



Available Online at ESci Journals

Journal of South Asian Studies

ISSN: 2307-4000 (Online), 2308-7846 (Print)
<http://www.escijournals.net/JSAS>



SOFT POWER - A MAJOR TOOL IN MODI'S FOREIGN POLICY KIT

Swaroopo Lahiri*

Columbia University, School of International and Public Affairs, New York, United States of America.

ABSTRACT

While India has always had various soft power strategies, they had limited success as they were not coupled with hard power such as a strong military force and advanced defense capabilities, notably nuclear capability. However, the past decade was an important turning point which marked India's growing hard power, fuelled by robust economic growth and its assertive maritime policies, which in turn made strengthened its soft power projection. Soft power has become one of the cornerstones of the current Indian Premier Narendra Modi Doctrine and is an important theme in most of his state visits. This paper analyzes the different soft power components used by the Indian government, especially the Modi government, in order to further its foreign policy goals, as well as some of the limitations to India's soft power potential. This paper is organized in the following manner: the first section defines soft power, Modi's dominant foreign policy canons and how his government differs from the previous governments in the use of soft power; the second section focuses on the four broad tenets of Indian soft power namely civilization and ancient heritage (Buddhism, yoga, Ayurveda, Sanskrit etc.), democracy, Bollywood, economic aid and to a small extent, Modi's personal charisma and how their exercise relates to India's foreign policy objectives; the third section addresses the shortcomings of Indian soft power and the fourth section concludes the paper.

Keywords: Foreign policy, India, Narendra Modi, Soft power.

SOFT POWER DEFINITION AND MODI'S FOREIGN POLICY PRINCIPLES

Joseph Nye coined the term soft power and explained it as one of the three ways of exerting power. According to Nye, "power is the ability to alter the behavior of others to get what you want" (Nye, 2006). and there are three methods of altering behavior namely coercion, payments and attraction. Soft power falls in the third category and a country has three main sources of soft power: "its culture (in places where it is attractive to others), its political values (when it lives up to them at home and abroad), and its foreign policies (when they are seen as legitimate and having moral authority)" (Nye, 2006). The Modi government has mainly relied on culture and political values (democracy) to promote Indian soft power. As opposed to the Nehruvian foreign policy doctrine *Panchsheel* whose five principles were "mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty, mutual non-aggression, mutual non-

interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and cooperation for mutual benefit and peaceful co-existence", the Modi government has formulated its own foreign policy doctrine labeled *Panchamrit*. *Panchamrit*'s five pillars are "dignity, dialogue, shared prosperity, regional and global security and cultural and civilizational links" (Panchsheel Gives Way to Panchamrit, 2015). This new foreign policy ideology assumes that India has finally "arrived", has achieved superpower status and is now a major, confident global player instead of a mere observer. *Panchamrit* is much more assertive in its tone, compared to the pacifist spirit of *Panchsheel*. Most of Modi's diplomatic visits reflect the notion of shared prosperity, regional security and cultural and civilizational ties as elaborated in Section 2 through the use of culture and economic aid.

While the use of soft power in foreign policy has not been spearheaded by Modi, he has certainly been more forceful about the projection. While previous governments have also used soft power to support foreign policy, their efforts were comparatively more ad-hoc and lacked a well formulated and consistent approach. On the other hand,

* Corresponding Author:

Email ID: sl3760@columbia.edu

© 2017 ESci Journals Publishing. All rights reserved.

the Modi government is taking baby steps to develop a cohesive, strategic and institutionalized approach to the use of soft power which would most likely increase its effectiveness in foreign policy.

THE FOUR BROAD TENETS OF INDIAN SOFT POWER RELEVANT FOR FOREIGN POLICY PURPOSES

The Modi government's areas of soft power emphasis are linked to the century old Indian ideals such as India's role as a "vishwaguru" or the world's teacher or the notion of "vasudhaiva kutumbkam" which implies that the whole world is a big family. The four broad categories of the display of soft power are ancient heritage or civilizational ties, democracy, economic aid and Bollywood. Each of these four aspects is explored below along with their foreign policy aims.

