India's Quest for Soft Power: Challenges in South Asia

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ABSTRACT: Indians were predicted to rise to prominence in the twenty-first century. The expansion of India's economic and military infrastructure since 1991 was reflected in the country's century-old claims. When India completed the world's largest civil evacuation during Operation Rahat in 2004, it marked a significant improvement in the country's soft power capabilities. Implementing India's soft power strategy across the region, on the other hand, is a difficult task. Developing a digital & public diplomacy infrastructure can assist India in overcoming its soft power limitations. Disputes over Indian leadership in South Asia threaten peace, security, and integration. With hard power failing, India has turned to soft power to assert itself. In order to attract new neighbours, it is now trying to rebuild a positive image in the area. Current economic reform efforts in India and the effectiveness of soft power in this location are summarised in this essay. Despite its flaws, this method holds a lot of promise. As a result, the relationship between the South and the North may be altered.

Keywords: Soft power in India, Foreign policy of India, India's rise, Smart power.

I. INTRODUCTION

South Asia is characterised by a sense of mutual affinities between states, developmental obstacles, and paradoxes. Although they have strong cultural and ethnic ties, it is one of the least integrated and most fragile communities. Regions of the world tariff and non-tariff barriers stifle domestic trade. Although the country has been independent for 60 years, many of its borders remain uncertain (such as, the border between Canada &US). There is a negative impact on inter-state (India–Pakistan) as well as bilateral (India–Pakistan, Bangladesh) relations. Transnational terrorism, illegal migration, drugs and weapons are all issues that must be dealt. As a result, numerous ethnic and religious communities (such as the Pashtuns in Pakistan, Bengalis in India and Bangladesh, and Tamils in India and Bangladesh) have crossed into the neighbouring countries of India and Bangladesh [1]. This concept of "soft power" has been thoroughly discredited in the academic literature. When Joseph Nye attempted to discuss the significant phenomenon of "getting people to desire the findings you want," he uses the phrase [2]. Despite the fact that India is the world's largest democracy and has the world's poorest population, the country is frequently depicted as a soft power exemplar or as a misuse of soft power. Several Indian politicians have emphasised the rich culture and democracy of the former authoritarian and revisionist big nations in the past. India is conspicuously absent from the Soft Power 30 list, despite the fact that other countries appear to gain more from global awareness, favourable associations, and cultural diplomacy. The truth, however, is more complicated. In many ways, India's national attractions fall short of expectations. There's no doubt it's a crooked, poor, and anti-business society. Expatriates, tourists, business owners, and other visitors have been deterred by reports of urban pollution, child labour, and domestic violence. Similarly, India's image has transformed from one of poverty and Mother Theresa to one of software engineers and techies. Despite these disparate tendencies, India consistently ranks low on objective soft power indicators. To begin, comparisons of soft power favour developed countries over developing states such as India. With millions of people without access to power, let alone basic digital capabilities, India has the most unicorns (billion-dollar start-ups) except the US and China. In terms of tourism and education, India possesses more UNESCO World Heritage Sites than anyone else save the US, China, and the UK [3]. The core assumption of this paper is that India's image issue is adversely affecting the development of a more reliable as well as cooperative regional environment in South Asia. It is a major source of the South Asian security conflict that Indians see themselves as a status quo power and their neighbours see them as a regional bully [4]. Independent of India's true regional ambitions, the country's hegemonic reputation has had a negative impact on political relations, regional security, and economic ties. Developing a greater sense of trust in smaller countries could help India achieve its goals and maintain regional stability and it is a rare chance for soft power.

II. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study provides an overview of India's soft power strategy and its effectiveness in the South Asian region. However, there is ample scope for further research in this area. Future studies could delve deeper into specific soft power tools employed by India, such as cultural diplomacy, education and tourism promotion, and digital diplomacy, to assess their impact on regional perceptions and relationships. Additionally, conducting comparative analyses between India and other major global powers' soft power strategies would contribute to a comprehensive understanding of India's position and potential.

It is important to acknowledge that the essay has referenced the works of Khanna & Moorthy (2017) [5], Kugiel (2012), [1], Nye (2019) [2], and other authors to present different perspectives on India's soft power. While efforts have been made to provide a balanced analysis, the views expressed in the essay may not necessarily align with the opinions or interests of all stakeholders. It is essential to consider multiple sources and viewpoints to form a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter.

