



Diplomacy Systems & Processes: Comparing India & China

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Diplomacy Systems & Processes: Comparing India & China

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Abstract

What are the key characteristics of the diplomacy of India and China? To what extent is diplomatic capacity an issue in the management of a country's foreign policy? Example: the number of the executive level officials in the diplomatic machinery of China and India (the foreign ministries, embassies, consulates and other subsidiary offices) varies greatly in size, composition, and work methods. An example: against about 1200 diplomat rank officials in India, China has over 6500 diplomats – not counting new recruits who serve in non-diplomatic staff rank for their first four years, before gaining traction in their careers under the so called '3-3-4' system. This and a several other elements (structure, competence, and capability) constitute a country's 'diplomatic capacity'; this concept has drawn new attention in the past five years. Another example: both are large countries with a number of sub-state entities; the methods used to bring them into the external policy process offers rich material for comparison and contrast, with some clear learning. China has a larger diplomatic machine, though this does not always translate into greater effectiveness. China's decision-making capability appears to be better organized. At the same time, some Indian methods are unique and score over the comparable situation in China. This essay draws on research carried out since 1999 in comparing foreign ministries (one outcome of which was *Asian Diplomacy*, 2007), with updated information and analysis.

Keywords: India, China, diplomacy, foreign ministries, diplomatic capacity, comparative study, effectiveness, national diplomatic system.

Introduction

The diplomatic establishment of a country – the foreign ministry and the network of embassies and consulates – processes information and analysis, and contributes to the formulation of foreign policy; it also handles the delivery of policy, coordination with home partners and management of external relationships. What constitutes this establishment? How this is organized depends on the country's constitutional structure, its system of governance, its institutions and the mobilization of all the agencies, official and non-official that have a role in these tasks. The scene evolves over time; what concerns us here is the current situation, and how may change in coming years. Broadly we examine the political and bureaucratic leadership structures that plan, formulate and supervise foreign policy, i.e. the national leadership, the foreign ministry and other official agencies that are directly concerned, and the non-state actors that play a role – typically, this includes the political parties; academia; the public and private companies, business circles and international business; civil society including NGOs; the media, thinktanks, science and technology agencies, and others that may exercise influence, depending on the country. All of them form part of what is called the 'national diplomatic system' (NDC).¹

We also need to consider the influence exerted by foreign countries, which can take the shape of persuasion, pressure as well as public diplomacy that addresses the non-official agencies of the home country – an example is the foreign political foundations and thinktanks that interact with counterparts in the home country and affect the agenda and the intellectual discourse of the latter. For both India and China this takes indirect character, given the autonomous manner of policy governance in each of the countries.

What criteria should be used to assess foreign ministries? One method could be to develop a matrix that sets out all the fields against which the performance can be measured. This becomes a perception index, since the variables that are in play do not permit us to measure objectively, for example, the impact of a country's cultural diplomacy, or the extent to which business promotion undertaken by embassies abroad actually help the country's exports. In this latter instance what we can probe is what business enterprises at home think of the extent and quality of support that the diplomatic missions provide to them; this is precisely what Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade probes through an exhaustive survey it conducts periodically. Such an assessment method is not utilized so far in India or China, though it is quite easy to undertake. At the end of this essay, after comparing the diplomacy of the two countries, an attempt has been made to quantify the result. This may appear novel, but the idea merits further development.

Disclaimer: This is a practitioner's essay, based on research carried out since 1999, initially for *Asian Diplomacy* (2007), which involved interviews with more than 40 respondents for the China segment of that book. The research continued thereafter, and the information presented here includes data obtained subsequently from interviews and opportunistic conversations. Distance teaching carried out in the past 14 years through DiploFoundation, where now I run five courses (singly and with others), has kept me abreast with developments in different diplomatic systems. Several themes addressed in this essay can be developed into full studies; what is presented here is thus a summarized overview. While every effort has been made to verify information, some of which not in the public domain, inaccuracies surely persist. Corrections are welcome.

Main Characteristics

What is the nature of the NDC of India and China, given the obvious differences in their governance systems? How do these differences impact on the foreign

policy and the diplomacy of the two countries? We examine this below, on the basis that our focus is on the nature of diplomacy and the process, though this must also include references to the foreign policy of the two countries, even while foreign policy is not the focus of this paper. But it is sometimes difficult to separate the two. Diplomacy is practiced with reference to the country's foreign policy. Therefore this study does intrude into foreign policy.

We begin with a major caveat. The opacity of the Chinese system and working process means that observers tend to assign to it virtues that are unreal and probably inaccurate. This began with Doak Barnett's pioneering study *The Making of China's Foreign Policy* (1985), and has persisted ever since, including, I confess, in my book *Asian Diplomacy* (2007). Example: it was in a recent chance conversation with a Chinese academic that I learnt that heads of leading thinktanks attend a monthly meeting with the country's apex foreign policy decision-making body; as far as I know this important fact has not been mentioned in any published study. At the same time, those that deal with China's diplomatic system on a continual basis, namely embassies in Beijing, are aware of its coordination difficulties, and the consequent delay in decisions. Conclusion: an aura of mystique seems to produce respect for Chinese efficiency and systemic rigor, which is probably misplaced. In stark contrast, rather little in the Indian system remains secret; an information overload that is a hallmark of New Delhi produces familiarity, plus a degree of disdain among observers. Example: the Indian media reported extensively on discussions in early November 2013 at the 'Trade and Economic Relations Committee' chaired by the Prime Minister, on a clash among senior ministers on whether FTAs help the country.² Could such information emerge in Beijing? Weakness seems to run through the Indian system; consequently, observers miss an inner resilience that is also a key Indian quality. Conclusion: the Indian system is not as ineffective as it may superficially appear. One needs to consider the deeper and non-obvious dimensions of country systems in any comparison.

Key characteristics of the Chinese diplomatic system are:

First, **decision-making**: at the apex, it is highly unified, centralized and hierarchical. While decision making authority is with the Politburo Standing Committee, in practice major foreign policy decisions rest with the ‘foreign affairs leading small group’ (FALSG), which operates behind the scenes (SIPRI, 2010, pp.5-6).³ State Counsellor Dai Bingguo headed the FALSG Office and in May 2013 newly appointed State Counsellor Yang Jieche, former foreign minister, succeeded him. The composition of the FALSG remains secret, though it is known that it includes Party Chairman Xi Jinping and at least one other member of the Standing Committee (almost certainly Premier Li Keqiang), together with top PLA personalities, several ministers including the Foreign Minister, and some other members of the State Council. But clearly, the decision process is not as effective as might appear; the third plenum of the Central Committee, held in November 2013, announced that a new ‘state security committee’ was being created, reportedly to resemble a national security council, to coordinate actions of the security agencies, bringing into the process the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) and some economic ministries, as well as the Army and the Police.⁴ It is also important to note that since the days of Chen Yi (1958-72), Chinese foreign ministers have not held high political rank (none in 40 years have been members of the Politburo), unlike India and most other countries where foreign ministers are among the top five or six government leaders.⁵ This gives greater influence to the Indian Ministry of External Affairs (MEA).

Second, **whole-of-government style**: the MOFA acts as the foreign affairs executive agency; it is highly professional, and well trained. Coordination at policy levels is effective, but as research has shown, at execution levels it is less smooth, partly as a consequence of the *xitong* (systemic) structure

in which institutions are embedded; they are responsible to, and work with, their system hierarchy, but poor at horizontal coordination. Inter-ministry cooperation at working levels is also not as smooth as it should be, as evident from different unpublished sources.

Third, **diplomatic reach**: China now has the world's most extensive diplomatic networks, with 165 embassies and 7 permanent missions, and 83 consulates. The number of bilateral embassies is now greater than those of the US and France. This comes at a time when many Western countries are cutting back on resident embassies (opting for new formulas, like 'non-resident ambassadors' and 'laptop diplomats'). In 2007, the number of embassies was 143 (besides 6 permanent missions and 66 consulates).⁶ China does not appoint honorary consuls, on an old socialist country doctrine that representation is not entrusted to those outside one's own system; yet in a recent move, it now receives appointments by foreign countries of honorary consuls, including those of Chinese nationals.⁷ This is a small indicator of further normalization in Chinese diplomatic practices, what Western scholars call 'socialization'.