Ancient heritage and civilizational ties (Buddhism, yoga, Sanskrit, Ayurveda, Power of Zero)

Ancient heritage and civilizational links mainly appeal to the culture and regional security characteristics of the *Panchamrit*. According to Modi, "in the present era, which can be considered an era of knowledge, our roles and responsibilities have increased. We have to emerge as a *vishwa guru*, not only to give new direction to the world, but also to protect our own heritage" (Martin, 2015). He also portrayed India to be the best of both worlds as India was young in terms of demographics while simultaneously being one of the most ancient civilizations of the world. Two major themes under the ancient heritage banner are Buddhism and yoga. Buddhism and yoga are earnestly exploited by India so that it is recognized as the world's spiritual capital. Even before Modi took power, former governments placed a lot of emphasis on using Buddhism as a cultural tool. For the past decade, the Ministry of External Affairs' wing, the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) has organized several Buddhism themed conferences in East Asian countries such as Thailand (April 2010) and South Korea (May 2010). The Nalanda University, supported by members of the East Asian summit was also set up by Manmohan Singh's administration to strengthen civilizational ties. Building on his predecessor's policy discourse, Buddhism has been the catchphrase associated with most, if not all, of Modi's East Asian country visits and his Look East/Act East policy. Modi has explicitly claimed that "without Buddha, this century cannot be Asia's century" (Pethiyagoda, 2015) and that during all his visits abroad, a day is reserved for visiting a Buddhist temple (Aurora 2015).

The charm of Buddhism was skillfully deployed in India's immediate neighborhood: Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bhutan (one of the first countries Modi visited as a Prime Minister). Modi's Kathmandu visit was characterized by his 4 Cs agenda namely cooperation, connectivity, culture and constitution and he even gifted a Bodhi sapling to Nepal, reiterating the cultural angle (Pethiyagoda, 2015). As Pethiyagoda (2015) claims, cultural connect was perhaps most beneficial in Sri Lanka as it helped reduce animosity and foster a more friendly bilateral relationship. Modi invoked the ancient Indo- Lankan Buddhist connection, dating back to the Mauryan Empire under Ashoka. He also made a strategic choice to visit Sri Lanka's ancient capital, Anuradhapura and the Jaya Sri Mahabodhi which served as a witness to historically strong Indo-Lankan ties (De Silva, 2015). In addition, he inaugurated the India funded Jaffna Cultural Center and paid a visit to Colombo's Mahabodhi Temple (Pratap, 2015:59). Similarly, in South Korea, Modi replanted a Bodhi tree sapling India had sent earlier. This in turn served to create closer economic ties between both countries, resulted in an influx of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) from South Korea primarily to improve infrastructure and help build smart cities (*India Tomorrow.net*, 2015). In addition, it enabled Modi to lure South Korean companies to invest in the Indian manufacturing sector to boost his coveted "Make in India" initiative, deepen defense cooperation and enhance technology transfer between both countries among other objectives (*India Tomorrow.net*, 2015).

The most publicized state visit was Modi's China visit. Given that China is experiencing cultural renaissance under current President Xi Jinping, Modi seized the opportune moment to make Buddhism an underlying theme during his state visit. Once again, he chose to land in Xian first instead of Beijing to visit the Wild Goose Pagoda, emblematic of Xuanzang's monumental travel to India and gifted a Bodhi sapling to the Xian government (Aneja, 2015). Modi played the culture card in China to advance India's economic interests; India desperately needed Chinese FDI to shrink the balance of payment gap with China and the 24 agreements signed during Modi's visit were mainly trade agreements, agreements to establish twin cities and cooperation in scientific research (De Silva, 2015). Still, the cultural overtone of his trip failed to yield satisfactory results on the strategic front as China perceived an inadequate balance between India's hard power and soft power, hence undermining

India's hard bargain potential.

Stobdan (2016) indicates that there are a few bottlenecks when India uses Buddhism as an outreach factor. Firstly, India has less than one percent of Buddhists and there exist major rifts plaguing the Mahayana tradition in India. In addition, Buddhism has been completely transformed in India, having been eliminated from the subcontinent by Islam at the end of the thirteenth century. Hence, modern day Indian Buddhism is devoid of the original teachings and practices and has been instead subsumed in the Hindu narrative. In order to create a common link with other East Asian countries, Modi has resorted to scraping the surface using ancient heritage sites in India instead of more deeper and substantial religious discussion. Also, as Pethiyagoda (2015) illustrates, Modi government's Buddhism focus is also apparent in some of the official government initiatives. On 4th May 2015, India initiated and hosted International Buddha Purnima Diwas to celebrate the birth of Lord Buddha. Incidentally, it was on this same date that Modi made his first appearance on the Chinese microblogging website Weibo to reiterate the ancient civilizational link between the two Asian giants. Furthermore, New Delhi would have a center for Buddhist worship and learning and would host an International Buddhism conference in 2016. Buddha diplomacy is being flaunted by the Modi government for two key foreign policy goals; a strategic one and an economic one; namely to offset Chinese soft power and to stimulate religious tourism in India. Buddhism is perceived to be a central tool in rebalancing power dynamics in East and South East Asia where both China and India compete for geopolitical influence. Hence, while China has taken steps to build and preserve Buddhist monasteries in Myanmar, Cambodia, Thailand, Modi's strategy is to visit monasteries during his trips to East Asia and present countries with saplings from the sacred Bodhi tree in Bihar. In the light of economic competition, Buddhism can either mellow bilateral relations or help India gain leverage by roping in the support of East Asian countries.

