Political Identity as a Soft Power:

India in the 21$^{\text{st}}$ century

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Abstract

The 21st century has witnessed an increased focus on the cultivation and propagation of soft power by the Indian government. Along with cultural soft power, the soft power of political values, ideals, and identities has also featured within this exercise, but is often overlooked. This thesis is anchored in the international appeal of the rare and hybrid nature of India's political identity, i.e. that of a post-colonial country with a robust and dynamic democracy, and its significance as an important soft power resource for the South Asian country. In this thesis, I draw on theories of critical constructivism and post-colonialism to propose that India's soft power strategy for a particular foreign state is influenced by the colonial history of that state. Comprehensive examination of extensive data is carried out through a comparative case study using the methods of qualitative content analysis and discourse analysis. Consequently, this thesis reveals that India is likely to use the democratic aspect of its political identity in bilateral relations with ex-colonizer countries and it is likely to use the post-colonial aspect of its political identity in bilateral relations with ex-colony countries.

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Abbreviations

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa grouping
EU	European Union
EAM	External Affairs Minister (Government of India)
FM	Foreign Minister
IBSA	India, Brazil, South Africa forum
ICJ	International Court of Justice
MEA	Ministry of External Affairs (Government of India)
NAM	Non-Aligned Movement
NPT	Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty
PM	Prime Minister
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
US	United States
VP	Vice-President
WTO	World Trade Organisation

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 India's Soft Power: Unique political appeal

On 20th November 2017, a historic, albeit globally minor, diplomatic incident took place when India's nominee to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) was re-elected in place of the nominee of the United Kingdom (UK), which decided to bow out of the contest after eleven inconclusive rounds of voting. Consequently, for the first time in the history of the United Nations (UN), the UK is not on the ICJ, and this is also the first time that a permanent member of the UN Security Council (UNSC) lost out to an ordinary UN member for a seat at The Hague (George, 2017). Backed by around two-thirds of the members of the UN General Assembly (UNGA), India's diplomatic outreach to fellow developing nations bore fruit when the UK withdrew its candidate, citing the hope of continued cooperation with "close friend" India (Pant, 2017). While also somewhat symbolic of Britain's post-Brexit reality, this incident has renewed the focus on India's political influence and leadership amongst the developing and post-colonial world. At the same time, the UK's decision to opt out and its rhetoric of friendship points to a desire for good political relations with India. Can this be seen as a sign of India's political soft power for both the developing world and an advanced country such as the UK?

Recently, in light of the prevailing economic interdependence and institutional multilateralism, soft power, i.e. the influencing power of culture, values, and policies, has risen in focus. This is particularly true for India and China, the two largest emerging economies that frequently attempt to exercise soft power for achieving greater political sway, and often elicit comparison. China has emerged as a global power, but one that is seen as threatening the established normative international order, with much skepticism about its 'peaceful rise'. India, on the other hand, for many across the developed and developing world, is a benign and more reasonable emerging power, one aiming to work within the established order, albeit with a view to making it more equitable. China's greater economic prowess and military muscle make it more powerful in a traditional sense, in the neighbourhood and beyond. Both nations are inheritors of ancient civilizations and rich cultural heritage, but China invests more heavily in public diplomacy and

soft power propagation. What truly sets Indian soft power apart from that of China, and also other emerging powers, is its polity, i.e. its pluralistic values and post-independence democratic institutions. The international coherence of India's dynamic political system eclipses that of its larger neighbour China, a communist state with political centralism. Moreover, China's permanent UNSC status alienates most of the developing nations that demand an increased say in global decision-making. Reflecting on these facets, Christian Wagner remarked in 2010 (p.334), "Compared to China, India looks like a soft power by default". As Joseph Nye (1990) argued, more attractive countries are those that help to frame issues, whose culture and ideas are close to prevailing global norms, and whose credibility abroad is reinforced by their values and policies.

In a world where most advanced economies are democracies and the vast majority of the developing nations once endured colonial rule, India's political identity as a post-colonial democracy enjoys substantial global appeal. One may even argue that India is a unique case of a nation whose political identity, thanks to its hybrid nature, has near-universal appeal. Is its political identity a factor in India's communication of its soft power? If yes, how is this done? These queries require exploration, and lead us to the main research question of this thesis.

1.2   Research Question

Power was defined by Robert Dahl in 1957 as "the ability to get others to do what they otherwise would not do". Echoing this classical definition, power is generally understood as the ability to influence or affect others in order to obtain the outcomes one wants (Nye, 2008; 2017). Historically and traditionally, it has been viewed in essentially tangible terms, such as military or economic (Wagner, 2005). This was especially the case for neorealist theorists like Kenneth Waltz, who underscored the significance of economic and military capabilities while ranking states according to their power capabilities (Waltz, 1979, p.131).

In his canonical work 'Soft Power' (1990) American political scientist Joseph S. Nye Jr. was the first to separate these "hard" dimensions of power from what he called a "soft power" approach, a term he coined to emphasize the salience of principles, values, and culture in a new era where the understanding of power was no longer solely dependent on military force. More recently, in his article 'Public Diplomacy and Soft Power' (2008, p.96), Nye clarified the concept when he

defined a country's soft power as resting on three primary resources: "its culture (in places where it is attractive to others), its political values (when it lives up to them at home and abroad), and its foreign policies (when they are seen as legitimate and having moral authority)", and dressed "soft power" itself in soft power terms when he called it the "power of seduction". Simply put, instead of coercing or pressurizing others to do what you want, soft power focuses on getting them to "want what you want" (Hocking, 2005, p.33).

The persuading power of ideas and cultural attraction arguably gained traction in the period after the end of World War II. Competing values and ideologies, as Jan Melissen (2005) points out, were the root of the military and economic rivalries which arose during the Cold War. Competition in the soft power sphere spilled over into the realm of hard power. Peter van Ham (2005, p.48) takes this further by arguing that it was the ideological erosion of communism which ultimately resulted in the loss of Soviet legitimacy and control over its 'satellite states', military strength notwithstanding. This is corroborated by Nye's (1990, p.169) observation of Soviet teenagers' proclivity for blue jeans and American recordings. While the understanding of soft power is, clearly, not new, it has certainly emerged as "increasingly important in the global information age" (Melissen, 2005, p.4). Janice Mattern (2005) argues that its feasibility has increased because the advancements in information technology have made its communication easy and cheap. Within academics, the rise of constructivist theories of international relations and the criticism of neorealist notions have enhanced interest in the topic (Baldwin, 2016).

In contemporary times, with the use of military power becoming restricted and costly in an increasingly inter-linked and economically inter-dependent world where several states possess sophisticated weapons capabilities, soft power is growing in significance as the power to influence other actors through "attraction or persuasion" rather than "coercion or payment" (Nye, 1990, p.167-168). Supranational entities such as the European Union (EU) and to a lesser degree the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) also harness the collective assets of their member-states as soft power (Ferguson, 2009). The traditionalist realist school views states as the only important actors within the international system, but Nye (1990, p.158) argues that though they lack military power, private actors such as large transnational corporations possess immense economic resources and increasingly engage in "co-optive" or soft power. Increasing

soft power activities by non-state actors, in particular, have benefited from technological advancements. But due to vested interests or external political pressures, these activities may at times contradict the interests of states, making it essential for states to manage the communication of their soft power resources. Moreover, effective use of soft power by states aids in safeguarding national military and economic interests as well, because it is able to create and sustain transnational bonds that are founded in shared ideals or objectives.

Contrarily, the actual effectiveness of soft power has been subject to much skepticism, with several debates over how (if at all) to measure the real-world success of soft power strategies. Echoing its criticisms, Niall Ferguson, in 2009, rather condescendingly said of soft power, "it's, well, soft". Linked to Ferguson's comment are academic debates on, whether for soft power to be truly compelling and credible, it necessarily needs to be backed up by the presence of hard power, i.e. whether "soft power requires the necessary resources and commitment to put words into actions" (van Ham, 2005, p.52). To counter criticisms, Nye asserted in 2008 that any drawbacks or complications in how governments control and employ soft power do not reduce its significance. It is certainly important to be cognizant of the skepticisms and criticisms that any discussion on soft power entails. But, this thesis will not focus specifically on the strength, legitimacy or success of soft power activities, or the different actors (state and non-state) who carry them out. Rather, it is concerned with what constitutes soft power and how a particular state (namely, India) wields it within its external relations.

Nye's writings form the basis of the conceptualization of soft power within this thesis. Building on his introduction of the concept in 1990 and his specific definition of the term "soft power" in 2008 (p.96), and acknowledging the discussion and debates over soft power, as detailed above, this research utilizes the term 'soft power strategies' to refer to diplomatic or foreign policy strategies which rely on the appeal of a nation's policies, political values, and culture.

India's capacity to influence other states and to resist unwanted influence arises from its power capabilities, both hard and soft (Perkovich, 2010). Since the late 1990s, scholars have been assessing India's emergence as a major global actor due to economic and demographic calculations. The nation's military capacity also swelled, and data from the Global Firepower Index 2018 shows that it now possesses the fourth most powerful military in the world. Its

military strength is admittedly largely due to the sheer numbers of its manpower resources (Rehman, 2012). However, in focusing on its hard power, many accounts overlooked India's rising emphasis on "developing its 'soft power' credentials" by harnessing the attractiveness of its culture, values and policies (Blarel, 2012, p.28). Former Indian diplomat and United Nations (UN) Under-Secretary General Shashi Tharoor proclaims that "India truly enjoys soft power", pointing to its economic, cultural, and political appeal (Tharoor, 2012, p.312). In his writing, Tharoor further advocates that in a world with many conflicts, the pluralistic nature of Indian society, and its espousal of the universal values of peace and non-violence have long been viewed as soft power assets which provide India with "the better story" (2007).

The practical mobilization and expression of soft power resources was aided by the rising focus on public diplomacy, conceptualized by Melissen (2005, p.3) as being official communication, governmental or otherwise, which is aimed at foreign publics and non-official groups within foreign societies. This "engagement with foreign audiences" (Melissen, 2005, p.13) thus acts as a fundamental instrument for wielding soft power which strives to forge and strengthen international relationships. As argued by Brian Hocking (2005, p.35), public diplomacy is found particularly advantageous by countries which don't possess "hegemonic proportions" of soft power and so benefit from strategic communication that "sells" their appeal.

Demonstrating its focus on public diplomacy, India's Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) established a Public Diplomacy Division in 2006. Further, the Indian Council for Cultural Relations aims to showcase India's pluralistic and multicultural society through engaging with foreign populations via the establishment of centers in several countries. This can be seen as part of the recent international trend towards public diplomacy, which Melissen (2005, p.6) sees as symptomatic of soft power's rise within international relations. In particular, under Prime Minister Narendra Modi from 2014 onwards, the Indian government has noticeably stepped up these efforts (Pant, 2015). Khanna and Moorthy (2017) point to the emphasis on digital diplomacy to convey India's cultural, economic, military, and political prowess.

Power must be seen as "a means, not an end" (Perkovich, 2003, p.133), and India's status as a major developing country with more than 1 billion people implies that it uses power with the aim of securing its economic and developmental interests. These combine with its geopolitical

territorial and security interests, and motivate its engagements with public diplomacy and soft power. As Tellis (2016) insinuates, India's great power ambitions hinge on its capacity to produce sustained long-term economic growth. Hence, soft power actions are connected to the pursuit of hard power goals. These actions are also driven by India's desire for greater influence within international organisations, multilateral forums and decision-making processes at the global level, underpinned by its ambitions of great power status. Less than a year after assuming control, Prime Minister Modi challenged his diplomats "to help India position itself in a leading role, rather than just a balancing force, globally." This path will be paved "either by the resolute use of military capabilities or by the persuasion of its soft power" (Tellis, 2016, p.6).

Nye (2008, p.95) states that soft power is not simply influence through persuasion, but also "the ability to entice and attract", and from this he infers that if soft power is "attractive power", then "soft power resources are the assets that produce such attraction". He cautioned that merely "broadcasting" through public diplomacy is not functional if the inherent nature of what is broadcasted is not attractive. In other words, the effective wielding of soft power relies on the appeal of its sources. For India, its cultural appeal and the economic allure of being the second-largest market in the world are the key soft power attractions.

But, as Nye argued in 1990 (p.167), apart from cultural and economic appeal, the allure of ideology and institutions is vital. He reinforced this view later in 2008 (p.96) by including "political values" as a core constituent of a country's soft power. He further stated that "cultural soft power can be undercut by policies that are seen as illegitimate", providing the example of the decline in American soft power after the Iraq invasion. So, the exercise of soft power is not only about the communication of a country's cultural traditions and economic prospects, but also majorly about the communication of its political values and thinking and about how legitimate and credible these values are (van Ham, 2005, p.48). This leads us to ask what exactly comprises India's political identity and whether this identity influences its foreign policy and soft power strategies. But first, we must define the term 'political identity'.

In her paper (2012, p.370), Karen Smith adopts Constructivist notions to define state identity as variable and dependent on "socio-political, cultural, and historical values". Following her description, this research defines the term 'political identity' as a nation's perceived identity

based on its political values, institutions, and history. Building on this, India's political identity is observed to be that of 'a democratic post-colonial state', which forms the focus of this research. This identity is derived from the Preamble to its Constitution, which proclaims India as a "sovereign … democratic Republic" (1949), after it achieved complete independence from British colonial rule in 1947, and its stance supporting state sovereignty and global decolonization after Independence, as is detailed below.

