

India’s Soft Power Potential: A Case Study of Components and Goals of Indian Public Diplomacy

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ABSTRACT

Public diplomacy is an important tool for presenting a state’s soft power throughout the world. The process by which a national government informs and influences foreign public opinion and attitudes in effort to accomplish its foreign policy goals is known as public diplomacy. Nation-branding, digital engagement, diaspora outreach, global broadcasting, and international exchange programs are examples of such initiatives aimed at promoting the state’s positive reputation and credibility to a global reach. This study examines the role of public diplomacy in achieving India’s geopolitical goals in the twenty-first century. Public diplomacy assists the government in attaining two key objectives. First, it helps ease any active or latent concerns about India’s rise as a global power. Second, in an era of globalization, it aids India’s efforts to expand international tourist trips, attract foreign investment, and secure new markets for its commodities. In this research, the grounds behind India’s engagement in international public diplomacy are addressed. This study also briefly discusses some of main objectives of Indian public diplomacy.

Key Words: **India, Public Diplomacy, Soft Power, Foreign Policy and Rising Power**

Introduction

A country’s foreign policy consists of a set of objectives and a strategy for dealing with both government and non-government entities. Its mission in international relations is to protect, maintain, and develop national interests. To be effective, a country’s foreign policy should be able to influence the actions and decisions of international stakeholders and audiences. Governments all around the globe have been studying soft power assets as a way to attract the global world (Cull, 2008; Nye, 2008). Soft power projection results in the construction of a certain aspect of

the state in the eyes of the international world. Scholars believe that a country's image will influence international community on investment, tourism, trade, and economic cooperation (Anholt, 2005; Roll, 2015).

Contemporary diplomacy is experiencing massive transformations that are changing the entire essence of diplomacy as we know it. These changes have an influence on aspects of domestic and international politics that were previously overlooked by diplomacy. The multitude of domestic and global stakeholders involved in diplomacy is increasing; the general public has become more conscious about foreign policy matters and attempting to influence diplomacy through social media and other platforms; and the way countries act together tasks and communicate with other local stakeholders is modifying. Diplomacy, as part of state government, must take these trends into account, since they mirror broader socioeconomic trends (Nye, 2008; Potter, 2009).

In recent years, some governments have made significant attempts to project their 'soft power' abroad. In this aspect, public diplomacy has shown to be an effective tool. The process by which a national government informs and influences international perception and views in effort to accomplish its world politics objectives is known as public diplomacy. Nation-branding, digital engagement, diaspora outreach, and global broadcasting, and foreign exchange programs are just a few examples of initiatives aimed at promoting the positive image and reputation of the country in international politics. This increases a nation's foreign clout and helps it to take a more active part in global events. International trade, foreign tourist arrivals, international assistance, foreign direct investment, and regional and international economic cooperation are all facilitated as a consequence, contributing to the country's economic prosperity and political stability. In a digitally connected world, both official and non-governmental actors are active in creating a favorable image of the country (Cull, 2008; Nye, 2008).

Indian Approach to Public Diplomacy

The technique of public diplomacy aids India in achieving two major goals. First, it allays any active or dormant anxieties about India as a growing force in the world community. Second, in an era of globalization, it assists India to contend with other nations as it aims to secure new markets for its goods, increase international tourists, and magnetize foreign investment. The activities and viewpoint in the foreign policy of India on significant worldwide problems are communicated and explained through public diplomacy. Finally, India uses public diplomacy to build a favorable image in the eyes of the international community as well as in the Indian Diaspora. This article examines recent efforts of India to build a more incorporated strategy to public diplomacy and how it might be used to attain the goals of foreign policy. It also examines some of the issues that India has when it comes to using public diplomacy (Cull, 2008; Potter, 2009).

The Indian government's approach to public diplomacy is relatively new, but it has quickly gained popularity as a key tool of soft power of the India. Never the

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less, yet public diplomacy is an important tool in the foreign policy of India, as it could be utilized to maximize the country's global footprint, particularly given the country's expanding importance in international affairs. In the shape of a complete and unified strategy, public diplomacy should be incorporated into India's foreign affair process. As a result, public diplomacy should be a surprise; rather, it must become a need at all stages of foreign policy formulation. As an outcome, India's government must employ all soft power tools, including public diplomacy, in order to become a global power (Yaseen, Jathol & Muzaffar, 2016).