Fourth, **manpower**: the total number of officials in the foreign ministry and missions abroad is about 7500, making it the world's second largest network, after the US. It is also a rare instance of a 'single-class' service, with no support staff (besides technical personnel for specific tasks); all new recruits serve for three years as non-diplomatic staff (this is reduced to one year for those with post-graduate qualifications). Human resource management is functional and 'modern', using methods such as '360 degree evaluations' where junior staff also evaluate their managers, and tight selectivity in selection, which kicks in after about ten years of service. Ambassadors are appointed in three grades, and those deemed as outstanding obtain such appointments in their early 40s; some vice minister rank officials are barely in their 50s. This meritocratic method is

handled in a manner that sustains morale, and is marked by a fair degree of transparency.

Fifth, **training**: it is thorough and intense, carried out at all levels; the Chinese MFA was one of the first to institute training for newly appointed ambassadors, which was a necessity in the early 1950s when party cadres and army generals were sent out as the first envoys. The process has also shaped by the high role given to training in the Leninist communist party model. A new development is that a training institute is being set up now, after handling these programs directly from the MFA. Two other features of its training are important: very high importance is given to foreign languages; the diplomatic service has interpreter-level experts in over 50 foreign languages, but unlike the situation that existed up to the 1990s, specialists are now required to work in regions outside their zone of expertise, adding to their range of skills, as also the professionalism of the service. Another key feature: through a highly competitive process, each year about 120 officials are sent to the world's finest academic institutions on study programs of a year or longer.

China has the potential and capacity for a major role in world affairs; but it does not seem to play that to its full weight. China's diplomacy is 'hesitant, risk-averse and narrowly self-interested' (Shambaugh, 2013, p.7).

Looking to the same five elements, India's foreign policy decision-making and diplomacy systems exhibit the following characteristics:

First, **decision-making**: at the apex are the Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs (CCPA) and the National Security Council, the latter established in 2000, with a National Security Adviser, a National Security Secretariat, and a National Security Advisory Council. While each of these entities is now fully functional, in practice it is the informal decision

process that prevails, and as in the past, much depends on the key personalities, especially the prime minister, and his immediate advisers. This makes the process opaque. Most new initiatives emerge from the top; at the bureaucratic level the system is risk-averse; that is perhaps also the case in China, though to a lesser degree. Crisis tends to reveal uncoordinated functioning, especially at the initial stage, sometimes with contradictory statements put out by the MEA, and other agencies including Defence, say after events on the border with China and the India-Pakistan line of control. As a recent major study notes, lateral communication between MEA and economic ministries is ‘too often blocked and insufficient’ (Khilnani *et al*, 2013, p.74). The decision process functions smoothly in normal situations; though some issues are delayed, especially if political parties that are members of the now pervasive coalition governments, take strong and mutually opposed positions (example: the entry of foreign academic institutions in India, and how local partnerships are to work). Consultation among ministries is a normal process. On major inter-ministry issues, turf and jurisdiction are frequently contested; unlike China and its dominant party structure, the Indian system has no over-riding mechanism, to produce resolution, short of the issue being taken to the cabinet. We should also note that the openness of the Indian system throws up lots of revealing information, but the fact that decisions are taken under intense public scrutiny is also an intrinsic strength of the system. Opposition parties are briefed on key issues, but this process does not work as well as it might, in part because external issues are increasingly contested in the Indian political arena.

Second, **whole-of-government style**: India’s MEA is professional; the Foreign Service is regarded by peers as among the best in the world. Inter-ministry coordination is sometimes poor, as noted above; take WTO as an example, which the Department of Commerce treats as its fiefdom, to the point that it does not harness diplomatic missions to pursue at bilateral

levels issues important to the country – instead it relies on its mission in Geneva as its exclusive window on these issues. MEA is hardly at the decision table. Paradoxically, at the same time, at working levels, issues are often handled smoothly, as long as these are of not of major import.

Third, **diplomatic reach**: the network of embassies and permanent missions has grown to 126, including five permanent missions, and is under expansion; the total was below 120 until about three years back. India has 45 consulates headed by career officials, and these numbers have also undergone expansion. It is likely that seven more missions may be established in the coming year. Thus modest expansion is underway, even though this is a strain on the limited executive level manpower.

Fourth, **manpower**: the Indian Foreign Service (IFS) is tiny in comparison with other diplomatic services, not just of China, but also those of Brazil or Australia. The IFS A Branch consists of just around 850, and that is six years after a decision was announced to double its strength (at that time it numbered 650); at the present rate it may take about 10 years to reach the desired strength. Out of this number, 546 are ‘direct recruits’, i.e. taken in via the Union Public Service Commission’s (UPSC) annual examination; the rest are promoted from the IFS B Branch.⁸ But as always, statistics have to be examined closely to arrive at a complete picture. In brief, we must add to the above number about 250 in Grade I of B Branch, since they are also of diplomatic rank (i.e. first or second secretary). We should also factor in the 30-odd officials of the interpreter cadre, and about 25 in the Legal and Treaties cadre, who mainly work as desk officers and as first and second secretaries in embassies. We thus come to a diplomatic service total of nearly 1200. This is still a low number, and severely conditions the working of MEA. Another problem in MEA (and in the rest of the Indian government) has been a rather long ‘tail’, consisting of support personnel, neatly divided into many sub-categories, with designations that date from

the colonial era. As in other ministries, for the past decade, MEA has severely curtailed recruitment into these junior categories, which has happily reduced the number of support staff, though in comparison with other foreign ministries, the MEA tail remains much too long.⁹ MEA could note that after about 2002, Kenya managed to fund six or seven new embassies by cutting down support staff; MEA persists in the policy of sending home-based security personnel to non-sensitive missions, even home-based chauffeurs.

Fifth, **training**: The Foreign Service Institute (FSI) is an important asset for MEA, but it remains under-utilized. I was a member of the small group headed by the late Abid Hussain that examined the working of FSI, and submitted its report in January 2010.¹⁰ MEA has not publicly commented on that report, or shared with this group its views on implementation. In late 2013, MEA framed a ‘New Training Policy’, in response to an initiative taken across all ministries and departments to upgrade training, but details have not been published. What is needed is for FSI to expand its own training competence (in lieu of outsourcing mid-career training), and develop new modules for different levels. Barely two or three officials are sent to academic institutions, in India or abroad, to attend courses; for instance, for the past two years, no Foreign Service official has attended the yearlong course at the National Defence College, New Delhi, against past tradition. Main reason: staff shortage.

Overall, Indian diplomacy punches above its weight, but is hamstrung by capacity and organizational shortcomings. It adapts well to the evolving international situation, but on major world issues, it is risk-averse. India seeks a larger global role, but hesitates to set out clear objectives.

Comparisons

The table below covers a series of parameters; each of them could be the subject of a comprehensive essay; the summarized format used here probably overlooks some relevant points for the sake of brevity.

India	China
Basic Characteristics	
<p>0.1 The Economic Reforms of 1991 coincided with the end of Cold War, forcing on India a major double adaptation; this was successful, reshape ties with major powers, and reorienting foreign policy to serve vital domestic economic interests. This also gave new impetus to diplomacy, with a strong emphasis on pragmatism; India quietly jettisoned most shibboleths of the past. Relations with the US and Europe were intensified. New focus areas tackled: SE, East and Central Asia, Africa and Latin America. We thus date India's vigorous diplomacy to the early 1990s.</p> <p>0.2 India still struggles to give a whole-of-government character to foreign policy; serious lack of coordination among ministries leads to inconsistent actions, poor implementation, and sometimes policy logjam. Yet at working levels, coordination is often effective.</p> <p>0.3 Within the 'national diplomatic system' recent official effort to reach out to non-state partners (actions by a new Public Diplomacy Division); improving with time, but not yet institutionalized, depending on individual actions. Outreach to thinktanks and civil society needs improvement.</p> <p>0.4 Both countries are proactive in their diplomacy; this has been long Indian tradition. Both countries foreign ministries publish annual reports, but MEA's white papers on policy issues are infrequent;</p>	<p>0.1 Behind ideological posturing, pragmatism was always the hallmark of Chinese foreign policy and diplomacy. The opening towards the US that started in 1971 received further impetus after the 1978 Economic Reforms under Premier Deng Xiaoping. Unique economic success of the next four decades has given weight and multiple-track capability to China's diplomacy, plus the resources for a huge foreign aid program. End of Cold War has pushed China to giving fresh impetus to its diplomacy, commencing also in the early 1990s.¹² But outreach to foreign non-state partners is relatively conservative.</p> <p>0.2 The country's overarching Party system ought to easily give foreign policy a whole-of-government mode, and yet problems persist. The setting up of a new 'State Security Committee' in November 2013, is a pointer. At working levels coordination can be poor, as a result of a <i>xitong</i> system where entities mainly work under their parent ministries, though evidence is episodic and indirect.</p> <p>0.3 The November 2013 Central Committee meeting called for stronger role for 'social organizations' (meaning NGOs); scholars increasingly vocal in criticizing policy, without crossing known red-lines. A profusion of policy papers and research on international affairs, but much of the material does not reach foreign audiences owing to a paucity of English translations.</p>

