

The Rise of India as a Global Soft Power: A Case Study of India's G20 Presidency

7

Reboli Jasiwal

Abstract

In the 21st century, global power is increasingly shaped not only by military and economic capabilities but also by soft power, the ability of a nation to influence through attraction, values, culture, diplomacy, and ideas. India, with its civilizational heritage, democratic institutions, cultural appeal, and rapidly expanding global footprint, is emerging as a significant soft power actor.

***Keywords:** Soft Power, G20 Presidency, Global South, Public Diplomacy, Strategic Partnership, Multilateralism, Global Governance, Strategic Autonomy.*

Introduction

The concept of ‘*Soft Power*’, popularised by Joseph S. Nye, has become a central analytical lens for understanding contemporary global influence. India's G20 Presidency in 2023 provided a unique platform to showcase this soft power. Amid global geopolitical fragmentation, India adopted the theme “*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*”, which means ‘*One Earth, One Family, One Future*’, emphasizing inclusivity and global cooperation. This presidency became a turning point in projecting India as the leader of the Global South and a facilitator of consensus on issues like climate action, digital transformation, and sustainable development.

Reboli Jasiwal

Research Scholar PhD, Dept. of Political Science, Bareilly College, Bareilly
Publisher: Anu Books, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31995/Book.AB356-A26>. Ch.7
Book Name : Indian Knowledge System and Social Sciences
Plagiarism Report: 02%

The G20 was established in 1999 as a reaction to various global economic crises and serves as the leading platform for promoting international economic collaboration as the world navigates recovery from pandemics, inflation, supply chain issues, and the expensive impacts of climate change experienced in recent years.

Unlike earlier G20 presidencies that focused only on macroeconomic stabilisation, India expanded the agenda to include Debt relief and financial resilience for vulnerable states, Digital public infrastructure as a development parameter, Climate finance and energy transitions, Reform of multilateral development banks, inclusion of the African Union, etc.

By hosting the G20 summit and engaging proactively with member nations, India underscored its commitment to global governance and played a crucial role in addressing global challenges.

Review of Related Literature

Review of International Research and Related Literature

1. Nye, J. S. (2002). 'The Paradox of American Power: Why the World's Only Superpower Can't Go It Alone'. The author argues that although the United States possesses unparalleled military and economic strength, this dominance does not automatically translate into effective global leadership. The "paradox" lies in the fact that in an increasingly interconnected world, even the sole superpower cannot achieve its objectives unilaterally.

The book emphasises the importance of multilateralism, alliances, and global cooperation to address transnational challenges such as terrorism, climate change, and economic instability. Nye cautions that overreliance on hard power can erode legitimacy and undermine long-term influence.

2. Nye, J. S. (2004). 'Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics'. The author's foundational work conceptualises soft power as the ability of a state to shape the preferences of others through attraction rather than coercion or inducement. Nye argues that culture, political values, and foreign policy legitimacy are the principal sources of soft power. Unlike hard power, which relies on military and economic force, soft power operates subtly through persuasion, credibility, and moral authority. The book is significant because it

reframes power in the post-Cold War context, where information, legitimacy, and global perceptions matter more than territorial control.

Nye also cautions that soft power cannot be manufactured instantly by governments; it must be embedded in consistent domestic and international behaviour. For studies on India, this framework is crucial, as India's civilizational heritage, democratic ethos, and non-coercive diplomacy fit well within Nye's model.

3. Mistry, D. (2004). 'A Theoretical and Empirical Assessment of India as an Emerging World Power'. The author provides a comprehensive evaluation of India's rise in global politics by combining theoretical frameworks with empirical analysis. He examines India's capabilities across economic, military, political, and cultural dimensions, arguing that its emergence as a world power is gradual and multifaceted rather than abrupt.

