

Soft Power in the Foreign Policy of Pakistan: Prospects and Potentials

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Abstract

Transition and diffusion of power are changing the political context and have made soft power more relevant than ever. The Government of Pakistan has started taking some initiatives to harvest soft power through its foreign policy. These include providing development assistance, signing bilateral and multilateral agreements, promoting culture, providing scholarships to international students, contributing to global peace and providing humanitarian assistance. This study aims to describe how soft power operates within the foreign policy of Pakistan. It also aims to explain how far the integration of soft power in foreign policy benefitted Pakistan and what new strategies are there to explore. The study borrows the conceptual framework of soft power proposed by Joseph Nye, follows the qualitative research design and uses primary and secondary data.

Keywords: Soft Power, Pakistan, Foreign Policy, Development, Humanitarian Assistance.

Introduction

The concept of soft power emerged in political discourse during the late 20th century. Scholars and political and foreign policy experts in western

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countries especially in the United States (US)¹ and the United Kingdom (UK)² explain the idea of soft power in their different contexts. They argue that integrating soft power into foreign policy is a cost-effective and an efficient way to achieve national interests.³ Over the years, scholars in non-western and developing countries such as China,⁴ Turkey,⁵ India,⁶ and Nigeria⁷ started de-westernising and indigenising the idea of soft power. This made the concept of soft power possibly the more widely accepted concept among policy-makers and students of international relations. Chitty writes that despite having different interests and contexts, soft power is emerging as a “popular currency for many foreign ministries, universities and think tanks across the world.”⁸ Emerging issues such as nuclear proliferation, cyber-attacks, terrorism, climate change, pandemics and economic crises require soft power for negotiation and resolutions.⁹ This makes soft power an important subject of contemporary international relations, especially in foreign policy. There are varying definitions of soft power in contemporary academic literature. This study borrows Joseph Nye’s definition of soft power: an “ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments.”¹⁰

¹ Joseph S. Nye, “Soft Power,” *Foreign Policy*, no. 80 (1990): 153-171, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1148580>

² Niall Ferguson, *Colossus: The Rise and Fall of the American Empire* (Penguin Books Limited, 2012), 20.

³ Jr Joseph S. Nye and Wang Jisi, “Hard Decisions on Soft Power Opportunities and Difficulties for Chinese Soft Power,” *Harvard International Review* 31, no. 2 (22 June 2009): 20.

⁴ Joshua Kurlantzick, *Charm Offensive: How China’s Soft Power Is Transforming the World* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007).

⁵ Meliha Benli Altunisik, ‘The Possibilities and Limits of Turkey’s Soft Power in the Middle East,’ *Insight Turkey* 10, no. 2 (2008): 41–54.

⁶ Patryk Kugiel, *India’s Soft Power: A New Foreign Policy Strategy* (Taylor & Francis, 2017).

⁷ Fidel Abowei, “Nigeria’s Soft Power in the Face of COVID-19,” June 22, 2020, <https://www.e-ir.info/2020/06/22/nigerias-soft-power-in-the-face-of-covid-19/>

⁸ Naren Chitty, ‘Introduction’, in *The Routledge Handbook of Soft Power*, Naren Chitty et al., eds., (London: Taylor & Francis, 2016, First Edition), 1.

⁹ Werner Weidenfeld, *America and Europe: Is the Break Inevitable?* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1996), 19-20.

¹⁰ Joseph S. Nye, “Soft Power and European-American Affairs,” in *Hard Power, Soft Power and the Future of Transatlantic Relations*, Thomas L. Ilgen, ed., (London: Ashgate Publishing, 2013), 26.

The present-day context of international politics is very dynamic one making it difficult for states to predict and proactively respond to various foreign policy issues. Nye identifies that ‘power transition’ and ‘power diffusion’ are two major changes in the international political context that enhance the significance of soft power in foreign policy.¹¹ He continues, that power is transitioning from western to non-western countries. Zakaria labels it as “the rise of the rest.”¹² While the emergence of non-state actors¹³ in international politics has diffused power. States are no more major actors in international relations and gradually lose their control over power.¹⁴ Ohnesorge refers to the phenomenon of “economic interdependence” where almost all the nation-states including the developed and the developing countries are affected by “global financial and economic crises.” Similarly, about the rise of non-state actors in international politics, he argues that many of the large multinational companies earn more revenues than “a great number of nation states”¹⁵ pushing the economy out of the boundaries of national power. Talks between the US and Afghan Taliban before the ‘Fall of Kabul’ in 2021 also illustrate that non-state actors have acquired the power to negotiate with the powerful states outdating the hard power in contemporary international politics.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the consequential global financial crisis highlight that the world has become a global village. Governments, multinational pharmaceutical companies such as BioNTech, Moderna and Pfizer and multilateral organisations such as the World Health Organisations (WHO) worked together to develop vaccines for COVID-19 and to ensure its equitable distribution. Similarly, World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF) and other financial institutions came forward to support developing countries to combat the economic crisis. Hard power could not help governments and non-governmental actors to address catastrophes especially natural disasters

¹¹ Joseph S. Nye, *The Future of Power* (Public Affairs, 2011), 113.