While its democratic credentials have long been cherished by the nation, the Cold War's end saw India being projected on the international stage as the world's largest democracy and the most successful among post-colonial states (Choedon, 2015). The international consensus around democracy, liberalism, and human rights under an American-dominated world order led India's democratic and secular achievements to be acknowledged (Blarel, 2012). From this, it can be understood that India's democratic values form a potent part of its political identity. In fact, as observed by C. Raja Mohan (2014), former Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh declared that democracy is central to India's identity in the 21st century.

Karen Smith (2012, p.373) argues that India's struggle against British colonial oppression "continued to have a strong influence" on its worldview even after Independence. One of the first colonies to achieve independence in the post-World War II period, India was at the forefront of the call for global decolonization. As highlighted in Alden and Vieira (2005), being a leader of the anti-colonial struggles for independence across the developing world implies that post-colonial ideals of sovereignty and solidarity are embedded within Indian political identity. This is particularly true as the nation strives to take its place in today's global discourse as a leader of the developing and post-colonial world and as an advocate for South-South cooperation.

The combination of democratic and post-colonial traditions with the historical Gandhian ideals of non-violence and India's successful experience with political pluralism and religious diversity, leads scholars such as Wagner (2010, p.333) to state that India assuredly "qualifies" as a soft power. The appeal of its polity was realized early in the post-Independence era by Indian policy-makers, who used ideological power to compensate for a lack of military and economic resources (Smith, 2012; Tellis, 2016). An example is India's leading role in the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) during the Cold War. Contrarily however, Nayar and Paul (2003, p.26) argue

that this ideational foreign policy fell short during the defeat to China in the 1962 war, leading the Indian policy-makers to recognize the significance of material capabilities (hard power) to back up soft power. This observation is reiterated by Sumit Ganguly (2010), and ties in with Nye's emphasis on the importance of combining hard and soft power strategies in a way that they "reinforce each other", as he articulated recently in 2017 (p.2). Following its economic reforms of July 1991, India experienced immense economic growth in the late 1990s which continued through the 2000s. As of 1998, India, despite being a non-signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), tested its first nuclear weapons and its nuclear arsenal has grown impressively since then (Yang, 2016). These upward trends in its economic and military power, with its lasting commitment to universal peace and non-violence, bolstered its ideological soft power. In particular, economic factors such as the high degree of economic liberalization and greater trade opportunities "increased India's international attractiveness" (Wagner, 2010, p.334), especially in the 21st century.

Soft power is not a "normative" concept, and relies on acceptance by the intended audience (Nye, 2017). For instance, even an extremist terrorist organisation can exercise soft power amongst those who follow or accept its ideology. So, a soft power asset is only truly so when seen as attractive by its target audience. Since Indian diplomacy is geared towards foreign governments and publics, the strategies for exercising soft power towards an individual foreign state are shaped by the nature of India's appeal in the eyes of that state. This leads us to the question: Do foreign states find India's political identity appealing?

Here, it is pertinent to keep in mind that while India's own political identity is that of a democratic post-colonial state, it must engage externally within an international system comprising both democracies and non-democracies as well as both historical colonizers and the historically colonized. Moreover, these categories are not always easily distinguishable from each other. Rather, the lines are often blurred. Most of the Western former imperial powers have prided themselves on their democratic government structures especially after the end of World War II, but some such as Spain and Portugal have undergone vast periods of authoritarian and military rule in the 20th century. Further, out of these nations which were historical colonizers, some accepted a new relationship with their former colonies after Independence, while others contested decolonization militarily before eventually accepting the colonies' independence and

sovereignty (Duara, 2004). Today in the 21st century, as the same nations rejoice in their democratic and liberal societies, their history as colonial occupiers remains an uncomfortable subject for most (Loomba, 2015).

The situation is even more complex in the case of countries which had undergone colonial rule, i.e. post-colonial countries, some of which are democratic while others are not. Samuel Huntington (1991) pointed out that after undergoing decolonization, many of the newly-independent post-colonial countries in Asia, Africa, and South America succumbed to dictatorships or military domination, while others endured civil wars; India, "the premier democracy of the Third World" (1991, p.23) is a rare example of a post-colonial state that has enjoyed a long-lasting robust democracy. While certain post-colonial nations have achieved varying degrees of democratic success, this is by no means widespread. The Democracy Index of 2017 by the Economist shows that several post-colonial states have made recent gains with regard to the development of democracy and rule of law. Nevertheless, the same index shows that many (if not most) post-colonial nations are still not democratic, with the prevalence of autocratic regimes and practices.

Keeping in mind such complex identities of the individual states that India must engage with, as well as the dichotomies between the historical colonizers and the historically colonized, it may be argued that a particular country would find certain Indian political values more appealing than others. Does this lead India to emphasize different parts of its democratic post-colonial political identity in relations with different states? Which identity does it emphasize for which country? How is this done? Also interesting is the role played by India's own colonial past as a British colony. While India may be reluctant to emphasize its post-colonial identity with non-Commonwealth colonial powers, is it possible that this reluctance does not extend to the United Kingdom (UK), where it might be a way of establishing historical bonds?

Going by these questions, it is logical to expect that historical and political sensitivities assume importance in India's soft power considerations, especially those concerning the use of its political identity as a soft power. Thus, this thesis addresses the question of **'How does India use its political identity within its soft power strategies for other states in the 21st century?'**

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND RELEVANCE

2.1 Literature Review

Power is a central theme of the literature on international relations, with Elster (1976, p.249) calling it "the most important single idea in political theory". As David Baldwin noted recently in 2016 in his 'Power and International Relations: A Conceptual Approach', the scholarly foundations for the study of power were laid by Howard Lasswell and Kaplan in 'Power and Society' (1950), and taken forward by Robert Dahl in 'The Concept of Power' (1957) and Steven Lukes in 'Power: A Radical View' (1974), among others. Dahl's simple and commonly accepted definition has been stated in the Introduction to this thesis. Baldwin also discusses the conceptualization of power in some of the major approaches to the study of international relations: realism focuses on the balance of power, neo-realism and offensive realism; constructivism focuses on the combination of material notions of power with social construction of reality; finally, neoliberalism highlights power as part of the dynamic and complex interdependence in the international system. In 2004, Mistry (p.66) observed that within the wider literature, power is viewed as having myriad dimensions which include "economic and military capabilities, national will, internal strength, relative standing versus other states, soft power, fungibility, and an ability to influence others and to control international outcomes".

In 1990, Joseph S. Nye Jr. observed that "power is becoming less transferable, less coercive, and less tangible" (p.167). His introduction and definition of "soft power" as a crucial component of power, with regard to the significance of a country's culture, political values, and foreign policies, laid the foundation for academic and political discourses on soft power. Nye's writings (1990; 2004; 2008; 2017) stimulated the subsequent debates on soft power and the benefits that the use of this attractive power can accrue for public diplomacy and foreign policies. Since the previous section has already detailed the academic discussion on soft power's conceptualization, exercise, and limitations, it will not be duplicated here. Instead, this section provides a review of the literature on the soft power of India, and also examines what answers the existing literature can produce to address the research question of this thesis.

Within the academic work on India's foreign policy, much attention has been devoted to India's rise as a global player or its status as an emerging power in the recent times, by both Indian and non-Indian authors alike. Some of the premier authors on this theme, such as Sumit Ganguly (2002; 2010), David Malone (2011; 2015), C. Raja Mohan (2004; 2009; 2015), and Harsh Pant (2008; 2009; 2016), have documented and researched this phenomenon through books, journal articles, and newspaper editorials. Justifying this research, Sumit Ganguly's 'India as an Emerging Power' (2002, p.1) noted that "(India) has a substantial military apparatus, a growing economy with some world-class sectors, and democratic political institutions that have withstood countless vicissitudes. Consequently, India's place in the global order at the Cold War's end merits careful scrutiny." India's soft power, i.e. the global appeal of Indian culture and values as forming a strong soft power asset, has been a growing theme within these works. Though it has been late in arriving to the Indian scene, largely in the mid-to-late 2000s, debates over soft power have rapidly gained sharper focus. In the literature, this focus was illustrated in 2003 by C. Raja Mohan when he stated that the South Asian nation possesses "strong cards in the arena of soft power". Amongst the not-so-academic works, Shashi Tharoor, former Indian diplomat and UN Under-Secretary General and current Member of Parliament of India, has written on India's global role and its soft power (2012; 2015; 2016). In fact, Tharoor is largely credited with popularizing the term and concept of 'soft power' within the mainstream discussion on Indian foreign policy. Albeit more political, his writings offer an illuminating view of the policymakers' side of the discussion, but must nevertheless be regarded with healthy skepticism as they run the risk of spilling over into political propaganda. He does, however, make some astute observations, evidenced in his book 'Pax Indica' (2012, pp. 279-287), where he argues that a country's soft power emerges from "the world's perception of what the country is all about", with cultural heritage, diversity, Bollywood, plural values and principles, and prowess in information technology forming the world's perception of India. As an Indian diplomat (who preferred to keep his name confidential) remarked in an interview (25 April 2018), "the world sees India as a relatively non-violent, tolerant and pluralistic democracy with a benign international influence."

Several scholars have analyzed the strengths and successes as well as the weaknesses and failures of India's soft power strategies (Hymans, 2009; Heng, 2016), and also discuss the untapped potential (Wagner, 2005; 2010; Ramachandran, 2015). A largely untapped source of

soft power has been India's development and humanitarian assistance activities. Ganguly and Mullen, in an online article in 2012 observed that "due to India's status as an emerging economy, a consolidated democracy, and a developing country free from colonial influence, Indian foreign assistance has great legitimacy in the eyes of other emerging countries", arguing that this legitimacy is "in clear contrast to that of China". Joseph Nye himself, in an article in 2006, stated that India's "democratic constitution and political structure" meant that "it has passed a test that China still faces, and that makes India a source of attraction". But, China has been observed as being much ahead of India when it comes to soft power in a practical sense. In fact, many scholars have chosen to compare India's approach with that of China's, emphasizing the difference in (particularly political) soft power resources and the greater success that China seems to have enjoyed with its strategies. Echoing the limitations of the Indian approach, Christian Wagner, in 'India's Soft Power: Prospects and Limitations' (2010) found India to be a "defensive soft power" (p.341) because of its apparent reluctance to transform capacities into capabilities or tangible instruments of influence. In line with this argument, an Indian diplomat remarked in an interview that "soft power was an element of India's soft power that we always knew we had, but never focused on in a very detailed manner" (30 April 2018). To address this, Rani Mullen noted that the nation "must design and resource coherent strategies" (2015, p.188) for communicating its soft power effectively, which has been largely under-utilized.

Researchers and analysts, for instance Bibek Debroy in 'India's Soft Power and Cultural Influence' (2009), have at times decided to focus on individual components of Indian soft power. Culture being a core soft power resource for India, it is no surprise that several authors examine its role in building an international image for India. Amit Gupta's 'Commentary on India's Soft Power and Diaspora' (2008) points to spiritualism and ancient civilizational culture captivating Western imaginations as being "exotic" and forming a point of connection for the Indian diaspora. In an interview for this thesis, an Indian diplomat referred to the cultural aspects, saying that "the Indian diaspora abroad and Bollywood have enormous soft power potential" (30 April 2018). Bollywood, India's mainstream film industry has also been the focus of literature by Anjali Roy (2012) and Daya K. Thussu (2013), which specifically emphasizes its potency as a soft power. Prime Minister Modi's emphasis on the so-called "Yoga diplomacy" is detailed by C.

Raja Mohan (2014), where he points to India's successful lobbying for June 21 to be declared as the 'International Day of Yoga' by the UN General Assembly.

On the other hand, fewer works detail the political aspect of Indian soft power. Here, the soft power of democracy emerges as a central theme. Scholars like Wagner ('From Hard Power to Soft Power?', 2005) observe that India has historically shied away from promoting democracy as an ideal among other developing states; it instead adopts a "cautious prudence" of providing democracy assistance only when requested (Choedon, 2015, p.164). These academic observations are corroborated by an Indian diplomat who said that India offers assistance with constitutional development and training programmes to other nations, but "this is not overt" (30 April 2018). Nicolas Blarel, in an interview conducted for this thesis (4 May 2018), calls this a "bottom-up" approach of democracy assistance, quoting the example of Afghanistan which sought India's assistance with its parliamentary structure. So, rather than democracy promotion, Karen Smith argues in her article 'India's Identity and its Global Aspirations' (2012) that stressing non-alignment and decolonization defined Indian policies towards these states. This is corroborated by S.D. Muni in 'India's Foreign Policy: The Democracy Dimension' (2009, p.8) who argues that despite joining the Community of Democracies in 2000 and the UN Democracy Fund in 2005, democracy promotion is not central to Indian foreign policy as it "might have breached the solidarity of the anti-colonial and anti-racial movement led by India under the umbrella of non-alignment". But several accounts have observed that this changes with regard to the approach towards Western democracies. For instance, in 'Soft Power in Indian Foreign Policy' (2011), David Malone, former Canadian Ambassador to India and current Rector of the United Nations University, states that democracy has become "a key element of India's international identity", arguing that the failure of Emergency in 1975-77 and the immediate return to democracy highlighted the "enduring nature of India's democracy"; this leads India to advertise "its own credentials when relating to other democratic countries" (p.36). According to Nicolas Blarel's article 'India's Soft Power' (2012), India's democratic stability is lauded because it is perceived as "complementing rather than challenging" the existing international order (p.32). Blarel raised this point when he was interviewed as well, where he said that India's actions have to be seen as "accommodative and not conflicting with the interests of other powers" (4 May 2018). This observation was corroborated by an Indian diplomat (25 April

2018), who offered the example of Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbot's visit to India in 2014 to finalize the sale on uranium to the non-NPT country, where Abbot justified the sale by saying that "India threatens no one … and is a friend to many". George Perkovich, in 'Is India a Major Power' (2003), noted that some impediments notwithstanding, India's democratic performance is astounding because "no state in history has been as populous, diverse, stratified, poor, and at the same time democratic as India" (p.134).

