

‘India’s Development Partnership Policy: the contradictions of becoming a global player’

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DECLARATION

I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of Doctor of Philosophy is entirely my own work, and that I have exercised reasonable care to ensure that the work is original and does not to the best of my knowledge breach any law of copyright and has not been taken from the work of others save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

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For my two people, Ashish and Ramya

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ABBREVIATIONS

BIMSTEC - Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation

BJP - Bharatiya Janata Party

BRICS - Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa

EXIM - Export-Import Bank of India

DPA - Development Partnership Administration

GoI - Government of India

GoN - Government of Nepal

GoSL - Government of Sri Lanka

IOR - Indian Ocean Region

INC - Indian National Congress

ITEC - Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation

LoC - Lines of Credit

MEA - Ministry of External Affairs

MoF - Ministry of Finance

NAM - Non-Aligned Movement

NDA - National Democratic Alliance

NDB - New Development Bank

NDD - Non-DAC Donors

ODA - Official development assistance

OECD-DAC - Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee

SAARC - South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation

SDP - Small Development Project

SSC - South-South Cooperation

SSDC - South-South Development Cooperation

UPA - United Progressive Alliance

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ABSTRACT

Rachna Shanbog

India's Development Partnership Policy: the contradictions of becoming a global player

This thesis aims to understand and explain the Indian model of development partnership, both policy and practice through an analysis of India's assistance to Sri Lanka and Nepal. The theoretical framework for this thesis applies constructivist theory of international relations and sociological understandings of gift theory. Using these, the study interprets the narratives, experiences and perceptions of present and retired policymakers and other elites (including project implementing teams) in New Delhi, Colombo, and Kathmandu, and perceptions and practices of Indian development assistance at the community level within two Indian supported housing projects, one in each country. While India's engagement in overseas development commenced immediately after independence, the analysis begins with a review of changes in Indian official assistance policy from 1999 onwards, corresponding to a period of expansion in the scale and ambition of Indian efforts in this area. The thesis draws from field research (including elite and community interviews) conducted in all three countries, analysis of publicly available Indian government documents and relevant speeches.

The thesis argues that India's development assistance is guided by both its regional and global identities. These identities shape Indian development assistance interests, which are diverse and in accordance with the country's broader foreign policy objectives. In reviewing India's development assistance/cooperation/partnership through a multi-perspective approach (in terms of different theories, different levels, and locations), this thesis broadens the understanding of how aid giving takes shape within India's foreign policy apparatus, and how assistance-receipt affects India's development cooperation. The country's development partnership policy, programme, and processes, reflect not just the broader contradictions within bilateral aid, but also the challenges that a developing country faces in its path towards recognition in the global aid architecture.

INTRODUCTION

The starting point or premise of this thesis is that both bilateral and multilateral aid involve many paradoxes¹ – be they at the level of aid policy or programme implementation. It is a complex mechanism, as it involves multiple actors in at least two or more countries (McNeill, 1981), – bureaucracies from national to local levels, political actors, implementing partners, and private actors (such as contractors) to name a few. With that as the background, this research studies the Indian model of aid giving, and to understand its complexities, it examines characteristics of the country's aid giving from India's elite perspective as well as two South Asian recipient countries' perspective. Development assistance, which involves a transfer of resources, gives an insight into the political, commercial and developmental factors at play within donor states, and emphasises their relations with recipient countries (Browne, 1990, p. 159). Interstate relations among neighbouring countries can be difficult (Vasquez, 1995). In the context of South Asia, the relationship between India, as a regional hegemon, and recipient states² is very layered – with them not just sharing a government-to-government relationship, but also government-to-people and people-to-people connections. Further, other global players'³ active presence in South Asia adds to the existing challenges. In the region, India is compared not just with China or other global south donors; recipient states draw parallels with northern donors too. For example, a Nepali bureaucrat, interviewed during fieldwork, said that people remember Britain's contributions, even of small amounts, because of the presence of celebrity dignitaries, such as British royalty⁴, while handing over projects. However, Indian projects do not get that kind of attention, and as a consequence what the Government of India (GoI) does

¹Some of the paradoxes in aid giving are: the amount of aid provided and spent defines success; lengthy complex processes in aid giving, but with the expectation that it be spent speedily; and working for the development of the recipient states, but competing with other donors for particular projects (McNeill, 1981).

²India provides assistance to Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka. The region has been getting over 70% of India's assistance over the last decade.

³The US, China, Japan, and Russia are some of the key players in the region.

⁴Prince Charles last visited Nepal in 2015, approximately four to five years prior to the interview cited.

in Nepal is often not known or acknowledged by the Nepalese people, especially when compared to northern donors (Elite Interview 5, Nepal, 2020).

The complex interdependent relations between countries in South Asia affect India's development assistance policy. To understand India's development partnership in a more comprehensive manner, this thesis uses two different theories. Firstly, constructivist theory from International Relations (IR), linking identities and interests to study, at the elite level,⁵ the kind of donor India is (level 1 and 2). Second, gift theory from development anthropology, which examines the hierarchical positions held by donors, recipient states, and beneficiary communities; this facilitates analysis on aid giving by India at the community level (level 3).

As stated by McNeill (1981, p. 9), one of the early writers on the contradictions of foreign aid, whatever is wrong with foreign aid is not because of problems such as incompetence or corruption, but due to the complex machinery of aid giving from donors to recipients. Likewise, India, as a development partner, has been navigating its own and recipients' aid receiving practices for several decades now. India has been providing some form of assistance to other developing countries since independence in 1947, however, this thesis highlights ways in which India has been operating as a development partner or donor state in the last two decades.

1.1 Summary of existing literature

The development partnership component has been more than 45% of India's Ministry of External Affairs' (MEA) budget for the past two decades. Scholars writing on Indian development assistance have mostly looked at the implementation structure of the partnership programmes (Chaturvedi, 2012, 2014; Chaturvedi *et al.*, 2014; Aneja and Ngangom, 2017), the (almost non-existent) development partnership policy (Ahmed and Singh, 2014; Mawdsley,

⁵'Elite level' includes those who work on policies, including those who are outside government, but can influence policies.

2015), and have conducted quantitative analysis (using econometric methods) (Fuchs and Vadlamannati, 2013) of the aid figures published by MEA in its annual reports. In addition to this, there have been a limited number of studies on specific aid programmes or sectors supported by India, often from a comparative perspective that also reviews the work of other emerging donors. Some such studies include those on Indian support for sugar production in Ethiopia (Kumar, 2016), on support for health programming in Nepal (Yang *et al.*, 2014), and a more general review of non-Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development - Development Co-operation Directorate (OECD-DAC) donors (including India) in Kenya (Mawdsley, 2010). However, when compared to research works on non-DAC donors (NDDs), India's development assistance programme has received considerably less attention than that of its near neighbour and sometimes regional competitor, China (especially in Africa).

There is a considerable body of knowledge on the impact and implications of aid given by DAC donors to developing countries. This literature, primarily using quantitative methods, has looked at the various positive and negative impacts of the development projects/programmes on beneficiary countries and their citizens. Factors influencing bilateral aid giving by these DAC donors and China have also been studied extensively. Issues identified in these scholarly works on DAC donors have been addressed in the policy world, mainly through the lens of aid effectiveness principles. The High-Level Forums (HLFs) on Aid Effectiveness organised by OECD-DAC in recent decades have included the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, 2005 (promoting ownership, harmonisation, alignment to the national agenda of recipient countries, results-based management and mutual accountability); the Accra Agenda for Action (AAA), 2008 (focussing on improving the predictability of aid flows, a stronger commitment to working through recipient country systems, and on untying aid from – and reducing – prescriptive conditionalities); and the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation, 2011 (highlighting aid transparency, reporting and a New Deal for Fragile States). Other existing studies predominantly examine aid as a political tool of foreign policy, and the origins of institutionalised bilateral aid giving.

Taking account of the areas explored and data from the existing studies on southern donors, the sub-research questions in this thesis examine both, a macro-level understanding of India's bilateral aid giving and micro-level insights into how the country's development assistance works at the community level. Thus, contributing to the current set of literature on southern donors and India.

1.2 Research question

The number of international donors has been growing over the last few decades, and they have various material and non-material motivations for providing assistance. One of the non-material motives is adapting international norms and practices of global development, and thus gaining international reputational legitimacy (Gulrajani and Swiss, 2017, p. 11). As a leading country in South-South Cooperation (SSC), Indian assistance too has been influenced by such factors.⁶ Therefore, to understand India's development assistance better, the research question of this thesis, 'What is the Indian model of aid giving?' is divided into three sub-questions. The first delves into how the country views itself as a development partner, along with factors that shape those narratives. The second and the third sub-questions look at the operation and implementation of India's bilateral assistance (grants) in recipient countries. The timeline for this study is 1999 to 2019, as this was the period when India's aspirations to be recognised as a global player grew, and additionally, because of increasing economic growth in the country, its development assistance budget began to gradually expand.

This research argues that the various identities of India, created as a result of domestic factors and interactions with other states, lead to certain drivers or interests while providing aid. India's development assistance data demonstrates that the greatest proportion of Indian assistance is provided within the South

⁶'South-South cooperation is a broad framework of collaboration among countries of the South in the political, economic, social, cultural, environmental and technical domains... Developing countries share knowledge, skills, expertise and resources to meet their development goals through concerted efforts.' (UNOSSC, nd)

Asian region⁷ — a region where India holds more than one identity — where it often acts as a regional leader, a leading country in upholding principles of South-South Development Cooperation (SSDC), an emerging global player and a neighbour which shares overlapping ethnic bonds.

1.3 Research design, methodology and case studies

This research adopts a descriptive inference approach (King, Keohane and Verba, 1994, p. 7), by using observations from the world to learn about other unobserved facts. The goal of this research is to map out distinct phases of India's development partnership policy and programme, along with factors and actors that have an effect on these phases of assistance. The thesis begins with an analysis of India's foreign assistance based on the empirical data collected through fieldwork in India, and in the two case countries - Sri Lanka, and Nepal, and goes on to compare India's approach to that of other donors.

The research methodology adopted in this study enables different levels of analysis, allowing for a better understanding of Indian aid policy and practice. The first level explores the characteristics of India's development cooperation as per the documents and narratives of the relevant ministries and stakeholders at the foreign policy elite level in New Delhi, the capital of India. The second and third levels examine how these elements take place according to the relevant stakeholders in the recipient countries.

Drawing from Mawdsley's (2012a, 2015) work on southern donors, including India, the thesis applied two theories – constructivism and gift theory – to study the different levels of aid giving, from policymaking to project beneficiaries. Constructivist theory applied here has been adapted from Jepperson, Wendt and Katzenstein's (1996, p. 11) work on identities and interests. Additionally, Institutional Analysis and Development (IAD) framework has been adopted for the overall analysis. The IAD framework has been used to identify and examine

⁷77.2% (INR 4,150 crores) of India's 2018-19 development partnership budget (INR 5,375 crores) was allocated to its South Asian neighbours (MEA, GoI, 2019).

the factors that contribute to and/or affect various identity formations, interests, experiences, and narratives in India and in the case countries.

The approach taken here in this research facilitates a multi-layered analysis that acknowledges the possibility of different, relatively stable, state identities, resulting in different practices and outcomes in aid giving. It is relevant in the case of Indian development assistance, which can have both SSDC and 'self-centred' elements. Alternative IR approaches provide less analytical possibilities. Realist theories have difficulty in explaining why powerful countries come together to provide collective goods to developing and smaller nations. Similarly, India's assistance does not fit well with IR's liberalist approach. Krasner (1982, p. 29) argues, for example, that 'hegemons provide these goods not because they are interested in the well-being of the system as a whole, but because regimes enhance their own national values'. India's development partnership narratives and practice do not fit into this theory because of other non-material factors (including and not limited to the interdependent relationships between the countries) that influence its aid giving.

The theoretical and analytical frameworks used in this thesis complement each other – particularly identities and interest from the constructivist approach, and how South Asian beneficiaries view India (a giver), themselves (as receivers), and the relationship between these two, which form the basis for gift theory. Further, both constructivism and gift theory help in identifying non-material factors that play a role in aid giving and aid receiving in a constructed reality. The negotiating capacity of these recipient countries is limited. They are often not in a position to refuse aid, as they are receiving it not just for financial reasons, but also because of various geopolitical, historical, religious, cultural, and ethnic connections. These multi-dimensional relationships influence India's aid giving to other South Asian countries, and because of this, the pairing of these two theories might not work as well if one were to study India's development partnership in other parts of the world, including Africa. Both the theories used focus on identities of the giver/provider, and how these identities then shape interests, giving, and counter-giving. Additionally, bilateral aid

cannot be viewed just from a single lens – whether moral, idealistic or realpolitik – as multiple states and multiple levels of actors are involved. These two theories allow inclusion of more of the actors involved, and thus, facilitate a more holistic approach in studying India’s development partnership policy and programme.

The research methods used in this thesis include interviews with households and groups that were beneficiaries of India-supported projects, and the policymaking elite communities in India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. To support, supplement and validate what were shared during interviews, publicly available government data and documents were studied. Many of these documents were downloaded from the websites of various ministries/departments or respective parliaments. Some were reports given to the researcher by those interviewed. Thematic analysis, has been applied to study the data collected.

As mentioned earlier, the two case countries for this thesis are Nepal and Sri Lanka. Both have been among the top four recipients of India’s development assistance for the past several decades. As neighbouring states, certain populations⁸ in both countries have strong ties to India. These countries also receive support from China, which provides useful opportunities to observe how competitive aspects of Indian foreign policy impact aid giving. Nepal and Sri Lanka are also post-conflict states, with Nepal perhaps being the more fragile, because of the 2015 earthquake and other factors that will be discussed in Chapter VI.

To address sub-question three, beneficiaries of two Indian Housing Projects (IHPs) in Nepal and Sri Lanka, were interviewed. The local Indian Embassy or High Commission⁹ has been taking the lead in these housing projects, supported by local implementing organisations. The basic features of the two projects are

⁸For example, the Sri Lankan Tamil community, Indian origin Tamil community, and Indian Nepalese community

⁹A diplomatic mission of a Commonwealth country in another Commonwealth country is called a High Commission; if otherwise, it is termed as an Embassy. Both types of missions hold the same diplomatic status.

similar. However, the conditions under which they have been implemented have been different, Sri Lanka being post-Civil War, and Nepal, post-earthquake.

Visiting these countries (in 2019 and 2021) and interacting with local communities in housing project areas has helped in gaining many interesting insights into how India's aid has affected people's lives over decades. For instance, a community member met during the fieldwork in Nepal remembered that Indira Gandhi (then Indian Prime Minister) and Surya Bahadur Thapa (then Nepalese Prime Minister) had visited Nuwakot in 1976 when the Trishuli dam was being constructed. The person shared that experience with some fondness. It was intriguing to see how people remember the support a donor provided, even after forty-five years, and how that still has an impact on their perceptions of that particular donor. Such incidents and experiences shared by many people have brought richness to this thesis, which have been discussed in the empirical chapters.

1.4 Structure of the thesis

The thesis has eight chapters including the introduction and conclusion, literature review (Chapter II), research design (Chapter III), and four chapters drawing from empirical data collected in India, Sri Lanka, and Nepal (Chapters IV – VII).

Chapter II maps out the available literature on aid giving, including literature on donors operating in the global south, followed by a survey of existing literature on Indian development assistance. This chapter provides an overview of the main themes covered by current bilateral aid literature, which predominantly focuses on northern or OECD-DAC donors and is most often examined through the lens of IR theories or development studies (including development economics). The different theoretical frameworks used by scholars, assisted in understanding discourses on aid giving. The chapter also helped in identifying actors and elements that shape both aid giving and aid receiving, and in understanding the complex nature of bilateral aid as both a political tool and a

tool for enabling socioeconomic progress in less developed states. The second part of this chapter is a review of the relatively modest body of current literature on Indian overseas aid. The current corpus in this area is characterized by a heavy reliance on Indian government documents and data, with relatively few studies drawing on direct interviews with relevant stakeholders (particularly stakeholders in recipient countries) or data acquired through tools like the Right to Information (RTI)¹⁰ in India's case.

The research design and methodology chapter (III) describes the approaches taken to address the research question. The chapter first looks at the research question and the three sub-questions. It then explains the process followed in case selection and the factors that were considered while doing so. The chapter then describes in detail the theoretical approach adopted. This includes a discussion of a multi-level framework for mapping aid giving and its implementation process. The next section describes India's identities and possible factors shaping these identities that underpin subsequent analysis. The final section discusses the tools used and processes followed in data collection and analysis.

Chapter IV, which examines Indian narratives, begins by providing an overview of the country's development partnership policy and programme. This section is divided into chronological periods, based on broad phases in Indian foreign policy. India's development assistance has mostly been overlooked in its foreign policy works, and to fill this gap, related changes in aid components and approaches, and other important changes, have been highlighted according to the different phases. The chapter underscores differing consequences of changes in foreign policy orientation for the aid programme. The shifts in the foreign policy of India, where some of the fundamentals remained unchanged but posturing differed, had an effect on its development assistance programme as well. The second part of the chapter looks at Indian development partnership interests based on the framework introduced in Chapter III, with supporting empirical

¹⁰The Right to Information Act, 2005 allows Indian citizens to seek information from public institutions, including from publicly funded organisations.

data. The chapter concludes by examining what kind of donor India is, as per its own narratives. This last section facilitates understanding Indian elite community perspectives, which are later compared with the recipient elite communities' interpretations in the concluding chapter.

Chapter V presents the Sri Lankan case study and Chapter VI, the Nepal case study. Both follow a similar structure with two parts. The first focuses on government-to-government relations, and experiences and perspectives of the elite community on India's bilateral aid in the recipient country. The second part focuses on the experiences of IHP beneficiary communities in various parts of the case countries.

The government-to-government and elite-focused research highlights the intermingling of global economic and political influences with domestic interests and pressures in both countries. These sections provide a better understanding of the aid programme environment in these countries and how they affect India's development cooperation, while also discussing the roles of other donors in Nepal and Sri Lanka. This leads to a discussion of each country's relationship with India, including aid relations. Understanding the kind of development partner India is, forms the last section in this part.

Moving from the meso- to micro-level, the second part of the case study chapters, focuses on two specific grant projects supported by India. Using gift theory the chapter examines how gift-giving and counter-gift-giving take place between India as an aid provider (in the form of gift) and beneficiaries as providers of the counter-gift.

Chapter VII zooms out to review India's development assistance policy and programme in the context of the larger global aid architecture and its practices, and global foreign policy discussions around aid giving. The chapter is divided into a number of sections, starting with the narrative on development cooperation, and going on to the origin of aid, the aid-giving process, the aid-

implementation process, geographical regions covered, and the policy community and other actors in aid giving.

The dissertation concludes with Chapter VIII, which summarises the findings and argument, and the contribution of the thesis.

India, as a development partner in the global south, is different from northern donors. Although it is a global player in the making, and some members of the Indian elite community say it is already an active and influencing state in global politics, its aid policy and programme exhibit contradictions in the form of opportunities and challenges. These opportunities must be seized, and challenges must be overcome, for the country to be able to deliver its development partnership commitments efficiently.

CHAPTER II: BILATERAL AID GIVING AND RECEIVING: THE MANY DEVELOPMENT PARADIGMS

Introduction

Donor states or development partners can be divided into two broad categories – DAC members or northern donors, and non-DAC donors or southern donors.¹¹ India has played an active role as a development partner in the global south. The country, like other southern donors, operates in the same space as northern donors and has been playing a crucial role in redefining the aid architecture, which has been dominated by DAC donors. This chapter is a review of existing work on aid giving by bilateral donors, and what recipient states understand of the bilateral aid that they receive.

Given the multi-level analysis approach used, this thesis relates to a diverse range of literature, including various sub-themes under discourses and practices on aid giving – looking at works on the origins of bilateral aid and norm-setting, the role of states and international organisations in aid giving, factors that make states provide assistance, implementation of aid programmes and projects, outcomes and impacts of bilateral aid, and studies that have examined aid as a political tool. The second section in this chapter is a study of literature that consider the perspectives of recipient states' stakeholders, and the last part of this chapter focuses on debates around India's development assistance programme and policy.

2.1 Discourses on and practices of aid giving

2.1.1 The evolution of bilateral aid and norm setting

The origin of aid giving by northern donors has been linked to the political and economic ambitions of a country, and is said to have been initiated in the Age of

¹¹The categories 'NDD' and 'southern donor' have been used interchangeably; 'DAC donors' have been called 'northern donors' in this thesis.

Enlightenment. Williams (2013, p. 3) connects the origin of this form of support to Adam Smith's ideas on 'mutual gains from economic development'. The establishment of contemporary bilateral aid giving by the global north is traced back to the 1940s, soon after World War II. The author further states that 'the origins of foreign aid as an institutionalised activity' began with the creation of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD, now the World Bank) in 1944 (Williams, 2013, p. 3).

The beginnings of aid from northern or DAC donors have dominated both academic and policy discussions, when compared to the works on the history or origins of other donors. These discussions on northern donors have examined their origin, the journeys they have been through in the past several decades, changes after the end of the Cold War, and opening up their shared space to non-DAC donors through various HLFs on Aid Effectiveness (Pacquement, 2010; Dabelstein, 2012; Eyben, 2013; Williams, 2013). In the global south, aid giving started around the same time, as with the northern donors, with developing countries providing support to other developing countries. However, it is only in the last decade that efforts have been made to document their journeys. A paper by Cabana (2014) documents all the regional and international milestones, and events that occurred under the SSC agenda. The emphasis of other such works (documenting history) has been on China's development support. One of the commonly cited and most comprehensive works on Chinese aid has been by Brautigam (2009). The historical descriptions in both these sets of works (on northern and southern donors), to a great extent, have focused on the institutional architecture that was in place to provide support, and the changes in these arrangements over the decades.

Defining what constitutes aid and development support has been debated upon, especially while comparing DAC and non-DAC donors. Detailed data on development assistance flows from emerging donors are not always clear, as each of these donors have different descriptions of their bilateral aid, and they do not have to report aid figures to any shared institution (unlike DAC donors). While comparing aid or development cooperation components, researchers state

that there is no set definition of development assistance that SSDC follows. According to them, such aid comprises mostly of grants, loans with concessions, government-sponsored investments, export credit (Lines of Credit – LoCs), and technical assistance. In contrast, in North-South Development Cooperation (NSDC) grants, soft loans and technical assistance are counted as aid as per the definition provided by OECD-DAC (Lengyel and Malacalza, 2011, p. 11; Gulrajani and Swiss, 2017, p. 13; OECD, 2018b). Renzio and Seifert (2014, p. 1863) state that southern donors feel the need to have a set definition on development assistance amongst themselves; however, no consensus has yet emerged on a competing ‘southern’ definition of development assistance. Aid definitions provided by scholars and those by southern donors are yet to be comparatively studied in a systematic manner, and in whatever has been analysed so far, the focus largely has been on China (Sears, 2019).

Normative settings or frameworks that donors follow also differ. These normative settings or frameworks facilitate narrative building on issues around development, and further, guide policymakers on how to communicate and prioritise these issues, and thereafter develop policies and programmes to address them (Fukuda-Parr and Shiga, 2016, p. 5). In this regard, the role of DAC, as an international agency that brought together northern bilateral donors and streamlined their aid efforts, including during the Cold War era, has been studied frequently. In the last two decades or so, both the DAC and the World Bank have been said to ensure good governance and have moulded the aid-effectiveness agenda amongst northern donors (Owa, 2014, pp. 4–7). Questioning the relevance of DAC as an institution, research works have looked at the role of southern donors¹² who are making an impact on the global aid architecture, with authors such as Verschaeve and Orbie (2016) examining how other institutions like the United Nations Development Cooperation Forum (DCF) can possibly dilute the powers of OECD-DAC. In terms of global norms, frameworks, and regulations, besides OECD-DAC guidelines that have been agreed upon in the various HLFs on Aid Effectiveness, there are other guidelines that are to be followed while providing aid by states that have ratified or signed

¹²This will be discussed in the following sections of this chapter.

these agreements. Some of these include the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, the Equator Principles, and the Kimberley Process¹³ (Mawdsley, 2012a, p. 143). The literature on these has described the components of these norms, and additionally, has looked at the proceedings of the forums (especially those organised by OECD-DAC). Lightfoot and Kim (2017) have looked at the European Union's (EU) role, as one of the leading aid providers amongst DAC members, in influencing the guiding principles and ensuring Paris Agreement norms continue to be upheld even during the Busan HLF, 2011. According to their analysis, the EU played a much more important role in the two previous HLFs (Paris and AAA), compared to during Busan. These norms and the literature on them is important to this thesis, as these frameworks most often contribute to how the foreign aid policies and practices of a country develop, and thereby the narratives around them (Fukuda-Parr and Shiga, 2016). For southern donors, apart from the stated ethical commitments discussed in this chapter, numerous authors have noted that these providers claim to follow principles of 'solidarity, horizontality among equals, sovereignty and non-interference, non-conditionality, mutual advantage and voluntary cooperation' (Bergamaschi, Moore and Tickner, 2017, p. 7; Gulrajani and Swiss, 2017, p. 13).

This literature on the origin of aid giving and norm setting takes very little note of the experiences of smaller donors, even within DAC donors. Often, modernisation theory and development economics theories have been used to study the large donors. Two important discussions stand out in this set of literature. The first being, how norm setting has shaped institutional aid, as a result of which there is more harmonisation, transparency, and accountability, and there are more recipient-friendly policies and practices in place. The second has been on aid conditionality. Even though the practice of aid conditionality have been slowly changing, this literature points to inconsistencies in donor behaviour. Donors have been expecting recipient countries to take ownership of

¹³The Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative is a global standard for good governance of oil, gas and mineral resources' (eti.org); 'The Equator Principles (EPs) is a risk management framework, adopted by financial institutions, for determining, assessing and managing environmental and social risk in projects' (equator-principles.com); and 'the Kimberley Process (KP) is a multilateral trade regime established in 2003 with the goal of preventing the flow of conflict diamonds' (www.kimberleyprocess.com).

the ODA they receive, especially after the Paris Declaration (2005). However, if one were to map the various conditionalities that recipient countries have been asked to follow, one can see the contradiction between letting states take responsibility for management of aid funds, versus imposing conditions to be fulfilled before receiving aid, whereby northern donors are deciding how their support will be used by the recipient states, along with setting targets for these states to achieve as part of the support provided. One set of these conditionalities, which is heavily criticised, are economic conditionalities. Such conditionalities were more prevalent in the 1980s, putting developing countries in a more vulnerable position, and pushing them to take corrective measures to improve their economic situation (Kevlihan, 2001, pp. 71–72). Other conditionalities that followed in the 1990s were on governance and human rights. In more recent years, new conditions were put in place regarding poverty and national planning processes (Whitfield, 2008, p. 75).

2.1.2 Role of donor states and other institutions in aid giving

Reports by the World Bank (2008, p. viii,11) show that the number of donors increased from three to 30 per country from 1960 to 2006, and the number of donors have grown from five/six in the 1940s to 56 in 2008. There has been an increase in academic literature on aid provided by NDDs or ‘emerging donors’ in the last fifteen years as these donors’ presence is becoming more visible in the global south when compared to northern donors. According to Paulo and Reisen (2010, p.536), as of 2010, there were at least 30 NDDs countries (including India), with rapid growth in the number of NDD countries in the early 2000s. Manning (2006) identifies four groups of NDDs: (i) OECD countries that are not members of the DAC (e.g. Mexico, Turkey); (ii) EU countries that are not members of the OECD (especially some Central and East European states); (iii) West Asia and Oil and Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) donors (especially Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates); and (iv) a disparate group of non-OECD countries not falling into groups (ii) or (iii) (e.g., China, India, Brazil, Israel, Taiwan, South Africa, Malaysia, Thailand). Besides these bilateral funders, there were over 230 international organisations, funds, and programs in 2008. According to the World Bank’s 2008 report, there are six

international aid architectures and phases under two broad timelines – Cold War Aid Architecture (1946–1989) and Post-Cold War Aid Architecture (1990–present) (World Bank, 2008, p. 25).

NDDs studied in the aid literature most often fall under Manning’s fourth category, including India and China. Both these countries have been providing assistance for as long as northern donors (i.e., from the late 1940s and early 1950s, respectively). In the case of China, for example, aid has been growing ever since the end of the Cultural Revolution in the 1970s, and it increased by 68% in 1990 as a result of rivalry with Taiwan (Kobayashi, 2008; Bräutigam, 2010; Kjøllestad and Welle-Strand, 2010; Mawdsley, 2012a, p. 75; Panda, 2014). In recent years, Asian development partners – Japan, South Korea, China, and India – have been studied together, mostly by Japanese scholars. These countries’ approaches are clubbed together and described as the ‘Asian model’ of aid giving. According to these scholars, what makes Asian donors different is that they have also been recipients of aid at least until recently, and this affects the way they approach other recipient countries. Representatives of these states often argue that they understand southern recipient states better because of their own experiences of development, with learnings from these experiences contributing to being better providers of aid (Satō and Shimomura, 2012; Shimomura, Page and Kato, 2013).

Works on these ‘new’ and ‘emerging’ donors highlight the fact that these states are slowly changing the global aid architecture and replacing traditional or DAC donors in South East Asia, South Asia, and Africa (Woods, 2008; Sato *et al.*, 2011; Julca, Montes and Vos, 2014). With the economies of many southern states growing, SSDC is getting a lot of attention, and there is an increase in literature highlighting how the rise of these donors will change global political and aid architecture. Those who have written about the Asian model see Asian donors providing an alternate model, which would be complementary to DAC aid architecture. Scholars on aid giving argue that SSDC can complement NSDC. Non-DAC donors, according to an OECD estimate from 2015, contributed 15.8% of total global aid, with the top five NDDs being Saudi

Arabia, UAE, Turkey, China, and India (Simplicio, 2011, p. 24; Huang, 2015; Bergamaschi, Moore and Tickner, 2017; OECD, 2017). Researchers like Woods (2008) see this change in the global aid architecture as an encouraging development, and see these donors' contributions in a positive light. Others like Naím (2007) view these 'new' donors negatively, describing their donor programmes as 'activist aid programs' and 'rogue aid'. A third set of writers, such as Manning (2006) and Mawdsley (2012), take a middle ground. Mawdsley (2012a, pp. 19–20), argues that developing countries have tried to question the global aid hierarchy on a number of occasions, including through the Non-Alignment Movement (NAM) and the subsequent New International Economic Order (NIEO), but without great success. The emergence of SSDC has also brought southern donors recognition as development partners, and this is having an impact on the existing global aid order to some extent. Unlike most DAC donors, southern aid providers do not follow a standardised set of rules while providing bilateral assistance; their aid policies are closely linked to their foreign policies, and in some cases are based on recipients' requests.

These changing dynamics in the global aid architecture include an increase in the involvement of southern donors. This has both been welcomed by and caused worries for northern donors. The concerns that are highlighted here are that progress made with respect to good governance, aid effectiveness, and poverty reduction will be affected by the entry of these southern donors, as they do not follow the same modalities as DAC members. Recipients, on the other hand, are more welcoming of 'new donors' involved in SSDC as this brings in additional funding, reduces financial dependence on northern donors, and the modalities of providing support are different from NSDC, which makes it easier for them to access development support from these donors. Even though there is some evidence that recipient countries are able to communicate and influence SSDC to address their own interests, more research needs to be done to understand the reality and to get more empirical data to classify these new modalities at work (Mawdsley, 2012a, p. 107). SSDC countries getting attention as development partners do not just dislodge states in the global hierarchy, they also redefine imagined boundaries that are currently operating because of the domination of

NSDC (Mawdsley, 2012a, p. 9). SSDC donors have influenced how other developing states behave, and their presence affects recipient states' economic relations with European states (Six, 2009, p. 1104).

Woods (2008), sees the 'emergence' of other donors (other than northern donors) as an indication of the failure of NSDC. Gore (2013, p. 774), points out that with the growth of SSDC players, recipient states can finally see an end to 'TINA – There is No Alternative'. They can now choose from a variety of donors/development partners and ensure that their rights and interests are safeguarded. The rise in SSDC is also linked to the restructuring of global hegemony, making relations between nations more horizontal (Briceño-Ruiz, 2017). Further, the formation of tri-lateral or tri-angular arrangements (North-South-South Cooperation) highlights the importance of southern development partners in this not-so-silent revolution.¹⁴

Examining the institutional structures on aid policy and programme implementation, existing literature draws attention to leading countries in SSDC. These countries, even though they have been providing aid for as long as northern donors, are yet to develop a clear organisational structure, and have weak institutional and personnel arrangements in place. For example, in the cases of both India and China, confusion and tensions persist between the different ministries involved in the distribution of aid (Mawdsley, 2012a, p. 94; Quadir, 2013, pp. 328–30). The respective embassies or high commissions of NDDs are the contact offices for recipient states for requesting funds, and for donors to channel their funds. A few Indian and Chinese aid projects are also spread across multiple departments. Citing examples of such projects, Mawdsley (2012a, p.96), writes about India's Department of Post helping with the modernisation of its counterparts in Asia and Africa, while China provides educational scholarships through its education ministry and health care support through its health ministry. According to Zhang and Smith (2017, p.2341),

¹⁴Woods (2008, p. 2221) calls the rise of SSDC countries a 'silent revolution' as these countries are not trying to change the norms, but are increasing the competition, thus creating an imbalance in the aid architecture which is dominated by DAC donors.

despite so many actors involved in the aid structure in China, it's the Communist Party and not the Ministry of Commerce that has the final say on foreign policy, and thus aid. Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) play an important role in implementing development projects in recipient states, and some southern donors such as Brazil have used their services in implementation of its development assistance. However, similar literature note that other states, such as India, despite having a strong civil society sector domestically, most often do not support their NGOs in carrying out development work in other countries. India most often does not make use of the experiences of these organisations in its development assistance projects. CSOs' roles, wherever involved, are mostly limited to carrying out humanitarian work on behalf of southern donors (Mawdsley, 2012a, p. 100).

At present, studies on various donors, institutions, and their structures, have considerably added to the knowledge pool on southern donors when compared to a decade ago. However, more research needs to be undertaken to understand each of the NDD's role as donors in various regions of the world. The starting point of most of the works on southern donors is only the late 1990s. With the exception of a few authors, no one has looked into the history of aid by southern donors. Authors such as Six (2009), argue for the use of a post-colonial lens (rather than an OECD-DAC lens) when examining these donors. In addition, he notes that it is important to pay attention to the fact that these southern donors are also developing economies, unlike most northern donors. Works on southern donors underscore a number of conclusions on the aid that these donors provide. However, these inferences are based on limited empirical evidence. Brautigam (2009) has attempted to address this gap, examining claims that China's development support affects governance structures of recipient states negatively, countering this claim with empirical evidence from African states in receipt of Chinese development assistance.

2.1.3 Drivers and interests in aid giving

Alesina and Dollar (2000, p. 3), note that most literature on aid can be divided into two broad categories: works related to the effects of foreign aid on receiving

countries and works related to determinants of aid. The following section will cover the latter. According to Lancaster (2007, p.ix), the question ‘Why is aid given?’ actually seeks answers to two questions – the reasons for giving aid, and why those particular reasons, not any other reasons? Deliberations on this since the 1970s categorise the reasons for giving aid into two broad categories – egoistic behaviour, linking aid to the self-interest of donors or for utilitarian reasons, and altruistic behaviour, relating it to recipient needs and/or focusing on humanitarian needs (Berthelemy, 2006; Betzold and Weiler, 2018). Padilla (2010, p.11) states that aid giving to certain regions or countries by certain donors can be linked to ‘cultural and historical affinities’ that could lead to effective aid programmes and strong relationships between the donors and recipients. The other possibility for providing bilateral support could be because of the need to maintain stability and ensure security in their immediate regions, in addition to maintaining regional hegemony. Along with determining who gets bilateral assistance and defining aid interests, the form (aid modality and type of assistance) in which support is provided also helps in understanding drivers behind aid giving. Decisions on providing grants versus concessional loans, for example, are determined differently, and this is decided not just by recipients’ economic progress, but also by donors’ expectations of the economic assistance they provide (Gaibullov and Younas, 2018). However, because of the limited number of studies classifying the drivers behind different forms of aid giving, there is no clear understanding on the extent these play a role in determining motives.

The 1970s and 80s saw some scholars use assessment studies to understand why aid is given. These scholars linked the amount of aid received by a recipient state to a set of economic indicators such as low per-capita income of the recipient (which meant aid is given for development purposes), or quantity of trade with the donor (to suggest commercial motives of the donor in providing aid). Such assessments concluded that aid is provided for realist reasons (Lancaster, 2007b, p. 3). In the case of southern development partners, Bergamaschi, Moore and Tickner (2017, p.7) state that there have been studies which examine the motivation behind SSDC. They bring out the differences between what these

southern donors claim, and what happens in reality while they provide assistance to other developing nations.

Some of the factors behind development cooperation as listed in the literature include: strategic needs (such as national security); bilateral trade; geopolitical reasons or power and influence; ensuring energy security, food security, and fuel security; debt burden and defensive lending (i.e. the practice of extending new loans purely to ensure that existing loans are repaid); desire to get support from other states in international platforms such as the United Nations; past colonial relationship (for example, aid given by the United Kingdom and France to their ex-colonies); sharing similar political ideologies; reputation or self-affirmation or maintaining regional hegemony; humanitarianism; and the influence of certain norms and expected behaviour or conduct (Naím, 2007; Taffet, 2007, pp. 1–10; A. M. van der Veen, 2011, p. 10; Qian, 2014, p. 20; Gulrajani and Swiss, 2017, p. 10).

In the case of SSDC, most southern donors provide development assistance to their neighbours as a priority, with the aim of fulfilling multiple interests. SSDC donors' motives (self-interest) are similar to NSDC donors'; however, aid allocation differs between the two. Taking a realist position, Padilla (2010) highlights that aid, whether from northern or southern donors, serves the purpose of fulfilling donor needs of diplomacy and trade. Six (2009, p. 1108), writes that even though donors like China, India and others might act in 'realist' ways while providing assistance, they should not be judged by the 'pseudo-emancipatory rhetoric' Western standard, because they share with their recipient states a history of being colonised. Mawdsley (2012a, p.5), has a similar take on this, where she says analysis of assistance by SSDC states must keep in mind the historical context that these states have emerged from, including them being both recipients and development partners at the same time. Adding to this, she says that even though southern donors can assist in ways that ensure mutual benefit, this is not always the case (Mawdsley, 2012a, p. 158).

Mapping the geographical spread of aid indicates that states such as India, Chile, Cuba and South Africa focus on providing support to their neighbouring countries (Younas, 2008, pp. 671–72; Lengyel and Malacalza, 2011, p. 12; Hühne, Meyer and Nunnenkamp, 2014; Barbière, 2015). China has partnership agreements with countries that are rich in natural resources or raw materials. However, in the past decade, as part of its cooperation with ASEAN countries, economic assistance from China to Vietnam, Philippines, Myanmar, and Cambodia has increased (Sun, 2018). Brazil carries out development programmes mostly in other Portuguese-speaking countries. Brazil has also been reaching out to African states and in the Caribbean through aid, to garner support and recognition of its growing power (Cabral and Weinstock, 2010; German Development Institute, 2010). Similarly, most northern donors focus on ex-colonies, countries sharing a common language and countries with rich natural resources. To a large extent, India and China have focused on providing aid to regions with historical ties and those rich in natural resources. Furthermore, in contrast to the common practice where developed states provide aid to developing states, some countries from the south have also reached out to northern states, mainly to provide humanitarian aid¹⁵. Examples include India's assistance to Japan during the 2011 Tsunami and Sri Lanka and Mexico's support to the US during Hurricane Katrina (Mawdsley, 2012a, pp. 114–15).

The current aid model followed by DAC nations was developed in 1996. The framework is based on the assumption that donors will work in partnership with, and will cater to the needs and strategic plans of, recipient countries (Gore, 2013, p. 773). Dreher, Nunnenkamp and Thiele (2011, p. 1961), in their study found that 'new' donors, unlike DAC donors, do not focus on poverty programmes, and greater familiarity with recipient countries does not necessarily translate into providing aid based on recipient needs. A DAC document calls its donors' approach a 'charity model', which according to Satō and Shimomura (2012, p. 179) is different from the 'Asian model'. Donors following the latter model

¹⁵'Humanitarian action saves lives, alleviates suffering and maintains human dignity following conflict, shocks and natural disasters' (OECD-DAC, ndc).

create a ‘synergy between aid, investment, and trade’, in order to help recipient countries, evolve into self-reliant states.

Identities, interests, and norms that define the narratives of aid have been touched upon by Fukuda-Parr and Shiga (2016). They argue that northern donors see ‘aid as charity’ and southern donors, including Japan (even though a DAC member), view ‘aid as investment’. An important commonality amongst southern donors is that they do not like to be called ‘donors’ (Gore, 2013, p. 770; Gulrajani and Swiss, 2017, p. 8). Gulrajani and Swiss (2017, p. 8), state that these southern providers do not like the donor tag as it can have implications of neo-colonialism. This trend of not calling themselves donors is now seen amongst DAC members as well. The identities that the donors have or want for themselves and the norms they follow, affect their relationships with recipients, and thus the motives behind aid giving. Constructivist IR scholars have studied foreign aid from a nonmaterial perspective, and have used norms, interests, identities, and ideas frameworks to engage with the topic (Finnemore and Sikkink, 2001). Finnemore (1996) argues that international organisations can influence global relations, and it is not just state security, identity and interests that shape a state’s behaviour and motives in providing aid. The author used the example of institutions such as the World Bank, Red Cross and UNESCO, which have encouraged the creation of state bureaucracies to support her claim (Barnett and Finnemore, 1999). Gulrajani and Swiss (2017), adding to constructivist analysis on foreign aid which uses international norms as a key factor, assert that because of the various normative frameworks countries are exposed to, they can feel compelled or influenced to provide aid. Especially since these norms are widely accepted as the expected behaviour of regional or world leaders. On similar lines, there are a large number of other studies that have used norms theory to understand aid giving, exploring how various norms have influenced negotiations and aid-giving decisions, most often while studying Asian donors, such as China, Japan and South Korea (Elgström, 1990; Lancaster, 2007a; Lewis-Workman, 2018).

As seen in the above paragraphs, bilateral aid drivers can be diverse. Gulrajani and Calleja (2019)'s paper argues that aid has been used to fulfil national interests, with support to other countries yielding good returns for the country providing that support, while the rhetoric of 'win-win' and 'mutual benefit' is used to argue for investing in development by southern donors. Lancaster (2007, p. 9), on the other hand, states that 'there are too many interacting variables' when it comes to deciding why a country provides aid, and that along with domestic factors, international events also play a crucial role as determinants of foreign aid. Interests are not constant; they do not exist in a vacuum, they are shaped by social interactions (Finnemore, 1996, p. 2). Furthermore, similar interactions are at play at the community level with regard to foreign aid, and this aspect has been not explored enough so far.

The contradictory reasons for providing aid as described in the literature highlight the ways in which foreign aid is akin to a Swiss army knife (Veen, 2011, p. 2). Applying gift theory from anthropology to foreign aid, some authors have deliberated on how aid can be used to showcase the benevolent giving (by a donor), but because of the hierarchical position that donors hold, be it northern or southern, there is always an element of expecting something in return (Saidi and Wolf, 2011; Mawdsley, 2012b; Fukuda-Parr and Shiga, 2016). Political scientists feel that aid is driven by political and diplomatic factors, those from economic backgrounds look at aid as a tool for enhancing trade and money flow between countries (Lin, 2000), and some researchers of development anthropology view aid giving as reinforcing a higher status. Introducing a distinct approach, Mawdsley's (2012a) study on development cooperation, applies theories of reciprocity (including gift theory) and constructivism to highlight how different non-material factors influence aid policies. The author uses emerging donors (India, China, Poland, and Venezuela) as case studies here. In the case of India and China's development cooperation policy, the author concludes that SSDC values, even if they are symbolic, are still important and play a crucial role in how southern donors operate, how recipient states view these donors, how these values largely help in establishing social relations between these two sets of actors. Poland's bilateral aid studied here demonstrates

that the state's identity (Western - modern and civilised) plays a crucial role in how and where the country provides aid; similar to how Russia's ODA was influenced by its identity as a G8 member. Whereas in the case of Venezuela, the development assistance it provides attempts to challenge the northern donors and their involvement in the recipient countries.

2.1.4 Bilateral aid giving

Despite claims to the contrary, non-DAC donors do share certain similarities with northern donors. There is also a significant diversity of approaches within the NDD club (Manning, 2006, p. 377; Robledo, 2015, p. 2).

Donors who are part of SSDC and NSDC share some common principles while providing aid. Some of the commonalities that have emerged in recent years include the principle of ownership and the ambition that aid should have a larger development impact than it has presently (Tortora, 2011). Pointing at another shared feature, Mawdsley (2012a, p. 136,141) in her descriptive work on countries that were once known as aid recipients, and are now seen as 'emerging' donors, highlights that aid conditionality and tied aid are practised by DAC members, and SSDC partners (with China having the most unfavourable reputation amongst all southern donors) push for tied aid.

Several research works on both sets of donors show that southern countries focus their assistance on social sectors (education, health, sports), infrastructure (building of roads, dams, railways, industrial plants, ports, airports), conflict prevention and resolution and to some extent on human rights issues. In the case of northern countries, financial assistance is mostly provided for education, health and population, economic infrastructure, other social infrastructure and humanitarian aid (Lengyel and Malacalza, 2011; OECD-DAC, 2017a). Japan is something of an outlier, as the only DAC nation that funds infrastructure projects (Mawdsley, 2012a, p. 38; Fukuda-Parr and Shiga, 2016).

Both NSDC and SSDC donors tend to display similar approaches when it comes to providing aid to ill-governed countries – not taking note of corruption levels or non-democratic practices of some regimes (Dreher, Nunnenkamp and Thiele, 2011; Mawdsley, 2012a, pp. 115–6). However, certain studies have reached the opposite conclusion – countries have either reduced the outflow of aid or redesigned their aid policies in such a way that deters them from providing aid to poorly-governed states (Winters and Martinez, 2015, p. 518).

Santander and Alonso (2018), state that while northern donors are relatively similar to each other because of the OECD-DAC processes that they follow, there is heterogeneity in how southern donors provide assistance. In their study on three southern donors in Latin America: Chile, Venezuela, and Brazil, they emphasise on the importance of socio-cognitive realm. According to the authors, apart from understanding how structural changes, such as economic growth, contributed to the rise of southern donors, it is also important to examine these emerging development partners using socio-cognitive elements - perceptions, identities, and interests of those involved. They conclude that this kind of analysis helps in underscoring the different models that southern donors adopt while providing development assistance.

2.1.5 Does aid work – outcomes and impacts?

DAC has its own set of evaluation criteria (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability) for its aid programmes, which have also been used by other multilateral donors and international NGOs. This set of criteria has been critically examined in some of the literature on DAC donors, following which, recommendations on improvements and how to best incorporate them while providing ODA have been put forth (Chianca, 2008). In contrast, existing equivalent literature on southern donors has highlighted how they have found it challenging to monitor and evaluate the programmes that they support (RIS and UNDESA, 2013; Renzio and Seifert, 2014, p. 1870).

Studies looking at outcomes and impacts by multilaterals such as BRICS and other emerging economies in trade, aid, and other bilateral and multi-lateral

relationships, have increased in the last two decades. There is a large body of knowledge on the impact, implications, outcomes and effectiveness of aid given by northern donors to developing countries, mainly based on statistical analyses of aid provided (Lancaster, 1999; Easterly and Pfutze, 2008; Okada and Samreth, 2012; Kersting and Kilby, 2014; Qian, 2014). Such studies have looked at both positive and negative impacts of development projects or programmes on countries and their citizens through an economic lens. Christensen, Doucouliagos and Paldam (2010), writing over ten years ago, compiled a list of studies that have used econometrics to examine the effectiveness of aid in increasing growth, through savings, investments, and conditionality, identifying 152 such studies from 1970 to 2009. Doucouliagos and Paldam (2009) brought together the findings of 97 research works from the aid effectiveness literature, published over the forty years ending in 2004, to argue that aid has not had much of a positive effect on growth. However, some researchers have suggested that a lack of proper data and the absence of well-designed empirical methods before the 1990s could explain why such studies have shown a negative or limited impact of aid (McGillivray, nd, p. 3). Noting the complexity of examining aid effectiveness and the actors involved, Bourguignon and Sundberg (2007) look into ‘the black box’, presenting a different model (to the usual econometric tests) of examining aid. Their model helps in scrutinising the role of donors, policymakers, and policies in contributing to the outcomes that the projects intended to achieve, which according to them can provide a better understanding of aid effectiveness.

Writings on aid effectiveness that use development studies theories¹⁶ with a focus on social and political factors (such as governance, corruption, poverty, health, agriculture) can broadly (and very simplistically) be classified as those that believe aid or assistance has improved the lives of people and has helped build effective state structures, and those that disagree on one or both counts. Some works have also looked at how the prevalence or absence of certain factors (such as democracy, post-conflict situation, population figures) in recipient

¹⁶ Dependency theory, Political Development theory, Critical Development theories, Modernisation theory and World Systems theory

countries affect aid effectiveness (McGillivray, nd). These stances, in most cases, are taken based on impact assessments of donor-supported projects (Riddell, 2008, pp. 165–178) or econometric causal tests (Alesina and Dollar, 2000; Hansen and Tarp, 2000, pp. 375–376; Riddell, 2008, pp. 165–178; Busse and Gröning, 2009; Arndt, Jones and Tarp, 2015). In recent decades, beginning with the conception of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), followed by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), most development studies literature has focused on these two sets of goals (critically reviewing these), and the performances of various actors in achieving these goals (Chang, 2009; Green, 2015).

2.1.6 Aid as a political relationship and tool of foreign policy

While development studies scholars argue over the effectiveness of aid, and/or of particular modalities or aid programmes, scholars of international relations tend to take a macro view. Realists within IR see foreign aid as a tool of foreign policy, where countries use foreign aid as an instrument to influence other states in allying with them, and/or to promote their own trade interests (Lancaster, 2007b; Mawdsley, 2012a; Pauselli, 2013, p. 81). Some researchers adopting a realist lens have concluded that providing aid is a wasteful expense, and that it is an ineffective way to carry out foreign relations (Mawdsley, 2012a, p. 24). Morgenthau (1962), a classical realist (arguing that aid is a foreign policy tool), classified aid into six categories – foreign aid, subsistence foreign aid, military foreign aid, bribery, prestige foreign aid, and foreign aid for economic development, all of which involve the ‘transfer of money, goods, and services’ from one country to another. Another positive perspective on aid is given by Nye (1990, p. 66), who came up with the concept of soft power (along with Robert Keohane). According to him, soft power ‘occurs when one country gets other countries to want what it wants – might be called cooptive or soft power in contrast with the hard or command power of ordering others to do what it wants’; foreign aid, from such a perspective, can be considered a tool of soft power (Wang and Lu, 2008).

Liberals in IR view aid as a tool that helps recipient countries' political and socio-economic growth, and emphasise on interdependence which can lead to cooperation, and mitigation of inequalities over time. According to them there is an economic difference between the donors and recipients, which gets addressed over a period of time through the flow in resources, and aid giving is driven by domestic factors (Hattori, 2001, pp. 634, 639, 646; Basrur and Kliem, 2021). Broadly, these two different IR theories view aid as political, and see it as 'material goods and services', with donors being in charge of it and its distribution to fulfil their motives. Both these models assume that the relevant actors' choices and environments as stable, which is not always the case when it comes to either aid giving or aid receiving (Hattori, 2001, p. 635; Lancaster, 2007b; A. M. van der Veen, 2011, p. 25,36; Mawdsley, 2012a, p. 27).

In addition to IR scholars, researchers working within various strands of comparative politics have also contributed to debates on aid. Many of their insights focus on various factors related to aid giving or aid receiving states and/or relations between them that affect aid giving, including the influence of domestic factors (such as political party in power and its ideology, type of state – welfare, democracy, public opinion on aid) on aid in donor nations (Tingley, 2010; Fleck and Kilby, 2001). The findings from these comparativist studies are similar to those of liberal IR analyses, wherein domestic factors play an important role in foreign policy decisions. Some of the key points arising from this strand of research are: conservative ideologies reduce the amount of aid provided; aid is mostly given to trade partner countries; liberal governments provide more assistance to countries in need of support; economic benefits to donor countries will not always mean domestic support for aid; aid is comparatively ineffective when provided to countries where bureaucracies are inefficient, or to states that are not democracies; and, the longer aid is provided and the higher the amount of assistance, the greater the negative effect aid has on good governance practices in recipient states, such as weakening institutions.

This section focused on analysing literature on various key aspects that affect aid giving, linking them to the two broad sets of donors or development partners

from different standpoints. In the following section, the objective is to study works that focus on recipients and their understanding of the support they receive.

2.2 Discourses on experiences and perceptions of aid recipients

The literature focused on what recipient states and relevant stakeholders in these states think and experience of bilateral donors and their support, is far less comprehensive than donor-focused work. This section reviews the types of questions that have been addressed in this strand of literature, the theories that have been used to understand recipient perspectives, the methods used to collect data, and discussions on key findings.

