

Unleashing India's Soft Power Potential: A Strategic Examination of its Role in Shaping Global Diplomacy at the G20 Summit 2023

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Abstract:

This article explores India's accelerating soft power capabilities and its strategic significance in shaping global diplomacy within the context of the G20 Summit and India's presidency in 2023. India's rise as a global power, characterised by its rich cultural heritage, dynamic film industry, and influential diaspora, positions it as a crucial player in the arena of soft power. This study conducts a comprehensive analysis of India's soft power assets, including Bollywood, yoga, cuisine, and ancient traditions, and evaluates their potential impact on international relations. By examining India's diplomatic initiatives and engagement at the G20 Summit, this article elucidates the ways in which India's soft power is harnessed to bolster its global influence and forge diplomatic ties. Through an interdisciplinary approach, encompassing political science, international relations, and cultural studies, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of India's role in contemporary global diplomacy and highlights the significance of soft power in the 21st century geopolitical landscape.

Key Words:

Soft power, diplomacy, G20, inclusive growth, foreign policy, Global South, Sustainable development, economic stability, 21st century, strategic, Yoga, cultural cohesion

Introduction

G20 New Delhi Leaders' Declaration which was held from 9 to 10 in the month of September in 2023 under the theme "One Earth, One Family and One Future" or 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' whereby the decisions were made to determine the future of our people and our planet. The G20 Summit is a premier platform for international diplomacy, bringing together the world's major economies to discuss critical global issues. The 2023 Summit had given an outstanding outreach to India's aspiration and benevolent attitudes towards the international stage. India, being the fifth largest economy always has been cherished its soft power strategy and influence as a global leader, not only as major economic player but also as a budding soft power giant. Being the largest democratic country in the world, India has been embedded as the hub of global economic governance. Over the period of two decades global power is becoming more diffuse, smarter and more asymmetric (Cooper, 2013). The G20 has evolved into a vital forum for addressing global economic challenges and promoting international cooperation. Its ability to respond to crises, coordinate economic

policies and activities, and foster sustainable growth makes it influential force in the world of global economic governance. The G20's continued relevance in the 21st century depends on its capability to adapt to evolving global economic dynamics, address its limitations, and engage with a broader range of stakeholders. India assumed the presidency of the G20 in 2022 at 17th Summit of G20 which was held in Bali, Indonesia where it intended to strengthen multilateralism and global governance further to build a peaceful, sustainable and prosperous world for all (Gautam, 2022).

In the ever – evolving landscape of international relations, soft power has become an increasingly vital tool for nations to influence global politics, culture, and economics. India, with its rich history, diverse culture, and growing global presence, possesses a vast reserve of soft power. As the world eagerly anticipates the G20 Summit in 2023, India has a unique opportunity to harness and showcase its soft power potential on the global stage.

Defining Soft Power

Soft power, a term coined by Joseph Nye in his Political Science Quarterly, “Soft Power and American Foreign Policy”, refers to the ability of a nation to shape the preference of others through appeal attraction rather than coercion or force. It involves various elements such as culture, art, education, and diplomacy, all of which can profoundly impact a nation's standing in the international arena. For India, a nation with a deep-rooted history from ancient Harappan Civilisation to recent Decolonisation era and vibrant culture, the deployment of its soft power can play a pivotal role in shaping global diplomacy at the G20 Summit 2023.

Cultural Heritage

One of India's most significant sources of soft power is its cultural heritage. With a history that dates back thousands of years India's traditions art, and philosophy have influenced people across the world. The Indian diaspora, spread across the globe, serves as a living testament to the country's cultural impact. At the G20 Summit, India can leverage its cultural richness to promote dialogue, understanding, and cooperation among nations.

Bollywood, India's prolific film industry is a prime example of cultural soft power. It has a global fanbase and has been instrumental in projecting a modern and dynamic image of India.. The global appeal of Bollywood, along with India's classical music and dance forms, can foster cultural exchanges and foster international relations.

Economic Diplomacy

India's rapid economic growth and technological advancements have been a significant source of its growing soft power. The country's soft power industry, for instance, is globally renowned, and its contributions to the information technology sector have positioned India as a technology hub. As such, India

can offer insights and cooperation in fostering technological innovation and economic growth at the G20 Summit 2023.

Yoga Diplomacy

Yoga, which has its roots in India, has gained immense popularity worldwide. The International Day of Yoga which is being celebrated on 21ST June every year, initiated by India at the United Nations, showcases India's commitment to global well-being and its soft power influence. India can use yoga diplomacy to promote health and well-being at the G20 Summit 2023, emphasising the role of traditional practices in maintaining physical and mental health.

Diplomacy through Education

India's robust education system and large number of international students particularly from Bhutan, Nepal, Afghanistan and some of the South Asian and East Asian countries, attracts to contribute to its soft power. By offering educational opportunities and promoting academic exchange, India can enhance its diplomatic relations at the G20 Summit. Collaborations with other member nations in areas such as research, innovation, and skill development can be mutually beneficial.

Global Health Initiatives

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, India's pharmaceutical industry and vaccine manufacturing capabilities gained global recognition. The supply of India's indigenous vaccines namely Covishield and Covaxin to numerous countries demonstrated India's commitment to global health. At the G20 summit, India has led discussions on global health challenges and collaborates on strategies to enhance pandemic preparedness.

Cultural Diplomacy

India's cultural diplomacy, through its many missions and cultural centres abroad, plays a critical role in promoting mutual understanding. The exchange of art, literature, and intellectual discourse can foster international harmony and collaboration among nations. These avenues can be employed strategically at the G20 Summit to strengthen diplomatic ties.

