

INDIA'S PUBLIC DIPLOMACY AS A RISING POWER

*A Thesis Submitted to the University of Hyderabad in Partial Fulfilment of the
Requirements for the Award of the Degree of*

**Doctor of Philosophy in
Political Science**

**by MUHSIN P P
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March 2024



CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled '**India's Public Diplomacy as a Rising Power**', submitted by **Muhsin P P** bearing Registration No.: **17SPPH08**, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science, School of Social Science, is a bona fide work carried out by him under my supervision and guidance. This thesis is free from plagiarism and has not been previously submitted, in part or in full, to this University or any other University or institution for the award of any degree or diploma. Furthermore, the student has the following publications before the submission of the thesis for adjudication and has provided evidence for the same in the form of reprints in the relevant area of his research.

1. **India and the Balakot Airstrike: Reflections Beyond Hard Power**, *Comparative Strategy*, 41:1 (2022): 46-59, DOI: 10.1080/01495933.2021.2017742

The student has presented research papers in the following conferences.

1. **Caught up in a Dichotomic Moment: India's Public Diplomacy During Ukraine Crisis**. *The Rise of Asia in Global History and Perspectives for Asia and the World: Global Crises - what impacts and what Perspectives for Asia and the world*. University Le Havre Normandy, Paris and Le Havre, France, February 8-10, 2023.
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Further, the student has passed the following courses towards fulfilment of coursework requirement for Ph.D.

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DECLARATION

I, **Muhsin P P** hereby declare that this thesis entitled “**India’s Public Diplomacy as a Rising Power**” submitted by me under the guidance of **Prof. Vasanthi Srinivasan** is a bonafide research work which is also free from plagiarism. I also declare that it has not been submitted previously in part or in full to this University or any other University or Institution for the award of any degree or diploma.

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This dissertation is dedicated to

My beloved mother, grandmother, and brother - my lifelong supporters and believers - whose infinite love, care, and steadfast support has served as the cornerstone of my PhD journey.

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INTRODUCTION

India's exponential economic growth following the liberalisation of the economy and the parallel growth of aspiration for greater status and global political role in the international system provided the impetus for Delhi's quest for reputation management. Today India is one of the few countries that were quick to recognize the potential of public diplomacy as a practice in foreign policy and diplomacy. India now ranks among the top countries that have integrated public diplomacy into their foreign policy strategy. Over the last decade and a half India has built robust public diplomacy apparatus and continued to utilise opportunities coming her way for its further expansion

India's "Incredible India" campaign launched in 2002 for the promotion of tourism in a concerted manner is a good example in conscious efforts to build national reputation as part of global aspiration.¹ This was coupled with major powers like the US beginning to recognize India as a "rising power"² (sometimes addressing India as already risen, as Obama did in his 2012 visit to India) and bestowing upon India certain role expectations such as greater contributions to the international peace and security, management of the global commons, and so on, further instrumentalised the need for greater international communication of Delhi's policies and to project non-coercive powers that Joseph Nye identifies as soft power.³

India's swift building and deployment of public diplomacy can be largely seen in this context. In other words, as India seeks to project itself as a "rising power," public

¹ David Geary, "Incredible India in a Global Age: The Cultural Politics of Image Branding in Tourism," *Tourist Studies* 13, no. 1 (January 21, 2013): 36–40, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468797612471105>.

² According to Manjari Chatterjee Miller, "a rising power is a state that is rising to become, in the near future, a great power." Manjari Chatterjee Miller, *Why Nations Rise: Narratives and the Path to Great Power*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2021).

³ "India Is No Rising Power, It Has Already Risen:," *The New Indian Express*, May 16, 2012, <https://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2010/nov/08/india-is-no-rising-power-it-has-already-risen-201051.html>, (Accessed January 16, 2023); Joseph S. Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, (New York: Public Affairs, 2004).

diplomacy forms one of the main components of the endeavour. As a matter of fact, India's public diplomacy is aimed at creating a positive narrative about India among the international community. It also has the role of soothing and cushioning India's muscle flexing as a part of its emergence as a major power in the international system.

According to Ritambhara, the essence of Indian public diplomacy is to affirm India as an internationally significant and influential "rising power." This aligns with India's aspiration to secure a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council to solidify its position at the global high table.⁴ Ellen Huijgh and Jordan Warlick point out that emerging powers significantly benefit from shaping their international image. This effort helps to create positive perceptions of the nation's development. Emerging countries aim to challenge any existing image of their historical weaknesses, backwardness, or lack of or modest growth.⁵ Thus, the country's public diplomacy functionally and objectively is representative of India's rising aspirations and a quest for greater status in the global system.

In this setting, the current Modi government occupies a central place in India's public diplomacy. Since coming to power in 2014, the Modi administration has made sustained efforts to project and promote India's soft power along with informing and explaining India's foreign policy to the global audience.⁶ Fundamentally, three trends have been at the forefront of shaping and moulding India's public diplomacy under this administration.

First, the impact of social media on Indian politics and international relations is noteworthy. Referred to as India's social media Prime Minister by the *Financial Times*, the government has placed special emphasis on utilizing social media for public policy

⁴ Ritambhara, "On Indian Public Diplomacy," *E- International Relations*, April 30, 2013, <https://www.e-ir.info/2013/04/30/on-indian-public-diplomacy/>, (Accessed January 16, 2023).

⁵ Ellen Huijgh and Jordan Warlick, "The Public Diplomacy of Emerging Powers: The Case of Turkey," *In Rising Powers: Turkey* (2016): 13, https://uscpublicdiplomacy.org/sites/uscpublicdiplomacy.org/files/useruploads/u31086/Turkey_ebook.pdf, (Accessed January 16, 2023).

⁶ Arijit Mazumdar, "India's Public Diplomacy in the Twenty-First Century: Components, Objectives and Challenges," *India Quarterly: A Journal of International Affairs* 76, no. 1 (February 17, 2020): 27, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0974928419901188>.

and political communication.⁷ Rodrigues and Niemann observe that, Modi's political communication strategy includes disregarding mainstream news media while for social media and government websites to inform his followers about his daily activities and government policies.⁸ The government has used Modi's personal Twitter account @narendramodi and his prime ministerial handle @PMOIndia and NaMoApp to launch and promote several policy campaigns online. 'Digital India,' the 'Make in India'; the Prime Ministerial People's Fund scheme, the 'Clean India' campaign; 'Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao' (a scheme supporting the rights of the girl child); and the digital payments are to name a few.⁹ In the same vein, social media engagement has come to occupy a central focus in India's public diplomacy activities, with Twitter becoming a major platform for India's mediated public diplomacy. The Modi government emphasised harnessing the full potential of social media for public diplomacy.¹⁰

Second, the thrust of Hindu nationalism and increasing nationalist sentiment among the public. While India's national leadership has historically seen India as a civilizational power that deserves a position at the world stage, the quest for great power status has assumed a new context and vigour under Modi.¹¹ India's self-perception as a "rising power" has been reinforced under him. As a matter of fact, the Modi government has strong ideological logic (of Hindu nationalism) driving and motivating India to realize its superpower status by building a strong India. Stemming from this ideological impetus is

⁷ Avantika Chilkoti, "Narendra Modi to Be India's First Social Media Prime Minister," *Financial Times*, May 23, 2014, <https://www.ft.com/content/e347de5c-e088-11e3-9534-00144feabdc0>, (Accessed January 16, 2023).

⁸ Usha M. Rodrigues and Michael Niemann, "Political Communication Modi Style: A Case Study of the Demonetization Campaign on Twitter," *International Journal of Media & Cultural Politics* 15, no. 3 (September 1, 2019): 361, https://doi.org/10.1386/macp_00006_1.

⁹ Ibid, 362.

¹⁰ Parama Sinha Palit, "India's Use of Social Media in Public Diplomacy," *Rising Powers Quarterly* 3, no. 3 (December 1, 2018): 160-65, <https://risingpowersproject.com/indias-use-of-social-media-in-public-diplomacy/>

¹¹ Sreeram Chaulia, *Modi Doctrine: The Foreign Policy of India's Prime Minister* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016), 78; Sreeram Chaulia, "Indian Foreign Policy: The Quest for Greatness," in *The Sage Handbook of Asian Foreign Policy* (London: Sage publications, 2019), 791-810.

the government's aggressive ethnic nationalism placing an exceeding emphasis on the worldview of India playing a central role in global governance.¹²

In 2014, India reaffirmed its goal to become a major global power. Prime Minister Modi urged Indian Mission Heads to take advantage of this unique opportunity to help solidify India's position on a global scale, moving beyond its usual role as a mere balancing force.¹³ In a 2015 talk in Singapore, former Indian Foreign Secretary Jaishankar restated the viewpoint, stating that India's foreign policy goal should be to become a leading international player rather than just a balancing force.¹⁴ Hague Centre for Strategic Studies (HCSS), which has been tracking great power assertiveness (GPA) since 2013, says India has shaken off some of its reluctance to exhibit the same.¹⁵ Foreign policies have taken on a central role in the country's electoral politics and are increasingly capturing more public interest.

Third, the role of India's Prime Minister Modi as the diplomat in chief who has become the face of India's international relations and diplomacy. Significantly, Narendra Modi's foreign policy activism is comparable to that of Nehru.¹⁶ According to Hall and Ganguly, few Indian prime ministers, other than the first, Jawaharlal Nehru, have sparked such an intense and enduring debate about their foreign policy as Narendra Modi.¹⁷ Aggressive diaspora diplomacy among others is a good example. Syed Akbaruddin, the former permanent representative of India to the United Nations and former head of the Ministry of External Affairs' (MEA) External Publicity Division, posits that the substantial

¹² Stephan De Spiegeleire, Karlijn Jans, and Paul Verhagen, "Strategic Alert Is India Catching Great Power Assertivitis?," *Hague Centre for Strategic Studies*, (2017): 2, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep12584>

¹³ "PM to Heads of Indian Mission," *Public Information Bureau (PIB)*, February 07, 2015. <https://pib.gov.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=115241>, (Accessed January 16, 2023).

¹⁴ Subrahmanyam Jaishankar (2015), IISS Fullerton Lecture by Dr. S. Jaishankar, Foreign Secretary in Singapore. *International Institute for Strategic Studies, Singapore*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=et2ihw8jHaY>, (Accessed January 16, 2023).

¹⁵ De Spiegeleire, Jans, and Verhagen, "Strategic Alert Is India Catching Great Power Assertivitis?", 4-6.

¹⁶ Chaulia, *Modi Doctrine*, 4.

¹⁷ Ian Hall and Sumit Ganguly, "Introduction: Narendra Modi and India's Foreign Policy," *International Politics* 59, no. 1 (2022): 1, <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41311-021-00363-8>

popularity of Prime Minister Narendra Modi across diverse social media platforms offers unparalleled backing for India's diplomatic endeavors.¹⁸

India has thus turned its attention to using social media to advance soft power and support public diplomacy initiatives as a "rising power" that is beginning to play a bigger part in global governance. The nation has been working to improve and innovate digital media applications as part of its diplomatic endeavors, even as the role of new media in international relations continues to grow. However, despite growing scholarship on India's public diplomacy, very little is known about how various actors and technological affordances work together in the process of India's public diplomacy during high-tension environment or crises. In other words, how dispersed actors engage in, facilitate, and contribute to India's public diplomacy remains to be analyzed. This thesis therefore investigates the nature of India's public diplomacy by situating it within these politico-ideological and societal transformations under the Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

An Overview of Extant Literature

Takenori Harimoto argues that there is a scarcity of scholarly literature addressing India's transformation into a prominent actor, elucidating its transition from disregarding to affirming its standing as a major power.¹⁹ Furthermore, studies of India's soft power resources, cultural interactions, and the benefits and limitations of its soft power have dominated a wealth of work pertaining to unconventional approaches to India's foreign policy.

¹⁸ Syed Akbaruddin, "The Evolution of India's Twitter Diplomacy," *Hindustan Times*, February 27, 2021, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/opinion/the-evolution-of-india-s-Twitter-diplomacy-101614344582598.html>, (Accessed January 16, 2023).

¹⁹ Takenori Horimoto, "Explaining India's Foreign Policy: From Dream to Realization of Major Power," *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 17, no. 3. (2017): 464, <https://doi.org/10.1093/irap/lcx011>

Notable works in this area include those by Ian Hall, Daya Thussu, C. Raja Mohan, Patryk Kugiel, Peter Martin, Uma Purushothaman, Christian Wagner, and Jacques E.C. Hymans.²⁰

²⁰ Jacques E.C. Hymans, “India’s Soft Power and Vulnerability,” *India Review* 8, no. 3 (2009): 234–265, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14736480903116784>; Uma Purushothaman, “Shifting Perceptions of Power: Soft Power and India’s Foreign Policy,” *Journal of Peace Studies* 17, no. 2-3 (2010): 1-16; Christian Wagner, “India’s Soft Power: Prospects and Limitations,” *India Quarterly* 66, no. 4 (2010): 333-342; Shashi Tharoor, *Pax Indica: India and the World of the Twenty-first Century* (UK: Penguin, 2013); David M Malone, “Soft Power in Indian Foreign Policy,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 46, no. 36 (2011): 35–39, <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3466579>; Ian Hall, “India’s New Public Diplomacy,” *Asian Survey* 52, no. 6 (2012): 1089-1110, <https://doi.org/10.1525/as.2012.52.6.1089>; Daya Thussu, *Communicating India’s Soft Power: Buddha to Bollywood* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013); C. Raja Mohan, *Modi’s World: Expanding India’s Sphere of Influence* (Noida, UP: HarperCollins Publishers India, 2015) and Patryk Kugiel, “India’s Soft Power in South Asia,” *International Studies* 49, no. 3&4 (2012): 351–376, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0020881714534033>; Peter Martin, “Yoga Diplomacy: Narendra Modi’s Soft Power Strategy,” *Foreign Affairs*, January 25, 2015, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/india/2015-01-25/yoga-diplomacy>, (Accessed January 17, 2023).

See for more - John Lee, “Unrealised Potential: India’s ‘Soft Power’ Ambition in Asia,” *Centre for Independent Studies* 4, June 30, 2010, <http://www.cis.org.au/app/uploads/2015/07/fpa4.pdf>; Peter Martin, “Yoga Diplomacy: Narendra Modi’s Soft Power Strategy,” *Foreign Affairs*, January 25, 2015, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/india/2015-01-25/yoga-diplomacy>, (Accessed January 17, 2023); Rani D. Mullen and Sumit Ganguly, “The Rise of India’s Soft Power,” *Foreign Policy*, May 8, 2012, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2012/05/08/the-rise-of-indias-soft-power/>, (Accessed January 17, 2023); Rhea Abraham, “India and its Diaspora in the Arab Gulf Countries: Tapping into Effective ‘Soft Power’ and Related Public Diplomacy,” *Diaspora Studies* 5, no. 2 (2012): 124-146, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09739572.2013.807544>; Peter Martin, “Yoga Diplomacy: Narendra Modi’s Soft Power Strategy,” *Foreign Affairs*, January 25, 2015, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/india/2015-01-25/yoga-diplomacy>, (Accessed January 17, 2023); Rani D. Mullen, “India’s Soft Power,” in David M. Malone, C. Raja Mohan and S. Raghavan (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Indian Foreign Policy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 188–204; Rohan Mukherjee, “The False Promise of India’s Soft Power,” *Geopolitics, History, and International Relations* 1 (2014): 46–62, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26804932>; Aakriti Tandon, “Transforming the Unbound Elephant to the Lovable Asian Hulk: Why is Modi Leveraging India’s Soft Power,” *The Round Table: The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs* 105, no. 1 (2016): 57–65, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00358533.2015.1126956>; David Scott, “Buddhism in Current China-India diplomacy,” *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* 45, no. 3 (2016): 139-174, <https://doi.org/10.1177/186810261604500305>; Stéphanie M-L Heng, “Diplomacy and Image-building: India Rides on its Soft Power,” *ORF Issue Brief* 163 (2016), <https://www.orfonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/IB-163.pdf>, (Accessed January 17, 2023); Kishan S. Rana, “India and China: Soft Power in an Asian Context,” in *The Routledge Handbook of Soft Power* (Routledge, 2016), 401-414; Arijit Mazumdar, “India’s Soft

Literature has also dealt with India's overall public diplomatic policy, including institutional framework and measures,²¹ communication strategy,²² and how social media have been integrated into the country's public diplomacy apparatus.²³ Public diplomacy is also analyzed in relation to India's economic engagement in South Asia.²⁴ However, these studies have primarily been descriptive rather than analytical and interpretive.

That said, there are a few case studies. Bhattiprolu and Zaharna, analysing the two websites – Overseas Indian Facilitation Centre (OIFC) and Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) found that India's use of digital media to engage with its diaspora as part of the country's public diplomacy endeavour is predominantly marked by one-way communication of information sharing rather than dialogue or relationship building with diaspora.²⁵ This is at a time while scholars and practitioners of public diplomacy have been advocating for dialogue-based communication for relationship-building over a period.²⁶ Similarly, Ronit, Manor and Segev's comparative analysis of public diplomacy

Power Diplomacy Under the Modi Administration: Buddhism, Diaspora and Yoga," *Asian Affairs* 49, no. 3 (2018): 468-491, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03068374.2018.1487696>; Ramakrushna Pradhan and Atanu Mohapatra, "India's Diaspora Policy: Evidence of Soft Power Diplomacy Under Modi," *South Asian Diaspora* 12, no. 2 (2020): 145-161, <https://doi.org/10.1080/19438192.2020.1712792>.

- ²¹ Navdeep Suri, "Public Diplomacy in India's Foreign Policy," *Strategic Analysis* 35, no. 2 (2011): 297-303, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09700161.2011.542927>; Mazumdar. "India's Public Diplomacy in the Twenty-first Century," 24-39.
- ²² Amit Dasgupta, "Making Public Diplomacy Work: The Need for an Effective Communications Strategy," *Journal of International Communication* 17, no. 1 (2011): 73-83, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13216597.2011.556087>
- ²³ Sinha Palit, "India's Use of Social Media in Public Diplomacy," 151-171.
- ²⁴ Sara Kulsoom, "Economic Determinants of India's Public Diplomacy Towards South Asia," In *Public Diplomacy and the Politics of Uncertainty* (Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, 2021), 255-276.
- ²⁵ Bhattiprolu Murti and Rhonda S. Zaharna, "India's Digital Diaspora Diplomacy: Operationalizing Collaborative Public Diplomacy Strategies for Social Media," *Exchange: The Journal of Public Diplomacy* 5, no. 1 (2014): 23-25, <https://surface.syr.edu/exchange/vol5/iss1/3>
- ²⁶ Jan Melissen, "The New Public Diplomacy: Between Theory and Practice," in *The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power in International Relations* (2005), 3-27; Shaun Riordan, "Dialogue-based Public Diplomacy: A New Foreign Policy Paradigm? Discussion Papers in Diplomacy no. 95, *Netherlands Institute of International Relations Clingendael, The Hague*; Geoffrey Cowan and Amelia Arsenault, "Moving from Monologue to Dialogue to Collaboration: The

using Twitter and Facebook by eleven foreign ministries, including the MEA finds that foreign ministries rarely engage in dialogue and communication.²⁷

Ittefaq, following comparative research of India's and Pakistan's public diplomacy through Social Networking Sites (SNS) Facebook and Twitter, illuminates a lack of two-way communication.²⁸ The study concludes that SNS have not been used by government agencies to connect with or communicate with the public digitally. Also, it has not been seen that government agencies use digital media channels to interact with either domestic or international audiences.²⁹ Natarajan's study based on interviews with officials from the MEA examines how India has utilized new media in its public diplomacy efforts. It highlights the significance of new media in informing foreign policy objectives, promoting positive narratives about India, and countering narratives that are detrimental to its interests.³⁰ Natarajan further observes that although India's MEA has begun utilizing digital platforms to propagate a favorable narrative and bolster the nation's reputation, the incorporation of a coherent strategic narrative and the management of counter-radical narratives on online platforms have not been fully amalgamated into its strategies for public diplomacy.³¹ However, these findings have not yet been tested in terms of real practice since 2014. To put it differently, even as one endorses her arguments and findings, there is a need to demonstrate how India practices the objective and aims.

Three Layers of Public Diplomacy," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616, no. 1 (2008): 10-30, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716207311863>

²⁷ Ronit Kampf, Ilan Manor and Elad Segev, "Digital Diplomacy 2.0? A Cross-national Comparison of Public Engagement in Facebook and Twitter," *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy* 10, no. 4 (2015): 350, <https://doi.org/10.1163/1871191X-12341318>

²⁸ Muhammad Ittefaq, "Digital Diplomacy via Social Networks: A Cross-national Analysis of Governmental Usage of Facebook and Twitter for Digital Engagement," *Journal of Contemporary Eastern Asia* 18, no. 1 (2019): 49-69, <https://doi.org/10.17477/jcea.2019.18.1.049>

²⁹ Ibid, 49.

³⁰ Kalathmika Natarajan, "Digital Public Diplomacy and a Strategic Narrative for India," *Strategic Analysis* 38, no. 1 (2014): 91-106, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09700161.2014.863478>

³¹ Ibid.

Spry and Garud-Patkar has attempted to address the gap.³² Spry draws attention to the extent and reach of India's Ministry of External Affairs' digital diplomacy through Facebook along with 13 other Asian countries. He found lower-level engagements on Indian Facebook pages and very low levels locals engaging with them. That is, in many cases, accounts based in India account for the majority of page likes. Garud-Patkar's research delves into India's utilization of social media for agenda-setting within the South Asian region. This was achieved through an analysis of 6000 tweets and status updates posted across 15 Indian diplomatic accounts, supplemented by a survey of 387 followers. The findings indicate that select Indian policy agendas showcased on social media resonated with the agendas of their South Asian followers, thereby suggesting a significant role in agenda-building.³³ While these studies made excellent attempts to address the temporal gap left by Natarajan, the studies did not accommodate the domestic socio-political scenarios associated with the temporal dimension that have changed the communicative environment to a considerable extent since 2014.

It can be seen from all this that the empirical studies of India's public diplomacy focus on analysing the communicative model, understanding the institutional set up, and evaluating the dialogic potential of India's public diplomacy activities online. Moreover, these studies have also been limited to communication strategies from the vantage point of international relations wherein the impact of domestic political and societal changes have been assumed to be mute or unimpactful. Besides, more importantly, crisis moment as a context and variable in shaping India's public diplomacy while at the same time being shaped by it remains yet to be examined. Furthermore, by discussing India's public diplomacy within the framework of cultural engagements, most existing studies avoid specifically looking into what Nye calls the "day-to-day dimension" of public diplomacy

³² Damien Spry, "From Delhi to Dili: Facebook Diplomacy by Ministries of Foreign Affairs in the Asia-Pacific," *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy* 15, no. 1-2 (2019): 93-125. <https://doi.org/10.1163/1871191X-15101067>; Nisha Garud-Patkar, "Is Digital Diplomacy an Effective Foreign Policy Tool? Evaluating India's Digital Diplomacy Through Agenda-building in South Asia," *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy* 18, no. 2 (2022): 128-143. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41254-021-00199-2>

³³ Garud-Patkar, "Is Digital Diplomacy an Effective Foreign Policy Tool?," 128.

which he says involves “explaining the context of domestic and foreign policy decisions,” and “dealing with crises and countering attacks.”³⁴

Yet digitization and ever-increasing public attention to foreign policy of nation states demands as much coherent explication of foreign policies. Governments and other international actors are facing growing demands to provide rationale for their decisions and activities in foreign policy to a broad audience, encompassing not only their official counterparts but also their domestic populations, non-state entities, and foreign publics. This obligation persists irrespective of whether these choices involve the deployment of military force, coercive tactics, soft power strategies, institutional influence, or symbolic gestures.³⁵

Therefore, it is crucial to provide a comprehensive understanding of India’s public diplomacy landscape. The purpose is to move beyond the discourse surrounding traditional public diplomacy spearheaded by the Ministry of External Affairs and official diplomatic avenues. Instead, the focus is on conceptualizing public diplomacy as a co-construction of discourses within the public sphere.³⁶ The primary investigative question then revolves around how different actors shape the context, landscape, and public diplomacy in India. Co-construction refers to the collaborative process of shaping a form, interpretation, stance, action, activity, identity, ideology, emotion, or any other culturally

³⁴ Nye, *Soft Power*, 107-109.

³⁵ Volker Stanzel, “Introduction: Following the Wrong Track or Walking on Stepping Stones – Which Way for Diplomacy?,” in *New Realities in Foreign Affairs: Diplomacy in the 21st Century* (eds), *Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, German Institute for International and Security Affairs*, SWP Research Paper 11 (2018), 10, https://www.swp-berlin.org/publications/products/research_papers/2018RP11_sze.pdf, (Accessed January 19, 2023).

³⁶ Alina Dolea, “Public Diplomacy as Co-constructed Discourses of Engagement,” in *The Handbook of Communication Engagement* (2018), 331-345, https://eprints.bournemouth.ac.uk/30207/1/PD%20as%20co_constructed%20discourses%20on%20engagement_Wiley.pdf, (Accessed January 19, 2023); Isabelle Karlsson, “Debating Feminist Foreign Policy: The Formation of (Unintended) Publics in Sweden’s Public Diplomacy,” *Journal of Public Diplomacy* 2, no. 2 (2022): 49-69. DOI: 10.23045/jpd.2022.2.2.049, https://www.journalofpd.com/files/ugd/75feb6_7f7c0e90fa4a45c79396cd5eb66c75ab.pdf, (Accessed January 19, 2023).

significant reality through joint effort.³⁷ Thus, the objective of this study is to provide an analytical and thick description of India's public diplomacy within the current political context and against the backdrop of Delhi as a "rising power." In addition, this study aims to underscore the necessity of a more encompassing conceptual framework for examining the involvement of the general public in public diplomacy, particularly in light of the significant changes occurring in global society.

Crises Moments

As can be learnt from the discussion above, studies have hitherto talked about India's public diplomacy landscape during every day or non-crisis situations. However, this study focuses on how India employs public diplomacy during crisis moments when there is both strategic necessity and opportunity to do so. In doing so, the analysis assumes that national public diplomacy actions during crisis moments better reflect the public and the state engagements around various narratives, assertions, values, and power-status projections that have little visibility on normal occasions. For this purpose, the study considers four moments. The cases are – Balakot crisis, revocation of Article 370, COVID-19 crisis, and the Ukraine Crisis. The overarching idea is to put these case studies together to understand how the broader apparatuses of state, constituting various actors including the public, local dynamics, and contextual factors interplay in making India's public diplomacy.

Balakot Crisis

The Balakot crisis emerged in February 2019 following a terrorist attack on an Indian paramilitary convoy in Pulwama, resulting in the loss of 40 security personnel. The incident sparked a widespread outcry and demands for action against Pakistan. With upcoming general elections, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi faced political and reputational consequences if he did not respond. Approximately two weeks later, India conducted a counterstrike by targeting terrorist camps in Balakot, deviating from its traditional restrained approach. Previous responses to terrorist attacks had been non-military in nature, but the Balakot strike demonstrated India's growing confidence in

³⁷ Sally Jacoby and Elinor Ochs, "Co-construction: An introduction," *Research on Language and Social Interaction* 28, no. 3 (1995): 171, https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327973rlsi2803_1

using force and challenged Pakistan's nuclear threat. The crisis represented a shift in India's foreign policy and strategic affairs, with justifications for the strike ranging from revenge to pre-emptive defense. While the strike triggered a battle of narratives from both sides, India garnered significant international support.

Revocation of Article 370

The abrogation of Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir on August 5th 2019 created a crisis with far-reaching consequences. The decision to remove the state's special status and split it into two union territories created a polarized and divisive atmosphere. Supporters contended that the action would combat concerns of terrorism and separatism while fostering regional development, economic progress, and tighter connection with the rest of India. Critics, however, expressed alarm over the effects on the general people, human rights, civil liberties, and the demise of democracy. The government put Preventive measures in place, including the deployment of security personnel, communication and internet bans, and the placement of political leaders under house arrest. Domestically, the decision received mixed responses from political parties, with some supporting it for peace and development and others criticizing it as an abuse of executive power. Internationally, Pakistan strongly reacted, downgrading ties with India and seeking support from the UN and Islamic organizations. The United Nations, OIC, and some world leaders expressed concerns about the restrictions and urged dialogue. Overall, the abrogation of Article 370 sparked a significant policy crisis with wide-ranging implications and intense political and diplomatic reactions both within and outside India.

COVID-19 Crisis

COVID-19 was originated in Wuhan, China, with the first reported cases linked to a seafood market in December 2019. In a short span of time, it brought about a global disruption and had a profound impact on various aspects of human well-being, extending beyond a mere health emergency. Vulnerable populations, including the homeless, individuals lacking access to water, refugees, migrants, and forcibly displaced people, were disproportionately affected, as indicated by a UN assessment. Discrimination was experienced by the elderly, individuals with disabilities, and indigenous communities. In certain institutions, resource allocation, such as ventilators, took into consideration factors like age and frailty. People with disabilities faced challenges due to physical

limitations and interrupted services. Indigenous populations encountered higher rates of illness, limited access to essential services, and ill-equipped medical facilities. The pandemic exposed and exacerbated pre-existing vulnerabilities within these marginalized groups. The pandemic also presented significant challenges to nation-states, leading to transformative changes in international relations through the implementation of social distancing measures, lockdowns, and a focus on internal affairs. Disruptions raised concerns regarding power dynamics and intensified nationalist sentiments. Effective international cooperation and coordination became crucial for navigating the pandemic, although state responses were complicated by the need to adapt traditional practices. Despite the strain on India's public health system, the country actively engaged on the global stage, providing assistance to others while managing its own crisis. The pandemic underscored the importance of diplomacy and proactive measures for nations in the face of this global health crisis.

Ukraine Crisis

The conflict between Russia and Ukraine started in 2014 when Crimea was annexed by Russia. Tensions peaked on February 24, 2022, when Russia launched a military invasion of Ukraine. Russian forces crossed the Ukrainian border during this invasion, representing a dramatic uptick in hostilities. Widespread international condemnation of the invasion's effects on the world caused diplomatic efforts to resolve the conflict and lessen its effects. For India, the Ukraine war presented a significant crisis of prestige as it navigated the complex aftermath of the conflict. Balancing relationships with the West and Russia while safeguarding its global image and national interests posed a delicate challenge for Indian diplomacy. Despite longstanding ties with Russia, India cautiously expressed concerns about Russia's aggression through guarded comments and implicit gestures, such as advocating for dialogue and voting against Russia in certain UN resolutions. However, the West viewed India's measured response as support for Russia, leading to criticism and accusations of financing the war. This predicament can be seen as a prestige crisis for India, arising from the conflict between its domestic preferences and the expectations associated with its role as a rising democratic power. The international community's expectations of responsible global citizenship and crisis management further compounded India's prestige concerns.

Research Questions

Some of the research questions that the study addresses include:

- How is public diplomacy shaped by different actors, processes, and goals?
- What are the different themes and narratives about India's rising power status in the attendant discourses about critical cases?
- What is the role and contribution of new media, particularly social media in co-constructing of India's public diplomacy by the Twitterati at large?

Giving the Twitterati its Due

In line with the overarching research question under exploration, this study understands public diplomacy as “basically comprise all a nation does to explain itself to the world.”³⁸ This definition encapsulates the view that public diplomacy is continuing to present, persist and flourish in multitude forms beyond the institutional coherence rendered by the government. This phenomenon underscores the significance of public engagement, as the communication of a country's foreign policy aims not only to validate these policies on a global scale but also domestically. Central to this concept of validation is the acknowledgement of diverse public opinions.³⁹

As such, owing to the democratisation of information availability, citizens can now participate actively in international politics rather of playing the more conventionally passive role that has been given to them. People are now able to have their opinions heard in the global arena by independently observing and engaging in international affairs.⁴⁰ They have evolved into participants-cum-collaborators who need to be heard, advocated

³⁸ Cynthia P. Schneider, “Culture Communicates: US Diplomacy that Works,” in *The New Public Diplomacy* (Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2005), 147.

³⁹ Karlsson, “Debating Feminist Foreign Policy,” 50.

⁴⁰ Filippou Proedrou and Christos Frangonikolopoulos, “Refocusing Public Diplomacy: The Need for Strategic Discursive Public Diplomacy,” *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 23, no. 4 (2012): 730, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09592296.2012.736339>

for, informed, and partnered with.⁴¹ The contemporary realities suggest that in an increasingly interconnected world (a networked society, in the words of Castells) the role of domestic audience has increased.⁴² Many domestic issues of political salience cannot be entirely disconnected or disentangled from their consequences for countries' efforts to maintain and promote a desirable image overseas, that is, from its public diplomacy efforts. According to Ellen Huijgh, a nation's (inter)national credibility and efficiency depend greatly on the domestic public's comprehension and support of a government's policy as well as their attempts to interact with peers abroad.⁴³

Moreover, in the age of social media, increased mobility and interactions among global citizens on cosmological scale has muddled the traditional distinction between international and domestic audience.⁴⁴ Non-state entities, individuals, and citizens can now communicate directly with local, national, and international authorities. They have the capability to generate and share user-created content for public diplomacy through online platforms.⁴⁵ In that sense, public diplomacy has evolved considerably over time, becoming a more intricate communication process that needs constant involvement, conversation, and realignment of goals in connection to other stakeholders. Consequently, public diplomacy's central role of controlling the communication process, has shifted from the state dominance to encompass a wide variety of actors and civil

⁴¹ Hocking quoted in Proedrou and Frangonikolopoulos, "Refocusing Public Diplomacy," 730.

⁴² Manuel Castells, "Communication, Power and Counter-power in the Network Society," *International Journal of Communication* 1, no. 1 (2007), <https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/46/35>

⁴³ Ellen Huijgh, "Indonesia's "Intermestic" Public Diplomacy: Features and Future," *Politics & Policy* 45, no. 5 (2017): 764, <https://doi.org/10.1111/polp.12221>

⁴⁴ Ellen Huijgh, "Changing Tunes for Public Diplomacy: Exploring the Domestic Dimension," *Exchange: The Journal of Public Diplomacy* 2, no. 1 (2011): 2, <https://surface.syr.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1018&context=exchange>; Ellen Huijgh, "The Public Diplomacy of Federated Entities: Examining the Quebec Model," in *Regional Sub-state Diplomacy Today*, Brill Nijhoff, (2010), 126, https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004394254_007

⁴⁵ Diana Ingenhoff, Giada Calamai and EfeSevin, "Key Influencers in Public Diplomacy 2.0: A Country-based Social Network Analysis," *SocialMedia+ Society* 7, no. 1 (2021): 1, <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305120981053>

society organisations that actively participate in and significantly influence, shape and impact the process.⁴⁶

A study on Norwegian consulates's public diplomacy during the COVID-19 pandemic notes that citizens participated in the process of re-sharing information and helping the MFA identify those in need through social networks as social media and several other digital platforms became crucial venues for distributing information about how people may obtain governmental aid. This demonstrates the value of citizens' engagement in sharing information on digital platforms, which contributed to the effectiveness of the MFA's consular response.⁴⁷ However, the public is taken for granted for its existence as a target or audience. In her recent publication in the *Journal of Public Diplomacy*, Karlsson highlights the prevalent presumption of pre-existing publics, resulting in a widespread belief that these publics are readily available to engage with, communicate to, and particularly, target. These approaches regard publics as passive entities, which poses a challenge as they overlook the diverse dynamics within modern communication realms.⁴⁸ Yet most of the studies dominated by the elites and institutional (design) perspective of public diplomacy only emphasises and affirms the governmental efforts to manage favourable public opinion and national image.

In essence, it is worthwhile to emphasize the participation of the public or citizens in public diplomacy beyond the direct, formal cooperation supervised by the state. Natarajan underscores this significance by emphasizing the need to acknowledge the diverse array of narratives that shape perceptions and serve as informal catalysts for public diplomacy.⁴⁹ Moreover, the perception of the public towards foreign policy has always had an impact on foreign policy capacity and states' behaviour in international affairs. However, society in recent years has become increasingly dynamic, expressing more pronounced opinions on foreign policy issues and individuals seeking to have a greater

⁴⁶ Dolea, "Public Diplomacy as Co-constructed Discourses of Engagement," 333.

⁴⁷ Ieva Birka, Didzis Klaviņš, and Roberts Kits, "Duty of Care: Consular Diplomacy Response of Baltic and Nordic Countries to COVID-19," *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy* 18, no. 1 (2022): 154, <https://doi.org/10.1163/1871191x-bja10115>

⁴⁸ Karlsson, "Debating Feminist Foreign Policy," 50.

⁴⁹ Natarajan, "Digital Public Diplomacy and a Strategic Narrative for India," 95.

say in the matter.⁵⁰ Even collaboration with citizens or civil society organizations does not always occur through official or formalised terms of engagement.

It is important to reckon with informal ways of public contributing to their country's public diplomacy that is prompted by public desire to represent their country in a certain way, including efforts to countering narratives harming their own country's image and national interest. In such cases, ideational factors can create the effect of collaboration between the state and the public or civil society. Certainly, the spurt of social media as an indispensable factor in political communication landscape has been a remarkable facilitator of this change. To be clearer, Twitter and other social media platforms have a worldwide audience reach, allowing messages to be viewed by audiences anywhere. That is, messages aimed to a home audience could have an influence abroad. So, every digital platform communication should take public diplomacy outcomes into account.⁵¹

More importantly, bringing the general public to the centre of public diplomacy as discursive agents and not mere targets of public diplomacy is important for the fact that growing de-globalisation, populism and nationalism has brought public to the fore of legitimising or contesting a country's foreign policy. Consider the case of India. As nationalism engulfed the Indian society, India's public are more willing than ever before to engage in social media conversations related to policies towards legitimising the country's image. The political environment was brought about a combination of dissemination of the internet and smartphones coupled with the rise of nationalist sentiment in the country following the majoritarian religious nationalist party Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) electoral resurgence under Modi.

A simultaneous development to India's democratisation of foreign policy under Modi is the religious embeddedness in diplomacy in which securing India's image has become a personalised moral responsibility of Indians. That is to say that defending the image of

⁵⁰ HwaJung Kim and Jan Melissen, "Engaging Home in International Diplomacy: Introduction," *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy* 17, no. 4 (2022): 613, <https://doi.org/10.1163/1871191x-bja10141>

⁵¹ Di Wu and Efe Sevin, "Neither External nor Multilateral: States' Digital Diplomacy During Covid-19," *Journal of Public Diplomacy* 2, no. 1 (2022): 69, DOI: 10.23045/jpd.2022.2.1.1

India as *Vishwaguru* (the universal teacher) is a moral responsibility of every Indian and is closely tied to private individual's status and identity. It is therefore important to situate public diplomacy within the nationalist dimensions of politics that comprise or makes public diplomacy routines of a nation-state.

This thesis takes up domestic public discourse created by the domestic audience as an arguably impactful element in a country's public diplomacy as much as institutional engagement. In doing so, it emphasizes the need for public diplomacy to be conceived within a comprehensive framework reflecting agencies of both the state and the Twitterati. It is grounded in the fact that public diplomacy increasingly takes place and is being shaped by in a more fluid context, an integrative/comprehensive or holistic approach has become an imperative for scholarly engagement with the topic. It calls for moving away from thinking that heavily relies on fixed categories or classifications, thus avoiding being bound by rigid distinctions such as hierarchies versus networks, old versus new, domestic versus foreign, or state versus non-state entities. Instead of solely focusing on these clear-cut divisions, the emphasis should be on recognizing where these categories might overlap or intersect. In doing so, it is important to focus on similarities and shared attributes rather than solely highlighting differences.⁵² Based on this vantage point, the current study both brings into focus the constant and ever-growing salience of how the ordinary public is shaping and/or giving meanings to India's public diplomacy.

Rationale for Case Selection and Sources

Justification for the Choice of the Cases and Sources

The study seeks to answer research questions based on four empirical case studies: The cases are – Balakot crisis, Article 370 withdrawal, COVID-19, and Ukraine Crisis. There is a six-fold rationale for case selection. *First*, the four crisis moments were marked by complex diplomatic engagements and competition to gain favourable international opinion. *Second*, the cases had attracted wide domestic and international attention and received tremendous public response. *Third*, the cases are of varying nature and represent different dimensions of foreign and security affairs that nation-state deals with in international system - terror attack, territorial disputes, global pandemic, and war,

⁵² Ellen Huijgh, *Public Diplomacy at Home: Domestic Dimensions*. (BRILL, 2019), 22.

respectively. *Fourth*, cases are constitutive of India's global and regional (local) level foreign policy engagements in terms of objectives and implications of India's policy actions. *Fifth*, the cases represent crisis management during four scenarios of crisis – Balakot attack (Status crisis – the challenge of responding to Pulwama attack in terms of holding India's reputation for power in protection of territorial integrity),⁵³ Article 370 withdrawal (Identity crisis – the challenge of maintaining a territorially stable and uncontestably sovereign identity), the COVID-19 pandemic (Image/Reputation Crisis – managing India's reputation as a “net security provider”⁵⁴ and “first-responder” in South Asia and Indian Ocean Region (IOR) coupled with the reputation as “the pharmacy of the world”), and Ukraine Crisis of Russo-Ukraine War (Crisis of Prestige - tensions triggered by sovereign interest (national interest) and norm expectation as the largest democratic rising power). *Finally*, the four cases - Balakot Airstrike, Article 370, and COVID-19 and Ukraine Crisis - best represent occasions to showcase distinct sources of state power – military, diplomacy, and state identity - that determine the status of emerging powers and great powers in the international system.⁵⁵

Approaching the Cases and Data

The cases are examined to understand both the institutional (Official) and non-institutional actors' (the public) involvement in the international communication process. For this purpose, two actors – Political elites and the public in general - whose involvement in public diplomacy have not been particularly examined in the Indian context are explored. By combining two different levels of analysis - the institutional and public dimensions of India's public diplomacy – the study is simultaneously attentive to

⁵³ Robert Gilpin in his book *War and Change in World Politics* (1981, 32) posits that attaining status and prestige hinges predominantly on achieving success, whether through military conquest or economic prowess. The nations deemed most prestigious within the global framework are those that have most recently demonstrated their ability to wield military force or economic strength effectively.

⁵⁴ In 2009, during his speech at the Shangri-La Dialogue, former US Secretary of Defense Robert Gates introduced the term “Net Security Provider” to the Indian discourse. Later, the 2010 US Quadrennial Defense Review emphasized this concept. According to the term, India is promoting peace, stability, and security in its region and beyond by making the most of its growing military might, economic clout, and diplomatic influence. It is also enhancing its standing as a significant and responsible player in international security and defense affairs.

⁵⁵ Thomas Renard and Sven Biscop, *The European Union and Emerging Powers in the 21st Century: How Europe Can Shape a New Global Order* (Ashgate, 2016), 46.

the need for integrating different levels of analysis to provide a comprehensive reading of the social-relational aspects of rising power's public diplomacy. All the four cases – *Balakot crisis, abrogation of Article 370, COVID-19 pandemic, and Ukraine crisis* - engage with institutional (official) outreach as well as the non-institutional (the public) landscape of public diplomacy involving the role of the Indian public and their perceptions.

Institutional aspect of public diplomacy is examined through three empirical sources - first, the Prime Minister's public speeches during COVID-19 pandemic, second, an analysis of the statements of S. Jaishankar, the Minister of External Affairs, and Hardeep Singh Puri, the Minister of Petroleum and Gas and third, Twitter engagement of India's prominent government officials and prominent party figures of the ruling party who are active on Twitter during Balakot crisis and the revocation of Article 370.

To examine the institutional/Official dimension of public diplomacy during the crises of Balakot and Article 370 withdrawal, 28 Twitter handles were selected. Of those selected, five handles were official Twitter handles of the government including, India's Public Diplomacy Division, Prime Minister's Office (PMO India), Ministry of External Affairs of India, Press Information Bureau (PIB), and Additional Directorate General of Public Information (ADGPI). Six Twitter handles were popular and active politicians from the ruling party and senior bureaucrats who are active users of Twitter including the Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Amit Shah, Dr. S Jaishankar, Hardeep Singh Puri, Sushma Swaraj, Yogi Adityanath. Foreign Secretary, Vijay Keshav Gokhale (2018-2020) and National Security Advisor (NSA), Ajit Doval who presided over Article 370 revocation, and Balakot Crisis were excluded for their absence on Twitter during the events.

While Vijay Gokhale joined Twitter in 2020 January, Ajit Doval does not have a Twitter account even at the time of this writing. Rest of the 17 Twitter handles were that of prominent Indian Embassies. This included embassies in the US, Russia, UK, Australia, Canada, Belgium and European Union, Japan, China, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar, Bahrain, UAE, Kuwait, Singapore, and Indonesia. These embassies were chosen after gathering general information about the context and background about the events and the period analyzed, mainly from online media including Facebook, magazines, and newspapers. Besides Pakistan for reasons obvious, the idea was to include India's major

partners, and the countries who are traditional supporters of Pakistan in India-Pakistan conflicts yet maintains close ties with India, not to mention that the latter countries are also predominantly Muslim countries.

Non-institutional aspect of public diplomacy is investigated through analysing the Tweets of the Indian public during the selected four crises moments. In addition, news report, policy reports and other official statements from the government were also relied on as auxiliary source of data.

