

## ANALYSING INDIA'S SOFT POWER IN ITS NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICY

By

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### Abstract

*This paper is not about the strength of India's soft power but also analyzing how such a capacity is being transformed into capabilities and observes its practical implementation in Indian foreign policy. This paper leads to investigate the agenda-setting role of India's soft power regarding its foreign policy. This paper has been undertaken in pursuit of the following objectives: to analyzing the evolution of power in Indian foreign policy and explain: the subsequent shift from soft power to hard power and smart power approaches; to evaluate the effectiveness of new strategies in foreign policy: and to examine limitations and suggest- ways flourishing of soft power.*

**Keywords:** *soft power, india, foreign policy, diplomacy, south asia*

### Introduction

Soft Power is a concept developed by Joseph Nye of Harvard University to describe the ability to attract, and co-opt rather than coerce, use force or give money as a means of persuasion. In his book "Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics" (2004), Nye mentioned that soft power is the ability to shape the preferences of others through appeal and attraction. A defining feature is that it is non-coercive. The currency of soft power is culture, political values and foreign politics. Recently, the term has also been used in changing and influencing social and public opinion through relatively less transparent channels and lobbying through the powerful political and non-political organization.

Joseph Nye points out in his article published in 1990 titled 'Soft Power' that the

relevance of hard power in the international system is declining. He points out several factors like economic interdependence, transnational actors, nationalism in weak states, the spread of technology and changing political issues, which made the hard power of a nation appear less significant.

The term soft power is now widely used in international affairs by analysts and statesman. For example, U.S.A. Secretary of defense Robert Gates spoke of the need to enhance American soft power by, "dramatic increasing spending on the civilian instruments of national security-diplomacy, strategic communications, foreign assistance, civic action and economic reconstruction and development." (Nye Joseph, 1990).

## Sources of India's Soft Power

India has always been a country with tremendous 'soft power'. India's soft power is very high in the countries of South Asia due to shared heritage and civilization and they one now called its 'Civilizational Neighbours'. Unlike the other emerging Asian powers like China and Japan, India has a unique advantage in these countries. (Uma Purushothaman 2010). India does not have a major border dispute with any of them. India have tremendous potential for soft power because of its culture and civilization like-its large Diaspora, popular films, music, art, yoga, democracy, and cultural links with several countries around the world all contribute to its soft power. Malone.M.David (2001) in his article 'Soft Power in Indian Foreign Policy' mentioned that 'Indian foreign policy has been based on moral values from the time of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, who stands out as a figure of tremendous influence, even today' (Malone, 2011). Prime Minister Nehru support Anti-colonialism, Anti-racialism, Panchasheel, Non-alignment, Regional Cooperation, Firm faith on the U.N.O and Commonwealth of Nations.

Cultural Diplomacy is a salient dimension of countries soft power. The international impact of India's soft power was felt long before the term found a place in popular parlance in the 21st century currently, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been creating new waves in the area of Indian diplomacy by combining new elements of soft power. P.M Modi has sought to embed India's political values in its larger geopolitical

calculus and has put special emphasis on the idea that India can be the "Vishwa Guru" or World Teacher. During the Kathmandu visit P.M Modi Speech on "Buddha" and "Yuddha" captured the essence of contemporary political dynamics in Nepal, where the Maoists returned to the mainstream after a violent civil war. A Month later, he articulated in Tokyo his concept of "Expansionism and Developmentalism" (Mohan, 2015). P.M Modi, like some of his predecessors, often invokes the centuries old Indian Idea of 'Vasudeva Kutumbkam' the entire world is a family to underline India's enduring commitment to Universalism. P.M Modi's policy 'Sabka Sath Sabka Viswas' building prosperity, created peace and stability in the Asian continent. Cultural bonding can be one of the ways to prevent conflict and promote peace. Indian cultural diplomacy seeks to spread the message of peace, brotherhood, coexistence, and prosperity.

