

**Heritage as a tool of diplomacy:
A case study of Narendra Modi-XI Zingping Meet at Mahabalipuram**

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Diplomacy has to renovate its tools to be relevant from time to time. It has many traditional tools like negotiations, bargaining and the newly found tool of “Heritage-Meet” etc. The Prime Minister of India Mr. Narendra Modi has experimented with the venues of formal/informal meetings with important world leaders; instead of New Delhi, he is inviting these leaders to the remote heritage sites of India. It is a major diplomatic shift that the leaders of the two most populace nations decided to meet a remote temple town of Tamil Nadu in October 2019. This type of heritage diplomacy started with the visit of Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s Varanasi visit and carried forward with the visit of Angela Merkel at Bengaluru and was also seen in the previous visit of XI at Ahmedabad.

Tamil Nadu has historical links with China as Chinese traveler Huiyen Tsang visited the region during the rule of the Pallava dynasty. It is also said that Bodhidharma, who is credited with taking Zen Buddhism to China, travelled from the Tamil Nadu coast to Guangzhou. This shows that the purpose of choosing the heritage site for the meeting was much more profound than it looks. The heritage connects history with the present and also highlights the economic relations between India and China, which gave a background to bilateral talks. This paper dwells into the issue of utilizing heritage for foreign policy purposes and how heritage can be a tool for diplomacy by selecting a case study of Indo-China Meet.

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