Cultural appropriation rivalry between India and China over Buddhism has intensified ever since Modi came into power. While the Chinese government views Lumbini in Nepal (Buddha's birthplace) as the focal point of religious tourism, the Indian government asserts that Bodh Gaya in Bihar is much more important since that is where Buddha attained enlightenment, and

is actively marketing that destination (Nandy, 2015). To use this to its full advantage, India has been considering the option of issuing visa-on-arrival to Buddhist tourists visiting the country for religious tourism. The Indian Ministry of Tourism and Culture in collaboration with the World Bank will also be developing a fast track Buddhist Tourist Circuit (Martin, 2015). Apart from Buddhism, the pragmatic Modi government is using other religions to underline strong ties with countries, especially Central Asian countries which are vital for India's growing energy appetite as part of its Connect Central Asia policy. Modi expressed that Islam tied India and Central Asia and softened his staunch Hindu nationalist stance by claiming that "the Islamic heritage of both India and Central Asia is defined by the highest ideals of Islam – knowledge, piety, compassion and welfare" (Pant, 2015). Despite these endeavors, Modi has not yet adopted an institutional approach to incorporate religious aspects in its foreign policy – there exists no formal department similar to the US State Department's Office of Religion and Global Affairs, for example, to supervise religious outreach initiatives.

Another major facet of Modi's cultural diplomacy is yoga. After successfully lobbying at the United Nations General Assembly, Modi managed to institutionalize an annual International Day of Yoga, the first of which was 21 June 2015. Modi claimed that yoga was India's gift to the world and it led to a peaceful harmony of the body and the mind and helped "discover the sense of oneness with yourself, the world and the nature" (Mohan, 2014). The World Yoga Day was widely welcomed, especially since Modi kept religion out of his yoga discourse and capitalized on the global yoga boom and popularity. During the International Yoga Day, in addition to a spectacular yoga parade in New Delhi, the Indian Armed Forces also celebrated the day with great pomp (Forces Display Soft Power, 2015). The world's highest battlefield, Siachen Glacier, witnessed soldiers practicing yoga despite sub-zero temperatures and as part of the "Yoga Across Oceans" initiative, the Indian Navy members had yoga sessions stretching from the Mediterranean waters to South China Sea. Furthermore, the Modi government set up a separate ministry called AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy) to institutionalize India's ancient heritage endowment as well as to help Ayurveda attain the same exalted status as Chinese traditional medicine through better packaging and promotion (Martin, 2015).

Yoga has generally been used for image building by India and as a means to allay fears associated with its hard power build-up. This is the Indian counterpart to China's concept of "Peaceful Rise". India happens to be the world's largest weapons importer, primarily from countries such as France, United States, Israel and Russia and Modi's ambition of developing a prosperous domestic defense industry points to India's growing military power aspirations (Tandon, 2016). In order to gain support for this objective and to establish itself as a powerful regional hegemon in South Asia, it is imperative that India's international image is untarnished and that it is largely viewed as a peaceful, spiritual, non-threatening and benevolent ally. In fact, Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbot agreed to sell uranium to India mainly because of its non-threatening position in the international arena and his belief that India had a spotless track record when it came to non proliferation. (Tandon, 2016).

Both yoga and Buddhism are influential branding mechanisms for India. Having armed forces take part in the World Yoga Day was a smart move as it projected a peaceful Indian military that refrained from aggression; a completely opposite image compared to the current image of the Chinese military, thereby increasing international goodwill for India. Some other attempts to highlight ancient heritage are the use of Sanskrit and the power of zero, both emphasizing India's world teacher posture. Sanskrit can be used to appeal to countries like Indonesia, the biggest and most powerful ASEAN member whose language has been greatly influenced by Sanskrit as well as Mongolia, an important country for the purpose of strategic encirclement of China, where rulers, even during present times, would rather have their names written in Sanskrit than in their own language (De Silva, 2015).

