

Role of Soft Power in India's Foreign Policy

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Abstract

The article focuses on power and its ramifications which has always been the central point in all security studies in international relations. Power is a crucial element of international relations that influences world affairs. As a result, power plays a significant role in foreign policy formulation. Realism is the dominant theory of international relations, and it revolves around the concept of power. Power can come in a variety of forms and implies the capacity to influence others to do what one wants. There are two types of power: hard power and soft power. These two types of power influence international politics, security, economy, and foreign policy. Whereas hard power derives from a country's military or economic might, soft power derives from the attractiveness of its culture, political ideals, and policies. In international relations, soft power is just as important as hard power. This paper argues that soft power is one dimension of power that refers to one's ability to persuade others to do something. Different countries place a high value on soft power in today's international politics. In international relations, the concept of soft power discourse emerged in the early 1990s. This article also argues that foreign policy of a country consists of self-interest strategies. It contains a general objective that guides the activities and relationship of one state in its interaction with other states. This paper intends to explain and analyze India's foreign policy on the ideas of friendly relations, international cooperation, and peaceful coexistence among all nations, regardless of their political systems. Maintaining national security, advancing democracy, fostering world peace, providing aid, and establishing open trade are the main objectives of India's foreign policy. The purpose of this paper is to theorize the dynamics of soft power in international relations and to analyze India's soft power potential. In recent years soft power has become an important tool for governments to achieve their foreign policy goals. India, a country with rich sources of soft power, has made great efforts to use this capacity to achieve its foreign policy goals. Among Indian leaders Narendra Modi has paid considerable attention to the capacity of soft power in India's foreign policy.

Keywords: Cultural Diplomacy, Foreign Policy, International Relations, Peaceful Coexistence, Soft Power

Introduction

The concept of soft power is derived from the works of Hans J. Morgenthau, Klaus Knorr, and Ray Cline in the nineteenth century. It was developed and coined by American Political Scientist Joseph S. Nye in his book, *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power* (1990). He has further explained the concept in his book, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (2004), where he also elaborated on the concept of smart power further conceptualizing it in *The Future of Power* (2011). He defined it as 'the ability to alter the behavior of others to get what you want, preferably through attraction rather than coercion or payment'. He also asserts that soft power consists of three elements: culture, ideology, and foreign policy.

Soft power is a strategy for boosting cultural and economic influence without resorting to direct military action (Bell 2015). It is already the essential component of a nation's overall power. It can strengthen a nation's capacity to have an impact on world affairs as well as the cohesion and resolve of its citizens. It can influence other states

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and individuals through policy, regulation, opinion, and action. As Pallaver points out, "... soft power as developed by Professor Nye is neither an evolution (or involution according to some commentators) nor a substitute for hard power. Soft power is simply another form of power" (Pallaver 2011: 87). It is based on the ability to influence the preferences of others. It is generated and promoted by both governments and non-governmental actors. It is also crucial in the new world of diplomacy.

In addition to soft power, strategies are important in today's international structure. Initially, soft power was thought to be co-optive behavioral power, or the ability to persuade others to do what one wants. Constructivists in international relations recognized the impact of ideas and norms, similar to soft power. Many key elements that Nye considers to be soft power are found in constructivist ideas of power in international relations (Lee 2009). Lee claims in his soft power analysis that his soft power theory is built on three steps: (1) classification of various types of soft power in international relations; (2) distinction between Nye's and my conceptions of soft power by distinguishing between soft resources and hard resources; (3) soft power theories have been diverted from soft resources (Lee 2009).

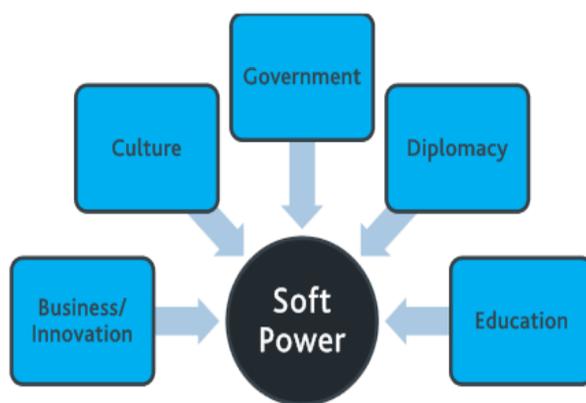
Nye's introduction of the concept of soft power provided new insights into some previously unknown aspects of international relations (Lee 2009). Using Nye's insights, Gil contends that soft power primarily applies to states and their behavior at the state-to-state level of world politics (Gil 2017). Soft power is a tool used to enlist support from other nations for effective foreign policies. It is also used to manipulate perceptions and preferences of other countries. It promotes community cohesion across the nations. In contrast to hard power, soft power emphasizes the character of the power being used (Lee 2009).