The rationale behind choosing social media is its ever-growing relevance in today's politics.⁵⁶ Social media tremendously enhanced the possibility and visibility of public communication than ever during the unmediated environment.⁵⁷ It has become a significant tool as the masses online can profoundly shape the political narrative both domestically and globally.⁵⁸ Moreover, social media has significantly enabled easier and wider public participation in socio-political discourses to increasing the public debate than the traditional media.⁵⁹ Above all, it has emerged as an important platform in international communication and digitalized diplomatic practices.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ Farzana Masroor, Qintarah N. Khan, Iman Aib, and Zulfiqar Ali. "Polarization and Ideological Weaving in Twitter Discourse of Politicians," *SocialMedia+ Society* 5, no. 4 (2019): 3, <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305119891220>

⁵⁷ Nancy K. Baym and boyd D, "Socially Mediated Publicness: An Introduction," *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 56, no. 3 (2012): 322, <https://doi.org/10.1080/08838151.2012.705200>

⁵⁸ Stephen D. Collins, Jeff R. DeWitt, and Rebecca K. LeFebvre, "Hashtag Diplomacy: Twitter as a Tool for Engaging in Public Diplomacy and Promoting US Foreign Policy," *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy* 15, no. 2 (2019): 80, <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41254-019-00119-5>

⁵⁹ Andrew S. Ross, "Discursive Delegitimation in Metaphorical #secondcivilwarletters: An Analysis of a Collective Twitter Hashtag Response," *Critical Discourse Studies* 17, no. 5 (2020): 510-514, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17405904.2019.1661861>

⁶⁰ Melissa D. Dodd and Steve J. Collins, "Public Relations Message Strategies and Public Diplomacy 2.0: An Empirical Analysis Using Central-Eastern European and Western Embassy Twitter Accounts," *Public Relations Review* 43, no. 2 (2017): 417-425, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2017.02.004>; Zhao Alexandre Huang and Rui Wang, "'Panda Engagement' in China's Digital Public Diplomacy," *Asian Journal of Communication* 30, no. 2 (2020): 120-21, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01292986.2020.1725075>; Efe Sevin and Ilan Manor, "From Embassy Ties to Twitter Links: Comparing Offline and Online Diplomatic Networks: Diplomatic Networks on Twitter," *Policy & Internet* 11, no. 3. (2019): 324-343, <https://doi.org/10.1002/poi3.199>; Efe Sevin, Kadir Jun Ayhan, and Diana Ingenhoff,

The selection of Twitter among social media for the current study was motivated by a lot of factors. Twitter, in the form of “microblogging,” has heralded a dramatic change in the way traditional public communication, dominated by political elites and journalists, tended to operate.⁶¹ Despite not specifically formed for political deliberation, Twitter has excellently evolved as a conversational blog facilitating ease of communication about political and social issues.⁶² Although the imposed restriction of a 280-character limit on Twitter⁶³ necessitates concise communication and limited message size, the platform offers advantages such as minimal access barriers, a dearth of gatekeepers, and the potential to reach substantial and diverse audiences.⁶⁴ Moreover, Twitter has also emerged as site where individual emotions are vent and presented to the larger audience in a way generating an emotional contagion that can lead to shared, collective sentiment and solidarity actions.⁶⁵

“Analyzing Country Images Through Networks: Case of South Korea,” *Asian International Studies Review* 21, no. 2 (2020): 95-119, <https://doi.org/10.16934/isr.21.2.202012.95>

⁶¹ Stefan Stieglitz and Linh Dang-Xuan, “Emotions and Information Diffusion in Social Media—Sentiment of Microblogs and Sharing Behavior,” *Journal of Management Information Systems* 29, no. 4 (2013): 218, <https://doi.org/10.2753/MIS0742-1222290408>

⁶² Itai Himelboim Stephen McCreery and Marc Smith, “Birds of a Feather Tweet Together: Integrating Network and Content Analyses to Examine Cross-ideology Exposure on Twitter,” *Journal of Computer-mediated Communication* 18, no. 2 (2013): 158, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcc4.12001>; Chien-leng Hsu, Se Jung Park and Han Woo Park, “Political Discourse Among Key Twitter Users: The Case of Sejong City in South Korea,” *Journal of Contemporary Eastern Asia* 12, no. 1 (2013): 65, <https://doi.org/10.17477/jcea.2013.12.1.065>

⁶³ Recently Twitter has extended the character limit to 4000 characters for subscribers to Twitter Blue’s monthly subscription service within the United States.

⁶⁴ Aliza Rosen, “Tweeting Made Easier [Blog post],” *Hämtad från* https://blog.twitter.com/official/en_us/topics/product/2017/tweetingmadeeasier. *Html*, November 7, 2017, https://blog.Twitter.com/en_us/topics/product/2017/tweetingmadeeasier (Accessed on January 24, 2023); Bernadette Barker-Plummer and David Barker-Plummer, “Twitter as a Feminist Resource: # YesAllWomen, Digital Platforms, and Discursive Social Change,” in *Social Movements and Media*, *Emerald Publishing Limited* 14, (2017): 91-118, <https://doi.org/10.1108/S2050-206020170000014010>

⁶⁵ Constance Duncombe, “Digital Diplomacy: Emotion and Identity in the Public Realm,” *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy* 14, no. 1-2 (2019): 102-116, <https://doi.org/10.1163/1871191X-14101016>

In many ways, it has emerged as a socio-political domain which is being expansively used for information dissemination as well as to express public opinion.⁶⁶ Put another way, it has developed into a mechanism for raising awareness that swiftly and extensively provides information, thereby enhancing wider public discussion on a variety of subjects.⁶⁷ In this context, Twitter emerges as one of the most recognized social media platforms in politics, extensively utilized by both political elites and the general public. Significantly, India has rapidly become the third-largest user base on Twitter worldwide, boasting 23.6 million users as of January 2022.⁶⁸

As such, Twitter's vast reach among the population and decision makers, its integration into the country's governmental organizations and foreign policy and diplomatic machinery, the political nature of the cases the present study deals with, and the presence of substantial number of Twitter users in India combinedly made it ideal for my study.⁶⁹ Since all the data were collected from the public domain, no ethical approval was needed.

That said, at this juncture, it is pertinent to consider a caveat concerning the Twitter users in India. Notably, the Twitter user base, primarily English-speaking, does not represent the broader spectrum of the Indian public. This segment, predominantly constitutes the English-educated middle-class population, thereby reflecting primarily privileged viewpoints. Despite these inherent constraints, it is imperative to acknowledge that the

⁶⁶ Andrew S. Ross and Damian J. Rivers, "Discursive Deflection: Accusation of "Fake News" and the Spread of Mis-and Disinformation in the Tweets of President Trump," *Social Media+Society* 4, no. 2 (2018): 1-2, <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305118776010>

⁶⁷ Axel Maireder and Julian Ausserhofer, "Political Discourses on Twitter: Networking Topics, Objects, and People," *Twitter and Society* (New York, NY: Peter Lang, 2014), 356; Anders Larsson and Hallvard Moe, "Who Tweets? Tracking Microblogging Use in the 2010 Swedish Election Campaign," *ECIS Proceedings* 251 (2011): 7, <https://aisel.aisnet.org/ecis2011/251/>

⁶⁸ "Leading Countries Based on Number of Twitter Users as of January 2022 (in Millions)," *Statista.Com*, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/242606/number-of-active-Twitter-users-in-selected-countries/>, (Accessed January 24, 2023)

⁶⁹ Anumeha Chaturvedi, "How India Emerged as Twitter's Fastest Growing Market in Terms of Daily Active Use," *The Economic Times*, May 16, 2017, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/opinion/interviews/india-became-our-number-one-market-in-daily-users-Twitter-new-india-director-taranjeet-singh/articleshow/58601906.cms?from=mdr> (Accessed February 8, 2023).

discourse within the Twitter sphere does wield influence over the general public sentiment in India.

Data Collection

This study utilizes qualitative content analysis as a methodology to offer insights. Qualitative content analysis is employed across all components of the data corpus, encompassing documents, tweets, and YouTube videos. This approach prioritizes a holistic perspective on speech and texts within their respective contexts. In doing so, it extends beyond mere word counting or extracting objective content from texts to delve into the meanings, themes, and patterns that may be evident or implicit within a given text.⁷⁰ Additionally, a significant advantage lies in its ability to enable researchers to comprehend social reality subjectively yet within a scientific framework.⁷¹

While most of the research involving social media data is following a quantitative approach,⁷² it has to be noted that the social media research based on big data, with its ability to quantify social spaces, does not necessarily get closer with objective truth.⁷³ Neither is an automated analysis of big data sets false proof and sometimes even smaller amounts of data with proper contextualization can provide us more information.⁷⁴ In this regard, qualitative research method is better to understand “how people do things with Twitter, why they do them, and how they understand them.” As a method it “seeks to understand meaning-making, placing technology use into specific social contexts, places, and times.”⁷⁵ Furthermore, the qualitative method makes it possible to shed light on the meanings and contextual factors that shape people’s perceptions and behaviors within a

⁷⁰ Yan Zhang and Barbara M. Wildemuth, “Qualitative Analysis of Content,” (2005): 1, https://www.ischool.utexas.edu/~yanz/Content_analysis.pdf, Accessed February 08, 2023.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Alice E. Marwick, “Ethnographic and Qualitative Research on Twitter,” in Weller K, Bruns A, Burgess JE, et al (eds.) *Twitter and Society*. (New York: Peter Lang. 2014), 110.

⁷³ Danah boyd and Kate Crawford, “Critical Questions for Big Data: Provocations for a Cultural, Technological, and Scholarly Phenomenon,” *Information, Communication & Society* 15, no. 5 (2012): 667, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2012.678878>

⁷⁴ Ibid, 670.

⁷⁵ Marwick, “Ethnographic and Qualitative Research on Twitter,” 118.

particular setting.⁷⁶ In this regard, in the current study, qualitative method was particularly used in seeking to provide an account of India's public diplomacy during crisis within the socio-political contexts of India.

Twitter data was predominantly gathered by utilizing the Academic Research product track Application Programming Interface (API) developer account coupled with the advanced search functionality offered by Twitter.⁷⁷ For Academic Research API, Twitter's permission was sought through an application by providing full details and purpose of the current study. Upon receiving access, the data was extracted using R. Only tweets in English were collected. This makes sense for the fact that tweets in local languages are mainly meant for communication with domestic audience while English Tweets are targeted at general global audience. Moreover, English is one of the official languages of India and spoken widely across the country.

Lack of context to a few tweets was a challenge in analysing them. Some tweets were too short and without context fail to convey any meaning. Therefore, to provide context and background was necessary. For this purpose, the researcher gathered more general information from other sources about the analyzed period, mainly from online media including Facebook, magazines, and newspapers. Also, collected political statements made by politicians belonging to the party holding power (government) as well as the opposition both before and during the period of which analysis is made. This information was used for interpreting the tweets and categorizing the major themes running through the citizen's discussion. However, this information was not coded.

Outline of Chapters

This dissertation is organized into six chapters, excluding the introduction and conclusion. The introduction discusses the extant literature, research questions, and

⁷⁶ Theophilus Azungah, "Qualitative Research: Deductive and Inductive Approaches to Data Analysis," *Qualitative Research Journal* (2018): 385, <https://doi.org/10.1108/QRJ-D-18-00035>

⁷⁷ Twitter API is a set of tools that enables developers to interact with Twitter programmatically. It acts as a bridge between external applications or programs and Twitter's platform, enabling the retrieval and analysis of Twitter data in an automated way. The Academic Research track is a specialized version of the Twitter API designed for academic research which provides access to 10 million tweets per month with full archival search.

methodology, including the rationale for the choice of cases and sources, the approach to cases and data, and the data collection process. Meanwhile, the conclusion addresses the study's findings and observations, its limitations and significance, and gives suggestions for future research.

Chapter first presents the definitions of public diplomacy and its related conceptual underpinnings and examines pivotal junctures and historical contexts that have notably impacted the advancement and trajectory of public diplomacy as a practice. The chapter also discusses the growing digitization of diplomacy within the changing frameworks of foreign affairs and policy-making. It focuses on assessing whether the digital aspects of public diplomacy represent a revolutionary or evolutionary change. This includes questioning whether the wave of change brought about by the digital media revolution is obscuring traditional diplomacy, and it also touches upon the potential transformation of traditional diplomatic practices due to digital diplomacy.

Chapter second focuses on the evolution and development of India's public diplomacy landscape. It elucidates the historical and traditional elements of public diplomacy, alongside current institutional strategies, initiatives, and methods of engagement. Moreover, the chapter explores the emergence of India's digital media public sphere and its impact on public involvement in shaping policy outcomes, particularly during times of crisis.

Chapter three investigates India's public diplomacy during the Pulwama/Balakot crisis. It examines the nature of public discourse on social media around the Balakot crisis. To that end, the chapter provides a comprehensive examination of the Pulwama attack and the consequential Balakot airstrike, offering insights into the events preceding and succeeding the crisis. Further, it highlights India's amalgamation of soft and hard power in public diplomacy during crises, emphasizing the crucial role of social media in shaping diplomatic narratives. The analysis encompasses an evaluation of Twitter's pivotal role as a medium for India's public diplomacy efforts, elucidating the involvement of both official institutions and Indian citizens in influencing public sentiment and projecting India's global stance.

Chapter four examines India's 2019 revocation of Article 370, granting Kashmir special autonomy. It analyses the contestation from Pakistan and India's diverse narratives, emphasizing the crucial role of social media and public participation in India's public diplomacy. The chapter highlights social media's persuasive influence during the Article 370 revocation.

Chapter five explores the communicative aspects of India's pandemic response, by examining the Prime Minister's speech and the discourse on Twitter as key components of India's public diplomacy. It explores the strategic use of India's cultural richness and medical assistance as diplomatic tools, showcasing India's active participation in global affairs during the pandemic. The chapter highlights that India proactively engaged with the global community, leveraging both situational imperatives and the opportunity to position itself prominently on the international stage.

Chapter six provides an analysis of India's public diplomacy strategies during the Ukraine crisis, focusing on the period from February 19, 2022, to January 04, 2023. This investigation delves into public statements, media interactions, and international engagements involving key Indian political figures, such as S. Jaishankar and Hardeep Singh Puri. Through a meticulous examination of twelve relevant video recordings, the study aims to unravel India's diplomatic approach, communication strategies, and global geopolitical positions. Additionally, the chapter examines public participation on Twitter.

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CHAPTER 1

PUBLIC DIPLOMACY: DEFINITIONS, CONCEPTS, AND EVOLUTION

This chapter deals with a comprehensive exploration of the conceptual underpinnings of public diplomacy, tracing its historical contexts and pivotal moments that have shaped its evolution as a practice. I argue that public diplomacy strategies are characterized by their dynamic and adaptable nature, often incorporating elements from various approaches to align with a country's national objective, target audience, available resources, and geopolitical landscape. Additionally, we discuss concepts such as nation branding, public relations, propaganda, and cultural diplomacy, which offer a broader perspective on the diverse strategies and approaches employed in public diplomacy. Gaining insights into the intricate complexities and strategic considerations involved can offer valuable perspectives on how states shape public perceptions in modern times. This understanding is essential in analyzing India's public diplomacy efforts as it establishes a solid foundation for exploring and evaluating India's specific approaches. Let us delve into the intricacies of this persuasive influence in international communication.

In contemporary international politics, public diplomacy has become a salient dimension of diplomatic statecraft and national strategy. It has become "part of the fabric of world politics," Melissen observes.⁷⁸ It is uncommon for a government nowadays to not expect its diplomats and other professionals to comprehend, interact with, and influence the global public, according to Bruce Gregory, the former head of the Public Diplomacy Institute at George Washington University.⁷⁹ However, despite its widespread usage, there is no universally agreed-upon definition for the term "public diplomacy."⁸⁰ Echoing

⁷⁸ Jan Melissen, *The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power in International Relations* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 6.

⁷⁹ Bruce Gregory, "Public Diplomacy and Governance: Challenges for Scholars and Practitioners," in *Global Governance and Diplomacy: World Apart*, ed. by Andrew F. Cooper, Brian Hocking, and William Maley (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008a), 241.

⁸⁰ Geun Lee and Kadir Ayhan, "Why Do We Need Non-State Actors in Public Diplomacy? Theoretical Discussion of Relational, Networked and Collaborative Public Diplomacy," *Journal of International and Area Studies* (2015): 57-58, <https://space.snu.ac.kr/bitstream/10371/96596/1/4.Why-Do-We-Need-Non-state-Actors-in-Public->

this sentiment, Lane observes that public diplomacy has become a fixture in twenty-first-century diplomacy without a clear consensus on its definition or the optimal utilization of its tools.⁸¹ This universally acknowledged ambiguity surrounding public diplomacy notwithstanding, there is a consensus regarding its fundamental nature, which revolves around communication with the public. In this regard, three key aspects can be identified as essential to public diplomacy practices: government involvement, communication strategies, and public perception.

However, prior to delving into the intricacies of public diplomacy, it is essential to have a thorough grasp of the concept of diplomacy. As Cohen aptly puts it, diplomacy serves as the “engine room” of international relations.⁸² Hedley Bull defines diplomacy as the management of relationships between states and other relevant entities in global politics through official representatives and peaceful methods.⁸³ Paul Sharp characterizes diplomacy as a distinct human activity defined by the deliberate construction, portrayal, negotiation, and manipulation of inherently ambiguous identities.⁸⁴ Peter Barston similarly emphasizes that diplomacy focuses on managing relations not only between states but also between states and other actors.⁸⁵

While the concept of public diplomacy—basically, managing public opinion abroad—has been around since antiquity, the term’s first recorded use dates to an article published

[Diplomacy-Theoretical-Discussion-of-Relational-Networked-and-Collaborative-Public-Diplomacy_Geun-Lee-and-Kadir-Ayhan.pdf](#), (Accessed on January 30, 2023); Kadir Jun Ayhan, “The Boundaries of Public Diplomacy and Nonstate Actors: A Taxonomy of Perspectives,” *International Studies Perspectives* 20, no. 1 (2019): 63, <https://doi.org/10.1093/isp/eky010>

⁸¹ Ann Lane, “Public Diplomacy: Key Challenges and Priorities,” *Report on Wilton Park Conference* (West Sussex UK: April 2006), 2.

⁸² Paul Sharp, “For Diplomacy: Representation and the Study of International Relations,” *International Studies Review* 1, no 1 (1999): 33, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3186365?origin=JSTOR-pdf>

⁸³ Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics*, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1995), 156.

⁸⁴ Sharp, “For Diplomacy,” 33.

⁸⁵ Ronald Peter Barston, *Modern Diplomacy*, 4th ed. (New York: Routledge, 2014), 1.

in the London Times in 1856.⁸⁶ The New York Times followed this in January 1871 and again a few months later.

However, in the contemporary parlance, it was first used by American diplomat Edmund Gullion in 1965.⁸⁷ Since then, it has gained traction among both practitioners and scholars, predominantly in the western context before others. Public diplomacy, in many ways, marks a departure from the traditional diplomacy. While traditional diplomacy is based on interactions between government elites, characterized by representatives of governments engaging in order to advance their national interests in the form of policy goals, public diplomacy, by contrast, seeks to engage targeted foreign audience in order to achieve foreign policy goals.⁸⁸ It relies on multiple means and instruments comprised of both government and non-government agencies, including non-state actors.⁸⁹

Tuch describes public diplomacy as aiming to foster understanding of its nation's ideas, institutions, and culture, as well as its national goals and policies.⁹⁰ According to Cull, it involves an international actor's effort to shape the international environment by engaging with foreign publics.⁹¹

Gregory emphasizes a two-way interactive approach, defining it as a tool used by states, associations of states, and some sub-state agencies and non-state actors to comprehend

⁸⁶ Arthur A. Bardos, "'Public diplomacy': An Old Art, A New Profession," *The Virginia Quarterly Review* 77, no. 3 (2001): 424-426, <https://www.vqronline.org/essay/public-diplomacy-old-art-new-profession>; Melissen, *The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power in International Relations*, 1.

⁸⁷ Nicholas J. Cull, "Public Diplomacy Before Gullion," in *Routledge Handbook of Public Diplomacy*, ed. by Nancy Snow and Philip M. Taylor (London, New York: Routledge, 2009), 19-21.

⁸⁸ Christopher Ross, "Public Diplomacy Comes of Age," *The Washington Quarterly* 25, no. 2 (2002): 75, <https://doi.org/10.1162/01636600252820144>

⁸⁹ Lee and Ayhan, "Why Do We Need Non-State Actors in Public Diplomacy?," 57-77.

⁹⁰ Hans N. Tuch, *Communicating with the World: U.S. Public Diplomacy Overseas* (New York, NY: St Martin's Press, 1990), 3.

⁹¹ Nicholas J. Cull, "Public Diplomacy: Lessons from the Past," (2009), 12, <http://stage.uscpublicdiplomacy.org/sites/uscpublicdiplomacy.org/files/legacy/publications/perspectives/CPDPerspectivesLessons.pdf> (Accessed on January 30, 2023)

cultures, build relationships, and influence thoughts and actions to advance their interests and values.⁹² Cowan and Cull define it as an international actor's endeavor to further policy objectives by interacting with foreign publics.⁹³

Cull lists listening, advocacy, cultural diplomacy, exchange diplomacy, and international broadcasting as the five essential components of public diplomacy.⁹⁴

Listening

It speaks to understanding what the public says and wants. Towards this end, public diplomacy actors engage in conducting research, surveys, and data analysis to gain insights into the perceptions, attitudes, and concerns of the foreign public.

Advocacy

This category of practice deals with strategically promoting policies, values, and interests of a nation to foreign audiences through media engagement, public outreach, and targeted messaging.

Cultural Diplomacy

Activities in this category promote a nation's culture, arts, language, and heritage to strengthen its soft power and promote intercultural understanding.

Exchange Diplomacy

Activities falling under this category involve facilitating cultural, educational, and professional exchanges to promote people-to-people interactions, mutual learning, and the establishment of long-term relationships.

⁹² Bruce Gregory, "Public Diplomacy: Sunrise of an Academic Field," *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616, no. 1 (2008): 276, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716207311723>

⁹³ Geoffrey Cowan and Nicholas J. Cull, "Public Diplomacy in a Changing World," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616, no. 1. (2008): 6, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716207312143>

⁹⁴ Nicholas J. Cull, "Public Diplomacy: Taxonomies and Histories," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616, no. 1 (2008): 31-36, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25097993>

International Broadcasting

This category encompasses activities related to the dissemination of news, information, and programming through international media platforms, enabling a country to reach global audiences and influence perceptions.

Although there is a lack of consensus among scholars on public diplomacy's definition, fundamentally public diplomacy as a practice and strategy involves systematic and deliberate efforts to reach out to the larger global population and particularly, population in targeted foreign countries in order to create a good will and reputation of the state which conducts the public outreach. This practice involves attempts to leverage the country's soft power to the extent that the latter forms a critical element of any public diplomacy engagement. Soft power is described as the ability to elicit the desired outcome from others through attraction of culture, political values, and foreign policies rather than coercion and payment.⁹⁵ This ability to influence other people's preferences is typically linked to intangible assets like a charming personality, a culture, established political institutions and norms, and laws that are seen as morally just or legitimate.⁹⁶ Nye argues that in certain situations, solely relying on soft power may not be effective, necessitating its fusion with hard power to achieve maximum influence - this fusion he terms "smart power."⁹⁷

With the emergence of mass societies in the globalized world, governments began to expand its targeted audience to residents in foreign countries in order to supplement the existing traditional diplomatic efforts with international communication.⁹⁸

⁹⁵ Joseph S. Nye Jr, "Public Diplomacy and Soft Power," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616 (2008): 94-95, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25097996>.

⁹⁶ Ibid, 95.

⁹⁷ Joseph S. Nye Jr, "Get Smart: Combining Hard and Soft Power," *Foreign Affairs* 88, no. 4 (July/August 2009), 160-163. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20699631>

⁹⁸ Richard A. Nelson, and Foad Izadi, "Ethics and Social Issues in Public Diplomacy," in *Routledge Handbook of Public Diplomacy*, ed. Nancy Snow and Philip M. Taylor (London, New York: Routledge, 2009), 334.

Technology improvements, such as the telegraph in the mid-1800s and the current state of satellite and internet technology, as well as the increasing importance of public opinion in governmental decision-making processes, should be credited for this change.⁹⁹ Research has shown that public opinion significantly influences foreign policy outcomes, forming the basis of public diplomacy, which involves intricate interactions between the government, the media, and public sentiment.¹⁰⁰ This complex nexus between media, government, and public opinion has become a major theme in the contemporary diplomacy, both in diplomatic theory and practice. If anything, it points to a major departure from the earlier traditional diplomatic activities in which diplomacy was strictly considered a private affair between the heads of the states with little engagement in the open media.

1.1 Public Diplomacy and Related Concepts

The general formulation of public diplomacy as an instrument for promotion of soft power has led to the term being used as a catch-all phrase by political elites, media, think tank community to denote activities such as propaganda, nation-branding, cultural diplomacy, and public relations. This has to an extent contributed to public diplomacy's definitional ambiguity. In fact, being closely related practices with normative underpinnings of country image and reputation and public opinion management in the international system, subtle conceptual and practical differentials between them and public diplomacy often tends to get overlooked. Therefore, teasing out the similarities and differences between these concepts and practices will help understand the nuances of public diplomacy.

1.1.1 Propaganda

Propaganda has become a common phenomenon in the modern world. Engaging the public and swaying their opinion has become essential for accomplishing foreign policy objectives and advancing national interests due to the ever-growing public interest in and influence over matters of foreign policy and international relations. Greater emphasis on

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Stuart N. Soroka, "Media, Public Opinion and Foreign Policy;" Eytan Gilboa, "Searching for a Theory of Public Diplomacy," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616, no. 1 (2008): 55-77, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0002716207312142>

public opinion and public perception orchestrated by the spread of liberal democracy and globalization, winnability of a policy to a large extent depends upon its public acceptance. As a result, the role of propaganda as a tool holds significance in the diplomatic toolkit of a nation. Propaganda as a tool in conducting international relations was very prominent during the World War period. The US government's foreign policy at the time heavily focused on preventing the expansion of communism around the world.

From the Latin word "propagare," which means "to sow," comes the word propaganda.¹⁰¹ Specifically, the term 'propaganda' originated from the Congregatio de Propaganda Fide, a committee of church officials advocating Catholic beliefs against the Reformation. Initially neutral, it gained negative connotations among Protestants. In World Wars, Allies labeled enemy information as propaganda, reinforcing its negative image. Efforts to neutralize its meaning persist but face deeply entrenched associations, rendering propaganda a weapon for discrediting opposing views through implied unethical manipulation and illogical argumentation.¹⁰²

While propaganda has been studied under various disciplines such as history, sociology, political science, journalism, psychology, and communication and an interdisciplinary perspective, it is not the intention of the chapter to delve into all of them. Rather the focus and emphasizes here is on the communicative aspects of propaganda as a tool in foreign policy or in conduct of international relations.

Propaganda can be defined as "a form of communication that attempts to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist."¹⁰³ Sproule claims that propaganda is the result of big businesses or organizations trying to influence the public in favor of their particular interests by carefully crafting conclusions that are both compelling and devoid of solid evidence.¹⁰⁴ In that sense, propaganda essentially involves

¹⁰¹ Garth S. Jowett and Victoria O'donnell, *Propaganda & Persuasion* (Washington DC: Sage Publications, 2015), 2.

¹⁰² Walton, Douglas. "What is Propaganda, and What Exactly is Wrong with It." *Public Affairs Quarterly* 11, no. 4 (1997): 383-384, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40435999>

¹⁰³ Jowett and O'donnell, *Propaganda & Persuasion*. 1.

¹⁰⁴ Sproule quoted in Jowett and O'donnell, *Propaganda & Persuasion*. 3-4.

dissemination of information. Yet information is deliberately selectively disseminated and presented as facts intending to promote or influence specific ideas or thoughts. Thus, it involves manipulation of information and facts and is more often tightly wired to the broader goals of foreign policy and national interests of the propaganda state.

However, though propaganda is generally seen as emanating from government of a country, in the world today it has received wider attention and is practiced by non-state actors such as religious organizations, the media, business corporate and companies, and activists as well. The potency of propaganda lies in its efficacy, defined by its capacity to resonate with a broad audience and engender widespread circulation, thereby fostering cohesion among disparate individuals.¹⁰⁵ In that sense it can be said that “propaganda entails propagation.”¹⁰⁶ At the same time all messages or information disseminated in public for mass audience does not constitute propaganda, as for example, weather forecasts.¹⁰⁷ However, weather forecasts may be part of propaganda in debates around climate change.¹⁰⁸

Propaganda has over the years acquired a pejorative connotation and because of that any activity undertaken under the label of propaganda tends to generate a negative perception. The term has been associated with lies, brainwashing and falsehood. As a result, similar activities involving information dissemination, advocacy, one-way broadcasting are often not labeled as propaganda. However, to the extent that information campaigns are aimed at influencing foreign public, public diplomacy overlaps and intersects with propaganda. Consequently, scholars and practitioners, in their quest to understand whether public diplomacy is propaganda or how far propaganda and public diplomacy overlap with each other, have attempted to delineate the differences and similarities between them.

Within scholarly discourse, a prevailing viewpoint characterizes public diplomacy as a variant of diplomatic discourse deemed to be compromised, albeit intermittently

¹⁰⁵ Jonathan Auerbach, and Russ Castronovo, *The Oxford Handbook of Propaganda Studies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 5.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

beneficial, and thus not inherently antagonistic to traditional diplomatic endeavors.¹⁰⁹ Richard Holbrooke articulated this notion, suggesting that irrespective of nomenclature—whether referred to as public diplomacy, public affairs, or more bluntly, psychological warfare—the underlying function could be understood as propagandistic in nature.¹¹⁰

Even the information activities conducted by the US during the War on Terrorism were called as propaganda and public diplomacy, often interchangeably as substitutes thus indicating a thin layer of difference between the two.¹¹¹ Both public diplomacy and propaganda employ long term culture-based activities as well as short term current affairs-based activities.¹¹² Although both aim to influence public opinion, they are guided by distinct principles. Public diplomacy, in particular, encompasses a broader and more extensive scope of influence, centering on the establishment of mutual understanding through open dialogue and enhanced cultural and educational interactions.¹¹³

Public diplomacy involves different functions such as informing and influencing foreign publics, listening to their voices, and as recently as collaborating with civil society organizations. It is not the goal of public diplomacy to be a monologue. In contrast, propaganda is mainly a monologue which does not seek to engage with targeted audience. Propaganda functions differently from other forms of media in many ways because its main goal is not to enlighten the public but rather to purposefully sway the beliefs or behaviors of a specific audience.¹¹⁴ In contemporary diplomatic practice, dealing with foreign publics may take different and less objectionable way wherein propaganda may

¹⁰⁹ Melissen, *The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power in International Relations*, 17.

¹¹⁰ Holbrook cited in Jan Melissen, *The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power in International Relations*, 17.

¹¹¹ R.S. Zaharna, “From Propaganda to Public Diplomacy In the Information Age,” (Draft) in *War, Media, and Propaganda: A Global Perspective*, ed. by Nancy Snow and Yahya Kamalipour (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004), https://www.american.edu/soc/faculty/upload/zaharna_propaganda.pdf (Accessed January 30, 2023)

¹¹² Ben D. Mor, “Public Diplomacy in Grand Strategy,” *Foreign Policy Analysis* 2, no. 2 (2006): 157–176, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1743-8594.2006.00025.x>

¹¹³ Christian Mull and Matthew Wallin, “Propaganda: A Tool of Strategic Influence,” *American Security Project* (2013): 7, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep06038>

¹¹⁴ *Ibid*, 5.

not be easily distinguished from public diplomacy. For instance, public campaigns conducted by Western European countries with the objective of fostering civil society, promoting the rule of law, and enhancing democracy in Eastern Europe are generally not perceived as propaganda.¹¹⁵ For the same reason, on many occasions Modern diplomacy and traditional propaganda might get along under the label of public diplomacy.

1.1.2 Nation Branding

In the present day, nation branding has gained significant recognition and is widely implemented. It is observed in countries with emerging market economies as well as established capitalist economies, encompassing diverse geopolitical and historical legacies. Nation branding plays an instrumental role in the realm of diplomacy.¹¹⁶ Nation branding can be comprehended as the outcome of the convergence of commercial and public sector interests, serving the purpose of communicating national priorities to both domestic and international populations, with various interrelated objectives in mind.¹¹⁷ According to Gudjonsson, nation branding happens when an entity, whether public or private, utilizes its influence to sway anyone with the capacity to alter a country's reputation. Nation branding is the process of using branding techniques to positively influence a country's identity, behavior, attitudes, and image.¹¹⁸

The importance of a country's reputation stems from its profound impact on the perceptions, behaviors, and responses of both internal and external stakeholders. It significantly influences the way people think about the country, their actions towards it, and their reactions to its products or activities.¹¹⁹ While marketing and brand management techniques can be beneficial in establishing a positive brand image for a country, it is important to acknowledge that countries cannot be branded in the same manner as

¹¹⁵ Melissen, *The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power in International Relations*, 17.

¹¹⁶ Melissa Aronczyk, *Branding the Nation: The Global Business of National Identity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 16.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Hlynur Gudjonsson, "Nation Branding," *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy* 1 (2005): 285, <https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.pb.5990029>

¹¹⁹ Simon Anholt, *Competitive Identity: The New Brand Management for Nations, Cities and Regions* (Basingstoke, England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 8.

products, services, or companies.¹²⁰ Similarly, building a brand name for a country is not a quick task to accomplish. It takes time. As Anholt aptly pointed out, the reputation of a nation cannot be contrived; rather, it must be acquired through sustained efforts and genuine actions.¹²¹ Enhancing national reputation significantly relies on increased engagement rather than mere communication. Communication alone has limited effectiveness, whereas actively engaging with the public fosters higher visibility and tends to generate stronger appeal.¹²² In most countries, there are many agencies and bodies both state as well as non-state actors all promoting and contributing to national image building or brand management.¹²³ Yet, these bodies function in isolation as there is no coordination often projecting contradictory and conflicting images of country, thus consistently offsetting the emergence of a single picture.¹²⁴

The link between nation branding or construction, as termed by Anholt as “competitive identity,” hinges on public opinion, particularly the global public opinion in our progressively interconnected and globalized world. And it is the global public opinion which forms the prime target of public diplomacy and nation branding efforts. In fact, in closely interconnected and inter-dependent world, ignoring national reputation accompanies with serious consequences. However, a major point of discussion in the concept of nation branding in contemporary times is ‘branding.’ As such, there has emerged a great deal of public skepticism as to how a nation can be branded. Acknowledging the public skepticism and seeking to explain the idea of branding a nation, Anholt who coined the term and pioneered the practice, rebranded it as ‘competitive identity’ which he describes as a new model that seeks to enhance national competitiveness employing practices of public diplomacy and brand management.¹²⁵

¹²⁰ Ibid, 5.

¹²¹ Simon Anholt, *Places: Identity, Image, and Reputation* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 6.

¹²² Ibid, 7.

¹²³ Anholt, *Competitive Identity*, 2-3.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ying Fan, “Branding the Nation: Towards a Better Understanding,” *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy* 6, no. 2 (2010): 97, <https://doi.org/10.1057/pb.2010.16>

At the crux of nation branding efforts is soft power. In fact, it is one of the forms of soft power and shares some similarities with public diplomacy. However, while nation branding has its base in the field of international marketing with little affinity towards diplomacy,¹²⁶ public diplomacy sticks to the realms of international relations and international communication.¹²⁷ Public diplomacy is centred on diplomatic communication. It takes the form of political branding and contributes to the overall efforts of nation branding.¹²⁸ Examining nation branding in isolation from traditional branding reveals its close alignment with public diplomacy in various aspects. It can be understood as the strategic self-presentation of a country, aimed at cultivating reputational capital by promoting economic, political, and social interests domestically and internationally.¹²⁹ This process is vital in public diplomacy initiatives, where self-presentation and the management of impressions play a pivotal role. Both public diplomacy and nation branding are mainly oriented towards foreign public but have strong domestic dimension as well.¹³⁰ In fact, both branding and public diplomacy are likely to be effective and successful if employed with a long-term approach.¹³¹

1.1.3 Public Relations

Public relations involve the communication efforts undertaken by organizations and individuals to engage with the public. It covers a wide range of matters, including stakeholder relations, corporate communications, public affairs, risk communication, problems management, and corporate social responsibility.¹³²

¹²⁶ Melissen, *The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power in International Relations*. 19.

¹²⁷ Gyorgy Szondi, "Public Diplomacy and Nation Branding: Conceptual Similarities and Differences," *Netherlands Institute of International Relations 'Clingendael'* (2008): 3, https://www.diplomacy.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Public_Diplomacy_and_Nation_Branding_Conceptual_Si.pdf (Accessed on January 30, 2023)

¹²⁸ Fan, "Branding the Nation," 99.

¹²⁹ Szondi, "Public Diplomacy and Nation Branding," 5.

¹³⁰ Melissen, *The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power in International Relations*, 20.

¹³¹ *Ibid*, 21.

¹³² Jacquie L'Etang, "Public Relations and Diplomacy in a Globalized World: An Issue of Public Communication," *American Behavioral Scientist* 53, no. 4 (2009): 609, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764209347633>

Public diplomacy and public relations are comparable in that they both handle official institutional interactions with other organizations, interact with the larger public, and respond to press coverage and public opinion.¹³³ However, for a long time, these similarities were not fully acknowledged, and public diplomacy professionals often maintained a distance from public relations practitioners due to perceived ethical concerns within the field.¹³⁴

Public diplomacy and public relations are not the same thing, according to Mathew Armstrong, the former executive director of the U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy. Armstrong highlights the importance of properly engaging global audiences as a national security priority and argues against viewing it as a tool of public relations, which he defines as merely disseminating ideas and ideals.¹³⁵ Perhaps, one reason for making such differentiation may be the close association between public diplomacy and propaganda, as evident from the fact that propaganda of the US during the Cold War was called public diplomacy, resulted in a blurring of distinction between both while spreading the pejorative connotation of propaganda to public diplomacy.¹³⁶ In a similar vein, a common misconception about public relations is that, it is widely perceived as corporate based marketing efforts even as business and non-government organizations also engage in public relations.¹³⁷ However, in contemporary practice, public diplomacy, public relations, and propaganda have all received professional status devoid of any inherently ethical or unethical stand points.¹³⁸

¹³³ Ibid, 608.

¹³⁴ Kathy R. Fitzpatrick, "Advancing the New Public Diplomacy: A Public Relations Perspective," *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy* 2, no. 3 (2007): 189, <https://doi.org/10.1163/187119007X240497>

¹³⁵ Armstrong quoted in Kathy R. Fitzpatrick, Jami Fullerton and Alice Kendrick, "Public Relations and Public Diplomacy: Conceptual and Practical Connections," *Public Relations Journal* 7, no. 4 (2013): 1, <https://prjournal.instituteforpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2013FitzpatrickFullertonKendrick.pdf>

¹³⁶ Fitzpatrick, "Advancing the New Public Diplomacy," 190.

¹³⁷ Ibid, 190-91.

¹³⁸ Ibid, 190.

Signitzer and Wamser assert that both “public relations and public diplomacy” serve as strategic communication functions employed by organizations or countries, facilitating the management of the reciprocal interactions between sponsors and their respective publics.¹³⁹ Melissen contends that the operational framework of contemporary public diplomacy shares notable similarities with the approach adopted in public relations.¹⁴⁰ Snow advocates for a comparative analysis of public diplomacy and public relations, highlighting the inclusion of intercultural communication theories and practices within the former, alongside the integration of best practices from public relations.¹⁴¹ Kiouisis and Stromback observe that public diplomacy initiatives are acknowledged as integral components of successful international relations among nations, with political public relations activities constituting a fundamental aspect thereof.¹⁴²

1.1.4 Cultural Diplomacy

The use of a nation’s culture as a form of soft power in foreign policy has become a feature of many countries in recent years. Early in the Cold War period itself the US policymakers had understood the importance of engagement with foreign public for national security.¹⁴³ Cultural diplomacy strategy encompasses the promotion of cultural products of a nation such as music, arts, literature, and television programs and organize and celebrate cultural programs as well as performances abroad.¹⁴⁴ Fundamentally, it is the same as public diplomacy as both focuses on communication with foreign audience.

¹³⁹ Signitzer and Wamser cited in Kathy R. Fitzpatrick, Jami Fullerton, and Alice Kendrick, “Public Relations and Public Diplomacy: Conceptual and Practical Connections,” *Public Relations Journal* 7, no. 4 (2013): 3.

¹⁴⁰ Melissen, *The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power in International Relations*, 21.

¹⁴¹ Nancy Snow, “Rethinking Public Diplomacy,” in *Routledge Handbook of Public Diplomacy*, ed. Nancy Snow and Philip M. Taylor (New York, NY: Routledge, 2009), 10.

¹⁴² Spiro Kiouisis and Jesper Stromback, “Political and Public Relations Research in the Future,” in *Political Public Relations: Principles and Applications*, ed. by Spiro Kiouisis and Jesper Stromback (New York: Routledge, 2011), 322.

¹⁴³ Helena K. Finn, “The Case for Cultural Diplomacy: Engaging Foreign Audiences,” *Foreign Affairs* 82, no. 6 (2003): 15-22, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20033753>

¹⁴⁴ Simon Mark, “A Greater Role for Cultural Diplomacy,” in *Discussion Papers in Diplomacy* (The Hague: Netherlands Institute of International Relations ‘Clingendael,’ 2009), https://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/20090616_cdsp_discussion_paper_114_mar_k.pdf (Accessed February 11, 2023); Melissen, *The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power in International Relations*; Gilboa, “Searching for a Theory of Public Diplomacy,” 55-77.

According to Milton C. Cummings, cultural diplomacy is the mutual exchange of ideas, knowledge, art, and other cultural components between countries and their citizens in an effort to promote understanding.¹⁴⁵ Cultural diplomacy is not easy to define as it includes a wide array of traditionally non-cultural aspects like sports, and science.¹⁴⁶ In contemporary times, cultural diplomacy has transformed from the domain of cultural relations between elites to a culture as medium for communication among the masses and as a result it has become more effective.¹⁴⁷

States engage in cultural diplomacy mainly for building its image in the international arena and improve reputation. As Gilboa pointed out, territory, access, and raw materials—traditionally obtained through military and economic means—have lost considerable significance in favor of a positive image and reputation around the world that are attained through attraction and persuasion.¹⁴⁸ During the Cold War period, the US efforts for building reputation and image and fighting communism in the international arena witnessed attention being given to cultural diplomacy, albeit that constituted a minor part of the state spending on overseas activities.¹⁴⁹ Initiatives related to cultural diplomacy include things like jazz concerts supported by the State Department and the establishment of notable venues for artistic exhibitions, such as American cultural centers and libraries.¹⁵⁰ However, the effectiveness of US cultural diplomacy has diminished over time due to the de-prioritization of its role and a misunderstanding of its potential as a

¹⁴⁵ Cummings cited in Bruce Gregory, “Public Diplomacy and Strategic Communication: Cultures, Firewalls and Imported Norms,” *American Political Science Association Conference on International Communication and Conflict*, August 31, 2005, 11. https://www.academia.edu/7855121/Public_Diplomacy_and_Strategic_Communication_Cultures_Firewalls_and_Imported_Norms (Accessed on January 30, 2023).

¹⁴⁶ Kirsten Bound, Rachel Briggs, John Holden, and Samuel Jones, “*Cultural Diplomacy: Culture is a Central Component of International Relations. It’s Time to Unlock Its Full Potential*,” (London: DEMOS 2007), 16.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Gilboa, “Searching for a Theory of Public Diplomacy,” 56.

¹⁴⁹ John Brown, “Arts Diplomacy: The Neglected Aspect of Cultural Diplomacy,” in *Routledge Handbook of Public Diplomacy*, ed. by Nancy Snow and Philip M. Taylor (New York, NY: Routledge, 2009), 57-59.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

central element for genuine American re-engagement in global dialogue.¹⁵¹ That said, its popularity in the non-western countries have grown in the post-Cold War period. Concurrently, emerging Asian nations are increasingly leveraging cultural diplomacy to not only engage foreign governments but also to resonate with broader populations and potential allies.¹⁵²

Apparently, the literature pertaining to cultural diplomacy includes both positive as well as negative perception, in terms of its efficiency and effectiveness as a tool of diplomacy. While many scholars argue that culture is an effective medium for engaging with international audience, they believe that cultural products that are disseminated will bring goodwill to the nation and positive image and further improve the reputation of the nation. Goodwill, reputation, and positive image of a nation can facilitate a congenial situation for advancing a nation's political agenda and foreign policy.¹⁵³ Moreover, the importance of culture lies in its ability to provide a national identity and such strong national identity in turn renders domestic public support and legitimacy to the nation,¹⁵⁴ showing domestic aspects of the benefits that cultural diplomacy provides.

On the other hand, critics argue that cultural diplomacy does not bring about any tangible benefits to countries as it does not produce any positive image of the country let alone changes in perception and public opinion. As a matter of fact, they would argue that such cultural diplomacy might face back clash in the form of nationalistic resistance against

¹⁵¹ Aude Jehan, "The Wider Horizon: In Favor of a New Coordinated Transatlantic Cultural Strategy," In Sabine E. Herlitschka, ed. *Transatlantic Science and Technology: Opportunities for Real Cooperation Between Europe and the United States*, vol. 27 (Springer Science & Business Media, 2012), xx.

¹⁵² Kirsten Bound, Rachel Briggs, John Holden, and Samuel Jones, "*Cultural Diplomacy: Culture is a Central Component of International Relations. It's Time to Unlock Its Full Potential*," (London: DEMOS 2007), 17.

¹⁵³ Kevin V. Mulcahy, "Cultural Diplomacy in the Post-Cold War World: Introduction," *Journal of Arts Management, Law, and Society* 29, no. 1 (1999), 3-6, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10632929909597281>

¹⁵⁴ Michael Barr, "Nation Branding as Nation Building: China's Image Campaign," *East Asia* 29, no. 81 (2012): 94, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12140-011-9159-7>

so called intrusion into their cultural space.¹⁵⁵ An apt example would be the backlash against ‘Korean Wave’ or *Hallyu* phenomenon, a Korean popular culture, in many South East Asian countries¹⁵⁶ and the Japanese comics *Manga Kankanryu* that in seeking to promote Japan’s culture and achievements decrying Seoul as a “thoroughly depraved nation” and Japan’s foe¹⁵⁷ are but good examples of counter-productive cultural diplomacy. There are also scholars like Brown, who do neither completely support cultural aspects in American diplomacy nor completely ignore its importance, justifies the need for art diplomacy modestly. He questions the efficacy of promoting art as a means to universally instil American values, highlighting skepticism towards its impact on countering terrorism. Additionally, he challenges the notion of government-supported arts diplomacy as a longstanding American tradition or as a significant contributor to Cold War victories.¹⁵⁸

In the era of information and intense competition for influencing public opinion, nearly every country recognizes the significance of culture in diplomacy. Promoting cultural relations and facilitating cultural and educational exchanges can yield economic and strategic advantages for a nation. However, there is a noticeable lack of discourse on the relationship between various strategies employed in cultural diplomacy and the resulting outcomes. Specifically, there is a need to explore how varied strategies can impact the effectiveness of cultural diplomacy.