Minister of External Affairs, Sushma Swaraj addressed a June 2015 Sanskrit Conference in Bangkok and stressed the importance of mastering Sanskrit to solve some of the biggest problems plaguing the world today such as poverty, global warming and terrorism (Pant, 2015). By terming the language as "modern and universal", Swaraj announced Modi government's plans to propagate the ancient language globally by means of a \$20,000 International Sanskrit Award to scholars contributing significantly to the language. Following in the footsteps of yoga and Sanskrit, India decided to sponsor an "International Conference of Zero" and gifted a bronze bust of Aryabhata to the UNESCO

Headquarters to showcase its age-old intellectual tradition and contributions.

DEMOCRACY

Previous Indian governments have recognized democracy as one of India's most valuable assets. In 2000, India became a founding member of the Communities of Democracies and joined the UN Democracy Fund in 2005, being its second major donor after the United States (Sudhindra, 2015). However, India has traditionally been reluctant to actively promote democracy overseas (especially given the disastrous consequences of democracy export attempts by the United States in the Middle East) and has preferred to set an example instead. Nevertheless it has quietly helped young democracies asking for India's assistance. For instance, much of the UPA government's Africa policy revolved around institution building, mainly to assist democracy transitions. Like his predecessors, Modi is not a vociferous advocate of democracy promotion abroad yet he has smartly used democracy as a talking point during his diplomatic engagements. For example, during his travels to Bhutan, Nepal, United States, Australia, South Korea, Japan and Myanmar, he has constantly played up India's democracy card to facilitate strategic engagement with the West and unite with other Asian democracies on the basis of shared values. He has often proclaimed that democracy made India an important global partner. An interesting case is Modi's visit to Mongolia on the latter's 25th democratic anniversary (Pant, 2015). The buzzwords of this trip were Buddhism and democracy where Buddhism was said to have made India and Mongolia "spiritual neighbors". Modi was the first Indian Prime Minister to ever visit Mongolia and acclaimed it as the "new bright light of democracy" thereby differentiating India and Mongolia from China. These efforts, coupled with Modi's \$1 billion aid package to Mongolia served as a measure to strategically encircle China as China was doing to India by helping Nepal and Pakistan economically in return for greater influence in those countries.

ECONOMIC AID

India is gradually emerging as a major foreign aid donor country. In 2011, India spent over \$1.5 billion in foreign aid, overtaken only by China among developing country donors, even though it remains a major aid recipient (Mullen et al. 2012). In the 1950s, India's financial condition only permitted it to give in-kind aid such as technical assistance to its smaller neighbors like helping

Bhutan build its hydroelectric facilities through knowledge transfer. However, India is now able to make cash transfers, not only to countries in its immediate neighborhood like Bhutan and Nepal, but to a much larger variety of recipients such as African countries. India has kept aside \$1.6 billion as foreign aid for the year 2015-2016 and is creating its own foreign aid agency named the India Agency for Partnership in Development (IAPD) which would be able to spend an estimated \$11.3 billion in the next 5-7 years (Know Everything About How Much India, 2015).

India has historically allotted 63% of its foreign aid budget to Bhutan primarily to support the latter's hydropower sector which would in turn consolidate India's regional power status (Know Everything About How Much India, 2015). The second largest recipient of Indian aid is Afghanistan, where India has played an important role in big infrastructure projects, followed by Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Maldives and African countries (Know Everything About How Much India, 2015). Africa and Afghanistan are two very strategic reasons for aid disbursement, serving ulterior geopolitical motives vis-à-vis Pakistan and China respectively. In Africa, India and China are both intensely competing for African energy supplies, especially crude oil, to satisfy their yawning energy appetites. Consequently, taking into account the continent's usefulness as an energy reservoir, generous aid packages are earmarked for Africa.

Turning to Afghanistan, India has always enjoyed a cordial relationship with the country, partly due to the popularity of Bollywood movies in Afghanistan as well as the fact that ex President Karzai spent his student days in Shimla. Subsequently, India's strategy in Afghanistan differs from that of Pakistan who uses coercive tactics such as Taliban mercenaries to retain control. On the other hand, India has heavily invested in Afghan infrastructure building, such as highways, hospitals, electricity projects as well as institution building (law enforcement, judiciary, Kabul Parliament) (Qureshi, 2014). Indian companies, especially its steel and mining companies, have largely benefitted from such involvement with the latter having won the mining rights to Afghanistan's most abundant iron ore deposit field (Mullen et al. 2012). From the Indian perspective, the choice of an economic intervention instead of a military one has helped it gain a lot of goodwill and has kept Pakistan at an arm's length.