<p>strategic policy objectives not articulated.</p> <p>0.5 MEA’s budget for 2012-13 was Rs.9661.97 crore (about \$200 million), having grown in the previous 5 years at an average of about 18% per annum.¹¹</p>	<p>0.4 China’s shift to proactive diplomacy dates to the early 1990s, partly a consequence of Tiananmen (Zhu, 2010). MOFA and other ministries regularly publish white papers setting out policy.</p> <p>0.5 A Chinese press reports put the 2012 MOFA budget at Yuan 5.7993 billion (equal to about \$960 million).¹³ But lack of detailed data renders direct comparison misleading.</p>
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1. Pursuit of Bilateral Political Diplomacy, Security Interests

<p>1.1 A major plus is that India is not seen globally as either a threat (with the exception of neighbors), nor disruptive of a world status quo, despite India’s hopes for reform of systems of global finance and the like. Asia mainly views India as a ‘balancing factor’ in relation to China. Immediate neighbors in South Asia are often critical of Indian diplomacy.</p> <p>1.2 Despite major resource constraints (esp. MEA manpower), India has effectively pursued bilateral diplomacy – witness adroit adaptation to the end of Cold War, ‘Look East’ Policy, and crafting new engagement with in the Gulf and Central Asia, Africa, and Latin America, and surge in aid and credits.</p> <p>1.3 India pursues engagement with China across a broad spectrum, treating it as both an opportunity and a potential threat; for most Indians China is <i>the</i> country that is a source of deep, long-term apprehension.</p> <p>1.4 Relations with immediate neighbors are patchy, partly owing to policy inconsistency, and lack of engagement intensity, and implementation of accords. Rebuilding ties with Myanmar and engagement with Afghanistan recent notable successes, but success less consistent in Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka. Indian summit visits are relatively few. Lack of diplomatic capacity is at the</p>	<p>1.1 As the world’s second most powerful state, and unparalleled economic growth, China evokes great admiration, plus some apprehension. Africa and Latin America see it as an exemplar. In Asia, China evokes mixed feelings; its recent assertive policy in the South China Sea and on offshore islands has prompted serious unease among affected neighbors.</p> <p>1.2 Diplomatic engagement with the world is intensive; its diplomatic network is much larger than that of India, with embassies that are considerably larger. But numbers do not always produce needed outcomes. China manages well its Asia policy and engagement with other world regions. Deep pockets and generous aid grants have supported a strong economic project drive.</p> <p>1.3 Some scholars ask if a ‘security dilemma’ conditions relations with India, where each side views incremental growth in military capability as a direct threat. At the same time, Beijing has deeper threat concerns vis-à-vis Washington DC and Tokyo.</p> <p>1.4 It initiated 6-power talks in 2003 to tackle North Korea. That issue remains a major dilemma, and difficult for China to manage; partly in consequence, we witness remarkable surge in relations with Seoul. It’s Japan policy is conditioned by acute domestic public hostility; it used to be</p>
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<p>root of several issues.</p> <p>1.5 India-US relations are based on mutual benefit; Washington DC mostly, but not always, understands that India will not permit itself to be treated as a ‘card’ vis-à-vis China.</p> <p>1.6 Military diplomacy, intelligence gathering: Sizable program of training foreign military personnel at a range of command and technical institutions. Intelligence services have long been active at data collection and as players in neighboring countries.</p> <p>1.7 A weakness is that Indian states (provinces) on borders are not involved in the foreign policy process, with the singular exception of a ‘Two Punjab’ initiative with Pakistan, steered out of Chandigarh and Lahore, plus a low-key ‘Kolkata-to-Kunming’ (‘K2K’) initiative pursued out of West Bengal, driven mainly by well-connected individuals. Realization is growing that MEA needs a real presence in key state capitals and ability to take their help on select issues.</p> <p>1.8 On an ‘index of diplomatic intensity’, India does well (Rana, 2007, pp.188-9). In 2007, against 110 bilateral embassies abroad, New Delhi received 111 foreign embassies; today, against its own 121 embassies abroad, New Delhi receives 152 resident embassies. Such a sizable imbalance suggests good international standing; 40 foreign countries, many of them small, opened resident missions in New Delhi in the past seven years. India has reciprocated at a slow pace, partly owing to manpower shortage.¹⁴</p>	<p>managed adroitly, but current overt Chinese rigidity on islands dispute and other issues has produced that very resolve in Japan that China could not have sought; managing this problem is a major challenge. Vietnam is another challenge for China.</p> <p>1.5 Diplomacy towards the US is managed well, along multiple tracks. China views India as a possible threat (much behind the US and Japan), but also as a ‘swing state’, and thus with potential for cultivation.</p> <p>1.6 Military diplomacy, intelligence gathering: Wide range of training offered to foreign armed force personnel, language problem is a factor. Evidently pursues a watching brief in its intelligence actions, but has been caught out using overseas Chinese for technology acquisition, especially in the US.</p> <p>1.7 Mobilization of provinces in foreign policy is remarkably effective (Rana, 2007, pp. 39), handled through ‘foreign affairs offices’ that exist in each of them, jointly responsible to Beijing and the province, while funded by the latter. India can learn from this, despite major differences in constitutional and political systems.</p> <p>1.8 In terms of ‘diplomatic intensity’ the number of Chinese embassies abroad is 165, and it receives 161 resident foreign missions in Beijing, i.e. showing relative balance in both directions. (In 2007, it had 143 embassies and received 141 foreign missions). In part this is driven by competition with Taiwan, though the two sides reached accord a few years back not to offer inducements to foreign countries to switch recognition.</p>
<p>2. Economic Diplomacy</p>	
<p>2.1 Foreign Service officials posted in embassies are key promoters of external economic interests, including some 70 missions have ‘commercial wings’ funded</p>	<p>2.1 Commerce Ministry officials posted in embassies handle commercial work (besides representatives of promotional bodies, including those representing</p>

