved into the Bangladesh China India Myanmar (BCIM) Economic Corridor in 2013, which was named under the BRI in 2015. Surprisingly, the 2nd BRI forum held in 2019 left it out, creating much ambiguity. Earlier, in 1992, China's Yunnan province became deeply involved in cooperating to build infrastructure connectivity and development projects as a part of the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS) forum, supported by the ADB, and involving six states including Myanmar. Yet, it was not until the late 2000s when the Chinese manufacturing sector provided the push

to the Chinese state to undertake major global investment, especially in the infrastructure sector, and when China was able to test its means of economic diplomacy (*jīngjì wàijiāo*/ 经济外交) in achieving foreign policy goals, that it traversed into the path of the using infrastructure as a means to influence its periphery and beyond.

When the economic crises hit the world in 2007-08, China stood its ground. President Hu Jintao addressed diplomats to convey that "China is at a crucial moment in dealing with the financial crisis and maintaining rapid economic development ... diplomacy must better serve the overall situation of reform, development and stability" (Embassy of the PRC in the USA 2009). Analysts and scholars wrote about the growing clout of China's increasing economic diplomacy at the time (Wong 2016). Experts claimed that from an 'engagement' phase of 1970s and 80s to an 'integration' phase of 1990s, China had been operating in the 'participatory' phase of its economic diplomacy, that entered a 'leadership' phase after the 2008 global economic slowdown (Li and Sun 2014). Trade deals, foreign investments and a booming manufacturing market in China catapulted it to be the world's second largest economy, overtaking Japan in 2010.

If we accept the stages enumerated above as valid, we can argue that the leadership stage of China's economic diplomacy (or rather economic statecraft) 'took off', in the sense explained by W.W. Rostow[*], when China's domestic market began to over-produce and leaned towards increasing exports, especially in the cement and steel sectors. Though the 1970s saw an explosion of cement production in China, it was during 2011-13 that China beat US production of cement for the entire 20th century (Yang 2018). Similarly, China's steel production soared to a level that seemed dangerous for its financial and political stability. As a result, a safety valve was sought. The economic strengths had to be harnessed rightly and diplomatic means were to be used to divert it to the right direction, whichever region it may be. The OBOR was a culmination of the economic necessities in China, as much as CPC's desire for increasing China's global footprints by means of smart power at its disposal.

[*] In 1960, W.W. Rostow propounded his modernization theory where he gave five stages of economic growth of societies. They are traditional society, pre-conditions of take off, take off, drive to maturity and age of high mass consumption.

Economic diplomacy in its traditional understanding was something that China certainly abided by during the first decade of the new millennium, if not earlier. But noteworthy were two trends that emerged. By 2012 China realized the need to focus on not just major powers to achieve their economic or political aims, but the potential the neighbourhood carried in perusal of China's centenary goals as well as the aim of 'national rejuvenation'. Another was the need to find a niche area within diplomacy and foreign policy functioning that emanated from China and was smeared with Chinese characteristics, one that would sell Chinese goals as those aligned with the progress and 'shared destiny' of all. It is then that a shift began to occur. While peripheral diplomacy (*zhōubiān wàijiāo*/ 周边外交) found exclusive coverage through speeches at the highest political level in China, the announcement of the OBOR could be seen as a new card to display the economic as well as the political might of a rising China. The infrastructure and connectivity sector began to be focused on as a niche practice area for China, and an option for countries to take up more actively.

On 7 September, 2013 President Xi in a speech titled 'Promote Friendship Between Our People and Work Together to Build a Bright Future' (as translated), at Nazarbayev University in Astana, stated that "a near neighbor is better than a distant relative" (MoFA PRC 2013). The importance of the neighbourhood was underlined in the speech. More importantly, by bringing forth the historical importance of the Silk Road in promoting exchange and friendship, he announced the need for an "innovative approach and jointly build an 'economic belt around the Silk Road'". The same month, speaking in the Indonesian parliament at the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) informal leader's summit, Xi Jingping unveiled the idea of the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road. With this the One Belt One Road was promoted as the new means to achieve President Xi's Chinese Dream. On 24-25 October 2013, President Xi Jinping speaking at the Peripheral Diplomacy Work Conference, held at Beijing, stated "peripheral countries have important strategic meanings for China's development whether in geological position or natural environment" and that China should "do more beneficial things to make peripheral countries kinder and more intimate to China and meanwhile more recognize and support China, thereby increasing China affinity and influence" (CCICED, 30 October, 2013). The need to make diplomacy more proactive and achieve China's strategic goals by engaging with its neighbours was underlined. There was also the use

of the word ‘Xiplomacy’ to describe this phenomenon and the leap that China had taken at the world stage under Xi Jinping’s leadership, especially the promotion of the idea of international development for all (Embassy of the PRC in Canada 2021).

These trends are nevertheless no surety of the fulfilment of China’s global vision, especially when the nature of diplomacy in China seems to be changing. Chinese practice of diplomacy have been critically viewed in the West. Some predict that China’s peripheral diplomacy is much like European Union’s European Neighbourhood Policy and rather similar in their inability to strike the right balance between protecting core interests and acknowledging the neighbours’ needs. Therefore, though heavy on their potential, these are not likely to succeed beyond a point (Sobol 2018).

Similarly, the use of infrastructure diplomacy by China remains filled with doubts. For one, there is no official pronouncement of such diplomacy, even though many have been using the term infrastructure diplomacy to discuss China’s increasing investments in the infrastructure sector (see Introduction chapter). Further, Chinese foreign policy strategy through the BRI and specifically through the conduct of infrastructure diplomacy has been critically termed by observers by names ranging from ‘debt-trap’ diplomacy to ‘cheque book’ diplomacy to ‘dollar’ diplomacy, something that takes away from the essence of using infrastructure as a focus area even within the traditionally accepted practice of economic diplomacy. For example, ROC has accused PRC of bribing states, (such as Dominican Republic, Panama etc.) by making financial gifts in the form of roads, railways and bridges to fulfil its own wishes and for gaining diplomatic recognition. To counter PRC’s misleading ‘dollar diplomacy’, ROC has outlined the need for ‘steadfast diplomacy’[*] that is not only ‘firm in purpose’ but also open in nature (Martin 2020). Yet, there is no doubt that infrastructure diplomacy is a fast evolving practice area in Chinese diplomacy, as much as among many other states. Even if China’s economic assistance, in the Dominican Republic (DR) for instance, is said to be nothing but the age old use of economic diplomacy, it cannot be ignored that after diplomatic relations were switched from ROC to PRC, the latter offered to provide USD3 billion to

[*] Since the diplomatic truce between ROC and PRC broke in 2016, the latter lost eight of its diplomatic allies up to 2020. As a response, Taiwan’s President Tsai Ing-wen began to practice what is termed as ‘steadfast diplomacy’. It believes in unwavering pursuit for international space while supporting the ideals of democracy and freedom and emphasises on ‘mutual assistance for mutual benefits’.

Dominican Republic, of which USD1.6 billion was for infrastructure alone (Myers 2019). DR also secured a USD600 million loan from China's EXIM bank to upgrade its power distribution system and a possible support to modernize the Port of Arroyo Barril (Ibid.). This points to the validity of the argument which states that infrastructure diplomacy is more than just a sub-part of economic diplomacy or statecraft. It is an area that itself has provided enormous diplomatic fodder for states to attach their foreign policies onto.

At the same time, it has been noted that Chinese officials tend to overlook or even undermine the use of the term infrastructure diplomacy (*jīchǔ shèshī wàijiāo*/基础设施外交), though non-Chinese scholars generally agree to the emergence of such a practice area, as mentioned above. This reverberates with Chinese state's non-use of the term 'privatization' (*sīyǒu huà*/私有化), choosing instead to explain the privatization drive since the 1990s as 'restructuring' (Panda, 2010, 82). In any case, it can be summarized that from focusing on *guanxi* and deploying public diplomacy to peripheral/neighbourhood diplomacy, China actually found its way into the world as an emerging power by investing majorly in infrastructure projects and fostering diplomatic relations with many states by conducting infrastructure diplomacy. The BRI marked a watershed in this context. As Bruno Maçães opines, the crisscrossing lines of connectivity laid down by the Belt and Road was the new map of the world to come as China imagined it (2019:5). Today, the influence that infrastructure and investment in the infrastructure sector has brought for China, both directly and indirectly, is legitimately unparalleled.

Infrastructure Diplomacy and Chinese Influence

In the US, while President Roosevelt popularized the adage 'speak in a small voice and carry a big stick', in the context of pursuing foreign policy through diplomatic negotiation, much afar, China under Mao and Deng made use of it in their foreign policy interactions (Gokhlae 2020). However, it is discernable that China's foreign policy visions have taken a more proactive shape under the leadership of President Xi Jinping. Today, China seems to 'speak in a loud voice and carry a big stick'. The material capability of China in terms of both military and economic might have enabled as well as necessitated it to make a shift in their diplomatic functioning. As pointed out earlier,

the objective stakes of China's negotiations are higher than they were in the last century. This has altered the nature of Chinese diplomacy to be rather truculent. At the same time, securing infrastructure linkages (whether for economic or strategic purposes) has become the core agenda in almost all major diplomatic endeavors of China, particularly after the the BRI was written into the Chinese constitution in 2017. As Bruno Maçães puts it, the inclusion of the BRI in the CPC Constitution marked an "unprecedented honor for a foreign policy or infrastructure initiative…impossible to abandon — and likely to impose on foreign states a corresponding obligation to engage with the Belt and Road if they want to engage with China" (2019:41). With this infrastructure diplomacy became a means of foreign policy influence for China.

The What and Where of China's Infrastructure Diplomacy Influence

During the Peripheral Diplomacy Work Conference, the Chinese official statement underlined the aim of conducting such a meeting as follows:

> …to conclude lessons, study and judge the current situation, unify thoughts, exploit the future, determine strategic objectives, basic guideline and overall layout in future five to fifteen years and specify the working roadmaps and schemes for solving major peripheral diplomacy problems (China Council for International Cooperation on Environment and Development 2013).

As per this exposition, in order to 'exploit the future', 'determine future strategic objectives' and 'specify the working roadmaps', Beijing had to implement a grand vision for itself. As an idea, the OBOR was already conceived in 2013. That President Xi announced it in phases, in countries that needed to hear about a plan which could resurrect or catalyze its infrastructure sector, was a thought out diplomatic move and a sharp geopolitical strategy. The influence and impact this left on the host countries, and others, became evident over time. Starting with the peripheral region, China began to offer infrastructure and connectivity projects to states through the road map of the BRI and put this idea into practice. Theoretically speaking, the need to revive the glory of China that had gone through a 'century of humiliation' and reclaim the virtues of the Silk Road was felt strongly. As Wang Yiwei points out, there were already various plans for a revival of the Silk Road being discussed and introduced by different countries. In the context of Japan for example, he writes:

> In 2004, Japan proposed to identify the five Central Asian countries and the three Transcaucasian countries as the 'Silk Road Region', and put the region high on its new diplomacy strategy. According to the concept of 'Silk Road Diplomacy', Japan starts with geopolitical considerations, seeking to stay firmly rooted in Central Asia and Transcaucasia, the areas with global strategic importance. At the same time, Japan also takes into consideration economic interests, and wants to seize this energy treasure house with the

> reserves no less than the Middle East. It seeks to obtain the right to energy development and dominance in trade by way of strengthening political influence and economic penetration. (2016:46)

Besides Japan, in 2005, Johns Hopkins University came up with the idea of the 'New Silk Road', which was officially presented as the 'New Silk Road Initiative' in 2011 in USA (Ibid.: 47). Russia too presented the China-European Transport Corridor as the 'New Silk Road'. In 2011, Iran's proposal of connecting through railways, up to China, was called by many as the 'Iron Silk Road' or 'Railway Silk Road' (Ibid.). It was only consequential that China took note of these events and began to garner for itself the energies across the globe for the revival of the silk road, and give an exclusive Chinese characteristic to it and almost try monopolize it at the same time. China not only succeeded in doing so, but also managed to largely influence other countries to follow such a path of infrastructure diplomacy.

In May 2013, at the behest of China, the BCIM was promoted into a Track 1 diplomatic initiative when an inter-governmental Joint Study Group (JSG) was formed to detail out the scope of a BCIM Economic Corridor. The same time round, with a new element of a maritime nature, China unveiled the BRI, comprising of two elements — The Belt (Silk Road Economic Belt or SERB having 6 corridors) and Road (21st century Maritime Silk Road or MSR having 6 sea corridors). This umbrella project expanded to include as many as 68 countries in the next few years (up to BRF 2019). Map 3.1 gives a broad view of the China's vision of the various connectivity initiatives its aims to undertake.

Map 3.1

China's Vision of Trade and Infrastructure Corridors

Source: Center for Strategic & International Studies, (2017), "Reconnecting Asia-2017", URL: https://www.csis.org/analysis/reconnecting-asia-may-2017.

What can be considered as an empirical evidence of China's increased influence through infrastructure diplomacy is the high number of actors who participated in the two BRI Forums (BRF) held thereafter. In May 2017, China held its first BRI Forum in Beijing. It was attended by 30 heads of state from all over the globe, along with as many as 30

other senior representatives from different countries. Some opine that though China achieved a great deal in putting up an impressive diplomatic show in 2017, it had little new to add to its flagship programme (Tiezze 2017). Yet, the fact that President Xi announced that "total trade between China and other Belt and Road countries in 2014-16 exceeded $3trillion, and China's investment in these countries surpassed $50billion", speaks of the fruits that China's infrastructure diplomacy had already begun reaping. If the BRI was a plan to increase China's footprints along the globe through various linkages, China sure was leading the way by great influence. A second edition in the BRF was held in 2019, in Beijing. The event stood out for the fact that the forum included 36 heads of states, the maximum gathered at any event hosted by one single country (Tiezze 2019).

If it is considered and accepted that China has been practicing infrastructure diplomacy, it is also notable that this has led to increased influence of China across various regions, both at an ideational/theoretical level and a practical level. At the same time China's influence has been both direct and indirect in the infrastructure sector. If we divide China's infrastructure diplomacy influence, since the BRI was announced, into different boxes as shown in Table 3.1, we get various categories of states.

On one hand, there are states that have been influenced by China's use of BRI as an idea, one that is universal and attractive, though some states have been influenced more directly than others. What has been visible is the trend of some countries taking China's example and idea to announce infrastructure projects along the lines drawn by the BRI, and make use of infrastructure diplomacy thereafter. For example, in March 2019, the Dubai Silk Road Strategy was approved to enhance logistical integration and facilitate better trade, within the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and with the external world. For this, existing and proposed ports, airports and free zones were pumped with capital. The increased cooperation between China and UAE, which had in any case moved beyond the energy sector, found expanding common ground in the infrastructure sector through the BRI. Further, DP World, a UAE based infrastructure company for instance, has been deeply engaged with China's BRI project implementation, moving on a path largely paved by China. It is true that DP World faced glitches in Djibouti, more recently aggravated by Chinese presence in the country. Yet, in Africa, encouraged by China's lead, UAE has been engaging with various infrastructure projects in the last decade.

Despite the fact that many, especially the EU, has done the same, but with a motive to counter Chinese influence in the region, UAE has maintained a cooperative/collaborative approach towards China. It is true that China has managed to influence countries to cooperate with it, as well as amongst themselves, particularly through the means of infrastructure diplomacy as a practice China popularized.

Table 3.1

BRI and China's Influence

China's infrastructure diplomacy influence in the BRI context	**Direct influence**	**Indirect influence**
Ideational level	Almost all states participating in BRF, due to their belief in the idea of BRI and an acceptance of leadership by China. For example, UAE has come up with their own Silk Road Strategy, after taking inspiration from BRI. It occasionally cooperates with China at various levels in the BRI context.	States that have been debating the BRI at an ideational level. For example, Australia where Victoria has pledged to join and yet the idea is being debated. States that have not directly been a part of BRI but which have reacted to it in various ways, showing the tacit influence of Chinese ideas on them. For example Japan and India that have come up with alternatives such as Asia-Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC)
Practical level	States that have been either unable to resist China in its perusal of national interest, for example Sri Lanka, or have willingly accepted Chinese terms for BRI, for example Pakistan	States that have been acquiescing with Chinese projects, despite having other players involved in the infrastructure sector. For example, Djibouti, Myanmar

Source: Author

At an ideational level, China's indirect influence is reflected in the fact that states not in support of the BRI have either begun to respond to it, even if by opposing it or have taken initiatives that allegedly come as an alternative to projects under the BRI. The Asia Africa Growth Corridor led by Japan and joined by India is a fitting example. Further, there are some states such as Australia that have shown confusing signs as regards BRI as an idea (see Table 3.1).

On the other hand, there are many states that have been influenced by China's infrastructure diplomacy at a more practical level. China's periphery is froth with such

examples, where most states have not only agreed to be a part of the BRI, but also facilitated it going beyond their own capacity to re-pay for such projects. The examples of Sri Lanka and Pakistan are popular when it comes to citing direct practical influence of China. Sino-Pakistan relations have most dramatically been described as 'higher than the Himalayas, deeper than the deepest ocean, and sweeter than honey'. In keeping with the spirit of this friendship, China has implemented the BRI in Pakistan through one of its most developed projects till now — the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) — termed as a 'game-changer' for the region. At the same time, China has managed to convince other states, such as Myanmar, Djibouti, etc. to acquiesce to China's scheme of things. This resonates with the kind of indirect (but on ground practical) influence China has in the infrastructure sector, due to possibly direct influence in another sector (look at the section on Myanmar).

As the study on China's infrastructure diplomacy proceeds, it must be noted that these boxes of the category of states as shown above may very often overlap when examining specific countries. If we look at Central Asia as a region for instance, an ideational aspect of infrastructure diplomacy influence of China is visible (also President Putin's ideas on integrating through infrastructure, among other things, through the Eurasian Economic Union vision). As an idea, the ancient Silk Road finds mention in most of Central Asian folklore and history. The travelers journey through the Pamir mountains to Samarkand and Bukhara are parts of many stories that continue to interest modern scholars. Therefore, it is not surprising that all five Central Asian countries accepted the BRI at an initial stage, as they themselves promote such ideas. This also translated to practical level influence through building of various projects in the region. Kazakhstan for instance has been under a major Chinese influence, as seen by the introduction of the Nurly Zhol programme in the country in 2014, in alignment with the BRI. Besides, China's investment in the dry port and economic zone at Khorgos have been said to be a high point of the BRI in Central Asia. However, what is noteworthy is that the influence is not only external in nature, as in the case of countries like Sri Lanka, where Chinese power play in the domestic political set up pushed the state into a deep Chinese fold. In contrast, Kazakhstan has believed in the Chinese proposition of 'win-win' cooperation and looked at China for reviving the links and opportunities once made possible by the silk road of the past.

In 2017, a report published by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) stated that Asia needs USD1.7 trillion annually to meet infrastructure needs by 2030, considering the climate change mitigation and adaptation costs. In addition to including transport, power and telecommunication, the report also included water supply and sanitation infrastructure within its scope (which falls into the ambit of infrastructure). Among other things, it concluded the following:

> Currently, the region annually invests an estimated $881 billion in infrastructure (for 25 economies with adequate data, comprising 96% of the region's population). The infrastructure investment gap—the difference between investment needs and current investment levels—equals 2.4% of projected GDP for the 5-year period from 2016 to 2020 when incorporating climate mitigation and adaptation costs.
>
> Without the People's Republic of China (PRC), the gap for the remaining economies rises to a much higher 5% of their projected GDP. Fiscal reforms could generate additional revenues equivalent to 2% of GDP to bridge around 40% of the gap for these economies. For the private sector to fill the remaining 60% of the gap, or 3% of GDP, it would have to increase investments from about $63 billion today to as high as $250 billion a year over 2016–2020. (Asia Development Bank 2017).

As stated, there exists a 2.4% gap in investment in the infrastructure sector. The need for investment in infrastructure in Asia is thus massive (see also PWC Infrastructure Series Report 1). Most certainly, it is China that has recognized this fact and acted on it, faster than others. In turn it has also managed to leverage its influence. If we look at Indonesia for example, the country where the ideas of MSR was unveiled, we find that it has the highest infrastructure gaps among the ASEAN states. China announcement of the MSR in Jakarta and the rolling out of grants, aids and infrastructure projects for Indonesia is no less than a way to make China's influence felt through infrastructure as a foreign policy tool in IR. The issue certainly becomes more complicated with influence increasing to the extent that it becomes a source of arm twisting by China (see next section). In the context of Indonesia itself, Dr Mashahiro Kawai notes that "contingent liability has become very high" (Kawai 2020).

The focus of China on its peripheral regions, particularly by officially stating the relevance of the periphery that would "recognize and support China, thereby increasing affinity and influence" (China Council for International Cooperation on Environment and Development 2013:1), is a layered effort to bring the emerging economies and the not-so-thriving economies in Asia under its geopolitical fold. The success that China has gained in this regard has been recorded through studies that have revealed the increasing influence of China in the region. For example, the recently published ranking of the Lowy

Institute Asia Power Index (2020) reflects on the influence that China has cast in its peripheral region through various indices. Among the 25 other countries accounted for in the study, China leads the way in diplomatic influence scoring 100 points compared to the US at 84 and India at 5th place with 70.1 points. Even though this index may be somewhat unfit in this context or simply, critically viewed, it is indicative of the influence that China has gained in the recent past. These studies, analyses and observations therefore is vindictive of the hypotheses that China's influence through infrastructure diplomacy is an advancing reality today. It is visible in regions that go beyond its peripheral states.

How China is Influencing through Infrastructure

If one looks at China's bilateral relationship around its neighbourhood, it is visible that China has created a niche for itself, mainly in the economic context. China is the largest oversea investor in Maldives, Sri Lanka, Myanmar and many other states, in various continents as well. It has built some of the most crucial infrastructure projects in countries including Pakistan, Laos, etc. It has been the largest trading partner for Vietnam, India (until recently when USA took over in 2020), Thailand, Indonesia among others. This economic clout is being upgraded through various investments, largely by building robust infrastructure for maintaining and improving China's position in the international system. Infrastructure diplomacy has therefore become important today. However, in conducting its international relations over the last decade, the Chinese way of functioning has very often been criticized as autocratic, non-transparent and replicating intentions as that of many earlier colonizers. Pertaining to the BRI for instance, Peter Frankopan writes, "China's Belt and Road is a programme that facilitates a form of colonialism that results in assets ending up in Chinese hands" (Frankopan 2018:113). Such a warning is also given by James A. Millward who speculates if China's BRI is a guise for making of a colonial power (Millward 2018).

Without getting into the question of whether the influence China has wielded is good or bad, (but while noting that effects of this influence has more often leaned towards the latter) this study has tried to understand how China has managed to influence states around its periphery. For this, it is crucial to delve into the funding, operating, contract making or negotiation process of some of the infrastructure investments by China. Over time, it has been commonly observed that China has policies and ways through which it

has managed to carve out favourable results for itself. In 2019, Johnathan Hillman in his paper titled 'Influence and Infrastructure' noted that the Chinese influence through infrastructure has been done through three stages (See Table 3.2). Firstly, at the finance stage, China has extracted diplomatic concessions, frequently by rewarding supporter and shaping project plans. Secondly, at the design and construction stage, it has managed to set standards, transfer technology and even collect intelligence from the host countries. Thirdly, at the ownership stage, China has taken to restricting or denying competition that has in turn enabled it to sustain its influence (Center for Strategic & International Studies).

Table 3.2

Avenues of Influence

Stage	**Finance**	**Design & Construction**	**Ownership & Operation**
Strategic Objectives	Win political concessions	Set standards	Collect Intelligence
	Reward supporters	Transfer technology	Restrict Access
	Set Standards	Collect Intelligence	Adapt to disruptions
	Access resources		Monopolize skills and technology
	Control Operations		

Source: Jonathan Hillman, (2019), "Influence and Infrastructure; The Strategic Stakes of Foreign Projects", Center for Strategic & International Studies, p.2, URL: https://www.csis.org/analysis/influence-and-infrastructure-strategic-stakes-foreign-projects.

If we consider the financing of Chinese projects, the story traces back to the 1990s when China begun to channelize the money and material available as a result of overcapacity in the steel and cement industry in the country, by offering to build infrastructure projects outside of it. Interestingly, this also led to the term 'cement diplomacy' being used (see for example Onnis 2017). There is no doubt that such exports provided a thrust or the economic capacity for China to introduce the BRI. This indirectly is one of the ways how China then managed to pursue other international goals and accrue power for itself. Indeed, studies have supported this line of argument stating that China's overcapacity problem does find a solution through the BRI (Zhongxin et. al. 2020). Yet, this is only a generic portrayal of how China managed to influence through infrastructure and the BRI

thereafter. But it is more important to understand how this available finance was put to its best use to garner power.

For one, it is said the speed and the amount that China provides for building infrastructure is remarkable. When countries are in debt, their need for finance is greater and therefore the scope to be manipulated is usually manifold. As Hillman points out, "the greater difficulty a recipient country faces in attracting investment, the greater influence a prospective financer wields" (2019:4). In this context, the example of Laos is obvious. China is financing Lao's high-speed railway (HSR) at a price that is almost 50% of it's GDP (Kishimoto 2017). Taking from the clue of high-speed railway, we can also try to understand how China is seeking to monopolize its expertise and technology in this segment. Gerald Chan writes:

> …this New Silk Road initiative has become the centre piece of China's foreign policy. At the core of this foreign policy is the development of infrastructure facilities around the world, and at the inner core of this infrastructure diplomacy is China's high-speed rail construction exports and investments. Financing the development of OBOR has become China's new financial diplomacy (Chan 2018:6).

Though Chan, like many others, use the words 'infrastructure diplomacy' or 'financial diplomacy' loosely to refer to China's infrastructure investments, especially under the BRI, he provides a detailed study of China's influence through its HSR network and the advantages of it. While China concentrated on the HSR sector as late as 2006[*] (Ibid.), it soon began exporting it as a niche means of communication to many states. The other giant in Asia exporting the same — Japan — has shown less interest in competing with China on the matter. Though Japan, a pioneer in this field, has signed MoUs with some important states on certain big projects (Mumbai-Ahmedabad bullet train in India for instance), it has not attempted to monopolize or milk on its expertise however (see assessment section of Conclusion chapter). This allows China to have more influence through its expertise. This is how China planned to build two-thirds of the world's total high-speed railways by December 2018, a total of over 29,000 kilometres (Tang 2019). In fact, such significant infrastructure investment by Beijing is hoped to offset issues such as the trade war it has with USA (Ibid.). Much like how Britain's largest telegraph company manufactured two-thirds of the cables used in the 19th century to its advantage,

[*] By 2003 China introduced the Qinhuangdao–Shenyang high-speed railway.

China seems to mirror this in the 21st century in the HSR sector (Ibid.). There is little doubt about the major influencing power China obtains through such expertise.

While discussing the influence through infrastructure financing, it is also pertinent to understand the economics of lending, therefore touch upon what may be called the power of influence through economic (diplomacy). China has been a major lender in the infrastructure sector. Along with funding various connectivity projects, China has become one of the highest creditors in the world. By September 2008, China had overtaken Japan as the largest foreign holder of US debt (estimated at USD1.5 trillion). This provided China with a "de facto veto power over certain U.S. interest rate and exchange rate decisions" (Drezner 2008:8). Moreover, it can be agreed upon that the creditor or those amassing wealth can be empowered in two ways — by "enhancing their ability to resist pressure from other actors" and by "increasing their ability to pressure others" (Ibid.: 9). In perspective, if this is the kind of influence China can have over USA, the same over less powerful states can only be imagined. But what has drawn the attention of experts most, in the context of many infrastructure-related lending in recent times, are some of the practices, if not the principles, of Chinese financing.

It has been said that "Beijing typically finds a local partner, makes that local partner accept investment plans that are detrimental to their country in the long term, and then uses the debts to either acquire the project altogether or to acquire political leverage in that country" (Xavier 2017). This resonates with the talks around Chinese debt-diplomacy. But there is more in the details of how it is done. Jonathan Hillman and many others allege that China has resorted to loan sharking and issuing tied loans, akin to some of the European powers in 18th and 19th centuries (Hillman 2017). Tied loans are those that have a condition to be spent in a certain way, most often in the lenders country and to buy their goods or services. While tied loans are a feature of most foreign lending, loan sharking is not as common. Loan sharking is a practice where lending is done at high rates while recipient states are encouraged for re-financing and renewals. China usually charges higher rate of interest than other lenders. This is evident when compared to other bi-lateral or even multi-lateral lenders. In the former category, Japan stands out as an example. It has much lower interest rates comparatively, which has in turn

increased the demand for Japanese loans (also Samurai and Ninja loans[*]) in recent times. India's bullet train loans have an interest rate as low as 0.1%. This is the same rate that Japan reportedly offered to Indonesia for building the HSR network (Kundu 2019). In contrast, Chinese loans have higher rate of interest. The case of CPEC can be cited as an example in this context. Pakistan has requested that China provide the USD1.6 billion for railway renovation, especially of the Main Line-1, at a rate of 1% (Kannan 2020). This has been rejected by China, an indication of the advantage that comes with infrastructure influence. However, some changes seem to be taking place, albeit slowly.

In the latter category of multi-lateral financing, it must be mentioned that many multi-lateral banks have been newly created to improve infrastructure for development needs or have been increasingly focusing on it, very often driven by Chinese infrastructure diplomacy moves. To be clear, China has both bi-lateral and multi-lateral agencies to facilitate the various infrastructure projects it has undertaken. Further, the definition of infrastructure in such context is broader than that understood in this study, for it usually includes all development and social infrastructure under its ambit. Nevertheless, connectivity and transport infrastructure forms a very large part of the share of financing. The BRI alone has an investment target of more than USD2 trillion (Hillman 2018). In 2016, an article in the *Hong Kong Economic Journal* written by a Professor at the Chinese University of Hong Kong conflated that number to as high as USD8 trillion (Wo Lap 2016). The point is, to support such initiatives financial institutions had to be upgraded. The old institutes, mostly West driven and led by USA, are considered to be inadequate or untenable for the needs of the developing East. This has in turn led to a demise of the New International Economic Order (NIEO) of the 1970s, with China fueling much of the changes.

The New Development Bank (NDB, earlier known as the BRICS bank) was formed in 2014 with its headquarter in Shanghai. The five BRICS member states aimed to provide USD10 billion each to focus on development of the member countries as priority (Forbes

[*] Sumarai loans are Japanese loans given to non-Japanese overseas borrowers at a low interest rate, usually due to the ample liquidity of investors. Reliance Jio for instance has raised a samurai loan of 53.5 billion Japanese yen.
NINJA stands for 'no income, no job, no asset' in context of loans given by lenders without the protocol to verify the borrower's ability to repay. It was prevalent in the USA until the 2008 economic slowdown took place. It can be still found in Japan however.

India 2014). Infrastructure development continues to be a major issue area. The Asia Development Bank (ADB) was founded in December 2015 with a pool of USD100 billion. The ADB Report in 2017 has drawn attention to the need for infrastructure investment in the region, catalyzing the process of infrastructure diplomacy as a result. The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), a Chinese initiative launched in January 2016 with headquarters in Beijing, aims to build Infrastructure for Tomorrow (I4T) that is sustainable. The World Bank too launched its Global Infrastructure Facility (GIF) in 2015. Therefore, there is an ample pool of resources for countries to seek help from for infrastructure development. Yet, the finance provided by China single handedly is overwhelming in comparison. The Export Import (EXIM) Bank, the China Development Bank (CDB), the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China are leading agencies for infrastructure funds of China. Beyond these banks, China launched the Silk Road Fund in 2014 to facilitate the BRI. China alone pledged USD40 billion to be spend along the OBOR. This has provided means of huge influence for China (Chan 2018:60)

If we do a comparison with some of the multi-lateral agencies, some interesting results are seen that reflect on the swelling degree of Chinese influence. Firstly, the bi-lateral funding by China is relatively high when compared to multi-lateral funding. This allows China to have greater influence over recipient states, along with the fact that China continues to provide a massive amount of funds to multi-lateral agencies as well. While AIIB invested about USD7.5 billion as of December 2018, CDB invested USD110 billion on BRI countries, an amount much higher indeed. Similarly, China's EXIM bank has been focused on BRI since 2015 and reportedly planned to finance more than1000 projects in 49 countries (Maçães 2020:49). Secondly, if one examines the principles of bi-lateral lending by Chinese banks compared to multi-lateral banks, there are visible policies that are written to advantage China in the former case, worse so, to arm-twist and influence the debtor. For example, ADB seldom takes more than 25% of total capital equity stakes (Hillman 2019). AIIB allows maximum of 30% stakes (AIIB 2020). China on the other hand does not have any such clauses in most cases. Hambantota port in Sri Lanka, where Chinese state-owned financing is used, has led to China Merchants Port Holding acquiring 80% stakes. State owned CNPC has 51% ownership stakes in the oil and gas pipeline project in Myanmar. Additionally, ADB usually is never the largest single investor. No such principle is written into Chinese clauses of banks. Thirdly, as

already mentioned, interest rates by China are usually higher. These have led to China being called as practicing ‘debt-trap diplomacy’ rather than ‘infrastructure diplomacy’.

The reference of Sri Lanka is a case in point. It is interesting how China, despite being far from the leading financer in Sri Lanka, managed to influence the country’s strategic infrastructure in such a short period. In 2008 Chinese funding formed only 2% of Sri Lanka’s foreign debt. But by 2018, it had provided loans worth USD8 billion, converting debts to equity norms of repayment and had 10% debt from Sri Lanka (Hillman 2019: 9). It is to be noted that it was not China that was the highest lender however, a place taken by ADB at 12% followed by Japan at 11% and World Bank at 10% (Ibid.). Yet the speed with which China provided funding was an important factor in influencing foreign policy in Sri Lanka. Chinese debt and equity are funding more than 50 projects worth more than USD11 billion. Most are roads and water treatment plants, but the largest projects in SRI Lanka are the Hambantota Port, the Colombo Port City and the Lakavijaya thermal power plant. The now (in)famous 99year old lease over the port of Hambantota is another result of China converting debt to equity, a technical principle that advantages China (Stacey 2017; Hillman 2018).

As a study conducted by, Gateway House: Indian Council on Global Relations, shows “Chinese investment is concentrated in hard infrastructure – power, roads, railways, bridges, ports and airports. In most cases, the contractors building these projects are Chinese. In many cases, the only capital available to fund these projects is also Chinese” (Bhandari and Jindal 2017). The same study also notes China’s increased involvement into the financial systems of countries like Bangladesh and Pakistan. Discussion on this falls outside the scope of this thesis. However, the pertinent point is that China has aimed to create an entire system that will help operate the infrastructure it has built in its periphery and in other parts of the world. There are therefore many ways by which China has influenced through infrastructure building. It has, for example, transferred technology that have Chinese lead. Besides the direct use of technology to gain knowledge about a country’s policy, to put simply, by spying (as in the case of African Union HQ built by China allegedly transferring data to Shanghai), China has focused on floating the digital silk road. Additionally, it has made the use of BeiDou navigation system a priority for states in the BRI network (Kelkar 2018).

