

**IGNORING SOFT POWER – THE *MEA-CULPA* MOMENT FOR NATIONS’  
TRYING TO ACHIEVE INFLUENCE IN THE GLOBAL COMMONS:  
THE INDIAN PERSPECTIVE**

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**Abstract**

Application of power in geo-strategic terms is the ability of a nation to affect another nation or a group of nations to derive the desired outcome one prefers. This may be accomplished by coercion, payment, or attraction and persuasion. Soft power of a nation, simply put, relies on the ability to obtain preferred outcomes by attraction rather than coercion or payment. This anecdotal comment recounts the origins of the concept as an analytical tool, and has gradually developed as an instrumental concept used broadly in the political discourse in Europe, the United States and more recently in China. It may be surmised from available literature that while having military power is the primary task of all administrators, the phenomenon of power itself and its effectiveness needs to be examined in a more detailed manner in terms of its sources, style of application (hard-soft) and its effectiveness in a given geo-political construct. In its conceptual evolution a country relies on the power momentum created by all possible opportunities it can muster, apart from direct military force, and leverages desired outcomes in its favour by attraction and without forcing them. This strategy has gained relevance in the present-day order of global commons, wherein, conflict is abhorred and soft or smart-power therefore has assumed greater essence as a more effective instrument to exert national influence which impacts world *Polity*.

With the advent of emerging economies such as China and India, which have a highly productive and influential human capital spread globally and are also fast emerging as economic giants, the concept of soft power is ideally applicable for both national assertion and its effective relevance in the international arena. The paper aims to establish this concept as a better suited strategic outreach for an emerging nation with specific relevance to India and while doing so dwells on a wide spectrum of instruments including foreign affairs, political science, sociology apart from the nations geography which India may factor to influence the global influence, in exercise of its National Power, to derive favourable impact in the global commons.

**Key Words:** Soft Power, Global commons, Polity.

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1. **Introduction.** *Soft Power*, a term used in international relations and public diplomacy, was coined by Joseph Nye<sup>2</sup> to describe co-option of power in contrast to the more conventionally recognised *Hard Power* (comprising military action). This essentially referred to a country's ability to influence others' behaviour or "the ability to shape what others want", without being coercive, which is "the ability to change what others do" (Nye, 2004a). While in definition<sup>3</sup>, Soft power could be the ability to achieve something; Political, financial, social etc. to influence control or dominion; application of the same in representative terms as a national tool remains allusive; despite being a key contributor to contemporary diplomacy used by most influential nation states. While Nye in his description stressed on the ability of the facet to shape the preferences of others (p5) by attraction, and thereby leading to acquiescence (p6) ... he made a distinct reference to the compelling ability of soft power, that persuades one to align to.. your desire owing to your cultural or ideological appeal (p11). In international transactions we increasingly witness nations' achieving favourable outcomes pursued indirectly through the global admiration of values, that most others aspire to, which is a cogent simile and a key element of leadership in global terms. This virtue may be extended in terms of one's national power to entice, to frame issues or establish the agenda (Nye, 2004b).

2. In today's world of changing paradigms with dynamic transformations in international polity, one witnesses the emergence of a subtle power-play amongst nations that occupy the high table (in opinion building), signifying an increase in stated positions taken by most, while relying profoundly on their ability to influence perceptions rather than enforcing them. It can therefore be fairly assumed that the relevance of *Soft Power* in contemporary times has attained a pedestal that countries may no longer ignore and need to embrace to further fine-tune and suit one's own statecraft. This further becomes more relevant for countries which are fast emerging, with the potential to break regional barriers and establish global prominence as they increasingly wield greater influence far beyond their own shores. It therefore assumes importance to consider the attributes of soft power that an aspiring nation must employ to promote its aim of establishing influence in the global commons. The paper aims to study this facet while looking through the prism of evolving

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<sup>2</sup> Joseph Nye is an American political scientist. He is the co-founder, along with Robert Keohane, of the international relations theory of neoliberalism. He developed the concept of soft power in his 2004 book, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*.

<sup>3</sup> Definition from Collins English Dictionary (2018 ed)

paradigms in international order which, in today's age (riddled with trade burdens, recession, terrorism etc.), demands stability, peace, and prosperity and seeks a strong-and-stable, assertive-yet-tolerant nation state which can contribute effectively to global stability and order. India, with its large human capital of highly educated and young work force (spread globally in well-established positions), strong historic and cultural base and pluralistic society (with leading socio-economic and fiscal indicators) stands at the cusp to seize this opportunity through leverage of its soft power. As a study case, the paper attempts to chronicle the evolution of soft power to establish its relevance and explore the determinants that India must manoeuvre being sanguine of its ambitious development goals. It has also been an endeavour to reconnoitre whether failure to realise this potential, despite having favourable socio-economic indicators would devoid her of the venerable traction she so desires, which could be an irrevocable missed opportunity.

3. **The Ancient Construct of Soft Power.** Soft power as a subject is not an entirely new thought. A more historical look into the ancient texts of India and China would lead one back by over thousand years, where soft power was perceived as a key determinant in state-craft. As prescribed in ancient proverbial wisdoms: to use *soft-and-gentle* means to overcome the *hard-and-strong* (以柔克刚 *yi rou ke gang*); and drips of water can penetrate a stone (滴水穿石 *di shui chuan shi*). Sun Tse<sup>4</sup>, a military strategist advocated over 2500 years ago, on winning a battle without a fight. Similarly, the Chinese philosopher Confucius<sup>5</sup> believed that the ruler should win the allegiance of people with virtue (then, perceived as soft power) not by force (hard power). Similarly, Mencius<sup>6</sup> advocated rule in *Kingly Way*<sup>7</sup> (王道 *Wang Dao*) rather than the tyrant way (霸道 *Ba Dao*). (Wang, 2006). Lao Tze<sup>8</sup>, a contemporary of Confucius, described in *Tao Te Ching*, "I know the benefit of *Wu Wei* (无为 *Do Nothing*); the softest can win

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<sup>4</sup> Sun Tse (known as Sun Tzu, Born: 545 BC, Qi) was a Chinese general, military strategist, writer and philosopher who lived in the Eastern Zhou period of ancient China. He is traditionally credited as the author of *The Art of War*, an influential work of military strategy that has affected Western and East Asian philosophy and military thinking.

<sup>5</sup> Confucius (Born: 551 BC, Lu) was a Chinese philosopher and politician whose philosophy is also known as Confucianism, emphasized personal and governmental morality, correctness of social relationships, justice and sincerity.

<sup>6</sup> Mencius (Known as Mengzi, Born: 372 BC, Zou) was a Chinese Confucian philosopher who has often been described as the "second Sage", that is after Confucius himself. Living during the Warring States period, he is said to have spent much of his life travelling around China offering counsel to different rulers, with notable works on Right to revolution as an aspect of the Mandate of Heaven.

<sup>7</sup> The kingly way referred to governing by moral example whereas the tyrant way involved governing by brutal force

<sup>8</sup> Lao-Tze (also rendered as Lao Tzu, Born: 601 BC, Chu), was an ancient Chinese philosopher and writer. He is the reputed author of the *Tao Te Ching*, the founder of philosophical Taoism, and a deity in religious Taoism and traditional Chinese religion.

the hardest. Invisible force can pass through the intangible.” Similarly, in the works of *Kautilya*<sup>9</sup>, written centuries ago notably the *Arthashastra*<sup>10</sup>, much stress was laid on the importance of *Sandhi* (mutual friendship) and *Doota* (Ambassador to propagate countries position) which resonates to the modern day Soft or Smart Power. As these scholars had to deal with real life situations, at a time when military power and economic power were the two recognised pillars of national security, the guiding values were of pragmatism and realism and both the theories propounded were acceptable in combination, to secure the kingdom or Nation State. However, quite clearly, in contrast to *Kautilya*’s world, wherein, means of hard power such as covert operations could be discussed in public, today’s age of neo-thinking forces you to make ethical choices which weigh-in heavily on *ethics in strategic thought*. The legal debate in US over the limits on use of torture and practice of rendition is an example. In effect, soft power though an ancient concept has assumed greater relevance in modern day management the sources of which need to be established clearly in the present-day context while correlating the ancient values so propounded to draw correct lessons on the evolution and application of Soft Power.