¹⁵⁵ Ian Hall and Frank Smith, “The Struggle for Soft Power in Asia: Public Diplomacy and Regional Competition,” *Asian Security* 9, no. 1 (2013): 12, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14799855.2013.760926>

¹⁵⁶ Mary J. Ainslie, Sarah Domingo Lipura, and Joanne B.Y. Lim, “Understanding the Hallyu Backlash in Southeast Asia: A Case Study of Consumers in Thailand, Malaysia and Philippines,” *Kritika Kultura* 91 (2017): 63-91, <https://journals.ateneo.edu/index.php/kk/article/viewFile/KK2017.02805/2412> (January 30, 2023).

¹⁵⁷ Nicola Liscutin, “Surfing the Neo-Nationalist Wave: A Case Study of Manga Kenkanryū in *Cultural Studies and Cultural Industries in Northeast Asia: What a Difference a Region Makes*, ed. by Chris Berry, Nicola Liscutin, and Jonathan D. Mackintosh, Online edition (Hong Kong Scholarship Online, September 14, 2011).

¹⁵⁸ Brown, “Arts Diplomacy,” 58.

1.2 Significance of Narratives in Public Diplomacy

Narratives are “socially construct reality” that helps humans to “make sense of and situate themselves in the world.”¹⁵⁹ It provides for a shared understanding by creating shared meaning for events and phenomena while relying on the place of action or “context in order to provide a meaningful interpretation of events and stories told.”¹⁶⁰ Examples include narratives such as the Cold War, the War on Terror, the rise of the East and the rise of China. Narratives are a useful tool in international relations that nations can use to explain their experiences and stories, establish an international reality, and make sense of how the world and international politics work.¹⁶¹

They encompass the intentions and objectives of political actors, facilitating the construction of shared interpretations of international politics and shaping the perceptions and behaviors of both domestic and international entities.¹⁶² In this regard, narratives serve as tools for states to articulate their values and interests, thereby extending their influence, managing expectations, and altering the discursive landscape in which they function.¹⁶³

¹⁵⁹ Elizabeth A. Shanahan, Michael D. Jones, Mark K. McBeth, and Claudio M. Radaelli, “The Narrative Policy Framework,” in *Theories of the Policy Process*, ed. by C. M. Weible, and P. A. Sabatier (New York: Westview Press, 2018), 174, 182.

¹⁶⁰ Yung-Yung Chang, “The Post-pandemic World: Between Constitutionalized and Authoritarian Orders—China’s Narrative-power Play in the Pandemic Era,” *Journal of Chinese Political Science* 26, no. 1 (2021), 35, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11366-020-09695-3>

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Chang, “The Post-pandemic World,” 36; Alister Miskimmon, Ben O’loughlin, and Laura Roselle, *Forging the World: Strategic Narratives and International Relations* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2017), 247.

¹⁶³ Andreas Antoniadis, Alister Miskimmon, and Ben O’Loughlin, *Great Power Politics and Strategic Narratives* (University of Sussex: Centre for Global Political Economy, 2010), 3. <https://www.sussex.ac.uk/webteam/gateway/file.php?name=cgpe-wp07-antoniades-miskimmon-oloughlin.pdf&site=359> (Accessed January 20, 2023).

A report by the Rand Corporation underscores the significance of strategic narratives in comprehending, informing, and influencing foreign audiences while countering adversaries.¹⁶⁴

However, although a narrative is a story that is aimed at making sense of reality, it does not have to be facts or objective truth; it deals with a subjective understanding of an event, process or phenomenon and may not, therefore, represent a nuanced account of the same.¹⁶⁵

Miskimmon et al. delineate three distinct tiers of narratives: International System Narratives, National Narratives, and Issue Narratives.¹⁶⁶ International System Narratives delineate the organized structure of the global arena, its principal actors, and operational mechanisms. National Narratives concentrate on the evolving identities of international actors through ongoing negotiation and contestation.¹⁶⁷ Issue Narratives strategically shape the discourse surrounding policy discussions, advocating for specific policies, and detailing their necessity, successful implementation, and execution.¹⁶⁸ Significantly, these narrative levels are interconnected and mutually shape narratives employed across various tiers and spheres.¹⁶⁹

Thus, strategic narratives serve foreign policy interests by potentially shaping the global public perception in favour of the proponent of the narratives in the information age, where “whose story wins” has come to occupy a matter of exercise of power and

¹⁶⁴ Larson E.V as quoted in Juyan Zhang, “Compassion Versus Manipulation; Narratives Versus Rational Arguments: A PD Radar to Chart the Terrain of Public Diplomacy,” *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy* 16, no. 3 (2020): 198, <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41254-019-00146-2>

¹⁶⁵ Torill Moen, “Reflections on the Narrative Research Approach,” *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 5, no. 4 (2006): 56-69, <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F160940690600500405>

¹⁶⁶ Alister Miskimmon, Ben O’Loughlin, and Laura Roselle, *Strategic Narratives: Communication Power and the New World Order* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 10

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid, 11 and 48.

¹⁶⁹ Chang, “The Post-pandemic World,” 36.

persuasion in international relations.¹⁷⁰ In the Indian context, Natarajan who examined India's public diplomacy, contends that narrative should be strategically used to facilitate a favourable environment for foreign policy and delegitimize narratives harmful to Indian interests.¹⁷¹

1.3 Evolution of Contemporary Public Diplomacy: An Overview

In its evolutionary trajectory, public diplomacy has undergone transformations. During the Cold War period, the emergence of public diplomacy as a major area of focus in international affairs was led by superpowers in order to globally attain their foreign policy objectives. Superpowers such as US, the USSR and European powers of the time invested heavily in public diplomacy as instrument of soft power.¹⁷²

Public diplomacy, Nye contends, has a long history of supporting a nation's soft power and was crucial to winning the Cold War.¹⁷³ During the period, public diplomacy was pursued alongside the conventional diplomacy.¹⁷⁴ As a matter of fact, campaigns to win over people to the need to maintain a careful balance on nuclear weapons and the ideological struggle for the hearts and minds of people everywhere dominated it.¹⁷⁵

The bi-polar rivalry with limited broadcast and government-run and controlled media, rendered clear pathways for engaging in an information battle in which the winnability was squarely rested on the ability to efficiently craft and execute persuasive messages, while enabling those possessing the most information to steer the political discourse, frame it, and effectively isolate or discredit the rival.¹⁷⁶ This way, Cold War public

¹⁷⁰ Ronfeldt and Arquilla cited in Juan Luis Manfredi-Sánchez, "Vaccine (Public) Diplomacy: Legitimacy Narratives in the Pandemic Age," *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy* (2022): 399, <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41254-022-00258-2>

¹⁷¹ Kalatmika Natarajan, "Digital Public Diplomacy and a Strategic Narrative for India," *Strategic Analysis* 38, no. 1 (2014): 91-92, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09700161.2014.863478>

¹⁷² Melissen, *The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power in International Relations*, 3.

¹⁷³ Nye. "Public Diplomacy and Soft Power," 94.

¹⁷⁴ Melissen, *The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power in International Relations*, 3.

¹⁷⁵ Gilboa, "Searching for a Theory of Public Diplomacy," 55.

¹⁷⁶ R.S. Zaharna, "The Soft Power Differential: Network Communication and Mass Communication in Public Diplomacy," *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy* 2 (2007): 215,

diplomacy was characterized by “bipolar interests, information volume, control, and separate audiences.”¹⁷⁷

1.3.1 Post- Cold War Context – New Public Diplomacy

In contrast to the Cold-war, the post-Cold War period marked notable shifts in public diplomacy. A re-shaping of public diplomacy was virtually taking place against the wider context of massive advances in communication and technologies bringing about increased vitality of public opinion in foreign affairs than ever before in the past. Public diplomacy gaining an instrumental role in the diplomatic tool kit of nation-states in the period of post-Cold War was the result of “three interrelated revolutions in mass communication, politics, and international relations.”¹⁷⁸ Revolutions in mass communication gave birth to the internet and mushrooming global news networks such as the CNN, BBC, Sky News, Aljazeera that have an international reach and capable of broadcasting almost in real-time international events across the world.¹⁷⁹ While revolution in politics remained consequential for increased democratization and mass participation in many societies, revolution in international relations altered objectives and means of foreign policy pursuit.¹⁸⁰ Unlike in the past, favourable image and the management of reputation in international relations began to receive so much attention as attraction and persuasion as source of power began to grow along with the traditional military and economic resources.¹⁸¹ As a matter of fact, the three revolutions are closely interconnected, interrelated, and mutually reinforcing. Revolution in one sphere had its correlated or spill-over effects in other spheres and therefore cannot be seen in isolation.

<https://www.american.edu/soc/faculty/upload/soft-power-differential.pdf> (Accessed on January 31, 2023)

¹⁷⁷ R.S. Zaharna, “The Network Paradigm of Strategic Public Diplomacy,” *Foreign Policy in Focus* 10, no. 1 (2005): 2, <https://www.american.edu/soc/faculty/upload/network-paradigm.pdf> (Accessed on January 31, 2023)

¹⁷⁸ Gilboa, “Searching for a Theory of Public Diplomacy,” 56.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.; Rhiannon Vickers, “The New Public Diplomacy: Britain and Canada Compared.” *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 6, no. 2 (2004): 183, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-856X.2004.00133.x>

¹⁸⁰ Eytan Gilboa, “Searching for a Theory of Public Diplomacy,” 56.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

Zaharna identifies at least three major developments in the post-Cold War scenario that re-moulded the nature of public diplomacy during this period.¹⁸² First, in the absence of a bi-polar context, information dissemination came to be multi-directional and targeted at wider audience. Second, the emergence of culture as important defining factor of political identity and its intermeshing with communication, creating a cultural barrier to communication that began to assume critical importance in public outreach efforts. Third, the spread of new communication technologies, such as electronic media, mobile communication devices, and the internet, along with the emergence of new participants in the communication space.¹⁸³ Moreover, non-state actors and private parties surging into the diplomatic arena became increasingly normal.¹⁸⁴

At the same time, it should be noted that often supra-national and sub-national actors practice their own public diplomacy.¹⁸⁵ Notably, there was a greater degree of convergence of interest between NGOs and state actors.¹⁸⁶ For instance, the 1997 Ottawa Convention, which outlawed landmines, and the creation of the International Criminal Court were the result of coordinated campaigns by governments, non-governmental organizations, and the UN to sway public opinion worldwide in their favor.¹⁸⁷ Similarly, there was also a growing involvement of multinational corporations. The growing interactions and interdependence among countries and the emergence of non-state actors in the international arena created multiple layers of interactions while blurring the distinction between domestic and foreign policy.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸² Zaharna, "The Soft Power Differential," 215-16.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Zaharna, "The Soft Power Differential," 216.

¹⁸⁵ Jan Melissen, "The New Public Diplomacy: Between Theory and Practice," in *The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power in International Relations* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 12.

¹⁸⁶ Jan Melissen, "The New Public Diplomacy: Between Theory and Practice," in *The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power in International Relations*. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Thomas C. Walker, "A Circumspect Revival of Liberalism," *Classics of International Relations*, Hoboken: Tylor and Francis, 2013), 149.

Within this context, the 9/11 incident came to be a watershed in the evolution of public diplomacy. The impact of 9/11 catalyzed the revival of public diplomacy which was losing steam in the intervening years of the post-Cold War period (the 1990s). In the wake of the 9/11, a realization of the US diplomatic failure to maintain cordial relations with nations and peoples and the collapse of the America as a brand grabbed the global attention for the growing importance of public diplomacy to manage national security concerns and strategic practices.¹⁸⁹ It demonstrated, rather clearly, the necessity of a strong public diplomacy program to resolve ideological disputes that could jeopardize national security.¹⁹⁰ The U.S. Advisory Group on Public Diplomacy for the Arab and Muslim World was inspired by this insight to redefine public diplomacy as the dissemination of information, active engagement, and global influence for the purpose of promoting national interest.¹⁹¹ Understanding this shift in a broader diplomatic context, Brian Hocking observes that ministries of foreign affairs (MFAs) worldwide are becoming increasingly preoccupied with communicating with the public, especially after 9/11. MFAs also acknowledge the growing role of image in international politics and the necessity of developing strategies for using image to further policy objectives.¹⁹²

Moreover, post 9/11, public diplomacy has also seen more involvement of non-state actors in the form of government collaboration with private entities by relegating responsibilities to the latter.¹⁹³ According to Hughes, this move to the private sector is a reflection of the realization that public leaders' voices aren't necessarily the strongest or most reliable.¹⁹⁴

¹⁸⁹ Kathy R. Fitzpatrick, *The Future of U.S. Public Diplomacy* (Leiden: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 2010),

¹⁹⁰ Ibid, 1.

¹⁹¹ "New Strategic Direction Urged for Public Diplomacy," Djerejian Advisory Group Releases Report to Congress Today. *US Newswire* 1 (2003). <https://2001-2009.state.gov/r/adcompd/rls/prls/24777.htm> (Accessed January 31, 2023).

¹⁹² Brian Hocking, "Privatizing Diplomacy?," *International Studies Perspectives* 5, no. 2 (2004): 149. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1528-3577.2004.00164.x>

¹⁹³ Kathy R. Fitzpatrick, "Privatized Public Diplomacy," in *Toward a New Public Diplomacy*, ed. by Philip Seib (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 155-172.

¹⁹⁴ Hughes cited in Fitzpatrick, "Privatized Public Diplomacy," 156.

Furthermore, a realization was emerging that in the global communication era marked by blurring of public and private distinctions, efficient pursuit of national interest in international relations has become a function of a successful assemblage of various state and non-state actors.¹⁹⁵ According to Hocking, as national and international knowledge networks expand, one of the significant challenges for national governments, international organizations, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) is determining how to connect with these networks, establish partnerships, and effectively advance policy goals through their utilization.¹⁹⁶

Responding to this adaption challenge thrown by the “communication revolution” in the dynamics of international political arena, traditional hierarchical and top-down approaches to foreign policy and diplomacy are giving way to a dynamic interplay among NGOs, businesses, and governments.¹⁹⁷ The complexity deepens with the growing forces of globalization, the rise of a more engaged civil society, and the erosion of public trust in governments accompanied by a heightened call for transparency. In this landscape, governments face an increasingly daunting task of exerting control over the information environment through conventional manipulation and management strategies. Overcoming these challenges and maintaining a substantial influence over people’s perceptions have become intricate endeavors.¹⁹⁸

These over-arching trends in mass communication and technological advances presaged what can be called a shift in the field of public diplomacy from old to a ‘new’ public diplomacy.¹⁹⁹ This shift distinctly stressed the centrality of a network model and

¹⁹⁵ Hocking, “Privatizing Diplomacy?,” 147-52.

¹⁹⁶ Brian Hocking, “Reconfiguring Public Diplomacy: From Competition to Collaboration,” *Engagement: Public Diplomacy in a Globalised World* (2008): 73-74, https://uscpublicdiplomacy.org/sites/uscpublicdiplomacy.org/files/useruploads/u26739/Engagement_FCO.pdf (Accessed on January 31, 2023)

¹⁹⁷ Hocking, “Privatizing Diplomacy?,” 149.

¹⁹⁸ Evan Potter, “Canada and the New Public Diplomacy,” *International Journal* 58, no. 1 (Winter, 2002/2003): 48-49, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40203812>; Jan Melissen, *Wielding Soft Power: The New Public Diplomacy* (Netherlands: Netherlands Institute of International Relations, Clingendael, 2005), 4.

¹⁹⁹ James Pamment, *New Public Diplomacy in the 21st Century: A Comparative Study of Policy*

relational approach in the 21st century diplomatic landscape. Thus, the emergence and crystallization of what is called “new” public diplomacy is aimed at cultivating and building long-term relations by pursuing an interactive and dialogue model, instead of the dominant one-way communication in the form of information campaigns of the conventional public diplomacy model.²⁰⁰ New public diplomacy, while making a departure from the practice of one-way messaging and information dissemination, integrates into public diplomacy a more of dialogic communication and interaction.²⁰¹

That is to say, it is based on strategic communication where serious attention is paid to listening to the wishes and interests of the message recipient.²⁰² In this sense, public participation, consultation, and action are all seen to be part of the public dimension, in addition to public opinion, which has long been seen as crucial.²⁰³ Thus, diplomacy is taking place in a networked environment of cooperation and mutual learning where hierarchical and state-centrist approach has become obsolete and impractical.²⁰⁴ A policy network is defined by Hocking as nonhierarchical, interdependent, and generally stable connections involving a range of players that exchange resources to pursue common policy goals.²⁰⁵ This emphasizes the fundamental principle that network public

and Practice. (London: Routledge, 2012), 3.

²⁰⁰ Zaharna, “The Network Paradigm of Strategic Public Diplomacy,” 2; Zaharna, “The Soft Power Differential,” 213-228; Cowan and Arsenault, “Moving from Monologue to Dialogue to Collaboration,” 10-30; Ali Fisher, “Mapping the Great Beyond: Identifying Meaningful Networks in Public Diplomacy,” *CPD Perspectives on Public Diplomacy* 2 (2010): 1-87, <https://uscpublicdiplomacy.org/story/cpd-perspectives-mapping-great-beyond> (Accessed on January 31, 2023).

²⁰¹ Eytan Gilboa, “Public Diplomacy: The Missing Component in Israel’s Foreign Policy,” *Israel Affairs* 12, no. 4 (2006): 719, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13533310600890067>

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Fulton, Burt, and Robinson cited in Rhiannon Vickers, “The New Public Diplomacy: Britain and Canada Compared,” *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 6, no. 2 (2004): 186, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-856X.2004.00133.x>

²⁰⁴ Brian Hocking, “Rethinking the ‘New’ Public Diplomacy,” in *The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power in International Relations* (New York; Routledge, 2005), 28-43.

²⁰⁵ Hocking, “Privatizing Diplomacy?,” 150.

diplomacy has become essential for navigating intricate policy environments by fostering communication and trust, highlighting its indispensable nature.²⁰⁶

1.3.2 Digital Tools

More importantly, another significant development that has come to the centre stage of new public diplomacy is the adoption and integration of the internet and new media into public diplomacy. The Internet and new media have brought diplomacy in real-time, a departure from the traditional diplomatic engagements giving rise to a new paradigm of public diplomacy as variously called public diplomacy 2.0, cyber diplomacy, e-diplomacy, net diplomacy, real time diplomacy, and digital diplomacy. Digital public diplomacy comes into the picture when technological revolution, especially the internet and social media was integrated into public diplomacy practices.²⁰⁷ Digital diplomacy, to put it simply, is the use of digital media platforms for diplomacy which mainly includes the use of social media for public communication.

According to Manor and Segev digital diplomacy is a foreign policy tool “to manage national image and reputation” through extensive use of SNS.²⁰⁸ The core of digital diplomacy lies in utilizing the informative and interactive spaces provided by social media. With the adaptation of technologies in diplomacy, leaders, and diplomats all around the world have already embraced SNS such as Facebook and Twitter. The millions of active users of SNS make them a game-changer in facilitating interactions and connections between leaders, citizens, and foreign population in a more efficient and flexible manner as never before. Essentially and more importantly, what it brings out are open and transparent diplomatic exercises in which the scope for direct interaction between government and foreign population, as different from the traditional government to government formal interaction, is immensely multiplied. In fact, this Two-way

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ Sabrina Sotiriu, “Digital Diplomacy: Between Promises and Reality,” in *Digital Diplomacy: Theory and Practice*, 1st ed. by Corneliu Bjola and Marcus Holmes (New York: Routledge, 2015).

²⁰⁸ Ilan Manor and Elad Segev, “America’s Selfie: How the US Portrays Itself on its Social Media Accounts,” in *Digital Diplomacy: Theory and Practice*, ed. by Bjola & Holmes, 89.

communication has come to the core of the “new” public diplomacy.²⁰⁹ This has redefined the practice of public diplomacy as to building people to people relations.

Consider the impact that Twitter has had on public communication in general. In the initial days of Twitter, Manuel Castells remarked that Twitter affordances can potentially increase political participation among citizens who were previously less active.²¹⁰ Now many regards Twitter as a potential public sphere for its affordances of easy online participation and deliberation. The concept of the public sphere as introduced by Habermas in his seminal book *The Structural Transformation of Public Sphere* describes it as a social space where people engage in informed and logical discussions to reach a consensus and decision making.²¹¹

Conceptually, the public sphere represents a platform where political participation is facilitated through the medium of talk.²¹² It represents the sphere where citizens engage in deliberation on shared matters, thus serving as an institutionalized platform for discursive interactions.²¹³ Put differently, a functioning public sphere is conceptualized as a network of communicative arenas within society that facilitate the unrestricted dissemination of information, exchange of ideas, and deliberation on various topics, thereby fostering the development of collective political consciousness, commonly known as public opinion.²¹⁴ Even as social media including Twitter is exclusionary in terms of inaccessibility to many thus drawing a parallel to the 18th-century public sphere that excluded women and non-propertied class, the role of social media has been profoundly established over the years as a space for the flow of information and ideas, facilitating public engagement, discussion, and mobilization and the formation of

²⁰⁹ Pamment, *New Public Diplomacy in the 21st Century*.

²¹⁰ Castells, “Communication, Power and Counter-power in the Network Society,” 238-66.

²¹¹ Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge: MIT Press 85, 1989).

²¹² Nancy Fraser, “Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy,” *Social Text* 25/26 (1990): 56-80, <https://doi.org/10.2307/466240>

²¹³ Ibid, 57.

²¹⁴ Peter Dahlgren, “The Internet, Public Spheres, and Political Communication: Dispersion and Deliberation,” *Political Communication* 22, no. 2 (2005): 148, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10584600590933160>

political will. Twitter provides for a combination of expressions such as likes, comments, replies, retweets, and mentions while hashtags allow comfortably organize tweets along varying themes.²¹⁵ Hashtags function as a “framing device” for a networked public, enabling them to share their narratives collectively and autonomously according to their own terms.²¹⁶

Moreover, the significance of Twitter comes to the fore as a platform to disseminate information and news when other media are restricted, controlled, or fail to keep public trust.²¹⁷ A recent example is the 2011 Arab Spring which swept the Middle East. Arab Spring protests testify to the significance of new media’s information dissemination capacity and the potential to bring about a ‘megaphone’ effect.²¹⁸ Enthusiasts of digital technology such as Philip Howard and Muzammil Hussain assert that recent advancements have been significantly influenced by the Internet, mobile phones, and social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter. By harnessing these technologies, individuals passionate about democracy have successfully created extensive networks, built social capital, and organized political movements rapidly and on an unprecedented scale. These tools have allowed virtual networks to form in real-world locations, empowering social movements to achieve goals that were once thought to be impossible.²¹⁹

Similarly, Twitter also occupies a central place in journalism and news reporting as it provides for a real-time channel of information dissemination, exchange, conversation,

²¹⁵ Çiğdem Bozdağ, “Bottom-up Nationalism and Discrimination on Social Media: An Analysis of the Citizenship Debate About Refugees in Turkey,” *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 23, no. 5 (2019): 715-16, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1367549419869354>

²¹⁶ Zizi Papacharissi, *Affective Publics: Sentiment, Technology, and Politics*. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2015), 308.

²¹⁷ Ibid, 309.

²¹⁸ Sean Aday, Henry Farrell, Marc Lynch, John Sides, and Deen Freelon, “New Media and Conflict After the Arab Spring,” *United States Institute of Peace* 80 (2012): 23, <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/150696/PW80.pdf>

²¹⁹ Philip N. Howard, and Muzammil M. Hussain, “The Upheavals in Egypt and Tunisia: The Role of Digital Media,” *Journal of Democracy* 22, no. 3 (2011): 35-36, <https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2011.0041>

and interaction on a networked platform.²²⁰ Mainstream media relies on social media especially Twitter in situations where it is required to catch up so quickly with the changing news as the story gets underway yet lacks sufficient time to cover the full story.²²¹ Social media are increasingly being used not only in situations of crisis but also for breaking news as well as resources in the mainstream news coverage.²²² Journalists also routinely monitor social media platforms.²²³ Mumbai Terror attack news was first broken out through social media. People were posting pictures and giving real-time updates including eyewitness accounts on the attacks as it was taking place.²²⁴ Even mainstream media was relying on social media for updates and information as there were difficulties in reaching the spot to cover the event during the early hours of the attack. Thus, Twitter has opened up possibilities for citizen journalism and at the same time deepened the integration and interdependence between traditional and social media²²⁵ so much as that it has brought about a hybrid media system.²²⁶

²²⁰ Tomer Simon, Avishay Goldberg, Limor Aharonson-Daniel, Dmitry Leykin, and Bruria Adini, “Twitter in the Cross fire—the Use of Social Media in the Westgate Mall Terror Attack in Kenya,” *PLoS one* 9, no. 8 (2014).

<https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0104136> (Accessed on January 31, 2023).

²²¹ Cory L. Armstrong and Fangfang Gao, “Now Tweet This: How News Organizations use Twitter,” *Electronic News* 4, no. 4 (2010): 218-235, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1931243110389457>

²²² Steve Paulussen and Raymond A. Harder, “Social Media References in Newspapers: Facebook, Twitter and YouTube as Sources in Newspaper Journalism,” *Journalism Practice* 8, no. 5 (2014): 542-551, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2014.894327>

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Claudine Beaumont, “Mumbai Attacks: Twitter and Flickr Used to Break News,” *The Telegraph*, November 27, 2008, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/india/3530640/Mumbai-attacks-Twitter-and-Flickr-used-to-break-news-Bombay-India.html> (Accessed on February 11, 2023); Paul Lewis, “Twitter Comes of Age with Fast Reports from the Ground,” *The Guardian*, November 28, 2008, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/nov/28/mumbai-terror-india-internet-Twitter> (Accessed on February 11, 2023).

²²⁵ Dhiraj Murthy, “Twitter: Microphone for the Masses?,” *Media, Culture & Society* 33, no. 5 (2011): 779-789, <https://doi.org/10.1177/016344371140>

²²⁶ Andrew Chadwick, *The Hybrid Media System: Politics and Power* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 4.

Accordingly, there is a close and natural linkage between new media and public diplomacy. Previously, diplomatic engagements including PD were undertaken in a rather restricted manner or in a closed space where only targeted audience remained mostly the witness to diplomacy. With expanding social media reach and the information and communication revolution, public diplomacy has transformed and visibly challenged the conventional diplomatic practices.²²⁷ That is, in the age of social media it inevitably goes beyond the just targeted audience to the wider arena of the global public (audience), irrespective of the kind of positive or negative impact that public diplomacy can result in. In short, the conduct of public diplomacy is more diffused²²⁸ and takes place in a hybrid media system.²²⁹

Today, any legitimate public diplomacy plan or campaign must include an e-diplomacy component due to the tremendous gains made in the amplification, recording, and dissemination of information through networked technology by platforms such as Facebook and Twitter.²³⁰ Social media facilitating diaspora engagements based on online platforms and thereby rendering scope for digital diaspora diplomacy is a new opening in diplomacy.²³¹ Personalised diplomacy is yet another new avenue digital diplomacy offers. The MEA recently launched the smartphone app as part of its personalized

²²⁷ Bjola and Holmes, *Digital Diplomacy: Theory and Practice*; Corneliu Bjola, "Digital Diplomacy: The State of the Art," *Global Affairs* 2, no. 3 (2016): 297-299, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23340460.2016.1239372>; Cristina Archetti, "The Impact of New Media on Diplomatic Practice: An Evolutionary Model of Change," *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy* 7, no. 2 (2012): 181-206, <https://doi.org/10.1163/187119112X625538>; Brian Hocking and Jan Melissen, "Diplomacy in the Digital Age," (The Hague: Netherlands Institute of International Relations 'Clingendael,' 2015). 1-58. https://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/Digital_Diplomacy_in_the_Digital%20Age_Clingendael_July2015.pdf

²²⁸ Melissen, *The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power in International Relations*, 36.

²²⁹ Chadwick, *The Hybrid Media System*.

²³⁰ Fergus Hanson, *A Digital DFAT: Joining the 21st Century* (Sydney: Lowy Institute for International Policy, 2010), 9, https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/124574/A_digital_DFAT.pdf, (Accessed on February 11, 2023)

²³¹ Murti and Zaharna, "India's Digital Diaspora Diplomacy," 3.

diplomacy and it is tailored to target both national and international population.²³² Thus, social media have become a promising platform for real time, results-oriented and dynamic diplomatic engagements and foreign policy interactions.

However, this wider reach to the global audience also illustrates the growing complexities in public diplomacy which is poised to increase further in the coming days.²³³ The major challenge to digital diplomacy stems from cyber security. Tools in digital diplomacy are susceptible to misuse ranging from anonymous usage, hacking, and spread of misinformation. Another serious challenge to deal with is the rising propaganda in the digital age. The recent instances of the alleged misuse of the social media networks during the US election 2016 by Russia and the disruption of electoral processes in Europe have demonstrated the volatility of digital diplomacy.²³⁴

As things stand, this growing popularity and adoption of the internet and social media as the vital core in the conduct of diplomacy have brought to the fore certain larger questions - whether the wave of change brought about by the digital media revolution in carrying out international relations and diplomacy is obscuring traditional diplomacy? Is traditional diplomacy to lose its ground in the near future? Where can we place the growing digitization of diplomacy in the changing frameworks of international relations and foreign policymaking?

1.3.3 Implications of Digital Diplomacy for Traditional Diplomacy

While the diplomatic context has been redefined by the extensive digitalization, to say that digitalization of diplomacy is making the traditional diplomacy trivial is not only unpersuasive and but also doesn't reflect the reality. A close observation of diplomatic activities of various states seems suggests that digital diplomacy is not replacing the traditional diplomacy. It is correct to say that traditional diplomacy entails secrecy and

²³² Ilan Manor, "Digital Diplomacy 3.0: Personalized Diplomacy" [Blog post], November 16, 2017, <https://digdipblog.com/2017/11/16/digital-diplomacy-3-0-personalized-diplomacy/> (Accessed on February 11, 2023)

²³³ Duncombe, "Digital Diplomacy: Emotion and Identity in the Public Realm," 102-116.

²³⁴ Corneliu Bjola, "Propaganda in the Digital Age," *Global Affairs* 3, no. 3 (2018): 189-191. DOI: 10.1080/23340460.2017.1427694

exclusive government-to-government official interaction and it is this aspect of diplomacy and foreign relations that have been bearing down on by the fast-growing Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). In this era of globalization, when the diffusion of information is fast taking place; communication technology is helping to transcend the barriers of time and space; world population is increasingly interconnected; nation-states are vulnerably interdependent; national boundaries are fast-eroding; and networks of state and non-state actors are going global; maintaining utmost secrecy of information is almost impossible and the practice of secluded government-to-government interaction has not only become irrational but may also bring diplomacy weak. In such a milieu, the conduct of international relations is bound to get affected, reshaped, and transformed. Wichowski argues that “in the current global landscape, secrecy is no longer the dominant mode. The world’s population is interconnected through a digital realm where the norm, both in practice and principle, is the sharing of information rather than keeping it concealed.”²³⁵ Moreover, information sharing has, in some sense, transcended from what is considered a new normal to something that of a right; a cause that is worth fighting for.²³⁶

This shift thus defines the rise of a competitive diplomatic landscape wherein actors in international relations and diplomacy are constantly reminded of the importance of strategic digital outreach. However, even with these drastic changes, the fundamental structure of diplomacy has remained intact, as we see even today, that diplomats and state leaders are still undertaking foreign visits and personal meetings in the pursuit of foreign policy objectives.²³⁷ Moreover, the traditional tasks of diplomacy such as formal representation, protocol, and participation in diplomatic activities continue to be a part of the state sovereignty and international society.²³⁸ Therefore, the new enterprise of digital diplomacy must be regarded as a synthesis of traditional diplomacy forming substance

²³⁵ Alex Wichowski, “‘Secrecy is for Losers’: Why Diplomats Should Embrace Openness to Protect National Security,” *Digital Diplomacy Theory and Practice*, ed. by Bjola and Holmes, 53.

²³⁶ Wichowski, “‘Secrecy is for Losers,’” 56.

²³⁷ Marcus Holmes, “Digital Diplomacy and International Change Management,” in *Digital Diplomacy: Theory and Practice*, ed. by Bjola and Holmes, 13.

²³⁸ Barston, *Modern Diplomacy*, 2.

and new means of technology as foreign policy tools banded together, striving to achieve national interest which is defined in terms of foreign policy goals. Arsenault remarks that social media and other 2.0 technologies have not rendered Web 1.0 obsolete. Similarly, while public diplomacy 2.0 is significant, it does not eliminate the necessity for more conventional forms of engagement.²³⁹ Thus, traditional diplomacy and digital diplomacy are not mutually exclusive but mutually reinforcing.

Coming to the second question, in the first place, digital diplomacy must be conceived as the part of the dynamic evolution of diplomacy. In that context, diplomacy is best understood as “change management”; that is, how diplomacy has been evolved historically managing socio-political and technological changes that it encountered both internationally and inter-nationally.²⁴⁰ Diplomacy is as dynamic as international relations which continues to evolve, grow, and position itself to deal with emerging challenges from time to time. All this may bring about new methods and practice; innovative means and ways to achieve policy objectives. At this juncture, to make a substantive prognosis about any imminent transformation that diplomacy will undergo seems to be a difficult task. However, given the rapid diffusion and absorption of information and communication technologies in our daily life, digital diplomacy is here to persist, and it might mature into a new direction from the current Anglo-American persistence and dominance.²⁴¹

In a more general sense, the centerpiece of international relations and diplomacy is conventions and practices. Therefore, while digital and social media may make it easy for mass public communication; information and intelligence acquisition; monitoring and surveillance; and coordination and cooperation in collective policy efforts; ultimately, in areas such as international negotiation and persuasion and further in participation in international institutions, traditional diplomacy likely to continue to remain relevant. Additionally, so long as sovereign states remain the defining player in international relations and the heads of states remain to be the driver of diplomacy; state visits will

²³⁹ Amelia Arsenault, “Public Diplomacy 2.0,” In *Toward a New Public Diplomacy* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 145.

²⁴⁰ Bjola and Holmes, *Digital Diplomacy: Theory and Practice*.

²⁴¹ Sotiriu, “Digital Diplomacy: Between Promises and Reality.”

endure and continues to effuse symbolism, as it remains indispensable as far as fruitful negotiations and reassurances are concerned.

Concerning the third question, it points towards the scope of new media in the international relations and diplomacy broadly, and foreign policymaking more specifically so that the dynamic dimensions of international relations and shifting focuses can best be accommodated in a better frame of reference. Answering the question, “digital,” “cyber” or “e” prefixes in diplomacy itself points to the dimension of technology. Digital diplomacy, also known as cyber diplomacy or e-diplomacy, came into existence through the process of linking up regular diplomatic networks with digital communication networks. As a result, digital networks constitute the defining feature of digital diplomacy. Networks are elaborate channels of communication built around a set of objectives that, by virtue of their adaptability to the operating environment, simultaneously provide execution flexibility and unity of purpose.²⁴²

Basically, it is these networks which in fact have egregiously undermined the choice of the actors as to being part or not part of the frame, while leaving it to them to make the full use of the opportunities the internet offers so as to remain competitive. That way, the efficacy and chances of success in international politics have been tied to the use of new media outlets, importantly SNS such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and other web 2.0 sites. However, to what extent digital diplomacy is yielding the desired diplomatic outcomes for the country is to a certain extent contingent upon other factors as widely understood as essential elements of public diplomacy and collectively referred to as, in the words of Nye, “soft power.” Nye defined soft power as the capability to elicit the desired outcome from others by using attracting through culture, political values, and foreign policies rather than conversion and payment.²⁴³ All these insights point towards the existence of a balance between traditional diplomacy and digital diplomacy which still constitutes the formula for the efficacy of foreign policies in the information age.

²⁴² Manuel Castells, *Communication Power* (Oxford University Press. Inc.” New York, USA. 2009), 21.

²⁴³ Nye, “Public Diplomacy and Soft Power,” 94-95.

1.4 Conclusion

Public diplomacy occupies a central place in the twenty-first century diplomatic landscape. The surge in popularity of public diplomacy both as a practice and discourse in the modern times can be better understood against the background of the advent of globalization, growing pervasiveness of information and communication revolution and the internet, and various non state actors that have risen to the mainstream of international relations, challenging the state supremacy in international relations. Growing interplay and interdependence between state and non-state actors have brought about complex relations in international politics. In such a context, public diplomacy which is understood to be an age-old practice in the conduct of international relations and foreign policy has also undergone transformation in order for making it relevant to the changed context of international relations and foreign policymaking. That is, the digitalization of diplomacy and the emergence of new communicative practices in the realm of public diplomacy has been a product of globalization and information and communication revolution that gave rise to a what Pamment calls the “transnational audience.”²⁴⁴

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²⁴⁴ James Pamment, “Diplomacy and Digitization: A Profession Adapting to New Networks of Power,” *Revista Mexicana de Política Exterior* (2018): 53-71, <https://revistadigital.sre.gob.mx/index.php/rmpe/article/view/264/243>

CHAPTER 2

EVOLUTION OF INDIA'S PUBLIC DIPLOMACY LANDSCAPE: OBJECTIVES AND COMPONENTS

It is notable that as India's influence and power have increased over time, so has the importance of its use of public diplomacy. As a rising superpower, India has embraced public diplomacy for nation branding and global information management purposes.²⁴⁵ The strategic competition between India and China partly set the context for India's competitive deployment of soft power strategy of public diplomacy in the international stage as well as the region of South Asia and the Indo Pacific. Beyond that, enhancing its not-so good image abroad, projection of a benign rise of India and promotion of economic development through tourism are other driving factors.²⁴⁶

To that extent, the establishment of a Public Diplomacy Division by the MEA in 2006 gave a great fillip to India's use of soft power. Soft power strategy has since then continued to be a crucial part of the country's public diplomacy strategy, demonstrating the Delhi's capacity to use its cultural and ideological sway on the international scene. Therefore, India has over the years significantly invested in public diplomacy to leverage its soft power and to shape public opinion of both the international and the domestic audience.

In this regard, the strategic communication tool of digital media, comprising the Internet and social media, has also been utilized to effectually communicate the foreign policy goals and decisions, as well as construct a strategic narrative of Indian foreign policy. Besides, this medium which is also intentionally directed towards countering any

²⁴⁵ Hall, "India's New Public Diplomacy," 1089–1098; Mazumdar, "India's Public Diplomacy in the Twenty-First Century," 24–25; Suri, "Public Diplomacy in India's Foreign Policy," 299–302.

²⁴⁶ Hall, "India's New Public Diplomacy," 1106; Mazumdar, "India's Public Diplomacy in the Twenty-First Century," 24–26.

narratives that could be potentially inimical to Indian interests has been crucial in shaping the perception of the global audience towards India's foreign policy.²⁴⁷

Nevertheless, despite the fact that India's public diplomacy has accelerated in the twenty-first century, most of these initiatives have existed in some form or another for a very long time. Even before the phrase "public diplomacy" was coined, India has a long history of engagement in public diplomacy, even though it may not all directly mirror contemporary forms or trends. Instead, the essence of connecting with people through promoting Indian cultural values and philosophical ideas remained at the core of such practices.

Against this background, the present chapter tracks the evolution of India's public diplomacy through a discussion of the dynamic nature and modes of conventional cultural diplomacy and contemporary, digital means and practices in communication and public outreach. In doing so, it also provides an overview of institutional aspects and operational logics while carving out differences in various public diplomacy engagements.

Let us begin by taking a look at the multifaceted, historical, traditional, and contemporary practices of India's public diplomacy.

2.1 Ancient India's Soft Power and Public Diplomacy Outreach

Public diplomacy was mainly conducted in the form of trade, cultural exchanges, and religious pilgrimages to promote country's interests, values, and culture. Indian kings and emperors frequently sent academics, artists, and religious figures abroad to advance Indian culture and philosophy. As an illustration, Indian rulers and scholars significantly contributed to the spread of Buddhism from India to other regions of Asia. The spread of Buddhism was greatly aided by the Indian ruler Ashoka. In the 300s BCE, Ashoka made significant efforts to promote Buddhism outside India.

He erected Buddhist stupas and monuments. Rock edicts built throughout his empire preached Buddhist values such as compassion, nonviolence, and social justice. The

²⁴⁷ Natarajan, "Digital Public Diplomacy and a Strategic Narrative for India," 92.

messages were inscribed in several languages including Prakrit, Greek and Aramaic to make sure that individuals from various cultural backgrounds could understand them. He also sent missionaries to promote the Buddha's teachings. He dispatched missionaries to various regions of the globe. Buddhist monks built monasteries and spread the religion's doctrines by travelling to China, Japan, and Korea.

Students and academics from all over the world, including China, Korea, and Japan, were drawn to India's learning centers and universities like Nalanda University which was located in present-day Bihar. Nalanda was known for imparting knowledge in the fields of Buddhism, astronomy, mathematics, and medicine. A noteworthy example of practicing international education as public diplomacy was the visit of the Chinese scholar and Buddhist monk, Xuanzang. He was attracted to India by the academic eminence of great Indian universities. Upon his arrival, Emperor Harsha bestowed upon Xuanzang the gift of patronage enabling him to engage in studies at Nalanda University as well as other esteemed centers of learning. Indian learning system advanced Xuanzang's knowledge which later played an instrumental role in the spread of Buddhism not just in China, but also throughout the region and the world.

Likewise, trade was another arena through which India engaged in cultural diplomacy and promoted people-to-people connections. The Roman Empire and India maintained extensive commercial ties, aiding in disseminating Indian culture. Spices, textiles, and other luxuries from India were highly sought after in Rome. The Roman author, natural philosopher, and army commander, Pliny the Elder, who lived in the 1st century A.D., has written about the glories of Indian civilization, such as the usage of spices, perfumes, textiles, and wealth.

What is more, the Chola Empire from Southern India had a significant marine presence and participated in commerce and cultural exchanges with other countries from the ninth to the thirteenth century. The Chola rulers forged cultural and religious relations with these nations by dispatching commerce and diplomatic delegations to Southeast Asian, Middle Eastern, and African countries. Additionally, they constructed temples and other monuments in these areas, promoting Indian culture and religion. South Indian Hindu temples, for instance, were renowned for their sophisticated carvings and sculptures drawing interests to Indian art, design, and architecture. For instance, Indian architecture

provided inspiration for the construction of the ancient temple complex known as Angkor Wat in Cambodia, which was constructed in the 12th century and today remains the world's largest religious edifice. In fact, the early South Indian Hindu architecture provided the basis for both the temple mountain and the later galleried temple.²⁴⁸

Moreover, the Mughals who ruled India from 16th-19th centuries also promoted and patronized artists, musicians, and poets who produced works that reflected Indian culture and philosophy. The majestic Taj Mahal, which has come to represent India's cultural diplomacy, was constructed by the Mughal dynasty. Also, ancient Indian literature influenced other cultures. Epics like the Vedas, the Ramayana, and the Mahabharata are examples of Indian literature that has spread around the world. The Ramayana and Mahabharata have been translated into numerous foreign languages, including Russian, German, Spanish, French, Thai, Cambodian, and Indonesian. The influence of the Ramayana can be seen in the cultures of Indonesia, Thailand, and Cambodia. In Thailand, and Cambodia, the story of Ramayana is retold in various forms through visual arts and literature. Ramayana forms foundation for the national epics of both the countries. While the Thai version is known as the *Ramakien* (the eulogy of Ram), the Cambodian version is an epic poem called the *Reamker* (Glory of Rama).

Likewise, Indonesia's the Malay-language *Hikayat Seri Rama* is a literary adaptation of the Hindu Ramayana epic in the form of stories. The Mahabharata is also the base of several classical works in art and literature in Thailand. Scenes from the Ramakien and the Mahabharata are frequently used in the traditional Thai dance theatre, Khon.²⁴⁹ In Khon shows, performers portray the roles while donning extravagant costumes and masks, along with live music and singing. In Indonesia, scenes from the Ramayana and Mahabharata are frequently performed in the Javanese *wayang kulit*, a style of shadow puppetry. Episodes from the Ramayana also feature in the Balinese *Kecak* dance. These epics are also the source of many terms and phrases of languages in these countries.

²⁴⁸ G. Massiot and Cie, "Angkor Wat: Center Axial Avenue of the Temple Complex Leading into the Central Shrine," 1910, <https://curate.nd.edu/show/m900ns0900r> (Accessed January 4, 2023).

²⁴⁹ Amara Srisuchat, "Mahabharata in Art and Literature in Thailand," *Indian Literature* 49, no. 1 (225) (2005): 105, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23346580>

2.2 Traditional Soft Power Engagements in Contemporary India

India established public diplomacy division in 2006 as an initiative to cater to the growing need for public outreach with the foreign as well as the domestic audience. Since then, it has been consistent in its efforts to reach out to citizens, Indian diaspora, and foreign nationals. According to Navdeep Suri, former Joint Secretary with the Public Diplomacy Division of MEA, public diplomacy that India has set into motion is not propaganda rather it is aimed at amplifying the positive narratives about the real works that India is doing, which often do not reach the public in the growing permeation of negativity the news media tend to focus.²⁵⁰

However, the launching of a public diplomacy division does not signify the start of India's modern-day institutionalized public diplomacy practice. In reality, public diplomacy activities have been carried out for more than 50 years by two separate organizations - the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) and the Indian Council for World Affairs (ICWA).²⁵¹

More broadly, the ICCR is one of the leading agencies engaged in public diplomacy outreach through cultural relations. As an autonomous organization, ICCR facilitates cultural and intellectual exchanges with other countries and their people and fosters a global understanding of India's rich cultural and civilizational heritage. At present, it has 18 Regional Offices in various States in India and 37 Indian Cultural Centers overseas.

