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“Soft power” of India: the role of culture in globalization processes

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Abstract. The article is devoted to the analysis of the concept of "soft power" in the context of the foreign policy strategy of India. The paper examines important aspects of cultural diplomacy, religious and philosophical heritage, the influence of cinema, culinary traditions, and the role of the Indian diaspora as a means of transnational influence. The author emphasizes that the "soft power" of India is formed not only as an element of cultural expression but also as a purposeful political and diplomatic resource, which is actively used to form a positive image of the country in the international arena. The historical development of Indian "soft power", from Mahatma Gandhi's nonviolent policies to the Indian national movement and modern initiatives led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has been highlighted. It is noted that India consciously uses cultural and spiritual heritage as a means of forming a global narrative, in which the country is seen as a carrier of universal values: tolerance, absence of violence, wisdom, and peaceful coexistence. The role of the Indian diaspora, especially in the West and the Persian Gulf, is also seen as an important mediator in the transmission of cultural codes and values. The diaspora acts not only as a cultural repeater but also as an active participant in economic, political, and educational processes, strengthening India's influence abroad. In addition, problems related to the fragmentation of diaspora communities, the politicization of identity, and social inequality were also noted. In conclusion, the author comes to the conclusion that Indian "soft power" is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that combines cultural, historical, and political elements, as a result of which India strengthens its position in the global competition for the consciousness and sympathy of the international community.

Keywords: India, soft power, diaspora, culture, ethnical influence, globalization, foreign policy, Modi, cultural diplomacy.

Introduction

The concept of "soft power", proposed by the American political scientist Joseph NYE, is widely used in modern international affairs. This approach currently allows states to promote their interests without resorting to military force, but to conduct a well-thought-out and skillful policy in their target regions. In political science, soft power means the ability to influence others through cultural means, such as traditions, language, and values, rather than through coercion. Over time, soft power has become an important strategy for global relations, as countries try to win hearts and minds by appeal, and not by pressure. Although the term itself was used in the 20th century, the basic principle of influence by attraction can be attributed to the ancient concepts of the organization of society [1].

As one of the oldest civilizations in the world, with its rich historical heritage, democratic values and diverse cultural diversity, India has taken an important place on the world stage as a weighty consumer of "soft power". From Bollywood, Yoga and a large diaspora to spiritual practices and intellectual contributions, India offers a unique model of applying "soft power" that finds an answer among many people around the world. That is why the richness of cinema and dance becomes a reflection of the spirit of the country and its appeal. These cultural elements are spreading abroad thanks to the diaspora, which is becoming a bridge between India and other countries that have become a new homeland for them. It is important to note that it is the people who are India's main "soft power" influencers. Further, this cultural impact is enhanced by the Indian diaspora out there all over the world. They serve to bridge cultural divides and create platforms for greater cross-cultural engagements, acting as ambassadors by initiating community initiatives, organising cultural festivals and running businesses. This dynamic diaspora feeds into broader international discourses about multiculturalism and diversity, revealing how Indian culture can be fitted to appeal in all manner of socio-economic niches.

Materials and research methods

The methods of case study and content analysis were used in the article. The literature of foreign researchers on the topic of this work, the development of "soft power" through ethnic and cultural influence, was analyzed. In addition, specific examples were studied (cinema, ethnocultural associations, yoga day, etc.), case studies on the main assets of "soft power" and different components used by the Indian government, especially the Modi government.

Results and discussions

Cultural globalization is a flow and a mixture of cultural practices, ideas, and symbols that go beyond national borders. Therefore, the national identity, firmly entrenched in language and culture over the centuries and even millennia during globalization, is only gradually changing (despite any harsh nationalist reaction), but at the same time, it is beginning to expand. It is aimed at proving the flexibility and clarity of Indian culture in various socio-economic conditions. In the

age of cultural globalization, the dissemination of national identity is a complex and multifaceted process. It must constantly change through intercultural dialogue and exchange. Instead, it can consist of elements of several cultures, which implies self-identification based not only on the aspects that make up the heritage of their ancestors, but also on aspects characterized by global influences.

This is true for India as well, where it has become quite important to study the cultural side of globalization and receive more attention than ever before in shaping our perceptions towards other countries on a larger scale. INDIA HAS employed a series of strategic interventions that have come to define how an ancient, culturally rich nation-state can successfully leverage its own heritage and transmit soft power.

