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Soft Power and Strategic Interests: India's Relations with Pakistan and Afghanistan

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Introduction

As India enjoys the title of a rising global power, it seeks to ensure political stability and economic development, both nationally and within its region. Over the past decade, India has made concerted efforts in employing a soft power approach towards its neighbours, determined by its geostrategic position and political and security concerns. As a result, India's soft power capacity has accentuated and formed a crucial aspect in its diplomatic engagements.

The idea of 'soft power', as defined by Joseph Nye, rests on the ability of a country to represent its foreign policy motives attractively enough for its counterparts to accept them and thus eliminates the use of coercion.¹ In the international environment, following the post-Cold War era, military confrontations and the practice of hard power became extremely precarious. With globalization leading to complex networks of interaction, and the rising presence of democratic regimes, and influential role of non-state actors, the practice of public diplomacy, as the most evident form of soft power, was rendered with great significance in the conduct of international relations.

India has directed its foreign policy by making a "coherent effort...to raise India's image and brand value in foreign countries."² Harsh Pant, adding to this, remarks that "under Prime Minister Modi, India is taking a strategic approach towards using its soft-power resources to enhance the nation's image abroad."³ This thesis will analyse India's diplomatic relations with its western neighbours- namely- Pakistan and Afghanistan. While earlier events serve as a framework to understanding diplomatic relations, the primary focus will be to position India's diplomatic conduct in light of two recent events. First, the election of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2014, following which substantial attention has been driven to India's neighbours and regional stability. Second, the 2016 Uri attack in Kashmir in September which significantly changed the power dynamics and policy approaches of India, Pakistan and Afghanistan. At the outset, it thus becomes important to establish an understanding of India's strategic interest.

¹ Joseph S Nye, "Soft Power," *Foreign Policy* 80, (1990): 153-171, URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1148580>

² Stephanie M.-L. Heng, "Diplomacy and Image-Building: India Rides on its Soft Power" *ORF Issue Brief* 163 (2016): 3, URL: <http://www.orfonline.org/research/diplomacy-and-image-building/>

³ Harsh V Pant, "India's Soft -Power Strategy," *Outlook*, August 31 2015, <http://www.outlookindia.com/website/story/indias-soft-power-strategy/295206>

Firstly, India seeks to ensure its national security, and increasing instances of terrorism pose a major threat to this. This has also been the major factor in determining India's foreign policy towards Pakistan and Afghanistan. Pakistan's strong fundamentalist values make it a safe haven for insurgent groups to cultivate anti-Indian sentiments, particularly aimed at wielding influence and territorial claim in Kashmir. Strong Islamic ideals have also led Islamabad to share solidarity with the Sunni, pro-Pashtun terrorist group the Taliban in Afghanistan. The terrorist attacks in Uri, Kashmir heightened India's security concerns. Marking a departure from the previous practice of 'strategic restraint', the Modi led government projected its military assertiveness by carrying out surgical strikes. A stronger retaliation was, however, aimed at Pakistan's human security, by diplomats playing the card of hydro-diplomacy, against Pakistan's domestic security interest.

Secondly, India seeks to boost its economic growth and capacity building through greater regional cooperation. The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) has experienced low levels of regional integration due to political differences. By inviting the national heads of SAARC member countries to his swearing in ceremony, PM Modi indicated his ambition to foster regional development through economic cooperation and political stability. Afghanistan's geostrategic position makes it the connecting link between South Asia and the oil and mineral rich West and Central Asia. Having this realization, India had strongly advocated for Afghanistan's membership in SAARC in 2007. In this context, while it can be argued that the realist ideals of economic and security concerns determine India's strategic interest towards its western neighbours, its diplomatic approach in achieving these goals reflects on its belief in the principles of peaceful co-existence and regional solidarity.

The first section of this thesis focuses on understanding the academic literature concerning soft power and diplomatic conduct as means of advancing foreign policies. In this context, this thesis employs the methodology of case selection focussing on qualitative analysis on two grounds. Firstly, unlike hard power or the military capacity of a country, which can be measured in quantitative terms, soft power yields outcomes over a period of time and cannot be quantified in absolute figures. Secondly, qualitative case selection, in the field of international research pertains to the study of foreign policies and decision making process

having links at the micro-historical level.⁴ The second section highlights this factor wherein India's diplomatic engagements with Pakistan and Afghanistan, focus on specific themes of water diplomacy and cultural diplomacy respectively. Case selection also enabled this thesis to constructively build upon causal processes in understanding India's diplomatic conduct. While India's diplomatic conduct with Pakistan primarily involves national security concerns (dispute over Kashmir), hydro-diplomacy has sought to link this matter with domestic security. Likewise, Indo-Afghan relations are aimed at achieving regional peace and stability, to which terrorism poses a major, but not the only apprehension. Furthermore, this research methodology, due to its broad ambit, facilitates the understanding of the link between national interest and policy formulation by probing into various socio-cultural, political and economic factors. A second methodology employed more subtly, in the study of India's soft power is content analysis, highlighting speeches and remarks made by political leaders. Content analysis draws on the link between cultural and historical values upheld by a country and public sentiments attached to it as expressed by country heads and diplomatic personalities. Furthermore, such statements intensify the magnitude of diplomatic negotiations, as political remarks aptly informs of national interests and strategic concerns.⁵

Drawing upon the aforementioned methodologies, the majority of sources to support this study comprise of official and unofficial documents both. While this thesis does not directly cite the two main official documents, namely the Indus Water Treaty Agreement between India and Pakistan and the Strategic Partnership Agreement between India and Afghanistan, they contribute to the fundamental understanding of India's diplomatic conduct towards its neighbours. Since unofficial documents such as newspapers, owing to their nation specific character may tend to reflect a political bias, this thesis not only studies the perspective of all the parties involved but also take into account external expert opinion by studying diplomatic and foreign policy journals. A strong dependence on unofficial documents can also be understood by considering the temporal context in which this thesis is placed. While a considerable body of academic work has been generated since the election of Indian PM Modi in 2014, the September 2016 Uri attacks form a much recent phenomenon. The lack of academic literature reflecting on aspects of international relations, in this scenario also served as a major gap in conducting the research. This thesis is also a humble attempt of

⁴ Audie Klotz, "Case Selection," in *Qualitative Methods in International Relations: A Pluralist Guide*, ed. Audie Klots et al. (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008)

⁵ Margaret G Hermann, "Content Analysis," in *Qualitative Methods in International Relations: A Pluralist Guide*, ed. Audie Klots et al. (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008)

contextualizing India's diplomatic relations with Pakistan and Afghanistan within the framework of IR and diplomatic theory. Thus combining Indian strategic interest and IR academia forms the crux of the analysis, wherein the research question advanced is '*To what extent has India's soft power approach, enabled it to achieve its strategic interests in regards to its western neighbours?*'

Literature Review: Soft Power and India's Foreign Policy

The literature for this thesis is divided into two sections. Firstly, it will talk of India's relations with Pakistan in the context of the Indus Water Treaty signed between the two nations. The framework for this case will be hydro-diplomacy and how it is used as means of asserting foreign policy. The second section will focus on India's diplomatic relations with Afghanistan, specifically highlighting the theory of public and cultural diplomacy and its application in achieving India's strategic interest. In this context, this thesis applies the theory of soft power and its sub-fields as subsequently discussed in the literature review.