Political pluralism and acceptance of social diversity are also hailed by several scholars as being crucial for India's identity and soft power, especially when perceived as "an antidote to the extremism rampant around the world" (Pant, 2015). Blarel (2012, p.30) argues that India's "democratic, federal, and secular political model" showcases the real-world possibility of the political accommodation of diversity. As Shashi Tharoor (2012, pp.285-286) points out, in May 2004, the world's largest exercise of democratic franchise resulted in "a Roman Catholic leader making way for a Sikh to be sworn in as Prime Minister by a Muslim in a country 81 per cent Hindu" something that "caught the world's imagination and won its admiration". This somewhat political but nevertheless factually convincing argument showcases the soft power of Indian polity. Ashley Tellis, in 'India as a Leading Power' (2016) sees India's "capacity to assimilate diverse foreign ideas, cultures, and peoples over the milennia" as its "native strength" (p.15).

Respect for state sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of other states are political principles resulting from India's colonial past, included by much academic literature as an important soft power asset. Amrita Narlikar, in 2008 in 'What Rationality, Whose Design and Governance How', highlights the post-colonial aspect of India's interactions with other developing states within multilateral platforms. Blarel (2012, p.32) also observes this angle, stating that India promotes its "image of the country which inspired the anti-colonial struggles of the last century". These arguments with a political focus are important to consider, in light of this research's focus on India's political identity as a democratic post-colonial state.

Overall, from the review of the existing literature on India's soft power, it becomes apparent that there is little research which focuses exclusively on Indian political identity as a soft power asset. As detailed above, David Malone, C. Raja Mohan, Nicolas Blarel, Harsh Pant, Christian Wagner and Shashi Tharoor explore the soft power facets of political identity and history, but only do so within a broader and more wide-ranging discussion on India's soft power and public diplomacy.

2.2 Academic and Societal Relevance

It is clear from the section on the literature review that there are several academic works and researches that focus on the immense cultural facets of India's soft power. However, as can also be observed from this review, the non-cultural and specifically political aspects of Indian soft power only find mention within the broader discussions and debates on Indian foreign policy and diplomacy. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, there is no focused study on the salience of India's political values and identity, as a soft power resource for the South Asian nation. Furthermore, there is a lack of in-depth analysis of whether India's soft power strategies employ different parts of its political identity in relations with different target states. This research project strives to fill this gap in the existing research.

This is done by conducting an empirical study to analyze and compare the manner in which India's political identity as a democratic post-colonial state is utilized within India's soft power strategies for other states in the 21st century, i.e. beginning from 1 January 2000. This research holds significant academic relevance since it aims to expand the scope of the present literature and make a new contribution to the study of Indian soft power, along with contributing to the wider academic debate on soft power sources and how they are utilized by governments.

Addressing this research question also retains societal relevance. As a major developing country with a vast population, India strives to achieve sustained economic growth, which aids in greater social development. Bilateral and multilateral international trade, investment, and tourism contribute towards this, and cultivating relationships through the strategic use of soft power, such as the power of political identity and ideology, takes on significance. Through its study of India's political identity as its soft power, this research highlights how perceptions of Indian political values and institutions can influence India's standing in the eyes of foreign publics and governments, and thus in turn, India's approach towards these foreign states.

Achieving influence and credibility abroad, both within and beyond its immediate neighbourhood, is crucial in India's quest for great power status and as a viable balance for its powerful geographical neighbour China. In the contemporary world, relations between different sets of states (democracies and non-democracies, developed and developing countries, former

colonial powers and ex-colonies) are being constantly reshaped by the forces of globalization. Joseph Nye said, "Information is power", pointing to the importance of "diplomacy aimed at public opinion" (2008, p.99). India's aspirations for greater say in global decision-making processes while navigating the constraints of an interdependent and networked world system mean that it must employ its soft power to engage constructively with different states with varying societies and structures of government. Given the rare and hybrid nature of India's political identity, its political history and values can play a central role within such soft power exercises. If and how Indian political values are perceived positively among different types of states, thus, becomes salient. Further, rising reputations in the international sphere can also generate national pride and domestic goodwill towards the ruling administration, thus proving useful for political leaderships in a democratic country like India. While effective use of soft power serves as public diplomacy abroad for the Indian administration, it can also be public diplomacy within the domestic sphere. So, political soft power is significant for both foreign and domestic policy-making.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1   Theories

To address the research question, constructivism and post-colonialism provide a relevant theoretical framework. Academic works pertaining to these theories are examined in this section. The premises of these works are then deduced and applied, in conjunction with practical observations, in order to formulate hypotheses, which are later tested through an empirical study.

Constructivist notions offer a useful starting point for exploring the central theme of state identity within international relations. Ted Hopf, in his article 'The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory' (1998), provides an overview of how constructivism, both "conventional" and "critical" (p.171), comprehends some of the most significant issues in mainstream international relations theory. Conventional constructivism, he says, views identities as necessary in international politics in that they perform three key functions: "they tell you and others who you are and they tell you who others are" (p.175). In this way, constructivism differs from neorealism (where the state has an eternal identity stemming from self-interest) by claiming that the identities of states are variable. Building on this, Hopf argues that these identities should be seen as empirical, which depend on "historical, cultural, political, and social" contexts (p.176), and that interests (and later, actions) are a product of such identities. The implication, clearly, is that a state's identity influences its interests and foreign policy preferences and its consequent actions. The choices of states are, similarly, constrained by their understanding of the identities and interests of other states; so, how state A behaves towards state B is moderated by state A's understanding of state B's identity. In particular, the argument about how a state's historical past and political context influences its identity and external actions is relevant for this thesis, seeing as how India's political identity as a post-colonial democracy is in focus. This also ties in with similar post-colonialist arguments. Hopf also addresses the constructivist approach to power, which incorporates "discursive power", i.e. the "power of knowledge, ideas, culture, ideology, and language" (p.177), as an important aspect of power, thus separating it from

neorealism and neoliberal institutionalism's sole focus on material (military and economic) power. His highlighting of the impact that prevailing social practices and norms have on state action echoes Nye's argument that values and ideas must be perceived as legitimate in order to be effective as soft power.

In the second half of his article, Hopf discusses critical constructivism, and particularly how it differs from conventional constructivism on the theme of state identity. He argues that while critical constructivists also see state identity and interests as variable, they are "more likely to see some form of alienation driving the need for identity", meaning that the production of one's own identity requires difference with another (p.184). This is rooted in their assumptions about power, which they see as present in all social exchanges and where one actor is always dominant. These notions of identities and actions driven by social "instances of hierarchy, subordination, or domination" (p.185) are reflected in the arguments made by post-colonial scholars, detailed further in this section. Similar to the critical constructivists that Hopf considers, other scholars have also criticized arguments which limit themselves to merely recognizing that states have distinct identities and interests. Rebecca Adler-Nissen, in her article 'The Social Self in International Relations: Identity, Power and the Symbolic Interactionist Roots of Constructivism' (2016, p. 27-39), argues in favour of a constructivism which emphasizes "symbolic interactionism" as an influencing power, i.e. the notion that complex two-way social interactions between states give rise to "forms of dominance or structural inequalities" and influence state's normative behaviours and self-perceptions. This can be seen as linked to the alienation and domination theme in the critical constructivism detailed by Hopf.

Overall, from Ted Hopf's article and his discussion of the critical constructivist arguments, it can be inferred that India's historical and political contexts affect its state identity, which in turn influences its exercise of power as well as its foreign policy actions.

The post-colonial school of international relations theory is valuable in its demonstration of how identities related to colonial experiences continue to influence state behaviour even in the post-colonial period. Critical constructivist notions were used by Himadeep Muppidi in his book 'Politics of the Global' (2004) where he prescribed a "critical constructivist framework" to examine the processes of globalization (p.18). This framework was adopted by him in his later work 'The Colonial Signs of International Relations' (2012), arguing for an anti-colonial

theoretical framework for the study of international relations (p.8). He exposes the failure of mainstream theories in addressing the continuing assumptions and influence of colonialism within their understanding. He draws attention to the ways in which exclusion, oppression, and even death in the colonialist style occurs in theoretical perspectives, by focusing on particular disastrous events and violent incidents in contemporary times; Muppidi highlights Western humanitarian interventions and democracy-related projects as a neocolonial hegemony which is imposed on the neocolonial 'other' (2012, p.126). These Western actions are often coloured by a sense of disdain, as he writes "the colonized…are never really ready for, or with the times" (2012, p.53). This leads to interesting questions on how democratic countries from within the colonized world (such as India) perceive their own institutions of human rights and rule of law, and how this impacts their relations with others with similar histories of being oppressed, thus tying in with the theme of this research project. Muppidi's call for a new framework for theorizing international relations paved the way for other scholars to offer more concrete post-colonial understandings of contemporary global politics.

In her book 'Wronged by Empire: Post-Imperial Ideology and Foreign Policy in India and China' (2013), Manjari Chatterjee Miller explains how colonial legacies lead post-colonial states to have what she calls a "post-imperial ideology" (p.7). She draws on psychological literature to assert that colonialism forms a collective historical trauma for the ex-colonies, i.e. they desire to be "recognized and empathized with in the international system as a victim" (p.8). Her focus is on states that underwent "extractive colonialism", where the "purpose was to shift the resources of the colony to the colonizer, often with few to no protections for the native populace against abuse by the colonial authority" (p.9). According to her, the post-imperial ideology is predicated on how decolonized countries espouse a sense of entitlement and a desire for a new and more equitable international order, all motivated by their personal and collective colonial suffering. Miller criticizes the traditional theories about state behaviour, such as realism, neorealism, and liberal theories, for privileging Western states. Even when these theories do consider non-western states, economic and material disparities form the basis of distinction from the more developed countries. This leads her to state that the study of international relations remains incomplete without accounting for colonialism and its legacies. Miller uses her conceptualization of a post-imperial ideology for analyzing the international behaviour of India and China as they "seek to alter the international status quo" (p.3), states which otherwise differ vastly in their

governmental and power structures and even in the nature of their colonial experiences. She argues that these states highlight their post-colonial identity and their belief in historical victimhood, in order to emphasize the importance of territorial sovereignty and status, which also influences their foreign policy decisions. In her book, Miller states that the post-imperial ideology and colonial past is an "essential component of India's national identity" (p.7) and self-perception, one that matters even in the contemporary era. Her argument strengthens this research's inclusion of India's post-colonial identity as a significant constituent of its political identity, which has an impact on its foreign policy-making.

Discussing the viewpoint of the former colonizers, Brysk, Parsons, and Sandholtz, in their paper 'After Empire' (2002), focus on the "special relationships" which often evolved between former colonizers and their ex-colonies, with Spain, the United Kingdom (UK), and France using the rhetoric of "family" to describe contemporary ties with ex-colonies (2002, p.267). They argue that such "historically conditioned notions of collective relations" and identity motivates European powers to maintain valued relationships with ex-colonies (2002, p.268). Keeping their observations in mind will be interesting for noting whether the rhetoric might come from the ex-colony's side as well, i.e. if a 'special relationship' perception is also reflected within India's behaviour towards the UK.

While this thesis focuses on critical constructivist and post-colonial perspectives, some scholars have examined Indian foreign policy through other theoretical lenses. One example is the work of Mischa Hansel and Miriam Möller, who, in their article 'Indian Foreign Policy and International Humanitarian Norms: A Role-Theoretical Analysis' (2015), go past realist premises of geopolitics and constructivist arguments of culture and identity to focus on the influence that international expectations of its global role may have on Indian foreign policy. While not denying ideational factors like identity and historical experiences, they use 'role theory' to argue that "national role conceptions" (p. 82) primarily drive the considerations of India's foreign policy. Highlighting how along with being the "largest democracy on earth and proud of its liberal and secular values", it remains "one of the staunchest defenders of the concepts of sovereignty and non-intervention", they examine India's approach to Responsibility to Protect and International Criminal Law within its foreign policy-making (p.79). Role theory is not in

focus within this thesis. Nevertheless, it is important to remain cognizant of these other approaches to better inform one's own study, and also to open up avenues for further study.

Thus, as inferred from the arguments made in the theoretical works examined above, the research undertaken for this thesis will be set against the theoretically assumed backdrop of a 21st century world where the historical experiences of colonialism continue to impact the identities, interests, and behaviour of nations with colonial pasts, including both former colonizers and the colonized.