The article emphasises the role of India's soft power as a complementary source of influence alongside material capabilities. Mistry also critically assesses the constraints on India's global projection, including bureaucratic inefficiencies, regional instability, and socio-economic disparities. Using historical trends, comparative data, and policy analysis, the study situates India within the broader context of emerging powers in the 21st century. Mistry concludes that India's influence is shaped not only by its growing resources but also by its ability to attract, persuade, and lead through credible, values-based diplomacy.

4. Kurlantzick, J. (2007). 'Charm Offensive: How China's Soft Power Is Transforming the World'. Although focused on China, the author's work is essential for comparative analysis. He examines how China strategically deploys culture, aid, diplomacy, and media to enhance global influence. The book highlights the instrumentalisation of soft power by an authoritarian state, offering a contrast to India's democratic model. For India-focused research, this work provides a benchmark to assess whether soft power is more credible when rooted in openness and pluralism.

5. Hymans, Jacques E. C. (2009). 'India's Soft Power and Vulnerability'. The author critically assesses the strengths and limitations of India's soft power in the international arena. The article argues that India's cultural richness, democratic institutions, and

historical global engagement provide it with considerable attraction-based influence. However, the author emphasises that this soft power is inherently fragile and contingent upon domestic stability, governance quality, and policy consistency.

The study further explores how India's reputation in multilateral forums and bilateral relationships is sensitive to these domestic and structural challenges. The study concludes that while India has the potential to be a normative and persuasive actor, its soft power effectiveness depends on addressing internal contradictions and strategically integrating soft power with other instruments of national influence, including diplomacy, economic engagement, and selective hard power measures.

6. Lee, J. (2010). 'Unrealised Potential: India's 'Soft Power' Ambition in Asia'. The author critically examines the limitations and challenges of India's soft power strategy in the Asian region. The article argues that while India possesses considerable cultural, historical, and democratic appeal, its ability to translate these assets into tangible influence remains constrained. Lee highlights factors such as inconsistent foreign policy messaging, bureaucratic inefficiencies, domestic socio-economic disparities, and limited institutional coordination as major obstacles.

The study also emphasises that India's soft power is often overshadowed by the more assertive and well-resourced public diplomacy strategies of regional competitors like China. Through analysis of cultural diplomacy, educational exchanges, and diaspora engagement, Lee demonstrates that India's initiatives, though promising, have frequently failed to achieve strategic depth or sustained regional impact. The article concludes that realising India's soft power potential requires coherent policy, effective institutional mechanisms, and integration with broader foreign policy objectives to enhance credibility and influence in Asia.

7. Malone, D. (2011). 'Soft Power in Indian Foreign Policy'. The author examines the role and potential of soft power in shaping India's international influence. He emphasises that soft power enables India to project leadership without relying solely on military or

economic coercion, making it particularly valuable in the post-Cold War multipolar environment.

The article analyses specific instruments of India's soft power, including cultural diplomacy, educational exchanges, development assistance, diaspora engagement, and participation in multilateral institutions. He also critically addresses the challenges that limit India's soft power, such as policy inconsistency, bureaucratic fragmentation, and domestic socio-economic disparities, which can undermine credibility abroad. He concludes that to maximise soft power, India must strategically integrate it with other foreign policy tools, ensuring coherent messaging, institutional coordination, and sustained engagement to enhance its global standing and diplomatic effectiveness.

8. Nye, J. S. (2011). 'The Future of Power'. The author extends his earlier arguments by examining how power is diffusing away from states toward non-state actors, networks, and institutions. He introduces the concept of "*Smart power*," a strategic combination of hard and soft power. Nye emphasises that legitimacy, narrative control, and global cooperation will increasingly define international leadership.

This work is particularly relevant for analysing India's rise, as India lacks overwhelming hard power but compensates through diplomatic credibility, multilateral engagement, and moral positioning. Nye's emphasis on global institutions and agenda-setting directly applies to India's G20 Presidency, where India shaped discussions on development, climate, and inclusivity.

