



Soft Power: An Analysis of India and China in Africa

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The term 'soft power' has been discussed increasingly in the post-Cold War era. It was first coined by the Harvard University Professor; Joseph Nye in his book, *Bound to Lead: the Changing Nature of American Power* (1990) Nye developed the concept further in his book, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (2004). Soft power in international politics arises from factors such as the dominant values, internal policies and practices, and the manner of conducting international relations of a State. Soft power is the ability to obtain what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments.¹

As power literature has developed, Nye's initial definition of soft power also evolved. Earlier version of Nye's soft power definition was "the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payment"² which included "culture, values and foreign policies"³. Later, Nye extended his definition into "the ability to affect others through the co-optive means of framing the agenda, persuading, and eliciting positive attraction in order to obtain preferred outcomes"⁴.

The success of soft power depends largely on the State's reputation within the international community, as well as the flow of information between States. Hence, it is often linked to the rise of globalization and neoliberal theory. Popular culture and media is generally identified as a source of soft power with the spread of a national language.

The end of cold war generated more curiosity about this idea mainly due to two important factors: first, the emergence of new power blocks in the east as well as south to some extent. Secondly, the debate around decentralization of power and further focusing on 'individuality' resulted to power shifting away from traditional state towards civil society. Development in transport and communication revolutionised the global economic framework with modernization and urbanization resulting to increasing role of Multi-national companies. While the state still remain the most important political institution, their authority and ability to influence and command individuals have decreased due to technological advancement, globalization etc. the speed and ease of information and ideas has made foreign policy not only a matter of state and bureaucracy but public opinion as well.

Formulation and development of foreign policy is one of the most important functions of the State but due to economic interdependence between states, this role of state has become more complex and challenging. Opportunities exist to achieve their aims, but success depends more than ever on the ability to attract, persuade, and mobilise others. In this new complex world, a critical foreign policy

¹ Joseph S. Nye. *BOUND TO LEAD: THE CHANGING NATURE OF AMERICAN POWER* (New York: Basic Books Inc. Publishers, 1990) p.188

² Joseph S. Nye. *SOFT POWER: THE MEANS TO SUCCESS IN WORLD POLITICS* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004).

³ *Ibid*, p. 11

⁴ Joseph S. Nye. *The Future of Power* (New York: Public Affairs, 2011) P. 20-21.

lever is soft power. Traditional power can no more be considered as the primary tool as seen in the past. According to Nye, in this information age, three kinds of countries are in a good position to gain soft power: a) those whose dominant culture and ideas are closer to prevailing global norms (which now emphasize liberalism, pluralism, and autonomy) (b) those with the most access to multiple channels of communication and thus more influence over how issues are framed, and (c) those whose credibility is enhanced by their domestic and international performance'.⁵

After the end of cold war, many countries have already taken considerable steps to increase their soft power capabilities. China has been particularly pro-active in this aspect. Most notably it has established over 300 Confucius Institutes all over the world to promote the Chinese language and culture.⁶ At the same time, it has hardly gone back on the traditional instruments of power projection, ex.- its increased naval presence in the South China Sea, deliberate conflict with India etc. With the onset of globalization and reduction of inter-state conflicts, the need of soft power as a tool gained momentum. Since mid-90s china started its efforts of projecting itself as a global power and a nation with larger foreign policy ambitions. In fact, since the fall of Soviet Union, china has emerged as a single nation to challenge the dominance of the United States in global policy framework. This transformation is mainly due to china's growing soft power influence.

As Nye explained, "soft power rests on the ability to shape the preferences of others. It is leading by example and attracting others to do what you want. If I can get you to do what I want, then I do not have to use carrots or sticks to make you do it"⁷. "This attractiveness could be called a nation's "brand," and it can be conveyed through various means, including a country's popular and elite culture, its public diplomacy (government-funded programs intended to influence public opinion abroad), its businesses' actions abroad, international perception of its government's policies, and the gravitational pull of a nation's economic strength, among other factors"⁸. China not only adopted Nye's version of Soft Power but revised it as well. It included economic power which is considered as a source of hard power by thinkers.