First propounded by the US political scientist Joseph S Nye, soft power can be understood as 'getting others to want the outcomes that you want through co-optation and not coercion'.⁶ Elaborating further, Nye argues that a country's soft power rests on three grounds: culture (in places where it is attractive to others), its political values (when it lives up to them and abroad) and its foreign policy (when they are seen as legitimate and having moral authority).⁷ A fourth feature that may be attributed to the increasing attractiveness of soft power is the growing focus on non-traditional forms of security, terrorism and nuclear capacity of states making the possibility of a full-scale military confrontation with the potential threat of mass destruction real. India, being the only country to share borders with all South Asian nations (except Afghanistan) as well as with China, realizes the threat of military confrontation from its past experience. Therefore, over the past decades, India's foreign policy has hinged on the country's cultural and political values, liberal institutions and welfare oriented policies as assets of its soft power. This thesis follows Kugiel's argument that India's soft power is aimed at fostering regional cooperation and solidarity achieved through a holistic approach encompassing a 'benign foreign policy, promotion of economic interdependence, strong cultural cooperation and foreign assistance'.⁸ The conduct of soft power, as it aims at projecting a country's attractiveness, is intricately linked to the practice of public diplomacy.

⁶ Joseph S Nye, "*Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*," (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), 5

⁷ Joseph S Nye, "Think Again: Soft Power" *Foreign Policy*, (February 23, 2006), URL: <http://foreignpolicy.com/2006/02/23/think-again-soft-power/>

⁸ Patryk Kugiel, "India's Soft Power in South Asia," *International Studies* 49 (3&4) (2012); 363 doi: 10.1177/0020881714534033

Public diplomacy can be understood as government initiatives to advance foreign policy, and to promote national interest by appealing to the public sentiments of the target country as well as the host country.⁹ With increasing global interdependence and integration, public diplomacy has come to play a significant role in projecting a nation's foreign policy. While the traditional definition of public diplomacy involves diplomatic interaction limited to government ministries, the 'new public diplomacy' involves reciprocal exchange of ideas and negotiations, involving state as well as various non state actors.¹⁰ The practice of new public diplomacy is therefore employed by state and non-state actors to 'understand cultures, attitudes and behaviour; build and manage relationships and influence thoughts and mobilize actions to advance their interests and values.'¹¹ The broad ambit of new public diplomacy incorporates various forms of diplomatic exchange and yields more promising outcomes of a nation's soft power, by creating greater public appeal amongst target audience.

India's public diplomacy since the mid-1990s has largely been determined by the "Gujral doctrine," advocated by the former Indian PM I.K. Gujral in 1997. Delineating India's conduct of foreign relations with its immediate neighbours, the doctrine strongly advocated for adhering to "sovereign equality, non-interference and non-reciprocal magnanimity."¹² However, the undertone that the doctrine adopted, can indeed be argued to have reciprocal sentiments wherein, India's foreign relations, as guided by the Gujral doctrine, can only become successful if its South Asian neighbours extend and follow the same principles, especially those of non-interference and respect to state sovereignty. India, under its new leadership, has altered and expanded on the Gujral doctrine to achieve its political interest. Furthermore, the doctrine also mentions that 'no South Asian country should allow its territory to be used against the interest of another country of the region.'¹³ This particularly holds relevance in the trilateral relations between India, Afghanistan and Pakistan as Pakistan has advanced its political interest and support to terrorism in Kabul as well as in Kashmir. In this regards, India's security and strategic interest remain at the apex of its diplomatic conduct. Considering its national interests, India's diplomatic relations with Pakistan, as the case studies will demonstrate, hinge on traditional public diplomacy and new public

⁹ Kennon H. Nakamura, and Matthew C Weed, "U.S. Public Diplomacy: Background and Current Issues," *Congressional Research Service*, (2009). URL: <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R40989.pdf>

¹⁰ Jan Melissen, "Public Diplomacy," in *Diplomacy in a Globalizing World: Theories and Practices*, ed. Pauline Kerr et.al. (: Oxford University Press, 2013)

¹¹ Ibid,193

¹² Kanak M Dixit, "Gujral Doctrine for Modi Darbar" *The Hindu*, last modified June 15, 2015, URL: <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/gujral-doctrine-for-modi-darbar/article7888715.ece>

¹³ Padmaja Murthy, "The Gujral Doctrine and Beyond," *Strategic Analysis* 23 (4), (2008): 639-652

diplomacy in case of Afghanistan. In the latter scenario diplomatic efforts have encompassed all major aspects of soft power, i.e. projecting national culture, political value and an attractive foreign policy. Keeping this in consideration, the term 'soft power' will be used interchangeably with public diplomacy in assessing Indo-Afghan relations.

Conceptualizing Hydro-Diplomacy

The increasing instance of water scarcity has become a global phenomenon. International experiences such as Turkey reducing the flow of water in Euphrates and Israel cutting off water supply to Palestine hold testimony to the fact that nations have time and again used water as a weapon to advance their strategic interests and political demands, thus giving emphasis to the idea of "water wars".¹⁴ The sharing of water, concerns not just the socio-economic development of societies and regions, but also gains a non-traditional security aspect, with the potential of subverting the domestic and international status quo. As issues pertaining to water sharing shape the foreign policy attitudes of nations, unstable power dynamics can weaken the practice of hydro-diplomacy. However, diplomats by harbouring on public diplomacy resources by incorporating technical experts, ecologists and engineers in the practice of hydro-diplomacy, legitimize national interests in accordance to ideals of sustainable development.¹⁵ Effective diplomatic engagement is driven by the idea that while non-cooperation and conflicts are a costly expenditure, diplomatic ties lead to peaceful outcomes with minimum investments.¹⁶ River sharing treaties and establishment of river basin organizations (RBOs) serve as peaceful and legal cooperative mechanism, to curtail political differences. While diplomatic engagement over the sharing of water may not lead to absolute solidarity between countries, they do serve as a promising means of "achieving positive spill-overs in terms of regional cooperation".¹⁷

The World Bank sponsoring of the Indus Water Treaty, signed by India and Pakistan in 1960, has been cited as one of the prime cases of water diplomacy wherein both the signatories had kept aside their differences and realized the need to cooperate over water sharing for the security of their people. Like most agrarian economies, India and Pakistan are heavily reliant

¹⁴ Joyce R. Starr, "Water Wars," *Foreign Policy* 82 (Spring, 1991), doi: 10.2307/1148639

¹⁵ Aneel Salman, "Blue Diplomacy: Transboundary Water Governance form a Foreign Policy Lens," *Regional Green Dialogs*, (2015) URL: <https://af.boell.org/2016/01/08/blue-diplomacy-transboundary-water-governance-foreign-policy-lens>

¹⁶ Benjamin Pohl, *The Rise of hydro-diplomacy: Strengthening foreign policy for transboundary waters* (Berlin: Adelphi, 2014), 28-32, doi: 10.113140/2.1.4035.5848.