Theories from multiple disciplines have been used to study recipient states. World systems theory in IR, similar to dependency theory in development studies, considers foreign aid an economic tool that deters recipient countries from developing (Kiely, 2010). Aid from an (ex)coloniser to an (ex)colonised state in return for raw materials is one example provided, where because of less or no bargaining power, a developing state will take aid to improve its condition, and in return is obligated to provide resources to donor states (Hattori, 2001, p. 634; Henningsson and Ohlsson, nd, pp. 3–4). Factors in recipient countries (economic policies, form of government, historical developments) that make aid effective/ineffective have been studied by comparative politics scholars (Cohen, Grindle and Walker, 1985; Alesina and Dollar, 2000; Bräutigam and Knack, 2004). Studies such as Findley *et al.* (2017) have used theories from economics to understand donor allocation and what recipients make of these allocations, including fragmented allocation. In terms of methods used, most of the studies that have looked at the perceptions of the people in the recipient states have used clustered random sample survey as the main research method, in particular if the studies were targeted at larger non-elite communities. The most-used survey method is interviews, largely with elite stakeholders at the policymaking level and/or representatives in implementing partners.

Recipient states' experiences with different types of donors have influenced how they perceive them. For relevant stakeholders in recipient states, involvement with development aid from bilateral donors is different to that of multilateral organisations. Similarly, interactions with DAC donors are different to those with non-DAC donors. In some cases, countries have preferred aid from multilateral as compared to bilateral donors, because of the conditions that have to be followed when implementing such aid projects/programmes. Sato *et al.*, (2011, p. 2099), in their research in Cambodia, for instance, found that those interviewed for their study preferred non-DAC donors over traditional donors. DAC donors are seen as more bureaucratic, pushing in support of their own needs, and not understanding the local context while providing assistance. The Cambodian interviewees in this study found China to be a more efficient aid-giver and implementer than India.

Tied aid has been one of the factors that have discouraged recipient states from accepting support from DAC donors. This has come up in studies undertaken across different continents, further with the accessibility of aid from non-DAC donors contributing to this trend (Degnbol-Martinussen and Engberg-Pedersen, 2003, p. 22; Kilama, 2016). Aid by both these sets of donors, including multilaterals, is thought to be controlled by the aid providers, and not by recipient governments. A study on recipient perceptions (that of both elite and common people) on who controls aid in Uganda, has shown that both sets of people think it is the donors who have the most control on the aid they provide (Findley *et al.*, 2017).

On the motives for receiving aid, the reasons listed by scholars can be linked to economic and social development, and economic and political power interests of leaders in recipient states (Degnbol-Martinussen and Engberg-Pedersen, 2003, pp. 21–22; Findley *et al.*, 2017). According to these studies, political and economic interests include – leaders using external assistance to buy votes and add to their own wealth, rather than to public wealth, as aid is controlled by the powerful political elite of the country. However, support to civil society can, to a large extent, address both these concerns (Findley *et al.*, 2017).

There are not many studies, either in academia or by practitioners, which highlight what non-elites in the recipient states think of aid outcomes. Organisations such as ALNAP¹⁷ and CDA Collaborative Learning Projects¹⁸ undertake research surveys regularly to find out how people perceive the humanitarian aid they receive. According to a 2018 report released by ALNAP, aid recipients feel that humanitarian aid is getting better. People in aid-receiving countries are more likely to see aid as helpful if they are included in the aid giving and implementation process (ALNAP, 2018). Anthropologists have examined various aspects of international development, but most often from the ‘powerful institutions-as-discourse, powerless-recipients-as-practice’ lens to study the process of aid giving (Sandler and Thedvall, 2017, p. 26). Understanding perceptions of project beneficiaries of humanitarian aid has gained momentum since the late 2000s, and in ethnography, there is a growing body of knowledge generation on development aid (referred to as ‘aidnography’) (Mosse, 2013). It helps not just in making local populations understand aid projects better, but also in improving aid implementation and its effectiveness (Nouvet, Chan and Schwartz, 2018).

Though some works consider how donor branding has influenced the perceptions of populations and the legitimacy of governments in recipient states (Dolan, 2020), studies on the perceptions of stakeholders involved in aid receiving do not examine how aid implementation can be improved. These studies on donor branding have also contributed to understanding certain recipients’ modes of functioning – such as why recipients tolerate aid fragmentation (Sato *et al.*, 2011). However, there is a considerable gap between aid literature that centres on donors instead of recipient states; this is also reflected in the literature on India’s development partnership discussed in the subsequent section.

2.3 Debates on India’s development partnership policy and programme

¹⁷<https://www.alnap.org/>

¹⁸ <https://www.cdacollaborative.org/>

The literature on India's assistance programme has mostly been examined from a foreign policy perspective, as opposed to other fields including development studies. Vohra (1980) provides one of the earliest comprehensive analysis of India's development assistance programme, in which he writes about the country supporting more than one hundred countries in the global south by transferring knowledge on technology. This was, according to him, a very important initiative, as most developed states were leaving behind these under-developed states that India was reaching out to through its aid programme. Literature on Indian development assistance has increased immensely in the last two decades, with much of the analysis emanating from scholars from the global south. Much of this work examines Indian development support from a comparative perspective. In their report, Chaturvedi *et al.* (2014) state that literature on India can be categorised into two broad groups. The first is described as the Western perspective – that India and other NDDs are more interested in taking over natural resources than providing support. From the second perspective, the country is not just different to northern donors, it is also different to other southern donors like China, and its assistance programme is a balance between the two. Almost every paper on India's assistance programme written after the late 1990s focuses on the history of the country's development assistance programme in a very condensed style and discusses the institutional framework that comes under MEA in a very descriptive manner. This has been done primarily to provide background to their research work, rather than examining the phases before the 1990s and linking India's development partnership to broader changes in Indian foreign policy, which this thesis does in Chapter IV.

India's assistance programme, which began in the late 1940s, has been studied by global north authors and actors, such as Phibbs (1968), Price (2004), Malone (2011, pp. 88–89), and institutions like OECD (2012) and the UN Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC). These authors and institutions look back at the development assistance of the country and track macro changes over the years, mostly since mid-1990s up until 2012, when the Development Partnership Administration (DPA) (a technical department with three sub-divisions, which

consolidates the assistance programme) within the MEA structure was established. Malone (2011, pp. 88–89) and Taylor (2016, p. 99) call the country's support 'economic diplomacy', a phrase that India's MEA has also started employing in recent years.

Aneja and Ngangom (2017) have examined the institutional structure that oversees India's assistance programme, and suggested improvements to this relatively new entity, noting that divisions managing different regions across the world (i.e., territorial divisions) play an active role in dealing with grants, concessional loans, and other technical assistance programmes. However, to date no scholar has examined the day-to-day functioning of these divisions in any great detail. Similarly, the role of Indian embassies in planning, implementing, and monitoring aid projects is under-explored in existing literature.

India's definition of development assistance is quite different from that of northern donors, but in many ways is very similar to that of China. According to Agrawal (2007, p. 5), the Indian aid programme is a 'mixed bag of project assistance, purchase subsidies, lines of credit, travel costs, and technical training costs incurred by the Indian government'. However, including LoCs as part of India's development assistance does not seem right to an expert on India aid (Mawdsley, 2010, p. 366). Gieg (2016, p. 50) makes a very intriguing point, drawing attention to two key aspects of India and China's assistance in Africa: first, support is given for projects, and no long-term aid is provided as a contribution to the country's budget; second, how these two countries define 'no strings attached' – which means both these countries, drawing from the Panchsheel agreement or the Five Principles of Coexistence of 1954, do not put conditions such as ensuring human rights, democracy, or good governance while providing development assistance. With reference to the second feature, Jalata (2014, p. 24), taking a different angle, states that China and India's assistance comes with conditions such as using their companies, equipment, services and labour, which is similar to the tied aid practiced by DAC donors.

There is a considerable amount of literature on capacity-building programmes and LoCs compared to the other forms of assistance that India gives, including grants and humanitarian aid. This is in accordance with the components of aid that India provided before the mid-1990s. Duclos (2012), tracking the country's capacity-building programme from the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) to the Pan-African e-Network (PAEN) project, highlights what he describes as an ethico-political shift that took place, with the programme moving from a bilateral framework that looked at capacity building, to one building up the 'collective self-reliance' of developing states, moving to a 'win-win' commercial model. He further explains that the ITEC was a government-to-government interaction, whereas in the PAEN project, the state provides space for Indian private actors to secure clients in Africa. Chanana (2009), uses aid data to highlight priority regions and the types of assistance that the country has been providing to its neighbours; he also talks about how such assistance has benefited countries like Nepal and Afghanistan. Citing examples, he concludes that historically, India has not been able to use the aid it provides for its own benefit; even though it will not be able to compete with other donors, he recommends that India continue providing aid.

Writing about India's motivation for providing assistance, Bhogal (2016) states that India's aid programme is guided not just by its economic interests, but also by strategic and security interests that define its foreign and aid policy, especially in South Asia. Additionally, she argues that India's assistance is based on recipient needs and does not have a defined format. This, along with sector-specific support, makes it potentially more effective when compared to western donors' assistance. Chenoy and Joshi (2016) adopt a more realist stance, arguing that there are four factors that drive India's development assistance towards more egoistic behaviour – using assistance to increase trade and thus ensure economic growth, leading to a reduction in poverty levels in the country; maintaining its geopolitical strategic position in South Asia; fulfilling its energy needs and accessing more resources; and the aspiration to be a global player. The authors measure each of these indicators against changes in assistance flow (amount, process, and components) to support their view. Fuchs and Vadlamannati (2013)

analyse aid data to 125 countries to argue that aid partially serves India's commercial and political interests. They also state that India's development assistance has led to a reduction in poverty levels in recipient countries. Jerve and Selbervik (2009, p. 34) compare India and South Korea as 'new' donors. Based on their policy analysis of India's development cooperation, and elite interviews with some think tanks and NGOs, mostly based in Delhi, they conclude that self-interest dominates India's narrative on its assistance programme.

On the outcomes of India's development assistance, Malone (2011, p. 122) highlights how assistance from India to Bhutan for hydropower projects has contributed to the Bhutanese economy, bringing in more revenue, and helping the country progress faster than other countries supported by institutions such as the World Bank or the Asian Development Bank (ADB). According to Aneja (2015), India's technical support has been accused of being of poor quality, and concerns have been expressed over most Indian projects going to just a few Indian private players. Mawdsley (2012b, p. 267), highlighting how people in Nepal feel about India, writes that for them, Indian development support is not much different to the that from the West, with self-interest being the main motive; and that they view the country as an 'over-bearing neighbour'. According to the same author, Ethiopian and Indian activists came together in Delhi in 2013 to raise their concerns over the harm that India's investments in the Ethiopian agriculture sector were causing, but neither Indian government nor private sector representatives met them (Mawdsley, 2014, p. 970). Tom De Bruyn's (2017) research uses the PAEN project, an Indian-supported initiative in Africa, as a case study to assess whether the narrative of SSC that India promotes and classifies its aid policy as, holds true when implementing PAEN project activities in Mozambique. He concludes that even though the infrastructure is efficient, communities are not able to make the best use of it because of 'the top-down, stand-alone and one-size-fits-all approach'. India's concessional (EXIM) loans, provided mostly to African states, are seen as 'an openly export promoting scheme' by Cairó-i-Céspedes and Colom-Jaén (2014, p. 387) in their analysis of India's role in Senegal as part of SSC, where both

private and public sector organisations have managed to enter the markets in the western region of the country. Another study (Yang *et al.*, 2014), which examines India's and China's roles in supporting the health sector in Nepal, concludes that India's own experience of dealing with health issues in regions similar to Nepal has helped it implement a project which has been effective in helping rural communities. Taylor (2016), like many other authors who have described India's assistance programme, feels that there must be a formal evaluation of the projects that India supports, so as to see how much of the aid rhetoric that India promotes is valid when programmes are executed.

Almost all the analysis on the outcomes of India's development partnership have concentrated on countries in Africa, and very little has been written on aid to South Asia, even though more than 60% of India's development assistance goes to neighbouring countries. India's aid in the form of LoCs in Africa comes with tied aid conditions, whereby countries receiving these soft loans have to buy Indian products and services to implement the projects for which the loans have been given (Mawdsley, 2014, p. 962). According to Large (2013), although China occupies a much larger role in the development of the continent, India's role in Africa is growing. Taken together, these studies highlight a mixed bag of advantages (where economic growth has improved, and India has been able to help countries because of similar backgrounds), and disadvantages (top-down approach in providing aid, inefficiency in implementation, and damage to local sectors) for recipient countries and the people who are at the receiving end of these programmes.

With regard to understanding public debate and civil society perspectives, existing research indicates that most Indians do not seem to be aware of India's development partner programme. The central government has not made use of Indian CSOs' experiences and learnings in implementing projects overseas. India's mainstream media, which mostly uses English, has reported positively about the country's assistance projects through a limited number of editorials and opinion pieces (Chaturvedi *et al.*, 2014). Aneja and Ngangom, (2017), also highlight similar findings on India's assistance programme, noting a lack of

public awareness within the country on the assistance that the state provides, the absence of discussion in the Parliament despite the assistance budget being larger than the budgets of certain other ministries, and how India's development assistance programme can learn from the implementation of various domestic policies and be aligned to India's foreign policy. Their article concludes by highlighting the need for a policy that addresses India's strategic and economic goals, and for India to have effective, efficient, and transparent bottom-up projects guided by the needs of recipient states.

Agrawal (2007)'s observations, even though more than a decade old, still hold relevance. The author looks at how the country can be an important development assistance partner, provided it revamps its institutional structure. The author also mentions how the country's assistance programme is driven by its strategic needs. His article touches upon a government report that was being reviewed when this article was written; one of the suggestions in the report was to allow Indian NGOs to utilise their funds to implement projects in other countries, which would have been an important step for the country in terms of using its rich NGO base for promoting development overseas. India's role in multilateral platforms such as IBSA (India, Brazil, South Africa) or BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) has been extensively discussed in the literature, mostly from a multilateral perspective, with a focus on how these countries are working together to change the global aid architecture. This includes descriptions of how India is involved in the World Food Programme (WFP), UN Peacekeeping and other UN bodies (Price, 2005).

Chaturvedi *et al.*, (2014) note that the 'different' model of providing assistance by India is slowly changing, and increasingly, donors are learning from and partnering with each other to implement programmes. Ahmed and Singh (2014) focus on what they describe as India's three-stage aid model, which according to them has existed for some time. The first level includes the MEA, the DPA, the Ministry of Finance (MoF) and the Export-Import Bank of India (EXIM) that gives out concessional loans, and other institutions involved in the implementation of assistance programmes under MEA. The second level

encompasses the three kinds of assistance programmes that India supports, while the countries that receive Indian aid occupy the third level. If this model is compared to that of other donors, it is quite evident that this is not unique to India. India's development partnership policy, as with other countries is influenced by its foreign policy, something that is again not unique to the country. The next part of this chapter examines how various research works have studied these two interconnected aspects – foreign policy and India's development partnership.

2.3.1 Literature on India's development assistance policy within the foreign policy framework

Describing Indian foreign policy after independence, Mukherjee and Malone, (2011, p. 87) state that the country has moved from being a 'preacher to pragmatist' over the decades. According to them, there have been three phases in India's foreign policy so far – idealism when Nehru was in power, 'hard realism' from the mid-1960s to mid-1980s, including when Indira Gandhi was in power, followed by the 'economically driven pragmatism' period. Ganguly and Pardesi (2009) divide India's foreign policy into three phases along similar lines: from 1947 to 1962 (Independence to China-India war), 1962 to 1991 (defeat in the 1962 war to the end of the Cold War), and 1991 onwards. According to them, 'systematic, national, and decision-making factors' defined independent India's development partnership policy. Citing Stephen Cohen and Sumit Ganguly's works on India's foreign policy, Pande (2017, p. 9) highlights how both those authors classify its strategies keeping Nehru's policies as the reference point. The Non-Aligned Movement, nuclear deals, security issues, and economic relations dominate works on India's foreign relations. Bajpai (2016) divides India's foreign policy into three phases – Nehruvian (from independence to 1989), neo-liberalism (from 1990 to 2016), and hyper-realism from 2016 onwards.

Even though most of India's development partnership is studied from a foreign policy lens, within the foreign policy literature of the country, development assistance has not been given importance; giving the impression that it is not

viewed as a tool of foreign policy as yet, which is not the case in practice. Going by David Campbell's argument, where he states that the foreign policy of a country facilitates establishing and recreating its identity (Wojczewski, 2019, p. 182), the following chapters in this thesis have attempted to fill this gap in the existing literature.

In view of the case studies selected for this thesis, understanding the relations between India and its neighbours is important. Highlighting the importance of the South Asian region, Raghavan (2015, p. 80,84), states that the MEA from early on had different priorities and policies for its immediate neighbours, and for the rest of the world. Pande (2017, p. 101), argues that India's relations with its neighbours emphasise that the country is geographically, socially, culturally, and economically at the centre of South Asia, and that the region has always been important to India. Though, Malone (2011, p. 104) states that it was only in the 1990s that Indian policymakers started paying attention to the region. The beginning of a different phase is indicated by the Gujral Doctrine¹⁹ of 1996 and three changes – which focused on having frequent interactions with the elite communities in these countries, on working on building trust amongst the states, and on dealing with key problems and paying attention to economic relations with these neighbouring countries. For a long time, Indian prime ministers have attempted to keep other countries, especially powerful ones, out of the region. This changed in the 1990s. Further, India has moved away from a security discourse to a development one in its approach towards other South Asian states. Murthy (1999, p. 640), while comparing the 'Gujral Doctrine' to older approaches to India's external policy, states that the principles in the 'Gujral Doctrine' were not new, having already been well established in the policy practices of the Indian government prior to this period. India, at various points, has tried to enhance its relationship with its neighbouring countries using different approaches. Of all the neighbouring countries, Bhutan is the only country that has had consistently good bilateral relations with India, including getting the highest amount of development assistance for some years now.

¹⁹'Gujral doctrine' refers to the five principles of I K Gujral (former external affairs minister from 1996 to 1997, and Prime Minister of India from 1997 to 1998), which if followed by India would lead to better relations with its South Asian neighbours (Murthy, 1999, pp. 639–640).

Maldives had good relations for a long time until recently; Nepal and Sri Lanka's relations with India deteriorated in the 1980s. In the last two decades, India has become better at keeping good relations with its neighbours, and has been providing trade concessions, using economic diplomacy for geopolitical reasons (Muni and Mohan, 2004; Malone, 2011; Pande, 2017).

Conclusion

This chapter looked at different works on bilateral assistance ranging from the general and comparative to the India-specific. These research works have been undertaken using different theoretical frameworks, examining numerous qualitative and quantitative aspects of bilateral development support, to understand various facets of this support. Over the past several decades, efforts and interests – both by academics and by practitioners – to understand bilateral development assistance have been steadily increasing. While the focus on aid data and using quantitative approaches to study aid continues to dominate this space, there have also been a number of qualitative contributions. Theories and concepts from development studies, development economics, and IR have been used to understand aid or development assistance policies and practices. With most of the developed donor-nations being part of OECD-DAC, the institution and its members undeniably occupy an important space in the international aid architecture, and as a consequence within much of the literature.

In view of what has been mentioned in this chapter, it can be stated that bilateral aid can be studied in various ways. As bilateral aid is multifunctional and involves both state and non-state actors, drawing key inferences from this set of literature is a challenge. While the literature on southern donors is expanding, it continues to see them through the lens of northern donors. Research on donors has predominantly used theories from one specific discipline or sub-field, rather than drawing from multiple fields and synthesising. Further, there is limited research from the perspective of recipient states or the beneficiaries of aid projects. This thesis contributes towards filling these gaps. Drawing from the literature review undertaken in this chapter, the different frameworks (theoretical

and analysis) and processes adapted to undertake this research are discussed in the following chapter. These frameworks and processes help in examining a southern donor, India, and its aid relationship with two fellow southern neighbours. The thesis furthermore implements a broader approach, a multilevel analysis that utilises theoretical perspectives drawn from multiple disciplines, and it includes recipient including stakeholder and community-level perspectives, as part of its analysis.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK FOR AN INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDY OF INDIAN DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE

Introduction

Historians and International Relations researchers working on India's foreign policy have studied the time period before independence to examine how policies, practices, decisions, and narratives from before 1947 have contributed to independent India's place in the global south, its foreign policymaking, and its relations with other countries. For them, as Smith (2012, p. 370) puts it, the foreign policy of India is not a consequence of it becoming a state, but is 'closely tied-up with and to a large extent constitutive of the development of the state'. Nehru's view of the country has immensely contributed to the framing of India's regional position, and therein its foreign policy — 'India, not because of any ambition of hers, but because of the force of circumstances, because of geography, because of history and because of so many other things, inevitably has to play a very important part in Asia' (Nehru, 1961, p. 22). A former Indian diplomat mentions the same in his book, and states that leaders in the country since the late 18th century have felt that for India to 'find an appropriate place...it would have to redefine its geo-political identity and cultural individuality' (Dixit, 2010, p. 16). Therefore, wanting India to be, or seeing India as, a great power or a global player is not a new or recent phenomenon in India's foreign policy (Basrur and Estrada, 2017, p. 1).

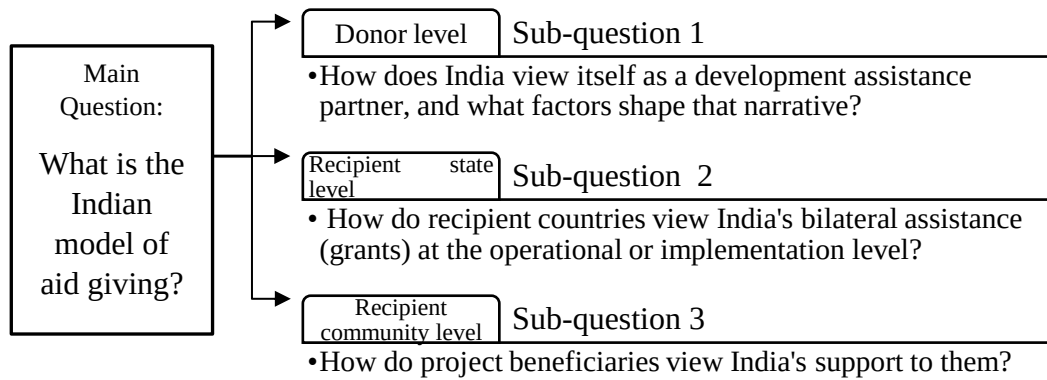
This chapter examines the aspiring and attained identities of India, and how these identities have shaped interests and drivers of aid giving by India to countries in the global south. To do so, this research uses a multidisciplinary approach to understand how India's bilateral assistance is perceived and projected by different sets of people at three different levels in the process of aid giving and aid receiving. The chapter at first focusses on unpacking the research question into three sub-parts, explaining each level studied, the framework of analysis

used, and case study selection. The second part of the chapter describes the methodology, including the process followed in data collection, the broad questions that were asked at each level of analysis, displayed in a tabular format.

3.1 Research question

Drawing from existing literature, this inductive research aims to answer the question, ‘What is the Indian model of aid giving?’ To fully answer this question, the study undertakes analysis at three levels: (i) at the Delhi level (understanding India at the policy level) — examining which international and national factors influence aid giving, the policy community, the rules that are in existence, and the dominant narratives and discourses; (ii) at the level of recipient states i.e. Sri Lanka and Nepal (understanding India as a donor at the implementation or operational level from the recipient perspective) — studying international and domestic conditions, the policy community in recipient states, rules followed while receiving aid, and perceptions, experiences, and outcomes of India’s assistance programme; and (iii) at the local community level – understanding perceived outcomes and experiences of activities financed by India, examining why India provides development assistance in selected sites in these case countries, and how does it showcase the selected grants it gives. For the first level of analysis, the thesis looks into the development assistance policy narratives of India from October 1999 to April 2019. At the recipient country level, projects were selected based on a set of criteria that will be discussed in the following sections of this chapter. Both these macro-level and micro-level (community level) analyses will facilitate a better understanding of how Indian development cooperation works (Paragi, 2017, p. 326).

Figure 1: Research questions



3.2 Case study and project selection

Case study ‘around an explanatory question may lead to more focused, and relevant description’ even if it does not help in providing a single valid causal inference (King, Keohane and Verba, 1994). The purpose of using case studies for the second and the third levels of analysis in this research is to undertake a detailed study of aid giving and its implementation by India within the South Asian region. The case study method gives the flexibility to undertake a comprehensive research, especially an inductive research of this kind (Berman, 2007; Mills, Eurepos and Wiebe, 2010).

Case country selection has been done based on the aid given to different regions, as per data compiled in the past decade from the annual reports of MEA. As shown in Appendix A, South Asian countries get the most development assistance from India, and of its six neighbouring countries – Bhutan, Afghanistan, Nepal, and Sri Lanka receive the highest amounts of assistance (in that order). A heuristic approach was taken to select the two countries to be studied for this thesis. With the help of a set of variables, six²⁰ South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) nations were assessed. Additionally, the advantages and disadvantages for the researcher of taking up

²⁰Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. Pakistan was excluded as it has received only humanitarian aid from India.

research in these countries were also considered. The table in Appendix B provides an overview of the variables against each of these countries. Consequently, Nepal and Sri Lanka were selected for this research. Both these countries have been receiving India's development aid for over five decades, and Nepal is the third highest and Sri Lanka, the fourth highest recipient of India's bilateral assistance. For the community level analysis, the project in Sri Lanka chosen is a housing project (50,000 houses for internally displaced persons — IDPs), which India started supporting in 2010. This grant project was selected as it is one of the largest grant projects (USD 270 million) that India has supported after the Sri Lankan Civil War ended in 2009. The project was implemented in Tamil majority regions of the country in the Northern and Eastern Provinces (High Commission of India, Colombo, 2014, no date; UN-Habitat Sri Lanka, nd).

In Nepal, India began providing support to the country in the late 1940s, and it provides aid for many socio-economic programmes including scholarships, infrastructure development (in sectors such as education, health), agriculture package and redevelopment after the 2015 earthquake (Embassy of India, Nepal, nda). The project that was studied in Nepal is an ongoing housing project in two districts of the country — Gorkha and Nuwakot — in which a USD 100 million grant is being provided for reconstruction work of 50,000 privately owned homes. This initiative is part of the reconstruction work that India started supporting after the 2015 earthquake (Embassy of India, Nepal, 2018, 2019), which killed over 10,000 people (*The Hindu*, 2020). Both districts selected for this housing project are close to the country's capital and to the epicentre of the 2015 earthquake.

The projects studied are both grants funded from Indian bilateral aid programmes. Grant projects were deliberately selected because they are often described by India in more altruistic terms than other forms of assistance (e.g. concessional loans and capacity building programmes), particularly these grants, as they are part of reconstruction programmes in both the countries in the wake of natural disaster (Nepal) and Civil War (Sri Lanka) (Gaibullov and Younas,

2018). Grants also form a significant portion of the India aid components, as shown in Appendix C.

3.3 Theoretical framework

Following Morgenthau's argument – 'As military policy is too important a matter to be left to the generals, so is foreign aid too important a matter to be left to the economists' – this research examines India's development assistance using theories from international politics and development anthropology (A. V. der Veen, 2011, p. 21). The theoretical framework adapted here builds on Mawdsley's (2012a, 2015) work on NDDs and India. The author, applying 'constructivist IR theory and ethnographies of foreign aid' highlights the importance of studying southern donors using a framework, which includes 'alternative norms, rhetorics and rituals of non-DAC identities and relations', and that goes beyond examining these donors from a limited politics or economics lens (Mawdsley, 2012a, p. 171). The theories applied in this research have been described in detail in the subsequent paragraphs.

3.3.1 Application of constructivist analysis

According to Mawdsley (2012a, p. 145), 'Constructivist theory suggests that states intentionally and unintentionally project particular identities through their development cooperation discourses and policies'. Unlike realism or liberalism, constructivism facilitates research on the process of events that shape and influence state identity, which then shapes interests, and thereby decision or policymaking or political behaviour. Policymakers and programme implementation administrators' decisions are influenced by the image they have of the country they represent or belong to, and of other countries involved in the aid giving and receiving process. These images might be based on their own beliefs and/or the narratives foregrounded by the states over the years (Bhasin, 2008). As this thesis aims to understand the narratives, perceptions, and experiences of policymakers and programme implementers, constructivist theory has been made use of to provide a relevant theoretical framework;

drawing from Wendt (2008)'s essay 'Anarchy is what states make of it' (first published in 1992) and Katzenstein (1996)'s edited work on Postwar Japan.

Identity as a concept was first used by Social Sciences scholars²¹ (such as Erik Erikson) since the 1950s, before it was used by IR scholars in the late-1980s. In Social Sciences, the definition depends on the context; though, there are some shared attributes in how identity is viewed. These are: it is used to explain political and social actions, collective phenomenon, how different social and political groups function, how identity influences political and social actions, and how discourse practices create identity (Skolimowska, 2017). Identity in IR has been linked to the constructivist approach and its rise within the IR scholarship post-Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. Within this scholarship, identity has a 'radical' and 'moderate' version. While William Bloom used the concept of collective identity as a way to theorise 'state as an entity' and talk about national identity or nationalism, Wendt applied it to study systemic-level constitution of states and international systems, thus stressing on how 'identities structure relations and vice versa', thus turning 'anarchy into a dynamic international society' (Berenskoetter, 2010). Wendt highlights that anarchy can change over time depending on the interests and identities of states, thereby highlighting the important role that state identity plays in a state's decisions and actions. Around the same time (as Wendt's work), Katzenstein (1996) applied the concept of state identity using constructivism in his security studies work. The difference between these two political scientists, who use identity as the central subject, is that Wendt takes a top-down approach (looking at the effect of international forces on the state's identity), whereas Katzenstein and fellow authors use a bottom-up approach, studying the impact of domestic environment on the state's identity.

Identities can be classified into four categories as per Wendt: 'type identities', 'role identities', 'person or corporate', and 'collective or social' (Wojczewski, 2019). India's identity as a regional power and a leader in the global south, and

²¹ Scholars of Psychology, Sociology, Social Anthropology, and Social Psychology.

the change in its status from an underdeveloped economy to one of the emerging global economic players, fall under the ‘collective or social’ identity type — an identity that has been given or acquired in relation to other countries in different geographical regions. This is similar to Katzenstein’s description of identity as ‘mutually constructed and evolving images of self and other’ (Katzenstein, 1996, p. 59; Finnemore and Sikkink, 2001, pp. 399–400; Berenskoetter, 2010; Smith, 2012). For this research, the ‘collective or social’ form of identity will be used, as this category of identity leads to a positive identification with the others and is most suitable while studying development assistance by a southern donor, which emphasises on following SSDC principles as part of its development cooperation practice (Berenskoetter, 2010; Skolimowska, 2017).

Applying constructivism to India’s case allows one to explore how these identities and interests are shaped by both domestic and international factors (Smith, 2012, p. 370), while also being attuned to changes that might become evident through the dynamics of aid (Mawdsley, 2015). India’s different identities have influenced its aid-giving programme, especially in the South Asian region. The stand that the Indian government took in 2003, on deciding not to take support from a lot of countries, the active role it played in newly-formed multilaterals, either at the regional level or with the other countries in the global south in the 1990s and 2000s, its engagement with institutions of global governance, and the push to showcase itself as a development partner through its development partnership programme, are clear indications of this aspect (MEA, GoI, 2009e). International norms and culture, and India’s conduct and its relationships with other states have shaped the country’s different identities discussed in this thesis. Further, the country has also projected these identities over several decades as a result of domestic conditions. These different relational identities will be discussed in detail later in this chapter.

Taking note of certain identities that get ascribed to and/or reinforced by other states (including recipient states) for India is important to this thesis. Bhasin (2008, p. 6) states that ‘most conflicts in the region emerge from this contradiction in perception and exercise of power’, where the power exerted, or

interventions undertaken by India in these countries may or may not have an extrinsic and negative motive. Therefore, along with knowing the narratives on the Indian side on its development partnership policy and programme, understanding the neighbouring states' perceptions of India as a donor or development partner becomes important. For example, during fieldwork in Sri Lanka in 2019, when some interviewees referred to India as a 'big brother', it was not always because of a poor impression or bad experience. Thus, the case study chapters will look at how experiences and perceptions shared by both elites and beneficiary communities in both the case countries revolve around these particular identities of India.

Comparing and contrasting changes over time using a constructivist approach expands knowledge of how various interests, behaviours, identities, etc. shape a donor state's policy and practice in bilateral grant-giving. Using a constructivist approach (of identity and interests) to highlight patterns in India's aid giving, the research examines what aspects of transnational aid architecture, foreign policies of India and aid recipient countries become important in influencing India's development assistance policy and its programme implementation over time. This approach, for the first two levels of analysis, also helps in understanding who are the relevant actors, and what domestic factors and rules influence India's development cooperation.

3.3.2 Application of development anthropology (gift theory)

Theories to study aid giving will be different to theories for understanding aid implementation. Further, 'states as viewed by analysts and status as accorded by policymakers — the two may not coincide' (Basrur and Estrada, 2017, p. 4). Taking the same rationale to community-level beneficiaries, the empirical part of this research found that beneficiary communities view India differently from local elites; hence, this section will use a theory from development anthropology for analysis at the third level. This research uses Hattori (2001)'s argument on categorising grants as gifts. Hattori combines Mauss, Sahlins and Bourdieu's analyses of foreign aid and applies them to understand what foreign aid is, and how it can be defined from an anthropological perspective, highlighting the

features of aid giving that are ignored by realists, liberalists, and world system theorists in IR. Bilateral aid is a form of gift in which the giver does not (overtly) expect anything in return. The way grant giving is practised, and the language used around it by both northern and southern donors, bring out its gift aspects. Even though the discourse of the givers portrays this form of gift giving as seemingly unreciprocated (as per Sahlin's and Hattori's analysis), various studies have shown that givers actually have unsaid, equivocal, and subtle expectations (Hattori, 2001; Silva, 2008; Mawdsley, 2012a; Paragi, 2017).

Gift giving and return gift giving has an effect on the identities of the giver, receiver, and their communities (Paragi, 2017). The identities of India discussed in the following section have also influenced how beneficiary communities view India vis-à-vis their own country's identity. Using gift theory in the case study chapters on the selected projects in Sri Lanka and Nepal enabled examination of how the gift dimension is evoked (which contributed to return gifts being offered in different forms) and how India's various identities shape perceptions and experiences of project beneficiaries (Eyben, 2006).

3.3.3 Application of both theories

To apply these theories in this research, firstly, the identities that India has, or aims to attain, are explained. Following this, factors that contribute to these identities' formation have also been explored. The argument made here, drawing from constructivism, is that these identities lead to particular aid interests, which in this research, are categorised as per Veen's framework, described in the later part of this chapter (A. M. van der Veen, 2011, p. 10). In the empirical chapters IV, V, and VI on India, Sri Lanka, and Nepal, this research, with the support of empirical data, has analysed how these identities and interests are construed and/or constructed. Similarly, it analyses how India (as a result of the position and identities it holds) brings in the gift factor, thus creating social relationships between itself and those in recipient countries — both with elites and beneficiary communities. This is followed by a discussion of how reciprocity is defined by both India as a donor state, and by communities who are beneficiaries of development support. Furthermore, a comparative analysis has been undertaken,

wherever possible, to highlight how various governments, political parties in recipient states and communities have shaped India's aid policy, or how their backgrounds influence their perceptions and experiences while providing and receiving Indian support.

The argument that this research makes is that to define what kind of donor a particular state is and what type of grant it provides, theorists and practitioners both need to look at different layers, from policymaking to programme implementation processes, using a combination of different theories. This minimises the risk of development assistance getting defined from a very limited understanding (for example, from one perspective or level) while ensuring a more inclusive approach through engagement with multiple actors (including implementing partners and beneficiaries). More limited approaches tend to overlook and/or undervalue each level's role before development assistance has any kind of outcome at the beneficiary level.

3.4 The three overlapping identities of the Indian state: a regional power, 'big-brother' and an emerging global player

In 2018 India's GDP was expected to grow by more than 7% annually in the coming years (OECD Development Centre, 2018, p. 21; World Bank, 2018). In 2019, it was the fifth-fastest-growing economy in the world in terms of purchasing power parity, with a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of USD 2.87 trillion and an estimated population of 1.39 billion. The country's membership in the G20 further shows the influence it has and the position it is being given in the global hierarchy (Malone, 2011, p. 2). During the most recent voting for the UN Security Council, India was supported by 184 out of 192 UN members.²² Labels such as 'good power', 'responsible power', 'vibrant democracy' and 'liberal democracy' have contributed to India's global status in the past two decades, and these labels have also influenced India's aid giving (Basrur and Estrada, 2017, pp. 6–11). As a result of both regional and global positions, India

²²A United Nations Security Council election was held in June 2020

has attained certain identities. Going by Wendt's explanation of identity, the number of identities a country has is not infinite (Finnemore and Sikkink, 2001, p. 399). The identities relevant to this study are explained in the following sections. The three identities discussed below are not binary; they overlap and are interconnected. However, this research attempts to distinguish these identities, as they have different influences on aid giving by India.

3.4.1 Regional power

Basrur and Estrada (2017, pp. 17–18), claim that India, because of the loss during the 1962 war against China, did not get the status of a global player, and the country's foreign policy strategy failed to get India 'accommodated' by the superpowers. Even though India failed to get recognition at the global level because of its identity at the regional level (attained through SSC), it continued to provide development assistance within the SSDC framework. The support it provided helped India gain recognition as a leading player in the global south. Therefore, status can be given both by those that are more powerful and by those that are less powerful; a country does not have to be recognised by global powers only. This holds true for India in the South Asian region. Given this, the country, due to its size, large economy, and with the fourth-largest armed forces in the world (including being a nuclear power), has seen itself as a regional power. Also, because of its conduct, other countries have considered India to be a leading player in the region. Many South Asian countries feel that India has used this hierarchical position to benefit itself and that it has at times interfered with their functioning to fulfil its own interests. Examples often used to support this perspective include the Indian Peace-Keeping Force's (IPKF) intervention in Sri Lanka in 1987 and India's many blockades of Nepal (Racine, 2008, p. 68). Bajpai (2015, p. 23) notes that with China, Pakistan and USA's involvement in the region, India is constantly under threat — it has to worry about its territory and sovereignty over its internal and external policies. India's win during the 1971 war with Pakistan, that helped Bangladesh (formerly East Pakistan) emerge as an independent nation-state further benefited India's claim to regional hegemony. Similar to the Monroe Doctrine, the Indira doctrine – proclaimed by then-Prime Minister Indira Gandhi – showed India's intent to keep external

actors out of the region (Mansingh, 2015, pp. 108, 110). Like China, India also draws particular attention to it being a former colony, which has been exploited to show camaraderie with other southern states (Bajpai, 2015, p. 24).

The need to fulfil India's aspirations to be a powerful or hegemonic country in the region is something that elected representatives, non-government institutions, and others have started promoting. Elected representatives, both in the government and opposition leaders, highlight that to be a major power, many more resources need to be invested in maintaining external relations (Lok Sabha Secretariat, 2014, p. 16). In 2012-13, the foreign secretary of India, highlighting development aid's contribution to enhancing India's status and identity, shared that the country's image and position are not limited to the traditional role it played in the developing world, but are also shaped 'by its emergence as a major non-traditional donor of aid and assistance, particularly in the form of technical and economic cooperation provided to the countries in its immediate and extended neighbourhood' (Lok Sabha Secretariat, 2012, p. 26).

3.4.2 'Big brother'

On the identity of being a 'big brother' or 'elder sister/brother', when and how smaller states in the South Asian region started viewing India in these terms has not yet been studied in depth. However, because of its position in the region, its 'familial' relationship with other countries in the region (which steers India's foreign policy towards South Asian countries in a more empathetic manner), and interventions and interferences (in certain situations) in its neighbouring states, these countries perceive it as a 'big brother' – which can have a positive or negative connotation as mentioned earlier in section 3.3.1 (Rao, 1988; Dahal, 2018; Brookings India, 2020). As Wendt pointed out, identities and interests are 'endogenous to interaction', therefore it can be stated that interactions between these South Asian countries and India have resulted in the latter obtaining this identity (Bhaumik, 1997; Pande, 2011; Jung, 2019, p. 6).

3.4.3 Emerging global player

The Indian state's influence and position as a global player have been much debated. Those who have written on this have looked at some of the critical aspects of being a global player — trade (and economic growth), nuclear power (and defence capacity), and other features such as soft power, coalitions (such as BRICS, International Solar Alliance), youth population, and skilled labour — to support their argument regarding India. Research works on this have broadly concluded that the country is yet to start on the path of progress that will help it become a global player. India has to take intensive steps to improve its market system, build its own military equipment, improve its internal development indicators, and build more coalitions (Hopewell, 2015; Sridharan, 2015; Pedersen, 2016; Chaudhary, 2019). Further, India has been considered an important global actor for a long time because of its democratic system of governance (Basrur and Estrada, 2017; Ragi, Sondhi and Pathak, 2017).

It is not just hard power that has contributed to India being an active player in global politics. Other elements such as the hard-line position that India took at the World Trade Organization has brought attention to India's leadership amongst global south countries (Smith, 2012, p. 382). Tharoor and Saran (2020, p. 284) point out that India's role as a 'key player' would be different from that of countries like USA and China. They deliberate upon how India will be the 'world's first development superpower' because of its role in 'issues of global governance and development' and its development assistance programme.

With regard to India's development assistance, which is considered soft power, the country provided USD 1.8 billion in 2015 as per OECD estimates. When compared to China's, which was USD 3.1 billion in the same year, or that of USA, which was USD 34.732 billion (providing the highest amount of aid in absolute amounts as per OECD 2017 records), or even the tenth-highest DAC donor, Norway, which provided USD 4.125 billion in 2017, India has a long way to go before it is seen as a global player when assessed on its development assistance figures (OECD-DAC, 2017b; Worley, 2019). India's development assistance programme has been more than 40% of the MEA budget for the past decade. These include grants, soft loans, technical trainings, and Humanitarian

Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR). The support was extended to other countries in the global south, and countries in the global north have given India the visibility in the global aid architecture. Despite the lower development assistance amounts, it is essential to note that one of the critical reasons for India's position as a leader has been because of the country's role in voicing the problems of states of the global south and demanding for better functioning of global institutions such as the World Bank. These actions have helped gain more visibility and support from other developing states (Ganguly, 2003). A 2018 report by AidData shows that India ranked 24th on the donor influence index, having climbed up from 31st in 2014. Further, strong historical connections have contributed to how India as a donor is perceived by other states. For example, similar to using familial relationships with countries in the South Asian region, India has defined its relationship with African countries as 'fraternal', while providing development assistance. Moreover, for India, other countries' perceptions of it and its foreign policy have been important, where it wants other developing countries to think of it as 'equitable rather than self-centred' (MEA, GoI, 2011a; Mawdsley, 2012a; Lok Sabha Secretariat, 2015b, 2015a; Wooley, 2018; Kevlihan and Shanbog, 2020; Pande, 2020, p. 99). These aspects, which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter IV, will facilitate a better understanding of how India is an important aid player in the global south, and thus a global player.

3.4.4 Domestic and international factors influencing India's identities

The factors discussed in this part of the chapter are categorised based on the works of Jepperson, Wendt and Katzenstein (1996), and Basrur and Estrada (2017). Since it would be difficult in some cases to clearly distinguish between domestic versus international factors that shape India's identities, the following section has groupings that include both these sets of factors on a thematic basis and broadly related topics. Additionally, some more of the significant specific aspects or steps that contributed to strengthening the various identities of India have been listed in Appendix D.

Non-alignment to strategic engagement

India's foreign-policy approach has moved from idealism to pragmatism. India was an important player in the global south during the 1940s; however, it had very limited social, political, and economic relations with the US. India followed the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence (Panchsheel) in its relations with China, and in following this, India did not invest much in defence nor foresee China as a threat until the 1962 war, which India lost. India reached out to USA for support after this defeat. Security policies and their implementation became an important agenda in the later decades (India's neo-liberalist phase), and military modernisation was undertaken while being part of the NAM. With the US continuing to be disinterested in India (with just a brief involvement during the Vietnam war, during which the US tried to pressurise India by withholding economic support since the country was against the US's air strikes into North Vietnam), the USSR paid attention to India. It facilitated a peace agreement between India and Pakistan, expanding its influence in South Asia (Thakur, 1979, p. 964). China's 1964 nuclear test made India's Prime Minister, Lal Bahadur Shastri, buy nuclear weapons for India. However, he continued to support the NAM despite opposition from some Indian parliamentarians who wanted to end India's neutral stand. The nuclear test by China and the 1965 war with Pakistan contributed hugely to changes in Indian foreign policy, which started moving away from Nehruvian policies of idealism, and compromising on its basic ideals — non-alignment, peaceful co-existence, and friendship. Shastri's successor Indira Gandhi undertook a nuclear test as part of India's Subterranean Nuclear Explosions Project (SNEP) as a measure to safeguard itself from external threats such as China. India continued to help colonised countries, to support Palestine and was vocal against apartheid in South Africa and the Portuguese presence in Angola and Mozambique (Chakma, 2005).

India started to slowly move away from its commitment to the NAM, and signed the Indo-Soviet Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation in 1971, which was initially for twenty years, but was renewed in 1991 for another twenty years. This gave the country confidence to engage in military actions internationally, such as supporting East Pakistan (present-day Bangladesh) in gaining independence from (West) Pakistan. The country's first nuclear test in 1974 led

to India gaining regional power status, though to a limited extent, as India was not economically developed. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and alignment of the US with Pakistan in response, resulted in closer Soviet-Indian relations. India continued to be of very little importance to the US, especially with the disintegration of USSR. 1991, which saw the end of the second phase of India's foreign relations, was a landmark year for the country. India underwent economic reforms (liberalisation, privatisation, and globalisation) under Prime Minister Narasimha Rao. The following years also saw an increase in political engagement with other regions such as Southeast Asia (Look East Policy of 1992), enhanced relations with the neighbours through the Gujral Doctrine, and increased engagement in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) and West Asia (for example, defence purchases from Israel). Efforts were made to build good relations with China; however, relations with Pakistan continued to be bad, especially after the 1999 Kargil War, when a National Democratic Alliance coalition government was in power (1998 to 2004). The second set of nuclear tests was conducted during this term in 1998 — the Pokhran II tests, where five devices were tested. Following this, the United Progressive Alliance (UPA), headed by Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh, governed the country from 2004 to 2014. Dr. Singh, one of the key figures in introducing liberal economic policies in the early 1990s as India's then finance minister, had one main aim for his government's foreign policy — 'to create a global environment conducive to her economic development and the well-being of the people of India' (Pande, 2017, p. 87). The neoliberal phase, along with an emphasis on economic development, witnessed idealism (which was also promoted in the initial decades after independence by Nehru), where the narrative was to focus on the self-interest of the nation, and respect and uphold the values of the Indian people. Narendra Modi became the next PM in 2014, and similar to earlier PMs, he ensured that security and foreign policy were developed in the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) and not in the MEA. His emphasis has been on economic development of the country and enhancing India's image as an emerging global power (Chiriyankandath, 2004; Ganguly and Pardesi, 2009; Mukherjee and Malone, 2011; Pedersen, 2016; Pande, 2017).

Apart from developing bilateral relationships, India has also continued to build multilateral platforms — along with IBSA, India is also part of the BRICS grouping. These countries have grouped together for economic cooperation, which includes cooperation in the areas of trade, investment, finance, manufacturing, energy, agriculture, science & technology, connectivity, etc. They have recently started the New Development Bank (NDB), which will provide loans to developing nations. India is an active member of the G20 nations and participates in its summits. India has also contributed to the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), another multi-lateral development bank. The bank — with ninety-three members — aims to support economic and social development in Asian countries.

Some of the recent international factors that impacted India's global role were the terrorist attack in the US in 2001, after which the country sought India's participation in tackling global terrorism, and China's rise in Asia, where once more countries like USA, Japan, and Australia have joined hands with India to deal with changes in the IOR (Pedersen, 2016). In the past some years, domestic factors and international influences have contributed to India's active role in the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad), the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), and suchlike platforms, simultaneously boosting its identity as an important global and regional player.

One of the key domestic factors that has contributed to its foreign policy changes and thereby India's image is its economic growth in the last three decades. Nanda (2009) and other experts, as mentioned in his article, write that the western world started to take note of India's economic growth only after the liberalisation of its economy, i.e., in 1991-92, even though India's economic growth had been consistently growing since Independence. The subsequent two economic phases started in the 1990s and the early 2000s respectively. Gupta (2018) highlights how India's growth story is different from other large democracies' growth trajectories. Attention on India's economic growth led interest in its development assistance programme, and India, like some other countries, was

called an ‘emerging’ donor only after the late 1990s. Turning to the country’s trade, an upsurge in India’s exports since 2000 has also contributed to its global economic presence. Further, Indian-origin private sector investments have also grown over the past two decades. Both these factors have enhanced India’s visibility in many countries (Pedersen, 2016).

Democratic-federal structure and its influence in enhancing India’s global and regional identities

After economic liberalisation, India’s position as a ‘liberal-capitalist democracy’ helped it in getting recognition from the dominant powers, including the US. Then-US President George W. Bush, talking about India’s democracy in 2005, stated ‘this century will see democratic India’s arrival as a force in the world’. At the same time, recognising the country’s rise in the region, his office shared that the US hoped to work with India to ‘promote democracy, economic growth, stability and peace in that vital region’ (Department of State, 2005). India was not seen as a threat in the region by leaders such as Lee Kuan Yew (former PM of Singapore), even when it increased its presence in Southeast Asia (Tharoor and Saran, 2020, p. 286). Maintaining its democratic status, an internationally accepted norm, has contributed to strengthening its identities and status at both global and regional levels. This, despite having lower levels of material power than China and Russia (Basrur and Estrada, 2017, pp. 98–99, 18). Connecting India’s development partnership programme with democratic systems in place in a recipient country, former Indian PM, Dr Singh in Mauritius, stated that India and Mauritius ‘were wedded to democracy, secularism and basic human rights’, and that the country will continue to support Mauritius’ progress and development (GoI, 2005).

Using India as a case study for rising powers, Plagemann and Destradi (2015) argue that the rise of sub-national bodies (along with interference from international actors) has promoted soft sovereignty at the central level in areas such as foreign and defence policies. Sub-national structures, such as political parties or states, have played important roles in India taking certain actions and decisions as part of its foreign policy, and have contributed to its image-building,

especially in the South Asian region. One of the commonly cited examples is the influence of the political parties of Tamil Nadu, and their role in decisions taken with regard to Sri Lanka during the Sri Lankan Civil War. To support this argument, one of the foremost instances talked about is of the Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP) led NDA – an alliance that included a regional party, All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK), in 2000. The party and the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister (of another party, Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam - DMK) were unhappy with the central government's decision to help the Sri Lankan government evacuate 40,000 Sri Lankan soldiers from an LTTE-controlled area (Sridharan, 2003). The other most-cited example is India's vote in favour of Sri Lankan Tamils in two resolutions initiated by US at UNHRC. The Indian government has also been moving away from its earlier practice of abstaining from voting, to taking a stand (during the UN General Assembly 2012) against the Sri Lankan state's atrocities on its Tamil population, demonstrating the influence coalition partners can have on the central government. The party which put pressure was DMK, a coalition partner in the UPA, which was led by the INC. The Indian government had to vote against Sri Lanka again during the 2013 UNHCR resolution because of the pressure from DMK (whose support was crucial for the UPA II government to remain in power). The second resolution called for a probe into war crimes committed by the Sri Lankan government. In the same year, Dr Singh was pressurised by the Tamil parties to drop his plans to attend the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Colombo — he gave in, and the minister of external affairs represented India instead (Plagemann and Destradi, 2015; Jacob and Asthana, 2017; Blarel, 2019).

Soft power, and intertwined relationships

In her recent book, Pande (2020, p. x) states that 'much as Indians want their country to be a global leader, there is also hesitance in building and exercising hard power'. While hard power plays a crucial role in building an image or status or identity of a country, soft power too has a key role in shaping these aspects, at least in India's case, even if the country has not been able to utilise its soft power well (Jaishankar, 2018). The impact both these forms of powers have on

a country's position is difficult to measure. However, this section provides an overview of what these soft power influences have been in the case of India.

India's many religions, diverse culture and traditions, and shared history can be considered part of its soft power. Scholars often ignore these factors. One example is India's status as the country of origin and source of diffusion of a number of religions including Hinduism, Sikhism, and Buddhism. As a consequence, co-religionist communities in neighbouring countries hold India in high regard. This perspective came to the fore during fieldwork conducted (for this research) in Sri Lanka and Nepal. The presence of trans-border ethnic kin (for example, Tamils in Sri Lanka and Madheshis in Nepal) has also strengthened India's soft power, and these communities play key roles in their respective countries in building and reinforcing different identities of India's over the decades.

The substantial worldwide presence of an Indian diaspora has been considered a source of soft power for India since at least the early 2000s (Mohan, 2003). Tharoor (2012, p. 199), underscoring the importance of this diaspora (25 million in 2012), especially in the US, states that they have 'transformed India's image across the world'.

