

Heritage as soft power: A critical analysis of foreign policy of India

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In the foreign policy context, soft power and heritage have become important as a tool of diplomacy for states as hard power. It promotes intercultural dialogue, which is essential to counter the multiple challenges to the existing world order by non-state actors and Islamic fundamentalists. Furthermore, it helps to develop sustainable tourism and the preservation of this precious heritage through their inscription on the World Heritage List of UNESCO. Interestingly, India's soft power, as disseminated through her inclusive cultural and civilization heritage across millennia, demonstrate that her values of secularism, tolerance, inclusiveness and cross-fertilisation of cultures are more important than ever in today's troubled world. Indian culture has emerged as the force to connect, to build relations and to heal the ruptures created by history and politics.

There is no other country in the world that embraces such an extraordinary profusion of ethnic groups, mutually incomprehensible languages, topography and climate, religion and cultural practices and level of economic development. India's largely non-violent defeat to colonialism served as an important beacon for freedom movement and newly independent countries elsewhere in the 1950s and 1960. Significantly, in the 21st century, the role of soft power has widened a lot and states are least interested to opt for war. This article aims to examine the concept of soft power, specifically, how it has emerged and transformed the notion of diplomacy, then investigates the linkage between soft power and heritage. Also, it seeks to examine the significant efforts by India to project soft power, essentially to the east, and looks at some major feature of Indian foreign policy, discussing how soft power might or might not relate to them.

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