¹⁷ Pohl, *The Rise of hydro-diplomacy: Strengthening foreign policy for transboundary waters*, 9

on water for irrigational purposes as well as expanding their industrial base. Furthermore, patterns of climate change and a burgeoning population has intensified the pressure on the available water resources. Concerns regarding water scarcity, domestic security and diplomatic engagements become intricately linked with the potential of escalating the smallest water sharing issues between countries, intractable and complicated political hostilities.¹⁸ Failure to abide by diplomatic and legal water sharing mechanisms, then, has negative bearing on the domestic socio-economic stability, effecting the downstream riparian in particular. On the contrary, the practice of water diplomacy with public diplomacy can lead to more promising outcomes. By using the public diplomacy apparatus, nations invest in advocacy programmes, involve NGOs in negotiating process to address public grievances and raise global awareness about water related problems.¹⁹ In the context of the Indus Treaty, diplomatic engagements have majorly involved government actors and technical experts, but non-state actors have also contributed to the conflict resolution process. The “Water is life” campaign, is a key component of the non-governmental collaborative, “Aman ki Asha” (desire for peace) aimed at spreading public awareness and discuss cooperative mechanisms involving civil society. However, due to its limited scope, this thesis will probe into the India-Pakistan relations within the framework of water diplomacy conducted at the state level, drawing on the practice of traditional public diplomacy.

Cultural Diplomacy: The Pillar of Soft Power

Nations practice cultural diplomacy as an important aspect of public diplomacy, with the aim of pursuing peaceful relations, mutual respect to state sovereignty and establishing long-term relations.²⁰ Cultural diplomacy encompasses not just political culture, involving government led initiatives to project national values and educational exchange, but also popular culture through cinema, performing arts etc. involving non-state actors. However, while cultural diplomacy forms an integral part of public diplomacy, where the latter is an umbrella term, the two cannot be equated at the same level. In contrast to public diplomacy, where the emphasis is on changing intellectual attitude of the counterpart, cultural diplomacy advances the idea of accepting different cultures which may alter the perception of individual

¹⁸ Salman, “Blue Diplomacy,” 8

¹⁹ Naomi Leight, “Policy Brief: Water & Public Diplomacy,” *Water Diplomacy Initiative* (2012), URL: http://uscpublicdiplomacy.org/sites/uscpublicdiplomacy.org/files/useruploads/u22281/Water_Diplomacy_Policy_Brief_Online.pdf

²⁰ Geoffrey Wiseman, “Polyilateralism and New Modes of global Dialogue” in *Diplomacy* ed. Christer Jonsson et al. (London: Sage Publications, 1999) 36-57

identity.²¹ In this sense, a nation's cultural diplomacy can successfully attract and affiliate the target masses with its national culture, and achieving soft power goals. Diplomatic conduct then, incorporates cultural policies in the broader remit of foreign policies wherein cultural relations and exchange are pursued by nations.²²

The Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) has served as the prime institution of facilitating India's cultural diplomacy since 1950 through bilateral agreements and treaties thus ensuring legitimacy of cultural exchange and cooperation. India and Afghanistan enjoy strong cultural and historical links furthered through Agreement on Cultural Relations signed in 1963 and more importantly through the Strategic Partnership Agreement signed in 2011. While governments enforce cultural policies, cultural exchange can be facilitated by non-state actors, in tandem to the national aspirations. As Kabul proposes to expand its relations with India by opening new consulate in Hyderabad, Shaida Mohammad Abdali, Afghanistan's Ambassador to India highlighted Afghan aspirations to build "ties in education, commerce and people to people ties, cultural cooperation and cooperation in health sector."²³ The involvement of non-state actors has largely contributed to the idea of nation branding, as an important benchmark of assessing a nation's diplomacy skills. Popular culture through Bollywood has gained remarkable popularity amongst native Afghans contributing to building a positive perception towards India. In this sense, Joshua Kurlantzick argues that soft power is a modification of any form of power outside of the military and security realm, practiced through public diplomacy as well as other forms of cooperation involving both state and non-state actors.²⁴

The aforementioned literature conceptualizes diplomatic conduct in a broad sense, and also briefly highlights India's diplomatic engagement with two of its neighbours- Pakistan and Afghanistan- as crucial for India's economic and strategic interest. However, as India has adopted a soft power approach to achieve these interests in a highly volatile region, owing to the national interest, and comparative political instability of India's neighbours, two factors

²¹ Paramjit S. Sahai, "India's Cultural Diplomacy in a Globalized World," *The Diplomat* (November 3, 2013) URL: <http://www.diplomatmagazine.nl/2013/11/03/indias-cultural-diplomacy-globalised-world/>

²² Erik Pajtinka, "Cultural Diplomacy in Theory and Practice of Contemporary International Relations." *Politicke Vedy* 17(4), (2014), 95-108, URL: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/269763112_Cultural_Diplomacy_in_Theory_and_Practice_of_Contemporary_International_Relations

²³ "Afghanistan to soon open consulate in Hyderabad," *The Economic Times*, (October 14, 2016). URL: <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/afghanistan-to-soon-open-consulate-in-hyderabad/articleshow/54849846.cms>

²⁴ Kugiel, "India's Soft Power in South Asia" 353

gain attention. Firstly, the soft power exerted by a nation, namely its ideals of democracy and political capital, can achieve absolute success only when it gains unanimous appeal amongst the masses. Afghanistan's multi-ethnic community has bifurcated opinion about India, wherein the Tajiks, and a majority of progressive Pashtun community appreciate India's cooperation, the Taliban controlled Pashtun region is opposed to Indian efforts.²⁵ Secondly, a foreign policy which is essentially too "soft" in its capacity may be rendered incapable of asserting a nation's strategic interest. India's efforts to build diplomatic pressure on Pakistan can fall weak considering the latter's hospitable relations with China. Being a major global power, China's relations with India are more competitive and contentious than cordial due to various bilateral disputes. The Pakistan-China alliance can adversely threaten India's national security from both sides.

This thesis is an attempt to highlight the merits of India's soft power and diplomatic engagement in achieving its national interests. However, considering India's geostrategic position of India, the case study also argues that while resorting to military force is a highly unfavourable option, military unpreparedness can render soft power efforts weak as well. In this regard, this study demonstrates that the idea of "soft power" and "hard power" in ensuring national interests become intricately linked and rests on a delicate balance between the two concepts.

²⁵ William Dalrymple, "Forget Nato v the Taliban. The real Afghan fight is India v Pakistan," The Guardian, (June 26, 2013). URL: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/jun/26/nato-taliban-india-pakistan>

Isolation or Assimilation: India's Diplomatic Relations with Pakistan

Introduction

Acute water crisis in South Asia, a region with extremely high population density and rising economic activity on one hand and conditions of abject poverty and sporadic socio-economic development on the other, calls for immediate and effective cooperation and resource development. While in theory, water management across South Asia is a top-down and highly bureaucratized phenomenon,²⁶ in practice it has been redundant and considerably ineffective in implementing the complex water sharing agreements. Hydrological discourse forms a major component of India's diplomatic relations with almost all of its South Asian neighbours, and serves as an important case study in the literature of water diplomacy. This chapter will study the case of Indus Water Treaty between India and Pakistan and how diplomatic conduct between the two nations is linked to issues of national security and regional strategic interests.