3.5 The multi-level framework for mapping factors in aid giving and receiving

Having discussed the various identities of India and established factors that contribute to the formation of different identities of the country to support the theoretical argument (section 3.3), this section illustrates the multi-level framework with specific focus on aid giving and aid receiving. This research uses the Institutional Analysis and Development (IAD) framework to understand the complexities involved in India's bilateral aid giving, and to understand the factors that most likely influence aid inflow in the case countries. The framework, developed by Elinor and Vincent Ostrom, as part of the Ostrom

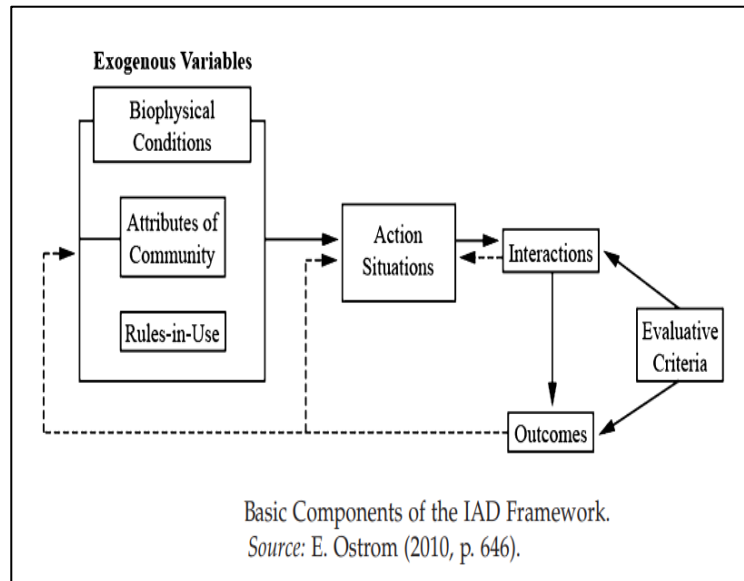
Workshop,²³ helps in providing comprehensive insight on the kind of donor that India is and its aid giving model (McGinnis, 2011). Though the analysis is based on constructivism and gift theory, as detailed in the theoretical section, the IAD framework has been used to identify and classify important factors that influence aid giving and receiving. This helped decide upon stakeholders to be interviewed, questions to be asked, and documents to be shortlisted for this thesis. The IAD framework has also helped in exploring how domestic political economy, policies (such as for trade), and political situations can shape national governments' policies, as emphasised by researchers of comparative politics (Putnam, 1988; Frieden and Lake, 1999; Finnemore and Sikkink, 2001; Milner, 2002).

Various researchers have adapted this framework to their research areas. For example, Gibson *et al.* (2005) have used the framework to study the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency's (SIDA) role as an institution in incentivising desired outcomes. Collier, (2002, p. 3) has combined IAD and constructivism in his research on corruption, and he states, 'Consistent with the IAD framework, constructivists believe that reality is affected by both social and material factors and that the properties of agents and structures are both relevant to explanations of social behaviour'. The IAD framework this PhD research uses has also been deployed by political scientists to understand other aid-giving institutions (Ostrom *et al.*, 2014). This research uses an adapted framework, drawing from the framework for analysis developed by Clement (2010). It also draws from some components from Gibson *et al.* (2005)'s work as set out further below.

3.5.1 An overview of the IAD framework

²³The Workshop in Political Theory and Policy Analysis was founded at Indiana University in 1973 by Nobel Prize-winning economist Elinor Ostrom and her husband, Vincent Ostrom' (<https://ostromworkshop.indiana.edu/index.html>)

The IAD framework looks at the variables that are involved in and affect the functioning of institutions, which lead to different decisions as a result of the collective choice process. The basic components of this framework (Figure 2 on



the left) contain an action arena in an institutional setup, which involves various actors in action situations. These when affected by external variables – bio-physical conditions,

community attributes, and rules in use, lead to different interactions and there in outcomes, which are evaluated.

The framework brings out the complexities involved in institutions, including in policymaking, and helps in categorising them. Each of these components is further categorised, which helps in highlighting different settings when using this framework. The IAD framework considers a multi-level analysis of governance and looks at the constitutional level, policymaking or collective choice level, and operational level (Gibson *et al.*, 2005; Clement, 2010; McGinnis, 2011). Although IAD came about as a rational choice framework, drawing from Fearon and Wendt (2002), constructivism and rationalism can often co-exist as complementary to each other, particularly if both are used as analytical tools. Similarly, McGinnis and Ostrom (2014) state that some theoretical perspectives, including social constructivism, can be applied within the broad IAD framework to both develop and analyse certain models.

3.5.2 IDA framework for this research

Clement (2010), in her study on Vietnam's afforestation policies, extends the IAD framework to study multi-level governance levels by adding two exogenous variables — the politico-economic context and discourses — to the three original variables mentioned in the previous section. The researcher brings in these two new factors to fill in the gap in the existing IAD model, which does not factor in historical, social, and discursive context while outlining unit-level analysis. Using the new extended framework that Clement (2010) has developed that uses three units of analysis – central, provincial, and village level²⁴ — a framework has been customised for this research's analysis.²⁵ Gibson *et al.*, (2005)'s work helped in identifying the level of interactions, actors, and policies and rules in the context of bilateral aid.

To address the sub-questions, the research design focuses on three levels of analysis – the bureaucratic and policy environment in New Delhi and the elite and community levels in aid recipient states (figure 3). This framework facilitates exploring answers on the exogenous factors (described in section 3.7) that affect policy decisions on aid giving in India. At the second level, along with studying how development assistance programmes affect power relations — as perceived and experienced by various stakeholders — between India and selected recipient countries, other external aspects – such as other countries, that shape recipient countries' aid receiving, and decisions taken on programme implementation are also studied. At the third level, the focus is only on beneficiaries' experiences and perceptions of projects supported by India, and how they view India as an aid provider.

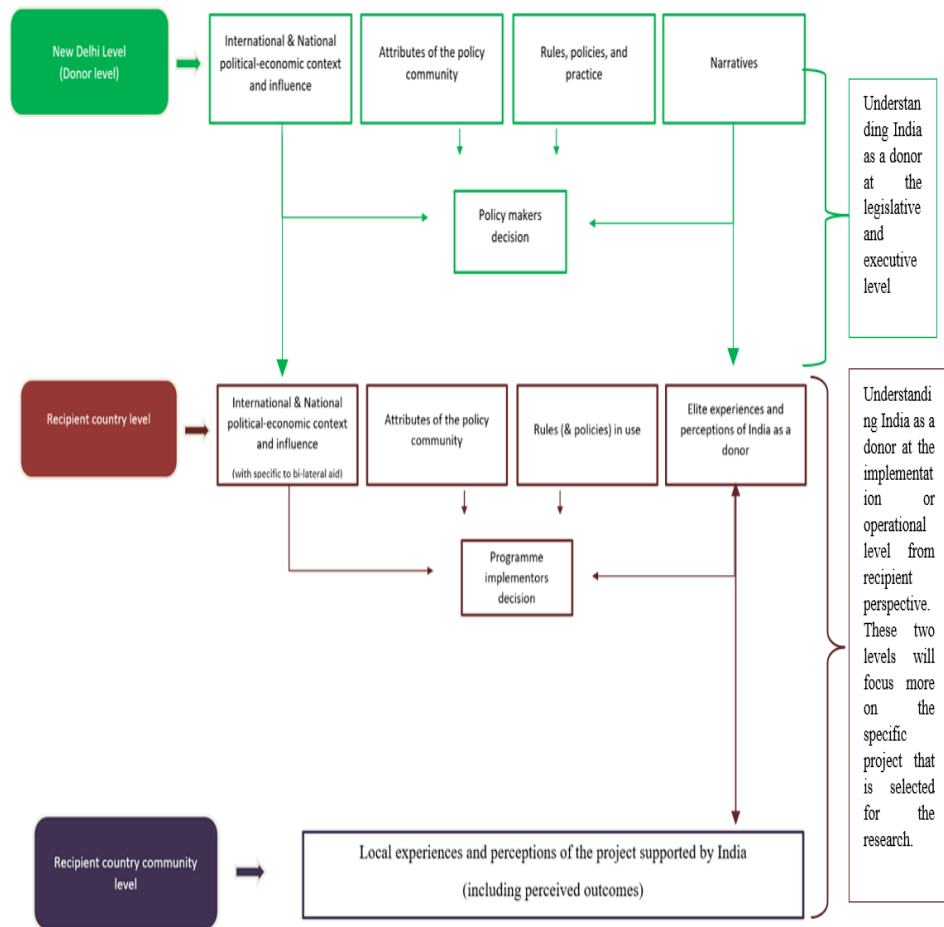
The objective behind looking at three levels is to establish what various sets of stakeholders — who are part of this bilateral process — make of the assistance programme and elucidate the possible influences that shape in describing India in the context of bilateral aid. Here, the IAD framework, as an analytical tool, not only helps in listing actors and components in aid giving and aid flow of

²⁴Each of the three multi-governance levels — constitutional, policymaking/collective choice, and operational arena — are present within each of these three units of analysis.

²⁵The bio-physical conditions variable has been dropped, as it is not relevant at least at the first two levels.

interactions, both within the donor state and between the donor and recipients but also helps map out the relations between these, and in identifying other donor states whose interventions in the recipient countries can influence India's development assistance.

Figure 3: IAD framework for this thesis



The following sections (3.6 and 3.7) will outline some of the concepts and terms that are part of the frameworks and important to this research. These sections will provide an insight into how certain broad key concepts and terms have been defined based on relevant literature and as per the understanding of those interviewed, in some cases.

3.6 Concepts

States as development partners

What does one mean by ‘state’? This has been debated by various scholars of IR over several decades. The questions phrased for the respondents and asked during the field work followed Wendt’s definition — ‘states are real actors to which we can legitimately attribute anthropomorphic qualities like desires, beliefs, and intentionality’. Some of these questions were about how the elite policy community perceives the Indian state and the support it gives, and what their experiences have been while interacting with the Indian state. The responses by most of the interviewees in Sri Lanka and Nepal indicated that they viewed India as a collection of individuals. This viewpoint was influenced by the identities of India discussed earlier. In view of the responses, Robert Gilpin’s description of the state has been used in this thesis. He notes — ‘strictly speaking...only individuals and individuals joined together into various types of coalitions can be said to have interests’ (Jackson, 2004).

Bilateral donors and their actors

Bilateral aid, especially in the context of southern donors, is yet to have a normative framework, and is mostly grounded in the broad foreign policy for a particular region (or country, in India’s case) for development partners. Decisions to provide Indian support or not, including how much and which regions to support, are mostly made by those in power (either at the embassy level, ministry level, or country leaders, including the Head of Government). These decisions are most often based on both external (international) and internal (domestic) factors, including individual decision-makers’ own perceptions or experiences, which have been shaped by broader narratives that prevail in the country that the person represents.

ODA

The OECD defines ODA as ‘government aid that promotes and specifically targets the economic development and welfare of developing countries’ (OECD,

2018b). As per this definition, there are five essentials that have to be met for a flow of resources to be termed ODA: a) it has to be in the form of grant, loans, or technical cooperation, b) it must be from a government source, c) its recipients have to be countries that are still developing, d) its purpose must be welfare and development, and e) it should be concessional (World Bank, 2008, p. 29).

Development partnership/cooperation/ assistance

India follows a broader definition, similar to one given by Riddell (2008, p.17), a development specialist: ‘all resources — physical goods, skills and technical know-how, financial grants (gifts), or loans (at concessional rates) — transferred by donors to recipients’. Using these terms helps India in looking at its development support as a mutual opportunity which will lead to a win-win’ situation, while showing post-colonial solidarity. India’s assistance programme is not to be termed as ‘foreign aid’ as it follows the principles of SSDC, and it goes deeper than just providing aid. The country also avoids using the term ‘foreign aid’ as because of the term being associated with DAC donors (Chaturvedi, 2012; Mawdsley, 2015).

3.7 Key terms under exogenous variables in the IAD framework

National and International political economic context and influences

Both aid giving and aid receiving are highly impacted by various national and international factors, which can change rapidly. For a recipient, apart from donor policy and practice, its internal and external contexts shape how it views a donor and forms its aid-receiving policy. While external factors may differ for a donor state and a recipient state, similar internal economic and political factors shape aid-giving and aid-receiving policies. These internal aspects can be the ideology of the political party in power, election timeline, economic status of the country, transborder ethnic kin, as well as idiosyncratic factors, such as the personality of the Head of Government.

Attributes of the policy community

Kingdon (2002, p. 117) notes that 'Policy communities are composed of specialists in a given policy area ... scattered both through and outside of government. Some of them are on committee staff ... Others work downtown, in places like planning and evaluation office and budget offices. Still, others are academics, consultants, or analysts if interest groups. But they have in common their concern with one area of policy problems'. Going by his definition of policy community, this research includes diverse sets of people who are categorised as policymakers, and the common policy area is India's bilateral aid.

Attributes of the policy community, for the purposes of this research, include the backgrounds of policymakers, the roles these policymakers are/were involved in, their seniority in their respective organisations, and the frequency and content of their interactions with representatives of the Indian state.

Existing rules, policies, and practices

Regulations that guide individual states for aid giving or aid receiving have to be factored in to understand the complete process. To be considered guidelines under this research, these rules and policies have to be issued in written form by the respective governments. Practices that are described for New Delhi level in Chapter IV are based on the interviews and documents analysed.

Narrative

'Narrative, understood here as both a particular category of communication and a method of cognitive organization (see Herman, 2002, 2003a, 2009), functions as a seemingly universal device for individuals to sharpen certain elements of reality while levelling others' (Jones and McBeth, 2010). Going by this, narratives in this research's context can be defined as those descriptions or portrayals of the aid policy and programme that influence the actions of policymakers (groups, individuals, governments, legislative bodies) in India. As De Fina and Georgakopoulou (2015, p. 4) state, 'Narratives are shaped by contexts, but they also create new contexts by mobilizing and articulating fresh understandings of the world, by altering power relations between peoples, by constituting new practices'. The narratives highlighted by the Indian government

vary with changes in the country's position internationally and shifts in domestic politics. The understanding here is that narratives influence perceptions and vice-versa.

Perceptions and experiences

Comprehending the perceptions of different sets of people gives insights into their experiences and into the reality of a particular phenomenon. Both help in understanding 'complex underlying mechanisms' (Munhall, 2008). These are very subjective, dependent on the micro, meso, and macro environment one is situated in. Studying the experiences and perceptions of those involved in aid giving and aid receiving is important, because perceptions and experiences affect opinions and thereby the narratives that can influence both policy and practices. These throw light on socially constructed multiple realities, and bilateral assistance — most often seen as soft power — gets impacted by the realities of all those involved.

Implementing agencies' staffs' experiences and perceptions (part of the elite experiences in the framework)

The selected projects in both the countries were/are being implemented through organisations (in some cases recipient government departments) based in recipient countries. These Implementing Partners (IPs) in Sri Lanka or Implementing Agencies (IAs) in Nepal, who are both state and non-state actors, are shortlisted by the Indian Embassy/High Commission in accordance with a selection process set by the Indian government with consultation from recipient governments. These actors play an important role in the operationalisation of projects, and influence decision-making by the recipient states; furthermore, the staff also have a hand in shaping local experiences and perceptions.

Local experiences and perceptions of India's support

The term ‘local’ here represents the beneficiaries of the Indian-supported projects, both in Sri Lanka (in four districts) and Nepal (in two districts). In Sri Lanka’s case, those interviewed at the local level were mostly Sri Lankan Tamils and the Muslim community who have been affected by the Civil War and were provided support to build houses either on their own land or on land provided by the local administration. In Nepal, those interviewed belonged mostly to some of the homogeneous communities (following Buddhism or Hinduism) in the Himalayan region.

In terms of experiences and perceptions, this research captured first-hand accounts of community members, i.e., those who were directly involved in building houses and in engaging with implementing partners for Indian-supported projects.

One of the elements in this research is an examination of India’s motivation for providing development assistance, drawing from government documents and interviews with elite communities in Delhi and in recipient states. In order to understand or bring out the dominant narratives, perceptions, and experiences reflected in the documents and interviews with individuals or groups on India’s aid giving motives, the frames developed by Veen (2011) were used to group the responses. Veen (2011, p. 10) developed this for his research on the aid programmes of Belgium, Italy, Norway, and the Netherlands, making use of data from legislative debates (applying content analysis). These frames help in determining the motivations of a donor over a span of time, and in this research, it also helps in linking these aid interests with the three different identities of India that were discussed earlier. The table (figure 4) below lists Veen’s frames and the corresponding customised frames used in this research.

Figure 4: Veen's frames and customised frames for this research

Veen's version		Customised for this research	
<i>Frames</i>	<i>Goals for aid</i>	<i>Customised Frames</i>	<i>(Some of the) Customised goals</i>
Security	Increase donor's physical security: support allies, oppose Communism, etc.	South Asian regional security	To minimise Chinese influence in the region, to end the internal conflict in Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Nepal.
Influence	Pursue power: increase leverage over others, win allies and positions of influence in international fora	Power/Influence in South Asia, Africa, Southeast Asia	To get regional support and have SA countries as allies, to get support for UN Security Council Permanent Seat.
Wealth/economic interests	Further economic interests of donor economy; support export industries	Interest in wealth accumulation or economic growth, and meeting energy, food fuel security	To get access to raw materials, to fulfil energy needs, LoCs to contribute to economic growth.
Enlightened self-interest	Pursue global public goods: peace, stability, environmental health, population control, etc.	Enlightened self-interest	To contribute to combating Climate Change, ensuring regional stability, to support other developing countries in the global south.
Reputation/self-affirmation	Establish and express a certain identity in international relations; improve international status and reputation	Reputation/self-affirmation/global image	To showcase itself as an emerging global player, to reinforce itself as a regional power
Obligation/duty	Fulfil obligations, whether historical or associated with position in the international system	Obligation/duty/solidarity as a South-South Cooperation partner	South-South solidarity, taking forward the Non-Alignment Movement, reaching out to common ethnic populations.
Humanitarianism	Promote the well-being of the poorest groups worldwide; provide humanitarian relief	Humanitarianism	To support countries during calamities.

3.8 Methodology

To gain in-depth insight into the Indian model of aid giving, the research looks at both donor narratives and recipient experiences and perspectives. The methodology section focuses on the research question, followed by a brief description of data collection methods, data analysis tools, and case selection processes undertaken to address the research question. This research project uses both primary data obtained through interviews and group discussions, and government data to examine intersubjective meanings of responses, and hence the tools used (for data collection and analysis) include those that provide this flexibility.

3.8.1 Sources for empirical data

Data was collected from publicly available government documents and speeches. Interviews at three levels were conducted in accordance with the three research sub-questions. Primary documents (listed in Appendix E) included

Parliamentary Standing Committee for External Affairs reports (44 of them) from the Lok Sabha website, 54 answers to parliamentary questions from both the Lower and Upper Houses (Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha respectively), and speeches (703 of them) archived on the MEA website. Primary data (listed in Appendix F and Appendix G) was collected through interviews with elite community members and beneficiary groups in the three countries.

3.8.2 Method of analysis

Thematic research analysis method is used in this thesis. This assisted in identifying keywords, themes, and concepts, along with how they relate to each other. Thematic analysis is an effective tool to use in a descriptive research approach (Vaismoradi, Turunen and Bondas, 2013). When used at different levels of analysis, these methods facilitate a better interpretation of India's development partnership, which has been a complex research topic. All collected data was fed into NVivo software, and codes and sub-codes, based on the components stated in the IAD framework (discussed in section 3.5) and broad themes (listed below) were created before undertaking analysis. Once the data was organised as per these codes and sub-codes, further assessment was undertaken manually on MS Word™ documents²⁶ — as per the below-mentioned analysis method — for each of the empirical chapters.

Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis was used to identify and understand factors that affect development partnership policy decisions by actors representing India and to understand the perceptions of the elite community interviewed in the case countries.

The first level analysis involves examining the history of India's development partnership programme and divide the phases in accordance with India's different foreign policy stages. Further, India's development partnership approaches as an SSDC partner has been also analysed. This is followed by an

²⁶ This exercise helped in further organising the themes and categories of data collected under various development cooperation phases and government time-periods.

assessment of aid interests for the period 1999-2019. Analysis at this level also highlights the influence of international aid on India's development partnership, which also then shape the narratives. The research concentrates on past central governments, its policymakers — with an emphasis on the departments within MEA involved in the management of India's official aid programme and in both Parliament Houses in New Delhi. Both primary and secondary data are used at this level.

The timeline for the first level of analysis is from 1999 to 2019. The rationale behind choosing this period is that this helps understand the narratives following an increase in the external assistance amount in the mid-1990s (Mukherjee, 2015). This time period also saw four governments (all coalitions — NDA I, UPA I, UPA II and NDA II) lead by the two main political parties of India, INC and BJP. This enables examining the changes in Indian development cooperation during each of the four governments' terms.

Being a qualitative research tool and suitable for an inductive research like this one, thematic analysis assisted in highlighting the presence of certain words and narratives or discourses in the data collected from the documents and interviews that showcase how the country defines its aid programme. The units of analysis were words and statements that were classified under these broad themes, such as: descriptions or reporting of aid policies and programmes, motivations behind the assistance programme, India's relation with recipient countries, and outcomes of these programme, and not the actual outcomes or impact.

A lot has been written on bilateral relations between India and each of the two case countries; however, not many studies have explored how India's assistance programme is perceived and experienced by key stakeholders at the macro-level in recipient countries, and how other factors come into play before bilateral programmes are implemented at the community level. The second level of the research aims to interpret the experiences and perceptions of relevant stakeholders in the selected case countries — including government officials, political leaders, and staff from implementing organisations — with regard to

India's assistance programme and its outcomes, and how they shape bilateral relations. Similar to the first level analysis, thematic analysis assists in studying the data collected, and in understanding India's relations with two of its south Asian neighbours in the context of its development assistance policy and programme framework. The broad themes that emerged from these interviews at this level are – case country's relationship with India, India's development partnership policies and practices in the country, perceived motives behind India's development cooperation, perceived outcomes of the support that India has extended, their own country's policies and practices on receiving aid, and factors that shape these policies and practices.

At the third level, the research explores two development projects, one in each recipient country. These two projects are studied in detail to get a better understanding of systems in place at the local level. It is important to focus on specific projects supported by India at this level in the research, as this brings forth current implementation practices, how the country's assistance is perceived and how it affects its beneficiaries.

Analysis method used here to analyse data on the experiences and perceptions of the community members who have been beneficiaries of projects supported by India. The common elements that came up were grouped under these codes – connection with India, perceptions of India and Indians, perceptions on the support India extended, their understanding on the outcomes of India's support in their lives, experiences on construction of their houses, and other information, including their views of their own country.

3.8.3 Fieldwork process

For elite interviews in all the three countries (including India), contact details were obtained from official websites, through Twitter™ contacts, or through snowballing via other interviewees. Appointments were given to the researcher after emails and multiple follow-up phone calls. At the community level in the two case countries, village names were provided by the implementing agencies, and by GoI in one case, and with the help of local translators (one in Sri Lanka

and two in Nepal), the researcher managed to communicate with the beneficiaries in each of the case countries. Elite interviews were conducted in spaces where the participants wanted them to be, including various online platforms.

Process followed for elite interviews with Indian elites

17 interviews with the Indian elite community (including both retired and current policymakers) were conducted in person in Delhi, Colombo, Jaffna, and Kathmandu, between January 2019 and January 2021. Some online meetings were conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic. The list of interviews has been provided in Appendix F.1.

Process followed for Sri Lanka

In the case of Sri Lanka, 20 elite interviews were conducted (listed in Appendix F.2). Keeping in view the complexities involved in India–Sri Lanka relations, and the origin and the nature of the Sri Lankan Civil War, it is important to outline the ethnicity and geographical origins of interviewees, as these might shape their perceptions and experiences, and thereby, the research analysis. The people met were mostly from the Sinhala community, some from the Sri Lankan Tamil community (from the Northern Province and Eastern Province) and a very few from the hill country (in the Central Province) belonging to the Indian-origin Tamil community.

National political actors who actively influence the flow of bilateral aid are from the central government and political party in power, governors of the provinces, elected MPs, and communities with transborder ethnic kin. Those interviewed were from this set of people, and they have been either in direct contact with the Indian High Commission (IHC) about its development assistance programme in the country or were part of the implementation of the projects in earlier stages.

At the community level, twelve villages in four districts of the Northern Province and Eastern Province in Sri Lanka were visited — they are listed in Appendix

G.1 with the dates of the visit. Field work in Sri Lanka was undertaken in September and October 2019.

Process followed for Nepal

Interviews with the Nepalese elite community were both online (because of travel restrictions and health concerns during the COVID-19 pandemic) and in person. Platforms such as Zoom™, Google Hangout™ and WhatsApp™ calls were used for these interviews from September 2020 to January 2021. Of 15 interviews, six were conducted in person in January 2021 (listed in Appendix F.3). Of those interviewed, most of the officials belonged to ethnic communities from the hill region, and very few from the plains or the Terai area of Nepal. These interviewees were all working for the Nepalese government in some capacity during or after 2015. This is when Nepal adopted a new constitution, and when the earthquake occurred for which the housing support was provided by India.

A field visit to nine areas in two beneficiary districts was undertaken in January 2021 (villages listed in Appendix G.2). Some of the areas visited were far from the cities/towns, in some cases, one-way drive being at least two to three hours. The objective behind choosing such faraway or remote villages was to try and ensure that different groups who were affected and got support from India are interviewed too.

Ethical consideration

In this research, interviewee names (including beneficiaries) are not provided in most cases. Considering the political situation in India²⁷ and in the case countries, and the delicate relations between these countries, the identities of those who shared their experiences and thoughts on the topic have been kept

²⁷For example, this latest notification by GoI — <https://thewire.in/government/retired-security-officials-now-need-govt-nod-for-any-writing-related-to-former-organisations-domain>

anonymous. In some cases, new information that were collected during the field research undertaken for this research have been deliberately merged with what is already known or alongside existing works in the empirical chapters, mostly in the sections that provide background information on the countries being studied.

The researcher's position as an Indian, based in a foreign university had its advantages and disadvantages. For example, most interviews with both sets of people – the elite and the community, were not recorded. The decision to not record these interviews was taken after a few elite interviewees refused to be recorded, and in some cases were uncomfortable with the arrangement at first. Elite interviewees were contacted through emails, each of the emails had an introduction, which detailed out the purpose of the research and what questions would be asked during the interviews. Most of those contacted at this level agreed to be interviewed – either because the researcher is Indian or because of foreign university affiliation. At the community level, the beneficiaries were very open to talking to someone from India. Beneficiary communities met, were first asked if they are comfortable talking to a researcher about the housing support they received, and only after their verbal consent questions were asked by the researcher with the help of the translators. Broad open-ended questions that were asked during the interviews at each of the three levels of analysis have been listed in the table provided in Appendix H. This also gives an overview of what has been discussed so far in this methodology section.

Conclusion

This chapter explores two frameworks that were adopted for this thesis – constructivism from IR theory and gift theory from development anthropology as theoretical framework, and the IAD framework for analysis. Using constructivism helps in establishing India's identities, and in determining how these identities shape its development partnership policy and programme, including aid interests. In accordance with this theory, various identities of India

are described in the chapter, and factors influencing their formations are also listed. The three broad identities that are discussed here are regional identity, ‘big-brother’ and global identity. Though the ‘big-brother’ or ‘elder sister/brother’ identity can be classified within the regional identity, it has been kept separate for analysis purposes. These identities also influence how India’s development support is perceived or/and projected at the beneficiary level, and gift theory helps in understanding this phenomenon. The second framework, IAD, helped establish the factors and stakeholders that play a crucial role in the complex world of aid, both in donor and recipient countries, thus supporting the theoretical framework.

Various forms of data collection, and analysis tool used to sort out and classify data, have been described in the methodology section. These include thematic analysis for analysing the empirical data – which enabled studying the different levels in the aid-giving and aid-receiving process.

India’s aid policies continue to be influenced by norms, identities, and ideas, defined at the regional, domestic, and international levels. Power and image are also defined by perceptions. Therefore, along with knowing the narratives on India’s side on its development partnership policy and programme, understanding recipient states’ perceptions of India as a donor or development partner becomes important. The discussions on the various identities and interests of India, followed by the theoretical framework outlined in this chapter, have allowed examining what components form its multilevel aid relations with recipients. As India’s development assistance structure is yet to be clearly defined, and decisions taken are influenced by many factors, using an institutional analysis approach seems the most appropriate (Ostrom *et al.*, 2014, p. 2).

As there has been very limited research on India’s development partnership with a focus on specific case countries, this research contributes — both empirically and theoretically — to the larger pool of scholarly work on bilateral development assistance policy. In terms of theory, the study builds on the works on

understanding southern donors within the framework of theories drawn from two distinct disciplines (IR and development anthropology). Further, this research will add to the contemporary knowledge, concepts, and frameworks used to study bilateral aid. The thesis, with new empirical evidence, that are described and analysed in the following chapters, adds to the existing works on global south donors. The findings from this research can help in policy formation and in improving the effectiveness of development assistance programmes. The most important contribution that the research makes is in bridging the gap between policy and practices, and take note of the ground realities experienced by people for whom these projects are supposedly planned. The thesis also contributes to knowledge on broader global aid-related topics, including similarities and differences between southern and northern donors, the use of aid as a foreign policy tool, and how recipient countries and their communities perceive donors and the outcomes of the projects they have supported.

CHAPTER IV: THE RHETORIC AND REALITY OF INDIA'S DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP POLICY AND PROGRAMME

Introduction

“‘Can a country survive without giving aid?’ is the question that should be asked, instead of ‘Why does India give development assistance?’” said a senior Indian bureaucrat during an interview for this thesis, further adding, “For example, when everyone around you is giving aid, or let us say giving a standing ovation, even if you do not want, you will still get up, right? That’s how it works.” (Elite Interview 16, India, 2020). Likewise, Indian leaders acknowledge that the country’s expanding global role has intensified its development assistance programme over the years. However, they also feel that to be an international player and play an influential role, the country must increase its aid budget (Lok Sabha Secretariat, 2007c, p. 8, 2014). India aims to have greater engagement and be a leading global south funder providing technical and economic support to other developing countries in South and South-East Asia, Latin America, and Africa (Lok Sabha Secretariat, 2011b). The country’s growing ambitions have changed its aid-giving approaches over the years. Most projects that India supports are demand-driven or/and need-based; therefore, the projects under India’s development programme vary in terms of requirements, objectives, and implementation processes.

Foreign policy of a country, building on what was done earlier, is always taken forward by different governments in power, observed a senior retired Indian diplomat (Elite Interview 8, India, 2020). This might be true at the macro level. Yet, as this chapter demonstrates, each government, and the key decision-making people involved with it — including the prime minister, the external affairs minister, the bureaucracy, those who chair the Parliament Standing Committee on External Affairs etc. — play decisive roles and cause changes in the country’s development partnership policy and practices. Notwithstanding these domestic factors and situation in recipient countries influencing India’s aid giving, if one were to highlight some of the larger goals of Indian-supported

projects, they would be: to build goodwill for India amongst the recipient countries' peoples; to fulfil the strategic needs of Indian foreign policy; to enhance people's lives in other countries through transferring of 'skills, technology and human resource capacities' (Lok Sabha Secretariat, 2009).

India's development assistance programme, linking aid to India's foreign policy, can be divided into three phases: from Independence to the mid-1990s, and from the mid-1990s to early 2018, and the third phase from 2018 onwards. Though India's economic status started improving in the mid-1990s, as did its aid budget, changes in the development assistance programme of India can be clearly traced from the late-1990s. This second and the third phase corresponds to the timeline of interest for this research (1999-2019).

Based on the IAD framework's components for the New Delhi (donor) level, the first section describes and analyses the international and national factors that influence India's different development cooperation phases, along with attributes of the policy community, and rules, policies, and practices. The second section examines the interests and drivers of India's development partnership based on Veen (2011)'s aid giving goals framework that are followed while providing assistance. The last section of this chapter explores the narratives that are prevalent on India's development partnership.

4.1 India's development partnership policy and programme

4.1.1 The various phases of Indian development cooperation

India, one of the fastest-growing economies in the world at present, is not a 'new donor', as various scholars have pointed out (Price, 2004; Malone, 2011; Mawdsley, 2012a, p. 5). The country has been providing aid to its neighbouring countries since a few years after its independence in 1947 (Phibbs, 1968). What has changed in the past two decades, causing it to be known as an emerging donor, is an increase in the volume of aid and an expansion in the geographical reach of that aid, together with the streamlining of its assistance programme and

the introduction of newer forms of aid programmes (Mawdsley, 2012b; Purushothaman, 2021). In the earlier decades, being an active member of the NAM under the leadership of India's first prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru, the country was one of the initiators of cooperation between former colonies in the global south, with the objective of helping each other develop as strong nations. This led to the launch of the Indian development assistance programme within the SSDC framework.²⁸

India has come a long way as an assistance provider and remains to be one of the largest aid-recipient countries even to this day. From 1951 to 1992 the country received development support of approx. US\$55 billion OECD nations (OECD, 2012). Nevertheless, it now identifies itself as a development partner (Ghose, 2013). India's economic interests do not guide just the country's aid programme, but also its strategic and security interests, especially in South Asia. These define its foreign policy, and thus its development partnership (Bhogal, 2016). India's external assistance programme can be divided into three main phases — the first from 1947 to the mid-1990s, the second from the mid-1990s to 2018, and the third one from 2018 onwards. Grouping the implementation of India's overseas aid activities into three phases helps in highlighting the differences in how the aid programme functioned in terms of components of the programme, amount of aid giving, institutional arrangements, and India's stand on being an aid-recipient nation and a donor state. Many foreign policy scholars of India have reasoned several policy stages/phases of the country, as discussed in Chapter II. The changes in India's development partnership policy and programme since the 1940s fits well with the foreign policy phases described by Bajpai (2016, pp. 116–120), compared to other scholars. Therefore, borrowing from his approaches, the following section gives an overview of the first two phases — phase one, which can be described as the Nehruvian period, and phase two, called as the neoliberal phase of the aid programme. Further, in the later part of this chapter, indications of phase three, being the hyper-realist phase is also discussed briefly.²⁹

²⁸The SSC agenda was first used by the Arab League in the 1940s.

²⁹Bajpai gives a slightly different timeline — the Nehruvian period from 1947 to 1989, neoliberalism from 1990 to 2016, and hyper-realism from 2016 onwards. This research, because

The Nehruvian phase in India's development cooperation

Even though the timeline for the first phase starts with India gaining independence on 15th August 1947, it is crucial to note that it had started playing an active role in world politics before this.³⁰ SSDC was one of the important priorities of the country then, and as a part of SSC, India was an observer at the Arab League in 1945. This was followed by the Asian Relations Conference held in Delhi in March-April 1947. The focus of the conference, held just a few months before India gained independence, was to bring together neighbouring countries of the global south and create a platform for common sharing and learning. As an outcome of this conference, several bilateral initiatives were taken up between India and other nations who attended the conference (Chaturvedi *et al.*, 2014, p. 6; ICWA, nd). In the following years, India gave 70 scholarships to Asian and African students, flood-relief aid to Bhutan, contributions to a maternity home in Ethiopia, and other such grants (MEA, GoI, 1950, 1951). Even though India was an important player in the Third World during the 1940s–50s, the country was not considered a strategic partner by either the USSR or USA, which (seemingly) gave the country space to define its foreign relations without external pressure, and thereby provide support to other countries.³¹ Three key aspects that defined India's foreign relations in this first phase were: its active involvement in UN Peacekeeping Missions, strong support for the NAM, and support for decolonisation. The agreement between India and China signed in April 1954 — the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence or Panchsheel — also guided India's development support (Malone, 2011, p. 104; David M, C. Raja and Srinath, 2015). The highpoint in SSDC, which also influenced India's aid programme, was in 1955, when 29 countries approved the Declaration on the Promotion of World Peace and Co-operation during the Bandung Conference in Indonesia. India continued to play an important role at

of the delayed effect of foreign policy changes (as described by Bajpai) on India's development cooperation, uses a longer time-period while describing the assistance phases of the country.

³⁰Historians feel that it is essential to note continuity with India's role in the years before Independence, which is when many of the foreign policies continued by independent India originated.

³¹Both the superpowers attempted to influence India's policymaking, especially by giving large amounts of aid (Jaishankar and Godbole, 2018).

these platforms and started taking a leading role in the NAM, along with furthering its bilateral economic, technical, and cultural cooperation with countries in Africa and Asia (OECD, 2012, p. 4; Chaturvedi *et al.*, 2014, p. 7). According to Chanana (2009, p. 11), in 1958, India promised a multi-year grant of INR 100 million to Nepal and a loan of INR 200 million to Myanmar. Further, he states that 60% of Bhutan's budget was coming from India, as per projections by UK's Foreign and Commonwealth Office at the time.

The Indian Ministry of External Affairs managed the country's aid activities from the beginning. India opened its first Aid Mission in Kathmandu in 1954, which was later renamed the Indian Cooperation Mission and was operational until 1980.³² The work of this Aid Mission was taken over by the Indian Mission in Nepal around the same time. An official letter dated 1974, found in the Indian National Archives, noted that the change of name was requested by then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, who felt that it was important 'to underline the spirit of cooperation in Indo-Nepal relations' (MEA, GoI, 1974). This narrative continues in various forms to the present day, with India preferring to describe itself as a development partner, and its aid programmes as development assistance, not aid. Other early institutional initiatives included the establishment of several Joint Commissions in Afghanistan, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), Iran, and Czechoslovakia (now the Czech Republic and Slovakia) to engage in joint development projects (Chaturvedi *et al.*, 2014, p. 10).

"India had the willingness to share and show solidarity", said a retired diplomat about India's development assistance (Elite Interview 11, India, 2020). ITEC was one of the ways in which India thought it could contribute. In the initial decades, as India did not have adequate financial resources to support countries with infrastructural development programmes, it mostly focused on skill-building and transfer of knowledge to other developing countries (Elite Interview 1, India, 2019). This aspect of India's aid giving has been captured by Vohra (1980, sec. preface). He writes that India's efforts in knowledge and skill

³² Nepal was the first country to receive assistance from India since the late 1940s (Phibbs, 1968).

transfer of its technical expertise to more than 100 countries in the global south were significant, especially since this form of support is provided to states that have not been at par with other countries in technological advancement. The countries that received these forms of support from India were mostly African states and close neighbours. The ITEC programme and the Special Commonwealth African Assistance Programme (SCAAP) were two key Indian development programmes until the early 2000s (MEA, GoI, nd). ITEC was implemented by the Economic and Coordination Division (ECD) under the MEA. Further, limited wealth was also shared by India with these countries. This was done particularly with its close neighbours, as an effort to improve people's life, mostly because of people-to-people connections. It was also the phase where India worked on setting up its aid implementation arrangements in countries of importance to it from a foreign policy perspective. While trying to accomplish national interests to some extent through its aid programme, the country largely ensured that the recipient states' collective interests were also met.

The neoliberal phase

As India started rising as a global economic power, sharing its resources became more important (Elite Interview 11, India, 2020). Indian economic and foreign policies started to change with the opening and restructuring of its economy in the early 1990s. Liberalisation, Privatisation and Globalisation (LPG) defined the content of the country's five-year plans for internal development. These plans also defined foreign policy; hence, the aid programme was also affected. This second phase began with an increase in India's aid in the mid-1990s (Mukherjee, 2015, p. 222). However, it was only in 2003 that India began to emphasise that it too provided development assistance. In that year, then finance minister Jaswant Singh announced in the Parliament that henceforth, India would not take any more aid from other countries, with the exception of five named countries³³ and the EU; instead, India would intensify its own overseas development aid programme. A senior retired Indian diplomat shared that though it was in 2003-04 when GoI took a stand on the ODA it was receiving

³³These five countries included the United Kingdom, United States of America, Russia, Germany, and Japan.

from many countries and started highlighting its role as a development partner, the changes in the aid it was providing had started soon after the economic changes of 1991, and the second phase of its development cooperation began in 1998.³⁴ These years saw good economic growth, so therefore, according to the interviewee there were plenty of financial resources for the various ministries (Elite Interview 8, India, 2020). This marked the beginning of the new ‘win-win’ phase in India’s aid programme, in which most aid programmes were expected to result in a ‘win-win’ situation for the recipients and India. This period also saw India reach out to various countries across the world through its assistance programme. For example, it was in this period that India began to focus more on Africa and initiated the India–Africa Forum Summit (IAFS). These regional changes are discussed under aid to various regions in the later part of the chapter.

To maintain India’s status as a development assistance provider, the government felt the need to reorganise its development programme. As a consequence, bureaucratic structures associated with the management of overseas assistance underwent several changes up to 2012, including the creation of the Indian Development Initiative (IDI), founded in 2003, and the India Development and Economic Assistance Scheme (IDEAS), founded in 2003-04, which started providing Lines of Credit (LoCs) through India’s EXIM bank (Jobelius, 2007, p. 4). In 2007, the government felt the need to consolidate all development partnership work. The UPA II government initiated a process of streamlining India’s aid giving. This was also the period when parliamentarians started to emphasise the importance of a proper monitoring system for the country’s aid programme, and of ensuring that funds reached those in need. In Sri Lanka’s case, for example, Indian elected leaders — both those who were part of the government and those in opposition parties — expressed concern, and asked for the country’s assistance to be used to support war-affected Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in the most efficient manner (Lok Sabha Secretariat, 2009).

³⁴ Also, the year when the Pokhran II nuclear tests took place.

It took five years for MEA to create the Development Partnership Administration (DPA) in 2012, located with the MEA, to manage India's aid programme. This administrative unit is headed by Joint Secretary-level officers and has four subdivisions under it, which at present are called DPA I, DPA II, DPA III, and DPA IV. Speaking about its structure, P S Raghavan, who headed DPA from January 2012 to September 2013, had stated that the organisation of the division, which was set up to bring in more efficiency in aid implementation, was based on MEA's study of other similar bodies such as USAID and DFID. Unlike the bilateral aid divisions of the US and UK, which is (in the US) or was (in UK's case) separate from their respective foreign ministries, DPA is not a separate establishment, but instead is situated within MEA (IDSA, 2012). It is important to note here that DPA is just a technical department in MEA. The four DPA subunits merely look after administrative work and support project implementation and are not involved in policy development or direct implementation. As per interviewees working in some of the territorial divisions³⁵, it is the officials in these divisions who exercise preeminent control. These divisions also control the budget (including negotiating with MoF for higher budgets, change in budget heads, and reporting on the budget amount spent), and decisions on what projects to approve; also, they are the main departments who are in touch with the various Indian missions abroad (Elite Interview 2, India, 2019; Elite Interview 3, India, 2019). In 2017-18, the Standing Committee on External Affairs as a recommendation stated that like USAID, India's aid budget should also be made autonomous and have pre-determined policy objectives (Lok Sabha Secretariat, 2018). This indicates that policymakers continued trying to persuade the government to consider establishing a more autonomous body to oversee development partnership setup with a separate budget and policy in place, even several years after DPA was institutionalised.

³⁵ 'Territorial divisions deal with bilateral political and economic work while functional divisions look after policy planning, multilateral organizations, regional groupings, legal matters, disarmament, protocol, consular, Indian Diaspora, press and publicity, administration and other aspects' (MEA, GoI, 2021) .

There have been other attempts to make DPA an autonomous body with development expertise and foreign policy people working together. According to a senior retired diplomat who played an important role in setting up the existing structures, DPA has not shaped up the way it was envisaged. That is because of the internal functioning of the government. In discussions about giving greater financial autonomy and more powers to DPA, there was a lot of resistance from within MEA and from the bureaucracy of the MoF (Amb Retd. Mathai, 2020; Elite Interview 10, India, 2020). A senior interviewee, who opposed greater autonomy for DPA, explained that when DPA was being created, they opposed the idea of this new department getting decision-making powers on India's development aid. The person's territorial division was getting the highest funding for aid, and they felt there should be political control of decisions on how to spend the money, hence the interviewee did not want DPA making any decisions on India's development cooperation (Elite Interview 14, India, 2020). Consequently, at least until late 2021, territorial divisions — because of the very active role they play in keeping track of geo-strategic and political developments in recipient countries — have controlled what kinds of projects to support in recipient countries. The key divisions relevant to Sri Lanka and Nepal, apart from the four subunits of the DPA, are the Northern Region (NR) division for Nepal and the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) division for Sri Lanka. Each DPA division's role is limited to helping the territorial divisions to implement projects (including calling for bids to undertake projects).

Along with changes in institutional structures in the past two decades, there have been changes in Indian aid components. The country's assistance has expanded beyond technical assistance to involve a broad range of other forms of external assistance (MEA, GoI, 2017a, p. 13). These include capacity building through technical & economic cooperation (ITEC, SCAAP and Technical Cooperation Scheme under the Colombo Plan); development grant projects; Small Development Projects (SDPs), now also called High Impact Community Development Projects (HICPDs) or just Community Development Projects; Lines of Credit under the Indian Development and Economic Assistance

Scheme, which is implemented by MEA through the EXIM Bank³⁶; disaster relief; deputation of Indian experts abroad; the Defence Training Programme; and special courses. India defines its aid components more broadly than the OECD definition, which is discussed in detail in Chapter VII.

SDP is the newest assistance instrument for India, introduced in the mid-2000s. It comprises of a smaller form of grant and is mostly implemented in neighbouring countries. Most often these SDPs provide a way to support infrastructure development at the community level. It is important to mention this category separately, as this newer form of support has been designed with the objective of reaching out to local people, and of making India's contribution more visible in most often remote areas and/or amongst certain groups (Press Trust of India, 2012; Elite Interview 2, India, 2019; Elite Interview 14, India, 2020). In a reply to the Standing Committee on External Affairs, the government in the context of Bhutan, stated that 'being at the grassroot level, these projects impart high visibility to India and help build goodwill amongst the people of Bhutan towards India' (Lok Sabha Secretariat, 2011a, p. 66). SDPs are also thought of as important tools of assistance programmes, introduced to serve certain political objectives in building foreign relations. Projects under the SDP model were first launched in Nepal, then Sri Lanka, and later in Afghanistan. All three countries were fragile conflict-affected states at the time of each respective launch. India first signed an MoU in November 2003 with Nepal, where it could provide such small grants directly at the grassroots level (Elite Interview 3, India, 2019; Elite Interview 10, India, 2020). Following the implementation of SDPs in neighbouring countries, Indian policymakers (members of parliament-MPs and Standing Committee on External Affairs members) felt that SDPs will help in increasing 'India's presence on a long-term basis' in other regions such as Africa and Latin America (Lok Sabha Secretariat, 2011a).

³⁶The 'EXIM Bank, on behalf of GoI extends LOCs to overseas financial institutions, regional development banks, sovereign governments and other entities overseas, to enable buyers in those countries to source developmental and infrastructure projects, equipment, goods and services from India, on deferred credit terms' (EXIM, MoF, GoI, 2018).

In recent years, Indian leaders, particularly those involved in the Standing Committee on External Affairs, have acknowledged that the development partnership programme of the country 'is a key instrument of India's foreign policy' (Lok Sabha Secretariat, 2017c, p. 58). As India's status improved during this neoliberal phase (post-1991 economic reform), various identity narratives (global player, emerging power, emerging donor) have been reflected in its development cooperation. The introduction into the external assistance programme and later systemisation (in collaboration with MoF) of LoCs,³⁷ the introduction of SDPs (increasing opportunities for linkages between recipient-state communities and India), and advancement of the narrative of SSDC as an alternative aid structure, are some of the most important changes that occurred during this second phase.

Though India's development cooperation can be divided into three broad phases, there have been some continuities as well, particularly with respect to development partnership principles and practices, which continue to guide India's aid programme to this day. For example, SSC (which includes SSDC) has been a consistently important principle in Indian foreign policy. By bringing SSDC values to development partnerships, by emphasising how India's development partnership follows SSDC using a non-prescriptive approach (especially in the case of Africa), and by not being part of the OECD-DAC, the country, along with China, Brazil, and some other global south countries, has become a strong player in a parallel aid architecture. To illustrate, India claims that it provides assistance to countries in Africa based on their needs and requests. The MEA's stand has been that India will not 'demand certain rights or projects in Africa' (MEA, GoI, 2010d); rather, the country wishes to support other countries in achieving development. This, Indian policymakers argue, distinguishes India's development cooperation from that of other donors, including China's (Parliament of India, 2017c; MEA, GoI, 2018g). Another

³⁷In 2015, India came up with guidelines on Lines of Credit, which brought in place a more efficient system of implementation and monitoring of LoC projects (Elite Interview 1, India, 2019).

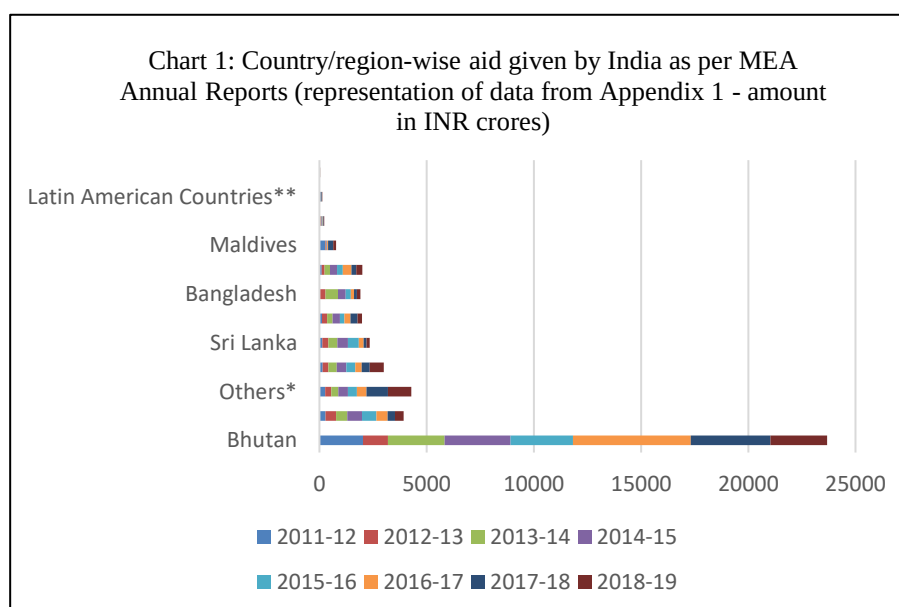
example of India's development partnership following SSDC principles can be observed is its aid interests. Its development assistance shows how in all the phases, interests, not just of India's but also of other key actors in the recipient states' are fulfilled. Foreign governments can engage with Indian embassies and consulates when they feel the need for support for certain projects in their countries, or they can put forth their requests to the Indian prime minister or minister of external affairs directly, following which they can be asked to submit a proposal. When it comes to monitoring projects supported by India, typically a steering committee is established, comprised of officials from Delhi and Indian representatives in respective recipient countries, who conduct regular visits and prepare reports. The relevant Indian embassies and consulates also have regular meetings with local stakeholders directly. Projects are demand-driven and/or based on the needs of the recipient governments and their citizens. However, in reality, it is not just governments that approach India — individual foreign MPs also reach out to Indian representatives. The GoI representatives interviewed for this thesis felt that there is no corruption involved in this process, hence it shouldn't be a problem (MEA, GoI, 2018f; Elite Interview 1, India, 2019; Elite Interview 2, India, 2019; Elite Interview 4, India, 2019).

4.1.2 India's development programme in various regions in the second phase

India's aid programme has also expanded geographically, and now covers more regions, as well as sectors (Asmus, Fuchs and Muller, 2017, p. 14).³⁸ India's foreign policy and procedures followed are the key factors in deciding which countries will be given aid. This also applies to cases where India is approached by governments of various countries seeking development support (Aneja and Ngangom, 2017, p. 3). The distribution of the assistance programme mirrors the 'three concentric circles reflecting political priorities' of India. The three concentric foreign policy circles were explained by C Raja Mohan, an expert on India's foreign policy, during his tenure as a member of India's National Security Advisory Board. These three concentric circles are: the inner circle of the

³⁸Agriculture and fish processing, small- and medium-sized enterprises, health, education, infrastructure, information technology and communications, automobiles and other transportation systems including railways, manufacturing, and skill development.

immediate neighbourhood, the extended neighbourhood, stretching across Asia and the Indian Ocean, and the outer circle of the global stage (Six, 2009). Chart 1 highlights the relative importance of neighbouring countries and other regions as recipients of India's development assistance from 2011 onwards.³⁹ Aid distributed in these regions by India is discussed in greater detail in the subsequent paragraphs.



Development assistance to South Asia

South Asia is a diverse region; however, there are political, cultural, and religious similarities shared by countries in this region. This has not always contributed to political agreements between India and other countries. Nevertheless, development assistance to these neighbouring states has helped improve India's relationships with them. India's support in the South Asian region is provided in the 'spirit of South-South cooperation', aimed at 'enhancing economic growth, regional connectivity, shared prosperity, and people-to-people contact etc.' (Parliament of India, 2018c).

Talking about learning from the early history of India's status-seeking approach, Basrur and Estrada (2017, p. 9) state that achieving high status can become

³⁹The inconsistency here with regard to regional or country categories is because of the way data is presented in annual reports of the Ministry — each South Asian country receiving aid from India is listed separately, but aid to African countries is shown as one figure, even though India has reached out to most of Africa's 54 states.

important for countries that deprioritise coercive measures while dealing with other states. Assistance to South Asia provided the means to fulfil status-seeking objectives for India in the region — using soft power to maintain good relations, earn the goodwill of neighbouring states and help them develop. Elected representatives, especially Parliamentary Committee members, have recommended that India should selectively use soft power to improve relations in its dealings with its neighbours (Parliament of India, 2018a, p. 4). This need not unnecessarily mean that government-to-government relations will improve, but using programmes like grants, the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), and scholarships, have enhanced relations between the people of the two countries (India and the recipient country). For instance, NDA I government felt that these programmes are ‘excellent models of bilateral cooperation’ generating goodwill amongst the people in recipient states towards India (Lok Sabha Secretariat, 2002c). The South Asian region has been an important political and geo-strategic space for India. The aid flow reflects this priority, and this understanding is not limited to the Indian government and the political parties that are in power; it also resonates with opposition leaders, whose views and strong recommendations are provided in parliamentary committee reports (Parliament of India, 2017a, p. 21).