Infrastructure investments have also been directly used by PRC in extending its diplomatic relationship to countries with which it shares no formal diplomatic relations. To elaborate, let us look at how Beijing has vied for recognition under the 'One China Policy' and has increasingly resorted to offering infrastructure loans and investments in exchange of it. It is also interesting to look at how some of the PRC's new diplomatic ties have been based largely on infrastructure investment and support provided in recent times. Since 1993, China has set up Trade Development Offices (TDO) in countries like Dominican Republic, Panama, Haiti, etc., making a rather economic approach to woo Taiwan's allies (Drun 2014). Yet, simple economic diplomacy has not been as effective as China's specific focus on infrastructure diplomacy. Once the BRI was announced and China offered massive infrastructure money to some of the countries that formally recognized the ROC as China, things rapidly altered for PRC. By 2008 only 23 countries in Africa, Central America and the South Pacific gave formal recognition to Taiwan. By 2019 that number reduced to 16 (Ibid.). In 2018 for instance, 3 countries — Burkina Faso, El Salvador and Dominican Republic — shifted their diplomatic allegiance to PRC. In the case of DR, even though trade had flourished, there was no diplomatic shift. Then, China reportedly offered USD3 billion, out of which USD1.6 billion was for infrastructure alone! Just a year earlier, Chinese firms offered to build one of the most high-profile projects in Panama, a high-speed railway system worth USD1.4 billion. This was around the same time when Panama City shifted its diplomatic focus from Taipei to Beijing. It therefore becomes simpler to assess how China has been managing to improve its diplomatic profile around the world. Such a diplomatic move also gives China a means through which it seeks to then influence the smaller countries vis-à-vis Taiwan. This observation can be put at the heart of research on Chinese infrastructure diplomacy. Yet, since most of the countries in this context are located far from China's periphery, which is where the focus of this study lies, only a brief reference to it suffices.

There are mushrooming studies on China's influence through infrastructure diplomacy that focus on regions across the globe. In the context of Russia for example, Jia and Bennett in a paper in 2019 conclude that China's energy projects in the interior of the country is more successful than its cross-border transportation projects that aim to improve inter-border connectivity and people to people linkages. This finding speaks of China's desire to harness the recipient state's energy resources rather than facilitate transport of people or goods. The success story in energy sector indicates a covert desire

and tact for influence through infrastructure diplomacy. Though there may be uncertainty and differing views on how China influences though infrastructure diplomacy, there is no doubt that it definitely influences for sure.

A glance at the response obtained from the survey conducted for this study, as already mentioned in Chapter 2, a very simple question was asked to experts and practioners from China and India (and other states) in the field of diplomacy and Chinese investments — "Do you think building/funding for roads, railways, pipelines and other infrastructure projects enable a country to gain influence in a recipient/host country?". As discussed earlier, 99.21% of the respondent gave an affirmative answer to it (Q3). The hypothesis in this study that states that with increased engagements by countries at various levels, infrastructure diplomacy has emerged as a foreign policy tool for China to assert influence, the official announcement of such a policy notwithstanding, therefore stands satisfactorily proved.

China's infrastructural forays in Myanmar

In 1985, at a time when Margaret Thatcher was speaking about the importance of the 'in-word', infrastructure, to an audience in London, an article was published the same year on the 2nd September issue of the *Beijing Review,* written by the then Vice Minister of Communication in China, Pan Qi. Titled as 'Opening the Southwest: An Expert Opinion', Qi wrote:

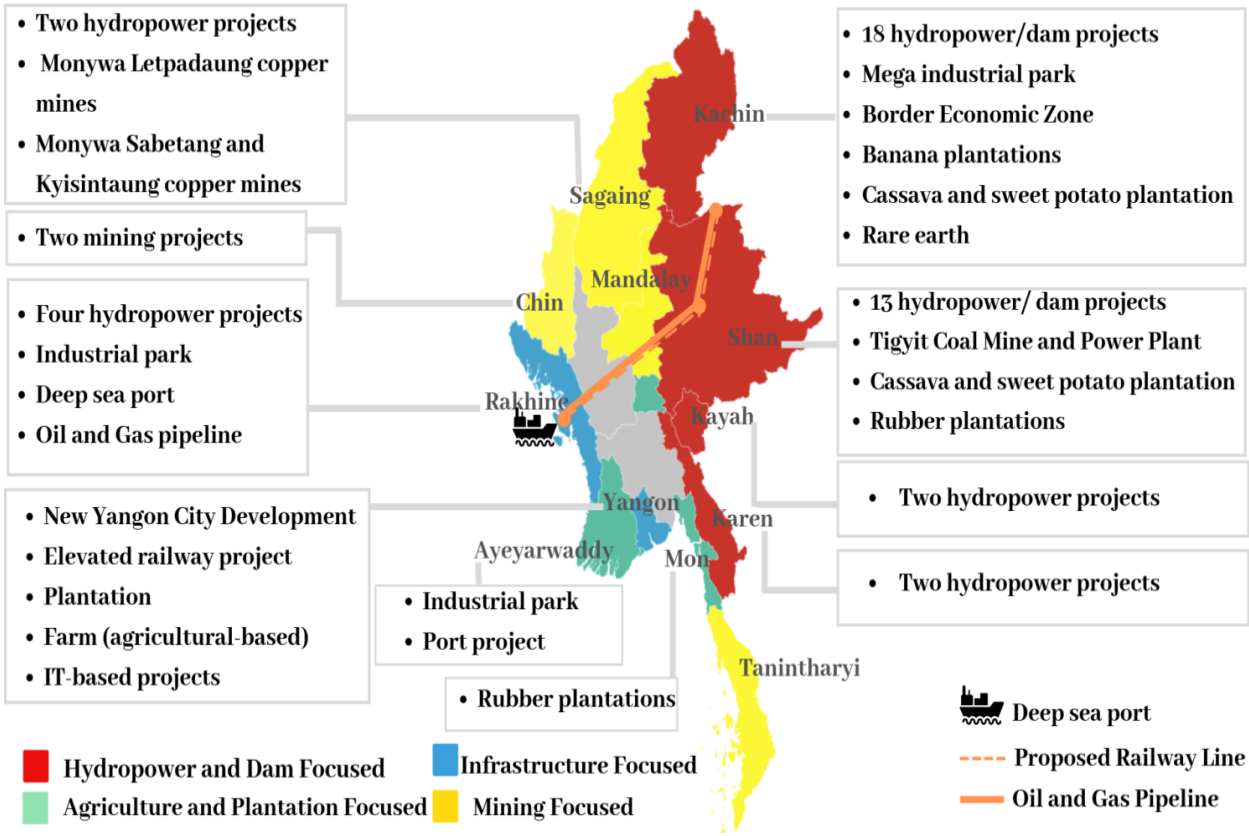
> Looking towards the south, we could find outlets in Burma; that is, we could select an appropriate route across the 1,000 plus-kilometer Yunan-Burma border to export the rich resources of west Yunan…several possible passages form Yunan to the outside world. From the mining area of Tengchong, for example, one highway leads westward to Myitkyina in Burma, where a railroad is available to transfer cargo to the sea. A second highway leads south to Lashio, another major Burmese railroad. And between these two, a third road leads to Bhamo, on the Irrawaddy river. None of these roads is over 300 kilometres long. Furthermore, an international airport is being planned for Mangshi, in west Yunnan. That will give the city air services to Hongkong, Guangzhou, Rangoon and even Bangkok and Singapore. If this comes about, the western part of Yunan will have more than one avenue to the outside world (Qi 1985:22-23).

Though the article went quite unnoticed then, it became the blueprint of China's southward thrust towards the Indian Ocean via Myanmar that was to follow soon. It was this article, that has been pointed out in the literature as the one that defines the Chinese aims and the objectives vis-à-vis its infrastructure forays into Myanmar. China began to implement these ideas from the 1990s onwards, often through diplomatic pursuits of

'wooing the generals' in Rangoon (as mentioned by Renaud Egreteau in his book with this title), which was not the case earlier. As Bertil Lintner points out, by the 1990s, "China, realizing its diminishing international importance, became busy strengthening ties with smaller, Asian countries in order to remain at least a regional power" (1992:225). It can be argued that this strengthening of ties was largely pursued by the means of infrastructure diplomacy. Map 3.2 provides a fair idea of Chinese projects in the country.

Map 3.2

Chinese Investments in Myanmar



Source: Nan Lwin, 'Infographic: 30 years of Chinese Investment in Myanmar' 25 January 2019, *The Irrawady*

When it comes to Myanmar, it becomes important to note that China has made efforts to build a few infrastructure projects in the areas of Myanmar bordering Yunnan since the1950s. For example, build around 1954, the Kunming-Baoshan-Dali highway was the first to be completed. China built more asphalted highways from Kunming to the border of Burma by 1963 (Lintner 1992:233). There was also a hydroelectric power station built by the Chinese in Burma by the end of 1960s, among smaller scattered investments (which falls outside the scope of this study). Yet the scale of these infrastructure projects were proportionately less, while the objectives were largely to enable the Communist Party of Burma (CPB) with better movement and transport to provide required equipment for military functionality (Ibid., 233). As such, they were military hard infrastructure in a realist sense of the term as used in IR. This continued even later, but the scale and objective of infrastructure investment, along with the means of achieving it underwent changes (see table 3.3). Further, as Myanmar itself transitioned into a so-called democracy (notwithstanding the fact that it yet again lost ground due to the February 2021 coup), the need for China to use more diplomatic means increased in turn.

A glance at some of the various infrastructure investments by China in Myanmar since the 1990s indicate how a change came about in China's policy. With Myanmar becoming a part of the BRI in 2017, China's infrastructure diplomacy in the country stood vindicated. However, there have been debates more recently as to the type of influence China has over Myanmar. Discussions reveal that with the growing importance of Myanmar as a country in the region, particularly as a result of its geo-strategic location and increased agency as a state juggling with democracy, it no more remains a 'vassal state' as Lintner had stated in the 1990s. Myanmar's disapproval of some of the Chinese projects (Myitsone hydropopwer project and the Letpadaung copper mine project for example), its invitation to all foreign players to invest in various types of projects, especially in the infrastructure sector, leaves doubts about the clout of China in its backyard. Yet, China's influence through infrastructure, used as a tool for conducting diplomatic relations, cannot be discounted. Given below is the table that helps understand China's infrastructure investments in Myanmar in details.

Table 3.3
Details of China's infrastructure investment in Myanmar

Infrastructure project and investment	**Year of announcement/investment and amount**	**Operating/Funding Agency**	**Added information and Current status**
Kunming-Baoshan-Dali highway that connects to Myanmar	Around 1954		Operational
Asphalted highways from Kunming to border of Burma[*]	1963		Supply lines to communist forces in Burma
Hydroelectric power stations in Burma[†]	End of 1960s		
Renovation of the Old Burma Road and Ledo road (Myanmar side).	1990s		2011 work had already begun after China won the contract[‡]
Bridge connecting Ruili and Muse	Agreement signed in 1991, completed in 1992		Myanmar requested on 20ton bridge but China insisted on 50tons[§] Operational
Bridge connecting Wanding to Kyukok	1991-1992		
Mregui island port	1992		
Zadetyeki port	1990s		
Tasang dam on Salween river			
56km (35mile) road from Yinjiang to Burmese towns of Taihone-Momauk and Bhamo	1993		
305 km (190mile) of highways as part of Golden square network			To link China to Myanmar, Thailand and Laos. In progress
104km (65mile) road from Lianghe to Bhamo			
Myitkyina-Sadon-Sailaw-Mangmin road	Inaugurated in May 1993		
Roads to Mandalay via Muse and Lashio (NH3/AH14); roads			Part of AH 14 that is well maintained and

[*] Lintner, 1992:233.
[†] Ibid:234.
[‡] Subir Bhaumik, 2011.
[§] Lintner, 1992:252.

via Myitkyina and Bhamo			used for border trade
177km (110mile) road from border to Lashio			
Kyaukpyu port upgradation	By 2000s inspection had begun		
Kyaukpyu deep sea port	Announced in 2007. Completed in 2014. Opened in 2015.	Contract to CITIC group (Central SOE) in 2016. In 2017, CITIC had to reduce its stake from 85%-70%	Operational. Being expanded by Chinese companies
Kyaukpyu Economic and Technology Zone		CITIC group has 70% stake	Part of CMEC
Oil pipeline from Kyaukpyu port to Kunming	Announced in April 2007: November 2008 invested USD1.5 billion in principle	CNPC (Central SOE having 51% ownership) with Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise (49% share)	Operational since 2015
Gas pipeline from Kyaukpyu port to Guizhou	Announced in April 2007: USD1.04 million in principle	CNPC has 51% ownership	Operational since 2014
Infrastructure loan	September 2010: Announced USD4.2 billion interest free loan for 30 years		
Myitsone hydropower project	Announced : USD3.6 billion for 6000MW project	JV between China Power Investment Corporation, Myanmar Ministry of Electric Power and Asia World Company	Suspended by Thein Sein government in September 2011
Railway from Kyaukpyu to Muse	MoU signed in 2011	China Railway Engineering Corporation (Central SOE) on a BOT basis	It was almost suspended in 2014. But on 22 Oct 2018, an MoU was signed regarding conduct of feasibility study for the Muse-Mandalay part.
Railway from Dali-Ruli almost up to Myanmar.	Construction began in 2011 Commissioned in 2015.		Gaolingong tunnel is the longest mountain railway tunnel in Asia in its current phase, due to be completed in 2022. In 2018, the Railway arch bridge as part of Dali-Ruili railway was erected in 2018.
Airport near Naypidaw	USD100 million funding to build airport announced in 2010		

Ayeyawady bridge at Yadanabon connecting Mandalay and Sagaing	In November 2002 tender was signed of USD10.9 million. Completed in 2008	China CAMC Engineering Co. Ltd (subsidiary of SINOMACH, a central SOE)	Operational
Ayeyawady bridge at Pakokku connecting Mandalay and Magway	Completed in 2012		Operational
Made oil port (as part of oil pipeline) project	Began in 2011 and completed in January 2015.		Operational
Thilawa shipyard	Completed in 2002. USD211 million contract for expansion in 2019.	EPC mode. Expansion by China CAMC Engineering	Operational. Expansion under planning.
Ruili-Muse Economic Cooperation Zone	Discussed in September 2015		Under implementation
Magwe-Minbu bridge			Completed and operational
Airport at Mandalaya			
High-speed railway connecting Yangon, Naypitaw and Mandalaya			Under planning

Source: Compiled by author

As evident, the 1990s was crucial for China's infrastructural forays into Myanmar. Out of the many initiatives that China took up, the Burma Road is of historical importance. It was completed in 1939 to be used as a supply chain during the Sino-Japanese war that had begun in 1937. However, when the Japanese took over Burma in 1942, it was shut down at source. The Allied forces built an alternate route through the Ledo Road (later renamed as Stillwell road in Assam) that then connected to the Old Burma Road as a military supply line during the Second World War. Additionally, the Kuomintang forces that were defeated made use of the Burma road to flee the newly established PRC's rule. With this, also flourished the opium cartels in northern Myanmar that forms part of the infamous Golden triangle network (Bail and Tournier 2010). This road, that was constructed as a part of hard infrastructure need in the 20th century, has now become a symbol of China's diplomatic efforts at reclaiming its civilizational greatness. By 1993 China had won the contract and begun renovating the Old Burma Road with an aim to restore linkages from Yunnan to Myanmar. It completed the Myitkyina-Kambaiti part of the road in 2007 and is developing the Myitkyina-Tanai part of it (Neog 2015). China

not only claims this road as a part of its historical southern Silk Road, but has offered to build the Myitkyina-Tanai-Pangsau pass section of the Stillwell road (in India). The Yunnan Construction Engineering Group, a Central SOE of China has already made progress in this regard (Dunn, et al. 2016). With the revival of the silk road narrative, the old Burma Road therefore forms an important part of China's infrastructure diplomacy.

By 1993, China built two bridges over the Shweli river connecting Ruili-Muse and Wanding- Kyouko. At a time when a simple bridge in some of the states in India's Northeast took up to many years[*], China built two bridges connecting Myanmar within three years. In this context, Myanmar requested for a 20ton bridge at Muse, but China insisted on it being 50tons (Lintner 1992:252). The latter persisted, suggesting the presence of the type of power through influence as explained by Robert Dahl[†]. The green-shoots of Chinese influence through infrastructure investment in Myanmar had begun to emerge. Yet the primary objective was of creating linkages with the the *tatmadaw*, by facilitating them with military equipment and hard power capabilities, often transported through routes developed by China. For example, the aforesaid mentioned bridges were used to deliver light infantry weapons, rocket launchers, etc., to the extent that they were locally referred to as 'gun bridges' (Singh 1997:120). China's bridge building capacity and genius have more recently shone with the completion of the Nujiang river bridge in December 2019. This bridge that forms part of the Dali-Ruili railway network has the world's longest truss arch and is an important link in China's railway connectivity to Myanmar.

Meanwhile, China built a network of roadways and highways that enabled travel and trade from areas in Yunnan to Myanmar. As Helene le Bail and Abel Tournier write as part of the Aise Visions:

> Two road corridors that run South from Kunming, the capital of Yunnan, benefitted from substantial Chinese investments, the main one being the former Burma Road (Kunming-Baoshan-Mangshi-Ruili-Muse-Lashio-Mandalay), the second an axis that links Yunnan with Thailand through northeastern Myanmar (Kunming-Simao-Jinghong-Daluo-Mongla-Kengtung-Tachileik-Chiag Rai) (2010:7).

[*] For example, a much shorter bridge at Ganeshguri in Guwahati, Assam in the late 1990s and early 2000s, took over 4 years to construct.

[†] In *The Concept of Power*,1957, Robert Dahl defined power as the ability of A to get something done by B despite the latter's unwillingness.

In 1993, the Myitkyina-Sadon-Sailaw-Mangmin road was inaugurated (Ibid.:119). By the mid 1990s Bhamo in Myanmar could be reached via a 35mile road from Yinjian through Taihone-Momauk or the 65mile road from Lianghe, both built by China (Ibid.; Myint 1993:71). Mandalay was approachable via Myitkyina and Bhamo or through the road from Muse-Lashio that forms part of the NH3 and also the Asian Highway-14. The Asian Highway network runs through Myanmar from China. Also, 190 miles of the Golden Square highway falls in Myanmar. These growing linkages indicated increased involvement of China in Myanmar's economy directly, through improvement of trade (not just at the border at Ruli-Muse regarding which a trade agreement was signed in 1988, but beyond), and its politics more indirectly, through improved interactions with the *tatmadaw*. The strategic implications of this relationship, especially as an impact of improved infrastructural presence of China in Myanmar, became an important point of analysis for scholars since the 1990s.

Further, in the 1990s Chinese engineers and advisors were already inspecting matters regarding the ports at Kyaukpyu and Yangon, as well as naval bases at Haingyii (Egreteau 2008:43; Garver 2001:292). In 1992, the Mregui island port was developed, while Chinese presence and assistance to upgrade some of the island ports in Myanmar, including those at Zadetkyi, Monkey point and Kyaikkami were creating rumours about China's intent in Myanmar. Many old ports were being renovated or new facilities being built. The shipping terminal and shipyard of Thilawa was built by China. Yet, it is Japan that took the limelight by building the SEZ at Thilawa, a reminder on involvement of other foreign players in the area. This was a result, or a response, to the excessive Chinese investment that started taking place. It was in the 2000s that China's infrastructure diplomacy took off, with the advocacy of its 'going out' strategy initiated in 1999.

China's foreign direct investment began to increase rapidly in the 2000s. Compared to other ASEAN countries, Chinese FDI was highest in Myanmar from 2005-2010 amounting from USD11.5 million to USD875.6 million respectively (Dunn et al. 2016). Though the political changes in Myanmar in 2011 led to a few setbacks for China, it had already become Myanmar's highest trading partner by then, beating Singapore and Thailand. This was brought about by a sense of 'win-win' cooperative policy of China, that went ahead to sign MoUs regarding some of the biggest infrastructure projects in Myanmar at the time. The construction of the Myanmar-China Oil and Gas pipeline was

proposed in 2004 and announced in 2007. By 2010 Chinese SOE, China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC was the fourth largest corporation by revenue in 2019, as per the Fortune Global 500 ranking) had 51% share of ownership in both, with an investment of USD2.45 billion (see table 3.3). These became operational by 2015 and accentuated the energy cooperation between China and Myanmar, which had already begun by the early 2000s.

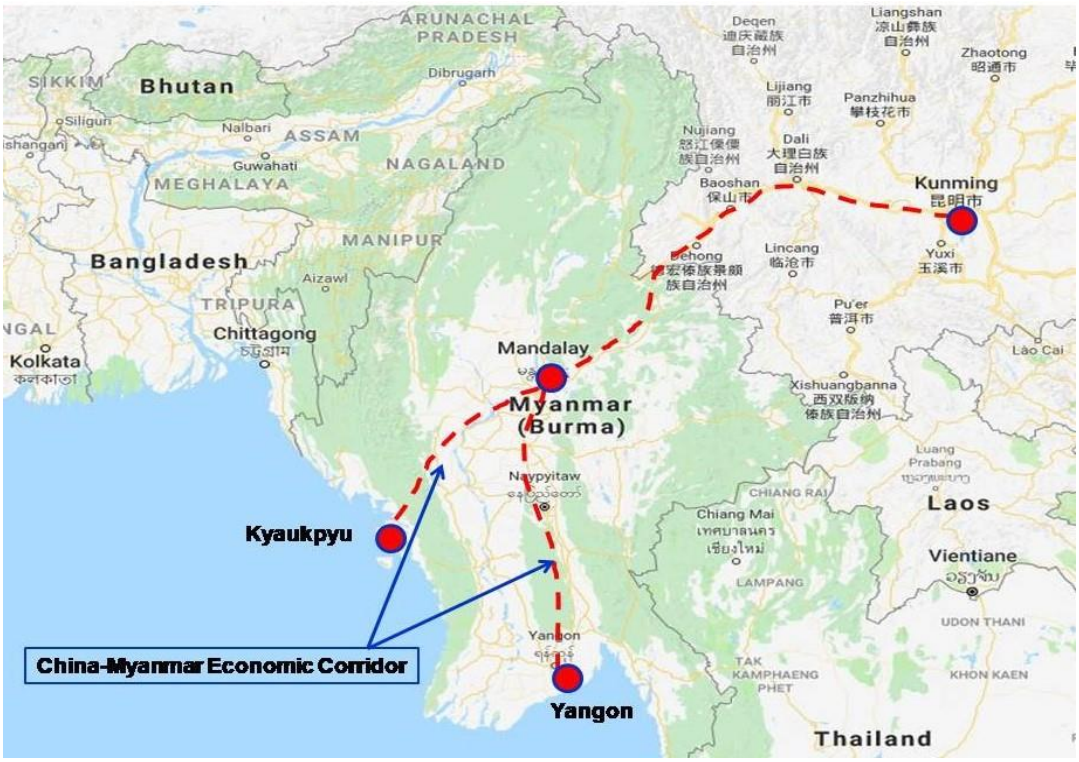
Chinese oil companies like CNPC, Sinopec, CNOOC and others had previously won major contracts in some of the valuable on-shore and off-shore fields of Myanmar (Egreteau 2008:54). But China was quick enough to put such infrastructure in place that not just enabled it to extract the energy resources in Myanmar but even transport it on time to its advantage, something that India failed to do (see assessment section in Chapter 5). For example, Chinese company, Petrochina, was able to buy gas produced by a Indo-Korean consortium in the Ramree Island and transport it through a pipeline to Yunnan as early as 2005. To such opportunities, China added an interest free loan of USD2.4 billion to Myanmar for 30 years in 2010 to build rail, roads and other development infrastructure (Lintner 2019:42). Noteworthy is the fact that just a year earlier, despite the fact that Beijing was unhappy about the Burmese offensive against the non-state armed group in Kokang (which is inhabited by people who speak the same Chinese dialect as the people across the border) which led to about 30,000 people to seek shelter in China, China did not take any action. An interest free loan was an outlier in Chinese financing usually practiced at the time (China has taken similar steps in Africa recently). It seemed to be aimed at providing Chinese assurances of continued support in terms of investment in a transitioning Myanmar. These developments can be read as a rather diplomatic move, an example of the practice of infrastructure diplomacy indeed.

Railways have been an important part of traditional infrastructure-for-influence mindset, the most apt example being that of the British colonizers in India. The ongoing investments of China in building the high-speed railways in Laos, that is estimated to cost USD7 billion, i.e. more than 60% of their GDP (Frankopan 2019:125) is yet another example of the influence infrastructure can reap through financing. In Myanmar, there were railway lines being planned alongside the land routes and energy tracks, which have been finding vigour under China's infrastructure diplomacy since a decade now. China has been working on three main railway projects, namely from Kunming-Kyaukpyu,

Kunming-Yangon and from Kunming through Shan state up to Chiang Rai in Thailand (Singh and Pandalai 2012:116; Singh 2020). The part on the Chinese side is being constructed in phases in form of the 330 km (approx.) Dali-Ruili railway. Connectivity is thus being upgraded in this stretch by building railways that form part the China-Myanmar railway corridor, mostly built by a SOE, China Railway Engineering Corporation (CREC). In 2011, a MoU was signed regarding the first line of this from Muse-Kyaukpyu, largely in alignment with the oil and gas pipelines. This was halted in 2014, but in 2018, a new MoU signed stated to begin a feasibility study for the line from Muse to Mandalay (*Xinhuanet* October 23, 2018). Map 3.3 of the CMEC gives an idea of the railway line built by China.

Map 3.3

China Myanmar Economic Corridor



Sounrce: Puyam Rakesh Singh, "The bridge across the Nujiang River", *E-Pao*, 22 June 2020.

Visibly also, the Kyaukpyu port was being constructed by China's CITIC group that initially obtained 80% stake in it. The USD7.7 billion project was however downsized

only in 2017 to USD1.3 billion with a 70% stake. Announced in 2007, the port is one of the most important aspects of China's infrastructure diplomacy in Myanmar. This deep sea port on Maday Island is also facilitated with storage capacity and designed to enable tankers of 30,000 tonne to dock and unload oil to be further transferred through the pipeline (Drunn et al. 2016:37). Additionally, as part of the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor (CMEC), a special economic and technology zone has been proposed at Kyaukpyu to be built by CITIC Construction Company limited, a subsidiary company of CITIC. The Kyaukpyu port project along with the planned SEZ is vital for meeting China's larger security goals as well. It symbolizes not only China's steadfastly attempts at planning and implementing ways to overcome the Malacca dilemma that would enable it to make better energy procurements, but also its ability to use infrastructure diplomacy as a means to influence countries to maintain cordial relationships, least it loses out on greater opportunities that China claims to offer to all through its mega projects. Therefore, China has not backed down on pursuing ID as an opportunity even though it may have lost out on ID as a process at times. In any case, a McKinsey report issued in 2013 stated that "Burma had the ability to quadruple its GDP by 2030 if it could attract $650 billion in investment. Just under half of that, $320billion, would be needed for infrastructure projects alone" (Myint 2019:195). Infrastructure thus had to be kept as an important issue on the diplomatic agenda.

With the announcement of the BRI in 2013 and the advocacy of peripheral diplomacy by China the same year, infrastructure diplomacy became a tool of influence for Beijing. Especially in such an important strategic neighbor as that of Myanmar, which itself was keen to rebuild its economy and stature in the international context, China had good scope. China under President Xi unified its scattered infrastructural forays across continents under the BRI network, in pursuance of global dominance and his 'China Dream'. The Bangladesh China India Myanmar (BCIM) economic corridor, a result of the 1999 Kunming Initiative, was brought under the BRI umbrella in 2015 (though left out of it in a list released at the second BRI Forum in 2019). Myanmar officially became part of the BRI in 2017, thus also acknowledging the China Indochina Peninsula Economic Corridor (CIPEC) as a part of it. In the interim, China has proposed the project development of the CMEC based on three pillars — the Kyaukpyu SEZ, the China-Myanmar Border Economic Cooperation Zone and the New Yangon City, all to be built with Chinese assistance (Yhome 2019).

As a result of the increased footprints in Myanmar, especially an infrastructural one, the bilateral relationship between the two countries became hinged on the success or failure of these projects. Suspension or cancellation of infrastructure projects became a sign language to express the host country's motives vis-à-vis China. For example, the Thein Sein government was blatant in expressing its desire to convert Myanmar's status from a Sinosized state to a more democratically functioning country post the 2010 elections. In September 2011, Myanmar suspended the Myitsone hydropower project that was being built at a cost of USD3.6 billion by China.

Revealingly the importance of infrastructure as a subject has increased in the agenda of both Myanmar and China to conduct their bilateral relationship. In January 2020, Xi Jingping visited Myanmar, becoming the first President to do so in 19 years. Interestingly, out of 33 MoU's signed, 13 were related to infrastructure. Without under-valuing the investments in other sectors of the bilateral relationship, infrastructure investment alone has the potential to make China an undefeatable foreign power in Myanmar in the near future and reach its larger aim of fulfilling the 'Chinese Dream'. This is of course dependent on how domestic politics pan out in the near future, given the political turmoil the country got into in 2021.

Conclusion

At the 19th CPC National Congress held in Beijing, into the constitution was inserted the words 'Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era' as well as the 'Belt and Road Initiative' for achieving 'shared growth' through discussion and collaboration. The fact that Xi's name was attached to the vision reinstates the importance of the leadership phase of economic diplomacy (as mentioned in Chapter 2) that China was in. This leadership role that President Xi and China took upon itself also reflects on the power play that has been brewing in the international system. To put it simply, the influence that China sought to have on the world at large, and its peripheral regions in particular, was to be achieved thorough the new strategy of the BRI, covertly through the practice of infrastructure diplomacy.

The more one looks at the growing importance of infrastructure and connectivity networks around the world today, the more one is convinced that whether one agrees

with China and its practice of infrastructure diplomacy or not, it is difficult to ignore it. Though it is clear that infrastructure as a means of influence has been there in practice in international relations, particularly since colonial times, its usefulness in the field of diplomacy and foreign policy has not been analysed and practiced the way it is being done since the advent of the BRI. It is to be noted that China itself has used infrastructure investment under the aegis of economic diplomacy much before the announcement of BRI itself. Yet, what changed post BRI was China's overtness in using ID to make its presence felt across the globe, even challenging others in its rise to world power status. China's infrastructure diplomacy is unique in more ways than one. It is multipronged and unlike the colonial times, not limited to the railways, telegraph or the social overhead capital sector alone. It is broader, involving increased maritime and technologically robust components of infrastructure building. It is also geographically more spread out across continents, going as far as Antarctica. Infrastructure diplomacy as a term itself has emanated from the need to assess China's growing clout through the means of infrastructure projects. The point remains to be seen, how much China will manage to alter its position in the international hierarchy of things, particularly as the lines are being clearly drawn against it in the world grappling with a pandemic, yet another problem said to be catalyzed and even allegedly caused by China.

Chapter-4
Infrastructure Diplomacy and India

Introduction

In India, Mahatma Gandhi once said, ‘a true power speaks softly, it has no reason to shout’. US President Theodore Roosevelt meant something similar when he suggested to ‘carry a big stick and speak softly’ (Roosevelt 1900). Of course one rarely can imagine Gandhi allude to the first part of this phrase in the same sense as that of Roosevelt. For the former, the stick would be that of *ahimsa* and *satyagraha*, while the latter is known to have referred to hard military resources as the tools of power and influence. Yet, it can be agreed to, what the two leaders indicated is that speaking ‘softly’ should be seen as a virtue, one that states should practice while dealing with another. On a related note, in the 1970s, Deng Xiaoping in China used the phrase *tāoguāng yǎnghuì (韬光养晦)*, meaning ‘keep a low profile and bide time’ (Wolf 2014). Though this has more recently been debated in view of the changing nature of China’s foreign policy conduct, it too referred to the way inter-state relations ought to be managed, i.e. without making a show of its power capabilities, through means that are subtle and that which keeps China away from the limelight.

All these maxims of foreign policy conduct tend to reiterate the significance of diplomacy in foreign policy, indirectly if not directly. It underlines that, often, diplomatic means rather than military means is what helps achieve national objectives. For big states like India or USA, to speak softly despite magnanimity may require skills that diplomats are trained for. For China to project its powers within measure and yet have a large impact need people with alacrity and temper for negotiation. Revealingly also, the inadequacy of the realist assumptions on the notion of hard power seems obvious within these statements. However, as noted in the earlier chapters, the many new issue areas of diplomacy and its evolution to adapt to the interdependent world have helped facilitate both soft power projections as well as hard power advantages at the same time. And, as pointed out, infrastructure as a diplomatic issue area has come to occupy an important space in this transition. It is therefore not surprising that many geopolitical games are anchored around it.

A glance through the global power politics of the 21st century beams with the examples of infrastructural interfaces between great, emerging and rising powers. Largely, connectivity, energy, development, trade and economic matters are at the center of these infrastructure talks. But what makes the subject critical for international politics is the fact that the need for infrastructure has overwhelmingly increased over the past decade. It has become a coveted resource, the access to which impacts so many other aspects of geo-economic, geopolitics and geostrategic concerns. Asia is said to dominate the infrastructure market at present. To be noted is the fact that despite having the largest requirement of infrastructure, over 50% of global investment (this gap is lowest as compared to other regions such as Africa and Latin America) (Heathcote 2016). East Asia (and the Pacific), Central Asia and South Asia spends 7.7%, 4% and 5% of their GDP respectively on infrastructure (Fray, et al. 2014). In any case, the relatively diminishing infrastructure gap has been largely attributed to the infrastructure investment by China, which however, continues to top the list in terms of infrastructure needs of the future (up to 2040), followed by India (Heatchcote 2016). Not only do these two Asian giants have the highest needs for infrastructure, but are also going global in fulfilling that gap both at home and abroad. That said, it is evident that China has done much more than India in this regard. India has only attempted to cope up more recently. But, there is little doubt that both these powers vie for power as influence by sharpening their infrastructural prowess.

In 2017, the ADB reported about the need for infrastructure among the ASEAN countries and pinned the estimate worth USD26 trillion by 2030. It also stated that China has taken steps to minimize this gap in most cases, not limited to ASEAN. Given the importance and need for infrastructure therefore, the dynamic opportunities present in this area can only be predicted. It is no wonder that the region has become a theatre of great game in the recent past and continues to be so in this context.

