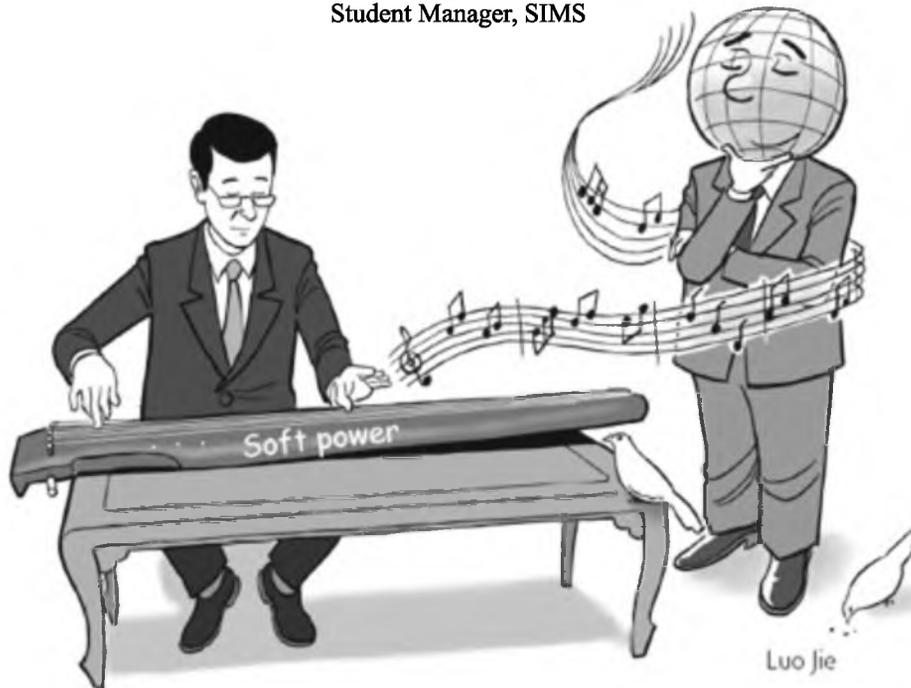




Will Soft Power Propel India to High Table

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What is Soft Power

What is power?

There is a famous quote by an American writer, Eric Hoffer. "The Only way to predict the future is to have the power to shape the future." In today's world, the term power has various annotations. So what is Power?

At the most general level, power is the ability to influence the behavior of others to get a favorable outcome. A 'favorable outcome' can be achieved in following ways.

- You can Coerce them with threats.
- You can induce them with payments.
- Or you can attract or co-opt them

Soft Power

The term 'Soft Power' was first coined by Harvard university professor Joseph Nye. Everyone is familiar with 'HardPower'. Economic and Military power, more often than not, get others to change their position. It often rests on inducement ("carrots") or threats ("sticks"). But sometimes it is possible to get an favorable outcome with without tangible threats or payoffs. A country may obtain an outcome it wants in world politics because other countries admire their values, emulate its example and aspire to its level of prosperity and freedom. And this precisely is what is called "the second face of power", the Soft Power.

Soft power rests on the ability to shape the preferences of others. Soft power is not merely the same as influence. It is more than just persuasion or the ability to move people by argument, though that is an important part of it. It is also the

ability to attract, and attraction often leads to It is also the ability to attract, and attraction often leads to acquiescence.

The interplay between hard and soft power

Hard and Soft powers are related to each other in a fundamental way that they the ability to achieve one's purpose by affecting the behavior of others. The distinction between them is in their fundamental nature. Command power is the ability to change what others do. It rests on coercion or inducement. Co-optive power is the ability to shape what others want. It rests on the attractiveness of one's culture and values.

What are India's Soft Power Assets

I. Indian Talent Pool

When the world speaks of Indian Engineers and software developers it is done so with a particular reverence, which until recently only reserved for graduates from top Ivy leagues of west. When the world speaks of the IITs in the same sentence with MIT and CalTech, it is India that gains in respect. The fact that people from developed countries are coming to India for medical treatment, or perhaps are being advised by Indian financial advisors or are being employed by Indian owned companies shows that India has begun exerting "Soft Power" well across the world.

II. Indian Culture

Much like giants of the world, India too derives much from its cultural export. Indian celebrated writers who write in English have been consistently winning prestigious literary awards across the world. Films based on India 'Slumdog



millionaire' and 'Bend it like Beckham' has garnered international acclaim and even won academy awards. Films and literature are helping transform India's image in the west, from an exotic-poor-country into a country where they find similarities.

III. Indian Film Industry

The Indian Film industry has already taken over as the leading asset in our soft power tactics. The glamour and glitz enthralled and mesmerized not only the UK and USA citizens but also the people from middle eastern, african and south asian countries. They may not understand the hindi dialect but enjoy the movies nonetheless for its drama and music. The iconic wax figures of indian celebrities in wax museums across other continents is an glaring example of the status of our film industry.

IV. Indian Cuisines

Indian kebabs are a staple product in the typical American barbecue gatherings. Indian curry is a rationed to british troops regularly instead of tinned food. And Indian recipe of butter chicken is much sought after in fancy parties across europe. It is hard to count, the number of restaurants offering Indian delicacies in any part of the world, on fingertips. M.K Gandhi's Non- violence, Nehru's Non-alignment, Democracy, Indian Muslims, etc are just a few of the myriad assets that India has in its 'Soft Power' arsenal.

What is the idea of a 'High Table'

High Table

According to the 2010 statistics by 'International Monetary Fund'. India is placed 4th across the world with respect to purchasing power parity of GDP, well above United Kingdom and Germany. This says a lot about India's growing economic power and the clout Indian private sector is gaining across the world. However when we compare the 'responsibility and credibility' UK enjoys on a world forum, as compared to india, we know we are not at the 'High Table' yet. At an informal interaction with members of the Indian strategic community in New Delhi, an American official asked weather the was any decision the Obama administration could take that would be as historic as the nuclear deal offered by the previous administration. It was suggested that an endorsement of India's candidature for a permanent seat in a reformed United Nations Security Council (UNSC) would certainly fit the bill.

The UNSC deals with questions and resolutions concerning international security, which more often than not are intensely political. Since the end of the cold war the Security Council has undergone a massive qualitative and quantitative transformation. As a principal empowered organ of the United Nations system, UNSC is certainly the world forum that India seeks, to be counted in the elite club of world powers.

Indian Soft Power and UNSC

The Question

This brings us back to the key question. Is soft power enough to propel India to High table?

India historically has been one of the biggest contributors to the UN peacekeeping efforts across the globe. With the reformed UNSC these peacekeeping responsibilities are going to get bigger. Almost always this is done without much controversy.

The acid test comes to the fray when there are vested interest at stake for the big powers, especially for USA and its ally Israel. It is at such junctures when India's performance and its foreign policy will be put to test. At such times soft power is not enough to carry out the responsibilities. Such occasions demand strong leadership and effective foreign policy from the government.