Unique form of application of Joseph Ney's concept in India, a striking example of which is the policy of Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhi's policy of not exploiting violence shows that soft influence has a huge impact that can lead to revolution. The success of M. Gandhi's policy is associated with the deep introduction of the principle of non-violence into Indian culture. The Central terms in the concept of M. Gandhi are "Ahimsa" and "Satyagraha". "Ahimsa" (translated from Sanskrit, meaning "not harm") is "the avoidance of killing and harming all living things with actions, words, and thoughts; a fundamental and first virtue according to all systems of Indian practical philosophy [2].

India has shown its "soft power" for centuries. Historically, India has been a melting pot for countless religions, communities, languages, cultures, and Customs for centuries. As part of establishing contact with the Indian diaspora in 1948, then Indian Foreign Minister Menon turned to the "heads of Indian missions and post offices abroad" to provide information on their Indian ancestry, employment, economic and political situation, and dealings with them in those countries [3].

In 1948, in the process of establishing contacts with the Indian diaspora, the then Minister of foreign affairs of India turned to the "heads of Indian missions and post offices abroad" with a request for information about the Indian origin of the people living there, their employment, economic and political situation and relations with them. To establish and establish relations with international entities and the Indian diaspora, the Government of India established two institutions.

The Cultural Relations Council of India (Cultural Relations Council of India) was founded in 1950 and is engaged in the promotion of Indian culture in the world. The Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) and the Indian Council for International Affairs (ICWA) seek to restore and strengthen ties with various countries and regions. One of the goals of India's struggle for freedom was to revive and strengthen the country's cultural ties with the outside world. The ICCR has more than 35 cultural centers around the world organized as part of India's respective missions [4]. These centers act as long-term platforms for cultural exchange and dialogue, fostering people-to-people ties and promoting a deeper understanding of Indian heritage among foreign audiences. This approach ensures that India's cultural diplomacy is not only symbolic but also sustained and strategic.

The most striking example of such an organization is the Salem Namaste ethnocultural association in the Mangystau region of the Republic of Kazakhstan, based on the Assembly of

people of Kazakhstan, which is a unique phenomenon, since Indians have not historically lived and/or been resettled in the country like other ethnic groups.

The globalization of Bollywood cinema has intensified with the advent of streaming platforms. Netflix and Amazon Prime ranked Indian films among the top 10 in 70 countries, due to the growing interest not only in the diaspora, but also in "alternative Hollywood". However, the success of directors such as Mira Nair ("Calcutta, I love you") is based on overcoming stereotypes — their works combine local stories with universal themes of migration and identity. The Indian film industry, with Hollywood in the twentieth century, has become a global phenomenon. At the end of 2010, by the annual production of films, India took first place among competitors. Indian films are now being shown there are more than 90 countries around the world in cinemas. Released in India in 2009, in total, about 2,500 films, of which 1,280 are feature films [6]. 100% of direct account foreign investment has managed to make the Indian film market more attractive for foreign companies such as "20th Century Fox», «Sony Pictures», «Walt Disney Pictures», and others [7]. India is rich in talent, and recognized film figures all over the world. Among the famous Indian cinematographers, there are such surnames as Vishwanath, Bapu, Satyajit Rai, Iyer, and others. In addition, competition with Nigerian Nollywood and South Korean Dora forces Bollywood to invest in cross-cultural collaboration and expand its audience.

Diaspora writers such as Jhumpa Lahiri face a duality: they are perceived in the West as the "voice of India", although the traditional and racist behavior of host societies is often criticized in their works. Rushdie's novel "Satanic poems" became a symbol of the collision of freedom of speech and cultural censorship and moved beyond literature into politics. In art, projects such as the exhibition "India: through time and space" at the Louvre show in 2022, how the diaspora integrates historical heritage by combining traditional methods (such as Mughal miniatures) with digital media and challenging Eurocentrism in museum stories.

Although 30% of Silicon Valley employees are Indian (NFAP report, 2023) [8], this is not just the result of a "brain leak". Programs such as the global diaspora platform of the ruling class of India create networks of reverse knowledge transfer: for example, Subbash Hochgard, a professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, is developing technologies for flights to Mars together with ISRO. Indian universities (e.g., IISc) actively interact with the diaspora to turn migration into a bilateral development resource. However, the imbalance remains: 70% of India's STEM students remain abroad due to bureaucracy and lack of funding in their home country.