As seen in Chart 1, and emphasised by various scholars (Mawdsley, 2012a, p. 113; Asmus, Fuchs and Muller, 2017, p. 15; Pande, 2017, p. 137), the South Asian region gets the highest amount of aid from India, with a heavy emphasis on investments in power generation and supply, transport and storage, industry, water supply and sanitation, infrastructure, agriculture, community development, health, and education (MEA, GoI, 2018b). The region has been supported consistently with a substantial amount of aid — 78% in 2012-13 to about 77% in 2018-19.⁴⁰ Over the past decade, Bhutan has received the largest amount cumulatively, followed by Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bangladesh, Myanmar, and the Maldives. Development assistance to these countries not only serves India’s altruistic objectives (for example, humanitarianism, solidarity as an SSC partner) of helping other countries to develop, but also fulfils the

⁴⁰Calculations based on the table in Appendix 1.

country's strategic needs. Bhutan and Nepal have been the largest recipient countries over the past several decades (Agrawal, 2007, p. 6). Post 9/11, India has been one of the largest donors in Afghanistan, having given over USD 3 billion in assistance. India has built major infrastructure projects including national roads, the Parliament building etc., and continued to contribute towards building Afghanistan's infrastructure till early 2021, and in the recent months, it resumed support by providing food and medical aid to the country (Ramachandran, 2010; MEA, GoI, 2018c, 2022).

Despite this focus, however, funding levels for neighbouring countries have been criticised. Observing a dichotomy between the foreign policy priorities of the 2014 BJP-led NDA II government, and the aid funding available for immediate neighbours, members of the Standing Committee on External Affairs felt that the importance of South Asia to India is not mirrored in the amount of aid provided (Lok Sabha Secretariat, 2017a). Further, Pande (2017, p. 155) notes that there is disappointment amongst South Asian recipient countries about how India does not follow through on its commitments regarding implementation of its promises. This is discussed further in Chapters V and VI.

Development assistance to Africa

With African states, India sees economic cooperation — including development cooperation — as a continuation of past relationships (Parliament of India, 2013b). The African continent receives the second-highest amount of official development assistance from India, after South Asia. The most important programmes implemented in the continent are SCAAP and ITEC. Competition with China, the need for raw materials and resources such as oil, a desire to gain the support of African states in international meetings, and the need for a market for Indian products; all of these have led to India using its development partnership as a tool for improving foreign relations in Africa (Agrawal, 2007, p. 7; McCormick, 2008). India has held four India-Africa Forum Summits (in 2008, 2011, 2015, and 2018). This platform, according to India, provides an opportunity to build a 'long-term and stable partnership of equality and mutual benefit between India and Africa' (IDSA, 2018; MEA, GoI, 2018b, p. 193).

Some of the development assistance to the continent has been in the form of LoCs, which increased from 32% in 2004 to 59% in 2012; grants, which increased from INR 50 million in 2000-01 to INR 3 billion in 2013-14; support to the Pan African e-Network in 48 countries began in 2009; and ITEC (MEA, GoI, 2017b). According to a report by Mullen *et al.* (2014, p. 6) from which this data was drawn, there have been three major changes in India's development assistance programme to Africa — growth in the amount of aid, a shift towards LoCs as the main form of support, and the inclusion of new regions and countries within the scope of Indian assistance to the continent. The external assistance from India to countries in the continent is substantially less than that provided by DAC donors or China. Nevertheless, India, has had a long-term engagement with some African countries because of its capacity building programme.

According to Six (2009, p. 1115), when compared to China's development assistance in Africa, due to internal inequalities and challenges, and domestic factors affecting its foreign policy, India's development assistance practice in Africa was not clearly defined and was still being formulated. Examining India's recent development partnership in Africa in terms of the amount of assistance provided, one can see that the continent has become an important arena for providing development assistance, compared to what it was ten years ago (Taylor, 2016, p. 99). The top five countries in the continent which received the highest amounts of support under the LoCs from India till financial year 2015-16 were Ethiopia (14%), Sudan (10%), Mozambique and Tanzania (9% each), and the Democratic Republic of Congo (7%) (R. Mullen and Arora, 2016, p. 7).

India's support to Africa is driven by various factors, from altruism to self-interest. According to the response to a parliamentary question, the government stated that assistance to Africa involves upholding SSC principles, empowerment, capacity building, providing access to the Indian market for African states, and support for Indian investments in Africa (Parliament of India, 2017b). An examination of the data on Indian aid to Africa reveals that self-interest is the dominant factor, with LoCs forming the largest assistance component.

India's development programmes in other regions

Other regions that the country has been supporting are Central Asia or Eurasia (from the mid-1990s), Latin America, Southeast Asia, East Asia, Central Asia, the Caribbean, and Pacific Island Countries (Mullen *et al.*, 2014; Parliament of India, 2019a). In the past few years, support for the development of the Chabahar Port in Iran has been one of the biggest projects of the country, which not only links India with Afghanistan, but also gives India access to a key port in the region, which is accounted for in the 'other regions' category (MEA, GoI, 2018e).

Responding to a parliament question on the amount spent on development assistance, on 6th February 2019, the government stated that 274 LoCs in 14 years (2005-06–January 2019) amounting to USD 26.79 billion have been extended to 63 countries in various sectors. Of these, 189 LoCs of USD 11.36 billion were extended to African countries (the highest recipient region), 53 LoCs worth USD 14.47 billion to Asian countries, and 32 LoCs of USD 970.53 million to Latin American, Oceania and Commonwealth for Independent States (CIS) countries. Regarding SDPs, India spent equivalent to USD 200 million on 536 projects from 2006 onwards in Afghanistan; there were 51 SDPs in Sri Lanka, 200 in Nepal from 2008 to 2017, 2,546 in Bhutan from 2008 to 2018, 5 in Bangladesh, 5 in Myanmar, and a few in some of the smaller states in the Oceania region (Parliament of India, 2019a). This pattern is consistent with trends discussed in this section on which regions receive the most development support, and the components of the support that also suggest aid-interests.

4.1.3 Amount of aid provided in the neoliberal phase

India's data of its development assistance facilitates a better understanding of its foreign policy interests, its reach, the components of its aid, the changes in the aid budget over the years, and how this budget fits into the overall MEA budget. In 2019, MEA started a dashboard to track its external assistance data online. However, a lot more needs to be done to improve this online platform. At present, data in the MEA annual reports have proven more valuable in studying

the country's development cooperation (Shanbog, 2020c). According to development assistance allocations mentioned in the 2017-18 annual report, 161 countries were provided various forms of development support.⁴¹ The various categories presented in the table in Appendix C are contributions to international organisations, such as the UN, and to treaties that the country has signed; grant to aid for institutions, such as ICCR, which undertakes cultural exchanges and promotes Indian arts and culture internationally, and which is seen mostly as promoting soft power; and training programmes, economic cooperation, and loans to countries are specifically categorised as development assistance. It is difficult to break down the precise amounts within these three groupings. The components of these include LoCs, grant assistance, concessional loans, technical consultancy, disaster relief, humanitarian aid, educational scholarships, and a wide range of capacity-building programmes, including short-term civilian and military training courses. In addition, there have been cases where funds from the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund (PMNRF) have been used to support other countries in need of immediate help (Prime Minister's Office India, nd).

According to Mukherjee (2015, p. 223), the country has been providing 0.04% of its Gross National Income — be it in 1966 or 2011 — as development assistance.⁴² The data in the table given as Appendix C clearly show an increase of 610.626% in technical and economic cooperation from 2000-01 to 2017-18, and a 311.648% increase in LoCs during the same period. The total funds allocated for grants and concessional loans in 2019-2020 amounted to INR 7,517.79 crore (around USD 986 million), which was 42% of MEA's budget,⁴³ an increase of approximately INR 2,000 crore (marginally more than USD 262 million) from the previous year.⁴⁴ These external assistance amounts and changes in its components over time reflect India's development partnership

⁴¹ Assistance data has been taken from the revised estimates (RE) provided in the annual report. This approach, of using RE data, has been adopted by research works on India's development assistance as well.

⁴² This increased to 0.055% in 2012. This is discussed in detail in Chapter VII.

⁴³ INR 17884.75 crore was the total budget as per MEA's Detailed Demands for Grants 2019-20

⁴⁴ <https://meadashboard.gov.in/indicators/92>

interests, and these interests have been analysed in the following section based on the customised frames (Veen's).

4.2 Development partnership interests

In an article written more than a decade ago on India's assistance policy, Jobelius (2007, p. 4) states that the motives behind the aid programme of the country have been to explore new markets for Indians, ensure energy needs are met, gain more clout to be able to negotiate at the global level, deal with security issues in the South Asian region for its own safety, and build newer alliances and partnerships. India's assistance to various regions worldwide, especially in the global south, is driven by a diverse set of motives, shaped mainly by the foreign policy it follows. In addition to its foreign policy priorities, domestic factors in India and recipient countries also shape its aid motives. As a regional and/or emerging power, India's interests lie in ensuring South Asian regional security, in expanding its influence in the region and other parts of the global south, in accumulating wealth and resources, and in helping its neighbours develop.⁴⁵ Another identity — that of being the 'big brother' or 'elder brother/sister' or sharing a 'fraternal relationship' — makes India adopt an enlightened self-interest approach, upholding a certain reputation and image, wanting positive self-affirmation, and showing solidarity by supporting other countries in the global south (MEA, GoI, 2010g; PTI, 2016). To achieve these interests, various foreign policy tools, including development cooperation have been used by India.

While the broad interests (as shown in Chapter III through Veen's framework) and driving forces behind providing development assistance have been the same throughout the timeline of this thesis, some of the motives have been given more importance by certain leaders and/or political parties in power. This section highlights these aspects. The reason behind detailing these motives based on Veen's framework is the consistency in aid interests over the twenty-year

⁴⁵Not necessarily in this order though.

timeline⁴⁶ of the study. Changes in the aid programme follow changes in hard-power aspects of India's foreign policy, though not immediately. Aid interests established in the Nehruvian phase were carried forward to the neoliberal phase, but as the following sub-sections will highlight, one can see traces of hyper-realist (third phase in India's foreign policy described by Bajpai) interests influencing aid giving towards the end of the thesis study timeline.

4.2.1 Obligation or duty or solidarity as an SSC partner

India's then external affairs Minister Yashwant Sinha's January 2003 speech, made during a seminar on South Asian Cooperation, provides an insight into the obligation or duty or solidarity as an SSC partner element of aid giving. He said, 'On behalf of India, let me tell you that whatever strengths we have built over the years in terms of technology, in terms of human resource development and terms of capacities, we are prepared to put at the disposal of our neighbours in South Asia. Whatever we have, can be yours, just for asking' (MEA, GoI, 2003). Though this was shared with a South Asian audience, India has been following this approach for other countries in the global south too. India, in its narrative and practice, has been fairly clear that its development assistance projects should be targeted towards both sets of people in 'third world countries', leaders as well as the general populace, particularly with respect to technical capacity-building programmes (MEA, GoI, 2001). As a promoter of people-to-people connection, by extending more of certain types of development support during the Nehruvian period, India has been focusing on passing on its knowledge and skills to other countries, for example, the information technology capacity of the country, through programmes such as ITEC. Taking this forward into new India's development cooperation phase, the Advisory Group on Technical Cooperation was established in 2001 'to identify ways to enhance the level and modernize the technical cooperation programmes' (Lok Sabha Secretariat, 2003a).

An important objective of India's bilateral assistance during UPA I was 'to promote self-reliance through SSC'. The country has always been very vocal

⁴⁶ Falls under the neoliberal phase, as explained earlier.

about developing countries needing different approaches for development — such as different technology suited to developing states — which can be provided by other developing states like India (MEA, GoI, 2004b).

India has been emphasising its historical connections with countries in South Asia and Africa as one of the critical reasons for distributing aid. For India, apart from historical connections, it is cultural and social interactions that have improved bilateral relations, rather than economic investments (Lok Sabha Secretariat, 2002a; Parliament of India, 2002a, p. 82). India also feels duty-bound to support communities with transborder ethnic connections with Indians. For example, an Indian official felt that the Indian-supported housing project in Sri Lanka helped people in both the provinces where the Civil War had taken place. It was the responsibility of the Sri Lankan government to provide houses to those affected, but if India had not undertaken this initiative, they would have taken ten more years to do that, as they do not mind Tamil people suffering (Elite Interview 4, India, 2019).

An ‘Innovative use of development partnership’ has been seen as a way to work towards achieving a ‘peaceful periphery’, with India not necessarily expecting reciprocity from its neighbours in this process. This term, and this understanding of development support, have been used quite a bit during UPA I — using technology, science, and economic growth for benefitting neighbouring states has been highlighted (MEA, GoI, 2009d). It is similar to the stand that India has been taking since Independence, where the focus of development assistance has been on passing on skills, capacities, and the benefits of economic progress of the country to other countries in the global south. This most likely also means that India, with a smaller pocket compared to other donors (including China), is looking to make the best use of the projects it supports. There is an understanding that India, unlike other developing countries which ‘by providing huge assistance and in the end exploiting’ recipient states, should be a better provider of assistance. The country should be different, and it should work towards ‘permanent friendly relations and promoting strong ties’ even if it means allocating extra funds to do the same (Lok Sabha Secretariat, 2005).

4.2.2 Enlightened self-interest

‘Today almost half of the entire budget of MEA is dedicated to international assistance. It is said that foreign policy cannot be based on altruism. Obviously, we are concerned with national security, assisting national defence, seeking allies in the fight against terrorism, building trade and investment links, maximising our gains from international commerce, assisting the search for resources, for technology, and for finance, and assuring India and its people and its culture a place in the world’ shared Amb. Mathai, former Foreign Secretary of India, in 2013 (MEA, GoI, 2013a). There was a visible shift in the narrative on aid giving during the early 2010s — idealistic and principle-based factors gave way to more pragmatic and strategic reasons. Despite this, the state categorises India’s self-interest as ‘enlightened’ (a post-Nehruvian discourse), rather than as ‘narrow self-interest’ (MEA, GoI, 2012h; Wojczewski, 2019).

The term ‘win-win situation’ is often used by India in describing the expected outcomes of its aid programme, whether with respect to hydropower dams in Bhutan or to LoCs in Africa (Lok Sabha Secretariat, 2005). For example, an official shared that Bhutan’s GDP is higher than that of other states in South Asia because of the electricity it produces, much of which is sold to India. According to the interviewee, it is a ‘win-win’ situation, as GoI helps build these hydropower projects and then buys electricity from Bhutan (Elite Interview 1, India, 2019). The understanding is that if there is economic growth in neighbouring countries, it benefits both India and its neighbours. On similar lines, as a democratic state, India also wants to promote democratic and pluralistic countries as part of its support for reconstruction programmes, especially to neighbouring states. ‘Sovereignty’ has been another important word that comes up when India talks about giving aid for reconstruction programmes, especially pre-2014, and it feels that democratic self-ruled states will bring more stability in the region (MEA, GoI, 2012d, 2016a) .

Apart from direct economic contributions, India also hopes to contribute to the social development of recipient countries (Lok Sabha Secretariat, 2011a). This

emphasis on social development became more noticeable during NDA II (post-2014), as the government and BJP leaders at that time started to employ certain catchphrases with respect to India's aid programmes that they had previously used for India's domestic policies, such as '*Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas*' ('Collective action, inclusive growth', first mentioned in the political party's 2014 manifesto, and then used by the government) (BJP, 2014). This has continued to the present, where objectives or mottos used for India's internal development projects having been replicated in and/or expanded to international projects — at least in India's aid narratives (MEA, GoI, 2017d).

4.2.3 Humanitarianism

Sweden and India, in a joint statement at the 2017 General Assembly, reiterated their commitment to the humanitarian principles (General Assembly resolutions 46/182 and 58/114 in 1991 and 2004 respectively) that were adopted by the UN (Embassy of Sweden, 2018).⁴⁷ Based on its capacity, national circumstances, and the needs of the affected country (mostly neighbours and friendly countries), India's humanitarian support has been provided to leverage goodwill by sharing resources with countries that are important to it, which does not correspond with humanitarian aid principles (MEA, GoI, 2016c).

In accordance with its growing economy, and increased efforts in gaining recognition as an important global actor, India's humanitarian assistance has grown over the past two decades (Parmar, 2012). The focus of its support has been in the South Asian region, where it has taken the lead in reaching out to neighbouring countries (Chakradeo, 2020). India takes pride in its humanitarian support and in being one of the first responders in these countries. Discussing what happened soon after the 2015 earthquake, an Indian interviewee shared that India was the first country to reach out to Nepal at that time. The Indian PM was in Vigyan Bhavan⁴⁸ at that time, and the then Nepalese PM Sushil Koirala was in Bangkok. The interviewee added that the Nepalese PM in fact first learnt

⁴⁷Humanity, Neutrality, Impartiality, and Independence. The last principle – Independence, was added in 2004, and the other three were adopted in 1991. Good humanitarian actions, based on these principles, are apolitical in nature (ALNAP, 2015).

⁴⁸ A government building in New Delhi.

about the earthquake from PM Modi, who called him within minutes of the tremors. This anecdote has also been shared by some of the elite interviewees in Nepal (Elite Interview 15, India, 2020).

India has also started providing humanitarian assistance to various regions or countries, beyond its neighbourhood, including the Caribbean Islands, Iraq, Palestine, Syria and Pakistan (Parliament of India, 2003, 2005a, 2015). The Indian state, especially in the case of humanitarian aid, has felt the need to pay back support received from countries such as Japan, from which it has been receiving aid for decades. Providing aid support in humanitarian circumstances is presented as an act of reciprocity, with India returning the support it has received and continues to receive (GoI, 2011).

4.2.4 Reputation or self-affirmation or global image

‘India’s expanding role in global affairs has led to an increased level of economic and technical assistance to our neighbours and other countries’ (Lok Sabha Secretariat, 2007a). This signals the growing role of India, and how it perceives aid giving and recognises it as an important instrument for the larger role it sees itself playing in the world. India also seeks validation, and the country is aware that it gets support from the international community for showing solidarity and willingness to support friendly nations through development assistance (Parliament of India, 2005b). As an emerging global player, India has played an important role in various donors’ conferences, where it has committed to contributing to a country’s reconstruction, be it in Africa (for example, in Mali in May 2013) or in South Asia (post-disaster Nepal, 2015; Afghanistan since 2002) (Parliament of India, 2002b, 2013c).

‘Aid diplomacy’ is a term that has been used several times by representatives of the Indian state, thus acknowledging that the country uses aid as a tool for sustaining and improving India’s relations with other countries, with an objective of getting access to recipient countries’ markets. Additionally India’s development partnership is also used to increase goodwill amongst the recipient states’ people through those who have been trained by India, and would be the

country's 'brand ambassadors' in their respective countries (MEA, GoI, 2004a). India sees itself as a leading state in the global south. This self-image is reflected in its discussions on development assistance, where statements such as these, 'India has been able to share with them, its rich developmental experience and expertise, as also appropriate technologies' are made by its policymakers (Parliament of India, 2005b). Also, aid has often been seen as a dimension of diplomatic outreach, although the discourse shifted towards economic diplomacy during the latter part of the UPA I government's rule. During UPA I, the Indian government started to consciously deliberate upon the use of development cooperation as soft power, which should be made use of in a 'cohesive' way and should have an approach that is 'outcome oriented'. This would then, according to the government, contribute towards enhancing India's role in global politics. The government felt that India has intentionally not made use of its development partnership for fulfilling its own interests, something that it should start doing, beginning with the ITEC programme (MEA, GoI, 2008a).

'Gaining visibility and goodwill for India' through providing assistance especially in neighbouring countries such as Nepal, has been welcomed by Indian policymakers (Lok Sabha Secretariat, 2005). Earning the goodwill of both elites and the common people through assistance is one of the main goals of India's development cooperation. Talking about the Northern Province and Eastern Province of Sri Lanka, an official mentioned that because the war destroyed the area and India supported the Sri Lankan government in the later part of the Civil War, there was a lot of anti-India feeling in those two provinces. As it was considered important to reduce ill-will towards India, a lot of projects in these regions are being supported by India (Elite Interview 5, India, 2019). In the past decade, increasing India's visibility has been an important expected outcome of extending aid beyond Asia, especially to countries and regions that have not yet been explored for aid giving, for example in regions such as Eurasia, Latin America and the Caribbean (Lok Sabha Secretariat, 2011a).

It is not just the political elite whose view of India matters to the country. People in recipient countries, what they need, and their sentiments towards India, have

all been important to Indian leaders, who have stressed the importance of GoI's relations with people in South Asia (Lok Sabha Secretariat, 2011a). GoI has also made use of social media to publicise its activities in recipient countries, taking advantage of the surge in social media usage in recent years. It is felt that the increase in use of social media globally could advantage India, and the NDA II government has taken full advantage of this opportunity (Gupta *et al.*, 2019).

4.2.5 South Asian regional security and India's internal security

Given that it shares borders with all South Asian countries, security is one of India's top priorities. All of its neighbours are developing countries like India itself and have depended on aid to support their development. China has also been providing assistance to India's neighbours for several decades, most recently through its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)⁴⁹. India's assistance to South Asian countries is also influenced by what other donors (such as China and Japan) are doing in the recipient country. Some development cooperation initiatives are undertaken to prevent other donors' presence, in some cases, in anticipation of future needs. For instance, the construction of the northern railway tracks in Sri Lanka was supported by India. China had initially offered to provide a loan for this project, and a Chinese company was going to implement it. However, India came forward, and an LoC was provided. The Indian undertaking IRCON International Limited⁵⁰ implemented the project, and it was reportedly completed at a much lower cost than that proposed by China (Elite Interview 6, India, 2020). India's assistance to Afghanistan since the early 2000s has enhanced the country's position in the South Asian region. For India, stability in its north-western border (sharing with Pakistan) areas is important for its own stability. The country believed that the support it provided for economic reconstruction and development in Afghanistan would bring peace and improvement, and would help India balance Pakistan's influence in the region (MEA, GoI, 2014b; D'Souza, 2016, p. 366; MEA, GoI, 2018c).

⁴⁹The BRI is China's project started in 2013, to connect China with the most countries for trade purposes (Chatham House, 2021).

⁵⁰Indian Railway Construction Limited (<http://www.ircon.org>)

For India, because of the close ethnic relations between its citizens and communities in neighbouring countries, taking care of the needs of these populations through development aid contributes to maintaining internal peace and security. For example, an interviewee shared that even though Jayalalitha or Karunanidhi⁵¹ have passed away, their respective political parties still push for Tamil Eelam (a proposed independent state) and pro-LTTE people are still present in Tamil Nadu. India does not want any security threats or dissidence within its territory (Elite Interview 5, India, 2019).

The government feels that the initiatives taken by India on its development cooperation in the immediate neighbourhood has resulted ‘in organic development, stability and security of the region’ (Parliament of India, 2018c). One of the expectations of political leaders from India’s development assistance programme has been that recipient countries reciprocate in ways that help India; for example, support from countries such as Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Myanmar in handling the issue of drugs and narcotics trafficking in north-east India (Lok Sabha Secretariat, 2002a).

4.2.6 Interest in wealth accumulation, economic growth, and energy, food, and fuel security

As a growing power, fulfilling its energy needs has been another important factor for India to consider. India has been providing aid to Nepal and Bhutan for hydropower dams since at least the 1980s. That has been reflected not just in the government’s approach but also other political leaders’, for example, the members of the Standing Committee on External Affairs (Lok Sabha Secretariat, 2002b). A lot of the recommendations of this committee during NDA I focused on aid to Bhutan, and specifically on hydropower projects that India supported. ‘Mutually beneficial economic cooperation’ and ‘India’s abiding geo-political, strategic and economic interests’ are some of the messages that the executive branch has used in its responses to parliament questions. Such a description of

⁵¹These two Tamil Nadu leaders headed two key regional Dravidian parties — the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam was headed by Jayalalitha till her death in 2016, and Karunanidhi was the president of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam till his death in 2018. AIADMK is a member of the coalition led by BJP, and DMK is part of the coalition led by INC.

the usefulness of aid giving has been mentioned mostly in the case of support to Africa, followed by other extended regions (Parliament of India, 2013b, 2019a).

In the past few years, there has been an added push for economic gains through India's development partnership programme. For instance, in Sri Lanka the focus of India's development support has been to use 'business opportunities like ports, city gas distribution, road building, railways and airports' (Lok Sabha Secretariat, 2018). The emphasis has been on undertaking large-scale projects in Sri Lanka, adopting an aid model more commonly associated with China. These changes signal a shift towards a hyper-realist approach.⁵²

4.2.7 Power or influence in recipient countries

India's support for development projects in countries like Nepal and Sri Lanka that help fulfil its strategic needs, has been guided by other factors too. One key factor is a desire to ensure that such projects remain with India, and that other donors are not involved. As a result of this, India ends up committing to projects and delays implementing them. This shows in the attitudes of Indian diplomats to this day, where they do not refuse projects, but shelve them for consideration at a later date, thus stalling the recipient country from approaching another donor (Lok Sabha Secretariat, 2004; Elite Interview 12, India, 2020).

Some projects have been implemented in the constituencies of certain political leaders in recipient countries. For instance, support under the SDP model was given to a political leader for his constituency in one of the case countries, and this helped India to have better relations with that person later, when they became a minister (Elite Interview 12, India, 2020). Some more examples of such cases are discussed in Chapters V and VI.

During NDA II period, 'the ministry has considered Development Partnership as an effective means to project soft power' (Lok Sabha Secretariat, 2016b). In 2018, the government was asked by the Standing Committee on External Affairs

⁵²Going by Bajpai's classification of Indian Foreign Policy approaches.

to prepare a ‘soft power matrix’ to measure the outcomes of ‘diplomatic traction’, especially in India’s neighbourhood (Parliament of India, 2018a). This demonstrates that Indian leaders (such as the chairperson of the committee and committee members from both ruling and opposition parties) have started to place greater weight on development assistance as a foreign policy tool.

One commonality that runs through all four Indian governments examined, is that India, unlike other developing countries, sees itself as an experienced country, and as more a successful state, when it comes to development. Having garnered expertise and technology it intends to pass them on to other developing countries in the global south through its development assistance programme. This aspect is not new — the core driver of India’s capacity and skill development programme has been based on this narrative and understanding since the country started providing support (Parliament of India, 2005b, 2012, 2016a).

These interests, analysed based on government documents and interviews, highlight the diverse nature of bilateral aid and its motives. The GoI’s take on its aid interests was comprehensively documented in its 2007 and 2008 ‘action taken’ reports to the Standing Committee on External Affairs. The report states that ‘IDCA, as it is proposed to be called, would on the one hand seek to expand, diversify, strengthen, and streamline India’s development cooperation programme...promoting the country’s political, strategic, economic and commercial interests in a rapidly globalising world, and on the other it would seek to make the delivery of the country’s development cooperation more efficient, cost-effective, well-coordinated, and professional in content and manner’ (Lok Sabha Secretariat, 2007a, 2008). This helps in summarising what the Indian government expects out of its development assistance programme.

The sections so far, integrated and examined the first three components of the IAD framework (at New Delhi level). In the following part of this chapter, the fourth component (narratives) of the framework is examined.

4.3 What kind of a donor is India as per its own narratives?

Even in projects based on altruism, where the aid goes and what it goes for, get decided based on the donor country's interests, shared a retired MEA senior official. India's aid is not a symbolic gesture; it is an element of India's foreign policy and is part of its attempts to strengthen international cooperation (Amb Retd. Mathai, 2020). As Indian policymakers think of the country as a different kind of development partner, they highlight that its development assistance is based on the needs and demands of recipient states and key actors, including the community leaders, in them. For India, the role of the beneficiary communities and local governments are also important, especially in neighbouring countries. These projects are mostly requested through various recipient actors, and the country supports projects that no other country takes up (Elite Interview 2, India, 2019). In the initial decades after Independence, India was willing to share and show solidarity with other countries in the global south. Once it started to become economically powerful, sharing resources and benefits through 'win-win' exchanges became more important. Having stated that, India understands 'that South-South cooperation actions are voluntary and in a spirit of solidarity cannot be a substitute for long made but still unfulfilled North-South development assistance commitments' (MEA, GoI, 2011d).

In the South Asian region, India's development assistance programme is a lot more complex than elsewhere. Because of India's multi-layered relations with countries here, India faces various internal and external challenges, including high political involvement, both within India and in recipient countries. For example, in situations where the political influence of local leaders in recipient countries is a factor, Indian representatives improvise India's development partnership strategy, and see how best to manage the situation by keeping in view the interests of the country. This is understood as practical politics in aid giving, as per an interviewee (Elite Interview 10, India, 2020). Overall, India's

understanding is that it has made a positive impact on recipient country and its people (Parliament of India, 2018b). Whereas that might not always be the case.

Institutionally, Indian aid-giving structure and processes are yet to be well established. MEA officials feel that other GoI stakeholders do not realise that India cannot enforce its internal rules and procedures on recipient countries' project implementers, as a result of which project delivery gets delayed. Other GoI stakeholders (such as MoF) feel that these internal rules must be followed. However, several current and retired MEA officials argued that India needs to change its standards and procedures to implement projects that are suitable to recipient country or region-specific settings. According to one interviewee, the process to buy a pen and the process to buy a "million-dollar something" is the same. Getting multiple clearances from MoF for utilising funds and relying on public sector organisations or other ministries to carry out projects as part of MEA grants and loans, has meant that the MEA has been tied to other ministries, slowing down the implementation process. Other constraints in regulations have meant that MEA could not approach private companies or experts while planning and designing projects. Even when private agencies undertook projects through tenders, there were hindrances caused by controls over utilising funds (even from approved budgets) — processes mandated by MoF regulations (Amb Retd. Mathai, 2020; Elite Interview 10, India, 2020; Elite Interview 14, India, 2020). Somewhat differing from this understanding, and putting a positive spin on these obstacles, Dr Shashi Tharoor's statement, when he was Minister of State at MEA, outlines the other factors that are at play in India's aid-approval processes. He states, 'We are sometimes accused of being slow in our implementation. It is true that as a democratic country we have to have consultations and build consensus. Sometimes our strong bureaucracy also acts as a check and balance on decision-making. But in all this, the reality is that once we take a decision and go forward, the decision is firm and well thought-out' (MEA, GoI, 2010d).

As an emerging global player and a donor state, it is only in recent years that India has determinedly showcased itself as a donor and highlighted the role it is playing in the development of countries in the global south. A few of the officials

interviewed felt that one reason for this could be the Indian culture of helping others, but not talking about it; it is only in the past seven years or so that India has started doing so. One official shared that India is not flamboyant about the support it provides; rather, it showcases its work only where needed, and that it avoids drawing attention to itself. In some cases, officials felt that by not disclosing the amount of assistance it provides, India does not use its development support to its advantage. A few Indian officials felt that monetising or trying to use aid for India's benefit can be a 'double-edged sword', where if India highlights its contributions, that might not be liked by recipient governments, but if India does not, it might lose out on getting recognition for its contributions. At the domestic level, highlighting the support India gives can lead to public backlash; however, they felt it is important for the country to draw attention to its development cooperation (Elite Interview 1, India, 2019; Elite Interview 4, India, 2019). The image of the country is an important aspect for India. As a leader in the region and with the aspiration to be a global player, having a certain image is a key element to how one country is perceived by others. Consequently, for others to accord India a high position, prestige projects such as the Afghan Parliament become crucial.

India's development aid, in accordance with Bajpai (2016)'s analysis of India's foreign policy since 2016, is gradually seeing the effects of hyper-realism. India's assistance to each region has different motivations and expectations of outcomes, and as an emerging global player, these expectations and drivers of aid giving seem to be narrowing instead of expanding, including a 'mercantilist approach' in aid and trade policies (Gupta *et al.*, 2019, p. 6,19). In recent years, public diplomacy has changed with the increase in usage of the internet by general public and governments. Even though India's development assistance programme has existed for many years, a narrative is being created that credits the Modi government for India's contribution more than other governments (Gupta *et al.*, 2019, p. 22,26). This is similar to what happens in domestic politics. Indian embassies' Twitter™ and Facebook™ accounts actively promote this image of GoI. This could have several motives, including (but not limited to) increasing Modi's visibility in international and domestic spaces (Hall, 2019;

Mazumdar, 2020, p. 26). This could also be because of a hyper-realist approach in aid giving, wherein development partnership is used to meet India's strategic and economic goals. This hyper-realist approach has also led to delays and more scrutiny at the central level. For example, decisions on smaller grant projects such as SDPs/CDPs are now being taken in New Delhi — they used to be taken at the embassy or high commission level (Elite Interview 4, India, 2019; Gupta *et al.*, 2019, pp. 23–24; Parliament of India, 2019b).

Conclusion

India's development assistance, which is a vital component of India's foreign policy, has helped the country economically. Furthermore, support has also been extended to fulfil India's strategic and security needs, and in some cases, aid giving has been driven by altruism (Chenoy and Joshi, 2016). Analysing this further, in the first phase, India's aid policy and programme were driven more by altruistic motives. In the second phase, which corresponds to a timeline of most interest in this thesis, they are guided by both egoistic and altruistic agendas. In contrast, the third phase — which became overtly clear sometime in 2018-19 and coincided with India's hyper-realist foreign policy period — has more egoist drivers of aid than in the past. However, the rhetoric in the first two phases, and the changes observed at the end of the second phase — on various media platforms of the government continues to be dominated by the altruistic language.

The understanding shared by most governments in India regarding its development assistance programme includes a persistent emphasis on the skills, experience, and technology that the country possesses, and how it would like to transfer all these to less-developed states through its development partnership programme. Finding problems with India's external assistance, DAC donors have pointed out that the country does not have a clear definition of development assistance, and mixes aid with geopolitics and commerce. However, India has found supporters for its approach from those who believe that this mixed method of providing technical and financial assistance is indeed an effective way

(Mawdsley, 2014, p. 962; Chenoy and Joshi, 2016; Elite Interview 13, India, 2020).

The MEA, like many bureaucracies, is resistant to change. MEA responds to stimuli, and the push that is needed comes from internal factors or actors and external sources (Katju, 2021). There was an internal push to set up DPA, with senior diplomats such as Ranjan Mathai and P S Raghavan taking the lead. However, there has been considerable and longstanding resistance to certain planned changes in the ministry, as discussed in this chapter (Amb Retd. Mathai, 2020; Elite Interview 10, India, 2020; Elite Interview 14, India, 2020).

Based on the data analysed for this thesis, India's methods of making decisions on aid giving can be broadly categorised as relative and absolute. Absolute methods aim at developing relations with other countries (especially its neighbours) for various reasons, thereby creating interdependence between India and recipient states. The second approach to decision-making is relative, dependent on providing aid based on 'what other actors do'; it is a more reactive form of aid giving.

In the various phases discussed in this chapter, both individual and institutional factors have influenced India's foreign aid. As noted earlier, one of the important institutional changes — introducing SDPs and giving decision-making powers on this form of grants to embassies and high commissions — made a vast difference to Indian development cooperation's reach and implementation. Similarly, the personalities of Indian leaders have also affected the country's development assistance policy and programme. The following two chapters on India's support in Sri Lanka and Nepal will develop this aspect further.

India's internal accountability to its citizens, civil society organisations or state governments is still weak. Most Indians do not seem to be aware of India's development assistance programme. The central government has also not made much use of Indian CSO experiences and learnings in implementing projects

overseas (Chaturvedi et al. 2014, p.22, Mawdsley 2014).⁵³ For a country with mostly well-defined domestic policies and an expansive strategic foreign policy since Independence, governments (at least in the past three decades) have been circumspect about defining their development assistance policy and highlighting their efforts.

Even though MEA has a Public Diplomacy division, which was set up in 2006 to focus on getting domestic and international support for India's foreign policy, its efforts had mainly targeted international audiences and foreign governments, rather than India's domestic audience. This has changed over the past 5-6 years, especially regarding the country's international development assistance programme. These changes are gradually taking place in the new hyper-realist phase.

As India's global importance grows, the various forms of its identities will change, and as a result, its aid-giving interests will continue to see changes. With no possibility of India joining OECD-DAC in the near future, nor of other southern donors creating a parallel monitoring body, India has the freedom to carry out its development partnerships programme in a self-focused manner.

The analysis undertaken here in this chapter provides insights into factors that shape the decisions taken on India's development assistance. This helps in understanding the Indian model of aid-giving from New Delhi's perspective. In the following two chapters, the aim has been to shift the attention on the recipients, understand how they view India's development support and present the Indian model of aid-giving from their perspective.

⁵³ Only two non-governmental organisations have been brought on board by the government — Barefoot College, Tilonia to train women as solar engineers, and Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) for training women on starting small businesses (MEA, GoI, 2013c; Chaturvedi and Mulakala, 2016).

CHAPTER V: THE REGIONAL POWER AND THE ISLAND STATE: INDIA'S DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT TO SRI LANKA

Introduction

After his visit to Ceylon,⁵⁴ in an August 1939 report to Dr Rajendra Prasad, All India Congress Committee President, Nehru had written, 'When the British Empire fades away, where will Ceylon go? She must associate herself, economically at least, with larger groups and India is obviously indicated. Because of this, it is unfortunate that many of the leaders of Ceylon should help in creating barriers between India and Ceylon. They do not seem to realise that while India can live without Ceylon, in the future to come, Ceylon may not be able to live without India' (Gopal, 1970, p. 61; V Suryanarayan, 2015, p. 499). Forty-four years later, on similar lines, then Indian PM Indira Gandhi said in a parliamentary debate, 'As you know, we have made it clear in every forum and in every possible way that India does not pose any threat to Sri Lanka, nor do we want to interfere in their internal affairs...At the same time, I pointed out to the President that developments in Sri Lanka affect us also. In this matter India cannot be regarded as just any country. Sri Lanka and India are the two countries who are directly concerned. Any extraneous involvement will complicate matters for both our countries' (Parliament of India, 1983, p. 518). L Kadirgamar, a former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Sri Lanka,⁵⁵ comparing India to the hub of the wheel, and its neighbours to the spokes, presented his understanding of where India stands in the region, and the position other states hold in relation to India. According to him, like the spokes, the countries shared maritime or land boundaries with India, but are not geographically connected (without crossing Indian borders) with each other (Bhasin, 2008, p. 9). These views on each other's countries held by senior leaders from India and Sri Lanka reflect the different types of identities that the former has had even before its independence, which to a large extent continues to be the case to this day, even after 74 years. These identities (global player and regional power) collective or

⁵⁴Sri Lanka was called Ceylon before 1972, the year it became a republic.

⁵⁵From 1994 to 2001, and again from April 2004 till August 2005, when an LTTE sniper killed him.

social are endogenous, and different actors, international and internal factors in both countries have contributed to the identity formation of India.

Since its independence, India's foreign policy towards Sri Lanka has been guided by two key factors — 'security coordinates and ideological coordinates (socio-cultural identities and characteristics of the political system)' (Muni, 1993, p. 31). In addition to these two, economic factors have also shaped the relationship, but they have not overwritten the importance of security and ideological factors (Muni, 1993). India's foreign policy has guided the nature of its bilateral aid to Sri Lanka, which began with technical capacity-building programmes in the early 1950s under the Colombo Plan. Aid to Sri Lanka from other countries started in the late 1940s. The nature of this aid began to change with time because of the Sri Lankan Civil War, which began in 1983 and ended in 2009. In Sri Lanka's history as a recipient of bilateral aid, it has been affected by domestic economic and political policies, and by global aid practices, as much as it has been affected by bilateral donors' foreign policies.

Foreign aid, especially bilateral support, by its very nature, cannot be apolitical (Hattori, 2001, p. 635; Mawdsley, 2012a, p. 27); thus India's assistance to Sri Lanka has included both development and political ones, regardless of the form of assistance provided. Examining what factors play a role in Sri Lanka in the context of implementing India-supported development assistance, this chapter, as per the second level in the IAD framework, explores global economic and political pressures, domestic political interests, bureaucratic structures, perspectives, and experiences of both political and bureaucratic actors. It begins with a brief overview of the external and internal factors, including influences (specific to bilateral aid), and existing rules (and policies). The next part of the chapter focuses on the perceptions and experiences of the elite community, which are shaped by the different identities of India in Sri Lanka, that provide insights into India's development programme.

The second part of the chapter focuses on the beneficiary community's experiences and understandings of India's support, including a brief introduction

to Indian Housing Project, and further discussion and analysis of findings on community perspectives on India's aid programme.

5.1 Intermingling of global influences with domestic interests and pressures

Donors and recipients both have their priorities and objectives while providing and receiving aid. These are only sometimes clearly communicated to each other. Nevertheless, both these sets of actors try to get the best out of what is being offered. Sri Lanka's history as an aid-recipient state, since it gained independence, showcases how internal interests and pressures have interacted with international aid-givers, and how global changes have shaped the aid flow into the country (Ofstad, 2002; Whitfield, 2008; Bhavan, 2013). Countries such as the US, UK, Japan, EU, China, India, and others have taken a keen interest in Sri Lanka. They have used various foreign policy tools (both soft and hard power) including trade, aid, and tourism, to ensure their presence in the state. Like in any other region/country in the world, these donors have formed informal alliances — broadly, USA, India, and Japan on one side, and China and Pakistan on the other. Corresponding to changes in the global aid architecture, countries such as China and India have increasingly been providing various forms of assistance (Amarasinghe and Rebert, 2013). Long term donors to Sri Lanka (who have provided assistance since before the Civil War began) included Japan, South Korea, the US, Australia, the UK, Yugoslavia (until 1992, because of NAM connection), and some countries of the former socialist bloc including Czechoslovakia, erstwhile USSR, and China. India too has had a long association with Sri Lanka as a provider of aid. However, since the end of the Civil War, northern donors' ODA to Sri Lanka has reduced (Rao, 1988; Mel and Silva, 2012; De Silva, 2018; OECD-DAC, ndb).

International norms and practices, and changes in them, have contributed to aid flows to Sri Lanka and the components of that aid. For instance, writing about aid strategies followed by donors during the Civil War, Ofstad (2002) lists three approaches: 'the traditional development agency approach; the comprehensive approach; and the pro-active approach.' Humanitarian funding started to flow in

when conflict resolution and peacebuilding became an important part of development discourse and policy in the global north (Orjuela, 2005; Kelegama and Mel, 2007). The presence of large diaspora communities of Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora in some leading donor countries, such as Canada and France, may also have influenced aid flows in these cases (Mel, 2009).

Sri Lanka's geostrategic position in the Indian Ocean makes it an important country to maintain a relation with for India, which has been both an advantage and disadvantage for the country (MEA, GoI, 2010a). Sri Lanka aims to use this strategic position to its advantage, showcasing itself 'as the centre of the Indian Ocean and an economic entry point to the Indian subcontinent' (Muni, 1993, p. 33; De Silva, 2018, p. 71). Sri Lanka's foreign policy stance, whether it was its anti-communist stand in the early 1950s — which brought it closer to the US — or their recognition of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1952, has impacted its aid inflow. Its anti-communist stance led to increased assistance from the US and its allies, including the UK, other Commonwealth countries, and countries such as Japan and India via the Colombo Plan. Recognising PRC as a nation-state resulted in China-Sri Lanka trade relations, starting with the Rubber-Rice agreement of 1952. Opening relations with PRC and Sri Lanka's continued position as a NAM member, caused a reduction in the aid flows from the US (Bastian, 2018).

Domestic factors in Sri Lanka, such as ruling parties' ideological positions and closeness with certain countries have also affected the country's aid flow. For example, the Mahajana Eksath Peramuna (MEP) — a centre-left-leaning political party that won the 1956 elections — started diplomatic, cultural, and economic ties with China, communist countries in eastern Europe, and USSR to balance out the relations that the country had with USA, Britain, and other western countries. While getting involved with these countries was seen as a first step towards practising non-alignment, it caused an increase in technical and economic support from the communist bloc. China's presence and its role in developing Sri Lanka have been growing in the past several decades. Between 2005 and 2014, when Mahinda Rajapaksa's government was in power, a little

more than one percent (USD 8.9 billion) of China's total investment (USD 870.4 billion) was given to Sri Lanka. Rajapaksa's government was considered to have closer ties with China than with India. However, when Sirisena, backed by the United National Party (UNP) government won the election in 2015, his initial stance on wanting to stop Chinese projects in the country was seen as a position that needed to be thought through. The government was advised by policymakers and academics to maintain a balanced foreign policy between the major powers who were providing support to the country (De Silva, 2018). A Sri Lankan interviewee, while talking about Sri Lanka's contemporary foreign policy position, noted that one of Sri Lanka's most significant diplomatic challenges is to balance China and India, and that Sri Lanka has made it clear that China will be a commercial partner only — no military presence or geopolitical elements will be part of the relationship (Elite interview SL 4, 2019). In the past few years, a policy of 'friendship with all; enmity with none', without upholding any ideological stand, has worked for the country, wherein it has tried to maintain good relations with both China and India (Levy, 1989; Uyangoda, 2016; De Silva, 2018).

Similarly, other domestic factors such as the internal armed conflict in Sri Lanka led to an influx of defence-related assistance. During the same period, OPEC countries started to provide aid, which increased Sri Lanka's capacity to bargain with northern donors. An important change that occurred because of this was that aid for programmes reduced, and funds were provided on a project basis. During the Civil War period, assistance for economic development continued to flow in, while humanitarian assistance commenced immediately after the signing of the Indo-Sri Lanka Peace Accord in 1987.⁵⁶ Bilateral aid donors, such as Norway, Sweden, UK, Netherlands, and Canada, developed a different framework for humanitarian assistance, or changed their programmes to cater to the ground realities. These changes could also be attributed to an increase in the outflow of refugees from Sri Lanka to these countries, and the inclusion of

⁵⁶On 29 July 1987, an Accord was signed in Colombo between India and Sri Lanka, which stipulated various measures to be taken by the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE to end the Civil War.

‘conflict’ in global aid policy (Goodhand, 2010, p. 358; Bastian, 2018; Jayasundara-Smits, 2018).

There have been other issues, such as economic policies and activities within the country, that have influenced the aid flow. For example, Sri Lanka becoming a middle-income country in the beginning of the new century caused change in the amount of aid flow and its components. The 2010 performance report of the External Resources Department (ERD) highlights that commitments from donors increased at the rate of 149% between 2005 and 2010. Concessional loans decreased, and export credit increased, when the country acquired this new middle-income status. The country was reclassified as an upper-middle-income state by the World Bank in 2019, and then was brought down to lower-middle-income in 2020. While these changes in its economic status might not affect aid from southern donors such as China and India, it is very likely that this new status might further change the components of aid from northern donors, as it did in 2009-10 (Bastian, 2018; Chandrasekara, 2019; Doers, SL, 2019, vol. 2010; Elite interview SL 2, 2019; Elite interview SL 14, 2019).

In the past few years, the country has been facing a debt burden. Sri Lanka has been borrowing money in the form of concessional loans for various developmental works. China, Japan, and India have been its largest bilateral lenders. In 2020, Sri Lanka was under pressure to pay back a substantial amount of debt, especially to the sovereign fund holders. The debt factor, alongside other aspects of debt management, has affected its foreign aid inflow. In 2020, Japan suspended funding for a cable project, as it felt that Sri Lanka’s debt situation had worsened and its government was not able to handle the fiscal situation well (Srinivasan, 2020; Wijedasa, 2020).

Human rights violations during the last stages of the war by the Rajapaksa government have affected the influx of foreign aid, specifically from DAC donors (De Silva, 2018). Besides this, northern donors — going against the Paris Agreement on Aid Effectiveness 2005 — had placed political conditionalities

and stopped providing assistance; this has undervalued Sri Lanka's own ability to work towards a peaceful state after the war ended (Mel and Silva, 2012).

In the 1990s, assistance was about 7% of the country's GDP; it reduced to 2% in 2001 (Goodhand and Klem, 2005, pp. 2000–2005). The two charts given in Appendix I give a glimpse into the number of countries that have been actively committing to or providing assistance to the island from 2009 to 2019.⁵⁷ The amount of aid either committed or disbursed reduced significantly in 2015, and one possible reason for this change could be the new government that came into power (DoER, SL, 2019, vol. 2015). The decrease in aid from northern donors allowed a higher inflow of assistance from southern donors, which continue to be an important source of external support even to this day, as mentioned earlier.

This intermingling of internal and external conditions has impacted the policy space and the common people in the country. The reality that the country requires investment for social and economic development, which is very much acknowledged by the elite community in the country, further adds to the pressure, and Sri Lanka's dependence on countries such as China and India has increased (Kelegama and Mel, 2007; Jayasundara-Smits, 2018).

5.2 Rules, policies, and practices for receiving aid

5.2.1 Formal and informal bureaucratic structures

Bureaucrats have played a crucial role in the political economy of Sri Lanka (Goodhand, 2010; Amarasinghe and Rebert, 2013). They operate in both structured and semi-structured environments, primarily in accordance with set operating procedures. As a country that has come out of a long conflict, different governments in Sri Lanka have been pursuing different policies and arrangements to receive aid. Significant bureaucratic change came with the new

⁵⁷ The performance reports published by the ERD, GoSL have country-wise data on the amount committed for 2009 to 2013, and the following years' country-wise data is presented with amounts disbursed and not the amount committed. 2013 and 2019 reports are not accessible online, hence the missing data for those years.

government in 2015, from former president Mahinda Rajapaksa's (2005-2015) to Maithripala Sirisena's (SLFP President backed by UNP), with Ranil Wickremesinghe as the PM.⁵⁸ For example, the agreement for the India-supported housing project, signed in 2012, was through the former Ministry of Economic Development, which was disbanded in 2015 and replaced by several newly-created departments (Elite interview SL 15, 2019).

The policy for receiving aid in Sri Lanka from 2006 to 2015 (during the M Rajapaksa government) was to align foreign assistance with the 'Mahinda Chinthana: the Vision for the Future 2006–2016' document. This document listed development targets to be achieved within the country with its own resources and with support from external sources (DoER, SL, 2019, vol. 2010). While the country was using the vision document of M Rajapaksa for rebuilding the country, most public works taken up by various ministries and departments were on a project basis and not a well-defined methodical programme in sync with other ministries (Amarasinghe and Rebert, 2013). Some changes in these processes followed in the latter half of the 2015–19 government. The policy of the UNP government, along with following the Public Investment Programme (2017–2020) document⁵⁹ and the new Vision 2025 document,⁶⁰ was to get optimum benefits from donors and follow a non-alignment policy. These vision documents and the country's development goals also change based on various other international treaties signed by Sri Lanka, such as the SDGs (Elite interview SL 15, 2019).

In terms of hierarchy, ERD, under the Ministry of Finance, Sri Lanka (MoF, SL) leads this process of receiving aid. The process followed and the decision-making patterns are based on instructions set out given in a February 2019 circular issued by the Department of National Planning (NPD). These recent

⁵⁸The PM's name is mentioned for the period 2015–2019 because there was a power struggle between these two leaders, who are from different parties, which prompted them to take decisions that most often would lead to internal clashes. Following a coup in October 2018, there were some more changes in how ministries functioned.

⁵⁹<http://www.npd.gov.lk/index.php/en/2017-03-02-07-02-41/publications/38-public-investment-programme.html>

⁶⁰<https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2017/10/17/vision-2025-sri-lankas-path-to-prosperity>

changes are aimed at streamlining the funding. Those in the system recognise the complexity within this setup and the process. From a circular issued by the Ministry of National Policies and Economic Affairs, it seems that the other ministries do not follow set procedures and tend to engage with donors directly (MNPEA, GoSL, 2019, p. 6).

The complexity of bureaucratic requirements on the Sri Lankan side seems to be mirrored by complex and multi-tiered engagements from India's diplomatic team in Sri Lanka. GoI is represented by the IHC in Colombo.⁶¹ Discussions with officials on both sides of the aid relationship highlighted many gaps and informal parallel conversations that take place between IHC and those requesting funds. Officials on both sides shared that some projects that IHC supports are based on the relationship the minister or leader has with IHC or India, and to a large extent depend on how beneficial the leader and their constituency are to India in the long run.

Furthermore, at the implementation level, the Sri Lankan state's capacity to execute donor projects, either through NGOs or through state structures, has been weak. Cases such as handling tsunami relief or some of the Indian-supported projects have shown that Sri Lanka cannot manage projects efficiently. The local population has not been trained enough to fill this gap either, particularly at the sub-national levels. Donor reporting, documentation, and monitoring further add to the already-burdened structures and its people (Mel and Silva, 2012; Elite interview SL 9, 2019).

These complex informal and formal aid receiving, and implementation practices provide donors like India (which largely provides support through bilateral channels) an advantage. For example, India had 22 projects with 12 ministries in Sri Lanka in late 2019, when the fieldwork for this research was conducted. In addition to these recipient offices, IHC also maintains contact with departments that are structurally part of the project implementation phase, such

⁶¹India has one high commission, in Colombo, and three Consulates, in Jaffna, Kandy, and Hambantota.

as the Department of Project Management and Monitoring. These practices provide the IHC staff interact with Sri Lanka's multiple ministries/departments directly.