III. DEBATE ON IDEA OF INDIAN SOFT POWER

This essay starts with a definition of soft power, then talks about how it can be used in India. First, a quick summary of India's soft power and how it can be used in foreign policy is given. The report then examines how efficient soft power has been in enhancing India's relations with its neighbours, as well as what can be done to make it even more effective in the future. The conclusion of the essay contains three points. In the last 2 decades, it is widely found that India has increased its use of "soft power" measures, which has helped its regional strategy. If India maintains this method and addresses the deficiencies in its policies, it may quickly achieve regional credibility and acceptability [1]. *"Bound to Lead: The New Nature of American Power (1990)"* by Joseph Nye is where the term "soft power" was coined. Scholars, reporters, and government representatives adopted it, and it became a part of the foreign policies of the United States, the European Union, Japan, Australia, and China. When it comes to post-Cold War globalisation, communications technologies, and non-state players, they assert that soft power is more important than military and economic strength. Soft power, as opposed to coercion (sticks) or influence (carrots), can influence others' opinions [2]. Political principles and foreign policies are all part of what Nye calls a country's soft power ((whenever they are accepted as legitimate & possess moral authority). Soft power differs from military & economic power.

Soft power has evolved over time. *"Everything outside of the military and security sphere, encompassing not only pop-cultural impact but also more forceful economic and diplomatic levers, such as aid and investment,"* [6]. Mutual relations between countries can be strengthened by development cooperation (foreign aid). Generally speaking, foreigners regard a country's actions in foreign countries as legitimate. The concept of soft power is still controversial and has many theoretical and practical limits [1]

Coexistence between hard and soft power is possible. What a great combination! Soft power theory is still debated. Soft power is becoming a global term. It is an Indian political word. India's soft power has evolved. "Soft power" may have made India a big global player during the Cold War. It preferred cultural assets and moral reasons over power justifications to achieve its worldwide ambitions. Against imperialism, colonialism, and nuclear weapons, India founded *"NAM"*. The spirituality of India, Mahatma Gandhi's nonviolent legacy, and its compelling culture were all admired by the West. Realpolitik has supplanted Nehruvian idealism in Indian foreign policy, resulting in a reduction of soft power and a shift in the country's character. Not in public, but often mentioned. In India's security and strategic communities, soft power is underappreciated. Foreign policy in the new pragmatic realism era that appears to be guided primarily by security and economic considerations. Soft power capabilities of the state have recently strengthened, implying that India's foreign policy is increasingly reliant on this tool. Soft power is a popular term in Indian politics which Raja Mohan claims this in 2003.Experts in India agree that both power and the interactions between them require soft power. Simply because soft power can only be taken seriously if it is backed up by hard power. The Indian government intends to use both hard and soft power more effectively in its efforts to influence the world. India's character and strength are debated. In India, Tharoor (2012) and Purushothaman (2010) are optimistic [1].

According to Christian Wagner, 2010 [7], India's government uses soft power to attract foreign investment instead of exerting influence abroad. "Capabilities" are also compared to "boost the nation's global influence," but he emphasises that "capabilities" are not the same as "influence." It was said by Jacques E. C. Hymans in 2009 that some of India's soft strength could also be its soft vulnerability. [8] Malone (2011b) points out how "defensive" the government is when using soft power. [9] Many experts point out multiple problems and deficiencies. Democracy, economy, and society all have flaws that hinder India's rise as a soft power in the global arena. One analyst claims that India now possesses more soft power than it did twenty years ago. Despite this, India is a minor soft power today [3]. Indian soft assets have great potential, but the government needs to learn more about using them in order to accomplish its foreign policy objectives, say most experts in the field. It will also be necessary to overcome a number of domestic constraints in order to effectively utilise soft power [1].

IV. INDIAN SOFT POWER CHARACTERISTICS

In order to fully understand Indian foreign policy, this section aims to demonstrate how soft power has become an actual state policy. It looks like Joseph Nye's general approach to culture, politics, and foreign policy fits the Indian

illustration well. India's low soft power ratings can be attributed to a variety of factors. Second, compared to more organic and spontaneous initiatives conducted by the private sector and citizens, India's cultural transmission is lacking. For example, the government of India is having trouble selling or investing in Air India. GoAir, SpiceJet, Indigo, & Jet Airways are all Indian airlines that are owned and operated by private individuals. From yoga to Bollywood, much of India's cultural diffusion to international audiences has taken place without the involvement of the Indian government, which has only made minimal attempts to claim national contributions in the past few decades. Because India has so many different languages, the Indian government has made very little effort to get people to study Hindi in other countries. Recent attempts have sparked a lot of debate in India. Third, Indians made contributions that were not directly related to the country. The increasing popularity of Jaguar Land Rover (JLR) models, which are owned by Tata Motors, resulted in an impressive 15.8 percent increase in the United Kingdom's car exports to India in 2016.Consider the following scenario [3].

With the inclusion of more soft power aspects in India's regional policy, the nation is attempting to break the regional dispute and raise its legitimacy in South Asia. An important component of the new soft power strategy is a preferable foreign policy, economic relations, cultural collaboration, and international assistance. Globalization and the fight against terrorism have both helped to strengthen India's soft power in the region. The Gujral doctrine, which was declared in the mid-1990s, marked the beginning of a massive change in Indian foreign policy towards the region. The concept of 'non-reciprocity' in interactions with smaller neighbours, as well as unilateral concessions, has allowed India to portray itself as a benevolent global power, more responsive to the anxieties and concerns of its partners than it otherwise would have been. Indian officials have taken steps to avoid being perceived as interfering in the internal affairs of other countries, as it did in the past (Pakistan in 1971, Sri Lanka 1987–1990, and the Maldives 1988).