The diaspora's success in politics (Kamala Harris, Rishi Sunak) is linked to the strategy of "silent integration": communities focus on education, legal activism and media presentation, avoiding contradictions. For example, Indian American organizations have invested 115 million in lobbying for H-1B (2020-2023) visa agreements. Cultural festivals such as Diwali in London or Sydney, attended by millions of people, have become instruments of Public Diplomacy and have cemented India's image as a "peaceful power". However, this is criticized: a part of the diaspora is accused of supporting the nationalist agenda of the ruling BDP party, which provokes a debate about the politicization of cultural identity.

India is a polyethnic state with large cultural diversity. The Indian diaspora, numbering 25 million globally, emerges as a strategic soft power resource. It holds the second place in the

largest diaspora after China. Western-based diaspora elites, including CEOs of major tech firms like Microsoft and Google, bolster India's image as a hub of talent and innovation.

The Indian diaspora has made a significant contribution to the establishment of the International Yoga Day, celebrated annually by the United Nations on June 21. This initiative gained special relevance after Prime Minister Narendra Modi came to power in 2014 (Table 1).

Table 1. ICCR Cultural Centers



As part of its foreign policy, the Indian government has made increased efforts to promote the country's "soft power" and use it in international relations. Unlike his predecessors, since his first days as prime Minister, Modi has made efforts to strengthen relations with the Indian diaspora and increase its importance in the implementation of foreign policy goals. This shows a strategic approach to using the global Indian community as an important tool on the international stage [5].

The role of Indian culture as a "soft power" consists of the following aspects.

1. Gastronomy
2. Cinematography
3. Literature
4. Entrepreneurship
5. Philosophy

The success of Indian cuisine abroad is due not only to its diverse tastes but also to the economic strategies of migrants. Opening restaurants is often a way of economic integration for the diaspora-according to the NRAI (National Restaurant Association of India), Indian establishments account for 12% of the American ethnic cuisine market. The adaptation of dishes to local tastes (for example, less spicy curries in Europe) demonstrates the flexibility of the diaspora's entrepreneurial model, which contrasts with the more conservative approaches of other culinary traditions. The phenomenon of "Chuck China" (Indo-Chinese cuisine) in the

UK reflects the transnational dialogue of cultures in which migrants reinterpret their identity through culinary creativity.

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Despite advances, the diaspora is facing crises of intergenerational cultural transmission: young people in the West often move away from "too traditional" identities, which is reflected in the increase in mixed marriages (40% in Canada, 2021 census). At the same time, migrants from India (35% of the UAE population) do not find their way to citizenship and remain marginalized in the Gulf countries. This creates a dichotomy between the "elite" and the "working-class diaspora" and deepens inequality.

Conclusion

According to the phenomenon, India's "soft power" is not only a collection of cultural practices and symbols, but also a strategically constructed and flexibly adaptable tool for global influence. In contrast to the traditional understanding of power as a source of pressure, the Indian approach is based on commitment, compassion, and cultural self-expression, which is especially effective in the context of cultural globalization. With the resources of its centuries-old civilization, India is reinventing cultural heritage in a modern way, transforming it into universal and in-demand forms, from yoga and Bollywood to gastronomy and philosophy.

The diaspora, which not only conveys culture but also actively participates in the formation of the country's foreign policy image, is a key factor in strengthening the "soft power" of India. This network of Indian communities around the world demonstrates the ability for self-organization, effective integration, and cultural diplomacy. The influence of Indians in politics, science, and business, especially in Western countries, reflects a deep change in the role of a migrant from an object of integration to a subject of global dialogue. However, this change is not uniform: there is a stratification between the privileged part of the diaspora and migrant workers, especially in the Persian Gulf countries, which raises issues of social justice and the ethics of the exported "soft power" model.

Especially under Narendra Modi, the Indian government is pursuing a consistent policy of institutionalizing cultural influence, from strengthening relations with the diaspora to establishing cultural centers around the world. This policy is aimed not only at promoting the image of India as a "country of spirituality and innovation" but also at realizing specific geopolitical and economic interests. In this sense, culture becomes a stage of strategic interaction and competition, and not a sphere outside politics. So, the "soft power" of India is not only a cultural phenomenon, but also a well-thought-out part of the state strategy, which includes both historical identity and the modern realities of the global world. This suggests that in the era of post-hegemony, the decisive influencing factors in the international arena are the cultural capital and the ability to conduct an inter-civilizational dialogue.