The previous chapter already discussed many of the infrastructure projects and investments undertaken by China in its peripheral region and elaborated on how influence has been garnered through it. This chapter attempts to bring out India's infrastructural forays in its peripheral region and examines the extent and nature of India's infrastructure diplomacy. Interestingly, it lays out how India conducts infrastructure diplomacy to fulfill both domestic (ID as a process) and international goals

(ID as a process and as an opportunity). At the same time, though India has made intense use of economic diplomacy as a concept and in practice, it concludes that India's engagement in the infrastructure sector has been increasingly discussed under the banner of development diplomacy or even 'diplomacy for development', something that differentiates it from the way China conducts ID, i.e. as a largely economic phenomenon. The first section that follows deals with the ideational and structural underpinnings of India's foreign policy and diplomacy. It seeks to locate the variable of infrastructure within it. It also discusses the practice of infrastructure diplomacy by India, at the domestic as well as the global level, while keeping the focus on its peripheral regions. The second section examines the infrastructural forays of India in Myanmar, the case study of this research. It enumerates the various projects undertaken in the country in details and attempts to find nuances in India's engagement with Myanmar through the variable of infrastructure.

Diplomacy and Infrastructure

Locating infrastructure in India's diplomatic practice

In January 2020, speaking at the Raisina Diaglogue, India's Foreign Minister, S. Jaishanker remarked, 'India is a prisoner of its past' when it comes to assessing its performance and commitments in the infrastructure and connectivity sectors. However, he insisted that things have been different in recent times and noted "we have by my estimate a hundred and forty two connectivity projects in the different parts of the world. Fifty three of which have been completed, in the last five years" (MEA 2020). This provided an assurance on India's engagement in the field of infrastructure, also indicating the expanding scope of India's infrastructure diplomacy in turn. But, unlike China's eventful attention to infrastructure and connectivity projects since the launch of the BRI, notwithstanding its earlier infrastructural engagements with foreign states, India's focus on it has been incremental, piecemeal and modest.

India's story on the significance of infrastructure diplomacy is a product of evolution of India's foreign policy and the exigencies of time. It is well acknowledged that like most states, India's foreign policy and diplomatic history has been a result of continuity and change, and therefore also the subject of infrastructure as a variable in it. Jawaharlal Nehru's 'strong sense of moral efficacy, and limited sense of martial efficacy' (Kennedy

2011) meant that the first Indian Prime Minister depended a great deal on diplomacy. Though he batted for infrastructure development within the country, taking up anything along the lines of infrastructure diplomacy as understood today was simply not possible. The infrastructural vestiges left by the British at the time of independence was meant to serve the interests of colonial trade and the imperial interests. The economy was in tatters in the 1940s and 50s. The socialist line treaded by Nehru through the Planning Commission via its Five-Year Plans meant government backed infrastructure development programmes and policies. The idea that investment in the big industries, such as that of infrastructure (largely understood within the SOC templet discussed in Chapter 2) and others like steel plants, nuclear industry, will have a trickle down effect and help improve other sectors of India's domestic market worked well for a while. Nehru's excessive focus on capital and heavy industries, which attracted much criticism, is however evidence of the importance India placed on infrastructure for economic growth. Yet, infrastructure as part of the development and economic narratives was a matter of India's domestic policy rather than foreign policy.

Having said that, it is also crucial to note that Nehru did not shy away from foreign investment in the infrastructure (and other) sector. It is estimated that by 1961 "two-fifths of the organized large-scale sector and one-fourth of the entire modern sector in India was under foreign investment" (Ranjan 2018). Some early example of infrastructure diplomacy, as a process (that involves negotiation with foreign states), if not as an opportunity, can therefore be mined from such occurrences. Nevertheless, infrastructure was seen necessarily as sub-part of issues related to development and economics. The term economic diplomacy was even used to describe many of the inter-state relations of the time. It is not surprising that by 1964 a separate Economic Division was established at the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), New Delhi. However, as Kishan Rana points out, economic diplomacy became the focal point after the oil shock in the 1970s [*]. Largely, diplomacy was concerned with furthering India's idealistic political policies abroad, whether it be non-alignment or peace to be achieved by nuclear disarmament.

[*] *Notes provided by Ambassador Kishan Rana, to the author via email (as part of interview) on 20 December, 2020.

While all these issue areas of diplomacy are relevant today and fuel the dynamism of diplomatic practice in contemporary times, it is worthwhile to peep into the trajectory of diplomatic practices of the past. The history the Indian Foreign Services (IFS), the institution that is meant to conduct diplomacy of India reveals the interesting marriage between politics, economics and foreign policy. By the late 18th century, the Foreign Department was created by the British to initially take care of the 'secret and political business' so that pressure was relieved of the Warren Hastings administration (MEA 2021). Noteworthy is the fact that issues pertaining to Asian powers were dealt with as political matters while those with Europe as foreign matters. As India became independent, the former category became the essence of the Ministry of Commonwealth Relations while the latter formed into the Ministry of External Affairs as we know it today. Meanwhile, the IFS created in 1946, breathed life into the MEA by managing India's diplomatic, consular and commercial representation abroad (Ibid.).

Given the limited hard means at India's disposal at the time to pursue its national interests, it relied on ideas such as cultural diplomacy and public diplomacy (PD), among others. Both these aspects continue to form a crucial part of India's soft power policy today, which in turn engages various diplomatic means to achieve national interests. Since the early years of independence, it became a norm to fall back upon India's rich cultural heritage and ancient civilization as a diplomatic resource. Whether it be bi-lateral relations, especially with most Asian states (for example, Nehru's slogan of *Hindi-China Bhai Bhai* emanated from a belief in the civilizational commonalities between China and India) or multi-lateral engagements through initiatives such as Non-Alignment Movement (NAM), past histories and cultures were often invoked in inter-state engagements. The religious ties hinged on the significance of the Buddha, on colonial histories as the baggage of the past. Similarly, the ancient trade of silk, tea and spices from India provided a sustainable pivot for foreign policy conduct with states in India's periphery and afar. As early as 1950, the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) was set up to "participate in the formulation and implementation of policies and programmes pertaining to India's external cultural relations; to foster and strengthen cultural relations and mutual understanding between India and other countries; to promote cultural exchanges with other countries and people, and to develop relations with nations" (ICCR 2021).

By mid 1950s India's affinity to nurture peaceful relations (as stated in the Panchsheel Agreement for example) via traditional diplomatic means was clearly visible. While China counted on the abilities of statesmen like Zhou Enlai to 'charm' at international forums such as the 1954 Bandung Conference, India was catapulted into the world stage by Nehru's international vision. Succeeding Prime Ministers attempted to cope up with Nehru's foreign policy and diplomatic legacy until almost the 1990s. Yet, among all these discussions, there was hardly talks of infrastructure (as defined in this study) as a variable in foreign policy. For instance, India's good will in Africa was visible through its efforts at supporting the cause of anti-colonial movements, in fostering ideas of non-alignment, in enabling democratic transition and to help the end of apartheid in the 1990s. In 1986, Rajiv Gandhi provided USD6.3 million[*] to the Africa Fund which India helped set up under the aegis of NAM (Beri 2003).

While Western powers like Germany and Britain had laid the foundations of railways in East Africa in the 19th century itself, Eastern states such as Japan, China hoped, and then managed to do the same in the 20th century and 21st century respectively. The latter's thrust in this context is commendable, as under the BRI Beijing has provided finance for more than 3000 infrastructure projects in Africa (Muller, 2019). On the other hand, India's assistance has been directed towards norm building, development programs and training and trade since many decades. Any focus on infrastructure was a collateral requirement to fulfil these goals. This line of engagement has continued, with some changes. Though India 's increasing footprints in Africa today remain focused on creating social and developmental infrastructure that range from "construction of Presidential Office in Ghana, National Assembly building in Gambia, Kosti Power plant in Sudan, Rift Valley Textiles factory in Kenya, water treatment projects in Tanzania, sugar factories in Ethiopia, and IT Parks in Mozambique and E-Swatini (Swaziland)" among other such projects (Mishra, 2019), New Delhi's push for the implementation of the Asia-Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC) is a case in point of the increased use of infrastructure as a variable in foreign policy and infrastructure diplomacy in turn.

[*] This is an approximate figure. India had paid 500million in Rupees, which valued at 12.6 per USD in 1986.

Certain issue areas of diplomacy meanwhile had already gained global impetus. Public diplomacy as a term had come up in the West in the mid-1960s, coined by a former US diplomat Edmund Gullion, to distinguish it from the increasingly negative sense of the word 'propaganda' at the time. It refers to a state's attempt to reach out to its people in another country more directly, through various means, especially via print media, television and the internet in recent times. In that, it is also varied from public affairs, that relates to more formal engagement with people and dissemination of public programmes and policies (USC Center on Public Diplomacy 2021). India began to increasingly rely on PD from the 1980s. It has indeed evolved over time and has become an important aspect of India's conduct of foreign relations (Suri 2011). In 2006, a separate division was created in the MEA to deal with matters of foreign policy promotion and external publicity activities. The growing resort to PD also indicates the transition from formal track 1 diplomacy to other modes in the interconnected world as well as the shift in IR from prioritizing the state alone to considering peoples as an important unit.

The 1990s was remarkable in many ways. For one, the dismantling of the Soviet Union had ensued structural changes in the international system as a whole. NAM as a foreign policy was bound to wane. This meant that India had to expand its international interactions beyond traditional allies. India's foreign policy marked a watershed moment when Prime Minister Narasimha Rao announced the Look East Policy in 1991. Through this, India began to engage and connect with its eastern neighbours, participating in regional and sub-regional initiatives, including those that worked at enhancing infrastructure connectivity. The Kunming Initiative of 1999 is one such example. Focus on infrastructure building certainly found renewed vigour in the following decades. Yet, the 1990s was a decade of preparation for laying down the plinth upon which robust foreign policy could be built with India's neighbourhoood in particular. The laying down of the Gujaral Doctrine by then External Affairs Minister I.K. Gujaral and the endorsement of it by the Deve Dowda Government in 1997 added emphasis on the significance of a friendly attitude and unilateral concession by India towards its immediate neighbours, albeit without any particular indulgence in infrastructure building or creating physical connectivity as such. The five principles of the Doctrine enabled to place India as the 'big brother' in the region. At times, this image and positon has

backfired as India's high-headedness, especially in context of its various efforts under the South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC).

Additionally, the 1990s was also the time of economic liberalization in the country which had its impact on foreign trade, investments and the economy at large. Globalization pushed states to discuss diverse issue areas in their foreign policy agendas and also facilitated the means to do so as borders seem to become soluble. This translated to India practicing diplomacy thorough issues of culture, economics and development as well as enhanced reference to public diplomacy, that has indeed found great popularity. The Modi administration's emphasis on the idea of *Vasudaiva Kutumbhkam* (the world is a family) is a fitting example. But earlier, as the internet revolution in India began in 1995 with Videsh Sanchar Nigam Limited (VSNL) launching the first internet service in the country, society, politics and economics underwent major qualitative changes alike. The more recent trends of digitalization have added to this further. Policies such as 'Digital India' and 'Make in India' are transmitted to the public, both at home and abroad, through public diplomacy and through what is termed as 'digital diplomacy' and 'cyber diplomacy'. In line with this, dissemination of information takes place thorough social media. That the MEA opened its first twitter handle by the name of @IndianDiplomacy in 2010 is evidence of the growing nature of diplomatic activities (MEA 2021a).

At present, among the 60 plus divisions at the MEA, three among them make use of the word diplomacy within it, namely Economic Diplomacy division, Public Diplomacy (and External Publicity) Division and Cyber Diplomacy Division. Additionally, there is a Finance division as well as three Development Partnership Administration (DPA) Division dealing with separate issue areas of development and different states (especially development aid in them). Besides these, there are further specific state/region focused divisions in the MEA. For example, beyond the mention of Myanmar (among other countries such as Nepal, Maldives, Sri Lanka) in DPA III Division (pertaining to development issues except housing), there is a separate division named Bangladesh and Myanmar Division. Therefore, the diplomatic structure of India reflects well its functioning and practices. Timely reforms and changes have been carried out to keep with the dynamics of inter-state relations and issue areas. For example, to keep up with the practices of times, the MEA launched a website in 2020 to enable the conduct economic diplomacy. To be noted is the point that though there is no mention of

infrastructure as a sector within this, construction, railways, ports and shipping have been included. Yet, a question can be asked. Where is infrastructure diplomacy in all this? What significance does infrastructure have in the Indian scheme of things? Answers can be found in more recent developments discussed in the following section.

Where is India's Infrastructure Diplomacy?

At the 20th Asian Security Conference hosted by the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (called Manohar Parrikar- IDSA since February 2020) in 2019, a question was asked (by this author) about whether infrastructure diplomacy can be said to be a concept that is used (by the Indian government) as a tool in the 21st century. Dr. S. Jaishanker replied:

> I think you are bang on when you say [that]. Is infrastructure diplomacy on today? I think yes. If we were to characterize today's competitive world, I would say technology choices and infrastructure choices are the two big differentiating factors. (26 March, 2019, Annexure V attached)

Though at the time, Dr Jaishanker did not represent the government, the essence of both the question and the prompt affirmative answer allows us space to deliberate more seriously upon the scope, use and need for infrastructure diplomacy by India. Especially, in the last two decades India has begun to engage in infrastructure diplomacy, the use of the term notwithstanding. The push at the time was provided by India's own desire to be proactive in international engagements over the ideas of connectivity, physical linkages, growing energy needs, enhanced people-to-people contact and so on, as a result of the changes of the earlier decade. The pull on the other hand was provided by states such as Japan, Russia, USA and others, as well as by opportunities provided by multilateral forum and initiatives as a result of India's growing role in the region. While the push resulted into the implementation of various schemes and programme for improvement of India's transport and connectivity sectors at home, the pull led India to partner with other countries with a view also to find an alternative to China's aggressive growth in the same direction.

India's LEP was already in place and sought to foster ties with its eastern neighbourhood. Yet, connecting to the east meant improving the gateway to that direction. India's NER was seen as that gateway which needed much attention. The ensuing development initiatives at a domestic level in the North-East Region (NER) are heavily attributed to

India's international requirement and pursuance of its foreign policy goals. Therefore, over the years India has collaborated with or have been assisted by foreign donors and international financial institutions to build infrastructure in NER. In doing so, India has undertaken activities ranging from diplomatic engagements to negotiations over money, material and other logistical aspects of infrastructure projects. Hence, infrastructure diplomacy has been at work since.

In 2005 the Department of Development of North East Region was made into a separate Ministry of DoNER. A range of activities began to take place thereafter, with focus remaining on improving the infrastructure of the region and removing connectivity bottlenecks in NER with both within and outside the country. For internal connectivity, the same year a feasibility study was made for projects under the North-Eastern State Road Investment Programme (NESRIP), later renamed the North-East Sector Development Scheme. This led to plans for upgrading NH7 that has been assisted by funding from the ADB, most recent being the USD400 million sanctioned through two tranches (Ministry of DoNER 2021). By 2008, the NER Vision Document was released. It is essentially dotted with plans to improve NER connectivity by building and upgrading the roads, railways, airways and bridges. By 2019, 21 externally aided infrastructures as well as development projects were planned for the NER funded by various multi-lateral agencies (Ibid.). These are some of the many examples that show the extent to which infrastructure as a variable in domestic policy became vital for providing thrust to increased engagements with India's neighbourhood, including the ASEAN region.

For connectivity with India's eastern neighbourhood, the focus on infrastructure increasingly became obvious. The catalyst to a spur of infrastructure projects however came about as a result of the revamping of the LEP into the Act East Policy (AEP) in 2014 by the Narendra Modi Government. Recognizing the need for diplomacy to spread beyond the traditional Track 1 mode, the Indian government also encouraged interactions and collaboration at the B2B (business to business i.e. Track 3 as per IMTD) and P2P (people to people or between private citizen, i.e. Track 4) levels. This witnessed boost in economic activities such as emergence of small and medium enterprises (SME) by people who undertook local trade with neighbouring states. The usher of economic diplomacy in the 1990s and 2000s and the various economic activities thereon was however mired in hurdles. Most certainly, the lack of better infrastructure and connectivity was at the

core of it. This meant that the gap between geographical proximity and time proximity had to be reduced by ensuring avenues of better transportation at the least. Further, the abundant local resources (hydro power, coal and products such as those from a bamboo industry) of the NER were underutilized. This problem was taken seriously and many options considered to deal with it. The UDAN (*Ude Desh ka Aam Nagarik*) scheme launched in 2016 was a step taken at promoting India's regional connectivity scheme (RCS). At the India-Bangladesh Stakeholder's meet in 2019 for instance, the Indian Ministry of Civil Aviation and State Government announced to start international flights on six routes to ensure better connectivity from the NER, namely Guwahati-Dhaka, Guwahati-Bangkok, Guwahati-Kuala Lumpur, Guwahati-Kathmandu, Guwahati-Hanoi and Guwahati-Yangon. Earlier, in December 2017, the North East Special Infrastructure Development Scheme (NESIDS) was approved to deal with the needs of social and physical infrastructure. As recent events show, the NER has emerged as a hub of investment and attention, much like Yunnan in the early 1990s (see Chapter 5).

India requires an estimated USD4.5 trillion to meet its infrastructure needs by 2040 (MEA 2021b). This includes many sectors (beyond the SOC) that does not fall within the scope of this study. Yet, it can be noted that many infrastructure projects and initiatives have been rolled out in the last decade with a view to improve India's position as a robust country to do business with[*] and as a state where infrastructure diplomacy is being used to fulfil national interests. At a generic level, the National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP) report released in 2020 aims to invest Rupees 102 trillion (approx. USD13 billion) within the next five years, spread across the country (Ministry of Commerce and Industry 2021). But there have been many projects that are aimed particularly at improving connectivity infrastructure of railways, highways, roadways and even waterways. In 2003 for instance, Atal Bihari Vajpayee envisioned the now known Sagarmala programme as a maritime corollary of the Golden Quadrilateral project (GQP) launched in 1999. The GQP aimed to improve the country's road and highway sectors

[*] India's ranking, as per the Ease of Doing Business (EoDB) report of the World Bank, jumped to 63rd position among 190 countries in 2020. This is a leap of 79 position from 2015-19, most of which is attributed to India's image world wide as a result of proactive diplomacy and its improved infrastructure provisions. On the other hand, a US based law firm, Wilmer Hale, has noted in an independent study that China has sought to manipulate its EoDB ranking that would otherwise bring it down from 78th to 85th position in the World Bank chart in 2017. As a consequence, the WB has decided to scrap publication of its EoDB report by September 2021.

along four metro cities, namely Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata and Chennai. The GQP has been subsumed under the Bharatmala project. The Sagarmala on the other hand has done well to modernize port connectivity and inland water transportation system in India with a total of 121 projects completed as of September 2019 (Ministry of Ports and Shipping 2021).

The above examples and instances of infrastructure development in India indicate the importance of infrastructure as an issue area for economic growth as also of India's footing on the international front. This push for infrastructure has provided scope for infrastructure diplomacy. A most credible and meaningful example of infrastructure diplomacy lies in the collaboration between India and Japan on matters of infrastructure building in the country as well as abroad. In fact, India was the first country to which Japan provided an ODA (Official Development Assistance) loan in 1958 (MoFA Japan 2011), initiating an economic cooperation that has shone in recent times. Prominent among such collaborations has been the HSR project in India. Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA) has provided a ODA loan covering 81% of the cost of India's bullet train project from Mumbai to Ahmedabad. The first tranche was sanctioned in 2018 (JICA 2018), with a 0.5% interest rate to be paid over 50 years. But there are some speculations about renegotiation with JICA given the increasing cost of the project amidst the inflation caused by the pandemic in 2020. Further, Japan has invested heavily in the infrastructure development of the NER. It has announced USD1.8 billion (Rs. 13,000 crores) in loan for various development projects, of which the Northeast Road Network Connectivity Improvement Project (in Assam and Meghalaya) (JICA 2020) falls within context of this study.

It is to be noted that India's focus on development infrastructure is much more than that on connectivity infrastructure, something that distinguishes India's infrastructure diplomacy from that of China's (see Conclusion chapter). Further, India's infrastructure diplomacy is as much focused on domestic development as on international ones. Achal Malhotra brings out this point when he writes:

> Economic diplomacy has been employed in the past also to promote trade and economic relations with outside world. In the past five years, however, there has been unique dovetailing of diplomacy and national aspirations. Hence we now have a dynamic concept, Diplomacy For Development. Intensified engagements with foreign partners have brought visible benefits through enhanced foreign investment and technology tie-ups, leading to the setting up of factories and creation of jobs. It has been possible to forge foreign collaborations

> for several flagship schemes such as Skill India, Smart Cities, Make in India, Digital India for creating a new India by 2022. Diplomatic outreach has resulted in commitments of substantial Foreign Direct Investment(FDI) from foreign Partners (UAE: $75bn, Japan $33bn, China: $22bn; South Korea 10bn)… France, Germany, Japan, European Investment Bank have agreed to fund railways and Metro projects in India. Similarly there are commitments to develop Smart Cities in India. (Malhotra 2019)

Having discussed much of the domestic aspects of infrastructure diplomacy by India, one can find various other examples of it at a multi-lateral and inter-state level as well. In 2002 Russia, India and Iran ratified to form the North-South Transport Corridor (NSTC), a multi-modal network of rail, road and shipway. Since, as many as 10 countries (including Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan and others) have been drawn in to create a network of connectivity corridor linking Asia to Eurasia and beyond. This International NSTC (INSTC), is often projected as a counter to China's BRI. The same year, India struck a deal with Iran over the Chabahar Port which links South Asia to Persian Gulf and Europe via Central Asia. Its strategic importance cannot be underplayed as it lies only 72km from Pakistan's Gwadar port largely built with Chinese assistance (Pant 2018). In 2016 a tri-lateral agreement was signed between Iran, India and Afghanistan that aimed to set up an International Transport and Transit Corridor that enables Indian exports to reach Afghanistan by-passing Pakistan. India's infrastructure diplomacy in this context revolved around its negotiations over the plans of building two terminals of the port, a free-trade area and the railway line to Zahedan in the Afghan border. This bore fruit when the first wheat shipment set off from Chabahar to Afghanistan in October 2017, followed by India Port Global Private Limited (IPGPL) obtaining a 18 months lease to operate the port (Shahid Behesti terminal) in February 2018. Though New Delhi has pulled out of the railway line as of now due to geopolitical complications surrounding US pressure on the country, its engagement with Iran stands as a success story of infrastructure diplomacy. It has broadened to include not only Afghanistan within the talks, but India is keen on linking Chabahar port project to the INSTC through Armenia. Armenia's position is unclear on this and the difficulties are multiple (Tashjian 2021). In such a case India's infrastructure diplomacy may be one way through which such dilemmas can be approached.

The promotion of the LEP in the 1990s overpowered much of India's foreign policy towards the neighbourhood in that decade. Some developments in India's west in the energy sector encouraged New Delhi to eventually be part of the gas pipeline project

Turkmenistan Afghanistan Pakistan India (TAPI). Yet, India's attention towards its west was limited indeed, to fluctuating engagements with Pakistan dominating most of the time, while use of cultural and economic diplomacy was seen as the best possible route of mediation and negotiations. A considerable part of the Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) with Pakistan were made via these modes. Further, the need for a 'Look Northwest Policy' (Jacob 2015) was felt strongly. In this context, it can be argued that when India began to sincerely improve its foreign policies towards its western neighbourhood, it was done so by focusing on the common demand for infrastructure (whether for transportation of energy resources or for better avenues for trade of goods) and connectivity between the many countries. Therefore, a robust policy towards India's west is increasingly focused on infrastructure diplomacy, along with the continuing issue areas of the past.

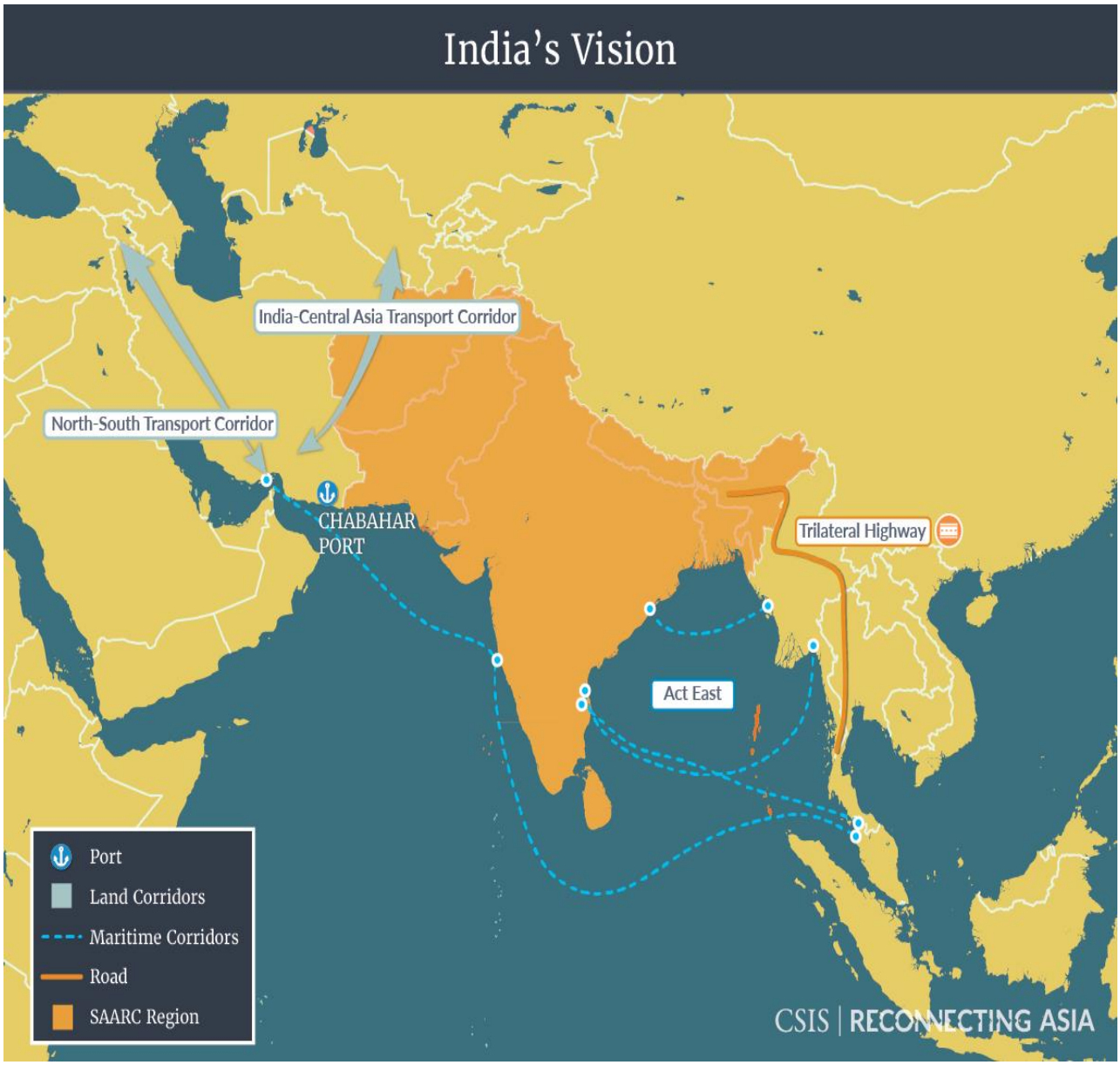
As regards the TAPI project, an inter-governmental agreement (IGA) was signed by the four countries in 2010 where India's Gas Authority India Limited (GAIL) obtained a 5% stake in the TAPI Pipeline Company (TPCL), a consortium with Turkmengaz (85%), Afghan Gas Enterprise (5%) and Inter State Gas System (5%) (Hydrocarbon Technology 2021). No doubt that India's infrastructure stakes in such multi-lateral initiatives is not very significant. Additionally, most of the TAPI project obtains its fund from ADB, which leaves India with no such influencing power through finance, the way China does in many cases (as shown in Chapter 2). But this does not dilute the fact that infrastructure has emerged as a very useful tool of diplomatic interactions with the region. India's 'Connect Central Asia Policy' unveiled in 2012 during the 1st India-Central Asia Dialogue is an evidence in that direction. The policy name itself seems to be a tell-tale of the significance connectivity infrastructure may occupy in the relationships. Infrastructure is slowly, but surely, finding space in international agendas with the Central Asian Republic/Region (CAR). During his 2015 visit to Kazakhstan, Prime Minister Modi offered to help with technical cooperation for the Kazakhstan Temin Zholy railways. By the time the 2nd India-Central Asia Dialogue took place in 2020, there were MoUs signed to not only modernize the infrastructure at Chabahar port in Iran with the CAR involved, but a USD200 billion Line of Credit (LoC) provided to the CAR for improving connectivity and for development projects. There was great focus on community development projects as well, with a bi-lateral agreement signed for the same between India and Uzbekistan the same year.

No doubt India has begun to consider the importance of connectivity infrastructure and infrastructural developments as a focus area of conducting diplomacy with different states. If China has moved aggressively towards the pursuance of infrastructure prowess, India and other states have attempted to respond to it with great zeal. Map 4.1 gives an idea of India's vision as far as connectivity corridors are concerned. As already mentioned, Japan has been an ally of India in this context. Beyond the domestic requirements of India, both states seem to have picked up the mantle to compete with China (Japan has done so more recently) and find alternatives to its various infrastructure projects, programmes and policies. The Asia-Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC) is one of such examples. In 2016, India and Japan discussed the possibility of an alternative to the BRI in the form of a AAGC that would be based on four pillars — quality infrastructure and institutional connectivity, development and cooperation project, enhancing capacities and skills and people to people partnership. In 2017, a Vision Document was released that laid out the way forward for collaborating on the same and laying down the scope of others to participate in this project (Africa Development Bank Meeting 2017). The aim was to build a network of connections that enabled economic growth, development and interactions between people at large.

The essence of the AAGC is not limited to infrastructure in the sense focused in this study. Yet, the fact that BRI and AAGC are both promoted as infrastructural, connectivity and developmental based ideas of states today bring our attention back to the value of infrastructure as a variable in IR in the 21st century. Whether understood as developmental, social, physical, digital or any other, conducting ID has become inescapable for foreign policy progress. Great games are being played on the basis of it. It is keeping such geopolitical aspects in mind that the Bluedot network (BDN) was launched at the behest of USA and Japan in 2019, a project that aims to keep China's assertive and rather aggressive ID in check (see Chapter 2). India's consideration of joining the same is another prospect of treading a path of ID.

Map 4.1

India's Vision of Trade and Infrastructure Corridors



Source: Center for Strategic & International Studies, (2017), Reconnecting Asia, "Competing Visions" URL: https://www.csis.org/analysis/reconnecting-asia-may-2017.

It is not that India relied on foreign partners alone to find its pull for ID in the international context. India's decision to reconfigure its foreign policy attention back to its immediate neighbourhood was visible with Prime Minister Modi's 'Neighbourhood First' policy (NFP) promoted since 2014. During his first term in power, Prime Minister Modi resurrected the SAARC grouping by inviting the heads of all SAARC nations to his

swearing in ceremony. It was a great diplomatic move, one that stands out as an example in studies pertaining to regional diplomacy. When asked to explain what the goals, status and future steps of India's Neighbourhood First policy were, Minister of State at the MEA, Mr S. Muraleedharan answered the following in Rajya Sabha:

> Under its 'Neighbourhood First' policy, Government is committed to developing friendly and mutually beneficial relations with all its neighbours. India is an active development partner and is involved in several projects in these countries. India's policy of 'Neighbourhood First' focuses on creating mutually beneficial, people-oriented, regional frameworks for stability and prosperity. Our engagement with these countries is based on a consultative, non-reciprocal and outcome-oriented approach, which focuses on delivering benefits like greater connectivity, improved infrastructure, stronger development cooperation in various sectors area, security and broader people-to-people contacts. (Rajya Sabha 2019)

Along with diplomatic engagements through issue areas such as economics, development and other such aspects reflecting a continuation of the past, infrastructure has occupied a pivotal role in making India's NFP a game changer in the recent past. India has taken to improving inter-state relations with its immediate neighbours by focusing heavily on infrastructure projects and investments. This has been read as a sign of New Delhi's response to China's presence in the neighbourhood by many scholars and IR observers. The strategic and geopolitical interfaces between the two giants have been amply highlighted in the recent literature. If we consider states such as Sri Lanka and Maldives, the point becomes more clear.

It is no secret that President Rajapaksa of Sri Lanka has favoured China in the past. But upon his re-appointment as President in 2019, he made his first official foreign visit to India, when New Delhi announced a line of credit worth USD400 million, stating that this is aimed at strengthening the country's infrastructure development. In Maldives, 'India First' has been a foreign policy effort of the President Solih government since 2018 (Chaudhury 2021). In February 2021, apart from the previous development and economic assistance India provided to Maldives (the USD250 million soft loans for example), five agreements were signed for improving the infrastructure of the island state. It included revisiting the USD25 million LoC for road development agreement signed earlier by EXIM Bank of India (Ibid.). But, as pointed out earlier, much of India's ID efforts are oriented towards building developmental infrastructure. The 2021 agreement over building the 2000 units housing project in Hulhumale, the grant of USD0.5 million for building of the fishing processing plant in northern Maldives are evidence of it (Ibid.). Similarly, in Sri Lanka, while China has eyed bigger connectivity

and physical infrastructure projects as the Hambantota port, India has had modest achievements in terms of creating development infrastructure such as the 60,000 housing units to be built in northeastern part of the country. Nevertheless, it is increasingly investing in the connectivity sector as well. While India had signaled its interest in entering a joint venture to enable the functioning of the non-starter Mattala airport in Sri Lanka, its ID did not fructify. In Maldives however, India has extended a LoC worth USD400 million and a grant of USD100 million to assist one of the country's biggest civilian infrastructure project, the Greater Male Connectivity Project. Therefore, to say that India's evolving diplomatic practice is nothing but a garb of the age-old development diplomacy or economic diplomacy alone is to overlook the nuances of India's foreign policy implementation on a whole in the 21st century.

Since India's attempt at reviving the SAARC grouping in 2014, there were questions about the overpowering image of the country, thus far seen as a 'big brother', among the smaller states like Nepal and Bhutan. In this case too, it can be argued that India made attempts to counter a negative and intimidating image of itself through recourse to infrastructure diplomacy, among others. At the 18th SAARC Summit in Kathmandu, India had proposed the idea of the Motors Vehicles' Act (MVA) under the BBIN (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal) sub-regional framework. It finds its origin in the South Asian Growth Quadrangle (SAGQ) of 1997 when the four countries decided to have a common goal of overcoming infrastructural gaps, develop economic and industrial linkages, focus on commonalities of the sub-region and find ways to accelerate growth. This seem to be among the green-shoots of ID in multi-lateral relations. The BBIN today seeks to have functional transport corridors that can be eventually transformed into economic corridors. To achieve this goal, ID is a way forward and an indispensable path.