5.2.2 Domestic conditions, politics, and aid implementation

According to Goodhand (2010, p. 344), Sri Lankan elites have managed to use donors and international actors' interests and positions to their advantage. Adding to this, the author states that the policy measures that are interpreted and facilitated by these domestic actors, in most cases, differ from what gets implemented on the ground. The role played by policymakers, such as politicians and government officials, in getting the project for the dams under the Mahaweli Development programme, shows that they are not submissive actors, and they play a very active role which also fulfils their agenda (Bastian, 2018, p. 81).⁶²

Another example of where internal politics impacted the implementation of a development project is the execution of an India-supported community-driven housing project in the plantation areas of Central Province. Undertaking the project here has been a problem because of the region's topography, but it is also hugely impacted by local politics and politicians, resulting in massive delays for the past few years in building 4,000 houses. The other challenges causing these delays are the involvement of multiple ministries, land allocation by estate owners, and lack of local labour, with most beneficiaries involved in tea estate work. These difficulties were not envisaged when the project was planned for the region. The contract for the next phase of houses (10,000) in this region was yet to be initiated by the IHC, for reasons unknown to the implementing partners. It is challenging to implement such projects in hilly regions, when compared to projects in the Northern Province and Eastern Province (where 46,000 houses have been built), because people do not own land, which hence has to be

⁶²The World Bank showed cautiousness in accelerating this project, as per the desires of the Sri Lankan government. However, this project was politically crucial to UNP, the political party in power, which would have showcased this project as its achievement, during the campaigning for the 1983 election. Therefore, since the World Bank was not ready to support the speeding up of the project implementation, the UNP government used bilateral relations to raise funds for this project from countries such as UK, Sweden, and Germany. Once these countries decided to support the project, the World Bank too funded the project.

provided by tea estate owners. In addition to the houses, other facilities, water, and electricity will also have to be provided. The absence of these amenities has resulted in low utilisation of the newly built houses. Further, demolishing line houses⁶³ is a problem, as people who are non-workers don't get houses, and they do not have a place to stay once these line houses are demolished (Elite interview SL 10, 2019; Elite interview SL 19, 2019).

Each of the points discussed in these two sections so far highly impact how donors, including India, provide assistance, the implementation of the projects thereafter, and how they are perceived. With this context in place, the next section centres around India's development assistance in Sri Lanka to address the second sub-research question.

5.3 Understanding India as a development partner in Sri Lanka

Development assistance from India has been one of the important sources of aid to Sri Lanka since 2005. Bilateral aid from India to Sri Lanka began in the early 1950s, with Sri Lankans getting scholarships to undertake various courses under the ITEC programme of the Indian government. Along with trainings, some LoCs were provided to the Sri Lankan government. Economic diplomacy tools, such as grants from India, are far greater in number and total value than China (MEA, GoI, 1973a; High Commission of India, Colombo, 2014; De Silva, 2018). People interviewed for this research shared their experiences and understandings about specific aid projects being implemented in Sri Lanka. The majority of the projects that India continues to support are aimed at infrastructure, healthcare, education, livelihood, and economic development, as was largely the case in 2005 (DoER, SL, 2019, vol. 2018). Most interviewees listed projects in sectors such as commercial infrastructure, housing, culture, and education in the form of schools and universities, as well as the project for a country-wide ambulance service, which according to them is a massive project, and both the governments take credit for it.

⁶³ Line houses are a continuous row of one/two-room houses built during the British era for workers in the plantations or estates.

Similar to that of other South Asian countries, Sri Lanka's foreign policy towards India is guided not just by the fact that the two states are very close neighbours, the relations they shared during the Civil War but also factors such as strong ethnic and historical connections (MEA, GoI, 2015d). In this interconnected relationship between India and Sri Lanka, India is referred to as the 'big brother' by the elite community in Sri Lanka. De Silva (2018, p. 71) uses Keohane and Nye's 'theory of Complex Interdependence' to note that Sri Lanka has moved away from the traditional realist state-to-state relations to a more society-lead relations (for example, inflow of tourists, trade flow, and foreign direct investment), and this holds true for Sri Lanka-India relationship as well.

Sri Lanka and India's political relationship has seen ups and downs since each gained independence, with previous interactions and decisions having varied consequences on both of them. The relationship, mostly difficult before the Civil War, was dominated by discussions on varied issues. Describing India's relationship with Sri Lanka, an archived Indian foreign policy document from the early 1970s states that India's association with the country, apart from 'several irritants', has been 'remarkably free of friction over the past 25 years'. The issues between these two countries, as per the Indian narrative, were: citizenship of Indian-origin Tamil persons; maritime boundary in the context of fishing; and external trade (MEA, GoI, 1973b; V Suryanarayan, 2015). Writing about India's role during the Civil War, Wedagedara (2013, p. 77) states that the country's involvement 'in Sri Lanka firstly as a covert supporter of the Tamil militants, then as a mediator, and finally as an active participant', sums up the changing nature of the political relationship — from an adversary of the Sri Lankan government to its partner — in the decades-long war.

Various experts and academics have analysed India's role in the Sri Lankan Civil War since the conflict began in July 1983. India's policies towards Sri Lanka, during this time can be divided broadly into three periods – the first two under former Indian Prime Ministers Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi respectively (1983 to 1991), and the third one from 1991 (when an LTTE suicide bomber

killed Rajiv Gandhi) to 2009. Under Indira Gandhi, India tried to change Sri Lanka's policy of cultivating other state actors, and tried to negotiate a political solution that ensured justice for the Tamil community, without pushing for separate territories or extending military support to GoSL. Under Rajiv Gandhi, India became softer towards GoSL, and hardened its approach to the Tamil groups involved in the conflict (Muni, 1993). India has been concerned about two issues since the conflict began – the Tamil separatist movement in Sri Lanka spreading to India, and other state actors, such as China and Pakistan, getting involved in Sri Lanka. In the 1980s, India facilitated talks between the Tamil groups and the Sri Lankan government (Menon, 2016, pp. 86–87). India and Sri Lanka signed a Peace Accord in 1987, which involved devolution of power to the provinces, Tamil being made an official language, and merger of the Northern and Eastern provinces. Wedagedara (2013) calls the third phase the 'hands-off' phase, wherein GoI started extending more support to GoSL, and the ethnic issue became less important, though that was not how GoI presented its position. In the 1999-2000 annual report of the MEA, GoI described ongoing Indo-Sri Lanka relations as 'cordial and friendly' (MEA, GoI, 2000), and over the next several years, it consolidated its relationship with Sri Lanka with high-level visits, and also by engaging with other countries, such as Norway and Japan, which were part of the peace negotiations.

The assistance provided by India during the Civil War reflects the different policies it maintained towards Sri Lanka during the three-decade-long conflict. Some of the well-known (and those that caused troubles between the two countries) were when the Indian Air Force dropped food and medicines in the Jaffna area (Northern Province) in June 1987. In the same year, India sent 70,000 personnel as part of the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) to assist in a ceasefire process. This force was involved in the internal conflict until late March 1990, when India decided to withdraw its troops (Federal Research Division, USA, 1988; Menon, 2016). In the 1990s, development support to Sri Lanka expanded, especially because of the Gujral doctrine (Gupta, 1997). Data on India's development assistance to Sri Lanka from the beginning of the Civil War till 1999 has been difficult to trace. Data presented in the annual reports of

the MEA since 1999 shows that development support to Sri Lanka increased from 110 million INR in 2000-01 to 150 million INR in 2004-05. This support mainly flowed into areas such as education and research, housing, health, resettlement, livelihood, and vocational training (High Commission of India, Colombo, 2014). The different stances that various Indian governments took, and the choices they made (including providing humanitarian assistance) during this period, impacted India's relations with the Sri Lankan Sinhala-dominated state and the Sri Lankan Tamil population. India was criticised for violating the air space of a sovereign state. GoI has also been accused of supporting the LTTE with weapons and training during the war period. In the last two decades, these incidents and decisions have shaped the country's development assistance policy to Sri Lanka.

The perceptions and experiences of political relations between the two countries at present are influenced by historical narratives and incidents, along with current-day politics. The two countries have historically shared a certain kind of closeness (Muni, 1993, p. 38). India and Sri Lanka have had democratic forms of government since independence. Some of the elite community interviewees look up to India because of this. They understand that India's democratic structure, with internal politics influencing the policies, operates differently to China, thereby affecting the two regional powers' approaches in Sri Lanka.

If India is the 'big brother' and the regional power in South Asia, that inevitably makes Sri Lanka less powerful and the 'younger sister/brother' in relation to India. Added to this, the hierarchy between a donor and a recipient state contributes to the Sri Lankan identity of being a dependent country. Even what L Kadirgamar said about India — it being the hub of the wheel and other countries being the spokes — gives India the central position. These various forms of relationships have shaped both community and elite accounts about India on the Sri Lankan side. They have affected the foreign policies of both countries, and therefore, bilateral aid to Sri Lanka from India.

Keeping this in the background, the following section looks at the various perceptions and experiences of the elite community in Sri Lanka, analysed through the lens of different identities of India. Studying these identities independently and how they interact with the factors in Sri Lanka's aid receiving policy, rules and practices helped establish a broad understanding of India as a donor.

5.3.1 Regional power identity

As a regional power, India has had both well-founded and ill-founded involvements in Sri Lanka during both conflict times and post-conflict (Elite interview SL 16, 2019). An important example of such involvement is India's dual role during the conflict, helping the Sri Lankan army as well as training LTTE members over two and half decades of the conflict (Rao, 1988). As a regional power, one of the key reasons for such involvement was to ensure that there are no ethnic tensions in Sri Lanka, especially in the Northern Province, since such tensions not only provide an opportunity for other countries such as China to have its footprints (for example, using aid for infrastructure development) close to the Indian border, but can also lead to other security problems for India (Menon, 2016). Geographically, the distance between both countries is about 18 nautical miles. In addition to it being a close neighbour that shares three maritime borders (Bay of Bengal boundary, Palk Bay 'Historic Waters', and Gulf of Mannar boundary), Sri Lanka's position in the Indian Ocean makes it an important country to maintain good relations with. An interviewee shared how it is an open secret that because of its geostrategic position, and the keen interest in Sri Lanka shown by various other countries, India is very cautious and is gathering information in Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka's position in the Indian Ocean and its proximity — especially the north of the island, which is also a post-conflict zone — to India, make the latter invest in the region. Further, it would want to minimise Chinese influence in this area (Rao, 1988; Elite interview SL 4, 2019).

Economic partnerships between the two countries fall under two broad categories: aid and trade. "If India sneezes, Sri Lanka will catch a cold", shared

an interviewee, implying that the Sri Lankan economy was dependent on the Indian economy (Elite interview SL 13, 2019). In 2010, then Foreign Secretary of India, Ambassador Nirupama Menon Rao shared something along the same lines: ‘It is a universally held truth that India’s economic growth has a positive impact on our region. Today, with sustained high economic growth rates over the past decade, India is in a better position to offer a significant stake to our neighbours in our own prosperity and growth’ (MEA, GoI, 2010c). That said, while India remains an important trading partner for Sri Lanka, Sri Lanka’s trade dependence on India has declined in recent years, and the Chinese-Sri Lankan trade flow started to exceed India’s trade flow with Sri Lanka after 2016 (Moramudali, 2019, 2021).

China’s BRI has become a recent threat to India’s position in Sri Lanka. This has added to the existing complications in the India–Sri Lanka relationship. India fears China’s linkages with Sri Lanka, and this too affects the political relationship between the two countries. A sense of complacency in relations has been disrupted by China’s economic engagement with the country (Elite interview SL 18, 2019). The other country that also affects India–Sri Lanka relations is Pakistan. An interviewee, sharing their personal viewpoint, suggested that India should make use of the relationship that Sri Lanka has with these two countries, and get things done that benefits itself (Elite interview SL 6, 2019). Sri Lanka has understandably used the ‘China card’ to its benefit in dealings with India (Manoharan and Chakravarty, 2016; Wagner, 2016, p. 317).

The effects of all the above-mentioned factors can be traced in the development assistance policy and programme of India in Sri Lanka. While referring to various examples of how sensitive India is to China’s presence (specifically) in the northern region, several interviewees cited one particular example: China wanted to provide concessional loans to Sri Lanka for about 40,000 prefabricated houses in the Northern Province, where people affected by the Civil War still

did not have proper housing facilities.⁶⁴ Upon getting this information, the IHC spoke to the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka and prevented the implementation of the project. These prefabricated houses may have had some design flaws and other problems, as shared by the interviewees, but the fact that India got involved in this internal matter is an important point to be highlighted. One interviewee, sharing their opinion on the situation, said that India did not realise that China can control the entire Indian Ocean, as they have access to ports, but it got worried about a few houses being built by the Chinese.

A common perception, especially of those who have not directly dealt with India's aid programme, or have dealt with it some years ago, were that India's assistance in Sri Lanka is primarily bilateral and is similar to China's — both countries look at how investing in Sri Lanka can benefit them. Some interviewees also felt that India has a right over the northern region, that it must ensure its security policy accordingly, and that as most superpowers (including China, the US, and Japan) are interfering, it is justified for India to act similarly. Further, the widespread perception of those interviewed is that all countries that provide development assistance do it with some motive or other; when India provides support, one of its driving forces is to maintain peace in the Northern Province, which serves the common interest of both countries.

5.3.2 'Big brother' identity

This identity of the country has been attributed to it in the context of India being a hegemonic state. However, India is considered a big brother in Sri Lanka also because the country has cultural and historical relations with other South Asian countries, and hence is obliged to assist in their development (Devasher Surie, 2015; Elite interview SL 13, 2019). The relationship between the two states has been shaped by ethnic, historical, cultural, and geographical factors. Sri Lanka and India have long shared cultural and social affinities, and this relationship has not been an easy one. This relationship is complex, compared to the China–Sri

⁶⁴ 'Sri Lanka reverses China's Jaffna housing contract and awards deal to India' (<https://www.tamilguardian.com/content/sri-lanka-reverses-china%E2%80%99s-jaffna-housing-contract-and-awards-deal-india>)

Lanka relationship, which is considered a model relationship between a small and a big state (Wagner, 2016; Elite interview SL 4, 2019).

What have stood the test of time are the extremely devoted relations between the Tamil populations in these two countries, even though most community members on either side of the border have not met each other. This holds true for both Tamil communities — Sri Lankan and Indian-origin — in Sri Lanka. This comradeship led ‘to a spillover of the internal conflict in Sri Lanka into Tamil Nadu’ (Wedagedara, 2013, p. 65; Menon, 2016, pp. 82–104). This continuing mutual feeling of oneness, which is frequently highlighted and actively encouraged by leaders in both countries, benefits the Sri Lankan and Indian origin Tamil communities and the Indian state. Some of the Sri Lankan Tamil people, interviewed for this thesis, feel that the Indian state and their fellow Tamil people in India will help and protect them when needed; one of the interviewees said that Tamil people in Sri Lanka trust India more than the local Tamil politicians. They added that since India supported the Sri Lankan government during the war, it should now support the Tamil population (Manoharan and Chakravarty, 2016; Elite interview SL 17, 2019). This gives the Indian state a support base within Sri Lankan territory, where other states such as China are a threat to the ‘big brother’ position India holds.

India has particularly been the voice of the Tamil people. A delegation of leaders from Tamil Nadu had visited war-torn areas in Sri Lanka in 2009 to see the development work being undertaken (MEA, GoI, 2009e). As part of the interview for this research, Amb (Retd.) Mathai (2020), sharing his views on India’s involvement with the Sri Lankan Tamil community, noted, “In Sri Lanka, India supported the reconciliation process; supporting the Tamil population was important for our policy because we had to take account of strongly held sentiments in India, particularly, but not only, in Tamil Nadu.” Alongside national politics, Tamil leaders in Sri Lanka have used the Dravidian parties⁶⁵ for pushing the Indian central government to take up issues of the Sri Lankan

⁶⁵Dravidian parties are regional Indian political parties based in the state of Tamil Nadu.

Tamil population. In the past few years, with Tamil leaders such as M Karunanidhi and Jayalalitha gone, and with BJP's majority in the central government, the influence of Tamil Nadu politics on India's foreign policy has reduced (Rao, 1988; Elite interview SL 11, 2019). Despite the overall volatile political relations between the two countries, a Tamil leader felt that India was needed for political solutions in Sri Lanka (Elite interview SL 12, 2019) — an opinion that leaders from other ethnic communities might not share.

A few interviewees (including implementing partners' representatives and policymakers) held the view that India must be respected for the support it provided. The country came in during the early stages (soon after the conflict officially ended) to provide housing support. India, being the 'big brother', reached out to Sri Lanka right after the war. It gives support for owner-driven and community-driven housing projects all over the country. Of these projects, the biggest and the most crucial one was support to 46,000 houses in the Northern Province and Eastern Province. The second-largest project is currently being implemented, which is the construction of 14,000 houses in the Central Province⁶⁶ for tea plantation workers, who are mostly Indian-origin Tamil. When Sri Lanka needed, India provided that funding, shared an interviewee (Elite interview SL 4, 2019). For Sri Lanka, 50,000 houses was a considerable number. India's support for developing post-war zones, especially in the Northern Province, helps it fulfil its enlightened self-interest. For India, 'genuine reconciliation between all the communities in Sri Lanka inclusive of the Tamil-speaking minority' is important. Sri Lanka needed help after the war, and India came in to help in rebuilding the country; this was initiated because Mahinda Rajapaksa's government asked for support. According to the Indian narrative, India has been generous. It has helped Sri Lanka, and in the long run, it is vital for both countries not to have ethnic tensions in Sri Lanka (MEA, GoI, 2010b).

On the other hand, the politically dominant Sinhala community — even though they have Indian origins, and travel to various Buddhist pilgrimage places in

⁶⁶Also referred to as hill country, upcountry, and plantation area.

India in significant numbers — feel that India is a threat to the Sri Lankan state and will take over the country (V Suryanarayan, 2015). One view shared by a Sinhala officer was that India behaves like the British — it divides the people of the north and south in Sri Lanka (Elite interview SL 14, 2019). This aversion towards the Indian state has been paid attention to in recent times. To appease the Sinhala community, the Indian government has started supporting projects in Sinhala-majority areas. For example, in 2019 India was supporting over 20 SDPs. These projects with the housing ministry included 153 houses in the Anuradhapura area, implemented by the office of the Parliament Speaker. The Speaker reportedly asked for this housing project in a village, which he had adopted. This village was taken care of by a Buddhist monk earlier. Other similar projects in Sinhala communities include: 600 housing units in 25 districts, with Sri Lankan Rupee (LKR) 5 lakh each for 24 houses in each district; LKR 300 million for 600 houses in the Southern Province; 600 houses in the Northern Province; and 600 houses spread across the country. Another project that India is supporting now is the construction of model villages of 24 houses each, in each of the 25 districts of Sri Lanka, totalling 600 houses. An interviewee shared that these small housing projects by the Indian government in Sinhala-dominated regions were not taken well at first by the local population, but once the then Sri Lankan housing minister (Sajith Premadasa) spoke to the community, they agreed to allow the implementation work (Elite interview SL 16, 2019). These country-wide community-based projects are attempts to showcase India as a friendly helpful neighbour to all the communities, and in particular, to the Sinhala community. One of the other country-wide projects that India has supported is the Emergency Ambulance Service, which has won some more goodwill, especially after the 2020 COVID outbreak (*DD News*, 2018; Srinivasan, 2021).

5.3.3 Emerging global player and a donor state

India, as an emerging global actor, plays an important role in the Indian Ocean region. It is also Sri Lanka's second-largest trading partner, and more recently, as part of the SAARC platform, has provided foreign exchange reserves to Sri Lanka (PTI, 2020).

India claims that its aid policy and programme for Sri Lanka have developed based on its own experience as a recipient state; it has also been influenced by other Asian donors such as China, Japan, and South Korea. Comparable to the aid programmes of these countries, India looks for a ‘win-win’ situation through its development programme, as described in the previous chapter. The components of its aid or what it defines as development aid are also similar to these donor states in Sri Lanka (Mawdsley, Kim and Marcondes, 2017, p. 2).

The impression about projects financed by India in the past is that they were not tangible — the projects that are supported now have more visibility. Projects now focus a lot on infrastructure development (for example, for railways, ambulance services, housing), unlike earlier support, which concentrated on cultural and education sectors. However, Indian projects involve the local communities in project implementation, as opposed to Chinese projects. India most often supports projects in rural areas. With regard to the small development grants, where local communities are involved, the IHC provides small grants of LKR 3 million, and India supports multiple projects in conjunction with different departments or ministries. India used to provide just LKR 3 million for most of these grants because projects of this amount (or below) didn’t have to be cleared with New Delhi and could be approved at the Colombo level, which made it easier and faster for IHC to take decisions on smaller aid projects (Elite Interview 2, India, 2019). However, in the months leading up to the fieldwork for this thesis, even these projects started to be approved at the New Delhi level, making things slower (Elite Interview 4, India, 2019). India's advantage in such projects is that with low costs, it gets more visibility and credit, even though the Sri Lankan government provides for certain additional funding in some cases. This arrangement also helps the political parties and leaders in power at the time since they get credit for new projects as well.

To emphasise how India’s projects are more visible now than before and highlighting the various kinds of aid that are being provided by the country, one of the interviewees had to say that, “One of the things that IHC offers, and I have

heard with my own ears, is that apart from these large-scale infrastructures, big amounts of money being given for grants, there is always that soft side of things, where GoI has always said, particularly the government sector, send your people, we will train them. I think comparatively, it is cheaper to go to India and study and learn; our government officials, public officials can gain a lot. I think we have taken advantage of that. Then, of course, there are a lot of educational opportunities for Sri Lankan students, there has been a lot of Indian interest here also, both from the private sector and business sector — lots of doctors are working here. We also have Indian labour here. That is what I am saying; the visible engagement is far greater than what we have seen in the past” (Elite interview SL 6, 2019).

One of the interviewees was critical of India’s projects; they stated that these projects were not managed well. For example, the Jaffna Cultural Centre, built with India's support, does not fit in with its environs from an architectural perspective. The structure was just built and handed over to the municipal authorities, who didn’t know what to do with it. Similarly, a water tank project in the Northern Province was reportedly not being implemented well. It could not take off because of a shortage of sand, which has been handled now. “India has to up its game. It does not deliver”, another interviewee said, and cited the example of Trincomalee harbour, where India was asked to help develop a port in July 2018, but not much progress had been made since then (Elite interview SL 9, 2019; Elite interview SL 13, 2019). Concerning LoCs, the over-all understanding of some interviewees working in a key department in the Sri Lankan government was that India gives support with very favourable aid conditions. However, this view was not shared by some in another department. The officials in the second department felt that like China’s, almost 75–85% of India’s loans go back to India, and the country asks for its own companies and materials to be used.

Reputation and self-affirmation (as a global player) are other reasons why India provides assistance in Sri Lanka, according to some of the elite interviewees. It reaches out promptly during disasters to get noticed and hit the headlines, they

shared. At present, India's assistance, including humanitarian aid, is provided to the Sri Lankan state. Highlighting the strategic motive of achieving political gain through aid, one of the interviewees felt that India should also give assistance for humanitarian needs and disasters through experienced agencies working in these sectors. The country also reaches out directly to those affected and provides aid during disasters, said another interviewee, for example, during the 2017 floods. It is felt that such gestures were carried out only to gain attention. Assistance given during these times is not based on the needs of the people, and works are undertaken on an ad hoc basis, according to the same interviewee. There are delays and disorganised execution when it comes to actual implementation, especially because they work in coordination with the recipient government (*The Hindu*, 2017; Elite interview SL 20, 2019).

The feeling amongst some in the elite policy community in Sri Lanka is that India does not have a pre-established development partnership policy. According to them it is very sporadic, and the possible reason behind that, is because India takes decisions based on what China is doing in Sri Lanka. These observations by the interviewees, whether highlighting what is unique to India, comparing it with other donors, being critical of its aid policy and programme, wanting it to play a more important role through its development support indicates how the country is viewed as a global player and an emerging donors.

As an emerging global player, provider of development assistance, and a regional power some of India's activities around its development partnership in Sri Lanka points at India's macro-level geostrategic and political interests. The examples to support this, as described earlier, have included: the selection of specific areas for aid giving by IHC is influenced by the local political leaders who are close to India; the country provides scholarships to the children of some Sri Lankan political leaders; and that India does not like it when other countries support Sri Lanka, especially in the northern part of the country.

Moving forward from the elite level analysis in Sri Lanka, after establishing how interviewees at this level view India's development assistance, and how India

operates as assistance provider in the Sri Lankan context, the second part of the chapter, in the following section examines how the beneficiary community of an Indian supported project view India as a development partner, and how they perceive the assistance it provided post-Civil War.

5.4 Caring for transborder ethnic kin with housing as a ‘gift’: the Indian Housing Project

‘Gift from the people of India’ was written on a package that was handed to a Sri Lankan beneficiary by Ms Nirupama Menon Rao, a former foreign secretary of India. A document, which had this photo of Ms Rao, used the word ‘gift’ seven times in the context of India giving ‘gifts’ to various beneficiaries in Sri Lanka. Likewise, a speech in the Lok Sabha by a former minister of external affairs referred to the various kinds of support India provided — to restart agricultural activities in the Northern Province of Sri Lanka — as a ‘gift’ (MEA, GoI, 2011e; High Commission of India, Colombo, 2014). These events happened around the same time when support for the IHP began. This gives an understanding of how India viewed the assistance (including the IHP) it was providing, and how this can establish giver-receiver relationships between the Indian state and recipients in Sri Lanka.

Eyben (2006, p. 90) views gift as a ‘material expression of a social relationship’. Applying this understanding to India’s grant support to Sri Lanka, this part of the chapter looks at how the Indian Housing Project can be seen as a ‘gift’ from India to the Sri Lankan people, contributing to the strengthening of social, political, and geo-strategic ties shared by both countries. The motive behind the initial support under the IHP was to uplift the lives of those affected by the Civil War. Its gift aspect — the giver providing rehabilitation and resettlement support for altruistic reasons — makes this project suitable for examining using gift theory. Further, this grant, in the first three phases, has involved multiple actors and has been complex in many ways, especially in a post-war state. Therefore, gift theory helps understand dynamic relations, and allows description of how ‘gift’ and ‘return gift’ work in the context of this particular bilateral grant.

In the subsequent sections, the objective is to give an overview of the IHP, the implementation process, followed by a description of the actors involved in this project, their role in emphasising the gift aspect, and how returns on this gift occur at the community level.

5.4.1 Situating the IHP, one of India's prestige projects

One of the key Indian foreign policy understandings is that development in the neighbourhood contributes to India's own growth. Thus, as a neighbouring state which is considered as an important player in the region, India has been providing humanitarian aid and grants for relief, reconstruction, and rebuilding to address the needs of IDPs and the Sri Lankan government. From 2009 to 2014, the amount of aid to Sri Lanka was approximately USD 208.31 million. GoI policy towards Sri Lanka committed to fund projects that would advance the lives of communities in the Northern Province after the Civil War. The Sri Lankan government had charted out a 180-day plan in May 2009 to settle the majority of IDPs, and the Indian government, through its development assistance, contributed to the Sri Lankan government's efforts. During the Civil War and soon after it ended in May 2009, GoI provided essentials such as food, medicines, materials for temporary housing, 10,000 bicycles for students, 500 tractors, motorboats for fishing, agricultural equipment, seeds, and support for infrastructure development — of railways, ports, schools, and hospitals and so on in areas affected by the war. The Indian government also helped in determining the areas where the projects were to be implemented, and most of these areas were cut off after the war (MEA, GoI, 2009c, 2009b, 2012c, 2013d; High Commission of India, Colombo, 2014; Elite Interview 6, India, 2020).

The IHP — 50,000 houses given to community members in Sri Lanka post-war — is one of the biggest and most extended grants that India has ever provided to any country. The Indian government called it a flagship project, and 'an enduring symbol of India–Sri Lanka partnership'. The initial budget for this grant was USD 270 million. The implementation of the project started after discussions with then Sri Lankan President M Rajapaksa and then Indian PM Dr Manmohan

Singh in 2009. The agreement was signed by the two foreign ministers — S M Krishna from GoI and Prof G L Peiris representing GoSL — on 17 January 2012. The timeline for the project was 2012 to 2015 with the objective of providing housing to (mostly Tamil) families affected by the Civil War. Project implementation was divided into phases, starting with the construction of 1,000 houses under a pilot project for over USD 10 million. This began in November 2010, before the signing of the MoU in 2012. Learnings from the pilot project were taken note of, and changes were incorporated in the subsequent phases of the project (MEA, GoI, 2010f, 2011e, 2012g, 2013e, 2013d; Shanbog, 2021).

For the GoI, the most important goal for this project, like other projects supported by India in post-war zones, was ‘to ensure the welfare and wellbeing of Sri Lankan Tamils, including IDPs, and to assist in the development of Northern Sri Lanka’ (MEA, GoI, 2011e). The second phase of this project began in 2012 with 45,000 houses in the Northern Province and Eastern Province; the third phase of 4000 houses, based on a community-driven model in the Central Province, is currently being implemented. This chapter mostly reflects on the second phase, while integrating available information from and analysis of the third phase where relevant (MEA, GoI, 2012e; High Commission of India, Colombo, nd).

5.4.2 Aid actors and the process followed

Interpreting David Sogge’s analysis of aid chains, Silk (2004, p. 235) describes them as ‘systems of power’. In the absence of a regular interaction between India with most of the beneficiaries, mapping the implementation process and aid chain relations of the project is important. This exercise helps in identifying aid brokers and other aid actors, along with their entry points, on the recipient side (Korf *et al.*, 2010). Gift theory recognises that actors in this chain play a crucial role in communicating the donors’ motivation. Even in the case of altruistic motives, these actors contribute to fortifying the donor’s position. Until current global aid practices and relations are changed, particularly in the context of bilateral aid, the position of donors will remain the same (Silk, 2004, p. 235). Therefore, examining who these intermediary actors are (between GoI and the

project beneficiaries), and their roles, will provide an in-depth understanding of how India works while implementing its programmes. The vital role these actors have played, and how they have contributed to reinforcing India's identity and the gift aspect in beneficiary communities, is examined in the latter part of the chapter.

Subsequent to the changes made after the pilot project, where the IHC decided to go with an owner-driven model for implementing the project, the High Commission requested agencies based in Sri Lanka to send in their applications. Of 72 applications received, 10-12 were shortlisted for presentations, and four organisations were asked to take on the implementation work.⁶⁷ It is from here that the head-office staffs of the implementing agencies started playing a role. The IHC and IAs then mapped out the areas for project implementation; following this 12 model house designs were finalised for beneficiaries to choose from (Elite Interview 9, India, 2020). The IAs undertook the selection of villages and beneficiaries with the help of local governments (on behalf of the Sri Lankan government) at the village level (mostly with the help of *grama niladhari* — village officer). This marks the entry of the second and third sets of actors: the local staff of the IAs and local government officials. The next steps for local staff of the IAs included assisting beneficiaries in securing land and related papers in their names (in cases where they did already not have it), opening of bank accounts for those who did not have an account, submitting a detailed file on each beneficiary, facilitating design, purchasing of material, building of the house, providing technical help, and ensuring timely implementation of the project. Each of the five instalments of funding for building these houses were directly transferred from the IHC's bank account in Colombo to the beneficiaries' accounts once each stage of the construction was approved by the IA staff and then IHC staff. Administrative and running costs of the IAs were directly bank transferred by the IHC again, which thus maintained direct control of all the project funds it was providing to Sri Lanka (Elite Interview 4, India,

⁶⁷The Implementing Agencies (IAs) are UN-HABITAT, International Federation of Red Cross & Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) in partnership with Sri Lanka Red Cross (SLRC), National Housing Development Agency of the Government of Sri Lanka, and Habitat for Humanity Sri Lanka.

2019, p. 4; Elite Interview 9, India, 2020; UN-Habitat Sri Lanka, nd). Some houses, in various project areas, were inaugurated by dignitaries from India and Sri Lanka, including Indian PM Modi, the former external affairs minister of India, the former Sri Lankan housing minister, and the former minister for economic development. This set of Sri Lankan actors are the fourth set of actors in this process (High Commission of India, Colombo, 2014; MEA, GoI, 2015c).

As a development partner of the Sri Lankan government, India was largely in command of project implementation. As the project was meant to supplement the work that the GoSL was going to undertake for the development of the post-conflict region, India had communicated that the country and its people ‘will stand shoulder to shoulder’ with the Sri Lankan people, especially communities in the Northern Province. A retired senior diplomat shared that they would have a review meeting every week because the situation was very difficult, and people had to be encouraged to move out of the camps to where they lived before the war. Immediate relief and rehabilitation had to be provided to about 300,000 IDPs — most of them had lost everything due to the war. Humanitarian support had to be delivered to them, following which reconstruction work had to be undertaken. Another official mentioned how a very senior Sri Lankan leader was in constant touch with them to get updates on the progress of the projects that India was undertaking (MEA, GoI, 2009e, 2010e, 2012f; Elite Interview 6, India, 2020; Elite Interview 9, India, 2020). These examples — of how involved India was in Sri Lanka’s post-Civil War rebuilding process — help in understanding the discussions that follow.

Paragi (2017, p. 319) emphasises that ‘reciprocity in gift relations, however, influences social cohesion and identity’ — thus it affects not just giver and receiver, but also their communities. In the case of this project, the IAs, local government bodies, and political leaders, because of their positions, played an active role in projecting the grant as a gift, and themselves as gift-givers, along with India. In addition, they also became givers of some form of return gifts to the donor, i.e. India, along with the beneficiary communities (Bachmann, 2017).

5.4.3 The ‘gift’ and ‘return gift’ through the IHP

‘Mauss (idem) believed that the gift relation was basically made up of three different kinds of obligations: to give, to receive and to reciprocate’, states Silva (2008, p. 6). This section looks at how these three aspects played out in the case of the IHP and how these shape the relationship between the two countries.

At the macro-level — from wanting to help a close neighbour who has just seen the end of a three-decade-long Civil War (altruistic), to wanting closer relations with the country, either for stability in the region, or to play the role of regional power and/or ‘big brother’ and support the country (self-enlightened and strategic) — there could be several plausible reasons that might have led to India’s decision to provide such a huge grant of USD 270 million. This commitment, made at the time of the meeting between Dr Singh and President Rajapaksa (and their respective delegations) in 2009, if viewed from the community perspective, could also have been to support the Indian Tamil community’s transborder ethnic kin in Sri Lanka (High Commission of India, Colombo, 2014; Elite Interview 6, India, 2020).

This ‘gift’ from India to Sri Lanka is categorised as an ‘obligatory’ gift in this thesis. According to Silk (2004, p. 232), an obligatory gift is a form of giving ‘within the framework of institutions, values and social forces underpinned by specific relationships of politics and power’. In a speech by India’s External Affairs Minister during the early years of the IHP, he stated, ‘I had the opportunity to interact with the political leaders in that country across the spectrum. There was consensus on the increased Indian role in assisting the economic reconstruction and development of Sri Lanka, especially in the health, education, housing and infrastructure development sectors’ (MEA, GoI, 2012a). Drawing from this, an implication of acknowledging that India’s contribution is needed for Sri Lanka’s development by various Sri Lankan governments, and further, requesting for and receiving support to build houses, is that the Sri Lankan government has identified India as a donor. Even if India thinks of Sri Lanka as an equal partner, calls its aid programmes a development partnership, and provides support using the SSDC principles, domination exists (including

symbolic domination), also because of its status in the region and globally. This classification of India by Sri Lanka has an impact on the perceptions not just of the elite community, as discussed in the earlier chapters, but also of project beneficiaries. In the case of the IHP, most beneficiaries are Tamil, and already have a strong ethnic and cultural relationship with India and its Tamil population. The giver, helper, and 'big brother' identities become more prominent for India, thus underscoring the obligatory gift aspects described by Six.

‘Gift relations and their economy of obligations and reciprocity are not confined therefore to the relationship between northern donors and southern receivers, but are constituted by far more complex chain of relations, rituals, and practices that equally play into domestic patterns of patronage and victimisation’ (Korf *et al.*, 2010, p. S62). In view of this, looking at the meso-level i.e., the project implementation level, diverse aid actors play various roles in each of the project stages in promoting the ‘gift’ angle. Each of these actors in the aid giving process contributes to furthering gift giving and return gift giving. This is explored in the following sections.

Indian representatives as donors

Beneficiary selection, an important part of the project implementation process, brings out a crucial aspect of gift giving in foreign aid. The implementing organisations selected the beneficiaries based on a set of criteria agreed upon by the IHC, the Sri Lankan government, and partner implementing agencies. As the housing project was implemented in Civil War-affected, Tamil-majority areas, most beneficiaries of the pilot and first phase were also Tamil. IAs would have town hall meetings with beneficiaries to make sure that beneficiary names were displayed at the community level. If someone had issues with the selection process, they could approach the IAs. Even though beneficiary selection was based on a set of criteria with a publicly disclosed point system, assessed by the IPs and IHC, aid actors could decide to whom this ‘gift’ was given, and others in the community would not have any rights if their name did not end up on the list (Eyben, 2006, p. 90; Elite Interview 4, India, 2020; Elite Interview 6, India, 2020).

Transfers of money into beneficiaries' accounts gave India immense visibility in the project areas. This exercise of direct transfers is not standard practice for bilateral aid and is unique to India. IHC officials initiated this special arrangement for this project because they could not transfer large amounts to IAs, due to Indian MoF regulations (Elite Interview 6, India, 2020). This had an unexpected positive outcome, and India received additional attention amongst beneficiaries who were interviewed for this research. The interviewees mentioned that the transaction entries in their bank passbooks showed that the money was sent by the IHC from Colombo.

Tracking of project implementation is an important tool for ensuring that work is being carried out as planned, and in some cases, it also gives donors the opportunity to interact closely with implementing partners and beneficiary communities. To oversee the Indian Housing Project's progress, a set of people from the Indian High Commission would regularly visit the implementation areas. One of the interviewees, an IA staff member, compared IHC involvement in the project's implementation to making curry. The person said, "Other donors will taste the curry in the end, whereas India looks at every ingredient and checks if they are fine rather than having the curry at the end" (Elite interview SL 19, 2019). With an added advantage of making them aware of hurdles faced at the community level, the officials' presence in the project areas also bridged the gap between the donor state and the recipient community.

With the beneficiaries, India uses the inauguration or 'handing over' of the completed houses as an occasion to showcase itself as a country that cares for Tamil community in Sri Lanka. The Indian team that visits the community can most often speak Tamil, which helps connect directly with community members in Tamil-speaking regions, making these officials more accessible to beneficiaries than other donors in the country are. Additionally, the inauguration ceremonies are mostly attended by senior Indian leaders or representatives — the extra 'special gestures' such as senior Indian leaders, most often with Sri Lankan leaders visiting the local areas, have supplemented the other efforts by

India to portray itself as a well-wisher of the Tamil community. In 2012, a twelve-member delegation of senior opposition leaders from India visited project sites in five districts (three in the Northern Province), and in some cases handed over completed houses to beneficiaries during ceremonies organised by IHC and GoSL (MEA, GoI, 2013e; Shanbog, 2020b).

As a donor state, India highlights its commonalities and long-term relations with Sri Lanka and its people; this is unique to India among the various donors present in Sri Lanka. This objective of wanting communities to see India differently, and recognise it as a close ally that provides for the Tamil population (transborder ethnic connection), is something similar to the approach, using the SSDC angle, that China and India have in African states, which is focussed on fraternal connections (Mawdsley, 2012a, pp. 155–156).

Implementing Agencies as intermediaries

IA staff members involved in project implementation were the most important actors in the aid chain. These members of the implementation agencies' team gave details of the project, possibly shared reasons why India was extending this support, and provided technical support for the building of the houses. Therefore, as 'representatives' of the India-supported project, their involvement with beneficiaries impacted their perceptions of India and the 'help' it provided.

Like most donors in the world, India has certain expectations from aid recipients, and wants its support to be known among at least two sets of people in Sri Lanka — community members and policymakers. Aside from the donor's expectations and desires, the implementing agencies and other stakeholders have shown a keen interest in keeping India happy and have found their own ways to ensure that the country gets noticed for its contribution. Some of the initiatives they took 'on their own' reemphasised the support being a 'gift' and India being the 'donor'.

For example, in housing projects there is a standard format for plaques and banners, which is followed by India's implementing partners when officially inaugurating houses. This format has the India–Sri Lanka friendship logo, Sri Lanka's country logo, India's emblem, and the implementing partner's logo. Officials at IHC stated in their interviews that they don't have or like to have such ceremonies, but their reports and stated expectations (in the project documents or during meetings) from the IAs tell otherwise (Elite interview SL 1, 2019; Elite interview SL 17, 2019; Elite interview SL 19, 2019; Elite Interview 4, India, 2020). In addition to this common practice amongst IAs, some IAs have also come up with their own ceremonies and methods, such as getting the tricolour (Indian flag colours) painted on houses built with Indian support; putting plaques on the houses; and hoisting of the Indian flag and singing of the Indian national anthem during inaugurations. As IAs depend on donors like India to sustain themselves, this can be construed as a way for them to show their 'gratitude' in this non-symmetric relationship. Some of the IAs provided a file (field logbook) to each of the beneficiaries, who mostly knew where the money was coming from, and these files were used to keep records of the house they were building.

Reporting and documentation systems that involve documents that capture beneficiaries' stories can be considered reciprocal gifts. India's reporting system and monitoring mechanisms have been simple, and the High Commission gives its implementing partners flexibility. The monitoring of projects is mostly based on the amount spent but reports also have to contain details of other qualitative aspects. However, IAs such as UN-Habitat and IFRC developed their own qualitative reports and videos⁶⁸, which have stories of the beneficiaries, and beneficiaries' experiences on how the project helped them. These materials, which contain information on the beneficiaries and their journeys towards owning houses, showcase India as a benevolent state. These reports are later used by these IAs to apply for other funding, and as proof of the work they have done (as is the common practice in case with other donors too); this brings more notice

⁶⁸ <https://unhabitat.lk/projects/past-projects/indian-housing-project/>

to the work India has supported (Paragi, 2017, p. 324; UN-Habitat Sri Lanka, nd).

Local government officials as information providers

The IAs worked closely with district-level and village-level government officials to identify prospective villages and beneficiaries to support in these villages, in some cases. Their role involved providing information on who is eligible for this support and how to apply for it; and similar to what the IAs did, sharing the intentions behind providing these houses were also communicated by them. Most of the officials being Tamil — and in most cases, friendly towards India, especially in the Northern Province — possibly influenced how messages, such as who was providing assistance for the houses, were communicated. For example, some beneficiaries said that the local authorities shared information on the source of support with them during the initial meetings.

Sri Lankan political elite as patrons

Korf *et al.* (2010) use three case studies in their article on humanitarian aid provided after the tsunami in Sri Lanka in 2005, to discuss how using the support provided by other countries and organisations became an easy way for politicians to ask for return gifts from beneficiaries. Similarly, in the case of the IHP, there have been political actors who have played a role in getting houses allocated to people in their constituencies who were affected by the war, even though the mapping of beneficiary villages was undertaken by the IAs along with the local authorities, based on data of IDPs and affected villages. On the other hand, some officials shared that political leaders did approach the IHC, but the norms and procedures, including beneficiary selection, was so well defined that there was no space for political interference (Elite Interview 6, India, 2020).

Some political leaders benefit even if they do not have a direct role to play in the external assistance a country receives. A female beneficiary shared that she would vote for Sajith Premadasa, the former Minister of Housing, Construction

and Cultural Affairs, who was a presidential candidate⁶⁹ in the 2020 elections. According to her, he had provided her with the house (which was actually India-supported), hence she wanted to support him. The beneficiaries feel that by supporting political leaders (who might have had a role in getting them the benefit), they are paying back for the help they received from India, and this is their way of showing how grateful they are. However, it is important to note that this could be because of how various actors make this project (IHP) support seem like a gift from all of them as a collective, and not from the state, which should be providing for its citizens' basic needs.

The involvement of Sri Lankan politicians must be managed diplomatically — maintaining cordial relationships with them is important for India, as some leaders may play important roles in Sri Lankan politics in the future, shared some interviewees. Even though Sri Lanka claims to be non-aligned, political leaders, like anyone else, can be biased against or towards India, and having good relations with these leaders might earn India goodwill (a return gift) in the long-term.

The four broad sets of actors discussed above play a key role in shaping how local communities think about Indian support that has been discussed in detail in the subsequent section.

5.4.4 'Gift' from transborder ethnic kin — perceptions of beneficiaries

A brief background on the beneficiaries

Most beneficiaries of this project, especially in the southern part of the Northern Province, had been displaced in the Civil War. In Jaffna (northern districts of the Northern Province) and Batticaloa (in Eastern Province) people continued living in their areas, and in some cases near Sri Lankan army camps or former LTTE bases. In 10 out of the 11 villages visited by the researcher, people had resettled in the same areas that they were living in before the war. The beneficiaries of the

⁶⁹ His candidature was announced around the same time as the field visit in 2019.

second phase of this project were predominantly Sri Lankan Tamil, followed by Muslim (Sri Lankan Moors), and then Sinhalese⁷⁰. As the Sinhalese beneficiaries were very low number in the second phase of the project, the researcher did not come across any beneficiary from this ethnic group during the field visit research.

Few families (less than five of the 45) encountered during field research had not heard of India, several families interviewed understood that India had provided them with aid packets while they were in camps, during which they had heard of India wanting to help the Tamil community in Sri Lanka.⁷¹ A small number had seen Indian Peace Keeping Force personnel in their villages, and that was their first interface with India (its representatives). Nearly 90% of those encountered knew that India had supported the building of their houses, either heard it from the IAs staff or village officials.

Strengthening the transborder ethnic bond narrative

It was common knowledge amongst most of them that India had its own Tamil population, although they might not have been aware of Indian-origin Tamil people in Sri Lanka. A female beneficiary interviewed in the Northern Province said that Tamil people on the other side (in India) wanted to help, and that's why India gave support to Tamil people in Sri Lanka. During project implementation in Tamil-dominated areas, India did not face the same challenges as it had while implementing similar housing projects in Sinhala-dominated areas. As mentioned earlier, these projects were implemented after some pacification of the local communities by a minister (Elite interview SL 3, 2019). Project implementation in Tamil dominated areas was smoother because of the perceived (by the beneficiaries) homogeneity between India and the Tamil beneficiaries in the Northern Province and Eastern Province, as 'dramatic global confrontation' does not really occur when the donor and the recipients have

⁷⁰Sinhalese people are an Indo-Aryan ethnic community and form about 75% of the Sri Lankan population.

⁷¹India provided 80,000 family packs with food and medicines, given by the Tamil Nadu state government and the central government to those in camps in February 2009. The Civil War ended that year on 18th May (MEA, GoI, 2009a).

commonalities — in this case, the Indian Tamil as the transborder ethnic kin of the Sri Lankan Tamils (Bachmann, 2017, p. 17).

According to the community members interviewed, solidarity, care, and protection for the Tamil population in Sri Lanka are important to India and its Tamil population. When asked why they thought India provided these houses, most interviewees' responses pointed towards these reasons — common ethnic population between the two countries, hence the gift from the Tamil (“our”) people from that side of the border, because the Sri Lankan Tamil community had suffered immensely during the Civil War; the common problems between the two countries help India understand the problems of Sri Lanka, and therefore, it extends development supports. A male beneficiary said that when they talk about India now, the house built with Indian support comes to his mind, whereas earlier, issues such as displacement and refugees would come up. This is one form of return gift for India, which it might not have anticipated receiving when the project was planned. Other return gifts from some of the beneficiaries were also non-material in form, such as ‘praying to seek blessings’ for those who provided the house.

It is important to understand that there is diversity in this homogeneous Tamil society. The closeness shown towards India in the Northern Province was different to the case in the Eastern Province; this could be because the Eastern Province is geographically and culturally further from India than the Northern Province is. This could also possibly be because of the different actors in the aid chain for the Eastern Province, since IAs and local governments have played a vital role in bridging the gap between the donor and recipients. What was unique to this province was that a lot of girls are getting houses from their parents after marriage. The matrilocal society here expects daughters and sons-in-law to stay with parents (Jayatilaka and Amirthalingam, 2015). Parents handed over India-supported houses to their daughter and lived in either another brick house or a tin house in the same area. This contribution of India's, where it lightened the burden of parents by providing a house for at least one daughter — thus upholding Tamil cultural practices — was seen in a positive light.

Transforming negative reciprocity into a positive return gift

Reciprocity can take many forms. One of them is positive sentiments towards India among Tamil communities in Sri Lanka. This, despite India supporting the Sri Lankan army during the last years of the Civil War — many LTTE members were killed when the Sri Lankan army captured LTTE areas. When asked why they thought India supported them by building houses, a beneficiary shared that India gave weapons to Sri Lanka and gave houses, food, and temporary shelter to people. The person added that the Sri Lankan government is ready to kill people in the Northern Province, and that the person understands that both these countries share government-to-government relations. However, the Indian government should facilitate peace talks instead of providing weapons to the Sri Lankan state. There was anger towards India, and they were sceptical of what India was doing in the villages, said one of the MEA officials who was present in the beneficiary areas when this project was being implemented. Providing housing to the families, war widows, and IDPs has definitely contributed to a change in the way India is seen at present, shared some of the interviewees. An official shared that it was important to reduce the Sri Lankan Tamil community's ill will towards India — while the country had managed to do that with most of the northern population, it still had to be conveyed to some people that India is there to help the Tamils (Elite Interview 5, India, 2019; Elite Interview 9, India, 2020).

Acknowledging India's hierarchical position

In terms of outcomes, although India has been criticised for delaying project implementation, the IHP in the first few years was implemented within a reasonable timeline. The outcome of this project, as per beneficiaries, was that they now had safe shelters to stay in. Having brick-finished houses helped IDPs and those whose houses were destroyed during the war to settle down in safely built homes. However, there have been other problems that the project beneficiaries have faced. The majority of those interviewed in both the provinces have spent extra money on completing their houses, either by taking loans or with financial support from relatives who live abroad. Most beneficiaries built

large houses (by adding more rooms, compared to the basic house designs provided by India) or used materials they felt were more suitable to local weather conditions. Some beneficiaries and IAs also shared that the amount given was not enough to build the houses, because of increased prices of materials and an increase in demand for them when a large number of houses were being constructed. While the plan to get houses built by local or foreign contractors had to be discarded in the second phase because of the problems faced in the pilot project, this owner-driven model, where beneficiaries took responsibility to build their own houses, has not been easy on them. It has been difficult particularly on single women, who have to bear this burden mostly by themselves and repay these loans (to this day). One of the single women beneficiaries shared that she had problems with getting a water connection, and masons were all busy working on other IHP houses. She used to get the work done at nights because masons were available then. She added that she used to cry when technical officers pressurised her to build the house as per their timeline. Similar experiences were shared by many other women beneficiaries. Yet, these beneficiaries felt grateful to India for providing the houses, and to the technical teams (from the IAs) who guided them in getting the work done. Without the help of this technical guidance and financial assistance, beneficiaries felt that they would not have had such houses. Sharing their past experiences, some of them talked about their temporary houses getting flooded during monsoons, finding snakes in their houses, and risks to the safety of women when living in those houses. These houses were mostly made of clay with tin sheets on the roof. Some of the beneficiaries mentioned that they were living in army camps for IDPs set up in Vavuniya and Mannar districts. Taking loans, mortgaging jewels or going through difficult times in order to have a house was seen as a sacrifice that they had to make in return for the gift that was received from India (Satkunanathan, 2015).

Most of those interviewed believed that they needed that support from India, as Sri Lanka was not in a financial position to help. They added that Sri Lanka and they themselves had to become independent now. Local communities see the dependency of Sri Lanka on India (and other donors). This brings out the power

relations between the giver and the receiver. The beneficiaries understand and feel the ‘burden attached’ to this gift because of this relationship between the two countries (Paragi, 2017). In their understanding, India is helping them because of the war, to help poor people, and to help Tamil people, even though India has its own poor people. Some of the interviewees shared that they are thankful to India. Though they felt obliged as a result of getting support from another country and not their own country – they felt that since Sri Lanka needed help, and India was a neighbouring state which shared special political bond with theirs, it was acceptable to take help from it.

It is understandable that the beneficiaries thought of India as a country that is there to support them and protect them (more than Sri Lanka does, some thought), because of the narrative that Indian representatives have been pushing for a long time. Many speeches (at least 18, from 2009-2019) by various Indian leaders and representatives have repeatedly highlighted how the country will ensure the development of Tamil communities (including the Indian-origin, Sri Lankan Tamil community). Phrases like ‘shoulder to shoulder’, ‘rebuilding lives’ have been used by India to showcase its position vis-à-vis the Tamil people. Furthermore, India has been urging various Sri Lankan governments to devolve powers and let provincial bodies lead in local governance. India feels that by this, Tamil communities will have opportunities to ‘attain equality, justice, peace and dignity’ (MEA, GoI, 2013d, 2013e). India has also been asking Sri Lanka to look into the human rights violations that the Tamil population had to face during and soon after the conflict (MEA, GoI, 2012c). These aspects of India’s stand have influenced beneficiaries’ perceptions and experiences. The giver here conveys a certain set of narrative and identifies itself with the receivers. This is reciprocated by the beneficiary community and this section highlighted how these occur in the case studied.

Through this project, and other similar grants it provides in Sri Lanka, India has been able to reinforce its identity as the ‘big brother’ or the regional leader. However, from what policy documents and officials say, as discussed earlier, that was not the motive when it agreed to support Sri Lanka. But as the IHP (and

probably other grants) was being implemented, it became a tool to strengthen India's identity and build an alliance with those in power (such as Sri Lanka's political leaders), and also with community members.

Conclusion

Members of the elite community interviewed for this research are both appreciators and critics of India's assistance programme, depending on their experiences, perceptions, and background. Further, at the macro-level, the intricacies involved in aid giving and receiving, and India–Sri Lanka relations, contribute to how the elite community view India as a development partner. Most interviewees are aware of how all these factors shape India's image as a donor state in Sri Lanka.

In addition to external relations and individual experiences, the domestic situations in recipient countries also affect donors' images and aid giving. In Sri Lanka's case, there needs to be a better understanding of (and more research on) the differences between policies and project implementation in a complex post-war setting, where the project objectives are to provide post-conflict relief, rehabilitation, and reconstruction. India's advantage over other donors in Sri Lanka, be it China or northern donors, is that it understands the ethnic complexities, and the outcomes that development projects can have. Apart from these and other advantages, some of the practices of India as a donor, and its direct contact with Sri Lankan government departments, also benefit it in multiple ways. For example, having Sri Lankan officials regularly attend review meetings headed by the Indian High Commissioner in the Commission office bridges the distance that would otherwise exist between a donor and recipient-country officials. Most Sri Lankan officials who were interviewed mentioned how the person in charge of development assistance in the IHC communicates with them primarily on their mobile phones, reducing official boundaries through regular personal interactions.