<p>by the Commerce Dept; the latter seeks representation abroad, but this is contested by MEA. Proactive actions are a hallmark of many Indian embassies, with close support from the Economic Division of MEA, but other economic ministries ought to make better use of this diplomatic network.</p> <p>2.2 Cooperation with the apex business bodies, CII, FICCI and ASSOCHAM is outstanding; support to individual private and public sector enterprises is productive, though there is room for improvement.¹⁵ Success in two decades 1991 led to some hubris; that mood has evaporated with 2011-12 slowdown of the Indian economy. New momentum for economic work needed. State level entities do not play an active external promotional role, except through visits by delegations, at ministerial and official levels. They are not allowed to maintain overseas offices. This is one more area where the Chinese experience is relevant.</p> <p>2.3 The main drivers of external investments are private companies, which tend to rely less on Indian embassies than in the case of China, but the aid and credits offered by MEA's 'Development Partnership Administration' (DPA) are changing that picture. FDI flows into India are barely 20% of those in China, with the difference that foreign ownership of FDI investments is also very much smaller in India than in China.</p> <p>2.4 India's 'Overseas Direct Investment' (ODI) has grown in the past ten years. Some Indian companies have turned to external markets at a time when investment conditions at home have not kept pace with expectations. But given its foreign exchange reserves of only \$300 billion (smaller than external debt obligations of around \$400 billion), India does not have any sovereign wealth fund type of official investments.</p> <p>2.5 India's energy diplomacy includes wide</p>	<p>provinces who also work out of key embassies); ambassadors and DCMs coordinate economic work. Promotion work by embassies is in low-key. No evidence of inter-ministry tussle over economic work. But one has an impression of relatively low modest economic promotion engagement by the diplomatic system; this needs closer analysis.</p> <p>2.2 Private Chinese associations of business play a limited role, but a number of official promotional bodies are very active in trade and investment promotion, much more than in the case of India. In particular, we see great activity at the provincial level, including the appointment of officials (nested within embassies), representing promotional bodies for trade, investment and tourism work. Beijing actively encourages provincial delegations to travel overseas and actively follow-up on promotion work. Such 'sub-state economic diplomacy' is missing in India.</p> <p>2.3 A galaxy of 'state owned enterprises' (SOEs) the lead in the huge external drive for resources, minerals, energy and agricultural farmland. Privately owned enterprises are less active, but this is under evolution. FDI inflow into China has been a major contributor to its growth, and accounts for the bulk of Chinese exports. This also means that a large share of the profits go to these foreign investors.</p> <p>2.4 China's ODI is about 4 times that of India, even while it has faced some obstacles in Western countries, esp. in the energy and high technology sectors. With foreign exchange reserves in excess of \$3.6 trillion, it quietly operates major sovereign wealth funds.</p> <p>2.5 China's energy diplomacy is much ahead that of India, given the country's geostrategic proximity to Central Asia and the building of new gas and oil pipeline networks. China is investing sizable effort in securing energy and other resources in the future, including reservation and lease</p>
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<p>reaching efforts at overseas prospection, but is also a story of missed opportunities, be it in Myanmar or in far-flung locations. Plans exist on paper to establish pipelines from Iran and Turkmenistan, but these are stymied by political challenges of traversing Pakistan and Afghanistan. Yet, in geostrategic terms, the country's location at the hub of the Indian Ocean precludes for India any transport choke points across the Indo-Pacific region.</p>	<p>of vast tracts of agricultural land in Africa and elsewhere. Aid and political diplomacy underpins these efforts. In particular the development of a Gwadar-Karakoram transport link through Pakistan, and an Irrawaddy link through Myanmar represent efforts to overcome the 'Malacca Dilemma'; these routes will surely gain in importance in future.</p>
<p>3. Foreign Aid</p>	
<p>3.1 MEA established Development Partnership Agency (DPA) in 2012, after much delay owing to internal dispute.¹⁶ DPA has provided new coherence, and impetus, to foreign aid. This aid is used to serve political objectives, on terms that are subject to mutual agreement with the recipient. Neither India nor China feel obliged to apply OECD guidelines on aid, though OECD continues with its persuasive efforts.</p> <p>3.2 The total volume of India aid is around 20% that of China, but the quality of aid is better in the projects pursued, technology transferred, and local employment generated. This is especially true of recipient perceptions.</p> <p>3.3 Provides technical training to about 14,000 foreign experts per year, mainly via short-term courses, and deploys around 1500 Indian experts, including professors at chairs it has established at foreign universities.</p>	<p>3.1 China's foreign aid is handled by the Commerce Ministry, which ties it very closely with the country's economic objectives. The total aid is much larger than India's, but several recipients, including those in Africa, have voiced public complaint over lack of local employment generation, technology transfer, and terms on which local workers are employed.</p> <p>3.2 The volume of Chinese aid in 2013 exceeded the total delivered by the World Bank. Some Chinese projects focus on prestige (stadia, exhibition halls, conference complexes); a bigger issue with its aid is that most of the execution is handled by Chinese labor, which does not help the receiving country. Its projects are poor at transfer technology, and create sufficient tertiary entrepreneur opportunities. But on the plus side, project execution is usually rapid.</p> <p>3.3 China provides technical training to around 25,000 foreign experts. Overseas deployment of experts includes 20,000 medical personnel, working in developing states.</p>
<p>4. Public Diplomacy and Soft Power</p>	
<p>4.1 MEA set up a PD Division in 2006; it gained momentum after 2010, especially using the internet and the social media tools in creative fashion, and engaging in</p>	<p>4.1 A Public Diplomacy Department was installed in MOFA in 2004, but a policy of 'managing' public perceptions, at home and abroad, dates to the earliest days of the</p>

<p>domestic PD. Its website [www.indiadiplomacy.in] attracts a sizable following.</p> <p>4.2 ‘Soft power’ is widely discussed in the Indian media, but it has not figured in high-level domestic discourse as a national objective; public diplomacy is now a recognized MEA task, but again not pursued in a consistent manner. No academic institution as yet studies public diplomacy; it seldom figures in scholarly discourse. (This is part of a wider problem; a few universities work on international affairs, but ‘diplomatic studies’ as a sub-branch of this discipline is not studied in depth). Individual campaigns, such as ‘Incredible India’ tourism promotion, have done well, but a consistent vision behind such actions is missing. Official coordination absent, e.g. a ‘public diplomacy board’, either run by MEA or with its participation. Yet, ‘rising India’ has attracted global notice, adding to the country’s attractiveness.</p> <p>4.3 According to the World Bank, India enjoys the world’s highest flow of inward remittances, estimated for 2013 at \$75B; the figure for China is \$65B.</p>	<p>PRC (evidenced in the key role of the ‘Propaganda Department’ of the Party, and the extensive efforts deployed to ‘manage’ foreign scholars specializing in China affairs).¹⁷</p> <p>4.2 Development of ‘soft power’ is widely debated and studied in China, among the academia, and in articles in publications, as well as in high-level official statements. Consequently, major actions, be it the 2008 Olympics or the 2010 Shanghai World Expo, and a range of cultural, education and other public diplomacy related events are examined in the soft power perspective, with the intent of expanding the country’s influence and attractiveness.</p> <p>4.3 In terms of perception of foreign publics, China ranks higher than India (BBC, 2013); tracking 22 countries, China was seen in ‘mainly positive’ terms by 42% of respondents, and ‘mainly negative’ by 39%; the figures for India were 34% and 35%. In effect China enjoys a higher profile, but also confronts a higher degree of reserve. An Ernst & Young ‘Soft Power Index’ of rapidly growing markets places China at 30.7, followed by India at 20.4.¹⁸</p>
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5. Culture, Media & Education

<p>5.1 In 1982, India pioneered an innovative yearlong, multidimensional ‘festival’ in a single foreign country.¹⁹ India’s music, dance, and to some extent the plastic arts as well, have reached ‘takeoff’ status in many parts of the world, especially the West, the Gulf and parts of Asia; artistes and performers find ready audiences, and local impresarios to host them, both in the classic and the popular genre. Thus sponsors like ICCR and bilateral ‘cultural exchange programs’, are no longer main drivers, while still playing a support role.</p> <p>5.2. Presentation of historical Indian art exhibits or long-term exchanges of exhibits remains conservative; consequently rather few exchanges of art exhibitions take place</p>	<p>5.1 State sponsorship remains the driver of cultural cooperation, though outstanding Chinese artistes in the Western music genre find a ready global audience. The global ‘Sinosphere’ composed mainly of its diaspora acts as a consumer and multiplier for the cinema and for some of the arts.</p> <p>5.2 China has projected especially well its historical heritage, including the art objects unearthed in recent excavations in several parts of the country, for mega-exhibitions in major Western cities. Its 2011 agreement with Italy to exchange exhibits to be displayed at museums in each other’s capitals is innovative. The opening of a series of new museums in Beijing and other major cities, in the past 20 years, has</p>
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<p>(many displays of Indian art objects in the West are based on collections located outside India). Almost no construction of major museums has taken place in India in recent decades, with the single exception of IGNCA in New Delhi.</p> <p>5.3 ICCR runs 35 cultural centers around the world, and another 15 are to be opened shortly.²⁰</p> <p>5.4 Doordarshan, the official TV network is underfunded and yet to develop a global footprint. But a huge number of private entertainment and news channels compensate for this in part, driven by demand from an affluent ‘Indosphere’, the diaspora; Indian soap opera also has a following in a surprisingly wide range of countries around the world, independent of the diaspora factor.</p> <p>5.5 India lags seriously in the exploitation of education diplomacy, with one exception. The number of foreign students is barely 30,000.²¹ Public universities, only allowed to charge low differential fees for foreign students, have limited incentive to go after them; living conditions for foreign students, and a shortage of ‘international house’ arrangements for them is a problem (e.g. Chinese students in two-way exchange programs are reluctant to come to India).²² Where India scores is in the private entities now take their education brand to Asian, Gulf and African states. In global rankings Indian universities rank lower than Chinese counterparts.</p> <p>5.6 Annually, India offers about 2500 scholarships to foreign students, and supports about 100 professorships in foreign universities around the world. The number of foreign academic institutions affiliated to Indian universities, public or private is much smaller than in China.</p>	<p>supported this drive. Indirectly, this draws foreign tourists and underscores the country’s attractiveness. This soft power dimension of culture has not been adequately grasped in India.</p> <p>5.3 The first Confucius Center was opened in 2004. By August 2011, 353 Confucius Institutes (at universities) and 473 Confucius Classrooms (at high schools), had been established in 104 countries; the current total of Centers is over 500; one announced goal is to take this to 1000 by 2020. Their innovative feature: embedded within foreign universities or comparable institution, they entail lower capital cost; yet, an estimated \$10 billion is spent on them annually.</p> <p>5.4 The launch of a 24/7 global news channel in English gives a new opening. Chinese entertainment and soap opera appeals mainly to its diaspora, with the exception of Kung Fu, i.e. films and shows featuring the fighting genre.</p> <p>5.5 Since 2001, the number of foreign students in China has jumped from 60,000 to 290,000 in 2011; one public goal is to have 500,000 foreign students by 2020. Differential fees are charged to foreign students, but for South Koreans and others, this is still much cheaper than options in any Western country. China has allowed the opening of foreign campuses, in collaboration with top foreign universities, which has served to improve its academic standards. That in turn impels strong foreign demand for study in China.</p> <p>5.6 China annually offers 25,000 scholarships to foreign students. Language teaching is one of the main activities of the Confucius Centers. Clearly there is strong global interest in the Chinese language; India has recently introduced Chinese as one of the options for its school program.</p>
<p>6. Multilateral Diplomacy</p>	
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<p>6.1 India has long been an astute practitioner of multilateral diplomacy, and this tradition has continues. On environment, climate change as well as on WTO and international economic issues, India has provided leadership to developing countries, taking up issues of vital interest to itself, even at the risk of gaining an occasional reputation, in the Western media, as an ‘outlier’.</p> <p>6.2 India is one of the countries that is ‘over-represented’ in the number of executive and high-level personnel it contributes to the UN and its agencies. A fair number have held high offices and have gained a reputation for their professionalism.</p> <p>6.3 India and China collaborate well at major international conferences, be it in the ‘BASIC’ group on climate change issues, or on functional issues at New York and Geneva, through their permanent missions. But as we saw at the Bali WTO meeting of December 2013, China and India do not always take an identical position.</p>	<p>6.1 Since gaining UN membership in 1971, China has built a reputation as a quiet and effective diplomacy practitioner. It has resisted taking a high profile, but moved forward in 1989 by contributing troops and other personnel for UN peacekeeping operations, much more than any other P-5 state. But China is behind India in the number of troops deployed in different and hazardous UN missions.</p> <p>6.2 In keeping with its rising contribution to the UN and other international organizations (in consonance with its rising GDP), China deploys a number of personnel in these secretariats, including some that hold high offices, and perform with distinction.</p> <p>6.3 China has hedged on open support to India’s aspiration for a permanent seat at the UNSC. Given that each aspirant faces obstacles from its own neighbors, this is not an issue that will come up for decision in the foreseeable future. China is clearly loath to see any other Asian state gain entry; it especially opposes Japan.</p>
<p>7. Regional Diplomacy</p>	
<p>7.1 India activated its regional diplomacy after 1991; SAARC covering South Asia remains its Achilles heel. In xx SAARC accepted ‘observers’, (including the China, Japan and the US), but hesitates over modalities for projects funded by non-members, including China; some members would like to move forward on cooperation with China. On functional issues, and on trade, SAARC has made some progress, even while India-Pakistan trade remains in doldrums due to Islamabad’s hesitation over MFN treatment for India. No regional organization where India is significantly involved has yet obtained sizable international project funding, though efforts are underway at SAARC.</p> <p>7.2 Three groups of large states set up after 1991, IBSA, BRICS and RIC (Russia,</p>	<p>7.1 China pursues regional cooperation, on the premise that it serves as vehicle for strong economic links, also to overcome foreign doubts over its political objectives. APT has become a strong platform for China, though its ties with ASEAN have been strained owing to strident advocacy of its South China Seas claims. GMS, as a sub-regional mechanism for the Mekong states has been used to develop transport and trade links China’s southern neighbors, along the Mekong river, attracting major ADB funding; Beijing uses its provinces to manage neighborhood relationships.</p> <p>7.2 Within BRICS China is by far the strongest economy; but it has not been able</p>