4. **Soft Power - Contemporary Rendition and its Elements.** Analysis of contemporary understanding and its modern rendition as postulated by one of its leading proponents, Nye (2004a), emphasised on the influence behind soft power (as an interaction between states) to be contingent on the pre-existing preferences of the other party. Consequently, soft power is only meaningful in the context of a conflict of objectives, where persuasion and attraction may be employed to influence behaviour. The significant question therefore concerns the extent to which a country is willing to alter the perception of its objectives under the influence of another. Although Nye coined the term in 1990, the concept of Soft Power has its origins in the works of Hans J. Morgenthau<sup>11</sup>, Klaus Knorr<sup>12</sup> and Ray Cline<sup>13</sup>. For instance, Morgenthau (1967) identified nine elements of national power, among which national character, morale, the quality of diplomacy and the quality of government to be closely associated with

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<sup>9</sup> Minister to emperor *Chandragupta Maurya*, 4<sup>th</sup> Century BC

<sup>10</sup> *Arthaśāstra* (अर्थशास्त्र) is an ancient Indian treatise on statecraft, economic policy and military strategy, written in Sanskrit and brings out the art of combining military power and diplomatic persuasion in the pursuit of national self-interest (with something subtle and smart such as smart power).

<sup>11</sup> Hans Joachim Morgenthau (Born: 1904 Germany) was one of the major twentieth-century figures in the study of international relations.

<sup>12</sup> Knorr, Klaus (Born: 1911, Germany) was a theorist and writer, who explored the bases of National economic power and the derived utility of military power.

<sup>13</sup> Ray Steiner Cline (Born: 1918, US) was an official at the United States Central Intelligence Agency best known for being the chief CIA analyst during the Cuban Missile Crisis, with notable works including *World Power Assessment: A Calculus of Strategic Drift*.

intangible sources of power, i.e. soft power. Similarly, Carr<sup>14</sup> (1964) postulated that power over opinion is not less essential for political purposes than military and economic power (and has always been closely associated with them). These ideas were since summarised and popularised in recent years by Nye (Gill and Huang, 2006). On the other hand, the management and psychology literature has long promoted the benefits of using referent (soft) power over coercive (hard) power (Cristo, 2005). According to Raven<sup>15</sup> and French<sup>16</sup> (1959), there are five bases of power: *reward*, *coercive*, *legitimate*, *referent* and *expert*. Soft power is thus described as a kind of referent power that is based on identification and attraction, which yields the greatest influence in relation to the other powers. Nye (1990) in his proposition, identified three sources as: *American culture*, *international laws and institutions*, in consonance with *American multinational corporations*. But the list has since been pragmatically finetuned to *culture*, *political values* and *foreign policy*: “the attractiveness of its culture, the appeal of its domestic political and social values, and the style and substance of its foreign policies” (Nye, 2004b). In contemporary analysis one must therefore understand that policy, by definition, is the course or general plan of action adopted by a state, therefore, a country’s foreign policy itself cannot be a separate form of soft power but the mere manifestation of its hard power (political power in the case of military intervention; economic power in the case of aid or sanction). It would however be prudent to calibrate the overt employment of such means in today’s age (no matter how inseparable it may be in substance, as an integral part of a nations’ power). Core values and domestic institutions, therefore, assume even greater significance in today’s society and culture, which are capable and mandated to stimulate sustainable effects well before the application of hard power. A discernible upsurge of countries in the Middle-East (Qatar, UAE, and more recently Saud Arabia etc.) willing to reach out to the global commons (unshackling traditional barriers), while attempting to expand their social acceptance and thereby indirect influence in world affairs, serves an example to understand the relevance of this new phenomenon. With the effect being more permeated, the concept (of soft or cultural power) in today’s context

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<sup>14</sup> Edward Hallett "Ted" Carr CBE FBA (Born: 1892 London) was an English historian, diplomat, journalist and international relations theorist, and an opponent of empiricism within historiography.

<sup>15</sup> John Robert Putnam French Jr. (Born:1913 France) was a Professor Emeritus in psychology from the University of Michigan

<sup>16</sup> Bertram Herbert Raven (Born: 1926, US) is an American academic, who has been a member of the faculty of the Psychology Department at UCLA since 1956, where he is currently a professor emeritus. Best known for his early work in collaboration with John R. P. French, with whom he developed an analysis of the Five Bases of social power.

(though protracted) is hugely relevant as an effective tool in exercise of national influence.

**5. Components and Application of Soft Power.** While delving through a large proportion of the sources of soft power Nye (2004a), lists a wide range of various examples as the proxy measures of soft power with innumerable examples that contribute to the concept, which stretch far to an extent that the term comes to mean almost everything (Hoagland, 2004). One must therefore extract from these examples the sources (cause) and impact (effect) to relate to its application. It is also important to note that sources and resources are not power per-se but potential for the power. The owners' (nations') of these resources must therefore convert them into desired power. Four key factors must be in place for power conversion: *Economic Capital, Political Structure, Social Capital and Social Structure* (Treverton and Jones, 2005). A key question though still remains unanswered: whether the sources of soft power are universal or vary from one culture to another? Both China and India have for instance rich cultural resources, but do they have the same level of soft power? If cultural power is soft power, why does a country like Egypt (history of seven thousand years) seem weaker compared to the US (founded only two hundred years ago)? Clearly, culture per se is not soft power but a source of potential soft power. In a fairer analysis Nye relates the frame in context of the changing global power equation which has witnessed the rise – or return – of India and China, in conjunction with the communication revolution which has infused power to many new stake holders, especially those who enjoyed these elements in the past. He also suggests there exists a need to avoid the “*Thucydides Trap*<sup>17</sup>” referring, inter-alia, to the fear mongering which can be achieved in the application of soft power. Nye concluded that for the success of the basic principles, there was a quintessential need for credibility in strategic communications<sup>18</sup> and the understanding of nations' to seek out solutions which are amicable and acceptable while exerting the ultimate goal of “smart power”.

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<sup>17</sup> Identified in classical times by the ancient Greek historian Thucydides is a deadly trap where, “It was the rise of Athens and the fear that this instilled in Sparta that made war inevitable.” The past 500 years have seen 16 cases in which a rising power threatened to displace a ruling one. Twelve of these ended in war. Of the cases in which war was averted, Spain outstripping Portugal in the late 15th century, the United States overtook the United Kingdom at the turn of the 20th century, and Germany rose in Europe since 1990 while the ascent of the Soviet Union followed its implosion by 1990.