At the local community level, India attempts to reinforce its donor identity in various ways. For example, by speaking Tamil during opening ceremonies or field visits, and by communicating its messages directly to Tamil-speaking Sri Lankans. Other ways India does this — directly, or indirectly through other actors — include using the Indian flag and its colours and providing files to beneficiaries with the India–Sri Lanka friendship logo on them. At the implementation level, India as a donor state is not very different from northern donors, and observes the broad steps as followed by the northern donors. The case here shows how it evokes the gift aspect, and how expectations of reciprocity are expressed in multiple ways. Some of these expectations are stated by Indian authorities; some are unstated, which the country nonetheless appreciates being fulfilled. What makes India different from other donors is its process of aid giving and in its interactions with the elite and beneficiary communities because of the commonalities and closeness. Its relations with the intermediary aid actors and beneficiaries are unique because of the reasons described in the earlier paragraphs.

The support for housing given to the communities in the two provinces visited has been seen as a gift from India by those interviewed. This has worked as a tool of soft power for India. This has also helped in gaining the country visibility and has increased goodwill towards India among the local communities. Though the IHP started as an altruistic gesture that was not deliberated upon — the decision to support such a project was taken in a matter of minutes (Elite Interview 6, India, 2020). In its implementation, especially during the first few years, it has unexpectedly helped India in positively influencing the Sri Lankan people's attitude. This outcome may perhaps be the reason that the housing project has been extended to other parts of the country.

This initiative of India — providing houses to active or passive participants in the violent conflict, or to those affected by the violence of the Civil War — has contributed to showcasing that India cares for the Tamil community in Sri Lanka. It also contributes to settling displaced people; this helps India too, likely reducing the number of refugees from Sri Lanka. For the Sri Lankan

government, stability in the country would mean managing the post-war situation effectively and ensuring peace. Therefore, the IHP can be viewed as a gift from India that serves the national concerns of the both the governments, and benefits the local community in Sri Lanka (Paragi, 2017, p. 319).

Like any developing country, Sri Lanka continues to take advantage of its geostrategic position in the IOR. As a result, there is a consistency in the external assistance inflow, from both northern and southern donors. Assistance to Sri Lanka from India and China have both contributed to Sri Lanka's development (De Silva, 2018). The Indian model of development partnership in Sri Lanka during the study period has changed over time in accordance with these the geopolitical changes. India's development cooperation in the country has been mainly influenced by internal conflicts and politics in both countries, and Sri Lanka's geopolitical position in the region. For example, India has started providing support to Sinhalese communities now. It has also started to put emphasis on large development projects through LoCs and has increased number of SDPs, which are spread throughout the country. These changes are also visible in India's development partnership policies and programmes in other countries in the region, including Nepal, which is the second case country for this thesis. The following chapter will examine these aspects in the context of Nepal, and illustrate the changes using a similar structure as this chapter.

CHAPTER VI: INDIA'S DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE TO NEPAL: THE GLUE IN A SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP

Introduction

Nepal, as an important neighbour, has been a priority in India's foreign policy since independence, and the two countries have shared a relationship since 'time immemorial, sharing the same civilization' (Sharma, 2020). Likewise, India occupies a special position in Nepal's foreign policy (Upadhyaya, 2012, p. ix; Adhikari, 2018, p. 51). GoI defines this relationship as 'friendship and cooperation which is characterized by an open border, extensive people-to-people ties and multi-faceted socio-economic interaction.' Compared to all the countries India provides development assistance to, Nepal's case is unique because of these factors. Apart from it being the first country to receive external assistance from India, it has received support in every sector, which has contributed to its development (MEA, GoI, 2014a, 2018d).

India and Nepal are close neighbours. When kitchen utensils are kept together, they make noise; likewise, these two countries constantly have issues with each other, said a retired bureaucrat in Nepal (Elite Interview 10, Nepal, 2021).⁷² For the elite community in Nepal, the relationship between the two countries changes over time — most often because of the influence of their domestic politics. These changes occur when there are important political, strategic, and economic changes within each of the two countries, and these changes shape various perspectives. At the same time, there is co-dependency and closeness in the relationship, which keeps it steady. One element that keeps relations steady is India's development assistance to Nepal. According to elite community interviewees, who are mostly based in Kathmandu, characterising India, and its relationship with Nepal using certain fixed words does not feel right, and it is important to look at the complexities that influence this relationship. One

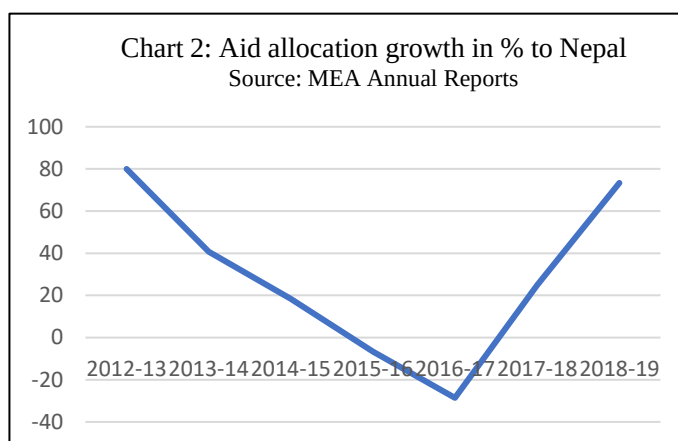
⁷²In Hindi, '*bartan saath rahenge to bajenge hee*'. This proverb, mostly used in South Asia, where steel utensils are used, suggests that when two persons or families live together or close to each other, they are bound to have some issues with each other.

interviewee emphasised that it is not just a government-to-government relationship; what is equally important, if not more, is the people-to-people relationship. They added that this aspect has played a great role in enhancing relations between the two countries (Elite Interview 3, Nepal, 2020).

Nepal and India share a complicated history. Even though India has supported many projects there, Nepal cannot be seen as a success story, shared an Indian interviewee. Most interviewees — at both the elite and community levels — emphasised the uniqueness of the relationship. A former Indian diplomat shared their opinion that despite the many connections between the two countries, including similarities in respective domestic problems, both have various problems with each other; despite this, both states have to work together, as “that’s the nature of the game” (Elite Interview 10, India, 2020).

As with Sri Lanka, the ‘stability and development of Nepal’ is in India’s interest, and the assistance it provides to Nepal helps in fulfilling these objectives (Lok Sabha Secretariat, 2002a). The Nepali elite community recognises these interests. As an interviewee shared, aid giving and implementation are not always effective processes, especially when GoI does not take the Government of Nepal (GoN) into confidence and take its support. As a development partner, the Nepali people’s understanding of India’s development assistance is a mixed bag of various perceptions and experiences, as is the case in Sri Lanka. The broad agreement is that Indian government representatives in Nepal can be approached easily by the elite community about Indian development projects, which is often not possible in the case of other donors in the country. According to those interviewed, this is a positive aspect of this aid relationship.

This chapter, like Chapter V, is divided into two broad sections — the macro level, involving the elite community in Kathmandu, and the community level,



focusing on two project districts. India's aid allocation to Nepal has seen variations in the past five years, as can be seen in the Chart 2 here. The reasons for these changes in the amount are varied. To

understand the particulars of Indian development assistance to Nepal at the elite level, the first part of this chapter (as per the IAD framework) describes national and international factors that are at play when it comes to the country's inflow of foreign aid. In the latter part of this section, India–Nepal relations are discussed, followed by India's assistance to Nepal, and understanding India as a development partner state from the perspective of the Nepali elite community.

While studying aid giving at the policy level, most often the experiences of those who are impacted by these aid projects, especially in rural areas, go unseen. In the second part of this chapter, drawing from the interviews, the experiences of the beneficiary community of the Indian Housing Project are described. Beneficiary community interviewees' most common response to a question on why India has supported them, underlines the 'material inequality and social hierarchy between donor and recipient' (Hattori, 2001). For them, support from India came because Nepal is a poorer country, hit by a disaster. The project being studied is a post-disaster project, which can be regarded as 'unreciprocated giving' by India, as per the gift theory discussed in Chapter III. This form of giving reinforces a donor-recipient hierarchy, as also pointed out by beneficiaries. India, in various ways through various actors, has signalled its expectations of reciprocity from the beneficiaries, especially at the elite level. Accordingly, the beneficiary community, to a large extent, has reciprocated in various forms. This is discussed further in the second half of the chapter.

6.1 Intermingling of global economic and political influences with domestic interests and pressures

Being a landlocked country, Nepal finds itself in a difficult position while dealing with its neighbours, especially India, and as a result, the country and its neighbours' foreign policy choices are influenced by its geographical location. Similar to Sri Lanka, Nepal's location makes it an important country within the South Asian region. King Prithvi Narayan Shah, who consolidated smaller territories and founded present-day Nepal in the 18th Century (starting in 1743), stated, 'The kingdom is like a yam between two stones', the two stones at that time being British India and China (under the Qing dynasty). This holds true even today (Subedi, 1994, p. 273). Apart from its two big neighbours, the other country that has played a crucial role in Nepal is the US (Bhattarai, 2020b).

Categorising Nepal as a small state, Adhikari (2018, p. 69) highlights that the country's foreign policy strategies have sometimes been similar to how a small state would respond, and that its foreign policy has been influenced by domestic political conditions. Indian and US involvement in Nepal in the 1990s and early 2000s pushed its political leaders to reach out to China for help. According to GoN, Nepal's policy from 2005 onwards has been one of 'equiproximity' to China and India. The Nepali foreign minister's message in Nepal's Ministry of Foreign Affairs' (MoFA) annual report 2020 has a full paragraph each on India and China, which underscore their respective relationships with Nepal. Other countries are mentioned only very briefly (MoFA, GoN, 2020, p. 7). The importance given to these two neighbouring countries shows how Nepal's foreign policy is guided by its current geo-political situation. Talking about India and China's importance in Nepal, a retired senior Nepali diplomat shared that China understands that Nepal cannot function well without India, and that Nepal and India should maintain their relationship. While India's take on the Nepal–China relationship is that 'India does not view its own bilateral relations with Nepal through the prism of Nepal's relations with third countries', according to the same interviewee, Chinese leaders had long ago given a foreign policy

‘mantra’ to a Nepali leader, Rishikesh Shah, in the 1950 or 60s — Nepal has to be with India, without being hostile to China (Lok Sabha Secretariat, 2017b; Elite Interview 8, Nepal, 2020). With political changes and a rise in security problems in the region — particularly China increasingly getting involved and making its presence more visible in South Asia with BRI — the US has reached out to Nepal (and several other countries) to play an active role and address some of the new developments in the country. Recently, one of the key components of the Nepal–US relationship has been Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) support as part of the Indo-Pacific Strategy (IPS). Nepal has also been making attempts in the past few years to strengthen its relationships with other countries including the UK, Japan, Australia, and France (Bhandari, 2020; Bhattarai, 2020a).

Nepal’s geographical position and domestic conditions have influenced its inflow of aid, which was initially project-based aid, and later, from the early 2000s, programme-based support to achieve MDGs and SDGs. ‘Terms like *bikas* (development) and *bidesi sahayata* (foreign aid)’ came into usage in Nepal when the Rana dynasty rule ended in 1951 (Dixit, 1997, p. 173). According to Sharma et al. (2008), India and the US were the first two countries to support Nepal with development assistance in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Other countries that started providing aid in the latter half of the 1950s included the UK, Switzerland, and China, while Japan and Norway began to contribute in the 1960s. According to Bhattarai (2005, p. 104), Nepal had at least 20 bilateral and 11 multilateral donors in 2005. Aid flows from DAC countries have been highly influenced by the political situation in Nepal. For example, in 1990, when multi-party democracy was introduced in the country, aid flows increased from existing donors (EU countries, particularly Denmark’s contribution, increased considerably), and was supplemented by the commencement of support from new donors (such as Sweden) (Sharma et al., 2008, p. 135; Sharma, 2014). The contribution of foreign aid to Nepal’s GDP was 7.25% in 1990, which had come down to 3.84% by 2015 (Pradhan and Phuyal, 2020, p. 47).

Nepal has come a long way, despite the political instability of several decades, and the decade-long internal conflict that began in 1996.⁷³ Studies on aid effectiveness in Nepal have shown that aid has contributed positively (if not significantly) to the country's per capita GDP from 1983 to 2013 (Bhattarai, 2005; Karki and Pappas, 2020; Pradhan and Phuyal, 2020). Expenditure under the country's first five-year plan was completely supported with aid (Sharma *et al.*, 2008, p. 135). In recent years, dependency on aid has been reducing, with remittances and government revenue increasing — the contribution of bilateral assistance to Nepal's budget reduced from 24.7% in 2018-19 to 23.3% in 2019-20. In 2019-2020, 29% of total development aid (loans and grants amounting to USD 2,002.8 million) to Nepal came from bilateral donors, the top five being the US, UK, India, China and Japan (MoF, GoN, 2021, pp. xi, 4). Nepal has been getting more loans than grants in recent years, which can be attributed to its improving economic indicators (MoF, GoN, 2021, p. 7). However, aid to Nepal has not been able to bring in social transformation at the same rate as it has stimulated economic growth, particularly for the country's rural population, which is primarily engaged in agriculture (Sharma, 2014; Pradhan and Phuyal, 2020; Dangi *et al.*, 2021). Some of the reasons for this, arise from its domestic conditions; including its internal politics, rules/policies and practices, which are discussed in the following section.

6.2 Rules, policies, and practices for receiving aid

6.2.1 Formal and informal structures for receiving aid

GoN currently structures its relations with donors under its 2019 International Development Policy.⁷⁴ These guidelines are consistent with donor declarations made at various OECD-DAC platforms (MoF, GoN, 2019). GoN, in an attempt to create a one-window system for receiving aid, has designated the International Economic Cooperation Division in the Ministry of Finance as the main actor in this process, and the guidelines in the policy are set out accordingly. MoF was

⁷³Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) launched a people's movement (*Janaadolan*) to bring in democratic systems. A Civil War commenced in February 1996 and ended in November 2006.

⁷⁴The first version of this policy was launched in 2004; it was later updated in 2014, before being updated again in 2019.

originally made the main institution responsible for foreign aid in 1968, and its role involves bringing in funds, and transferring the agreed-upon aid amounts to implementing ministries or other government agencies. Assistance coming into the country is in accordance with Nepal's national priorities and needs,⁷⁵ which include achieving the SDG goals by 2030. The policy aims at raising funds for all levels of governance in Nepal — federal, state and local (MoF, GoN, 2019). The government has made certain changes to maximise the benefit of the external support it receives. Such changes include taking grants and loans of less than USD five million for single projects, designating specific sectors for which it wants assistance as priority areas, and not accepting technical assistance in the form of loans (Republica, 2019; Xinhua, 2019; Dangi *et al.*, 2021).

Despite there being a formal structure to receive bilateral aid, longstanding relations with India with respect to aid funding mean that in practice, political leaders, and others (such as local community groups or organisations) can directly approach GoI to support projects. These requests sometimes emerge during political dialogue in high-level meetings, where GoN shares a list with projects it wants India to support. This implies a possible political dimension to aid giving, where the Indian government expects support from Nepal in return for the development assistance it provides. Such requests to Nepal come through diplomatic channels including the Embassy. In certain cases, India has approached GoN with a project that it wants to support, indicating that Nepal will benefit from it, and if it interests GoN, discussions are initiated (Elite Interview 3, Nepal, 2020; Elite Interview 7, Nepal, 2020).

6.2.2 Domestic conditions, politics, and aid implementation

Sharma (2014) describes Nepal as a fragile state, highlighting poverty levels, unemployment rates (particularly in rural areas), poor governance, and government instability as reasons why aid to Nepal has not been very effective, despite its high volume. Other conditions have also arguably contributed to the fragility of the state, including the capacity of government institutions, inability

⁷⁵GoN is currently in its 15th five-year plan (FY 2019-20 to FY 2023-24).

to absorb aid inflows, corruption at the elite level, the absence of certain communities (for example, the Madheshi community) from policymaking, geographical location, vulnerability to natural disasters, and difficult relations with India while trying to maintain a balance with China. These, and some more factors that have been used to describe fragile states by Ware (2014, p. 6), hold true for the country.

Nepal has had 11 prime ministers between May 2008⁷⁶ and April 2021. An official, while pointing out the frequent changes of officials in key positions, shared how the Chief Executive Officer of the National Reconstruction Authority (NRA) — set up in December 2015 — had changed five to six times. This happened especially when different political parties came to power (Elite Interview 15, India, 2020). The institutions that carry out foreign aid-related work, like the Nepal Planning Commission or the MoF, face problems such as coordination issues, gaps between planning and implementation, and lack of technical capacity (Bhattarai, 2005, pp. 306–310; Dangi *et al.*, 2021).

In addition to these national changes, setting up a federal system is also taking time. An interviewee who managed Indian projects shared that at the state and local levels, one would coordinate with a particular officer one day, but there would be a new person-in-charge to work with the next day (Elite Interview 15, India, 2020). Similar thoughts were shared by an interviewee based in Nepal, who said that if an institution like the NRA⁷⁷ had been around at the time of the first fundraising conference — the International Conference on Nepal's Reconstruction (ICNR), after the 2015 earthquake — the terms under which GoN got some of the funding could have been negotiated better. The interviewee felt that NRA officials understand the complexities of aid implementation, unlike political leaders, ministers or GoN. Citing an example to support this opinion, the person shared that the World Bank project implementation process in 2015 mentioned that local government bodies would implement the work.

⁷⁶When it became a republic.

⁷⁷GoN instituted the National Disaster Risk Reduction & Management Authority in 2019. The work that NRA undertook will be handed over to this new institution after 2021.

However, at that time Nepal did not have local governments in place since the elections had not yet taken place. Consequently, there was no one to implement the reconstruction work as per the implementing modalities agreed upon with WB's support. The GoN officials who had signed the agreement had not read the documents correctly, the interviewee noted. Furthermore, as various institutions in Nepal were either not in existence or were newly formed, during the donor conference for the post-earthquake reconstruction programme, the countries involved only made broad commitments at the time, and detailed negotiations took a long time. This, according to the interviewee, slowed the reconstruction process in the initial years after the earthquake (Elite Interview 15, Nepal, 2021). Currently, despite the three tiers of government being in operation, implementing development projects has been a difficult proposition for those who head provinces and community-level governments. GoN's own analysis points to this 'mismatch between the periodic plans, government policies and programmes and the annual development programme' (Devkota, 2021).

There are also a number of other issues that affect the smooth implementation of projects, including India-supported projects, which will be examined in the subsequent section. Some of these hurdles are land acquisition, local political dynamics, and implementing actors (who are in most cases private contractors). For example, a few Indian projects have been delayed because of 'lack of decision-making on the Nepali side due to the political situation in the country' and also because of weather conditions (Lok Sabha Secretariat, 2013, 2018; CSEP, 2020).

6.3 Understanding India as a donor state in Nepal

Nepal, like Sri Lanka, has had close relations with India, not just politically but also culturally, religiously, and economically. The two countries are said to have a '*rotee-betee kaa rishtaa*', a relationship involving commensality and intermarrying. They have shared a cultural relationship for centuries, and religiously, both states have Hindu-majority populations. These factors — along

with transborder ethnic connections (including associations between Buddhist monks in Nepal and India) with five Indian states,⁷⁸ and familial ties between Nepal's royal family and Indian erstwhile royal families — have led to a deeper relationship between the two countries than between any other two countries in South Asia. Talking about the relationship between the two countries, former ambassador Ranjit Rae⁷⁹ states that India has always extended its support to the Nepali people and their struggles (The Wire, 2019). However, all these factors have not ensured a purely friendly political relationship over the past several decades. Rather, the India-Nepal relationship has 'transformed from simple, linear relation to complex relations' (Dahal, 2018, p. 47). Sharing senior Nepali journalist CK Lal's view on this, Sujeev Shakya⁸⁰ says 'India is like that big brother, whom you keep fighting with, and China is like that cousin who comes with lots of presents' (Brookings India, 2020). An overview of this relationship between India and Nepal, outlined in the following paragraphs, helps in setting the context and provides a better sense of the aid relationship between these two countries, which is discussed in the later part of this section.

Many in the Nepali elite community feel that even though there are tensions in the relationship, the 'small things' (issues that constantly occur between the two countries) don't matter when it comes to Nepal-India relations. The understanding is that tensions or rifts fade away with time, and that it is but natural for India and Nepal, as very close neighbours, to go through various phases in their bilateral relations. A retired senior official who worked with the Nepal government said that dealing with India is easy in terms of formalities, language, and other commonalities, adding that even though the countries have some differences, they are friends —people from both governments have tea together and discuss matters (Elite Interview 8, Nepal, 2020). Quoting the Sanskrit phrase *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*,⁸¹ which is also one of the Modi government's foreign policy mantras, a bureaucrat said that the two countries should live together peacefully (Elite Interview 5, Nepal, 2020). A lot of Nepali

⁷⁸Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Sikkim, and West Bengal.

⁷⁹Indian ambassador to Nepal from September 2013 to February 2017.

⁸⁰A Nepalese expert on the country's economic foreign relations.

⁸¹'The world is one family'.

youth who were studying in British India took part in India's freedom movement alongside Indian leaders. They went on to become political leaders in Nepal and maintained their connections with political leaders in India; for example, members of the Congress Party of Nepal maintained relations with Indian Congress Party members. This is changing now; however, it did shape relations between the two countries for a long time (Adhikari, 2018; Elite Interview 8, Nepal, 2020).

Landlocked in the Himalayan region, Nepal holds a position that is geo-strategically important for India. The country shares its borders with India on three sides (1,868 kilometres) and the northern side with Tibet (which was annexed by PRC in 1951). Because of its location, Nepal's economy has been dependent on India and China for a long time. The country has tried to maintain a balanced link with both these Asian powers, both for security reasons and to ensure its sovereignty is not violated. The Nepali elite community, much as they are aware of the effects of anti-India narratives in their country, also understand that strategic reasons influence India's decisions with regard to their country. Having a 'good neighbour' matters to India for security reasons. The Nepali elites share with their Sri Lankan counterparts the view that their respective countries should not be a threat to India (Saran, 2017; Sarwar, 2018; Elite Interview 6, Nepal, 2020).

India has been Nepal's largest trading partner and has invested enormously in the country for decades. Indian private actors are the largest investors (38.3%) in approved foreign direct investment (FDI) projects in Nepal. Indian markets are the most accessible to Nepal's people, compared to those of any other country. However, GoI feels that Nepal is a 'non-reciprocal regime', as it allows free entry of Nepal's goods into its country, whereas Nepal charges taxes on goods from India. This arrangement is in place because Nepal is economically less developed than India (MEA, GoI, 2006). Nevertheless, economic relations between the two countries continue to grow, with new initiatives being implemented that benefit both countries. For example, South Asia's first cross-border oil pipeline called the 'Motihari-Amlekhgunj oil pipeline', between India

and Nepal, was inaugurated in 2019 (Jha, 2011; MEA, GoI, 2012b; Dahal, 2018; *AlJazeera*, 2019).⁸²

Politically, formal relations began with a treaty signed in 1950,⁸³ which gave Nepali people the right to live, work, and freely move around in India, and Nepali businesses the right to undertake commercial activities in India. This treaty also recognises the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and independence of both countries. The treaty is considered to be on unequal terms for Nepal, as it constrains its autonomy to adopt a foreign and defence policy freely and independently. Various factors shaped interstate relations from the mid-1950s to the late 2000s. Key issues have included Nepal's dependence on India, over-involvement of GoI officials in the internal affairs of Nepal, Indian support for a democratic state in Nepal, the 1962 India–China war (which India lost), and a new Nepali foreign policy approach during King Mahendra's reign that prompted anti-India feelings. In the 1950s, India's involvement in Nepal had been quite common, with its representatives even attending Nepal's Cabinet meetings, shared an interviewee. This is no longer the case, but it shows the extent to which India was involved in the country's domestic matters. Nepal's current position is that it understands that India has security concerns, but does not accept that India has a right to be involved in Nepal's internal affairs (Elite Interview 8, Nepal, 2020). As founding countries of SAARC, India and Nepal's relationship improved in 1985, only to be disturbed again when Nepal negotiated defence deals with China in the late 1980s. This led to a long economic blockade by India, resulting in Nepal halting its purchase of equipment from China, which paved the way for the 1990 people's movement in Nepal.⁸⁴ India had been pushing for a democratic system in Nepal since the early post-Independence period, which was attained after the 1990 movement (Sarwar, 2018, p. 137). For India, a peaceful democratic Nepal was a step towards stability in the region; it

⁸²Given the economic relations shared by the two countries, in 1993, Nepalese Rupees pegged with Indian rupees first in 1966 was revalued, whereby 1 Indian Rupee became equal to 1.6 Nepali rupees.

⁸³'Treaty of Peace and Friendship between the Government of India and the Government of Nepal'

⁸⁴ The Jana Andolan (People's movement) for multiparty democracy formally started in February 1990

led to a new set of efforts to improve relations, through economic concessions, liberal policies, and assistance for various developmental projects (MEA, GoI, 2011c). Cordial relations have been maintained despite political (and ideological) changes and security concerns⁸⁵ in both countries (Upreti, 2003; Nayak, 2010; Kumar Sahu, 2015; Dahal, 2018, p. 51; Sarwar, 2018; South Asia Programme, Hudson Institute, NA).

This trend of positive interaction changed after the 2008 elections in Nepal, which resulted in Pushpa Kamal Dahal (often known by his nom de guerre, Prachanda) becoming the new PM of Nepal, whose first visit was to China instead of India, contrary to the norm. This move caused mistrust on the Indian side (Housden, 2008). In 2014, Indian PM Modi became very popular in Nepal after he invited South Asian leaders (including Nepali Prime Minister Sushil Koirala) to his swearing-in ceremony in New Delhi, and because of his multiple visits to Nepal thereafter. According to a retired senior advisor to Nepal's PM, Modi's 2014 visit gave a lot of political momentum to the relationship. The interviewee added that for years, the relationship between the two countries was run from the South Block⁸⁶ by the Indian bureaucracy. At Modi's initiative, bilateral relations moved to the political level, making it easy to get work done quickly. No Indian PM had visited Nepal for 17 years, whereas every new PM of Nepal (even when there was a change every six months) visited India first. However, this political momentum did not last long, and this favourableness towards India and Modi was short-lived. India's interference in the internal politics of Nepal in 2015, wherein it was putting pressure on GoN to ensure the rights of the Madheshi community,⁸⁷ led to one of the major current problems in this relationship. India's stance, its apprehensions about the newly promulgated Constitution of Nepal,⁸⁸ and the 'unofficial' blockade in 2015-16 by Madheshi political groups, which GoN felt was aided by GoI, led to relations deteriorating.

⁸⁵Including the rise of the Maoist movement in Nepal, and the misuse of Nepal by Pakistani terrorists to hijack an Indian flight from Kathmandu to Delhi.

⁸⁶Head office of MEA, GoI

⁸⁷A community that lives in the southern part of Nepal and has very close links to communities living in various states on the Indian side (Ghimire, 2015).

⁸⁸This is the fifth constitution that the country has had, but the first after it became a republic in 2008. This constitution recognises Nepal as a secular democratic republic (India Today, 2015).

Indian policymakers maintain that there were trucks with goods waiting on the border to enter Nepal, and that it did not block the borders. In addition to these developments, continued pro-China tendencies in Nepal in the wake of the election, with the Communist Party of Nepal winning in 2017 continue to disturb relations (Khalid, 2015; The Wire, 2019; Elite Interview 8, Nepal, 2020; South Asia Programme, Hudson Institute, NA).

To improve ties between the two countries, the two prime ministers established an 'Eminent Persons Group on Nepal–India Relations' (EPG-NIR) in January 2016. This comprises of four Indian and four Nepali experts on India-Nepal relations. The objective of this group was to re-examine existing treaties between the two countries and recommend changes, including in the 1950 treaty. The group's report was finalised in 2018, but the members have not been able to submit the report as the Indian PM has been unable to give them any time to date. This delay by GoI has made GoN question India's seriousness about strengthening the relationship. At present, the relevance of this three-year-old report is also in question. (Giri, 2018, 2021; Mitra, 2019, 2020).

An eminent expert on the India–Nepal relationship noted that India thinks Nepal's sovereignty is less important than its own, adding that the sovereignty of a state should not be decided based on its size (Elite Interview 13, India, 2020). There is still some reluctance on the part of the Indian state to see Nepal as a sovereign state, and this can be seen in the way India has involved itself in Nepal's internal matters, such as when the 2015 Constitution was adopted by the Nepali parliament, or even when India built roads in disputed territories in Western Nepal in 2019-20. A former MEA senior official, recollecting an experience he had had with an Indian leader, shared that for the Indian administration, Nepal sometimes has been seen as one of its northern states (Elite Interview 4, India, 2020). India's approach in Nepal is very narrow; it categorises the entire Himalayan region as one, and Nepal within that area (Brookings India, 2020).

Variations in how different Indian governments have projected themselves were noted by some interviewees (Elite Interview 9, Nepal, 2020). For instance, they said, the NDA II government appeared to be closer to Nepal, but this was short-lived. A Nepali interviewee noted that how much respect India gives Nepal depends on the ‘attitude of the officials’ (Elite Interview 1, Nepal, 2020). Clarifying that it is sometimes Indian bureaucrats or just certain individuals who view and treat Nepal as a country of less importance, some interviewees said that it is not the whole decision-making system or the people of India who feel that. Likewise, Nepali political leaders have one take on India when they are in the Opposition, and an opposite stand when they are part of the government (Elite Interview 1, Nepal, 2020; Elite Interview 8, Nepal, 2020; Elite Interview 10, Nepal, 2021).

The current challenges that create hurdles in building a better relationship between the two states include India’s overbearing involvement in Nepal’s internal matters, anti-India nationalist feelings on the Nepali side, the lack of proactiveness of MoFA, GoN, and the challenging of India (the ‘big-brother’) by political parties in Nepal to gain political mileage (Upreti, 2003; Shastri, 2016; Patel, 2017; Dahal, 2018; B. Shrestha, NA).

The nuanced relationship between the two countries discussed in this section have had an impact on aid giving and aid implementation. While informal, non-government links between the two countries are deep and important. Nonetheless the narratives, discussions and literature on India-Nepal relations focus heavily on government-to-government relations in the context of trade, border issues, China’s influence in Nepal, and infrastructure development from an international relations perspective. As argued throughout this thesis, Indian aid to its neighbouring states (Nepal included) aims to improve the lives of both the elites and the people at the community level. This chapter describes some of these aspects, as it examines India’s position as a donor in Nepal. The following section, basing upon the description so far, gives an account of Indian development assistance to Nepal, before moving on to interviewees’ experiences and perceptions of India’s development cooperation.

6.3.1 India's aid to Nepal

This Figure 5 (on the right) from an archived document shows data on India's development assistance to Nepal, which began in 1951 within the framework of the India–Nepal Economic Cooperation Programme, which was signed after the Peace and Friendship treaty (MEA, GoI, 1984, p. 14). Right after the ending of the Rana dynasty's rule (in 1951), both

Year	Rs. in Crores
1951-56	4.42
1956-61	5.22
1961-66	20.55
1966-71	49.49
1971-76	42.84
1976-77	9.95
1977-78	8.21
1978-79	8.51
1979-80	13.63
1980-81	11.10
1981-82	15.75
1982-83	16.78
1983-84	17.88
1983-84	18.09

India and the US began providing assistance. Even though Nepal requested support from India first, analysis of India's assistance programme in Nepal reveals the presence of the US as the main reason why India jumped at the opportunity of providing assistance. India's first aid mission was set up in Nepal, and was renamed the 'Indian Cooperation Mission' in 1966 after PM Indira Gandhi's visit, as discussed in Chapter IV. Assistance to Nepal after 1980 has been handled by the economic cooperation wing of the Indian embassy in Kathmandu (Sharma *et al.*, 2008; Tilak, 2013; IECCD, MoF, GoN, 2018, p. 26).

India started by providing support for major infrastructure development in Nepal, as did other countries such as the US, China, USSR, and some European countries. These donors, along with others such as the UK, Switzerland, and Japan, started providing assistance once various multilateral bodies began operations in the 1960s – after Nepal became a member of the UN (1955) and the Colombo Plan (1956). The first project implemented by India was the building of the Tribhuvan International Airport in Kathmandu. Between 1953 and 1984 India also supported other major infrastructure projects in road building, irrigation, hydropower, health, drinking water supply, horticulture, education, and community development, and supported the construction of six airports. Between 1953 and March 1983, India provided more than INR 2.06 billion as development assistance to Nepal. Of this amount, INR 10 million (0.48%) was in the form of loans and the rest were grants (MEA, GoI, 1974,

1984; Adhikari, 2014; Saran, 2017; Embassy of India, Nepal, nda). Talking about this period, Mukherjee (2015, p. 227), highlights that India's aid for infrastructure development in Nepal focused on road connectivity — roads that would connect the country with India. India's support for infrastructure development and connectivity in the early years were triggered by offers of similar projects from China and the US. India was hoping to replace these two large states, and as a result started supporting major high-value prestige projects. These projects used Indian labour and companies. In its first project, India built an airport that had short runways and was not meant for large airplanes (that could fly over the Himalayas); this airport was managed by Indian authorities for some years. The Tibet issue and relations with the former Soviet Union created incentives for China to invest in Nepal. Following its defeat in the 1962 war with China, India's aid relations with Nepal improved, and the country provided the highest amount of aid (of all donors) from the mid-1960s to the 1970s. The understanding is that from the 1980s to date, both India and China have used aid as a tool of foreign policy for their advantage in Nepal (Khadka, 1997; Sharma *et al.*, 2008; Adhikari, 2014).

Development projects from the 1980s to early 2000s also included people-centred community or grassroots work. Large projects during this time period looked at the health care sector; one concerned information technology (optical fibre project). India also began to implement SDPs in Nepal in 2003. This was an attempt to focus assistance on local communities. In the past decade and a half, the emphasis has been on connecting with people, and using local governments to implement small community projects. Most of these small projects continued to be in infrastructure development and capacity building. With the signing of the 'Comprehensive Peace Agreement' between GoN and the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) in 2006, India and other donors also started supporting the peace process (Einsiedel, Malone and Pradhan, 2012, p. 100; Embassy of India, Nepal, ndc). Former Indian ambassador to Nepal, Shyam Saran, talking about development projects during this period, says, 'As ambassador, I tried to make a start by connecting with the Madheshis through small community-level development projects and by regularly visiting the Terai

to directly meet their local leaders. This was done without reducing in any way the number of community projects we had going in the hill areas. It was obvious that the development projects promoted by the Nepali government and even by many of the international and Western aid agencies were almost entirely focused on these areas' (Saran, 2017, p. 149).

Cartwright (2009, p. 10), in his article draws attention to how the restoration of democracy in Nepal saw a 'tripling of Indian foreign aid to the country in fiscal year 2006/07', however the budget was reduced in the following year. In the past, India's assistance to Nepal has been linked to the political situation in the country. Appendix J gives an overview of projects completed or planned as of March 2008. This shows the forms of projects that were implemented across the country before 2008 (Embassy of India, Nepal, ndc).

In the period from 2008 to 2019, after Nepal became a republic, India's assistance initially continued to follow the same pattern as before — grants for infrastructure, education, health, rural and community development, within the large and small development grant models as mentioned in the earlier sections.⁸⁹ During Prachanda's visit to India after the 2008 elections, the Indian government committed not just to continuing help in the development process, but also to support Nepal in transitioning to a democratic republic (MEA, GoI, 2008b). In the wake of the devastating earthquake that struck Nepal in 2015, India's aid aimed at 'emergency relief and long-term reconstruction'. India was the foremost country to provide immediate assistance and relief operations under 'Operation Maitri'. One-fourth of India's USD 1 billion post-disaster support to Nepal was in the form of grants (MEA, GoI, 2016b). The country continues to undertake large development projects as well SDPs, along with the reconstruction programme, which began in 2016. India, along with China (USD 483 million in grant assistance) and Japan (USD 260 million) offered the most assistance after the earthquake for the reconstruction programme (Agence

⁸⁹A Constitutional Amendment Bill to abolish the monarchy and make Nepal a federal democratic republic came into force on 28 May 2008.

France-Presse and staff, 2015).

The amount of money allocated and disbursed to Nepal between April 2008 and January 2020 as presented in the MEA performance dashboard⁹⁰ by GoI, does not match the amount shown on the aid management platform of GoN.⁹¹ The reason behind this discrepancy in data is unclear. Classified by sector, the highest amount of support went towards local development in 2010-11 and 2013-14, road and transportation in 2011-12, 2015-16, and 2016-17, followed by energy, electricity, and health sectors. Under the ITEC and other scholarship programmes, India provides 3,000 scholarships to Nepali individuals per year. This helps them in undertaking various study programmes in India (MEA, GoI, 2017a; Dahal, 2018; IECCD, MoF, GoN, 2018; Embassy of India, Nepal, ndd).

India is the fifth-largest assistance provider to Nepal according to the Nepali government's report, and Nepal has consistently been the third- or fourth-largest recipient of India's assistance programme for at least the past three decades (Goyal, 2019). Indian supported projects are quite diverse in terms of sector, budget, and scale. As shown in Chart 2, the aid figures in the last decade at first dipped and then increased post-earthquake. In 2014-15 and 2015-16, aid budgets to Nepal declined. This was in accordance with the larger government-government relationship between the two countries which was worsening (MEA, GoI, 2011b; R. D. Mullen and Arora, 2016).

Regardless of the variety of projects in Nepal being implemented by India, experts feel that India has not been able to keep up with the pace of development and has not fully explored other sectors where China has been working, and which still have space for India to invest in. Acknowledging the support by India, a retired senior officer said that India as a development partner contributed very positively to Nepal, especially with respect connectivity (roads), education, and health. They added that there was a time when Nepali doctors were trained in India; however, now they are trained in Bangladesh, Pakistan, China, Indonesia

⁹⁰ <https://meadashboard.gov.in/indicators/92> (accessed on 16th June 2021)

⁹¹ <https://amis.mof.gov.np/web/guest/reports> (accessed on 16th June 2021)

etc. (Elite Interview 8, Nepal, 2020). Some commentators argue that India needs to expand its work in the western region of the country, which is neglected at present. India has concentrated its projects in the central, eastern, and southern regions that border Uttar Pradesh and Bihar (Appendix F), with very few projects in the western development region (Brookings India, 2020). One of the reasons for this could be the difficult Himalayan terrain, which makes it challenging to implement and monitor projects.

Comparing India's and China's assistance to Nepal, a study (Yang *et al.*, 2014) examining both countries' roles in supporting Nepal's health sector concludes that India's own experience of dealing with health issues in regions similar to Nepal has helped it implement a project which has been effective in helping rural communities. On similar lines, when compared to support by all other bilateral donors, India's support has distinct features, shared a senior Nepali bureaucrat, adding that India not only has government-to-government relations (like other donors countries), but also has people-to-people connections, because of a cultural connection and common traditions (Elite Interview 9, Nepal, 2020). Another Nepali official shared that with India it is like '*ghar ke logon se baat karna*' (interacting with someone in the same household); with other donors, it is like they are guests. Similar thoughts were shared by most elite interviewees in the country, and they associated this with the projects that India supports, such as the restoration of cultural and religious places. To paraphrase one member of Nepal's elite, India's projects are not just projects for people in Nepal, they are the 'heartbeats' of people (Elite Interview 5, Nepal, 2020).

"We understand each other" when it comes to making decisions on aid, said a senior bureaucrat (Elite Interview 1, Nepal, 2020). India as a donor in the global south is aware of the complexities and issues of working in a fragile state, which might not hold true in the case of other donors. Sharing how India understands the problems involved in rebuilding and reconstruction work, especially after a disaster, an Indian diplomat said during a speech in Nepal that the country would extend its support in post-earthquake reconstruction work, and that the reconstruction models used in India can be applied to Nepal because of the

similarities in both the contexts and communities (MEA, GoI, 2015b). India uses various approaches to address some of the difficulties that affect aid giving or implementation. For example, to reduce corruption while implementing SDPs, ‘*upbhogta samities*’ (stakeholders’ committees) of relevant people were instituted to monitor the projects (such as parental involvement in monitoring school construction). While the familiarity and understanding between the two countries and populations help to a large extent, they can also create hurdles during project implementation that other donors might not have to face. To address such hurdles, Indian representatives have come up with specific solutions whenever needed. For instance, a Joint Commission as an Oversight Mechanism (based on Modi’s Pragati meetings) was set up in 2016. This included all project implementers from both countries. On the Indian side, there were relevant embassy staff, contractors, and consultants. On the Nepali side, there were inter-departmental representatives and the foreign affairs secretary. Meetings took place every 3-4 months, and all issues and problems were sorted out; both sets of people knew what was happening and there was no confusion or misinformation. Issues such as Indian contractors blaming Nepali workers for delays, and/or Nepali workers accusing Indian contractors were addressed. Such practices enabled a more transparent way of functioning, improving implementation timelines for India, shared a former Indian diplomat (Elite Interview 14, India, 2020).

On the Indian side, a review of available secondary data, such as the reports of various Indian governments to the Standing Committee on External Affairs, highlights several factors driving India’s assistance programme to Nepal, including India–China competition (strategic and political interests since the mid-1950s), provision for the free flow of goods and labour, and exploitation of water resources (economic interests). Das (1986, p. 80) states that ‘The primary objective of India’s aid to Nepal is based upon the consideration that economic interdependence between neighbours should form part of the greater scheme of South-South cooperation and the creation of a New International Economic Order.’ While this might have been the intention of Indian governments for India’s assistance programme, until at least the second phase of its development

cooperation, the outcomes so far indicate that this will take time, especially because of geo-political changes within India, Nepal, and in the South Asian region.

According to those interviewed on the Nepal side, India provides assistance mainly for four reasons — strategic, to create goodwill, connectivity (infrastructure in the frontier region, which helps in trade) and economic. According to them, there is no difference between UPA and NDA in aid giving. Some of the other reasons given for why India supports Nepal included religious and traditional connections — rivers from Nepal flow into India, and rivers occupy a special religious space for the Hindu community in the country; according to mythology, Sita, a Hindu goddess from the ancient epic Ramayana, was born in Janakpur in Nepal; and shared concepts of *sabhyataa* (civility) and *sanskaar* (inner conscience) pervade the shared culture. These understandings of the elite community have been attributed to the three identities of India and are discussed in the following sections.

6.3.2 Regional power identity

Several factors contribute to India's regional power identity. An occasion where this identity of India gets reinforced, is donor coordination in aid giving to Nepal. Some countries ask if India has invested in Nepal, or see if GoI has given aid, before investing or providing financial support. For example, while sharing details of an official interaction, a retired bureaucrat said that Malaysia wanted to know why India, with so many similarities, does not have many FDIs in Nepal. Some of these countries wonder that if India — despite being a close neighbour of, and sharing so many similarities with, Nepal — does not invest, how will they? They assume that there must be something amiss that explains why India does not invest (Elite Interview 6, Nepal, 2020). Similar questions have been asked by certain donors too, where they want to help Nepal, but they also want to see if India has a good relationship with the country (Elite Interview 8, Nepal, 2020).

Equating the relationship between India and Nepal to the connection between the US and Mexico, a retired senior bureaucrat shared how Mexico's development is necessary for the US, since the former is the poor neighbour. Likewise, Nepal's development is crucial for India, especially during disasters and conflict (Elite Interview 6, Nepal, 2020). However, in contrast a district-level bureaucrat who hails from the Madhesh or Terai region argued that India could have developed the Terai area well, but it does not want the region to develop, so that it can continue to use underdevelopment in the region as a tool to influence Madheshi people against GoN (Elite Interview 14, Nepal, 2021). Reflecting on India's support to Nepal, another interviewee felt that the country provides development assistance for political reasons, hoping that Nepal will support India when needed. India also supports Nepal as a neighbour, especially when Nepal has *samasya* (problem). They added that certain projects are undertaken because the outcomes benefit both countries — sometimes even with projects that are undertaken after a natural disaster, the outcomes help both India and Nepal (Elite Interview 14, Nepal, 2021).

A government official shared that as a regional player, India has been very protective of its neighbourhood, and is sensitive to other actors' roles. In trying to keep other donors out of Nepal, some in the elite community feel that India takes up projects and blocks them for a few years. It either takes time to implement the projects, or does not complete them on time and does not let them be taken over by other actors, the person added (Elite Interview 5, Nepal, 2020). This observation is similar to what many interviewees in Sri Lanka felt. While the elite community seeks certain kinds of support from India, it also wants to ensure that the sovereignty of the state is upheld. For example, GoN pushed back when it felt that India was overstepping its boundaries by putting constant pressure to have the ICNR in Delhi.

In Nepal, some people interviewed from the policymaking community feel that India should concentrate on aid with trade, and help Nepal in creating an environment for investment, as Nepal's position (landlocked and a developing nation) makes it difficult for the country to access foreign markets. Such

reflections by those in decision-making positions help in understanding the position that India holds and the role it can play as a regional power (Elite Interview 6, Nepal, 2020; Elite Interview 9, Nepal, 2020).

6.3.3 ‘Big brother’ or ‘elder brother’ identity

Differentiating personal feelings towards the country from an official take on India’s position, a retired bureaucrat expressed that India is like a big brother, but officially they don’t like to call it that (Elite Interview 10, Nepal, 2021). A similar opinion was shared by a representative of the Nepal government, who said that labelling India’s and Nepal’s behaviour towards each other is not easy, and that it is not black and white (either/or) — there are so many nuances to it. Just as in the trans-Atlantic region, the US is more than a big brother, in this neighbourhood, India holds that position (Elite Interview 7, Nepal, 2020). Another official felt that Modi’s invitations to all heads of SAARC countries — for his swearing-in ceremony in 2014 — indicated that ‘we all are equals’, and that India is not a big brother to Nepal. However, this was a short-lived feeling, as relations soured in late 2015 (Elite Interview 5, Nepal, 2020).

While India’s SDP model of implementation, which is meant to benefit people at the community level, has reached some parts of the rural population in Nepal, it has also been questioned by many because it provides space for Indian representatives to interact directly with communities in Nepal. India and Nepal signed an MoU in 2003 on the SDP scheme. As per this understanding, the GoI can decide the type of projects it wants to support in Nepal, and these projects are implemented in partnership with local government and local communities (Goyal, 2018). Considering the difficulties of implementing projects in fragile states, donors often look at alternate non-government implementing models in such cases. India had funded 521 SDP projects as of early January 2021, of which 428 were completed to date (Chandy, 2011; Elite Interview 17, India, 2021). This mode of aid delivery — for example, where SDPs are identified and/or shortlisted by Indian officials directly — is possibly unique to India. One interviewee noted that this arrangement that India has for its SDPs has been questioned by the Nepali media as well. Journalists have asked why Nepal allows

India this special arrangement, where GoI gets to interact directly with the people of Nepal and visit various parts of the country to implement such projects. An interviewee shared their observation that people are not happy with small projects that help only 10–15 villages. The same goes for policymakers in Kathmandu, who are unhappy with such projects. For them, it is a sensitive issue, and a sovereignty issue, when Indian government officials travel to 10–15 villages in Nepal to either initiate projects or unveil completed projects (Elite Interview 7, Nepal, 2020). Relating how SDPs help India influence the general population at the local level, an official shared that SDPs include the building of schools. In these cases, where the construction of these schools is supported by GoI, local people and the students know that these are supported by India. The school buildings, built in all districts of Nepal, stand out. These schools have a library and other facilities. This initiative will have a long-term impact on people's minds, especially students who study in such schools, thus reinforcing India's 'big-brother' status (Elite Interview 5, Nepal, 2020).

India wants to do everything by itself, from smaller commodities to high-level projects, from initiation to implementation, observed another Nepali government official. For example, in 2020, the Indian government wanted to gift some buses and ambulances to Nepal on Mahatma Gandhi's birth anniversary (2nd October), which is similar to what it does for India's Republic Day or Independence Day. The Indian government, while keeping GoN informed, unilaterally took responsibility for all steps of the process, from beneficiary selection to handing over the commodities and vehicles. In all probability, GoI thinks that it has the capacity, expertise, and knowledge needed to do this without directly involving GoN. Such initiatives, where India involves itself more than other donors would, are most often not appreciated by the GoN (Elite Interview 3, Nepal, 2020). This again showcases how India thinks of itself as the 'big-brother'.

6.3.4 Emerging global player and a donor state

As an emerging global player, one of the main motives behind India's development partnership in Nepal has been driven by strategic concerns. High impact projects are an example of this. They give India donor visibility in Nepal.

Some of these projects include the oldest hospital, which is the backbone of Nepal's healthcare sector; the 1200km east–west Terai highway; the north–south highway; and the BP Koirala hospital. According to a Nepali diplomat, people appreciate India to this day for large projects undertaken with its support in the past several decades. It is felt that India should take up large projects in Nepal, and strategic support must help Nepal's development in the long-term. The interviewee added that if India builds something in Nepal, it will earn the goodwill of the people there; goodwill creates an image, and for a country like India, “What is my image?” is an important consideration, since it is an emerging power (Elite Interview 7, Nepal, 2020).

For India, highlighting its role as a development partner has become very crucial, therefore the push for media visibility has importance for the country. Be it through its project implementing partners, its social media handles, and Indian media houses, it uses all the available options. Indian media agencies have played a very influential role in promoting India as a global player and provider of aid in the region. With respect to Nepal, the Indian media community's representation of Nepal and its politics, insensitive reporting during the earthquake, and hyping up the contribution that the Modi government was making post-earthquake, had a negative impact on the people of Nepal, according to most elites interviewed for this thesis (Elite Interview 7, Nepal, 2020; Elite Interview 14, Nepal, 2021). In Nepal's case, pushing for visibility for India's contributions can have a dubious advantage — if not strategised properly, it can lead to anti-India sentiments (Elite Interview 15, India, 2020).

India as a donor state has been criticised for having an implementation structure different from other donors. Nepal's policy community expects India to perform better as a donor. The common understanding in Nepal is that the initiation of projects is easy with GoI or the Indian embassy but operationalising them gets delayed. While this set of people feels more comfortable with India at the planning stage, the implementation phase is delayed, sometimes by a few years, they note. As a result, India's image has taken a hit. Nepal bureaucrats feel that it is not the Embassy that takes time — instructions and approvals from New

Delhi take time. This is also because of the conditions India imposes regarding implementation. To cite one instance, in a health project India committed to after the earthquake in 2015, the consultant for that project was hired only in 2020, which delayed the project implementation by some years (Elite Interview 1, Nepal, 2020). Problems with processing instalments have also been mentioned by interviewees. It is felt that it is better to give the whole amount of money to the district office and let them be in charge of the finances, instead of giving it in parts. Also, these payments are cleared once the first or second secretary level of Indian officials visit the field, which means extra work, including ensuring their security arrangements, thus causing more hurdles in project implementation. Such officials usually visit a district or region periodically to see multiple projects, so construction of some projects has to wait until they make that trip and give their approval. India works on improving people's perceptions of itself by providing such assistance, but these experiences lead to negative outcomes (Elite Interview 14, Nepal, 2021). Comparing India to other donors, both multilateral and bilateral, it is felt that the technical component is missing in Indian support. Like the ADB and WB, India should ensure capacity-building of Nepali individuals working on India-supported projects and provide support in making detailed project reports (DPRs), as Indian representatives do not approve the DPRs made by GoN officers. These experiences shared by the interviewees indicate that India is very much seen as a donor state (including being compared to other donors) in Nepal.

On the Indian side, retired senior officials feel that Nepal does not have the capacity to absorb much of the development funds it receives, and there is a high level of corruption that delays work undertaken by GoI (Khadka, 1997; Adhikari, 2014; Chaturvedi, Kumar and Mendiratta, 2016; Brookings India, 2020). The delays are caused by both countries, for various reasons, confirmed a retired Nepali bureaucrat (Elite Interview 6, Nepal, 2020). However, as a donor in Nepal, India ensures that both GoN's and GoI's reputation as project implementers is well maintained. This is not just to safeguard the reputations of the two governments, but also because of complexities in political relations. Any critical feedback on each other's ways of functioning might affect the

relationship, which may not happen in the case of other donors in the country (Elite Interview 12, Nepal, 2021).

All donors have their own interests, and in the case of GoI, motives are a grey area, shared a representative of an implementing partner organisation, adding that EU gives aid because of colonial links, to be connected with their former colonies. For India, it could be its proximity to Nepal that makes it give aid. India is a powerful country in Asia, and therefore it wants to showcase that, reflected an implementing partner representative of an India-supported project (Elite Interview 12, Nepal, 2021). As an official working in one of the key Nepali ministries shared, “Presence itself shows the power” (Elite Interview 3, Nepal, 2020). India’s presence and involvement in Nepal’s infrastructure development since the early 1950s, and later (from 1954) having a separate development cooperation wing in the embassy, showcase how India wanted to assert its position as neighbouring country which actively participates in Nepal’s growth. There are problems in the relationship, but the past has shown that they are momentary, and most often they are narratives created to suit the respective country and/or its leaders’ needs.

Just like with large high-visibility projects, for India its presence at the community level is also important, where it provides small to large grants; the next part of this chapter examines India’s role at this level, with a focus on the Indian Housing Project and its beneficiaries.