¹² Fareed Zakaria, “The Future of American Power: How America Can Survive the Rise of the Rest,” *Foreign Affairs* 87, 3 (2008): 42.

¹³ Khalid Saifullah and Azhar Ahmad, “The Increasing Influence of the Non-State Actors in International Politics,” *Journal of European Studies (JES)* 36, no. 2 (15 July 2020): 39.

¹⁴ Joseph S. Nye, *The Future of Power*, *Public Affairs* (2011), xv.

¹⁵ Hendrik W. Ohnesorge, *Soft Power: The Forces of Attraction in International Relations* (New York: Springer Nature, 2019), 6.

and pandemics. Soft power emerged as an imperative to the foreign policies of many countries to negotiate for vaccines, economic assistance and trade. Attias cites an example of South Korean foreign policy, where the government tried to brand itself as a role model in COVID-19 management and influenced the G-20 forum to attract foreign investment.¹⁶

The example of South Korean foreign policy leads to the hypothesis that a foreign policy based on manifestation and tangible actions helps a country wield soft power. Hill and Beadle validate this hypothesis that soft power works effectively in the exercise of foreign policy when it is aligned with domestic values and considered legitimate.¹⁷ Nye writes that an arrogant, two-faced and narrow foreign policy cannot yield soft power.¹⁸

Soft power is often criticised for not showing tangible results as compared to hard power in the realm of foreign policy. Nye responds to such criticism by saying that soft power “has often had very real effects in history.”¹⁹ Many other scholars echo Nye and argue that soft power “can accomplish significant and varied”²⁰ objectives of a country’s foreign policy. Measuring the outcomes of soft power, however, becomes a complicated process due to three main reasons; “the results appear over a long period;” the outcomes depend more on the recipient country or groups rather than the applicant; and, governments lack control over soft power instruments.²¹

The study makes an effort to answer the question that, how soft power operates in Pakistan’s foreign policy? This qualitative study uses both primary and secondary data and follows the methodology of document

¹⁶ Shay Attias, “Asian Soft Power Grows in the Corona virus Era,” BESA Center Perspectives Paper (Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies, 6 April 2020).

¹⁷ Christopher Hill and Sarah Beadle, “The Art of Attraction: Soft Power and the UK’s Role in the World,” *The British Academy*, 2014, 11–12.

¹⁸ Joseph S. Nye Jr, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics, Public Affairs* (2004), 14.

¹⁹ Nye, *The Future of Power*, 81.

²⁰ Kostas Ifantis, “Soft Power,” in *Routledge Handbook of Diplomacy and Statecraft*, McKercher B.J.C., ed., (London: Routledge Handbooks Online, 2011), 443, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203807804>

²¹ Nye, *The Future of Power*, 83.

analysis that helps the readers to make empirical observations by using written records. The records include press releases by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Government of Pakistan, books, articles, reports, manuscripts, statistics and other documents.²² The study describes various examples illuminating the role of soft power in Pakistan's foreign policy.

Foreign Policy as Soft Power Resource

Foreign policy is one of three basic resources of soft power. The other two primary resources are culture and political values.²³ Foreign policy can be defined as “the sum of official external relations conducted by an independent actor (usually a state) in international relations.”²⁴ The foreign policy of a country usually includes “bilateral and multilateral agreements signed with other countries, membership of International Governmental Organisations such as the IMF and the WTO, support to the United Nations peacekeeping missions, providing educational scholarships to foreign students,²⁵ settlements of territorial disputes, hosting of international events,²⁶ providing foreign aid or development assistance and promoting democracy in other countries.”²⁷ Herpen adds the analogous activities by Non-Government Organisations²⁸ and the Orthodox Church²⁹ to this list.

Integration of soft power strategies into foreign policy contributes significantly to the realisation of the national interests of a country. Notably, it reduces fears of other countries and attracts other nations to achieve mutual interests.³⁰ There are, however, some preconditions to effectively integrating soft power in foreign policy. Among these is the alignment of

²² Janet Buttolph Johnson, H. T. Reynolds, and Jason D. Mycoff, *Political Science Research Methods*, 8th ed. (Toronto: SAGE Publications, 2015), 268.

²³ Joseph S. Nye Jr, “Soft Power and American Foreign Policy,” *Political Science Quarterly* 119, no. 2 (2004): 256.

²⁴ Lisa Harrison, Adrian Little, and Edward Lock, *Politics: The Key Concepts*, First (London: Routledge, 2015), 67.

²⁵ Nye, *The Future of Power*, 96.