India's new objective includes regional economic cooperation. All of these agreements included conducive regulations for smaller neighbours, including the unilateral grant of MFN status to Pakistan in 1996, a campaign for a regional free trade area under the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation in 2004 and the signing of a bilateral free trade agreement with Sri Lanka in 1998.Agreement with Nepal & Bhutan will be restructured as well. To promote the concept of "dense interdependence" Foreign Secretary Shivshankar Menon (2006) stated that "we must give our neighbours a stake in our own economic progress." [10]

Foreign aid has been a significant factor in relations with South Asian neighbours.

Even though Indian aid has grown, South Asia is still the main recipient. In 2012–2013, the MEA gave money to countries in South Asia for technical and economic aid. Bhutan got financial aid of around (36.2%), while Afghanistan got almost 15%. After 2001, India's aid to Afghanistan jumped, making it the country's sixth-biggest contributor to each other. 'Soft power' examples include economic concessions for the least developed countries of SAARC,' says Wagner [7]. India's public diplomacy attempts to reach out to other South Asian countries have recently increased. As per Hall (2012) the PPD was set up at first to make India look better to people in the developing countries and in its immediate neighbourhood [11].

The fact that India is more conscious of the need to modify neighbouring states' perceptions of New Delhi despite its small size is demonstrated by these programmes.

The recent democratic processes in Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nepal, as well as the Maldives have given India a new chance. India is the region's oldest mature democracy. India is ranked 39[th]globally by the Economist Intelligence Unit's 2011 Democracy Index [12], significantly ahead of Sri Lanka (57[th]position).

According to the State of Democracy in South Asia Report, Indian democracy is well-entrenched (2008). Given the country's scale and complexity, it is fair to assume that India has dealt with ethnic and religious issues better than its neighbours.

Despite these advantages, India has been circumspect in its promotion of democracy. Contrary to its former reputation as a regional bully, it has no intention of interfering with the sovereignty of other governments. In bridging the gaps between non-interference as well as a democratic South Asia, India has placed great emphasis on civil society engagement and issued an explicit invitation to motivate inter-South Asian cooperation. Cultural ties between our peoples are obvious, Shyam Saran (2005) noted [10]. To create a regional covenant of peace and harmony, we need to include South Asian citizens, not just governments. In keeping with this modest goal, India has contributed to the establishment of democracy in Afghanistan as well as Nepal.

India's soft power initiative in this area has resulted in increased educational and cultural cooperation. India and several other South Asian countries share a common linguistic, cultural, religious, & ethnic legacy, which is a critical source of soft power. Few nations worldwide have a significant Hindu majority, such as Nepal. Then there's Afghanistan, which has a long history of cultural exchange with India, as evidenced by Bamyan Buddha sculptures and Ghaznavid dynasty monuments in Delhi. Consequently, India and its neighbours have a strong cultural bond with one another [1]. Pakistani and Afghan audiences enjoy Indian pop music and Bollywood films, which are produced in India. This is due to the success of Indian governments. The Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) has assisted in the promotion of Indian culture in countries of South Asia. All SAARC members, with the exception of Pakistan, have cultural institutes affiliated with the ICCR. In addition to musical performances, seminars, and movie screenings are held at the centres.

Additional scholarships have been made available to SAARC students by the ICCR. Approximately 650 scholarships are awarded annually to deserving Afghan students as part of one particular programme. In addition, it has plans for people from countries like Afghanistan and Nepal in addition to plans for everyone else. More than 1,030 scholarships

were awarded to students from South Asia out of a total of 2,235 given to students from over 80 nations. As a regional centre of excellence, the South Asian University in Delhi, which was funded in part by India, was opened in 2011 as part of the SAARC effort. In addition, India is working with China, Singapore, and Japan to bring Nalanda University, which has been closed for more than a century. Muni says that Nalanda University is going to become a useful tool of soft power on 2 levels (2010). In India's regional soft power technique, Pakistan doesn't play a big role. In South Asia, China has long been a strong alliance of Pakistan. Pakistani universities do not have any India cultural centres. ICCR scholarships have never been awarded to a Pakistani student. Aside from providing humanitarian assistance following the 2005 Kashmir earthquake, India has done little to assist Pakistan in its development. Security and political tensions between India & Pakistan have complicated the two countries' bilateral relationship.