At a bi-lateral level, India, as Bangladesh's biggest development partner has extended three LoCs worth USD8 billion for the development of infrastructure, like roads, railways, shipping and ports (Bhowmick and Kamal 2020). In 2019, Nepal looked out to India for investment in hydro-power, roads and highway sectors (Sonkar 2019). Bhutan, on the other hand, was the first country Prime Minister Modi visited in his first term in office in 2014, reaffirming the 'special relationship' between both countries. Most of this relationship lies on a solid grounding of cooperation in the hydropower sector, the

possibility of discussion over the 2500MV Sankosh dam being next in line (Roche 2019). Yet, it is true that in a competition between China and India in most of these states, it is India that has had a relatively more challenging course.

India's ID is not limited to forming physical linkages across land. If China has been upping the infrastructure game with its Maritime Silk Road, India has ventured into it as well through its Project Mausam. It aims to create a cultural connection across 39 states along the Indian Ocean as well as to build physical networks of connectivity among them (Ministry of Culture 2017). As such, it symbolizes a mix of India's cultural diplomacy and infrastructure diplomacy. Project Mausam also brings to the centre India's position in the Indo-Pacific region as a balancer to and regional power vis-à-vis Chinese domination.

Among all these discussions, one question that still remains unanswered is the ability of India to influence through infrastructure diplomacy. That ID is being used by India is well established. But has it been able to harness power as influence, the way China has managed for itself? The answer is to be found in the nature of the foreign policy goals as well as the idea of soft/smart power pursued by India through infrastructure building. To put things in perspective, a look at the Government's view as well as the actual steps undertaken by New Delhi enables us to understand this point. In 2016, the theme of the Raisina Dialogue revolved around Asian Connectivity. Then External Affairs Minister (EAM) Shusma Swaraj reiterated India's position vis-à-vis connectivity initiatives in the region as being aimed at "creating an environment of trust and confidence in the pre-requisite of a more inter-connected world" where cooperation rather than unilateral approach is the way forward (MEA 2016). It indicated New Delhi's disapproval at China's BRI vision of putting forward an all-encompassing infrastructural road map created and planned by China alone. Then Foreign Secretary S. Jaishanker had also argued that he would not give in to ideas where connectivity is seen as "an exercise in hard-wiring that influences choices", suggesting that India does not seek to adopt a similar approach that China has taken up to gain influence. Therefore, in the Indian scheme of things, infrastructure as a foreign policy variable is not aimed at garnering influence per se. It does however aim to harness goodwill and soft power capabilities that comes with the exercise of meaningful and impactful infrastructure building projects in any country. Moreover, New Delhi's motives of benign ID and its official views are

accepted more easily at face value as compared to Beijing's. This is possibly a result of India's actions and words being aligned with each other, unlike China that has repeatedly spoken about 'win-win' cooperation and its 'peaceful rise' while making belligerent moves to fulfil its international goals. This has made it difficult to look at China's ID as purely economic or developmental in nature.

With India's assistance to other countries in the infrastructure sector, India's capabilities are certainly made visible. However, since India's ID is largely development oriented and very modest, influence through ID is certainly limited. It is since China's giant steps in the physical infrastructure sector that India has attempted to put its balls into the court of mega physical and connectivity infrastructure spanning various countries, if not regions. These are indeed the areas that enable states to play the game for influence as bigger stakes, both geo-strategic and geo-economic, are involved. In that sense, India has had less influence power through ID. Very often the 'fall back' option (see Chapter 3) for host states provide greater advantage than what India has to offer. India's participation in initiatives like the AIIB is an example of how on the basis of funding infrastructure project a financial system has been created, the control over which provides certain degree of influence. India holds the second largest shares in AIIB, led by China, and is at the same time the highest beneficiary of the AIIB loans for its domestic infrastructure projects, ranging from Bangalore's metro rail project to Gujarat's rural road project to Mumbai's urban transport project (Mishra 2020). Its influence in taking decisions over financing of projects at AIIB is a very distant way through which ID can be used. But it is hardly any use given that AIIB is essential under Chinese grip.

Despite these various multi-pronged network of infrastructure building, investments and programmes India's ID has come under critical light, most certainly due to delay in project implementation. It is often that India is compared to much bigger players in the infrastructure sector, whether it be China, Japan or others, due to which it loses credit. Yet, as EAM S. Jaishaker summarises, India's infrastructure successes in the recent past are showing good results:

> So, let me start with the neighbourhood, what is it, which we have delivered. If you take Bangladesh, I think the pre-1965 road and rail connections which were disrupted, are all today restored. We have connectivity projects underway in waterways and ports, in roads and rail. If you look at Nepal, there are a whole set of roads which have been completed, there's a sea change in Nepal's electricity situation because of the transmission projects which, by the way, began in the last five years and have been completed. You have a pipeline of fuel

> from India to Motihari-Amlekhgunj to Nepal. If you take Sri Lanka, the rebuilding of the Sri Lankan rail network after their civil war was over, was really done by India. If you look at Afghanistan, again whether it's electricity transmission, whether it's road networks, all of those have happened. So, I think to some degree, India is a prisoner of its past image. We have to leave that behind now. (MEA 2020)

India's foreign policy based on the importance of infrastructure as a variable has to therefore be studied under realistically grounded goals, ambitions and progress, which has no doubt already set the wheel of ID in motion across the continent and beyond.

India's infrastructural forays in Myanmar

While China has shared a '*paukphu*' (meaning kinsfolk) relationship with Myanmar, India has been traditionally referred to as '*kala*' (meaning foreigner, in a rather pejorative term.) India-Myanmar relationship should not be seen as being hyphenated by China. However, China's involvement in Myanmar has been an important factor in shaping India's Myanmar policy at many stages. China's infrastructural footprints in Myanmar has remained a concern for New Delhi. Though this is no place to recount the long historical linkages between India and Myanmar, it is important to point out some watershed moments that have altered the political and diplomatic interactions between them, to better understand India's infrastructural forays into the country. At the same time, it is pertinent to highlight that India's focus on building infrastructure through bi-lateral conduct of diplomacy in Myanmar has been more recent compared to China. Further, it has been anchored on development needs of the region, prior to strategic ones.

India's ties with Burma go back to the 3rd century BC when Emperor Ashoka sent Buddhist emissaries to the region of Burma to spread the religion after he embraced the ideals of Buddha himself, around 263BC. *Mizzima desa* or the Middle country as India was known in Burma, was a territory revered for being the land of the Budhha. This acceptance of Buddhism and consequently the Pali language led to increased cultural ties with the Indian sub-continent. In the 13th century the Shan tribes of Burma — the Ahoms — invaded and settled as the original inhabitants of Assam which thereon created an increased cultural interlink between the two regions. But the region remained inconspicuous, despite one branch of the old silk route (southern route from Sichuan, China) traversing through the Irrawady and Brahmaputra valleys, until the British colonizers waged wars against Burma in the 19th century and brought it under its control as a province of British India (Pakem 1992).

As mentioned earlier, notably, the British built railways and telegraphs, ports and facilities to export Burmese resources and enable efficient trade. By the 20th century, many Indians were already working as labourers in the railways, post and telegraph services in Burma (Lintner 1992: 239). This is crucial to remember while studying India's efforts at infrastructure diplomacy in later years. The fact that India and Burma were politically linked brings forth the point that India as an independent modern nation state, especially since the 1950s, already had the British infrastructural vestiges to fall back upon. Some of the initiatives as a result of the Look East Policy in the 1990s picked up these connections as a starting point.

Burma became independent in 1948 and maintained good relations with India, particularly because Prime Minter U Nu and Jawaharlal Nehru shared great camaraderie. In fact, it is said that Nehru made way for Burma to be the first non-communist country to formally recognize the PRC, at the request of U Nu (Panikkar 1955:68). But after the 1962 coup, diplomatic ties with India were not important anymore for Burma, mostly as it went into the phase of isolationism imposed by Ne Win. Unlike China, which managed to keep itself minimally involved in etching certain supply lines for the communists in upper Burma and constructed hydropower station, India was left wanting to do more (Lintner 1992). For a brief period until 1971, China-Myanmar diplomatic ties were cut off. But, Beijing strongly reconnected after Burma began looking closely at China by the late 1970s. This bond was ironically cemented after the 8.8.88 incident. China signed border trade agreement with Myanmar in 1988, assisted in banning the Communist Party of Burma (CPB) in 1989 and also started to build roads, bridges and railways inside Myanmar in perusal of its strategic vision thereon. In case of India, the story was different.

India shares a 1,468 km long border with Myanmar with four states sharing the boundary (1600km including maritime boundary). Out of them, Arunachal Pradesh has an obsolete road connectivity with Myanmar through the Ledo Road (renamed the Stillwell road) of the British Colonial times. The National Highway 153 runs through Ledo in Assam up to the Pangsau pass at the border, before entering Myanmar and merging into the Old Burma Road, a branch of the ancient southern Silk Road. As already stated, the British constructed the road during the Second World War to provide war material to the soldiers

against possible Japanese invasion. While China has built its part of the Old Burma Road, India has fallen back on doing so. Very often than not, security reasons have been cited for the lack of enthusiasm on this subject, though local and some mainstream narratives make a case for reviving it (Neog 2012), with arguments on it facilitating better connectivity and trade in the region. Yet, as a former Ambassador of India to Myanmar states:

> Our local people who are keen on it and keeps building a case for it needs to understand that when security and development go hand in hand, then things like Stilwell road projects can be considered, even when there may be opposition from the pure security constituency. But when security and development run head long into each other, then I am afraid development would always have to take the secondary place. (Bhatia 2020)

In this context therefore, infrastructure diplomacy has been a non-starter and continues to be so. At the same time, it is to be noted that the security issues in the NER have been handled well with the help of Myanmar in recent times. The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) reported that there has been a "70% reduction in insurgency incidents, 80% in civilian deaths and 78% in security forces casualties in 2019 as compared to 2013 in the North-Eastern region" (MHA 2020). It is rather the insecurity with the Chinese accessibility to the Stillwell road, the extension of which is already restored by China and leads up to Yunnan, that has kept India from pursing the project. Given the deteriorating India-China security scenario, the Stillwell road development has not been on the agenda on infrastructure development.

The trajectory of infrastructure diplomacy of India, to put it simply, is slow and steady. Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi visited Burma in 1987. But soon India's vocal condemnation of the crackdown on democratic protest by the *tatmadaw* and the coup in 1988 drove India-Myanmar relations to the ebb. With PM Narasimha Rao's initiation of the Look East Policy in 1991, things took a positive turn. Since then, India has acknowledged the growing importance of Myanmar as a 'land bridge' to Southeast Asia as well as invested on the need to connect the NER through improved roads, railways, waterways, besides working on making both regions economically viable (see Table 4.1).

Table 4.1

Details of India's Infrastructure Investments in Myanmar

Name of Infrastructure project/investment	**Year of investment and amount**	**Operating/Funding Agency**	**Objective and Current status**
Kaladan Multi-modal Transit Transport Project	Implementation began in December 2010. USD307 million (Bhatia)	ADB has announced generous funding	Under Implementation and delayed. Was expected to be completed by 2016.
Tamu-Kalewa-Kalay Road up gradation. (Kalewa-Yagyi road)	USD11million		Inaugurated in February 2001, Under upgradation. 101km (62.7 mile) stretch of the 120 km (74.5mile) Kalewa Yagyi road is being upgraded into a 4 lane highway.
69 bridges			
Trilateral Highway Project (multilateral)			Under Implementation. Plans to extend it to Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam (as East West Economic Corridor under GMS).
Rhi-Tiddim Road Project (under KMMTTP)	USD50 million		Under Implementation. Was expected to be complete by 2018.
Up gradation and construction of railway lines including Yangon-Mandalay, Jiribam-Imphal-Moreh			
Infrastructure development under Mekong Ganga Cooperation (MGC) Project (multilateral)	Lent USD56 million Line of Credit in 2010* to Myanmar		Meant to construct better facility by rail in Central and Northwestern region.
Tamanthi and Shwazaye hydropower project	Planned in 2008 to build 1200MW and 880 MW dam respectively. USD400 million was underwritten†	NHPC	Scrapped in June 2013
Mekong India Economic Corridor	Proposed		Corridor to connect Vietnam (Ho Chi Minh) with Myanmar (Dawei) via Thailand

* McCartan, (2011).

† Bhaskar (2013).

			(Bangkok) and Cambodia (Phnom Penh), lining it to India (Chennai)
Delhi Hanoi Railway link	Proposed		Proposes to link India with Vietnam via Myanmar, Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore
BCIM Economic Corridor	2013		BCIM cooperation forum exists since 1999. Prospective to build a trans-border transportation network linking China (Kunming) to India (Kolkata) from Myanmar and Bangladesh

Source: Compiled by author

In the 1990s, India's foreign policy and diplomacy with the east, with special focus on infrastructure was not notable. Nor was it quite bi-lateral. Instead, India was involved in engaging with Myanmar (among other states) through regional and sub-regional cooperative platforms. In 1999, the Kunming Initiative led to the Bangladesh China India Myanmar Regional Cooperation Forum (BCIM) that commenced as a Track 2 diplomatic forum (Uberoi 2016). The idea found root in Rehman Sobhan's advocacy of building multi-modal transport connectivity and other infrastructure projects among the BCIM states which could reduce transaction costs and stimulate trade, thus alleviate poverty in the region. This was also at the time when the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS) Economic Cooperation Programme supported by the ADB was doing well with its various connectivity and infrastructure development initiatives launched in 1992. With an aim to build an economically developed region, including in Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, Thailand and Yunnan province of China this was an example of green shoots of infrastructure diplomacy being promoted within the ambit of broader regional diplomacy. It was also in this backdrop that India wished to be regionally involved in development and regional connectivity initiatives. While on the Myanmar side, the Department of Trade as a Track 1 mode represented the country at the BCIM, for India it was the Centre for Policy Research (CPR) that was involved.

Meanwhile, in 1993 though the plan for the Tamu-Kalewa-Kalemyo/Kalay road was conceived, it was much later that it fructified into what is known as the India-Myanmar friendship road. It was in February 2001, that the Tamu-Kalewa-Kalemyo road was inaugurated. India's Border Road Organization (BRO) built the entire stretch as a gift to its neighbor (Chaudhary and Basu 2015), a sure diplomatic move in the infrastructure arena. Under a pact, BRO maintained the road till 2009, after which it was handed over to Myanmar (Subramanian 2018). This also forms part of the Asian Highway network (ERIA report 2020). Further, this bi-lateral project eventually got utilized under larger multi-lateral initiative such as the Trilateral Highway (TLH).

The TLH is an important infrastructure project that India has signed up for, and that forms a crucial part of India's infrastructure diplomacy with Myanmar. This multi-lateral initiative aims to connect Manipur's Moreh town in India to Mae Sot in Thailand via Myanmar (for update and details see ADB report 2018; also ERIA report 2020). The total cost of it is estimated at USD140 million. In 2012, India is reported to have provided USD500 million worth of loan to Myanmar. From this, the entire cost of THL in the country is being covered (Chaudhary and Basu 2015). Additionally, there are two routes to reach Thailand, one via Mandalay and the other by-passing it. Part of the former aligns with the friendship road from Moreh to Tamu to Kalewa. This onwards, the 101km Kalewa-Yargi section of it has been under poor condition. India has agreed to invest USD11 million to upgrade it into a four-lane highway (Ibid.). At the same time, there are the 69 bridges (out of total 70) that come on the TLH route which are in need of betterment. India has agreed to help. Yet, it is to be noted that the task of upgrading them is not of the BRO, but of the Myanmar government (Ibid.:31). This kind of cooperation with the Myanmar government, whether civil or military, over development of infrastructure have over the years gained traction and can indeed be seen as emergence of infrastructure diplomacy.

India picked up pace in initiating infrastructure and development projects with Myanmar in the 2000s. With the turn of the new millennium, many high-level visits between the Burmese generals and Indian military men took place. Ambassador Rajiv Bhatia opines that PM Vajpayee and National Security Advisor (NSA) Brajesh Mishra sought to make use of "military diplomacy to supplement India's foreign policy" (Bhatia 2015:104). But even within such type of diplomatic engagement, the need for cooperating in improving

infrastructure linkages began to find an important place in the agenda. For instance, General V.P. Malik revealed that India assured its "readiness to support various infrastructure projects" in his meeting with Vice Senior General Maung Aye in January 2000 (Ibid.:105). It is true that by 2003 the *tatmadaw* advocated General Khin Nyunt's seven-step-roadmap to democracy and promised multi-party elections. This helped India align with its foreign policy norms and ideals while hoping for a practically sustainable relationship with the military regime in Myanmar.

At the domestic level many infrastructure development projects were rolled out in NER under the aegis of the new Ministry of Development for the Northeast Region (DoNER), initially established as a department in 2001. For example, the Special Accelerated Road Development Programme for North East (SARDP-NE) was conceived as a plan in mid-2000s to improve connectivity in the NER. In doing so, it was expected to translate into better connectivity with Myanmar. Similarly, improvement of the railway system in the NER has been seen as a step to enhance links to Myanmar. For example, there is a proposal on laying tracks in the Jiribam- Imphal- Moreh sector, which will be linked up to Mandalay as part of the larger vision of the Delhi-Hanoi rail link. The latter is in turn a part of the multi-lateral ambition initiated by India and six other countries of the Mekong Ganga Cooperation (MGC). Under this NER is to be linked with Vietnam via Myanmar, Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore. India has already lent USD56 million Line of Credit in 2010 to Myanmar (McCartan 2011). As evident, India's engagement with Myanmar began to reflect the practice of infrastructure diplomacy, at both a bi-lateral and a multi-lateral level.

As a counter to the arguments made in this thesis, it can be said that India-Myanmar relations, rather than being increasingly hinged upon infrastructure diplomacy is being conducted traditionally through economic diplomacy or even development diplomacy. Yet, as noted in Chapter 2, without infrastructure as the base, it becomes untenable to pursue robust economic activities and hence diplomatic engagement in that direction. One example in this context is the underutilized capacity of the Land Custom Station (LCS) at Zokhawthar in the Mizoram border with Myanmar. Due to the lack of good roads from Mizoram, the capacity for trade has suffered. On that note, the road from Champai in the border town in Mizoram that go from Rhi to Tidim and Falam will now be built with generous support of USD60 million from India. The 80-km Rhi-Tiddim

road was expected to be complete by 2018 (Yhome 2019). Despite the delays, it underlines the need as well as the rapidly growing practice to focus on infrastructure even within the talks of economic diplomacy, as a foreign policy tool for India.

Though not from the core discussion on infrastructure investment, another context of India's engagement with Myanmar lies in the energy sector. As a result of the LEP, India began to find ways to harness the vast opportunities that lay in front of it in Myanmar. This meant also exploring into its rich hydropower, gas and oil sector. Some of the Public Sector Undertaking (PSU) companies such as Oil and Natural Gas Corporation of India Limited-Videsh (ONGC-V/OVL) and Gas Authority of India Limited (GAIL) along with Essar Oil (private) have been involved in exploration and production sharing since the 2000s. For example, in 2002, OVL got a stake in the Shew Gas field from where a pipeline is planned. It has invested up to USD722 million till 2019 (Business Standard 2020). In a Indo-South Korean consortium, OVL has 20% stakes in A-1 and A-3 offshore field along with GAIL which has 10% stakes (Gupta 2013:88). However, due to lack of a pipeline to transport this, in 2005, Myanmar handed over to PetroChina the right to buy gas from A-1 block at a relatively low price (Egreteau 2008:55). While under the AEP drives, India began to catch up on the hydrocarbon industry in Myanmar with production sharing contracts (PSC) won by ONCG for the Block B-2 and EP-3 in 2014, the hydropower projects have suffered. The Tamanthi and Shwazaye hydropower project (see Table 4.1) of 2008 was scrapped in 2013.

Talking about infrastructure as a highlight in India-Myanmar relations, one cannot leave out the most ambitious infrastructure project by India in its eastern neighbourhood — the Kaladan Multimodal Transit Transport Project. The components of the project are summarized in Table 4.2 below (Dutta 2020). Shreedhara Dutta writes:

> As planned, the KMMTTP would reduce the distance of transportation between Kolkata and Sittwe in Myanmar by shortening the route from 1,880 km via the Chicken's Neck to 930 km. The multimodal transportation includes cargo movement through three different modes viz. coastal shipping, inland waterway and road transport. Freight ships from Kolkata, Haldia port will travel 540 km to dock at Sittwe port, (located in the Rakhine state of Myanmar), where a jetty terminal has been completed. (Ibid.:1)

Table 4.2

Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project

S.No.	Component Description
(i)	Construction of an integrated port and Inland Waterway Transport (IWT) terminal at Sittwe, including reclamation of land and dredging
(ii)	Development of navigational channel along river Kaladan from Sittwe to Paletwa (158 km)
(iii)	Construction of an Inland waterway — Highway trans-shipment terminal at Paletwa
(iv)	Construction of seven IWT barges (each with a capacity of 300 tonnes) for transportation of cargo by waterway between Sittwe and Paletwa
(v)	Building a highway (110 km) from Paletwa to the India–Myanmar border (Zorinpui) in Mizoram

Source: Shreedhara Datta, (2020), 'Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project: Navigating Myanmar's Ethnic Conundrum', Briefing Paper, URL: https://cuts-citee.org/pdf/briefing-paper-kaladan-multi-modal-transit-transport.pdf.

The KMTTP has been backed by India's offer to build a SEZ in Sittwe. In 2013, the Government of India gave a USD50 million line of credit for the same purpose. This came as an assurance to India's commitment at making KMTTP a success and also as a call to see New Delhi in the geopolitical race where Beijing has been striding ahead. Meanwhile, by 2012 the GMS economic corridor and East West Corridor were proposed (among few others) where India was in discussion (IPSC issue brief 2012). The AEP therefore added vigour and tempo to the ongoing infrastructure focused diplomatic engagement between India and Myanmar in the last few years.

It is not without problems that the maturing of infrastructure diplomacy between India and Myanmar takes place. For one, there has been criticism regarding the delay in completion of the projects by India. In fact, New Delhi has often been questioned at home and abroad for what is seen as its lax attitude. Another issue has emerged in the rise of the February 2021 coup in Myanmar that has caused concerns in India over instability and the civil disobedience movement (CDM) ongoing in the country. Securing India's own interest by siding with the increasingly notorious behaviour of the *tatmadaw* is

looked at as a digression from India's democratic ideals and foreign policy norms. Hence while infrastructure investments remain one of the most crucial agendas in the India-Myanmar relations, infrastructure diplomacy is what India has to rely on to find solutions over any dispute that may arise due to changed political regime, if at all.

Conclusion

In the previous chapter, the change in diplomatic conduct of China over the years was noted. In doing so, it also acknowledged that the nature of diplomacy may have changed from Deng's times to more recent conduct under President Xi's rule. Yet a new issue area of diplomacy, that of infrastructure, seems to flourish under various nomenclatures and modes. Infrastructure diplomacy has managed to marginally draw attention away from China's military projections to Chinese economic might. ID today concerns relatively higher stakes for countries. Trying to speak softly through non-military language has been rendered useful via ID. Yet it has resulted in attracting more limelight than ever before, especially for China. The case today is no different for India, notwithstanding the scale of it. This chapter therefore brings forth India's slightly different story of infrastructure diplomacy, its structural evolution and swelling use.

Like China, India has also seen a great demand for infrastructure in the last decade. In response, again like China, India has taken steps at a domestic level by introducing many policies and programmes that aim at meeting the infrastructure gap in the country. In doing so, it has been assisted by foreign powers, mainly Japan. Whether it be the Japanese ODAs for development of the NER (seen as a gateway to India's AEP) or grants to help build India's first high speed train project, New Delhi has had to make use of its diplomatic channels for achieving its goals in the issue area of infrastructure. Therefore, at least as a process, ID has been on a rise for India though China had begun earlier and with very different speed and scale.

At the international level, India's foreign policy has evolved from making use of traditional diplomatic means with focus on issue area such as culture and economics to increasingly negotiating on matters pertaining to infrastructure. Within the limits of ID however, India has shown a good record in developmental infrastructure rather than physical connectivity infrastructure, an area that is doubly demanding in terms of resource and stakes and a domain where China has been leading in the recent past.

Additionally, India's ability or intent to use ID to influence other states for hard power gains is rather unfounded, unlike China's. Yet, to therefore sing swan songs of India's efforts at ID is not simply irrelevant but also untrue. India has revived its position across its peripheral regions increasingly due its attention paid to infrastructure as a variable in inter-state relations. Despite its modest capabilities in competing with China in the game of ID, India has made its attempts rather persuasively, both bi-laterally and multi-laterally. It's growing stature in the Indo-Pacific region and in the Asian context as a whole can to great extents be attributed to its choosing the tool of ID to enter the great games being played out hitherto.

Chapter- 5

Impact of Infrastructure Diplomacy on bi-lateral Relations: An Assessment

Introduction

In the field of IR, a debate about power has long been the focus of theoreticians and practioners of diplomacy and statecraft. Notwithstanding other approaches to IR, the realist theory which depicts the international system as having an anarchical order, with hierarchy as one of its core elements, has given scholars food for thought to analyse the rise and fall of powerful states (Kennedy 1989; Brooks and Wohlforth 2015-6). Emanating from this line of assessment, the modern nation state of the Westphalian conceptualization, has often been categorized into power groups and poles, lead or largely driven by either what is termed as great powers, major powers, super powers, and more recently the emerging powers and rising powers.

Different scholars have proposed different formulations and attempted predictions of global power politics using these frameworks. For example, talking about Great power, a term that came into prominence after the Congress of Vienna in 1815 (Jarret 2014), Kenneth Waltz states that great powers have a greater size of population and territory, are endowed with resources, military strength as well as political stability and competence (Waltz 1993). Barry Buzan, distinguishes between Great power and Super power, another concept that evolved during the Cold War, by stating that the latter has a "broad-spectrum capabilities exercised across the whole of the international system", something that the former lacks (2018:3). In short, a Great power is not as big as a Superpower. Through his 1+X theoritization, Buzan argues that USA was the only Superpower in the first decade of the 21st century, while there were four Great Powers — Russia, Japan, EU and China (Ibid.). After a decade, in tandem with Buzan's definition, Stephen Brooks and William Wohlforth predicted the continuing dominance of USA as the sole Superpower, with a Great power like China ascending on the international rung. China, they argue, is marked as a 'class by itself' among other Major powers such as, Germany, Japan, and Russia (2015). China's growing prominence in the international arena has been acknowledged by most scholars and experts in the field of IR, irrespective of the different level of power hierarchy that they may place China into.

Meanwhile, the proliferation of major powers, a category that was churned out of the Industrial Revolution, played an important role in the balance of power scheme. With the beginning of globalization and end of Cold War, many emerging economies thrived. The booming of the Asian Tiger economies — Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan and South Korea — was reported by the World Bank as the 'East Asian Miracle' in 1993. Further, some of the fast growing economies around the world began to be heralded as the Rising powers. Though the distinction between Rising and Emerging power is still debated, and outside the scope of this thesis, there is an agreement that the BRICS grouping — Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa — along with a few second-tier powers like Indonesia, Turkey and Mexico, are put under the bracket of rising and emerging powers (NOREF Policy Brief 2012; Chatin and Gallarotti 2017). These states are marked by their rapid economic development, expanding political and cultural influence on matters of global importance through the exercise of mostly their soft power means.

With the advancement of the 21st century, there has been a slow, but a certain shift of geopolitical focus from the Trans-Atlantic to the Indo-Pacific, where more countries hold the position of rising and emerging powers than in the past. The global economic slowdown since 2008, the policies of the hitherto superpower, USA, looking inward and practicing piecemeal nationalism, if not anti-globalization policies, the weakening of the European Union (EU) as a result of Brexit, and even more importantly the growing capabilities of China and India to influence the global world order like never before, shifted the so called great game (Destradi 2017; Chatin and Gallarotti 2017) that scholars refer to in IR, to the Asian backyard. As the country with the highest population and largest manufacturing capabilities, controlled by a single party that dominates every aspect of politics and economics, if not society, China's rise has been considered something of a miracle since the 1990s. With growing military and naval capability and attempts by replace and reject the west centric global world order, China is a power to reckon with. India as the largest democracy, pacing economic growth and population, geographically strategic location, a country that is visibly status quoist as well as willing to challenge the rise of regional hegemons, sees China as the nemesis in Asia. It is this rise of China and India that have attracted scholars and observers of IR as both emerged as prominent players in global geopolitics, especially in the Indo-Pacific, an evolving concept that has become strategically viable. Leaving alone the rhetoric of President Donald Trump's emphasis on the term Indo-Pacific over the more prevalent idea of Asia-

Pacific until the 2000s, as a sign of indicating the importance of India as a balancer to China in the region, there is no denying that China's attempt at seeking the status of a Mearshimmerian ideal of a regional hegemon is hindered by the position that India holds as a leading nation in Asia. This has brought both countries to a level of competition that has very different dynamics than the conflictual relationship they had in the 1960s and 70s. The military clashes between the two states, that turned very bloody unlike in the recent past, mobilization of forces on the borders of both countries in June 2020, despite attempts at engagement and even some cooperation through multilateral forums is a case in point. China as a rising power (Shambaugh 2016) and India as an emerging power (Panda 2017) have indeed become the ontological grounds for renewed research on global power politics.

Having acknowledged the growing power positions of China and India and hypothesizing that the level of competition between the two countries is only going to increase in the coming decade, it is important to highlight what has already been stated in the previous chapters, i.e. the means of geopolitical power play has had a marked change in the 21st century. Unlike earlier times, hard power has limited tactical significance in its direct usage. It is through the means of smart power, and more specifically through the use infrastructure investments, that China has been influencing countries around its periphery. That has enabled it to convert soft power means to achieve hard power strategic advantages. India on the other hand, has attempted to undertake the idea of infrastructure as a means of diplomacy as an answer to Chinese moves in the region, albeit largely through multilateral modes. Though at a nascent stage, and rather incomparable to the level of infrastructure diplomacy practiced by China, India has invested in building connectivity networks around its neighbourhood in pursuance of its policies such as Neighbourhood First and Act East in particular. It has further backed multilateral forums that focus on connectivity and infrastructure projects such as the Asia Africa Growth Corridor, Bangladesh Bhutan India Nepal (BBIN), etc., akin to China's BRI ventures. The competition through the medium of infrastructure diplomacy may not be very overt, but given the geopolitical and geo-economic potential of those infrastructure initiatives, it has emerged as a defining factor in analyzing the China-India relationship.

This chapter aims to test the hypothesis that the geopolitical competitiveness between China and India as dominant powers in Asia finds renewed vigour in the sectors of connectivity and infrastructure building, which in turn has led each to employ infrastructure diplomacy as a tool to engage with and influence strategically important states. This study also brings forth the argument that at the middle of this tug for power and dominance has been smaller states such as Nepal, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Maldives and other countries. The various infrastructure investments by both China and India in some of these countries have already been discussed in the previous chapters, with the case of Myanmar being studied in detail. This chapter seeks to assess the impact of those discussed investments by China and India upon their bilateral relations and upon their relationship with Myanmar as a strategically important country. It concludes that Myanmar's natural resources, its historical ties with both these contiguous neighbours and coveted geographical location has provided a level playing ground for India in the infrastructure sector, to compete with China in the region in recent years. The southward thrust of China towards the Indian Ocean and the eastward thrust of India into the larger Indo-Pacific can best be gauged by anaylsing Chinese and Indian involvement in Myanmar. The impact of this power play indeed has great reverberations on their bi-lateral relations as well as on power politics globally.

An Overview and Assessment of the Case

After having enumerated the various infrastructural projects that China and India have undertaken in Myanmar, it is important to clearly understand the story of Myanmar before trying to assess the China-India relationship within it. Therefore, a brief narrative follows.

Why Myanmar?

Myanmar, known as Burma until 1988, is one of the most fascinating countries in Asia. It shares a contiguous border with both China and India, as well as Bangladesh, Laos and Thailand. With a population of about 5.5 million people, Myanmar is a nation with diverse ethnic groups making it a 'plural society' (Furnivall 1956: 304-305).

Ruled as a monarchy for many centuries until the 20th, the second Anglo-Burmese War (1852-3) brought much of then Burma under the colonial rule. After the third Anglo-Burmese War in 1885, Burma was made a part of India, unlike how the other colonies

such as Malaya, Singapore, Ceylon, etc. were ruled. It was only in 1937 that it was separated from India, agreeing to a long Burmese demand for it. In 1942, during World War II, the Japanese pushed the British up to Assam, a situation that was reversed only by 1945. Burma got formal independence and separated from the British commonwealth in 1948, just after a year of India's independence. Therefore, the country has had a colonial history that becomes important to keep in mind when studying it as a case from a geopolitical prism. But why was Burma important for the colonizers in the first place? The answer lay partly in its immense natural resources and its geo-strategic location.

The timber of Myanmar, particularly its teak forests, was known for its abundance and quality, the gems and jade markets are still the rarest in the region, while natural oil and gas provides the country with potential to be the leading exporter in Southeast Asia. For instance, during colonial times, the Burmah Oil (later British Petroleum) company provided immense profits to their shareholders in London and Glasgow (Myint U 2019:17). Thant Myint U writes that "throughout the colonial period, Burma was richer than the rest of British India…For a period in the 1920s Rangoon rivaled New York as the biggest immigrant port in the world" (Ibid.: 18). Swapna Bhattacharya points out that the British were not interested in the exploitation of natural resources until about 1890. Instead the attention was on creating a commercial economy based on the export of rice (2007:93). Yet, undoubtedly the riches of Burma, combined with its geographical location was an attraction for foreign powers, then and now. Since Myanmar is strategically located at the intersection of South and Southeast Asia, at the western rim of the Bay of Bengal (refer to Map 5.1), it was also looked upon as a 'backdoor to China's fabled markets' (Ibid.). The Bay of Bengal, as Robert Kaplan puts it "is starting to become whole again and its returning to the centre of history…no one interested in geopolitics can afford to ignore the Bay of Bengal" (Brewster 2016:). The relevance of Myanmar's location is more pertinent today than at that time when China was a closed country. Nevertheless, the British built ports, roads and railways in colonial Burma to facilitate efficient trade (Myint:18). Further, as noted in Chapter 2, building infrastructure was a means through which the British colonizers could obtain much of its geo-economic and geopolitical ambitions in the region. The same strategy still holds true for big power politics in the 21st century, especially China.