Although Nye was the first to coin and define the term "soft power", the concept can be understood through the works of many other international relations theorists. For example, even a hard-core realist like Morgenthau recognized the importance of statesmanship in enhancing power and gaining overall superiority over other countries. Nye has developed a new conceptual approach to soft power based on a realistic description of power politics for understanding international relations and analyzing foreign policies in the post-Cold War era (Ding 2010). The idea of soft power has mostly focused on the political ideas of the so-called bourgeoisie since the early 1990s.

Sources of India's Soft Power

India has a vast array of soft power assets, including civilizational values, a rich cultural legacy, music and art, pluralism, a democratic ethos, spirituality and yoga, science and technology, and, perhaps most significantly, a lively diaspora that has spread India around the globe. Soft power assets are often immaterial and comprise ideas, information, beliefs, and culture that have a lasting impact on society but are challenging to observe.

Fig. 1: Component Parts of Soft Power¹



(Source: McClory 2011: 10).

Government, culture, diplomacy, education, business/innovation, and other factors are all considered when evaluating each nation's soft power. A society's norms and customs that add value to it can be thought of as its

¹This figure has been taken from McClory, Jonathan (2011), *The New Persuaders II A 2011 Global Ranking of Soft Power*, London: Institute for Government. Joseph Nye (2004) has expanded the pillars of a country's soft power to five major categories: government, culture, diplomacy, education, and business/innovation, which comprise the soft power index.

culture in the context of soft power. Culture has a significant impact on developing soft power. It can help a country's image, which in turn affects its soft power (McClory 2011). The appeal of the nation is increased by a sustainable domestic governance model that includes transparency, justice, and liberty. Importing international students is a crucial part of the nation's public diplomacy strategy. The exchange of foreign students has 'ripple effects' on those who are not directly involved. A key factor in this situation is education. When it comes to rules, liberal policies, and the extent of creativity, business and innovation are aimed at a nation's economic model. Though it might be challenging to distinguish between the components of soft power and hard power, economic resources can produce soft power. The elements of soft power are shown in the above figure (McClory 2011).

In this context, India's cultural outreach initiatives are insignificant in comparison to those of the British Council, the Goethe-Institut in Germany, the Institute of International Affairs in Japan, and the Global Network of Confucius Institutes in China. China in particular has proven that it is superior in terms of soft power as well as in terms of the economy, military, and politics. Notably, it places higher than India on the Global Soft Power Index.

I. Indian Cultural Traits and Practices

The culture of a country is a significant source of soft power. It must encourage communication and engagement between individuals from various walks of life on a global scale. Cultural ties are important for advancing the democratic processes in civil society, for preventing conflict and finding peaceful solutions to it, for maintaining interpersonal trust, and for encouraging cultural cooperation in unfavorable circumstances. Cultural institutions, popular culture, and the media all play important roles in soft power promotion. Cultural diplomacy is a new field that encompasses a wide range of nations, ethnic groups, political and social structures, and cultural norms. The existence of cultural diplomacy contradicts the concept of soft power. Soft power is defined by its impact, exchange, and the formation of cross-cultural relationships. This necessitates communication, exchange, and a mutual interest in different cultures.

India's growing global presence, combined with deeper relationships in the cultural, economic, and diplomatic domains of international affairs, gives it an advantage over others. The cultural diplomacy campaign was launched in order to carve a new identity for India in the global cultural landscape. India's culture has drawn interest from all around the world as a result of its lengthy history of glory, which has given it a rich heritage. Indian diplomats have played a significant role in improving India's soft power assets and reputation. India practices a wide variety of cultures. India has a long history of civilizational, historical, and cultural exchanges with distant nations including South East Asia, the Mediterranean, the Gulf, Africa, and Europe. For centuries, its wealth and prosperity have influenced traders and migrants. India, also known as the Land of Buddha, is a spiritual home for Buddhists from all over the world.