²⁶ Nye, *The Future of Power*, 88-89.

²⁷ Nye, *Soft Power*, 62.

²⁸ Marcel H. Van Herpen, *Putin's Propaganda Machine: Soft Power and Russian Foreign Policy* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), 67.

²⁹ Herpen, *Putin's Propaganda Machine*, 192.

³⁰ Joshua Kurlantzick, *Charm Offensive: How China's Soft Power Is Transforming the World* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007), 40.

the foreign policy of a country with domestic realities.³¹ Moreover, the variety in foreign policy tools provides a country with an opportunity to choose and implement different strategies to achieve its objectives.

Pakistan has diverse and rich soft power resources; however, little effort has been made to exploit these to achieve foreign policy objectives. Following the resource categorisation introduced by Joseph Nye,³² Pakistan’s soft power resources can be arranged into the three groups as depicted in the following table.

Table No. 1
Pakistan’s Soft Power Resources

Sr No	Soft Power Resource	Constituents
1	Culture	i- Religion ii- History iii- Media and entertainment iv- Tourism v- Language vi- People vii- Sports
2	Political Values	i- Democracy ii- Diversity iii- Civil Society
3	Foreign Policy	i- Development Assistance ii- Educational Scholarships to Foreign Students iii- Bilateral and Multilateral Agreements iv- Peacebuilding Support v- Cultural Diplomacy vi- Trade – import and export vii- Non-military Interventions (Humanitarian interventions)

*Source: The table is derived from the idea of Joseph Nye explained in his book “Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics”. He shared his idea in the context of the US. See “Chapter 2: Sources of Soft Power,” 33-72. The authors contextualised his idea for Pakistan.*³³

³¹ Nye, *The Future of Power*, 90.

³² Nye, *The Future of Power*, 84.

³³ The table is derived from the idea of Joseph Nye explained in his book, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*. He shared his idea in the context of

Pakistan's cultural resources of soft power are explained in the paper titled "Enumerating Cultural Resources of Pakistan's Soft Power: Potential and Prospects" written by the authors of this paper.³⁴ This study confines itself to studying the role of soft power in the foreign policy of Pakistan (the third group in table No.1).

Soft Power in Pakistan's Foreign Policy

Nye believes that soft power is a form of power available to all countries including the developed and the developing.³⁵ This leads to an inference that like all other states Pakistan also owns this form of power. Soft power has historically played an important role in the foreign policy of Pakistan. The founder of Pakistan, Mohammad Ali Jinnah's guidelines to develop the foreign policy of Pakistan includes the conception of soft power. In his speech on 15 August, 1947, Jinnah said, "Our objective should be peace within and peace without. We want to live peacefully and maintain cordial and friendly relations with our immediate neighbours and with the world at large. We have no aggressive designs against anyone. We stand by the United Nations Charter and will gladly make our full contribution to the peace and prosperity of the world."³⁶ Jinnah emphasised peaceful coexistence and alignment with the United Nations charter — one of the important pillars of the modern idea of soft power. Jinnah, therefore, set the foundations for Pakistan's foreign policy on developing friendly relations with other countries and promoting peace in the world. However, geostrategic location, inherited insecurities and the great game are some of the hurdles facing Pakistan in achieving this vision of foreign policy.

The country has inherited some issues of foreign policy from the colonial era such as the Durand line and the India Occupied Kashmir associated with its neighbours i.e. Afghanistan and India, respectively. Pakistan has been trying to use its soft power since its inception to resolve these issues. Nonetheless, in academia, little has been written on Pakistan's

the US. See "Chapter 2: Sources of Soft Power," 33-72. The authors contextualised his idea for Pakistan.

³⁴ Khalid Saifullah and Irfan Hussain Qaisrani, "Enumerating Cultural Resources of Pakistan's Soft Power: Potentials and Prospects," *Pakistan Journal of History and Culture* LXII, no. 2 (2021): 61-84.

³⁵ Ohnesorge, *Soft Power*, 67.

³⁶ Mehrunnisa Ali, "Jinnah's Perception of Pakistan's Foreign Policy and the Kashmir Issue," *Pakistan Horizon* 43, no. 2 (1990): 58.

soft power approaches. Pakistan has diverse soft power resources that require political will and effective strategies to achieve its foreign policy objectives. Susan Loughhead, a British civil servant, accessed the historical archives of the British Government and learned about the successful diplomatic efforts of the newly-established Pakistan Government. Pakistan exercised its soft power and mobilised international support over the issue of the Durand line raised by Afghanistan. As a result of Pakistan's multilateral diplomacy, an important soft power strategy, Afghanistan was diplomatically isolated.³⁷

The existing literature cites that the foreign policy of Pakistan has remained “pro-Western, pro-Chinese and pro-nuclear” throughout its history.³⁸ The country's foreign policy remains security centred and aims to protect its independence, national identity and territorial integrity. Pakistan keeps on struggling to develop and strengthen a close relationship with other Muslim states. Overall, the country remains compliant with international norms and protocols.³⁹ The regional dynamics and geostrategic location of the country pose some security challenges that unfortunately dominate the foreign policy agenda of Pakistan. Despite internal and external challenges, Pakistan is implementing some projects to capitalise on soft power in its foreign policy. Below are the details of the main soft power ventures.