An effort by two major media companies in both countries to close the "Aman ki Asha" (Hope for Peace) gap is being supported by non-governmental associations, cultural institutions, companies, and individual efforts. This is an excellent example: "the Jang Group" in Pakistan and "the Times of India" in India. Both countries' diplomatic and cultural ties have benefited greatly since they began working together in earnest to promote peace and goodwill in 2010.Furthermore, a number of research organizations in India and abroad are attempting to facilitate track-two conversations between Indian & Pakistani professionals on critical issues affecting both countries and the region in general. In addition, business leaders from India were present [1].

Organizations and individuals have made efforts to connect with Pakistani counterparts. Trade between India and Pakistan increased by 21 percent to $2.4 billion in 2012. If there is no movement on a multilateral level, regional governments are making concerted efforts to bring the two countries together. Relationships between the two countries are strained because Pakistanis cannot enter India legally. Anti-Pakistan tirades broadcast on Indian television do nothing to assist Pakistanis or Indians. Instead, they contribute to a vicious cycle of mutual suspicion, accusations, and prejudices. Summarizing the situation, India's message to its neighbours is complicated and perplexing [1].

In South Asia, how effective is the soft power strategy

India's soft power has had a significant impact on South Asian perceptions of the country. This is a sensitive topic because of the essence of soft power. As a result, it's difficult to demonstrate a link between one nation's soft power initiatives and a shift in the behaviour of another. Public opinion surveys are widely regarded as the best method for measuring soft power. Taking into consideration the possibility that civil society and the ruling elites may hold opposing viewpoints. Because government policies may not reflect popular preferences, this problem may be exacerbated in authoritarian regimes.

Data on Indian soft power's effectiveness in South Asia is scarce, making it difficult to assess its impact. Indian soft power in the region has not been the subject of a thorough comparative study until now. It is also lacking in a structured method or tool to evaluate the effectiveness of neighbouring nations' actions. South Asians' views of India aren't polled on a regular basis. A few worldwide surveys done periodically in Southeast Asian nations must therefore is enough. Additionally, the number of visitors to a country for leisure, business, or some other purpose is an important metric to consider. As a result, the number of tourists from other countries who come to visit is used as an additional indicator. Scholars and experts' views also aid in our understanding of the world's interconnectedness.

Indian relations with the majority of its neighbours have been cordial and cooperative for the better part of the last decade. The country's ties with Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, & Nepal have improved despite the fact that it has not achieved its primary goals in these countries yet. This may be a result of India's new strategy, which places a premium on pragmatism, modesty, and soft power. India's earlier reputation as a regional hegemon has been eroded as a result of its refusal to intervene physically in domestic conflicts in Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, and Nepal. Leaders in the region need not be alarmed despite India's growing influence and power over the last two decades. India is a "moderate regional power" because of its low-profile responses and less unilateral approach to regional affairs. [11] The second finding is that India already has a significant amount of soft power in the region, as evidenced by surveys of South Asian popular opinion.

According to surveys undertaken in Afghanistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, & Sri Lanka, India is the most popular country in South Asia. According to Gallup/SADF (2011) [13], 84% of Nepalese people like their big neighbour. Like the Maldives (40%), Bangladesh (44%), Sri Lanka (43%), and Bhutan (40%). The Nepalese gave Pakistan and Afghanistan the lowest marks, 33% and 26%. Also, Bangladeshis rated India as the best South Asian country. Gallup/SADF (2012) found that 80 percent of respondents liked India, while only 10 percent disapprove. Pakistan was preferred by 33% of respondents, while Afghanistan was preferred by 24%.

A 2006 Sri Lankan study found that 49% of those polled liked India. Afghanistan also praises India. According to an ABC News/BBC/ARD poll conducted in 2010, 71 percent of Afghans regarded India favourably (42 percent) or very favourably (29 percent), compared to 36 percent who viewed it negatively. This was a big improvement against Pakistan, an unpopular country in Afghanistan. This is due to the appeal of Indian culture and India's recent political and development aid to Afghanistan. Only 4% of Afghans, according to a survey conducted in 2012, are familiar with the idea of Indian development programmes in their region. India was ranked sixth in the world despite its small population.

Sections that represent India's "global footprint" geo-tag ICCs across various countries. "Promoting India's soft power strength" is the mission of these government-funded centres, which hold names such as Vivekananda, Tagore, Gandhi, Nehru, and Shastri.

The 36 ICCs that are currently in operation, especially in cities, are devoted to promote India's rich cultural tapestry. One of the things it did was host a seminar on "ancient Indian knowledge practises" and a Bharat Natyam recital in January 2020.Latin America has seven, Europe has seven, Africa has three and Southeast Asia has four. There are also one each from Iran and Russia in Asia-Pacific and the Middle East, as well as five across the continents combined. On a global scale, their reach and capacity to reach out in line with regional and bilateral interests of India seem limited. Contrary to popular belief, nearly every Middle Eastern and North American country is an economic and geopolitical alliance of India [14].