The Indian Council for World Affairs (ICWA) is a think tank whose goal is to enhance India's ties with other countries via in-depth analysis, research, discussions, publishing, and exchanging ideas and expertise with foreign organizations.²⁵² The goal of the ICWA is to advance an in-depth understanding and knowledge of India's foreign policy goals and to assist in creating novel approaches for enhancing India's relations with other countries. The ICWA contributes to developing India's foreign policy and strengthens its global participation through research and analysis.

²⁵⁰ Navdeep Suri, "Public Diplomacy in India's Foreign Policy," *Strategic Analysis* 35, no. 2 (2011): 299, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09700161.2011.542927>

²⁵¹ Mazumdar, "India's Public Diplomacy in the Twenty-First Century," 24–39.

²⁵² Ibid, 27.

ICCR administers India's scholarship program, which is the largest and most significant activity in its portfolio in terms of resources and human resources. It only managed scholarships for foreign students seeking to pursue academic programs in India but also plays a key role in organizing seminars and symposia in India about various topics of significant interest. Additionally, the ICCR is also in charge of overseeing the establishment and maintenance of Chairs and Professors of Indian Studies at universities located in foreign countries, and is responsible for the management of awards associated with various academic initiatives.²⁵³

Apart from this, it also oversees and administers a host of centers, activities and events including Indian cultural centers & yoga, Hindi promotion, exhibition, unveiling bust & statues of great Indian leaders, food festivals, and classical art performances. Further, ICCR also takes the lead in patriotic and enthusiastic celebration of India's national holidays overseas, such as Republic Day and Independence Day, besides other events like Hindi Diwas, Tagore Jayanti, Constitution Day, and Indian festivals like Holi, Dussehra and Diwali that keep the diaspora in contact with the nation and give the locals a glimpse of India's diversity and legacy.²⁵⁴

As part of commemorating India's 75 years of independence in 2022, ICCR hosted the Gen Next Democracy Network programme, which provides an opportunity for youth worldwide to get acquainted with Indian cultural heritage and the functioning of democracy. In the 7th batch of the Gen Next Democracy Network Programme held between 22nd Jan-31st Jan 2023, 29 young delegates from 9 countries participated.²⁵⁵

²⁵³ "Connecting Through Culture Annual Report 2021-22," *Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR)*, <https://www.iccr.gov.in/sites/default/files/2023-02/Annual%20Report%202021-22%20%28English%29%20Final%202nd%20Jan.%202023.pdf> (Accessed January 2, 2023).

²⁵⁴ "Connecting Through Culture Annual Report 2021-22," *Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR)*.

²⁵⁵ "ICCR Organizing a Visit of 29 Young Leaders From 09 Countries to India Under The 'Gen-Nexy Democracy Programme'," *Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR)*, January 20, 2023, https://iccr.gov.in/sites/default/files/2023-03/7th%20batch_0.pdf (Accessed February 12, 2023).

Additionally, since the late 1980s and especially in the post-1991 liberalization period, there has been a significant increase in public diplomacy activities involving the Indian diaspora. In this regard, the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) Convention constitutes a signature public diplomacy outreach event aimed at engaging and connecting with the overseas Indian community. The convention also provides a forum for diaspora members to interact with one another. The 17th PBD Convention was recently held in Indore from 8-10 January 2023 in partnership with the Madhya Pradesh Government. The theme for the convention was “Diaspora: Reliable Partners for India’s Progress in Amrit Kaal.” Notably, over 3,500 diaspora members from approximately 70 countries registered for the PBD Convention, demonstrating its significant reach and appeal.

Promotion of Yoga as India’s contribution to the world is another public diplomacy initiative of India. Beginning in 2015, organized by the Ministry of AYUSH, International Yoga Day has been observed globally. Over 35,000 people, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi and notable individuals from 84 countries, participated in the first event in New Delhi, where 21 yoga asanas were performed for 35 minutes. In 2018, the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) started conducting an annual international conference on yoga to further awareness of the various facets of yogic science. The 8th International Day of Yoga celebrations took place across India and various parts of the world on 21 June 2022, with the theme of “Yoga for Humanity” highlighting the critical role of yoga in promoting better mental health.

2.3 Public Diplomacy Initiatives in the Digital and Cyberspace

A steady expansion of India’s public diplomacy has seen various programs and initiatives introduced over the last decade. Extensive domestic and cyber initiatives shape India’s global engagement.

Although India created the MEA website in 2003 for the purpose of disseminating information, it was not until 2009 that Shashi Tharoor, the country’s minister of external affairs, started interacting with citizens on SNS, marking a significant change from the previous administration’s policy of banning social media use in government offices.²⁵⁶

²⁵⁶ Ronak D. Desai, “How India’s Leaders Tweet with a Purpose,” *Forbes*, May 15, 2017, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/ronakdesai/2017/05/15/how-indias-leaders-tweet-with->

The genesis of the MEA's venturing into the realm of social media can be traced back to the year 2010, when the @IndianDiplomacy Twitter account was first created. This marked a significant turning point in the MEA's approach towards public engagement through digital channels. This was quickly followed by the establishment of @MEAIndia's Official Account in 2011.²⁵⁷ On September 15, 2012, when the Indian Navy embraced technology for the first time to promote a diplomatic naval voyage, the Ministry of Defence launched an interactive website to track the Indian Navy's journey through ASEAN countries, featuring descriptive blogs from both the skipper and the crew.²⁵⁸

Additionally, in an effort to generate widespread awareness and knowledge of India's foreign policy among its people in general and its educated youth in particular, the MEA Distinguished Lecture Series on India's Foreign Policy was launched by the Public Diplomacy Division. The goal of these series of talks, which were offered at different colleges throughout the nation, was to serve as a strategic communication tool and advance India's soft power internationally. The lecture series aimed to inculcate in the nation's youth a sense of pride and patriotism by creating a profound grasp of India's foreign policy objectives and choices. This in turn was expected to provide them a keen appreciation for India's strategic interests and foreign policy priorities. If anything, it displays the domestic dimension of India's public diplomacy. Moreover, recognizing the importance of strategic digital outreach as means for advancing its national interests and the potential of the social media to connect with the masses, India integrated social media into its diplomatic toolbox. As of now, the MEA has a vibrant presence on SNS including Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, Instagram, Soundcloud, Flickr, and Google+ channel.²⁵⁹

[purpose/?sh=660a69db9cc2](#) (Accessed September 10, 2021); Sinha Palit, "India's Use of Social Media in Public Diplomacy," 156.

²⁵⁷ "MEA's Digital Diplomacy Footprint," *Ministry of External Affairs*, http://mea.gov.in/Uploads/PublicationDocs/29120_MEAs_Digital_Diplomacy_Footprint.pdf (Accessed September 10, 2021).

²⁵⁸ Sinha Palit, *New Media and Public Diplomacy: Political Communication in India, the United States and China* (Taylor & Francis, 2023), 83.

²⁵⁹ "MEA's Digital Diplomacy Footprint," *Ministry of External Affairs*.

Besides, social media has been connected to Indian embassies around the world. These digital platforms have become a powerful tool for engaging the public by disseminating accurate information about foreign policy and global affairs, encouraging interaction, and soliciting valuable feedback. Notably, these internet forums have also made it possible for public complaints to be resolved quickly, although the extent of such practice unquestionably depends on the preferences and idiosyncrasies of the minister in charge of external relations.

During Sushma Swaraj's tenure as Minister of External Affairs, India saw direct public involvement. The minister exhibited an overwhelming inclination towards responding to issues and complaints conveyed to her via tweets. She did so with unmatched swiftness, resolving them in a way that was nothing short of impressive. The unhindered access to the ministry and its embassies, quick response to public complaints and appeals, extensive outreach, and effective utilization of social media outlets made India one of the top nations in public diplomacy.

Furthermore, the MEA made a ground-breaking decision in 2013 by releasing the MEA App, the first mobile application ever by any ministry in the Indian government. This step increased the MEA's digital media footprint while providing the general public access to efficient services. By providing seamless and simple access to information about foreign policy, consular services, and other vital areas of national interest, the MEA App has revolutionized the way people interact with the ministry.²⁶⁰ More importantly, the MEA App became the industry standard for other government departments and solidified India as a pioneer in utilizing digital technology to improve public services.

What is more, India has implemented e-Visa and e-Visa-on-arrival services to streamline and speed up the visa application procedure for visitors from other countries. Foreign nationals can apply for visas online using the e-Visa system, and travelers can also apply for visas at Indian airports once they arrive. At present, 166 countries and territories are included in the e-Visa scheme. E-visa services will be offered at 5 Indian ports and 28 Indian airports. E Visa enables visitors from other nations to apply for an Indian visa

²⁶⁰ "MEA's Digital Diplomacy Footprint," *Ministry of External Affairs*.

from their home country without going to the Indian Mission. They can even pay the visa fee online.

Films, magazines, films, and cultural events are also widely employed tools in public diplomacy. The flagship publication of the MEA, called “*India Perspective*” has been published in 17 languages. The digital edition is accessible on all mobile platforms and app stores in 16 languages. In order to provide a single point of reference for information and knowledge on Indian art, religion, philosophy, culture, economy, and other subjects, Bharat EkParichay was created in 2018 and plans to open branches in educational institutions throughout the globe using carefully chosen books that are shipped from India. Furthermore, the MEA collaborates with leading Indian universities and academic institutions to host lecture series featuring specialists who offer their perspectives on current foreign policy issues.²⁶¹

Digital media has also been leveraged for showcasing cultural legacy and enhance India’s soft power. For instance, the government, in 2015, started the *Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat* (roughly translated - United India Distinguished India) initiative to encourage cooperation and interstate cultural interaction. The effort comprises a digital platform that highlights the richness and diversity of India’s many cultural traditions. As part of this initiative, *Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat* week was observed in Indian embassies abroad.²⁶²

Promoting Indian languages and literature to global audiences is another important facet of India’s diverse approach to public diplomacy. The great linguistic diversity of India, which includes more than 22 official languages and many dialects, is leveraged as part of this strategy. The Indian government has started several programs to promote Indian languages overseas to meet its objectives. The *Bharatvani* project, which aims to build a

²⁶¹ Mona Gupta, “Defining the Role of Public Relations in India’s Foreign Policy,” *Glocalism: Journal of Culture, Politics, and Innovation*, 3, (2012): 13, DOI: 10.12893/gjcpi.2021.3.

²⁶² “Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat Week Recorded Live India in Peru & Bolivia” (Embassy of India, Lima) – Peru,” *Facebook*, March 12, 2022, https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?ref=watch_permalink&v=336600588495203 (Accessed December 10, 2022); “#EkBharatShreshthaBharat Week! Costumes and Attires Bind India Together in One Thread of Unity. India In Malaysia (High Commission of India, Kuala Lumpur),” *Facebook*, March 08, 2022, <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=502377401610354> (Accessed December 10, 2022).

comprehensive digital library of all Indian languages, is one such initiative.²⁶³ As part of this, an online portal and Android App were launched in 2016. This initiative demonstrates India's dedication to protecting and promoting its linguistic legacy and the enormous strides it has already made in this direction.

India has also been using technology to further its trade diplomacy efforts and promote Indian goods and services to international markets. Launched in 2016 with the objective of enhancing the public procurement process' speed and transparency for MSMEs, the *e-Marketplace for MSMEs* is one such digital platform the government has established to promote trade and investment. Through its internal and international commerce, the MSMEs sector currently makes up 29% of India's GDP.²⁶⁴ Learning from its success, the government has been working with SBI to create the B2C e-commerce website Bharat Craft which will help MSMEs promote and sell their products both domestically and abroad.²⁶⁵ This platform would be similar to platforms like Amazon and Alibaba.

The year 2019 saw a groundbreaking accomplishment by the MEA when it launched the Performance "Smartboard"—a fusion of three different types of Dashboards—in the ever-expanding and continuously changing digital milieu. The performance smartboard encompassed an Operational Dashboard for real-time system monitoring, a Tactical Dashboard for evaluation and benchmarking, and Strategic Dashboards for monitoring the accomplishment of strategic objectives. It resonated with the idea of democratization

²⁶³ "Bharatavani Becomes the Largest Online Repository of Dictionaries in India on its Very First Day," *Press Information Bureau Government of India*, May 25, 2016, <https://pib.gov.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=145676> (Accessed December 10, 2022)

²⁶⁴ "MSME Industry in India," *India Brand Equity Foundation*, <https://www.ibef.org/industry/msme> (Accessed February 26, 2023).

²⁶⁵ "GeM Becomes India's First E-Commerce Portal to Hit This Mega Milestone; Transaction Value Crosses Rs 80k Crore," *India Brand Equity Foundation*, January 28, 2021, <https://www.ibef.org/news/gem-becomes-indias-first-ecommerce-portal-to-hit-this-mega-milestone-transaction-value-crosses-rs-80k-crore> (Accessed June 26, 2022).

by giving the populace more agency and transparency in serving their demands with enhanced efficiency in an era where information is power.²⁶⁶

More broadly, India has made a variety of initiatives to improve its cyber security, including implementing legislative measures into effect, creating new organizations, and appointing critical officials, including the National Cyber Security Coordinator. The Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre and the Defence Cyber Agency are two recently formed entities, while the National Cyber Security Strategy of 2021 is an example of such a policy initiative. India ranked 10th globally and 4th in the Asia-Pacific area in the 2020 Global Cyber Security Index by International Telecom Union.²⁶⁷ Moreover, India was at the forefront of COVID-19 pandemic-enforced virtual diplomacy. The administration has conducted and continues to engage in high-level conferences, meetings, and other diplomatic interactions with international counterparts utilizing virtual platforms.

In the face of the global COVID-19 pandemic, India hosted the Shanghai Cooperation Organization's (SCO) Council of Heads of Government's first-ever virtual summit in December 2020. Prime Minister Modi's effort to reactivate the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) summit, which had been dormant since 2016, through the virtual meeting was notable. Not only that, Modi the first time since taking office in 2014 took part in the virtual Non-Aligned Movement summit (NAM).

Further, India's comprehensive strategy to provide COVID-19 immunizations worldwide included the use of technology as a key component. The success of India's *Vaccine Maitri* program launched in January 2021 rests, to a great extent, on the use of technology to propagate and disseminate knowledge about the country's vaccination efforts across the world. Domestically, the sophisticated technical platform Co-WIN also played a crucial role in aiding the national immunization campaign. In addition, India developed the

²⁶⁶ "MEA's Digital Diplomacy Footprint," *Ministry of External Affairs*, http://mea.gov.in/Uploads/PublicationDocs/29120_MEAs_Digital_Diplomacy_Footprint.pdf (Accessed September 10, 2022).

²⁶⁷ Sameer Patil, "India's Cyber Diplomacy," *India Perspectives*, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, no. 04, 2021, https://www.indiaperspectives.gov.in/en_US/indias-cyber-diplomacy/ (Accessed June 26, 2022).

smartphone app *Aarogya Setu* to track and monitor the spread of COVID-19 and provide citizens with accurate and up-to-date information about the pandemic.

In the post-pandemic world, India's taking over of the G20 presidency witnessed continued digital engagements. Hardly a month into India's presidency, Delhi organized a digital conference - *The Voice of the Global South* from 12-13 January 2023 with member of 125 countries participating in it to deliberate on matters affecting the countries in the Global South with a view to make their voice heard in the international system.²⁶⁸ India is also actively participating in cyber dialogue with countries that share similar interests.²⁶⁹

The MEA's Cyber Diplomacy division engages with countries in bilateral, regional, and multilateral forums, including the United Nations. In the year 2022, India held several cyber dialogues with different countries, including Japan, Germany, Australia, and the USA, among others.²⁷⁰ The same year India also assumed the Chair of the Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI), an international initiative aimed at the responsible and human-centric development of Artificial Intelligence (A.I.). In February 2023, India hosted the second Cyber Dialogue between India and the Netherlands in New Delhi. The third Cyber Dialogue between the two countries is slated for 2024.²⁷¹

2.4 Maturation of India's Digital Media Environment

Media's influence on foreign policy has grown significantly in today's age of SNS in terms of shaping public opinion. India has acknowledged the potential of such new media technologies in its public diplomacy outreach to manage Delhi's soft power and improve its reputation and national image towards attaining national interests.

²⁶⁸ Rajiv Bhatia, "Voice of Global South Summit@G20," *Hindustan Times*, January 19, 2023, <https://www.gatewayhouse.in/voice-of-global-south-summitg20/> (Accessed February 10, 2023).

²⁶⁹ Bhatia, "Voice of Global South Summit@G20."

²⁷⁰ "India acing the game of Cyber Diplomacy," *NewsOnAir*, March 31, 2023, <https://newsonair.com/2023/03/31/india-acing-the-game-of-cyber-diplomacy/> (Accessed April 10, 2023).

²⁷¹ "India, Netherlands hold 2nd Cyber Dialogue in New Delhi," *ANI*, February 03, 2023, <https://www.aninews.in/news/world/asia/india-netherlands-hold-2nd-cyber-dialogue-in-new-delhi20230203201044/> (Accessed March 30, 2023).

In this context, taking a look at how the intersection of India's media and foreign affairs in terms of public engagement and participation has changed and advanced through time has relevance. A brief discussion on the subject at this juncture can provide insights into the reach and impact of new media in diplomacy and how it can be utilized for national objectives. Further, it can help us anticipate emerging opportunities as well as challenges of the digitalization of diplomacy. More precisely, in the context of this dissertation, it can demonstrate how India and its public have adapted to the new platforms for public diplomacy and its implications for India's public diplomacy in terms of the vast, complex, and challenging information environment it fostered.

So, to capture the story of the significant transition of India's public diplomacy landscape, some pivotal moments in Indian foreign policy both preceding the years before the advent of social media networks and in the initial years of its dissemination in the country are highlighted. Some valuable events that can shed light on this are the Kargil conflict, the 2008 Mumbai attacks, and the detention of Indian diplomat Devyani Khobragade in the U.S. These events demonstrate a landscape of transition marked by a shift from the traditional domination of news media to the growing importance of social media in public affairs and foreign policy.

2.4.1 Kargil War

The Kargil War, a momentous military conflict that erupted between India and Pakistan, took place during the months of May and July in 1999 within the rugged terrain of the Kargil district of Kashmir. It started when 100 square kilometers of Indian Kashmiri land in the Dras-Kargil sector along the Line of Control (LoC) were taken over by Pakistani forces. The war served as a resounding testament to the awe-inspiring and dynamic force of the news media, as they wielded their power and influence to shape and mold the thoughts and emotions of the general public in India's favour, even as Pakistan wrestled hard to counteract it but in vain. Therefore, the involvement of India's satellite news networks comes heavily in assessing the significance of India's diplomacy for the Kargil's success.

This is emphasized by Vivek Chaddha, who says that when India was liberalized in 1992, the number of houses with television access increased from 1.2 million to 14.2 million by 1996. In addition to the proliferation of soap operas, 24x7 news started to appear often

in Indian homes. Notably, NDTV was founded in 1998 and was instrumental in providing vital reportage during the 1999 Kargil conflict. Furthermore, at the same time as Zee TV and Aaj Tak debuted, they pioneered the broad distribution of television news.²⁷²

So much so, the Kargil war was dubbed as India's first televised war.²⁷³ The frenzied and feverish coverage of the Kargil war by the Indian news media, replete with a dizzying array of graphical images and real-time videos of the conflict, was deemed to be of pivotal importance in fomenting and fueling a strong sense of nationalist sentiment and fervor among the populace. This, in turn, resulted in an unparalleled and unprecedented surge of animosity and loathing towards Pakistan, culminating in the creation of a virtual parallel war zone that manifested itself in the highly charged India-Pakistan match in the World Cup.

On the other end of the spectrum, the interaction between the government and citizens was primarily mediated through news media, thus becoming the key conduit for the flow of information and communication within society. As a result, the information that circulated among the public was predominantly comprised of representations and presentations that emanated from various news media outlets, including satellite television and print news media. The news media often went beyond the scope of government briefings and army handouts to produce an eclectic and eclectic mix of stories, unattributed narratives, and rhetorical flourishes that formed the major source of information and knowledge for the Indian populace.²⁷⁴

During the war, satellite networks had only just begun to proliferate, with a substantial number of networks in the private sector, while Doordarshan and All India Radio (AIR) were the exclusive government-owned news outlets. The government utilized Doordarshan and AIR to distribute information and provide frequent updates to the public

²⁷² Vivek Chadha, *KARGIL: Past Perfect, Future Uncertain?* (KW Publishers, 2019), 82.

²⁷³ Ashley C Tellis, Christine Fair, and Jamison Jo Medby, "Limited conflicts under the nuclear umbrella: Indian and Pakistani lessons from the Kargil crisis," *Rand Corporation*, 2002, https://www.rand.org/pubs/monograph_reports/MR1450.html, (Accessed March 30, 2023).

²⁷⁴ Geetha Seshu, "Media and Kargil: Information Blitz with Dummy Missiles," *Economic and Political Weekly* 34, no. 41 (1999): 2917. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4408501>

regarding the progress and particulars of the conflict. Further, as the intrusion began, the Indian government acted quickly to upgrade the existing systems in place for public diplomacy through restructuring institutions and processes.²⁷⁵

To start with, public relations officers (PROs) for the Indian government stationed in 25 places across the country, including in sensitive regions like Srinagar and Udhampur work for the Directorate of Public Relations (DPR), which was led by an officer of the Indian Information Service and was in charge of disseminating information via the media on behalf of the three services – the army, navy, and air force. However, during the Kargil conflict, instead of the DPR chain, experts from the respective services were recruited to serve as spokespersons. At the same time, it was the Army Liaison Cell (ALC) or MI 24 which dealt with psychological operations and integrated public information and psychological operations.²⁷⁶

The Army's public relations and psychological operations activities now use the ALC as a tool. Major General Arjun Ray and his team managed the additional workload at ALC, with Colonel R. E. Williams handling media relations. Manvendra Singh, a journalist and officer in the Territorial Army, was assigned to the ALC to render better inputs for media communication. At the same time, the movement of journalists to and from the Kargil conflict zone was facilitated by PROs in Udhampur and Srinagar, who provided information updates.²⁷⁷

In addition, a unique attempt was made in the government's media outreach in the form of the development of a three-man media interface. The individuals that make up this interface were carefully selected from the ranks of the army, air force, and MEA, bringing a variety of perspectives and levels of experience together. This entailed the presentation of a shared and cogent perspective that was a synthesis between the Kargil battlefields and diplomatic corridors. This accompanied by daily press briefings turned out to be an invaluable instrument in the government's information campaign.²⁷⁸

²⁷⁵ Chadha, *KARGIL*, 88-89.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 85-86.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid*.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 87.

All these positives notwithstanding, the information campaign by India faced multiple challenges. Chadha notes, the troops' humiliation because of the army's vain attempts to drive the enemy back, which resulted in losses on the battlefield, initially caused tension between the media and the soldiers. Journalists were scorned for what they perceived as impartial reporting. On June 4, 1999, journalists were barred from the conflict zones, and contact between the media and the military was restricted. Further, structures in Srinagar and New Delhi found coordinating and controlling reporting challenging due to the conflict's broad theatre and the limited coordinating mechanisms available for mobility within it.

Moreover, coordination became more challenging at Kargil due to the lack of a structured information transmission process since most media and television networks wanted direct feeds from the area of conflict. Additionally, the reporting that emerged from the conflict area sometimes misrepresented the reality in the absence of supporting evidence. In certain cases, media access to specific troops and commanders exposed to certain aspects of truth also affected the picture. The restrictions negatively affected the situation, and speculations and unverified reports made things much more difficult.²⁷⁹

Furthermore, critics also argue that the media's function as an intermediary in the communication between the government and the nation's citizens was understandably not satisfactory for several other reasons relating to the media's reporting. Geeta Seshu noted in a study on media coverage of Kargil conducted by the Centre for Monitoring the Media (CMM) that throughout the reports, a recurring theme was the valor and bravery of those who died on the battlefield. The martyrdom and commemoration of the martyrdom of officers and soldiers were celebrated. Celebrated was also the willingness among those who attended the funeral, whether from the family or beyond, to offer up another young life for the sake of the country and to engage in war. In doing so, news reports seldom reflected upon the tragedy and pointlessness of war, the sheer squandering of life, and the potential loss to a family of a crucial member, perhaps the only earning member and provider of the family.²⁸⁰

²⁷⁹ Chadha, *KARGIL*, 91-95

²⁸⁰ Seshu, "Media and Kargil," 2918.

Additionally, the phenomenon of media politicization is very important, especially during times of conflict, as the media tends to portray the “other” party as the aggressor, selectively presenting information as news and exploiting ingrained sentiments in the collective psyche to generate jingoistic sentiments that foster an environment of increased tension in which dissent is frequently suppressed. This could lead to a dangerous diminution of tolerance towards dissenting viewpoints, threatening the democratic foundation of society.²⁸¹

As Partha Chatterjee observed, it is arduous to be a critic of nationalism in the present Indian context. This statement holds even in the progressive state of West Bengal where instances of anti-war protests have resulted in arrests and the subsequent rejection of bail. Throughout the rest of the country, any conversation or critical analysis related to defense policy and the ultimate goals of war is suppressed by the authoritative assertion that no one ought to detract from the valor and gallantry exhibited by Kargil’s war heroes.²⁸² The communal tensions in some parts of the country at the time could be partially attributed to it.

Nevertheless, one must acknowledge the central role of the mass media in eliciting the support of world community in India’s favor, especially U.N. and the United States. The Mass media’s portrayal of India as the victim of belligerent actions of war-mongering Pakistan and India fighting defensively yet without crossing the Line of Control (LoC) was looked upon with sympathy and respect by many countries, gaining diplomatic advantage for India in the process. Raja Mohan, emphasizing on the aspects of diplomacy, observed that in India’s Kargil victory the role of diplomacy was as much important as the use of the force and it was the combined effort of both that lead to the success.²⁸³

²⁸¹ Dipankar Sinha, “Kargil Episode in Bengali Print Media,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 37, no.27 (2002): 2804.

²⁸² Sinha, “Kargil Episode in Bengali Print Media,” 2804.

²⁸³ C. Raja Mohan, “Kargil Diplomacy,” *The Hindu*, August,03, 2000, <http://www.thehindu.com/2000/08/03/stories/05032523.htm> (Accessed June, 2022).

Arguably, in any analysis of India's Kargil victory, the role of public diplomacy remains protruding. As India's politically responsible stance in the war and demonstrating herself as trying to fight the 'aggressor' became the dominant perception in the eyes of the world. The formidable role of the news media in strategically communicating and showcasing India's responsible posture to the world was praise-worthy. Navigating the domestic front presented a unique scenario where, on one hand, minimal effort was required to secure popular support due to the perception of the 'eternal enemy.' This ease of garnering public backing, however, was not to be overlooked, as the government had to be cautious, recognizing that even though public support seemed assured, it remained crucial and should not be taken for granted, especially if the battle were to persist for an extended period.

Obviously, it was before the advent of social-media-created transnational public sphere. The discussion and public engagement as a two-way political communication process were notional. Except for a limited television discussion with experts, an extensive outreach, discussion, and interactions were absent, obviously for they were virtually beyond the realms of possibility. Suppose there had been a digital public sphere (in its most basic understanding of the phrase), and social media portals like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube at the time of the conflict. In that case, it would have sparked tremendous public debate, dialogues, and vigorous critical analysis from civil society.

2.4.2 The 2008 Mumbai Terror Attack (26/11)

The Mumbai terror attacks, also known as 26/11, were a string of eight planned and coordinated terrorist assaults across Mumbai, on November 26, 2008. Ten members of the Pakistani terrorist organization Lashkar-e-Taiba carried out the 60-hour-long siege of the city, which killed at least 172 and injured over 300 others. According to the analysis of B. Raman, a former head of the Counterterrorism Division of the Research & Analysis Wing (R&AW) in India, the Mumbai terror attack was "the first mass casualty terrorism against innocent civilians, using hand-held weapons" in India.²⁸⁴ The televised coverage

²⁸⁴ Ministry of External Affairs quoted in Onook Oh, Manish Agrawal and H. Raghav Rao, "Information Control and Terrorism: Tracking the Mumbai Terrorist Attack through Twitter," *Information Systems Frontiers* 13, no.1 (2011): 33, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10796-010-9275-8>

depicted chilling scenes of the Taj Mahal Hotel engulfed in flames with commandos armed with heavy weaponry conducting patrols along the streets, CCTV footage capturing terrorists breaching Mumbai's central railway station, hostages signaling for help from hotel windows, and terrorists firing indiscriminately into a crowd of journalists and onlookers from a seized police vehicle.²⁸⁵

However, more importantly, the attack highlighted a wide usage of social media during crisis situations. Events taking place in the city was widely narrated with live coverage through social media, making a global spectacle out of it.²⁸⁶ According to some estimates, tweets were posted at the rate of seventy tweets in every five seconds; and on Wikipedia, a new page on Mumbai Terror Attack 2008 was set up immediately as the news broke out and it was being supplemented with information, mostly in real time.²⁸⁷ Social media made it a public spectacle in a way not previously known in the country.

Civilians assumed journalistic roles by disseminating eyewitness accounts, challenging the traditional broadcasting. Citizen journalists, as they are called, used social media such as Twitter, Flickr, Facebook, and similar SNS to break the story at the time of Mumbai Terror attack, sharing narratives and images about the ongoing crisis.²⁸⁸ These ordinary citizens, mostly eye witnesses, residents, and passers-by in the near areas, who have no any expertise in journalism, were found to be forthcoming in putting out information and keeping people updated, along with professional journalists.

Social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook provided a way for people to communicate their predicament to friends and family and alert the locals and the international communities of the developments in the city. Mumbai Help, a blog that provided information on the attack, offered to help people outside the city

²⁸⁵ Åshild Kolås, "The 2008 Mumbai Terror Attacks: (Re-)constructing Indian (counter-) Terrorism," *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 3, no. 1 (2010): 86.

²⁸⁶ Yasmin Ibrahim, "City Under Siege: Narrating Mumbai through Nonstop Capture," *Culture Unbound* 1, no. 2 (2009): 386, DOI: 10.3384/cu.2000.1525.09123385.

²⁸⁷ Beaumont, "Mumbai Attacks."

²⁸⁸ Robert Jewitt, "The Trouble with Twittering: Integrating Social Media into Mainstream News," *International Journal of Media and Cultural Politics* 5, no. 3 (2009): 233.

connect with their friends in the city.²⁸⁹ A group of Mumbai-based bloggers utilized their Metroblog, which often covered the details of life in this busy metropolis, as a news wire service, breaking the story to their followers and the rest of the globe.²⁹⁰ Someone even made a Google Map with links to news articles and eyewitness statements that pinpoints the locations of the structures and landmarks that were the focal point of the incident.²⁹¹ Paul Lewis notes that Twitter was very active even to the extent that erroneous reporting of the Indian media did not go uncontested, as an Indian reporter's announcement of the end of the siege in the Taj was immediately contested in Twitter that gunfights were continuing.²⁹²

The public used social media also to organize collective protest against the government. In the wake of the attack, the administration came under fire for failing to rescue the lives of the police, national security forces, and citizens. Reuters reported that Mumbai, India's financial center, witnessed several candlelight vigils, demonstrations, and marches. Information was spread through mass text messages, e-mail, and Facebook, rousing the typically peaceful middle class.²⁹³ PBS News Hour notes an estimated 20,000 people took part in a public protest intended to voice dissatisfaction to Indian government officials and law enforcement officers.²⁹⁴ This huge crowd included shopkeepers, Muslim housewives wearing long robes and headscarves, students wearing tank-tops, and accountants in suits. Many people claimed they had never participated in a public protest before.

Also, public anguish was amplified as they sought accountability from the government

²⁸⁹ Ibrahim, "City Under Siege."

²⁹⁰ Beaumont, "Mumbai Attacks."

²⁹¹ Beaumont, "Mumbai attacks."

²⁹² Robert Jewitt, "The Trouble with Twittering: Integrating Social Media into Mainstream News," *International Journal of Media and Cultural Politics* 5, no. 3 (2009): 233-234.

²⁹³ Rina Chandran, "Mumbai Residents in Human Chain Protest Over Attacks," *Reuters*, December 12, 2008, <https://www.reuters.com/article/idINIndia-36999320081212> (Accessed September 09, 2022).

²⁹⁴ "As Thousands Protest Indian Government, Rice Tells Pakistan to Aid Attacks Probe," *PBS NewsHour*, December 3, 2008, https://www.pbs.org/newshour/nation/asia-july-dec08-india_12-03 (Accessed September 09, 2022).

through SNS. A quick scan of some social media posts from the incident and the immediate aftermath reveals that there was strong popular dissatisfaction with the administration. Overall, the social media posts expressed a range of feelings, including hopelessness, indignation, and empathy. November 28, 2008, several tweets were found to be expressing outrage at the tragic reality that the attack was continuing after 48 hours. A few tweets also compared the Kargil conflict and the struggle against terrorism.

A post on a blog *Indianbee.blogspot.com* posted on 28th November 2008 by Arulprakash questioned the Indian government for its slow and diplomatic laziness in giving a strong message to the Pakistani terrorist elements as promised by Pranab Mukherjee. Prefacing his remarks by stating his lack of expertise in national security or affiliation with the media or celebrity status, Arulprakash emphasized his identity as an ordinary citizen deeply invested in his homeland. Despite this disclaimer, the blog emanates a tone of stern criticism, urging the Prime Minister to take decisive retaliatory action as a means of honoring the sacrifices made by those who lost their lives.²⁹⁵ Further, the blog also has three pictures showing damaged properties and road and railway station caught up in the terrorist attack. Also, the blog posted a video giving out the words of journalist Rajiv Sardesai about the sacrifices made by Indian police and army. It also showed the gathering of politicians in the last ceremony of Mumbai police officer. All these could potentially contribute to kindle public sentiments.

The public mood at the time had generated tremendous pressure on the Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to retaliate. The government reaction to the incident seemed not enough in the eyes of the people. The perception about the government as not being serious and lacking the willpower to retaliate in military terms had generated discontent among the people. Even when almost all top brass in the military and intelligence were in fact in favor of a tough retaliation, the government finally decided to move along the diplomatic way.²⁹⁶ This was in stark departure from the furious reaction and promises of the government and politicians of stern action against the terror perpetrators.

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

²⁹⁶ Sandeep Unnithan, *Black Tornado: The Three Sieges of Mumbai 26/11* (Harper Collins, 2014), 163-66.

Conversely, even as the attack demonstrated Twitter's potential as a collaborative reporting medium to foster a symbiotic relationship between the public and government in successfully conducting an operation during extreme events and instant feedback mechanisms influencing government policy decisions, it was revelatory in exposing downsides as a participatory emergency reporting system for national security.²⁹⁷ Notably, a study using content analysis of tweets from the Mumbai terror attack finds that, the fast information sharing and communication possibilities offered by social media contributed to create the worst horror scenario. That is, terrorists opportunistically used situational information broadcast through Twitter and live media to increase the effectiveness of hand-held weapons in achieving their objective of enacting sufferings on a global stage.²⁹⁸

2.4.3 Arrest of Devyani Khobragade

U.S. authorities' arrest of Devyani Khobragade, Deputy Consul General of the Consulate General of India in New York City, attracted significant media and public attention. It caused a big diplomatic row between India and the U.S. Devyani was arrested on December 12, 2013, for alleged visa fraud and violation of wage laws in the U.S. Allegations were levelled against Devyani by her former India-based domestic assistant, Sangeeta Richard, who accused the diplomat of underpaying her as per the U.S. labor laws.

The Indian government reacted instantly by calling the American ambassador, issuing stern remarks denouncing the detention, and demanding Khobragade's release.

It retaliated with a series of measures. Delhi downgraded diplomatic privileges for U.S. officials in India and took down the concrete barricades outside the U.S. embassy in New Delhi. Further, the government also transferred Khobragade to the Indian mission at the United Nations, where she was granted full diplomatic immunity.

²⁹⁷ Onook Oh, Manish Agrawal and H. Raghav Rao, "Information Control and Terrorism: Tracking the Mumbai Terrorist Attack through Twitter," *Information Systems Frontiers* 13, no.1 (2011): 33-34, DOI 10.1007/s10796-010-9275-8.

²⁹⁸ Oh et al., "Information Control and Terrorism,"

However, the Indian public was horrified to learn of her arrest; many felt it violated her diplomatic immunity. Public anger was mainly directed against the ill-treatment meted out to the Indian diplomat, including public handcuffing and strip-searching, a procedure typically followed for criminals. The Indian public that perceived such treatment of an Indian representative as nothing short of a humiliation of India's dignity led to demonstrations.

Protests and demonstrations broke out in many places in India demanding justice for Khobragade, including in the major cities of Mumbai, Delhi, and Kolkata. A strong anti-American sentiment was evident as protesters raised slogans denouncing the American "racist and dictatorial attitude" towards Asians.²⁹⁹ Students protested the arrest by covering their eyes with black bands.³⁰⁰ Although protesting rallies were mainly nonviolent, some of them devolved into violence as demonstrators demanded an apology from the American administration and burned effigies of U.S. President Barack Obama.³⁰¹ Protesters urged the Indian government to sever ties with the U.S. The protesters included students, farmers, NGOs, and caste organizations. Calls were made to ban American products and agricultural inputs.³⁰²

Public attitude and sentiments were visibly evident on social media. Twitter enunciated discussion with hashtag #DevyaniHumiliated which was trending at the time. Public sentiment expressed among other things viewed the arrest as affront to the Indian nation.

²⁹⁹ "Maharashtra Farmers Burn Obama Effigy Over Diplomat Incident," *DNA*, April 26, 2015, <https://www.dnaindia.com/mumbai/report-maharashtra-farmers-burn-obama-effigy-over-diplomat-incident-1937417> (Accessed September 20, 2022).

³⁰⁰ "National Students Union of India to Boycott American Goods," *Times of India*, December 20, 2013, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/mumbai/national-students-union-of-india-to-boycott-american-goods/articleshow/27689043.cms> (Accessed September 20, 2022).

³⁰¹ "RPI Vandalizes Pizza Outlet Over Diplomat Arrest," *Times of India*, December 21, 2013, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/mumbai/rpi-vandalizes-pizza-outlet-over-diplomat-arrest/articleshow/27698248.cms> (Accessed September 20, 2021); "Maharashtra Farmers Burn Obama Effigy Over Diplomat Incident," *India TV*, December 19, 2013, <https://www.indiatvnews.com/news/india/latest-news-maharashtra-farmers-burn-obama-effigy--31653.html> (Accessed September 20, 2022).

³⁰² "RPI Vandalizes Pizza Outlet Over Diplomat Arrest."



Akhil Vijayan
@illusionist_cet

[#DevyaniHumiliated](#) Strip searching a diplomat is equivalent to strip search an entire nation they represent.

11:22 PM · Jan 11, 2014 · Twitter Web Client

Figure 2. 1 Public reaction to the arrest and treatment of Devyani Khobragade³⁰³

There was public clamor for harsh response from India, including the treatment of U.S. diplomats there similarly as payback and providing of sanctuary to Edward Snowden.



तत्त्व चिंतक:
@Brahmendriyam

...

Replying to @TimesNow

[@timesnow](#) [#DevyaniHumiliated](#) I wil NOT b hapy untl al those US diplomats who violate law of OUR land r arestd wid NO MERCY OR IMUNITY shown!

9:04 AM · Jan 10, 2014 · Twitter for Android

Figure 2. 2 Public reaction to the arrest and treatment of Devyani Khobragade

³⁰³ https://twitter.com/illusionist_cet/status/422063534004895745? (Accessed March 20, 2022).



Rohan
@GoRohan7



How to take revenge for #DevyaniHumiliated ? Give immunity to Edward Snowden.

12:49 AM · Dec 21, 2013 · Twitter for Android

1 Retweet 1 Like

Figure 2. 3 Public reaction to the arrest and treatment of Devyani Khobragade³⁰⁴

Public outrage also turned violent when a group of people from the Republic Party of India attacked the US MNC Dominos in Mumbai.³⁰⁵

Similarly, on Facebook, there were pages opened - 'Justice for Devyani Khobragade' and 'I support Devyani Khobragade' - which registered 'likes' slightly more than 1800 and more than 3500, respectively. Facebook page 'Justice for Devyani Khobragade' also created an online petition urging people to sign the petition in order to pressurize the U.S. government to withdraw the case. As each tweet and comments could be taken as an expression of individual's opinion, public opinion showed ire against the U.S. action and support for the diplomat. The government of India's reaction to the incident by removing certain privileges the U.S. diplomats were enjoying at that time in India did not only send a strong diplomatic message to the U.S. but, at the same time, also appeased the public who were outraged over the 'humiliation of India.'

Beyond that, public discourse encompassed the advocacy of anti-bureaucratic elitism and the denouncement of the politicization of the issue in domestic politics, particularly along

³⁰⁴ <https://Twitter.com/GoRohan7/status/414112772570365952> (Accessed March 20, 2022).

³⁰⁵ "Indian Diplomat Devyani Khobragade Row: Protesters Attack Domino's Pizza Outlet In Mumbai," *The Indian Express*, December 20, 2013, <https://indianexpress.com/article/business/business-others/indian-diplomat-devyani-khobragade-row-protesters-attack-dominos-pizza-outlet-in-mumbai/> (Accessed September 20, 2022).

caste lines. People expressed strong displeasure to Mayavati's attribution of caste as the reason for the government's alleged delay in saving Devyani from humiliation.³⁰⁶

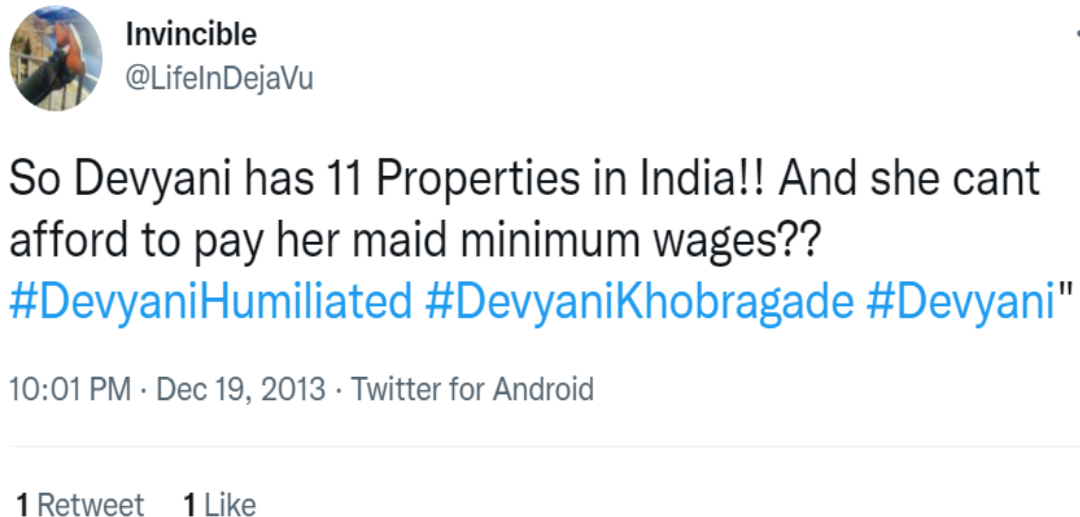


Figure 2. 4 Public reaction to the arrest and treatment of Devyani Khobragade³⁰⁷



Figure 2. 5 Public reaction to the arrest and treatment of Devyani Khobragade³⁰⁸

³⁰⁶ Adrija Bose, "Devyani live: Bharara's Office Mum On India's Response To His Statement," *Firstpost*, December 20, 2013, <https://www.firstpost.com/world/devyani-live-bhararas-office-mum-on-indias-response-to-his-statement-1291025.html> (Accessed September 20, 2022).

³⁰⁷ <https://Twitter.com/LifeInDejaVu/status/413708164195160064> (Accessed March 20, 2022).

³⁰⁸ <https://Twitter.com/m10syndrome/status/413194291528232960> (Accessed March 20, 2022).

2.5 Conclusion

As we have seen, the presence of the news media and new media were discernibly robust. India's diplomats and decision-makers have had to handle tough diplomatic crises while simultaneously trying to win over the Indian public and advance and manage India's interest reputation abroad. More importantly, however, the incidents show the evolution of India's public diplomacy landscape, especially in managing crisis situations. Furthermore, the incidents also highlight the opportunities and challenges attached with different mediums and platforms.

Kargil war presented a time when the new media, especially social media were non-existent. It was a time when the news media were instrumental in foreign policy making and conduct of international relations. During the Kargil War, India's public diplomacy efforts centered on emphasizing Pakistan's contribution to the war and portraying India as a responsible and peaceful country. India's diplomatic efforts finally resulted in the defeat of Pakistan and its withdrawal from the conflict partly as a result of the increased support for India's position on the world stage. For example, the United States which traditionally sided with Pakistan against India during the Cold War period, blamed Pakistan for the violation of Line of Control (LoC).

The Mumbai terror attacks and the Devyani's case demonstrated the significance of social media as a catalyst in amplifying public sentiment as well as shaping policy responses of the government. Mumbai Terror attack highlighted public interaction and discussion social media platforms generated. As mentioned elsewhere, as soon as the attack occurred there had been citizens tweeting, retweeting, sharing, commenting, blogging, and posting pictures on various social media outlets such as Twitter, Facebook, and blogs that went to the extent of being called "citizen journalism." It also provided a glance into the public mood at the time and public expectation from the government, as vividly put out through social media outlets calling for tough action against the perpetrators. It showed the progress that we underwent from the elite government and politicians dominated one-way communication towards mass people-to-people interaction through social media. At the same time, government-people interaction seemed to be still on the anvil.

The arrest of Devyani also captured the true potency of the social media. It showed people expressing their opinion in different ways and even trying to influence the U.S. government through online petitions and Facebook pages. The unprecedented pace and scale of diffusion of public opinion through the new media outlets and online journalism displayed real-time general mood of the country. Though government-public interaction remained limited, public opinion of the people was successfully conveyed to the government.