External perceptions of India have shifted as a result of the exponential economic development of country and acceptance of its actual nuclear position by the US and other nations. India is now seen as an emerging power with growing global weight. The endeavor of India to enhance its soft power in the course of popular diplomacy becomes critical in this circumstance. India has previously shown to be a strong military and economic force in the globe, but it continues to struggle to project that influence internationally. Hard power has its limits, thus a well-balanced blend of soft and hard power, or 'smart power', is required (Nye, 2007). As a result, strengthening the soft power of India is the most important strategy for increasing its global influence. Joseph Nye created the phrase "soft power", which has since become a reliable indicator of a nation's supremacy and power in the globe. Soft power refers to the capacity to acquire what a country wants without resorting to force or money (Nye, 2004).

The culture, political beliefs, and institutions of a country, as well as its foreign policy, all contribute to soft power (Nye, 1990). Because of its prosperous history and culture, autonomous identification, technical growth, a big and important diaspora, and leadership among developing countries through global institutions such as the Non-Alignment Movement, India is well-positioned to hold soft power resources. Thus, India's argue to international authority is distinguished by its distinct, unremarkable, and convincing "soft power", or what South Asian specialist Steven Cohen refers to as "India's Reputational Power" (Chaulia, 2007). Public diplomacy is a most significant weapon for a state's soft power to be used. Public diplomacy is explored as, "a Government's process of communicating with foreign publics in an attempt to bring about an understanding for its nation's ideas and ideals, its institutions and culture, as well as its national goals and current policies" (Mazumdar, 2020).

A Glimpse of Indian Public Diplomacy

In the twenty-first century, Indian public diplomacy is entirely based on culture. To a significant degree, public diplomacy is covering, conveying, and assigning the cultural values, ideas, commodities, and practices of India to abroad in order to achieve economic and political objectives, boost national pride, and increase national security. The finest way to express the notion and image of India is through its culture. Its interactions with the rest of Asia have always had a

significant cultural dimension throughout the Indian history (Thussu, 2013). Indian civilization today merges “strong Hindu-Buddhist foundations, centuries of Islamic influence, and integration with European institutions and ideas” (Thussu, 2013). When it comes to public diplomacy, this diversified culture offers the country with a variety of resources. Indian traditional music and dance, Buddhism, Ayurveda, Bollywood, yoga, and diaspora are just a few of the soft power assets that have been utilized to show the entire world a new and vibrant India (Thussu, 2013).

The study of public diplomacy of India is a reasonably new endeavor, despite the fact that the activity itself dates back to the time of the creation of India. PM Nehru aimed to give the country a distinct character by emphasizing norms and ideals such as nonalignment, decolonization, and development partnerships (Mullen, 2015). Since independence, many administrations have used soft power in various ways. This initiative included development cooperation programs with nations such as Nepal, Bhutan, Afghanistan, and various other countries, which included technical and financial aid (Mullen, 2015). Others have concentrated on the role of successive governments in projecting India’s soft power overseas via the ‘public diplomacy’ process (Suri, 2011; Hall, 2012; Blarel, 2012). Several reports have highlighted the difficulties of promoting such a large and varied people as India, on the other hand, disadvantages of portraying India as a unified country. For achieving the Indian foreign policy goals, the government, according to the majority of these studies, is the only body capable of bringing different parts of soft power resources together (Kaur, 2012).

Some experts have lately addressed how soft power of India has been exhibited by the Narendra Modi administration. Modi has sought to represent India as a benign growing power by utilizing the country’s soft power resources (Tandon, 2016; Mazumdar, 2018). He has endeavored to communicate with the vast Indian Diaspora throughout the world in order to market India as a desirable foreign investment and tourist destination. Broadcast, social and print media have all shown to be effective in this regard. PM Modi is a frequent user of social media (Tandon, 2016; Mazumdar, 2018).