<p>India and China) have been successful in varying degrees, with India playing an active role. India's ties with ASEAN have developed well, but it remains blocked out of the ASEAN Plus Three (APT) process; the East Asia Summit (EAS), set up in 2005 as a weak alternative, has expanded to include the US and Russia. India missed making even a token contribution during the 1998 Asian Crisis. India has not gained access to APEC, nor gain full membership of SCO.</p> <p>7.3 Other neighborhood groups, BIMSTEC, Mekong-Ganga, BCIM, IOC-ARC, witness some initiatives, but they have not moved to the stage of concrete projects. An over-arching vision on regional diplomacy is yet to develop in India.</p> <p>7.4 On the management of shared rivers, commencing with the 1960 Indus River Treaty with Pakistan, India has favored bilateral approaches, but in 2013, signs emerged that it may consider trilateral or wider approaches, given that it is both an upper and lower riparian on some rivers.</p>	<p>to dominate this group. China was unable to join IBSA, because of the latter's democracy rule.</p> <p>7.3 In wake of 1998 Asian Crisis, offered \$10B as currency swap monetary support, leading to 'Chang Mai Initiative' (CMI) which in turn is transformed into 'CMI Multilateralized' (CMIM), and a \$240B stability fund (India did not participate in this, and remains out of this group). SCO is the result of Chinese initiative; it has shifted from its original security orientation to a vehicle for economic and energy cooperation, with a web of oil and gas pipelines now beginning to link China with Central Asia.</p> <p>7.4 On shared rives, with the exception of its Northeast region, China is exclusively an upper riparian, and it has not paid much heed to the rights of lower riparian states. The management of the Brahmaputra-Tsang Po is emerging as a potential issue for China, India and Bangladesh. An India-China dialogue is underway on river issues, after several years of Indian effort.</p>
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8. Diaspora and Consular Diplomacy

<p>8.1 Across the world, the Indian diaspora numbers around 25 million. This includes about 6 million that work in the Gulf region; around 3.3 million in the US, and over a million each in Canada and the UK, almost all of whom are new migrants of the past 50 years; the old migrants are in Asia, Africa, the Caribbean and the South Pacific. A good number are engaged in business and entrepreneurship.</p> <p>8.2 India was concerned with the welfare of overseas migrants even in colonial times, but official policy of active outreach to this diaspora commenced three decades back; it is now handled by the Ministry of Indians Overseas, and partly by MEA. India pioneered active engagement with its diaspora, compared with other states, using</p>	<p>8.1 The Chinese diaspora numbers about 35 million. The largest concentration is in Asia, including communities that settled several hundred years back, mainly engaged in business. New professional migrants are concentrated in North America. In the past two decades around a million moved to both Latin America and Africa, as businessmen and as skilled workers.</p> <p>8.2 The of Overseas Chinese Affairs Office, under the State Council, dates to the early days of the PRC; it conducts an active engagement policy. While dual citizenship was the norm earlier, after the major civil disturbances in Indonesia in 1966 (which led the two countries to a withdrawal of diplomatic missions for</p>
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<p>them as connectors with their ‘host-land’, and for promoting Indian interests in the places where this is politically feasible. Annual conferences are held to discuss their concerns; Indian ministers and others attend diaspora meets around the world. Other countries now emulate India’s methods.</p> <p>8.3 Diasporas connect with consular work in that they are an important constituency that is served by embassies and consulates. Indian missions maintain a fairly high standard; at posts where visas are issued in large numbers, the processing is outsourced to private companies, in keeping with the method employed by an increasing number of countries.</p>	<p>several years), and problems in Malaysia, this law was amended, to assure the receiving countries. China seems cautious in using its diaspora to enhance bilateral relations. But Overseas Chinese have been the major investors in China, and a source for business ventures, much more so than in the case of India.</p> <p>8.3 China also now outsources visa processing in many foreign capitals. The working mode of its consular services appears rigid, and not always user-friendly, in terms of the service hours at offices. But compared with wide criticism over Indian visa services, one encounters fewer public complaints over Chinese services.</p>
<p>9. Human Resource Management</p>	
<p>9.1 Recruitment into the IFS is exclusively through the national higher civil services entry system, handled by the Union Public Services Commission, and effectively outside MEA’s control. MEA has not been able to get differentiation in the selection process, e.g. requiring high communication skill standards from new recruits.²³</p> <p>9.2 In recent years, MEA has begun to accept officials from other services (in addition to a small number of Commerce and Finance Ministry officials that have long been appointed to posts abroad), as well as specialists taken from the open market on assignment, especially for aid-related jobs. This should help MEA to overcome a ‘silo’ reputation.</p> <p>9.3 The system of personnel assessment is old-fashioned, even in comparison to the model used in the Indian armed forces. Promotion follows the country’s standard civil service mode, where seniority is the determinant, with limited weightage to merit.²⁴ But selectivity is applied well in the assignments entrusted to officials, which are largely merit-based, especially the appointment of ambassadors to key</p>	<p>9.1 Recruitment is under MOFA’s control. It is able to adjust recruitment to suit own needs, including special recruitment of those already skilled in ‘scarce’ foreign languages. This makes the process far more flexible than in India. MOFA is far ahead of most diplomatic services in its pool of language experts in over 50 foreign languages; in contrast, the only foreign language for which MEA has interpreter level officials is Chinese; it lacks similar in house skills even for Arabic or Russian, to say nothing of other languages.</p> <p>9.2 Outside personnel taken into MOFA are mainly from the provincial ‘foreign affairs offices’, and specialists from the agencies that are under MOFA, such as the China Institute of International Affairs and China Foreign Affairs University; some scholars are sent to select missions; MEA is said to be considering such a method.</p> <p>9.3 Personnel assessments aligned with what in business management is called ‘360-degree’ evaluation, where juniors also evaluate their seniors. For the first ten years of service, promotion follows a fixed path; thereafter, sharp selectivity kicks in,</p>