6.4 Support from the ‘rich brother’: the Indian grant for reconstruction of houses after the earthquake

6.4.1 Overview of the Indian grant for reconstruction of houses after the earthquake

In the wake of the devastating 2015 earthquake, India made significant contribution to the GoN’s reconstruction work. The GoN is undertaking multiple

projects with support from bilateral and multilateral donors including JICA, USAID, DFID, China, India, UN, WB and ADB. During the ICNR held in June 2015, USD 4.4 billion (NPR 400 billion) was committed by these donors, and as per GoN's Post Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA)⁹², an estimated cost of USD 6.7 billion was needed for the reconstruction programme (NPC, GoN, 2015; NRA, GoN, nd). During this donors' conference, India committed to providing USD 1 billion (NPR 10,000 crore) to Nepal for post-earthquake recovery and reconstruction work. The government also set up a reconstruction wing at the embassy in Kathmandu in July 2016 to oversee reconstruction work until 2020. This unit was in addition to the existing development partnership division in the embassy. The five-year support included both grants (25%) and LoCs (75%) for projects on 'housing and public buildings, heritage sites, infrastructure development like roads, transport and power, agriculture, education, health and hospitals, and disaster risk mitigation' (MEA, GoI, 2015b; Embassy of India, Nepal, ndb).

The Indian Housing Project, part of the larger post-earthquake reconstruction funding, is being undertaken in two districts of Nepal: Gorkha (26,912 houses) and Nuwakot (23,088 houses). A grant of USD 100 million is being provided for the reconstruction of 50,000 private homes. Other donors who provided support (grants and loans) towards the rebuilding of private houses for those affected by the earthquake include JICA, USAID and the World Bank. For IHP, similar to the Sri Lankan project implementation model, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)-led Owner-Driven Reconstruction Collaborative (ODRC) and United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) are the two agencies who have been partnered with to implement this project. A partnership agreement with them was signed in March 2018, almost three years after the earthquake. Both districts selected for this project are close to the country's capital, and were also close to the epicentre of the 2015 earthquake that killed over 10,000 people (Embassy of India, Nepal, 2018, 2019; *The Hindu*, 2020). According to GoI, the country has used its learning from implementing various post-earthquake projects, including the housing project undertaken after the

⁹²The PDNA report was prepared with technical inputs from experts sent by GoI to Kathmandu.

Gujarat earthquake,⁹³ which are of ‘similar magnitude and complexity’, and has come up with models, which it offers to share with other countries, such as Nepal (MEA, GoI, 2015b; Elite Interview 16, India, 2020).

6.4.2 The implementation process and identification of key actors

The implementation process followed in Nepal was in some ways similar to Sri Lanka, where the implementing partners — UNDP⁹⁴ and UNOPS — provide technical assistance to the beneficiaries. These beneficiaries for Gorkha and Nuwakot districts were shortlisted by the GoN, and the list was handed over to the GoI. According to some interviewees, these two worst-affected districts (out of the 14 districts affected by the earthquake), were selected for Indian support due to various factors: the Gorkha regiment, a unit of the Indian army started by the British, has a lot of soldiers from this district; Gorkha was the epicentre of the 2015 earthquake, and as a powerful neighbour, it meant India gets to showcase its work here; Gorkha is also where Prithvinarayan Shah initially ruled before unifying present-day Nepal; and Nuwakot, being close to Gorkha, was an efficient choice from an implementation point of view. An interviewee also pointed out that Dr Ram Saran Mahat, who was the minister of finance when the project areas were decided, is from Nuwakot and contested elections from there, and it is possible that he needed a reliable donor to implement the housing project in his constituency (Elite Interview 1, Nepal, 2020; Elite Interview 3, Nepal, 2020; Elite Interview 5, Nepal, 2020; Elite Interview 14, India, 2020, p. 14; Elite Interview 16, India, 2020).

NRA, which was constituted in 2015 by GoN, has been the nodal agency coordinating post-disaster rebuilding work, including private as well as GoI-supported housing. GoI and its IPs regularly update NRA on progress made. Instalment payments for project beneficiaries is transferred by NRA once IPs

⁹³Bhuj earthquake (in Gujrat) occurred on 26th January 2001. This affected 1.4 million people and resulted in more than 18,000 deaths.

⁹⁴UNDP has furthered partnered with Owner-Driven Reconstruction Collaborative (ODRC) which has four institutions: i) SEEDS Technical Services (ODRC Secretariat); ii) Hunnarshala Foundation; iii) UNNATI - Organization for Development education; and iv) Centre for Ecocentric Development and Peoples' Action (CEDAP) for various technical areas (UNDP, Nepal, 2020).

apprise NRA of the work done. NRA is then reimbursed by GoI. These reimbursement cheques are usually handed over during media-covered events, ensuring that India enjoys visibility for the support it provides. However, as the money is transferred by GoN into the beneficiaries' personal bank accounts, using local government structures, most beneficiaries interviewed felt that the support came from the Nepali government.

In the case of Nepal, community-level stakeholders' (in the hill region) perceptions and sensitivities towards India are notably different to those of people met in Sri Lanka. The beneficiary communities are of various castes and religions – predominantly Hindu and Buddhist. Although some beneficiaries of the housing project funded by India were from semi-urban, dominant-caste communities, they either denied receiving support, or were not keen to talk about it. As is clear from responses to questions regarding their personal connections with India, most beneficiaries who were interviewed had some direct or indirect connection with India — either an immediate family member worked or had worked in India, or they knew someone in the village who had been to India. In the Gorkha district, many people were in the Indian army. These communities did not have the same transborder ethnic feeling towards Indians as the Tamil beneficiaries in Sri Lanka had, even though both India and Nepal have the same ethnic groups on both sides of the border. For example, communities from the hills in Nepal, like the Gurung or the Tamang communities, also live in some Indian states, such as Sikkim and West Bengal (Saran, 2017, p. 134). This lack of feeling connected could be because of how the Indian state has been excluding these communities while talking about the India-Nepal relationship, and instead, highlighting people-to-people connections only between communities in the Terai belt of Nepal and in northern Indian states such as UP and Bihar.

India has been delegating mostly Bihari-origin diplomats to Nepal. There has been high likelihood of these diplomats from Bihar focusing their attention on the Nepali plain areas closer to the Indian border. India follows a similar policy in Sri Lanka — Indian diplomats of Tamil origin have played important roles in building up India-Sri Lanka relations (with a focus on the Northern Province and

the Eastern Province). Experts on India-Nepal relations think that India's approach in Nepal and its understanding of communities is narrow – India thinks that it understands Nepal because it knows communities in the Madhesh region. The politics of Nepal can be understood better if one is conscious of the three major regions in the country — Madhesh, the central hill region, and the upper hilly areas. Interviewees also noted that the perceptions of the people in these regions also differ (Elite Interview 13, India, 2020; Elite Interview 14, India, 2020).

6.4.3 Making gift giving and return giving happen in the context of the IHP

Sushma Swaraj, India's external affairs minister during the post-earthquake ICNR, emphasising the role India played, said 'Our rescue teams arrived in Nepal within six hours of the earthquake...Operation Maitri was our largest-ever disaster assistance effort abroad, valued at nearly four billion Indian rupees. But what is important is not that this support was larger than other foreign countries; what matters is the strong feeling of empathy and the instantaneous, instinctive and heart-felt response from Indians for their Nepali brothers and sisters' (MEA, GoI, 2015a). When examined, this statement reveals the intentions of GoI — drawing attention to the fact that India was first to respond to the crisis and was the biggest logistical and financial contributor soon after the disaster and for reconstruction work. It also underlines the familial connection between India and Nepal, most likely implying that they are connected in ways that other donors are not. All these aspects make it seem like it is an 'unreciprocated giving'. Nepal, by accepting this support, further strengthens India's position as a donor and regional power. Other actors also play a role in amplifying the donor position for India; these actors' roles are examined in the following section.

Indian representatives as donors

Immediately after the earthquake, during 'Operation Maitri', the India media played a major role in sensationalising the contribution that was being made by the Indian government and the public. This influenced how the Indian government and its support was perceived in Nepal. Similarly, the government overemphasised the support it was providing. While announcing its contribution

of USD 1 billion, the minister of external affairs, Sushma Swaraj said, ‘The Government of India, the State Governments, NGOs, and Corporates, and above all the people of India, opened their hearts to come to Nepal’s assistance. We reacted as if a disaster had struck India’ (MEA, GoI, 2015a). Further, PM Modi’s words — ‘India will do its best to wipe the tears of every Nepali, hold their hands and stand with them’ — during his regular radio programme⁹⁵, consolidated India’s position as a giver and the Nepali people’s as receivers. These events led many Indians to believe that their country’s actors such as the state, NGOs and its people provided this ‘pure selfless gift’ to the Nepali people (Biswas, 2015; Vikram, 2015).

At the community level, once implementation of the housing project started in 2018, and the owners (beneficiaries of IHP) completed building their houses, occasions of senior Indian officers inaugurating newly constructed houses and ‘handing it’ over to the owners were frequently publicised on the Indian embassy’s social media accounts. The handing out of cheques as part of the agreed-upon reimbursement process to GoN, and the inauguration of houses in the community have been done by senior diplomats, with these events also being published on social media and covered by newspapers in Nepal and India. These promotion efforts, and Indian representatives presence in the communities, further reinforced India’s donor position and its ‘gift giving’.

IPs as intermediaries

The teams of the implementing partners included staff in Kathmandu and district offices, engineers at the local level, and mobilisers at the community level. Members in each of these levels had important roles to play in promoting India and its housing project.

Intermediary actors played a crucial role in communicating the gift aspect. Beneficiary community who were aware that GoI provided this support, knew it because the implementing partners’ teams shared it with them, and/or they had

⁹⁵ Mann Ki Baat

heard of such support being provided by India on their local radio broadcast or in the news. Some people also knew of the other district (other than theirs) where India is supporting the construction of houses. As part of a visibility strategy, IP teams had to wear caps, jackets, or T-shirts with an India–Nepal Friendship logo.⁹⁶ For people who could read, it was possible to know and understand which actors supported the housing project, from reading what was written on these things. But those who couldn't read had to learn of the Indian support either verbally from the IP teams, or by hearing it on radio or television.

Most bilateral funders place some emphasis on media visibility, and it has become an important project outcome over the years, shared a Nepali interviewee (Elite Interview 11, Nepal, 2021). For one of the implementing partners, what is unique about this project is the emphasis on media visibility — there are well-defined guidelines on it. IP teams used various other approaches to make India's work more visible. One strategy included the production of radio programmes by one of the IPs, which were broadcast on a local radio channel. The ODRC network produced 310 programmes in the Gorkha district, which included content to create awareness about, and give information to beneficiaries of, Indian support to private housing in the district (UNDP, Nepal, 2020).⁹⁷ In addition, IPs were required to create Facebook and Instagram pages and Twitter handles to post project updates from, and to increase project visibility.⁹⁸

Hattori (2001, p. 647) states that bilateral grants are 'the kind of gift that ensures...that recipient know who to thank'. In the case of the IHP, IPs played an important role as intermediaries — they asked beneficiaries to thank *Bhaarat Sarkaar* (the Indian government) for its support in building their houses, and these messages were recorded on mobile phones. In some cases, they were told what to say; in some, they had to read the script that was given to them. The

⁹⁶The logo has both the countries' flags, with these lines written around them: 'Nepal India Cooperation' in the Roman script, and '*Nepal Bhaarat Sahayog*' in the Devanagari script, which can be read by both Nepali and Hindi readers.

⁹⁷The programme was called '*Mero gharko punarnirman mero netritwo ma*', and broadcast on Radio Gorkha. A sample of this programme can be heard on SoundCloud (<https://soundcloud.com/user-697296022/mero-ghar-puna-nirman-90>).

⁹⁸UNOPS posts updates on the IHP on its 'STFC Nuwakot Project' page and Twitter handle. UNDP uses its main social media account for the same.

donor state and its agencies representing it can enable a feeling of obligation among beneficiaries to return the favour (return gift), even though they may not feel the need to themselves.

In Nepal, the IPs' team members' job responsibility to represent India is not always an easy task, especially because of anti-India feeling after the 2015 blockade and the border dispute in western Nepal. Apart from what people in the communities (both rural and urban) would have thought of them (when they represented India), as Nepali citizens, it would also have been difficult to keep oneself disconnected from local political sentiment towards India, thereby influencing what was or not being communicated to the beneficiaries. Additionally, a lot of these staff members have moved out of their home districts and are working in difficult hill terrains. As 'outsiders' in the project areas has been both an advantage and disadvantage while 'representing' India.

What is India's motivation to showcase this as a 'gift'? What is the reciprocal gift it expects?

For India, getting recognised as a provider or giver further validates its position in the region, and even for Indian political leaders, popularity and image-building are important for garnering domestic votes and support. In Nepal's case, where aid giving is driven by multiple motives as discussed earlier in the chapter, influencing the Nepali people's opinion of India becomes important, as anti-India sentiments have been used by Nepali politicians to gain popularity and votes domestically (Saran, 2017, p. 137).

Talking about an experience they had during a visit to Gorkha soon after the earthquake, an Indian interviewee remembered how people there came to meet, wanting to share about their postings in the Gorkha regiment, and were happy to see an Indian there, despite the sadness around and losses they had faced because of the earthquake (Elite Interview 16, India, 2020). This gesture (of acknowledging Indians and the community's connection with India) as a form of reciprocity from the people of Nepal fits well with GoI's expectations from its aid programme. Ever since India started providing assistance to Nepal, one of

the key objectives has been to receive goodwill as a ‘return gift’, and many such incidences and experiences demonstrate this.

These various actors discussed here in this section, in some form or the other influenced the beneficiary communities who were met for interviews for this research. These perceptions and experiences of this set of stakeholders have been discussed in the next section.

6.4.4 Support from the ‘rich brother’ — a look at the perceptions of the beneficiaries

At the government-to-government level, India has had multiple reasons for providing aid. As the first responder after the earthquake, and later as a technical support provider while setting up the NRA and organising ICNR, India wanted to be one of the leading donors for the reconstruction work. This aligns with the larger development partnership goals of India. From the community perspective, support was given because India is economically a more developed country than theirs, is friendly towards Nepal, and wants to help the Nepali people in their time of need because of the ‘*bhaaee–bhaaee kaa rishtaa*’ (brotherly relationship). In Nepali urban areas, people were more aware of the support given by GoI. Possible reasons include the people in these areas being able to read what was written on the T-shirts and caps, and more access to television and radio in urban areas.

A brief background on the beneficiaries

The beneficiary community in the Gorkha and Nuwakot districts mostly belong to three major ethnic or religious communities — Gurung in Gorkha, Tamag in Nuwakot and Hindu (from a dominant caste) (NCP, GoN and UNICEF Nepal, 2014). The 2015 earthquake damaged a substantial number of houses, bringing down the structures completely, or causing cracks on the walls and making them risky to live in. As per those interviewed, people whose houses were damaged did not sleep in these houses for some 10–15 days because of the aftershocks. Some of them managed to rebuild their houses without any support, some went back to living in their now-unsafe houses, and the others lived in temporary tents

provided by donors as part of disaster relief work. Before the financial support from India started to flow in, several affected families had already begun building their houses with their own money. Indian support for these houses came much later, as a senior GoN official shared, noting that by that time, GoN had already started organising its budget to undertake the work. According to this official, India giving the money directly to GoN was a positive approach, as it allowed Nepal to retain ownership of the projects, which is different from what other donors did (Elite Interview 1, Nepal, 2020). Despite some delays and hurdles, the project has benefitted both India and Nepal, including its people.

Acknowledging India's position in the region

Making the community aware of the position that India has in the region — especially with respect to its economic status as a donor — is a form of ‘symbolic domination’ (Hattori, 2001). The common understanding in the Nepali community was that India, like other donors, supported Nepal after the earthquake, and there is nothing unique in how it responded. Though the number of houses funded with India's support is highest among all the bilateral donors, this (understandably) is not something that stood out as an important aspect for the beneficiaries.⁹⁹ The technical support that the IPs provided in the two project districts, to both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries alike, is what impacted them the most.

In Nepal, despite having faced a very difficult time soon after the earthquake in 2015 and 2016 because of the blockade in some parts of the Nepal-India border, people had to take support from India to build their houses (when anti-India sentiments were at a peak). In most cases, beneficiaries were informed of the source of funding. People felt that Nepal needed help after the earthquake, and most things come from India — that is why the country provided the support to them. Even though most beneficiaries had spent more than NPR 3 lakh¹⁰⁰ each in rebuilding their houses (as of the field research), people felt that amounts

⁹⁹The other highest contributors were Japan (support to 34,000 houses) and USAID, mostly in the form of loans and grants, whereas India's support (for 50,000 houses) was entirely in the form of grants.

¹⁰⁰ Three hundred thousand.

received from India were helpful, particularly to poor people.¹⁰¹ For example, an interviewee said that it is valuable even if someone gives ten rupees. For some people, the financial support was helpful because the first instalment pushed them to build the house, which might not have been the case in the absence of this support.

On the motives behind aid giving, some people's responses focussed on their country's status, rather than on India's motive. Most people felt that India supports Nepal because it is a poorer country compared to India. The beneficiaries of the housing project understand that there is economic inequality between India and Nepal. Despite knowing that many people in India suffer as much, if not more, from poverty and other development issues, most people in Nepal feel that being a more prosperous country, India helps them because of Nepal's economic situation. As a generous provider, India wants to look after the welfare of the Nepali people, according to them. Like in Sri Lanka, this perception works in India's favour, as it wants to be seen as a developing country, better than other states in the region, and ready to help the Nepali population, particularly in times of crisis.

This post-disaster aid and the perceptions of the Nepali people further create a hierarchy between Nepal and India, which over time naturalises their levels of power as noted by Sahlins (Hattori, 2001, p. 638).

Strengthening the 'old bond' narrative

Some interviewees brought in the 'familial' connection or relationship between the two countries to reason out why India gave aid to Nepal. Words like '*bhaaee–bhaaee*' (brotherly) relationship were used. Going by Mauss's position on gift exchange, where he 'conceives of gift exchange as a potential way of nurturing "the bond of alliance and commonality"', this understanding of Indian aid by the community can be categorised as a gift, and further, Nepali people viewing

¹⁰¹ The extra amount that the beneficiaries had to invest in ranges somewhere between NPR 50,000 to two hundred thousand.

Indians as ‘their own’ can be considered their return gift, which helps India (Heins, Unrau and Avram, 2018, p. 130).

Negative reciprocity

In Nepal, unlike in Sri Lanka, a few interviewees mentioned that they did not think about where the money came from — they got NPR 3 lakh as support, and they built the house. This shows that the gift theory does not always apply, and it might not be valid for everyone who receives support from a donor. An example of negative reciprocity — when asked about the motives behind Indian aid, an interviewee referred to the land dispute between both countries and said that India had been taking land from Nepal for years, and this development support that India gave was how it paid back or compensated.

While beneficiaries felt that they would not be able to give something in return, GoI’s expectation is that the ‘gift’ will lead to a positive opinion of India, which will help in changing the anti-India sentiment prevalent amongst the Nepali people. An additional expectation is that such community-based projects will help India counter other actors in a space where countries like China also operate (Lok Sabha Secretariat, 2016a, p. 73).

Conclusion

According to a Nepali bureaucrat, India–Nepal relations can be compared to the USA-Mexico relationship; for a retired Indian diplomat, the relationship is similar to that of Vietnam and China, with constant hostility, even though there is a lot of dependence (Elite Interview 6, Nepal, 2020; Elite Interview 14, India, 2020). However, in the context of development assistance, there is a certain level of comfort among the actors of both countries. For example, the Nepali elite take India’s help in their work (such as getting approvals within Nepal), which is not how they deal with other donors. Furthermore, India and Nepal’s government-to-government relations are different to their people-to-people connection. The latter is influenced by religion, as well as Indian films and television serials.

Additionally, some people in beneficiary areas who used to work in West Asia have fond memories of living with Indians, especially Indian Hindus from northern states such as UP and Bihar (states sharing the border with Nepal).

Nepal has been a fragile state. As Ware (2014, p. 4) says, ‘effective aid in fragile states depends on donors delivering aid differently...with new ways of working that better conform to fragile states.’ India understands these difficulties because of its own experiences. GoI has used a single-window system to manage the inflow of aid. It maintains that India provides assistance to Nepal ‘in accordance with the aspirations of the people of Nepal, for peace, stability and socio-economic development’ of the country (Parliament of India, 2016b).

Most Nepali elite-level interviewees felt that India’s support to their country is driven by its self-interests because of Nepal’s position in the region but agree that India has gained very little political visibility from its aid to Nepal. They also believe that India’s assistance has made a positive difference, but it will have greater impact if the issues that create hurdles in the India–Nepal relationship are sorted out, through effective interventions by India. India holds an important place in beneficiary communities’ lives. For them, India financed the project because it is Nepal’s closest neighbour; Indians want to help, and the reconstruction projects are based on the needs of the Nepali people because of the disaster.

Amongst other explanations, one of the important factors that threatens India’s position — and thereby the identities that it wants to maintain in Nepal — is China’s presence. For example, this has affected India’s development cooperation and promotion of its work through media channels, which it now does a lot more than it did before 2015-16. This aspect, along with how the elite community, which is now getting educated not just in India but also in some western countries and China, unlike earlier decades, has swayed the perceptions of people.

In Nepal, Indian aid giving is determined mainly by the country wanting to be closely linked with the Nepali people, and for geo-strategic reasons. Unlike Sri Lanka, Indian domestic politics has very little influence on how and in what regions aid is given to Nepal. Though Nepal and India share a volatile relationship, most often this does not impact trade, aid flows and people-to-people connections. As with large countries with smaller neighbours across the world, India is an interventionist state in the South Asian region, particularly when it comes to Nepal. Notwithstanding these issues, both the elite and beneficiary communities of Nepal feel close to India and Indians, and India's development assistance in various forms continues to contribute immensely to improving the government-to-government, people-to-people, and government-to-people relations even when certain aspects of the government-to-government relationship face difficulties.

India's model of aid giving in Sri Lanka and Nepal has many parallels, as seen in this chapter. Having delineated this model of aid giving from three different perspectives in Chapters IV, V and VI, the next chapter will delve into the similarities and differences between India's and other donors' external assistance; to better understand India's position as an emerging global player with regard to its aid programme.

CHAPTER VII: INDIA'S OFFICIAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME VIS-À-VIS GLOBAL AID PRACTICES

Introduction

India has its own poor people — why does it provide support to people in Sri Lanka then? This question was asked by one of the beneficiaries of the Indian Housing Project to an implementing partner representative in Sri Lanka (Elite interview SL 3, 2019). This indicates that even rural stakeholders in India's aid-giving process are aware of the country's domestic conditions. This dual role that India plays in the global aid architecture — as giver of development assistance and receiver of ODA — has influenced its approach while providing assistance. Talking about India's support in Mozambique and Senegal, Jain and Marcondes (2017, p. 37), state that the country being both an emerging power and a developing state 'gives India's contemporary south-south relations a dual swing of ambition and empathy'. According to those interviewed, and corroborated by research works on India's assistance, its experiences as a developing country receiving aid from mainly DAC members, including Japan, has helped it become a distinct provider of development assistance (Satō and Shimomura, 2012, p. 156).

Quoting Tomasevski (1993), Peter (1997, p. 1) says that whatever one may call this type of aid giving, whether it is foreign aid, international assistance, development cooperation or partnerships, it is vast, complex and has many dispersed components. Both DAC and non-DAC donors play important roles in the complex global aid architecture. While studying these donors, there is always a risk of taking a 'dichotomous either-or approach—emerging or traditional', yet it is important to understand the diverse forms of external assistance (Sato *et al.*, 2011, p. 2092). This chapter examines India's development assistance policy and programme in the context of global policies and practices of aid giving, and broader foreign policy discussions around aid, in order to better understand India as donor country from a comparative perspective. Based on the insights gained from the data collected for this research on India's development cooperation, the

country's aid policy and programme is compared to aid given by DAC donors as well as other leading southern development partners, particularly China.

Using the broad categories from the IAD framework's first level of analysis (New Delhi), the chapter here first explores the origins of southern donors and the institutionalisation of DAC followed by examining the narratives on bilateral development cooperation. Different ODA and development assistance definitions and aid/assistance giving, and implementation processes by both sets of donors are discussed in the third and fourth sections. The last part of the chapter explores the role of various actors who are part of bilateral aid giving, including the policy community. These five sections help locate India's position as a development partner in important aspects of aid giving process – from policy level to programme implementation stage.

7.1 Origin and reach of bilateral donors

Bilateral aid giving as it stands today originated in the mid-1940s, with then-US President Harry S. Truman taking the lead in creating an institutional architecture for supporting countries in their post-war recoveries. One of the early guiding agencies established to maintain norms and standards in northern aid structures was the Organisation for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC) in 1948. This was founded to implement the USA's Marshall Plan. The organisation was renamed the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development in December 1960. The OECD, which officially started operating on 30th September 1961, when the Convention entered into force, now has 35 countries as its members. The Development Aid Committee, an international body of funding or donor countries, which is a part of OECD, was established in July 1961. DAC has brought together 30 members (including the European Union), Hungary being the latest member to join in 2016. Global governance institutions such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and United Nations Development Programme participate as observers in the DAC (*History - OECD*, nd).

Southern donors development partnership initiatives started around the same time as northern providers. Even though they are a more diverse set of donors, one of the key things they share is their origin as aid providers, evolving from their own experiences as recipients. As a provider of development assistance, India's external assistance is an important component of its diplomatic outreach, especially in other developing countries. It has been able to share its 'development experiences and expertise' and technology with other friendly nations over the last seven decades (Parliament of India, 2005b). Like India's aid giving phases, China's has been divided into three phases so far — from 1950s to 1970s, 1978 to 1990s, and the third stage from the 2000s onwards. These phases are based on the goals of its external assistance policy. The goals of the first two phases of India (discussed in Chapter IV) largely correspond with those of China. The aid priorities of Chinese support in the first phase was 'expand socialist ideology and political reciprocity' and the second phase aimed at 'meeting its domestic economic development and promoting economic reciprocity' (Mulakala, 2016, p. 97).

The origins of aid giving by these southern development partners are based on SSC principles. Within SSC principles, what matters the most for India are 'solidarity, equality, mutual benefit, and shared knowledge'. These principles have similarities with that of China, which looks at 'equality, sovereignty, horizontality, and a win-win condition' (Bergamaschi, Moore and Tickner, 2017, p. 307). China's aid programme, which began in the 1950s, has been guided by Zhou Enlai's 'Eight Principles for Economic Aid and Technical Assistance to Other Countries' from January 1964. For India, the principles were defined in the Panchsheela Agreement in 1954 (Campbell *et al.*, 2012; OECD, 2018a, p. V–16). Principles that these two southern development partners follow are overlapping, and these principles can also be extended to the foreign policies of both countries. China's aid programme began soon after the establishment of the PRC in 1949. Cooperation began in its immediate neighbourhood, with the PRC providing aid to rebuild North Korea from 1953 onwards. This support was followed by aid to other Asian countries such as Vietnam. China's development partnership was largely initiated to counter the US and France in Asia (Regilme

Jr and Hodzi, 2021, p. 118). Aid to African countries began with Egypt in 1956. Over the following years, China provided support to many African countries (including Guinea in 1959, and Ghana and Mali in the 1960s), in addition to supporting an Asia-Africa Solidarity Fund. China subsequently began to support other countries in Asia, including South-East Asia. Problems with the USSR led China to be independent and self-reliant, and focus on its economy and in building external support through aid and trade (Kobayashi, 2008, p. 3). Similarly, Brazil's programmes date back to the 1960s, with subsequent increases in the 1980s and 90s. Since 2002, under the leadership of the then President Lula da Silva (President from January 1, 2003 - January 1, 2011), the programme multiplied further (Quadir, 2013, p. 324). South Africa's aid programme predates development assistance from all these three countries. With the creation of the Southern African Customs Union (SACU) in 1910, the country started contributing to this fund, thus helping other states in the union. Bilateral development cooperation during the apartheid era was provided to other African countries to gain their support during various UN meetings and to overcome isolation and keep trade relations going under the Economic Cooperation Promotion Loan Fund. Owing to new developments in this region in the 1990s, and following the changes in SACU, a developmental subsidy was brought in to help neighbouring states by South Africa (Besharati, 2013).

For both China and India, providing assistance to other developing countries, despite their own economic problems, was a way of bringing together these countries, especially during the Cold War period, when these countries were expected to take sides in order to receive development support (Shiga, 2012). Going by the countries and regions where southern development partners provide the bulk of their assistance, their geographical reach in aid giving most often reflects their foreign policy priorities. Along those lines, India's development assistance is provided to broadly four regions or continents — South Asia, Africa, Eurasia, and Latin America. India's development partnership is spread across 161 partner countries, but its assistance budget is much smaller when compared to China or most large DAC countries. The number of countries is high because most of these countries come under the ITEC programme — for

example in 2018-19, India had offered 11,051 training slots for people from other countries under this capacity building programme (MEA, GoI, 2019, pp. 278, 258). Indian aid in recent years have been highly influenced by China's presence in recipient countries. Although Indian government representatives deny this, empirical data from the neighbourhood indicate otherwise (discussed in Chapters IV, V, and VI). China, between 2013 to 2018, extended its development assistance support to 122 countries in the world, including Asia (30 countries), Africa (53 countries), Oceania (nine countries), Latin America and the Caribbean (22 countries), and Europe (eight countries) (Krishnan, 2021). From 2000 to 2014, Cuba (USD 6 billion), Cote d'Ivoire (USD 4 billion), and Ethiopia (USD 3.7 billion) were the top three recipients of Chinese assistance (Regilme Jr and Hodzi, 2021, p. 116). DAC members divide aid recipient states into four categories¹⁰² as per per-capita GNI and provide development assistance accordingly, DAC donors and southern development partners, despite the 'rivalry' between them have used development assistance to reach out to countries that are important to both of them (Asmus *et al.*, 2021, p. 2). Almost all DAC recipient countries are in the global south, including in Asia, Africa and South America, with a smaller number in the Balkans region (OECD-DAC, 2020).

The different identities of both these sets of donors – northern and southern, contributed to their aid giving origins and reach. Some of these identities were being a coloniser or/and more developed states for northern donors (Boone, 1996). In the case of southern development partners – southern powers, the dual identity of recipients and assistance providers, specifically for India, was the leader of the third-world or global south identity. These origins affected the aid narratives, which have been discussed in the next section.

7.2 Narratives on development cooperation

¹⁰²Least Developed Countries, Low Income Countries and Territories, Lower Middle-Income Countries and Territories, and Upper Middle-Income Countries and Territories

Bilateral aid giving has been used to fulfil foreign policy objectives and is commonly considered as a foreign policy tool. However, it often receives less attention when compared with other components of foreign policy. This is the case with respect to India's bilateral aid giving, which is not as well-researched by scholars compared to other components of Indian foreign policy. India's usage of external assistance as soft power can be linked to its development partnership expansion beyond its immediate neighbourhood to a more diverse range of countries and regions, including Afghanistan, Iran, and countries in Africa, amongst others. MEA started publicly referring to India's development assistance as soft power during the UPA-I government (2004-09). This change can be seen in the speeches by representatives of the ministry. The then external affairs minister, Pranab Mukherjee speaking to the heads of missions said that 'soft-power is an asset we need to utilize' and India needs an 'audit of the utility...of these tools of soft-power' (MEA, GoI, 2008a). India's foreign policy objectives have had an enormous impact on its development assistance. India foreign policy initiatives, from its engagement in the NAM and SSC to the Panchsheel Agreement, the Gujral Doctrine, or more recent Look East or Act East policies have influenced assistance flows, budgetary commitments to development partnerships, modalities of providing assistance and, in some cases, even sectors where assistance flows (MEA, GoI, 2003, 2017c, sec. 6). Several scholars note that this has also been true for China. The manner in which China determines its external assistance is affected by its domestic and foreign policy goals, and because of the nature of development assistance it provides, the importance given to this form of assistance is far more than India's (Bergamaschi, Moore and Tickner, 2017; Regilme Jr and Hodzi, 2021, p. 115). For many DAC countries, development assistance is an important component in their foreign relations, and something that is needed to bring global stability. For countries such as the US, development is one of the three pillars of its foreign policy, which it clearly stated about a decade or so ago (OECD, 2009). Stating similar reasons, the UK government announced the merger of its Department for International Development (DfID) with its Foreign Office in 2020. It is now called the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (PMO, GoUK, 2021).

Southern development partners have been attempting to create an alternative narrative to DAC donors with respect to their aid giving since they started providing support. The ‘autogenous SSC narrative’ of southern aid providers has made them feel different (Mulakala, 2016, p. 30). Nevertheless, SSDC is not a straitjacket, like the DAC framework. Though SSC narratives and principles have been influencing DAC donors’ discourses over the years, both China and India feel they are different even now. India’s methods in aid giving are a mix of approaches, one extreme being China, whose development support is difficult to separate or distinguish from investments and trade¹⁰³ as part of its foreign policy, the other being DAC donors, who often describe their own aid giving as being driven by altruistic goals. However, both India and China aim to build parallel aid architecture, as an alternate model to DAC-led architecture. These countries feel that other developing countries can use their development path as a template for recipients’ own progress (Bergamaschi, Moore and Tickner, 2017, p. 320; Regilme Jr and Hodzi, 2021).

There are variations between southern donors’ development partnership approaches. India claims to be different to the other southern aid providers, including China. China, along with other emerging donors, has been called a rogue donor and has a bad reputation amongst other donor nations, and in some recipient countries also (Naím, 2007). India, when compared to China, feels it is a better and more just development partner (Waisbich, 2021, p. 6). Some elites interviewed on the Indian side shared that recipient governments look at the economic benefit, and as China has deep pockets, they feel that it has more to offer. However, its *modus operandi* is different to India (Elite Interview 17, India, 2021). Though India thinks it is different, over the years, it has also been adopting the language of other donors, especially China at the policy level. For example, references to a ‘win-win situation’ have become more common in recent years. Certainly, when India’s official rhetoric about it being different to others is examined critically, it does not seem to be very different to China’s

¹⁰³For example, the BRI project in China’s case and the LoC provided by India, whereby an Indian company, Tata Housing, rebuilt houses for slum dwellers in Colombo in 2019.

development assistance narratives, at least with respect to their development partnership narratives in Africa (Stuenkel, 2011). India and China's aid have been called development assistance, and India prefers to be known as development partner over donor because of the negative connotation the term carries (Bergamaschi, Moore and Tickner, 2017, p. 305). In the case of DAC donors, the term 'partner' has been used for recipient states, and not for themselves (OECD-DAC, 2003, p. 46). Changes in terms and language of DAC countries' aid has been influenced by that of SSC language over the years (Tosone, Villani and Mocci, 2018).

As a result of operating in the same regions and countries, the gap in India, China, and northern donors' aid narratives seems to be narrowing over the decades. These changes in the discourses have impacted the aid components and, thereby, the different approaches practiced while giving aid.

7.3 ODA and development assistance definitions, and the aid giving process

Assistance, be it financial, technical or material to other countries, organisations and institutions has been labelled differently, including developmental aid or cooperation, foreign aid, international assistance, and development partnership (Peter, 1997, p. 1). On similar lines, there are several definitions of foreign aid or development partnership. While China has about nine different aid components, India has categorised its aid components into two broad areas in its annual reports — technical and economic cooperation and loans to governments (Brautigam, 2009; Xiang, 2012). In its recently published dashboard,¹⁰⁴ it further divides these into three — grants and loans, LoCs, and capacity building (only in numbers, not aid budget). It does not, however take into account humanitarian aid provided in response to disasters understating its development assistance when compared to DAC countries (Shanbog, 2020c). This mix differs from the aid definition and components that OECD has for official ODA — namely that 'government aid that promotes and specifically targets the economic

¹⁰⁴<https://meadashboard.gov.in/indicators/92>

development and welfare of developing countries’ (OECD, 2018b). As per this classification there are five essential elements that have to be met for a flow of resources to be termed ODA — a) it has to be grant, loan, or technical cooperation, b) it has to flow from a government source, c) recipients have to be countries which are still developing, d) the purpose of the flow should be welfare and development, and e) the flow should be concessional (World Bank, 2008, p. 29).

Development assistance budgets form a large percentage of donors’ foreign affairs budgets. DAC countries provided USD 157,813 million in ODA in 2017 alone. It is clear that the quantity of aid from DAC nations is higher, however, financial assistance from non-DAC states is growing at a considerably higher rate (Gore, 2013, p. 17). Though, unlike the northern donors, who are expected to provide 0.7% of their GNI as ODA, India and China do not have such targets. As per the recommendation of the Pearson Commission in its 1969 report ‘Partners in Development’ and later adopted in the aid definition by OECD-DAC, members started working towards providing 0.7% of the GNI as ODA (OECD-DAC, 2018; The Center for Global Development, 2018; OECD-DAC, ndd). In 2017 and 2018, only seven of the DAC countries managed to reach this target percentage, and no DAC member had come up with a plan of action on how they would reach the target of 0.33-0.7% of their GNI for aid (OECD-DAC, 2019).¹⁰⁵ India’s aid amounts to anywhere between 40% to 60% of the MEA’s budget (with highest being 64.05% in 2014-15 and lowest in 2003-04 at 30.07%) (Shanbog, 2020a). Economic growth since the 1990s has provided the country with greater capacity to support other countries and expand its reach. India’s development cooperation in 2014 formed about 0.022% of its GNI,¹⁰⁶ this was around 0.04% of the country’s GNP until at least 2011 (Mukherjee, 2015). In China’s case, aid has been growing ever since the end of the Cultural Revolution in the 1970s, and it increased by 68% in 1990 as a result of rivalry with Taiwan (Kobayashi, 2008; Bräutigam, 2010; Kjøllesdal and Welle-Strand, 2010;

¹⁰⁵Peer review reports state that DAC members intend to provide at least 0.33% of the GNI as ODA.

¹⁰⁶USD 0.0014896 trillion (INR 9434.8 crores) aid was given in 2014-15 as per the MEA annual report. India’s GNI figure for 2014 was USD 6.701 trillion.

Mawdsley, 2012a, p. 75; Panda, 2014). China's external assistance in 2014 accounted for 0.09% of its GNI (Haibing, 2017). Whereas, assistance from Saudi Arabia, a non-DAC donor, when calculated on the basis of development assistance or GNI ratio, has been the highest in the world from 1973 onwards (Padilla, 2010).

Between 2012-13 and 2018-19, about 70.66% of India's development cooperation was provided as technical and economic cooperation and the rest, 29.34% was given as loans to foreign governments.¹⁰⁷ China's assistance during 2013-18, according to its third white paper, consisted of concessional loans (48.52% of the aid budget), grants (47.3%) or interest free loans (4.18%) (Krishnan, 2021). An estimated USD 5.8 billion was provided in external assistance by China in 2016 (Kitano, 2018). In comparison, India's budget was USD 2.17 billion in the 2016-17 fiscal year. Talking about China's reconstruction support to Nepal post-2015 earthquake, an official in Kathmandu mentioned how China's yearly development assistance allocation for Nepal was converted into reconstruction aid post-earthquake, and that China did not provide any additional funds (Elite Interview 15, Nepal, 2021). In Sri Lanka and Nepal, India's financial commitment to the reconstruction work was over and above what the country had already committed to in these countries — it has not cut back its budget on other funds to offset reconstruction funding.

China defines its assistance as per its own desires. In terms of how recipient states view the components of aid provided by southern donors, some have found that assistance from these countries gives them the flexibility that DAC donors don't provide. Though this might not necessarily be true for all southern recipients. For example, the Zimbabwean government in 2019 did not include commercial elements which were part of the Chinese aid while calculating the total contribution made by China. However, after China's complaints, Zimbabwe adapted the Chinese external assistance definition (Regilme Jr and Hodzi, 2021, p. 118). India does not have a set definition for its development

¹⁰⁷Figures based on ana analysis of data available in MEA annual reports. INR 15341.56 crores as loans and INR 36947.22 crores as technical and economic cooperation.

assistance. Its aid components have grown over the years, and it now largely resembles China's external assistance, except the trade component.

China has published three white papers on its aid policy (Mawdsley, 2012a; Lei Ravelo, 2017; Zhang, 2021), in contrast to India which is yet to develop a white paper. China's third white paper was released in January 2021.¹⁰⁸ Comparing the old white papers to the latest one, Zhang (2021), highlights that China will be reforming its aid programme with respect to aid giving modalities and monitoring and evaluation. The country will also be coming up with medium and long-term plans on aid giving. Those interviewed for this thesis at New Delhi level felt that GoI needs to develop a white paper of its own. According to an interviewee, Indian assistance policy needs to formulate a short-term high-profile plan, medium-term plans, and long-term capital-building plan. All these should fit into the larger foreign policy framework of the country (Elite Interview 10, India, 2020).

In the past two decades, DAC donors' aid flows have been guided by the MDGs and SDGs. Though India has been an active member of the UN, and has contributed to developing the MDGs and SDGs, the country's development assistance components and approaches have not been directly influenced by these global indicators. Since 2017, of the 30 DAC members, half of them have incorporated policies and strategies that will help in achieving the SDGs in recipient countries, but have also ensured that their strategic areas of interests are also served (OECD-DAC, 2019). Much of DAC donor aid has traditionally gone into supporting projects in social sectors (Saidi and Wolf, 2011, p. 13). For India and China, the sectors for which support is provided are based on the requests of recipient governments. For example, both these countries are said to have provided support to economic infrastructure and agriculture in Africa. This has been changing over the past decade or so for India at least. The country has been using innovative ways while extending assistance in sectors such as health

¹⁰⁸Earlier ones were brought out in 2011 and 2014.

and education. Projects such as PAEN¹⁰⁹, International Solar Alliance and Geoinformatics Applications in Rural Development have been implemented as part of India's LoCs or concessional loans in the continent (Mawdsley, 2010, p. 374; MEA, GoI, 2018a).

The economic status of recipient countries also has an impact on the components of aid flow (including the mix of grants, loans or even on the amount of aid provided) when DAC donors consider providing assistance to a certain country. For example, between 2012 to 2016, there was a 30% difference between ODA received by countries falling at the lower end of low-income economies, compared to countries which were on the higher end of the same group (OECD-DAC, 2019, p. 5). Whereas for India and China, this is not a foremost deciding factor on how and who they fund. For both countries, other motives guide their aid giving decisions, including initiatives such as the Belt and Road Initiative in China's case (Elite interview SL 8, 2019; Wooley, 2021).

On aid conditionality, for instance in Sri Lanka, some of the interviewees noted that EU assistance comes with human rights conditionality clauses before providing support. In addition to the EU, Japan also looks at the impact on the environment of the projects it supports (Elite interview SL 6, 2019; Elite interview SL 8, 2019). In China's case, it claims that it adheres to the eight principles of aid giving including non-interference and not putting any conditions on recipient states (OECD, 2018a, p. 453). However, in the past few years, China has involved itself in the politics of countries in South Asia, such as Nepal (Jain, 2020). According to an interviewee in Nepal, China feels that if India can interfere in the internal politics of the country, why cannot it do the same (Elite Interview 8, Nepal, 2020).

In order to ensure that it remains a regional power and continue to play a global role while representing countries from the global south, India cannot afford to overtly withhold support and demand compliance, particularly in South Asia. If

¹⁰⁹'a satellite-based ICT platform connecting over 50 countries in Africa with Centers of Excellence in India' for tele-education and tele-medicine (MEA, GoI, 2018a).

India attempts to put any conditionalities, the likelihood of South Asian and other recipient countries reaching out to other donors, including China, for support will be higher. This, in all possibility, will create further problems for India. For instance, India has on occasions supported projects which have been unfeasible, just so that other donors do not support these specific projects. Citing the example of the Kathmandu-Raxaul railway project that India will help in developing by providing a LoC to Nepal, a senior retired diplomat shared that India's development assistance approach is very narrow. According to the interviewee, this project is a vanity project, but India took it up to counter China's railway project connecting Rasuwagadhi to Kathmandu. Such projects do not make sense and a road route would have been better in this case, shared the retired diplomat (Elite Interview 14, India, 2020).¹¹⁰ Historically, India is said not to have attached conditionalities to its development partnership (Phibbs, 1968, pp. 5–6). Nonetheless, it informally attempts to influence decisions of recipient countries in various ways. Its LoCs comes with some terms, in the form of tied aid, to be followed, which is the same as other donors, like China.

As seen from the empirical data presented in the last three chapters, India gains leverage through its development assistance programme often through informal channels, and this helps it fulfil three broad motives — to pursue its self-interest, to ensure the interests of people in recipient states, and to the improve recipient country's institutions. India's development support to Bhutan for the construction of hydro-power dams is an example of supporting the country with aid to meet India's own energy needs. The first dam project financed by India in the 1980s was implemented with the intention of generating for West Bengal from Bhutan, and this continues to be the case at present where most of the electricity that is produced by Bhutan is being bought by India to meet the energy requirements of the North-East part of the country (Rasgotra, 2016, pp. 319–320; Parliament of India, 2017c; Elite Interview 1, India, 2019). By reaching out to the Sri Lankan Tamil community during the Civil War and after the war ended, ensuring they and civilians formerly living in areas they controlled are provided with basic shelter and giving assistance accordingly while working

¹¹⁰‘Proposed Kathmandu-Raxaul rail project moves a step ahead’ (<https://tkpo.st/3IIV6ac>)

with the Rajapaksa government is another instance of influence that India exerted through its development partnership. In this case, to protect the interests of transborder ethnic communities, which would also have an effect on domestic audiences mainly in Tamil Nadu. In Afghanistan, India's development assistance has contributed to building certain large infrastructure projects, on the basis that strengthening the Afghan national government (prior to the Taliban takeover in August 2021) was in India's national interest (Parliament of India, 2013a). These examples reflect how India (both as a regional power and global player) has attempted to counter Chinese leverage, in some cases through its development programmes, while also ensuring that recipient governments have the space to do what they want.

Unlike China, India's development assistance comes under democratic scrutiny, the same as most DAC countries. An interviewee in New Delhi said that India tells its recipient countries that aid giving for it has to be a transparent process as GoI has to respond to RTIs (when and if needed) on the issue (Elite Interview 6, India, 2020). In contrast, government accountability and transparency in China has not been a priority when improving its budget processes (Deng and Peng, 2011, p. 81). Aid giving processes followed by democracies such as India can be delayed when compared to China. In India's case its democratic system of governance involves multiple layers of bureaucratic clearance. Adding to these factors is also the aid budget. A senior retired diplomat shared that 60% - 70% of MEA's total budget (when the person was in office) was for development assistance. Therefore, responsibilities were exercised with caution and subject to financial controls (Amb Retd. Mathai, 2020). However, in contrast with northern democracies, in India the aid budget or the breakup of the aid budget is not separately approved by the parliament. For parliament members, India's development cooperation has not been an important enough topic to raise a significant number of parliamentary questions. Between 1999 and 2019, only 54 parliament questions related to the country's assistance programme were asked (Shanbog, 2020a). Further, it is only during the NDA II government (2014-19) that the Standing Committee on External Affairs started to view it as one of the key issues of India's foreign policy, as compared to previous years. This possibly

happened because of the professional and political background of the Chairman of the Standing Committee, Dr Tharoor, and his being the Minister of State, MEA in the previous government.

Accountability also involves keeping the citizens aware of the country's bilateral assistance contribution. Engaging with the public, keeping track of the public's take on their aid programmes, and creating awareness of their public spending has been something important to DAC donors when compared to southern donors. DAC members have development education initiatives, where they fund citizen public awareness programmes on global development issues and the interdependence of states, so as to get support for country's foreign aid programme (Scheunpflug and McDonnell, 2008). DAC countries such as Ireland also have had initiatives that include a Volunteering and Information Centre with an associated Public Awareness programme to create awareness amongst the citizens about the work Irish Aid supports.¹¹¹ Both India and China have feared that if their development assistance data is made more accessible to the common people of their respective countries, they will have to face adverse reactions, because both these countries have their own domestic developmental issues (Elite Interview 2, India, 2019; Regilme Jr and Hodzi, 2021). While not much is known about China, India has not had such a system in place — its initiatives being limited to the relatively recent launch of an on-line dashboard, and the changes in the public diplomacy (as discussed in chapter IV), and use of social media for visibility, rather than awareness building. Making changes in how its data is presented and adopting some of the bilateral donors' practices on being transparent about its development cooperation can contribute to India's global image.

7.4 Aid implementation process

Aid implementation processes are as important as policymaking in bilateral aid and require the active involvement of various sets of stakeholders in both donor

¹¹¹Public Awareness (<https://www.developmenteducationreview.com/issue/issue-8/irish-aid-volunteering-and-information-centre>, accessed on 25/06/2021)

and recipient countries. Highlighting the role played by both donors and recipients for development aid to work effectively, one of the interviewees said that “a good donor needs good recipients” (Elite Interview 10, India, 2020). Reflecting on this perspective, Indian budget allocation decisions are made on the basis of what commitments have been made by India and what has been the absorptive capacity of recipient states for ongoing and approved projects. India in South Asia has direct control over aid implementation (particularly grant projects). For loans or LoCs given to Sri Lanka, an Indian elite interviewee shared that the decision on how to use the loans is up to the Sri Lankan government to decide — whether to build a Lotus Tower ¹¹² or to build a flyover where traffic is heavy in Colombo. In the end, recipient governments have to pay back such loan with interest, in the case of both Chinese or Indian support (Elite Interview 4, India, 2019). As we have seen in the cases of Sri Lanka and Nepal, India has more control over its grant projects in Nepal than in Sri Lanka. One possible reason for this could be that institutions to manage aid in Nepal are still somewhat nascent compared to those of Sri Lanka. India, using aid models such as SDPs or CDP have more control over decisions in both the countries, which in some cases helps in speedier implementation of projects.

While the role of recipient states is important, donors decision-making processes also impact the implementation process. An interviewee in Nepal, talking about other donors such as JICA and China, shared that these two countries take a lot of time to plan. However, once the planning phase is over, implementation happens quite fast, whereas India and US take time to implement the projects they fund (Elite Interview 15, Nepal, 2021). Implementation terms and conditions are clearer for DAC countries shared another interviewee in Nepal. However, with China, sometimes the conditions are favourable, sometimes not, and it depends on India-China competition (Elite Interview 9, Nepal, 2020).

¹¹²*Nelum Kuluna* or the Lotus Tower was completed in 2019, and it was built with support from China. The project began in 2012, and costed 19 billion Sri Lankan Rupees, out of which Chinese loan was 12 billion rupees.

Ownership is one of the common principles that both northern and donors following SSDC adhere to. For India, its development assistance is mostly demand-driven. This, to a large extent applies to both grants and loans. However, this principle does not completely hold true in the case of LoCs. One of the main ways in which it promotes ownership is by using the services of local implementing partners in recipient countries. This helps in not just inflows of Indian support to recipient government departments or INGOs/NGOs present in recipient countries, but also amounts to building the capacity of civil society organisations in aid recipient countries, as seen in chapters V and VI. For a housing project (similar to the one India supported in Nepal) — reconstruction of private houses in Sindhupalchok and Gorkha districts in Nepal, Japan worked through JICA. The organisation hired local people to implement the programme, thus keeping key decision-making control on implementation within its office (Elite Interview 5, Nepal, 2020). In contrast, India's implementing model gave more autonomy and flexibility to local actors. Talking about the differences between how India and other donors operate in the reconstruction programme, a senior Nepal bureaucrat shared that Indian aid which is reimbursed directly to GoN is a helpful approach. This enables the Nepal government to have more control and own the reconstruction work, which might not be the case in reconstruction projects funded by other donors (Elite Interview 1, Nepal, 2020).

India has played an active role in various donor conferences, as mentioned in Chapter IV. Although, at the policy level, it has been focusing on providing bilateral and multilateral aid, it has some to almost no coordination (aid harmonisation) with other donors in recipient countries, including at the implementation level. Interviews conducted in Nepal and Sri Lanka indicate that this lack of engagement in coordination efforts is also a feature of China's approach to development assistance in aid recipient states. Within DAC countries, it is the Nordic Plus group which have developed tools to implement projects as per one of the 'rules of the game' agreed upon by DAC donors during two HLFs in 2005 and 2008 (OECD, 2009).

A well-structured or defined reporting system helps in both monitoring and evaluating aid projects. In the case of India's reporting system, unlike USAID or the EU, it depends on the projects (for example, small grants versus big grants) and the Indian High Commission or Embassy staff in the recipient countries (requirements vary most often). Even between Sri Lanka and Nepal, for a similar project, each partner country had their own reporting formats as shared by the implementing partner representatives. An interviewee in Sri Lanka, comparing India's monitoring system to that of EU's said that the EU always has mid-term evaluations where stakeholders are brought together, and audits are undertaken. With India in Sri Lanka, the IHC depends on the implementing agencies to monitor and ensure quality control (Elite interview SL 5, 2019). Indian policymakers, especially those in the opposition have been asking the government about the evaluation of aid projects, including the ITEC programme, since at least the 13th Lok Sabha's Standing Committee on External Affairs (1999-2004). This has been brought up consistently by the SCs during the four Lok Sabha terms that were studied for this thesis. The objective behind these evaluations for the committee members have been to see 'how far this programme has helped India strengthening mutual and bilateral relations' (Lok Sabha Secretariat, 2003b, sec. 134). In 2015 the MEA mentioned that the Policy Planning & Research (PP & R) division within the ministry had initiated an evaluation of the aid development assistance projects with the help of external think-tanks (Lok Sabha Secretariat, 2015a). As per Waisbich (2021, p. 6), independent assessment or evaluations has been undertaken for six India-supported projects with the help of various think-tanks, starting in 2013. Of these evaluations, four are publicly available.