9. Mullen, Rani D. and Ganguly. S. (2012). 'The Rise of India's Soft Power'. Author explore the growing significance of soft power in India's foreign policy as a tool for enhancing global influence in the 21st century. The authors argue that India's democratic institutions, cultural richness, historical pluralism, and normative values constitute the primary sources of attraction that differentiate it from other emerging powers.

The article examines how India strategically employs cultural diplomacy, educational exchanges, diaspora networks, and participation in international institutions to project its image and shape global perceptions. Mullen and Ganguly also analyse the challenges limiting India's soft power, including domestic inequalities,

bureaucratic inefficiencies, and inconsistent policy implementation, which can undermine credibility abroad. They emphasise that soft power cannot replace hard power but complements it by creating legitimacy, trust, and normative authority. The study concludes that India's rising soft power is a critical component of its quest for international recognition and leadership in a multipolar world.

10. Mukherjee, R (2014). 'The False Promise of India's Soft Power'. The author critically examines the limitations and overestimations of India's soft power in global affairs. He argues that while India possesses substantial cultural, democratic, and civilizational assets, their translation into effective international influence is often constrained by policy inconsistencies, inadequate institutional coordination, and domestic socio-economic challenges. The article highlights instances where India's soft power initiatives, such as cultural diplomacy, diaspora engagement, and multilateral participation, have achieved symbolic visibility but limited strategic outcomes. Mukherjee also critiques the overreliance on civilizational narratives and international perception campaigns, suggesting that credibility depends on tangible delivery in areas like economic leadership, governance, and regional stability.

The study contends that soft power alone cannot compensate for structural constraints in foreign policy. While India's potential is significant, the author emphasises the need for pragmatic integration of soft and hard power instruments, a coherent strategy, and sustained policy execution to achieve meaningful global influence.

11. Hall, I. (2016). 'Multialignment and Indian Foreign Policy under Narendra Modi'. The author analyses the shift in India's external relations from traditional non-alignment to a more flexible strategy of multialignment. The article argues that India under Narendra Modi has sought to deepen partnerships with multiple major powers simultaneously, such as the United States, Russia, Japan, and ASEAN, without entering rigid alliances. Hall situates this approach within India's long-standing emphasis on strategic autonomy while highlighting its adaptation to a rapidly changing global order. The study examines diplomatic initiatives, defence cooperation, economic engagement, and regional outreach as components of this strategy.

He also explores how multialignment enhances India's diplomatic leverage and global profile.

12. Hall, I. (2017). 'Modi and the Reinvention of Indian Foreign Policy'. The author analyses how India's foreign policy has been reshaped under Narendra Modi, particularly in terms of symbolism, outreach, and narrative construction. He argues that Modi's diplomacy emphasises visibility, cultural symbolism, and personal engagement, all of which enhance soft power. The work contributes to understanding how domestic political leadership interacts with soft power projection.

13. Kutiel, P. (2017). 'India's Soft Power: A New Foreign Policy'. The author provides a comprehensive examination of how soft power has emerged as a central component of India's contemporary foreign policy. The book argues that India's cultural heritage, democratic values, spiritual traditions, and pluralistic society constitute enduring sources of international attraction.

He also analyses key instruments such as cultural diplomacy, educational exchange, diaspora networks, media, and branding initiatives to demonstrate how India strategically communicates its national image abroad. The study situates India's soft power within global theoretical debates, particularly Joseph Nye's framework, while emphasising India's distinctive historical and civilizational context. He also critically evaluates policy challenges, including institutional fragmentation and limited coordination between cultural and strategic objectives.

14. Paul, T. V. (2024). 'The Unfinished Quest: India's Search for Major Power Status'. The author examines India's long quest for recognition as a major power, focusing on constraints, strategic culture, and global perception. He argues that India's rise is shaped not only by material capabilities but also by legitimacy and acceptance within international institutions. Paul's analysis underscores the importance of multilateral engagement and norm entrepreneurship, both core elements of soft power.