Furthermore, it is noteworthy that India's public diplomacy was impacted by institutional elements as well as the attitudes and behaviors of the general population throughout these crises. The three incidents profoundly affected Indian public. The general population in India was deeply affected by these episodes, expressing rage, patriotism, and a sense of pride in their country. Public sentiment and views throughout these events had an impact on India's public diplomacy efforts. The Indian public also played a significant role in shaping India's public diplomacy during these incidents. The Indian public was actively engaged in these incidents, with social media playing an increasingly important role in shaping public opinion.

Overall, the incidents of the Kargil war, Mumbai terror attacks, and Devyani's case provide valuable insights into the evolution of India's public diplomacy landscape over the years. Ultimately these collective and real-time expressions of public opinion on social media illustrates the advantages of social media for information dissemination, influence audience and shape narratives in the Indian context. Thus, how these events have played out on social media speak to the growing critical role of social media in diplomacy and foreign policymaking. It informed and foregrounded India's further bolstering of its public diplomacy apparatus mediated through social media.

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CHAPTER 3

STRATEGIC CROSSROADS AT BALAKOT: UNVEILING A STRONG AND SMART INDIA

In modern warfare and political disputes, preserving national reputation and credibility is crucial. During international crises, prevailing in the narrative battle is paramount, given that conflict as a method of international relations is viewed unfavourably within the current global governance norms of the post-Cold War era. In this context, public diplomacy plays a pivotal role in shaping positive foreign public opinion. This chapter focuses on India's public diplomacy during the Pulwama/Balakot crisis, exploring how international conflicts manifest in informational environment. It takes a holistic view of public diplomacy and examines the nature of public discourse on social media around the Balakot crisis.

The specific research questions addressed by this study were as follows: what was Prime Minister Modi's social media strategy, particularly on Twitter, during the Balakot crisis? How was official perspective reinforced and/or contested by the Twitter public? What is the balance of reasoned and emotional aspects of public discourse at Balakot?? In doing so, this chapter aims to uncover the major themes of narratives and discussions online in the public diplomacy of a rising power.

As matter of fact, there were contrasting views about India's Balakot strike. On the one hand, the strike was construed as revenge for the Pulwama attack, while on the other hand, the narrative was the strike as a pre-emptive offensive in self-defence (to thwart further attacks on India). Indeed, India's official justification was aimed at garnering international support in the wake of the extraterritorial use of force against non-state adversaries. Additionally, politicians capitalized on the crisis by invoking nationalist sentiments, particularly with the upcoming general elections in mind. Notably, India received significant international support during this period.

A web of diplomatic and strategic narratives formed the foundation of India's global engagement in the Balakot crisis episode. This reflects what Melissen said that public diplomacy "also has 'hard power' goals such as alliance management, conflict prevention

or military intervention” or isolating enemies.³⁰⁹ However, involvement in hard power is not normally discussed in public diplomacy literature.³¹⁰ This chapter thus also deals with how successfully India combined soft and hard power in public diplomacy during crisis and what is the role of social media public diplomacy. The rest of the chapter thus proceeds as follows.

The following section in this chapter provides an overview of Pulwama attack and Balakot airstrike. Subsequently, an account of methodology is provided, allowing for an understanding of research approach employed. This is followed by a concise overview of India’s diplomatic relations with Pakistan during the Modi government. Subsequently, it underscores the imperative to move beyond the conventional military-centric perspective that has predominantly shaped the comprehension of the Balakot crisis.

In this context, the theoretical framework of smart power is introduced as a conceptual tool. The ensuing discussion then delves into the employment of Twitter as a medium for India’s public diplomacy initiatives, examining both institutional engagement and the participation of Indian citizens, while considering its role in projecting India’s rising power status. The subsequent segment of this chapter delves deeper into the complexities and nuances involved in framing the Balakot strike as a smart power strategy. It highlights how India strategically employed various approaches during the operation and in its immediate aftermath to generate favorable narratives that bolstered India’s stance.

3.1 Overview of Pulwama Attack and Balakot Airstrike

On 14 February 2019, a group of Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) terrorists attacked Indian paramilitary convoy, killing at least 40 security personnel in the Pulwama region of Jammu and Kashmir in India.³¹¹ The incident triggered tremendous public

³⁰⁹ Melissen, *The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power in International Relations*, 1.

³¹⁰ Falk Hartig, “Deterrence by Public Diplomacy: The Negative Dimension of International Political Communication,” *Journal of Communication Management* (2017): 344-45, <https://doi.org/10.1108/JCOM-02-2017-0024>

³¹¹ PTI Washington, “Pulwama Terrorist Attack: Officials Suspect Leak of Information About Movement on CRPF Convoy on Jammu-Srinagar Highway,” *Financial Express*, February 15, 2019, <https://www.financialexpress.com/indnews/pulwama-terrorist-attack-officials-suspect->

outcry and protests, demanding punitive action against Pakistan. With the general elections around the corner, political and reputational costs of failure to retaliate remained high for Modi.³¹² Nearly two weeks after the Pulwama attack on 26 February, India conducted a counterstrike with the primary objective of destroying the terrorist camps in the town of Balakot in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in Pakistan.³¹³ The strike assumed an important place in India's counterterrorism operations. It was the first Indian airstrike in Pakistan since 1971. Even during the 1999 Kargil war, India had desisted from airstrikes in Pakistani territory.³¹⁴ The strike, therefore, marked a profound departure from India's traditional approach to counterterrorism, specifically, the menace of cross-border terrorism emanating from Pakistan.³¹⁵

For starters, India traditionally followed considerable restraint in the use of military force to counter cross-border terrorism, mainly owing to the fear of it escalating into a fully-fledged war and the potential to trigger a nuclear exchange.³¹⁶ India's non-military responses to the terrorist attack on the Indian Parliament in 2001 and the Mumbai terrorist attack in 2008 are instructive.³¹⁷ At the Pakistani end, however, it has since 1998 resorted to the nuclear card to build up coercion to deter India's conventional response to its proxy

[leak-of-information-about-movement-on-crpf-convoy-on-jammu-srinagar-highway/1488277/](https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2019/03/06/why-america-cant-escape-its-role-in-the-conflict-between-india-and-pakistan/), (Accessed December 13, 2022).

³¹² Ian Hall, "Pulwama Terrorist Attack: Modi Under Pressure," *The Interpreter*, February 21, 2019, <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/pulwama-terrorist-attack-modi-under-pressure>, (Accessed December 14, 2022).

³¹³ Joshua T. White, "Why America Can't Escape its Role in the Conflict Between India and Pakistan," *Brookings*, March 6, 2019, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2019/03/06/why-america-cant-escape-its-role-in-the-conflict-between-india-and-pakistan/>, (Accessed December 14, 2022).

³¹⁴ Arzan Tarapore, "Balakot, Deterrence, and Risk: How This India-Pakistan Crisis Will Shape the Next," *War on the Rocks*, March 11, 2019, <https://warontherocks.com/2019/03/balakot-deterrence-and-risk/>, (Accessed December 14, 2022).

³¹⁵ Kapil Patil, "India's New Template for Counterterrorism," *Asia & The Pacific Society Policy Forum*, April 1, 2019, <https://www.policyforum.net/indias-new-template-for-counterterrorism/>, (Accessed December 14, 2022).

³¹⁶ Rajeswari Rajagopalan, "India-Pakistan Dynamics After Balakot: A Different Deterrence Equation," *South Asian Voices*, March 20, 2020, <https://southasianvoices.org/india-pakistan-dynamics-after-balakot-a-different-deterrence-equation/>, (Accessed December 14, 2022).

³¹⁷ Rajeswari Rajagopalan, "India-Pakistan Dynamics."

terrorism, often to the extent of inducing a self-deterrence on India's part.³¹⁸ By evoking this fear of escalation coupled with the rhetoric of nuclear exchange, Pakistan usually managed to marshal international support (especially the U.S. intervention) to deter India's retaliation while citing the prominence of regional peace and stability.³¹⁹ Resultantly, with limited strikes across the Line of Control in the past, New Delhi largely refrained from directly attacking Pakistani territory - beyond the disputed areas.³²⁰ For these reasons, even the limited strikes that occurred remained hardly publicized.³²¹

However, the Balakot strike remarkably demonstrated a change in this dynamic. It put to the test Pakistan's nuclear threat, international reaction to India's retaliation, and the scope for conventional war within the nuclear threshold.³²² In doing so, it eroded India's psychological barrier to confront Pakistan's nuclear threat and coercion.³²³ As Harsh V. Pant observes, the strike instilled confidence in India that its use of the force might not invite the kind of adverse international reaction as New Delhi expected.³²⁴ By and large, as much as changing the terms of engagement with Pakistan, the Balakot crisis also reflected on the growing transactional approach as well as rising confidence in India's conduct of its international relations, proving it to be a shift in its foreign policy as well as strategic affairs.³²⁵

³¹⁸ Ashley J. Tellis, "A Smouldering Volcano: Pakistan and Terrorism After Balakot," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, March 14, 2019, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2019/03/14/smoldering-volcano-pakistan-and-terrorism-after-balakot-pub-78593>, (Accessed December 14, 2022).

³¹⁹ Ashley J. Tellis, "A Smouldering Volcano."

³²⁰ Ashley J. Tellis, "A Smouldering Volcano."

³²¹ Rajeswari Rajagopalan, "India-Pakistan Dynamics After Balakot"

³²² Ibid.

³²³ Ashley J. Tellis, "A Smouldering Volcano."

³²⁴ Nilanjana Sen, Joy Mitra and Harsh V. Pant, "Defense Is Becoming More Integral to India's Diplomacy," *Fair Observer*, August 13, 2019, https://www.fairobserver.com/region/central_south_asia/defense-is-becoming-more-integral-to-indias-diplomacy/, (Accessed December 14, 2022).

³²⁵ Gautam Chikermane, "5 Ways India's Foreign Policy Has Changed Post-Balakot," *Observer Research Foundation*, March 8, 2019, <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/5-ways-indias-foreign-policy-has-changed-post-balakot/>, (Accessed December 14, 2022).

3.2 Dramatic Unfolding of the Balakot Strike

The evening of the attack, the Air Force chief and Air Marshal Kumar acknowledged the imperative to act. The ensuing days saw deliberations and meetings, including one with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who called for a Cabinet Committee on Security meeting to discuss the options available. National Security Advisor Ajit Doval convened a meeting on February 18, attended by the chiefs of the Army, Navy, and Air Force, along with key RAW operational personnel. This meeting marked the pivotal moment when the IAF was given the target and the green light to plan. The utmost secrecy surrounding the operation was maintained, with only a handful of individuals being privy to the impending attack.

On the night of February 26, 2019, a meticulously planned and daring mission unfolded under the shroud of secrecy. At approximately 0115 hours, 20 fully armed Mirage 2000 fighter aircraft soared into the skies from the Air Force Station at Gwalior, launching a retaliatory strike that would reverberate across South Asian geopolitics. The aircraft embarked on their mission in rapid succession, heading towards Bareilly to refuel mid-air before making their way to Jammu and Kashmir. Guided by a calculated strategy to evade Pakistani detection, the fighters navigated through the cover of mountains, avoiding the surveillance of a Pakistani SAAB Airborne Warning and Control aircraft. Around 0345 hours, the Mirage aircraft, flying at an altitude of 30,000 feet, skillfully crossed the Line of Control (LoC) into Pakistani-administered Kashmir.

In a remarkable departure from previous operations, 16 aircraft crossed into Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK), with four dedicated to escort duties, while four others remained on standby as backup. Approximately 15 km into PoK, the Mirage aircraft released five Israeli-made Spice 2000 bombs. The precision-guided munitions struck a Jaish-e-Mohammed camp in Balakot, dealing a significant blow to the terrorist infrastructure responsible for the Pulwama attack. After accomplishing their mission, the fighters safely returned to an airfield in the Western Sector. Meanwhile, four Mirages, armed with Mica RF and IR air-to-air missiles, remained poised to guard the skies until the other 12 aircraft re-entered Indian airspace, ensuring no engagement with Pakistani fighters.

This entire operation, from entering PoK to landing back in India, was executed with remarkable efficiency and agility, lasting a mere 21 minutes. The meticulously chosen target and the strategic execution spoke volumes of the meticulous planning and intelligence inputs involved. Air Marshal Hari Kumar, the mastermind behind the operation, emphasized that the decision on the target and its execution was driven by a resolute message to Pakistan that India would not tolerate further attacks like the Pulwama incident.

The use of the Mirage aircraft for an operation outside Indian territory was unprecedented since the 1971 War. The planning was so discreet that even the AOC-in-C of the Central Air Command, which includes the Gwalior base from where the aircraft took off, remained unaware until just hours before the operation. To ensure secrecy and to divert attention, a DASI inspection was strategically ordered at the Gwalior Base, masking the real purpose of the activity. Communication was meticulously restricted to secure channels to prevent leaks. The IAF had meticulously practiced the operation on simulators, using the 900-kg Spice 2000 penetration bomb and Crystal Maze missiles. The success of the simulation informed the decision to employ the same technology in the actual operation.

A remarkable facet of the operation was the misdirection that Pakistan fell victim to. Amid media speculation and discussions on various options, a farewell event for Air Marshal Kumar proceeded as planned. This strategic move aimed to deflect attention from the imminent strike. Rumors of a possible air strike led Pakistan to focus on the JeM headquarters in Bahawalpur, a calculated diversion. When the Mirages neared the LoC, Pakistan's SAAB AWACS detected their presence and scrambled fighters toward the supposed target, unaware that the true objective lay in Balakot. The Balakot airstrike stands as a testament to meticulous planning, strategic misdirection, and operational precision. It showcased the Indian Air Force's ability to execute complex missions under pressure and emphasized the significance of diplomacy and strategic communication in managing regional tensions.

3.3 Methodology

To analyze the official discourse, tweets were collected by using keyword searching from 28 Twitter handles (see **Table 3. 1**).

Official Government Twitter Handles	Personal Twitter Handles of the Ruling Party's Politicians & Senior Bureaucrats	Indian Embassies
1. India's Public Diplomacy Division 2. Prime Minister's Office (PMO India) 3. Ministry of External Affairs of India (MEA) 4. Press Information Bureau (PIB) 5. Additional Directorate General of Public Information (ADGPI).	1. Narendra Modi 2. Amit Shah 3. Sushma Swaraj 4. Dr. S Jaishankar 5. Hardeep Singh Puri 6. Yogi Adityanath.	1. United States of America 2. United Kingdom 3. Russia 4. Australia 5. Canada 6. Belgium and European Union 7. Japan 8. China 9. Pakistan 10. Saudi Arabia 11. Oman 12. Qatar 13. Bahrain 14. UAE 15. Kuwait 16. Singapore 17. Indonesia

Table 3. 1 Twitter handles of 28 Government of India officials and institutions

The keyword search was used instead of hashtag search to retrieve maximum tweets as most of Twitter users do not use hashtags, as they only appear in between 5–11% of Tweets.³²⁶ The keywords used were - Pulwama, SurgicalStrike, Balakot. The data was collected for the period between 14 February and 31 July 2019, that constitutes five and half months. The researcher selected this period because although the hashtag was most active in the first few weeks, owing to the breakdown of India-Pakistan relations, they continued to remain part of the public discourse for a few months. Moreover, it might also help to understand if there are any consistent efforts from the government, especially the embassies overseas to share information regarding terror activities taking place in India beyond the peak period. This is because the main goal of India is to isolate Pakistan in the international system as a terror state that ideally requires to show rampant terrorist infiltration into India.

The data collected comprises Tweets, retweets, retweets with quote. Thus, the key word search yielded 291 tweets. These tweets were extracted using the software R. Retweets were also collected intentionally despite the fact that there will be many duplicate tweets. But these repetitions or duplications of tweets can be justified by the fact that it is important for Indian embassies located in different parts of the world to communicate with their local audience. It was assumed that retweets can show any underlying pattern, if any, of retweeting by certain Twitter handles that may provide insight about issues of coordination and/or coherence in the way public diplomacy is conducted. The collected tweets were manually cleaned as many of the tweets missed the last few words, often in the middle of emojis, that were not rightly captured during the extraction of the tweets. Therefore, the researcher manually searched, found, and verified each tweet before coding. This process enabled the research to immerse within the data engaging in a closer reading that enhanced his understanding of content of the tweets and the overall tone and tenor of the messaging.

Manual inductive method of coding was used to analyze the data to uncover major themes from the corpus. The inductive methodology entails thorough engagement with the dataset through meticulous examination and comprehension, aimed at deriving comprehensive insights and comprehending the overarching patterns inherent within the

³²⁶ Marwick, “Ethnographic and Qualitative Research on Twitter,” 116.

data corpus.³²⁷ Thomas defines inductive analysis as methods that primarily develop concepts and themes via in-depth readings of raw data.³²⁸ It involves carefully reading over each line of the data and coding paragraphs or text segments as concepts come to light.³²⁹ While the researcher's assessment aims or queries may have an impact on the results, the inductive analysis derives its conclusions from the actual data analysis itself, not from preconceived notions or models.³³⁰ Manual coding was carried out by using Microsoft Word and Microsoft Excel. The unit of analysis for coding was tweet. Only textual parts of the tweets were coded while many tweets had links to videos or photos. Although these were not systematically coded, the researchers examined such links to get more information about the tweets. The latter was especially useful when some tweets did not fully convey ideas in the absence of the extra information available on the links.

Of these 291, most of the tweets were retweets. Many tweets were found irrelevant to the study and was excluded from the final coding session. Thus excluded tweets included duplicate tweets (after observation was made about patterns and Twitter handles), tweets that just pass information about Indian ministers' cabinet meeting and party meetings during the crisis, some non-military and non-security related measures India undertaken in strained relations with Pakistan, tweets expressing only condolences and paying tribute to the martyrs and other tweets that do not convey anything substantial other than through videos links that attached to the tweets. Final coded tweets for analysis consisted of 150 tweets.

Similarly, to assess the public dimension of India's public diplomacy in relation to the Balakot crisis, a similar methodology was employed to collect and analyze relevant tweets. The data collection process involved searching for specific keywords and utilizing the software 'R' to extract tweets. This search yielded a total of 57,915 tweets related to the Balakot Crisis. In order to focus on tweets from within India, further filtering was

³²⁷ Azungah, "Qualitative Research," 383.

³²⁸ David R. Thomas, "A General Inductive Approach for Analysing Qualitative Evaluation Data," *American Journal of Evaluation* 27, no. 2. (2006): 238, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1098214005283748>

³²⁹ Azungah, "Qualitative Research," 391.

³³⁰ Thomas. "A General Inductive Approach for Analysing Qualitative Evaluation Data," 239.

carried out based on user location. Tweets were considered as originating from India only if their location was explicitly mentioned as “India.” This filtering process excluded tweets that indicated specific places within India, such as “Hyderabad,” “Kochi,” or “Telangana,” without explicitly stating “India” as the location. It is crucial to highlight that the phrase “Indian public” denotes Twitter accounts that appear to be based in India.

Given Twitter’s inherent characteristics and the difficulties in confirming users’ identities and precise locations, the location as it appears is accepted as is. After applying the filtering criteria, the dataset for the Balakot Crisis comprised 19,978 tweets. To further analyze the tweets in a qualitative manner, a subset of the most highly engaged tweets was selected for convenience. The top 200 tweets with the highest number of retweets, which also coincided mostly with the most liked tweets, were chosen for qualitative analysis. This selection process involved manually examining each tweet to ensure its relevance to the research questions and objectives of the study. Tweets from news agencies, those sharing general information, expressing joy and appreciation, and other irrelevant tweets were excluded. The decision to focus on the most liked and shared tweets was based on the rationale that evaluating these tweets would provide insight into their potential impact. The criterion of high likes and retweets suggests popularity and greater reach.

It is important to consider that Twitter users may not actively engage with every message they come across, but their passiveness online does not necessarily reflect their offline political activity. Offline, they may be actively involved in disseminating opinions and engaging in discussions. Therefore, analyzing the most engaging tweets can provide valuable information on public sentiment and influence. The resulting dataset of 200 tweets underwent qualitative analysis by the author to identify recurring themes. The researcher immersed himself in reading and comprehending the data to gain a comprehensive understanding of the collected facts. Each tweet was closely read and manually coded based on its content, allowing for a detailed analysis of the underlying themes and patterns present in the dataset.

3.4 India's Pakistan Relations Under Modi

India's relations with Pakistan under Modi have seen optimism for engagement, tensions, and crises. Once he came to power in May 2014, Modi seemed to defy many expectations. Despite wearing the image of a hardliner coupled with tough rhetoric against Pakistan during elections, Modi followed a pragmatic approach to cooperation between the countries. He invited Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif along with other heads of the SAARC member nations for his swearing-in ceremony at the Rashtrapati Bhavan on May 26 and travelled to Pakistan to reinitiate a comprehensive dialogue process in December 2015.³³¹ There was exuding optimism when Nawaz Sharif hailed Modi's coming to power calling it "impressive victory." Sharif soon reciprocated Modi's gestures by inviting the latter to Pakistan. In July 2015, Modi and Sharif met in Ufa, Russia, during the BRICS outreach dinner. Earlier during the holy month of Ramzan, Prime Minister Modi had extended best wishes to his counterpart while stressing on the importance of continued bilateral dialogues between India and Pakistan for establishing peace and harmony in the region. Moreover, as a goodwill gesture both countries released fisherman detained for crossing territories.³³²

Partly, the initial hopes were based on the political campaigns of the two leaders who emphasized regional cooperation for economic development and growth of countries in the region for which trade normalisation is essential.³³³ In December 2013, Modi, as a Chief Minister of the state of Gujarat, supported the Southern Gujarat Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SGCCI) to invite large Pakistani delegates to a trade fair. Trade

³³¹ ORF, "In Pakistan, Eyes are Now on New Indian Government," April 18, 2014, <https://www.orfonline.org/research/in-pakistan-eyes-are-now-on-new-indian-government/>, (Accessed December 10, 2022).

³³² The Tribune, "Pak Releases 113 Indian Fishermen on Ramzan," June 18, 2015, <https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/archive/nation/pak-releases-113-indian-fishermen-on-ramzan-95464>, (Accessed December 10, 2022); The New Indian Express, "India Releases 88 Pakistani Fishermen as Goodwill Gesture During Ramadan," June 19, 2015, <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/india-releases-88-pakistani-fishermen-as-goodwill-gesture-during-ramadan/> (Accessed December 10, 2022).

³³³ Aryaman Bhatnagar, "India, Pakistan and the Same Old Problems," March 2, 2015 <https://www.nbr.org/publication/india-pakistan-and-the-same-old-problems/>, (Accessed December 10, 2022).

between India and Pakistan has historically been hostage to politics and military affairs, where security concerns dominate commercial ties.

Both nations have a long history of using tariffs and other legal obstacles to stifle commerce with one another, as Rahul Mediratta points out in a Foreign Affairs piece. Bilateral commerce has seldom exceeded 2 percent of their entire trade volume, demonstrating the remarkable effectiveness of these barriers. The 1998 Kargil War, the 2003 Indian Parliament attack, and the 2008 Mumbai terror strikes are just a few examples of the diplomatic and military crises that have frequently derailed attempts by leaders on both sides to improve economic relations.³³⁴

However, this initial optimism and demonstrations of desire to engage each other would soon be dampened by the same old problems. In a way indicating the difficult road to peace, the first irritant came when Pakistan's high commissioner to India met Kashmiri separatist leaders. Responding to it, India called off the scheduled foreign secretary-level talks that were set to form the foundation for building trust and relations. More substantial indication of the same could be found when Pakistan escalated gunfire at the Line of Control (LoC) by Pakistan. As Brahma Chellaney of the Centre for Policy Research (CPR) puts it, India's strong response to border aggression is a "mortar-for-bullet response," which involves heavy mortar firing in retaliation to Pakistani machine-gun fire near the Line of Control. With this, India's strategy of strategic moderation is replaced with one of progressive escalation, which calls for a more appropriate reaction to Pakistani provocations and aggressions.³³⁵ The strategy, crafted by India's NSA Ajit Doval, called "offensive defence," was to give a befitting response by increasing the cost of any act of aggression on India.³³⁶

³³⁴ Rahul Mediratta, "Partners in Crime: How Smugglers Unite India and Pakistan," *Foreign Affairs*, May 7, 2014, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/south-asia/2014-05-07/partners-crime>, (Accessed December 10, 2022).

³³⁵ Brahma Chellaney, "Doctrine of Graduated Escalation," *The Hindu*, October 15, 2014, <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/Doctrine-of-graduated-escalation/article62118988,ece> (Accessed December 12, 2022).

³³⁶ George Glenn, 2016, "India's Aggressive Approach at Border Is the Brainchild of NSA Ajit Doval," *Economic Times*, July 12, 2018, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/indias-aggressive-approach-at-border-is-the-brainchild-of-nsa-ajit-doval/articleshow/54599228.cms>, (Accessed December 12, 2022);

Still more profoundly, the attack on Pathankot Airbase on January 2, 2016 and the Army Camp at Uri in August 2016 affirmed the realisation that India Pakistan relations are far from taking an optimistic turn, least of all normalisation of ties. While the Pathankot strike saw both countries collaborating on the investigation, the Uri attack resulted in an onset of crisis in which India conducted a limited cross-border retaliatory strikes calling it “surgical strikes.”³³⁷ These attacks, if anything, provided a snapshot of historic tensions and moulded efforts at reproachment between the countries replete with Pakistan’s betrayal of India’s confidence and consolidating the hostile environment between them.

Chellaney notes that the military always manages to carry out major cross-border assaults or acts of terrorism to undermine any attempts by a Islamabad leader to strengthen ties with India. Notably, a significant Indian peace initiative—that is, then-prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee’s bus diplomacy—collapsed violently during Mr. Sharif’s previous term in power, with the bus being symbolically hijacked to Kargil and starting a conflict. This serves as a warning story that shows how the pursuit of peace may turn into violence when the armed forces of one side act without being accountable to civilian authority.³³⁸

Still, India’s policy of “offensive defence” aimed at building deterrence though imposing severe costs on anti-India actions proved to have little deterrent value and evidently failed to prevail over the historical trends when a convoy of vehicles carrying Indian security personnel on the Jammu–Srinagar National was attacked in Pulwama on 14 February

Doval Ajit, “India’s Internal and External Security: Areas That Call for Greater National Attention,” 2012, <http://ajitdoval.blogspot.com/2012/09/indias-internal-and-external-security.html> (Accessed May 20, 2023); Thorsten Wojczewski, “Populism, Hindu Nationalism, and Foreign Policy in India: The Politics of Representing “The People,” *International Studies Review* 22, no, 3 (2020): 410.

³³⁷ Sameer Lalwani and Hannah Haegeland, “Anatomy of a Crisis: Explaining Crisis Onset in India-Pakistan Relations,” *Investigating Crises: South Asia’s Lessons, Evolving Dynamics, and Trajectories*, Stimson Center, Washington DC (2018), 49; “Surgical Strikes: Full Text of Indian Army DGMO Lt Gen Ranbir Singh’s Press Conference,” *The Indian Express*, September 29, 2016, <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/pakistan-infiltration-attempts-indian-army-surgical-strikes-line-of-control-jammu-and-kashmir-uri-poonch-pok-3055874/> (Accessed December 12, 2022).

³³⁸ Brahma Chellaney, “Doctrine of Graduated Escalation,” *The Hindu*, October 15, 2014, <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/Doctrine-of-graduated-escalation/article62118988,ece>, (Accessed December 13, 2022).

2019. The Pulwama attack triggered a crisis episode when India retaliated militarily by conducted airstrike in Balakot, inside Pakistan. India's military response in Balakot, and Pakistan's counter-response triggered concerns about a possible escalation to another war. It reinforced the fact that although nuclearization may restrict possible escalation of a conflict to some extent, the risk of actual war perceptibly persists. As far as India-Pakistan relations are concerned, the Pulwama- Balakot episode and the ensued diplomatic row has further soured the already strained relationship.

3.5 Beyond the Hard-line Approach – Smart Power

While it may be tempting to interpret the Balakot crisis as a manifestation of a hard-line military approach or a hawkish, forceful counterterrorism operation by India, it is crucial to delve into the interplay of public diplomacy that contributed to achieving the desired outcome. In this regard, a perspective rooted in the concept of smart power may provide a more comprehensive understanding of the strike.³³⁹ The Balakot episode, both in terms of its style and substance, exemplified a calculated and diverse combination of soft and hard power strategies. Thus, analyzing the Balakot crisis through the lens of smart power allows for an exploration of the underlying dynamics of ideational components encompassing soft power measures and public diplomacy, aspects that have received limited attention in conventional analyses. Adopting such a perspective becomes particularly relevant when examining the seemingly overlooked factors that contributed to the successful global resonance of India's justification for the Balakot strike.

It is worth noting that the designation of Masood Azhar, the mastermind behind the Pulwama attack and a member of JeM, as a global terrorist by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) was not a mere coincidence but rather an outcome that had eluded New Delhi in previous endeavors.

Attributing the global support garnered by India following its Balakot counterstrike solely to its concerted efforts in combating terrorism would be an oversimplified and factually inadequate perspective. Such an argument fails to acknowledge the significance of territorial integrity and the principle of sovereignty in the utilization of force between

³³⁹ Nye, "Get Smart: Combining Hard Power and Soft Power," 160-63.

independent states when faced with potential threats, particularly those posed by non-state actors such as terrorist groups. In essence, it runs the risk of diminishing the international legal framework's fundamental understanding of the principle of sovereignty, which centers around the exercise of authority over a defined territory as a foundational principle of the global legal order.

Furthermore, within the given context, such an argument lacks explanatory power in comprehending the reason behind Pakistan's inability to secure significant international support despite India's violation of its territorial sovereignty. This situation occurred even in light of the United Nations actively discouraging unilateral employment of armed forces against a sovereign state, as it holds the potential raises the possibility of a military war between the two governments, which might jeopardize global peace and security.³⁴⁰

Moreover, it is important to note that neither India nor Pakistan could present substantial, corroborative evidence to conclusively prove or disprove their respective positions regarding the actual existence of the targeted terrorist camps, which India claimed to have struck as part of its counterterrorism operation.³⁴¹ Consequently, despite these challenges and uncertainties, India received substantial international support.

Smart Power

The traditional understanding of the notion of power in international relations has been a realist vision of power.³⁴² One of the prominent realists, Kenneth Waltz, suggests that "in international politics force serves, not only as the *ultima ratio*, but indeed as the first and constant one."³⁴³ Basing the state's survival in international politics on the use of force

³⁴⁰ William C. Banks and Evan J. Criddle, "Customary Constraints on the Use of Force: Article 51 with an American Accent," *Leiden Journal of International Law* 29 (March 2016): 71, [doi:10.1017/S0922156515000655](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0922156515000655).

³⁴¹ Abu Argam Naqash and Sanjeev Miglani, "India Launches Air Strike in Pakistan: Islamabad Denies Militant Camp Hit," *Reuters*, February 26, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-india-kashmir-pakistan/india-launches-air-strike-in-pakistan-islamabad-denies-militant-camp-hit-idUSKCN1QF07B>, (Accessed December 18, 2022).

³⁴² Giulio M. Gallarotti, "Soft Power: What It Is, Why It's Important, and the Conditions for Its Effective Use," *Journal of Political Power* 4, no. 1 (March 2011): 26, [doi:10.1080/2158379X.2011.557886](https://doi.org/10.1080/2158379X.2011.557886)

³⁴³ Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, MA: Addison Wesley, 1979), 113.

and coercion, realists regard material capabilities as the major source of power. Such material capabilities include “size of population and territory, resource endowment, economic capability, military strength, political stability and competence.”³⁴⁴

However, moving away from this conventional vision of power defined in terms of material capabilities alone, Nye from Harvard University defines power as “one’s ability to affect the behavior of others to get what one wants.”³⁴⁵ He classifies power into three dimensions, viz, hard power, soft power, and smart power. By hard power is meant the ability to achieve the desired goal through traditional military and economic might, generally practiced in the form of coercion (‘sticks’) and inducements and payments (‘carrots’).³⁴⁶ On the other hand, soft power denotes “the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments.”³⁴⁷ Nye postulates that “the soft power of a country rests heavily on three basic resources: its culture (in places where it is attractive to others), its political values (when it lives up to them at home and abroad), and its foreign policies (when others see them as legitimate and having moral authority).”³⁴⁸

Hard power resources are “most often kept in reserve, and are used in specific moments, or within certain theatres and timeframes, with specific strategic and tactical objectives in mind.”³⁴⁹ In this respect, the possession of hard power resources does not necessarily need its deployment; instead, threatening to use these resources can often achieve what one wants.³⁵⁰ Conversely, soft power resources generally require its sharing because they

³⁴⁴ Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 131; Also see, John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: Norton, 2001), 55; Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (New York: Cambridge UP, 1981), 13.

³⁴⁵ Nye, “Get Smart,” 160-63.

³⁴⁶ Ibid.

³⁴⁷ Nye, *Soft Power*, x.

³⁴⁸ Nye, *The Future of Power*, Chapter, 4.

³⁴⁹ Laura Roselle, Alister Miskimmon and Ben O’Loughlin, “Strategic Narrative: A Means to Understand Soft Power,” *Media, War & Conflict* 7, no, 1 (March 2014): 73, [doi:10.1177%2F1750635213516696](https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1750635213516696).

³⁵⁰ Roselle, Miskimmon and O’Loughlin, “Strategic narrative,” 73.

mainly target various public audiences, both domestic and foreign public.³⁵¹ Also, harnessing their possibilities, by and large, requires sharing and deployment while keeping them in reserve has little consequence for its practical utility.³⁵² For instance, it makes “no sense to fund a cultural program that is not implemented, or to produce a BBC documentary that is not aired.”³⁵³

However, the point is that though both hard power and soft power constitute two types of power resources, they are not mutually exclusive. At a time when power becomes widely diffused and ubiquitous in the international system like never before and a complex web of interactions and interdependence between the state as well as the non-state actors are increasingly shaping the national interests of a country, excessive dependence on one form of power as a panacea is not only imprudent but also ineffectual. For instance, the United States tasted defeat in the Vietnam War despite its considerable military advantage, and Dalai Lama, one of the staunchest proponents of soft power, has been unable to achieve the desired result in the Tibet-China issue.³⁵⁴ In these two examples, while the former was the case of overwhelming dependence on hard power, the latter shows the ineffectiveness of relying solely on soft power to bring about the desired outcome.

Therefore, the key is to find the right balance, depending on situations, in the deployment of soft and hard power. Nye describes the effective utilization of both soft and hard power resources in a strategic manner as smart power. Specifically, he characterized it as a successful fusion of coercion and financial incentives with persuasion and attraction.³⁵⁵

³⁵¹ Ibid.

³⁵² Ibid.

³⁵³ Ibid.

³⁵⁴ Mandip Singh, “From Smart Power to Sharp Power: How China Promotes her National Interests,” *Journal of Defense Studies* 12, no. 3 (2018): 6, <https://idsa.in/jds/jds-12-3-2018-from-smart-power-to-sharp-power-msingh>, (Accessed December 18, 2022).

³⁵⁵ Nye, *The Future of Power*, xiii.

Simply put, smart power is an eclectic blend of both types or dimensions of power instrumentally in a coherent strategy.³⁵⁶

3.6 Projecting India's Rising Power Status: Official Discourse

There are four most common themes in India's public diplomacy during the Pulwama/Balakot Strike: New India is strong and brave, international solidarity and support with India, Pakistan is a terrorist state that needs to be dealt with firmly, the attack at Balakot a pre-emptive strike on JeM. In one sentence, the discourse about the Balakot strike goes like this: With massive appreciation and solidarity from the international community, India demonstrated its resolve to deal with the terrorist state of Pakistan by carrying out a pre-emptive strike on JeM terrorist camps inside of its territory before they could conduct further strikes as planned against India. The themes showcase a visible dimension of this discourse spread across and crafted around narratives, rhetoric, and discursive tropes.

Strong India, New India

A power-based narrative of new India that is strong and responsive to acts of terrorism was a popular theme. In essence, it conveys a message of collective societal perseverance, national resolve, and willingness to confront terrorists and their supporters. The narrative justification of the Balakot strike that India put forward had three components strung together along a strong evolutionary trajectory in explaining the necessity of the strike - before the attack, immediately after the attack, and beyond the peak moments of the crisis. According to the justification narrative, the strike at Balakot was necessary as Pakistan was not taking actions against the terrorists in the country. Resultantly, there were more attacks planned against India which needed to be thwarted and the only possible solution was to conduct a pre-emptive strike and which has produced positive results.

Beyond the message of condemnation and tribute that most of the tweets featured, a lot of emotions, feeling and intentions characterized the tone of the tweets. Several tweets represent messages of unity and solidarity of the citizens as shared emotions.

³⁵⁶ Richard L. Armitage and Joseph S. Nye, *CSIS Commission on Smart Power: A Smarter, More Secure America* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies Press, 2007), 7.

The President of India, Ram Nath Kovind, and the Additional Directorate General of Public Information (ADGPI) both took to Twitter to strongly denounce the terrorist attack in Pulwama, J&K. President Kovind's tweet, which received numerous retweets, expressed solidarity with the close relatives of the martyrs and wished a speedy recovery to the injured. He emphasized the country's unified stance against terrorism and evil forces. Similarly, ADGPI tweeted a message of solidarity, using the hashtag #WeStandAsOne, to honor the memory of the brave hearts lost in the cowardly attack. These actions underscore a collective determination to stand united against terrorism and to honor the sacrifices of the fallen heroes.³⁵⁷



Figure 3. 1 Tweet from President of India condemning the terror attacks in Pulwama

³⁵⁷ <https://twitter.com/rashtrapatibhvn/status/1096051155832979457> (Accessed January 20, 2023). 2023). <https://Twitter.com/adgpi/status/1096393621136322561> (Accessed January 20, 2023).



Figure 3. 2 Tweet by ADGPI condemning the Pulwama attack and expressing solidarity

Further, the spirit of solidarity and unity of the country was shown through retweets of ordinary citizens showering support for the martyrs in the Pulwama through various means and ways. For example, Indian embassy in Pakistan retweeted a news by NDTV in which a street food vendor was giving his earnings to the families killed in the Pulwama. Likewise, the Indian Embassy in the US shared on Twitter the story of an Indian American who utilized Facebook to raise approximately \$1 million in donations to aid the families of the Pulwama soldiers (See Fig. 3.3).



Figure 3. 3 Retweet and Tweet from Indian Embassy in Pakistan and the US respectively³⁵⁸

These emotionally laden messages may serve the purpose of garnering global support by channeling national emotional reactions to the global audience in order to shape their perception about India positively before India decided to take punitive action at Balakot. According to Duncombe, individuals can utilize social media platforms such as Twitter to openly display their emotional dispositions, aiming to appear genuine, honest, or truthful, a concept known as emotional authenticity, which holds political influence.³⁵⁹ Viewed more broadly, such imagery could be seen as a facet of emotional diplomacy, which involves organized, official state-level activities projecting specific emotional responses towards other nations.³⁶⁰

Duncombe states that emotions may spread from one person to another. For example, fear, joy, anger, and sadness can all spread across individuals as well as within a community. Text-based social media posts and their corresponding visuals have emotional weight that may influence people's reactions and elicit feelings on their own. This suggests that tweets, postings on Facebook and Weibo, or stories on Instagram have

³⁵⁸ <https://Twitter.com/ndtv/status/1099099015763812352> (Accessed January 20, 2023); <https://Twitter.com/IndianEmbassyUS/status/1099829699688230912> (Accessed January 20, 2023).

³⁵⁹ Constance Duncombe, "The Politics of Twitter: Emotions and the Power of Social Media," *International Political Sociology* 13, no. 4 (2019): 411, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ips/olz013>

³⁶⁰ Todd H. Hall, *Emotional Diplomacy: Official Emotion on the International Stage*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2015), 2.

the ability to go beyond the digital sphere, enabling followers or larger online networks to share personal responses, which may then be debated in the offline, “real-world” setting.³⁶¹

Furthermore, these messages served the purpose of establishing a context and highlighting the unprecedented nature of the attack, thereby emphasizing the need for an extraordinary response from India. Simultaneously, it is reasonable to argue that such messages also contribute to constructing a narrative of domestic pressure on the government to retaliate. By framing the retaliation as a response to domestic audience expectations, the narrative of ‘domestic audience cost’ helps depict the action as less of an irrationally aggressive move driven by a desire for conflict with the opposing state.

Another set of tweets and retweets demonstrated India’s resilience, resolve, and conviction to fight terrorism. For instance,

³⁶¹ Constance Duncombe, “Soft Power, Emotion, and the Future of Public Diplomacy,” *Center for Public Diplomacy Blog*, November 18, 2019, <https://uscpublicdiplomacy.org/blog/soft-power-emotion-and-future-public-diplomacy> (Accessed March 20, 2023).



Narendra Modi ✓
@narendramodi



A grateful nation bows to the martyrs of Pulwama.

A befitting reply will be given to the perpetrators of the heinous attack and their patrons.

No force will succeed in disturbing peace, progress and stability of India.



11:51 AM · Feb 15, 2019



10K



24K



88K



192



↳ PIB in Maharashtra 🇮🇳 reposted



Col Rajyavardhan Rathore ✓
@Ra_THORe



Condemn the despicable attack on @crpfindia jawans in #Pulwama.

The cowardly enemy will NOT weaken our resolve. We WILL wipe out every terrorist from the country.

We mourn the braveheart martyrs, and stand with their families in this difficult time.

7:23 PM · Feb 14, 2019



268



1.3K



5.6K



2



Figure 3. 4 Tweets and retweets condemning Pulwama attack by PM and PIB³⁶²



Figure 3. 5 Amit Shah tweeting about empowering security agencies for retaliation³⁶³

These tweets reflect a number of things. Prime Minister Modi's tweet serves as a rallying cry for national unity and resilience. The tone is unmistakably patriotic and resolute, with expressions like "A grateful nation bows to the martyrs of Pulwama" invoking a sense of reverence and solidarity. The phrase "A befitting reply will be given" underscores the government's determination to respond decisively to the perpetrators of the attack. Moreover, Modi's assertion that "No force will succeed in disturbing peace, progress, and stability of India" reflects unwavering confidence in the nation's ability to overcome adversity.

³⁶² <https://Twitter.com/narendramodi/status/1096293506048380928?lang=en> (Accessed January 20, 2023); <https://Twitter.com/PIBMumbai/status/1096092208170622976> (Accessed January 20, 2023).

³⁶³ <https://Twitter.com/AmitShah/status/1098636631832055809> (Accessed January 20, 2023).

The retweet by the Press Information Bureau (PIB) of Rajyavardhan Singh Rathore's tweet amplifies the message of defiance and solidarity. Rathore's condemnation of the attack as "despicable" and his vow to "wipe out every terrorist from the country" resonate with a sense of righteous anger and determination. The phrase "Cowardly enemy will NOT weaken our resolve" serves as a reaffirmation of India's unwavering commitment to combating terrorism.

BJP Chief Amit Shah's tweet adds another layer to the narrative of strength and determination. His assertion that "PM Narendra Modi's government has zero tolerance policy towards terrorism" reaffirms the government's firm stance on national security. The phrase "a free hand to decide on when and where to hit the perpetrators" reflects a proactive approach to counterterrorism, emphasizing the government's trust in the capabilities of security agencies which has been empowered by giving freehand to counter and retaliate in response to the Pulwama incident. Shah's tweet underscores the government's commitment to ensuring the safety and security of its citizens through decisive action against terrorism.

In the same vein, yet another set of tweets were reassuring the public that befitting reply will be given to attacks on the nation. For instance, in a widely shared tweet of the Prime Minister Modi, he both assured the nation about befitting reply and revenge in response to the Pulwama. He said, "attack on CRPF personnel in Pulwama is despicable. I strongly condemn this dastardly attack. The sacrifices of our brave security personnel shall not go in vain. The entire nation stands shoulder to shoulder with the families of the brave martyrs. May the injured recover quickly."³⁶⁴

The statement that "the sacrifices of our brave security personnel shall not go in vain" was more than an assurance a signalling of India's retaliation that was on the way. More in line with this argument, Amit Shah retweeted his own statements that, "we pay our tribute to the martyrs of the Pulwama terror attack. The sacrifices of our brave security personnel will not go in vain because India has a govt in the centre that takes decisive actions."³⁶⁵ The statement "India has a government at the center" indicates the presence

³⁶⁴ <https://Twitter.com/narendramodi/status/1096035566670565376> (Accessed January 20, 2023).

³⁶⁵ <https://Twitter.com/BJP4India/status/1097082164288471041> (Accessed January 20, 2023).

of an administration that places significant emphasis on national security and actively addresses related issues. The political undertone of the message is, in part, aimed at the Indian populace. Implicit in the tweet is the portrayal of the narrative of a “New India,” a concept actively promoted by the Modi government.

However, such narratives come to the fore more explicitly in the wake the Balakot airstrike. Tweets projected the strike as a new India’s demonstration of its national resolve and power. In short, the airstrike became the symbol of the new, strong India. For instance, Indian Embassy in Pakistan retweeted Indian Army Chinara cops’ post: Four terrorists eliminated in Op #Panzirin (#Pulwama). Joint operation by @adgpi @kashmirpolice & @crpf_srinagar over. Together in pursuit of #TerrorismFreeKashmir. Weapons & war like stores recovered. #JihadNahiJahalat @NorthernComd_IA @easterncomd @Whiteknight_IA.”³⁶⁶ Hardeep Singh Puri tweeted: First the #SurgicalStrike & now today’s bold & decisive strike against training camps run by a UNSC Designated terror outfit should instil the fear of God in the hearts of those who are now facing the resolve of #NewIndia.³⁶⁷

These tweets informing the public about eliminating terrorists by airstrike indicates that that retaliation was placed in the context of India’s attacks on terrorist camps. That too a pre-emptive strike to thwart further attacks on India which was being planned from Pakistan’s soil. It is to be noted that the narrative pre-emptive had elements to satisfy both international community and the domestic audience simultaneously. It both carried the message of retaliation as well as the imperative of protecting the integrity of the country. In this telling, India also reinforced its efforts to project the narrative of Pakistan as a terrorist state, for India struck JeM terrorist camp at Balakot, inside Pakistan.