In line with its global strategy, during the years of the Tenth Five-Year Plan (2001–2005) the Chinese government began promoting Chinese language and culture by establishing Confucius Institutes, which many scholars read as a means of developing China's soft power around the world. Till December 2017, 525 Confucius Institutes and 1113 Confucius Classrooms exist in 146 countries⁹. The next five year plan (2006-2010), aimed at promoting Chinese culture. The 12th five year plan (2011-2015) focused on the rise of china as a cultural superpower with socialist characteristics. This plan pointed out the importance of cultural industries as a basic element for country's economic development in the future.

The thirteenth five year plan (2016-2020), focuses upon the balanced development of building the nation into a cultural superpower including strategies for developing traditional and new media, going culturally global, framing the cultural industry as a key industry, as well as preparing for winter Olympics¹⁰. Today, The Chinese soft power is dependent mainly on three resources: the model of Chinese development (the Beijing consensus model), foreign policy propagation on peaceful rise and development and the Chinese culture including the spread of Chinese language.

⁵ Joseph S.Nye. *The Paradox of American Power: Why the World's only Superpower Can't Go it Alone* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) p. 14

⁶ Bates Gill and Yangzhong Huang, *Sources and Limits of Chinese 'Soft Power'*, *Survival*, Vol. 48, No. 2, 2006, p. 17.

⁷ Joseph S. Nye (Jr.). *SOFT POWER: THE MEANS TO SUCCESS IN WORLD POLITICS* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004) p. 5-6

⁸ Joshua Kurlantzick. *How China's Soft Power is Transforming the World* (London: Yale University Press, 2007) p. 5-6

⁹ Claire S. Lee. *Soft Power Made in China* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018) p. 3-4

¹⁰ State Council five year plan of PRC, 2016

The Beijing Consensus consists of three theories: the first states that China's development model is based on innovation, the second states that China's development model considers sustainability and equality as top priorities, the third states that China strives for self-determination in foreign policy¹¹. China's success story has many admirers, especially in the developing world, where the Chinese model of a mixture of authoritarian governance and fiscal discipline are more acceptable. For developing countries in Asia, Latin America, and mainly Africa, China's experience contains very important implications. In particular, the idea that an authoritarian political system can be maintained while also pursuing high economic growth has attracted the interest of the ruling elite in non-democratic countries. Authoritarian leaders in Africa and Latin America have shown tremendous interest in the Chinese development model represented by the Beijing Consensus¹².

The arguments of Peaceful Rise Theory are as follows. First, although China has accomplished rapid economic growth in a short period of time, one cannot consider China's rise a threat because its initial economic development levels were so low to begin with and the leadership is faced with accommodating a population of 1.4 billion. These domestic constraints mean that China needs to focus all its efforts on its own development for the next three generations at least. Second, China is pursuing a development strategy that strives to participate in rather than detach itself from globalization. Third, while participating in globalization, China is also pursuing independent development strategies that do not harm other countries. Fourth, China's economic development contributes to the overall economic development, prosperity, and stability¹³.

The civilization, one of Asia's ancient along with India, is China's greatest soft power asset. Among the many attributes of Chinese civilization, Confucianism is a core factor that presents Chinese values and vision in a different way from the West. Countries in Asia are familiar with Confucianism and Confucian values, which carry universal meaning in this region on par with human rights or democracy in the West. These values include the importance of family as the focal point of social structure formation; concerns over virtues and ethics; the primacy of the group over the individual; emphasis on unity or harmony and order; and hard work, frugality, and the importance of education. China's Asian values are based on the rapid expansion of the Chinese economy. Furthermore, China's civilization and historical legacies add weight to Chinese advocacy of Asian values¹⁴.