The book is relevant to the G20 case study because it situates India's presidency as part of a broader effort to gain recognition as a responsible global stakeholder. Paul's work helps explain why India prioritises leadership roles in forums like the G20 to convert reputation into influence.

15. Dalrymple, W. (2024). 'The Golden Road: How Ancient India Transformed the World'. The author explores the profound and enduring influence of ancient Indian civilisation on global history, culture, and knowledge systems. The book traces how Indian ideas travelled across Asia, the Middle East, and beyond through networks of merchants, monks, and scholars.

The author challenges Eurocentric historical narratives by demonstrating India's role as a central transmitter of intellectual and cultural exchange in the pre-modern world. By emphasising cross-cultural interactions rather than isolation, the work situates India as a foundational contributor to global civilisation. It also reinforces the idea that India's present-day global appeal is deeply rooted in its historical role as a knowledge hub and cultural connector.

Review of National Research and Related Literature

16. Mohan, C. Raja. (2003). 'Indian diaspora and soft power'. The author examines the critical role of the Indian diaspora in enhancing India's international influence through soft power. Mohan argues that India's global image and attractiveness are significantly reinforced by the cultural, economic, and political contributions of its diaspora communities across the world. The article highlights how diaspora networks function as bridges, facilitating trade, investment, knowledge exchange, and political goodwill while promoting India's cultural heritage, including language, cuisine, arts, and festivals.

Mohan emphasises that these communities amplify India's credibility and moral authority, particularly in multilateral forums and bilateral engagements, serving as informal ambassadors of Indian values. He also notes challenges, including divergent diaspora interests, policy gaps, and underutilization of this resource by the Indian state. The study concludes that strategically engaging the diaspora is essential for India's soft power projection, enabling the country to enhance global influence without relying solely on military or economic means.

17. Tharoor, S. (2012). 'Pax Indica: India and the World of the Twenty-first Century'. The author presents India as a civilizational state re-emerging onto the global stage with a distinctive worldview. He argues that India's strength lies not in domination but in its pluralism, democratic tradition, and cultural confidence. Tharoor highlights India's

historical commitment to multilateralism, non-alignment, and moral diplomacy, tracing continuity from Nehru to the present.

The book critically examines India's hesitations, contradictions, and missed opportunities while also emphasising its soft power assets such as culture, diaspora, and democratic credibility. Tharoor's narrative supports the idea that India's influence grows when it frames leadership in ethical and civilizational terms rather than hegemonic ambition.

18. Chauhan, V. (2014). 'Soft Power: A Foreign Policy Choice for India'. The author examines soft power as a strategic and normative instrument within India's foreign policy framework. The author argues that India's civilizational heritage, democratic ethos, cultural diversity, and moral authority provide a strong foundation for soft power projection. Chauhan situates India's soft power within Joseph Nye's theoretical framework while highlighting its distinct characteristics shaped by non-alignment, strategic autonomy, and peaceful coexistence.

Chauhan also critically addresses limitations, including institutional constraints and inconsistent policy implementation. The study concludes that soft power should not be treated as an auxiliary tool but as a deliberate foreign policy choice capable of enhancing India's global influence, especially in the Global South and emerging multipolar order.

19. Mazumdar, A. (2018). 'India's Soft Power Diplomacy Under The Modi Administration: Buddhism, Diaspora And Yoga'. The author critically examines how the Narendra Modi government has strategically deployed selected cultural and civilizational assets to advance India's international influence. Mazumdar argues that Buddhism, the Indian diaspora, and yoga have been foregrounded as key soft power tools to enhance India's diplomatic reach, particularly in Asia and among Western partners. The study shows that Buddhist heritage is leveraged to build cultural bridges with Southeast and East Asian states, reinforcing historical links while supporting India's *Look East/Act East* policy.

