

6-1-2018

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### Recommended Citation

Kranz, Susanne Ph.D. (2018) "Kugiel, Patryk. *India's Soft Power. A New Foreign Policy Strategy.* London and New York: Routledge, 2017.," *Journal of International and Global Studies*: Vol. 9: No. 2, Article 23. DOI: 10.62608/2158-0669.1421  
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.lindenwood.edu/jigs/vol9/iss2/23>

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Patryk Kugiel sets out to expand the discourse on the use of soft power in India in general and in India's foreign policy in particular. The author explores the potential of India's soft power, along with the actual implementation of soft power within India's foreign policy (xii). The book starts out with a discussion on Joseph Nye's concept of soft power<sup>1</sup> and then explores the historical evolution of India's foreign policy following Independence in 1947, and with this, India's move from using soft power to hard power to smart power. The obvious aspects of India's soft power such as yoga, spirituality, Mahatma Gandhi, and Bollywood are recurrently mentioned in *India's Soft Power*, yet they are too basic to fully encompass India's soft power; hence, Kugiel attempts to broaden the simplistic view on soft power, extending Nye's original definition and aspects of soft power and adjusting it to the Indian context, which is essential in such a study, given the Western origin of the concept and the vastly different Indian context. Kugiel, throughout the book, suggests that India is on the right track to becoming a smart power, a state that successfully combines hard and soft power in the global playing field. He supports his argument with numerous examples from India's independence to the present day, but at times, Kugiel contradicts himself; for example, he asserts that India seems to be taking its soft power for granted, and there seems to be no need for further scrutiny of the subject (ix), yet he later highlights when and how the Indian government utilizes its soft power tools, which is essential to where India stands in the world today. Since India has embraced the concept of soft power for decades while at the same time rejecting it due to its Western origin, where exactly does the use of soft power fit in? Has India subconsciously created this concept; has it indigenized the concept; has it made it its own? These are some questions that come up when reading this book, which are only partially answered.

The opening chapter explores the existing discourse on the concept of power, leading to a closer discussion on soft power, providing a nice introduction to the book and the topic for both readers with prior knowledge in the field as well as newcomers to international relations. Kugiel tries to extend existing definitions on soft power, making the concept applicable to non-Western societies such as India and introduces the reader to the wide theoretical discussions that have taken place. The section "What Constitutes Soft Power?" is particularly useful setting the stage for this study of India's foreign policy and its direct and indirect soft power approach. The author clearly outlines the limitations and opportunities soft power provides to countries and emphasizes the importance of successfully leveraging soft power domestically before "strengthening soft power tools in external relations" (p. 23), a sequence India struggles with—as shown later in the book. The chapter further contemplates how soft power can be measured, which appears to be the most difficult aspect of the concept and the book. The author discusses the tangible and intangible assets of soft power before concluding that "in India's case, soft power resources would include, along with culture, political values, foreign policy, its diaspora, and growing economic potential" (p. 31).

The subsequent chapter provides an overview of India's foreign policy and how the country incorporated different elements of soft power into its foreign and domestic politics. Kugiel differentiates three distinctive time periods: 1947 to 1964, characterized by Nehru's soft power; 1964 to 1998, a time of hard power under Shastri and Gandhi; and the time post-1998, which saw a "revival of soft power in Indian foreign policy" (p. 51) and a shift towards smart power. Despite Kugiel's claim that "India has not sacrificed one dimension of power for another but is in the midst of building up a comprehensive smart power strategy" (p. 57), it becomes clear that India seems to be struggling with its self-perception, its strengths and weaknesses regarding its soft power approach. This is further highlighted in the subsequent chapters of this book, which reflect some of the contradictions mentioned earlier.