Components and Goals of India’s Public Diplomacy

Navtej Suri, a former Indian diplomat, articulated the fundamental parts of India’s strategy to developing a public diplomacy agenda in 2011. Creating a constructive description, projecting soft power, welcoming guests, image and branding, digital diplomacy, the domestic front, broadcasting, and coordinating and tactical infrastructure are just a few of them. To complement these features, India has established a departmental structure linked with appealing the international audience throughout time. The External Publicity and Public Diplomacy (XPD) Division, the Overseas Indian Affairs (OIA) Division, and the Development Partnership Administration (DPA) Division are the three main institutions

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involved in the making of Indian public diplomacy. Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) is the key body for the country's international affairs (Suri, 2011).

Public diplomacy is also carried out through the Indian Council for World Affairs (ICWA) and the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), both of which are more than half a century old. The ICWA is a research institute tasked with promoting India's foreign relations through research, conversation, press release, and sharing of ideas and knowledge with organizations around the world, whereas the ICCR works with the MEA on external cultural diplomacy, such as promoting exchange of culture with other countries and peoples. The Diaspora has been cultivated by recent governments, including the current Modi government, as a method of conveying information about India's advancements and recruiting entrepreneurs, visitors, and business partners (Suri, 2011).

The Indian diaspora is not an entity player, despite being defined as individuals who travelled to various regions of the globe while maintaining their Indian character (Varadarajan, 2015). Over many decades, their cultural tie with India has been kept alive via cultural resistance and hereditary social behaviors of settlement. India made no attempt to make a genuine relationship with the Indian diaspora till the early 1990s. As a result, their influence on the development of foreign policy of India has been little in the past. India's economic liberalization reversed this trend, as the country observed to the diaspora for development, as likely the Chinese diaspora has contributed to China's rapid rise (Varadarajan, 2015).

The MEA (i.e., the government) has forced the above-mentioned institutions and organizations into service in order to principally affect the attitudes and opinions of international community in such a way that they turn into favorable and helpful of Indian interests and foreign policy. In order to achieve these aims, the government uses public diplomacy to interact with actors from all over the world. As previously stated, India's public diplomacy aims to accomplish two major goals. First, it tries to assuage any active or dormant anxieties about India's ascent in the international community. Second, in a period where rivalry is the custom diagonally many industries, it aids the state in 'marketing' itself as a desirable location for international visitors, foreign direct investment, and new markets for its products (Mazumdar, 2020).

India's Rising Power: Friend or Enemy?

Since the end of the Cold War, India's growing power is the subject of intense controversy and discourse within academia, media circles and governments. The world's second populated state has also the status of nuclear superpower with some of the world's foremost nuclear arsenals. The attention accorded to India in terms of GDP is unsurprising surprise that it possesses the biggest global armed group and the world's fastest growing economy. India has the ability to influence

others due to its size and population both regional and, to a degree, global issues (Cohen, 2001; Pant, 2009).

At the same time, India's limitations and challenges must be recognized, as evidenced by caste inequity and cruelty, signs of limited social development, religious groups and women have been targeted, security personnel have been accused of violating human rights in Kashmir and the north-east, historically there has been poor governance and significant levels of public dishonesty. The foreign country's perception of India is a hybrid of these two pictures (Mazumdar, 2020). It's reasonable that the world community is concerned about India's ascent. The development of the Netherland as a super power recognized the hegemony throughout the seventeenth century was exemplified by a sequence of wars with Spain. Both China and Russia have recently trailed territorial aspirations in Ukraine and the South China Sea however stability and prosperity in both regions are jeopardized. The global community is concerned because it believes that as emerging nations' economy improve, so will their military capabilities, making them more likely to engage in conflict behavior (Sinha, 2016).

If emerging nations combat with conventional powers on important universal problems such as terrorism, nonproliferation, climate change, trade, and the contemporary geopolitical structure may be called into question. If growing countries believe they do not have a substantial voice within important global institutes such as the World Trade Organization (WTO), World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), and UN Security Council, they may try to oppose their operations. For instance, in May 1998, India executed nuclear tests and publicly defied a nuclear explosion policy that aimed to keep atomic armaments nations as an elite association. The requirement of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) has been openly violated by the India and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) by doing so (CTBT) (Paul, 2016).