<p>posts. For instance, those appointed to key posts like Colombo, Dhaka or Islamabad are sometimes in Grade II or even III, even while Grade I officials are sent to assignments of peripheral importance. This appears paradoxical, but manages to square the circle. In both India and China morale among officials is relatively high.</p>	<p>based on rigorous evaluation. The result is some reach the rank of director general (roughly equivalent to India's additional secretaries or Grade II ambassadors) at the age of 45, and vice minister at 50. Grades of ambassadors are tied rigidly to specific assignments. This HR system closely resembles that of Germany.</p>
<p>10. Innovation</p>	
<p>10.1 Neither country fully uses 'intranets' owing to parallel concern over security. In MEA, thanks to initiatives by young officials, non-official group-mail networks operate very effectively; one has over 800 users, about half of them retired IFS officials. MEA also performs well in use of social media tools.</p> <p>10.2 MEA makes limited use of retired ambassadors (though a few are designated as 'special envoys, or appointed to special tasks). Plans recently announced to make better use of this resource. Some years back a former Minister of External Affairs had set up an advisory group of former ambassadors, but this experiment ended on his departure from office.</p> <p>10.3 MEA has no formal mechanism to encourage innovation.</p>	<p>10.1 MOFA makes extensive use of the internet for domestic outreach, employing Chinese social media tools, paired with tight control and censorship. (Consider a paradox: Facebook is banned in China, but President Xi Jinping uses it for external outreach; however he does not use the Chinese equivalent, Sina Weibo).²⁵</p> <p>10.2 About 25 retired ambassadors appointed to a MOFA advisory body, and used to produce advisory papers. Several serve on special tasks, but neither country makes special emissary appointments on the scale that Japan does. MOFA now appoints roving envoys for specific regions, more extensively than MEA.</p> <p>10.3 A system of innovation encouragement exists, but details not known.</p>
<p>11. Diplomatic Capacity</p>	
<p>11.1 Numbers: At the core of India's problems of diplomatic outreach is shortage of personnel, as evident from the numbers given above. It has insidious, and pervasive effect.</p> <p>11.2 MEA headquarters has a total of barely 400 at the level of executives, taken to mean officials at the rank of third secretary or above (this includes those now brought in from other agencies). One consequence is a relative neglect of relations with a wide swathe of countries, other than those of core importance,</p>	<p>11.1 Numbers: In comparative terms, the situation for MOFA is of diplomatic 'over-capacity'. No one seems to have examined whether large numbers, as in MOFA, create other challenges, in terms of performance.</p> <p>11.2 MOFA at Beijing has at least 3000 executive rank officials. This enables it to deploy them for a range of activities that are far beyond MEA's capacity. This applies to bilaterals, as also on regional and global issues, especially new and emerging issues, be it climate change, energy</p>

<p>especially inability to follow up on decisions announced at bilateral levels, often involving coordination with other official agencies.²⁶ A related issue: even in relation to priority countries, MEA is unable to support multiple negotiations, owing in part to top management capacity (Markey, 2009).</p> <p>11.21 The average size of embassies is small, with less than 4 representation grade officials at each, not counting attaché-rank officials or those of non-diplomatic staff. The ‘tail’ of the embassy is relatively long, with an average of around 6 support officials, including home-based chauffeurs and security guards. Unlike the UK and some others, neither India nor China conduct ‘capability reviews’ at embassies, to assess staff needs in relation to work obligations.</p> <p>11.3 Top Management: MEA’s structure is unique among foreign ministries. While four ‘secretaries to the govt.’ head it, the Foreign Secretary, holding the same rank, is ‘Head of the IFS’, with major personal responsibilities; it becomes almost impossible for that incumbent to handle both the political and the MEA management tasks, while the other secretaries are often underworked (Katju, 2013). Work demarcation among them is not institutionalized; over the past 20 years, it has fluctuated between the collegial to highly individualized.</p> <p>11.4 Competencies: Chinese is the only foreign language in respect of which interpreter level personnel available in the IFS. Area specialists available for other regions, but with variable language skills. A limited number of functional specialists available, covering disarmament, WTO affairs, environment and a few other issues. Sabbaticals could be better used to develop such competencies.</p> <p>11.5 Foreign travel by leaders: In comparative terms, Indian President (whose foreign visits as constitutional head</p>	<p>options, or regional cooperation. It has no discernible shortage in negotiation capacity. One finds no clear evidence that large numbers lead to better political performance.</p> <p>11.21 The average embassy size is 3 to 5 times larger than for India. Non-diplomatic staff consists of fresh recruits who serve for three years in non-diplomatic rank; those with post-graduate qualification spend one year as ‘non-diplomatic staff’. This seems to be a good method. An unusual feature is that embassy manpower is partly tied to the rank of the ambassador; when the Chinese ambassador in New Delhi’s rank was raised to that of vice-minister, additional officials were posted, in keeping with his status.</p> <p>11.3 Top Management: With 10 officials at the rank of vice and assistant ministers, MOFA resembles the US State Dept. in structure, i.e. political and functional supervision is separated from managing the diplomatic system. Work demarcation appears clear, with no deficiency discernible. Large numbers at MOFA means easy access for foreign embassies in the capital (which is a real problem in New Delhi, especially for medium and small states), as also good external reach.</p> <p>11.4 Competencies: Big numbers also mean sufficiency to release officials for training programs, and to implement a range and quality of language specialization that has no parallel. Functional expertise also exists in depth, covering all needed disciplines, based on planned training. An earlier method of regional over-specialization, as existed till the 1990s has been abandoned, which has had the effect of broadening the experience base of specialists.</p> <p>11.5 Foreign travel by leaders: Between the President and the Premier, typically one annual major African and Latin American tours is the norm, covering large and small states. Consider an Indian contrast: only</p>
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<p>are symbolic, at best quasi-political), and PM, travels relatively little on bilateral trips, be it to neighbors, or Africa or other regions, mainly on account of domestic preoccupation. In his first five years (2004-09) PM Manmohan Singh did not make bilateral visits to Bangladesh, Nepal or Sri Lanka.</p> <p>11.6 Ambassador conferences: This practice was instituted in 2009, and made annual event based on that first experience. With a duration of four days, it is not yet used in a training function, as is now the method in many countries. Consultation visits home are frequent.</p>	<p>two Indian PMs have made bilateral visits to Nigeria, by far the largest African state, Nehru in 1962 and Manmohan Singh in 2007. No Indian PM has visited any Central American country, other than Mexico.</p> <p>11.6 Ambassador conferences: Started as two-week annual event in the 1990s, combined with annual leave. But Chinese ambassadors have far fewer opportunities to travel home on consultation, compared with Indian or other counterparts (Rana, 2007, p.29).</p>
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Measuring Efficacy

Is there a technique for assessing the efficacy of diplomatic services? Can we assess foreign ministries by applying objective criteria? As with the rest of the public services, foreign ministries have borrowed management techniques from the corporate world. Balanced scorecards and performance contracts are now used by a growing number of countries, partly at the behest of international financial institutions.²⁷ Many foreign ministries strive to modernize their human resource management, improve performance, reward the meritorious and sustain morale. A problem many of them face is that if the country does not have legislation or a set of rules that take into account their work environment, which is different from the norm for the other public services, the foreign ministry is seldom able to justify differential treatment; this affects selection methods for foreign ministry recruitment, as also personnel management regulations, and the application of norms such as those for monitoring performance. Example: in 2013, even a small country like the Maldives is drafting legislation to give special domestic status to its foreign ministry personnel.

The World Bank's annual survey on ease of doing business in different countries, and the World Economic Forum's analysis of attractiveness of global destinations for foreign direct investments are in effect perception surveys, where a large number of respondents are probed, in the expectation that a big sample size reduces subjectivity. Nothing comparable has been attempted in respect of diplomatic effectiveness, no doubt because the subject is considered to be of limited interest.