India, particularly in South Asia, has experiences in supporting fragile states, including Afghanistan, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. In Africa, it has contributed assistance to fragile states such as Mali, along with other donors in 2012. Its support in these countries have involved high risks and these have been high stake projects for India, including the ones studied as part of this thesis. An interviewee, sharing India's approach in Afghanistan (prior to the 2021 Taliban takeover) said that India ensured local participation so that the ownership is with

the local population. For example, in Afghanistan, some of the SDPs that India undertook were based on the needs of local people, involving them and if these structures were damaged or were in any form of risk, it was believed that local people would protect them (Elite Interview 12, India, 2020). India does not have a documented aid giving approach to fragile states. However, from the projects studied for this research and projects in conflict or post-conflict contexts that India has supported, India's grant approaches provide the flexibility to fit the needs of recipient states. Though, delays in implementing India-supported projects, be it because of Indian bureaucratic structures or because of hurdles (such as political, conflicts, violence, and bureaucracy) has cost India a huge increase in project budgets or escalated the cost of implementing these projects. Nonetheless, the country has taken that in its stride and completed these projects. Example include the Afghan-India Friendship dam¹¹³ and the Afghan parliament (Lok Sabha Secretariat, 2007b, 2010). In China's case, aid to conflict states or non-conflict states is not very different according to their official, quoted in Campbell *et al.*, (2012, p. 20). DAC donors, on the other hand have systematised their aid for conflict or fragile states, where promoting peace and stability have been their goals (Campbell *et al.*, 2012, p. 77). The aid budget for 'fragile contexts' from DAC countries has increased between 2007 to 2016, and some countries such as Australia and Canada have come up with 'whole-of-government' approaches to deal with fragile states (OECD, 2009; OECD-DAC, 2019, p. 7).

7.5 The policy community and other actors in aid giving

Many DAC countries have a separate division within their foreign affairs ministries to manage their aid programmes. In India's case, development assistance is managed by territorial divisions based at the MEA, despite there being a separate unit for development cooperation. For China too, the recently formed China International Development Cooperation Agency comes under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Denghua and Hongbo, 2020). While in India, the

¹¹³Formerly called as Salma dam

Prime Minister, the MEA and its diplomatic staff, and others such members of the Standing Committee on External Affairs play an important role in shaping its development partnership policy, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China is said to have more control on decision-making on its assistance compared to the ministries of commerce and finance (Zhang and Smith, 2017). The Chinese president's role in the country's development assistance seems to be increasing slowly over the years according to Bergamaschi, Moore and Tickner (2017, p. 310). Indian diplomatic corps and institutions, as currently configured, are not specialised enough to handle development projects. The MEA faces many internal hurdles, which is one of the reasons for projects not being implemented well. Sharing about the hurdles faced, an interviewee said that various ministries and departments create hurdles (such as lengthy bureaucratic process of getting funds approved, administering GoI practices in recipient countries) for the MEA, affecting its competences in undertaking development cooperation work. Further adding, that for India to implement project well it needs to address its domestic issues (Elite Interview 10, India, 2020).

India's aid giving process, especially in the context of South Asia starts with territorial divisions in the MEA. These divisions provide the budget that is required for a year for the countries that their desk is in-charge of. Nevertheless, Indian embassies or high commissions play an important role in the aid process. This is fairly similar to China's approach. For example, in Nepal, an interviewee shared that aid from China is channelled through their embassy there, specially through an economic counsellor in the embassy who deals with aid. GoN regularly makes requests for support through the Chinese embassy, as it does with the Indian embassy (Elite Interview 3, Nepal, 2020). This system for requesting assistance has facilitated demand-based and/or need-based country specific assistance, albeit in a manner that may come across as though it is done in an ad hoc way when compared with DAC donors' process of approving projects (Sato *et al.*, 2011).

Talking about the expertise of those who work on southern donors' development assistance policy and programme, Bergamaschi, Moore and Tickner (2017), state that it is weak for most of these countries, including India and China. Added to the lack of expertise in the institutions, the difficult relations between aid giving structures in India and China with other relevant departments or ministries make it even more difficult to carry out the work smoothly (Bajpai and Chong, 2019; Elite Interview 3, India, 2019). Despite this, Indian MEA officials have, to a large extent, managed to undertake aid giving which has benefitted both recipient governments and India. The case of India's support to Bhutan for hydropower dams is one such example. The initial dam project (i.e., Bhutan's first mega dam project - the Chukha Hydropower Project) in the 1970s was not being approved by Bhutan's monarch despite several requests from GoI. The then Indian foreign secretary of India, M K Rasgotra, after talking to the king, learned why there was hesitation on his part to approve these projects. The king was reportedly worried about Indian labour settling down in Bhutan after the dam was built. Once an assurance was given to the Bhutanese that GoI will ensure such a thing won't happen, permission was given for the construction of the dam, after which many such projects have been supported by India to the economic benefit of both governments (Rasgotra, 2016, p. 319).

Apart from the larger processes, bureaucracies — those who are in power or running the governments both in India and recipient countries also influence important decisions. For example, in Nepal's case, observing the role of the political party in power in the country, the Standing Committee on External Affairs of India stated that a 'popular government' in Nepal will facilitate discussion or questions on initiating 'hydropower, road, railway projects that fulfil the need of both the countries' (Lok Sabha Secretariat, 2008). While in Sri Lanka's case, even though the country has had problems with the Rajapaksa government and GoI became politically close to the UNP government since 2015, aid amounts to Sri Lanka have not reflected these changing relationships. The political aid cycle, a phenomenon wherein donors provide more aid to leaders (in recipient countries) they favour, especially before the elections, can be seen in the components and the geographical locations where aid was

provided (discussed in Chapter V and VI), but not in the absolute amounts of aid provided (Faye and Niehaus, 2012). Though delays in projects have been caused because of the influence of Indian domestic politics on India's development cooperation to Sri Lanka, the political ideology of the ruling political parties governing India and Sri Lanka have not affected this relationship. While India's aid decisions are influenced by China to a large extent, the country has used its aid programme strategically, at least while implementing projects, mostly because of the familiarity with project areas, communities, and their local politics. One of the strategies used is to employ aid projects as a tool to benefit local leaders who might be of help to India in the long term. The inauguration of an airport in Jaffna and the push for announcing the list of beneficiaries in the hill country of Sri Lanka before 16th November 2019 Presidential elections are some examples to support this, as discussed in greater detail in the project case study chapter on Sri Lanka.

Conclusion

This chapter elaborates on the key features of Indian development partnership as observed through the two case studies and from what the Indian elite community shared, to highlight similarities and differences between India and other donors with respect to their assistance. India, like most development partners, has used its development cooperation to pursue its 'enlightened self-interests' (for example, bilateral and multilateral collaborations to address climate change) and economic interests, and to fulfil its geo-strategic needs; it has also provided support for altruistic reasons. As with most donors, both in the global north and global south, the economic growth of the country has had a direct impact on its assistance flow: Indian bilateral aid giving expanded after its economy started growing more rapidly in the mid-1990s, which led to its development cooperation programme getting more visibility.

The narratives that southern donors use for their development assistance are extremely similar to each other, and different from DAC donors' narratives. However, the differences between these two discourses seem to be slowly

reducing, especially since the mid-2000s. Changes in the larger global aid narrative, and other southern countries' growth as donor states, have not had much impact on how China and India function. The principles that southern donors follow make their funds more accessible (compared to northern donors) to recipient states, and to some extent, neutralise the power differences between providers and receivers. This has been seen in India's case, both in Nepal and Sri Lanka.

Southern donors' extensive aid programmes and trade relations with their respective recipient countries have been seen by DAC countries as a problem to their own positions in developing countries. In an attempt to play a more global role, some non-DAC nations — such as Brazil, South Africa, Russia and India — have come together and forming parallel bodies such as the NDB, which has led changes in international relations, foreign policy and the global aid architecture (Rowlands, 2012, p. 633; Saran and Aneja, 2016, p. 5; Asmus, Fuchs and Muller, 2017).

Southern donors like India have to systematise their aid giving. Unlike DAC donors, India's structures for aid giving are less transparent, and are being established slowly. Indian policymakers understand that it will take some years for the country to strengthen its aid programme and make it into an effective one that benefits both India and the recipient states. A former Indian diplomat said that India has some distance to go to have an efficient development assistance programme, and that the initiatives India takes to improve its development cooperation programme also have to fit into the overall foreign policy of the country (Elite Interview 10, India, 2020).

For India, especially in its neighbourhood, relationships with recipient states are three-tiered: government-to-government, government-to-people, and people-to-people. The 'human dimension' that India provides in its aid giving and aid implementation processes has contributed positively and made relationships more balanced. India's grant implementing model, especially where it uses the services of government departments or INGOs/NGOs from recipient countries,

is similar to that of DAC donors. Apart from promoting people-to-people connections through its assistance, using local institutions and local people has also contributed towards one of its aid goals, namely, building the capacity of civil society organisations. This is different from China's case, as China has been criticised for not fostering people-to-people contact through its aid programme (Denghua and Hongbo, 2020).

Despite all this, India has not yet attained the credibility of being a reliable development partner. This is mostly because the benchmarks for a good assistance programme are often defined by northern actors. Southern donors have challenged this to some extent and continue to provide development support that suits both parties — donor and recipient states — to a considerable degree. In India's case, for example, the country's historical relationship with its recipient states (such as, post-colonial, anti-apartheid, support extended during conflicts) has contributed to how recipients view its development partnership programme and how it extends assistance. Most often, such factors are not considered while studying India's development cooperation, as noted by Six (2009).

CONCLUSION

Introduction

India was the one of the largest ODA recipients from OECD countries in 2018-2019, receiving USD 4,042 million in aid that fiscal year. In the same year, India provided USD 828 million in assistance to other countries (MEA, GoI, 2019; OECD-DAC, nda).¹¹⁴ Development partnership has become one of India's main tools in reinforcing its position and different identities in the South Asian region and other parts of the global south, especially in the past two decades. This, it hopes, will enhance its status globally.

The research undertaken for this thesis examines India's model of development assistance from two perspectives — India's approach as a donor or development partner, and how India's assistance is perceived in recipient countries. In accordance with its foreign policy, India's development partnership has seen changes in the past seven decades, triggered by internal and external factors such as economic growth, domestic politics, the rise in China's status in Asia and globally, the role of USA in the region, and internal conflicts in India's neighbouring countries. India's development cooperation is undergoing transition, similar to its role in global power politics. The country's aid programme provides opportunities and challenges that India will have to use and learn from, to continue to be an active global player in the aid architecture.

8.1 India's development assistance policy and aid interests

A state's foreign policy looks at the outside world as different from its domestic world and it separates the country from others. This plays an important role in shaping new identities and reinforcing them (Wojczewski, 2019, p. 4). India's regional and global identities have been influenced by domestic and external

¹¹⁴INR 62.3505 billion.

factors, including, but not limited to, historical, cultural, religious, ethnic, and political connections. These identities in the international system include its role as a regional hegemon, big or elder brother or sister, leader in the global south, and global player. The different identities of India have shaped the country's development partnership interests since it first started providing development assistance to Nepal immediately after independence. India's role as a donor started getting more noticed and accepted as its regional and global positions grew. These gave shape to various aid interests. Interests are not constant, as seen in the case study chapters (IV to VII). The diverse set of interests¹¹⁵ arising from these overlapping identities of India, facilitate government-to-government, government-to-people, and people-to-people links. Accordingly, India's has pursued a range of interests through the use of development assistance as a form of soft power and a tool of foreign policy.

The history of India's development cooperation can be divided into three phases, from its beginnings in the late 1940s, reflecting broader changes in India's foreign policy. Each of these three phases has seen one broad aid interest dominate over the others with its aid giving motives moving from being more about the larger good of the developing world to being more self-centred. Correspondingly, the relative mix of different types of aid has changed over the past several decades. India's current development assistance programme is a comprehensive one, combining grants, LoCs, concessional loans, and technical training, in accordance with the neo-liberalism foreign policy phase.

Over the timeline in consideration for this thesis, India's development partnership has been driven by both altruistic and self-interest motives, drawing from both SSDC principles and the view that its assistance can provide a 'win-win situation', from which both India and the recipient state benefit. As a southern donor, driven by self-affirmation and its position in the global south, India has provided support to show that as a growing power it is taking the responsibility of helping other lower-income states develop alongside itself. This

¹¹⁵For clarity, these different interests and purposes have been categorised into seven goals discussed in chapter III.

also fulfils its interests related to showing south–south solidarity — by taking forward the principles that it practised in the first phase of its foreign policy. In pursuit of these interests, India has provided assistance in the form of grants, scholarships, technical support, and humanitarian aid. Connected to these interests is the idea of ‘enlightened self-interest’: India has supported projects that combat climate change — for example training women on solar energy in Africa¹¹⁶ — and projects aimed at attaining regional peace and stability, such as in Afghanistan, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. A final set of discernible interests are more self-centred and include providing aid to minimise the influence of other countries (primarily China, Pakistan, and the US), or to get access to raw materials. These projects help in wealth and resource accumulation.

8.2 India’s bilateral assistance at the implementation level in recipient states

India is perceived as the ‘big brother’ in its relations with its South Asian neighbours, particularly with respect to Nepal and Sri Lanka. This (dual) identity of the country is seen both in the sense of sharing a familial bond and also that of a State which exercises geopolitical dominance, gives India an advantage over other donors or development partners working in neighbouring states. This uniqueness does not arise only from geographical proximity, but also from the similarities that these South Asian countries share. Further, India’s experiences of dealing with its own development and internal disturbances, and governing a diverse country, have helped its representatives deal with conflicts and thus fragility in recipient countries like Nepal and Sri Lanka.

Elites in Nepal and Sri Lanka understand, and to some extent approve of India’s need to use development assistance to both help people in recipient countries and also to get what it wants from recipient states’ political leaders to achieve its geostrategic goals. Local elites in both countries commonly view India’s development cooperation as a tool India uses to fulfil its own security and

¹¹⁶Women engineers who get these trainings are accredited as ‘solar mamas’.

economic interests, rather than as aid given for purely altruistic reasons. Even though the common understanding of those interviewed is that India can be a better donor, especially when it comes to project implementation, it is easier for them to work with Indian embassy or high commission officials — because of the other connections and familiarity that they share with Indians — than with other donors. According to those interviewed, most donors provide development support expecting something in return from recipient countries, and India is not very different in that respect. As China also plays a vital role as an aid provider in Nepal and Sri Lanka, most elites explicitly compared India with China. The different journeys that India and China have taken, or the different styles of development assistance they provide, did not have much bearing on the perceptions of elites interviewed in both countries.

Just as domestic politics in India affects its foreign policy, domestic politics in recipient countries also affects what kinds of aid are given, regions where projects are supported, and how soon they get implemented. However, aid amounts from India, most often are not affected by these recipient countries' domestic factors as discussed in Chapter VII.

Despite the ups and downs in India's relationship with its aid recipients (especially Nepal with whom India has a more complex relation), aid has been provided to both Nepal and Sri Lanka in an almost consistent manner. Frequently overlooked in scholarship on India's foreign policy with respect to both countries, this assistance has contributed to the strengthening of these ties over the years.

8.3 India-supported projects at the community level

As Nouvet, Chan and Schwartz (2018, p. 456) note, 'In all cases, perceptions matter. Whether empirically verifiable or not, these shape relations to, expectations of, and trust in aid organisations and workers on the ground.' Understanding of beneficiary perceptions and experiences has thrown light on what worked and what did not for the community, what added pressure to their

lives, and how India and its representatives (including IAs or IPs) can incorporate these findings into their future projects.

Chapters V and VI highlight the complexities of bilateral grant-giving and implementation. In the absence of research by donor states on their projects, there can be discrepancies between what these states think about their support and what the reality is. This thesis studied the multiple actors involved — and the unequal relations amongst them — at the project implementation level, especially in dynamic settings such as post-conflict or post-disaster environments. The unequal relations and the various identities of the giver and the receiver shaped the perceptions and experiences of all actors involved. At the community level, these perceptions and experiences can reaffirm existing identities and influence the shaping of new ones. Applying Paragi (2017)'s analysis to this thesis and using the concept of gift and return gift, engagement with recipient communities through this research highlights what community level beneficiaries and aid actors give back and the ways in which unequal relations continue to prevail.

India's 'ownership model' — a model that the execution team (at the IHC/embassy level and the IAs/IPs staff) feels was successful — has both advantages and disadvantages as an implementation model. Projects with owner-driven houses have been implemented in the case countries by other agencies as well. The advantage of this to both the recipient states and India, at least in the particular projects studied, is that this model appears to keep both countries on a more equal footing. The disadvantage of this model is that if the recipient states do not implement these projects well, then beneficiaries suffer, and funds are wasted. Since roles and responsibilities are often loosely demarcated and/or overlapping, any gaps in the implementation of these projects cannot be solely attributed to a particular actor.

In addition to advantage accruing to India from its development cooperation, leaders in Sri Lanka and Nepal have been able to benefit from Indian (and Chinese) projects. Although this can lead to clientelism (recipient elites

supporting donors and beneficiary communities supporting domestic political leaders or elites), it is not easy to draw such conclusions from the data collected for this thesis. This is an area meriting future research, based on the initial findings of this thesis.

At the community level, people-to-people transborder ethnic connections, and Indian government-to-people connections have proven to be helpful. Beneficiary communities mainly associate India's aid with the Indian people rather than the Indian government; this is especially true of the Sri Lankan Tamil populations. In Nepal's case, the association is both with government institutions (like the Indian army) and the Indian people. There was a sense of affinity, loyalty, and brotherhood in their minds when talking about the Indian support, though it was not as distinct as in Sri Lanka. An implication of this perception is how they view the support they have received — as a gift from Indians. This gets reinforced by messaging directed at these communities from India, its IAs/IPs, and in some cases local administration and political leaders. As a result, beneficiary communities feel obliged to give something in return. These gifts come in various forms: trusting India, holding it in higher esteem than their own country, wishing Indians well, and being eager to extend help to Indians when needed.

India has a vast potential to use soft power — such as grants and technical trainings — to help communities in all of the 161 countries where its development support has reached. It has started reaching out to other ethnic communities more actively in both case countries, which has contributed to strengthening its position amongst them (for example, the Sinhalese population in Sri Lanka and non-Madheshis in Nepal). Most beneficiaries interviewed said they benefitted from the support, and these projects have also helped in positively influencing recipient states citizens' perceptions of India and Indians. With quicker decision-making and implementation at both ends — India's and recipient states' — reconstruction projects can be more beneficial to affected communities, especially in post-disaster and post-conflict situations.

8.4 What is the Indian model of bilateral aid giving?

Applying Nehru's doctrine (and those of other global south leaders) from the mid-1950s and 60s on development cooperation in the global south, which aims 'to assert Third World sovereignty and autonomous decision-making' (Mawdsley, Kim and Marcondes, 2017), India's stand on the aid it provides to other southern states is that it follows the SSDC model.¹¹⁷ In contrast to DAC donors and even China, India does not have legislation or a white paper that provides insight or directions guiding its development partnership. As a result, one has to rely on publicly available official documents and information shared by the policymakers. Data collected from both these sources, as seen in the empirical chapters, confirms that India does follow SSDC principles to a large extent.

With much shallower pockets than most donors, India has to improve its development partnership policy and practice to make the most of the available resources. Though the country has some form of planning and implementation strategy in place (mostly in harmonious with its undocumented strategic foreign policy), which is unique compared to other donors, documenting it is important (MEA, GoI, 2013b). In addition to the lack of a government-approved, publicly available document on its development partnership policy, the intent to counter other donors' involvement in recipient countries, also creates inconsistencies in India's development cooperation approaches. The absence of a long-term written vision makes India more reactive than proactive, hence it is perceived as a passive donor compared to China. Consequently, this position that India takes, and its policy can be interpreted as India does not concern itself with the plans and visions of recipient states and is satisfied with providing aid to fulfil its own immediate economic, political, and geostrategic needs. This is incompatible with

¹¹⁷SSDC, according to the Accra Agenda for Action 2008, 'aims to observe the principle of non-interference in internal affairs, equality among developing partners and respect for their independence, national sovereignty, cultural diversity and identity and local content. It plays an important role in international development cooperation and is a valuable complement to North-South cooperation' (OECD, 2008, p. 8).

what SSDC stands for. As an important actor in the region and in the case countries, and its own experience of being a leading recipient state for decades, India can do better than it is now. An outline or a plan of action for each country — on components or sectors of aid, and how aid will be provided and delivered within a defined timeline — which is communicated to other relevant ministries (including the MoF, GoI) can be one way to move forward on this. This will also ensure that India's support is relevant to the countries receiving it; even though India claims that it supports projects based on the demands of the recipient states, this is not always the practice.

In the absence of a guiding document, India's development partnership programme is guided by its foreign policy. According to its foreign policy mandate, India's development support priorities lie first in the region, i.e., the immediate neighbourhood; then in neighbouring regions in Asia, such as Southeast Asia and West Asia; then in Africa; followed by other developing areas in the world. In 2018-19, 77% of its assistance budget was allocated to South Asia, 5% to Myanmar, 3.7% was allocated to Africa, and other countries got 20%. This is not uncommon among southern donors — other southern donors too have prioritised their immediate neighbourhoods while providing development assistance.

India has its own strengths and capacities as a development partner, which recipient states in South Asia, Southeast Asia, Africa, etc. understand and appreciate. Based on the experiences and perceptions of elite interviewees, it is certain that India understands and respects cultural diversity, ethnic issues, and recipient states' histories while providing assistance. This is unique to India, as DAC and other southern donors do not consider these factors. However, with better planning and evaluation of its own projects, Indian development cooperation can be more effective. Even though India's development support budget is lower than that of other donors, it can make a more significant impact, especially in the global south. At present, there is a huge amount of qualitative and quantitative data collected by implementing partners for certain large projects, which is not being used beyond the project period, and is mostly limited

to the disbursement of funds. Establishing broad monitoring and evaluation guidelines at the central level, followed by a more institutionalised setup to undertake country-specific monitoring exercises will facilitate more efficient aid projects.

DAC donors and NDDs have both influenced each other's aid giving principles and practices over the years. India's aid policy and programme have been shaped by its own experiences as a recipient state, its alliances with other southern developing countries before and during NAM, and its learnings from other donors — Asian donors, like Japan and China, as well as DAC donors. As a southern provider, these factors have helped India become more familiar with recipients' needs. This greater familiarity with these states and their people has helped it be a better and more flexible provider of aid, compared to other donors, especially in South Asia (studied in Chapters V and VI). India's decisions on sectors for which aid is provided has also been influenced by what other donors are doing in the recipient countries, apart from the needs of these recipient states. Furthermore, within these broad sectors, Indian support has been extended for the construction of infrastructure and developing technical capacities of the stakeholders' through grants, LoCs, concessional loans, and specialised training. This has ensured long-term benefits for the development of recipient states and is similar to what Japan and China do.

India's domestic policies appear to have become more influential on its aid practices in recent years (particularly post-2014). Domestic leaders have politically benefitted by highlighting India's contributions, or by pushing for contributions to specific causes (for example, politicisation of support to the Indian-origin Tamil community in Sri Lanka and supporting reconstruction of Hindu temples in Nepal as part of Indian post-disaster assistance on cultural heritage).

For a country that is actively seeking to be a development partner by determinedly reaching out to countries in the global south, the decision-making system needs to be quicker and more decentralised. Going by the experiences

shared by both Indian officials and relevant stakeholders in the case countries, decision-making has in fact become more centralised since 2016. Decentralising, and having ‘non-diplomatic’ or ‘non-political’ development experts in Indian diplomatic missions to bring development expertise into the process, from the planning to the implementation stage, will make aid giving and aid implementation better.

An Indian expert stated that the ‘different model of Indian development assistance’ is changing (as described in Chapter II) — this is valid to some extent, and it is also a more layered model than what has been stated in research work undertaken to date. India’s uniqueness lies not just in the way it provides aid at New Delhi level, but also how India implements its development assistance in recipient states. India’s policy and practices have remained much the same for some decades post-independence. Bilateral assistance policy and practice change at a slower pace than aid narratives. India continues to build relationships at three different levels. The welfare of transborder ethnic kin communities plays a deciding role in aid giving. Promoting shared history, cultures, and religions through aid is still seen as a common priority for South Asia. Large parts of Indian development cooperation, unlike Chinese assistance, are focused on rural areas, as can be seen in Sri Lanka and Nepal’s case (Appendixes J and K). As a developing country, India understands that investing in rural regions is important for states to achieve sustainable growth. While assessing aid narratives and attempting to understand them at a macro-level, data calculations, modalities, and interests are critical. Indian development partnership and those implementing it on the Indian side are flexible — adapting to changes, handholding, and guiding recipient states’ stakeholders (the policy community as well as the beneficiary communities) when asked for extra help and managing projects by working around internal political conditions and structural arrangements in recipient states.

There are contradictions between the policy narratives and actual policy practice. One example of this is the budget allocated for development assistance. The amount is significant compared to other components of the MEA budget,

reflecting the importance of development assistance for India's foreign policy. However, structurally, all governments and their bureaucracies have been slow in introducing and implementing changes in India's aid policy and programme. Even though development partnership divisions have been set up at MEA, there has been a lot of opposition to giving them more autonomy. Another example is India's push for being visible and showcasing itself as a regional and global player. The importance of gaining visibility for India's development cooperation increased considerably in the NDA II government's term, which started in 2014. It is also clear that countering Chinese development partnership is a critical factor in how India distributes its development assistance. Despite this, India had planned on working with China on joint development projects in Afghanistan (Parliament of India, 2018d). The other contradiction that is commonly mentioned, and which is very noticeable, is the inflow of aid into India and its own aid budget, which is somewhere around 40–60% of MEA's budget. India's development assistance (policy, programme, processes) is not just a reflection of the contradictions in the aid world — it also shows the path a developing country has to take to be recognised as a global player.

Though there are some issues with India's development cooperation, the success of its assistance programme is not because of the amount of aid India gives, which is relatively small compared to that of most donors, but is because of the country's approach, which includes following SSDC principles and adapting to recipient needs. Beyond its approach, the advantage India has in the regions it provides assistance to, is that it understands the problems in the recipient countries, through facing similar issues within its domestic sphere. The historical connections it shares with most of these countries as a post-colonial state also work in its favour while providing bilateral assistance. India's uniqueness lies in the processes and practices it follows while providing development assistance, and not in the larger narrative or aid policy.

8.5 Contributions of this thesis

This thesis fills a gap in the literature on India's relations with the rest of the world. At present there is limited academic research on Indian aid that looks at India's development partnership over an extended time period. This thesis, in an attempt to address this gap, also tackles the issues of empirical evidence from beyond the New Delhi level by looking at recipient perspectives. The two South Asian countries studied here are the third- and fourth-largest recipients of India's assistance programme and have been receiving Indian aid for the past six decades at least. What recipients think of Indian aid is important, along with what India says or does with its aid. The perspectives of stakeholders in recipient states help in understanding the processes, the nuances, and other details in a more in-depth way. Project beneficiaries who were interviewed for this thesis belonged to various communities; their experiences and perceptions are most often not taken into account when it comes to India's bilateral aid. This thesis addresses this gap.

Furthermore, understanding recipient countries' experiences also helps in mapping out their strengths and weaknesses. As stated earlier, a good donor needs a good recipient. This study has also been able to examine other understudied issues with respect to India's development cooperation, including the capacity of recipients, governance structures in place, internal conflict, other actors, and factors — both domestic and international — influencing aid receiving and aid implementation.

Theoretically and methodologically, the thesis contributes to existing works on bilateral aid by southern donors. On the theory front, this thesis contributes to understanding southern donors within the framework of two different theories — constructivism (connecting identities with aid interests) and development anthropology. In addition, it shows how a multidisciplinary approach can provide a better and more comprehensive understanding of foreign aid or development assistance giving and receiving, which has been highlighted by various other scholars. The IAD framework (discussed in Chapter III), which was customised for this research, enabled in organising the structure of the research, identify key actors and aspects, and list initial questions to ask the

interviewees and primary data to examine for empirical analysis. The framework helped in dissecting the complex aid architecture (in this case, India's) into different levels and sub-levels. The customised IAD framework here, can be used by scholars to undertake similar research. Methodologically, this thesis, by studying the perceptions and experiences of those involved in India's development cooperation at various points of time in the study period, helps in forming a broad universal understanding of India's development partnership policy and programme.

As a donor, India is different from northern donors; it should be assessed keeping this aspect in view. This thesis is an attempt to do precisely this. It is essential to study India from a global south perspective, because it is only then that the unique characteristics of Indian aid giving, and the reasons behind what India does as a donor state, can be understood better. Apart from highlighting the contradictions in bilateral aid, its complexities, and within this larger framework, the intricacies of India's development assistance and the challenges around it, this thesis also emphasises the point that while trying to understand a development partner, it is not just its aid budget that matters. What recipients think of donors, what factors shape their perceptions, who the key actors are, and how decisions are taken, are other important considerations while studying donors.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Country/region-wise aid given by India as per the MEA annual reports

Country/Region	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Bhutan	2030	1171.06	2640.5	3065.99	2919.4	5490	3,714.13	2650
Afghanistan	290	491.16	525	676	676	520	350	400
Others*	270.55	280.6	329.65	449.32	410.32	447.82	999.9	1090
Nepal	150	270	380	450	420	300	375	650
Sri Lanka	133	290	410	500	500	230	125	150
African Countries	124	237.5	250	350	200	290	330	200
Bangladesh	8	280	580	350	250	150	125	175
Myanmar	111.82	125	255	330	270	400	225	280
Maldives	273	30	10	25	25	40	245	125
Eurasian Countries	30	30	25	40	20	20	25	30
Latin American Countries**	0.5	27.61	5	30	15	15	25	20
Mongolia	2	1	1.5	2.5	2.5	5	5	5

Amount given in Indian Rupees Crores.

*Others include – others, Mauritius, Seychelles, Chahbahar Port – Iran. They have been put in others because they don't appear in all the years.

** GRULAC region – The Latin America and Caribbean Group

Appendix B: Table with factors that were considered for case selection for this research.

Variables Countries	Receiving funds from India at least for the last four decades	Transborder ethnic kin	Intra-state conflict in the last four decades (Uppsala Conflict Data Program)	Negotiating Capacity (self-analysis from limited readings)	India's rivalry with China	Bilateral tensions with India	Positive implications of aid that is known (self-analysis readings)	Advantages/Disadvantages
Afghanistan	X (since 2001)	X	✓	X	✓	X	✓	- War-torn country.
Bangladesh	✓ (since 1971)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	- Language (Bengali) - Approaching the govt. + Easy access through NGOs
Bhutan	✓ (since 1950s)	✓	X	X	✓	X	✓	- Large part of the aid goes for hydro-power projects – 3 completed , 4 more under construction + Language + Easy access through NGOs
Maldives	✓ (since 1965)	✓	X	✓	✓	X	✓	- Language (Dhivehi) - Approaching the govt. and the community
Nepal	✓ (since late 1940s)	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	- Approaching the govt. + Language (Hindi is understood by most of the population) + Easy access through NGOs + Multi-purpose development programs + First country to receive aid from India
Sri Lanka	✓ (since 1980s)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	- Approaching the govt. +Language (tamil) can understand most of it but cant speak + Easy access through NGOs + Multi-purpose development programs + Has been receiving aid from India for a long time.

Appendix C: Budget Allocation by MEA for various forms of partnership activities India undertakes (each colour represents one govt. term of 5 years each)

	1999-2000#	2000-01	2001-02#	2002-03#	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Total MEA budget*		2720.72			3410	3884.31	4182	4032.75	4783	6868.42	6333	7120	7,836	9662	11794	14730	14967	14967	14798.6	15011
1.A Contributions to International Organisations		32.27			42.1	61.5	122.62	117.93	123.96	1015.56	197.19	202.57	225.65	271.61	299.23	417.59	386.03	527.78	717.93	912.1
1.B Grant-in-Aid to Institutions (from 2000 to 2009 it was only for ICCR)		39.65			56.5	57.5	60.5	68.5	77	86.75	160.36	180.42	175.2	199.44	209.12	198.3	214.43	241.24	260.52	288.27
1.C Technical and Economic Cooperation		716.8			1025.64	1326.39	1594.72	1439.23	1656.11	1730.09	1936.29	2445.35	2391.87	3233.9	5411.7	6268.8	5708.2	5832.3	5093.77	5398.55
1.D Loans to Foreign Governments		437.33				298.88	278.4	35.2	48	914.6	422.5	472	1041	1838	1626.5	3166	3398.8	2675.5	1800.26	836.5

* The figures under 1 (1.A-1. D) are a few components of the of the total budget.

**The amounts are presented in Rupee crores, whereby one crore =10 million

Annual reports are not online.

Appendix D: Factors that facilitated India's identities

Identity	Some important factors that shaped or facilitated these identities (internal and external factors)	Period
Regional leader/power	Leading Member of the NAM	1961 onwards
	South-South Cooperation since the Colombo Plan	1950 onwards
	One of the sponsors of the Bandung Conference/ Asian-Africa Conference	April, 1955
	Winning the Indo-Pakistani War	1971
	India's role in Peacekeeping in Sri Lanka	Late 1980s
	Development aid to Afghanistan (fifth largest donor in the country)	Mid 2000s onwards
	India's role in facilitating in the brining of democracy in Nepal	1950s onwards to 2015
Global Player	One of the founding members of the United Nations	June 1945
	Democratic-liberal structure	Since 1992
	Growing economic power	Since late 1990s
	Nuclear tests and a responsible nuclear power	Pokhran I in May 1974 Pokhran II in May 1998
	Key role in Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief missions	2004 onwards

Appendix E: Categories of primary documents analysed for the research

1. 44 Standing Committee on External Affairs reports, action taken reports and demand for grants reports – taken from Lok Sabha website (http://loksabhaph.nic.in/Committee/reports_page.aspx?tab=6). The researcher went through them and selected parts which talked about aid, development assistance were picked up for analysis.
2. 703 speeches and statements from MEA website (the researcher scanned through 3077 speeches to get these speeches & statements published on MEA website from 1999 to 2019) – helped in understanding how executive body likes to be perceived by the audience/larger public.
3. 54 parliament questions and Answers from 2000 to 2019 April. The data was taken from MEA website, Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha website (typed in key words – development assistance, aid, Nepal, Sri Lanka to get these speeches).

Appendix F: List of Elite Interviews

Appendix F.1 List of interviews conducted in India

Interview details	Date of the meeting
Elite Interview 1, India (MEA, Delhi)	1st Feb 2019
Elite Interview 2, India (MEA, Delhi)	18th Feb 2019
Elite Interview 3, India (MEA, Delhi)	22nd Feb 2019
Elite Interview 4, India (MEA, Sri Lanka)	18 th Sept 2019
Elite Interview 5, India (MEA, Sri Lanka)	1 st Oct 2019
Elite Interview 6, India (Senior Retired Diplomat, MEA)	24 th Jan 2020
Interview 7 with Amb (Retd.) Ranjan Mathai, Former Foreign Secretary of India	31 st Jan 2020
Elite Interview 8, India (Senior Retired Diplomat, MEA)	5 th Feb 2020
Elite Interview 9, India (GoI officer)	5 th Feb 2020
Elite Interview 10, India (Senior Retired Diplomat, MEA)	11 th Feb 2020
Elite Interview 11, India (Senior Retired Diplomat, MEA)	24 th Feb 2020
Elite Interview 12, India (Senior Retired Diplomat, MEA)	14 th Sept 2020
Elite Interview 13, India (Indian expert on Nepal- India relations)	17 th Sept 2020
Elite Interview 14, India (Senior Retired Diplomat, MEA)	7 th Oct 2020
Elite Interview 15, India (MEA, Nepal)	8 th Oct 2020
Elite Interview 16, India (GoI officer)	23 rd Oct 2020
Elite Interview 17, India (MEA, Nepal)	7 th Jan 2021

Appendix F.2 List of interviews conducted in Sri Lanka

Interview details	Date of the meeting
Interview 1 with IP representative	16 th Sept 2019
Interview 2 with Sri Lankan bureaucrat from External Resources Dept	17 th Sept 2019
Interview 3 with NHDA representative	17 th Sept 2019
Interview 4 with Member of Parliament, Sri Lanka	19 th Sept 2019
Interview 5 with IP representative	23 rd Sept 2019
Interview 6 with representatives from the National Planning Commission	24 th Sept 2019
Interview 7 with Sri Lankan bureaucrats (Dept of Project Management and Monitoring)	25 th Sept 2019
Interview 8 with Sri Lankan diplomats	26 th Sept 2019
Interview 9 with Member of Parliament, Sri Lanka	27 th Sept 2019
Interview 10 with Member of Parliament, Sri Lanka	1 st Oct 2019
Interview 11 with district level NHDA representative	1 st Oct 2019
Interview 12 with Governor of the Northern Province	2 nd Oct 2019
Interview 13 with IP representative	8 th Oct 2019
Interview 14 with Housing Ministry representative	11 th Oct 2019
Interview 15 with IP representatives	15 th Oct 2019
Interview 16 with Former Foreign Affairs Secy. and former Northern Governor	16 th Oct 2019
Interview 17 with IP representatives	21 st Oct 2019
Interview 18 with representative from the National Policy and Economic Affairs	21 st Oct 2019
Interview 19 with bureaucrats Sri Lanka (Ministry of upcountry and department Ministry of North and Eastern development)	22 nd Oct 2019
Interview 20 with IP representative	23 rd Oct 2019

Appendix: F.3 List of interviews conducted in Nepal

Interview details	Date of the meeting
Elite Interview 1, Nepal (Senior officer, GoN)	11th Sept 2020
Elite Interview 2, Nepal (Officer, GoN)	15th Sept 2020
Elite Interview 3, Nepal (Officer, GoN)	19 th Sept 2020
Elite Interview 4, Nepal (Officer, GoN)	2 nd Oct 2020
Elite Interview 5, Nepal (Officer, GoN)	16th Oct 2020
Elite Interview 6, Nepal (Retired Senior Officer, GoN)	8th Nov 2020
Elite Interview 7, Nepal (Diplomat, GoN)	10th Nov 2020
Elite Interview 8, Nepal (Senior Retired Diplomat, GoN)	Dec 2020
Elite Interview 9, Nepal (Senior officer, GoN)	13th Dec 2020
Elite Interview 10, Nepal (Retired Senior Officer, GoN)	6th Jan 2021
Elite Interview 11, Nepal (IP representative)	6th Jan 2021
Elite Interview 12, Nepal (IP representative)	11th Jan 2021
Elite Interviews 13, Nepal (Two district level officials, GoN)	17th Jan 2021
Elite Interview 14, Nepal (District level official, GoN)	20th Jan 2021
Elite Interview 15, Nepal (Senior officer, GoN)	29th Jan 2021

Appendix G: List of villages visited

Appendix G.1: Villages in Sri Lanka in 2019

Province	District name	Implementing partner	Villages visited	Dates	No. of households met
Northern Province	Jaffna	IFCR/SLRC	Senthamizh Grama (houses handed over in Aug 2019), this might not be under the main housing project.	29 th Sept	Small group
			In and around Keerimalai (some houses handed over in 2013 and some in 2015)	30 th Sept	6
			Navatkuli	1 st Oct	0
	Kilinochchi	UN Habitat	Selva Nagar	4 th Oct	3
			Santhapuram	4 th Oct	6
			Puthumurippu	5 th Oct	6
	Vavuniya	NHDA	Salam Baikulam	6 th Oct	6
			Puthukulam	6 th Oct	2
			Thandi Kulam	6 th Oct	2
			Oyar Sinna Kulam	7 th Oct	1
Eastern Province	Batticaloa	Habitat for Humanity	Mangikaddu	8 th Oct	7
			Pethalai	9 th Oct	6
Total	4	4	11 (Excluding Navatkuli)		45

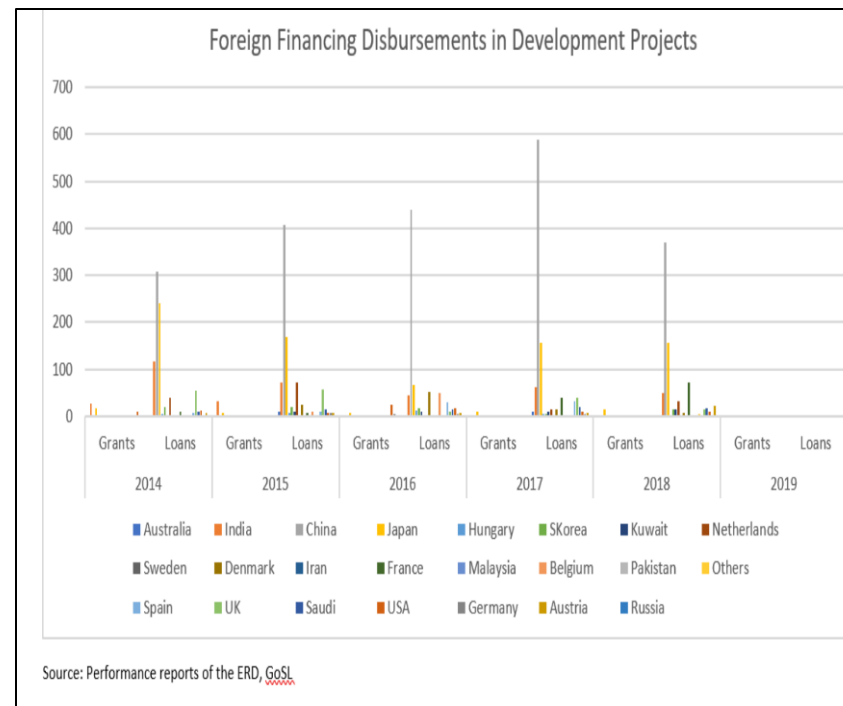
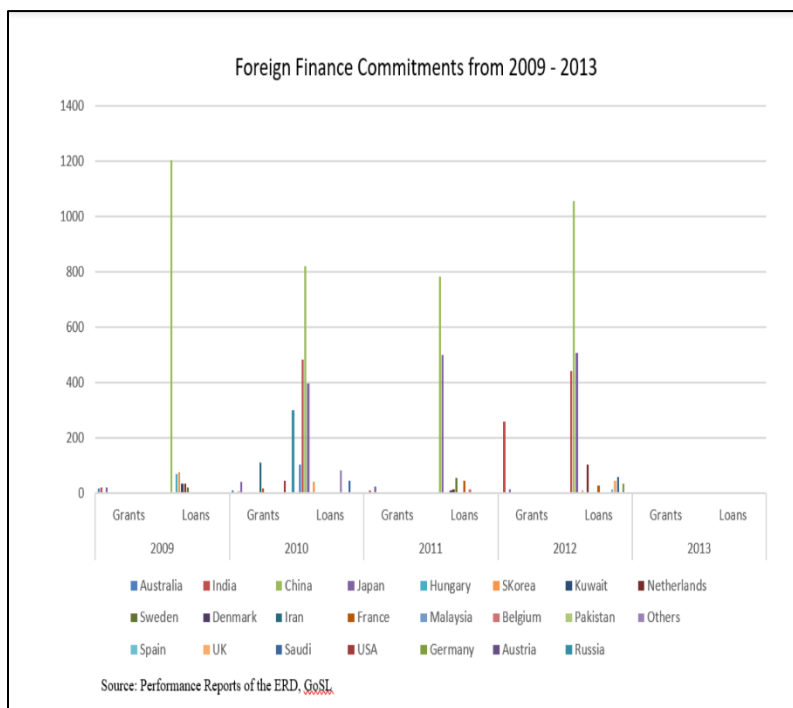
Appendix G.2: Villages visited in Nepal in 2021

District name	Village/Area name	Date	No. of households met
Gorkha	Phinam	13 th Jan	7 households
	Taklung village, Sahid Kalam	14 th Jan	6 households and a groups of men beneficiarites
	Ghya chok	15 th Jan	7 households
	Hattibout, Palungtar	16 th Jan	12 households
Nuwakot	Ward 9, Belkotgadhi municipal area (Jiling)	21 st Jan	10 households
	Chiurivanjyang, ward 5, Deurali	22 nd Jan	10 households
	Nuwakot and Devi Ghat	23 rd Jan	8 households
	Kharanitar (old ward number 7 and 5)	24 th Jan	7 households
Total	9 areas		67 households

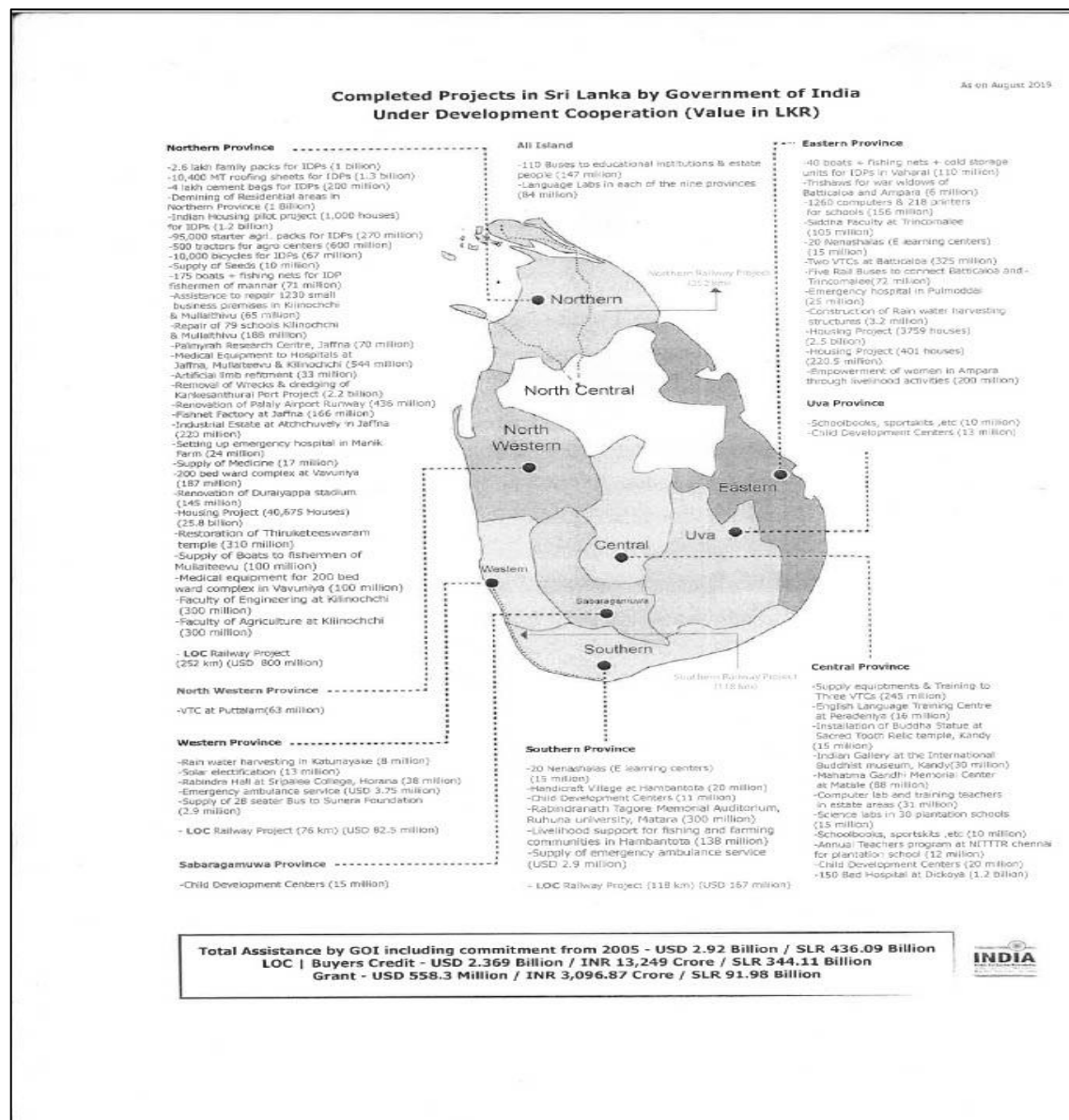
Appendix H: Broad questions asked during the interviews

Sub-questions	Key questions that were asked	Tools for analysis	Source of data	Time frame
1. How does India view itself as a development assistance partner, and what factors shape that narrative?	- Is it important for the country to be seen as a development partner, and why? - Who are the key stakeholders and networks involved in the assistance programme? - What drives India's assistance policy and practices? - How are aid policy and practices decided by the MEA? - What are the criteria for providing support to a particular country or project? - What are the expected outcomes of the assistance that the country provides? - What is the process of providing assistance and then monitoring and evaluating it? - How have the roles of policymakers, parliamentary bodies and elected representatives shaped the policy and practice? - Has the approach changed over time and over different governments, and what have been the critical changes? - What are the external and domestic factors that play a role in aid giving?	Content analysis and thematic analysis	44 Parliamentary Standing Committee reports on External Affairs (including Action Taken reports, Demand for Grants reports) 703 Speeches and Statements from the MEA website 54 Parliamentary questions and answers - Interviews with current and former diplomats/bureaucrats/officials - Interviews with Indian officials in Nepal and Sri Lanka	1999 to 2019
2. How do recipient countries view India's bilateral assistance (grants) at the operational /implementation level?	- Why do they think India is supporting projects in their respective countries? - What kind of support is India providing and are there any changes that they would like it to make? - How has the experience of implementing Indian-supported projects been? - What impacts have the Indian-aided projects had at the macro (country) and micro (community) levels? - What are the external and domestic factors that play a role in receiving aid?	Within-case analysis as a method, and thematic analysis	- Interviews with government officials - Expert interviews	2009 to 2019
3. How do project beneficiaries view India's support to them?	- What have been the outcomes of the project? - Why do they think they got the support of the Indian government? - Who were the key people they were in communication with when the project was being implemented? - What roles did these people play, and how did it affect them?	Hermeneutic phenomenology	Interviews with beneficiary communities	2011 to 2019

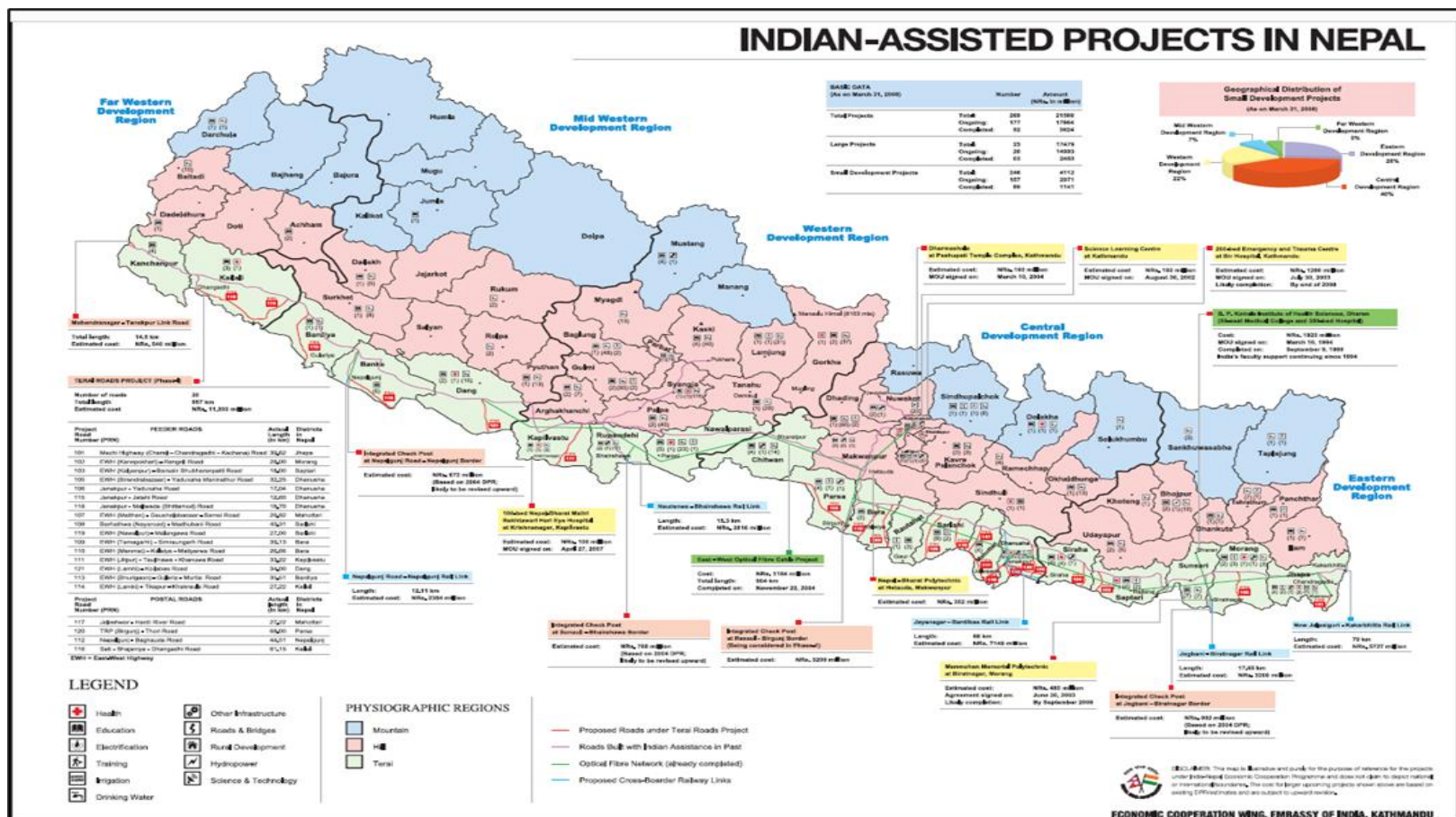
Appendix I: Countries supporting Sri Lanka from 2009 to 2019



Appendix J: Indian projects completed from 2005 to 2019 (Source: the Indian High Commission official in Colombo, 2020)



Appendix K: Indian supported projects in Nepal



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