3.2   Hypothesis and Variables

This thesis draws on theoretical premises which claim the influence of historical experiences on state identity and behaviour even in the 21st century, and links these to the study of India's political identity and how it wields this identity as a soft power asset in dealings with other states. In doing so, this thesis introduces the deductive hypothesis given below.

HYPOTHESIS: *The colonial history of a certain state shapes India's use of its political identity as a democratic post-colonial state within its soft power strategy towards that state.*

In this hypothesis, the independent variable is 'colonial history of a certain state', which this thesis defines as an individual state's own historical experience with colonialism, whether as a nation that was a historical colonizer or one that was historically colonized. To define 'colonialism', Ania Loomba's (2015, p.23) concept of "administrative colonialism" is utilized in this research. In her book 'Colonialism/Postcolonialism (The New Critical Idiom)' she uses this term to discuss the situation where a colonizing country controls the colony mainly through "a military, administrative, and economic apparatus" and to a large extent without a "large movement of people from the colonizing country to the colony". She provides the examples of India, Namibia, and South Africa to clarify this definition, thus differentiating them from the "settler colonialism" experienced by Canada, Australia, and New Zealand.

The dependent variable is 'India's use of its political identity as a democratic post-colonial state within its soft power strategy'. As has been detailed in the Introduction to this thesis, this is defined as India's self-perceived democratic and post-colonial identity which arises from its political values, institutions and history, and how this is exercised strategically as soft power.

Following the stating of the primary hypothesis, two sub-hypotheses are introduced, which serve to operationalize the variables: the independent variable is operationalized as (i) erstwhile colonial power nation, and (ii) former colony nation, while the dependent variable is operationalized as (i) political identity as a democratic state, and (ii) political identity as a post-colonial state. Moreover, the sub-hypotheses further elaborate on the primary hypothesis, based on the assumption that for an effective soft power strategy, India has to focus on a dimension of its political identity that best resonates with the target country.

Sub-hypothesis 1: *If a state is an erstwhile colonial power nation, then India is likely to prioritize its political identity as a democratic state in its soft power strategy for that state.*

Following from Loomba's (2015) definition, the term 'erstwhile colonial power nations' here is used for nations which had historically extended their authority/rule over foreign territories or established political or economic dominance through acquiring and controlling colonies. The dependent variable is operationalized as the usage of official governmental channels to communicate or emphasize India's 'political identity as a democratic state', which follows from its Constitution (1949) and its proven credentials as the world's largest democracy.

This sub-hypothesis is based on the assumption that stressing India's political identity as a post-colonial state in relations with erstwhile colonial power nations may lead to discomfort and wariness stemming from historical injustices being carried forward to the present day. This may hinder diplomatic efforts seeking to create strong partnerships based on common worldviews. It is, instead, India's cherished democratic ideals that appeal to these nations which themselves take pride in their democratic societies (Malone, 2011; Blarel, 2012; Choedon, 2015). "We are

the largest democracy", reiterated an Indian diplomat (with a hint of pride) who was interviewed for this thesis (30 April 2018). She elaborated by pointing out how unusual it was for a newly-independent nation to "carve out a Constitution" that enshrined all the basic values of a democracy. C. Raja Mohan (2014) observes that starting from Prime Minister Vajpayee in 1998 and continuing under Prime Ministers Singh and Modi, India began selectively injecting democracy in its global engagements. This is further corroborated by Harsh Pant (2015) who states that the Modi administration focuses on democracy and emphasizes shared political values "to strengthen ties with the West and democracies in Asia". So, this sub-hypothesis argues that in relations with erstwhile colonial power nations, India prioritizes the communication of its democratic political identity over the post-colonial identity.

Sub-hypothesis 2: *If a state is a former colony nation, then India is likely to prioritize its political identity as a post-colonial state in its soft power strategy for that state.*

Here, again based on Loomba's (2015) definition, the term 'former colony nation' refers to nations which had historically been fully or partially politically controlled or occupied by a colonial power of the time, and are now fully independent and sovereign states. The dependent variable is operationalized here as utilizing official governmental channels in order to communicate or highlight India's 'political identity as a post-colonial state', on account of India, being a former British colony that is now fully and formally independent (Loomba, 2015).

This sub-hypothesis follows from the assumption that since most post-colonial nations have not had similarly successful experiences with democracy, India's emphasis on its democratic political identity might be seen as Western-style political preaching or 'democracy promotion' by other former colony nations, something generally having negative connotations in the eyes of these countries (Muni, 2009). Such practices could prove to be counter-productive in Indian efforts for establishing shared values and stronger bilateral ties. Nicolas Blarel, in an interview (4 May 2018), observed that many Western democracies have attempted to "co-opt" India into their global push for democracy, but India has resisted. Thus, as argued earlier, India's history as a supporter of decolonization processes, its leadership in the Non-Aligned Movement and forums

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of the Global South, and its principles of post-colonial solidarity and respect for territorial sovereignty, appeal to these nations (Smith, 2012). This can be seen in India's strategy in the World Trade Organisation (WTO) where it "acts as a leader of coalitions involving developing countries" (Narlikar, 2008, p.271). Further, as pointed out by Blarel (2012, p.32), unable to compete with China's massive financial investments in Africa, India relies on its perception as a crusader for global decolonization and an anti-apartheid advocate for strengthening relations with African states. So, the second sub-hypothesis argues that when it comes to relations with former colony nations, India prioritizes its post-colonial political identity over its identity as a democratic state.

In order to answer the research question of this thesis, a comprehensive testing of the main hypothesis and the two sub-hypotheses has been undertaken by conducting empirical research, as is detailed in the following chapter.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research Design

The objective of this thesis is to determine how political identity factors in India's exercise of soft power towards other states. To this end, an empirical study has been conducted, in order to confirm or reject the main and sub-hypotheses introduced by this thesis. In doing so, this research aims to contribute to the study of India's soft power and build on the existing academic literature and the observations of scholars and Indian foreign policy analysts on the topic.

This thesis comprises empirical explanatory research on the basis of a Small-*N* qualitative comparative case study, using a most-similar systems design. Roger Pierce (2008, p.51) states that comparative case study is most widely used in international relations, and involves obtaining data from a sample of states at the same points in time, which would allow the hypotheses to be tested. The comparative nature of the study means that limitations of external generalizability will be easier to avoid than that in the case of a single case study. The Small-*N* comparative method also enables the provision of contextual descriptions of the observed similarities and differences between the cases (Pierce, 2011, p.56). Though a small number of samples is subject to the danger that selection bias becomes difficult to avoid (Landman, 2003), this risk was found to be inescapable due to the limited availability of time and resources for the study to be conducted. Moreover, the detailed and in-depth data required for a qualitative study meant that only a limited number of cases could be studied. A most-similar systems design is logical because the cases only differ in one factor, as is explained further in this section. Because the outcome (dependent variable) is also different, then that one factor could possibly be seen as the probable cause for the outcome.

Four nations were selected as the cases in total. In a comparative case study, at least one case is required per variable. This research qualifies because there are two cases per sub-hypothesis, i.e. per variable. In each case, there was a study of India's soft power strategies towards the specific

country selected, focusing particularly on India's use of its political identity as a democratic post-colonial state.

The four nations selected as case studies within this research project are: (in alphabetical order) **Indonesia, South Africa, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom (UK)**.

Since this thesis concerns itself with the study of how India's identity as a democratic and post-colonial state serves as a soft power tool, it was considered crucial for the individual nations selected for the case study to have certain relevant characteristics. The selection was non-random, and with the main hypothesis and the operationalization of the variables in mind, three criteria were judged as important for guiding the selection process:

a) **The nation has historical experience with colonialism:**

In order to test the main hypothesis of this thesis, only nations with a colonial history, either as a colonizer or as a colonized territory, could be studied. Further, since sub-hypothesis 1 is concerned with erstwhile colonial power nations while sub-hypothesis 2 concerns itself with former colony nations, it was essential that out of the four cases, there would be two per each category of nations. So, the selection of the UK and the Netherlands can be justified since both are erstwhile colonial powers, with each controlling their respective colonial empires during the 16th–20th centuries. Furthermore, out of the two, the UK had been India's own colonial ruler, whereas the Netherlands held other colonies. This allowed an observation of any possible differences in the Indian approach to erstwhile colonial power nations based on its own colonial past as a British colony. Similarly, Indonesia and South Africa were selected because they are both former colonies of different erstwhile colonial powers; South Africa was a British colony for most of its colonization, while Indonesia was a Dutch colony. Moreover, South Africa had the same colonial ruler as India, with Indonesia being colonized by a different one. This enabled the observation of whether there are differences in India's strategies based on similar colonial experiences at the hand of the same colonial power. Thus, based on their (albeit oppositional) historical experiences with colonialism, it can be argued that all four nations retain the ability to take cognizance of the post-colonial debates within international discourses, that was important for the testing of the main hypothesis. Keeping this in mind, studying whether India chooses to

prioritize its political identity as a democratic state in its relations with the Netherlands and the UK holds significance for testing sub-hypothesis 1.

b) The nation is a democracy:

This project aims to study if political identity plays a role in India's soft power strategies for other states. While familiarity with post-colonial themes within political identity was discussed in the first criterion, a nation's ability to at least recognize and preferably identify with democratic themes is also crucial for answering the research question. All of the selected nations have had democratic governments throughout the 21st century, with the minor exception of Indonesia where indirect elections through the People's Consultative Assembly gave way to direct Presidential elections only in 2004. However, Indonesia still qualifies as a suitable case for this study, because the progress towards democracy began with the commencing of the reforms era in Indonesian politics in 1999. So, democratic ambitions and reformist sentiments prevailed among Indonesian people and its political structures. With respect to the contemporary era, the Democracy Index of The Economist (2017) qualifies the Netherlands and the UK as "full democracies". Although the Index rates them as "flawed democracies", Indonesia and South Africa are still classified as being democracies and can also be observed as being amongst the most democratic post-colonial states rated by the Index. Moreover, India itself was rated as a "flawed democracy" (2017), and this demonstrates that Indonesia and South Africa can be expected to identify with India's own democracy. Hence, it is possible for India to stress its political identity as a democratic state in bilateral relations with all four nations. Whether India nevertheless prioritizes its political identity as a post-colonial state over its democratic identity in relations with democratic former colony nations such as Indonesia and South Africa was, thus, crucial for testing the main hypothesis and sub-hypothesis 2.

c) The nation holds significance for India:

A country attempts to exercise soft power in order to influence another country's behaviour or position, or to generate goodwill. In order for India to attempt to influence another country through soft power, it must deem that country's behaviour, position, or goodwill as significant for Indian interests. As a major developing economy, economic interests are treated as crucial within Indian foreign policy-making. Perkovich (2003, p.132) argued that "greater participation

in international trade, particularly increased exporting, can boost national income significantly as well as enhance a state's power by making others depend on it". So, high trade and economic ties with India were considered essential in the selection of countries for the case studies. The 2016-17 Annual Report of India's Ministry of Commerce and Industry aids in gauging the significance of countries for India, based on bilateral trade. According to this data, each of the four selected nations are counted among the top ten trading partners for India in their respective continents – the Netherlands and the UK among India's top ten trading partners in Europe, Indonesia is within the top ten trading partners in Asia, and South Africa within the African continent. Moreover, the online 'Indian Trade Portal' (2015) of the Ministry lists all four of the selected nations within the worldwide top twenty-five export destinations for India. Thus, based on their economic importance for India, it can be argued that India has reasons to turn to soft power in its bilateral dealings with these countries, in order to manifest stronger relations and better trade ties.

From the explanations of the three criteria given above, it can be deduced that Indonesia, South Africa, the Netherlands, and the UK are all democracies and also hold considerable economic significance for India. Furthermore, each country has had historical experience with "administrative colonialism" as defined earlier (Loomba, 2015, p.23). The only differing factor is that whereas the Netherlands and the UK are categorized as erstwhile colonial power nations, Indonesia and South Africa are former colony nations. These selection criteria are presented in Table 4.1 as a simple checklist, where ✔ means 'yes' and ✘ means 'no'.

Table 4.1: Case study selection criteria: Checklist

COUNTRY (in alphabetical order)	COLONIAL HISTORY		DEMOCRACY (Democracy Index 2017)	ECONOMIC SIGNIFICANCE FOR INDIA
	Erstwhile colonial power nation	Former colony nation		
Indonesia	✘	✔	✔	✔
South Africa	✘	✔	✔	✔
The Netherlands	✔	✘	✔	✔
The UK	✔	✘	✔	✔

The inclusion of two cases per sub-hypothesis, and hence a comparative case study method, does reduce the risk of limited external generalizability which a single case per sub-hypothesis would bring. At the same time, however, this danger cannot be entirely eliminated because all the nations of the world which qualify for the study could, of course, not be studied, due to the immense limitations of time and resources. Furthermore, in addition to the three criteria detailed above, the specific selection of the Netherlands was also motivated by practical reasons, owing to the researcher's own location in The Hague. Thus, working within certain constraints, the selected countries were deemed suitable to undergo a Small-*N* comparative case study based on a most-similar systems design, in order to test the main and sub-hypotheses.