India's public diplomacy approach is specifically meant to soothe such international worries. India is primarily attempting to establish itself as a global superpower and integrated into the current global structure through its public diplomacy activities. It has no intention of undermining the current system. The foreign countries could assist in boosting the position and prosperity of India by recognizing South Asia as its area of persuade and giving it a stronger influence in major worldwide organizations, according to the hope. India wants the international world to know that it would neither hunt unmatched argues nor utilize military action against its neighbor countries. Although when confronted with threatening cross-border attacks, India's policy of military self-restraint is built up as indicative of the aspiration of country to be recognized as a nonviolent emerging superpower. The public diplomacy of India initiates aims to persuade the rest of the globe that the state would not involve in economic or cross-border disputes (Sullivan, 2015).

Given the native land of Mahatma Gandhi and Buddhism, the principally peaceful essence of its fight for independence, the proclamation of no use of atomic warheads, and its prestige as the largest democratic republic in the world

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stressing tolerance and pluralism, India is indeed a potential danger to the global community. India has no intention of exporting its economic doctrine or political system to other nations, regardless its rising impact. Rather than military weapons, it wants integration into the international structure based on its financial successes and soft power. It strives for peaceful cooperation and encourages all issues to be resolved via communication and debate (Sullivan, 2015).

The public diplomacy of India is to portray that, despite the state is growing in strength, it is doing it at a slower rate than China. The international world would have more time to acclimatize to India's ascent, it is hoped. India's financial and strategic strengths continue to improve, it may be progressively accepted (with minor revisions) into the ranks of established nations. The recognition of global institutions by India is a subject of debate and reform forums, as well as its support of democratic values and growing ties with the West, particularly, the US, makes it easy to satisfy its desires (Sullivan, 2015).

India's certainty that current international organizations, such as the IMF, the UN Security Council, the NPT, the World Bank, and the WTO, can be reformed to give a further noteworthy position. The use of public diplomacy to communicate India's goals to the world community is critical. The idea that India is implausible to be confrontational toward the Western countries helps Indian argument. India does not have a significant feeling of historical resentment toward the West. Its public diplomacy activities emphasize the country's desire for communication, engagement, collaboration, and accommodation wherever it is practicable. The purpose is to guarantee that existing countries do not take an obstructionist stance in the face of India's rising ambitions (Mazumdar, 2020).

India's non-alignment past is also emphasized in order to indicate that it would not form strategic partnerships in the outlook, disrupting the present power stability and jeopardizing world peace and security. India attempted to forge a unified character for the rising countries based on anti-capitalism and anti-imperialism sentiments during the Cold War. Current public diplomacy operations are intended to demonstrate to worldwide community that, despite its expanding goals and capabilities, India's commitment to collaborate with poor nations remains unwavering. In truth, India need developing-country collaboration to address global concerns such as international commerce, climate change, nuclear profusion, poverty, violence, and the modification of current global organizations. To ensure the rising world's assistance for India's objectives and need for acknowledgment, public diplomacy is essential. India's dedication to South Asian cooperation was reaffirmed, non-interference in other nations' domestic relationships, and the building of a more equitable international order is critical in this respect (Harris & Vittorini, 2015).

As a result, Africa's development cooperation projects, such as unconditional lines of credit (LoC) and infrastructure development projects tailored to African countries' specific needs, are ingredient of a larger approach to demonstrate that

India is dissimilar any other force in the world system. In the meanwhile, public diplomacy might assist allay fears in these nations that then if India joins the club of power elites, it would adopt policies and acts similar to those of other great powers (Sullivan, 2015).