The Indus Water Treaty- Context and Problems

David Lilienthal, the first to advocate for a cooperative mechanism between the two countries wrote "No army, with bombs and shellfire, could devastate a land so thoroughly as Pakistan could be devastated by the simple expedient of India's permanently shutting off the source of water that keeps the fields and people of Pakistan alive."²⁷

Pakistan, since its formation in 1947 has been largely dependent on the Indus river basin for supporting over a quarter of Pakistani population and 90% of the country's agricultural practices. With the increasing instances of global warming, glacier melting and high intensity precipitation, Pakistan's susceptibility to the instances of flooding, followed by the drastic

²⁶ Gareth Price, "Rethinking Water-Climate Cooperation in South Asia," *ORF issue Brief* 130, (2016), URL: <http://www.orfonline.org/research/rethinking-water-climate-cooperation-in-south-asia/>

²⁷ Brahma Chellaney, "Mitigating Intercountry Water Disputes and Discord," in *Water: Asia's New Battleground* (Washington D.C: Georgetown University Press, 2011) , 291.

decrease of water supply has increased immensely.²⁸ The Indus Delta, therefore is bearing the brunt of “severe degradation,” sparking “coastal poverty, hopelessness and despair,” further aggravated by the prevalent “social construct” leading to inequitable patterns of water allocation.²⁹ While Pakistan is currently experiencing a water crisis, India is believed to become water stressed by 2025, or even earlier.³⁰ In such a scenario, water scarcity inherently becomes one of the major threats to human security with the potential of creating civil unrest and political instability within domestic borders. The trans-border nature of Indus River links domestic concern to a country’s foreign relations with the fellow riparian, thereby politicising the issue.

Since the first diplomatic negotiations in 1948, both India and Pakistan realized that water, used as a weapon, had the ability to wreak havoc. The signing of the Indus Water Treaty in 1960, after intense diplomatic confrontations and the prevalent “political tensions between the states concerned,”³¹ sought to curtail interstate water sharing disputes from escalating into an armed conflict. The understanding that water was pivotal for maintaining peace and regional stability served as the driving force to maintain a positive bilateral relationship. This idea also led to the establishment of governing institutions to primarily overlook dispute solving mechanisms and adherence to the clauses of the treaty. The Indus Commission, chaired by two Commissioners from India and Pakistan each, has served as an umbrella institution in facilitating un-biased and peaceful diplomatic relations and technical cooperation. The Indus Basin Development Fund, with significant international assistance was aimed at supporting irrigation infrastructure, particularly in Pakistan.

Water Diplomacy: A Framework for Dialogues and Debates

The Indus Water Treaty has served as a hallmark of water diplomacy as it has survived three military confrontations between the two nations. It is important to understand water diplomacy as a concept within the larger framework of foreign policy. Also referred to as hydro-diplomacy, the practice of water diplomacy involves measures aimed at preventing or peacefully resolving (emerging) conflicts related to water availability, the allocation or use

²⁸ Michael Kugelman, introduction to *“Running on empty: Pakistan’s Water Crisis,”* (Washington D.C: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2009)

²⁹ Ibid, 6

³⁰ Robert G Wirsing, “River Diplomacy in Himalayan Asia,” in *Non-traditional Security Challenges in Asia* ed. Uttam K.Sinha et.al (New Delhi: Routledge, 2015), 154-174.

³¹ Ruben van Genderen and Jan Rood, *“Water Diplomacy: a Niche for the Netherlands,”* (Netherlands Institute of International Relations, 2011)

between and within states and public and private stakeholder interests.³² Water diplomacy can be practiced through various platforms and involves technical expertise as a crucial aspect of negotiations.³³ The Treaty incorporates both these aspects as understood by two factors.

Firstly, it is primarily a bilateral treaty between India and Pakistan as they are the main stakeholders. The nature of the Indus river basin having six rivers enabled equal division on both sides with India enjoying control of Beas, Ravi and Sutlej and Pakistan gaining 80 percent of the entire share through the Indus, Chenab and Jhelum. Furthermore, the division of Indus waters has allowed both the nations to maintain absolute territorial sovereignty, thereby giving validity to the Harmon Doctrine. Conceptualized by Judson Harmon in 1895, the Harmon Doctrine rests on the fact that international law and its practice gives absolute state sovereignty the first and foremost priority in its conduct.

From a diplomatic perspective, however, the upstream riparian state can exercise its rights in complete oblivion to the demands of the downstream riparian, in this case India and Pakistan respectively. In the initial phase of the Treaty, while India claimed absolute sovereignty and greater control over the Indus waters, downstream Pakistan emphasized on absolute river integrity and historical rights over water, for ‘not causing “significant harm” to fellow riparian.’³⁴ The ambiguity of the doctrine, however, leaves room for misinterpretation of the Treaty as well as the position of the riparian states, further stressing diplomatic confrontations.

Secondly, while critical issues concerning navigational and security interests to maintain peaceful cooperation were to be dealt with at the political level, the more complicated issues concerning the development of the Indus basin were dealt with by technical experts such as irrigation engineers or senior administrative civil servants.³⁵ This attribute of diplomatic engagements ensures that they are conducted in a holistic manner, wherein the technicalities of water sharing are not overshadowed by national political concerns, and the negotiating and mediating skills possessed by diplomats helps to achieve a mutual compromise and equity.

³² Patrick Huntjens, “Water Diplomacy: An Approach to Prevent and Resolve Conflict,” *The Hague Institute for Global Justice*, (September 2, 2016) URL: <http://www.thehagueinstituteforglobaljustice.org/latest-insights/latest-insights/commentary/water-diplomacy-an-approach-to-prevent-and-resolve-conflict/>

³³ Genderen, “Water Diplomacy,” 11.

³⁴ Ibid, 11.

³⁵ Salman M.A. Salman and Kishor Uprety, “India-Pakistan Relations” in *Conflict and Cooperation on South Asia’s International Rivers*, (Washington D.C: World Bank Group, 2002), 57

The practice of hydro diplomacy is hinged on the idea that conflicts over water are irrational in terms of strategic and economic interests and ineffective in achieving hydrological development.³⁶ The technical intricacies of water sharing and the political saliency of both the nations have led to a complex conflict resolution mechanism. However, political undertones and security concerns have driven India and Pakistan to prioritize their strategic interests in determining the water sharing framework. As both the countries have taken up various hydro-power projects, the Indus Treaty allows India, being the upper riparian to develop hydropower projects “on the headwaters of Pakistani rivers”.³⁷ Islamabad’s apprehensions in this context can best be understood through two of the most important cases discussed below. A second major factor in this regard is that, since the Indus flows through Kashmir, water sharing and territorial dispute have become intricately linked matters of diplomatic negotiations.

The first major dispute arose in 1999, when military forces of India and Pakistan were engaged in fighting the Kargil War and diplomats and engineers were debating the Baglihar Dam project on the Chenab River. The plan to construct gated spillways by Indian engineers, aimed at preventing siltation and generating hydropower was opposed by Pakistan on two security related factors. Firstly, India could manipulate the water flow of Chenab, leading to floods as well as drought and secondly, as spelled out by the Harmon Doctrine, India sought to cause “significant harm” to its downstream riparian. Amidst the tensions of war, the Indus Commission was convened. The Indian technical expertise, addressing Pakistan’s apprehensions, argued that in case of flooding, India would be equally as affected as Pakistan, due to the positioning of the gateway.³⁸ Secondly, as per the United Nations Convention on the Law of Non-Navigational Uses (UNC), “significant harm” implied serious consequences upon the industrial and agricultural base of the other state or on its human security. India had the capacity to release the withheld water, without disturbing Pakistan’s share over the Chenab. After considerable diplomatic negotiations, both the parties agreed to India’s proposal thereby showing the success of the Indus Treaty and the Indus Commission.