The third chapter of this volume explores sources of India's soft power while exploring cultural power, political values, and foreign policy. To this, Kugiel adds a discussion of the country's economic potential—which constitutes a useful addition in the case of India—and its diaspora. Despite offering further insights into Indian society and soft power, this chapter reads like an “Incredible India” campaign, which Kugiel himself mentions several times in the book. Unlike other chapters, this chapter does not offer much critical analysis. While interesting, the numerical comparison of newspaper readerships and social media users between India and the US might not be the best comparison given the vast differences in population. Such a comparison would only hold up if India were compared to China. On the other hand, Kugiel raises interesting points such as sports which India, apart from cricket, have not been sufficiently utilized as part of the country's soft power approach. India's foreign policy also emerges as an idiosyncratic, third way, and hence, its diaspora, “the second largest in the world” (p. 83), plays a significant role in forming India's image abroad. The success of the diaspora is emphasized by Kugiel, but this success varies greatly depending on the region to which Indians have migrated since there are vast differences between the US or Western Europe and the Middle East, for instance. Lastly, the author discusses India's economic power and the importance of liberal and pro-market reforms, which have clearly contributed to India's image “as a modern, vivacious, and technology-savvy country” (p. 87) but have also led to a decline of soft power among certain sections of Indian society. In addition, Kugiel mentions the importance of outsourcing and the IT industry, which has increased India's soft power, though this also created a negative image of India in countries that were affected by outsourcing, leading to unemployment.

The fourth chapter follows up on the implications presented in the previous chapter, examining specific soft power tools like public, economic, and cultural diplomacy; development cooperation policy; and relations with its diaspora (p. 93). Kugiel examines these tools while returning to the claim made in the introduction of this book, namely that perceptions matter more than ever. This chapter provides a critical assessment of India's soft power and the tools used, which Kugiel supports with many useful examples. India's foreign aid programs emerge as a primary tool of soft power abroad—which reemerges in the concluding chapter as a major source of criticism and weakness of domestic soft power, considering India's ongoing struggles with poverty.

From there, the book flows smoothly into the subsequent chapter, which attempts to measure the effectiveness of the soft power strategies laid out in preceding chapters. Kugiel examines international perceptions of India abroad, some of which yield surprising results. To delve deeper, he studied the impact of India's soft power in Afghanistan and Poland. It is not quite clear why these two countries were chosen, especially Poland, but the comparison nonetheless offers interesting insight into very different results of soft power strategies. With this analysis, it should not escape the reader's attention that the approach India is taking towards Afghanistan is determined by the benefits provided to India, along with geopolitical concerns, whereas the approach taken toward Poland reflects the fact that Poland does not play a major role in the advancement of India and its foreign policy. Instead of Poland, a comparison with another country of regional importance to India but in which India's soft power strategies have faltered would have been beneficial to measure the effectiveness of India's soft power strategies. Kugiel rightly concludes the chapter saying that “India's assets are countered by its considerable liabilities” (p. 157).

The final chapter and conclusion contain limitations of India's strategies and possible solutions. Modi and his impact on soft power are discussed, and even though Modi has actively tried to improve India's image externally, he remains a controversial figure in this diverse society in which multiculturalism is one of the major soft power assets. As Kugiel states, “He has missed no opportunity to promote Indian traditions” (p. 163), yet one should not forget that he promotes Hindu values whilst not really embracing other aspects of

multiculturalism internally, in the long-run possibly weakening India's domestic soft power. Nonetheless, Kugiel offers useful suggestions for India's continuous improvement of its soft power strategies such as the strengthening of its democracy, nation-branding, and the reform and improvement of its bureaucracy and diplomatic body.

Overall, Kugiel's *India's Soft Power* is a good book for readers with an interest in India's political evolution and landscape, domestic and foreign, and international relations in general. At times, the writing is slightly repetitive, and some ideas contradict statements appearing earlier in the book; nonetheless, this textual analysis of soft power and foreign policy contributes to the larger discourse on power (soft, hard, and smart) as well as contemporary Indian politics. India seems to have succeeded in developing its own idiosyncratic approach to soft power, clearly setting its eyes on becoming a smart power.

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<sup>1</sup> Soft generally refers to the noncoercive use of diplomacy, persuasion, and cultural influence or appeal to shape the preferences of others and achieve political goals.

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