Modi has more or less followed the aid policies formulated by the administrations since the 1990s. His Afghanistan policy especially depicts more continuity with Manmohan Singh's approach than differences. In September 2016, he offered \$1 billion to Afghanistan for nation building (Busvine and Kumar, 2016). Stability of Afghanistan and minimal Pakistani influence in the "Graveyard of Empires" is critical to India's security and feeds into Modi government's regional security pillar of *Panchamrit*. Nevertheless, Sharma (2015) shows that Modi's aid packages are bigger than the ones offered in previous years, in terms of amount and scope. For example, during the April 2015 Nepal Earthquake, the Modi administration injected \$67 million in Nepal during Operation Maitri (biggest disaster relief assistance till date) and promised to give approximately 15 % worth of the reconstruction costs. Also, a \$2 billion line of credit was offered to Bangladesh which happens to be the largest financial assistance by India to another country. Moreover, during Modi's Vietnam visit, he presented \$500 million defence line of credit (LoC) to the host nation which is the biggest amount of defence LoC India had ever given out (Mitra, 2016).

BOLLYWOOD

Bollywood has been one of India's biggest cultural exports from Africa to the Middle East and East Asia. However, the Indian government very rarely uses Bollywood as an official soft power tool in its foreign policy. This might actually prove to be beneficial since as Nye remarked, in today's world, the best kind of propaganda comes from things which are not meant to be propaganda, thereby increasing their credibility. Afghanistan is perhaps the country where the craze for Bollywood movies has indirectly acted as a catalyst for a closer and warmer Indo-Afghan bond. When NATO ousted the Talibans in Afghanistan, one of the first things local people did was to fish out their hidden collections of Bollywood songs. Mir (2007) gives another example- the fact that contestants sing Hindi songs at the American inspired Afghan Idol musical contest, even though they are only allowed to sing Afghan songs. He further explains that much to the dislike of Pakistani madrassas, young Afghans are much more interested in learning about the lives of Bollywood stars instead of focusing on religious learning. In fact, all Afghan television channels broadcast Bollywood movies and Indian television serials and some men even plead in front of imams to adapt the evening prayer schedule according to the Indian television serial schedule. Recognizing the overwhelming popularity of

Bollywood movies, in 2007, the United States had requested India to send some Bollywood stars to Afghanistan to speak about urgent social issues (Qureshi, 2014).

Even India's traditional rival, Pakistan, is smitten by the charm of Bollywood movies. In spite of a long official ban on Bollywood movies which was lifted in 2008, Pakistanis still managed to watch pirated copies of Indian movies. Another landmark development was the release of the classic movie *Sholay* in Pakistan on March 23, 2015 in theatres, forty years after its release in India (Soft Power of Bollywood, 2015). Despite this time lag, movie theatres were fully booked, vouching for *Sholay's* runaway success in Pakistan. The year 2015 was also the year when a Bollywood movie succeeded in influencing political decisions in Pakistan. The 2015 movie *Bajrangi Bhaijaan* where a kind Indian man helps a mute Pakistani girl return home, overcoming multiple obstacles, prompted the Pakistani government to let Geeta, a deaf and mute Indian girl, stranded in Pakistan for thirteen years finally return to India and be reunited with her family (Pillai, 2015). Therefore, Bollywood movies strengthen people-to-people connect in the neighboring countries, even though it is not a conscious move by the Indian government. Similarly, in Myanmar, according to the local people, Indo-Burmese relations revolve around 5 B's namely Buddhism, Business, Bollywood, Bharatnatyam and Burma teak, and Bollywood movies are a roaring success (India-Myanmar Ties, 2015).

Apart from Asia and Africa, Bollywood movies are making their mark in many East European countries like Poland and Lithuania as well as in Russia where Indian movie stars like Arjun Rampal feature in television commercials. The "King of Bollywood", Shah Rukh Khan, is extremely popular in Poland where there have been a number of Shah Rukh Khan movie festivals (Bhutani, 2015). These factors could give the Indian government some much needed diplomatic leeway in its interactions with East Europe and some small Asian countries captivated by the magic of Bollywood. At the same time, it should be noted that compared to Hollywood's overarching influence, Bollywood's influence remains limited. While Hollywood embodied the idea of a better life through consumerism and progress and sold the idea of America to the world, Bollywood remains at the "fantastic" level, serving more as an entertainment option instead of sending across a powerful cultural message.