The second and the most contentious issue concerns the Kishenganga dam project on the upper tributary of Jhelum River. Due to the natural course of the upper tributary had to be

³⁶ Vandana Asthana and A C Shukla, “Water Security in India’s Neighbourhood” in *Water Security in India: Hope, Despair and the Challenges of Human Development* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014)

³⁷ John Briscoe, “Troubled Waters: Can a Bridge Be Built over the Indus?,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 45 no. 50, (2010), 5

³⁸ Muhammed Siyad A.C, “Indus Water Treaty and Baglihar Project: Relevance of International Water Course Law,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 40 no. 29 (2005)

diverted before it joins the Jhelum and eventually flows into Pakistan. Such a diversion, regulated by the Indian side, creates serious human security concerns for Pakistan. John Briscoe noted that “New Delhi’s ability to hold a month’s worth river flow during Pakistan’s critical dry season, [is] enough to wreck the entire planting season.”³⁹ The designers of the Indus Treaty were well aware of the complex pattern of flow of the Jhelum River and when Pakistan approached the International Court of Arbitration over the dispute, it was ruled in India’s favour. The dispute was a prolonged one but did not threaten the functioning of the Indus Water Treaty or the operations of the Indus Commission. The reason behind this, as Briscoe noted, was because “the Indians weren’t building anything.”⁴⁰

The Indus Water Treaty, in this regard, is perhaps the second most contentious issue after the territorial claim of Kashmir by both the nations. The downside of this, however, is that amidst the political bargaining, the state of Jammu and Kashmir suffers from attaining socio-economic development. Kashmir has huge potential to develop hydropower but the state experiences frequent electricity shortages. In the initial phases of the Treaty, India had not advanced any major hydrological projects. Considering that since the eastern rivers allotted to India do not flow through Kashmir, Islamabad can consider this as interference in its share of Western rivers, namely Chenab and Jhelum. In such a scenario, New Delhi fears that Pakistan can instigate civil unrest and militant insurgencies against India, detrimental to its political and security concerns. Pakistan, on the other hand, has feared that India’s economic capacity to spearhead development in Kashmir will help “win the hearts and minds”⁴¹ of Kashmiris and reduce its limited political support furthermore. Extremist groups in Pakistan have, time and again, issued open warnings against India over the water issue and raised violent slogans such as “Let water flow or face war,”⁴² thereby linking Indus Water to national security. In the aftermath of the Uri attacks, India has shown determination to pressure Pakistan by not just proceeding with its hydropower projects but also by reclaiming the 80% rights it has over the Indus river.

Water Diplomacy and Soft Power

³⁹ Baba Umar, “Kashmir: A Water War in Making?,” *The Diplomat* (June 09,2016) URL: <http://thediplomat.com/2016/06/kashmir-a-water-war-in-the-making/>

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Manav Bhatnagar, “Reconsidering the Indus Waters Treaty,” *Tulane Environmental Law Journal* 22 (2009), 271-314.

⁴² Ramaswamy R.Iyer, “What Water Wars?,” *The Indian Express* (March 23, 2010) URL: <http://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/what-water-wars/>

‘Blood and water cannot flow at the same time,’ remarked the Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, as New Delhi advanced its water weapon towards Pakistan. The aim was not to disrupt the regular flow of the Indus or curtail Pakistan from receiving its share of water, but simply to claim India’s rights over the eastern rivers which have not been utilized to the maximum capacity. However, Pakistan responded to this advancement harshly with the Pakistani diplomat Sartaj Aziz saying any action by India would be considered an “act of war”.⁴³ The acute water crisis in Pakistan, will only be heightened if a war breaks out between the two nations, seriously threatening the human security of Pakistan and to some extent of India as well. India’s diplomatic pressure on Pakistan, comes from the consideration that” raising dams will prove less dangerous strategy than raising guns”⁴⁴ but more effective as Pakistan’s fragile economy, in terms of weak human capital, as well as political instability combined with the presence of extreme fundamentalist groups would not be able to respond to New Delhi’s water warfare.

The division of the Indus river basin into equal shares, with each country having the full authority over three rivers each, has, regarding India-Pakistan relations, allowed both the states to maintain certain levels of non-interference. However, the theory of water diplomacy expects the riparian nations to alter their power relation based on a? zero-sum approach and to work towards strengthening diplomatic cooperation. While the Indus Treaty, in theory and in principle, takes into consideration factors such as agriculture, water scarcity and energy pertaining to human security,, in practice it fails to link it with state security. The threat to repeal the Indus Treaty, has however turned the tables and India has targeted the domestic security of Pakistan in furthering its strategic goals. Indian PM Narendra Modi had also remarked that Pakistan’s fight against poverty and efforts to ensure food security would fall far behind India, if the Treaty is repealed. A politically and economically unstable Pakistan will be compelled to ensure its internal stability and political legitimacy amongst its citizens, and can also be condemned in the international environment for its failure to ensure human security and support terrorism. The Uri attacks have also come to light in the international arena, favouring India’s standpoint. However, India can face international pressure and, as argued, even “global condemnation and the moral high ground which India enjoys vis-à-vis

⁴³ Michael Kugelman, “Why the India-Pakistan War Over Water is So Dangerous,” *Foreign Policy* (September 30, 2016) URL: <http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/09/30/why-the-india-pakistan-war-over-water-is-so-dangerous-indus-waters-treaty/>

⁴⁴ Justin Rowlett, “Why India’s water dispute with Pakistan matters,” *BBC News* (September 28, 2016) URL: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-37483359>

Pakistan in Uri would be lost,⁴⁵ if the Treaty is repealed. Furthermore, China being an ally of Pakistan and the upstream riparian in sharing the Brahmaputra River, with India and Bangladesh, could retaliate to Indian actions by diverting the course of Brahmaputra to meet its hydrological interest. This would create significant hydrological and navigational problems for India. In all senses, the abrogation of the treaty is not just logistically complicated but also has adverse effects for India's image as a 'rising power'. In this regard, neither India nor Pakistan could afford such a situation which could lead to disastrous results in terms of human security as well as traditional security.

Conclusion

The above discussion entails India and Pakistan's diplomatic relations over the sharing of the Indus River. India has used diplomatic tools to pressure Pakistan for ensuring its human and food security, largely sustained by the Indus waters. In this context, India has shaped Pakistan's position as weak and fragile in addressing human rights issues, thus subjected to international condemnation. The success of India's soft power is demonstrated by it resorting to diplomatic means rather than the use of force to advance security concerns and also asserted comparative socio-economic stability.

However, as water diplomacy forms an important aspect of India's foreign relations, not just with Pakistan but with other South Asian neighbours as well, Indian efforts to revive cooperation over eliminating them can wield better outcomes in tandem to the ideals of India's soft power. By reviving the Indus Commission, suspended after the Uri attacks, India can strive for a strengthened cooperative mechanism, which will enhance its international reputation as a benevolent neighbour, catering to the needs of the aggrieved Pakistani populace by side-lining the political differences.