The Indian diaspora is treated as a global asset that can foster goodwill, economic investment, and knowledge exchange, even as institutional coordination remains uneven. Mazumdar also highlights practical challenges, including heritage site preservation, bureaucratic

coherence, and infrastructure constraints, which affect the full realisation of these soft power resources.

20. Sahai, P. (2019). 'Indian Cultural Diplomacy: Celebrating Pluralism in a Globalised World'. The author provides a detailed analysis of India's use of culture as a central pillar of its soft power strategy. The book argues that India's strength in international relations lies not in cultural homogeneity but in its deeply rooted pluralism, reflected in its languages, religions, philosophies, artistic traditions, and social practices.

Sahai examines how India institutionalises cultural diplomacy through mechanisms such as the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), international cultural festivals, yoga and Ayurveda promotion, academic exchanges, and diaspora networks. The study situates Indian cultural diplomacy within the broader context of globalisation, emphasising how cultural narratives help India project an image of tolerance, inclusivity, and democratic coexistence.

21. Jaishankar, S. (2020). 'The India Way: Strategies for an Uncertain World'. S. Jaishankar offers an insider's perspective on India's foreign policy evolution in a rapidly changing global order. He argues that India must pursue strategic autonomy while actively shaping global norms and institutions. The book emphasises realism tempered by civilizational confidence, highlighting diplomacy, narrative control, and partnerships as instruments of influence. Jaishankar implicitly acknowledges the role of soft power, particularly India's credibility, values, and global image.

22. Saran, S. (2021). 'How India Sees the World: Kautilya to the 21st Century'. Author traces the intellectual and strategic evolution of India's worldview from ancient statecraft to contemporary foreign policy practice. Drawing on classical texts such as the *Arthashastra* alongside modern diplomatic experiences, Saran argues that Indian foreign policy is neither idealistic nor reactive but rooted in pragmatic realism shaped by history, geography, and civilizational consciousness. The book explores core principles such as strategic autonomy, balance of power, and multilateral engagement, highlighting continuity rather than rupture in India's external behaviour. Saran also examines India's responses to globalisation, regional security

challenges, and shifting power structures in the 21st century. The work is significant for soft power studies as it demonstrates how India's ethical traditions, diplomatic restraint, and emphasis on dialogue contribute to its international credibility.

23. Sarmah, B. (2022). 'Soft Power in India's Foreign Policy: Role of Public Diplomacy'. The author offers an in-depth analysis of how public diplomacy functions as a critical mechanism for generating and sustaining India's soft power. The study examines institutional frameworks, policy initiatives, and communication strategies adopted by the Indian state to influence foreign publics. Sarmah analyses tools such as cultural exchanges, media outreach, diaspora engagement, digital diplomacy, and educational cooperation to assess their effectiveness in shaping India's international image. The study situates India's public diplomacy within broader theoretical debates on soft power and international communication, highlighting both achievements and limitations. It also evaluates coordination challenges among state institutions and the need for a coherent long-term strategy.

24. Verma, D. (2023). 'Dissecting India's Evolving Role in Soft Power through Cultural Diplomacy'. The author analyses how cultural diplomacy has become a central mechanism in India's soft power strategy. Verma situates India's cultural outreach within broader foreign policy objectives, arguing that cultural diplomacy complements strategic and economic engagement rather than functioning independently.

The author also critically assesses challenges, including uneven global visibility and the need for coherent policy coordination. Overall, the article concludes that India's evolving cultural diplomacy enhances its normative influence and reinforces its image as a pluralistic and culturally rich civilisation in the contemporary international system.

25. Sahoo, S. K. (2023). 'Unleashing India's Soft Power Potential: Strategic Examination at the G20 Summit 2023'. The author critically examines how India leveraged the G20 Summit as a platform to project and consolidate its soft power capabilities. Sahoo highlights key dimensions such as the theme *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*, India's leadership on Global South concerns, promotion of Digital Public Infrastructure, and emphasis on sustainable development and climate responsibility.