It would be wrong to say that there has been no strategic use of Bollywood in the Indian government's foreign

policy. For instance, as Aneja (2015) reports, three days before Modi's arrival in Xian, Bollywood star Aamir Khan reached China for the very first time to promote his film *PK*. His previous movie *3 Idiots* was very well received in China, especially by Chinese youth. The timing of his arrival implied that he was meant to prepare the Chinese public for Modi's visit and to some extent, ensure that the Prime Minister got a warm welcome. Furthermore, to reinforce Sino-Indian cultural bonding, a film on the life of Xuanzang was jointly produced by India's Eros group and China Film Group – Modi signed the MoU in Shanghai to approve of this film production which had a star cast from both countries. In addition, *Kung Fu Yoga* is another jointly produced, cross-cultural and multilingual movie with shooting having taken place in both countries. Besides, the Indian government has had a fetish for Bollywood stars when it came to choosing the brand ambassador of its main tourism campaign, "Incredible India". While Aamir Khan served as the campaign's brand ambassador since its inception, in an unprecedented step, the Indian government directly appointed Bollywood megastar Amitabh Bachchan and Priyanka Chopra as Aamir Khan's successors in 2016. The choice of Bollywood stars is an excellent marketing move as these are faces widely recognized in almost every corner of the globe and might subsequently attract a large number of tourists to the country.

THE MODI BRAND

Compared to his predecessor, Modi is a stark contrast, personality wise. While Manmohan Singh was seen as a shy, timid albeit dignified Prime Minister with no voice of his own and a "puppet" in the hands of his own political party, Modi is seen as a proactive and bold political leader who stands his own ground and believes that India is second to none on the global stage. He has made efforts to cultivate people-to-people ties, as can be seen from his decision to visit Xi Jinping's hometown and invite him to his hometown as well. Another instrument he's wielding is digital diplomacy. Martin (2015) demonstrates some of Modi's successful public relations efforts. Modi's Twitter has around 9.5 million followers and he has skillfully used this platform to demonstrate his close friendship with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe as well as extend a public invitation to President Obama for India's Republic Day Celebrations in 2015. Modi's surprise visit in Lahore on the occasion of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's birthday further supports Modi's personal relationship approach. These efforts are all ultimately directed at fostering

stronger bilateral ties which would translate into commercial or strategic benefits for India.

Furthermore, in line with the previous governments' diaspora outreach initiatives such as the Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas introduced by Vajpayee in 2002, Modi similarly recognizes the untapped potential of India's large diaspora network (approximately 25 million people) and has put in tremendous effort to connect with them. For example, during his 2014 Madison Square Garden rally in New York City, he called on the Indian Americans who happen to be financially well off to team up, participate in India's growth process and serve Mother India. He similarly called on Indians in Japan and Australia to do the same. Another striking feature about Modi is his choice of communicating in Hindi. By choosing vernacular over English, unlike other rival politicians often seen to be pandering to English, he has succeeded in increasing his Indianness quotient and in reaffirming India's great power status where it makes its own rules instead of playing by other countries' rules. In doing so, he seems to be taking a cue from Chinese leaders who also converse only in Chinese.

LIMITATIONS OF INDIAN SOFT POWER

According to Portland's Soft Power 30, India is not among the top 30 countries that excel in soft power capabilities while China barely makes it to the list, ranked at 30 (The Soft Power 30, n.d.). Since Modi's efforts are fairly recent, their implications may take some time to get reflected. India is, by curse of geography, in an extremely turbulent region with a majority of its neighbors regarding it with suspicion and hostility. As per a 2012 study, Pakistan and Nepal find India overbearing whereas Bangladesh and Sri Lanka have problems trusting India. India's soft power also seems to have limited geographical outreach beyond Asia. This is primarily illustrated by the fact that most foreign students studying in India come from the Middle East and neighboring South Asian countries and that it does not score as well as one would expect even on the tourism front (one of the major causes behind this is New Delhi's reputation as the world's rape capital).

Mukherjee (2014: 53) attributes India's soft power limitations to three central elements: India's soft power resources are over exaggerated, India does not have enough hard power to match its soft power and finally, India is unsure about the type of power it wants to become. India's cultural outreach initiatives pale in comparison to the British Council, Alliance Francaise, the Japan Institute and perhaps even the recently launched Chinese Confucius

Institutes. Bollywood, India's prized cultural export is much smaller than the Hollywood industry, both in size and scope for influence. Secondly, India has tended to substitute hard power with soft power without realizing that both are complements to one another. Modi has perhaps been the Prime Minister who has worked towards this goal most diligently; while on one hand, he is flaunting and institutionalizing soft power to further foreign policy, he is simultaneously matching this with steps to increase hard power capability, recognizing the need for a strong and respected military force, thereby coming close to the concept of smart power. Finally, India is fraught with internal tensions such as religious conflicts, gender based violence, poverty, ethnic violence among others. These internal problems prevent the leadership from developing a coherent and consistent soft power strategy.