A distinctive aspect of Chinese discourse is that unlike the West, Chinese economic investment and foreign trade is not tied to any political conditions. The Chinese government avoids lecturing developing countries about human rights and democracy and how to run their affairs, and such an attitude, has given its diplomacy an "edge over Western powers like the United States"¹⁵. Not surprisingly, China's "aid without strings"—substantial and growing—has made it a major influence in the developing world, particularly in Africa. The position of China as a permanent member of the UN Security Council also helps in it exercising wide range of influence in Africa.

Before 1990s, China's policy towards Africa was mainly on political terms. China supported anti colonial and postcolonial solidarity during independence movements in Africa¹⁶. This helped china get recognised by many African states when they became independent. These policies paid off as African nations played an important and decisive role in china's entry into the UN in 1971. The symbol of China-Africa relations 1960-70s was the Tanzania-Zambia railway, built by fifty thousand labourers

¹¹ Joshua Cooper Ramo, Beijing Consensus (London: Foreign Policy Center, 2004) p. 11-12

¹² Bates Gill and Yangzhong Huang, Sources and Limits of Chinese 'Soft Power', Survival, Vol. 48, No. 2, 2006, p. 20-21

¹³ Zheng Bijian. Peaceful Rise: China's New Road to Development (Beijing: Zhonggong zhongyang dangxiao chubanshe, 2005) p. 2-8

¹⁴ Chong-Min Park and Doh Chull Sin, Do Asian Values Deter, Asian Survey, Vol. 46, No. 3, 2006, p. 343

¹⁵ Yong Deng. The New Hard Realities: Soft Power and China in Transition. Mingjiang Li (ed.) Soft Power: China's Emerging Strategy in International Politics (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2009) p. 63-80

¹⁶ Alan Hutchinson. China's African Revolution (Colorado: West View Press, 1976) p. 42

from china. 1980s was known as the ‘decade of neglect’ of Africa in China’s foreign policy¹⁷. The ‘neglect’ was later put aside after the Tiananmen Square crackdown of 1989, to resist Western sanctions as well as in competition with Taiwan over diplomatic recognition by African nations. But the current phase of economic engagement for securing natural resources to sustain China’s unprecedented growth started to take priority with the emergence of twenty-first century. The acceleration of growth and greater depth of engagement of the Chinese economy led to it becoming increasingly important in the global economy, particularly in Africa. Since 2000, China has emerged as Africa’s largest trading partner. Chinese direct investment in African countries has grown rapidly as well. Its foreign reserves stood at US\$165.6 billion in 2000 and in 2019, it stood at US\$3.2 trillion.

Today, China and its African partners interact in a wide range of sectors from cultural to military but economic pursuits lie at the very centre of Sino-African relations. China seeks to acquire oil, gas, minerals and other natural resources to promote and expand its economic growth and many African states and regions have abundance of resource reserves whose extraction is their primary economic source to generate revenue in international market. Beijing also seeks markets for Chinese companies to sell their goods and services. African governments purchase less expensive Chinese military equipment and get Chinese construction companies to develop much-needed physical infrastructure. This economic policy has been one of the most important tools for china to expand its influence and soft power in the region.

In 2010, the People’s Daily published an article in which Premier Wen Jiabao stated that China would more actively engage in “culture promotion”, highlighting the notion that soft power had become a key concept in contemporary international relations¹⁸. In the context of Africa, this involved promoting a positive image of china to Africa through media, culture, and people to people interaction. China’s media push began in earnest after January 2009, when China’s central government unveiled plans to allocate 45 billion yuan (\$6.6 billion) to fund the global expansion of Chinese state media in Africa¹⁹. In January 2012, the state-run Chinese Central Television (CCTV) established CCTV AFRICA and On December 14, 2012, China Daily, China’s largest English-language newspaper, launched its first African edition. China continuously uses its state-run media to advance its policy goals and the role of media in this regard is expected to grow more in future in Africa.

