



Mains Practice Question

Q. Discuss India's use of soft power as a foreign policy tool in the context of an emerging multipolar world order. Highlight its key role in enhancing India's global standing and influence. (250 words)

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Approach:

- Briefly introduce the concept of soft power and its significance in international relations.
- Discuss India's key soft power tools, particularly in the context of a multipolar world and highlight how these tools enhance India's global standing and influence.
- Conclude suitably.

Introduction:

In an increasingly multipolar world, India has strategically used **soft power** as a core component of its foreign policy. **Joseph Nye** defines soft power as the ability to influence others through attraction and persuasion, rather than coercion. India's soft power is evident through its rich cultural and political values, as well as diplomatic efforts. A prime example is the promotion of Yoga, exemplified by the establishment of the International Day of Yoga, showcasing India's cultural diplomacy on the global stage.

Body:

India's Use of Soft Power as a Foreign Policy Tool:

- **Cultural Diplomacy:** One of the most prominent aspects of India's soft power is the global popularity of yoga, with the United Nations declaring **June 21 as International Yoga Day**.
 - The promotion of Indian culture through initiatives such as the **Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR)** has enhanced India's global appeal.
 - **Bollywood's global influence** through its music and dance, helps enhance India's attractiveness, particularly in **South Asia** and other parts of the world.
 - Indian food has gained worldwide popularity for its **rich flavors and diversity**.
- **Humanitarian Values & Global Governance:** India's philosophy of **non-violence, peace, and tolerance**, rooted in ancient spiritual traditions like **Buddhism, Jainism, and Hinduism**, has enabled it to position itself as a moral leader in global governance.
 - India's commitment to **peaceful coexistence**, as demonstrated in its foreign policy of **'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam'** (the world is one family), and **non-alignment approach** resonates with the global world.
- **World Largest Diaspora:** The Indian diaspora, the largest globally with around 35.4 million people (2024), plays a vital role in enhancing India's global influence.
 - They act as **cultural ambassadors** by promoting Indian festivals, values, and businesses abroad. They contribute through investments, trade, and remittances, amounting to a record **\$129.1 billion in 2024**, the highest ever received by any country.
 - They advocate for India's interests, strengthening diplomatic ties.
- **Economic Diplomacy:** India's rapid economic growth and its position as the world's fourth-largest economy have strengthened its global presence, especially in IT and outsourcing, supported by a

skilled, English-speaking workforce.

- **Multilateral Diplomacy:** Through active roles in **BRICS, the UN, and G-20**, India promotes global issues like climate change, sustainable development, and peacekeeping.
 - It also extends **development aid** and technical assistance to countries in **Africa, South Asia, and the Indian Ocean Region**.
 - Initiatives like the India-Africa Forum Summit reflect its commitment to South-South cooperation and reinforce its image as a responsible global player.

India's Soft Power Role in Enhancing Global Standing:

- **Big Brother Role:** India's leadership in South Asia is crucial to its foreign policy. India's **"Big Brother" role**, enshrined in doctrines like the Gujral Doctrine, stresses non-reciprocity and aid to smaller neighbors.
 - This strengthens India's image as a peacekeeper and stabilizer in the region.
- **Resolving Regional Disputes:** India's proactive role in resolving regional conflicts, like in **Sri Lanka and Nepal**, further solidifies its influence, promoting regional integration and stability.
- **Strategic Influence:** India's increasing engagement with global powers, like the USA, **Russia, and China**, demonstrates its growing diplomatic and strategic weight. India has also pushed for a **permanent seat in the UN Security Council**, aligning its ambitions with global governance reforms.
- **Public Diplomacy:** India's emphasis on **people-to-people exchanges**, academic collaborations, and cultural events, like the **Indian Film Festivals and educational scholarships**, has amplified its influence.

Challenges and Suggested Measures to Enhance India's Soft Power

Challenges	Measures to Overcome
Internal Socio-Economic Issues	Address poverty, inequality, and social tensions through inclusive development policies to enhance soft power diplomacy.
Inadequate Funding	Increase private sector investment in cultural diplomacy through SPVs.
Challenges in Extending Beyond South Asia	Promoting bilateral relations through regional cooperation, educational initiatives, and business collaborations in Africa, Latin America and European countries.

Conclusion:

Overcoming internal challenges and expanding its influence beyond South Asia will be vital for India's continued success in shaping the global order. As a rising power, India's strategic use of soft power will remain an essential part of its foreign policy in the coming decades.