As India prepared to host the G20 Summit in 2023, it could recognise the untapped potential of its soft power resources. India's cultural heritage, economic growth, yoga, education and health initiatives all provide unique avenues to influence and shape global diplomacy. By leveraging these soft power assets, India could create a lasting impact on the global stage, fostering cooperation, understanding and mutual progress among the world's leading economies. The 18th G20 Summit has provided an invaluable opportunity for India to unleash its soft power potential and redefine its role in shaping the future of global diplomacy.

India's Influence on G20 Logo and Theme

The G20 logo draws inspiration from the vibrant colours of India's national flag – saffron, white and green, and blue, 'Bharat' written in Devnagari Script. Apart from this, the theme of India's G20 Presidency – "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" or "One Earth, One Family, One Future" – has been drawn from the ancient Sanskrit text of the Maha Upanishad. Eventually, the theme affirms the value of all life – human, animal, plant, and their interconnectedness on the planet Earth and the wider universe.

India's influence on the G20 logo and theme for 2023 demonstrated the country's commitment in order to promote sustainable development and inclusive growth on a global scale. The Ashoka Chakra in the logo and the concept of "Dharma" in the theme symbolise India's rich heritage and cultural values. As the G20 nations convened under India's leadership, they were guided by the principles of responsibility, sustainability, and inclusivity, reflecting the nation's ancient wisdom in addressing the challenges of the modern world. India's influence on the G20 Presidency left an enduring mark, emphasising the importance of cooperation and shared responsibilities in shaping a better future for all.

The Vibrant Colour Palette

India's influence on the G20 logo extends to its vibrant colour palette. The colours used in the logo draw inspiration from India's diverse cultural landscape. The vibrant reds, oranges and greens reflect the nation's enthusiasm, energy, and eco-consciousness. They symbolize India's commitment to sustainable development and its effort to address climate change and environmental challenges.

The G20 logo is a visual representation of the host country's cultural and historical identity. Most significantly, India's leadership left a profound influence on the logo, reflecting country's rich heritage. The Ashoka Chakra symbolizes India's philosophy of "Dharma; Sustainable development and inclusive Growth". The theme highlights India's dedication to promoting a sense of responsibility among member nations towards global development and inclusive prosperity.

Key Initiatives of G20 New Delhi Leaders' Declaration

The G20 Summit of 2023 marked a crucial moment in the ongoing efforts of the world's major economies to address pressing global challenges. During this summit, the G20 nations launched key initiatives aimed at advancing sustainable development, ensuring inclusive growth and addressing pressing global issues. Following are the key initiatives at the G20 New Delhi Leaders' Declaration:

1. **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs);** A central focus of the G20 Summit in 2023 was to reinvigorate the commitment to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The g20 members reaffirmed their dedication in order to achieve these goals, which encompass various aspects of sustainability, including poverty reduction, climate action, gender equity, and clean energy. Paragraph 22 and 24 of G20 New Delhi Leaders' Declaration stated about accelerating progress on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and committed to taking collective action for effective and

timely implementation of the G20 2023 Action Plan to Accelerate Progress on the SDGs, including its High-level principles.

2. **Green Finance:** Recognising the need for financing to support the transition to a more sustainable and eco-friendly future, the G20 initiated discussions on green finance. This initiative sought to create frameworks that would enable the mobilisation of private and public capital for environmentally sustainable projects and investments.
3. **Digital Inclusion:** As the digital economy continues to play a pivotal role in global growth, the G20 launched an initiative to ensure digital inclusion. This effort aimed to bridge the digital divide by expanding access to digital infrastructure, promoting digital literacy, and creating an environment conducive to e-commerce and technological innovation.
4. **Climate Action:** Climate Change remained high on the G20 agenda in 2023. The summit saw the launch of initiatives designed to accelerate efforts to combat climate change. This included discussions on clean energy, renewable technologies, and the role of G20 nations in achieving global climate targets. Paragraph 39 of the G20 New Delhi Declaration talks about India's ambitious Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), carbon neutrality and net-zero considering different national circumstances.
5. **Inclusive Growth and Decent Work:** In line with the theme of 'Dharma', the G20 emphasized the importance of inclusive growth. Initiatives related to labour rights, gender equality in the workforce, and the promotion of decent work were discussed to ensure that economic growth benefits must be included to all segments of society.
6. **Vaccine Access and Global Health:** The COVID-19 Pandemic underscored the importance of global health and vaccine access. In 2023, the G20 continued its support for equitable vaccine distribution, including providing resources for the access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerators. Additionally, discussions revolved around strengthening global health infrastructure to respond to future health crises effectively.
7. **Anti-Corruption:** Efforts to combat corruption and promote transparency were central to the G20's agenda. Initiatives aimed to enhance corporate governance, strengthen anti-corruption measures, and encourage the responsible use of public resources.

Conclusion

The 18th G20 Summit of 2023, hosted under the leadership of India, exemplified the forum's commitment to addressing the world's most pressing challenges. The key initiatives launched during the summit were centred on promoting and ensuring sustainable development, accelerating inclusive growth, and tackling global issues such as climate change and health crises. As the G20 nations continue to collaborate, these initiatives will play a vital role in shaping the global agenda. The results of the 2023 Summit serve as a testament to the power of international cooperation and the shared responsibility of nations to work together in creating a more sustainable and inclusive future for all. Eventually, in a nutshell we can say, the G20 remains a key driver of global governance and policymaking, and its initiatives will continue to have a profound impact on the global landscape in the years to come.

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