In reality, India's dual essentials of gaining appreciation from established supremacy and maintaining harmony with rising nations would formulate it improbable that it will engage in aggressive behavior in foreign relationships in the outlook (Sullivan, 2015). As a representation of the developing countries, it can be endeavoring to modify the current global order; however, there will be no danger antagonizing established influence outside a certain position. As a result, it is probable that modest, incremental modifications to the global structure will be pursued. Its strategic competence, whereas substantial, are nonetheless restricted in comparison to those of the big countries, proving that it is unable to threaten or modify the world order unilaterally. These truths must be communicated to international governments as well as foreign citizens. This is where the role of public diplomacy comes into play. It's worth noting that the public diplomacy of India is progressively more portraying the country as a growing cultural and economic force despite understating the country's military ability (Sullivan, 2015). In summary, India aspires to show itself to the international world as a valuable and trustworthy partner as it confronts serious security and non-security concerns. It aims to remove the idea that as a growing power, it would pose a danger to global peace and security. India vows to support the present international order, which is based on two key elements: liberal democracy and free trade, and would not weaken international organizations. It promotes global economic and commercial cooperation. In exchange, it seeks legitimacy from other nations as well as incremental but concrete concessions from the existing supremacy. The main focus of India is on changing global organizations in order to give it a stronger influence in the global community. Its desire of ultimate veto power in the UN Security Council exemplifies this. By communicating the notion that an emerging India will not react like previous growing countries in the past, public diplomacy initiatives are intended to reduce anxiety and hostility to India's objectives. The global society will definitely respond and assist India in fulfilling its ambitions to the degree that public diplomacy of India have effects, and that India's progressive transformation strategy be recognized (Mazumdar, 2020). Economic growth is critical for India. South Asia's capacity to do business with other nations and attract foreign direct investment is likely to be harmed by conflict inside the area or abroad. As a result, India is improbable to act forcefully and endanger the world financial structure (Mazumdar, 2020).

The results appear to back up the theory that public diplomacy of India has efforts for accomplish something in fostering a favorable image of the nation among international audiences. Nonetheless, while public diplomacy has gained in importance as a weapon for governments to change the opinions of others, its implementation is fraught with difficulties (Mazumdar, 2020). The most

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significant barrier in the case of India is that a specific picture of the state has been cemented in the intellect of outsiders (Mazumdar, 2020).

Finally, given the size of the nation and its goals, the Modi administration's commitment of resources to India's public diplomacy is rather little. Another impediment to effective public diplomacy is the unwillingness of some foreign policy professionals, politicians, and specialists to interact with overseas spectators and effectively explain the views and stances of India on significant global problems (Mazumdar, 2020). Politicians sometimes not succeed to distinguish how their actions and words are viewed by worldwide community, as well as the potential detrimental influence on the reflection of state. Even though the bureaucracy and government play a vital role in effective public diplomacy, they may also be the most significant causes of failure.

Conclusion

The goal of the current security policy is to safeguard and enhance its objectives through persuading the actions and ideas of other players. Soft power, in addition to strong power, is an important instrument for achieving these goals. Projecting soft power in favor of a state's geopolitical interests has become increasingly common. Most nations are presently attempting to craft a positive narrative about them and protect their reputation in the international sphere. The image and reputation of a country is crucial in a world where growing nations are seen with anxiety and fear, and competition for tourism, commerce, and investment is strong. Public diplomacy takes on new relevance in this scenario. In the end, public diplomacy is a tool for projecting a country's soft power to a worldwide audience. Once positive impressions of the country have been created, public diplomacy activities should strive to reinforce these impressions while also include additional stories that help to establish a new paradigm about the state. India has used public diplomacy to help it overcome roadblocks on its way to become an immense authority. It has endeavored to convince the global society that it will not behave in the same way that other emerging nations have. It seeks to be a part of, rather than a danger to the global order that currently exists. It wishes to be acknowledged and accommodated by the current superpowers. It claims that its ambitions are modest in comparison to those of previous emerging powers, and that it is ready to recognize a steady, but substantial, adjustment of its ambitions to play a prominent responsibility in global organizations such as the UN Security Council.

Finally, in order to foster economic growth, India uses diplomatic arenas of public to initiatives for magnetize foreign consideration and finance. India has begun to use diplomatic arenas of public to affect the opinions of the world society, inspired by the modest accomplishments of other governments. It believes that once again, they may change their minds on the situation. Its programs and efforts aim to not only promote India as an attractive tourist and trade destination,

but rather to showcase the nation's distinctive traits in order to differentiate things from others. Indian food, Buddhism, Indian classical music and dance, yoga, Bollywood, and cricket are all illustrations of soft power resources that are already being promoted as part of the public diplomacy strategy of the country. India's image as an exclusive state worth visiting and investing in will almost certainly persist in the outlook. Unless the country's public diplomacy initiatives can promote development and economic expansion while also facilitating the rise of India, it will be a success. The power realignment of the twenty-first century has become more of a fact by the day, with Western nations' dominance declining to some extent and rising powers like China and India taking a more active role in the international setting. This tendency should have lately accelerated by the international economic recession, which has a less impact on the Indian and Chinese economies than on the US and European economies.

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