In the regional context, India has furthered its strategic interest by developing hydropower projects in Afghanistan - the Salma Dam being the benchmark of cooperation. The Kabul river contributes 20% of the flow of the Indus in Pakistan, and in the absence of any water sharing treaty between Pakistan and Afghanistan,⁴⁶ India's support to the latter to develop hydrological resources can also create pressure on Pakistan but without any collateral

⁴⁵ Kugelmann, "Why the India-Pakistan War Over Water is So Dangerous"

⁴⁶ Briscoe, "Troubled Waters" 30

damage.⁴⁷ India's practice of water diplomacy reflects a gesture of goodwill and its belief in greater cooperation as a means of strengthening regional solidarity. The underlying argument is that if conflicts can result in water wars, effective practice of water diplomacy can enable states to "win friends around the globe"⁴⁸, thereby justifying the fundamental idea of soft power.

⁴⁷ Amitabh Sinha, "Turning off Indus tap easier said than done," *The Indian Express* (October 03, 2016) URL: <http://indianexpress.com/article/explained/india-pakistan-relation-indus-water-treaty-terrorism-3044967/>

⁴⁸ Genderen, "Water Diplomacy," 16

Winning Hearts, Winning Strategies: India's Soft Power in Afghanistan

Introduction

A few months before India threatened to repeal the Indus Water Treaty with Pakistan, country heads of both India and Afghanistan inaugurated the Salma Dam in the Herat province of Afghanistan. Hailed by policy makers and diplomats as the benchmark of cooperation, the Salma dam would transform the draught stricken region into an industrial hub. In his inaugural speech, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi remarked “Your [Afghanistan’s] friendship is our honour; your dreams are our duty.”⁴⁹

The fall of the Taliban in 2001 and the withdrawal of US-NATO forces from Afghanistan in 2014 compelled Afghanistan to ensure its geopolitical security and seek international assistance in achieving socio-economic development. India’s soft power policy mainly focussed on humanitarian aid and economic development over military assistance, as prioritized by Afghan government has ranked India as the fifth largest aid provider to Afghanistan.⁵⁰ Such an approach is reflective of India’s strategic interest in Afghanistan, driven by two major aspirations. First, Afghanistan’s rich mineral base and strategic positioning, making it a connecting link between India and the Central Asian countries, drives India’s economic aspirations. Second, the threat posed by the Taliban-Pakistan alliance to the national security of India and Afghanistan as well as to the regional stability of South Asia determines New Delhi’s political considerations. In this regard, India’s foreign policy aims at wielding cultural and political influence and also the promotion of liberal and progressive ideas through education, media and politics.⁵¹ This would also allow India to build relations with various ethnic communities of Afghanistan, particularly the Pashtun community which serves as buffer between India and Pakistan in terms of influence.

⁴⁹ Praveen Swami, “At Afghan dam inauguration, PM promises: India will not forget you,” *The Indian Express* (June 05,2016) URL: <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/narendra-modi-afghanistan-salma-dam-inauguration-ashraf-ghani-2834106/>

⁵⁰ Shaji S, “Withdrawal of NATO and Indo-Afghan relations,” in *Afghanistan Post-2014: Power configurations and evolving trajectories*, ed. R. Harshe et. al, (Oxon: Routledge, 2016)

⁵¹ Jeff M Smith and Gianluca la Manno, “India Key to U.S. Afghan Success,” *The Diplomat* (June 02, 2012) URL: <http://thediplomat.com/2012/06/india-key-to-u-s-afghan-success/>

Therefore, a policy hinged on socio-economic and cultural connectivity has enabled Indian diplomats to project India's political salience as more effective than military engagement,⁵² in establishing a democratic, multi-ethnic and plural society supporting Indo-Afghan relations.

Beyond Bollywood: India's Soft Power Policy in Afghanistan

President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani on his recent visit to India remarked that Afghanistan is marred with terrorism and acknowledged India's cooperative efforts in reviving the aspirations of the Afghan society. Paying tribute to Rabindranath Tagore and his classic novel, the Afghan President added, "Kabuliwala has done more to give us a brand which we could not buy with a billion dollars of investment,"⁵³ Sujeet Sarkar, adding to this remarks that the influence of Bollywood in establishing people-to-people connection is greater than any government efforts.⁵⁴ However, state involvement in gaining support for their foreign policy amongst the masses of the other country forms the basic principal of public diplomacy. In this context, the Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA), signed in 2011 between India and Afghanistan, is the benchmark of India's foreign policy in Afghanistan. As the first formal agreement signed by Afghanistan and the first Strategic Agreement signed between India and any other South Asian country, the Strategic Partnership Agreement is symbolic of Nye's concept of co-optive power manifested through 'cultural and ideological attraction and its foreign policy framed in accordance to institutions of international regimes.'⁵⁵

While the Agreement, inter alia, highlights security cooperation and India's assistance in "capacity building programmes for the Afghan National Security Forces,"⁵⁶ it does not mention Indian deployment of troops on the Afghan front. Rather, greater emphasis is given to soft power resources through cultural cooperation and economic development. The strategic partnership between the two countries, as former Indian PM Mammohan Singh remarked, "will create an institutional framework so that India can help in Afghan capacity building in the areas of education, economic development and cooperation, and people-to-

⁵² Smruti S.Pattanaik, "India's Afghan Policy: Beyond Bilateralism," *Strategic Analysis*.36 no.4, (2012) doi: 10.1080/09700161.2012.689527

⁵³ Press Trust of India, "Tagore's Kabuliwala has given us a brand: Afghan President Ashraf Ghani," *The Indian Express* (April 28, 2015) URL: <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/tagores-kabuliwala-has-given-us-a-brand-afghan-president-ashraf-ghani/>

⁵⁴ Press Trust of India, "Afghanistan and the popularity of Bollywood are inseparable" *The Economic Times* (June 17, 2012) URL: <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/media/entertainment/afghanistan-and-the-popularity-of-bollywood-are-inseparable/articleshow/14209348.cms>

⁵⁵ Nicolas Blarel, "India's Soft Power: From Potential to Reality in *LSE Research Online*, (2012), 28

⁵⁶ Ministry of External Affairs, "Agreement on Strategic Partnership between the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the Republic of India," Government of India (October 04, 2011)

people contacts”.⁵⁷ Under the institutional framework of the SPA, the Indian Council for Cultural Relations has spearheaded capacity building in Afghanistan by providing over 7,000 scholarships to Afghan students and professionals. By displaying its progressive political values by supporting education initiatives and its economic capacity by investing in such programmes, India’s cultural diplomacy has sought to create a positive perception amongst the Afghans by catering to their needs. The education system in Afghanistan is feeble due to inadequate infrastructure, security concerns and significant gender disparity.⁵⁸ The strongpoint of cultural diplomacy lays in its ability to connect masses and not just the governments. It aims at appealing the sentiments of people and creating a feeling of acceptance and mutual benevolence. While it is difficult to quantify a country’s soft power efforts, their outcomes can be assessed best through opinion polls, as they can give insight to the effect a nation’s public diplomacy has. Public response to India’s diplomatic efforts are evident both directly and indirectly. Dr. Masooda Jalal, a prominent Afghan activist appreciated India’s role in establishing female vocational training and skill building centres in Herat, Kabul and Kandahar, and hopes that a strengthened relationship between the two countries would improve the limited female emancipation programme.⁵⁹ This has perhaps increased support for female empowerment within the country as 74% of Afghans think women should work outside the home, which would also contribute to the nation’s economic growth.⁶⁰