Since India's soft power strategies for other states in the 21st century are to be examined, each case was studied from the beginning of the 21st century till just before the commencement of data collection for this project. Thus, the time period of **1 January 2000 till 31 March 2018** was studied. This period was decided upon acknowledgement of practical issues such as data collection under constraints of time and financial resources, as has been addressed before. Complementarily, though, the selection of this time duration also has academic merit. Tellis (2016) has argued that freed from the shackles of Cold War alliance-management calculations in the 1990s, India thereafter pursued "specific forms of collaboration" in its bilateral relations with different countries. India's economic growth from the late 1990s also raised its foreign appeal in the 21st century (Blarel, 2012; Malone et al, 2015), arguably leading to greater scope for the exercise of soft power.

4.2   Data Sources and Collection

Qualitative data comprising both primary and secondary sources have been utilized within this thesis. Data from secondary sources have been used mainly for reviewing, understanding, and quoting academic arguments and observations by scholars and analysts, identifying a theoretical framework, and also for the purpose of deductive reasoning in order to frame hypotheses, as can be seen in each of the previous sections. This has been in the form of relevant existing academic and theoretical literature, as well as news articles, opinion articles or editorials from reputed

online sources, and has been collected through the physical and online libraries of Leiden University, and reputed national and international media sources.

Under the original research conducted in this thesis, in order to address its research question and test its hypotheses, data from primary sources have been utilized. Only official Government communication during and regarding bilateral visits between India and the specific country selected as the case (Indonesia, South Africa, the Netherlands, or the UK) have been considered. Further, only bilateral visits (to and from India) at the level of the following state and government leaders are included in the study:

1. President or King/Queen of the state
2. Vice or Deputy President of the state
3. Prime Minister of the state
4. Foreign Minister or Minister of External Affairs of the state

The information or data required for this thesis was collected for the time period of 1 January 2000 to 31 March 2018, i.e. the 21st century.

The data has been obtained from the official online archives which are available at the website of the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) of the Government of India. The websites of India's diplomatic missions in the UK, the Netherlands, South Africa, and Indonesia were also purveyed in order to extract any supplementary information about the official visits. Since no additional published data could be found on the websites of the Indian missions, only those obtained from the MEA website were studied. Eighty-one documents were studied in total, which consisted of the following official published communication from the Government of India:

1. Press releases, media briefings, and interviews
2. Speeches and statements

Details on the bilateral visits included and the number of documents used for each case can be found below in Table 4.2a. A complete list of the documents is given in Appendix 1.

Table 4.2a: Primary Data: Official published communication from the Government of India

No.	CASE (in alphabetic order)	BILATERAL VISITS (total number of visits to and from India during 1 January 2000 – 31 March 2018)	DOCUMENTS STUDIED (total number)
1	Indonesia	10 visits (5 visits to India, 5 visits from India)	16 documents
2	South Africa	14 visits (4 visits to India, 10 visits from India)	24 documents
3	The Netherlands	8 visits (5 visits to India, 3 visits from India)	12 documents
4	The UK	19 visits (9 visits to India, 10 visits from India)	29 documents

Table 4.2a shows that for erstwhile colonial power nations (the Netherlands and the UK), which concerns sub-hypothesis 1, a total number of forty-one documents have been collected for analysis. Similarly, for former colony nations (Indonesia and South Africa), i.e. those that concern sub-hypothesis 2, forty documents have been collected for analysis in total. So, the distribution of documents amongst both categories is well-balanced. Press conferences, statements, and interviews conducted by Indian leaders jointly with their foreign counterparts have not been included, because the focus of the study is solely on India's soft power strategies for other states. Joint or combined communication implies that the positions or strategies of the foreign state are also incorporated and conveyed within it. Similarly, documents released or published together, such as joint communiqués, bilateral declarations, and joint action plans, are also not included. Visits to and from the selected countries which included focus on mutual multilateral platforms have been included in the study, since they often contain targeted communication for the specific host or visiting country. For instance, an Indian Prime Minister on a visit to South Africa to attend a BRICS summit also often makes press statements or speeches to address India-South Africa bilateral relations. So, case-specific information from these visits has been included, while multilateral statements, declarations, and communiqués have been left out. Furthermore, due to time constraints, only the speeches, statements, and interviews by Indian leaders at the hierarchical levels specified earlier were analyzed, thus excluding any statements or briefings by diplomats or officials of the Indian Foreign Service. As

can be observed, the bilateral visits and documents available for case of the Netherlands were significantly less than those available for the other cases. This has been compensated for within the elite interviews, with most interviewees based in the Netherlands, as will be shown below.

New primary information was also obtained through the conduction of elite interviews. The interviews were carried out in a semi-structured manner, meaning that they were guided but still rather open-ended, enabling the securing of in-depth and non-restrictive but still relevant answers from the interviewees. The semi-structured interview format is "essentially one of question-and-discussion" (Pierce, 2008), much like a purposeful conversation. Each interview comprised five topic-related and open-ended questions, along with four pre-determined supplementary (follow-up) questions. Questions on India's general approach were used, without delving into the specific approach to the four selected nations. Due to the discussion-style format, impromptu follow-up questions were used at times, to obtain more depth in the answers. Open-ended questions were considered suitable for seeking lengthy and descriptive answers since they are concerned with "why and how, beliefs, opinions, forecasts and narratives" (Pierce, 2008). Gentle prompts, clarifications, and brief summarizations were also utilized during the interview process. This research's own hypotheses were mentioned towards the end of the interview, so as to "give the elite the opportunity to dissuade" the researcher from the hypothesis (Pierce, 2008).

The term 'elite' does not necessarily mean that those interviewed have a "high social, economic, or political standing", but that they were chosen "because of who they are or what position they occupy" instead of a random or anonymous selection (Hochschild, 2009). The elite interviews consisted of individual semi-structured interviews with Indian diplomats as well as an academic scholar. The diplomats were selected as interviewees due to their important role in policy-making and the implementation of Indian foreign policy and soft power. The scholar was selected due to his academic expertise on the topic. Four interviews, with three diplomats and one scholar, were conducted in total, as can be observed in Table 4.2b.

Table 4.2b: Primary Data: Elite Interviews (semi-structured)

No.	PROFESSION	NAME	LOCATION	METHOD OF INTERVIEW
1	Diplomat, Government of India	Confidential	The Hague, the Netherlands	In person
2	Diplomat, Government of India	Confidential	The Hague, the Netherlands	In person
3	Diplomat, Government of India	Confidential	Beijing, China	Skype
4	Assistant Professor, Leiden University	Dr. Nicolas Blarel	Leiden, the Netherlands	In person

In order to arrange the elite interviews, these individuals were approached via email or through personal contact. While the interviewees were not given any advanced notice of the questions, they were made aware of the theme of the research, i.e. India's soft power, prior to the actual interview. Before commencing the interview, the attribution of source was confirmed, meaning if the elite interviewee wanted his/her name to remain confidential. The interviews were carried out either in person or via Skype, and were conducted approximately 7-10 days after the initial request for an interview was made. Each elite interview lasted approximately 30 minutes.

Two out of the three diplomats interviewed are posted at the Indian mission in The Hague, a decision driven by convenience. In these two specific interviews, Indo-Dutch relations were also discussed spontaneously (in addition to the general-style questions in the interview protocol), to strengthen the case study on India's soft power strategies for the Netherlands, owing to the lesser number of official visits and documents available for this case. Unfortunately, more persons (diplomats and/or scholars) could not be interviewed, due to time-related limitations and problems of accessibility, which is to be expected especially in the case of diplomats.

Along with collecting new data, these elite interviews were also helpful in corroborating the data collected from the other primary and secondary sources.

4.3   Methods of Data Analysis

'Research Methods in Politics' (2008) by Roger Pierce provided helpful guidance in designing and implementing the analytical process for this thesis, and is referenced throughout this section. The objective of academic research is to answer the research question through either confirming or infirming the hypothesis (Pierce, 2008, p.177). This requires a systematic and thorough examination of the information collected, which has been carried out within this thesis using the two methods of qualitative content analysis and discourse analysis. The data described in the previous section, i.e. official communication documents from the Government of India and the content of the elite interviews, have been examined, and the results interpreted in the next chapter, with inferences being drawn. The inferences and observations are then discussed comprehensively, which later lead to the conclusions.

Qualitative content analysis, also referred to as textual analysis, is concerned with specific words and phrases that occur in the content. In the context of this research, the 'content' refers to the text of the official published documents collected. A substantive form of content analysis involves counting the frequency and distribution of certain key words and phrases in the textual data (Pierce, 2008, p.269). Such an examination of the data enables the determination of the extent to which specific words and phrases linked with India's political identity are used by the Government of India in their official communication during important bilateral visits with the four nations selected for the case study. The process of content analysis is made simpler and faster by the use of technological scanning of the text. This research utilizes the navigation and scanning tools of Microsoft Word to carry out the qualitative content analysis of the data. The 'advanced find' settings of the program allow us to find all word forms of the key word being searched, such as 'end', 'ended', 'ending', etc. Further, it ignores punctuation characters like '-' and ':', and white-space characters, which helps in controlling for the varying styles of writing a phrase. The text, which is already in the form of a Microsoft Word document, is analyzed by searching for the key word and obtaining its frequency within the document. So, the process is relatively straightforward and no coding of any kind is required.

In order to use Microsoft Word effectively, all the textual documents available for each case were first merged and compiled as one complete Word document for the respective case. For

instance: the 16 documents available for Indonesia's case were transformed into one document, the 24 documents available for South Africa were transformed into one document, and so on, leading to four complete documents or text files in total (one per case). A quick scan of each complete text file, coupled with logical and educated expectations, enabled the creation of a list of key words and phrases. These key words and phrases were selected because they are linked to India's political identity as a democratic post-colonial state. The selection was done by employing logical reasoning and expectations, based on the literature reviewed and the researcher's own academic background as a graduate of Political Science from one of India's central universities, the University of Delhi. This list, with fifty words and phrases that are separated by the aspect of political identity they are linked to, is presented in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: List of Key Words and Phrases (50 in total)

IDENTITY	KEY WORDS and PHRASES				
Democratic Identity	Democratic	Rule of Law	Liberal	Democracy	Representation
	Election	Civil society	Democratization	Liberties	Plural
	Constitution	Vote	Equality	Participation	Values
	Ideals	Electorate	Parliament	Rights	Republic
	Secular	Suffrage	Multiparty	Consensus	Justice
	Total : 25 key words/phrases				
Post-colonial Identity	Post-colonial	Colonial	Non-violence	Freedom	Independence
	British Raj	Free	History	Decolonization	Empire
	Gandhi	Struggle	Solidarity	Movement	Imperial
	Legacy	Sovereignty	Non-interference	Historical	Commonwealth
	Oppressed	Ruled	Territory	Liberation	Injustice
	Total : 25 key words/phrases				

The words/phrases were entered one by one into each complete document, using navigation and scanning tools. Searching in this manner was carried out in order to obtain the frequencies of the

key words within the data. Since the search also demonstrates the sentence context that the key word/phrase is found in, it could be discerned whether the word/phrase was in that instance indeed connected with either India's democratic or post-colonial political identity, rather than being used in a different context. This enabled the determination and comparison of which aspects of India's political identity are used by it for which foreign states. The findings are presented in the next chapter on Results and Analysis.

Since qualitative content analysis is concerned primarily with the frequency of certain terms within the data, it has only been utilized to analyze data from the official published documents. It was decided to abstain from using this method to analyze the data obtained from the elite interviews, because the interviewees were guided and prompted by the questions and the researcher into mentioning and addressing the specific terms during the interview. So, analyzing the mere frequency of those terms for this data would skew the results unfairly in favour of the hypotheses, which has been sought to be avoided by not using the qualitative content analysis method for the elite interview data. This demonstrates, in practical terms, a major criticism of this method, i.e. it might not be more than simplistic word-counting. On a positive note, however, it enables an initial 'reading' of the textual data, which provides a basic understanding of the significance (if any) accorded to India's political identity within its soft power strategies for each selected country. This method is also relatively low-cost and less time-consuming, due to the use of the navigation tools of Microsoft Word, as has been detailed above. But, it is important to keep in mind that diplomatic text, such as the ones being analyzed, are carefully and deliberately planned, containing judicious and discreet language. The key words or phrases may not entirely reflect the main concerns, or might even "conceal or divert attention from real policy concerns" (Pierce, 2008, p.267). Overall, its limitations mean that qualitative content (or text) analysis, while being useful, is insufficient as the sole method of analysis. So, after carrying out this preliminary analysis, further strengthening by more in-depth methods is required. Discourse analysis is one such in-depth method.

Essentially, discourse is understood as being a "mode of communication" where the "language is political", i.e. a system of meaning where the language has "ideational, referential, and propositional" purposes (Pierce, 2008, p.281). Norman Fairclough, in 'Language and Power'

(2000), lays out his method of critical discourse analysis, focusing on the relationship between text, interactions, and contexts. Fairclough (2000, p.92-93) developed a three-stage system of critical discourse analysis:

1. Description: identification of the formal properties, i.e. vocabulary, grammar, and textual structures, of the text.
2. Interpretation: identification of the relationship between the text and nature of interaction.
3. Explanation: identification of the relationship between the interaction and the social context, i.e. how the discourse is affected by and how it influences social structures.