In the 1950s, as a modern republic and democratic state led by a socialist regime, Burma grappled with fissiparous nationalist tendencies and soon became a hotbed of civil war. Various ethnic nationalist groups claimed either their own government or separate homeland, a problem that still persist in a transitioning Myanmar (Lintner 1999). On the other hand, a communist insurrection challenged the power at the center. Additionally, the safe havens found by the Chinese nationalist, led by Chiang Kai-sheik and backed by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), in the northern borders of Burma, made matters worse. The newly established communist state of the People's Republic of China (PRC) became deeply involved in Burma's internal security issues thereafter. As a result of the turmoil at a domestic level, in March 1962, at a time when Sino-Indian relations were going downhill by the day, the Burmese military took over power at the center, set up a Revolutionary Council and closed its door to outside powers. The Ne Win regime introduced the 'Burmese Way to Socialism' which lasted until 1989 when Burma underwent political and economic changes, along with much else. Within this time, Burma's foreign policy was aimed at what Muang Maung Gyi termed as 'negative neutralism', (1981). This, as Bertil Lintner in an article for *China Report* in 1992 explained, had tuned Myanmar's foreign policy from non-alignment to isolationism and bi-lateralism where it refused to "deal with blocs of any kind; it even resigned from the Non-Alignment Movement in 1979…dealt only with one country at a time, and preferably only with neighbours" (Ghoshal 1992: 249). Then how did Burma become involved with the outside world? The very simplified answer is — China.

By the end of 1980s the economy was moribund. There were growing voices demanding for democracy, and General Ne Win announced his resignation. Especially with the formation of the National League for Democracy (NLD) led by 'The Lady' (movie, 2011) — Aung San Suu Kyi — political changes received impetus. But the anti-government student protest of 8 August, 1988 (also referred to as the 8.8.88 incident) were brutally crushed. The State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) was set up in 1989, soon led by General Than Shwe. It is then that the new establishment decided to end the socialist way of life and give private businesses chance to herald an 'open door economy' (Maung 1994). Foreign investments were resumed after decades and prioritized. 1995 was branded as 'visit Burma year'. Yet, as the house arrest of Suu Kyi was carried out and news about the 8.8.88 incident spread, Myanmar found itself increasingly cornered in the international stage. The Asian financial crisis in 1997 took

a toll on the economy and dissolved many companies. The western sanctions led by the US had made Myanmar's interaction with foreign players even more difficult. It was China, who had already been 'wooing the generals' (Egreteau 2003), that befriended the weak pariah state in the 1990s and attempted to bring the West and Myanmar into talking terms.

By the 2000s, Myanmar was one of the poorest countries in Asia (Myint U 2019: 60). The US adopted a policy of stern sanctions and pressures, which further led Myanmar to move into the Chinese fold. In 2003, President Bush imposed major economic sanctions on Myanmar, while Condolezza Rice added the name of Myanmar as an 'outpost of tyranny' among the countries considered the 'Axis of Evil' in 2005 (Ibid.:67), as a result of reports about Naypitaw gaining defence aid and expertise from its new strategic partner — North Korea (Lintner 2019:43). Though some experts deemed such an US foreign policy towards Myanmar counterproductive (Ott 1997; Steinberg 2009), relations with the West remained lukewarm. Added to this was the troubles that came due to the destruction caused by Cyclone Nargis in 2008. The humanitarian efforts of the junta were considered inept.

Meanwhile, fresh offshore gas was discovered by some foreign companies, which built pipelines and exported it to Thailand. It was at this time when both China and India (along with others like South Korea) were vying for share in the new gains (see following section). This enabled a class of political business elites to make money and prepare for their retirement as generals, to fit in a new so-called democratic set up scripted by Than Shwe himself. Elections were held in November 2010. Soon after however, Myanmar began to show signs of real transition into a country open to international engagement, rather a pro-West state under the Presidentship of Thein Sein. Though the February 2021 military coup has again questioned whether the changes were real or not, yet a democratic Myanmar was unlike what China expected. Dignitaries from all over the world flew into Myanmar, especially into the new capital Naypitaw (announced in 2005 but considered one of the emptiest capitals until then). Sanctions began to be lifted, the internet suddenly became a mode of interaction and discussion, and public involvement increased, including in policy making (think tanks began to be consulted, outside experts were recruited into ministries). Investments poured into the country in various sectors, the largest being telecommunication (Myint U:196). The 2015 elections were held fairly.

Aung San Suu Kyi led the NLD government as State Counsellor (a new post created) and even attempted a 'national reconciliation' with the ethnic armed organization through a 21st century Panglong. Ethnic insurgencies have been one of the major security problems of Myanmar. China watched and even assisted these developments from close quarters. In November 2020, the general elections saw the return of NLD to power with Suu Kyi in the lead. But with the new developments as mentioned, along with the declaration of a year long state emergency, it is expected that foreign policy stance with Myanmar may have to be rethought. The prospects of reaping benefit from the various ongoing infrastructure projects of countries may be pushed into longer gestation periods.

Many observers and scholars believed Myanmar has been Sinocized, especially after 1988 (Singh 1997; Maung 1994) and tuned into a 'vassal state' (Lintner). Yet others believe that with time Myanmar has done well to diversify its foreign engagements. What got into the way of Myanmar's international engagement in recent times however is the Rohingya crisis that erupted in the state of Rakhine in 2017. The international criticism of Myanmar's human rights profile notwithstanding, with time, the US, Japan, India and a few others seem to look at Myanmar as a country with which there should be greater engagement, particularly as China's footprints became strategically more visible thorough the various infrastructure investment, within and beyond the aegis of the BRI. Myanmar itself realized the need to harness the full potential of its geo-strategic importance in the great game that began to be played out in the Indo-Pacific.

As far as China and India are concerned, as Renaud Egreteau opines, the regional giants cannot use Myanmar as a mere field for their rivalry because Myanmar is in a position to resist and will do so (2008). On the other hand, others like Mohan Malik believes, it is Myanmar that has allowed and fostered a rivalry to play out in their land more intentionally (1994; 1997). In either case, Myanmar has attained some agency of its own to steer its foreign policy wheel by itself. Even investment opportunities in Myanmar are no more openly given away to the most influential on the latter's terms. In 2020, Myanmar introduced its Project Bank initiative which is an online portal for identifying the sectors and infrastructure projects that are truly needed in the country to fulfil the Myanmar Sustainable Development Plan (MSDP) of 2018-2030 (The Myanmar Project Bank 2021). It is aimed at bringing about a transparent system at each stage, including financing, where foreign players usually tend to pocket its own interest at the cost of the

host country. This indicates the changing nature of Myanmar's outlook of the world today. It has hence increasingly become an important intervening variable in the regional game of power, especially between China and India. It appears to be a level playing field for the latter as much as it has been for the former.

Map 5.1

Myanmar

Source: Britannica 2013

Impact of China-India interface in Myanmar on bi-lateral relations

There is no doubt that among all others, China and India, hold special diplomatic importance for Myanmar. It is a tradition that whenever the new ambassador of either

country arrives at the Burmese capital, the foreign minister hosts them for an exclusive dinner, a privilege reserved for them alone (Bhatia 2020). The former has a *pauk-phu* relationship with Myanmar and continues to be the largest foreign investor as well as the largest trading partner of Myanmar. India, on the other hand, has a history of being inextricably bound to Burma for a long time until 1937, making it a state with shared political history, not to downplay the common linkages of culture that both share since ancient times. Today, Myanmar finds itself at the crossroads of tugs for strategic leverages, among others states, between China and India. Notably, most of that interface revolves around infrastructure issues whether in the connectivity or energy sectors.

While China's Myanmar policy in the 1980s became more viable due to the creation of infrastructure linkages (which in turn enabled transfer of men and material) thereon, India's infrastructural forays took some time, beginning with multi-lateral efforts before New Delhi could strike bigger bi-lateral infrastructural deals with Myanmar. As seen in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4, undeniably both China and India have warmed their relationship with Myanmar with the use of ID. What is pertinent in the context of this chapter however is to assess how China's and India's infrastructure diplomacy in Myanmar impacted their bilateral relations. To find answers to this, Bertil Lintern's views expressed in the 1990s seem useful to begin with. In an overall context, "nowhere in Asia have Chinese and Indian policies and ideals clashed to the same extent as in Burma", expressed Lintner (1992:240). Whether one interprets the word 'clash' as competition, rivalry or conflict, there is no refuting that with increased interfaces between the two in Myanmar, largely evident in the infrastructure sector, such a tendency has increased instead of being driven by cooperation or collaboration.

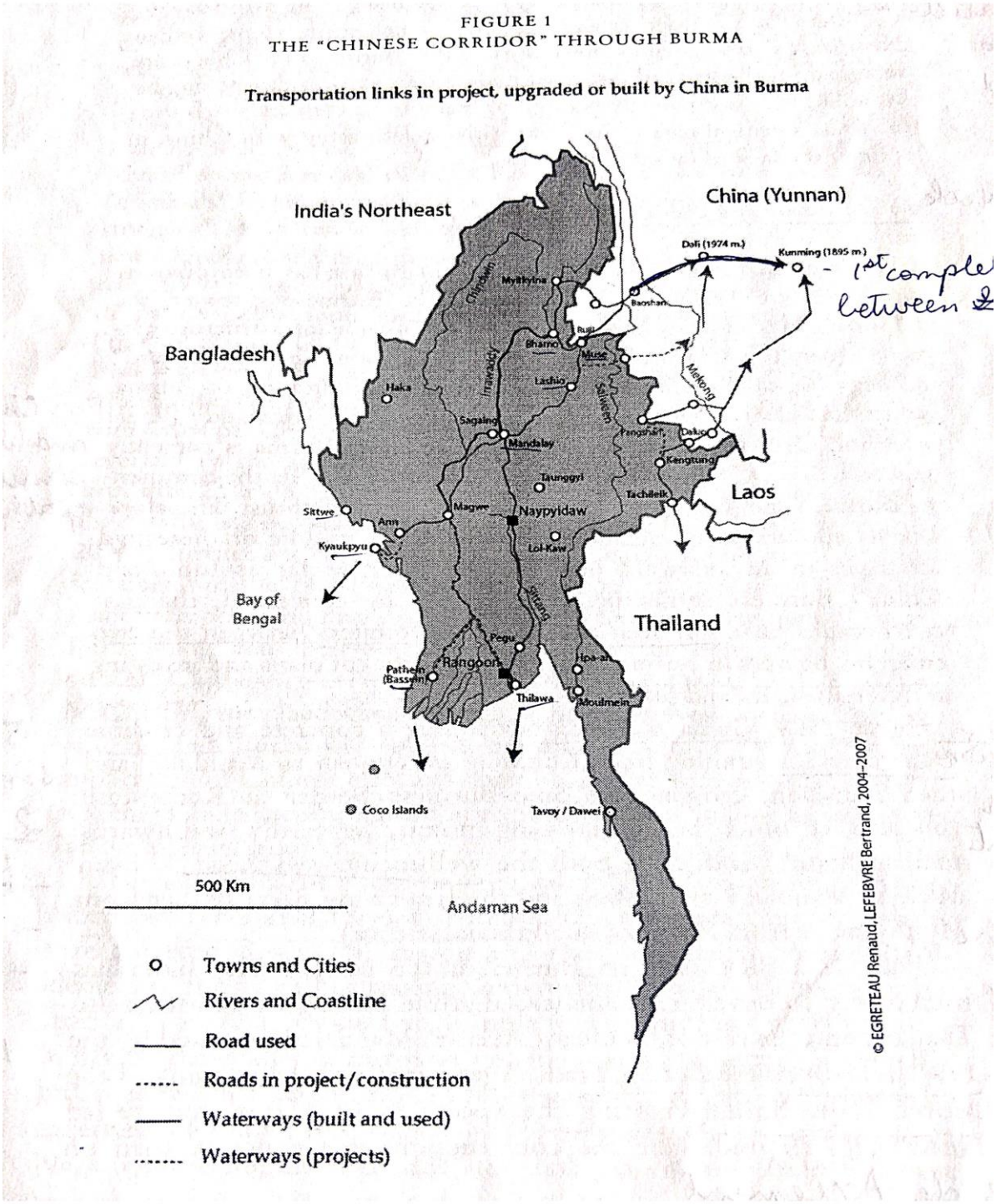
Various works on the subject of China-India in Myanmar (see Introduction chapter) highlight the factor of competition and rivalry between the two. While some like Bertil Lintner (1992) and John Garver (2001) believe that the China-India competition in Myanmar presents an apt picture of the global scenario and mirrors an overall bi-lateral relation that tend to lean towards competition between the two Asian giants, others such as Renaud Egreteau feels what is happening between China and India in Myanmar should be seen as nothing more than a quiet rivalry, putting aside speculations that warn of a more serious conflict (2008). Yet others such as Mohan Malik agrees to the hypotheses that elaborate on the competition by adding that indeed it is Myanmar itself that allows

for such tussles between great powers in order to reap bargains out of them (1997). Most of these scholars also eye the bilateral relations between India and China through a growing infrastructural lens. For example, Renaud Egreteau, writing about 'India and China Vying for Influence in Burma' (2008) notes that infrastructure linkages have been at the heart of trade and energy relations between China and India in Myanmar. He even provides a glimpse of the Chinese and Indian corridors through Burma (Map 5.2 and Map 5.3).

Keeping with the larger equation, the competition between China and India is most visible at a geo-strategic as well as a geopolitical level even when viewed through an infrastructural lens. The strategic location of Myanmar and its many resources have been important factors for such a competition at the first place. But China's engagement with succeeding *tatmadaw* regimes, including through the involvement of its own military personnel in providing inputs for infrastructure projects have buttressed India's insecurities. This led to China-India relationship being driven by suspicions, especially in the 1990s. Consider a few events of the time when China had begun to indulge in ID with Myanmar before India had done so substantially. China's Burma policy became "a less militant foreign policy" in the 1990s (Lintner, 1992: 234), as it began using diplomacy, through infrastructure linkages and development to achieve its objectives. Bertil Lintner accounts:

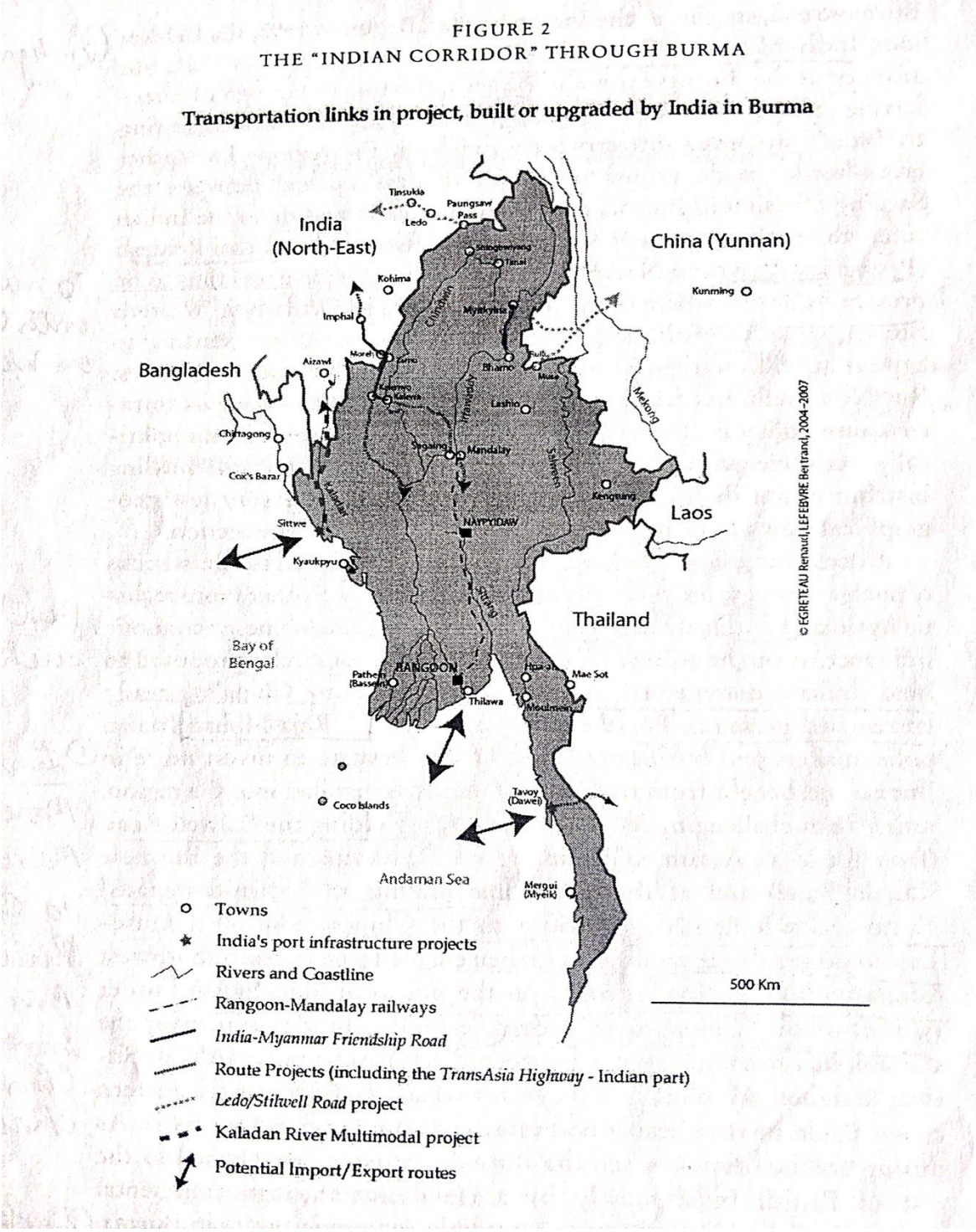
> China soon became involved with upgrading Burma's badly maintained roads and railways. By late 1991, the Chinese experts were working on a series of infrastructure projects in Burma… Chinese military advisers arrived the same year, the first foreign personnel to be stationed in Burma since the fifties…what the CPB failed to achieve for the Chinese on the battlefield has been accomplished by shrewd diplomacy and flourishing bilateral trade (1992:238).

Map 5.2



Source: Renaud Egreteau, (2008), 'India and China Vying for Influence in Burma', India Review, 7(1):49

Map 5.3



Source: Renaud Egreteau, (2008), 'India and China Vying for Influence in Burma', India Review, 7(1):51

China's increased involvement in building new infrastructural linkages with Myanmar and upgrading its infrastructure sector has been acknowledged by many scholars and experts (Myint 1993; Singh1997; Maung 1994). But, the notable presence of Chinese military advisors involved in the decision of infrastructure projects and planning in Myanmar, as pointed out by Lintner, was not to be underplayed. It pointed towards the strategic motives behind Chinese involvement in infrastructure building in the country, to say the least. Since 1988 China became the largest supplier of arms to the *tatmadaw*. The use of the 'gun bridges' at the China-Myanmar border built in 1991-92 is already noted (in Chapter 3). By 2013 the China-Myanmar defence relationship was so tight that it is estimated that about USD2.5 billion worth of weapons had already been provided to Myanmar (Gupta 2013:85). Along with the increased use of diplomatic means by China, its strategic aims became visible too. No doubt, at a bi-lateral level of the China-India relation, diplomacy enabled the signing of the agreement in 1993 to maintain peace and tranquility along the LAC, where both decided to not let the border issues between them come on the way of cooperation in other sectors. Yet this sense of entente was not visible in an overall sense beyond their borders, in any third country to be specific. Rather, China and India tried to reap advantages out of competition in countries like Myanmar. Linter in fact highlights the importance of Myanmar, and other smaller countries in the Indian Ocean, for China's strategic goals in the global stage through his book, *The Costliest Pear: China's Struggle for India's Ocean* (2019). Interestingly, the author leaves no doubt about his position vis-à-vis China, in the great game of the 21st century, when he refers to China's struggles in 'India's' ocean.

In Myanmar alone, China managed to give concrete shape to Pan Qi's 1985 blueprint to link Yunnan to the Indian Ocean, which itself had many fold benefits. Reaching out to the Indian Ocean meant overcoming the Malacca dilemma which was haunting China. Evidently, a port in the Myanmar coastline meant an alternate route for China's energy imports, that had risen dramatically in the 21st century. Further, Myanmar gave access to its pool of energy resources that in turn meant added benefit. It also enabled strategic leverages for China in the Bay of Bengal, giving it a stronger say in the region. Additionally, and importantly, it gained influence over Myanmar's political regime through closer physical linkages, increased trade through movement of goods and people and thorough economic debt creation. This turned infrastructure investment into a means to achieve China's geopolitical goals. This was considered a problem by India, to the

extent that much of whatever China did in the 1990s made New Delhi wary. For example, it is now acknowledged that the hand over of *Hainan* Class patrol boats (from 1991 to 1993), *Huxian* and *Jianghu* frigates (in 1995) by China to the *Tatmadaw Yay* (Myanmar's navy) was meant for strengthening their counter-insurgency activities and was of no direct threat to India in the maritime domain (Egreteau 2008:45). China's building of the maritime reconnaissance and electronic intelligence station in Coco Island in 1992 was also blown out to be an anti-India infrastructure installation as the intelligence reports seem to suggest then. Such suspicious claims were later dismissed by the Indian government in 1995. But the seed of suspicion had already been sowed deep. This came to haunt New Delhi again in 2008 when China was reported to have begun building a helipad and 'storage system for arms' in the Coco Island facility (Selth 2008:25).

The suspicions that flowed in the 1990s as a result of the infrastructural inroads was more than a one-way traffic. India was perceived as a problem by China too, at least a concern to be looked out for, as New Delhi decided to engage with Myanmar after a hiatus caused by the 8.8.88 incident. In 1994 the Indo-Burmese Border Trade Agreement was signed, opening up a positive front for Myanmar towards its west, an area where China could not be present. This was followed by the building of the now celebrated India-Myanmar Friendship Road and establishment of cross border trading point in Manipur and Mizoram. Until then, China was the rare player that sided with the pariah state which Myanmar had become. In the 1990s, it is noted that "Chinese defense establishment ha[d] been excessively concerned about India's role in the Indian Ocean and the Chinese strategic literature continue[d] to list India as one of China's most likely opponents in regional conflicts on China's southern borders" (Singh 1997: 128). This uneasiness at the presence of the other became quite a routine, which led to the rise of a traditional security dilemma in IR. Given that infrastructure meant to garner security advantages became the focus of China in the 2000s, even while connectivity infrastructure (aimed at both strategic and energy security in turn) remained the promoted norm, India's Myanmar policy sought to increasingly respond to the Chinese dominance of the neighbourhood. As Renaud Egreteau notes:

> Pushed by military and security circles still haunted by India's humiliation during the 1962 Sino-Indian war, New Delhi chose to engage Burma's Generals and build up a closer partnership with them, trying to checkmate China's increasing influence. As a consequence, India chose to 'enter the game' in its own way and this policy shift led many security analyst and academics specialized in Burma affairs to suggest

> the possibility of India and China now openly 'competing' in Burma, vying for influence and jockeying for its resources. (2008:40-1)

By the 2000s a clear competition was visible. Most of the ramifications of this competition was obvious in the energy sector, one of the crucial aspects for foreign powers to consider Myanmar as significant in regional geopolitics. As Egreteau points out, in no other sector is the China-India interface a zero-sum game except in the energy sector (2008:53). It was one area where both China and India were late comers. In that sense, both had to start off a competition from the same line, though China had the vantage point of proximity to the *tatmadaw* regime. While Indian companies began to explore the natural gas and oil resources in the various blocks up for auction and obtained stakes (along with South Korea) in the A-1 and A-3 blocks thereafter, it was China that managed to sweep the carpet from under the Indian feet. India had already signed a tri-partite agreement with Bangladesh and Myanmar in 2005 that would allow for transportation of gas via Bangladesh, Mizoram and Tripura up to West Bengal (Sethi, 2006). However, after much anticipation and cluelessness on the Indian side, it was known that Myanmar had signed a MoU with PetroChina to allocate the resources to China instead. While India deliberated for the next three years upon the ways to transfer the resources, Myanmar is said to have rewarded its ally China for standing up for it at the UN Security Council Resolution against Myanmar in 2007 (Gupta 2013:85). This left a bitter experience for India which already finds itself lagging behind in the country. With regards to the China-India competition in the energy sector, Amit Bhandari enumerates three points that are noteworthy:

> Firstly, China has a head start over India in Myanmar (and otherwise). It has invested heavily in Myanmar's natural resources (oil & gas, mines) and energy (hydropower) with an eye to use these resources. Most of these Chinese investments in Myanmar, according to us, have been made by State Owned Enterprises (SOEs). On the other hand, most of outward FDI in India (and business in general) is done by the private sector. Private sector is concerned with economic viability, not political goals. Secondly, the private sector is also more mindful of international sanctions - which Myanmar has been under - something Chinese SOEs have been happy to ignore. Finally, some Chinese SOEs also fund projects in areas controlled by insurgent groups, and hence provide direct financial support to insurgencies. This is not something an Indian firm, government or private, would want to be associated with". (Bhandari 2020).

The state versus private sector involvements of China and India bring to the fore the differing approaches towards investments, not limited to the energy sector however. Such dissimilarities therefore reduce any chance of cooperation between the two, in the energy sector at least. While each country has had their own strategy for Myanmar, there have been some areas of common interests. The choice of whether to cooperate or not fall

upon the two major powers. For instances, the Chinese had sought India's cooperation in completing the Burma road on the Indian side, famously known as the Stillwell/Ledo Road to enable free flow of good and people all the way upto Yunnan (). This has been rejected by India time and again (). There are contrasting views in India on this issue. Some local narratives in NER vote for renewing and completing the Ledo road to make it trade friendly. Similarly, certain dominant opinions saw it beneficial for India to cooperate and invest along with China than to challenge it (C. Rajamohan's opinion on the subject is mentioned in Egreteau 2008:50 and on note 49.). These views were however dated to less complicated times when the overall China-India relationship was cordial and aimed at business. Today, things appear different. As Rajiv Bhatia, former Indian Ambassador to Myanmar, expressed:

> In an environment where both common citizens and informed citizens are clear that China does not mean well for India, the question of creating any road or facility on our territory that could even remotely assist trade with China and so on is an honest startup. Our local people who are keen on it and keeps building a case for it needs to understand that when security and development go hand in hand, then things like Stilwell road projects can be considered, even when there may be opposition from the pure security constituency. But when security and development run head long into each other, then I am afraid development would always have to take the secondary place. (Bhatia 2020).

Another aspect of studying the interactions of China-India in Myanmar that is worth noting is the significant role the frontier territories of the two countries play for pursuance of ID. While China recognized the need to connect its South-West regions of Yunnan and Sichuan to Myanmar by re-imaging its political and economic systems by the late 1980s itself, India learnt from its hard experiences in the NER through the 1990s, that the disadvantages NER was drowning in with regard to 'looking east', despite close proximity with Myanmar, was embedded in bad infrastructure and the problem of insurgencies. The strategy that both China and India used to reach out to Myanmar was to improve the connectivity infrastructure and physical linkages of their frontier regions, boost its economic capacity and empower it to engage with a foreign state. Largely, most of this was achieved by making Yunnan and NER infrastructurally robust and sound.

Yunnan as the frontier province of China, sharing boundaries with not only Myanmar but also Laos and Vietnam became the focus of China's developmental outreach quite early. In one sense, the word outreach captures Beijing's desire to provide Yunnan with the monetary and financial fuel required to convert it into an economic engine so that inter-state relations with Myanmar can be pulled ahead for access all the way up to the

Indian Ocean. In the early 1990s Yunnan was provided the agency needed to improve ties with Myanmar. But there is also an argument that runs the other way around. It identifies Yunnan as the factor in the 1990s that rescaled China's importance in the south-western neighbourhood (Kurian 2018), one that helped China gain inroads into Myanmar and eventually to the coveted ocean. In fact, this is another sense that one can make out of the word outreach, where Yunnan was the factor that resurrected China's status in Myanmar. Yunnan's development was an imperative to make China's infrastructural motives in Myanmar a success. As regards China-Myanmar economic relations too, as noted below, Yunnan played an important role:

> The bilateral trade has been consolidated since the 20th century. The opening of the Yunnan-Burma Road during World War Two not only supported the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression but also strengthened economic ties between China and Myanmar….With China's reform and opening-up as an opportunity, a total of 18 trading ports have been established at the border between the two countries after 1988. (CGTN 2020).

Yunnan has not only been engaging and socializing to further China's foreign policy in the region but also at times by-passing Beijing's calls (Ibid.). For example, it is Yunnan that implements the agreement regarding shipping between China, Laos and Thailand, and such other provisions of the Greater Mekong Sub-region forum (Zhenming 2010). At the same time, while Beijing supported Myanmar's ban on timber logging and gems trade at the border, Yunnan was against it, making this an irritant in the China-Myanmar relation for a while.

India can be said to have borrowed some lessons from the Yunnan story to some extent, though it is only the logical means to focus on the NER to get New Delhi's policies towards Myanmar working. India's NER region was given a new boost in the 2000s with infrastructure projects being funded by the centre and foreign players through ODAs and FDIs (as noted in Chapter 4). Much like Yunnan, NER is seen taking lead at the behest of the centre in many instances, with the aim that better relations with countries such as Myanmar, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan will translate to stability of the region and therefore improved development. For example, in 2019 it was a team from Assam which sent its high-level delegation for a meeting with the Myanmar government to discuss possibilities of greater 'Economic Cooperation and Connectivity' (Consul General of India, Mandalay 2019). Hence, the trajectories of development of Yunnan and NER provides a perspective that help scholars understand the competitive urge between China and India a little better. Despite a logical submission which makes the focus on NER a

must for implementing India's AEP, it cannot be missed that to visible extent there is a mirroring of the growth model by New Delhi of what Beijing chose for Yunnan first. This provides backing to arguments that cry out a sense of competition between China and India in the neighbourhood.

At a geo-strategic level, over time the competition of China and India on the basis and necessity of building robust infrastructure has become more real. Even the 'myths' of the Chinese threat (Selth 2008) came to the forefront, one project at a time, in the context of the larger Indian Ocean region. China has managed to upgrade some of the port areas in Myanmar since the 1990s, built the Kyaupkyu project as a port from where it can lay gas and oil pipelines link up to Kunming in China, laid railway lines to facilitate the movement of goods trades via sea and planned a SEZ that is envisioned to be a manufacturing hub that could become a centre for bustling economic activates and trade between China and Myanmar almost seamlessly. Kyaukpyu port has always been a major destination along the 'string of pearls' China has been weaving in the Indian Ocean.

As a response, and as a result of India's own desire to look and act East, India has most visibly sought to implement the Kaladan Multimodal Transit and Transport Project, which includes the building of the Sittwe port, barely 100km north of Kyaukpyu port built by China. The port is not competent yet to be compared with Chinese ports along the Myanmar and Bangladesh coastline such as Kyaukpyu and Chittagong. But it has left many observers making a case for India's restored position vis-à-vis China in the great game of the region. This strategic competition and even rivalry is one of the biggest examples of the use of ID by both China and India in Myanmar. Even then, while India may be considered a viable competitor of China in Myanmar at a strategic level, more so than in any other country, India's inability to finish infrastructure projects on time, and more recently New Delhi's inability to have a clear approach in dealing with the political instability in Myanmar, have had its adverse impact in its game with China in the country. This has in turn affected the economic thrust of India in Myanmar where China has had an overwhelming lead.

China is Myanmar's largest trading partner as well as the largest investor in Myanmar. Trade between the two reached up to USD16.8 billion in 2019, while Chinese investments accounted for 25% of Myanmar's total foreign investment in the same year

(CGTN 2020) (see Table 5.1). India Inc.'s investments on the other hand was said to be taking "too long to come" (Bhatia 2015:177). While the overall good relations between China and Myanmar have been a factor in this trade growth, the availability of good connectivity and proper infrastructure has to be underlined for the same. India's case on the other hand appears to be a counterfactual of how good connectivity impacts economic relations, trade more importantly.

Table 5.1

Trade volume between China and Myanmar

Source: CGTN, "China's flourishing economic relations with Myanmar, 15 January 2020, URL: https://news.cgtn.com/news/2020-01-14/China-s-flourishing-economic-relations-with-Myanmar-Nf4PFUytXO/index.html

Among other things, India's economic relations with Myanmar have taken a hit due to the lack of proper infrastructure. Table 5.2 provides the statistics of their bi-lateral trade. More recently, the overall trade relations saw a decline in 2017-19, not attributed specifically to missing infrastructure however. But in the context of impact of infrastructure on trade, it is best to analyse the cross border trade between India-Myanmar that takes place at Moreh-Tamu (Manipur-Myanmar) and Zokhawthar-Rih (Mizoram-Myanmar). Most of India-Myanmar trade occurs through the sea route (92%) and air

route (8%) (Taneja, Naing. et.al. 2019:5) and barely through the land route. This is due to the fact that until 2015 there was a restrictive border trade policy that allowed border trade through custom posts via barter as per the Border Trade Agreement of 1994. A policy shift enabled the barter trade to move to normal trade at the Land Custom Station (LCS). For India, India-Myanmar bilateral border trade accounts for 0.01% of total border trade (highest is with Bangladesh). For Myanmar, India-Myanmar border trade stands at 1.1% of its total border trade. In short, border trade is weak between both countries. There are attempts being made to correct the missing infrastructure links to enhance border trade by also increasing India's overall infrastructure investments in the region, to create uninterrupted supply chains. As a result, when total trade between India and Myanmar stood at USD1.7 billion in 2019-20, border trade was recorded at USD92 million the same period.

Comparatively, with China however Myanmar's border trade forms 79% of its total border trade, highest among its neighbours. This has been attributed to better connectivity and physical infrastructure. Writing about the significance of Myanmar's border trade, Toshihiro Kudo explains how the country makes use of its border trade as an alternative to the sea route (trade mostly via Yangon port) to export even natural gas (to Thailand for example), making it 'more resilient to western sanctions' (Kudo 2013:279). Of all, the border trade with China stands out, largely due to the development of the Burma road as well as the Muse border trade gate (Ibid.), both dealt with in Chapter 3. It has been established that infrastructure has played a vital role in enhancing trade in general. Yet, that in the geo-economic game between China and India the languishing prospects of the latter can be pinned at its relatively weak infrastructure diplomacy with its important neighours, Myanmar being the common ground where each share borders with.

Table 5.2

India’s Trade with Myanmar

Figures in brackets indicate variation from previous year(s). Figures are in million USD

Year	**2014- 15**	**2015-16**	**2016-17**	**2017-18**	**2018-19**	**2019-20**
India’s exports	**773.74** *(-1.69%)*	**1070.65** *(38.46%)*	**1,107.89** (3.48%)	**966.19** (-2.79%)	**1205.60** (24.78%)	**973.89** (-19.22%)
India’s imports	**1231.54** *(-1.76%)*	**984.27** *(-0.08%)*	**1067.25** (8.43%)	**639.64** (-40.07%)	**521.49** (-18.47%)	**547.25** (4.94%)
TOTAL TRADE	**2005.28** *(-8.13%)*	**2054.92** *(2.5%)*	**2178.44** (5.85%)	**1605.84** (-26.17%)	**1727.10** (7.55%)	**1521.13** (-11.93%)

Source: Department of Commerce, Government of India; also available at Embassy of India, Yangon, Myanmar, URL: https://embassyofindiayangon.gov.in/pdf/menu/Bilateral-Economic-&-Commercial-Brief.pdf.