There are various elements that comprise the culture of India such as Indian clothing and fashion, Indian cuisines, Indian festivals, Indian films, religion and spiritualism, yoga and ayurveda, Indian diaspora, media, tourism, cricket and sports diplomacy, and technology especially software. These elements are briefly discussed below.

A. Indian Clothing and Fashion

The body and clothing have an intimate relationship. It gives the body its external covering and makes the body visible to the outside world. It is determined and impacted by a number of variables, including geography, economic situation, age, level of education, and other social factors. The sari is the most common form of Indian clothing. Saris are available in a variety of sizes and colors, depending on how they will be used.

On the other hand, fashion is a broad term that includes more than just apparel and includes things like hairstyles, accessories, and more. Different people have various viewpoints about fashion. A society's values change as a result of fashion trends, which also shape their culture and ideas. Instead of restricting ourselves to the concepts of European or Western fashion, the concept of fashion can be divided into elite and daily fashion. Fashion is visible in society, but it also has sociological significance.

B. Indian Cuisines

Another important aspect of India's soft power, which is growing in popularity around the world, is its cuisine. An Indian restaurant can be easily located in many locations. It is amazing how many restaurants have Indian names in various South Asian nations. Additionally, Indian spices have made their way into a lot of non-Indian families worldwide. Indian cuisines like samosas, chaat, chicken tikka, masala dosa, curries, and many others have become popular worldwide. The popularity of Indian cuisine in Western nations has led to the establishment of several

Indian restaurants around the world. Despite the fact that Indian cuisine is popular and enjoyed worldwide, many people are unaware of how unique it is compared to other cultures.

C. Indian Festivals

Festivals play a significant role in human heritage and culture. It is a social activity that fosters interpersonal relationships, brings the community together, and builds social identity and social capital. Many other countries, including England, France, Japan, and Russia, observe Indian festivals. This helps to raise awareness of India's culture. Festivals have also aided in the promotion of tourism in India. Furthermore, the festival is influenced by its economic conditions, venue amenities, media coverage, local or regional culture, festival locations, etc. As a result, festivals serve as an important cultural component. Food, dress, and decorations are necessary elements for celebrating Indian festivals. The Indian diaspora observes a number of festivals, including Dussehra, Diwali, Guru Nanak Jayanti, Holi, Makar Sankranti, Navaratri, Pongal, and Ratha Yatra. These events are closely followed by the Indian community.

D. Indian Films

Since the 1930s, Indian films have been enjoyed in various countries around the world, but it is only since the 1990s that Bollywood² has had an impact on global popular culture. Indian music and films have a large share of the international market and have proven to be a dominant factor in the promotion of Indian culture, particularly in Asia, Europe, Africa, and West Asia. Indian film and music have a significant impact on South Asia. Today, Indian films are screened around the world at the same time as they are in India, and its actors are well-known figures in the advertising and entertainment industries on a global scale.

Even people who know nothing about India have probably heard of the 'Three Khans'³. Bollywood maintains close ties with India's Foreign Ministry. It contributes to the formulation of foreign policy and works to improve India's image abroad by exporting Indian cultural products. In addition, Bollywood, India's well-known film industry, helped establish the value of soft power in achieving the country's foreign policy goals. In a nutshell, these are some of the most iconic instances of India using its soft power to advance its foreign policy. As a result, the globalization of the Indian film industry has played an important role in promoting India's soft power in international relations.

E. Religion and Spiritualism

India is a secular country in which all religions are treated equally. Religions in India define the way of living life. It teaches many ethics and virtues, such as forgiveness, truthfulness, courage, nonviolence, non-possessiveness, and many others, in order to live a happy and peaceful life. People in India follow a variety of religions, including Christianity, Buddhism, Jainism, Zoroastrianism, Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism, and Judaism. People of various religions coexist peacefully, harmoniously, and respectfully in India. Although every religion in India is practiced differently, they all share certain core values.