<sup>18</sup> Nations use strategic communication to exhort to the world their point of view such as the celebrated channels: BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation) of the UK or CNN (Cable News Network) of US and more recently the RT (Russian Television of Russia or Chinese CGTN (China Global Television Network). The work by Al Jazeera of Qatar since its inception in this field is well established

6. **Soft power weighed against Hard power.** As discussed, the distinction between soft and hard power is a tricky one (see Table 1). Nye argues (2004a) on the relationship between the two forms, stating: soft power does not depend on hard power (p9), some have however termed it as a derivative (Huntington, 1996). A fact in the modern age of the global commons remains that people do not admire cultures that are exerted through the power of “coercion”. Therefore, while in some cases, hard power may support the basis for *Soft Power*, in manifestation or representation, it is *Soft Power* which will be accepted. Therefore, while there are different

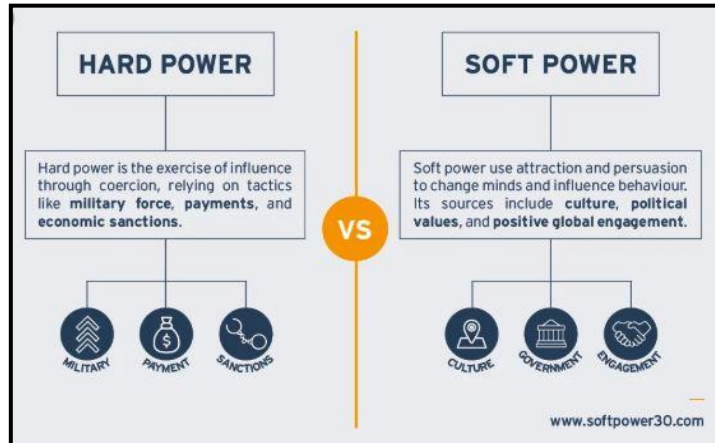


Table 1: Elements of Hard and Soft power

Hard Power	Soft Power
Ability to change others' position by force or inducement	Ability to shape preferences of others by attraction
Military and economic power	Cultural Power
Coercion, force	Co-option, Influence
Absolute	Relative, context based
Tangible, easy to measure, predictable to certain degree	Intangible, hard to measure, unpredictable
Ownership specified	Unspecified, multiple sources
controlled by State or organizations	Mostly non-state actors, uncontrollable
External, action, push.	Internal, reaction/ response, pull
Direct, short-term, immediate effect	Indirect, long-term, delayed effect
Manifested in foreign policies	Communicated via nation branding

Table 2: Relation between Hard and Soft Power

understandings of soft power, and particularly, about the relationship between soft and hard power (see Table 2), it is necessary to distinguish between *potential* and *real* soft power. Simply put, a country with rich sources in soft power does not necessarily have the “power” at its disposal. In other words, the existence of soft power sources is a mere deposit, a country however needs to have the will and ability, to tap into the deposit and convert this *Potential* into *Real Power*. Consequently, there is no country in the world that could exert significant soft power if it is in dire economic situation. A country must also find effective means - distribution channel or communication media, to “sell” this to the wider audience with some form of economic power or hard power to lend it credibility. To a greater or lesser extent, many countries in the world possess the cultural potential to influence others but lack the firm will in the geopolitical arena to communicate their agenda. While for

discreet assessment a comparison between the two forms of power exhibits a number of distinctive attributes, due to its diversified sources, soft power is difficult to measure and control, though it delivers far more substantially. Similarly, while Soft and hard are related because they are both aspects of the ability to achieve one's purpose by affecting the behaviour of others, the distinction remains in its degree (Nye, 2004b) and relation. Therefore, when compared to *Military Power*, *Economic Power* is soft; but *Economic Power* (aid or sanction) is hard power when compared to *Culture*. Secondly, "all power depends on context – who relates to whom under what circumstances – but soft power depends more than hard power upon the existence of *willing interpreter(s) and receiver(s)* (Nye, 2004b). In terms of effects and visibility Kurlantzick (2006) further classifies soft power as notoriously difficult to evaluate and measure, with the impact of hard power normally direct and immediate, straight and visible. In comparison, the effect of soft power is indirect and takes much longer to appear, a sentiment acceded to by (Nye, 2004a, p99). One must however relate to effectiveness of any power which depends on the acceptability and perception of the target audience or host country (Syria and Afghanistan being examples). A number of contextual variables affect the deployment of soft power by one country to another and the effect of such efforts on the latter, including geographic proximity, cultural similarity, historical relations and economic ties. Soft power in context therefore assumes relevance in today's context of interdependencies, progressive vision and multilateralism.

7. **Dynamics of Managing Soft Power.** Based on the assessments thus far, the problem devolves to try and calibrate Soft power in order to design its employment and efficacy. In a normative study by the RAND Corporation<sup>19</sup>, it was suggested that the best single indicator of a country's attractiveness (soft power) may be poll responses to the question "*where would you like to live other than your own country*" (Treverton and Jones, 2005). There existed a view that only the West or the countries with democratic institutions could yield soft power. It has similarly been claimed that communist countries (viz. erstwhile USSR, China) despite their rich culture, have not been able to develop soft power (Raman, 2005). This may not be true as a country alone may not have monopoly on soft power. Any organisation, country and culture, can develop soft power - the

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<sup>19</sup> RAND Corporation is an American non-profit global policy think tank created in 1948 by Douglas Aircraft Company to offer research and analysis to the United States Armed Forces. It is financed by the U.S. government and private endowment, corporations, universities and private individuals.



question is not who can or cannot develop soft power, but *to whom it is Soft Power*. It is clearly undeniable that whilst America has seen a decline in its soft power (Nye, 2004c), China's soft power has been on the rise, primarily in Southeast Asia, but also in Africa and Latin America (Kurlantzick, 2006; Nye, 2005; Business World, 2005). China's national image in developing countries, particularly in Africa, is much more positive than in the west. For example, the "Beijing Consensus<sup>20</sup>", a term coined by Ramo (2006) is seen by many developing countries as a viable alternative to the western model or the "Washington consensus<sup>21</sup>". There are many published examples of Chinese soft power in Africa (Thompson, 2005), however, it is important to note, especially for emerging countries, that the influence and good relationships China has enjoyed in Africa are not merely the result of its charm and friendly policies (soft power), but a product of four decades (since 1960s) of concerted investment (by the Chinese government) to cultivate such good will, through investment in reputational capital, and an intended strategy to build relations through aid, trade, medical teams, economic doles<sup>22</sup> and educational programmes (that elucidates the context and measure of Soft power in broader sense).

**8. National (Soft) Power and Global Influence.** A State remains non-influential as long as it remains passive and detests the display of desire how much so ever potential it may retain. This latent potential, in any power relationship can be comprehended in relative terms and is mostly transactional between the two parties. Conventional wisdom suggests that this would give rise to inequality as the stronger party will exert power over the weaker; as the richer would over the poorer. One must however be seized of the fact that power equilibrium between two parties does not change instantly and is a protracted evolution as described in the *Yin-Yang Philosophy*<sup>23</sup> (deriving weakness in the strength and a strength in the weakness). Similarly, interactive Soft Power *waxes-and-wanes* based on world geopolitical events and relations between two countries and changing perceptions (Walch, 2004; Cristo, 2005). It is in fact being increasingly witnessed in international polity, how the power

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<sup>20</sup> The China Model / Beijing Consensus (also known as the 中國模式 or Chinese Economic Model) refers to the political and economic policies of the People's Republic of China that began to be instituted by Deng Xiaoping after Mao Zedong's death in 1976.

<sup>21</sup> The Washington Consensus is a set of 10 economic policy prescriptions considered to constitute the "standard" reform package promoted for crisis-wracked developing countries by Washington, D.C.-based institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank and United States Department of the Treasury.<sup>[1]</sup> The term was first used in 1989 by English economist John Williamson.

<sup>22</sup> As per John Hopkins institute, the Chinese government extended US \$ 143 Bn loans to the African countries between 2000-2018.