Development Assistance

Nye says that development assistance is an important instrument of soft power.⁴⁰ There are fewer examples in existing literature when a developing country provides development assistance to another developing country. Pakistan, despite being included in the list of the top ten recipients of development assistance in the region of Asia⁴¹ and faces many other

³⁷ Susan Loughhead, *The End Game: The Final Chapter in Britain's Great Game in Afghanistan* (Stroud: Amberley Publishing, 2018), 172-73.

³⁸ Waseem Mohammad, “Dialectic Between Domestic Politics & Foreign Policy,” in *Pakistan: Nationalism Without a Nation*, Christophe Jaffrelot, ed. (London: Zed Books, 2002), 281.

³⁹ Hasan Askari Rizvi, “Pakistan's Foreign Policy: An Overview 1947-2004,” (Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency, April 1, 2004), 9.

⁴⁰ Nye, *The Future of Power*, 228.

⁴¹ “Development Aid at a Glance, Statistics by Region – Asia,” (The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2019), 2.

economic problems is providing development assistance to Afghanistan for social, human, political and infrastructural development. Pakistan's Ambassador to Afghanistan in his speech on the inauguration of Jinnah Hospital in Kabul indicated that Pakistan's bilateral development assistance had reached one billion U.S. dollars in 2019. He further said that this support was being provided to Afghanistan in pursuance of Pakistan's policy objective of deepening and broadening people-to-people connections between the two countries.⁴² The development aid is being used in different projects related to "infrastructure, education, health, agriculture and capacity building of Afghan professionals."⁴³ The aid contributed significantly towards state-building in Afghanistan but it was, however, unable to generate a positive image for Pakistan.⁴⁴ There are many factors behind this failure of Pakistan's soft power including interference by India, the vested interests of great powers, internal conflicts in Afghanistan, Pakistan's alleged relations with the Afghan Taliban, and perceptions of the previous ruling regimes and young generation in Afghanistan.

Pakistan has also provided emergency assistance to some of the Muslim countries such as Syria,⁴⁵ Palestine⁴⁶ and Lebanon.⁴⁷ The country has designed a "Technical Assistance Program" for friendly developing countries. The program aims to build a soft image of Pakistan, fortify bilateral relationships and share experiences and knowledge. The officials from 105 developing countries have been trained through this programme. Major countries include Malawi, Iran, Senegal, Indonesia, Sudan, Uzbekistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Maldives, Myanmar and

⁴² Embassy of Pakistan Kabul, Press Release, Inauguration of Muhammad Ali Jinnah Hospital in an auspicious ceremony in Kabul, April 20, 2019, <http://www.pakembassykabul.org/en/press-release-29/>

⁴³ "Pakistan-Afghanistan Relations," Ministry of Foreign Affairs, <http://mofa.gov.pk/testing-language/>

⁴⁴ Khan Hashmat Ullah and Rahman Gohar, "Pakistan's Aid to Afghanistan Since 2001 and Its Prospects for State Building in Afghanistan," *FWU Journal of Social Sciences* 14, no. 3 (n.d.): 127.

⁴⁵ "Provision of COVID-19 Humanitarian Medical Aid to Brotherly Government of Syrian Arab Republic, — Ministry of Foreign Affairs," <http://mofa.gov.pk/provision-of-covid-19-humanitarian-medical-aid-to-brotherly-government-of-syrian-arab-republic/>.

⁴⁶ "Pakistan Increases Contribution to Help Palestinian Refugees," *Express Tribune*, 11 November, 2018, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/1845062/pakistan-increases-contribution-help-palestinian-refugees>

⁴⁷ "Relief Assistance from Pakistan Reaches Lebanon — Ministry of Foreign Affairs," <http://mofa.gov.pk/relief-assistance-from-pakistan-reaches-lebanon/>

Vietnam.⁴⁸ Despite its meagre resources, Pakistan has been making efforts to assist other developing countries through development aid, humanitarian relief and training. Pakistan needs, however, to establish an organisation dedicated to offering foreign aid along the lines of the USAID, Australian Aid and UK Aid to systemise its development assistance. This will help the country to actualise soft power in pursuance of the objectives of the foreign policy

Educational Scholarships for Foreign Students

Pakistan provides scholarships to foreign students. The Higher Education Commission of Pakistan announces scholarships for students in Afghanistan,⁴⁹ Sri Lanka,⁵⁰ Hungary,⁵¹ OIC Least Developed Countries,⁵² and Commonwealth Least Developed Countries.⁵³ The education system in Pakistan is facing many challenges including a lack of direction, an obsolete curriculum, unqualified and untrained teachers, a high dropout rate, insufficient human and financial resources and poor management.⁵⁴ Despite these challenges, the country offers scholarships to students in developing countries. The internationalisation of education has huge potential to produce soft power for Pakistan, especially in developing Muslim countries. Pakistan can learn from the experience of China, Thailand, Russia and India where more and more international students are enrolling in institutes of higher education.