It might be a good idea to keep more strategic assets outside of the country, like cultural organisations. Spending a lot of state money in places where there are a lot of Indians living outside of India would be unnecessary. They act as India's unofficial flag-bearers. However, an argument has been disproved in the Nordic & Eastern European areas impacted by terrorism. The implications in India's foreign policy are rising, considering the increasing Indian community. The fact that three International Criminal Courts (ICCs) are focused in the Caribbean is also detrimental to the case. It's possible to find 3 in South Africa and 1 in Fiji, all of which have a significant Indian population. As part of the "Performance Smart" programme, the MEA annexure certifies the existence of official establishments in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, as well as the Indian ICCR eliminating the ICC in Australia. There are only 34 ICCs in the "Dashboard". Indian's position appears to be changing. ICCs are being placed to contain and signify favourable shift patterns in its bilateral collaborations with UK and US. Megacities, such as New Delhi, are common. Peru and the United States are negotiating a free trade agreement. IFFCO, ZuariAgro, as well as Redbus are some of the companies that are involved. They all have a lot of customers. Vice president Venkaiah Naidu, an Indian, was one of them. Peru is his first official overseas tour. However, the chance to open an ICC in Africa's third-largest nation was greatly missed. India and China's countries are underrepresented in a number of countries with high bilateral importance, such as Nigeria, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, and the United Arab Emirates. There have been no ICCs in the Philippines till date. People from all over the world live there because of its cultural background. Diplomacy has been a part of India's soft power for a long time. There have been many more people in India since the first ICCs came to Moscow in 1989, so the country has grown very quickly. Every year, there is at least one new cultural centre that opens. It takes approximately one year to establish a network. As a result, China has a total of twenty cultural institutions, which is more advantageous. Chinese cultural diplomacy, on the other hand, has relied on an increasingly valuable – though divided – resource to re-energize its cultural diplomacy system. Documentation presented in its initial form to the Ministry of Education A lot of the CIs are now trying to promote languages. Affinity Group for Goethe among China's cultural institutions, which rivals the British Council in stature. Despite allegations of corruption, Beijing's censorship and corporate surveillance, over 500 CIs remain active globally.

The global desire – and possibly necessity – for Chinese languages, script, and culture is unsurprising. with the Asian behemoth's global influencer and investment clout However, China has topped the 2019 "Soft Power 30" rankings. top ten cultural attractiveness and involvement sub-indices However, expecting the ICCs to fulfil demand, finance, or project scale is unrealistic. China's CIs have a blast. It should come as no surprise that Chinese script, languages, and culture are in high demand around the world – and may even be necessary with the global influence and investment clout of the Asian behemoth China, on the other hand, has topped the "Soft Power 30" rankings for 2019.

V. INDIA'S EMERGENT POSITION ON SOFT POWER

In a 2018 poll of the top 30 nations for soft power conducted by the USC Centre for Public Diplomacy, the United Kingdom received an 80.55 out of 100 score. With a score of 40.65, India was unable to qualify. First, any comparison of the soft power of rich countries like the United States and the emerging countries like India is going to be unfair. No matter which country you live in, there are more UNESCO World Heritage Sites and research institutes in the United States, China, or the UK than anywhere else. Second, when compared to the initiatives undertaken by the corporate companies and people, India's cultural transmission lags far behind the curve. The country's culture, political principles, and foreign policy have all been used to promote national aims. As a pluralistic yet postcolonial democracy, India's abroad participation had a strong moral element during the Cold War. South Africa's racist Apartheid policies were admired by ethnic African states, who applauded India's principled boycott of the country. It has positively impacted from its soft power as a democracy on multiple times, due to its rich cultural heritage and a semblance of morality. That, however, would be time travel. The all-powerful CPC and President Xi Jinping have made unequivocal assertions about China's soft power, while India has not. "Jaishankar describes India's place in the modern world," said one Washington-based journalist, referring to Foreign Minister S Jaishankar's recent trip to the United States in September 2019. In his speech, Jaishankar explained India's view of the world as a fluid array of numerous poles, where convergence is possible but not congruent, and simultaneous engagement with the US, China, and Russia is natural. To retain its bargaining position, India will be both patriotic and internationalist [15].