China has also increased the scale of training and scholarships to African citizens. At the 2012 Forum on China-Africa Cooperation summit (FOCAC), Hu Jintao promised to train 30,000 Africans, offer 18,000 scholarships, and build cultural and vocational skills training facilities by 2015²⁰. In comparison, the 2009 FOCAC Action Plan offered 5,500 scholar-ships and promised to train 20,000 Africans by 2012²¹. “Government-funded public institutes teaching Chinese language and culture influence with a focus on soft power. Confucius Institutes are set up with partnership between a Chinese University, a university of the host country and the Office of Chinese Language Council International (Hanban), which is an organisation under Chinese ministry of education. Since 2004, the number of Confucius Institutes in Africa has jumped from zero to 48 in 2018, according to the international consulting firm Development Re-imagined”²².

¹⁷ Ian Taylor, China’s Foreign Policy towards Africa in 1990s, *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 26, No. 3, 1990, p. 443-460

¹⁸ Yu-Shan Wu, *The Rise of China’s State-led Media Dynasty in Africa*, South African Institute of International Affairs, Occasional Paper 117, June 2012

¹⁹ Joost Akkermans, “China Plans 45 Billion Yuan Media Expansion, Morning Post Says,” *Bloomberg*, January 12, 2009

²⁰ Hu Jintao Proposes Measures in Five Priority Areas to Boost China-Africa Ties. *Xinhua*, July 19 2012

²¹ “Forum on China-Africa Cooperation Sharm El Sheikh Action Plan (2010–2012)”, *Forum on China-Africa Cooperation*, November 12, 2009

²² Liadu, Kemi, *China’s Language and Cultural Centers are Growing Faster Across Africa than We Thought*, *Quartz Africa*, August 18, 2011 <https://qz.com/africa/1351749/chinas-confucius-institutes-in-africa-spreadmandarinculture/>.

In addition to the rapid growth, an important characteristic of China's booming economic relationship with Africa is that Unlike Western countries, the Chinese government actively engages in finances, encourages and organizes Chinese business ventures into Africa. Interest-free or low interest government loans are common such as the US\$2 billion credit line at 1.5% for 17 years to Angola in 2005 for oil exploration and the US\$2 billion subsidized loans to Ghana for oil and gas projects in 2010. Also, Beijing has shown significant generosity in dealing with African states with, for example, the cancelation of over US\$10 billion in government debt in 2000–2005²³.

China has emerged as a new face of globalization and as an alternative to the West. China has presented itself as a development model which African leaders aspire and dream of. But the influence and involvement of China in Africa has also given rise to resentment by African people. There are growing African complaints against the opportunistic and sometimes predatory behaviours by the Chinese in Africa. These acts are feared as a neo-colonial mentality fuelled by cheap Chinese imports that has the capability to damage the local business environment, ruin social fabric, and undermine labour rights and employment opportunities for the locals. China building infrastructure for Africa's resources has been raising concerns among African civil society. The non-conditionality, lack of transparency and corruption involved in this kind of financial support and the negative impact it may have on Africa's overall governance is a matter of serious concern among scholars debating the negative effects of Chinese policy of current involvement in Africa. There has been fear about the possibility that the loans being provided by the Chinese may push these countries into a new cycle of debt, as seen in case of countries like Sri Lanka having similar pattern of experience, which would likely to have a negative long-term impact on the continent's economic stability. Poor environmental and social responsibility record of Chinese companies engaging in natural resources extraction has also been a grave matter of concern. Local trade union and labourers are protesting the Chinese policy and labour practices of bringing workers within Chinese projects in Africa pointing out that the potential development gains of Chinese investment for African economies are undermined by this approach. China is also being criticized at international arena for threatening to undermine the efforts by international institutions to push African governments to improve transparency, human rights and undermining African citizens' aspirations for democracy, as seen in Sudan, Zimbabwe and other similar cases in Africa, thereby increasing the likelihood of weak and failed conflict ridden States.