⁴⁸ Umar Siddique, "Annual Report 2008-2009 (Vol-II), State Bank of Pakistan," Annual Report (Islamabad, Pakistan: State Bank of Pakistan, 23 November 2009), 101, <https://www.sbp.org.pk/reports/annual/arFY09/Vol2/anul-index-eng.htm>

⁴⁹ "Award of Allama Muhammad Iqbal Scholarships for Afghan Nationals," Higher Education Commission, <https://www.hec.gov.pk/english/scholarshipsgrants/amisp/Pages/default.aspx>.

⁵⁰ "Pak-Sri Lanka Higher Education Cooperation Program," <https://www.hec.gov.pk/english/scholarshipsgrants/pshecp/Pages/default.aspx>.

⁵¹ "Scholarship for Hungarian Nationals," <https://www.hec.gov.pk/english/scholarshipsgrants/ARL-FS/SHN/Pages/default.aspx>.

⁵² "Scholarship for OIC Least-Developed Countries Under the Project," Academic and Research Linkages under Bilateral Agreement, <https://www.hec.gov.pk/english/scholarshipsgrants/ARL-FS/OIC/Pages/default.aspx>.

⁵³ "HEC Scholarships to Students of Least Developed Commonwealth Countries," <https://www.hec.gov.pk/english/scholarshipsgrants/ARLFS/CWLDC/Pages/default.aspx>

⁵⁴ Iqbal Ahmad et al., "Critical Analysis of the Problems of Education in Pakistan: Possible Solutions," *International Journal of Evaluation and Research in Education* 3, 2 (June 2014): 79-83.

Bilateral and Multilateral Agreements

Bilateral and multilateral agreements enhance the soft power of countries allowing small countries to negotiate with powerful countries. Gieger shares that smaller countries feel empowered to challenge powerful states such as the US even with limited hard powers.⁵⁵ Pakistan has signed 60 conventions and treaties and joined the international commitments to curb drugs and crimes; promote education, science and culture; ensure human rights; protect the environment; and encourage disarmament. Pakistan has also signed 1,120 bilateral agreements and memorandums of understanding (MoU) with 68 countries.⁵⁶ A dedicated research is needed to study and explore the effectiveness of these covenants, treaties, agreements and MoUs. Nonetheless, they indicate the untapped potential of soft power for Pakistan. These arrangements strengthen the country's position to negotiate with other countries in pursuance of its national interests. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has established two dedicated divisions to promote bilateral and multilateral cooperation. These include Science Diplomacy and Public Diplomacy. Both initiatives aim to support the objectives of Pakistan's foreign policy. The initiatives also indicate that Pakistan is inclined towards understanding its soft power potential and initiating plans to use its resources.

Peacebuilding Support

Participation in the UN peacekeeping missions also enhances the soft power of a country.⁵⁷ Pakistan's role in the UN is characterised as a promoter of peace, sovereignty, respect, and the behaviour of a good neighbour.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Till Geiger, "The Power Game, Soft Power and the International Historian," in *Soft Power and US Foreign Policy: Theoretical, Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, Inderjeet Parmar and Michael Cox, eds., (London: Routledge, 2010), 91.

⁵⁶ "MOUs / Agreements – Ministry of Foreign Affairs," Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Pakistan, <http://mofa.gov.pk/mous-agreements/>

⁵⁷ Jean-Marc F. Blanchard and Fujia Lu, "Thinking Hard About Soft Power: A Review and Critique of the Literature on China and Soft Power," *Asian Perspective* 36, 4 (2012): 568.

⁵⁸ Nausheen Wasi, "Pakistan and the United Nations," *Pakistan Horizon* 58, 3 (2005): 89.