VI. POSSIBILITY AND CHALLENGES FOR INDIA'S SOFT POWER

(A) Possibilities

The failure of India's OOAC (Out-of-Area Contingency Operations) and HADR to evacuate Indian citizens in a reasonable timeframe following the 1991 Gulf War has spurred significant improvements in these departments (and ultimately relying on Air India). This was observed in India's tsunami reaction in 2004. The Navy committed thirty-two navy ships, seven aircraft, and twenty helicopters to provide support for five navy ships, seven aircraft, and twenty

helicopters. It is a component of India's "Operation Madad." Khanna and Moorthy [5] (Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu) mentioned "Operation Sea Waves" in Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and "Operation Castor" in Maldives. 'Operation Gambhir' and 'Rainbow' are two names for the same thing. This is how the majority of nations in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) are developing or underdeveloped, with insufficient funds and capacity to deal with frequent natural disasters. This places significant pressure on India to maximise the use of its resources, but it also provides an opportunity for India to maintain and create its soft power in the region. As stated in the Indian Maritime Doctrine [16], the diplomatic function must be boosted to promote regional and global collaboration. Global security includes maritime assistance and military activities. NCO Evacuation and OOAC (NEOs). During Operation Raahat, over 41 countries, including the United States and the United Kingdom, requested India's help and support in saving their citizens. Former PM Manmohan Singh stated in Gurgaon in 2013 that *"we must accept our responsibilities for the stability of the Indian Ocean Region... We're in a good position"*.

However, India's security cannot be assumed. Soft power can help supplement the Indian Navy's position as a stabilising force, which is based only on hard power. Navy. Due to the obvious negative repercussions of the hard power alliance, leadership effectiveness is inversely related to Machiavellianism (characterised as manipulative, exploitative, and dishonest) [2]. A valuable supplement to the Indian military collaborations that require Littoral zones of the sea [5].

Using Scientific, Technical, and R&D Skills

India wanted to stay out of the Cold War as soon as possible after it became a country. It also wanted to keep its own internal and external borders. It stayed unaligned with and essential of interventionist projects [18]. After the Cold War came to an end, things changed a lot. As evidenced by the number of humanitarian missions conducted since the Iraq War, the theory of democracy was founded during this period of time. This has led to an increasingly democratic foreign policy for India.

According to Paul, [19] the Indian situation demonstrates the value of treating each case individually. Although that appears to be a great achievement, India's involvement in Bangladesh during Pakistan's dissolution appears to have been partly related to the remoteness of its chances of success in helping the Burmese pro-democracy movement (Ibid.). In 2000, India joined the Community of Democracy project in Warsaw, which was inspired by the United States, and made a significant contribution to the UN Democracy Fund formed in 2005.

A secondary consideration in Modi's foreign policy is the promotion of democracy [20]. Geo-economics has taken over Indian foreign policy, despite the country's claim to be the world's largest democracy. Because of this, the projection of a prosperous democracy that provides for its people's needs is a successful foreign policy weapon that should be strengthened. Moreover, unlike China's belligerent foreign policy, India's democratic culture stresses consensus in decision-making. In this sense, the acts of India in the Indus Waters Treaty disputes and China in the South China Sea arbitration disputes could be used as examples. On many of these issues, China is more egocentric than India, which is more likely to accept international judgments. Another factor is India's democratic foreign policy, which allows the country to be more accepting of a world governed by rules. This democratic projection can compete with the authoritarian and one-party Chinese model by forming dependable ties with Asian nations. As a result, India has sufficient incentives to position, if not promote, democracy as a marketing advantage for Brand India [5].

(B) Drawbacks and Challenges

It's difficult to implement soft power in the United States, even if you believe it can actually facilitate foreign policy goals. To some, soft power appears to be more secure than economic or military might. An asset that is difficult to use is also prone to being lost or stolen and expensive to get back. Wagner, [7] identifies three critical soft sector issues. To begin, he casts doubt on culture's value as a soft power resource. Cultural legitimacy is not synonymous with political influence. When it comes to soft power strategies, their success depends on a wide range of variables. States must always influence. As a final point, he questions the validity of the data. Agenda-setting appears to have an advantage in that it has the ability to influence after a long period of time (Ibid.) Soft power is the ability to influence others. India also has enormous challenges in becoming a developed nation. Ignorance & family discord long-time human rights organisations and international watchers have focused on India's "million mutinies". The issue of Kashmiri secession has enraged the Indian leadership, and Pakistan uses it to undermine India's rise as a responsible force. Though the separatist movement became a terrorist organisation However, Pakistan's ability to exploit the disagreement has dwindled. The potential of minor protests turning into large-scale riots is a serious concern. Concern is evident, as it was in 2016 in Kashmir following a child's death. Central India has been overrun by the Maoist threat, which is causing chaos in the nation. For example, consider the "attraction" with other separatist movements in North East India's "Soft Power of India". "Intolerance" was brought to the forefront in India by a spate of lynchings in 2015. Academics from the most prestigious universities in the world have done more harm than good to the Indian economy. Numerous universities, such as Cambridge, UCL, and UCL, have expressed concern about the "authoritarian threat culture" promoted by the current Indian government [21]. Other current civil unrest sources: The army cleared the area in the Jat community reservation dispute. As India's caste turmoil continues, the BBC is telecasting it at primetime [21]. As a result of the Nirbhaya protests, India was portrayed as an unsafe country for women in the international media in 2012. So, in the year 2013, a BBC study was conducted by GlobesScan Inc. and PIC. This is the first shift in policy attitudes in eight years. Negative views of India (35%) marginally outweighed positive views (35 percent). These stereotypes of India as a backward, tyrannical nation are false. As previously stated, society is fatal to soft power projection. Soft power exploitation is a long-term investment that requires patience. As a result, the government

must continue to promote investment of their acts on India's image of Swachh Bharat and Atithi Devo Bhava. India's soft power will continue to be hindered by these issues, however, because long-term solutions are needed to some of them [5].