Indian spirituality has had a global presence for a long time. One of its manifestations is the large number of Yoga centers running across the world. On June 21, 2015, the world stood still. A large number of people around the world, participated *asanas* to celebrate the first International Yoga Day (which were declared by the United Nations). (Mohan, 2015). Indian classical dances enjoy a high degree of worldwide acclaim and appreciation. The Global popularity of Bollywood films is another instance of the strength of India's soft power. The religious heritage of this region is of great interest not only to the people of

the subcontinent but also of the world. In his outreach to the leaders in the subcontinent and Asia, from Nepal to Japan and China to Myanmar, P.M Modi has projected Buddhism as one of India's bridges to these nations. Buddha has long figured prominently in India's international engagement (Modi's Buddhism, n.d.). As the land where Buddhism was born and from where it has spread around Eurasia. India did not have to work hard to make it part of India's cultural interactions with the rest of the world. One out of six tourists in India to visit Bodh Gaya. Buddhism has long been an integral part of India's relations with many countries in Asia.

### **India's Soft Power in South Asia**

In 2014, at the swearing-in ceremony of the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi invited all the leaders of SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation) organization. It was indicated that how much importance India gives to its neighbour countries. The focus of the Modi government has been improving connectivity with its neighbour, strengthening economic and cultural ties, and given the development and humanitarian assistance. India's efforts to strengthen relations with SAARC countries should also be seen linked to China's growing economic and military intervention in the Southern Asia region. The second swearing-in ceremony, Prime Minister Modi invited all the leaders of BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation) countries. This indicates how much India gives importance to its neighbour.

India has been following good neighbourhood policy even before its independence. India's soft power with Nepal is highly closed. They sharing a common frontier with road and air connectivity, open borders that do not require a visa. Nepal is the world's second nation with a majority of Hindus. As an M.P. from Varanasi Indian PM highlight's the enduring links between Pashupati Nath and Kashi Vishwanath. In the 2015 earthquake struck Nepal, India started Operation Matri and also giving \$1 billion economic aid to reconstruction (Anderson, Ashlyn, Ayres, Alyssa., 2015). However, after the Madheshis protest in 2016, the relations between the two countries got into a tussle after Nepal blamed India for stopping the supply of essential goods for about six months. Due to this, Nepal could not get petrol and other important goods. India had repeatedly clarified that it had nothing to do with this blockade. K P Sharma Oli visits India in 2016, after Oli visit to India in April 2018, Modi went to Nepal and started the Ramayana Circuit and Janakpur-Ayodhya bus service there. Its purpose was to strengthen the cultural and religious relations of the two countries.

India's relation with the Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan has been traditionally closed (Abraham, 2007). India is Bhutan's main trade Partner. P.M. Modi chooses Bhutan for his first foreign visit. On his recent visit to Bhutan, Prime Minister Modi announced plans to double scholarship money provide to Bhutanese students. Prime Minister emphasized on building economic ties both the countries. The other areas of cooperation

included hydro-electric deal, the inauguration of the India-funded Supreme Court of Bhutan building. In June 2017, the Chinese army had penetrated to the plateau of Doklam and its soldiers wanted to build a road. Bhutan objected to this. On his request, India intervened in this matter and prevented China from building the road. This created a situation of confrontation between India and China. Then there was a serious dialogue between Bhutan and India for 73 days and high-level diplomatic cooperation was shown (Bardalai, 2018). Buddhism is the birthplace to India and it's the official religion of Bhutan. "Nehru Wangchuck Cultural Centre" proposed in Thimphu in 2010. The Buddha has long figured prominently in India's Bhutan Engagement.

India and Sri Lanka both are ancient Heritage. Anuradhapura, in north-central Sri Lanka where Ashoka's son Mahendra delivered two public speeches on Buddhism 3rd century B.C., is the first place where the shores of India embraced Buddhism. India's current PM official visit to Sri Lanka, P.M promoted to "Increasing people to people contact". Jaffna the center of Sri Lanka, It is present to Tamil Identity or Tamil Diaspora. It first visits the Indian Prime Minister there. On the recent visit of Sri Lankan, President Sirisena signed four agreements like-Civilian Nuclear Cooperation, Sharing of Resources, Exchange of Knowledge, and Economic Cooperation. Simhastha Kumbh Mela in Ujjain, which was graced by president Sirisena. He also mentioned a comment that I have a special reason to be happy as Mr. Modi was leaving no stone unturned

"Towards respecting Buddhism"(MEA., 2015).