Pakistan is a founding member of the UN peacebuilding commission.⁵⁹ The country ranks sixth on the list of 120 countries that are contributing to the UN peacekeeping forces in the world.⁶⁰ Pakistan's support for the UN peacekeeping was recognised by the UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, who on his visit to Pakistan stated, "Thanks to the thousands of Pakistani soldiers who have served under the United Nations flag, and to the many distinguished Pakistani scholars, economists and international civil servants who have advanced our work for development and peace, Pakistan can truly call itself a leader in the work of the international community."⁶¹ Hameed Ali Khan Rai researched the role of Pakistan in the UN. He concluded that Pakistan has remained active in UN peacekeeping forces since its establishment, played a crucial role in resolving the Suez Canal crisis of 1956, and "maintained its position of impartiality" in doing so.⁶² Meiske and Ruggeri found that Pakistan uses its peacekeeping contribution to develop a soft image, minimise its diplomatic isolation and attract the international community for increased economic cooperation and development assistance.⁶³ Krishnasamy wrote that Pakistan demonstrated its capacity to contribute significantly to international peacekeeping. He identified two major areas where Pakistan has proved its excellence: contributing ground troops as and when required, and providing expertise to implement peacekeeping projects in emergency situations.⁶⁴

⁵⁹ "Pakistan's Position towards UN Reform," Government of Pakistan Website, Pakistan Mission to the United Nations, https://pakun.org/unreform/index.php#Pacific_Settlement_Of_Dsputes.

⁶⁰ "Contributors to UN Peacekeeping Operations by Country and Post Police, UN Military Experts on Mission, Staff Officers and Troops," United Nations Peacekeeping, January 31, 2021, 1, https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/01_summary_of_contributions_34_jan2021.pdf

⁶¹ "Secretary-General Salutes Pakistan's UN Contribution, Offers Support for Efforts to Establish Democracy," in Toast at Islamabad Banquet | Meetings Coverage and Press Releases, UN Official Website, United Nations, <https://www.un.org/press/en/2001/sgsm7736.doc.htm>.

⁶² Hameed Ali Khan Rai, "Pakistan's Role in the United Nations: A Study of Issues" MLitt (R), Ann Arbor., Pro Quest Dissertations & Theses, 1970), 157-73, <http://theses.gla.ac.uk/72488/>

⁶³ Maline Meiske and Andrea Ruggeri, "Peacekeeping as a Tool of Foreign Policy," *Oxford Research Encyclopaedia of Politics*, September 26, 2017, 16, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.013.462>.

⁶⁴ K. Krishnasamy, "Pakistan's Peacekeeping Experiences," *International Peacekeeping* 9, 3 (1 September 2002): 114-15, <https://doi.org/10.1080/714002736>

Despite these contributions, recognitions and sacrifices, Pakistan still could not use its soft power as one of the largest contributors of troops. Kiani highlights that Pakistan was not invited to policy-level discussions on peacekeeping arranged by the UN in 2004.⁶⁵ Support for peacekeeping missions is hardly marketed by Pakistan at regional and international forums. Pakistan can, and should, develop a strategy to promote its role as an international peacekeeper. The existing literature cites some examples where Pakistan has also contributed to bringing peace to Afghanistan. For example, Pakistan offered a venue to facilitate intra-Afghan dialogues between the democratic government in Afghanistan and the Taliban.⁶⁶ This highlights the fact that Pakistan requires effective strategies to capitalise on its role in regional and international peacebuilding efforts to achieve the objectives of its foreign policy.

Cultural Diplomacy

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) has taken many initiatives to promote Pakistani culture abroad to develop the soft image of the country. Pakistan arranged several musical events at the UN General Assembly and has received comments of appreciation and acknowledgement of its cultural resources and diplomatic efforts from the international community.⁶⁷ Maliha Lodhi, a former Pakistani ambassador to the US and UN recalls her experiences when Pakistan used cultural diplomacy to win the election to an important UN body. She invited a famous Pakistani singer to introduce traditional music to the members of the General Assembly, arranged a street food festival and photo exhibition and celebrated Eid at the UN. She succeeded in getting 151 votes out of 193 in the General Assembly.⁶⁸ Similarly, Pakistan started arranging festivals that attract the international community to visit Pakistan. The Annual Karachi Literature Festival is among the notable events to introduce Pakistani literature to international readers. Professor Francis Robinson, a noted British historian, is convinced

⁶⁵ Maria Kiani, "Pakistan's Contribution to UN Peacekeeping," *Strategic Studies* 24, 3 (2004): 59.

⁶⁶ Neamatollah Nojumi, *American State-Building in Afghanistan and Its Regional Consequences: Achieving Democratic Stability and Balancing China's Influence* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 96.

⁶⁷ News Bytes, "Sachal Jazz Ensemble Performs Live at UN General Assembly," <https://www.thenews.com.pk/magazine>.

⁶⁸ Maleeha Lodhi, "Why Soft Power Is Pivotal," *Dawn*, April 6, 2020, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1546838>.

about the potential of Pakistani cities to attract international tourists. He stated that Pakistani writers produce amazing work in English literature fascinating readers around the world.⁶⁹

Pakistan has started realising the potential of public diplomacy in its foreign policy. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs recently established the “strategic communication division” to promote the country’s narrative to the international community.⁷⁰ Pakistan has huge potential for cultural diplomacy and can produce soft power to achieve the objectives of its foreign policy. Archaeological sites, traditional food, folk music, ethnic diversity, diverse landscape, sports, handicrafts and literature are some of the main resources to yield soft power. However, despite having these resources, the image of Pakistan is portrayed as a country where extremism, transboundary conflicts and intolerance prevail.

