### Chinese life in Myanmar today

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OVER THE PAST FEW DECADES, while Western democracies sought to limit the reach of links that their people had with Myanmar, the Chinese government adopted a proactive policy of engaging with Myanmar and encouraged its own people to do the same. This policy created a position of leadership for some Chinese in the Myanmar economy, and also gave Chinese governments, whether in Yunnan or Beijing, a better chance to exert influence over the military rulers of Myanmar. Therefore, the idea that Myanmar was ‘closed’ or ‘isolated’ during the 1988 crackdown on pro-democracy protestors until the general election of 2010 misses the manyreeze of the streets—of the Chinese side of the border and of the border towns—were already busy. The most important Yen Bai-Hanoi road was treacherous. A continuous line of container trucks marked ‘China Shipping’, cars, motorcycles, and pedestrians navigate a narrow combination of two-lane roadways, paved roads and dirt tracks.

Apart from the question of whether the road infrastructure meets the criteria of being an economic corridor and its ability to connect Yunnan province with the Lao Cai in Northern Vietnam and both countries are working to establish a 1,208km ‘North-South Economic Corridor’ from China’s Yunnan province to Vietnam’s southern provinces and cities. In 2014, we travelled from Kunming to Hanoi through this China-Vietnam economic corridor highway to observe how resource and merchant trade, capital and people flows are conducted at an everyday level, and found that only certain stretches of the highway—on the Chinese side of the border and of the border towns—were already busy. The most important Yen Bai-Hanoi road was treacherous. A continuous line of container trucks marked ‘China Shipping’, cars, motorcycles, and pedestrians navigate a narrow combination of two-lane roadways, paved roads and dirt tracks.

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