Table 5.3

India’s Total Trade via Moreh-Tamu and Zokhawthar-Rhi (Values in USD million)

	India's Total Trade via Moreh-Tamu		India's Total Trade via Zokhawthar-Rhi	
Years	Myanmar Stats	India's LCS Stats	Myanmar Stats	India's LCS Stats
2012-13	9	9	3	0
2013-14	26	13	19	0.3
2014-15	46	25	15	1
2015-16	46	20	26	3
2016-17	48	18	40	4
2017-18	46	0.1	44	0.3

Source: LCS Moreh, LCS Zokhawthar (India) and Ministry of Commerce, Government of Myanmar; Taneja, Naing. et.al. 2019, p.15.

While ID has been a definite way to woo Myanmar, there were political events that confirmed the extent to which China was ready to go to get what it wanted in Myanmar. In 2009, despite the fact that Beijing was unhappy about the Burmese offensive against the non-state armed group in Kokang, which is inhabited by people who speak the same Chinese dialect as the people across the border, and which led to about 30,000 people to seek shelter in China, China did not take any action (Lintner 2019:42). Instead, the next year, China pledged to provide an interest free loan worth USD4.2billion over a 30year period to Myanmar to help build roads, railways, hydropower project and for development of information technology (Ibid.). China's involvement in Myanmar's domestic politics too allowed it an edge against India. It was no surprise that when Aung San Suu Kyi attempted to pull through a 21st century Panglong in 2018, China went out of its way to facilitate its success, something it avoided to do when Then Sein attempted something similar in 2015. Such an open indulgence in Myanmar's political contestations by India is unthinkable.

After understanding the nuances that make up the triangular relationship between China-India-Myanmar, the increasing importance of infrastructure as a variable in their respective bi-lateral relationships is not difficult to identify. Nor is the fact that China-India relationship have moved from being based on suspicions in the 1990s to open competitiveness since the 2000s. Yet it can also be argued that the potential of a conflict between the two centered in Myanmar seems overstretched. When the Chinese and Indian infrastructural forays in Myanmar are compared under various parameters, very different results are revealed (see Table 5.4). But, it is no doubt that the friction that occurs there forth tends to lead to graver issues elsewhere, and adversely impact the overall relationship between the two Asian giants in the region.

Table 5.4

Comparing China's and India's Infrastructural Forays in Myanmar

Parameter of ID in Myanmar	China	India
Initial visions	Pan Qi's 2 September 1985 Bejing Review article is cited as an early plan, though roads and highways had been built in the 1950s and 60s.	1986 memo cited as evidence of India's infrastructure plans in Myanmar.
Type of projects	Roads, highways, port building, dams, pipelines and other economical infrastructure.	Bridges, roads, inland water, ports.
Number of projects	33 projects approx.	10 projects approx..
Mode of ID	Largely bilateral	Largely multilateral

Source: Author

Impact of Infrastructure Diplomacy on the China-India relations

As evident through the case of Myanmar, the push and pull of China and India in their Asian backyard as a result of the exercise of infrastructure diplomacy has increased over the last decade. From suspicion the relationship languished around negative interfaces and open competition. When we consider the larger scenario however, the China-India relationship has taken a step further and witnessed even clashes and conflicts, as violent as the one at Galwan valley in June 2020. That the tussle between their armies in the last decade have increased is indeed a fact. Viewed from the perspective of an immediate cause, most clashes have been largely attributed to building of roads and infrastructure in the border areas claimed as their own, by both China and India, deemed as a challenge and threat by the other. Though, the essence of many such infrastructure eludes the exact definition maintained in this study, it does help peg the reason for dispute at a micro level on the variable of infrastructure nevertheless. On the other hand, the long term causes are certainly more complex.

At a geo-strategic level, China's growing infrastructure footprints in South and Southeast Asia, particularly its maritime thrust has postulated the idea of a 'China threat' into which the Indian view of China has been largely tied to. At a geo-economic level as well, China's investments in securing and strengthening crucial points in its supply chains of production and trading routes have fortified its competitive edge over India and even the US, with which a trade war is considered ongoing. In any case, there is no denying that

infrastructure as a variable has led to the China-India relationship becoming more competitive over the years. In view of this, it becomes important to assess their bi-lateral relationship from the lens of infrastructure diplomacy and its use to garner influence by the two Asian giants.

To try and theorize the relationship between China and India, one can make use of a 4Cs framework — cooperation, convergence, competition and conflict. There already exists the 4C model in business and leadership contexts. For instance, the article titled 'The 4-C's of Effective Leadership: Collaboration, Compromise, Cooperation, and Competition Are Desperately Needed- A Leadership Primer', discusses the need for the 4Cs in managing people to work together and negotiate over issues. Also, literature on the 4Cs model and its various combinations as elaborated by scholars have been discussed (DNC 2021). Within such a framework and within the focus of this study, the variable of infrastructure can be treated as the prime indicator for measuring their relationship. On that note, Table 5.5 shows how the China-India relationship has fluctuated within the 4Cs framework. Yet, admittedly, the relationship is not so simple after all. As Jagannath Panda writes, China and India "represents two modes of civilization, demographically strong societies, and promising economic and geography forte, bringing *cooperation* and *collaboration*, *coexistence* and *convergence*, and *competition* and *conflict* on a single platform, signifying the most complex and dynamic relationship in world politics" (2017:1).

Table 5.5

China-India relationship within the 4Cs framework

Period	**Significant events**	**Overall relationship**	**ID status**	**Impact of ID on relationship**
1950-1960	Panchsheel Agreement in 1954. Bandung Conference in 1955	Convergence (at a geopolitical level)	China had build the Xinjiang-Tibet highway passing through Aksai China. It started work on the Karakoram highway from Kashgar (Xinjiang) to Abbotabad (Pakistan) in 1959. It was completed in 1979. No ID by India.	Very little impact. Example: By October 1958 Indian Government submitted a memorandum clarifying its claims over Aksai Chin, given that infrastructure building had gained some pace [*].
1960-1970	1962 war. 1967 clashes at Nathu La/Chola La. Diplomatic relations snapped.	Conflict (at a geo-strategic level)	China looked at investing abroad (including in infrastructure in Africa for example, where Zhou Enlai made a 10 country tour in 1964-65). No ID by India.	Some impact. Example: The Karakoram highway was being jointly built by Pakistan (with whom a war was fought by India in 1965) and China. KKH a.k.a the Road of Friendship, cut through parts of Aksai Chin, which increased security dilemma for India.
1970-1980	Border clash at Tulung La in 1975. Diplomatic ties resumed in 1976. 1979, first official visit to China since 1960 of then India's EAM, Atal Bihrai Vajpayee	Conflict and cooperation (at a diplomatic level)	China's ID became visible (the TAZARA railway was built by 50,000 Chinese for example). Opening up of China in 1978 helped pursue ID. No ID by India.	Some impact. Example: At Tulung La, one of the causes of clash is reported as building of a wall (a symbolism of territorial claim by establishing physical infrastructure) by Chinese on the Indian side of the

[*]Wang Hongwei is quoted in Shyam Saran's book, *How India Sees the World: Kautilya to the 21st Century*, (2017), pp.132.

				pass[*]. This trend has continued.
1980-1990	1986-87 Sumdorongchu stand off. Rajiv Gandhi visits China in 1988 as PM.	Competition and Cooperation	China's ID continues. No substantial ID by India[†].	Some impact. Example: As China had built sustained infrastructure in Tibet and Xinjiang by then, the strategic importance of Aksai Chin road may have diminished. Therefore, by 1985, China's 'pacakage proposal' of the 1960s had altered. It became stern towards its claims over Arunachal in the eastern sector.[‡]
1990-2000	1993 Agreement on Maintenance of Peace and Tranquility at the border. 1996 Agreement on CBM in the Military Field along the LAC	Cooperation (diplomatic) and competition (asymmetric)	China begins investing abroad. India engages in ID (at home and through multilateral forums due to LEP)	Some impact
2000-2010	2005 Strategic and Cooperative Partnership for Peace and Prosperity.	Cooperation and increased competition	China enhances ID, including in the maritime domain. India looks at ID abroad.	High impact Example: Chinese investments in India's neighbourhood (in ports, roads and highways) led to 'string of pearls' theory increasing strategic competition.
2010-2020	Depsang standoff in 2013. Agreement on Border Defence Cooperation. Doklam stand-off in 2017 and clash	Conflict (in geo-strategic terms). Competition (in geo-economic and geopolitical terms)	China announces BRI and increases ID from Asia to Europe. India ignores BRF and attempts to	Defining impact. Example: The Doklam standoff emanated from infrastructure (road) building by

[*] The US cable notes this, as mentioned in an article by Srijan Shukla (2020).

[†] India had contributed to the Africa Fund which included building social infrastructure. Yet, no substantial engagement that can be defined under ID.

[‡] Saran (2017):140.

	at Galwan Valley in June 2020. Yet, marked by informal summits and increased engagements		create multilateral alternatives.	China in its border with Bhutan. Recently, China has proposed a 'code of conduct' which requires India to freeze infrastructure building along the LAC*. India's joining of the QUAD is reflected as an attempt to counter Chinese dominance in the region, especially through ID influence.

Source: Compiled by author

It is not that the China-India relation is, or was always, only defined by competition and marked by animosity. Yet, the increased level of ID by China in the Asian neighbourhood has prompted India to do the same to counter China's dominating strategic posters. Therefore, as ID found boost from the 2000s, the relationship between China and India have also found a space for enhanced interfaces and competition.

The first four decades

The China-India relationship moved from convergence in the 1950s to conflict in the 1960s. The adage of *Hindi-Chini bhai bhai* of 1950s had a basis of its own, no matter how one sided it was. India was one of the first countries to recognize the People's Republic of China in 1950. At the time, Nehru had already managed to propel India into the regional centre stage by hosting the Asian Relations Conference (ARC) of 1947 and 1949. Emanating from the concerns regarding the governance of Tibet and India's diplomatic position on the issue, the Panchsheel Agreement of 1954 laid down the principles of peaceful co-existence that seemed to smoothen out the overall relation between China and India. In fact, as Amitav Acharaya explains, the first Asian African Conference in 1955 at Bandung became a defining moment in the relationship when

* Krishnan 2020:181.

Nehru "played the chaperon to communist China, as it sought acceptance from skeptical and fearful Asian neighbours" (2017: xiv).

What however changed post-Bandung is the fact that China, with the use of charm diplomacy of Zhou Enlai, managed to not only stay afloat in the Asian geopolitical context but gained leadership ambitions as that of India, a development that put the two on to a level of similar power projections in due course of time. Neither succeeded in their endeavors to influence the Asian geopolitics the way they may have hoped, at least immediately. While India's 'colonization' theory propagated by some historians such as R.C. Majumdar and K.A. Nilakanta Sastri were rejected as arrogant in Southeast Asia (Majumdar 1940; 1948), China's involvement in great power conflicts in Indo-China and the Korean war disallowed it to garner the trust and status it desired. As the ideas of Pan Asianism was being toyed with, China and India were seen as incapable of binding together South and Southeast Asia, between which a gap was clearly visible. Speaking about the role of China and India in Asia of the later 1940s, Burmese leader Aung San had expressed that "while India should be one entity and China another, Southeast Asia as a whole should form an entity – then, finally, we should come together in a bigger union with the participation of other parts of Asia as well" (Vandenbosch and Butwell 1966:341). For such unionism, a bigger common denominator was required, some of which was found through multilateral forums thereafter.

India as part of the Colombo powers (which also included Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Indonesia and others) group managed to discuss the common issues of the region at Bandung. But it was the Eisenhower administration's misfired approach towards Asia, as a consequence of the Dullesian policies (that hope to form military pacts with Asian states in their fight against communism in the region), that enabled most of decolonized Asia to join the Non Alignment Movement (NAM) formed in 1961. By then, India was still trying to reinstate itself as one of the leading states of the non-aligned group, a seat China found difficult to find for itself as it became more and more aligned with the communist ideology of the Soviets. But, it was not this that sowed distrust into the bilateral relations between China and India. Rather, engagement policies of Nehru began to show cracks in the late 1950s, particularly over the issue of territorial non-conformity along the border.

Issues of territorial sovereignty has been defining in the overall China-India relationship. What is crucial in the context of this study is to outline how infrastructure has played a role in it. By 1958, China had built a road that traversed through Aksai Chin. This did not have any aspect of diplomatic discussion at that time (except possible talks with Pakistan over the building of the Karakoram highway, work on which began the next year). Yet, that infrastructure building was a crucial element of the China-India relationship since the early times is brought out through India's protest at the time. In his book *How India Sees The World: Kautilya to the 21st Century*, Shyam Saran mentions that by October 1958 the Indian Government submitted a memorandum clarifying its claims over Aksai Chin, given that infrastructure building had gained some pace. He writes:

> Until 1958, when India formally conveyed to China that its territory in the western sector included the area between the Kunlun and the Karakoram ranges, including Aksai Chin, and that the Chinese had violated Indian territorial integrity by building the Aksai Chin road, the alignment in the eastern sector defined by the MacMohan Line was not disputed. The subsequent claims in this sector were raised by China only as a bargaining chip to acquire territory in the west that did not belong to it in the first place. Had China been convinced of its claims in the west there would have been no reason to suggest this trade-off. (2017:135).

By the 1960s, though Nehru continued to show trust in China as the reliable neighbour, as it turned out, events pointed at an opposite direction. In 1960 Nehru had noted that "China as a rising nation was bound to be assertive" (Rana 2016: 49). The assertion was felt most heavily when the 1962 war broke out between the two, making the decade as one where China-India relationship became defined by conflict and clashes. On the other hand, China signed the boundary agreement with Pakistan the next year, when the Karakoram highway was already touted as the 'road of friendship' between them. Built by the Frontier Works Orgnization (FWO) the road remains a problem between China-India relations, more so as it has been engulfed by the BRI. Not only this, but on 21 October 1967 while the China-India 'war' at Nathu la had hardly cooled off, China and Pakistan went ahead by announcing the re-opening of the Silk route between Gilgit and Xinjian (Razvi 1971:185). This all-weather road, first between the two important destinations, was thus completed by 28 September 1968 (Ibid., 186). As expected, India sent a protest note at the time, rejected as irrelevant by Pakistan on 25 June 1969 (Ibid.) A close look at the decade gives sufficient clues about how, even though infrastructure diplomacy may not have taken off for either side, infrastructure as a variable did set a tone of their relationship in the larger geopolitical context of the times, as well impacted immediate events pertaining to their border dispute.

To be noted is the fact that by October 1964 China was already a nuclear power, fifth in the world, with its successful testing of a fission device. China's elevated status boosted its confidence as a regional power to say the least. In fact, along with Pakistan and Indonesia, it pushed towards holding the second Asian African Conference in 1965, a role that India had played in the 1950s. Though Southeast Asia went ahead without either China or India in forming the regional forum of ASEAN in 1967, China was eager to test its lead against India. In 1967, the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) led an attack on the Indian post at Nathu La on 11 September and at Cho La the next month. This deadly combat led to casualties on both sides (the number stands at 200 deaths on the Indian side and estimated at about 400 on the Chinese side[*]) and is often referred to as the 1967 Sino-Indian war in Sikkim. Interestingly, the clash reportedly began with a local brawl over the erection of a fence by Indian soldiers on what was claimed as Indian side of the LAC. In any case, despite CPC's attempts to shine both internationally and at home, the results were not as expected. It is even said that the 1967 clash was only to distract people at home from the deplorable plight the country had reached as a result of the Great Leap Forward (1958-62)[†] and the social upheaval caused by the Cultural Revolution (1966-76). China's GDP growth rate stood at -27.3% in 1961 and -5.8% in 1967, at a time when India achieved 3.7% and 7.8% GDP growth rates in the respective years (see Table 5.6). China was now faced with a resurgent India. At the same time, India also found US encouragement in this context, given the US-China tensions on ideological grounds, manifested at the time through the Vietnam war. India broke ties with China thereafter.

The strained Sino-Indian relationship witnessed yet another border clash in 1975 at Tulung La. This time, the immediate cause was pinned at the erection of a stone-wall by

[*] A story covered by Vandana Menon and Nayanika Chatterjee for *The Print* (1 October, 2018) states that 200 Indian soldiers had died as against 300 on the Chinese side (URL: https://theprint.in/defence/remembering-the-war-we-forgot-51-years-ago-how-india-gave-china-a-bloody-nose/127356/). Ananth Krishnan writing for *The Hindu*, 14 July, 2020, pegs the number at 80 above for India and about 400 for China (URL: https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/forgotten-in-fog-of-war-the-last-firing-on-the-india-china-border/article31827344.ece).

[†] Yang Jisheng, the author of *Tombestone* (2008), notes in his book that though official record shows that 10 million people died in China within two years of the Great Leap Forward, most of which is referred to as 'three years of natural disasters' in the history books of today's generation, he claims the numbers are as high as 36 million.

China on the Indian side of the pass at Arunachal (Shukla 2020). Without overemphasizing the importance of such moves, it needs to be noted that border areas are often sensitive boundaries between states where infrastructure building, whether it be of a road, wall, fence or any other, becomes a symbol or pretext for territorial claims. This easily translates into a threat or challenge that can escalate into localized brawls or blown out conflicts, as happened in Nathu la and Tulung La. Therefore, it can be said that infrastructure has had an important impact on the China-India relationship, especially in the immediate context of their border conflicts. The geopolitical impact of ID is however a story of the 1990s onwards.

India had tested its nuclear devises for the first time in 1974. The next year, Sikkim attained statehood. China was left irritable by these events and perceived it as a challenge put up by India. Yet, dispute resolution post the Tulung La incident led to a diplomatic attempt to re-start relations between China (led by Deng Xiaoping from 1976, following the death of Mao Zedong) and India. The period of diplomatic cooperation gained some tempo in 1979 when the then External Affairs Minister (EAM), Atal Bihari Vajpayee, visited China (though he was recalled over questions on China's moves in Vietnam). This was the first official visit since 1960. Meanwhile, China, which followed an autarkic economic model based on self-reliance (*zìlì gēngshēng*/自力更生) moved towards opening up of the economy through its Four Modernizations[*] goal in 1978. Among other things, this enabled better engagement of China with other countries, facilitated China to join the IMF and WB by 1980, in turn pushing China into the New International Economic Order (NIEO). As China's development strategy changed, it's infrastructure diplomacy also picked up some pace, in Africa as well as in Asia. By then, India too had extended its support, albeit in sectors of trade and social development to smaller countries in hope of countering Chinese presence. For example, as John Garver brings out, India was deeply engaged in assisting Vietnam in the 1970s and 80s, at a time when China sought to overpower it during the Vietnam War (1987:1209). This added to the China-India rivalry in the region.

[*] It was a means to strengthen Chinese economy by focusing on agriculture, industry, defence and science and technology, in that order. The four modernizations goal was laid out originally by Zhou Enlai, but popularized by Deng Xiaoping as a precursor to the opening up phase that followed.

However, India had no option but to take China more seriously and attempt to better relationship with it. It was no smooth process. Glitches that occurred over the border issue again, left the China-India relationship oscillating between conflict and cooperation in the coming years. It is said that, since, by 1985 China had managed to make other robust infrastructural forays in areas from Xinjing to Tibet, the strategic significance of the Aksai Chin road may have reduced to some extent. China was not ready to bargain areas in the western sector anymore, in lieu of the eastern ones. Therefore, the 'package proposal' of the 1960s was withdrawn (Saran 2017:140). China instead challenged India in this regard. In 1986-87 a major standoff between the two militaries at Sumdorongchu took place in the eastern sector. The main cause is attributed to China's unease at India giving full statehood to Arunachal Pradesh in 1986. China was also not happy with the creation of the SAARC in 1985, a group where India stood out as the 'big brother' vis-à-vis other South Asian states. But the immediate cause, yet again, was to be found in infrastructure creation, this time India's protest at China building a helicopter base at a point called Le (Ibid.:139). This reaffirms the fact that China-India relations were often held hostage to infrastructure installations at the border. The need for diplomatic cool off was felt immediately. As a result, N.D. Tiwari as the Foreign Minister visited China, followed by Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in 1988 to ensure an 'ice breaking' event that was much needed. This enabled the 1990s to be a decade of cooperation and increased engagement between China and India.

1990s and the 2000s

As Surjit Mansingh notes (1994), 'normalization' of China-India relations were seen in the 1990s that involved the following:

> …exchanges of visits at the highest political level; regular interchanges among appropriate levels of officialdom; openings and opportunities for commerce, economic cooperation, joint business ventures, and general as well as border trade; non-confrontational dialogue at academic, cultural and intellectual for; and, it must be emphasized, an institutionalized mechanism in the Joint Working Group for working out confidence building measures and demarcation of the Line of Actual Control (LAC) on the Himalayan border, along which the governments agreed to maintain "peace and tranquility" without prejudice to their respective territorial claims on the disputed border. (1994: 285).

The 1993 Agreement on Maintenance of Peace and Tranquility at the border and the 1996 Agreement on Confidence Building Measures in the Military Field along the LAC were two monumental examples of willingness of cooperation between China and India. It certainly increased the engagement between the two. Increased interfaces also meant

increased competition however. Its infrastructural plans in its peripheral regions had started taking concrete shape, as seen in Myanmar for instance. If Pan Qi's article of 1985 can be noted as evidence of China's infrastructural outreach plans in Myanmar, the 1986 memo (Chanda 2021; Bhaumik 2021) that discusses the Kaladan Project can be cited as India's vision for the same. India had introduced reforms in the early 1990s under the leadership of Prime Minister Narasimha Rao. More importantly, India launched its Look East Policy hoping to increase engagement towards its east, where China had already found ground, through various regional and sub-regional forum such as UN-ESCAP, GMS and Kunming Initiative. These multilateral initiatives were discussing infrastructural and connectivity corridors in the Asian context and China was considerably invested in them. By then, China was also looked at as a rising power by the West, as the 'peaceful' rise of China narrative gained ground, only to be contested a decade later. For example, as Kishan Rana writes, "German decision makers had long been captivated by China, their top Asian priority" in the early 1990s (2016:6). India was thus left more insecure and was considered by the Indian elites as "the greatest potential threat to India's long term interests" (Grare 2017:3).

China's early liberalization bore fruits in the 1990s. India took steps to 'catch up' and mainly used the route of multilateralism. At the same time, that India's pace of ID in Myanmar and other states is slow and limited, is a fact to be acknowledged, along with the aspect that its ID is largely driven by multilateral initiatives and collaborations. India's outreach and diplomatic engagements with southeast Asia multiplied in the 1990s. For example, it became a sectoral partner of ASEAN in 1992, promoted to a full dialogue partner by 1995, meanwhile becoming part of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) where China too found space. It is to be remembered that by then, suspicion, mainly due to security partnerships that China maintained with smaller states around India's periphery, had begun to impact the China-India relations. The Coco Island incident mentioned in Chapter 4 is one of many examples of the security dilemma that developed. In fact, one of the reasons for the 1998 nuclear test by India was the presence of an 'overt nuclear weapon state on our border', i.e. the China threat (Vajpayee 1998)[*].

[*] Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee's letter to U.S. President Bill Clinton was leaked on 13 May 1998 and published in the New York Times.

The competition between India and China had begun to show clear signs in the geo-economic context as well. As Frédéric Grare writes, "since the 1990s, China had been the largest recipient of FDI in Asia, but several East and Southeast Asian countries were eager to diversify their investment and mitigate their risks", especially countries like Thailand and Singapore. These countries considered the geopolitical emergence of India to be more predictable than that of China (2017:9). India went ahead to sign Free Trade Agreements (FTA) with many countries by the 2000s — Thailand (2003), Singapore (2005), South Korea (2009), Malaysia, Japan (2011), etc. But China's economic growth was no less than phenomenal at the time and indeed paved the way for Beijing's growing clout in the region. China's GDP growth rate had bounced back to 14.2% by 1992. Most of this was a result of the growth in the industrial sector. Within over a decade China's rise was the focus of geopolitical calculations. By 2009, the manufacturing sector showed a growth of 48.6% of China's GDP (Panda 2010), when Indian industry still stood at a 23% growth rate even ten years later. But India was definitely part of the race that had begun. Especially as the global economic crisis engulfed the West in 2007-08, the rise of China and the economic robustness of India became examples for the world to see. Economics was the soft power of the time and China and India were taking the leads. The Asian Century seemed inevitable.

Table 5.6

GDP growth rates of China and India over time

Year	**China's GDP growth rate in %age**	**India's GDP growth rate in %age**
1961	-27.3	3.7
1964	18.2	7.5
1967	-5.8	7.8
1970	19.3	5.2
1980	5.1	6
1984	15.2	3.8
1992	14.2	5.5
2000	8.5	3.8
2007	14.2	7.7

2013	7.8	6.4
2017	6.9	7
2021	2.3	

Source: Compiled by the author from World Bank data

Revealingly, what became a concern was an almost asymmetric power competition between China and India. By then, India's emerging power status, particularly in the geo-economic context, was not exclusive. While China was referred to as the rising power of Asia, others such as Indonesia, Brazil, South Africa, Mexico and others were on an economic rise as well. This led for China-India to find certain common grounds in joining forums such as the BRICS or IBSA (India Brazil South Africa Trilateral Cooperation), in negotiating on the same side in the climate change regime, in forging strategic and cooperative partnership at a bi-lateral level with India in 2005. Yet, China's rise was becoming a problem, for India, and for others.

Writing in 2000, Bill Gertz stated that China would rise to a superpower level and pose a threat to other powerful states. The string of pearls theory by the mid 2000s underlined the reality of the China threat with empirical evidence around the region of the Indian subcontinent. Most importantly, these security threats were a result of Chinese increased strides in the infrastructure sector, pertaining to sea ports, energy pipelines and highways crisscrossing across Asia, leading to the mainland of China. The Maldives, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Pakistan became the grounds for China's geopolitical tactics carried out through infrastructure diplomacy. At the same time, China formed military, economic and strategic ties with the Central Asian Republics through the SCO. In fact, these connections that China built around India's neighbourhood were bearing fruits. For instance, at the SAARC summit of 2005 in Dhaka, India had to deal with the Nepali delegation who "held up consensus on admitting Afghanistan as the eight member of the organization, insisting that China should be admitted too" (Saran 2017:65). This was also backed by Pakistan and Bangladesh, each of whom had already received huge infrastructure investments from China (see Chapter 3). As a result, China became an observer member of SAARC that year. This is only the Asian part of the larger game, the rest being embarked upon by China in Africa all the way up to Europe and Latin America.

As shown in Chapter 4, India had begun to make ID strides at home and engaged in social sector infrastructure projects abroad. Coping with China looked unimaginable in the infrastructure game. The asymmetry between China and India in this context is a given. An added disadvantage was India's slow pace at achieving its targeted projects, which dented India's ID strides. Ananth Krishnan writes, "since China's tenth five-year plan (2001-05), Beijing had embarked on an ambitious push to build a road and rail network across Xinjiang and Tibet. A decade and a half later, it is almost complete, in stark contrast to India's slower border road building" (2020:199). Despite New Delhi being touted as the regional competitor to Beijing, at least as per a narrative of the West that looked at 'containing' China, India struggled to catch up, not only in the infrastructure context but also in some other sectors. If we consider trade relations for instance, by 2008 China became the highest trading partner of India, the reverse being far from reality. With President Xi Jinping in power and the BRI in place, the next decade threw far more challenges into the China-India relations as also to the great game that showed clear contours in the Indo-Pacific emerging as a new theatre of their geopolitical competition.

Last decade onwards

China's announcement of the BRI in 2013 has been one of the most monumental events in recent history. Among other things, what pushed China to venture into an all-encompassing infrastructural initiative such as the BRI was the fact that by 2010 it left behind the US to become the world's largest energy consumer. India is still estimated to occupy the number three position by 2030, leaving behind Japan and Russia (Eriksen and Sending 2012:30). The same goes with trade. In the last decade, China became the world's largest trading nation and largest trading partner for most countries. In fact, the asymmetric trade relations China has with not only India but also the US has become a cause of concern, especially since 2017 when a trade war broke out between China and USA. USA has already diverted its markets and supply chains out of China, to countries such as Vietnam, India and others.

India's Make in India initiative was targeted at attracting foreign investment and manufacturer, luring them away from China, as much as to instill a sense of domestic self-sufficiency. Yet, China's dominant position in the value chain is not easy to replace. In any case, this meant until China made new economic, energy and strategic partners

and acted on time to make physical arrangements for operating as the largest economy as it is predicted to be (see for example the PWC report mentioned earlier), it would not be able to harness much of its power. As far as energy is concerned, China has had a fear regarding the vulnerability of the Malacca route for most of its oil imports. The so called 'Malacca dilemma', a term that has been in vogue since 2003, has pushed China to explore alternatives. For example, the oil and gas pipelines running from Kyaukpyu (where China also built a port) to Kunming, has been explained in preceding chapters. Similarly, China has entered into various contracts with Russia, Central Asia, etc. China has also sought to facilitate better physical infrastructure for trade and development in some of the needier states, or so it is said. The port at Gwadar and Hambantota for example, are meant to enable increased trade for Pakistan and Sri Lanka respectively. Within its own territory, among the top ten busiest ports in the world, five are in China (Krishnan 2019:83).

The BRI has put China on the global map in one stroke of exceptionalism and made it an unrivaled infrastructure giant. What China managed to do through the BRI is to bring the scattered infrastructure investments and projects it already had into a structured and well knit mega vision (at least in appearance). This has catapulted infrastructure and connectivity issue into the agenda of foreign policies and IR studies. But the impact this has on the China-India relations is crucial. In a speech in 2016, former Foreign Secretary S Jaishanker said:

> We cannot be impervious to the reality that others may see connectivity as an exercise in hard-wiring that influences choices. This should be discouraged, because particularly in the absence of an agreed security architecture in Asia, it could give rise to unnecessary competitiveness. Connectivity should diffuse national rivalries, not add to regional tensions. (Panda 2018)

It was clear which country this message referred to. Despite such statements that hoped to encourage cooperation than competition, the reality looks different in relation to China. Since the mid 2000s, India's neighbourhood seems to fall into a Chinese fold, one country at a time. Slowly, but surely, New Delhi has begun to respond, making the competition between them, abetted by ID, more clear. The up gradation of the LEP into the Act East Policy in 2014 and its neighbourhood first policy are unilateral foreign policy moves that, as some put it, did not so much hope to balance China as much to contain it (Grare 2017: 6). On the other hand, debates about India's 'string of flowers' as a response to China's string of pearls found space in the public domain (Unnithan 2015).

Among others, evidences have been cited from Modi's Indian Ocean Region tour in March 2015. MoUs were signed to develop infrastructure projects in Agalega Island (Mauritius) and Assumption Island (Seychelles) where reportedly both airfields and port facilities will be build by India, giving it a strategic foothold in the Indian Ocean (Ibid.). The same month, the Union Cabinet approved the Sagarmala project that aims to develop India's long coastline and 14,500km of potentially navigable waterways and maritime facilities (Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways 2021a). This was in view of the fact that despite being cheaper, safer and cleaner, only 6% of the freight found its way through water borne transportation in India. Comparatively, water transportation was 47% of China's modal mix (Ibid.), indicating the advancement of Chinese waterways. The more relevant point is, at the Colombo International Maritime Conference in 2016, Sri Lanka's Prime Minister Ranail Wickremesinghe stated that Sagarmala is an advantage for the country, showing keen interest to join the India led programme (PTI 2016a).

This not only suggests the success of India's attempt at responding to China's strong hold but also its viability as a balancer and 'net security provider' in the region, especially as the maritime sector has grown manifold in importance. India's vision of Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR) is seen by many has enhancing India's role of a balancer against China in the Indian Ocean region. Further, because the policies under SAGAR are usually made functional through multi-lateral forums, be in BIMSTEC or ASEAN, India's proactive foreign policy has been useful. As it is, at a multi-lateral level, efforts have been visibly aimed at containing as well as balancing China's aggressive rise. The most obvious example being the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) resurrected by USA, Japan, Australia and India in 2017. It has since challenged China's dominance in the Indo-Pacific and the South China Sea without exclusively becoming an open military alliance yet (though with the formation of a new security forum, AUKUS in September 2021, that comprises of Australia, UK and US, the Quad turning into a military alliance is unlikely). That the Quad is speculated to be akin to an Asian NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) has made China irritable. Further, in 2017, the Japan and India led Asia Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC) was a direct counter to the BRI. The Blue Dot Network (BDN) more so, as it aims to caution against China's infrastructure bait in particular. India is also part of various infrastructure policy plans in

the region. The Comprehensive Asia Development Plan (CADP), a report submitted at the East Asia Summit in 2010 and upgraded in 2015 is a fitting example (ERIA 2015).

The survey conducted for this study (as mentioned in Chapter 2) asked a very simple question to a sample, that included 30 respondents. Question 10 of the questionnaire (see Annexure I) was aimed at finding out if experts could give their preferences as to which states have invested in infrastructure abroad with the aim to influence and achieve major foreign policy goals. The options given were as follows:

A) China, especially in the 21st century through BRI.
B) Britain during colonial times.
C) USA, both in the past through Marshall Plan, and today through many initiatives as a response to China's BRI in particular.
D) Japan, by investing in development and infrastructure, especially in Asia.
E) India, in joining multilateral efforts at building/financing infrastructure.

China emerged as the country that 50% of the people (14, out of 28 who responded to this question) thought of as their first choice among the countries that uses infrastructure to influence others and obtain its foreign policy goals. The US was a close second (9, out of 27 who responded to this question ranked it as their first choice). In contrast, Japan and India were not voted as people's first choice (except 1 out of 29 who ranked India as first choice), indicating that they did not feel either of these states indulged in investing in infrastructure abroad with any aim to particularly influence others. Nevertheless, the evidences of competition are clear today, no matter the motives.

Unlike China's open sway in the 2000s, the last decade has seen increased challenges and competition. The case of Myanmar has been a good example. The trend has picked up in other countries too, where China has witnessed backlash or challenges, mainly due to attempts at counter balancing China in the region. Countries are looking at options other than China. This has also provided states some increased agency to decide who gets what, where and how much within its territory. In Bangladesh for instance, India's National Stock Exchange (NSE) and US's Nasdaq lost a bid to the Chinese consortium of Shenzhen and Shanghai stock exchange to acquire 25% stakes in Bangladesh's largest stock exchange in 2018 (Bhandari and Jindal 2017). Yet, the coordinated warnings against China seem to have worked. Bangladesh kept China away by cancelling the deep-sea port at Sonadia that was under negotiation (Chaudhury 2020). Instead Japan (JICA)

is building a deep sea port at Matarbari, though it too has issues with the phase 2 financing of the coal fired power plant. Maldives is another country where the China-India tussle has had clear camps within the country itself. In 2012, an Indian company, GMR's contract to build an airport was scrapped and given to China's Beijing Urban Construction Group. Pro-China leader, Abdulla Yameen, came to power after overthrowing pro-Indian President Naseer in 2013. Maldives quickly became a part of the BRI. Chinese infrastructure projects flourished, such as the China-Maldives Friendship Bridge (2km built by China), expansion and upgradation of Velena International Airport (with USD830 million of Chinese money), acquisition of majority share of Trans-Maldivian Airways among others. Yet, Maldives was also quick to join the AAGC in 2017, the same year that three Chinese naval ships docked in Male, increasing Indian concerns. As evident from these example, infrastructure and connectivity projects have emerged as the niche area where competition has increased, in turn impacting overall relations between countries, China-India bi-lateral relations being no exception.

