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Editorial

Is it better to have more hard or soft power in the 21st century in Indian context?

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As an era of internationalisation, 21st century witnesses the growth and prosperity of the respective nations. Constant integration of nations and its system is required for achieving this progress.

Such integration of nations and its systems is never in favour of the nations' inclination towards any one kind of power -Hard or Soft- in this era, for it might not give a positive or promising result. Such internationalisation through integration of nations and its systems will be successful with a right mix of hard and soft power because that only can give a desired end result. Country's military and financial prosperity, country's natural resources and geography, coercion or diplomatic relations only might not get the work done.

Interdependence is a modern phenomenon, a factor that nations have learned to live with, whether it is a developed or developed nation, because each country has something or other provision needed to maintain beneficial trade relations, globally. In contrast, in the past when strong forces were not used to persuade countries to do things they would not be used as a strategy now because of the weakening of the focus on power. For example, in the case of the Indo-Pak conflict since India gained independence, the United States extended its overwhelming support to Pakistan and India backed by Russia. Thus, a deliberate plea to one country could lead to the repatriation of an opposition country that would not only disrupt international relations

but also greatly affect the economy and trade.

India is one of the most democratic countries in the world and a culturally rich country, known for its use of soft rather than hard power. The nature of democracy and its rich cultural values are closely aligned more towards highly diplomatic rather than power and persuasion using existing power. The cultural competency, diversity, heritage, Indian film industry, the discovery of spices, the ancient Indian health care system, the diverse population in terms of income and purchasing power, young minds evolving in different domains especially Information Technology makes India a prominent soft power, globally. In addition, India has been striving to maintain friendly and peaceful relations with countries around the world

Even after being so rich in soft power, India could not use them to its full potential. Of all the reasons available, one of the most important is its inefficiency in achieving full digital access and failure to keep up with the digital transformation that has already taken place in the world. The current population of India and many of the illiterate, disadvantaged, conservative people and technologically backward have hampered this development. The brain drain from India to the developed world are one such evidence that has kept India as a prominent player in the developing world league, whereas, with the potential that India has in being diplomatic and with the amount of soft power it has, makes it capable of tremendous transformation.¹⁻³

Digitalisation has increased the reach and scope of society, too. This makes it important for government to use

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its power wisely. Freedom of speech, education, literacy, public-diplomacy, self-reliance are not only powerful but also social. Excessive use of force may not attract a lot of support from the people and similarly, ignoring the hard power the country has and always relying on soft power may hinder the nation's progress beyond a certain limit. Therefore, in view of the 21st century and the clearing of international borders of trade and commerce as a result of globalization, strong efforts are needed to conserve hard power and its benefits. However, the use of soft power is what will help nations to survive the effects of globalization. Therefore, co-operation between both forms of power is what the world needs in the 21st century.

1. Conflict of Interest

None.

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