<sup>23</sup> *Yin and Yang* is a principle, dating from the 3rd century BCE, premising that all things exist as inseparable and contradictory opposites, as a fundamental concept in Chinese philosophy and culture in general.

relationships both bilateral and multilateral are being wielded through international instruments and influence groups' or congregations<sup>24</sup>, and there is a growing appetite to embrace space to shape national influence, a fact which is empirical and can be verified through *Soft Power Indices*<sup>25</sup>, that measure them in pragmatic terms.

9. **Competing for Soft Power Dominance - New Paradigm.** Power is desirable and therefore sought by all. It is therefore pertinent to assess how global competition is shaping this domain. Countries' increasingly compete against each other for attention and attraction in the same fashion as commercial brands fight for market dominance. History shows this might not be achieved with impunity due to various factors, some of which may be internal; just as the futile efforts by the Shah<sup>26</sup> of Iran (in early 70s) to conjure global outreach<sup>27</sup> resulted in failure. One country's gain in soft power, generally leads to the loss of influence of another. This draws particular relevance to the rise of the Asian economies. Nye (2005) for instance regards the rise of China's soft power at America's expense, one that proclaims fight for power dominance and challenges world order. One may relate the development of over 300 *Confucius Institutes*<sup>28</sup> by China worldwide is an effort in exerting that influence just as the apparent attempt to counter this very influence by the Japanese through the recently launched program to open a hundred *Genki*<sup>29</sup> schools overseas. While the means to compete for soft power enhances, so does the level of sophistication in its scope and span; albeit all aimed to exert the influence of national power.

10. **Influence of Soft Power and National Outreach.** World over, several countries today suffer an image problem caused due to dramatic changes taking place internally (politico-economic and social landscapes); and externally (owing to the effect of outdated stereotypes). Despite

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<sup>24</sup>Major Global groups that debate and formulate policy instruments such as OECD, G7, G 20, IMF, World Bank , WTO, SCO etc are increasingly becoming the rules governing bodies that formulate policies for international transaction.

<sup>25</sup> According to the *Soft Power 30*, an annual index published by Portland Communications and the USC Center on Public Diplomacy for 2018, the United Kingdom is the leading sovereign state in soft power. While India does not figure on the list, this year's report features a chapter dedicated solely to Asia, listing 10 countries in the region, ranking India's soft power as eighth.

<sup>26</sup> Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, also known as Mohammad Reza Shah, was the last King of Iran from 16 September 1941 until his overthrow by the Iranian Revolution on 11 February 1979.

<sup>27</sup> The shah of Iran attempted to showcase Iran as a modern state in the early 70s to gain the pedestal of the top league of nations.

<sup>28</sup> Confucius Institute is a public educational organization under the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, whose stated aim is to promote Chinese language and culture, support local Chinese teaching internationally, and facilitate cultural exchanges.

<sup>29</sup> Offers short and long-term Japanese Intensive courses with accredited and award-winning Japanese language and culture school GenkiJACS

globalisation, free tourism and the advancement of technology, particularly the Internet, it is surprising that huge gaps and barriers still exist in the understanding between countries and cultures. Developing countries, especially large economies such as India with rising economies suffer from subdued brand awareness or tamed perceptions. In most cases this is aggravated by a subdued intent to make good use of the reticent Soft Power potential. The argument therefore arises on countries having rich resources or potential, lack the resource adequacy (technical and financial knowhow) to convert them into realisation. While nations across the world have been seized of the need to tell the story of their nation to the target international audience, it needs to be beyond simplistic propaganda, and one with subtlety and sensitivity (Pilon, 2005); also termed as *Country or Nation Branding* (Olins, 2002; Anholt, 1998). Some nations' have practiced this for ages, such as the French<sup>30</sup> did in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century (Melissen, 2005). As a subject for academic research, however, nation branding is a relatively new arena (Fan, 2006; Papadopoulos and Heslop, 2002). There is still no agreement about what the concept is and whether a nation can be branded (Aldersey-Walliam, 1998; Gudjonsson, 2005). To some, it is simply another term for country of origin effect or place marketing (Kotler, 2002). One must however remember, in a globalised world, everything attractive has a price, and if not as a direct return it certainly pays back as influence in dividend for a nation. Nations' must therefore manage and control their brand image to be able to compete effectively with others while, actively repositioning and branding to gain the competitive advantage over others (Gilmore, 2002) with accompanying factors such as tourism and foreign investment. We can therefore establish the need for a consistent and all-embracing national brand strategy which determines the most - realistic, competitive and compelling strategic vision for the country; supported, reinforced, and enriched by every act of communication between the country and the rest of the world (Anholt, 1998). In essence, such branding concerns the application of marketing through communications techniques to reshape the international opinion of the country as a cross-cultural communication process which very much resembles the advertising process: awareness -attraction- preference and a quintessential prerequisite for any nation desiring to influence the world while narrating its own story (without losing relevance of its own roots and past). Therefore, while there is no substitute for conscious

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<sup>30</sup> France as a nation (in early 17<sup>th</sup> century) went to much greater lengths in remoulding their country's image abroad, ahead of other European countries, and put enormous efforts into managing their country's reputation, seeing it as one of the principal sources of a nation's power, of which they reap benefits to this day.

development of a nation's brand (Olins, 2005), and economy has and will continue to play a critical role for countries who peruse this path, as seen through the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century<sup>31</sup> one must not lose sight that the world as it appears has become a gigantic stage on which nations are competing against each other for both attention and affection; and Nation branding holds the key to win this 'global contest of perception'. While developing such strategy a nation must be cautious to be sensitive, lest its efforts are construed otherwise and loses its relevance. For instance, while most countries welcomed China's growing influence (Pew, 2007), many in the West saw it as a threat (Nye, 2005), or "Sinoization" of Asia (Treverton and Jones, 2005). Successful campaigns help create a more favourable image among the international audience, thus enhancing the country's soft power which goes beyond just finding a catch phrase or window-dressing. This requires deep study of a nation's soft power sources through destination marketing with specific commercial purposes (promoting tourism or inward investment) and its inclusion into mainstream ambassadorial missions just as enacted in the US policy<sup>32</sup> of 2005.

11. **Soft Power and Nation Branding.** There are three key components in nation branding: *political*, *economic* and *cultural* (Fan, 2008a). These three are intertwined and need to work in synergy to achieve the same goal of promoting the nation's image. Nation branding should be distinguished from a nation brand as there is not necessarily a direct link between the two. A nation's '*brand*' exists with or without any conscious efforts in nation branding, as each country has a current image to its international audience, be it strong or weak, clear or vague (Fan, 2006:12). A nation brand can be defined as the total sum of all perceptions of a nation in the mind of international stakeholders which may contain some of the following elements: people, place, culture/language, history, food, fashion, famous faces (celebrities), global brands etc. Clearly, these are also the sources of potential soft power identified earlier in the paper. Therefore, to transform soft power from its potential source into real power, a number of issues need to be addressed, which may include - enhancing the competitiveness of cultural industry through necessary media infrastructure (which would provide a stage to showcase the nation, just

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<sup>31</sup> South Korea and Spain showcased their nations in mega events in the 1980s and 1990s just as China did in Beijing Olympics 2008 and Shanghai World Expo 2010. Similarly, Brazil and UK showcased their countries' spectacle in 2012 and 2016 respectively.

<sup>32</sup> The US state department has an under-secretary for public diplomacy with a mission of "turning around anti-American sentiment in the world".

as Japan<sup>33</sup> employed the concept in the 80s). China on the other hand despite almost everything being *Made in China*, had been suffering a big deficit in terms of cultural exports, which it lately, acknowledged<sup>34</sup> and has been very effectively working to overcome. Similarly, whether a unique cultural product from a country can serve as a form of soft power depends on how one markets the product. As a case in point, while *Tae-kwon-Do*<sup>35</sup> from Korea could become one of the most widely practiced martial arts in the world (even an Olympic event), *Kung-fu*<sup>36</sup> of *Shaolin* remains still largely unknown outside China.