A peculiar feature of the China-India relationship developed in the last decade. Diplomatic exceptionalism marked by the desire to cooperate was attempted by both states, despite the acknowledgement of growing competition. Yet that cooperation has been outweighed by competition is almost an accepted fact. If we consider the border issue for instance, there is no doubt that infrastructure building has remained at the heart of border clashes earlier as well as in the recent past. In 2013, border provocations seen in Depsang, quickly de-escalated via largely diplomatic channels. This was followed by more diplomatic and cooperative move in form of the Xi-Modi meeting in 2014 at Sabarmati in Gujarat. The complexity of the relationship was visible when simultaneously another PLA incursion occurred at Chumar, this time caused by the PLA extending a road into the Indian side, as New Delhi claimed. Still, President Xi hosted Modi in Xi'an in 2015, in fact sidelining protocols to reach out to the Indian head of government, that too outside the capital city. By 2017, this oscillation between cooperation and conflict leaned much towards the latter when the Doklam standoff took place.

The Chinese complained that Indian army was obstructing 'normal Chinese activities' of constructing a road in Doklam, a plateau that India considers territory of Bhutan. By then

the BRI was inserted into the Chinese constitution with the aim to achieve the China Dream. The lines were clearly drawn out in the competition along ID lines. Though the innovative 'informal summit' at Wuhan and Mamallapuram that followed in 2018 and 2019 respectively helped keep the China-India relationship moderated, growing aggressiveness of China was a grave concern for India. This was proved during the Galwan valley clash, the most brutal since 1967, where 20 Indian soldiers died along with reportedly 43 casualties on the Chinese side (*The Times of India* 2020). What had changed the situation to turn so brutal?

One of the strongest explanations lies in the grit China developed as a result of power influence obtained through infrastructure diplomacy over the last decade. At an international level, the influence that China has achieved through the aegis of the BRI alone is itself the product of infrastructure diplomacy it deploys to achieve larger goals. In general, infrastructure diplomacy has helped China garner influence well. At a local level, as Ananth Krishnan writes, "China has already built a huge infrastructure network of highways, railway lines and airports across the Tibetan plateau" (2020:189). For instance, the Lhasa-Shigate railway line in Tibet was completed ahead of its schedule in 2015 within just four years (Ibid., 172). This may possibly see an extension all the way up to Kathmandu. In any case, Nepal, that usually finds itself squeezed between the international dynamics of China and India, has sought to break away from the 'big brother' cover of India and found itself giving larger space to China. This has happened due to China's ID moves with Nepal, something that stands in contrast with India. When the China-India infrastructure investment is compared, Shyam Saran's description of the on-ground reality suffices to understand the context. He writes:

> Travelling from the Nepali side to the Indian side is like driving from a more developed country to a less developed one… On the other side of Nepal, the Chinese have been busy building a number of highways from the Tibetan side into Nepal, all the way down to the East-West highway that traverses Nepal, hacking through high mountains and difficult terrain…In contrast, our plans to upgrade the existing highway and railway links between India and Nepal and create modern integrated check posts on the border have been on the agenda for years but we are bedeviled by a very slow process of implementation. (2017:171)

Such infrastructure diplomacy has no doubt helped China to gain some influence in Nepal. When Nepal challenged India's territorial claims in the Lipulekh area in May 2020, the Indian Chief of Army, General M. Naravane, commented that Nepal's surprisingly assertive behavior was at the 'behest of someone else' (Giri 2020). That, by this he meant China was backing Nepal was obvious. On the other hand, as regards

infrastructure and development projects that India has aimed to build in Nepal, it has faced issues of land claims and procurement as the laws and policies are not clear (Sinha and Xavier 2020).

China's, rapid infrastructure building along the border pushed India to do so on its part. India too has an enhanced pace of infrastructure building, especially along the LAC today. China in fact counter protests these, as visible through the 'Code of Conduct' issued on freezing Indian infrastructure along the LAC (Joshi 2020). Hence, the China-India relationship has been highly impacted more recently by infrastructure building at a local level along the dispute border and infrastructure diplomacy in a larger geopolitical great game brewing in their periphery.

If the BRI is considered as China's most valuable means to fulfil its vision for the 21st century, it has been also the most scrutinized one. It is not without reason that China's infrastructure investments are at times considered problematic by others. As the result of the survey discussed in this study shows (Q3 for instance), China's motives and actions through the BRI have made people cautious because it is clearly understood as a tool for influencing other states for achieving the Chinese interest. Yet, not many people wish to call it out as a strategic tool alone. Instead more people look at the BRI as a mix of both a strategic and a diplomatic tool that China uses to garner influence for itself, something that this study aims to underline. The use of infrastructure as a means of diplomacy has found weight through the BRI as well. To elaborate, an analysis of Q7 of the survey undertaken reveals some interesting results. The questionnaire put forth a statement that read — if the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is considered as a tool of expanding China's influence, in which category among the following would you place it:

A) Strategic tool, as it provides China with a clear measurable goal, within a set time frame, to gain dominance in the global world order.

B) Diplomatic tool, as the BRI gives China an upper hand in negotiating and discussing agendas of foreign policy with recipient host countries, without using hard means of influence.

C) Both in some measures.

D) None of the above.

60% of the respondents (18 out of 30) opted for C. 10% even opted for B alone, meaning they looked at the BRI not as a strategic tool at all, instead a diplomatic one that is useful

for the harness smart power in current times. Power as influence and smart power meant to operate in the interdependent world that is as complex, needs means that are equipped to handle a state's varied range of foreign policy issues. Infrastructure has surely emerged as one of such means. China has taken lead in this power struggle by investing in infrastructure. There is less option for others but to respond to this, India being among the most visible cases that need to do so.

Conclusion

China's rise has introduced structural shifts in IR. There is discussion on the increased bi-polarism today, as also of redundancy of a west-centric world order. When Donald Trump as President of USA declared his 'America First' policy, withdrew from multi-lateral forums and contracts such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), Paris Agreement, JCPOA, the swan song of American leadership was clearly heard. Added to this was the resurrection of China as the rising power with the tendency to challenge the status quo and dominate the region directly by making open threats (as seen in the South China Sea dispute with Phillipines) or indirectly by influencing through means such as ID. China has no doubt proposed or built some of the infrastructure development projects with a strategic aim in mind. There are multiple examples of China improving its military connections and affiliations with countries under the banner of the BRI. On 8 July, 2019, *Xinhua* reported that State Councilor and Defense Minister of China, Wei Fenghe, said "China is willing to deepen military exchanges and cooperation with the Caribbean countries and Pacific island countries under the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative" (*XinhuaNet* 2019). Such a comment holds true of Chinese intention and action for the countries along the Indian Ocean as well. As far as the Indian Ocean is concerned, more recently, Bertil Lintner reiterated his warnings about the 'string of pearls' theory of the mid 2000s and its impact on India. He claims that Chinese infrastructure building, especially strategic ports for developing its maritime power in this region, have emerged as China's 'costliest pearls' (2019). In this context, Myanmar shines as one of its brightest pearls indeed. As Shyam Saran puts it:

> There is no doubt that for much of Asia, but particularly South-East Asia, the dynamic of India-China relationship is a constant and running theme. While China may see itself as regaining what it believes is its historical primacy in the region, India views the future of Asia somewhat differently- a more multipolar Asia if you will, in line with its innate preference for a multipolar world order. Nowhere do we see a jostling for these two different approaches to the region than in Myanmar. (Bhatia 2014:xii).

China is a spatially large country with the largest population. Its power desires are clear and the means to achieve them are widespread, which include both hard and soft power. But India has gained ground as well, not only through its forays in building infrastructure projects, but in multi-lateral manoeuvers and economic upsurge. The IMF Report 2020 states, India will grow at a rate of 1.9% and China at 1.3% (while the US has a slowdown by 6%) (IMF 2020). India's significance in the Indo-Pacific region can be gauged thorough its activities via the QUAD grouping as well. Moreover, since the COVID pandemic originated from China, the defensive aggressiveness shown by Chinese diplomats to vindicate its position, the growing inquire into the lab-leak theory from Wuhan have all etched some clearer lines along which the geopolitical events are revolving, largely weighing down on China. In such a case, China has made some efforts to keep a balance and draw states into its fold. By late 2020 and early 2021, China already began spreading its goodwill and assistance to overcome this pandemic instilled crisis, albeit with some prevarications. Words such as 'health silk roads', 'COVID diplomacy' and 'vaccine diplomacy' have sought to supplement the talks on BRI and infrastructure diplomacy, which until recently were the only buzz words in the international arena. Yet, since such areas are the least strong points for China (there is also growing trust issues on Chinese vaccine and Chinese manufactured products across countries), Beijing's push for infrastructure diplomacy will remain intact in terms of its importance and impact. How India manages to balance or counter China, especially by increasing the pace, tempo and efficiency of its infrastructure diplomacy will indeed by interesting to observe and crucial for the geopolitics of great powers in the region.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

The geopolitical milieu of the 21st century has become increasingly complex. The rise of powers such as China and India, along with a few other Asian states considered as emerging powers, have drawn the international attention a great deal towards the East. Economic powerhouses have sprung up in the region that finds increased attention, as they in turn impact the global world order, until recently shaped largely by the West. Added to this has been the diminishing power of some of the erstwhile great powers from Europe and the inward-looking policies of the US, particularly heralded during the Trump Administration. The geo-strategic significance of the maritime domain has enabled the Indian Ocean littoral region to increasingly show dynamism that was visible across the Tran-Atlantic in the last century and before.

This dynamism has in the recent past been accentuated by the Chinese policies and actions in the international realm. China is considered as the rising power of the century that has managed to increase its geo-economic and geo-strategic footprints all across the globe. President Xi Jinping's aims of overcoming the 'century of humiliation' through the achievement of the Two Centennial Goals to achieve his 'China Dream' and these have already taken shape and gained momentum. Among other things, it is infrastructure investments, access to various resources through it and creating connectivity corridors that have helped catapult China onto the leading positions that it occupies at a global level today. The announcement of the BRI as a crisscrossing network of corridors, both land and maritime, is seen as the amalgamation of so much efforts China had been making since the early 1990s that hoped to propel it to a position similar to its glorified past — a time when the fabled Silk Roads were the arteries of trade and power, when the fleet of Admiral Zheng He voyaged through territories that is said to have been under China's command, when explorers of the likes of Marco Polo wished to know about the Oriental mystery that China was. Therefore, that China's rise in contemporary times had to take a path of its indigenous making was certain. The inclusion of the BRI into the CPC Constitution in 2017 along with the pronouncement of 'Xi Jinping's Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era' is Beijing's embracement of a changed international system where it sees and finds itself at the center of it all. In such a scenario, it is no surprise that infrastructure investments and connectivity projects by

China have been one of strongest means through which China has enhanced power for itself in the 21st century. If the colonial powers of the previous centuries made use of the railways, telegraphs and ports to influence the countries they governed, China has well understood the value of infrastructure building and rolled out its ubiquitous plans for the modern times through the BRI in 2013. In this context, Bruno Maçães writes:

> Connectivity (*wu tong*) projects are seen as a tool in the service of larger goals: The connectivity projects of the Initiative will help align and coordinate the development strategies of the countries along the Belt and Road, tap market potential in this region, promote investment and consumptions, create demands and job opportunities, enhance people-to-people and cultural exchanges, and mutual learning among the peoples of the relevant countries, and enable them to understand, trust and respect each other and live in harmony, peace and prosperity. (Maçães, 2019:43)

This is a benign perspective of the BRI and the multiple infrastructure projects undertaken by China. Not all concur with such a perspective however. Japan, the other Asian giant that has both the geo-economic and geopolitical might to rival China in the region is also an early starter when it comes to getting a grip on infrastructure as an important variable in IR. In fact, Japan was the first Asian country to master the high-speed railway technology as early as 1964. But, it is China that has taken a lead in this context, emerging as the largest exporter of the HSR technology across the world today. This is not as much a result of Japan falling behind due to its incapacity to keep up with China, as it is due to its disinterest in competing with China for regional dominance. Yet, the idea of a 'peaceful rise' of China that Beijing promotes began showing signs of hegemonic tendency and belligerence in diplomatic behaviour, creating suspicions of a 'China threat' instead. Japan has been drawn to respond to such geopolitical developments in the region more recently. What is also visible is Japan's willingness to partner with countries that share Tokyo's sentiments vis-à-vis China's exponential growth and its methods of international outreach. Among others, India has become a close partner in this regard.

India's economic growth has been an equally gripping story in Asia. As the South Asian leading state with a crucial position in the Indo-Pacific, it is India that has been projected as the balancer that allows the international system to maintain a status quo against the challenging Chinese revisionism. India is predicted to be the second largest economy with a GDP of USD42 trillion by 2050, right behind China standing at USD61 trillion (PWC report 2017). Besides China, India's growing leads in geopolitics further allows it to become an ontological ground for research in the field of area studies anchored on

Asia. The US push to India's established position in the great game brewing in the Indo-Pacific is a sign of the growing significance of India as China's immediate neighbor and competitor. No matter how modest, New Delhi has begun responding to Chinese strides in the region in their own game of infrastructure investments and garnering influence through it, both geo-economically and geo-strategically. For one, it has partnered with others such as Japan and USA in forming a counter narrative to the BRI via initiatives such as the Asia Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC) and the Blue Dot Network (BDN). Additionally, India has increased its infrastructural partnerships with countries in its neighbourhood including Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Maldives, Myanmar and others. An interesting issue area has thus come up in the international realm where power struggles are witnessed. It is the field of infrastructure that has found a niche for itself today.

In Asia, Chinese infrastructure projects and investments have been some of the biggest in many countries. Consider Laos for instance. Laos agreed to Chinese built HSR system in the country that is almost 50% the worth of its own GDP! The case of debt burden on Sri Lanka and Pakistan is well know. In the last decade, China began to focus on its peripheral regions. As a contiguous neighbor, Myanmar has been at the receiving end of Chinese infrastructural assistance since the early 1990s. However, China's aims to build seamless linkages via Myanmar up to the Bay of Bengal, at a time when the maritime domain has become so crucial, has gained focus and enthusiasm after the BRI. The interesting point however is that, the process of infrastructural engagement and Chinese moves are not as seamless as Beijing would have expected. In Myanmar alone, China has witnessed the halting of its USD3.2 billion Myitsone dam project and backlash against the Letpadaung mines project. Further, given the political upheaval in Myanmar that ensued in February 2021, China's ride to the Indian Ocean through Myanmar is not as smooth as it used to be in the 1990s and early 2000s. In such a case, does India have something to gain in lieu of the Chinese?

India through its up gradation of the Look East Policy (LEP) to the Act East Policy (AEP), its announcement of the Neighbourhood First Policy (NFP) and New Delhi's enthusiastic outreach that has been witnessed in the infrastructure sector as well makes Myanmar a pivot to much of its foreign policy aims, especially vis-à-vis China and ASEAN states. To be noted is the growing agency that Myanmar seem to have mustered for itself, more so because of the 'fall back' options it has today when it comes to

choosing foreign partners. This means, unlike in the past, neither India nor even China, which once seem to look at Myanmar as a 'vassal state', has a sweep over Burmese negotiations and resources for its own national interest. Both China and India therefore have had to make use of their soft power and diplomatic skills to make the best of what Myanmar has to offer.

In this context, various questions come to mind as we observe this power shift from the West to the East and as we begin to contextualize the importance of infrastructure in IR of the 21st century. To begin with, we are often found asking how it is that countries like China and India have grown exponentially and managed to move up the rungs in the international system marked by hierarchy? It is not that China and India are militarily the most powerful states in the world. Most would attribute this rise to the economic prowess of both states. Hence economic power comes out as an answer. Yet, what is meant by power itself has undergone major changes. How has the nature of power changed from the last centuries? As Jopseph Nye famously propounded the theory of soft power, understood and applied clearly from the mid-2000s, it becomes clear that hard power means alone are insufficient for states to increase their power positions and influence as explicated by the Realist School of thought in IR. The need for softer means becomes inevitable. In the 1960s and 1970s economic power emerged as what could have been called soft power means. But is economics too the right answer? Such puzzles, not novel of this study, leads us to the traditionally understood soft side of conducting inter-state relations and achieving foreign policy goals, the realm of diplomacy in IR. The need to focus on diplomacy and look at power as influence through diplomatic means comes out as pertinent.

The field of diplomatic practice has also evolved over time, as much as the concept of power has. From a traditional mode of diplomacy there has been a rise of multimodal or multi-track diplomacy that engages people and entities much beyond the Ambassadors and state representatives. Further, given that international relations have become rather complicated in an interdependent world, the issue areas of diplomatic engagements have proliferated. From economic diplomacy (ED) and development diplomacy (DD) there has been talks increasingly about an interrelated space termed and explained in this study as infrastructure diplomacy. Infrastructure diplomacy (ID) is not only the manifestation of the magnified significance of infrastructure in IR, as evident from the China story for

instance, but also that of how power as influence can be garnered in the complex interdependent world. It is the use of infrastructure for access to men, material and resources and the multi-pronged investments in the infrastructure sector, especially those that enhance connectivity and physical linkages which has become a source of power in international politics today. Having said that, it is then intriguing to consider the rise of China and India in Asia and their growing competition against the backdrop of their use of infrastructure diplomacy. It is such a field that the study aims to examine. If we accept the rise of infrastructure diplomacy today, what precisely do we mean by that and how is it different from other related issue areas of diplomacy, economic and development diplomacy for instance? How does China and India make use of ID in their geopolitical manoeuvres? Does the use of ID then impact the bi-lateral relations between China-India in Asia?

After a detailed study on the topic 'Infrastructure Diplomacy as a Tool for Regional Influence: A Case Study of Myanmar', a number of findings have come to the fore. Along with a summary of each chapter, the following pages will enumerate these findings of this study as well as leave a note on what could be a possible way ahead to approach some of the related questions to this study.

Summary and Analysis

It is an essential to glance through the gist of each chapter that forms a part of this thesis before highlighting the key findings. Against the backdrop given above, the Introduction to this thesis begins by laying the context of this study that looks at essentially two variables — infrastructure diplomacy and China-India relations. The case study of Myanmar is examined as the intervening variable which impacts each of the two main variables in some form or the other.

What is valuable at the beginning of this study is the literature review that has been thoroughly outlined under various headings. The first among them discusses the works related to 'diplomacy and the role of infrastructure in IR'. Besides traditionally known works by Hans Morgenthau and Henry Kissenger, some contemporary authors and books find space in the literature namely, G.R. Berridge, Kishan Rana, Ramesh Thakur, Andrew Cooper and Jorge Heine, the last three having co-edited the *Oxford Handbook on Modern Diplomacy* (2013) that has been very useful for this study. Importantly, there

is also detailed discussion on works that come under the genre of economic diplomacy and development diplomacy versus the growing number of articles that make use of the term infrastructure diplomacy within their title. This distinction is crucial to the essence of this study.

The second section of the literature review focuses on understanding the 'China-India interfaces for regional influence in Asia'. In doing this, various resources from China, India and other countries have been utilized to understand what the different narratives are when it comes to China's and India's engagements with foreign entities, both at a bi-lateral as well as multilateral level. With ASEAN for example, both states have sought to find means of collaborations thus paving the way for interacting and collaborating with many Southeast Asian states. Some books and articles that have been covered in this context include those by Amitav Acharaya, S.D. Muni and others. Similarly, but separately, another section looks through the writings that more closely gauge the bi-lateral relations between China and India. From experts like Neveille Maxwell, Minxin Pei, Srikanth Kondapalli, Swaran Singh and others, this section also covers various sources from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in China and the MEA in India which have been important primary sources for this research.

In any case, the literature on China and India is full of works from various corners of the world, as these two Asian giants have emerged as the leading nations of the 21st century and have begun to shape (or even change) the world order. What is found missing however is a substantial body of writing that hinges the China-India relations on their ongoing infrastructural forays in the region. Most works that cover India's view of the BRI for example look at the strategic disadvantages the 'string of pearls' built by China along India's maritime periphery causes for Indian security. To be sure, proliferating works exist that study China-India relations and interfaces in singular contexts, in so many countries where a race between China and India is visible. In the context of Nepal for example, Geeta Kochar and Pramod Jaiswal look at a triangular relationship that creates a complex situation in South Asia. Yet, the focus is not on infrastructure as the defining variable however, despite increasing space that infrastructure projects by China or even by India find in such studies. Expectedly, there are studies that study Japan and China in the infrastructure context, which also makes one realize that the reason for such a gap lies in India's incomparable infrastructure moves as compared to China's. The case

of Myanmar has been an exception in many ways however (see below). Additionally, the gap in the literature is clearly brought out in the context of theoretical and conceptual understanding of infrastructure diplomacy, often interchangeably understood as economic diplomacy or pipeline diplomacy and so on.

Over the years, there is a growing interest to study Myanmar in IR. This is well reflected in the two sections that cover the literature relating to 'Myanmar in Asian geopolitics' and 'China and India in Myanmar' with focus on infrastructure diplomacy. A lot of work that look at the China-India complex in Myanmar find increasing spaces comparing the infrastructure projects and their impacts on bi-lateral relations. To find readings and articles that enumerate, analyse and study the Chinese infrastructure investments are common. This is also because China has done much more on the ground that feeds the scholarly quests at various levels. India has done less, at least in the sectors covered under ID in this study. But surprisingly, there has been a lot of discussion about India's infrastructure forays in Myanmar and its interfaces with China. Thus, Myanmar appears to be a level playing ground for India as much as China today. A lot of this is a result of the momentum built in the larger context of India's Act East Policy indeed. During the course of this study, given the travel restrictions imposed by the COVID pandemic protocols and the lack of substantial field study thereafter, what has been useful is that most of the factual details needed for the analysis of the case study, touched upon in Chapter 4 and Chapter 4 in particular, have relied on secondary sources pertaining to such growing literature.

The Introduction chapter also clearly brings out the design of the research, including discussions over the research questions (dealt with later here) as well the methodology for the study. One important aspect of the research was the opinion and perspectives gained from experts via the explanatory survey as well as the interviews conducted. As noted, there has been problems emanating from the the restrictions created by the pandemic from 2020 onwards. Though a field trip to Yangon was fruitful to understand how diplomacy works (in the Indian context), what is the status of Indian projects in Myanmar, as well as observe first-hand the socio-physical infrastructure of the city and collect a few maps, pertaining to the Yangon city project pocketed by China in 2019, such a visit to Kunming and a few other parts of China were cancelled. As a result, the entire survey and most of the interviews had to be conducted online. Making use of online

tools and apps have nevertheless induced methodological shifts in research and taught important lessons to scholars to adapt to the digital age. No doubt, there is no replacement for site visits and real time travel, for the experiences such exercises provide allows the collection of more than factual data. Yet, the time and money saved as a result of online interviews and surveys is a trick for the future.

Chapter 2 is a theoretical examination of definitions, concepts and opinions (through survey). It begins with the observation about the changes in notions of power and also diplomacy in an interdependent world of the 21st century. What is highlighted through the lens of complex interdependent theorists like Joseph Nye and Robert Koehane is that interdependence is different from an inter-connected world. In the former, power has more meaning as influence over outcomes than power through hard resources. This leads us to power as influence garnered by using soft power means, particularly through the use of diplomacy. Now, what those soft power means are, have evolved with time as well.

Just as there are a range of ways in which diplomacy is practiced through different modes — from traditional G2G ways to multi-track ones (as elaborated by the Institute of Multi Track Diplomacy), from a 'club' kind to a 'network' kind — there are also a variety of different issue areas that have found place in international agendas for negotiations and discussions. From economic and development matters that were focused on as important issues under the ambit of diplomatic discussion and practice from 1960s and 1970s, to matters of environment and energy that found increased space from the 1980s onwards, there is growing importance on infrastructure investments and projects in diplomacy today. It is not that talking and negotiating about infrastructure is altogether new.

When economists like A.O. Hirschman wrote about investing in the Social Overhead Capital (SOC) sectors as crucial for economic growth, when W.W. Rostow highlighted the need to build robust infrastructure for economic take off, the idea was to make infrastructure, both social and connectivity, essential for economic growth and development. Similarly, infrastructure has been discussed in the subject of New Economic Geography (NEG), extensively covered by Paul Krugman and others since the 1990s. Yet, what is unprecedented is the desire and discussion between countries to build/invest in infrastructure, especially related to forming physical linkages and

connectivity, with no clear intention of strengthening economics alone or transferring energy resources alone. Mirroring the paraphernalia of the times, infrastructure has emerged as a crisscrossing field that encompass the areas of economics, development, energy and many others all at once or selectively so, depending on diplomatic intent or national interest of states. Infrastructure on its own has found a great deal of attention as a variable in IR today.

While the idea of ID has been boosted due to China's implementation of the BRI, the concept of ID, as yet under process of theorization, is more than what China has to offer. Infrastructure diplomacy has been understood in this thesis both as 'a process', of negotiations over and discussions on infrastructure between countries, and as 'an opportunity', that enables host and recipient states to engage with each other depending on what is demanded by either or both. As such, unlike what is commonly understood, i.e. that China uses ID to influence through its infrastructure projects, this study reveals that, additionally, even smaller and less powerful states can equally indulge in ID with advantages found over host states if there is crucial resource they can offer or increasing fall back options to rely on, as larger number of states practice ID today.

There are still some critical concerns highlighted in Chapter 2 which are important to keep in mind. As the explanatory survey detailed out in the chapter reflects, there is no clarity on infrastructure diplomacy as yet. Largely, experts still consider it as nothing broader than what already exists, in the form of ED or DD, and is often found being interchangeably used with these concepts. Further, it is often seen as simply an addition to jargons such as pipeline diplomacy, debt-trap diplomacy and so on which find mention frequently in the BRI context. Especially since negative connotations have become attached with the BRI (debt-trap and cheque-book being most common), ID finds itself being seen under biased light therefore.

A meaningful takeaway from such deliberations has been to ask oneself — how important is it to distinguish and establish a separate issue area in diplomacy termed as ID? The answer is simple. Most issue areas of diplomacy are inter-linked and mutually reinforcing which cannot be seen as absolute distinct categories. As long as ID is recognized as a niche issue area that requires special expertise and attention, it may fall within the sub-category of another concept (say ED) or may be considered as having

ramifications in form of other sub-categories (say pipeline diplomacy). What is essential is to understand that ID has developed distinct features today. As it covers projects with high stakes in most cases, it also requires expertise that are specialized, in turn making ID a niche area in itself.

Chapter 3, titled 'Use of Infrastructure Diplomacy by China' provides a detailed examination of how Chinese diplomacy has evolved to have infrastructure as so important within its foreign policy goals and about how China has managed to influence states, especially through the BRI in the last decade. Written in the form of a historical narrative, the first few pages of the chapter help understand why, due to its experiences at the hands of colonial powers and its own policies that crippled China's economy and state in the 1960s and 70s, infrastructure was considered essential by China for its national interest. But does China make use of ID? From the charm diplomacy of Zou Enlai in the 1950s, to ping-pong diplomacy (with the US in the early 1970s) to panda diplomacy and public diplomacy, China has more lately invoked the idea of peripheral diplomacy that puts its neighbours at the center of Chinese diplomacy. Yet, since President Xi understood and acknowledged the importance of infrastructure by not only announcing the BRI but also inserting it into the CPC constitution in 2017, there is no doubt ID has emerged as a niche area in Chinese international negotiations too. No matter whether the Chinese officially consider infrastructure as a separate issue area in their diplomatic agenda or not, ID has emerged as a useful means in the Chinese diplomatic tool kit.

How China has used ID and influenced states is elaborated through various accounts of Chinese projects and an in depth analysis of the implications of the BRI on China's power of influence, whether directly, indirectly, ideationally or practically. Borrowing from secondary literature on the subject the chapter also examines some of the clauses of China's bi-lateral financial infrastructural assistance vis-à-vis multi-lateral ones, under ADB, WB, AIIB etc. One part of the case study is taken up in the last part of the chapter, under the heading 'China's infrastructural forays in Myanmar'. Besides enumerating the various Chinese projects through the decades, with the help of tables, maps and images, the section sets the tone for the holistic assessment of the case study found in Chapter 5. Meanwhile, the Indian corollary of this is detailed in the last section of Chapter 4 titled 'Infrastructure Diplomacy and India'. The Chapter has an approach that is different than

the previous one. This is reflective of the fact that India, unlike China, has lesser projects and until recently, was not among the states deeply involved the field of ID. The status is slowly changing however.

In the early years since independence, India was in no position to focus on ID, which requires relatively larger stakes as mentioned, with external partner. India's economic diplomacy took off early with Nehru focusing on creating infrastructure within the state. That ED was encouraged is evident from the separate Economic Division established within the MEA structure by 1964. Eventually, New Delhi engaged with states in Asia and Africa, to build social and developmental infrastructure, that remains the the core of India's ID practice even today. From the 1990s onwards, India's impetus to build linkages with its neighbouring countries was reflected through multi-lateral forums, be it the Kunming Initiative or its efforts through the LEP. In the 2000s, as a result of Chinese infrastructural footprints across their peripheral region, India found an external pull to do more in the context. This has gained momentum in the last decade as India has found itself leading infrastructure initiative such as the AAGC, BBIN, TAPI project etc. What is brought out through this chapter, and stated as something distinct from the China story, is the fact that even since the 2000s when India's ID found external 'pulls' to drive its foreign engagement in the infrastructure sector, it also indulged in ID at a domestic level through many policies and program built to make India a country with robust infrastructure. To reach out to its East for example, the NER was to be linked substantially with the neighbouring states to fulfil even its economic goals. Besides, India launched many infrastructure policies at home with the aim to make its highways, port facilities and airways more efficient to complement its growing ID abroad. Therefore, India found a 'push' from within, at a domestic level to conduct ID. Japan has been a reliable partner in India's ID both at a domestic level, driven by a push factor and international level, driven by many pull factors.

Though India's ID has a feature of focusing on development projects more than connectivity projects, there have been incremental exceptions. Myanmar is a prominent one. India's Kaladan Multi-modal Transit and Transport project in Myanmar and its involvement in the Asian Highway project in the country has been covered in details, along with many others, where infrastructure has been at the center of initiatives. Further, Myanmar, in the China-India context has been discussed again in Chapter 5. The last of

the chapters, it is rooted in assessment of the case study in its first half. The second half however delves into China India bilateral relations since its early days, to show how, very simplistically put, it has been fluctuating within the 4Cs framework i.e. cooperation, convergence, competition and conflict. On juxtaposing the China-India relations, which forms the dependent variable of the study, over ID as the independent variable, it is revealed that the relationship has moved from cooperation and convergence to competition and conflict in recent times. The border dispute for instance, has been raked up time and again over infrastructure build up on each side, no matter what kind it is. No doubt that bi-lateral relations between the two countries are much more complex and are difficult to analyse through the use of any one variable. However, as noted, since infrastructure in IR today has the flexibility to touch upon many aspects from economics to energy to strategy and so on, it can be justifiably considered as one of the most important variable to study the China-India relations. Especially as China has made it clear how important BRI is to them, and India has drawn its lines to disagree and even support alternate options, it matters how scholars study the role of infrastructure in this and examine the so far superficially used idea of ID to see if there is scope to alter the China-India relations through more diplomatic means during complex times.

Answering the Research Questions through the Findings

At the beginning of this study there were five questions laid out before us. The answers to them have been enumerated below through the findings.

The first question asked was — What has been the role of infrastructure and connectivity projects in international relations? The answer can be largely found in Chapter 2. Infrastructure has been a vital part of inter-state relations from colonial times and even before. The importance and significance of railways and telegraphs for the British Raj is documented through a vast pool of literature. In this study for example, among others, the work of Daniel Headrick has been cited (1981). The author has written about the 'The Tools of Empire' the British made use of, to rule and to influence its colonies. Similarly, the French in Indochina built highways, canals, bridges and other infrastructure to fulfil their national interest and even export their culture to this part of the world. With the advent of the BRI, the role of infrastructure in IR has found focus and relevance like never before. That most of the non-Chinese experts on the BRI consider it as a tool of

influence, has started a debate on the importance of proliferating infrastructure based initiatives around the globe in the geopolitical, geo-economical and geo-strategic context.

The second question asked was — Can we observe the rise of a niche issue area in diplomacy that can be termed as 'infrastructure diplomacy', distinct from established concepts such as economic diplomacy and development diplomacy? The answer is a bit complicated. Through this study, it can be concluded that as a result of increasing jargons pertaining to infrastructure, such as debt-trap diplomacy, rail diplomacy, pipeline diplomacy, as well as pertaining to other issue areas, such as vaccine diplomacy, COVID diplomacy (in the context of health diplomacy) and so on, the importance and need to recognize ID as an emerging diplomatic means is lost. Also, given that ED and DD are established issue areas of diplomacy with similar sub-fields and jargonistic proliferation, the need to outline another distinct area named ID appears unimportant in most cases and hence ignored by most experts. At best, ID is seen as a sub-part of ED or DD. However, there are a rising number of articles and works that make use of the term infrastructure diplomacy today, no matter how loose and restricted it may be. This is indicative of the importance and scope that ID has in the 21st century.

As such, infrastructure diplomacy has emerged as a niche area being discussed and considered, but only superficially. Most of the works that talk about ID revolves largely around the Chinese projects of BRI. This has led the term ID to slip into a negative light more often than not. Therefore, due to the ambiguity and biased notion of the term, there is no official use of such a field called infrastructure diplomacy in the diplomatic missions of China, with which the term is repeatedly linked, or India or any other. The important take away is that, there is awareness about the rise of ID. It has become fashionable to even talk about ID. But how should it be defined and understood is left unattended. This study suggests that if ID as a term is not defined and its features not identified at an early stage when it is multiplying in its usage, there will only be more confusion in practice in the future. On the other hand, if it is made conceptually strong, it can be used to garner more than just influence. Once ID is defined and well understood, the expertise needed for conducting ID is identified, the stakes involved in ID is assessed, it matters least if it is seen as a sub-part or super-part of ED and DD. What matters then is to make use of ID by states, big or small, as an issue area that touch upon other sectors too, be it economy, development, energy, etc. as these are mutually reinforcing concepts.