India's relation with Bangladesh is based on the value of democracy and the value of secularism. The Ganga is creating a pool to interact with Bangladesh and India. Islamic tendency is also developed in India. External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj choose her first visit to Dhaka. Historical 'Land Boundary Agreement' is also settled by present both government. Bangla language becomes a hearty engagement between Bangladesh and West Bengal. Bangladesh is virtual "India locked". Bangladesh has also been cooperating in eliminating extremist groups from North-East of India. "Aman ki Asha", it will facilitate meetings between business chambers. India's foreign policies also assent to give unilateral concession. Modi and Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina also started the India-Bangladesh Friendship Pipeline Project from Siliguri in West Bengal to Parbatipur. During Hasina, visit India in 2017; the two countries reached an agreement in 22 areas such as defense, nuclear power, cybersecurity, and media.

Afghanistan's relation with India, In fact, represents a victory of India's soft power, and India's efforts have been appreciated by even common Afghans. Zaranj-Delaram highway to better connectivity from the Iranian. Many Afghan refugees are in India. India gives 1,000 scholarships to Afghan students to various Universities in India. PM Modi announced 500 additional scholarships. India also trained Afghans government officials, parliamentarians,

media professionals, and others (Gateway House, 2012). The pluralist nature of the Indian society and democratic polity offers a possible model and guide to Afghanistan. India built a new parliament in Afghanistan. PM Modi said, addressing to Afghanistan, "On Behalf of 1.25 Billion friends in India, in admiration for your achievements, in gratitude for your friendship and in solidarity for your future". TAPI pipeline signals a new phase in regional cooperation. ("Text of Modi's speech to Afghan parliament", 2015).

In the context of Pakistan Indian culture, Bollywood, Arts, Fashion Music, Paintings are highly attracted to Pakistan's society. Many of Pakistan's writers and Musician launched their work in Delhi. The leader from Pakistan never miss an opportunity to visit Ajmer Sharif when they happen to be India. There was a time when Pakistan's soft power is growing. There are the free media, Independent Judiciary, Natural beauty of food, Coke studio as an emblem of the richness and diversity of Pakistan culture. In recent times, all these positives have turned into negative.

Our homeland has given the world several apostles of peace and Non-Violence like Mahatma Gandhi, Swami Vivekananda, and some venerated God-Men like Vardhaman Mahavir and Gautam Buddha. Our home grown religion like Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism, and Jainism are all inherently Non-Violent, defensive, and peace-loving.

Joseph Nye in Springing Tigher (2006) said India still faces challenges of poverty with

260 million people surviving on less than one dollar of a day, inequality tied to a caste system, corruption, and inefficiency. But India is also changing and adopting within a broad democratic set-up and many foreigners find that attractive place. India has great soft power in terms of culture, democracy, freedom of speech, unity in diversity, and moral values. Speaking about India's soaring soft power in 2009, Shashi Tharoor made the astute point that "The message that really gets through is that who we are not what we want to show " (Tharoor, Shashi, 2008). He pointed to Indian successes- in Bollywood, the Indian Institute of Technology, a pluralistic society as the basis on which the world formed its perception of the country. India also using BBB policy for his neighbour-Bread, Book & Bollywood.

### **Conclusion**

Finally, India is still in the early stages of developing its soft power toolbox. It is an evolving new institutional solution and needs more time to streamline the process to act more effective and productive way. If India wants to emerge as a major soft power it needs more resources, constant decision-makers attention, and better coordination actions. Recently, India has mixed soft and hard power resources to develop a smart power strategy (Patrik Kugiel, 2017). Where India's hard power resources are well known, measurable, and thoroughly described, there is an impending need to assess what in the 21st Century will constitute India's soft power potential that the country can use in its foreign policy.

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