**12. India – Soft Power Potential and Realities.** While soft power and its relevance for emerging economies is well established, application of its dynamics in the Indian context (with potentially leading indicators) brings forth many misgivings in deliverance. Since the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, in keeping with India's rise on the world stage, the scholarly and policy communities in India and abroad have witnessed a steady increase in writings on India's Soft Power. Many of these assessments were optimistic, placing faith in India's potential as a *Civilizational Great Power*<sup>37</sup> with considerable resources arising from its culture, domestic ideology and geography (K M Panickkar, 1945) and diplomacy. However, when we equate this in terms of sheer impact, *Indian Soft Power* does not measure up to the expectations. Significant sections of public opinion in the West and in Asia still maintain a dilemma on rather being favourable to this *idea on India*. This can primarily be adjudicated to the difficulty an evaluator faces while identifying the significant role played by soft power in India's diplomatic gains since the early 1990s. While writing in 2003, prominent Indian foreign policy analyst C. Raja Mohan even argued:

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<sup>33</sup> Japanese prime minister is quoted as saying that Sony and Matsushita (Panasonic) are the left and right faces of Japan (Fan, 2008b). Such brands emerge from the stability and success of a country's political and economic institutions – the foundation of its hard power – and consequently contribute to nation branding in aggregate.

<sup>34</sup> First published in 2005 in an article of the influential People's Daily "While we are great in cultural resources, we are not strong in cultural industries".

<sup>35</sup> Tae Kwon Do (Korean 태권도/跆拳道), is a Korean martial art, characterized by its emphasis on head-height kicks, jumping and spinning kicks, and fast kicking techniques. The combative sport was developed during the 1940s and 1950s by Korean martial artists with experience in martial arts such as karate, Chinese martial arts, and indigenous Korean martial arts traditions such as *Taekkyon*, *Subak*, and *Gwonbeop* and included in Olympics in 2000.

<sup>36</sup> The Chinese martial arts known in China as *Wushu* (武術; wǔshù) and the West as *kung fu* (/ kɒŋ FU /; Chinese :功夫; *pinyin* : *gōngfu* ). In China , the expression *kung fu* characterizes any style of martial art, or task done to perfection, not just martial arts. There is also another widely used term in China : *Kuoshu* ( *pinyin* : *Guoshu* ) - which means "national art" - imposed by the Chinese government to designate martial art ( *Wushu* ) in a more nationalistic way.

<sup>37</sup> A civilisation state is a country that claims to represent not just a historic territory or a particular language or ethnic-group, but a distinctive civilisation. It is an idea that is gaining ground in states as diverse as China, India, Russia, Turkey and, even, the US.

*The spiritualism of India has attracted people from all over the world, and its Gurus have travelled around the world selling yoga and mysticism. Bollywood has done more for Indian influence abroad than the bureaucratic efforts of the Government. From classical and popular music to its cuisine, from the growing impact of its writers and intellectuals, India now has begun to acquire many levers of soft power.*

13. It can be safely assumed in consonance with majority consensus in literature that India has historically possessed considerable soft power resources arising from its universalist culture, democratic and political institutions. However, translating this into effective use as a stimulant of national influence has been visibly absent. Though the recent accounts of concerted efforts by New Delhi<sup>38</sup> to channelise resources – including engagements through its large diaspora living abroad<sup>39</sup>, into generating soft power might depict nascent foreign policy outcomes (Hall 2012), these effects are gradual and yet to expound. As a matter of fact, for a country which was almost destined to provide significant moral leadership in the post-Cold War world, India’s soft power resources in the past have commonly proved not up to the task (Blarel 2012). Various surveys and impressionistic reviews of India’s cultural capital among publics around the world have concluded that world opinion is still nowhere near as favourable as it should have been, given the potential and expectations (Hymans 2009). Here we must reflect that analysts, have paid insufficient attention to the manner in which India’s soft

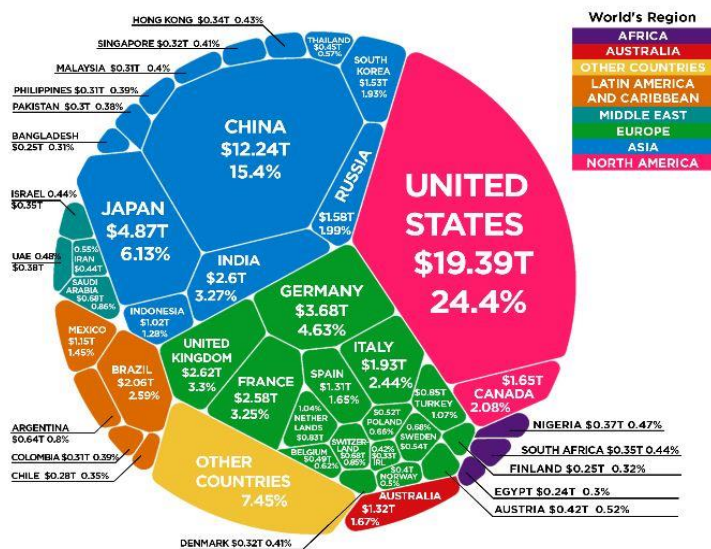
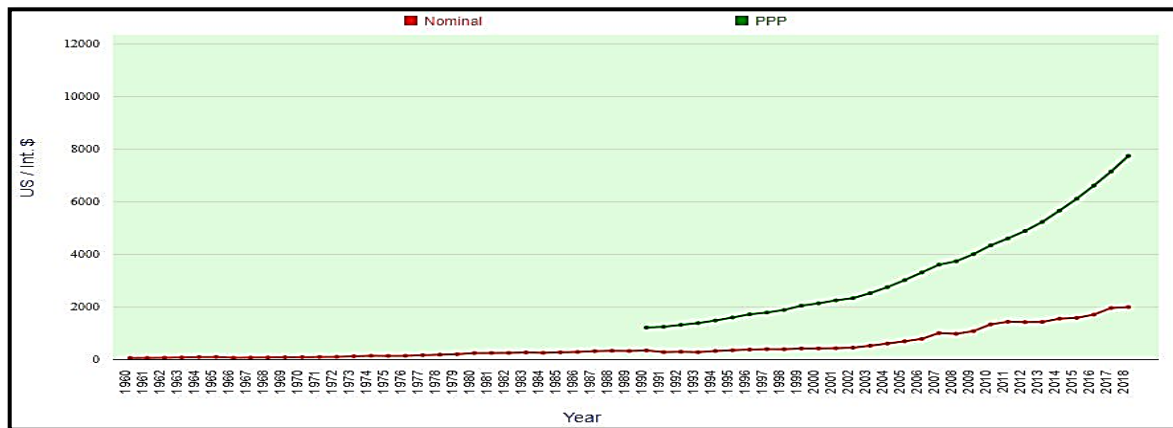


Fig 1: India’s GDP in relative terms (@2018 data)

<sup>38</sup> Capital of India

<sup>39</sup> Many successful engagements with the Indian Expat community were witnessed through interactions/conclaves during the Indian Prime Minister’s visits abroad post his election victory in the year 2014 and 2019.

power resources conflict with each other and send mixed messages to international audiences. Also, the increased emphasis on India's soft power has not accompanied its rise along traditional economic power dimensions which relates to its GDP (PPP) vs Per-Capita gap (see Fig 1 and Graph 1) which is known to have a noticeable impact on the relevance of India's human capital and in-turn its foreign and public diplomacy influence<sup>40</sup> (Sharp, cited in Melissen 2005, p. 8). Lastly, as with any state, the credibility of India's soft power lies in the coherence of its national identity, and India has not yet resolved the many contradictions<sup>41</sup> in its self-image in a manner that might lend to the successful utilisation of its latent soft power resources. The missing link that comes to mind therefore is of unstructured application and a need for effective application followed with prudent projection to gain the desired effects from the reticent Power potential.