The more important China becomes an economic, political, and development partner for Africa, the more the Chinese government and Chinese companies will have to deal with questions regarding the effectiveness, transparency, safety and sustainability of its initiatives in Africa. It is clear that the Chinese national interest is to sustain its economic development, and focus on 'business' that favours it in Africa but as a rising global superpower it has an obligation to prove that it is a responsible leader working for the benefit for all involved in the relationship and not only in the self-interest. Opportunities and challenges for African nations involved in this relationship are immense and hence, individual or collective States in Africa must monitor these effects of Chinese influence in the region to create architecture of cooperation to maximize their benefits and deal with threats.

Chinese State has taken active and conscious policy decision to use a combination of instruments including public diplomacy, economic assistance, cultural exchanges, and international broadcasting to promote its geopolitical and economic agenda. But Unlike China, India's soft power is inherent in its history, culture, political structure and organization, and hence therefore can adopt what has been called a "passive approach" to soft power²⁴.

²³ Jean Christophe Servant, China's Trade safari in Africa, Le Monde Diplomatique, May 2005

²⁴ Joseph S. Nye (Jr.). The Future of Power(New York: Public Affairs, 2011) p. 94

In the 21st century, India found itself in a very good position to play bigger role in global politics due to its military and economic power combined with a huge soft power potential. India's policy of liberalization and nuclearization greatly enhanced its economic and military power. India's non-violent anti-colonial independence movement, participation in the Non-Aligned Movement and championing the cause of the developing countries, allowed a sense of a shared cultural unity with other decolonising countries, have been other sources of soft power. Joseph Nye counts India's liberal democratic structure as a real advantage over China in the two Asian giants' competition for global attractiveness and influence²⁵. India is comfortably well placed in possession of soft power resources due to its rich history, civilization and culture, liberal-democratic and multicultural structure, technological advancement, large and influential Diaspora and the nature of leadership India commands among the developing nations through multilateral institutions like Non-Alignment movement. Thus, what differentiates India's aspiration for global leadership is its unique persuasive soft power or what South Asia expert Steven Cohen calls "India's Reputational Power"²⁶.

India's cultural heritage is one of the most ancient, diverse and extensive cultural heritages of known human existence. Throughout history, multitude of varieties contributed to Indian accumulative culture presenting a unique example of unity in diversity. Components of the Indian culture ranging from spirituality including the spread of Dharmic Religions, its way of life, art music and craft, yoga and Ayurveda, dances and dramas, literature, cuisines represent the diversity and continuity of its past heritage.

India is the world's largest democracy. One of its biggest assets in soft power capability is successfully functional democracy. Unlike most other developing countries, India has established continuity in democratic traditions. The fact that India never had a military dictatorship and still managed to solve many of the problems it faced at the time of independence has been recognised all over the world. India has proved that democracy can work even in a developing society against all odds and is not the exclusive preserve of the rich Western countries. This particular factor has made India an inspiration for many post colonial societies mainly in Africa.

Indian Diaspora is a huge soft power asset at disposal to India. Millions of people of Indian origin spread across countries as far as Fiji, Guyana, Mauritius, Surinam, South Africa, Kenya, Uganda as well as other parts of Africa display and promote a positive image of the nation. Indians in South Africa, Kenya and Ethiopia occupy key roles in business, politics, bureaucracy, academia and health care. In Mauritius, people of Indian origin account for 68 % of the population, leading and representing the government since independence this has given India a huge advantage in comparison with other nations in areas of influence and soft power.

One of the least recognised but no less important tools of soft power for India in international arena and mainly in Africa is its presence as one of the largest peacekeeping force on the ground for the United Nations. This makes the projection of India as neutral to local and regional conflicts, supporter and promoter of Human Rights and even a source of hope for ethnic minorities prosecuted by their own government.