Indian spirituality has made a great contribution to the world since many years ago. Both the people of the subcontinent and the rest of the world are extremely interested in and concerned about the religious legacy of the country. In the past, Buddha has long played a prominent role in India's connection with the world. Many individuals all around the world have been impacted by Indian spirituality and its preachers have traveled the globe to spread mysticism and yoga. The spirituality of India is crucial in times of conflict and struggle. India is incredibly tolerant of other religions and cultures.

F. Yoga and Ayurveda

Yoga is an ancient practice developed in India to help people control their physical, mental, and spiritual minds. It is a Sanskrit word. It means 'to unite', implying the unification of body and mind. Despite the fact that yoga is practiced in many ways around the world, it is the tool that brings people together. Yoga is a powerful tool for promoting the Indian way of life and aids in presenting India as a peaceful, non-aggressive nation. It is another important soft power tool in India's arsenal, with millions of enthusiastic practitioners around the world. As a result, yoga gains the power of attraction and becomes an important cultural export from India.

²Bollywood has one of the biggest film industries in the world. It is situated in Mumbai. It is also referred to as Hindi cinema. The realm of Bollywood is greatly expanded by the large number of regional films that are also produced in regional languages. Indian culture has gained popularity throughout the world because of Bollywood.

³Most commonly, this involves the Three Khans: Salman Khan, Aamir Khan and Shah Rukh Khan. The three were all born in 1965, despite the fact that they were unrelated and had the same last name. They are regarded as the most prominent and long-lasting movie stars in Indian cinema history because of their popularity and longevity.

Ayurveda has its origins in the history of its civilization and culture. It was considered as one of the most organized systems of medicine. Ayurveda, with its power of natural remedy and lack of side effects, is attracting many people around the world to this system of medicine. To achieve soft power goals, it is important to raise awareness of the effectiveness and accessibility of Indian medical systems both within India and abroad. As a result, the Indian government must take a more serious and proactive approach to promoting ayurveda. Yoga and ayurveda are two of India's major contributions to the world.

G. Indian Diaspora

The Indian diaspora is a significant soft power asset. It has the ability to contribute significantly to India's progress and development. It has grown into a significant and vital component of India's soft power, helping to shape, establish, and uphold favorable connections between their host and native nations. The success of the Indian diaspora can be attributed to its rich cultural heritage, civilizational values and ethos, and propensity for cooperation. India has to use its soft power assets more effectively both at home and among its diaspora. India's soft power has increased as a result of the diaspora's economic successes, particularly in Western developed countries.

H. Media

The media has a significant impact on our lives. One of the most important functions of mass media is the broadcast of news and announcements. It keeps us up to date on the latest news, trends, and even daily weather forecasts. Mass media and popular culture are frequently linked to soft power, as well as the spread of a national language. Particularly, it was found that the reputation and image of other countries were greatly influenced by the news from other countries. The growing influence of social media is altering the dynamics of soft power around the world. In other words, as the media evolved, so did the structures of both the domestic and international systems, which influenced foreign policy indirectly. As a result of social media's rapid growth, Indian political leaders have created incredible personal brands that brilliantly combine personal passions, nationalist pride, and strategic positioning. Perhaps the best example of the phenomenon is Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's online presence.

I. Tourism

India has a large number of tourist destinations because it is the birthplace of three major religions⁴ and the world's oldest civilization. Buddhism spread from its ancient Indian origins to China, Southeast Asia, and other parts of the world. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi uses Buddhist diplomacy to advance his foreign policy objectives. Two of their primary goals are to counteract Chinese soft power and promote religious tourism in India. The tourist destinations in India encourage the visits of people all over the world showcasing the uniqueness of our cultural heritage. The tourism sector has become a flourishing industry generating resources.

There are forty UNESCO world heritage sites located in India. India continues to be ranked sixth in the world in terms of the number of cultural heritage sites. Some popular ones are *Konark Sun Temple*, *Agra Fort*, *Ajanta Caves*, *Taj Mahal*, *Virupaksha Temple*, *Vittala Temple*, *Hazara Rama Temple*, *Palace of Vira Hariharu*, *Hampi Bazaar*, *Queen's Bath*, *Lotus Mahal and Archaeological Museum etc.* *Konark Sun Temple* was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in India in 1984. In different regions of India, visitors will be enthralled by the natural beauty, serene settings, history and architecture, spirituality, and other things. All of these elements persuade tourists to travel to India for a memorable experience.