Graph 1: India's GDP (PPP) Vs Nominal (Source World Bank @2018)

14. **India's Soft Power Indices - What Must be Done?** Just as public diplomacy does not focus on specific policy issues (a task better suited to lobbying); neither is it ideological in its content (like propaganda). There exists a need for India to focus on "building long-term relationships that create an enabling environment for government policies" (Nye 2004, p. 107). Arguably, it may appear that India did consider its soft power resources, since the early 21<sup>st</sup> century and to some extent been promoting its credentials around the globe to its own people (Suri 2011), who however, tended to mostly know and care little about their nation's foreign policy (Kapur 2009); thereby translating to ineffective action. The deficit in approach has therefore been largely internal. Among the various

<sup>40</sup> Public diplomacy is a key ingredient of soft power's potency. Public diplomacy is "The process by which direct relations with people in a country are pursued to advance the interests and extend the values of those being represented".

<sup>41</sup> Countries image that contrasts between lagging human development indicators while being one of world's leading IT and service provider with an exceptionally successful Space program

commentators who have enumerated these endeavours, Tharoor (2008, p. 40) has perhaps been the most enthusiastic, while he commented famously:

*When India's cricket team triumphs or its tennis players claim Grand Slams, when a Bhangra beat is infused into a western pop record or an Indian choreographer invents a fusion of Kathak and ballet, when Indian women sweep the Miss World and Miss Universe contests or when Monsoon Wedding wows the critics and Lagaan claims an Oscar nomination, when Indian writers win the Booker or Pulitzer prizes, India's soft power is enhanced.*

15. Clearly, India's soft power resources have been and are multi-faceted which include- sports, music, art, film, literature, and even beauty pageantry, but are they adequately understood and branded when compared to the potential mandate of a steeply aspirational India; perhaps not. While one may suffix to the aforesaid list, India's anti-colonial history, democratic institutions, free press, independent judiciary, vibrant civil society, multi-ethnic polity, secularism, pluralism, skilled English-speaking workers, food, handicrafts, yoga, its status as a responsible nuclear power, the rapid growth of the information technology sector in India's Silicon Valley, and the existence of a large Indian diaspora in certain western countries (Blarel 2012, Malone 2011, Purushothaman 2010, Hymans 2009, Mohan 2003) it remains an intriguing facet with similarity to the plethora of soft power resources and diversity it brings along just as in case of China (Cho and Jeong 2008, Garrison 2005), Russia (Hill 2006) or Japan (Lam 2007). It is therefore difficult to comprehend what precisely are the key inhibitors that stalls India despite such mutually homogenous facets and enablers to affect global opinion and influence of a diversely complex country like India.

*"India will overtake the US economy by 2030" which heralds "**A new world economic order**" – with India possessing an economy which is like "an elephant starting to run"<sup>42</sup>(See Graph 2)*

16. One thing that emerges therefore is despite having favourable factors, they remained largely unused thus resulting in dwarfed survey indices<sup>43</sup> that delude India from the high pedestal it so deserves. To sum up the Indian Context, there exists a great paradox in both *concept* and

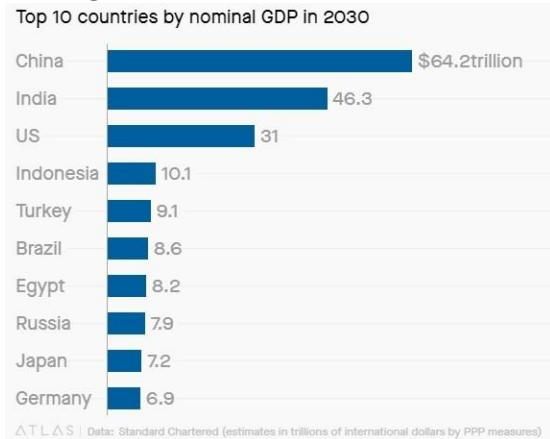
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<sup>42</sup> IMF Prediction on World GDP indices (World Economic Forum review 2019)

<sup>43</sup> Soft power Index of India



*potential application*. As soft power rests on attraction, the “power” lies not in the hands of India alone (which might possess it), rather more so in the *responses and reactions* of the party (in this case the global arena) which it is intended for. Therefore, there needs to be an **effort to bring clarity and erase the existential deficit** (internally and externally). Also, in view of its unique nature, a nation’s soft power over another cannot be exploited purposely in any coherent way (Blechman, 2005) which being an intangible, uncontrollable and unpredictable force, unless structured,



Graph 2: Standard Chartered estimates: GDP predictions (2030)

organised and coordinated Nye (2005), would never yield India the desired results. There needs to be **cogent effort in synchronising the resources of India’s soft power**. Finally, human feelings such as attraction and affection can be fickle, therefore influence of soft power is difficult to sustain (Treverton and Jones, 2006). India therefore needs to **build sustained and substantial means which permeates the target**

**nation and imbeds the message for lasting impact** in consonance with existing realities and paradigms in global polity.

17. **India’s Soft Power - Contemporary Context.** Developing the Soft power resources of India in present day context can be best summarised under following heads: -

(a) **Diplomatic Initiative.** In practice, India’s soft power remains weak for two primary reasons. First, Indian diplomacy has neglected soft power as an important tool of statecraft and has only recently understood the relevance of ‘cultural diplomacy’. Second, soft power cannot really exist without some initial hard power achievements. A country will only be able to realistically tell a ‘better story’ if it has material power to build its soft power on. While goodwill for India abroad has largely been generated in an unplanned manner, New Delhi does retain the capacity to accentuate this through ‘public diplomacy’ (developing a framework of activities) by which it may seek influence on public attitudes supportive of national interests. India has recently demonstrated this intention notably, by creating a Public Diplomacy Division in India’s Ministry of External Affairs (in 2006), with an

objective to intensify the dialogue on foreign policy issues with all segments of the society (at home and abroad). However, such efforts are fairly nascent and effects could only be seen as broader engagements are witnessed as a result of GoI (MEAs) new-found and extensive outreach (See Fig 2).

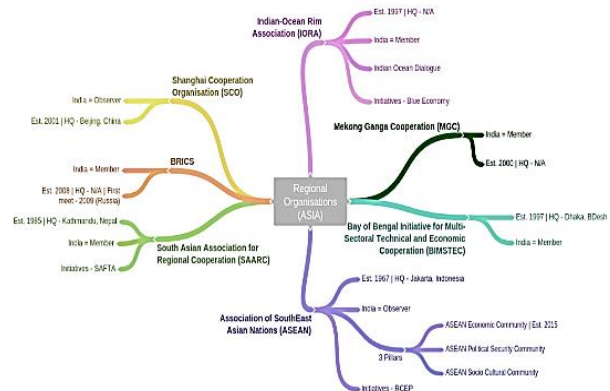


Fig 2: India's Look East Policy

(b) **Building Human and Cultural Capital.** Most notable development in recent times has been the explicit incorporation of the 'Human and cultural' element into India's foreign policy. The Indian Council for Cultural Relations<sup>44</sup> has set up over 20 cultural centres in over 20 countries whose activities range from film festivals to book fairs and art exhibitions, aiming to present an image of India as a plural multicultural society. While the human capital has been omnipresent it witnesses enhanced global engagement beyond own shores through such initiatives. The Indian government today is encouraging the use of *Hindi*<sup>45</sup> abroad by organising annual and rotating World Hindi Conferences, offering classes in its different centres. Offering religious diversity through consciousness societies such as ISKCON<sup>46</sup> and inaugurating temples abroad<sup>47</sup> (maiden initiative) for expats is an effort to assert the cultural links as well. Similarly, despite India's important democratic achievements, New Delhi had historically shied away from promoting this strength abroad, this saw some positive slew since early 2000 (notably in coordination with the international community). In 2005, India joined the UN *Democracy Fund* and contributed \$25 million, making it the second biggest donor after the

<sup>44</sup> Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), founded on 9 April 1950, is an autonomous organisation of the Government of India, involved in India's external cultural relations, through cultural exchanges with other countries and their people.