Fairclough's method of critical discourse analysis has been used for this study. This is done for the data collected from the official published documents, while the information from the elite interviews is used for the purposes of corroboration and substantiation. Such a structured framework for analysis enabled a detailed and critical assessment of textual data, thus allowing one to read between the lines. Keeping in mind the main and sub-hypotheses to be tested, specific parts of the text which discussed or alluded to India's political identity and soft power were analyzed in this manner. This allows an investigation of any subtle and non-obvious references to India's political identity as a democratic state or as a post-colonial state within the text, as has been done here.

However, as Pierce (2008) pointed out, Fairclough's method "emphasizes the interpretations given by the audience rather than the intention of the text-producer", making it "highly speculative" (p.299). Pierce argues that this weakness can be remedied by the inclusion of other methods, such as using content analysis to calculate the actual frequency of key words and the inclusion of interviews with those involved in the text-producing. As has been explained earlier, both of these suggested remedies have been incorporated within this study.

The combination of the qualitative content analysis and discourse analysis leads to a comprehensive examination of the data. While content analysis is helpful for conducting an initial analysis, discourse analysis is important for its detailed study. Thus, the data analysis undertaken to address the research question of this thesis can be viewed as appropriate, especially considering the limited time available to the researcher. The results of the data analysis are presented, interpreted, and discussed in the next chapter.

5. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

5.1   Findings and Interpretation

In order to examine the data collected, qualitative content analysis was initially carried out on the official published communication from the Government of India, during bilateral visits with leaders of the four countries selected as cases. In this way, the frequency of key words and phrases, i.e. the number of times a certain word or phrase appears within the text, was obtained, as is recommended by Roger Pierce (2008). Due to the somewhat elementary nature of this analysis, the method of discourse analysis, in the form of Norman Fairclough's (2000) three-stage system with its focus on description, interpretation, and explanation, was utilized to conduct a deeper study. The results have then been interpreted. Moreover, the data obtained from the elite interviews that were conducted by the researcher has been utilized to corroborate, verify, and substantiate the analysis. The data was examined and interpreted first through qualitative content analysis and later through discourse analysis, and is presented below in the same order.

a) India's soft power strategies for INDONESIA

The published governmental information regarding bilateral visits between India and Indonesia in the 21st century was first analyzed using the method of qualitative content analysis, the results of which can be seen in Table 5.1a.

Table 5.1a: Frequency of Key Words and Phrases in the Data (16 documents) for India-Indonesia relations

No.	INDIA'S DEMOCRATIC IDENTITY		INDIA'S POST-COLONIAL IDENTITY	
	Word/Phrase	Frequency	Word/Phrase	Frequency
1	Democratic	8	Post-colonial	0
2	Rule of Law	1	Colonial	6

3	Liberal	0	Non-violence	2
4	Democracy	15	Freedom	12
5	Representation	0	Independence	7
6	Election	4	British Raj	0
7	Civil Society	0	Free	3
8	Democratization	0	History	6
9	Liberties	0	Decolonization	0
10	Plural	9	Empire	0
11	Constitution	0	Gandhi	8
12	Vote	0	Struggle	5
13	Equality	0	Solidarity	2
14	Participation	0	Movement	4
15	Values	5	Imperial	0
16	Ideals	0	Legacy	3
17	Electorate	1	Sovereignty	1
18	Parliament	0	Non-interference	0
19	Rights	0	Historical	20
20	Republic	9	Commonwealth	0
21	Secular	1	Oppressed	2
22	Suffrage	0	Ruled	1
23	Multi-party	0	Territory	2
24	Consensus	0	Liberation	1
25	Justice	1	Injustice	0
	TOTAL	**54**	**TOTAL**	**85**

Table 5.1a shows that out of the sixteen published documents containing official communication from the Government of India, references to India's political identity as a post-colonial state (eighty-five in total) are significantly higher than references to its identity as a democratic state

(fifty-four in total). On closer observation, it also becomes clear that the invocation of its democratic identity involved the usage of only ten out of the twenty-five possible words/phrases. Furthermore, the words "democratic", "democracy", "plural", and "republic" are specifically stressed, while terms that arguably make up the essence of democracy, such as "rule of law", "civil society", "equality", and "rights" are not in focus within this communication aimed at the Indonesian government and people. From this, it can be inferred that references to India's democratic identity are largely peripheral, in the sense that commonality may be established based on how both countries are pluralistic democratic republics without delving into the intricacies of what this may entail.

On the other hand, the usage of terms linked to Indian post-colonialism is more widely dispersed and expansive, with seventeen possible words/phrases appearing in the text. Even amongst the usual suspects like "freedom", "independence", and "Gandhi", it is interesting to note that the term "historical" stands out as it is mentioned twenty times within the text. This repeated appeal to pre-contemporary circumstances could demonstrate a desire to forge or strengthen bonds founded in similar or shared experiences or incidents in history, with colonial experiences forming the bulk while ancient cultural linkages are also referenced.

On completion of the qualitative content analysis, discourse analysis of the data based on Fairclough's three-stage system, as explained in section 4.3, was undertaken. The documents collected for the case of Indonesia included eight speeches or addresses, one interview, and five statements to the press or media by Indian leaders, and two press releases from the Government of India.

The press releases are characterized mainly by formal language, where information about bilateral visits is provided in a systematic manner. While colonialism is not mentioned explicitly, India's 'historical linkages' and commonalities with Indonesia are acknowledged early on, perhaps as a way of establishing a sense of two similar nations in the mind of the reader. Their status as large and pluralistic democracies is mentioned towards the end, and within the context of expectations of similar future global roles. The statements to the press/media are largely intended for an audience that comprises domestic and Indonesian publics. These are marked by simplistic language and an overview of the bilateral relations and multi-dimensional partnerships between the two nations. Both history and present democratic values are invoked at the onset,

and the democratic status is linked to that of being emerging economies, which leads the foray into the importance of economic cooperation. An interesting observation is that the emphasis on historical ties, in the context of colonialism as well as cultural links, is accorded separate status, while democracy is often clubbed together with economic concerns. In an interview, an Indian diplomat stated that when it comes to Southeast Asian countries such as Indonesia, "cultural connections" are increasingly being used, in tandem with post-colonial ideals (30 April 2018). This could be seen as public diplomacy, where the influencing power of familiarity is used for the purpose of advancing people-to-people ties. In October 2013 during an official visit to Indonesia, the Indian Prime Minister at the time, Dr. Manmohan Singh, was interviewed by the Indonesian newspaper 'Kompas', which has also been published by India's Ministry of External Affairs. While the bulk of the interview is devoted to trade and security issues, it begins tellingly with the two Asian countries' shared experiences during the struggle for freedom from colonial rule and post-colonial solidarity leading to the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), with references to their democratic set-ups forming a minor part towards the end. Speeches by India's External Affairs Ministers (EAM) tend to be reasonably balanced in their references to India's democratic and post-colonial identities, and touch upon a wide range of bilateral concerns, predominantly economic. The speeches and addresses by Indian Presidents and Vice-Presidents provide perhaps the most substantial and descriptive content for analysis. The speeches made in formal diplomatic settings all begin by recollections of shared history, with specific description of how the agony of foreign rule and colonial subjugation united the two peoples in their fight for freedom and against the forces of global exploitation. The Bandung Conference of 1955 and the two nations' leading roles in NAM are often hailed as connecting them, and the commitment to territorial sovereignty is highlighted. Democratic success in the 21st century certainly finds mention within these speeches, but the spirit of anti-colonial struggles is often invoked to lend support to the significance of participative democracy and pluralism. Further, emphasis is also placed on the need to reform structures of global governance such as the UN, arguably pointing to a desire for a more equitable and just international structure. The Vice-President's speech at the Indonesian University of Udayana in November 2015 is distinctly informal and descriptive, perhaps owing to the audience of mainly students and scholars. Ancient civilizational and cultural linkages are referenced early on, then giving way to focus on democracy and pluralism. Mahatma Gandhi and his ideals of tolerance and non-violence are described as reflecting mutual

ties. In most of the documents, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is accorded significance, with two speeches by Indian leaders, made in Jakarta, focusing on India's relations with ASEAN. In these speeches, there seems to be an underlying sense that positive relations with Indonesia, the largest ASEAN state, are hoped to pave the way for stronger ties with ASEAN as a whole.

Overall, while democratic practices and the diverse and pluralistic composition of both the nations are regularly highlighted, the references to post-colonialism, particularly the respective freedom struggles and their shared NAM ideals after independence are more dominant within the discourse in the data analyzed.

b) India's soft power strategies for SOUTH AFRICA

To examine India's soft power strategies towards South Africa, twenty-four documents comprising official communication from the Indian government on bilateral visits with South Africa in the 21st century were available. These were analyzed using qualitative content analysis to derive the frequencies of key words or phrases, and the results are shown in Table 5.1b.

Table 5.1b: Frequency of Key Words and Phrases in the Data (24 documents) for India-South Africa relations

No.	INDIA'S DEMOCRATIC IDENTITY		INDIA'S POST-COLONIAL IDENTITY	
	Word/Phrase	Frequency	Word/Phrase	Frequency
1	Democratic	5	Post-colonial	0
2	Rule of Law	0	Colonial	5
3	Liberal	0	Non-violence	5
4	Democracy	9	Freedom	17
5	Representation	1	Independence	10
6	Election	6	British Raj	1
7	Civil Society	2	Free	3

8	Democratization	0	History	12
9	Liberties	0	Decolonization	0
10	Plural	2	Empire	0
11	Constitution	2	Gandhi	34
12	Vote	2	Struggle	13
13	Equality	3	Solidarity	2
14	Participation	1	Movement	7
15	Values	5	Imperial	0
16	Ideals	1	Legacy	5
17	Electorate	0	Sovereignty	0
18	Parliament	4	Non-interference	0
19	Rights	1	Historical	4
20	Republic	8	Commonwealth	2
21	Secular	0	Oppressed	4
22	Suffrage	0	Ruled	2
23	Multi-party	0	Territory	1
24	Consensus	0	Liberation	2
25	Justice	1	Injustice	3
	TOTAL	**53**	**TOTAL**	**132**

It can be observed from Table 5.1b that references to India's post-colonial identity, with one hundred and thirty-two key words/phrases being utilized, far outnumber the references to its democratic identity, with only fifty-three words/phrases used. In the case of South Africa, it becomes immediately apparent that "Gandhi" is invoked substantially (thirty-four times) within post-colonial references. This is not surprising, considering that Mahatma Gandhi's time as a lawyer and civil rights activist in South Africa before returning to India was widely influential on his political thinking and emergence as the leader of the Indian movement for independence (Guha, 2012), which has long been a unifying factor in both nations' freedom struggles. The fact that this is seen by India as relevant even in the 21st century, along with terms such as "freedom",

"independence", "history", "struggle", and "movement", points to the theme of post-colonialism running strong in India's political soft power approach for South Africa. Additionally, the presence of the terms "British Raj" and "Commonwealth" reveals the intention to convey solidarity and similarity based on foreign rule by the same colonial power, something that was (expectedly) missing in the case of India's approach towards Indonesia.

Here, unlike what was seen for Indonesia, sixteen out of the possible twenty-five words/phrases connected to democracy are used at least once each. The words "democracy" and "republic" have the highest frequencies within these sixteen words/phrases, but others such as "civil society", "Constitution", "equality", "values", "Parliament", and "rights" also find mention. Thus, the references to aspects of democracy, while paling in comparison to post-colonial aspects, certainly appear to be balanced and wide-ranging.

Of the twenty-four documents analyzed for this case, there are thirteen speeches, five press statements, and six press releases issued by the Government of India. A detailed analysis was undertaken using the method of discourse analysis.

The press releases are issued in formal and curt language, and provide an overview of all the details of a particular visit, either to or from India. The existence of a long-term political relationship is occasionally acknowledged, but no details or explanations about this relationship are offered in any of the press releases. When a visit coincided with a specific event related to independence from colonial rule or any commemoration related to Gandhi, this was mentioned explicitly in the press releases, due to the afore-stated connection between the two nations that Gandhi's legacy and their similar colonial experiences forged. On the other hand, democracy is referred to scarcely here, and only to show that the path to democracy emerged after freedom from foreign rule was achieved.

The speeches and press statements by Indian leaders are markedly descriptive and focus strongly on historic ties. Once again, anti-colonial struggles and Gandhi come up in multiple forms within almost every speech, with a marked sense of similarity being stressed. There seems to be an acknowledgement that Gandhi, and the political values he stood for, are as much South African as Indian. Later, the speeches and statements go on to describe the common future aspirations of both nations. Even in speeches made at business forums, where the economic issues of trade and investment are the main topics, the post-colonial ideal of solidarity and India's support for South

Africa's struggle against apartheid are touched upon. Mutual commitments to democracy are also mentioned in most speeches and press statements, but these are often made in relation to the nations' economic interests and broader international concerns, particularly as important developing countries.

A speech by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in July 2016 addressing the Indian diaspora in South Africa includes many references to similar historical experiences and Gandhi's role in bringing the people of the two countries closer. Interestingly, democracy is not referenced in this speech directly. Most speeches also have specific mentions of British colonial rule, arguably to strengthen the sense of a shared past under the same colonial ruler with both countries going through similar hardships. This is in line with Nicolas Blarel's expectation (4 May 2018) that the rhetoric of "we are both former British colonies" is visible in diplomatic speeches, invoking the sense of a "shared fate". Furthermore, mutual objectives within common multilateral platforms were addressed in most documents, the main ones being the IBSA (India, Brazil, and South Africa) forum, and the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) grouping. Several documents in this case focused solely on BRICS, IBSA, and the African Union or pan-African issues and events, demonstrating the importance of South Africa as the gateway for India's outreach to Africa. Common goals from the standpoint of global south cooperation are also elaborated within the communication.