J. Cricket and Sports Diplomacy

One specific form of culture that plays a pivotal role in augmenting the image of countries is sport. Physical fitness, accompanied by a country's success at major international sport events, can substantially increase its attractiveness and soft power (Kugiel 2017: 72). Sports, especially cricket, have played a very positive role in our diplomacy. The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) as a rich cricket body has been helping many countries like Nepal, West Indies, and Gulf countries in building their cricket infrastructure. In fact cricket diplomacy had worked during Pervez Musharraf's time. For India, cricket has proven to be a powerful source of soft power. The so-called "cricket diplomacy" has significantly improved relations between India and Pakistan. Additionally, it has been used to indicate preparedness for negotiations. In 2008, an Islamist terrorist organization with a base in Pakistan launched coordinated attacks in Mumbai, causing significant damage to bilateral relations. Three years later, the leaders of both countries gathered in Mohali, India, to watch the Cricket World Cup semi-

⁴Buddhism, Hinduism, and Jainism.

final game. Following the meeting, high-level diplomatic discussions helped to reduce residual tensions between the two countries.

K. Technology especially Software

Indians are abroad for their superb technological skills. Their mastery in software is unparalleled. Software is a knowledge-based industry. For it to succeed, it requires a group of highly qualified experts. India has discovered a huge opportunity in the IT revolution as a key environment for specialized software development. India was the most prosperous and active global center for IT development at the start of the 1990s. The Indian technology sector's main engine was thought to be the software industry. In recent decades, technology has grown significantly and has integrated with India. This has led to the expansion of well-known software development companies in India. These software firms serve both Indian and international clients. As a result, Indian software engineers are now more respected on the global market. As a result, technology has added to India's soft power.

Impact of Soft Power on India's Foreign Policy

In recent years, soft power has become an essential part of foreign policy for all nations. Foreign policy in any country consists of self-interest strategies chosen by the state to protect national interests and achieve goals on the international stage. Foreign policy is shaped, powered and constrained by four factors: history, geography, capability, and leadership. And, within all of these factors, identity plays a significant role in foreign policy. In order to adapt to the newly emerging trends in international relations, India has made several changes in its foreign policy since 1990. India's foreign policy is characterized by both continuity and change. The development of mutually beneficial economic ties, a greater willingness to uphold international law, the peaceful resolution of disputes, and the recognition of the need to address non-traditional and transnational security issues like terrorism, international crime, and escalation are just a few examples of the many facets of India's foreign policy that show its soft power (Gill and Huang 2006).

India has a long history of using soft power. For centuries, India has projected its soft power. Actually, even today, the leaders of many different countries around the world are drawn to India's soft power assets and its values. In addition, for the rise of the Indian nation, thinkers and freedom fighters like Mahatma Gandhi, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Swami Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo, and Jawaharlal Nehru frequently emphasized the synthesis of various cultures and values. Many individuals, including Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Swami Vivekananda, and others, were instrumental in spreading India's soft power around the world. More importantly, India has popularized Gandhi's Nonviolence and Jawaharlal Nehru's Non-Alignment Movement at the international level through political and ethnic heritage. They can still be regarded as soft power assets of India's foreign policy because these principles and practices are still applicable in contemporary international relations (Srinivas 2019).

India's soft power can be divided into several categories. The first is India's extensive cultural and spiritual legacy, which has aided in the development of ties with other nations. Even before political scientists began to study the idea, India has demonstrated its soft power potential for a number of years. India has employed both hard power and soft power in the past, at various times. The majority of nations in the modern period employ a mix of hard power and soft power, collectively known as "smart power". Smart power is neither hard nor soft; it is both. It combines both hard and soft elements. Recently, India has mixed soft and hard power resources to develop a smart power strategy. In other words, India, like other states, "deploys a blend of coercive, persuasive and commercial instruments" in its foreign policy (Bajpai and Pant 2013). Additionally, India still has a lot of soft power potential. India is the only country with growing economic clout on the international stage whose soft power as a policy has been successful, despite numerous attempts by various administrations to adopt various soft power facets (Maini 2016).