International Solidarity and Support with India

Following the Pulwama attacks India sought to build international support and solidarity before responding to it through airstrike at Balakot. Tweets mostly represented the global

³⁶⁶ <https://Twitter.com/chinarcopsia/status/1136908675283443712> (Accessed January 20, 2023).

³⁶⁷ <https://Twitter.com/hardeepsuri/status/1100329344994467840?lang=ca> (Accessed January 20, 2023).

community's responses to the act of terrorism showcased as a global support for India. It is logical to assume that underneath the act of conveying global support was the idea of gaining a sense of validity for India's actions that would soon follow. Tweets about countries condemning and standing by India was widely shared, mainly retweeted by Indian embassies in various countries. For example,



Figure 3. 6 Tweets and Retweets from Indian Embassies about countries condemning Pulwama attack and standing by India³⁶⁸

³⁶⁸ <https://Twitter.com/IndianDiplomacy/status/1098257310370148352> (Accessed January 20, 2023).

<https://Twitter.com/navdeepsuri/status/1096120918525575169> (Accessed January 20, 2023).

<https://Twitter.com/FranceinIndia/status/1096059616914477058> (Accessed January 20, 2023).



Figure 3. 7 Retweets from Indian Embassies showcasing solidarity from Russia and Israel.³⁶⁹

In addition to garnering international support, India has taken the initiative to disseminate the United Nations (UN) statement. India skilfully modified the statement to convey a strong message, suggesting that Pakistan is being censured by the UN for its involvement in financing terrorism, accompanied by the use of the hashtag #TimetoAct (refer to Figure 3.4). This hashtag signifies a temporal conception of the attack encapsulating a sense of urgency. It portrays the attack as a moment of adversity, thereby serving as a purported call to take action against Pakistan. Furthermore, it aims to establish a perception of exceptional circumstances, distinctly different from past events, while emphasizing the extent to which India's patience has been tested.

³⁶⁹ <https://Twitter.com/IndEmbMoscow/status/1101177481674018821> (Accessed January 20, 2023); <https://Twitter.com/DrRonMalka/status/1096085451507675136> (Accessed January 20, 2023).



Figure 3. 8 MEA Spokesperson highlighting UNSC statement on Pulwama attack.³⁷⁰

Further, solidarity messages of lawmakers from different countries, especially from the West, were posted. MEA also shared a list of lawmakers from the US (see Figure. 3.5). Lawmakers expressing condolences called for support for India and stand together to fight the menace of terrorism. Besides, Indian embassies shared posts about Indian community gathering in various countries for paying tribute to the CRPF personnels killed in Pulwama and showering support and solidarity to the country. (See – Figure. 3.6).

³⁷⁰ <https://Twitter.com/meaindia/status/1098756748918153216?lang=en> (Accessed January 20, 2023).



Figure 3. 9 Indian Embassies sharing expression of solidarity by US lawmakers by Indian communities in the wake of Pulwama attack³⁷¹



Figure 3. 10 Indian Embassies sharing expression of solidarity by Indian communities globally in the wake of Pulwama attack³⁷²

³⁷¹ <https://Twitter.com/patrickbrownont/status/1096123261430030336> (Accessed January 20, 2023); <https://Twitter.com/SeemaMalhotra1/status/1096736893574750208> (Accessed January 20, 2023); <https://Twitter.com/MEAIndia/status/1096310914981056512> (Accessed January 20, 2023).

³⁷² <https://Twitter.com/IndiainToronto/status/1097474602949849088> (Accessed January 20, 2023); <https://Twitter.com/IndiainSingapore/status/1099100119079636992> (Accessed January 20, 2023).

It is important to note that public perception and reaction are crucial for the characterization of a terror attack. Through international media and communication, the emotional impact, fear, and anxiety experienced by individuals collectively contribute to the global characterization of a terror attack and its enormity. More clearly, given the nature of global communication system, collective responses from the public, such as organizing memorial events, vigils, and expressions of support for victims, collectively shape how the event is understood internationally.

Taken as a whole, showcasing international support was for all intents and purposes should be seen in conjunction with India's framing of Pakistan as a terrorist state. In that way, Delhi sought to project this condemnation of terrorism as a criticism of Pakistan and expression of solidarity with India, albeit all countries did not name Pakistan while condemning terrorism and offering support for India. However, Indian Embassy in Pakistan after the strike retweeted a report from the Hindu that, the UK offered to support India's counter terrorism with intelligence assistance.

Pakistan as a Terrorist State

India's representation of Pakistan as a terrorist state was repeated. India has long characterized Pakistan of funding terrorism while historically calling out terror attacks on India emanating from Pakistan as varying as "Pak terrorism" and "cross border terrorism." One of the ghastliest terror attacks in India - 26/11 Mumbai terror attack - that shook the international community reveal strong evidences about Pakistan-based terror outfits targeting India. Emphasizing the narrative of "terrorist state of Pakistan" when the Jaish-e-Muhammed terror group claimed responsibility for the Pulwama attack was just a natural response.³⁷³

³⁷³ "Pulwama Terror Attack: Jaish-e-Mohammed Claims Responsibility with Video of Suicide Bomber Adil Dar," *India Today*, February 16, 2019, <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/pulwama-terror-attack-kashmir-jaish-e-mohammad-adil-ahmad-dar-1456169-2019-02-14>, (Accessed January 20, 2023).

JeM is a Pakistan-based terror group that aims to unite Kashmir with Pakistan. Yet the way it was directly and implicitly represented in tweets reflect a self-conscious, strategic response to isolate Pakistan in the international system. Arun Jaitley, one of the active ministers of the government's, who was serving as the Minister of Finance and Corporate Affairs during the Pulwama/Balakot crisis, categorically assured the public that India will campaign for Pakistan's isolation. India has also made significant efforts in this regard at the UN Security Council on various occasions when there is evidence to suggest Pak-link in terrorist attacks in India.



Figure 3. 11 Arun Jaitley Tweets about isolating Pakistan³⁷⁴

The ascription of terrorism to Pakistan, encapsulated in the portrayal of “terrorist Pakistan,” was strategically crafted and accentuated through diplomatic and public communication efforts. This discourse persisted from the initial stages of the crisis, triggered by the Pulwama attack, and continued throughout the Balakot airstrike, accompanied by an immediate aftermath dominated by a narrative struggle to claim victory. The battle of narratives unfolded through condemnatory messages, accusing Pakistan of employing terrorism as a tool of state policy against India, outrightly labeling the Pulwama attack as an act of terrorism sponsored by Pakistan, and highlighting the absence of any meaningful change in Pakistan's conduct.

³⁷⁴ <https://Twitter.com/arunjaitley/status/1096325951372345344> (Accessed January 20, 2023).

To further underscore this perspective, personal observations were integrated, exemplified by Hardeep Singh Puri. The statement issued by the MEA condemning the Pulwama attack as “cowardly,” a colloquial expression politicians employ to convey the stealthy nature of such attacks and shield the perpetrators from immediate consequences, was expanded upon to emphasize Pakistan’s role in the incident.³⁷⁵ The act was portrayed as a consequence of Pakistan’s failure to effectively address its domestic economic and law and order issues. Rather than diligently working to overcome these internal challenges, Pakistan was accused of actively destabilizing its peaceful, stable, and progressive neighboring country. The underlying political rhetoric aimed to set the stage for swift and severe retribution.



Figure 3. 12 Tweets from MEAIndia and Hardeep Singh Puri calling out Pakistan for terrorism³⁷⁶

³⁷⁵ Chatterbox, “In What Sense Are Terrorists Cowards?” *Slate.Com*, September 11, 2021, <https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2001/09/in-what-sense-are-terrorists-cowards.html>, (Accessed January 20, 2023).

³⁷⁶ <https://Twitter.com/MEAIndia/status/1096089819271385088> (Accessed January 20, 2023); <https://Twitter.com/HardeepSPuri/status/1096657333407674368> (Accessed January 20, 2023).

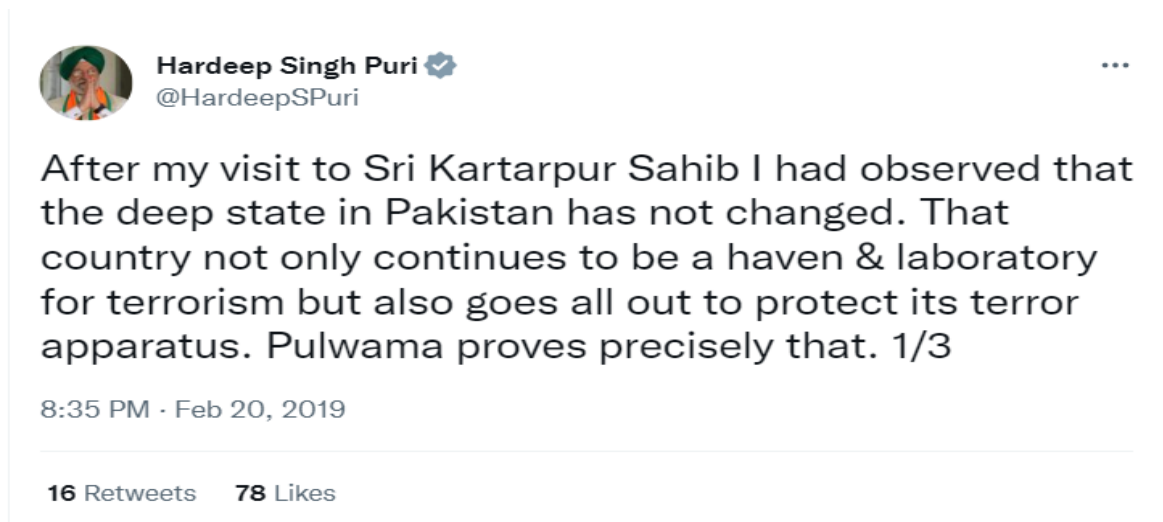


Figure 3. 13 Hardeep Singh Puri condemning Pakistan for terrorism³⁷⁷



Figure 3. 14 MEAIndia tweets Prime Minister Modi's statements -
#IndiaDemandsAction³⁷⁸

³⁷⁷ <https://Twitter.com/HardeepSPuri/status/1098237215736422401> (Accessed January 20, 2023).

³⁷⁸ <https://Twitter.com/MEAIndia/status/1096346188813615104> (Accessed January 25, 2023).

<https://Twitter.com/MEAIndia/status/1096347048025210880> (Accessed January 25, 2023).

The hashtag #IndiaDemandsAction which was widely shared along with this pointed criticism was supposedly a message to the international community to stand with India in its resolve to fight Pakistan based terrorism and isolate Pakistan for using it as a state instrument against India. It reiterated the need for international support for two reasons first, Pakistan continually denied any role in the attack by militant group Jaish-e-Mohammad and second, Pakistan sought to save its face in front of the world community by showcasing its willingness to cooperate to eradicate terrorism, which the latter claimed is an issue for the country as well. In this face-saving tactic, India was asked for evidences to support the claim that JeM carried out the attack.

However, Hardeep Singh Puri doubled down on exposing the shallowness in Pakistan's narrative. He tweeted: "predictability of the response peddled by the Pakistani establishment is nothing short of the theatre of the absurd. JeM, headquartered in Bahawalpur, has claimed full responsibility for Pulwama misadventure. Yet PM Imran Khan wants India to provide actionable intelligence."³⁷⁹ He added, "what further intelligence & proof does he need that the Pulwama attack was planned & managed from Pakistani soil? Instead of acting against the terrorists, who enjoy state patronage, he is going around chest thumping & playing to his gallery."³⁸⁰ Through these statements, India sought to drive home the point that Pakistan's inaction itself is axiomatic that of its involvement in the Pulwama attack. The narrative was thus sought to present that India's integrity is constantly threatened by its terrorist neighbour that needs to be strongly dealt with by the international community.

India Conducted a Pre-Emptive Strike on JeM Terrorist Camps

The Balakot airstrike was followed by a narrative interpretation of events. The immediate narrative was constructed around explaining the nature of the strike, the aim of the strike, the location, and the result. Yet most importantly, all the messages carried the story that India attacked JeM camps in Pakistan. For example, the Press Information Bureau (PIB) shared a video featuring Foreign Secretary Vijay Gokhale's media briefing, where he stated that India had targeted the largest training camp of Jaish-e-Mohammad in Balakot,

³⁷⁹ <https://Twitter.com/HardeepSPuri/status/1098237508549103617> (Accessed January 20, 2023).

³⁸⁰ <https://Twitter.com/HardeepSPuri/status/1098237592040960010> (Accessed January 20, 2023).

resulting in the elimination of a significant number of terrorists, trainers, senior commanders, and fidayeen jihadis.³⁸¹

A tweet from the Indian Embassy in Pakistan outlined the aim and extent of the pre-emptive strike: Its specific goal was to decisively target the terrorist infrastructure of JeM, aiming to prevent any further terrorist attacks in India.³⁸² To assert India's story of killing large number of terrorists, Indian embassy in Pakistan retweeted the NDTV report that terror camp bombed by New Delhi was only sixty kilometres from where Bin Laden hid.³⁸³ It draws the audience's attention as much as it serves as a means of reiterating India carried out the strike on the terrorist location.

Curiously, the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, Yogi Adityanath, tweeted "I congratulate the Indian Airforce for the non-military and pre-emptive air strike on PoK's Chakoti, Muzaffarabad and Pakistan's Balakot's terrorist Camps of JeM in which large number of terrorists, trainers, senior commander & Jihadis were eliminated."³⁸⁴ His tweet was particularly interesting for the fact that in the domestic political meetings and gathering happening around the same time, he was boasting of India's revenge on Pakistan. In one of such meetings at Etah district in his home state, he hailed the attack as a revenge in which 400 perpetrators of Pulwama attacks were killed in lieu of 40 military personnels India lost. The death of 400 terrorists in the Balakot airstrike was confirmed.

In fact, there were different number floating around in the media and elsewhere. He was also quoted as saying "the speed and agility with which we intruded Pakistan and killed perpetrators of Pulwama attack was only possible under the Modi's leadership."³⁸⁵ Indian Embassy in Pakistan also tweeted MEA's counter narrative on Pakistan's statements:

³⁸¹ https://Twitter.com/PIB_India/status/1100282702559797250 (Accessed January 20, 2023).

³⁸² https://Twitter.com/the_hindu/status/1100624332206862336 (Accessed January 20, 2023).

³⁸³ <https://Twitter.com/ndtv/status/1100465487534686208> (Accessed January 20, 2023).

³⁸⁴ <https://Twitter.com/myogiadityanath/status/1100395879679156224> (Accessed January 20, 2023).

³⁸⁵ Arvind Chauhan, "Yogi Adityanath Hails IAF Strike, says 400 Killed in Response to 40," *Times Now*, February 26, 2019, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/agra/yogi-adityanath-hails-iaf-strike-says-400-killed-in-response-to-40/articleshow/68170756.cms>

“India’s response to remarks by Prime Minister of Pakistan on the Pulwama Terrorist Attack.”³⁸⁶ However, hardly a couple of the embassies showed seriousness in posting it to their audience.

Overall, despite India’s extensive use of Twitter for public diplomacy, there were some problems. The analysis and observation reveal that India initially prioritized establishing a global perception implicating Pakistan’s involvement in the terrorist attack before resorting to a counterstrike. The dominant themes in India’s discourse revolved around portraying Pakistan as a terrorist state and emphasizing the emergence of a new India.

However, there was a notable absence of discursive engagement in other forms. There is substantial evidence suggesting a lack of effective coordination in the dissemination of information and narratives by Indian embassies on social media platforms worldwide. Although the overarching objective was to isolate Pakistan on the international stage, digital diplomacy fell short in terms of effectively crafting and disseminating wider narratives. This indicates a deficiency in national coherence and coordination in promoting the desired narrative. Even the engagement on Twitter was limited, repetitive, and appeared insufficient in achieving the intended impact.

The majority of the posts primarily consisted of simple retweets of content from the Prime Minister’s Office, Narendra Modi, the MEA India, and news clips. There was a noticeable absence of meaningful conversations or innovative content. For instance, an evident aspect of lackluster effort was that only the Indian Embassies in Pakistan and Australia shared India’s statement countering Pakistan’s official statement.

In contrast, other embassies did not follow suit, indicating inconsistencies in narrative or a lack of coherence and attentiveness in managing strategic narratives online. However, countering unfavorable narratives is a fundamental aspect of any public diplomacy endeavor. Therefore, a potential effective approach would have been to actively persuade the global community to unite against terrorism using a suitable hashtag, accompanied by condolence messages from Indian embassies.

³⁸⁶ <https://Twitter.com/IndiainPakistan/status/1097908359519485952> (Accessed May 18, 2023).

What is more, India's public diplomacy efforts at times appeared propagandistic. Despite the lack of concrete evidence provided by the Indian government regarding the casualties inflicted, various factoids were circulated among the media and social media platforms, contributing to a narrative of success and deterrence against terrorism.

While India's foreign secretary, Vijay Gokhale, asserted that a significant number of JeM terrorists, trainers, and senior commanders were targeted, specific numbers were notably absent. This ambiguity allowed for speculation and exaggeration in casualty counts. The Press Trust of India (PTI) reported a casualty count of up to 350 without citing any official sources, indicating a potential exaggeration fuelled by the lack of official confirmation. Moreover, the attribution of casualty figures to "top government sources" or "Indian officials" by the Indian news media without verifiable facts further blurred the lines between official statements and unofficial leaks, contributing to the spread of misinformation among the public.³⁸⁷ This dissemination of contrasting casualty figures seems to suggest that it was part of crafting a narrative about Pakistan's terror camps and the inevitability of the strike and its success without factual backing.

At the same time, BJP Chief Amit Shah claimed 250 casualties without providing concrete evidence, which was curiously supported by the then Union Minister of State for External Affairs, VK Singh, who was also a former Chief of Army Staff. It is reasonable to suggest that the involvement of prominent figures like VK Singh added credibility to the claims of significant casualties made by Amit Shah. However, their statements, which lacked concrete evidence, further highlight the propagandistic nature of public engagement surrounding the Balakot Airstrike.³⁸⁸

VK Singh's endorsement of Amit Shah's claims, coupled with media reports, likely contributed to an echo chamber effect, wherein similar assertions were echoed and amplified within political circles and among supporters, further solidifying the narrative of high casualties without factual basis. If anything, this ambiguity surrounding casualty

³⁸⁷ Ayush Tiwari, "'Over 300 Casualties' in Balakot Airstrikes, but Who's the 'Source'?", Newslandry, March 12, 2019, <https://www.newslandry.com/2019/03/12/over-300-casualties-in-balakot-airstrikes-but-whos-the-source> (Accessed May 10, 2020).

³⁸⁸ Ibid.

figures created confusion and speculation, spreading differing interpretations and reinforcing preconceived beliefs.

To maintain credibility and avoid perceptions of propaganda Government officials, including the prominent political figures like Foreign Secretary, BJP Chief Amit Shah, and former Chief of Army Staff and the then Union Minister of State for external Affairs VK Singh, should have refrained from making unsubstantiated claims or exaggerating casualty figures. The Indian government could have actively engaged with the media to ensure accurate reporting and avoid the dissemination of misleading information. Providing regular updates and briefings to journalists would have helped in shaping a more accurate narrative surrounding the Balakot Airstrike.

3.7 Public Discourse on Twitter

Examination of the public tweets reveals the prevailing narratives and attitudes within a section of the English-speaking Indian public at the time. The common theme was a great feeling of excitement and celebration about India expressed in many emotions. In that sense, the content of the tweets primarily revealed both emotional outbursts as well as more rational expressions of massive support for the Balakot airstrike. Partisan aspects of politics in the country were also embedded in much of the public opinion on Twitter. Some tweets represented it more overtly and aggressively, while in others it was more latent and subtle.

One significant aspect of the public discourse was the “New India” rhetoric. Proponents of this narrative celebrated the airstrike as a bold and assertive move, showcasing India’s willingness to respond to acts of terrorism decisively. According to the “New India” narrative, the strike represented the rise of India as a powerful, proactive country, unafraid to defend its interests and respond to security concerns. India’s self-image as a growing force that demands respect on the international stage was to be redefined through this discourse. The tonality of the tweets is triumphant, nationalistic, and confrontational. For example, check out the following Tweets:

#Balakot targeted bombing by IAF: #NewIndia has signalled it will take on terror and its patron #Pakistan. I stand with Government of India, Defence Forces, and PM Modi. Jai Hind.³⁸⁹

INDIA is no more a Soft State! This is new INDIA #indianairforce #Surgicalstrike2 #Balakot.³⁹⁰

Must note that world powers endorsed India's right to retaliate after Pulwama and are calling for restraint after #IndiaStrikesPakistan. As it should be. India has arrived.³⁹¹

The post-Uri surgical strike and the Balakot raid are symptomatic of a new India that has clearly jettisoned its Gandhian aversion to war and is ready to retaliate with deadly force. Outgunned and outdated, the PAF is in match for the IAF.³⁹²

For 70 years, no government allowed the IAF to even cross the LOC. Today we have not just crossed the LOC but have even crossed POK to ATTACK PAKISTAN. This is what revenge looks like! Thanks PM @narendramodi & IAF! I know this is just the beginning! #balakot #GarvHai.³⁹³

Make no mistake the courage and political will of @PMOIndia @narendramodi has to be credited. Post 26/11 we said no to decisive air strike, today we took the decision. This is #NewIndia. Jai Hind. #Balakot #IndiaStrikesBack #IndianAirForce #IndiaStrikesPakistan.³⁹⁴

The nation kept on waiting after 26/11, Indians were in pain & agony, our security forces were waiting for orders to retaliate, NO orders came & INDIA WAS LET

³⁸⁹ <https://Twitter.com/kanchangupta/status/1100247421941174273> (Accessed May 18, 2023)

³⁹⁰ <https://Twitter.com/shraeyofficial/status/1100254033376210944> (Accessed May 18, 2023)

³⁹¹ https://Twitter.com/India_Policy/status/1100327565825200128 (Accessed May 18, 2023)

³⁹² <https://Twitter.com/ByRakeshSimha/status/1100840159107473408> (Accessed May 18, 2023)

³⁹³ <https://Twitter.com/manojkrs29/status/1100385620642283520> (Accessed May 18, 2023)

³⁹⁴ <https://Twitter.com/pradip103/status/1100288498978906113> (Accessed May 18, 2023)

DOWN. Pulwama happened, India wanted revenge, but this time we retaliated WITH BRUT FORCE! This is what has changed.³⁹⁵

As evident, the tweets representing “New India” emphasize national pride, and a departure from perceived weaknesses of the past. They shape the rhetoric surrounding the Balakot airstrike and India’s response to terrorism, using various discursive tropes and tonalities. The phrase “ये नया हिंदुस्तान है” (“This is the new India”) captures a sense of national confidence, indicating that India is no longer hesitant to defend its interests. The trope “New India,” also signifies a proactive and forceful approach to national security. Hashtags like #NewIndia and statements like “India has arrived” convey nationalistic pride and assurance. The tweets employ a triumphal and celebratory tonality, utilizing capital letters, exclamation marks, and enthusiastic language to evoke excitement, victory, and satisfaction.

The hashtag “#NewIndia” further signifies a break from the past and an assertive approach towards countering terrorism. The combination of hashtags associated with military action amplifies the message of India’s retaliation and reinforces the importance of the Balakot airstrike within the narrative of “New India.” Further, references to past incidents like the Pulwama attack and the 26/11 attacks establish a historical context and evoke feelings of pain, frustration, and the need for revenge. The combination of hashtags associated with military action amplifies the message of India’s retaliation and reiterates the importance of the Balakot airstrike in the narrative of “New India.”

Deeply embedded in the celebration of “New India” are explicit nationalistic outbursts and patriotic sentiments and support for the government of India and especially Prime Minister Modi. His leadership is credited for the success of the airstrike, praising his courage and political will. This is apparent in the statements such as “India is not scared of any other country or UN or any organisation” and referring to the “Aman ki asha gang” (Gang of hope for peace) to say that Prime Minister Modi is not inclined towards pacifist ideologies.

³⁹⁵ <https://Twitter.com/sharmaAvl/status/1100616283979218944> (Accessed May 18, 2023)

Similarly, tweets used nationalistic tropes, provocative language, and a triumphant tone to amplify support for India's actions, emphasizing the bravery of the armed forces and promoting a sense of patriotic fervor while also ridiculing Pakistan.

“‘We have Nuclear weapons’ ‘We have Nuclear weapons’ ‘We have Nuclear weapons’ ‘We have Nuclear weapons’ ‘We have Nuclear weapons’ #Surgicalstrike2 #Balakot ‘Button China waalon ne rakh liya.’”³⁹⁶

The post-Uri surgical strike and the Balakot raid are symptomatic of a new India that has clearly jettisoned its Gandhian aversion to war and is ready to retaliate with deadly force. Outgunned and outdated, the PAF isn't match for the IAF.³⁹⁷

Masood Azhar's 'Jija' got butchered by our forces. 'Jijas', beware #Balakot.³⁹⁸

Actually Pakistan should thanks India for Balakot because for years they have cried that they are also victim of Terrorism. We only did what they aren't capable of.³⁹⁹

Indian Air Force Strikes at Balakot don't have official word yet but the Helter skelter by Pakistan seems like something big has happened. The IAF has gone beyond POK & into Pakistan near their capital while they were busy counting alms received from Saudi & China.⁴⁰⁰

Attack on Akshardham temple, Attack on Parliament, Serial blasts in Delhi, 2008 Mumbai Attack, Uri attack, Pulwama attack... Never forget, never forgive #SayYesToWar #IndiaStrikesBack.⁴⁰¹

³⁹⁶ https://Twitter.com/Atheist_Krishna/status/1100317329227825152 (Accessed May 18, 2023)

³⁹⁷ <https://Twitter.com/ByRakeshSimha/status/1100840159107473408> (Accessed May 18, 2023)

³⁹⁸ https://Twitter.com/Ra_Bies/status/1100275758751047680 (Accessed May 18, 2023)

³⁹⁹ https://Twitter.com/Sahil_Adhikaari/status/1100290943100567558 (Accessed May 18, 2023)

⁴⁰⁰ <https://Twitter.com/DrAMSinghvi/status/1100236126470586373> (Accessed May 18, 2023)

⁴⁰¹ <https://Twitter.com/orchidfab/status/1100714266070380544> (Accessed May 18, 2023)

While Pakistan was kept busy in rising Tomato prices & water, our brave Forces were finalising the death plan of bastard Terrorists. Around 300 Terrorists killed in POK/PAK today by our brave soldiers. Fitting Tribute to our #Pulwama martyrs. Our Josh is all time High. Jai Hind.⁴⁰²

As evident, public apparently adopted a dismissive tone towards Pakistan by highlighting its alleged inadequacies through characterizing Pakistan's response as chaotic ("Helter skelter") even after India entered into its territory and went near its capital. In doing so, the Indian force was portrayed as bold and capable of infiltrating Pakistani territory to great depths.

Additionally, the notion that the Indian Air Force (IAF) is powerful and the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) is weak was reinforced. Phrases such as "Outgunned and outdated, the PAF isn't a match for the IAF" seek to undermine Pakistan's military strength, projecting India as the dominant force in the region. By mocking Pakistan's focus on financial aid from Saudi Arabia and China, the tweets further demean Pakistan's economic and political status while denigrating Pakistan's economic dependence and attempts to diminish its standing in comparison to India.

A discursive trope in the tweets is the use of derogatory language against Pakistan. Referring to Masood Azhar as 'Jija' (brother-in-law) and celebrating his alleged demise at the hands of Indian forces signifies a derisive and dehumanizing tone. This trope aims to delegitimize and belittle Pakistan's leaders and institutions, further reinforcing the narrative of India's superiority. Furthermore, the tweets employ a vengeful and unforgiving tone by listing past terrorist attacks on Indian soil. The use of phrases like "Never forget, never forgive" and hashtags such as #SayYesToWar signifies a desire for retribution and a willingness to engage in armed conflict. This tonality reflects a heightened emotional state and a firm stance against Pakistan and terrorism, reiterating the call for a stern and proactive military response.

⁴⁰² https://Twitter.com/advocate_alakh/status/1100271239850008576 (Accessed May 18, 2023)

In the similar vein, nationalistic trope indicates praising the actions of the Indian armed forces and positioning them as brave defenders of the nation. Pakistan was ridiculed as preoccupied with rising tomato prices and water issues while India's forces were actively engaged in countering terrorism. In a triumphant and celebratory tone, public applauded the killing of around 300 terrorists in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (POK)/Pakistan by Indian soldiers, referring to them in a dehumanizing language as "bastard terrorists" evoking strong emotions and solidify support for the Indian armed forces. The mention of a "fitting tribute" to the Pulwama martyrs further indicates a desire to link the current events to past acts of sacrifice, further enhancing the tone of nationalism and honor.

Another dominant aspect of the public discourse was the strong desire to portray the strike as a revenge for Pulwama attack and not as a pre-emptive strike which is India's official justification of the strike. In other words, the public discourse shows a stark contrast between the public's jubilation over India's retaliatory action against Pakistan for the Pulwama attack, and India's official narrative on the international platform which stated the surgical strike as imperative to thwart an imminent assault on its territory. For example:

First you drop the ball, then you blame that the ball is bouncing back. Get back to the classroom & understand the #TheoryOfGravity. #PulwamaRevenge #Balakot #Muzaffarabad #Chakoti.⁴⁰³

What a fantastic & befitting reply to Pak's atrocities in Pulwama! Hats off to our marvelous IAF boys & our Air Chief who have retaliated with precision after meticulous planning with the PM, the NSA, Army Chief & senior ministers. Our martyrs have been avenged! Jai Hind!⁴⁰⁴

Balakot air strike by India has not just avenged #PulwamaTerrorAttack but also avenged IC-814 hijack and humiliation it faced by releasing JEM terrorists. Today

⁴⁰³ https://Twitter.com/Francis_Joseph/status/1100375556070096896 (Accessed May 18, 2023)

⁴⁰⁴ <https://Twitter.com/dreamgirlhema/status/1100310351835353089?lang=en> (Accessed May 18, 2023)

after 20 years, masterminds and relatives of Masood Azhar lie dead in debris of JeM's Balakot facility.⁴⁰⁵

To avenge Uri, we crossed Line of Control. To avenge Pulwama, we crossed Pakistan border. If Pakistan still doesn't learn, then "Abki baar Lahore ke paar". Get it Pakistan?.⁴⁰⁶

While the nation slept, #IndianAirForce roared and avenged #Pulwama! Our pride knows no bounds, Thank you.⁴⁰⁷

Has anyone noticed that Modi is yet to say that Pulwama has been avenged?.⁴⁰⁸

High on Josh! Higher on Hosh! BlitzKrieg proves that India will not leave a stone unturned to protect its sovereignty. Indian Forces will be responsibly and relentlessly track down the killers of Pulwama! Jai Hind.⁴⁰⁹

Public opinion reflects the belief that justice has been done. The expression "our martyrs have been avenged" conveys pleasure and closure regarding the perceived justice for the Pulwama terror attack victims. Additionally, it emphasizes the Balakot attack as a form of cumulative retaliation for earlier terrorist acts. Additionally, there was a great desire for the retaliatory action to be recognized officially. This is evident when people question why Prime Minister Modi has not explicitly stated that the strike is in vengeance for the Pulwama attack.

However, while the display of patriotism, national pride, and the projection of the notion of "New India" embedded in the public opinion often lacked complexity and critical analysis leading to overshadowing discussions about the airstrike's strategic implications

⁴⁰⁵ <https://Twitter.com/DivyaSoti/status/1100378932849721345> (Accessed May 18, 2023)

⁴⁰⁶ <https://Twitter.com/AbhishBanerj/status/1100242581684797440> (Accessed May 18, 2023)

⁴⁰⁷ <https://Twitter.com/officekiran/status/1100264578171039744> (Accessed May 18, 2023)

⁴⁰⁸ <https://Twitter.com/UnSubtleDesi/status/1100399725658947584> (Accessed May 18, 2023)

⁴⁰⁹ <https://Twitter.com/shaziaailmi/status/1100319541115133952?lang=da> (Accessed May 18, 2023)

and long-term effects, they held some relevance from the vantage point of India's public diplomacy. Discernibly, the public opinion despite not being intended as an instrumentalized rational discourse understandably has a certain degree of contribution towards shaping a favorable public perception.

It is notable that even though Pakistan denied the existence of terror camps, the central narrative of India's public diplomacy was Delhi has attacked these camps. Indeed, the narrative also remained at the forefront of discussions and debates about the strike. It is at this juncture that the nature and content of public opinion seems to have played a role in fortifying India's narrative justification. The tweets below exemplify the complementary role of public engagement.

Narendra Modi has drawn a brand new red line.. Govt officials confirm that #JaisheMohammad camp hit in #Balakot was inside KPK in Pakistan. Called a non-military strike by India as the target was a terrorist base and not civilians or military. Capacity of India extended #PulwamaAttack.⁴¹⁰

Today the nation is celebrating not one but two victories. One the victory of a successful counter attack and destruction of terror camps. Second (equally if not more important) the happiness and relief that all 12 pilots returned back safe and sound #Balakot #IndiaStrikesBack.⁴¹¹

Look at the video of the terror training camp of Jaish e Muhammad at the Jaba Top, Balakot in KPK of Pakistan. This is the very terror training camp almost 80kms away from LoC which was targeted by Indian Air Force this morning around 3am. Camp headed by Masood Azhar's relative.⁴¹²

Pakistan's stupid claim that #IndianAirForce fighter jets entered & dropped payload but there's no casualty reminds me of the situation when a kid slaps

⁴¹⁰ https://Twitter.com/BDUTT/status/1100294120747290624?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw (Accessed May 18, 2023)

⁴¹¹ <https://Twitter.com/swatic12/status/1100436716861747205> (Accessed May 19, 2023)

⁴¹² <https://Twitter.com/AdityaRajKaul/status/1100367605431336963> (Accessed May 19, 2023)

another kid in a fight and the other kid says “Nahi laga”, then goes back home & cries hard. #SurgicalStrike2 #Balakot.⁴¹³

First confirmation from Pakistan of Strike by Indian Air Force. BBC Urdu video from Jaba Post, Balakot, KPK where a local says that there were 5 big blasts after 3am at night followed by Jets leaving within 10 minutes. Many casualties and several injured. How can Pakistan deny?.⁴¹⁴

Last time Pakistan said Surgical Strike didn't happen at all. This time they are admitting the fighter jets entered Pakistan and dropped the payload. Imagine the scale of damage they're trying to hide. #SurgicalStrike2 #Balakot #IndiaStrikesBack.⁴¹⁵

Pakistan must be the only country where for the destruction of 5 to 7 trees as claimed - 1) Many press conferences conducted. 2) Nuclear veiled threat issued. 3) Retaliation shout. 4) Indian movies banned. 5) Offer for journalists to tour Balakot. All these for 5 trees?.⁴¹⁶

India destroys terror camps inside Pakistan. Terrorism must be eradicated from the world. And everyone should help in this noble work. #IndiaStrikesBack #IndianAirForce #Balakot #AirStrike.⁴¹⁷

Massive protest organised outside Pakistan mission in Kathmandu, #Nepal by locals against Pakistan sponsored terrorism. People organise silent protest paying tribute to 40 CRPF martyrs who died in a terror attack at Pulwama in #Kashmir.⁴¹⁸

⁴¹³ <https://Twitter.com/SirJadeja/status/1100271347421319168?lang=en> (Accessed May 19, 2023)

⁴¹⁴ <https://Twitter.com/AdityaRajKaul/status/1100340140961083394> (Accessed May 19, 2023)

⁴¹⁵ <https://Twitter.com/SirJadeja/status/1100259229674364928> (Accessed May 19, 2023)

⁴¹⁶ <https://Twitter.com/KiranKS/status/1100426361091616773> (Accessed May 19, 2023)

⁴¹⁷ https://Twitter.com/satkabir_/status/1100271634483761152 (Accessed May 19, 2023)

⁴¹⁸ <https://Twitter.com/AdityaRajKaul/status/1100068193769533441> (Accessed May 19, 2023).

In general, the public tweets played a significant role in India's public diplomacy efforts by effectively disseminating crucial information, countering Pakistan's narrative, and garnering international support. This contributed to strengthening India's international standing. These tweets emphasized India's commitment to peace and security, aligning with the narrative that portrayed India's actions as responsible, proportionate, and necessary in combating terrorism. By framing the airstrike as a non-military operation targeting terrorist bases rather than civilian or military installations, the tweets strategically highlighted India's message.

This emphasis underscored India's dedication to measured and proportionate action, prioritizing the targeting of terrorist camps while minimizing potential harm to innocent civilians or military assets. The reinforcement of India's narrative by the public seemed to shape the global perception of the targeted strike against Pakistan-based terrorists. Moreover, it is noteworthy that these public posts addressed gaps left by state agencies while reinforcing the official narrative and its dissemination to the international audience. In this sense, public engagement complemented state-driven public diplomacy, shaping the global public perception of the Balakot strike and Pakistan's image as a perpetrator of terrorism.

It underscores the importance of domestic support for the government and its policies for an effective public diplomacy. As Huijgh Ellen points out, the "inter" now counts just as much in international policy-making and action as the "national," with domestic citizens' roles being recognized more and more. Therefore, a nation's (inter)national credibility and efficiency depend greatly on the awareness and backing of its local audience for a government's policies as well as their attempts to connect with peers overseas.⁴¹⁹

Thus, the discourse reveals a discernible tacit convergence between state-driven initiatives and public engagement, indicating a collective participation influenced by pervasive nationalist sentiments manifested on Twitter. This alignment between the state

⁴¹⁹ Ellen Huijgh, "The Public Diplomacy of Emerging Powers Part 2: The Case of Indonesia," *CPD Perspectives on Public Diplomacy* (2016): 11, <https://uscpublicdiplomacy.org/sites/uscpublicdiplomacy.org/files/useruploads/u35361/Public%20Diplomacy%20of%20Emerging%20Powers.pdf> (Accessed May 23, 2023).

and the public is closely intertwined with the narrative of “New India,” which has gained substantial resonance among the populace. This narrative associates the Balakot airstrike with the principles and ideals associated with the concept of “New India,” where national strength and pride hold paramount importance. As a result, this overarching narrative acts as a catalyst, evoking various public sentiments and actively encouraging engagement aimed at portraying the nation in a positive light.

3.8 Responses from The Major Opposition Party

The opposition party leaders from the INC responded to the crisis with a mix of emotional solidarity, support for the armed forces, and critique of the government.

The opposition’s collective grief and support for the brave CRPF personnel emphasised the necessity for national unity and solidarity during such challenging times. Rahul Gandhi conveyed a profound sense of distress over the cowardly assault on the CRPF convoy in Jammu and Kashmir. He underscored the sacrifices of the courageous CRPF personnel, with many martyred and critically injured, evoking a call for unity and support. Gandhi’s message, while heartfelt, primarily focused on acknowledging the human toll of the airstrike and offering prayers for the injured, rather than delving into broader geopolitical implications.⁴²⁰

Kapil Sibal echoes an unwavering determination in the face of terror. He underlined the unwavering commitment to standing together as a nation despite the strike and emphasized the imperative need for a solid and fitting response to avenge the precious lives of the brave hearts lost.⁴²¹

Shashi Tharoor expressed heartfelt sympathies for the families of the CRPF jawans who lost their lives in Pulwama. Tharoor’s tweet strikes a balance between empathy and pragmatism in addressing the aftermath of the Balakot airstrike. While offering profound condolences to the families of the martyred CRPF jawans, Tharoor also called for a measured yet decisive response to the situation in Kashmir. His message emphasizes the

⁴²⁰ <https://Twitter.com/RahulGandhi/status/1096026241537167361> (Accessed September 20, 2023).

⁴²¹ <https://Twitter.com/KapilSibal/status/1096639871958114304> (Accessed September 20, 2023).

unity of the nation in times of tragedy, while cautioning against the exploitation of the bloodshed for political gains.⁴²²

P. Chidambaram expressed sentiments of grief and solidarity with the CRPF and their families, reflecting the collective mourning of the nation. He emphasized national solidarity, indicating the unity of purpose in the face of adversity, without issuing a specific call to action. Instead, he focused on reaffirming the nation's solidarity with the victims.⁴²³

Considerably thus, opposition expressed a firm resolve to combat the forces that breed hatred and violence, emphasizing the necessity to strike hard to make the perpetrators grieve and suffer the consequences of their actions. It adds a layer of determination and resilience to the collective response, emphasizing the resolve not to be defeated by the forces of terror but to stand united and resolute in the face of adversity.

However, while highlight the importance of solidarity and unity, the opposition also makes a critical evaluation of the Pulwama attack and the ensued crisis involving India's airstrike at Balakot as response. The government was accused by the opposition of exploiting the Balakot attack for electoral purposes. Tharoor made a plea to the government to avoid leveraging the situation for political advantage, showcasing a more diplomatic stance.

Kapil Sibal, adopting a more direct critical approach, questioned the credibility of the ruling government's claims, especially in relation to the Balakot airstrikes. He highlighted the absence of international evidence to support the government's narrative of the strike at Balakot resulting in the killings of terrorists, suggesting a politicization of the situation. His tweets reflected a persistent skepticism toward the ruling party's actions and a call for more concrete measures to tackle terrorism. Take a look at these tweets:

⁴²² <https://Twitter.com/ShashiTharoor/status/1096055976782778368> (Accessed September 20, 2023).

⁴²³ https://Twitter.com/PCChidambaram_IN/status/1096043781437063168 (Accessed September 20, 2023).

Modiji: Is international media: 1) New York Times 2) London based Jane's Information Group 3) Washinton Post 4) Daily Telegraph 5) The Guardian 6) Reuters reporting no proof of militant losses at Balakot pro-Pakistan? You are guilty of politicising terror?⁴²⁴

On 27th Feb. B S Yeddyurappa at Chitradurga In a public function said: "The Indian Armed Forces proved their mettle by destroying the terrorists' hideouts. The impact of this strike will help BJP win more than 22 seats in the state." Is this patriotism or crass politics?.⁴²⁵

Likewise, Chidambaram emphasized the need for accountability and transparency, particularly in the context of intelligence failures and the government's response. Chidambaram also underscored the historical context of certain events, specifically the India National Congress-led (INC) initiatives in dealing with terrorism, seeking to establish the opposition's commitment to addressing security issues.

Chidambaram criticized the government's handling of intelligence and security matters. Referring to The WEEK magazine's report on the Pulwama attack, he expressed concerns about apparent intelligence failures, indicating a lack of preparedness or oversight. This raised doubts about the Modi government's ability to pre-empt security threats effectively. He then emphasized the government's duty to address the allegations from The WEEK and clarify the role of the Multi-Agency Centre (MAC). This call for transparency and accountability in national security underscored the opposition's stance.⁴²⁶

Furthermore, Chidambaram stressed the seriousness of the Pulwama attack and its aftermath, warning against hastily dismissing such incidents. He urged the government

⁴²⁴ <https://Twitter.com/KapilSibal/status/1102416463065956353> (Accessed September 20, 2023).

⁴²⁵ <https://Twitter.com/KapilSibal/status/1100973863129763840> (Accessed September 20, 2023).

⁴²⁶ https://Twitter.com/PChidambaram_IN/status/1101687663726219264 (Accessed September 20, 2023); https://Twitter.com/PChidambaram_IN/status/1101687803031609344 (Accessed September 20, 2023).

to maintain focus and take action to address underlying issues.⁴²⁷ Additionally, he provided context on counterterrorism efforts by mentioning the Congress-led UPA government's move to designate Masood Azhar as a global terrorist after the 2008 Mumbai attacks. This highlighted the opposition's commitment to combating terrorism and its past involvement in security initiatives, indicating a consistent approach to national security concerns.⁴²⁸

Thus, the overarching theme in the opposition's response was a call for transparency, accountability, and a responsible handling of national security issues. Congress party leaders attempted to project themselves as a vigilant and credible alternative, ready to hold the ruling government accountable. Overall, the responses of the opposition leaders during the Pulwama and Balakot crises represented a delicate balancing act, blending empathy for the victims, support for the armed forces, and a critical appraisal of the government's actions.

3.9 Smart Power Diplomacy

While the Balakot counterstrike may seem like a hard power approach at first glance, a careful scrutiny of the whole episode would suggest otherwise. Arguably, the Indian strategy encapsulates a deployment of the combination of both ideational and material components of power. Although the hardline policy was found laced with soft power and narratives right from the strike, it came to prominence mainly during the post-strike diplomatic engagements, constituting both the components of power – coercion and influence through the attraction.⁴²⁹

⁴²⁷ https://Twitter.com/PChidambaram_IN/status/1101687850515423237 (Accessed September 20, 2023)

⁴²⁸ https://Twitter.com/PChidambaram_IN/status/1123826728969940996 (Accessed September 20, 2023).

⁴²⁹ Vivek Katju, "Indian Diplomacy Did Well, Now to Step It up," *Deccan Herald*, March 3, 2019, <https://www.deccanherald.com/specials/sunday-spotlight/indian-diplomacy-did-well-now-721260.html>, (Accessed January 13, 2023); "India's Diplomatic Win at UNSC: An Isolated China Finally Clears Masood Azhar Case," *Financial Express*, March 2, 2019, <https://www.financialexpress.com/defence/indias-diplomatic-win-at-unsc-an-isolated-china-finally-clears-masood-azhar-case/1566086/>, (Accessed January 14, 2023).

As the response (strike) constituted a military action in the territory of a sovereign nation, it was obligatory upon India to provide justification for the action and defend her position before the international community. Failing to do so would have potentially put a premium on India's image on the global stage. Therefore, an immediate necessity India confronted was to back up the military action with a strong narrative justification. Importantly, such a strategic narrative should be not only persuasive but also be reflective of India's image as a peaceful nation and its genuinely peaceful intentions. Normatively, it should also encapsulate India's long projected ideals and values such as non-violence, mutual respect of sovereignty, international peace, and harmony, which have, over the years, crafted the foundation of its national character and become the sustained source of its soft power.