The study argues that India's success in achieving consensus outcomes, including the New Delhi Declaration, demonstrated its growing diplomatic credibility and normative influence. Sahoo also assesses cultural diplomacy initiatives, decentralised summit hosting, and people-centric messaging as tools of attraction. The article concludes that India's G20 Presidency marked a turning point in translating latent soft power resources into effective diplomatic capital within global governance.

26. Jaishankar, S. (2024). 'Why Bharat Matters'. S. Jaishankar presents a comprehensive articulation of India's evolving worldview and its growing significance in global affairs. The book argues that India's foreign policy is deeply shaped by its civilizational identity, historical experiences, and strategic autonomy rather than ideological alignment.

Jaishankar explains how a confident and self-aware "Bharat" engages the world through realism, pragmatism, and national interest while remaining committed to dialogue and multilateralism. He highlights India's role as a balancing power in a multipolar international system, particularly in the Indo-Pacific and the Global South. The book also emphasises India's contributions in areas such as digital public infrastructure, development partnerships, and crisis response.

27. Qureshi, A. (2024). 'G20 Presidency and India's Soft Power Projection'. The author analyses India's G20 Presidency as a strategic opportunity to enhance its soft power in global governance. The article situates India's leadership within the context of geopolitical fragmentation, economic uncertainty, and North–South divides.

The study highlights India's emphasis on Digital Public Infrastructure, sustainable development, climate action, and Global South representation as key pillars of its soft power outreach. It also evaluates cultural diplomacy initiatives, decentralised summit venues, and public engagement as mechanisms to shape international perceptions. It concludes that India's G20 Presidency strengthened its normative credibility and demonstrated its capacity to exercise leadership through attraction and legitimacy rather than coercion in a multipolar international order.

28. Kumari, S., & Kaur, M. (2024). 'India's Soft Power: Cultural Diplomacy, Diaspora, and Global Leadership'. Authors

examine the multidimensional nature of India's soft power strategy in contemporary international relations. The article analyses how cultural diplomacy, diaspora engagement, and leadership in global forums collectively enhance India's international influence. The Indian diaspora is placed as a bridge between India and host countries, contributing to economic ties, political goodwill, and narrative building.

The study also situates India's soft power within its growing role in global governance, including multilateral diplomacy and crisis response. Authors argue that India's ability to integrate cultural and people-centric diplomacy with strategic leadership enhances its credibility as a responsible global actor. The article concludes that India's soft power has become an essential complement to its hard power capabilities in a multipolar world.

29. Kumar, S. (2024). 'India's G20 Presidency as a Voice of Global South'. The author analyses how India leveraged its 2022–23 G20 leadership to advocate for the priorities of developing nations. The study argues that India strategically positioned itself as a bridge between the Global South and advanced economies, highlighting issues such as equitable economic growth, sustainable development, climate finance, and debt relief.

The article details India's initiatives in promoting digital public infrastructure, green energy, and inclusive globalisation, portraying the G20 Presidency as both a platform for agenda-setting and a demonstration of India's diplomatic credibility. Kumar concludes that India's leadership not only strengthened the Global South's voice but also enhanced India's normative authority, showcasing how soft power and principled diplomacy can reinforce strategic influence in global governance.

30. Srivastava, A. (2025). 'A Decadal Snapshot of India's Soft Power Strategies (2014-2024)'. The author provides a comprehensive assessment of India's soft power initiatives over ten years marked by heightened global engagement and strategic assertiveness. Srivastava argues that India's soft power strategy during this decade became more institutionalised, outcome-oriented, and aligned with foreign policy priorities, particularly in the Indo-Pacific and the Global South.

The study highlights flagship initiatives, including International Yoga Day, vaccine diplomacy, Digital Public Infrastructure exports, and India's G20 Presidency as key milestones. It also identifies structural constraints, such as coordination gaps and measurement challenges.