Trade

Pakistan has huge potential of using economic resources to produce soft power. The country is rich in natural resources such as water, land, sunlight, coal, minerals, metals, gemstones, crops, vegetation, herbs, birds and animals. These resources can lift the economy. Pakistan has a diverse landscape ranging from the second-highest mountain in the world to the desert of Thar to the ocean. However, despite this abundance, the country is still unable to utilise these resources to convert them into valuable economic products.

Trade is one of the important strategies to strengthen the economy. Trading with neighbours is more effective in terms of cost and time. Pakistan does not have good relationships with its major neighbour, India. This directly impacts the overall volume of trade. China and Afghanistan are the only two neighbours in the top twenty countries to which Pakistan

⁶⁹ “Prof Francis Robinson’s Trip to Karachi Adabfest,” Royal Holloway, University of London, February 5, 2020, <https://www.royalholloway.ac.uk/research-and-teaching/departments-and-schools/history/news/prof-francis-robinsons-trip-to-karachi-adabfest/>

⁷⁰ Khaleeq Kiani, “PM Orders Overhauling of Public Diplomacy, Information Policy,” *Dawn*, January 10, 2020, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1527408>

imports and exports.⁷¹ Limitations in trade with neighbours affect the economy.

Pakistan exports raw materials such as cotton, fruit and vegetables and simple manufactured products such as textile and sports goods while it imports high-tech products such as machinery, manufactured goods, chemicals and oil.⁷² The country lacks such technology and skills that convert raw materials into value-added products of high global demand. This has resulted in a huge gap between exports and imports. Exports are almost half the imports. This leads to a huge trade deficit and a poor economy.

Giustozzi shares an example where Pakistan's economy contributed to increasing its influence in southern Afghanistan. He finds that the economy is playing an important role in maintaining better relationships between tribes across the border. The Pakistani rupee is used in trade in bordering areas of Afghanistan.⁷³ The China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) also provides an opportunity for Pakistan to boost its economy. A strong economy will directly contribute to enhancing the soft power potential of Pakistan.

Key strategies to strengthen the economy of Pakistan include "successful integration of Pakistan into the global economy, sound macroeconomic policies, a strong institutional and governance framework, investment in infrastructure and human development and political stability."⁷⁴ Pakistan's "geographic location provides an advantage of intra-regional trade and investment."⁷⁵ Pakistan needs to improve the law and order situation, improve governance, learn and develop technology, strengthen democracy and normalise bilateral relations with neighbours to achieve the maximum potential of its economic resources.

⁷¹ "External Trade Statistics Tables, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics," Government of Pakistan Website, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, March 30, 2021, <https://www.pbs.gov.pk/trade-tables>.

⁷² "External Trade Statistics Tables, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics."

⁷³ Antonio Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov, and Laptop: The Neo-Taliban Insurgency in Afghanistan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 27.

⁷⁴ Ishrat Husain, "Pakistan's Economy and Regional Challenges," *International Studies* 55, 3 (1 July 2018): 270, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0020881718796041>.

⁷⁵ Husain, *Pakistan's Economy and Regional Challenges*, 253.

Pakistan's Military Power

Nye states that military power used for protection and humanitarian assistance produces soft power. He further adds that “non-coercive and benign uses of military resources can be an important source of soft power behaviour of framing of agendas, persuasion and attraction in world politics.”⁷⁶ Pakistan’s military is the fourth largest military in Asia⁷⁷ and has proved to be amongst the best in countering terrorism and improving domestic security.⁷⁸ Pakistan’s military has also proved its skill and ability in UN peacekeeping missions. The professionalism of Pakistan’s military is acknowledged in the world and is respected, especially in Muslim countries.⁷⁹ During calamities and development work, the military always supports civilian organisations. The people in Pakistan appreciate the contribution of the military to development and humanitarian work.⁸⁰ A survey conducted by an international research firm in 2018 concludes that around ninety-six per cent of the people in Pakistan recognise the support provided by the military.⁸¹ Education and training are other areas where the Pakistani military is contributing significantly. The military has established schools, colleges and universities where children both from armed forces and civilian families can enroll.⁸²

Pakistan ranked ninth out of 140 countries in the hard power index despite limited financial resources.⁸³ While on the other hand, the country scored sixty-third position out of 100 countries in the global soft power index.⁸⁴ This highlights a stark mismatch between the two components of

⁷⁶ Nye, *The Future of Power*, 25.

⁷⁷ The International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), *The Military Balance 2021* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2021), 218.

⁷⁸ Studies (IISS), 289.