Significantly, New Delhi's diplomacy proved to be substantially successful, as evidenced by the "general acceptance about Indian kinetic retaliation."⁴³⁰ As mentioned elsewhere in this chapter, despite India violating Pakistan's sovereignty, New Delhi's compelling reasons and effective diplomatic strategy generated international support and rendered a great deal of global public opinions in its favor. New Delhi's combining of soft and hard power seemed to have produced a cohesive force that not only helped the country win people's hearts and minds but also appeared to have successfully translated public emotions and sympathy into actions. Countries, including France, Australia, and Afghanistan, coming out in support, testify the efficacy of the strategy.

Given the overall solidarity and support to New Delhi, including at the United Nations (UN) level, fully comprehending the Balakot implausible devoid of the role of soft power and coercive diplomacy in it. Therefore, it is worth looking into, in some detail, how this has come about, especially outside the online space, before we venture into the intricacies of social media engagement that forms part of the repertoire of actions India undertook.

First, New Delhi's managed to communicate its decision to strike Balakot as less of an aggressive attack against the state of Pakistan than directed against a non-state actor - a

⁴³⁰ Rakesh Sood, "Does Balakot Redefine a New Normal?," *Observer Research Foundation*, March 22, 2019, <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/does-balakot-define-a-new-normal-49198/> (Accessed January 15, 2023).

terrorist group. Through the style and substance of the attack, along with the chosen location and operation - targeting the terrorist camps alone while leaving the surrounding areas - India tried to make it clear that its intention was only to protect its sovereignty and not to indulge in a conflict or war. By not targeting the Pakistan military establishments, India got this message across going beyond abstract declarations alone. It precisely avoided vitiating the climate further that could potentially catapult it into a fully-fledged war.

Likewise, by refraining from targeting the civilian population, India displayed that it values and respects the fundamental principle of international humanitarian law, namely the principle of distinction that distinguishes between civilians and combatants, further evincing civility in a counterterror attack.⁴³¹ Moreover, even as New Delhi responded to terrorists' provocations with force, it refrained from overreacting. Through the strategy, New Delhi emphasized its commitment to ensuring counterterrorism measures with much regard for the protection of human rights. This act of compounding both soft and hard power by the Indian military (the Air Force) is in line with the essence of Nye's idea that "a well-run military can be a source of soft power."⁴³²

Second, New Delhi conveyed a strong message that terror attacks emanating from its neighbour risk military retaliation from India. Conveying India's resolve through a counterattack was reasonable on two grounds: Firstly, to harness international attention and substantive diplomatic support in the case of cross-border terrorism. This is because the international support India received previously did not transcend beyond the usual diplomatic courtesy, mainly owing to the general perception of India as a soft state.⁴³³

⁴³¹ OHCHR, "Human Rights, Terrorism and Counter-terrorism," *Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights*, Fact Sheet no, 32, <https://www.ohchr.org/documents/publications/factsheet32en.pdf>, (Accessed January 15, 2023).

⁴³² Joseph S. Nye, "Think Again: Soft power," *Foreign Policy* 22, no, 2, February 23, 2006: para. 10, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2006/02/23/think-again-soft-power/> (Accessed January 15, 2023).

⁴³³ Prem Mahadevan, "India and the Global Discourse on State-sponsored Terrorism," *Observer Research Foundation*, December 2017, <https://www.orfonline.org/research/india-global-discourse-state-sponsored-terrorism/> (Accessed January 18, 2023); and Subrata K. Mitra and Jivanta Schottli, "The New Dynamics of Indian Foreign Policy and its Ambiguity," *Irish Studies in International Affairs* 18, (2007): 29, www.jstor.org/stable/25469813.

Secondly and concomitantly, it was necessary to shed the baggage of the weak state status. In that attempt, New Delhi remarkably displayed the much-expected restraint even as the public pressure kept mounting for severe punitive retaliation to the point of even war with Pakistan. Alongside, New Delhi publicly declared its disinterest in any possible escalation of the situation into an armed-confrontation.⁴³⁴ Thus, India exhibited the country's disinterest in pursuing an expansionist policy, illustrating, overall, a mix of coercive diplomacy and democratic restraint.

Third, India conducted vigorous diplomacy in the international arena to make Pakistan accountable for the terror attack that originated from its soil and to pressurize Islamabad to act upon it. In the process, the government of India dubbed the strike as "non-military pre-emptive action."⁴³⁵ New Delhi advised the party leaders to project the move more as a pre-emptive strike to protect India's sovereignty and security, than as an act of revenge for Pulwama terror attack.⁴³⁶

In doing so, it projected the Balakot as well within its right to protect India's sovereignty as it had credible intelligence suggesting more Pulwama-like attacks in the offing. Indian embassies in various countries were called upon to spread this narrative and reach out to the respective country's government for its support.⁴³⁷ In this regard, it is reasonable to conjecture that the strategic narrative of the strike as pre-emptive action punctuated with intensified global outreach yielded to New Delhi legitimacy in the eyes of the world. It

⁴³⁴ "India Says It Does Not Want to See Further Escalation," *Times of India*, February 27, 2019, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/india-says-it-does-not-want-to-see-further-escalation/articleshow/68178579.cms>, (Accessed January 18, 2023)

⁴³⁵ "Balakot: India Launches Airstrike," *BBC*, February 26, 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-asia-47379558/balakot-india-launches-air-strike-in-pakistan>, (Accessed January 18, 2023).

⁴³⁶ Liz Mathew, "BJP to Its Leaders: Keep Restraint, Project Balakot as Pre-Emptive Strike, Not Revenge," *The Indian Express*, February 27, 2019, <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/bjp-project-balakot-as-pre-emptive-strike-not-pulwama-revenge-5602297/>, (Accessed January 18, 2023).

⁴³⁷ Pranay Sharma, "India Pursues Vigorous Diplomacy to Make Pakistan Act on Terror," *Outlook*, March 7, 2019, <https://www.outlookindia.com/magazine/story/world-news-a-hum-of-persuasion/301270>, (Accessed January 18, 2023)

fostered India to instantly connect with countries such as the United States and France who were already victims of similar deadly terror attacks in the recent past.⁴³⁸

Fourth, India employed what is known as the negative soft power strategy against Islamabad. Immediately after the Pulwama attack, New Delhi called for the international terror financing watchdog, the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), and the European Union Commission to blacklist Pakistan, which was on the FATF grey list since June 2018.⁴³⁹

New Delhi also shared evidence of the Pulwama attack with other UNSC members across the globe.⁴⁴⁰ Such a negative soft power strategy is useful in the sense that “by attacking the values of others, one can reduce their attractiveness and thus their relative soft power.”⁴⁴¹ This strategy inevitably stems from the imperative to succeed in the struggle over perception. To that end, as Miskimmon et al. suggest, “actors work to frame their own character and that of others, by selecting and highlighting some facets of their history or actions in order to promote a particular interpretation and evaluation of their character.”⁴⁴²

Indeed, this strategy is not without precedent. India has resorted to it in the past. In fact, New Delhi continues to demonize and call out Pakistan as a sponsor of terrorism. Repeatedly bringing forth in the public platforms such narratives as Islamabad’s

⁴³⁸ Sreeram Chaulia, “India Versus Pakistan in the Court of Global Opinion,” *Asian Review*, March 2, 2019, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Opinion/India-versus-Pakistan-in-the-court-of-global-opinion>, (Accessed January 18, 2023).

⁴³⁹ Geeta Mohan, “After Pulwama, India to Isolate Pakistan at FATF and European Commission,” *India Today*, February 16, 2019, <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/pulwama-terror-attack-india-isolates-pakistan-fatf-paris-european-commission-1457532-2019-02-16> (Accessed January 18, 2023).

⁴⁴⁰ Geeta Mohan, “India Shares Evidence on Pulwama and Masood Azhar with UNSC Members,” *India Today*, March 6, 2019, <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/india-shares-evidence-on-pulwama-and-masood-azhar-with-unscc-members-and-all-countries-of-the-world-1471142-2019-03-06>, (Accessed January 18, 2023).

⁴⁴¹ Joseph S. Nye, “Information Warfare Versus Soft Power,” *The Strategist – Australian Strategic Policy Institute*, May 12, 2017, <https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/information-warfare-versus-soft-power/> (Accessed January 18, 2023).

⁴⁴² Miskimmon, O’loughlin, and Roselle, *Strategic Narratives*, 7-8.

involvement in the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks and 2016 Uri attack are good examples to illustrate this case. Arguably, India has managed to build a common negative perception and understanding about Islamabad, incrementally, by case by case, while invariably projecting herself as righteously resolved to fight cross-border terrorism emanating from Pakistan. To that extent, as a constant strategy to disempower Islamabad, resorting to it in the wake of the Pulwama attacks, exemplified somewhat a prevailing trend. In this context, conceiving of soft power as socially constructed, based on “hermeneutic understanding that relies on persuasive interpretation” can provide further insights into India’s diplomatic strategy.⁴⁴³ The strategic use of negative soft power is not something peculiar to India. Countries such as Russia and China employ similar strategies.⁴⁴⁴ Perception management during conflicts is vital for any country. Morgenthau writes, “in the struggle for existence and power...what others think about us is as important as what we actually are.”⁴⁴⁵

Fifth, India supposedly efficiently pursued persuasive diplomacy. With the help of international support, New Delhi pressurized China to support India’s resolve to impose UN sanctions on JeM leader Masood Azhar. Note that Beijing, in the past, had repeatedly vetoed the same in its support to Pakistan. In the existing strategic situation, however, New Delhi grasped the opportunity. It acted deftly to push the resolution through which had been pending for more than a decade. Under sustained international pressure, China finally agreed to the UN Security Council resolution. It did so precisely to prevent losing face in the international community when Pakistan-based terror organization JeM claimed responsibility for the Pulwama attack and implicating evidence to its involvement was made public by India.⁴⁴⁶ Starkly, it showcases the fact that India was,

⁴⁴³ Yasushi Watanabe and David McConnell, “Introduction,” in *Soft Power Superpowers: Cultural Assets of Japan and the United States*, eds, Yasushi Watanabe and David McConnell, xvii–xxxii, Armonk, NY: M,E, Sharpe, 2008), xxiv; William A, Callahan, “Identity and Security in China: The Negative Soft power of the China Dream,” *Politics* 35, no, 3-4 (March 2015): 216, [doi:10.1111%2F1467-9256,12088](https://doi.org/10.1111/2F1467-9256.12088).

⁴⁴⁴ Callahan, “Identity and Security in China,” 220.

⁴⁴⁵ Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations* (New York: Knopf, 1963), 73.

⁴⁴⁶ “Why China Agreed to List Masood Azhar as a Global Terrorist Now,” *The Hindu*, May 1, 2019, <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/watch-why-china-agreed-to-list-masood-azhar-as-a-global-terrorist-now/article27004117,ece>, (Accessed January 18, 2023).

to a greater extent, successful in making most of its narrative and diplomatic efforts to bring about a favorable output. It also reiterated the fact that a credibly convincing story was a key to win the battle – as Nye puts it: “in the information age, success is the result not merely of whose army wins but also of whose story wins.”⁴⁴⁷

Moreover, in part, it subtly captures the centrality of soft power as “the ability to create consensus around shared meaning.”⁴⁴⁸ That is, in the prevailing consensus in the international community on the necessity to fight terrorism, New Delhi has been able to shape a common and widespread global perception of the presence of terrorist organizations in Pakistan and their role in multiple terror attacks in India and elsewhere. The Pulwama attack helped India reinforce the perception, generate sympathy for the country, and justify its Balakot counterattack. Consequently, Beijing had to overlook its unresolved issues with India and defer to its stance on Balakot. As in the existing common perception and the shared understanding, it was “more difficult to legitimize actions perceived to be in conflict with that consensus.”⁴⁴⁹

Sixth, words are an important source of power, and they play a critical role in shaping thoughts.⁴⁵⁰ They assume significance in times of wars and conflicts and help in crafting public acceptance and legitimacy.⁴⁵¹ Accordingly, grasping the situation as a whole, especially the widespread global attention surrounding the conflict, New Delhi cautiously navigated the use of terminology to describe the whole episode. In the process of building a strategic narrative, it studiously avoided using any terms of high-flown war rhetoric that are usually seen reverberating in the United States, such as the war on terror. India did so despite the fact that the metaphor of war does not necessarily constitute a war as traditionally defined and can denote a spectrum of activities pertaining to diplomacy as well. Instead, India prudently adopted rhetorically low-pitched terms like surgical strike

⁴⁴⁷ Joseph S. Nye, “Get Smart,” 162-63.

⁴⁴⁸ Roselle, Miskimmon, and O’Loughlin, “Strategic Narrative,” 72.

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁰ Oren Gross and Fionnuala Ni Aolain, “The Rhetoric of War: Words, Conflict and Categorization Post-9/11,” *Cornell Journal of Law and Public Policy* 24, no. 2 (November 2014): 1, <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2530789>,

⁴⁵¹ Ibid.

even though the larger goal of disseminating the information on terror activities originating from Pakistan coupled with the military as well as diplomatic efforts to contain the same can, in essence, constitute a war on terror.

In hindsight, given the strategic situation, terminology like war would have effused a rather bellicose narrative and might not have led to greater public acceptance among multiple audiences. That includes many Muslim countries in the Middle East, which traditionally support Pakistan. Thus, India's decision to keep it eloquent and yet articulately less boisterous seemed to have yielded public opinion in India's favor. In this regard, the invitation of India's External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj as a guest of honor to the foreign ministers' meeting at Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) seems to illustrate the diplomatic success of such strategy.

Finally, India's diplomatic leverage would have been exceedingly tricky or almost inconceivable devoid of the robust base of its soft power. Nye writes that "the universality of a country's culture and its ability to establish a set of favorable rules and institutions that govern areas of international activity are critical sources of power."⁴⁵² The strong foundation of the longstanding, credible soft power of the country was crucial in enabling narratives to frame India's position as legitimate. India has long-established for itself a good reputation and popularity in the international stage. India's defining ideals of democracy and secularism, coupled with political stability, economic growth, cultural values, and foreign policies, have portrayed the country in a positive light and served to construct a positive national identity for itself. All of this has rendered the country an image of a peace-loving, rising superpower in the world.

Besides, India stands vehemently opposed to all types of terrorism by countries, organizations, or individuals. New Delhi has been at the forefront of fighting terrorism. It has resolutely called for international cooperation in fighting the menace. Some of India's track records include a proposal for the adoption of the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism in 1996 and sustained advocacy and support for adopting the *UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy* in the UN General

⁴⁵² Joseph S. Nye, "Limits of American Power," *Political Science Quarterly* 117, no. 4 (Winter 2002): 554, [doi:10.2307/798134](https://doi.org/10.2307/798134)

Assembly.⁴⁵³ All this can be attributed to the subtle sources of India's soft power leverage and provided credibility to its stance against terrorism.

Taken together, New Delhi's multifaceted response in the case showcased an exemplary case of New Delhi's smart power intervention. This was unprecedented in India's counterterror response. It ostensibly marked the realization of what Nye observed more than a decade ago. Speaking about India's potential soft and hard power resources, he had said that "it is a safe bet that India's hard and soft power are likely to rise in the coming years. If India can combine the two successfully, it will be a 'smart power.'"⁴⁵⁴ Similarly, it optically substantiated an expected renewed emphasis on smart power in Indian foreign policy under Modi, as suggested by scholars like Amitabh Mattoo.⁴⁵⁵

3.10 Conclusion

India's communicative outreach during the Balakot airstrike in response to the Pulwama terror attacks served as a compelling example of public diplomacy within India's strategic framework. Tweets analyzed showed key themes in official discourse including depicting India as resilient, gaining international backing, and labelling Pakistan as a terrorist state. This discourse aimed to justify India's actions, bolstering its image domestically and internationally while isolating Pakistan diplomatically. The portrayal of India as strong aimed to rally domestic support, while emphasizing international solidarity validated India's stance. Additionally, framing the Balakot strike as preventive counter-terrorism measures aimed to justify India's military intervention and discredit Pakistan's actions.

⁴⁵³ Aman Y. Thakker, "India at the United Nations: An Analysis of Indian Multilateral Strategies on International Security and Development," *Observer Research Foundation*, March 29, 2018, 16-17, <https://www.orfonline.org/research/india-at-the-united-nations-an-analysis-of-indian-multilateral-strategies-on-international-security-and-development/> (Accessed January 15, 2023).

⁴⁵⁴ Joseph S. Nye, "If India Can Combine its Hard and Soft Powers, It Will Become a Smart Power," *India Today*, October 2, 2006, <https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/cover-story/story/20061002-if-india-can-combine-its-hard-and-soft-powers-it-will-become-a-smart-power-782294-2006-10-02> (Accessed January 15, 2023).

⁴⁵⁵ Amitabh Mattoo, "A Doctrine of Economic Levers, Soft Power," *The Hindu*, June 12, 2014, <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/a-doctrine-of-economic-levers-soft-power/article6105078,ece> (Accessed January 15, 2023).

While representing India's military strength by emphasizing its steadfast dedication to protecting national security, the airstrike highlighted India's adeptness in foreign policy and diplomatic manoeuvres. Further, the display of military capability not only resonated with a domestic audience but also conveyed a compelling message on the global stage, presenting India as a country capable of taking decisive measures in response to external challenges. As demonstrated, the Balakot episode represented India's deployment of what Nye's called 'smart power' - combining hard (military strength) and soft (attraction and persuasion) power to achieve foreign policy objectives.

By effectively garnering international support for its principled stance against terrorism, India solidified its image as a responsible and influential global player. The global support post-Balakot portrayed India as resolute against terrorism, integrating the "New India – a Strong India" narrative into its image. The rhetoric of "New India," characterized by assertiveness, national pride, and a departure from perceived past shortcomings, projects an image of India as a robust and resolute nation. Moreover, India's public diplomacy reflected the collective societal perseverance and national resolve. The public discourse also stressed on the narrative of India's rising power status by emphasizing assertiveness, national pride, and a departure from past weaknesses. In all, it can be said that the India's multifaceted approach reinforced India's position as a rising power with a comprehensive and sophisticated conduct of international relations.

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CHAPTER 4

COMMUNICATING THE REVOCATION OF ARTICLE 370: SHAPING GLOBAL PERCEPTIONS

This chapter considers the overarching question of how India's legitimization strategies in Article 370 revocation represent and reflect on the discourse of the country a rising super power. The chapter seeks to address the following specific questions: what are the major themes in the official legitimization of the move? How do the public engagements and debates on the social media sphere represent or contribute to India's public diplomacy? What national identity representation underlies it?

While addressing these questions, this chapter provides an account of India's public diplomacy landscape related to the abolition of Article 370 and the subsequent division of Jammu and Kashmir in August 2019. A study of Article 370 through public diplomacy lens merits attention for the fact that, no work has provided a detailed account of the public diplomacy landscape, even though it is very much constitutive of the political discourse of the policy and its execution. To that end, this chapter puts the spotlight on social media discourse for the reason that the whole episode unfolded in a highly mediatized environment. Social media was central to various legitimization, delegitimizing, and contestation strategies. Additionally, and particularly, the examination of legitimacy discussions social media is extremely important for the fact that elites may voice and propagate their different opinions for the legitimacy of actions. This can give rise to a media-based legitimacy discussion that can shape individual public opinions and discourse.⁴⁵⁶

4.1 Fuzzy Boundary between the Internal and the External

This endeavour holds significance for the fact that although it is India's long-standing and consistent stance that any decision to "reorganise" Jammu and Kashmir and repeal certain of the provisions of the Indian constitution is an internal matter has nothing to do

⁴⁵⁶ Clara Brandi, "Club Governance and Legitimacy: The Perspective of Old and Rising Powers on the G7 and the G20," *South African Journal of International Affairs* 26, no. 4 (December 20, 2019): 685-687, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10220461.2019.1697354>

with Pakistan or that matter any foreign country, India's response in the wake of the abrogation showed a contrasting picture. The abrogation turned out to be a diplomatic challenge for India.⁴⁵⁷ Notably, India's hostile neighbours China and Pakistan were at the forefront of opposing and resisting the policy and demeaning India on the world stage. In this regard, they sought to bring the issue of Kashmir to the attention of the United Nations Security Council.

Despite garnering significant support, the Indian government faced opposition and criticism regarding its decision, with concerns raised about the violation of rights of the Jammu and Kashmiri people and the restrictions imposed on civil liberties and communication in the region.⁴⁵⁸ Consequently, the revocation of Article 370 remained a complex and contentious issue, with diverse perspectives and beliefs held by different stakeholders. In light of this reality, public diplomacy became crucial for India in defending, explaining, and countering rumors and disinformation surrounding the policy.

To address these challenges, the Indian government swiftly initiated a comprehensive diplomatic outreach aimed at alleviating concerns and reassuring allies and friends. This outreach encompassed various diplomatic activities, including bilateral meetings, diplomatic consultations, briefings, and engagement with both traditional media and social media platforms. Through these vigorous diplomatic endeavors, India aimed to shape and manage its international image in an effective manner.

This duality of the situation - revocation strictly an internal matter yet with international implications - spells out the extent to which this issue instinctively straddles the boundary between domestic and foreign policy. It speaks to the fact that getting the politics of legitimization right was important. In other words, a variety of its political influences, including securing international support with India's image and reputation intact, was integral to the policy's success. Nonetheless, despite India's communication strategies to

⁴⁵⁷ Khalid Shah and Kriti M, Shah "Kashmir After Article 370: India's Diplomatic Challenge," *ORF*, October 19, 2020, 5-6, <https://www.orfonline.org/research/kashmir-after-article-370/#:~:text=The%20abrogation%20of%20Article%20370,widespread%20support%20for%20its%20decision> (Accessed May 10, 2023)

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid.

legitimate its action being a key element in the policy, there seems to be a curious oversight within the field of political science and international relations in academically engaging with it.

The literature about Article 370 has been chiefly restricted to discussions surrounding domestic politics of the policy and other varying aspects involving legal, constitutional, and human rights perspectives. Focus has thus far been on the political analysis of various stances of the political ideology of the ruling party and the opposition,⁴⁵⁹ peace and nuclear disarmament in South Asia,⁴⁶⁰ a historical perspective of the process and makers of Article 370,⁴⁶¹ and linguistic and rhetorical strategies for the narrative purpose by supporters and oppositions of the Article 370.

This chapter addresses a notable gap in scholarly investigation, specifically the absence of comprehensive research on the nation's communicative strategies, particularly through social media platforms to shape the international perception of the revocation of Article 370.

Twitter's importance comes from witnessing a hive of activity right after Article 370 was repealed. There was a significant public expression of sentiment, opinion, and conversation engagements. #Article370 became one of the most trended hashtags on Twitter in 2019, and according to digital marketing firm AdLift, hashtags such as #JammuAndKashmir and #Article370 garnered interactions from over 8.5 million users

⁴⁵⁹ Muhammad Farooq and Umbreen Javaid, "Suspension of Article 370: Assessment of Modis Kashmir Masterstroke under Hindutva Ideology," *Global Political Review* 5, no. 1 (2020): 1-8, DOI: 10.31703/gpr.2020(V-I).01; Aditi Bhatia, "The discursive construction of legitimacy in the abrogation of Indian Constitution's Article 370," *Journal of Pragmatics* 183 (2021): 132-141, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2021.07.009>.

⁴⁶⁰ Rizwana Abbasi and Sufian Ullah, "Rising Strategic Instability and Declining Prospects for Nuclear Disarmament in South Asia: A Pakistani Perspective," *Asian Journal of Peacebuilding* 10, no. 1 (2022): 215-241, DOI: [10.18588/202202.00a207](https://doi.org/10.18588/202202.00a207); Sugra Alam, Muhammad Nawaz Bhat and Muhammad Waris Awan, "Abrogation of Articles 370 & 35A of the Indian Constitution: Implications for Peace in South Asia," *International Review in Social Sciences* (2020): 9-20.

⁴⁶¹ Pavan Kumar, "Blame Game on Article 370: Patel, Nehru, and Ayyangar," *Strategic Analysis* 47, no. 1 (2023): 48-60, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09700161.2023.2183589>

in the month following August 5th.⁴⁶² However, it is still to be noted at the very outset that, although it may not represent an exhaustive account of India's public diplomacy, the study of online public discourse "allows for finer nuances to emerge" about understanding how public discourse emerging online contributes to public diplomacy during crisis moments.⁴⁶³ In doing so, this chapter expands the understanding of how the use of Twitter form part of India's international relations and diplomacy.

4.2 Methodology

To assess the institutional dimension of public diplomacy, Tweets about Article 370 were collected by using keyword searching from 28 Twitter handles (see the Table-2). The keyword search was used instead of hashtag search to retrieve maximum results. The keywords used were - Article370, Kashmir. The data was collected for a period of five months - between 1 August and 31 December 2019. The utilization of the hashtag was prominent in the initial weeks following the deterioration of India-Pakistan relations; however, it remained a topic of public discourse for several months thereafter. This is why the researcher chose this time frame.

⁴⁶² Anandita Singh Mankotia and Anumeha Chaturvedi, "Social Media Compliance with Govt Requests Shoots up after Jammu & Kashmir Move," *ETBrandEquity.Com*, September 11, 2019. <https://brandequity.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/digital/social-media-compliance-with-govt-requests-shoots-up-after-jammu-kashmir-move/71075748> (Accessed May 17, 2023).

⁴⁶³ Yuqiong Zhou and Patricia Moy, "Parsing Framing Processes: The Interplay Between Online Public Opinion and Media Coverage," *Journal of Communication* 57, no. 1 (2007): 82, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0021-9916.2007.00330.x>

Official Government Twitter Handles	Personal Twitter Handles of the Ruling Party's Politicians & Senior Bureaucrats	Indian Embassies
1. India's Public Diplomacy Division 2. Prime Minister's Office (PMO India) 3. Ministry of External Affairs of India 4. Press Information Bureau (PIB) 5. Additional Directorate General of Public Information (ADGPI).	1. Narendra Modi 2. Amit Shah 3. Sushma Swaraj 4. Dr. S Jaishankar 5. Hardeep Singh Puri 6. Yogi Adityanath.	1. United States of America 2. United Kingdom 3. Russia 4. Australia 5. Canada 6. Belgium and European Union 7. Japan 8. China 9. Pakistan 10. Saudi Arabia 11. Oman 12. Qatar 13. Bahrain 14. UAE 15. Kuwait 16. Singapore 17. Indonesia

Table 4. 1 Twitter handles of 28 Government of India officials and institutions

The data collection process for this case consisted of extracting tweets, retweets, and retweets with quotes. The programming language R was utilized to extract the data. Despite the potential for duplicate tweets, retweets were intentionally included for its significance in the engagement between Indian embassies and their local audiences (public in the country where the embassies are located). That is Indian embassies retweets for the local audience. Retweets were also anticipated to unveil any discernible patterns in the retweeting behavior of specific Twitter handles, which could shed light on questions of coordination and coherence in the execution of public diplomacy.

Total tweets thus collected were 631. The tweets collected required thorough manual cleaning, as a significant number of them were found to be truncated, with final words frequently missing, particularly when containing emojis that were not correctly extracted. Therefore, prior to coding, each tweet underwent a meticulous examination process to identify and confirm any missing information. Through a comprehensive examination of the data, including deep reading and immersion in the tweets, the researcher gained a better understanding of their content, as well as the overall tone and nature of the communication and discourse. Microsoft Word and Microsoft Excel were used for the manual coding process.

The tweet served as the unit of analysis. Many tweets containing links to videos or photographs, along with texts were also taken into account while coding. The researcher also looked at the external links attached to some tweets even if they weren't systematically coded to learn more about the tweets. The latter was especially helpful when, in the absence of the additional information on the links, some tweets did not completely convey ideas. In all, several tweets deemed to be unrelated to the study and were thus left out of the coding session. In total 135 tweets were eventually used for analysis.

In order to examine the public dimension of India's public diplomacy surrounding the revocation of Article 370, a methodology similar to that used for the Balakot Crisis was employed. The data collection process involved utilizing the software 'R' to search for relevant keywords, resulting in a dataset of 187,289 tweets specifically related to the Article 370 revocation. To ensure a focus on tweets originating from India, the dataset underwent further filtering based on user location.

During the location-based filtering process, only tweets that explicitly mentioned their location as "India" were considered. Tweets indicating specific places within India, such as "Hyderabad," "Kochi," or "Telangana," without explicitly stating "India" were excluded from the dataset. It should be highlighted that the term "Indian public" means Twitter accounts that appear to be based in India. However, given locations are taken as accurate or genuine, acknowledging the difficulty in verifying them with certainty due to limitations in confirming user identities and precise geographical details. Following the

location-based filtering, the dataset for the Article 370 revocation consisted of 52,094 tweets.

To conduct qualitative analysis, a convenient sample of the top 200 most highly engaged tweets was selected. These tweets were chosen based on the highest number of retweets, coinciding with the most liked tweets. Each tweet in this subset underwent manual examination to ensure its relevance to the research questions and objectives of the study. Tweets from news agencies, those sharing general information, expressing joy and appreciation, and other irrelevant tweets were excluded from the analysis. The decision to focus on the most liked and shared tweets was driven by the assumption that these tweets would possess the greatest potential impact. By evaluating tweets with high engagement metrics such as likes and retweets, valuable insights into their popularity and reach could be gained.

It is important to recognize that not all active Twitter users engage with every message they encounter. However, even passive observers may exhibit offline political activity and actively share their opinions through discussions and interactions in physical spaces. Analyzing the most engaging tweets can thus offer valuable insights into public sentiment and potential influence.

The resulting dataset of 200 tweets underwent qualitative analysis performed by the author. Each tweet was individually and manually scrutinized, with a focus on close reading and coding based on its content. This meticulous process facilitated a detailed examination of the data, allowing for the identification of recurring themes and patterns and enabling a comprehensive understanding of the collected facts.

To further advance the discussion, it is essential to delve into the historical background concerning the Kashmir issue, which has consistently been a source of tension between India and Pakistan.

4.3 Kashmir as a Thorn in India-Pakistan Tensions

The comprehension of the wider political contentions concerning the region of Kashmir, as perceived by India and Pakistan, constitutes a significant contextual framework that merits consideration before engaging in further analysis. Kashmir plays an important role in the dynamics of international relations between India and Pakistan. It impacts the larger interstate political environment by articulating various narratives, counternarratives, and discourses.

To put it more plainly, the Kashmir dispute has continued to be the source of discord and tensions between Pakistan and India. In the present context, the nuclear capabilities of two historically antagonistic nations exacerbate the security landscape in the region as they introduce and keep alive the potential for reciprocal retaliation. But how did things get to this point?

Precisely, the events of 1947, marking the culmination of British colonial rule and the subsequent establishment of two independent states, provide the difficult history for the ongoing tension in the region and its impact on India-Pakistan relations. During the process of India gaining independence from colonial rule, the British instructed about 560 princes to choose between India and Pakistan for their newly formed countries in 1947. The Jammu and Kashmir Maharajah hesitated because he wanted his territory to be independent, but that did not happen. However, following an invasion by Pakistani tribal forces, the Maharajah eventually decided to join India. India dispatched troops to stop the invasion, and Jammu & Kashmir was merged into the Indian Union with special status marked by comprehensive powers for self-governance under Article 370.

Unfortunately, the matter did not resolve there but rather catapulted into a long rivalry in South Asia, for Pakistan sees Kashmir as an integral part of its territory because of its strategic location and Islamic identity. This is because, although the local ruler and a widely backed national movement supported it, Kashmir's accession to India has continued to be contentious since then. Jawaharlal Nehru, the country's first prime minister, had pledged that the people of Kashmir would determine the future of their region. Nonetheless, because of India Pakistan's reluctance to withdraw from the part of

Kashmir it held, India has not favoured holding the plebiscite mandated by the United Nations Security Council in 1948.

Thus, their unrelenting political claim over the State of Jammu & Kashmir has since put them at loggerheads. Further, security worries and suspicions of one another's motivations reinforced the lingering abysmal state of bilateral ties. Stemming from these mistrusts and apprehensions, both nations routinely exchange fire along the Line of Control, the disputed boundary. Each side accuses the other of breaking the cease-fire and claims they are only retaliating for attacks from the other side. Not just that, the persistently strained relations between the countries have led to more significant occasional skirmishes and wars (1947-48, 1965, and 1999) between the two states.⁴⁶⁴ Kashmir has thus continued to remain a bone of contention and a major obstacle to peace between India and Pakistan which is compounded by militancy and the rise in violence.⁴⁶⁵

However, both states' unremitting claims over Kashmir have proven it more than a "contested piece of territory."⁴⁶⁶ The dispute over Kashmir has several implications for India and Pakistan, including nuclear deterrence, religious extremism, terrorism, and bilateralism versus global intervention in conflict resolution.⁴⁶⁷ Moreover, emerged as the nuclear powers in the South Asian region, any stand-off or conflict between India and Pakistan tends to attract more extensive international attention.

Significantly, the conventional belief that nuclear deterrence effectively contains the possibility of war or military tension between nations has proven unassuming in the India-Pakistan rivalry. While scholars have described the geopolitical and geostrategic situation in the India-Pakistan rivalry varyingly as the "ugly stability," the "stability–instability paradox," and the "instability-instability paradox," there appears to be a consensus among

⁴⁶⁴ Nicole Burnett, "Kashmir: A Path Forward for India and Pakistan?," *Pacific Council on International Policy*, August 9, 2019, <https://www.pacificcouncil.org/newsroom/kashmir-path-forward-india-and-pakistan> (Accessed May 10, 2023).

⁴⁶⁵ Sumit Ganguly et al., "India, Pakistan, and the Kashmir Dispute: Unpacking the Dynamics of a South Asian Frozen Conflict," *Asia Europe Journal* 17 (August 2018): 129, [doi:10.1007/s10308-018-0526-5](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10308-018-0526-5).

⁴⁶⁶ Robert G. Wirsing, *Kashmir in the Shadow of War* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 8.

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid.

them on the modest effect of nuclear deterrence in preventing conflicts between the adversaries.⁴⁶⁸ That means the acquisition of nuclear status has not entirely wiped out the possibility of conflicts or war, whether nuclear or conventional. Evidently, with no possibility of nuclear reversal, the situation seems to remain tense and volatile, drawing global attention. The recent Pulwama attack of suicide bombing by Pakistan-based terrorists on Indian paramilitary forces is a case in point. The incident attracted international attention as it brought the two countries dangerously close to war.

4.4 Abrogation of Article 370: Context

According to the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019, the Indian government removed Article 370, which gave special status to the state Jammu & Kashmir, on 5th August and divided the state into two union territories – Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh. A union territory is an administrative unit under the union government's control.⁴⁶⁹ The Union Territories of Jammu, Kashmir, and Ladakh came into existence on October 31, 2019.

⁴⁶⁸ Ashley J. Tellis, *Stability in South Asia* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1997), VII; Sumit Ganguly, "Indo-Pakistani Nuclear Issues and the Stability/Instability Paradox," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 18, no. 4 (1995): 325–26, [doi:10.1080/10576109508435989](https://doi.org/10.1080/10576109508435989); Paul Kapur, *Dangerous Deterrent: Nuclear Weapons Proliferation and Conflict in South Asia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 34-41.

⁴⁶⁹ PIB, "Parliament Approves Resolution to Repeal Article 370; Paves Way to Truly Integrate J&K with Indian Union," August 6, 2019, <https://pib.gov.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=192505> (Accessed March 20, 2023).

MAP OF UT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR AND UT OF LADAKH



Map 4. 1 Map of newly established Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir, along with Ladakh⁴⁷⁰

The Indian government put in place preventative measures to ensure the smooth implementation of the policy, including the deployment of tens of thousands of security personnel, the placement of the majority of prominent Kashmiri political leaders, including former J&K chief ministers Omar Abdullah and Mehbooba Mufti and People's Conference chief Sajad Lone under house arrest, the closure of schools, the expulsion of foreigners, and the imposition of a telecommunications and internet blackout.⁴⁷¹ These measures attracted multiple and diverse critical perspectives regarding the politics of the policy.

The decision to revoke Article 370 brought about a divisive and polarising atmosphere, with proponents and opponents holding different opinions about what it meant. According to the Indian government, it was done to promote regional development, economic growth, and closer integration of J&K with the rest of India to curb cross-

⁴⁷⁰ <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1590112> (Accessed March 23, 2023); <https://static.pib.gov.in/WriteReadData/userfiles/Map%20of%20UTs.pdf> (Accessed March 23, 2023).

⁴⁷¹ Jonah Blank, "India's Kashmir Move Imperils Democracy in South Asia," *The Atlantic*, August 8, 2019, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2019/08/indias-kashmir-democracy/595711/> (Accessed April 15, 2023).

border terrorism. The government stated that the region's special status under Article 370 had hampered development and fuelled terrorism and separatism. The government implemented several measures to control the situation in J&K since the repeal of Article 370, such as placing limitations on travel, communication, and internet access, deploying security forces, and initiating administrative changes in the form of the bifurcating the state into two union territories.

Critics expressed concerns about its effect on the general public in Kashmir, the human rights scenario, and civil freedoms, particularly in the wake of India's imposition of restrictions on communication, movement, and internet services. Many claimed that it adds to the erosion of democracy in India, which was already underway under the Modi government.⁴⁷² Others characterised the move as a governmental effort to divert attention from the economic slowdown that India was facing at the time.⁴⁷³ Still, many others perceived it as the government's attempt to permit non-Kashmiris to buy land in the region to alter its demographic makeup dominated by Muslims.⁴⁷⁴

Politically, the revocation attracted a lot of attention both domestically and abroad. For a start, the decision provoked a variety of contrasting responses and viewpoints at home, although political party elites and the general populace mostly supported it. Unsurprisingly, there was wide variation in the responses from Indian political parties. Rahul Gandhi, the former leader of the INC, the main political rival of the BJP, tweeted on August 6, "national integration isn't furthered by unilaterally tearing apart J&K, imprisoning elected representatives and violating our Constitution. This nation is made by its people, not plots of land. This abuse of executive power has grave implications for our national security."⁴⁷⁵

⁴⁷² Ibid.

⁴⁷³ Rasia Hashmi, "Quashing of Art 370 Was to Divert Attention from Economic Crisis," *The Siasat Daily*, September 9, 2019, <https://www.siasat.com/quashing-art-370-was-divert-attention-economic-crisis-1611628/> (Accessed April 15, 2023).

⁴⁷⁴ BBC News, "Article 370: What Happened with Kashmir and Why It Matters," August 5, 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-49234708> (Accessed April 15, 2023).

⁴⁷⁵ <https://Twitter.com/RahulGandhi/status/1158635699186225153> (Accessed April 17, 2023).

This stance was endorsed by Omar Abdullah, former Chief Minister of J&K, who stated, “government of India’s unilateral and shocking decisions today are a total betrayal of the trust that the people of Jammu & Kashmir had reposed in India ... aggression against people of the State ... has resorted to deceit and stealth in recent weeks to lay the ground for these disastrous decisions.”⁴⁷⁶ However, Arvind Kejriwal of Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), proclaimed, “we support the govt on its decisions on J & K. We hope this will bring peace and development in the state.”⁴⁷⁷ Similarly, Aaditya Thackeray of Shiv Sena (a right-wing ultranationalist party) celebrated the decision and claimed, “historic day for India. Article 370 scrapped, and Jammu and Kashmir now truly a part of India ... the path to a safer, progressive and an open J&K determined by the citizens and not anti-national elements, has been paved.”⁴⁷⁸

Internationally, the issue generated significant debates and discussions. The revocation evoked strong responses from Pakistan. Apart from initiating vigorous diplomatic campaigns against India, Pakistan downgraded its ties with New Delhi, removed the Indian high commissioner, and halted all trade between the two countries. Further, it also banned Indian films and suspended the Lahore-Delhi friendship bus service, and the Samjhauta Express runs between Lahore and Atari. Interestingly, to some extent, all these unilateral actions on various aspects of bilateral relations came as not only intriguing and surprising but also paradoxical. This is because the level of reaction and anguish provoked by the annulment of Article 370 does not behold Pakistan’s stance on the same, which was made clear by the country’s military leadership. As per a statement issued on August 6 by the Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR), which serves as the media unit of the armed forces of Pakistan, “Pakistan never recognised the sham Indian efforts to legalise its occupation of Jammu & Kashmir through Article 370 or Article 35A decades ago, efforts which have now been revoked by India itself.”⁴⁷⁹ It should be emphasised

⁴⁷⁶ <https://Twitter.com/ANI/status/1158273125831925761> (Accessed April 17, 2023).

⁴⁷⁷ <https://Twitter.com/ArvindKejriwal/status/1158280371441553409> (Accessed April 17, 2023).

⁴⁷⁸ <https://Twitter.com/AUThackeray/status/1158268696386654208> (Accessed April 17, 2023).

⁴⁷⁹ Shishir Gupta, “Pakistani Army Calls Articles 370, 35-A a Sham after India Scrapped Special Status,” *Hindustan Times*, June 12, 2020, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/pak-s-army-termed-art-370-35a-as-sham/story-fXUXUmmY6KzM8beqMwgCgI.html> (Accessed April 16, 2023).

that the military always takes the lead in major decision-making when it comes to the Kashmir issue.

This statement notwithstanding, Pakistan launched a concerted effort to mobilise the world against India. By claiming that India's action was against UN resolutions, it appealed to the UN and Islamic organisations like the Organisation of Islamic Countries (OIC) to denounce the Indian action. Imran Khan sought to foster actions against India by invoking fear among the international community about potential war and prolonged instability in South Asia. According to him, this decision would fuel resentment, resulting in violent reactions from Kashmiris. Any form of oppressive retaliatory action from India would only serve to exacerbate the already fragile security situation in the region. In this context, he contends that incidents akin to Pulwama are inevitable, setting off a cycle of blame and counter-blame as well as strikes and counterstrikes. Furthermore, in anticipation of more attacks and subsequent responses, he questioned the utility of the revocation, framing the policy as ultimately leaving no clear winners. He concluded by warning of the grave global consequences such a scenario would entail, emphasizing that this is not a mere game of nuclear brinkmanship but indicating it could potentially precipitate nuclear war.⁴⁸⁰

In another classic public diplomacy outreach, Imran Khan highlighted the issue through a *New York Times* article, urging the international community to “think beyond trade and business advantages.” He also drew parallels with history, reminding the world of the consequences of appeasement at Munich, which led to World War II. He warned that a similar danger hangs over the world once more, but this time amidst the specter of nuclear weapons.⁴⁸¹

⁴⁸⁰ Outlook, “Pulwama-Like Attacks can Happen After Revocation of Article 370: Imran Khan,” August 6, 2019, <https://www.outlookindia.com/website/story/india-news-india-has-a-racist-ideology-pakistan-pm-imran-khan-on-scrapping-of-article-370/335699> (Accessed April 16, 2023).

⁴⁸¹ Imran Khan, “The World Can’t Ignore Kashmir. We Are All in Danger,” *The New York Times*, September 6, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/30/opinion/imran-khan-kashmir-pakistan.html> (Accessed April 16, 2023).

Apart from calls for dialogue and maximum restraint on both sides, United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres expressed concerns over the restrictions and urged India's government to ease them. The UN Human Rights Chief also expressed similar concerns. The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) consisting of 57 member states representing "the collective voice of the Muslim world" urged India to rescind the decision on Article 370, calling it "unilateral illegal actions."⁴⁸² Meanwhile, US President Donald Trump expressed willingness to mediate between the two states on the Kashmir dispute. Still, India has been adamant that there was no room for American mediation because the subject was bilateral. India's stance rests on the historic Shimla Agreement, signed in July 1972 by Pakistan's Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and PM Indira Gandhi, which decided that the issue be resolved through bilateral negotiations.

In all, the revocation of Article 370 was a significant policy decision with broad ramifications. Strong reactions from within and outside India gave the policy profound political and diplomatic significance. Therefore, as the news spread, the Indian government used social media, mainly Twitter, to communicate its perspective and interact with the international community. The following section of the chapter examines how India utilized Twitter to reach out to the global audience, supported by evidence of tweets and official statements.

4.5 Official Discourse

A qualitative analysis reveals that tweets discuss various subjects, including the policy's effects on Kashmir and its residents, the responses of various communities and nations, the administration's involvement, the region's economic prospects, and the security situation. However, most tweets by government agencies could be comprehended through the lenses of three broad, interconnected themes. The major themes are – the socio-economic development of the region and national security; the region's calm and peaceful situation; and international and domestic support for the policy. These themes represent three broader narratives: narratives of justification, narratives of normalcy, and

⁴⁸² Suhasini Haidar, "Kashmir Issue: Rescind Action on Article 370, Organisation of Islamic Cooperation Tells India," *The Hindu*, September 27, 2019, <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kashmir-issue-rescind-action-on-article-370-organisation-of-islamic-cooperation-tells-india/article29522112.ece> (Accessed April 16, 2023).

narratives of support for the policy, respectively. The narratives contain a variety of viewpoints and beliefs, but, taken as a whole, indicate both proactive and counteractive intentions in terms of interactional aspects. These narratives ultimately make up the dominant discourse of the inevitability and success of India's decision to revoke Article 370.

The Socio-Economic Development of the Region and National Security

The central motive underpinning the criticism was that Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi repealed a constitutional clause that allowed Jammu and Kashmir additional autonomy from the central government to fulfil a long-standing position of the ruling party on his re-election. The fundamental assumption on which other criticisms were based served to turn the issue into an international spectacle. So, India sought to push back against the criticism and negative national and international public perception while maintaining the stance that Article 370 is an internal matter of the country and the Kashmir issue needs to be resolved bilaterally between Islamabad and New Delhi, which requires no external interference.

In many tweets, India vehemently held that the revocation was for social, economic development, and security reasons and for the benefit of the region and its people. The revocation move was projected as much needed because Article 370 permitted unequal treatment of citizens of the country. See, for instance:



Figure 4. 1 Tweets about nullification of Article 370 from PIB⁴⁸³

In this regard, Union Minister Amit Shah explains the negative aspects of Article 370, stating that it is anti-growth, anti-development, anti-women, anti-Dalit, anti-Adivasi, pro-poverty, and pro-terror. The tweet creates a narrative around the notion that Article 370 was a barrier to the region's development, particularly for women, Dalits, and Adivasis, who were supposedly discriminated against as a result of the clause. The tweet further implies that Article 370 encourages terrorism and poverty in the region. This explanation aims to justify the repeal of Article 370 as a critical measure for resolving the alleged prejudice and fostering regional growth and development.