India's contemporary global cultural appeal i.e. Bollywood and Bangalore (IT and Software) have widely been recognised over the world. The success of Indian companies in the Information Technology (IT) sector; space technology, successful multinational companies like the Tata Group and Reliance and the worldwide recognition of the academic excellence of the Indian Institute of

²⁵ Joseph S. Nye, Springing Tiger, India Today, September 25 2006

²⁶ India Rising: The Role of Indian Diaspora in accelerating India's transition as a Global Power. The Foundation for Critical Choices for India, Pravasiya Bharatiya Divas. Hague, Netherlands. 19th September, 2009

Management (IIMs) and Indian Institute of Technology (IITs) as the centres of excellence for higher training, research and development in science, engineering and technology coupled with English language have contributed to the new image of India mainly among developing countries of Africa as they can relate to India more than china given their shared colonial past, commonwealth and use of English language.

In this age of information and its reach, Nye has argued that the side with the better story to tell often wins. India must remain the “land of the better story”²⁷. India’s entertainment industries have given India an edge over many others and have enhanced India’s image. Indian music, dance, fashion and art add to India’s growing soft power base. Along with this, the contribution of new age Indian authors to English literature has resulted in increasing awareness and interest about Indian society, polity and culture. The popularity of Indian cuisine and Yoga has amplified the world’s fascination with the Indian nation.

The first soft power action in public diplomacy policy was the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), created in 1950, for two- way cultural exchanges. The ICCR declares that their aim is to expand its reach and promote India’s ‘soft power’ abroad. India demonstrated the intention to exploit its soft power resources in a systematic manner to achieve its objectives, by creating a Public Diplomacy Division in India’s Ministry of External Affairs in 2006, in 2014 it was merged with the External Publicity Division. The Department of Culture runs bilateral exchange programs with over 70 countries, and is also the main Indian partner in the organization of multi- dimensional cultural ‘festivals’ and other targeted activities in select countries.

Unlike as in case of china where soft power is spread through a deliberate state policy, the historical sources of India’s soft power as well as India’s contemporary global cultural appeal like Bollywood, cricket, new age spirituality etc. were autonomous of the government involvement in its promotion. Recent developments suggest the changing attitude of the Indian Government and positively so in context to soft power. For example- The Government of India introduced a resolution in the United Nation on behalf of 140 co-sponsor nations to mark 2nd October as International Day of Non-Violence. And later, on 11 December 2014, the United Nations proclaimed 21 June as the International Day of Yoga.

In context to Africa, the relationship dates back centuries to ancient civilization ties between the Nile and Indus valley²⁸. Movement of people from India to Southern and Eastern Africa established a large Diaspora in these regions and continued to spread within the continent resulting to cultural exchanges at various points. India’s shared colonial past with various African Countries significantly contributed to this political and cultural connect. Further, during the late half of 20th century following independence, India saw its role as a champion of struggle against colonialism and racism. India played an important role in Bandung conference (1955) which led to the emergence of Non-Aligned Movement and used it to promote Afro-Asian solidarity. This relationship was largely based on principles of south-south cooperation, mutual benefit, equality and respect for state sovereignty. These principles set India apart from western approach to African relations based on donor-recipient to ‘economic, technical and cultural cooperation for mutual benefit’²⁹.

²⁷ Shashi Tharoor, Land of Better Story: India and Soft Power, Global Asia, Vol. 2, No. 1, 2007

²⁸ Daniel Large. India’s African Engagement. N.Kitchen (ed.) Emerging Powers of Africa (LSE-IDEAS Special Report,2013) p.28-36

²⁹ Emma Mawdsley, The non-DAC donors and the changing landscape of foreign aid: The (In) significance of India’s development cooperation with Kenya. Journal of Eastern African Studies, Vol. 4(2), No. 2, 2010, p.361–379

In 1964, India launched its Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) programme and Special Commonwealth African Assistance Plan (SCAAP). Under ITEC, India provided assistance in Training fellowships in India, Deputed Indian experts to undertake specific assignments, project aid to friendly African nations and external assistance in form of technological and economic studies. Despite Convergence on economic, political and social issues emanating from common development challenges, domestic issues and the lack of economic and political power on both sides constrained proactive engagement.