<sup>45</sup> *Hindi* (India's national language), is an Indo-Aryan language spoken in India (by over 300 million people) and across the Indian subcontinent. Modern Hindi is the standardised and Sanskritised register of the Hindustani language, which itself is based primarily on the Khariboli dialect of Delhi and other nearby areas of northern India.

<sup>46</sup> The International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), known colloquially as the Hare Krishna movement or *Hare Krishnas*, runs over 850 worship centres world-over. It is a *Gaudiya* Vaishnava Hindu religious organisation, founded in 1966 in New York City by A. C. *Bhaktivedanta* Swami Prabhupada. Its core beliefs are based on the Hindu scriptures, particularly the *Bhagavad Gita* and the *Bhagavata Purana*, and the *Gaudiya* Vaishnava tradition, which has had adherents in India since the late 15th century and American and European devotees since the early 1900s.

<sup>47</sup> The temple in UAE estimated to cost Dhs400-450m is being built on land donated by the Abu Dhabi government with collaboration with India and the foundation stone was laid in 2016.

US (\$38 million). The specific activities enacted include – *International Electoral Assistance* and programs to strengthen the rule of law and to fight corruption. Even at the regional level, India’s decision to link its development assistance with projects of democracy promotion to regional countries (see

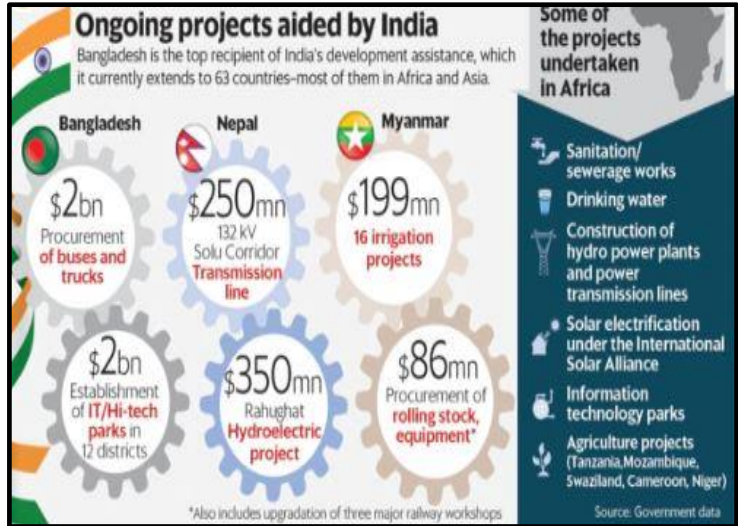


Fig 3: India’s ongoing development assistance (source: GoI 2018)

Fig 3) and increased value of exchange and public interactions such as in Afghanistan<sup>48</sup>, are examples of soft power outreach. These regional initiatives are termed as *neo Soft Power Approaches*<sup>49</sup> and are framed around the concept of ‘*non-reciprocity*’, ‘*connectivity*’ and ‘*cooperative-asymmetrical responsibilities*’<sup>50</sup>, and are indicative of a willingness to use own economic attractiveness to persuade neighbours positively.

(c) **Securing Outreach Benefits.** Just as in the beginning of the 1990s, as it became evident that the *Overseas Chinese community* was contributing to China’s economic development, India began its outreach<sup>51</sup> efforts to wealthier expatriates who were well situated to

<sup>48</sup> The Afghanistan example is interesting as India has direct national interests at stake in the stabilisation of that country. However, India has deliberately refused to send any military mission and instead pursued a soft power strategy to gain Afghan goodwill by delivering \$1.3 billion in economic and logistical assistance. Since 2001, India has concentrated on the reconstruction of Afghanistan through aid for building infrastructure like dams and roads and providing scholarships for Afghan students. Ordinary Afghans seem to have appreciated India’s ‘soft’ involvement in their country as 74 percent of them have a favourable image of India according to a 2009 ABC/BBC/ARD poll.

<sup>49</sup> The efforts initiated since the 1980s were greater political investment in different regional institutions such as the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), the South Asia Cooperative Environment Programme, the South Asian Economic Union and BIMSTEC which were created to enhance cultural and commercial ties and to rebuild its trust deficit with neighbouring countries while promoting mutually beneficial Free Trade Agreements.

<sup>50</sup> The Indian-American community played pivotal role in improving India’s image in American minds which greatly contributed to the Indo-US rapprochement. The lobbying efforts carried by the US India Political Action Committee (USINPAC) proved to be crucial to get the much-debated Indo-US nuclear deal passed in the US Congress.

<sup>51</sup> In 2000 Indian Government established a High-Level Committee on Indian Diaspora to review the status of People of Indian Origin (PIOs) and Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) in the context of constitutional provisions, laws and rules applicable to them both in India and countries of their residence. By studying the characteristics, strengths and weaknesses of this community, which represents twenty million people worldwide, this committee aimed to study the role that PIOs and NRIs may play in the economic, social and technological development of India. In exchange for their contribution and based on the committee’s recommendations, the Indian government reformed citizenship requirements in 2004 and eased the legal regime governing the travel and stay of PIOs in India.

play a vital role in strengthening ties between India and other countries. A relevant continuum of this can be appreciated from the Prime Ministers successful expat engagements<sup>52</sup> in the recent past. While it is apparent that India has slowly yet progressively realised the two dimensions of power, especially for its aspiring global dimension, its political and economic appeal would not be effective unless it develops robust political institutions along with sustained high economic growth rates (that give legitimacy and credibility to play leadership role in the world). As key indicators point, India has credible soft power advantages over the other rising powers, and because of its democratic experience, this rise has been perceived as *complementing rather than challenging* to the existing international order. The need therefore is to use this potential to promote publicly the pluralist nature of its politics, society, as a cooperative and stabilising force in today's increasingly divided international power matrix.