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Үндістанның «жұмсақ күші»: жаһандану процестеріндегі мәдениеттің рөлі

Аңдатпа. Мақала Үндістанның сыртқы саяси стратегиясы контекстіндегі «жұмсақ күш» ұғымын талдауға арналған. Мақалада мәдени дипломатияның маңызды аспектілері, діни және философиялық мұралар, киноның әсері, аспаздық дәстүрлер және Үнді диаспорасының трансұлттық ықпал ету құралы ретіндегі рөлі қарастырылған. Автор Үндістанның «жұмсақ күші» тек мәдени көріністің элементі ретінде ғана емес, сонымен бірге халықаралық аренада елдің жағымды имиджін қалыптастыру үшін белсенді қолданылатын мақсатты саяси және дипломатиялық ресурс ретінде қалыптасатынын баса айтады... Махатма Гандидің зорлық-зомбылықсыз саясатынан Бастап Үндістанның ұлттық қозғалысына және Премьер-Министр Нарендра Моди бастаған заманауи бастамаларға дейінгі Үнділік «жұмсақ күштің» тарихи дамуы ерекше атап өтілді. Үндістан мәдени және рухани мұраны саналы түрде жаһандық баяндауды қалыптастыру құралы ретінде пайдаланатыны атап өтілді, онда ел жалпыадамзаттық құндылықтардың тасымалдаушысы ретінде қарастырылады: толеранттылық, зорлық-зомбылықтың болмауы, даналық және бейбіт қатар өмір сүру. Үнді диаспорасының, әсіресе Батыс Пен парсы Шығанағындағы рөлі мәдени кодтар мен құндылықтарды жеткізуде маңызды делдал ретінде де қарастырылады. Диаспора тек мәдени қайталаушы ретінде ғана емес, Сонымен бірге Үндістанның шетелдегі ықпалын нығайта отырып, экономикалық, саяси және білім беру процестерінің белсенді қатысушысы ретінде де әрекет етеді. Сонымен қатар, диаспора қауымдастықтарының бытыраңқылығына, жеке басын саясаттандыруға және әлеуметтік теңсіздікке байланысты проблемалар да атап өтілді. Қорытындылай келе, автор Үнділік "жұмсақ күш" мәдени, тарихи және саяси элементтерді біріктіретін күрделі және көп қырлы құбылыс деген қорытындыға келеді, нәтижесінде Үндістан сана мен жанашырлық үшін жаһандық бәсекелестікте өз позициясын нығайтады.

Түйін сөздер. Үндістан, жұмсақ күш, диаспора, мәдениет, этникалық ықпал, жаһандану, сыртқы саясат, Моди, мәдени дипломатия.

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«Мягкая сила» Индии: роль культуры в процессах глобализации

Аннотация. Статья посвящена анализу понятия "мягкая сила" в контексте внешнеполитической стратегии Индии. В статье рассматриваются важные аспекты культурной дипломатии, религиозного и философского наследия, влияния кино, кулинарных традиций и роли

индийской диаспоры как инструмента транснационального влияния. Автор подчеркивает, что "мягкая сила" Индии формируется не только как элемент культурного самовыражения, но и как целенаправленный политический и дипломатический ресурс, активно используемый для формирования положительного имиджа страны на международной арене... Особое внимание было уделено историческому развитию индийской "мягкой силы", от ненасильственной политики Махатмы Ганди до национального движения Индии и современных инициатив во главе с Премьер-министром Нарендрой Моди. Отмечается, что Индия сознательно использует культурное и духовное наследие как средство формирования глобального повествования, в котором страна рассматривается как носитель общечеловеческих ценностей: толерантности, отсутствия насилия, мудрости и мирного сосуществования. Роль индийской диаспоры, особенно на Западе и в Персидском заливе, также рассматривается как важный посредник в передаче культурных кодов и ценностей. Диаспора выступает не только как культурный повторитель, но и как активный участник экономических, политических и образовательных процессов, укрепляя влияние Индии за рубежом. Кроме того, были отмечены проблемы, связанные с раздробленностью сообществ диаспоры, политизацией идентичности и социальным неравенством. В заключение автор приходит к выводу, что индийская "мягкая сила" - сложное и многогранное явление, сочетающее в себе культурные, исторические и политические элементы, в результате чего Индия укрепляет свои позиции в глобальном соперничестве за сознание и сострадание.

Ключевые слова. Индия, мягкая сила, диаспора, культура, этническое влияние, глобализация, внешняя политика, Моди, культурная дипломатия.

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