31. Tripathi, J. M. (Ed.). (2025). 'The Other Side of Diplomacy'. The author offers an insightful exploration of the less visible yet crucial dimensions of diplomatic practice that extend beyond formal negotiations and official statements. The volume brings together contributions from diplomats, scholars, and practitioners to examine informal diplomacy, backchannel negotiations, cultural engagement, public diplomacy, and personal relationships in international affairs.

It highlights how trust-building, perception management, and narrative construction often determine diplomatic outcomes as much as treaties or strategic calculations. The book also discusses the growing importance of media, technology, and societal actors in shaping diplomatic environments. By focusing on these softer and human dimensions, Tripathi's edited work challenges state-centric and purely strategic interpretations of diplomacy.

Research Gaps

The existing literature on India's soft power and its G20 Presidency provides substantial insights into cultural diplomacy, diaspora engagement, and India's normative positioning in global governance. However, a critical gap remains in linking these dimensions to a systematic evaluation of outcomes rather than descriptive narratives. Much of the literature conceptualises India's soft power through broad civilizational frameworks or policy-oriented commentaries, yet few studies offer an empirically grounded assessment of how the G20 Presidency translated soft power resources into measurable diplomatic influence.

Current works emphasise themes such as Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, Global South leadership, and Digital Public Infrastructure, but they rarely examine the institutional mechanisms, stakeholder coordination, and audience reception that determine effectiveness. There is also limited comparative analysis between

India's G20 diplomacy and earlier presidencies, leaving unanswered whether India introduced a distinct model of soft power or largely followed established multilateral practices.

Furthermore, the literature tends to treat soft power as a homogeneous asset, overlooking tensions between narrative projection and domestic realities highlighted by critics like Mukherjee and Hymans. The interaction between India's development challenges and its global image-building during the G20 remains underexplored. A focused case-study approach integrating discourse analysis, policy evaluation, and perception studies is therefore required to assess whether India's G20 Presidency represents a structural shift in global leadership or a momentary diplomatic performance. This research seeks to address these gaps by providing a multidimensional, evidence-based analysis of India's soft power in practice.

Conclusion

The surveyed literature collectively affirms that India's rise as a global soft power represents a significant transformation in contemporary international relations, with the G20 Presidency serving as a decisive moment in this trajectory. Scholars such as Nye, Malone, and Hymans conceptualise soft power as the capacity to shape preferences through attraction and legitimacy, while recent Indian and international studies demonstrate how India has localised this framework through civilizational narratives, democratic values, and development partnerships. The literature on India's G20 Presidency highlights that New Delhi effectively utilised cultural diplomacy, leadership of the Global South, and digital innovation to construct a distinctive model of normative influence.

Several authors underline that initiatives such as Digital Public Infrastructure, LiFE, millet diplomacy, and decentralised summit engagement translated symbolic capital into practical diplomatic outcomes, most visibly through the consensus on the New Delhi Declaration. At the same time, critical perspectives caution that India's soft power faces structural constraints, including institutional fragmentation, uneven communication strategies, and the gap between global messaging and domestic realities.

The reviewed literature indicates that India's G20 experience marks a shift from aspirational soft power to strategic statecraft. The Presidency reinforced India's image as a bridge-builder in a polarised world and demonstrated the growing relevance of culture, ideas, and development models in global governance. However, challenges remain in assessing the depth of influence and the translation of soft power into structural diplomatic outcomes. Continued research in these areas will enrich our understanding of India's role in the evolving global order. Future research must assess the long-term sustainability of this influence and its integration with India's economic and strategic capabilities in an evolving multipolar order.