Poverty and Poor Human Development Indicators

Since 1991, India's status as an impoverished country has evolved slightly. Indifference, illiteracy, poverty, and low human development indices are constraining India's soft power in a globalised world. The World Bank estimates that 872.3 million people live in poverty globally, with 179.6 million in India. According to the World Bank, India, which has 17.5 percent of the worldwide people, had a poverty rate of 20.6 percent in 2011.In terms of nutrition, the situation isn't really much better. India suffers from malnutrition at a higher rate than a number of Sub-Saharan African nations. Former PM Manmohan Singh referred to malnutrition as a "national humiliation" in a speech in January 2012.

As a result of India's poverty and malnutrition, the idea of a 'Rising India' or a "Next Superpower" is thrown into disarray. In 2010, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Oxford University jointly developed the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), that revealed that 8 states in India which comprises 421 million population had more MPI people living in poverty than the 26 poorest African nations. According to Amartya Sen, India is the only country aspiring to become a worldwide economic power that has an educated workforce on its side. It has never been performed before and it will never be done again.' He also makes use of the Meiji period [5].

Japan's goal of becoming completely educated in forty years was restored, and the country achieved this goal. Aftermath of the war, similar events occurred in Singapore, South Korea, and China.

It's important to remember that low human development index (HDI) also hinder India's global soft power influence. However, one of the explanations outlined for its denial is International Public Opinion. UNSC status as a permanent member is defined by poverty, as per critiques. In India, malnutrition is an issue.

Lack of IFS personnel and funds

The restoration of Japan's 40-year-old goal of becoming fully literate has been achieved. As a result of the Second World War, Singapore, China, and South Korea all adopted similar policies. As a reminder, poor HDI showed that reduce India's soft power impacted in the global community. However, it is denied according to International Public Opinion. Critics say the UNSC's permanent membership is based on poverty. India has a malnutrition problem. The Institute of Strategic Studies is an Islamabad think tank.

In 2016, research published a policy brief opposing the creation of new cities. Permanent seats on the UN Security Council were distorted in India's poverty and equity measures. Furthermore, becoming a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council will boost India's HDI. From 1994 to 2004, the decline was about 8%. The World Bank has reported that India has the lowest poverty rate among countries with large populations of poor people [22].

Geopolitics & Soft Power Boundaries

In South Asia, soft power is doomed to fail. Indian policies such as the Gujral Doctrine and PM Modi's recent trip to Pakistan have proven effective. In South Asia, cricket diplomacy or CBMs have limited value. Terrorists from Pakistan who are anti-Bollywood will gladly cross the Pakistani border and attack India. And it affects India's relations with Nepal and Sri Lanka. India loses soft power in these countries due to South Asian cultural nationalism.

Most foreign viewers see it as tranquil and neutral. A movement for non-alignment emerged from Nehru's panchshheel principles. A lack of intellectual leadership hampered India's military and economic power. India's influence in Africa has grown since its liberalisation. China's African policy has been dubbed "neo-imperialist" by some African and Western media. *"South African-European trade is increasing"*, says SAIIA deputy chairman Moeletsi Mbeki [8]. China's exploitation, says Nigerian Central Bank Governor Lamido Sanusi, is comparable to that of former colonial powers. However, this is a vast improvement over the material's Indian participation. The West must present the foundations of Indian foreign policy in order to depict India as superior to China. The economic might of South Asia, say members of ECOWAS, ECCAS, and IGAD, is not a coloniser [5].

Soft Power's impact and how important it is to have hard power

It is this track record of non-proliferation, civilian control over the armed forces, and democratic functioning that sets India apart from other non-NPT nuclear nations. Consequently, Iran is the only non-NPT country to allow international nuclear trade. Australia's PM Tony Abbott stated in 2014 that "India poses no threat to anyone".

Indian soft power is very dependent on the West. In terms of how many English speakers there are, India has a big lead over China. Notable Bollywood artists have recently had a lot of success in Hollywood TV shows and movies. On a popular TV show in 2015, Priyanka Chopra was asked about how well she could speak English even though she was born and raised in India. An Indian hasn't been asked about their English skills before, and it caused a lot of talk on Twitter. Indians who speak Good English as their first or second language often inspire awe in visitors from the West. One of India's greatest advantages as a source of soft power is the fact that it is the only liberal democracy outside of the West that is still in operation. Because of the decline in Western economic success in the twenty-first century, India is seen as the natural western ally against China and for the preservation of a rule-based international order in the twenty-first century. This puts India in a position where it is more likely to attract soft power investments in the future [5].