The comparison set out above provides a preliminary framework against which a questionnaire based survey could be carried out, among diplomacy professionals, academics, scholars, businessmen, media practitioners, civil society and all the others that make up a country's national diplomatic community. That framework can be elaborated to bring in additional criteria. As a preliminary demonstration of how this might be done, let me try and quantify personal responses, assessing India and China on the above parameters, based on a rising scale of 1 to 10.

Criterion	India	China
1. Bilateral political & security interests	8	8
2. Economic diplomacy	9	8
3. Foreign Aid	8	8.5
4. Public diplomacy (including mobilization of soft power)	7	8
5. Culture, education & media	7	9
6. Multilateral diplomacy	9	8.5
7. Regional diplomacy	6	9

8. Diaspora and consular diplomacy	9	7.5
9. Human resource management & training	7	9
10. Innovation	8	8
11. Diplomatic capacity	7	8
Total	85	91.5
On Scale of 10	7.73	8.3

Is such a numerical assessment useful? I leave this to the reader to judge. It perhaps shows how a country's diplomacy is perceived; a comparative platform is essential, to provide a context. One issue to be addressed is the weightage that ought to be given to different criteria. The above tabulation is meant to be illustrative, i.e. no more than a starting point.

A final point: our focus is the foreign ministry and the diplomatic mechanism. But many other actors affect and participate in the national diplomatic system, some of them outside the direct control of the state. We thus end up measuring this national system, even while the composition of that system varies from one country to another. This too conditions our observations.

Mutual Learning

The conditions in which international affairs are conducted are similar around the world, and countries deliver their own foreign policy, using nearly identical diplomacy techniques. And yet, foreign ministries do not engage in mutual learning as an organized activity, except on occasion. Some countries survey 'best practices' in other states, sending teams with long questionnaires, but the results are almost never made public.²⁸ There exist a few clusters of countries that

periodically swap information; for example, EU heads of foreign ministry administration meet periodically; another Western group, which was initiated by Canada meets annually to discuss human resource management practices, and new ideas tried out by different foreign ministries. Austria and Switzerland share experiences at periodic meetings, as fellow neutral states.

China has carried out continual examination of foreign ministry management practices in other countries since it put into implementation changes in its diplomacy, starting around 1994, and has implemented incremental reform. It has sent teams to several countries to discuss management issues. It has also has a MOFA unit to examines reform ideas. In contrast India has looked at reform issues only on occasion, though improvements are applied on a continual basis. The most recent comprehensive examination was undertaken in 2001 when Ambassador Satinder Lambah submitted a report based on a survey of Indian embassies and senior officials.²⁹ Execution of his recommendations has been episodic, even while a number of sound ideas have been implemented over time. In late-2013, MEA launched new actions to rework methods and consider improvements in more thorough fashion, at the initiative of Foreign Secretary Sujatha Singh, mainly through the involvement of young officials, which is a modern and practical approach. Results are awaited.

One objective of a comparative study such as this one is to see if between India and China, commonalities in methods and shared perspectives can be identified and enlarged. It makes sense for the two countries to carry out dialogue between MEA and MOFA. On multilateral affairs in particular, a fair degree of policy congruence exists. It is worth investigation if the two countries can find points of mutual relevance in diplomacy techniques as well.

Conclusions

India and China are co-founders of *Panchsheel*, the five principles that they offered as a basis for good inter-state relations, a key dictum of which is non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries. This is a sound notion in modern international affairs; yes, this appears at odds with more recent ideas such as humanitarian intervention and the doctrine of ‘Responsibility to Protect’. The UN Security Council tried out the latter in Libya in 2011, even though what was originally approved as a ‘no-fly’ ban became a pervasive and successful effort at regime change; has the world community left the Libyans better off by exterminating Gaddafi? No one laments his departure, but the traumatic mayhem that has followed makes one wonder. The year 2014 marks the 60th anniversary of *Panchsheel* and it is logical for Beijing and New Delhi to reaffirm the relevance of this doctrine.

The key issue, at the end, is to consider how well the diplomatic machinery of each country is suited to the implementation of its foreign policy objectives. This involves several elements: the structure of the foreign ministry and the national diplomatic system, the methods deployed, and its adaptation to contemporary needs and possibilities; the spread, reach and effectiveness of the country’s diplomatic network; how well it is resourced in financial and material terms, including its capacity to deliver economic and technical assistance to foreign countries; the quality and motivation of its personnel and their training, and their numbers in relation to their tasks.

One: Each is an autonomous player in international affairs, sometimes influenced by others, but not in thrall to anyone. Sometimes, Chinese scholars doubt this, and imagine Indian dependence on the US. For an Indian this is a strange approach, not only because it is erroneous, but also because the two Asian giants partly mirror each other, notwithstanding profound differences in their systems and history. Neither country will mortgage its foreign policy to serve other states. True, India and the US have a limited congruence of interests – as do China and

the US, in their own way – but they also have their differences. What we basically see in play across the Indo-Pacific region is an evolving multipolar dynamic.

It is clear that the diplomacy structure and system in China are well adapted for the delivery of its foreign policy. India, with a much smaller set of officials and embassy network punches above its weight. That there exist in New Delhi shortcomings in some areas suggests that Indian diplomacy has the potential to do much better. Will MEA exploit this potential? Possibly, but we await further evidence.

Two: India elevated the notion of ‘bilateralism’ to the level of a doctrine, in the management of neighborhood relations, partly owing to disappointment with the results of taking the Kashmir issue to the UN in 1949. In hindsight, it appears that this blocked the development of creative regional approaches to cooperation in South Asia. After 1991, even while regional diplomacy has been actively pursued, hard solutions have not been developed, as a result of which cooperation in new groups such as BIMSTEC, IOC-ARC and even in relation to ASEAN has not moved forward as much as hoped. China’s record in groups such as GMS and SCO, and the APT mechanism with ASEAN provides a stark contrast.

Three: A concept I first advanced in 2000 compared the proportion of foreign ministry executive level personnel, as distributed between ‘headquarters’ (i.e. the foreign ministry) and missions abroad (Rana, 2000, pp.434-5, 455-6); at the time the Indian ratio was 1 to 4.5, indicative of a severely understaffed MEA. This concept was refined in subsequent studies. Diplomatic systems where the proportion was roughly equal (i.e. 1 to 1) had in effect a larger headquarters organization than needed. The ratio for the Chinese MOFA was calculated at 1 to 1.2 in 2007. By then India’s ratio had improved, reaching 1 to 3 (i.e. three-fourths of personnel were in missions abroad (Rana, 2007, p.187). These relative proportions shape the working style: the comparatively large MFAs are prone to micromanage their embassies, and this tends to inhibit the latter; on the other

hand, when the comparative ratio is high, say above 1 to 2, the headquarters does not have sufficient personnel to digest the output of the missions, or to guide them adequately. Examining other MFAs, I had postulated that an ideal ratio should be between 1 to 1.5, and a maximum of 2.³⁰ We should note that at present the Indian MEA has improved to around 1 to 2.8, as a result of deliberate strengthening of headquarters, which is a continuing process. The Chinese MOFA proportions have not changed significantly, to my knowledge.

Four: An excellent diplomacy quotations comes from GR Berridge: ‘A diplomatic service which is well resourced and above all well staffed can give a state a significant increment of power and influence.’³¹ This essential truth seems well understood in both countries, though perhaps not always acted upon in India. China’s budget process is not transparent, but it seems that MOFA obtains its needed funding without discernible difficulty. In contrast, India’s MEA faces tough scrutiny at the hands of the Finance Ministry; for example, MEA’s efforts to create a ‘Development Partnership Administration’ to improve its foreign aid oversight faced opposition, and it found the needed personnel through staff redeployment.³² Yet, most of the time, MEA manages to obtain needed funds, such as for its gradual expansion in the embassy network.

Five: How much latitude do the embassies of the two countries have to pursue their own initiatives? Or to put it another way, are diplomats able to take carefully assessed risk, or is the dominant work culture risk-averse? In part these questions relate to the headquarters to embassies ratio. I have pursued this generic theme in two books, *The 21st Century Ambassador: Plenipotentiary to Chief Executive* (2004) and *The Contemporary Embassy: Paths to Diplomatic Excellence* (2013). In brief, a few Western countries (notably Canada, Germany, the Scandinavians and the UK), have deliberately shifted some tasks from the foreign ministry to their embassies, relying in part on their intranets that allow them to treat these embassies as if they are ‘virtually’ located inside the ministry – we might call this a form of disintermediation. As we noted, neither India nor China make extensive

use of intranets. Despite this, by virtue of a relative scarcity of staff in MEA, Indian embassies gain latitude for initiative. Empirical experience (including mine, as a head of mission or post at six locations, and extensive conversation with colleagues) indicates that a good number of Indian embassies act with confidence on own authority, while of course keeping headquarters informed. Not everyone does this, but many do.³³ How does this work for China, which has what I have described as an oversized MOFA, which in most situations usually suppresses initiative? Chinese ambassadors surveyed in the SIPRI study gave interesting responses to the query: are they ‘foreign policy actors or merely implementers and coordinators’ Conclusion: ‘In many cases, an ambassador’s influence is limited to making recommendations... The perception among non-MFA officials that diplomats might fall prey to too much foreign influence has undermined the standing of ambassadors ever since China’s opening in the late 1970s’(Jakobsen, 2010, pp.9-10).