To further people-to-people interaction, New Delhi adopted a more liberal visa policy towards Afghan nationals in 2014. Greater movement of people would facilitate dissemination of liberal and progressive ideas of culture and democracy, which would give India a greater outreach and capacity to engage the civic societies on both sides, who are otherwise not involved in traditional diplomatic activities.⁶¹ Public diplomacy, in this sense, does not confine itself to limited measures but is advanced with more conviction when official government level diplomats envision and channel the transmission of ideas and

⁵⁷ “Afghanistan and India sign ‘strategic partnership,” *BBC News*, (October 04, 2011) URL: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-south-asia-15161776>

⁵⁸ Arne Strand, “Expanding and improving the quality of girls’ education in Afghanistan,” *Brookings*, (August 19, 2015) URL: <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/education-plus-development/2015/08/19/expanding-and-improving-the-quality-of-girls-education-in-afghanistan/>

⁵⁹ Shanthie Mariet D’Souza “India’s Aid to Afghanistan: Challenges and Prospects,” *Strategic Analysis*. 31no.5, (2007), 838, doi: 10.1080/09700160701662328

⁶⁰ Henry Duke Burbige et.al, “A Survey of the Afghan People: Afghanistan in 2016,” *The Asia Foundation* URL: <http://asiafoundation.org/where-we-work/afghanistan/survey/>

⁶¹ Patricia Goff, “Cultural Diplomacy,” *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Diplomacy* ed. A F Cooper et al, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013)

values they wish to project. The cultural dimensions of the Strategic Partnership have wielded successful results in rekindling stronger Indo-Afghan relations and have enabled India to further its political aspirations of establishing a stable democratic Afghanistan that would inherently distance itself from fundamentalist Pakistan. The construction of the Afghan Parliament by Indian authorities is the most evident physical manifestation of the Indian aspirations of promoting liberalism and democracy.

In this context, India's economic assistance is also believed to generate a healthy workforce and political capital which would favour democratic governance over Islamic fundamentalism. India's developmental aid also considers its economic interest as Afghanistan serves as a rich resource base and also bridge between India and Central Asia. Afghanistan possesses rich reserves of copper, iron, gold and lithium, having great potential to boost Afghan economy. However, in the absence of any "reliable transit route to export minerals, and develop its mineral resource base" due to the threat of Taliban controlling mining activities, Kabul has welcome international investments in the energy and agricultural sector. India has addressed the needs of the local population by taking up various infrastructural projects. Commenced in 1976, the Salma dam was finally inaugurated in 2014 and renamed as the Afghanistan-India Friendship Dam by Kabul. The hydro project had been targeted to several terrorist attacks aimed at "derailing the process of development and reconstruction in Afghanistan", but the majority of Tajik speaking Herat province supported the project and celebrated its completion, thus favouring India's soft power potential.⁶² As a means of gaining access to Central Asia, heads of India, Iran and Afghanistan signed the trilateral transit agreement in May 2016. India extended financial aid to the development of Chahbahar port on the Iranian coast, which will link India with Afghanistan and other central Asian countries. Islamabad, due to its apprehensions of increasing Indo-Afghan relations, had denied this connectivity overland. However, the trilateral agreement has only isolated Pakistan as a regional player in Central and West Asia. As per the Strategic Agreement, economic cooperation between the two countries is executed keeping in mind the long term and sustainable benefits to both the parties, and Pakistani interests are detrimental in achieving this goal.

⁶² Syed Zafar Mehdi, "India Wins Hearts in Afghanistan with the 'Friendship Dam,'" *The Huffington Post*, (June 07, 2016) URL: <http://www.huffingtonpost.in/syed-zafar-mehdi/india-wins-hearts-in-afghanistan-with-the-friendship-dam/>

New Delhi also advanced unflinching support to Afghanistan's membership in the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), which would enable the free flow of goods across borders in the region through the mechanism of South Asian Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA).⁶³ Afghanistan's membership in SAARC would contribute in developing a liberal and free market oriented economy, and thereby lead to a politically stable and secure Afghanistan. The declaration of Bamiyan to be the cultural capital of SAARC for 2015-16 sought to revive the rich but desecrated Buddhist site and promote tourism contributing to economic growth and employment opportunities in the region. Afghanistan's acknowledgement of India's fight against Pakistani supported terrorism was reflected in the aftermath of the Uri attacks. Afghanistan not only followed India's footsteps of boycotting the 2016 SAARC Summit to be held in Islamabad, but was the first nation to advocate in favour of diplomatically isolating Pakistan in the regional sphere. This marked the evident success of India's soft power in the regional sphere since the election of PM Narendra Modi.

It may come as little surprise that Pakistan has expressed apprehensions over the growing Indo-Afghan relations due to the fear of losing its political influence in the region. Pakistan has been highly sceptical of Afghanistan's dependence on India and has to come expend the vaguely defined "benign economic and cultural relations"⁶⁴ with Afghanistan. Furthermore, it has always followed a zero sum policy, eliminating any chances of peaceful trilateral cooperation. Pakistan's false accusation of India and Afghanistan encouraging rebellion in Balochistan and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) as aimed at destabilizing political sanctity of Islamabad has reinstated Pakistan's fears.

On the other hand, while India's policy in Afghanistan is not aimed explicitly at rooting out Pakistan's presence, New Delhi realizes the risk that a strong Afghanistan-Pakistan relationship could have grave consequences in regards to its strategic interests. The Pashtun community, which resides mainly on the Pakistan side of the Afghan border still experience a strong presence of Taliban and political assertion from Pakistan. As India seeks to establish stronger ties with the Pashtuns, Pakistan's use of Islamic fundamentalism serves as a major roadblock in plans of consolidation. Keeping in mind its national interest, Kabul believed Pakistan would bring the Taliban to the negotiating tables as it had promised. India and

⁶³ Harsh V Pant "India in Afghanistan: A test case for a rising power," *Contemporary South Asia* 18 no.2, (2010), 138

⁶⁴ Pattanaik, "India's Afghan Policy," pp.576

Afghanistan could only wait in futility, following which Afghanistan was put under diplomatic pressure from the Indian side. As a result, India maintained a low profile in the 2014 Heart of Asia Conference and halted the investment in Chabahar port in Iran. Further, New Delhi has refused to consider Afghanistan's request to "revive the Strategic Partnership Agreement or to hold a meeting of the Strategic Partnership Council."⁶⁵

India's soft power in Afghanistan has however been spearheaded with the change of governments in both India and Afghanistan since 2014. Indian PM Narendra Modi has sought to advance a highly ambitious foreign policy towards Afghanistan wherein "India neither sees Afghanistan as a battleground for competing national interest nor assistance to Afghan reconstruction and development as a zero sum game".⁶⁶ Pakistan on the other hand has adopted a zero-sum attitude but wishes to attain a "strategic-depth" in Afghanistan by eliminating India's security and strategic motives.⁶⁷ With the withdrawal of US-NATO security forces, India has been compelled to ensure its security interest in Afghanistan i.e. primarily aimed at curtailing the Pakistan-Taliban alliance from muddling in India's soft power initiatives.