Bibliography

1. Nye, J. S. (2002). *The Paradox of American Power: Why the World's Only Superpower Can't Go It Alone*. Oxford University Press.
2. Nye, J. S. (2004). *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*. Public Affairs.
3. Mistry, D. (2004). *A Theoretical and Empirical Assessment of India as an Emerging*. India Review, Pg. 64-87. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14736480490443003>
4. Kurlantzick, J. (2007). *Charm Offensive: How China's Soft Power Is Transforming the World*. Yale University Press, Pg. 509-512
5. Hymans, J. E. C. (2009). *India's Soft Power and Vulnerability*. India Review, 8(3), 234–265. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14736480903116784>
6. Lee, J. (2010). *Unrealised Potential: India's 'Soft Power' Ambition in Asia*.
7. Malone, D. M. (2011). *Soft Power In Indian Foreign Policy*. Economic And Political Weekly, 46(36), 35–39. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41719935>
8. Nye, J. S., & Goldsmith, J. L. (2011). *The Future of Power*. Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 64(3), 45–52. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41149419>

9. Mullen, R., & Ganguly, S. (2012). 'The rise of India's soft power'. *Foreign Policy*. <http://foreignpolicy.com/2012/05/08/the-rise-of-indias-soft-power/>
10. Mukherjee, R. (2014). 'The False Promise Of India's Soft Power'. *Geopolitics, History, And International Relations*, 6(1), 46–62. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26804932>
11. Hall, I. (2016). 'Multialignment and Indian Foreign Policy under Narendra Modi'. *The Round Table*, 105(3), 271–286. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00358533.2016.1180760>
12. Hall, I. (2019). 'Modi and the Reinvention of Indian Foreign Policy' (1st ed.). Bristol University Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvpwhf20>
13. Kugiel, P. (2017). 'India's Soft Power: A New Foreign Policy Strategy' (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315272139>
14. Paul, T. V. (2024). 'The Unfinished Quest: India's Search for Major Power Status from Nehru to Modi'. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780197669990.003.0004>
15. Dalrymple, W. (2024). 'The Golden Road: How Ancient India Transformed the World'. Bloomsbury Publishing.
16. Mohan, C. R. (2003). 'Indian Diaspora And Soft Power'. *The Hindu*.
17. Tharoor, S. (2012). 'Pax Indica: India and the World of the Twenty-first Century'. Penguin Books India.
18. Chauhan, V. (2014). 'Soft Power: A Foreign Policy Choice For India'. *The Indian Journal Of Political Science*, 75(2), 403–410. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24701147>
19. Mazumdar, A. (2018). 'India's soft power diplomacy under the Modi administration: Buddhism, diaspora and yoga'. *Asian Affairs*, 49(3), 468-491. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/03068374.2018.1487696>
20. Sahai, P. (2019). 'Indian Cultural Diplomacy: Celebrating Pluralism in a Globalised World'.

21. Jaishankar, S. (2020). *'The India Way: Strategies for an Uncertain World'*. HarperCollins.
22. Saran, S. (2021). *'How India Sees the World: Kautilya to the 21st Century'*. Juggernaut.
23. Sarmah, B. (2022). *'Soft Power in India's Foreign Policy: Role of Public Diplomacy'*.
24. Verma, D. (2023). *'Dissecting India's Evolving Role in Soft Power through Cultural Diplomacy'*. *ShodhKosh: Journal of Visual and Performing Arts*.
25. Sahoo, S. K. (2023). *'Unleashing India's Soft Power Potential: Strategic Examination at the G20 Summit 2023'*. *TJER*.
26. Jaishankar, S. (2024). *'Why Bharat Matters'*. Rupa Publications.
27. Qureshi, A. (2024). *'G20 Presidency and India's Soft Power Projection'*. *International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research*.
28. Kumari, S., & Kaur, M. (2024). *'India's Soft Power: Cultural Diplomacy, Diaspora, and Global Leadership'*. *Global International Management & Research Journal*.
29. Kumar, S. (2024). *'India's G20 Presidency as a Voice of Global South'*.
30. Srivastava, A. (2025). *A Decadal Snapshot of India's Soft Power Strategies (2014–2024)*. Observer Research Foundation Report.
31. Tripathi, J. M. (Ed.). (2025). *'The Other Side of Diplomacy'*. Westland books.