As the content analysis indicated earlier, India's post-colonial identity is emphasized strongly within its soft power approach towards South Africa, much more than the communication of its democratic identity. The anti-colonial struggles of both nations, and particularly the important and binding legacy of Mahatma Gandhi, are invoked very frequently within the data.

c) India's soft power strategies for THE NETHERLANDS

In the case of bilateral visits between India and the Netherlands, the analysis of twelve documents containing published governmental communication in the 21st century was

undertaken. The results of the initial examination using the method of qualitative content analysis are presented below in Table 5.1c.

Table 5.1c: Frequency of Key Words and Phrases in the Data (12 documents) for India-Netherlands relations

No.	INDIA'S DEMOCRATIC IDENTITY		INDIA'S POST-COLONIAL IDENTITY	
	Word/Phrase	Frequency	Word/Phrase	Frequency
1	Democratic	0	Post-colonial	0
2	Rule of Law	2	Colonial	1
3	Liberal	1	Non-violence	0
4	Democracy	7	Freedom	0
5	Representation	1	Independence	2
6	Election	2	British Raj	0
7	Civil Society	0	Free	1
8	Democratization	0	History	3
9	Liberties	2	Decolonization	0
10	Plural	2	Empire	0
11	Constitution	0	Gandhi	0
12	Vote	1	Struggle	0
13	Equality	1	Solidarity	0
14	Participation	7	Movement	0
15	Values	4	Imperial	0
16	Ideals	0	Legacy	0
17	Electorate	0	Sovereignty	0
18	Parliament	2	Non-interference	0
19	Rights	3	Historical	0
20	Republic	1	Commonwealth	0
21	Secular	0	Oppressed	0
22	Suffrage	0	Ruled	1
23	Multi-party	0	Territory	0

24	Consensus	0	Liberation	0
25	Justice	0	Injustice	0
	TOTAL	**36**	**TOTAL**	**8**

As the findings in Table 5.1c show, within official communication aimed at the Netherlands, India's political identity as a democratic state is referenced a striking more than four times (thirty-six) as often as its political identity as a post-colonial state (eight). The usage of terms related to the democratic identity is reasonably balanced since fourteen out of the total possible twenty-five words/phrases find mention at least once, with the words "democracy" and "participation" being used most frequently. This can be interpreted as an attempt to convey India's democracy as wholesome and not simply superficial.

On the contrary, when it comes to the post-colonial identity, out of the possible twenty-five in total, merely five words are used. These are "colonial", "independence", "free", "history", and "ruled", which can be argued as being general to all countries that underwent colonial rule, rather than being specific to India's experience. A plausible reason is that India itself was not colonized by the Dutch, who held colonies elsewhere, and thus more generic references to colonialism are utilized for the Netherlands.

Of the twelve official documents available for analysis in this case, there are three speeches, four press statements, and five press releases. With regard to the press releases, India's democratic political identity is conveyed in just one instance, while its post-colonial identity is left out entirely. Even in the one instance where democracy was referenced, this was done in the broader context of shared values and economic interests.

The speeches and press statements made by the Indian leaders to address Indo-Dutch relations are less formalistic and more elaborate. While diplomatic relations in recent history are included here, they mainly refer to trade relations. Shared political values emerge as a central theme within the speeches and statements, where pluralism, rule of law, and an independent judiciary are detailed as hallmarks of India's commitment to democracy. It is striking to note that the speeches or press statements that occurred in a governmental context contain absolutely no

references to post-colonialism. This is in stark contrast to the observations made in the case of Indonesia and South Africa.

Both Prime Ministers Singh and Modi addressed the Indian-origin diaspora in the Netherlands, in November 2004 and June 2017 respectively. In these addresses, the references to history are about the civilizational and cultural links to India, rather than a colonial past. On the other hand, democracy, public participation and India's diverse society are invoked to convey the pluralistic essence of Indian democracy in practice. As an Indian diplomat based in The Hague explained (30 April 2018), diversity and pluralism are particularly useful in the approach towards the Netherlands because of its reputation as an inclusive society.

Democratic values are also in focus when establishing similarity with the European Union (EU) and its ideals, which appears regularly in the communication aimed at the Netherlands. This is particularly true of the documents on the Indian Prime Minister's official visit to The Hague in November 2004 for the India-EU Summit when the Netherlands held the Presidency of the European Council. Here, India and the EU were hailed as being natural partners, largely due to the shared democratic and liberal ideals. With the Netherlands, overall, the focus is on economic ties and cooperation over mutual international concerns such as sustainability, nuclear security and terrorism, and the political commonalities are highlighted as a way of softening the overall discourse and building a sense of similarity. Democracy is often used as political soft power "when we deal with advanced countries in the West; countries such as the Netherlands and others in Europe", says an Indian diplomat in an interview, also mentioning "the rule of law and order" as a hallmark of the democratic system (30 April 2018). "It may not be overtly mentioned, but it's there", she states.

It is very clear in the case of the Netherlands that when political identity comes into play, the communication of India's democratic identity is given preference over its post-colonial identity. This can be discerned from the examination of the data collected through both qualitative content and discourse analysis methods.

d) India's soft power strategies for THE UK

The case of the UK yielded the most documents (twenty-nine in total), in terms of the official communication from the Government of India with regard to bilateral visits between the two states in the 21st century. The results obtained from the qualitative content analysis of these documents are presented in Table 5.1d.

Table 5.1d: Frequency of Key Words and Phrases in the Data (29 documents) for India-UK relations

No.	INDIA'S DEMOCRATIC IDENTITY		INDIA'S POST-COLONIAL IDENTITY	
	Word/Phrase	Frequency	Word/Phrase	Frequency
1	Democratic	6	Post-colonial	1
2	Rule of Law	8	Colonial	4
3	Liberal	5	Non-violence	0
4	Democracy	17	Freedom	9
5	Representation	3	Independence	5
6	Election	5	British Raj	2
7	Civil Society	2	Free	6
8	Democratization	0	History	13
9	Liberties	3	Decolonization	0
10	Plural	12	Empire	6
11	Constitution	15	Gandhi	10
12	Vote	4	Struggle	1
13	Equality	27	Solidarity	3
14	Participation	3	Movement	2
15	Values	9	Imperial	1
16	Ideals	3	Legacy	2
17	Electorate	3	Sovereignty	1
18	Parliament	4	Non-interference	0
19	Rights	16	Historical	6

20	Republic	3	Commonwealth	5
21	Secular	2	Oppressed	1
22	Suffrage	0	Ruled	6
23	Multi-party	0	Territory	0
24	Consensus	3	Liberation	0
25	Justice	6	Injustice	0
	TOTAL	**159**	**TOTAL**	**84**

The vast number of documents available for this case meant that a comprehensive analysis could be conducted. The high number of bilateral visits, and the resulting documents, between India and the UK are not surprising, given their historical ties that were shaped by around two centuries of British colonial rule over India, and their friendly relations after India's independence in 1947. The findings presented in Table 5.1d clearly show that India's political identity as a democracy is invoked much more (almost twice as much) than its post-colonial identity in its approach for the UK, with one hundred and fifty-nine words/phrases being used for the democratic identity compared to eighty-four for the post-colonial one. It is immediately noticeable that references to both are quite well-balanced within themselves, as twenty-two out of the possible twenty-five words/phrases linked to democracy are employed here and nineteen out of twenty-five are employed for post-colonialism.

The references to India's democratic identity see the terms "democracy", "plural", "Constitution", "equality", and "rights" appearing the most frequently, thus pointing to the importance of communicating the depth of Indian democracy. The allusions to "Parliament" and "rule of law", in particular, are significant because India's system of parliamentary democracy and many of its political ideals are inspired from the UK's own political system, tenets of which were in place during the British colonial rule in India. Here, it is important to note that shared democratic features, which are mutually comprehensible, are attempted to be utilized as soft power by India.

While amounting to almost half of the democratic references, the references to India's post-colonial identity are nonetheless significant because the number of connected words/phrases used (irrespective of their respective frequencies) is the same as that for South Africa and more

than that of Indonesia, both of which are post-colonial nations like India. Further, the highly frequent use of the terms "history" and "Gandhi", along with the mentions of "empire", "British Raj", and "Commonwealth" demonstrates that India's particular experiences as a former British colony continue to play a part in its contemporary approach towards its former colonial ruler. This observation is compounded by the fact that the usage of these specific terms (with the exception of "history") was absent in its approach towards the Netherlands. So, even though the theme of post-colonialism is not dominant in official communication aimed towards the UK, it is still used in the pursuit of establishing familiarity as two nations that share an intertwined and complex colonial history.

Of the twenty-nine official documents available for bilateral visits between India and the UK in the 21st century, twelve are speeches, while there are eight press statements, eight press releases, and one interview. Within the press releases, as expected from observations of the previous cases, the focus is on key areas of bilateral relations and details of the particular visit. But, a closer look reveals that though not explicitly stated, there are hints at their past colonial ties, seen in vague mentions of a relationship that has transformed over the years and the allusions to a shared history. Slight democratic references, such as those to parliamentary political exchanges are also present, though (again) not stated explicitly.

The statements to the press comprise detailed descriptions of particular visits, mainly economic in nature, but also occasionally touch upon the political identities this research is concerned with. In the recent press statement by Prime Minister Modi during British Prime Minister Theresa May's visit to India in November 2016, the ties between the two countries are hailed as being special, enduring, and unique (which points to their specific historic ties), and shared values are emphasized (which points to common democratic values). Interestingly, the statements which are made to the Indian media focus almost exclusively on national economic and security interests and the Indo-UK developments on those fronts. In contrast, the statements made by Indian leaders during visits to the UK are more descriptive on the nature of bilateral ties. Here, the familiarity lent by history and people-to-people ties, and shared democratic values, are discussed; the unique character of the world's oldest and the largest parliamentary democracies sharing historic connections is mentioned.

The interview of Prime Minister Singh with The Times during his visit to the UK in September 2004 brings up the colonial past as an inspiration for pursuing a democratic and equitable political system. This particular sentiment is echoed by many of the speeches and addresses by Indian leaders as well, perhaps in a bid to emphasize the pre-independence colonial roots of India's post-independence democratic trajectory. This is also true of the transformation of the relationship from one of colonial subjugation to one of an equal partnership. Speeches made at business or technology-related summits are expectedly largely devoid of political references, but do refer to institutional familiarity. Democratic pluralism and how this connects the common peoples of the two nations is stressed in speeches addressed to the large Indian diaspora in the UK, with the 'close understanding' of each other's political institutions being highlighted as an asset. The mutual importance accorded to basic freedoms and fundamental human rights is also mentioned, all with the aim of strengthening this sense of familiarity and connection. Nicolas Blarel, in an interview (4 May 2018), pointed to the importance of the diaspora in increasing India's "visibility" that at times could translate into leverage in the politics of the UK. Speeches and press releases regarding India-EU summits under British Presidency of the Council feature strong endorsement of India and the EU as 'natural partners', where the foundations of a common belief in democracy, civil society, and consensus are viewed as leading the way for greater economic cooperation.

Finally, it is the speeches made by Prime Minster Modi at the British Parliament in 2015, and those made by Prime Minister Singh at the Universities of Cambridge and Oxford in 2006 and 2005 respectively that are truly elaborate in their discussion of the political dimensions of bilateral ties. They, thus, provide valuable fodder for the examination of India's political identity as a soft power towards the UK. The speeches by the respective Prime Ministers from rival Indian political parties are almost a decade apart. Yet, each one of them begins with recollections of their long colonial history, the Indian movement for freedom, and inevitably, the role of Mahatma Gandhi, who studied law in London before going to South Africa, after which he returned to India. This emphasis on history at the very onset seems designed to forge a bond with the audience, and it later gives way to a more intricate detailing of India's democratic and liberal achievements. While the speech at the Parliament is rather diplomatic, the ones at the universities are more open and frank. It seems that India's colonial experiences are described not with the intent of invoking sympathy or guilt, but rather, demonstrating the ungrudging and forward-

looking attitude of the Indian leadership after independence was achieved. The grievances against British colonial rule are laid out, but only to state that these did not deter India from seeking good relations with the UK, and this spirit of cooperation and partnership is credited to the 'essence of democracy'. Here, colonial history and the resulting familiarity with British laws and political institutions are showcased as having an impact on India's own democratic system. Further, the need for shared tackling of the contemporary dangers faced by inclusive democracy is mentioned.

Overall, the nature of the approach towards the UK is particularly fascinating. Historical colonial experiences are freely referenced, often in great detail, but they are shown as paving the path for India's democratic system. This is evident in an Indian diplomat's assertion that "the relationship with Britain is no longer what it used to be and Britain itself is no longer what it used to be", referring to the practical redundancy of post-colonialism here because India is no longer subordinate and the UK no longer holds a powerful empire (30 April 2018). To address mutual contemporary and future concerns, a shared democratic and secular worldview is portrayed as bolstering bilateral ties. So, though post-colonial references are sizable, they are generally surpassed by the emphasis on democracy.