Since Prime Minister Narendra Modi took office, India's foreign policy has changed to be more strategic and pragmatic, taking into account the kind of situation that is typical in current international relations. Now, the world appears even more chaotic. As a result, India had to balance its foreign policy in order to maintain its bilateral and multilateral ties with regional and international powers. As a result, the emergence of Prime Minister Modi as a charismatic and populist figure has redefined India's foreign policy through the use of soft power at both the regional and global levels. Consequently, India's foreign policy has demonstrated the importance of soft power (Srinivas 2019).

India could be regarded as one of the nation's having significant soft power potential. India would become a more equitable and effective society, a worldwide economic power, a country whose society is founded on the idea of

equality, and a nation whose economy has a larger proportion of the wealth created by international trade and investment. India is making bold use of its cultural, diaspora, media, yogic, educational, tourism, and other assets in its foreign policy. Additionally, both the present and previous governments in India have implemented numerous initiatives and programmes to increase the use of soft power tools. “Make in India” is a prime example of a current government initiative. With the tagline “Come, Make in India”, the “Make in India” programme consists of numerous facilities and initiatives.

The international standing of the nation and inter-actor communication are key factors in the success of soft power. By combining contemporary soft power elements, Prime Minister Narendra Modi is currently creating new trends in Indian diplomacy. The Narendra Modi administration has launched a number of soft power initiatives to improve India’s international reputation. Make in India is an example of a programme that promotes domestic production. While the Swachh Bharat Mission prohibits open defecation, sanitation is also improved. Atmanirbhar Bharat translates as “self-sufficient India”. It serves as a guiding principle for the Modi administration’s goals of increasing India’s productivity, competitiveness, and economic resilience. In order to highlight and use India’s soft power in international affairs, there has been an increase in activism as part of the promotion of India’s foreign policy.

The Modi government has put a lot of money into programmes and resources since 2014 in order to improve India’s capacity for soft power diplomacy. These programmes include increasing the number of embassies abroad, rekindling ties with regional groups like ASEAN, BIMSTEC, and SAARC, and bolstering strategic, cultural, diplomatic, and economic ties with countries in Eastern and South Asia through the Look East Policy, Act East Policy, and Neighborhood First Policy. It can take some time for these efforts to start to have an effect. However, they are all intended to advance international relations, which would be advantageous to India both strategically and commercially. The well-known Indian leader who has shown fervent support for this objective is Modi. He may have a point when he emphasizes the value of soft power.

Historically, India’s soft power was directed mostly at Asia (Thussu 2013). The establishment of an Asian century based on “Vikasvaad” which would bring peace and unity to the continent, is one goal of the Modi government’s foreign policy. Asia, the largest continent in the world, has struggled with significant internal tensions in addition to experiencing cutting-edge economic growth and development. One of the best methods to foster peace and prevent conflict is through cultural links and affiliations. Indian cultural diplomacy is to spread the message of harmony, brotherhood, prosperity, and peaceful coexistence. Modi has been to many nations throughout his presidency in an effort to improve relations with other nations. During his visit to the United States, Modi maintained his popularity among Americans of Indian descent.

Conclusion

Soft power distinguishes between the resources and the outcomes in terms of national resources. In this sense, the purpose of instruments of foreign policy like financial aid, cultural diplomacy, and public diplomacy can be better understood. Soft power has the potential to be very influential in the formulation and execution of foreign policies, aiding the nation in making wise choices. By assisting in understanding how far nations use their soft power capabilities in the creation and execution of their foreign policies, it enhances a nation’s overall capability.

In conclusion, it can be said that soft power plays a significant role in India’s foreign policy making. India’s culture, civilizational values, films, yoga, diaspora etc. are focused on by our foreign policy makers. India has a huge soft power source and India needs to use it in a wider and more proactive manner. India’s soft power strengthens its impact on politics, economy, and culture while creating such power. At the international level, India is in a position that is comparatively more favorable. However, India needs to develop and advance further in terms of soft power – diplomacy.

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