Modi must also be careful so as not to get too carried away by his soft power emphasis such that it turns farcical or loses credibility, for example, in one of his speeches, he stated that Lord Ganesha proves that Indians practiced plastic surgery in ancient times (Martin, 2015). There is also mounting pressure from Hindutva groups to add a religious touch to yoga or to "take back" yoga which would undermine New Delhi's appropriation of yoga as a soft power tool.

CONCLUSION

This paper has examined the use of soft power by the Modi Administration in foreign policy. The four principal aspects of soft power used by Modi are ancient heritage and civilizational links, democracy, Bollywood and economic aid. It is also important to note that Modi is using his personal charisma as a crucial albeit small source of soft power to gain influence in countries. Modi's government is still in the nascent stages of making India a soft power powerhouse but as compared to the previous governments, Modi has certainly been more successful in institutionalizing and developing a more consistent and strategic soft power approach.

REFERENCES

- Aneja, Atul. (2015, May 11). Soft Power Set to Define Prime Minister Narendra Modi's China Visit. *The Hindu*, Retrieved from <http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/social-media-bollywood-and-yoga-to-dominate-modis-china-visit/article7194559.ece>
- Aurora, Bhavna Vij. (2015, May 05). PM Narendra Modi Keen on Projecting India as a 'soft Power', Uses

- Buddha Connect in Foreign Policy. *The Economic Times*, Retrieved from http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2015-05-05/news/61833609_1_pm-narendra-modi-president-xi-jinping-hiuen-tsang.
- Bhutani, Surender. (2015, March 31). Bollywood's Soft Power Visible All over Poland. *The Indian Diaspora*. Retrieved from http://theindiandiaspora.com/news-details/Spotlight/primary_news/bollywoods-soft-power-visible-all-over-poland.htm.
- Busvine, Douglas, & Kumar, Manoj. (2016, September 15). India pledges \$1 billion in aid to Afghanistan before donor meeting. Retrieved from <http://in.reuters.com/article/india-afghanistan-ghani-modi-aid-idINKCN11K25E>
- Chaturvedi, Sachin. (2012, September 05). Aid from India, Coming to a Country near You. *The Hindu*. Retrieved from <http://www.thehindu.com/-opinion/op-ed/aid-from-india-coming-to-a-country-near-you/article3859607.ece>.
- Chung, Lawrence. (2015, May 14). Yoga and Modi's Soft-power Position on China. *South China Morning Post*. Retrieved on May 07, 2016 from; <http://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy-defence/article/1795974/indian-prime-minister-looks-yoga-add-soft-power-twist>.
- De Silva, Bandu. (2015, May 29). Emerging Cultural Emphasis In India's Foreign Policy Under Modi. *Colombo Telegraph*. Retrieved from <https://www.colombotelegraph.com/index.php/emerging-cultural-emphasis-in-indias-foreign-policy-under-modi/>
- Forces Display Soft Power From Siachen to South China Sea. (2015, June 21). *The New Indian Express*. Retrieved from <http://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/Forces-Display-Soft-Power-From-Siachen-to-South-China-Sea/2015/06/21/article2878979.ece>.
- India-Myanmar Ties: Buddha, Bharatanatyam and Bollywood. (2015, January 15). *Youth Forum on Foreign Policy*, Retrieved from <https://yffpindia.wordpress.com/2015/01/15/india-myanmar-ties-buddha-bharatanatyam-and-bollywood/>.
- Kamalakaran, Ajay. (2015, October 10). The Re-emergence of Indian Soft Power in Russia. *Russia & India Report*. Retrieved from http://in.rbth.com/blogs/tatar_straits/2015/10/10/the-re-emergence-of-indian-soft-power-in-russia_481335.
- Know Everything About How Much India Receives And Donates Foreign Aid. (2015, November 06). *The Logical Indian*. Retrieved from <http://thelogicalindian.com/story-feed/exclusive/know-everything-about-how-much-india-receives-and-donates-foreign-aid/>
- Martin, Peter. (2015, January 25). Yoga Diplomacy. *Foreign Affairs*. Retrieved from <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/india/2015-01-25/yoga-diplomacy>
- Mir, Haroun. (2007, March 16). Indian 'idol' in Afghanistan. *The Hindu Business Line*. Retrieved from <http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/-todays-paper/indian-idol-in-afghanistan/article1682196.ece>
- Mitra, Devirupa. (2016, September 04). India and Vietnam Upgrade to Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. *The Wire*. Retrieved from <https://thewire.in/63957/india-and-vietnam-upgrade-to-comprehensive-strategic-partnership/>
- Mohan, C. Raja. (2014, December 15). Modi's Diplomacy: Yoga, Democracy, and India's Soft Power. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Retrieved from <http://carnegieendowment.org/2014/12/15/modi-s-diplomacy-yoga-democracy-and-india-s-soft-power>.
- Mukherjee, Rohan. (2014). The False Promise of India's Soft Power. *Geopolitics, History, and International Relations*, 6(1), 46-62, Retrieved from doi:10.2139/ssrn.2246839
- Mullen, Rani, and Ganguly, Sumit. (2012, May 08). The Rise of India's Soft Power. *Foreign Policy*. Retrieve from <http://foreignpolicy.com/2012/05/08/the-rise-of-indias-soft-power/>.
- Nandy, Chandan. (2015, May 04). For Modi Regime, Buddhism Is A Soft Power Approach for Hard Power. *The Quint*. Retrieved on May 07, 2016 from