A major step taken in this direction was the Heart of Asia Conference hosted by India aimed at developing security, political and economic stability in Afghanistan and its neighbourhood. "We want dignified relations with our neighbors, not charity,"⁶⁸ the Afghan President remarked in the 2016 Heart of Asia Conference- Islamabad Process, hosted by India. The aforementioned statement came from the Afghan President as he rejected Pakistan's financial aid and condemned Islamabad for supporting extremist groups against the desire for cooperation and peace furthered by Kabul and New Delhi. For the first time, India and Afghanistan brought security concerns on to the table, while seeking to enhance developmental cooperation in tandem parallel. The understanding behind this is perhaps that India's strategic interest of ensuring a politically stable Afghanistan can be achieved only when the hard power and soft power combines.

Envisioning a stable Afghanistan: Outcomes of India's Soft Power

⁶⁵ Ahmad Bilal Khalil, "The Tangled History of Afghanistan-India-Pakistan Triangle," *The Diplomat* (December 16, 2016) URL: <http://thediplomat.com/2016/12/the-tangled-history-of-the-afghanistan-india-pakistan-triangle/>

⁶⁶ Pattanaik, "India's Afghan Policy," 579

⁶⁷ Khalil, "The Tangled History"

India, Pakistan and Afghanistan have refuted the idea of entering into formal diplomatic engagements mutually beneficial to all three countries. However, their foreign policies are deeply intertwined. India's policy in Afghanistan, as evident from the discussion, largely hinges on the security threat from Pakistan and Pakistan's Afghan policy has been India centric, aiming to reduce the influence of the latter. Afghanistan on the other hand realizes this tug-of-war between India and Pakistan and has used its strategic location to build up the stakes for both the countries.⁶⁹ As India and Afghanistan embark persuasively on bilateral terms, they seek to achieve cooperation in various socio-economic and cultural areas including sports, health care and infrastructural development.

The Strategic Partnership Agreement in this regard has successfully displayed India's willingness and capacity to employ its soft power on the one hand and Afghanistan's acknowledgment of such a policy to be crucial for its national development on the other. The underlying strategic interest of India has been well covered as well. Since India does not wish to deploy military troops in Afghanistan, but by training Afghan recruits, India can shape their attitudes in its favour. This would inherently ensure India's security interests are maintained in Afghanistan especially against Pakistan's influence. The Agreement has thus facilitated India to achieve its soft power goals to a considerable extent by building the image of a much favoured nation against Pakistan, with nearly 70% of Afghan population have shown support to New Delhi's diplomatic efforts.⁷⁰ While New Delhi's policy towards Pakistan has been severed in the light of recent events and distrust, Indo-Afghan relations on the contrary are hinged on mutual trust and goodwill Indian initiatives have been reciprocated by Kabul cordially.

A major step taken in this direction was the Heart of Asia Conference hosted by India aimed at developing security, political and economic stability in Afghanistan and its neighbourhood. "We want dignified relations with our neighbors, not charity",⁷¹ the Afghan President remarked in the 2016 Heart of Asia Conference- Islamabad Process, hosted by India. The aforementioned statement came from the Afghan President as he rejected Pakistan's financial aid and condemned Islamabad for supporting extremist groups against the desire for

⁶⁹ Pattanaik, "India's Afghan Policy" 573

⁷⁰ "Majority of Afghans wants India, not Pakistan, to help," *The Economic Times*, (January 21, 2010), URL: http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2010-01-21/news/28479206_1_opinion-poll-taliban-administration-german-tv-ard .

cooperation and peace furthered by Kabul and New Delhi. For the first time, India and Afghanistan brought security concerns on to the table, while seeking to enhance developmental cooperation in tandem parallel. The understanding behind this is perhaps that India's strategic interest of ensuring a politically stable Afghanistan can be achieved only when the hard power and soft power combines.

Conclusion

The power dynamics between India, Pakistan and Afghanistan have been shaped by their strategic interests and inherently involve a trilateral dimension. Power, as a concept and in its utility has been subjected to individual interpretation. This thesis develops India's foreign relations on the understanding that soft power not just averts threats to national security, but also means of building long-term and stable relations in the region.

The realization that soft power, may not suffice in achieving strategic interests especially pertaining to national security, compels nations to rely on coercive measures or "hard power". The practice of "hard power," then becomes a requisite in achieving immediate and short-term goals. New Delhi's immediate response to Uri attacks were surgical strikes in Kashmir, and the Indus Treaty option was only resorted to later. However, hard power has its downsides as demonstrated by security concerns of India, Pakistan and Afghanistan. Summarizing this intricate power dynamics, Stephen Cohen remarked, "India has been doing a great job in helping in civil economic reconstruction and training of security forces of Afghanistan," however, "by training security forces, India is in competition with Pakistan which is supporting the Taliban".⁷² The Modi government realizes risks involved in relying heavily on military sources and therefore has made concerted efforts in striking a balance. This is evident from two factors- first, India has maintained its position as the largest importer of arms and have provided military assistance to Afghanistan as well, thus reflecting on India's military preparedness. Secondly, the distinction between traditional and non-traditional security has become distorted. The purpose of Leviathan, as articulated by Thomas Hobbes, is to protect the safety of its people, thus connecting state security and human security.⁷³ India's diplomatic stance towards Pakistan has revived the realist tradition but by resorting to diplomatic measures and not coercion. Soft power, in this regard as manifested through peaceful mechanisms of dialogue and negotiations, considers the significance of force but seeks to mitigate the risk associated with its application.

The theory of soft power rests on gradual but long-lasting outcomes. India's soft power aims at projecting its belief in universal values of peaceful coexistence and strong democratic

⁷² Prakash Nanda, 'Soft Power' not enough to serve India's foreign policy goal in Afghanistan," *Firstpost* (June 5, 2016) URL: <http://www.firstpost.com/politics/indias-soft-power-in-afghanistan-has-reached-its-limits-time-to-develop-smart-power-approach-2817608.html>

⁷³ Kal Holsti, "The Diplomacy of Security," *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Diplomacy* ed. A F Cooper et al, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013)

credentials and aspirations to achieve socio-economic prosperity. As Afghanistan seeks to rebuild itself, the Indian example, owing to its political stability, in comparison to an instable and authoritarian Pakistan, has proven to be more attractive and promising option. In this context, Indian PM remarked, “a unified, sovereign, democratic, peaceful, stable and prosperous Afghanistan,”⁷⁴ would ensure mitigation of deeply entrenched terrorism and regional stability.

Drawing on the above discussion, this thesis concludes that India has successfully asserted its strategic interest through a soft power approach and gained international acknowledgement as well. However, for fulfilling its strategic interest, India needs to strike a balanced approach between hard power and soft power. This balance, has been termed by Nye as “smart power” which aims at the nation’s security concerns and addresses them with a long-term solution.⁷⁵ Furthermore, effective hard power can ensure the practice and cultivation of soft power resources. In this regard, it becomes evident that hard power has shaped the undercurrent of India’s soft power policy, but in the long run, it is an effective and mature soft power which shields the national interest by mitigating the possibilities of coercion and favouring for peaceful coexistence and regional solidarity.

⁷⁴Ankit Panda, “India Pledges \$1 Billion in Assistance to Afghanistan,” *The Diplomat* (September 15, 2016) URL: <http://thediplomat.com/2016/09/india-pledges-1-billion-in-assistance-to-afghanistan/>

⁷⁵ Ernest J Wilson, “Hard Power, Soft Power, Smart Power,” *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616 no.110, (2008), doi: 10.1177/0002716207312618

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