The third and fourth questions can be considered in tandem. It asks — Has ID emerged as a tool in contemporary times through which countries seek to assert influence, regionally and globally? If so, how are China and India, the two Asian giants, making use of infrastructure diplomacy and how is it impacting their bi-lateral relationship? No matter the theoretical confusion that surrounds ID, it does not negate the importance of ID as a useful tool of influence as well as inter-state engagements in contemporary times. It has become a niche area, access to and control of which enables a state to garner soft power for itself in the form of influence. Additionally, it also allows a state access to resources and strategic aspects of geopolitics, thus having the potential to convert influence into hard power gains. If power is understood as influence as explained by the complex interdependent theorist, it becomes necessary, from a realist point of view, for states to enter the field where such power competition is taking place. Countries are continuously discussing and negotiating over infrastructure where each party stands a chance to influence if it has something bigger to offer in creating infrastructure. This provides influencing power, as seen in the case of Chinese financing of infrastructure projects. In the context of this study however, there are differing results found in the case of China and India when it comes to them using ID for influence in their peripheral regions.

If issue areas of diplomacy are considered as overlapping fields, India's infrastructural forays has been aligned with DD more than ED, with social infrastructure more than connectivity infrastructure. This is slowly changing as India is now enthusiastically involved with many infrastructure projects related to connectivity and forming physical linkages that remain the focus of this study. It can also be noted that India's influencing power is less than that of China's because of two reasons. One, India indulges in ID more at a multilateral level than bi-lateral, in major cases that include Japan. This takes away from India's power to influence to some extent, depending on what position India holds within a group among other partners. Two, India's record at a bi-lateral level to influence through ID has suffered in many cases due to delay in project completion. This has been obvious in the case of Myanmar for instance. It can also be acknowledged that India's objectives to influence is more limited as compared to China's. As it is found, in India the chance of the term infrastructure diplomacy being accepted and incorporated as a distinct issue area is much higher than the same happening in China. The encouragement

of the term at higher levels is rather surprising despite the ambiguity attached to it. Table 6.1 enumerates the difference between ID of China and India.

China has shown no sign of associating diplomacy with its all-encompassing infrastructure projects, especially through the BRI. Yet, that it does practice ID covertly, as defined in this study, most certainly to gain influence at a regional and global level, is beyond doubt. This has pushed India to respond to the Chinese moves in the peripheral region. Due to infrastructure as a key variable and the pursuit of ID by both, the China-India bi-lateral relationship has become competitive. What can be added in the context of the border issue between the two is that, though infrastructure has created competition among them and even led to conflicts, reversely, the lack of diplomacy over infrastructure between them has caused the decline of the situation at the border many times. Therefore, it is not only ID that has impacted the China-India bilateral relationship to be a competitive one, but it is also the lack of ID between them that has led to conflictual behaviour at the border. There is potential to build the case of ID in search of collaboration and cooperation in times to come. Table 6.1 given below enumerates the difference between ID of China and India.

Table 6.1

Comparison of ID by China and India

	China's ID	**India's ID**
Overlapping issue area	Most infrastructural projects are economically oriented. Thus ED remains overlapped with ID	Largely engaged with infrastructure projects that are developmental and social. Thus, DD remains overlapped with ID
Influencing power	More, as a result of its financing capability in most cases. Intention to influence remains an objective.	Less, since India's financing capability is limited and often multi-lateral. Intention to influence is low and not a major objective. Providing an option against China remains an objective in most cases.
View on the terminology of ID	Distances from using diplomacy as a means of obtaining infrastructure goals. The likelihood of the term ID being officially used is very low.	No official use of the term, though tendency of ID being adopted officially is high.

Source: Author

The last question asked was — With the eastward thrust of India towards Southeast Asia and the southward thrust of China towards the Indian Ocean, does their infrastructure diplomatic engagement in Myanmar as an intersecting point, have any impact on their relationship, individually or bi-laterally? The simple answer to this question is that it does have an impact on their bi-lateral relationship in Myanmar. It has an even greater impact on the geopolitics of the region. At a bi-lateral level, two incidents can be treated as evidence that growing infrastructure build up by each in Myanmar makes their relationship competitive. One is the security concerns caused by the Coco Island incident in the early 1990s when China had already begun exploring port facilities around the Indian Ocean, especially in Myanmar. Second is the PetroChina deal that Myanmar handed over to China in 2005 after delays on the Indian (and S. Korean) side. This adversely impacted India's chances of transferring back gas from the A-1 block at a relatively low price. In any case, by the mid-2000s the string of pearls theory was based on China's strategic moves in the Indian Ocean by making use of port infrastructure that Beijing either controlled or influenced. China began to expand its projects in Myanmar by adding a gas and an oil pipeline from its port at Kyaukpyu, by announcing a SEZ in the area and interlinking railways that created direct connectivity from its access point in the Bay of Bengal all the way up to Yunnan, which has already become a crucial frontier province on China's southwest. All this led to a security dilemma for India, increasing suspicions and competition between China and India in the region.

India began planning its KMTTP project, among other things to be able to lure Myanmar away from the Chinese grip. By 2017 the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue was resurrected mainly as a result of China's aggressive claims in the Indo-Pacific, many of which were hinged on infrastructural outreach strategies by China. When the BDN was announced, it became clear that not only did infrastructure increase competition between China and India but also other players, including the US and Australia. At a narrow level, India's AEP appeared to be New Delhi's attempt to boost its relations with countries in the East. Myanmar became even more important, especially as some infrastructure projects with high stakes were planned in Myanmar. The problem was that, when India began to fall behind its scheduled projects, Myanmar shrugged because of the option that they have had for decades — China, besides growing foreign partners showing interest to pocket infrastructure projects in the country, be it Japan, Singapore, Thailand or S. Korea. It thus led to Myanmar becoming more important as a strategically located,

democratically transitioning, resourceful country in Asia, a level playing field for a geopolitical tussle in Asia indeed.

As regards Myanmar's individual relations with China and India, here too ID can be said to have played a role. Myanmar's agency has grown due to its ability to conduct ID with interested partners. If it was ID by China in Myanmar in the 1990s and 2000s that helped Beijing develop close relationship with Myanmar, it has been the recent infrastructural forays by India (through LEP and AEP), that aim to connect with its eastern neighbour better, which has made their relationship stronger and the stakes higher. India's very carefully crafted statements to handle the February 2021 coup that enfolded in Myanmar has been read as New Delhi's concerns vis-à-vis its infrastructure projects in Myanmar. Unlike India's open condemnation of the trampled processes of democracy in Myanmar the late 1980s and 90s, ID has impacted the way bi-lateral relation between the two countries are being defined. Similarly, Myanmar's ID with China has become more even today than in the past. ID thus is a very important variable that has shaped relationships between countries and impacted the geopolitical milieu of the peripheral regions.

Through these answers, the three hypotheses laid down stand validated. It is true that ID has emerged as a niche foreign policy tool used by states largely to assert influence. It is justified to say that the bilateral relationship between the two emerging powers in Asia, China and India have become more competitive due to their infrastructural forays around its peripheral regions. Moreover, because Myanmar has become that one state where even India finds a level playing ground to indulge in ID via-a-vis China, their inter-state relationships have indeed been impacted by the way ID is conducted amongst China, India and Myanmar.

Tailpiece

Rita Choudhary, an Assamese novelist, narrates a very interesting story in her critically acclaimed book *Makam*. Rooted in true events, she writes about the Chinese people who were brought to northeast India in the 1800s, as tea plantation workers and as builders. She brings out the horrors of the 1962 India-China war and its impact on the lives of such people whose succeeding generations had been Indianized, whose Indian spouses gave them children no less Indian by citizenship, yet no less Chinese by ancestry. Their identities were shaken overnight with the calls of evicting of the 'Chinese' from India in

1962. What unfolded is a series of events that led to separation of families from one another and the painful deportation of the Chinese to their lands where even the language seemed unfamiliar to them. Today, few Chinese families still live in the town of Makam in the Assam-Arunachal border. The rest have left. But what remains are the old buildings, colleges and libraries that the Chinese built in various towns. One paragraph from the book is translated below:

> My father had told me that Chinese workers had built most of the old bungalows in Assam. The zamindar's house in Gauripur, the District Commissioner's house in Guwahati, Cotton College, and wherever there are good wooden bungalows are all made by Chinese workers. (Choudhary 2010: 176)

The Chinese were the builders then. The Chinese are builders now. The only difference is, China was made to build for their colonizing masters then, but China has mastered to build and mould the world on its own terms in the 21st century. Chinese capabilities are not limited to social infrastructure, but those that link countries together via land, air or water. It is one of the major reasons for the rise of China, a spectacle for all to see, made visual by the BRI. India, by comparison has focused on building social infrastructure instead of physical ones. Over the year though, India has evolved to focus on building physical connectivity as well, largely through multilateral initiatives. This has been driven by the need to respond to the BRI, largely, if not entirely so. India's position in the power competition against China is increasingly dependent on how it manages to balance China. While economically both states are compared as the shapers of the Asian Century, a lot of how much they do so together matters on their infrastructural engagements. The need to prioritize infrastructure as a variable in IR in general and ID as a niche area of interactions between China and India has become a very crucial way forward.

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ANNEXURE - I
Details of Survey conducted and Questionnaire
Time: September 2020 to February 2021
Medium: Online through app called Survey Monkey

Q. What according to you is the closest and most practiced understanding of diplomacy in the 21st century? Rate in order of preference:

a) Diplomacy is a way to maintain interaction with other states and find means of cooperation. This traditional understanding remains most important even today.

b) Diplomacy is a soft power means. It is increasingly becoming a tool of influence to further national interest.

c) Diplomacy is (not a tool of influence but) a tool of negotiation in foreign policy.

d) I believe diplomacy is a combination of these options, depending on the circumstance. Yet, the best combination could be:

Comment:

Rate your preferences in order:

Q. Do you think building/funding for roads, railways, pipelines and other infrastructure projects enable a country to gain influence in a host country?

a) Yes. Because:

i) It helps the donor country gain direct access to people, goods and resources of the host country, which then definitely translates into influence through soft power at its disposal.

ii) Infrastructure sector is itself one of the main arteries of growth in the 21st century and investment in it provides an upper hand to the donor country while pursuing its foreign policy with a host country.

iii) Both

iv) State any other reason

b) No. Because:

i) Even though it helps improve connectivity and increases interaction at various levels, it does not automatically translate to having a means of influence over the donor country.

ii) Building/funding infrastructure projects on its own has no advantage in terms of influence in the 21st century. Inter-relations between states are more complicated and has many facets.

iii) Both

iv) State any other reason

c) May be

Q. Notwithstanding official formulations and pronouncement, in which category among the following would you place China's diplomatic practice in the 21st century: Rate in order of preference

a) Major power diplomacy
b) Peripheral diplomacy
c) Economic diplomacy
d) Infrastructure diplomacy (ID)
e) Other

Order of preference:

Q. If the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is considered as a tool of influence by China, in which category among the following would you place it:

a) Strategic tool, as it provides China with a clear measurable goal, within a set time frame, to gain dominance in the global world order.

b) Diplomatic tool, as the BRI gives China an upper hand in negotiating and discussing agendas of foreign policy with recipient host countries, without using hard means of influence.

c) Both in some measures.

d) None. It is not a tool of influence

e) Any other State any other :

Q. Is there a niche practice emerging in the foreign policy conduct of China, particularly after BRI, that can be termed as 'infrastructure diplomacy'?

a) Yes
b) No
c) May be

Q. Which of the following statements do you think is most apt to understand a concept termed as Infrastructure Diplomacy? Rate in order of preference:

a) ID is an emerging new practice area in foreign policy conduct of states. It is evolving distinctively from economic diplomacy.
b) ID is nothing but a new garb of conducting economic diplomacy, at best a sub-part of it.
c) Economic diplomacy is becoming a sub-part of ID.

Q. Rate in order of preference, the major powers among the following, which according to you have attempted/is attempting to achieve foreign policy goals by investing in infrastructure abroad.

a) China, especially in the 21st century through BRI
b) Britain during colonial times
c) USA, both in the past through Marshall Plan, and today through many initiatives as a response to China's BRI in particular.
d) Japan, by investing in development and infrastructure, especially in Asia
e) India, in joining multilateral efforts at building/financing infrastructure

f) Others

ANNEXURE - II
Telephonic Interview with Ambassador Rajiv Bhatia
Date: 17 September, 2020. Time: 12:30pm IST
Purpose: Primary research for PhD on the topic 'Infrastructure Diplomacy as a Tool for Regional Influence by China and India: A Case Study of Myanmar'

Interviewer, SB: During your posting in Myanmar as India's Ambassador, did you have to interact with Chinese diplomats at any point in your official capacity? If yes, what were the conversations about?

Interviewee, RB: Yes, it is very much expected of diplomats to interact with other country's diplomats all the time in formal, semi-formal and even personal occasions. When they meet each other, they discuss the world, and almost everything, not specifically that country alone.
I always kept in touch with Chinese diplomats. Firstly, they represent an important country. Secondly, you need to be aware of what they are doing in the country of your posting. Of course you also have to keep influencing them, informing them as to what you are doing and how you are doing.

Coming to Myanmar, I served there as the Indian Ambassador from 2002-2005. It was an important and critical period and the importance of it was reflected in our conversations. In the previous decade China was the only country which dealt with Myanmar on a full range of issues. China was the only friend of Myanmar. The rest of the world had ostracized Myanmar because of the democracy movement. Since the fall of General Ne Win in 1988, it was very clear that Myanmar was friendless. So, always discussion with the Chinese related to what they were doing and how they were looking at Myanmar. Obviously, on the basis of reciprocity you had to share with them your world view.

I remember very well two particular aspects. One, that the Chinese Ambassador in Yangon in my time was a very senior member of the Central Executive Committee of the Communist Party. He was not an ordinary career diplomat. He had access to the highest political levels in his country, so conversations with him were always very authentic and useful. He didn't speak English and I didn't know Chinese. So there was always a person who would translate for us and that way we talked to each other. Whether it was a large banquet or a one to one lunch, there was always a translator. But I found Chinese diplomats always friendly and communicative and we got along very well and learnt from each other. Secondly, it was the foreign minister of Myanmar who had told me that for his government two countries were of special importance — China and India. Therefore, the tradition was, when the new Ambassadors of these two countries arrive, the Foreign Minister hosts an exclusive lunch for the Ambassador and the spouse, so that they could feel especially welcomed in Myanmar. He gave me that honour too. That explains how in Myanmar's world view, China and India were very very important in that era.

SB: Since you mentioned that at times you had to influence your Chinese counterpart regarding India's policies or positions, was there any particular incident when you have had to do that?

RB: Essentially this was the period from 1988 to about 2000 when China's task was really ascendant in Myanmar, as I said, the only friend of Myanmar. But in the following decade, which is 2000 to about 2011, things changed. This change was primarily led by India as it introduced a change in its policy. It was done a few years earlier, but the change began to create an impact around the time Ambassador Shyam Saran went there, followed by me. The change was that Myanmar began to understand that for the sake of creating certain balance in its foreign policy, it should open up to India more. India was seen as the supporter of democracy which was willing to do business with the military regime, whereas China was the time tested friend of the military regime. So I can say very clearly that India-China diplomatic conversations very much related to how the Chinese viewed changes in the second decade and naturally how India looked at the entire democratic constituents and its future prospects. It was very clear that the Chinese regarded India as a very respectable competitor for the quest for influence in Myanmar. Just as China was a neighbour, so was India. China had a history of relationship. But probably India had even a longer history, and unlike China, India was seen by almost every Burmese as the land of Lord Buddha and his nirvana. Therefore, India had a special place there and the Chinese recognized it.

SB: Can you share your observations about how China conducted its diplomacy in Myanmar at the time? Were there any particular Chinese protocols that were different from other countries, which stood out in your view?

RB: I cannot recall anything specific. But I know that it was not such a high profile practice of diplomacy as it became later. I think it was in third decade that Chinese diplomacy became more people oriented and more technology oriented. They then went to reach out to the public opinion in Myanmar, because by then they were probably moving into a bigger direction. But at the same time, an era when they also had to face competition from several other sources of friendship for Myanmar. During the second decade, when I was there from 2002-2005, Chinese did a lot of things quietly. They had many links with the ethnic communities, they had their links with the corporations backed by the Myanmar military and certainly their own ties with the Burmese of Chinese ethnicity. But it was done relatively quietly.

SB: You had previously been quoted that the involvement of China in the Coco Island incident in the mid 1990s was misplaced. Can you throw a little light on the incident and what had happened then?

RB: It's a fairly old episode now. I suppose barring academics and few experts, others may not be terribly interested in it anymore. But the fact is that, for a long time, countries that were not very happy with China-Myanmar close friendship in the first decade, their agencies played up this projection in a big way that certain parts of Myanmar have been used for setting up a foreign military installation. This was cited in a way to say that Myanmar therefore should be totally neglected and un-friended. But while media went on with the story, slowly it began to emerge that the reality was different. Myanmar followed a policy, even during the times of the military regime, of opposition of military bases on its territory. It never compromised on that policy. Slowly it became clear that it was more an episode to discourage Western countries and India from forging some kind of a new relationship with Myanmar. However, that was a different era altogether. Developments subsequently made it clear that Myanmar may have closer economic, infrastructural, developmental partnership, even military cooperation with China. But it is a country which is firmly opposed to foreign bases on its territory as a matter of policy.

SB: What are your views on India developing the roads leading up to the Stilwell road? Do you think it could be a good way to reach out to trading route going up to Yunnan or do you feel the cost, both security and economic, is unviable?

RB: This is also a perennial issue on the India-Myanmar agenda with a lens on China. But with developments in 2020, specifically on 15-16 June night when PLA killed 20 Indian army men, including a colonel, I think your question stands answered. In an environment where both common citizens and informed citizens are clear that China does not mean well for India, the question of creating any road or facility on our territory that could even remotely assist trade with China and so on is a non-starter. Our local people who are keen on it and keeps building a case for it needs to understand that when security and development go hand in hand, then things like Stilwell road projects can be considered, even when there may be opposition from the pure security constituency. But when security and development run head long into each other, then I am afraid development would always have to take the secondary place. This is why I would say that this is not the time at all, when India-China relationship has touched the new nadir since 1962, to talk about the Stilwell road.

SB: How do you think India should deal with the Chinese presence in Myanmar, especially in context of the various infrastructure projects, whether in connectivity or energy?

RB: I think we do have a challenge there. We can break it into three parts. Firstly, what China does in terms of infrastructure development in Myanmar is fundamentally an issue between China and Myanmar. It is the latter which has to think the environmental aspect, the financial aspect, the dependency aspect and the overall impact of these facilities on the people of Myanmar and their interests. Therefore, that is something we cannot do much about. This is exactly what is happening. Madam Aung Saan Suu Kyi's government has been far more cooperative with China than her predecessors. As a result, the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor has been taking shape and India simply has to monitor and track it, but there is not much more you could do about it. Secondly, nevertheless, it is for India to continue cultivating its constituency in that country, the constituency which believes that Myanmar's interests are promoted through an independent and balanced approach to external relations. So should Myanmar need more external support, there are many other sources that they can obtain. That is the idea we need to pluck and

promote. At the end of the day, it is up to Myanmar and its government and its people to decide what kind of relationship they want with a third country. Thirdly, India has to do something drastic to improve its own performance in the infrastructure sector in Myanmar. The Kaladan Multimodal project and Tri-lateral project have become a burden on the relationship and must be completed as soon as possible. India should take the lesson that it should not undertake such big projects in that country, or that region, in future. That is where our interest would lie.

SB: Do you think a competition between India and China playing out in Myanmar is over drawn, given that there are other players such as Japan, which is forging deeper relationship with Myanmar, especially in the infrastructure sector? Further, Myanmar itself has an agency of its own.

RB: Yes, that is what is looks to us now. India has fallen behind the Chinese achievements and Chinese progress. On the other hand, there are other actors, particularly from Asia, that have come into the picture in a bigger way than in the past. But the scene is complex because the West which showed a lot of interests in the second decade, especially during President Thein Sein's tenure, has now diminished interests, particularly the US. You recall the time when the state was visited by President Obama and, I think more than once by Hillary Clinton, and Americans were very enthusiastic about the investments and so on. Even the Europeans were far more bullish then. While the Western interest has suffered, the Japanese and South Koreans and a few others, like Thailand and some ASEAN countries, continued its presence. As far as India is concerned, I think I have to regretfully admit that in the view of developments in the past 5-7years, because of the delays on our side and the Chinese success in the infrastructure field, the story of India-China competition looks less credible now.

Signature

ANNEXURE-III
Interview with Amit Bhandari, via Email
Date: 28 Oct, 2020. Time: 1:30pm
Purpose: Primary research for PhD on the topic 'Infrastructure Diplomacy as a Tool for Regional Influence by China and India: A Case Study of Myanmar'

Survey Infrastructure and Diplomacy

Inbox

shrabana barua <shrabanabarua88@gmail.com>

Wed, 28 Oct 2020, 13:20

to Bhandari.Amit

Dear Amit,

Please find the link to the survey below as well as two very open ended questions.

Q1. You write that there are many strategic corridors in Asia to India. Do you think India should harness these linkages by building hard infrastructures like China has done, especially in the connectivity sector? Or do you feel India should follow a different route since it does not have the resources to do so yet.

Q2. Both China and India have been late entrants into the energy sector in Myanmar. Yet China seem to do better in that regard, especially due to better energy infrastructure in place. What is your take on it?

Q3. Click on the link to complete the survey https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/XZ9N6YS

Ping me anytime you are ready to record the answers.

Thanks a ton.

Best,
Shrabana

BHANDARI AMIT <BHANDARI.AMIT@gatewayhouse.in>

Wed, 28 Oct 2020, 13:39

to me

1 India needs to invest in hard infrastructure connectivity with its neighbours - because that will pave the way for economic and other forms of connectivity, which are far more important. The investment doesn't need to be entirely done by the government - in some cases, even the private sector can do it, provided Government creates the right environment. Moreover, if India vacates the infrastructure space, then it leaves countries such as Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh vulnerable to predatory lending practices of China. At the end of the day, these are countries that require infrastructure, if World Bank doesn't fund, India doesn't help, they will turn to China. Prosperity, for India's frontier states and its smaller neighbours, can come only with better economic connectivity - therefore better infrastructure is a must.

2 China has a head start over India in Myanmar (and otherwise). It has invested heavily in Myanmar's natural resources (oil & gas, mines) and energy (hydropower) with an eye to use of these resources. Most of these Chinese investments in Myanmar, according to us, have been made by State Owned Enterprises (SOEs) - most of outward FDI in India (and business in general) is done by the private sector. Private sector is concerned with economic viability, not political goals. Second, private sector is also more mindful of international sanctions - which Myanmar has been under - something Chinese SOEs have been happy to ignore. Finally, some Chinese SOEs also fund projects in areas under insurgents - and hence provide direct financial support to insurgencies - not something one would assoicate with an Indian firm, government or private.

I hope this helps

regards

Amit

ANNEXURE IV
Interview via E-mail with Mr Bertil Lintner
Date: 29 January, 2021
Purpose: Primary research for PhD on the topic 'Infrastructure Diplomacy as a Tool for Regional Influence by China and India: A Case Study of Myanmar'

shrabana barua <shrabanabarua88@gmail.com>

Wed, 27 Jan, 00:25

to Bertil

Dear Mr Lintner,

Thank you very much for your reply and my apologies for the very very late response. As much as I would have loved to have a video call with you, I understand the limitations imposed by your surgery. I also hope you are recovering well, Sir.

As you suggested, I am attaching a word file with five subjective questions and the link to a short survey to be filled online. Please be as detailed as you wish, to share your experiences and opinions. I am sure I have much to gain from your views.

May I also request you to allow me to use this interview for citations and documentation? For this, you may either put your signature at the end of the transcript or an email stating that I can use the material for my research. Though there is no hurry, I hope you will find time to respond within a month.

Thank you once again for agreeing to this interview.

Looking forward to hearing from you.

Best regards,
Shrabana

Attachments area

Bertil Lintner <bertil.lintner@gmail.com>

29 Jan 2021, 08:53

to me

Here, attachments. Best, Bertil

3 Attachments

shrabana barua <shrabanabarua88@gmail.com>

29 Jan 2021, 09:28

to Bertil

Dear Mr Lintner,

Thank you so much for the prompt response as well as for the articles. This is very helpful.

I hope to share my work once I complete.

Have a great weekend sir.

Details of attachment along with answers:

SB: Infrastructure investments by countries are increasing each year, with connectivity becoming a ubiquitous word. In this context, from your personal experience, how much of real improvement or change do you think has come about in Myanmar? To what would you attribute such changes?

BL: Myanmar has become a battleground for foreign influences. In that context, China and Japan are the main competitors. Look at Myanmar's railways which are being upgraded with Japanese assistance. Then, there is the Kyaukphyu port (Chinese) and the possibility of another deep-sea port at Dawei (Japanese)

SB: Asia World is one the largest infrastructure companies in Myanmar, with an alleged link to the opium trade in the 1990s. Today, with an improved profile it often collaborates with Chinese companies on infrastructure projects. Can you narrate from your personal experiences, anything in this context that you may have followed for your work or otherwise?

BL: It is not quite like that. Asia World was founded by Lo Hsing-han, dubbed the King of the Golden Triangle in the early 1970s. He was arrested in Thailand in 1973 and extradited to Burma where he was sentenced to death, not for drug trafficking though (he was a Ka Kwe Ye, or local home guard, commander and as such allowed to trade in opium). His sentence was passed in reference to his brief alliance with the Shan State Army in 1973, thus insurrection against the state. But he was not executed. Instead, he was released during a general amnesty in 1980. He then returned to Lashio and established a new (mainly ethnic Chinese) village south of Lashio called the Salween Village. It is widely suspected that his new wealth came from there – and the Golden Triangle drug trade. His son Stephen Law was denied a visa for the US in 1996 because of the family's suspected involvement in the drug trade. He is still believed to be on a narcotics watch-list (although no longer on the immigration blacklist).

SB: In one of your articles, you mention that in 1990s, Myanmar wanted a 20 tonne bridge but China insisted on a 50ton bridge, which was then constructed within a year. Would you say

China had a direct influence on such decisions of the Burmese leadership in the 1990s, that continues to persists today, especially after the BRI?

BL: Yes, before and after BRI. But see also answer to a question below.

SB: Do you think the notion of competition between India and China playing out in Myanmar is over drawn, given that there are other players such as Japan, which is forging deeper relationship with Myanmar, especially in the infrastructure sector? Or would you say that India is no competition at all to China in this context?

BL: India is not really seen as China's main competitor in Myanmar, Japan is. Japan has offered to develop Myanmar's infrastructure (railways, ports) in order to counter China's influence.

SB: Myanmar itself has an agency of its own when it comes to great power competition in the region. What are your views on this?

BL: Myanmar is squeezed between India and China, the two giants of Asia, and then Thailand in the east (traditionally a US ally, but now closer to China), so Myanmar is very conscious about its national independence and, therefore, have to balance one outside power against the other.

Q6. Please click on the following link to answer a few objective questions for a survey:

Source of survey: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/XZ9N6YS

Annexure- V
Conference proceedings, Asian Security Conference, IDSA
March, 2019

Source: https://idsa.in/event/asc/asc2019

SB: We have talked about how a Great Game is being played out today. Can we say, at the government level, that though we have not used the term infrastructure diplomacy, infrastructure is emerging as a tool of diplomacy of the 21st century, as distinct from say economic diplomacy or development diplomacy?

Jaishanker: I think you are bang on when you say [that]. Is infrastructure diplomacy on today? I think yes. If we were to characterize today's competitive world, I would say technology choices and infrastructure choice are the two big differentiating factors.

ANNEXURE VI

Opening the Southwest: An Expert Opinion

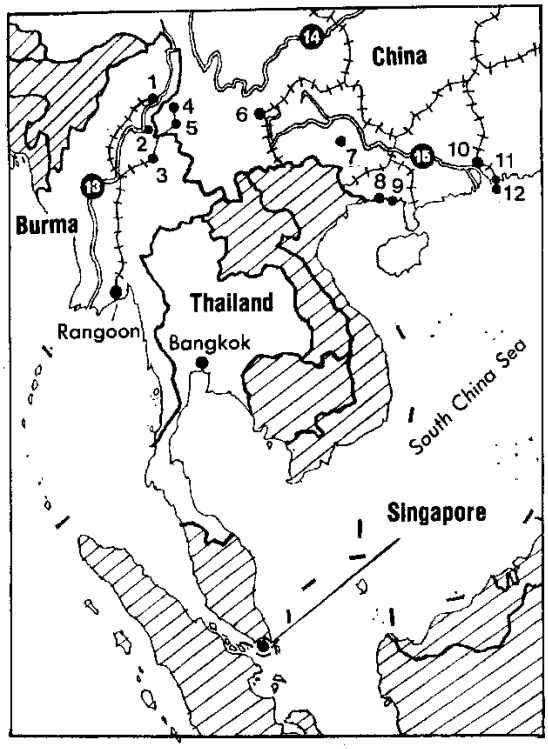
by PAN QI

IN August 1984, I accompanied Gordon Wu, General Manager of Hopewell Holdings Limited of Hongkong and a member of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, Brian D Littlechild, a British geological engineer from Ove Arup & Partners of Hongkong, and W. G. Elliett, Hopewell's Executive Director, on a tour of Guizhou and Guangxi, in southwest China. After covering these areas by air, water and land, the visitors were all greatly surprised by their abundant mineral resources and excellent tourist spots. They did not stint in their praise. As Elliett put it: "Several other American friends would have come with me on this trip, if they hadn't believed the stories they heard about Guizhou's poverty and backwardness. I also did not expect that Guizhou's resources would be so rich and its landscape so beautiful. It appeals to me very much."

Wu, a graduate engineer and top Hongkong real estate man, is enthusiastic about promoting China's modernization programme. I told him that China's southwest can be compared to the West Coast of the United States. Once developed, it could not only enrich itself, but also help supply materials to the better-developed coastal region, thus benefiting the whole country. He and his companions all agreed with me on this point.

To study the question of developing and opening the southwest, I have made three trips to Yunnan, four trips to Guangxi and five

The author was vice-minister of communications, and now is an adviser to the Communications Ministry.



1. Myitkyina 2. Bahmo 3. Lashio 4. Tengchong 5. Mangshi 6. Kunming 7. Bose 8. Fangcheng 9. Beihai 10. Guangzhou 11. Shenzhen 12. Hongkong 13. Irrawaddy River 14. Changjiang River 15. Beipan River, Nanpan River, Hongshui River, Xijiang River, Pearl River 16. Sichuan 17. Guizhou 18. Yunnan 19. Guangxi 20. Guangdong

trips to Guizhou in the past year. I believe that the region (it also includes Sichuan Province) must open to the outside world to speed the pace of its economic growth. I do not agree that China's opening to the outside world must proceed gradually from the east coast to the interior. That's a conservative point of view. Rather, I believe that the opening of the southwest can run parallel to that of the east, and can be carried out at the same time. Only by doing this can we speed the economic development of the southwest.

Through on-the-spot surveys, I found two channels from the southwest to the outside world: One to the east, and the other to the south.

Cargo can be shipped from the southwest to the east China coast along the Changjiang (Yangtze) and Xijiang Rivers. The northern parts of Guizhou and Yunnan can be linked up with the coast by the Changjiang River, while the southern parts of the two provinces can find outlets in Guangzhou or Shenzhen, in Guangdong Province, through co-ordinated train-and-bus or land-and-water routes. The Nanpan and Beipan rivers, two tributaries of the Xijiang River, can be used to serve this aim. Outlets could also be found at Beihai and Fangcheng, in Guangxi. Both are open port cities on the Beibu Gulf which could draw on the resources of the southwestern provinces such as Sichuan, Yunnan and Guizhou to set up their own programmes of opening to the outside world. I have suggested to the local authorities concerned that pipelines be utilized to send high-quality coal from west Guizhou to Bose, in Guangxi, or even to Beihai and Fangcheng. The terrain along this route drops steeply from west to east. In addition, supplies of water are ample. Conditions there are good for developing pipelines, which would be much more economical than building railways or highways.

Looking towards the south, we could find outlets in Burma; that is, we could select an appropriate route across the 1,000-plus-kilometre Yunnan-Burma border to export the rich resources of west Yunnan. For example, there are large deposits of high-grade diatomite near Tengchong, in Yunnan, that could be exported. A ton of processed diatomite brings US$2,000 on the international market. Other minerals such as bauxite, phoshate rock, iron ore, lead, zinc, tin, mica, gold and silver could be exported, too. What is more, many scenic spots in Yunnan and Guizhou will certainly appeal to foreign tourists.

There was a road connecting western Yunnan with southeast and west Asia quite early in history: Zhang Qian, a Han Dynasty (202BC-220AD) diplomat, helped open a southern "Silk Road" from Sichuan, and the artery was travelled for centuries.

I also investigated several possible passages from Yunnan to the outside world. From the mining area of Tengchong, for example, one highway leads westward to Myitkyina, in Burma, where a railroad is available to transfer cargo to the sea. A second highway leads south to Lashio, another major Burmese railhead. And between those two, a third road leads to Bhamo, on the Irrawaddy River. None of these roads is over 300 kilometres long. Furthermore, an international airport is being planned for Mangshi, in west Yunnan. That will give the city air services to Hongkong, Guangzhou, Rangoon and even to Bangkok and Singapore. If this comes about, the western part of Yunnan will have more than one avenue to the outside world.

These are just my tentative ideas on the opening of China's great southwest, but I think they can be put into effect. □

Guangzhou's Aged: Life Begins at 60

by LIU NANCHANG
Guest Reporter

IT is just after dawn on a humid June morning in Guangzhou, and the temperature is already climbing past 30°C. The streets of this south China metropolis are alive with people strolling to work or gliding through the sinuous movements of their daily *tai ji quan* (shadow-boxing) exercises. Soon the tempo of the day will begin accelerating towards its rush-hour peak. But for now, there are few vehicles about and the loudest sound is the fluid chirping of thousands of caged songbirds out with their owners for an early airing in local parks.

Most of these bird fanciers are elderly men, some of the nearly 500,000 retirees in this city of 5.6 million people. Many will spend the rest of their morning following the distinctive Cantonese custom known as *yum cha* (drinking tea) while nibbling steamed shrimp dumplings and other hot snacks and chatting with friends in a pleasantly crowded restaurant.

Others, however, prefer to keep busy, like Huang Huoxing, a 63-year-old former auto repairman. Huang, who reached the mandatory retirement age three years ago, is but one beneficiary of a 1983 Guangzhou government decision permitting retirees to go back to work while still drawing their full pensions. After spending a year at home, caring for his grandchildren and puttering about the neighbourhood helping with local chores