Six: Individuals of considerable personal brilliance and ability are to be found in most Indian institutions, including MEA. The missing element in India is a tradition for teamwork, institutional consistency, and organizational clarity. China has also produced outstanding diplomats, and its meritocratic system is a significant asset. Further, China is distinctly stronger at teamwork, which gives it an advantage. Coincidentally, the Party mechanism functions to provide additional oversight, and also supports a strong human resource management system.

Seven: Training for today’s professional challenges remains a serious challenge for MEA. The Foreign Service Institute, New Delhi has been satisfied with modest accomplishments; installed at its purpose designed campus since 2006, it has opted in essence for an ‘out-sourcing’ model, rather than develop in-house training competence; it has no professional training staff of its own. It has done much too little in developing its own training software, be it negotiation simulations or scenarios, or other teaching materials of quality. It can do much

better. In China, it is interesting that even as the ‘owner’ of the small but elite China Foreign Affairs University (CFAU), MOFA has opted to take develop in-house training facilities, which are now in the process of being spun off as a diplomatic training facility, co-located with CFAU at its new campus but distinct from it.³⁴ Chinese officials also undergo extensive training at the Party school facilities at various levels; this provides a vital second training track, given that such is ingrained in the Chinese system as an essential prerequisite to each promotion in Party rank.

This comparative examination confirms the known, but also perhaps reveals some trends that may not be so apparent. Hopefully, it also throws up ideas that call for deeper examination by scholars in India and China, and by others interested in such comparative study focused on other countries.

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² See: Times of India, 6 November 2013, which wrote: 'Monday's meeting of the [Trade and Economic Relations Committee](#), the government's think tank on trade, saw passionate exchanges, with Planning Commission deputy chairman Montek Singh Ahluwalia's support for greater trade openness coming under attack from Chidambaram and V Krishnamurthy, chairman of National Manufacturing Competitiveness Council.

³ See Lampton, David M, ed. *The Making of China's Foreign & Security Policy in the Era of Economic Reforms*, (Stanford University, Stanford, 2001). The very first account of the working of the foreign affairs LSG was provided by Doak Barnett, *The Making of China's Foreign Policy*, (1980)

⁴ See *The Economist*, 16 November 2013. It is worth noting that an attempt in 1997-98 to create a national security council had failed (Rana, 2007, p.23); this time the push evidently comes not from the military establishment, but from the civilian leadership.

⁵ This point has been made several Chinese interlocutors during my interviews for *Asian Diplomacy* (2007).

⁶ A Chinese official provided these figures in December 2013. In contrast, France now has 149 embassies, 17 missions to international organizations, besides 113 consular offices. The US has a total of 294 embassies, permanent missions and consulates. Western countries have withdrawn missions from small states. For instance, in the Maldives (population 320,000) the only resident missions are from regional neighbors, Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, plus China.

⁷ I learnt this by chance during a visit to the Maldives to conduct a weeklong training program at the foreign ministry. Looking at a list of the 30-odd honorary consuls appointed by this country, I came across the name of one such appointment at Shanghai; it seems that Jamaica, Nepal and Papua New Guinea have appointed honorary consuls in Shanghai, while Monaco has one in Beijing. Incidentally, the US too does not appoint honorary consuls, though it used to do so some decades back.

⁸ This promotion quota from IFS B to the A Branch was expanded a few years back, and is resented to by direct recruits, since it has become a kind of secondary fast track for those that may have failed to get into the A Branch through the UPSC exam. During 2013, news reports emerged on disquiet among young IFS officers.

⁹ In a typical Indian embassy, three representation grade officials (i.e. third secretary or above) are supported by about five staff members (including attaches, who technically are of diplomatic rank, but are not treated as 'representation grade' in the Indian system), not counting home-based security guards and possibly a home-based Indian chauffeur.

¹⁰ This report was made public in May 2010, but is not easily available on the website of the Foreign Service Institute, though someone told me it can be found tucked away in some corner (information as of November 2013).

¹¹ MEA Annual Report, 2012-13. Foreign ministry budget figures are difficult to compare for several reasons. Some countries (like India) include bilateral aid given through the foreign ministry, including technical training for foreign states in these figures. Further, these figures usually include the annual contributions made to the UN and other international organizations.

¹² Zhu (2010) confirms the data I collected through interviews, which indicated that serious change in Beijing's diplomatic drive is visible after 1994 (Asian Diplomacy).

¹³ China Times, 24 April 2012.

¹⁴ Singapore has one of the world's largest such imbalances; for over 20 years now, it has resisted opening new embassies beyond its current 28 around the world (opting instead to establish part-time 'non-resident' ambassadors, who live in Singapore and travel two or three times each year to their country of assignment); in contrast, over 60 foreign embassies are resident in Singapore.

¹⁵ The Indian MEA has never carried out a 'user survey' (which is much the norm in the West) to gauge the feedback from companies, public and private on the support they receive from embassies and from MEA. Such methods also not used by China.

¹⁶ The decision to establish DPA was blocked by the Finance Ministry, for reasons not made public, and MEA got round the refusal by that ministry over the creation of additional posts for this aid agency by redeploying staff – which also impacts on MEA's staff shortage.

¹⁷ See Anne-Marie Brady, *Making the Foreign Serve China: Managing Foreigners in the People's Republic of China*, (2003).

¹⁸ See: <http://www.ey.com/GL/en/Issues/Driving-growth/Rapid-growth-markets-soft-power-index-Soft-power-defined>

¹⁹ The first Festival of India was held in the UK from April 1982 to March 1983, inaugurated by the prime ministers of the two countries. This was followed by one in the Soviet Union, but it was the 12-month event in the US (starting in October 1985) that is still remembered in that country as a gem; a unique feature was that any group or organization across the US was free to hold its own event, be it a book exhibition in a town library or a modest performing event, and call it an 'associated event' of the Festival, using the festival logo. It produced an extraordinary outpouring of thousands of such activities across the country.

²⁰ The cultural centers operated by ICCR operate under different names, as suited to local conditions; this precludes the development of a single brand identity.

²¹ An academic has brought to notice a website that gives 27, 531 as the total number of foreign students, but reliability of this is to be affirmed (website could not be accessed).

²² This information is from the head of an academic institution in Yunnan in 2013, involving a major Indian university.

²³ Among major democracies India is among the few that does not have a law governing its diplomatic service; in 2013, even the Maldives plans to introduce such legislation in its parliament.

²⁴ An instance of anachronistic practices: an IFS official passed over for promotion who may subsequently promoted, regains original seniority, rather than get new ranking based on the promotion date, which is the usual norm elsewhere.

²⁵ This observation came from Chinese participants at a recent conference.

²⁶ This was acknowledged by a senior MEA personality at a closed-door meeting some years back.

²⁷ The list of users includes Botswana, Ethiopia and Malaysia.

²⁸ In one instance, a foreign ministry conducted a survey in the 2000s, and after spending several days in each of seven or eight countries selected, sent a homogenized set of results, which left their interlocutors rather confused; they would have preferred to know what was the system in each country.

²⁹ It was in 2000 that MEA asked senior officials and embassies abroad to suggest reform. I understand some of these interlocutors suggested that *Inside Diplomacy* (2000) provided a range of actionable ideas.

³⁰ See Rana (2004), pp.

³¹ GR Berridge, *Introduction to Diplomatic Theory: Machiavelli to Kissinger*, (2001).

³² This information was provided by a good source in a discussion based on 'Chatham House Rules'.

³³ The emerging series of oral history documents – those published in each issue of the *Indian Foreign Affairs Journal*, plus the full records that ICWA is beginning to place on its website, bear this out.

³⁴ CFAU has a student strength of barely 2000, pursuing under-grad, post-grad and doctoral studies, but ranks very high in China, under the country's single university entrance examination system, the 'gao-kao'. In 2014 we find that France has set up its diplomatic academy for the first time, and the British FCO is finally considering setting up one of its own as well.

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