18. **Conclusion.** As has been amply analysed, Soft power in its true form is intangible, relative, context-based, and controlled largely by non-state actors with its relevance and ultimate effectiveness depending on the perception and response of the target audience. This however remains a challenge to achieve in reality especially in today's materialistic and polarised world. With the bottom-line of any two countries in a power relationship getting mutually benefitted being the premise, it assumes importance for an emerging power like India (identified as traditionally an accommodating nation) to employ its cultural, Social and Human capital resources as key elements of leverage to its advantage. While globally accepted brands can play key role in promoting positive image in the global commons, the absence of a coherent and succinct nation branding campaign will mar this opportunity. India must therefore introspect closely to conjure the potential of its effective cultural products which may be showcased to promote national image as a vital cog in creating long-lasting impact in image branding. Also, since Soft power and nation branding are two closely linked concepts, India will need to supplement its efforts with stable outwardly policies which reflect the global sentiments and align with the core of sustenance and of *Universal Good*. Effective and prudent use of soft power through public diplomacy and nation branding

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<sup>52</sup> The Prime Minister of India, in his scheme of enhanced public interaction with Indian expats and diaspora visited the US in 2014 and more lately in 2019 during the 'Howdy Modi' event. Similarly, he has had interactions in Singapore and the UAE in 2015, the Town Hall event in London (UK) in 2018 which are a few among major outreach programs.

through more focused, culturally unbiased and a proactive approach to create international influence in the world should form the backbone of Indian influence and outreach in the use of its soft power potential which draws heavily from its civilizational past and aspirational present (in full measure). A lot remains to learn for India from the examples of both the US and China (both at distinct junctures of cultural and civilizational advent-line). As a rising power India seems to now realised well, that brand and image value assumes great importance which is also a necessity if it aims to wield influence in the world polity which will both augment and expand its acceptance and impact as a power centre; and utilising the reticent potential despite leading indicators may no longer be sustainable for the developmental objectives the nation so desires.

19. **Recommendations.** A few recommendations that can be drawn from the assessment as key imperatives for India and future of its Soft Power application are enumerated below: -

- (a) Rejuvenate *Multinational Brands* of Indian origin<sup>53</sup> as the de-facto *Brand of the Nation* as elements that propagate nation branding.
- (b) Promote the enormous soft power (in the form of global brands and power wielding multinational companies) as tangible manifestations of India's soft power resource.
- (c) Help promote the *new* and *modern* image of India through greater *Foreign Direct Investments* utilising the liberalisation process and graduate progressively to a global manufacturing hub for international firms (committing long-term productive investments in the country).
- (d) Hard sell the fashionable aspects of Indian culture (viz music, food, style and religion) which have gained prominence in many parts of the world, in a centrally coordinated '*Charm Offensive*,' akin to the Chinese.
- (e) In an effort to increase its international clout, mould its public diplomacy initiatives to one that tells a '*Better Story*'.
- (f) Devise norms through debates to determine the right mix between *Soft* and *Hard* power in order to achieve effective and real influence, to what Nye, termed as '*Smart Power*.'

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<sup>53</sup> With each passing day, India Inc is acquiring companies abroad, becoming world-popular suppliers and are recruiting staff cutting across nationalities. Some of these include Asian Paints, Tata, Sundaram Fasteners Apollo, Venky's, Mahindra, ITC, Reliance group, OVL etc.

- (g) To remain relevant and an attractive power, which can wield influence, there exists a need to present a more compelling *Development Model* that is '*All Embracing and Democratic*'.
- (h) Since soft power has a fluctuating value, India will need to *resolve its social and economic inequality* to retain the soft power edge.
- (j) Implement policies that promote an equitable and efficient society, that not only commands a major share of the global wealth, but *celebrates Human Wealth* as the ultimate beneficiary.
- (k) Build institutional (macro-economic and structural) reforms and physical infrastructure, without constraining federal regulations, efficient bureaucratic structures and eradicate the perception of corruption which deters both monetary and exploratory investments.
- (l) Establish the power construct that explores the *Effects Based Approach*<sup>54</sup> of military establishment (Hard Power) with economic growth as an edifice to supplement the Soft Power elements in union.
- (m) Model the strategy to manage 'nation's image in the eyes of foreign audience', with *objectives* which may be pursued in *short, medium* and *long-term* time frames.
- (n) In the present age of the global commons and communication revolution, implement measures to achieve the right messaging to accrue crucial benefits in *opinion building* and initiate *proactive dialogue* wherever course correction is mandated.
- (p) Keep a clear sight of mutual interdependencies and social security structures of the current world order both regionally and internationally.
- (q) Better utilise the more socially accepted and dynamic *alternatives to Western cultural values* such as Indian Soap Operas, entertainment and perhaps the well-established and acclaimed film industry, popularly dubbed '*Bollywood*<sup>55</sup>', to promote the model for political and cultural development (similar to what *Hollywood* did during the Cold war).
- (r) Assume leadership position in guiding transformational approaches to global social acceptance through initiatives such as *Yoga*<sup>56</sup> which is now practiced around the world as a social health and wellness revolution.

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<sup>54</sup> Effects-based operations (EBO) is a [United States military](#) concept that emerged during the [Persian Gulf War](#) for the planning and conduct of operations combining military and non-military methods to achieve a particular effect. An effects-based approach to operations was first applied in modern times in the design and execution of the Desert Storm air campaign of 1991.

<sup>55</sup> One of the largest and farthest-reaching mediums for Indian culture and today the world's largest film industry

<sup>56</sup> Yoga is a group of physical, mental, and spiritual practices or disciplines which originated in ancient India. Yoga is one of the six orthodox schools of Hindu philosophical traditions. m



- (s) Popularise and hard sell home grown and traditional sports (particularly which trend socially) and gather popular support such as the *Super* and *Premier leagues* (with huge bounties attached) for *Cricket* and *Kabaddi*<sup>57</sup>. With an intent to make them more accessible to people across the globe. Indian films have never really promoted a certain model for political and cultural development.
- (t) Utilise the large (global) *Indian diaspora*<sup>58</sup> as a means of Indian diplomacy which has been regarded and considered to be a major asset internationally (for having added value to every system that it has been associated with).
- (u) Use India's unprecedented democratic record (amongst most decolonised countries), as a strong soft power resource.
- (v) Exploit the new international consensus around democracy, human rights and market-oriented economic reforms which reinforce the '*Indian appeal*'<sup>59</sup> of a new global order of larger commons in established and stable societies that *restore hope* and *demonstrate good will* as an institutional alternative to Western political systems.
- (w) Explore the recent technological achievements<sup>60</sup> as critical soft power resources that extend the nation's accomplishments and prove attractive to others to overcome *stereotypical image of underdeveloped impoverishment*.
- (x) Aid the impression of a modern economy backed by dynamic research base (that leads world innovation) with cutting edge technologies such as the ISRO<sup>61</sup> model on space sciences).
- (y) Finally, leverage the soft power elements consistently as effects-based resources as diplomatic instruments rather than merely articulated rhetoric<sup>62</sup>.

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<sup>57</sup> *Kabaddi* is a contact team sport, played between two teams of seven players each with ancient accounts of the sport appearing in the histories of ancient India.

<sup>58</sup> There are today millions of Indians spread as far as Fiji, Malaysia, Mauritius, South Africa and Trinidad. While many of these Indians originally migrated as labourers for the British Empire in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a new wave of richer and educated expatriates have found their way to the US, Canada and Australia in the last decades. These immigrants have come to play major roles in the political spheres of these different countries.

<sup>59</sup> India's democratic, federal and secular political model (although not always perfect) could be considered as an institutional model of reasonable accommodation of minority rights, and of flexible adjustment to different ethnic and linguistic claims.

<sup>60</sup> Indian information technology firms such as Infosys Technologies and Wipro, the achievements of other multinational companies such as the Tata and Mahindra Group and the Reliance empire; and the now global reputation of the Indian educational institutions, have contributed to the development of a new image of India as a technological and economic powerhouse.

<sup>61</sup> The Indian Space Research Organisation (founded in 1959) is the space agency of the Government of India headquartered in the city of Bengaluru. Its vision is to "harness space technology for national development while pursuing space science research and planetary exploration"

<sup>62</sup> India's political leadership and its diplomatic instruments have traditionally aimed to capitalise its resources with discreet and disjointed references to cultural diversity, diaspora, political values and economic growth story. These have amounted to rhetoric for image-polishing, and not national image building. Need therefore is to put in place structured and sincere attempts to exploit this huge soft power potential.

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