India's foreign policy typically ignores Middle Eastern soft power. This is owing to both India's tense relations with the Middle East and Arab sympathies for Pakistan. Bollywood and the diaspora are distinct cultures in India. India's soft power is rare in the area. Thussu (2013) exploits the post-2003 experience of Time magazine's Baghdad bureau director Bobby Ghosh. Once upon a time, a pro-Saddam "colonel" arrived. He makes an attempt on Time's life, but is

stopped. While Bollywood films have soared after independence. In the twenty-first century, the Indian film industry has become increasingly economically powerful. In the Middle East, one of India's most effective tools is to pique people's interest. Only half of the region's gross domestic product (GDP) is derived from India. In 2015, remittances to India topped $72 billion. (CNBC) The foreign policy of Prime Minister Modi has heightened tensions. In Saudi Arabia and Qatar, King Salman has pushed for the implementation of his Link West Policy. This was referred to as a "relational tipping point" as well. While Shale has driven Middle Eastern countries to relocate owing to unrest and US withdrawal. PM Modi has pushed countries to seek out other key markets. Modi's Middle East escapades relied heavily on the Indian diaspora. Modi stumbled into New York, Sydney, and London. $75 billion UAE-India Infrastructure Investment Fund unveiled in Dubai [24]. The visit of Abu Dhabi's Crown Prince was notable. The most significant occurrence was when The Burj Khalifa was lighted in tricolours for the 68th Republic. Soft power produces anger and animosity. Aside from soft power, India cannot afford to lose hard power due to inability to operate due to South Asian geopolitics. Soft power reliance ignores hard power. These assessments would diminish India's soft power [5]. In this context, it would be beneficial to evaluate India's need to be a smart power, one that combines hard and soft power. The importance of a strong military cannot be overstated, nor can the importance of heavily investing in alliances, partnerships, and institutions at all levels in order to enlarge American influence and legitimise American action. It's ignorant to limit this strategy to the United States' foreign policy only. Such a strategy would be advantageous for India's foreign policy. A recent example is Operation Rahat. Meanwhile, India was successful in projecting soft power by expelling foreign nationals from developed nations while protecting its own citizens in crisis-stricken areas. Despite this, India's foreign policy, especially in South Asia, must involve smart power in order to overcome the limitations of soft power in terms of projecting power [5].

VII. CONCLUSIONS

Soft power is critical in today's global politics, regarding its practical and theoretical constraints. In terms of alternative political, economic, as well as cultural models for the rest of the world, only India is capable. Soft power is a relatively new phenomenon in India, and it has only recently started to be implemented. Internal reforms are required to address India's developmental, sociological, and political shortcomings. In South Asia, soft power is undeniable.

Although further research is needed to fully understand India's soft power in this domain, this study can derive three findings. First, India's regional policy appears to include soft power aspects. Because harsh power is ineffectual and lowering suspicion and strengthening acceptance of its regional leadership role is critical to achieving regional and global goals. To cooperate economically and diplomatically, India may need to ease its smaller neighbours' anxieties. Public diplomacy, Economic cooperation, cultural and development cooperation, and other forms of soft power are prioritised in this approach. India's current South Asian propaganda campaign is a strategic decision.

Another sign that this soft power tactic may work is that even though major concerns remain unresolved, the new policy has helped improve relations. As a result of its hegemonic positions in Nepal, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, as well as Bangladesh, India has a great benefit in attaining its foreign policy goals. This strategy worked in Afghanistan, where India gained respect for its civilian participation. An aggressive cultural as well as public diplomacy strategy is required in this context. It ought to strengthen people-to-people ties, increase trade and investment, and educate its neighbours about democratic principles. Through the SAARC project, India may also play a larger role in regional collaboration. Surprisingly, societies and ruling elites regard India differently. The public's growing optimism contrasts sharply with the government's scepticism and hostility. India's soft power strategy may help close the gap. Soft power is a long-term strategy with visible benefits. Regional democracy will make it difficult for national leaders to ignore public sentiment and attack India. South Asians' faith in shared stability and peace is increasing as a result of India's soft power. India must persuade a greater number of people in the region that economic progress is a good thing. In addition, Pakistan is not included in India's soft power strategy in South Asia. Delays in addressing Indian-Pakistani tensions jeopardise regional cooperation and South Asian peace and security. Containing Pakistani public scepticism and suspicion of India. Indian cultural institutes, Indian Studies Chairs, ambitious scholarship programmes, new development partnership efforts, visa liberalisation and promotion of academic and corporate links are all needed to directly reach Pakistani citizens. Ineffective and unfair, labelling all Pakistanis as potential terrorists Encouraging Pakistan to see India as a trusted partner and friendly neighbour [2].

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