⁷⁹ Shuja Nawaz, *The Battle for Pakistan: The Bitter US Friendship and a Tough Neighbourhood* (Karachi: Liberty Publishing, 2020), 202.

⁸⁰ Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema, *The Armed Forces of Pakistan: The Armed Forces of Pakistan* (London: Allen & Unwin, 2002), 181.

⁸¹ “National Survey of Public Opinion in Pakistan, November 1-22, 2018”

Washington/D.C: International Republican Institute,
https://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/2019.3.14_pakistan_poll.pdf.

⁸² Cheema, *The Armed Forces of Pakistan*, 181.

⁸³ ‘2022 Pakistan Military Strength’, https://www.globalfirepower.com/country-military-strength-detail.php?country_id=pakistan.

⁸⁴ Brand Finance, ‘Global Soft Power Index 2021’, Research study on perceptions of nation brands (London, UK), 7, <https://brandirectory.com/globalsoftpower/>

power. The Pakistani military is known for its professionalism and expertise in counter-terrorism and international peace building. The military training institutes also train officials from different countries. This highlights the potential of soft power lies in the non-coercive use of the Pakistani military. Pakistan can offer its experience and skills related to peace building, humanitarian assistance and counter-terrorism to other countries.

Conclusion

The idea of soft power is among the most popular debates in contemporary international relations. Since 1990, western countries have systematically explored and utilised their soft power resources. Non-western countries such as China, Russian, India and Turkey learned from the West and indigenised their soft power resources and strategies. There are several examples where the use of soft power resources has helped both western and non-western countries in achieving their foreign policy objectives. The concept of soft power is not much explored in the context of Pakistan. Almost a decade ago, Pakistan has started implementing some activities that can be characterised as initiatives to accumulate soft power. These include the provision of foreign assistance to Afghanistan, hosting millions of Afghan refugees, sending military troops to the UN peacekeeping missions, arranging international sports events, providing scholarships to foreign students for higher education, signing bilateral and multilateral agreements, supporting the Afghan peace process and promoting international tourism. These initiatives, although on a limited scale, indicate that Pakistan is mindful of its international image.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs took the lead in implementing these projects in consultation and coordination with relevant ministries.⁸⁵ Pakistan provided scholarships to thousands of foreign students,⁸⁶ signed hundreds of bilateral and multilateral agreements,⁸⁷ promoted bilateral and multilateral

⁸⁵ 'President Karzai Visits Pakistan — Ministry of Foreign Affairs', Government of Pakistan, August 26, 2013, <https://mofa.gov.pk/president-karzai-visits-pakistan/>

⁸⁶ 'Scholarship for Foreigners, Higher Education Commission, Pakistan,' <https://www.hec.gov.pk/english/scholarshipsgrants/ARL-FS/Pages/default.aspx>.

⁸⁷ "MOUs / Agreements – Ministry of Foreign Affairs," Government of Pakistan, <http://mofa.gov.pk/mous-agreements/>

trade,⁸⁸ provided development assistance and humanitarian assistance,⁸⁹ promoted Pakistani culture at international forums and provided peace building support at regional⁹⁰ and global levels. However, little has been researched on the scope and scale of these initiatives.

At global level, Pakistan is read and understood through the words of foreign writers.⁹¹ The country is depicted as a fragile state that supports terrorist groups⁹² thus presenting one side of the blurred picture. Scholars and researchers in Pakistan are making efforts to explain the other side i.e. the local perspectives to complete the jigsaw that is the political situation. More studies on Pakistan's soft power can help to strengthen the country's foreign policy and to improve the image of the country

⁸⁸ "President Ashraf Ghani Meets President Mamnoon Hussain — Ministry of Foreign Affairs," Government of Pakistan, November 14, 2014, <https://mofa.gov.pk/president-ashraf-ghani-meets-president-mamnoon-hussain/>.

⁸⁹ "Meeting between Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi, Foreign Minister of Pakistan, and Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, Chairman High Council for National Reconciliation – Ministry of Foreign Affairs," Government of Pakistan, September 28, 2020, <https://mofa.gov.pk/meeting-between-makhdoom-shah-mahmood-qureshi-foreign-minister-of-pakistan-and-dr-abdullah-abdullah-chairman-high-council-for-national-reconciliation/>

⁹⁰ "Joint Press Release – Second Meeting of the Quadrilateral Coordination Group on the Afghan Peace and Reconciliation Process – Ministry of Foreign Affairs," Government of Pakistan, January 18, 2016, <https://mofa.gov.pk/joint-press-release-second-meeting-of-the-quadrilateral-coordination-group-on-the-afghan-peace-and-reconciliation-process/>

⁹¹ Ahmed W. Waheed, "Constructing 'Pakistan' through Knowledge Production in International Relations and Area Studies (Springer Nature, (2019), 170.

⁹² Waheed, *Constructing* "Pakistan' through Knowledge Production in International Relations and Area Studies,"1.