The era of 1990s transformed the globe on both political and economic fronts. The collapse of Soviet Union and the end of cold war coupled with wave of globalisation and liberalization led to the rise of Asian giants mainly China and India. India opened its economy in 1991 amid dynamic changes within the international system driven by political, economic and technological factors. Globally, both India and African States found themselves marginalised by unfair global institutions including UN Security Council as well as negotiations on climate change. The Chinese engagement and presence in Africa, given India's competitive relationship with China, necessitated a greater focus on Africa in its foreign policy. Collaboration with African States was strategically imperative for India if it wanted to project and play its role as a significant international Player. Greater presence of India in Africa also provided African leaders an alternative to the development policy of IMF and World Bank. In post cold war era, foreign policy of India has focused Africa for three main reasons: energy security mainly oil, diplomatic influence and untapped markets in Africa.

India-Africa Forum Summits (IAFS) started in 2008, eight years after China Launched FOCAC. IAFS emphasised on a partnership based on equality, mutual respect and understanding between the sides involved. Since 2008, India has intensified its efforts to engage in the continent at regional, bilateral and through people to people contacts. IAFS in 2008 (New Delhi), 2011 (Addis Ababa) and 2015 (New Delhi) culminated in the India Africa Framework for strategic cooperation. During the summit in 2015, the Indian government also significantly increased its development initiatives in Africa by making commitments for additional concessional credit lines worth US\$ 10 billion. The grant package also included a US\$ 100 million India-Africa Development Fund for infrastructure creation, US\$ 10 million India-Africa Health Fund to build capacity by training African health-care workers and researchers in Indian hospitals, and fifty thousand scholarships for training and studying in India between 2015 and 2020, India also committed to the continuation of support for expanding the Pan African e-Network project and institutions of skilling, training, and learning across Africa. One of India's most important development cooperation projects in recent years, the Pan-African e-Network, has been referred as India's flagship programme in Africa. Formally announced in September 2004, it was launched in July 2007 in Addis Ababa. It aims to connect schools and hospitals on the African continent with institutions based in India with the use of technology.

India's engagement in Africa takes place at three levels: Pan- African, Regional and bilateral. Apart from these, India's relation with Africa has also been enhanced by a comprehensive set of diplomatic mechanisms and summits such as, India – Africa Forum Summit (IAFS), India Regional Economic Communities (RECs) meetings, annual India – Africa trade ministers meeting, regular meetings of joint working groups, inter-governmental joint commissions, foreign office consultations, and business enclaves. These also include the crucial 'Pan-African e-Network' project and interactions at various multilateral forums such as the 'Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation' (IORARC). "Unlike the predominantly state-driven approach of China, India's entry into Africa is spearheaded by private companies covering sectors such as telecommunications, agriculture, hotels, mining, rail and road infrastructure and pharmaceuticals. The Tata Group, Mahindra and Mahindra, Fortis, Escort and Apollo have begun looking to the continent of Africa as a source of raw materials and markets. The dramatic growth of the Indian private sector in Africa has taken place under the stewardship of the

Confederation of Indian Industries (CII), the publicly owned EXIM Bank of India and major Indian companies. Between 2004 and 2011, the CII and EXIM Bank have jointly organised seven major meetings that brought together key Indian and African private sector organisations and government representatives to discuss and review the progress made in deepening economic engagement between India and Africa³⁰. The current government in India has tried to forge closer relation with regions having a large Indian Diaspora mainly in East and Southern Africa. It also aims to revive Indian Ocean's historical maritime routes through cultural initiatives such as Project Mausam, to further India's soft power in the region. India today is also trying to use its Diaspora by granting overseas Indian citizenship.