5.2   Discussion of the Results

This section provides a discussion of the results presented and interpreted in the previous section. This is done in order to link the empirical evidence with the theoretical expectations and the hypotheses, which would allow us to address the research question of this thesis.

An examination of the data shows that India's political values and its identity as a post-colonial democracy are salient features of its overall appeal. Nicolas Blarel, in an interview (4 May 2018), used the term "hybrid political entity" as India's strong suit, to refer to its unique political character. He claims that "India is contributing … it has something to bring to the table, to the

international community", which, he argues, sets India apart from its neighbour China even though India's budgetary investments in this arena are nowhere near China's. Though stating that soft power activities are "nothing new" and have existed since the times of India's first Prime Minister Nehru, Blarel is of the opinion that, since the 1990s, there has been an increased acknowledgment of the potentials of soft power within institutional settings in India. His academic opinion was corroborated from the policy-making side as well, by an interview with an Indian diplomat (30 April 2018), who said that "In the last three years [before 2018], there has been more governmental focus on soft power than usual", as she referred to the rising push for soft power under Prime Minister Modi's administration. This adds to the relevance of conducting this study.

The Netherlands and the UK were the erstwhile colonial power nations selected for the case study, and were analyzed in detail. The findings of the study demonstrate that for these nations with an uncomfortable past as colonial occupiers of foreign territories, democracy emerges as a unifying factor with India. This reflects the constructivist arguments described by Ted Hopf (1998) which state that a state's behaviour towards another state is moderated by its understanding of the other state's identity. In the case of the Netherlands, the focus on shared democratic values and ideals is extremely apparent, which is not surprising given the fact that the Netherlands was not India's own colonial ruler. The results are not as clear-cut for the UK, because governmental communication from India routinely highlights their intertwined colonial histories and India's freedom movement. The rhetoric of a "special relationship" that Brysk et al discussed in 2002 (p.267) is missing from India's side, and Blarel also touched upon this by saying that it is the UK, rather than India, that pushes for the "special relationship" rhetoric, mainly in a bid to distinguish itself from other Western nations such as France which are trying to enter the Indian market (4 May 2018). However, from India's side, though there are mentions of historic connections, these revolve around a transformed but enduring relationship. Even here, as observed in the previous section, India's system of parliamentary democracy and its liberal commitments are showcased as being influenced by the British system, with institutional and legal familiarity sought to be conveyed. The interview with Blarel corroborates this, with his observation that many institutions of independent India "come from British India" (4 May 2018). While colonial-era ties are acknowledged, it is democracy which is shown to be the political

guide for the way forward. Based on these results, it is possible to state that sub-hypothesis 1 is confirmed, that is 'if a state is an erstwhile colonial power nation, then India is likely to prioritize its political identity as a democratic state in its soft power strategy for that state'.

A comprehensive examination of the cases of Indonesia and South Africa, through the methods of content and discourse analysis, shows that for these former colony nations, India considers its own post-colonial identity as a more substantial soft power asset than its identity as a democratic state. It is important to note here that Indonesia and South Africa are both democracies, which makes the fact that shared post-colonial ideals are nevertheless given preference, especially significant. The emphasis on post-colonialism here is in line with Himadeep Muppidi's (2012) argument that democracy-related projects can be conceived as forms of neocolonial hegemony, which India would certainly look to avoid. Echoing this is an Indian diplomat who states that India doesn't have "a policy of spreading democracy all over the world" (30 April 2018). Within post-colonial ideals, India and Indonesia's leadership of the Non-Aligned Movement and for Asian-African solidarity, and India's support for South Africa's anti-colonial and anti-apartheid struggles, along with the immense legacy of Mahatma Gandhi, are particularly highlighted by the Government of India to forge a sense of shared experience, understanding, and common interests in the 21st century. Further, as stated by an Indian diplomat in an interview (25 April 2018), "state sovereignty plays a very important role in India's political soft power, and India's foreign policy has consistently followed this approach since its independence, particularly with the Non-Aligned Movement". Another diplomat narrows it down further by saying that post-colonialism "does play a part in India's approach, but it depends on who you're talking to", pointing to targeted strategies (30 April 2018). These results enable the confirmation of sub-hypothesis 2, which states that 'if a state is a former colony nation, then India is likely to prioritize its political identity as a post-colonial state in its soft power strategy for that state'.

The confirmation of both sub-hypothesis 1 and 2 by the results of the case study implies that India's usage of its political identity as a soft power resource is different for different target states; it is dependent on whether the other state is an erstwhile colonial power nation or a former colony nation. When asked about the dichotomy between ex-colonizers and ex-colonies being used in this thesis, an Indian diplomat (30 April 2018) termed it as "reasonable", saying that the

two sub-hypotheses reflect the general approach of the Indian government. As a result, it can be asserted that the main hypothesis of this research is confirmed: the colonial history of a certain state shapes India's use of its political identity as a democratic post-colonial state within its soft power strategy towards that state. This effectively answers the research question of this thesis.

Further, the confirmation of the hypothesis lends support to the critical constructivist notions detailed by Ted Hopf (1998) focusing on alienation as a motivator for the search for state identity, and Rebecca Adler-Nissen's argument (2016) about inequalities of dominance that influence a state's self-perception, discussed in the chapter on the theoretical framework. The emphasis of post-colonial identity with other post-colonial nations demonstrates that historical political alienation from power over one's own territory and the post-independence alienation from structures of global power have a crucial impact on the self-identity of these states. It also strengthens Manjari Miller's (2013) assertion that India's colonial past forms a key component of its national identity and that this influences its foreign policy decisions. Miller's argument that post-colonial countries possess a "post-imperial ideology" (p.7) which leads them to pursue a more equitable international order is corroborated in the observations from the cases of Indonesia and South Africa. Here, India highlights shared calls for reforms in the structures of global governance, with such calls missing in the cases of the Netherlands and the UK.

Additionally, an interesting aspect is the role of memberships or partnerships of significant international or regional multilateral platforms. As the analysis of the data has shown, in the case of the European nations, there was much focus on India's present and potential relations with the EU. This was especially noticeable in the case of the Netherlands, and to a lesser extent with the UK. In Indonesia's case, the importance of its ties with ASEAN was brought up by India, and the same was observed for South Africa, with common membership of the IBSA forum and the BRICS forum being stressed at times. These diplomatic linkages can be viewed as a way of highlighting common worldviews and shared stakes in certain policy outcomes, which motivates the two sides to strive for stronger ties and remain committed to agreements. The British Commonwealth was also discussed occasionally (but not strongly) in India's communication for the UK and South Africa. That it was not stressed upon very highly perhaps implies that the

Commonwealth is not accorded particular significance by India in the 21st century, unlike the other platforms mentioned above.

5.3   Limitations and Implications for further research

The empirical evidence that emerged from the comparative case study has confirmed the main hypothesis as well as the two sub-hypotheses of this thesis, with regard to India's soft power strategies for other states in the 21st century. However, this study is not bereft of limitations, and has certain drawbacks.

The most challenging aspects with regard to the research design have been the paucity of time and the lack of financial resources, owing to which more cases could not be selected for observation. The case selection in this thesis carries with it the dangers of selection bias and a limited basis for external generalization. While two cases were considered per sub-hypothesis, the incorporation of more cases could have further reduced these risks by increasing the scope of representation of a larger population. The inclusion of more nations, especially non-Commonwealth ones, would lend further credibility to the hypotheses, if confirmed again; this could be done in the future if this study is to be expanded. The qualitative nature of the study also meant that a small-*N*, rather than large-*N*, design was utilized. Furthermore, along with the time-related concerns, limitations of physical access also imply that additional elite interviews with diplomats and/or scholars could not be conducted by the researcher.

This research focused specifically on India's soft power strategies for individual states, and the highlighting of India's political identity during visits to and from the selected states, for various purposes or events. At the same time, India is an active member of several multilateral regional and international forums, and expectedly exercises soft power within these platforms as well. Is political identity a factor here? How? The soft power role played by Indian political identity within forums such as the UN General Assembly, the WTO, the BRICS grouping, regional initiatives such as the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), etc. is, thus,

important to explore the overall salience of India's political identity as its soft power. This can potentially be taken up in future research which focuses solely on India's official communication during various multilateral meetings or summits.

Further, as is evident from the cases of Indonesia, the Netherlands, and the UK, India's soft power outreach towards important multi-national blocs such as ASEAN and the EU plays a role in its approach towards individual member-states of these blocs. The examination of political identity within soft power strategies for ASEAN and the EU, comparatively and/or as a single case study, hence, could also make up the focus of subsequent research.

Another area for further study could be the role played by India's possible self-identification as a great power or regional power in the use of its political identity as a soft power resource. This has not been explored by this research, which largely limited India's self-identification to that of a democratic post-colonial state.

Thus, though constrained by certain limitations, as stated above, this study offers suggestions for new spheres of research on India's soft power, along with enriching the existing research.

6. CONCLUSION

Since very early in its existence as an independent nation, India's soft power and in particular the power of ideas and values has formed a crucial aspect of its foreign policy, but the nation lacked the substantial hard power needed to bolster it. The last decade of the 20th century, the 1990s, brought with it an increase in India's hard power, which lent greater potency to its soft power. In turn, soft power was also considered vital in ensuring that India's hard power rise was not interpreted as being hostile. The governmental acknowledgement of this power of attraction and persuasion has been on the rise, gradually but surely, in the 21st century. Soft power activities have received immense impetus under the current administration of Prime Minister Modi, with its focus on public diplomacy. As a fellow major developing economy with a vast population, comparisons with China are but natural and are made in the context of soft power as well. While both nations have rich soft power assets linked to civilizational heritage, the appeal of political values and ideologies is more far-reaching in the case of India, largely due to the rare combination of democratic and post-colonial dimensions in its state identity, and its reputation as a benign and peaceful state. This thesis is rooted in the debates over soft power in international relations, with a specific focus on the political components of India's soft power in the contemporary era.

The primary objective of this research was to address the question of 'How does India use its political identity within its soft power strategies for other states in the 21st century?' The central argument proposed in response to this question was reflected in the primary hypothesis, i.e. the colonial history of a certain state shapes India's use of its political identity as a democratic post-colonial state within its soft power strategy towards that state. This was followed by the introduction of two sub-hypotheses which were informed by a post-colonial dichotomy. One sub-hypothesis propounded that if a state is an erstwhile colonial power nation, then India is likely to prioritize its political identity as a democratic state in its soft power strategy for that state, and the other that if a state is a former colony nation, then India is likely to prioritize its political identity as a post-colonial state in its soft power strategy for that state. These hypotheses drew upon deductive reasoning based on the existing literature on the topic, and a theoretical

framework of critical constructivist and post-colonial conceptualizations of the interactions between state identity and foreign policy.

The testing of the hypotheses relied on extensive research, which was conducted in the form of a comparative case study where Indonesia, South Africa, the Netherlands, and the UK were selected as the cases. Information obtained from eighty-one published sources of official communication from the Government of India, and four elite interviews with three diplomats and one scholar, was examined using the methods of qualitative content and discourse analysis. The results for each case were interpreted and discussed comprehensively, and then compared using the categories of erstwhile colonial power nations (the Netherlands and the UK) and former colony nations (Indonesia and South Africa). This analysis led to the confirmation or acceptance of the two sub-hypothesis, which in turn entailed the confirmation of the primary hypothesis and with it the central argument of this thesis. While contributing to the existing research, this study does have certain limitations, largely due to the limited time and resources available to the researcher. The acknowledgement of these limitations is valuable because it has raised additional possibilities and scope for further research on India's soft power and the strategies to convey it.

To conclude, this thesis found that political values and identity, particularly those linked to democracy and post-colonialism, play a role in India's communication of its soft power. The hybrid nature of its political identity can be perceived as lending a unique and extremely wide-ranging appeal to the South Asian country. India's rise in the 21st century has led the nation to pursue soft power and public diplomacy with increased fervor, which manifests in targeted strategies for political soft power that are likely to invoke India's democratic identity when communicating with former colonizers and its post-colonial identity for former colonies. If this approach evolves further, and in which manner this occurs, promises to be interesting and salient to follow, in both academic and practical senses.

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Appendix 2

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Appendix 3

Elite Interviews: Interview Protocol

QUESTIONS (Semi-structured interview)

1. In recent years, several scholars and Indian foreign policy analysts have argued that there has been increased governmental focus on India's soft power. Would you agree with this? Why?

2. While culture has been a primary aspect of India's global appeal, do you think political values form a soft power source for India?
   Follow-up: Which political ideals or institutions would you argue are the key components of India's political identity?

3. Would you argue that India uses its identity as a democracy within its exercise of soft power? How does it do so?
   Follow-up: Is this democratic identity (or narrative of a democratic society based on the rule of law) employed by India universally within its bilateral relations, i.e., with all other states? Why / why not?

4. Do post-colonial ideals such as solidarity with other former colonies and emphasis on state sovereignty also play a part in India's political soft power?
   Follow-up: How does India stress this post-colonial identity as a soft power within bilateral relations with other states?

5. Does India prioritize certain political values and identities within dealings with other individual states?
   Follow-up: Is there a difference in India's soft power approach for states which were historical colonizers and those that were historically colonized? How? Which political values would India emphasize in each case?