- <http://www.thequint.com/world/2015/05/05/for-modi-regime-buddhism-is-a-soft-power-approach-for-hard-power>.
- Nye, Joseph. (2006, September 25). "Springing Tiger," Harvard University Kennedy School of Government, *India Today*. Retrieved from <http://www.hks.harvard.edu/news-events/news/news-archive/springing-tiger>.
- Panchsheel Gives Way to Panchamrit. (2015, April 04). *The Telegraph*. Retrieved from http://www.telegraphindia.com/1150404/jsp/nation/story_12587.jsp#.Vy6KuyGfK4A
- Pant, Harsh. (2015, August 20). New Delhi's Soft Power Push. *Yale Global*. Retrieved May 07, 2016 from <http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/content/new-delhi-soft-power-push>.
- Pethiyagoda, Kadir. (2015, June 01). Modi Deploys His Culture Skills in Asia. Brookings India. Retrieved from <https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/modi-deploys-his-culture-skills-in-asia-2/>
- Pillai, Pooja. (2015, October 26). From Bajrangi Bhaijaan to Geeta: When Soft Power Shows India and Pakistan the Way. *The Indian Express*. Retrieved from <http://indianexpress.com/article/-explained/from-bajrangi-bhaijaan-to-geeta-when-soft-power-shows-india-and-pakistan-the-way/>
- Pratap, Bhanu. (2015). India's Cultural Diplomacy : Present Dynamics, Challenges And Future Prospects. *International Journal of Arts, Humanities and Management Studies*, 1(9), 55-65. Retrieved from <http://ijahms.com/upcomingissue/07.09.2015.pdf>.
- Qureshi, Aurangzeb. (2014, September 03). How India Is Using 'Soft Power' to Secure Energy Interests. *Foreign Policy Journal*. Retrieved from <http://www.foreignpolicyjournal.com/2014/09/03/how-india-is-using-soft-power-to-secure-energy-interests/>.
- Salient Features of India-South Korea Joint Statement on Strategic Partnership. (2015, May 18). *IndiaTomorrow.net*. Retrieved on May 08, 2016 from <http://www.indiatomorrow.net/eng/salient-features-of-india-south-korea-joint-statement-on-strategic-partnership>. <https://thewire.in/63957/india-and-vietnam>
- Sharma, Rajeev. (2015, June 26). From Nepal to Vietnam: PM Modi is raining money on India's neighbours to counter China. *First Post*. Retrieved from <http://www.firstpost.com/world/from-nepal-to-vietnam-pm-modi-is-pouring-money-on-indias-neighbours-to-counter-china-2313342.html>
- Soft Power of Bollywood. (2015, February 14). *The Tribune*, Retrieved from <http://www.tribuneindia.com/news/editorials/soft-power-of-bollywood/41700.html>
- Stobdan, P. (2016, November 28). To Deploy the Soft Power of Buddhism, India Needs to Embrace the Sangha. Retrieved from <https://thewire.in/83060/buddhism-soft-power-india-china/>
- Sudhindra, Uma. (2015, December 08). From Buddhism to Bollywood - The Investment in Soft Power. Vivekananda International Foundation. Retrieved from <http://www.vifindia.org/print/2785>.
- Tandon, Aakriti. (2016, February 29). The Modi Government and India's Projection of Its Soft Power. *The Round Table*. Retrieved from <http://www.commonwealthroundtable.co.uk/commonwealth/the-modi-government-and-indias-projection-of-its-soft-power/>
- The Soft Power 30. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://softpower30.portland-communications.com/find-out-more>