Though public diplomacy in promotion and leverage of soft power has been one of the important goals of the current government, the indirect and inconsistent nature of India's soft power remains less influential to china for two primary reasons. First, Indian diplomacy has neglected soft power as an important tool of statecraft and has only recently understood and incorporated 'cultural diplomacy' directly in foreign policy. Second, soft power cannot really exist without some initial hard power achievements (economic and political projection of power). While goodwill for India abroad has largely been generated in an unplanned manner, India does have the capacity to promote its soft power through public diplomacy and recent advancement in this regard is welcome sign for the nation but it must understand the political and cultural contexts of each country with which it engages.

India has to compete with soft power of other countries, especially as it expands its influence all over the world. India, in some ways has an advantage in this competition of influence and art of attraction over China because of its soft power resources. As the world's largest democracy, with a vibrant press and thriving entertainment industry, India has huge soft power advantage over authoritarian China and its state controlled media. India can take advantage of that goodwill as Asia's two giants' battle for influence in the region and around the world. Another point is that India's rise, unlike the rise of China, is not being viewed with trepidation and alarm in many countries³¹.

Being a democracy, India can assert a political influence in the world, especially now in developing countries mainly Africa. Today, when more countries and population are aspiring for democracy and opting for a democratic model of development, the Chinese path, although mesmerising, is a unrealistic dream while India offers a relatable and familiar chaotic model of development, giving realistic hope for African Nations to aspire for. Today, when the emerging players and traditional powers are competing in accessing African resources, the edge for India is its historical goodwill, large Indian Diaspora along with its constant urge to adopt all possible strategy to retain this unique strength. Furthermore, India is dissociating itself from China by displaying a distinct investment and development assistance profile combined with a strong focus on capacity building. Besides, Indian companies usually rely on African labour, whereas many Chinese companies almost exclusively use low-paid Chinese labour³² but the potency of soft power depends not only on China or India, but also on whether Africa is willing to buy it. The challenge is whether the current soft power capabilities and effort in its promotion will be helpful in preserving this goodwill?

³⁰ S Bhattacharya. Engaging Africa: India's Interests in the African Continent, Past and Present. Fantu Cheru and Cyril Obi (ed.) The Rise of China and India in Africa(London: Zed Books, 2010)

³¹ Uma Purshuthoman, Shifting Perceptions of Power: Soft Power and India's Foreign Policy, Journal of Peace Studies, Vol. 17, No. 7, 2010

³² Evious Zgou and Oliver Morrissey. The Impact of China and India on Sub-Saharan Africa: Opportunities, Challenges and Policies (London: Commonwealth Secretariat, 2011) .

In the eyes of African States, The two Asian giants have made great progress in transforming their backward economies and have been able to reduce absolute poverty dramatically (particularly in the case of China) in a relatively short period of time, under the guidance of a strong, development oriented activist state. There is a growing view that African countries can learn a lot from the Chinese and Indian economic reform programs of the past thirty years without having to import either the "Beijing Consensus" or the "Delhi Consensus" to Africa in their entirety depending upon the fulfilment of developmental aspirations of the African Public.

The engagement of China and India with Africa has far reaching implications for the world and the continent. Both Asian powers have mostly managed to compartmentalize their differences and engage in soft power projection in Africa, characterized by accommodation and competition with each other. The focus should be peaceful development of Africa, consistent to accepted global norms and good governance. Here, a potential opportunity exists for Africa to turn the competition between these powers into a development opportunity for the continent. An African Plan of Action is required to assess the impact of involvement by both these countries on a case to case basis and decisions should be made accordingly so that policies are formed for strategic development of Africa and mutual benefit of all the parties involved.

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