⁴⁸³ https://Twitter.com/PIB_India/status/1159442564505731072 (Accessed March 23, 2023).



PIB India @PIB_India · Aug 6, 2019

#Article370 is anti-growth, anti-development, anti-women, anti-dalit, anti-advansi, pro-poverty and pro-terror: Union Minister @amitshah in **#LokSabha**

#JammuandKashmir **#AmitShah**



18 305 2,006

Figure 4. 2 PIB Tweets about Union Minister Amit Shah’s speech in Lok Sabha⁴⁸⁴

This was substantiated by providing an account of issues in the region. In this regard, the Union Minister of Home Affairs, Amit Shah, made significant statements regarding the legal status of certain acts and laws in Jammu and Kashmir that work against the peoples’ social welfare. He explained that laws meant for social progress and development of people in the rest of the country were denied to the people of the region. Showcasing an account of the worrying state of affairs in the area, where specific laws and actions intended to safeguard weaker groups have not been enforced, he contended that a constitutional clause designed to grant the region autonomy had not yielded appreciable results. In this context, resolving these problems and ensuring that all Jammu and Kashmir residents are given the same legal protections is imperative. For Instance:

⁴⁸⁴ https://Twitter.com/PIB_India/status/1158733701716406273 (Accessed March 23, 2023).



PIB India ✓
@PIB_India

...

Anti Child Marriage law has not been applicable to [#JammuandKashmir](#); Minority Commission and Right to Education, Whistleblower Act do not apply to J&K; [#Article370](#) has not benefited anybody: Union Minister [@amitshah](#) in [#LokSabha](#)



6:52 PM · Aug 6, 2019

Figure 4. 3 PIB Tweets about Union Minister Amit Shah’s speech in Lok Sabha⁴⁸⁵

Similarly, the abrogation was portrayed as required for the nation’s interest, safety, and security. In this regard, terrorism emanating from Pakistan was highlighted as one of the problems plaguing the region. Consider the following Tweets:

⁴⁸⁵ https://Twitter.com/PIB_India/status/1158730001048453130 (Accessed March 23, 2023).



Vice President of India

@VPIndia

For decades Jammu and Kashmir region has suffered developmental deficit due to [#terrorism](#).

Cross boarder militancy has spoiled the prospects of an entire generation of bright local youth. We cannot let this continue.

10:19 AM · Dec 23, 2019

55 Retweets 3 Quotes 315 Likes

Figure 4. 4 Vice President of India calling out Pakistan for terrorism⁴⁸⁶



PIB India @PIB_India · Aug 8, 2019

[#Article370](#) and [#Article35A](#) had only given terrorism, separatism, nepotism and massive corruptions; these Articles have been used as a weapon by [#Pakistan](#), killing atleast 42,000 people : PM [@narendramodi](#)

[#JammuandKashmir](#)



2

78

235



Figure 4. 5 Tweets by PIB about Prime Minister calling out Pakistan for terrorism.⁴⁸⁷

⁴⁸⁶ <https://Twitter.com/VPIndia/status/1208972803367559168> (Accessed March 23, 2023).

⁴⁸⁷ https://Twitter.com/PIB_India/status/1159475916164042755 (Accessed March 23, 2023).

The message is clear that decades of conflict in the area have left the region with a developmental deficit that has impeded its growth and advancement. The cross-border militancy has harmed the region's infrastructure and economic possibilities, but it has also had a significant negative impact on the youth, who are Jammu and Kashmir's future. Due to the violence and instability in the area, skilled people who could have contributed substantially to the region's growth and development have left the area, many have been killed, and the region remained volatile and lacking in development.

Therefore, India claimed that revocation would benefit the region and its people. Delhi further emphasised the advantages that the outcome of Articles 370 and 35(A) will bring to the area. For example:



Figure 4. 6 Prime Minister Modi tweets about benefits of revocation of Article 370⁴⁸⁸

⁴⁸⁸ <https://Twitter.com/narendramodi/status/1184880766163009546> (Accessed March 23, 2023).

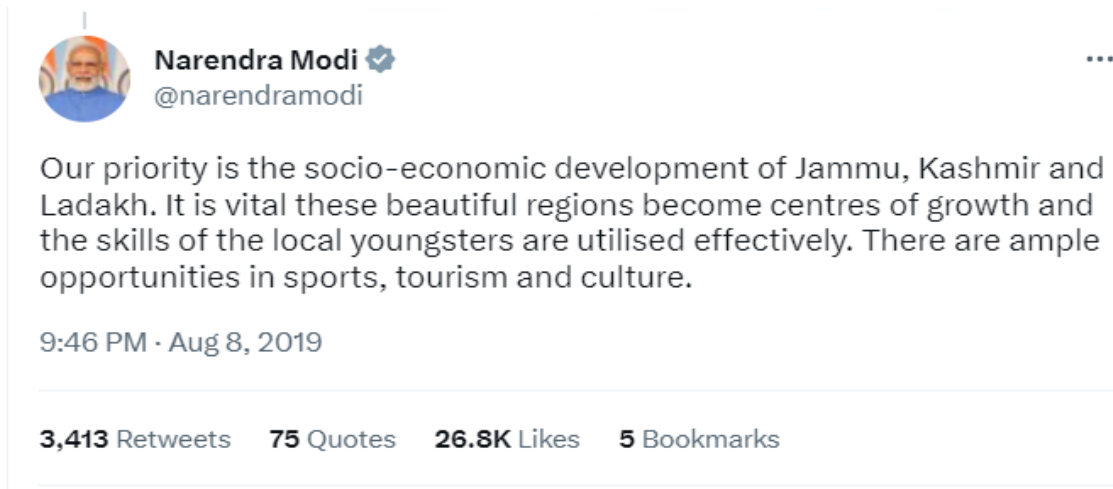


Figure 4. 7 Prime Minister tweets about his vision about J&K after revocation of Article 370⁴⁸⁹

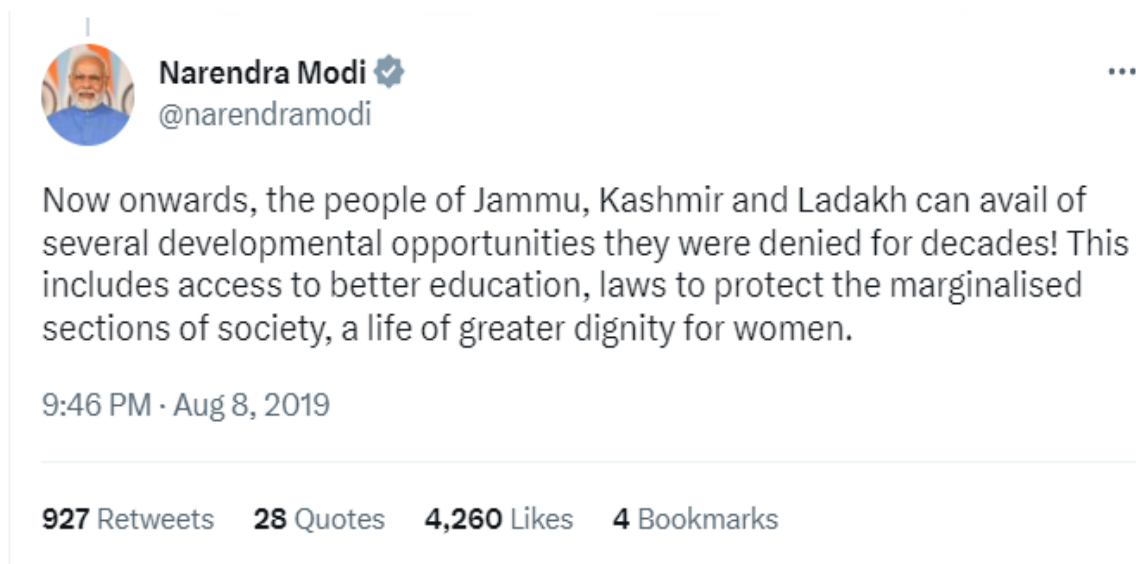


Figure 4. 8 Prime Minister tweets about his vision about J&K after revocation of Article 370⁴⁹⁰

⁴⁸⁹ <https://Twitter.com/narendramodi/status/1159498517288611841> (Accessed March 23, 2023).

⁴⁹⁰ <https://Twitter.com/narendramodi/status/1159498515250180097?lang=en> (Accessed March 23, 2023).

Claims of “Further integration” and “Boost inclusion” suggest that it would bring the inhabitants of the region closer to the country’s mainstream. The phrasing “begin industrial growth,” “increase investment,” and “create a proper environment for innovation” all imply that the decision would foster the region’s economic growth and development, leading to greater investment and employment opportunities. The phrase “ends the era of exclusion” indicates that the region had previously been ignored, and the decision would put an end to its marginalisation. Further, emphasis is also placed on the potential of the area and asserts that it is “vital” for the area to become a growth hub and efficiently utilise the talents of the local youth. The tweet emphasises the region’s opportunities in sports, tourism, and culture and suggests that it has the potential to develop into a hub of cultural and commercial activity. Additionally, the decision would provide a “life of greater dignity for women,” indicating that the decision would positively impact gender equality.

Overall, a narrative is put forward that the region is anticipated to gain from the repeal of Article 370 in J&K in several ways. The decision is likely to foster a favourable climate for innovation and growth, deeper integration, increased inclusiveness, and the start of industrial expansion. Additionally, there would be an increase in investment; people would have access to better education; laws would protect society’s outcasts; and provide women with a life with more dignity. Also, the region’s prospects for sports, tourism, cultural development, and socioeconomic growth will be fully materialised by adequately utilising the local youth’s skills while ending the exclusion era.

Beyond all this, the narrative of socio-economic development and security was further fostered through an account of the observed benefits of the revocation policy. The latter was presented in the form of updating about the situation to persuade the audience of a favourable perception. In this respect, prospects for developments and advancements in the region were conveyed to the audience to demonstrate that the government was delivering on its promises and was right about its decision, commitment, and determination to bring about positive developments in the region.

In this regard, Kashmir Saffron receiving Geographic Indication (GI) registration as a significant step towards improving its international marketing, Jammu and Kashmir government hosting a three-day Global Investors Summit from October 12 in Srinagar

were shown off as the government of India's achievements for the prosperity of the region.



Figure 4. 9 Tweets about positive changes in J&K after revocation of Article 370⁴⁹¹

Further, several tweets were carefully crafted to draw attention to various aspects of the development, such as air connectivity, tourism, local governance, employee benefits, and investment opportunities.

⁴⁹¹ <https://Twitter.com/airnewsalerts/status/1161451120839073793> (Accessed March 23, 2023);
<https://Twitter.com/diprjk/status/1176879141527769088> (Accessed March 23, 2023).



Figure 4. 10 Tweets about positive changes in J&K after revocation of Article 370⁴⁹²



Figure 4. 11 Tweets about positive changes in J&K after revocation of Article 370⁴⁹³

⁴⁹² https://Twitter.com/PIB_India/status/1202595604498542594 (Accessed March 23, 2023);
<https://Twitter.com/narendramodi/status/1187624495932010496> (Accessed March 23, 2023).

⁴⁹³ <https://Twitter.com/DDNewsLive/status/1186838721863151616> (Accessed March 23, 2023);
<https://Twitter.com/investindia/status/1182639342264578048> (Accessed March 23, 2023).

The hashtag #SabUdenSabJuden, which translates to “everyone flies, everyone connects,” embodies the government’s goal of fostering connectivity and growth in the area. Highlighting the smooth running of the BDC elections in Jammu, Kashmir, Leh, and Ladakh with 98% voter turnout and the involvement of over 1080 candidates reflect how enthusiastic and confident the populace is in the political process. The tweet depicts the government’s initiatives to build local governance and give the local population more control, which is contrary to the narrative of the Indian leadership trying to muzzle people’s voices and erode democracy and democratic institutions. The government’s efforts to draw foreign investment into the food processing sector through Invest India’s facilitated meeting with the LuLu Group, the UAE, and MoFPI were also cited as evidence of the government’s commitment to fostering regional economic growth. Additionally, the government approved all 7th CPC allowances for government employees. These actions were conveyed as the government’s commitment to enhancing the quality of life for citizens and promoting development in Jammu & Kashmir, and Ladakh.

The government’s public diplomacy outreach also stressed propagating the advantages of the abrogation through the use of positive language, such as “strong air connectivity,” “boost the tourism sector,” “historic turnout,” “payment of all 7th CPC allowances,” and “investment plans.” The tweets aim to construct a narrative that depicts the government as pro-active, forward-thinking, and attentive to the people’s needs by highlighting the development’s positive parts.

Through citing all these reasons, India projected the repeal of Article 370 as an essential first step towards bringing about positive change and the growth of the nation and the region. It stressed the need for cooperation for a better and more prosperous future and urged the public to support the choice and keep the national interest in mind. Thus, India explained to the domestic and international audiences how important it is to help the Kashmiri people, work towards development, and attempt to restore some normalcy in the region. It should be understood that restoring normalcy to the area means establishing peace, security, and economic development.

Return to Normalcy

The conversation centres on the return to normalcy in Kashmir was marked by projection of the situation as a peaceful atmosphere which allows people to continue their daily lives and economic activities without significant disturbances. The normalcy narrative encompasses two overarching themes, namely the situation's calm and peacefulness, and the government's various measures to restore normalcy.

Numerous tweets with videos projected Kashmir's serene and peaceful environment, where no alarming occurrences have been recorded in any area. Seen in the videos were regular highway traffic and locals gathered in marketplaces and ATMs. This means that things are getting back to normal in Kashmir. For instance:



Figure 4. 12 Tweets showcasing normalcy in J&K after the revocation of Article 370⁴⁹⁴

⁴⁹⁴ <https://Twitter.com/airnewsalerts/status/1160227392545144832?lang=ar-x-fm> (Accessed March 23, 2023); <https://Twitter.com/IndiaambFrance/status/1160480793552216064> (Accessed March 23, 2023).

Moreover, such tweets also showed the local Muslim community of the area preparing for and celebrating Eid with the faithful offering the Eid prayer in huge gatherings in mosques. In the Islamic religion, Eid is a significant holiday traditionally observed with prayer, family get-togethers, and feasting.



Figure 4. 13 Tweets showcasing normalcy in J&K after the revocation of Article 370⁴⁹⁵

Such tweets containing photos and updates about Eid celebrations extend beyond the surface depiction of a normal festive atmosphere in the region. The portrayal sought to drive home the point that the Muslim community's celebration of this special occasion did not face any restrictions and took place without any issues. It was particularly politically important to project these images as one of the narratives doing the rounds was that repealing Article 370 was driven by the Hindu nationalist politics of the Modi government, which is trying to impose the central government rule over the only territory

⁴⁹⁵ <https://Twitter.com/IndianEmbJkt/status/1161893771975385088> (Accessed March 23, 2023); https://Twitter.com/pbns_india/status/1160521358121455619 (Accessed March 23, 2023).

in India with a Muslim majority. In such a context, these images could provide a fig leaf of credibility to India's projection of the policy as not negatively targeted at any particular community.

The normalcy narrative was further sought to build through positive visuals of the region, highlighting the area's peace, cultural activities, healthcare facilities, and education. Consider the following examples:

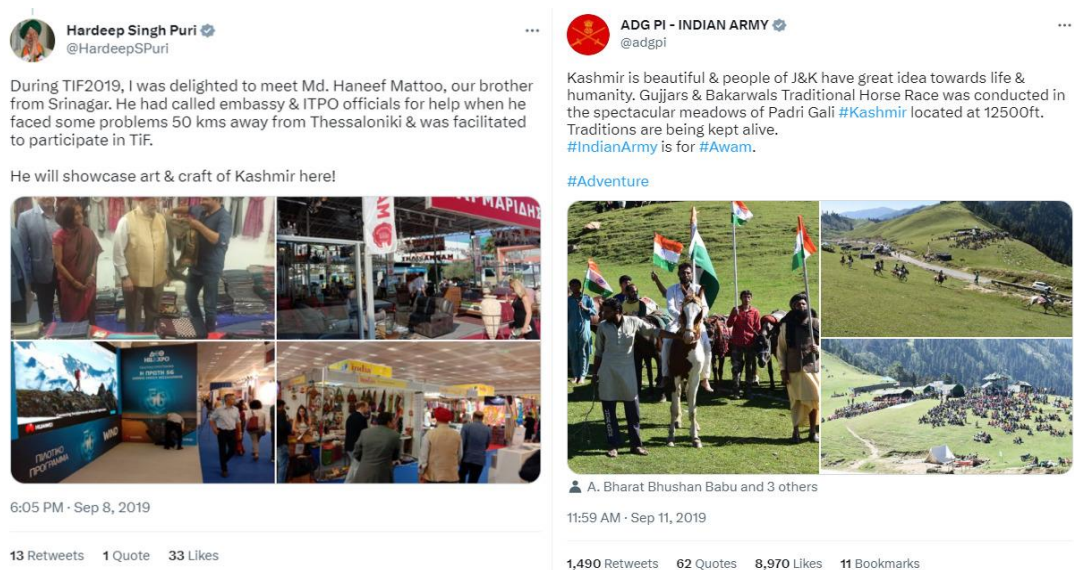




Figure 4. 14 Normalcy and positive developments in J&K

The tweets communicate positive representations.⁴⁹⁶ The region's natural beauty and customary horse racing held by the Gujjar and Bakarwal communities are highlighted to emphasise that the government allows the locals to practice their customs and the concept of life and humanity. Similarly, the Kashmiri artist's recent participation in an Indian event and display of the art and craft of the region was portrayed as a success story to provide evidence that the Indian government is taking steps to promote Kashmiri culture. Further it also showcases to the world the government extends full support to the artist's participation.

At the same time, busy visuals of hospitals were proof that the region's healthcare system is operating normally and giving residents health care as usual. It also illustrates that, despite the difficulties brought on by the repeal of Article 370, the Indian government is meeting the healthcare demands of the local populace. Likewise, the enthusiasm for learning among Kupwara children reflects the regularity of academic activities in the area. It also asserts that the Indian government is devoted to offering educational

⁴⁹⁶ <https://Twitter.com/HardeepSPuri/status/1170677067429498881> (Accessed March 23, 2023).
<https://Twitter.com/adgpi/status/1171672144897462272?lang=en> (Accessed March 23, 2023);
<https://Twitter.com/IndianEmbassyUS/status/1197189575506112515> (Accessed March 23, 2023);
<https://Twitter.com/ChinarcorpsIA/status/1164920573262102530> (Accessed March 23, 2023);
<https://Twitter.com/diprjk/status/1168539128520040449> (Accessed March 23, 2023).

opportunities to youngsters in the area and portrays the desire for education as a positive indicator. Nevertheless, it is important to highlight that there were reports of disruptions to healthcare and medical services in Jammu and Kashmir following the abrupt revocation of Article 370 by the government.

Overall, the tweets paint a picture of the routine of life in India's Jammu and Kashmir area after Article 370 was repealed. They emphasise the region's rich cultural heritage, medical services, tourism, and educational opportunities, all of which point to its stable and promising condition. If anything, all of which was an effort to counteract pessimistic narratives about the region's predicament and to give an optimistic view of the Indian government's initiatives.

In addition to all of this, as was already indicated, the Indian government also showed the audience numerous measures being taken to return the region to normalcy. The tweets present the return of mobile phone coverage as an important step towards bringing the area back to normalcy. The tweets specifically affirm the restoration of post-paid mobile phones in the province of Kashmir and announce the restoration of mobile phone connectivity in all areas of Jammu and Kashmir, all of which are presented as positive news. See, for instance:



Kashyap Kadagattur  
@iamkash_kr

...

There's no curfew or restriction anywhere in Kashmir except in few minds. It is business as usual in Kashmir. Post paid mobile phones and land lines are fully functional. Shops n market crowded with people. Please see yourself.



Figure 4. 15 Tweet showcasing the routine daily life in Kashmir⁴⁹⁷

⁴⁹⁷ https://Twitter.com/iamkash_kr/status/1204808651732471808 (Accessed March 23, 2023).



India in Indonesia 
@IndianEmbJkt

...

All parts of Jammu and kashmir to have mobile phone connectivity from tomorrow.

Government of Jammu & Kashmir
Press Statement

Mobile phones to be restored from 12 noon on Monday, 14 October 2019

October 12, 2019: In the light of the important constitutional changes that were made in relation to Jammu & Kashmir in August 2019, a number of restrictions were imposed from 4 August 2019 in order to prevent externally aided terrorists from disturbing peace and inflicting casualties on innocent citizens.

It is now a well established fact that there have been sustained attempts from across the border, both in the past and more so in the last two months, to promote militancy and terrorism in Jammu & Kashmir in order to create a sense of fear and terror among the people and keep the place in a disturbed condition. It is also a fact that the attempts from across the border to disturb normal life continue. Credible inputs continue to be received of the likelihood of large scale terrorist attacks, sponsored by forces inimical to the nation and from outside its borders. These terrorist attacks are meant not only to cause large scale damage to life and property but also create an atmosphere of fear and terror among the people of Jammu & Kashmir, the vast majority of whom are peace loving. Banned organizations such as Lashkar-e-Toiba, Jaish-e-Mohammed, Hizbul Mujahideen continue to make attempts to terrorise the people of Jammu & Kashmir.

It was in anticipation of this that the restrictions were imposed so that externally aided terrorism does not lead to a loss of innocent lives. It is a tribute, both to the people of Jammu & Kashmir and to the security forces, that these measures have ensured that there is no unnecessary loss of life in Jammu & Kashmir. This is remarkable, given the history of events in 2008, 2010 & 2016. Some killings and injuries have been inflicted by terrorists, including on a baby, to prevent traders, businessmen and transporters from doing their normal business.

Since 16 August, there has been a gradual removal of the restrictions that were imposed and by the first week of September, most restrictions were removed. Barring 8-10 Police Stations, movement restrictions have been completely removed. Over 99% of the area of Jammu & Kashmir has no restrictions on movement. Telephone landlines have been fully restored and are functioning for over six weeks. Mobile phone facilities were restored in Jammu and Ladakh and subsequently in Kupwara district. Media was facilitated through the Media Centre equipped with all

facilities. Schools were gradually reopened since August and Universities, Colleges and Higher Secondary schools were reopened in the last 10 days. Examination schedules have been announced. Air services are operating normally and air booking has been facilitated in Srinagar with new counters in the city. People inconvenienced by restrictions were facilitated. Haj Yatris were helped in their travels. 25 Internet kiosks are operating in each district in the DC office to help students, contractors and government departments to carry out their functions. Students have been using this facility to apply for exams, download admission cards, etc.

This week, the Travel Advisory to tourists issued in August 2019 has been lifted. Tourists are welcome to visit the state and they will be facilitated for their visit. Internet facilities are being opened in tourist places to assist tourists wanting to access internet.

To help apple growers, an ambitious Market Intervention Scheme has been launched by the Central Government through NAFED and the Horticulture department here. The prices for apples have been revised last week and the prices for the best varieties are highly competitive.

Having reviewed the situation in Jammu & Kashmir, a decision has been taken to **restore mobile phone facilities in all the remaining areas of Jammu & Kashmir. More specifically, all post-paid mobile phones, irrespective of the telecom service provider, will stand restored and be functional from 12 noon on Monday, 14 October 2019. This will cover all 10 districts of Kashmir province.** With this step, tourists will be able to visit the state without being handicapped by the lack of phone connectivity, students can be in touch with parents while attending schools, businessmen can be in touch with customers, transporters can contact clients, and contractors can be in touch with staff.

The government urges businessmen, industrialists, traders, transporters, shopkeepers, hoteliers and contractors not to be frightened by the threats of terrorists and separatists and go about their normal activities. The government is firm in its resolve that the attempts of these disruptive elements will be foiled. The Government thanks the people of Jammu & Kashmir for being cooperative and helping in maintaining peace and public order.

 Menteri Luar Negeri Republik Indonesia and 2 others

9:56 AM · Oct 13, 2019

Figure 4. 16 Tweet by Indian Embassy (Indonesia) about restoring mobile phone connectivity⁴⁹⁸

⁴⁹⁸ <https://Twitter.com/IndianEmbJkt/status/1183237647017201664> (Accessed March 23, 2023).



Information & PR, J&K

@diprjk

SRINAGAR, OCTOBER 12: Jammu and Kashmir Government today announced that all post-paid mobile phones in Kashmir province would be restored from October 14 (Monday), 2019 from 12 noon.

2:41 PM · Oct 12, 2019

88 Retweets 11 Quotes 258 Likes



Shahid Choudhary

@listenshahid

With latest clearance, the telephone network in Kashmir is set to be almost normal by Monday. Politics apart, from world's powerful newsrooms to UNGA, this was biggest, perhaps only, complaint since August 5. Together, let's hope best for the Internet

2:37 PM · Oct 12, 2019

486 Retweets 90 Quotes 3,059 Likes 2 Bookmarks

Figure 4. 17 Tweets from J&K officials providing updates on the restoration of cell phone connectivity⁴⁹⁹

The tweets imply that restoring cell phone connectivity is one crucial step in resolving the issues and returning to normalcy. The tweets further suggest that there are no curfews or other restrictions in effect in Kashmir and that everything is operating regularly there, including landlines, marketplaces, shops, and markets. Overall, the tweets portray the reinstatement of mobile phone coverage as a sign that life in Jammu and Kashmir is returning to normal.

Measures taken for arranging the Muharram celebration were also highlighted. See the tweet below:

⁴⁹⁹ <https://Twitter.com/diprjk/status/1182946960560410624> (Accessed March 23, 2023); <https://Twitter.com/listenshahid/status/1182945953575141376> (Accessed March 23, 2023).



Information & PR, J&K
@diprjk

...

#Kashmir prepares for Muharram-ul-Harram starting Sept 01

DC Budgam, Bandipora review arrangements.

Essential services to be ensured, Fire & Emergency Authorities to remain alert, available to facilitate public.

@dwivedimk_jas @JmuKmrPolice

7:42 PM · Aug 21, 2019

10 Retweets 22 Likes

Figure 4. 18 Tweets from J&K officials providing updates on preparation for Muharram-ul-Harram, Muslim religious event.⁵⁰⁰

As evident, the hashtag #Kashmir is used to place the tweet in a specific geographic and political context, highlighting how significant the event is to the area. To foster a sense of community and support for the general public during the event, the phrase “available to facilitate public” is used. Additionally, by focusing on reviewing plans and providing essential services, the tweet creates a sense of preparedness and security. Overall, Tweets position the government as responsible and attentive to the people’s demands by creating a sense of security, readiness, and community support in advance of the impending catastrophe.

Widespread Support for the Policy

A compelling narrative of support was essential for the government to navigate the difficulties of the policy. Discursive constructions have been used to portray domestic, international, and regional support for the policy from diverse sources. The government needed a powerful narrative of overwhelming support to defend its revocation policy against other criticism, such as the government’s tyranny in oppressing the populace and their rights, as well as the larger narrative of democratic erosion in the nation, which was

⁵⁰⁰ <https://Twitter.com/diprjk/status/1164178498409254913> (Accessed March 23, 2023).

all doing the rounds on digital and social media during the days that followed the policy's abrogation.

All effort were made to look like the decision a collective one as against the criticism that the government took the decision without in consultation with stakeholders. Critics have claimed that the government did not sufficiently consult with or take into account the opinions of the people of J&K. While others were of the opinion that the decision was hurried and made without sufficient consideration of all of the possible outcomes, particularly how it may affect the region's economy and security situation. Consider the following examples:

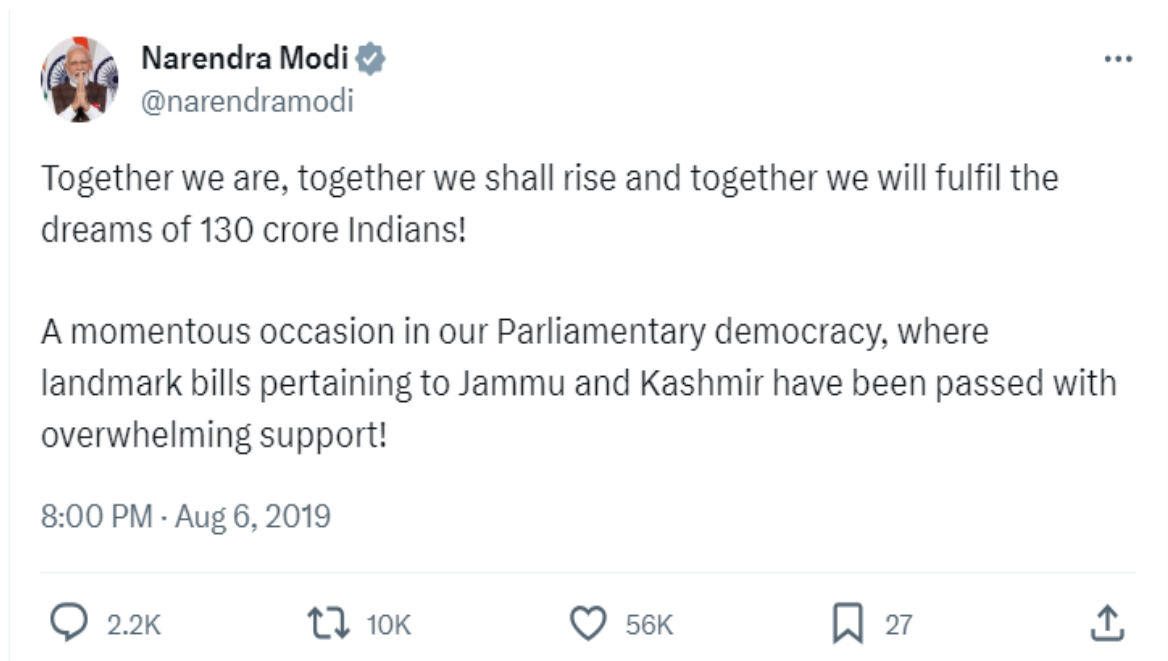


Figure 4. 19 Tweets from the Prime Minister affirming the overwhelming parliamentary support for the revocation of Article 370.⁵⁰¹

⁵⁰¹ <https://Twitter.com/narendramodi/status/1158747246717853696> (Accessed March 23, 2023).



Figure 4. 20 Tweets about Lok Sabha passing the J&K reorganization bill with tremendous majority.⁵⁰²

It is evident that in these tweets, the policy was depicted as having garnered resounding support and serving as a symbol of India’s parliamentary democracy, national pride, and unity. The phrases “Together we are, together we shall rise,” and “overwhelming support” emphasise a sense of unity and collective action that speaks to a broad spectrum of people to convey the impression that the programme is broadly supported and has a strong mandate. The phrase “130 crore Indians,” in a similar vein, evokes a sense of national pride and implies that the policy is advantageous to the entire nation.

⁵⁰² https://Twitter.com/PIB_India/status/1158738383000051712 (Accessed March 23, 2023).

Additionally, the fact that the bills were approved through a democratic process suggests that the policy is righteous and consistent with democratic principles.

The local populace's support for the policy and their celebration of it were also displayed to help bolster this viewpoint. For instance, a news report of *India Today* coverage in which the public celebrating the revocation was shown. The video shows people recalling their sufferings because of Article 370 and says the current revocation is a moment of freedom for them.



Figure 4. 21 Tweet displaying public sentiment in favor of the revocation of Article 370.⁵⁰³

⁵⁰³ <https://Twitter.com/PoojaShali/status/1159548166997340160> (Accessed March 23, 2023).

Similarly, a video of Kashmir youths exhorting fellow Kashmiris to accept the temporary minor problems for a better future was shared by the Indian Embassy in Japan.⁵⁰⁴



Figure 4. 22 Tweet displaying public sentiment in favor of the revocation of Article 370

Furthermore, a portrayal that India's freedom fighters and revered figures would have loved to see the revocation of Article 370 was put forward. Such formulation was aimed at pointing out that these visionaries' and leaders' dreams had ultimately materialised years later. In this story, the government's decision was portrayed as a step towards realising the goals of those who had battled for India's freedom and continuing the fight for Indian independence.

⁵⁰⁴ <https://Twitter.com/IndianEmbTokyo/status/1167633287512092672> (Accessed March 23, 2023).

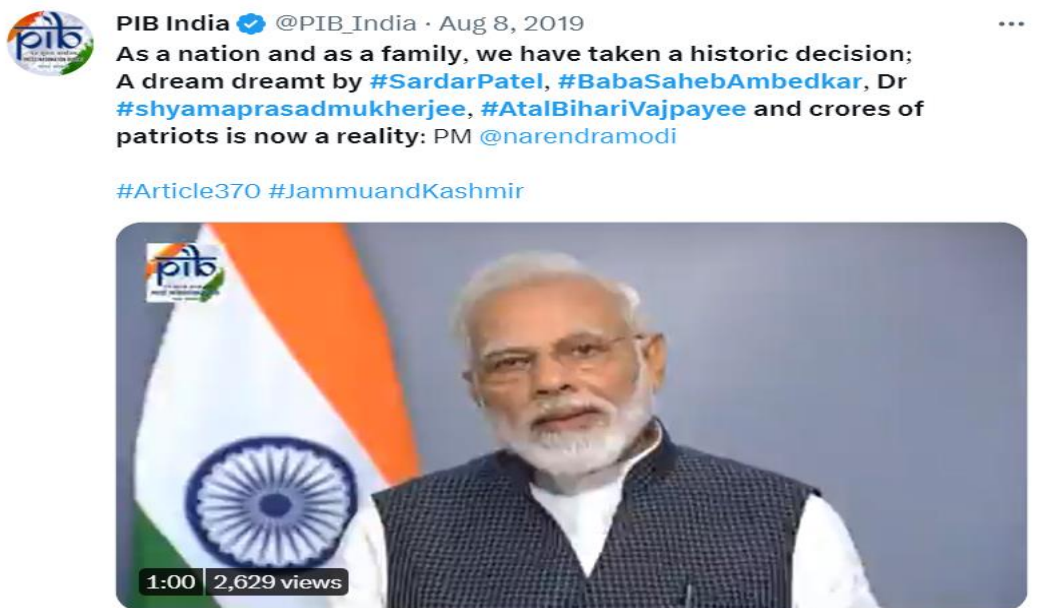


Figure 4. 23 Prime Minister’s remark about Article 370 revocation⁵⁰⁵

According to the tweet, many significant figures in India’s history, including Sardar Patel, Ambedkar, Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, and countless other patriotic Indians, waited patiently for the judgement in question. The mention of these well-known individuals suggests that the choice has substantial historical and cultural significance for India as a nation and represents the fulfilment of a long-held dream held by numerous patriots and highly regarded national icons.

Additionally, India also showcased the support it received from several nations and international organisations. In this regard, countries such as the United States, Israel, Russia, and several other nations and the UN Security Council backing India’s decision as an internal matter of India was highlighted. For example:

⁵⁰⁵ https://Twitter.com/PIB_India/status/1159474343442731008 (Accessed March 23, 2023).



Figure 4. 24 Tweets highlighting international support for India's revocation of Article 370⁵⁰⁶

It should be noted that public diplomacy is the practice of a country's government or other actors trying to change the public opinion and perception of their country overseas. Showcasing worldwide support may be a valuable instrument in this process. A nation can establish its policies and activities that other countries regard and value by highlighting international support, which can help it gain credibility and improve its reputation worldwide. Additionally, it can assist in fending off unfavourable assumptions or criticism from other nations or international organisations.

Finally, support from celebrities also formed part of India's narrative of popular support. Rajnikant and Pullela Gopichand were shown showering appreciating the government for bringing the policy. Celebrity endorsements can help public diplomacy efforts succeed by amplifying messages and reaching broader audiences. Celebrities' endorsements of a country's policies or activities can facilitate in developing favourable impressions of those policies.

⁵⁰⁶ <https://Twitter.com/timesofindia/status/1160279651090145281> (Accessed March 23, 2023); <https://Twitter.com/airnewsalerts/status/1164381291841642498> (Accessed March 23, 2023).



Figure 4. 25 PIB retweets celebrities supporting the revocation of Article 370⁵⁰⁷

The support of Muslim organisations was similarly highlighted. The Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind, one of the most renowned Muslim institutions with millions of adherents, and Kashmir forums in Canada and Europe are two examples.

The Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind group argued in favour of Kashmir's total fusion with India. Because people tend to trust and value the opinions of those who share their backgrounds, values, and beliefs, communities play an important role in forming the perceptions and opinions of their members. Positive narratives and false information about a nation or its policies may be combatted with support from inside the community. Community influencers and leaders can serve as advocates and aid in dispelling any myths or misconceptions that could exist in their neighbourhoods. More importantly, these tweets helped to counteract the image of the government and the particular decision which was branded by some and especially Pakistan, as anti-Muslim. Notably, India sought to defy the narrative that Prime Minister Narendra Modi is pursuing a Hindu nationalist strategy

⁵⁰⁷ <https://Twitter.com/pibchennai/status/1160426794962395136> (Accessed March 23, 2023); https://Twitter.com/pib_india/status/1160428737894076416 (Accessed March 23, 2023).

to erode minority rights in the most populous democracy in the world and at ending Muslim supremacy in Kashmir.





DD News 
@DDNewslive



Indo-Canadian Kashmir forum, Indo-European Kashmir forum supports move on [#Article370](#)

10:07 AM · Aug 6, 2019

227 Retweets 7 Quotes 1,459 Likes 1 Bookmark

Figure 4. 26 Tweets and retweets displaying Kashmir and Muslim diaspora organizations' support for the revocation of Article 370.⁵⁰⁸

Still, in the broader context, although India sought to utilize Twitter for effective public outreach, its public diplomacy efforts through the platform do not seem to have fully leveraged its potential. The affordances of Twitter, which include two-way communication and dialogue – foundational elements of public diplomacy on social media, were noticeably absent in India's approach. Moreover, the use of Twitter appeared fragmented, lacking a concerted and unified effort by India's embassies. For instance, the announcement of the restoration of mobile connectivity in the region received minimal traction, with only a few embassies, such as the Embassy in Indonesia, the US, and Pakistan, participating in retweets. Surprisingly, other embassies overlooked this significant update, reflecting a lack of coordinated engagement.

More curiously, despite being positioned as a conduit for digital diplomacy, the designated Twitter account of India's Public Diplomacy Division, identified as the MEA's involvement through digital diplomacy on its profile, remained largely dormant in communicating and engaging the public regarding the events following the revocation of Article 370.

⁵⁰⁸ https://Twitter.com/HCI_London/status/1172604425690632192 (Accessed March 23, 2023); <https://Twitter.com/DDNewslive/status/1158597971161866240> (Accessed March 23, 2023).

Similarly, Indian embassies and agencies demonstrated a lacklustre effort in broadcasting the success story of the local body elections held for 310 Block Development Councils (the second tier in the Panchayati Raj system) across Jammu and Kashmir. These elections were particularly significant as they constituted the first democratic process following the revocation of special status. Since democracy is a fundamental pillar of the Indian state and concerns were raised about the perceived undemocratic aspects of the execution of the Article 370 revocation, this could have been a minimum effort to project and highlight India's commitment to democratic practices.

Further, the dissemination of a pamphlet by the government elucidating the necessity of revoking Article 370 and detailing the benefits for Jammu, Kashmir, and Ladakh encountered a similar challenge. Despite addressing crucial aspects and aiming to dispel fears and rumours, the outreach on this matter lacked widespread dissemination from the Indian embassies abroad on Twitter as many of them did not amplify the information. The Twitter account of India's Public Diplomacy Division also failed to do the same, indicating a missed opportunity for effective communication and engagement.

At the same time, characterized by strategic messaging through selective information control, political endorsement, and media influence, India's public diplomacy efforts sometimes crossed the line into propaganda. The flow of unbiased information and viewpoints from journalists on the ground was curtailed when the Indian government barred media access to Kashmir following the revocation. These restrictions enabled the government to largely control the narrative delivered to the public on a national and international level, possibly painting an inaccurate or incomplete picture.

For example, there were reports in several Indian newspapers of a shortage of medicines, potentially leading to a healthcare crisis.⁵⁰⁹ However, both the governments of India and

⁵⁰⁹ "Home Ministry Denies Claim of Life Saving Drugs Shortage in J&K," *The Wire*, August 26, 2019, <https://thewire.in/health/mha-life-saving-drugs-shortage-jk> (Accessed March 22, 2023); Aakash Hassan, "Kashmir Dispatch 11 | Valley Running Out of Medicines With No Fresh Supply Coming, Say Doctors," *News18*, August 25, 2019, <https://www.news18.com/news/india/kashmir-dispatch-11-valley-running-out-of-medicines-with-no-fresh-supply-coming-say-doctors-2282033.html> (Accessed March 22, 2023).

Kashmir sought to maintain an image of competence and control by dismissing the reports outright. The official handle of the Dept. of Information & Public Relations of J&K government (@diprjk) refuted the claims of medicine shortages through statements released on Twitter. Likewise, the Srinagar district magistrate Shahid Choudhary, along with J&K Governor Satya Pal Malik also dismissed reports of medicine scarcity and asserted that there was no dearth of medicines or essential commodities anywhere in the region.⁵¹⁰

Further, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) also addressed the issue through tweets, stating that a large number of pharmacies remained open in Srinagar and across the Valley. The MHA also refuted claims of overpricing and provided statistics to demonstrate the availability of medicines and the functioning of retail and wholesale drug shops. While the MHA specified the average delivery time from Jammu, where most distributors are based, they did not clarify whether the same timeframe applied to deliveries across the entire Valley.⁵¹¹ That is, while statistics were provided to demonstrate the availability of medicines and the operational status of drug shops, deflecting attention away from potential shortcomings, there was a lack of clarity regarding the accessibility of medicines in remote or rural areas within the Valley.

As things stand, the coordinated public diplomacy efforts across various official channels, including the Dept. of Information & Public Relations of J&K government, the Srinagar district magistrate, and the Ministry of Home Affairs, to refute the claims of medicine shortages appears as elements of a strategic propaganda campaign. Thus, the governments seemed to have sought to maintain control over the discourse surrounding the situation in Kashmir through swift denials, coordinated messaging, and selective presentation of information, thereby reinforcing their authority and legitimacy in the eyes of the public.

⁵¹⁰ “Home Ministry Denies Claim of Life Saving Drugs Shortage in J&K.”; “‘No Shortage of Essential Items in J&K, Curbs Saved Lives’: Guv Malik,” *Hindustan Times*, June 21, 2020, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/phone-restrictions-helped-save-lives-in-jammu-kashmir-governor-satya-pal-malik/story-YSNWksjorJcx1ss4Ev3M4K.html> (Accessed March 22, 2023).

⁵¹¹ “Home Ministry Denies Claim of Life Saving Drugs Shortage in J&K.”

4.6 Public Discourse on Twitter

The public tweets show the vast range of feelings and viewpoints that have been expressed in response to Article 370's cancellation. Here again, India's English-speaking public expressed a variety of opinions, emotions, and arguments. More specifically, while most tweets were appreciative and happy with the change, a considerable few were against it and disagreed with the government's choice.

The dominant public expression at the revocation of Article 370 was happiness, gratitude, and pride. Public expressed appreciation and joy for what they called the historic decision. Public sentiment conveys a sense of anticipation and significance surrounding the revocation of Article 370. It suggests that the country as a whole is eagerly awaiting the outcome in Kashmir, emphasizing its importance. Such expression displays a congratulatory tone, projects a sense of national unity and empowerment, and suggests that the dreams and aspirations of the citizens from all regions, including Jammu, Kashmir, and Ladakh, will be fulfilled with the collective strength and support of the nation. They also show that complete integration of Kashmir into India could raise support for the government and increase faith in governance. They evoke a sense of national pride, emphasize the fulfilment of aspirations, express apologies for prior doubt, and highlight the positive impact on the youth. The tweets aim to create a positive narrative around the revocation, projecting it as a step toward unity, progress, and empowerment for all regions, including Jammu, Kashmir, and Ladakh.

Several tweets expressing support for the revocation highlighted the aspirations of people in Ladakh for freedom from perceived discrimination. These tweets align with the government's narrative of promoting regional development and addressing disparities, and bringing inclusivity. By showcasing the voices of the local population, the tweets aimed to garner public support and reinforce the notion that the decision was in the best interest of the people. Additionally, tweets that appreciated the revocation and paid tribute to political figures like Sushma Swaraj aimed to evoke a sense of national pride and reinforce the government's message of fulfilling the dreams and aspirations of the citizens. These tweets showcased the discursive characteristic of nostalgia and gratitude, invoking positive emotions and further solidifying public support. The tweets that follow serve as examples:

Congratulations India! Sardar Patel's dream of 'Ek Bharat - Shreshtha Bharat' has been realised. Dreams and aspirations of the citizens of every region of Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh will be fulfilled with strength & support of the whole Nation.⁵¹²

#KashmirParFinalFight Sorry @narendramodi Bhai i had lost faith in you & your focus for a while. My sincere apologies Complete Kashmir integration is a dream come true & pray for your success. Once again apologies for losing faith in you.⁵¹³

Here's to more inclusiveness. May there be peace and love. #Article370.⁵¹⁴

It is a wonderful time to be young in India. I see so much energy and ambition. It should be a wonderful time to be young in Kashmir and Ladakh too.⁵¹⁵

While a bunch of well meaning people break their heads over how #Article370 is being scrapped (me included), I'm very much aware that a large section of the population don't give a shit about *how* this was done. They only care about it getting done. That's where BJP is winning.⁵¹⁶

More importantly, the public support included Kashmiris themselves expressing their joy and celebrating the policy. Such support was conveyed in the form of personal gratitude, pride, and celebration, emphasizing the symbolic value and legitimacy of the decision. Here are a few tweets as examples:

I HAVE WOKEN UP IN NY TO THE BEST NEWS OF MY LIFE ABOUT KASHMIR. AND ON THE DAY MY AUTOBIOGRAPHY #LessonsLifeTaughtMeUnknowingly RELEASES! WHAT BETTER GIFT

⁵¹² <https://Twitter.com/smritiirani/status/1158752522582024193> (Accessed April 22, 2023).

⁵¹³ <https://Twitter.com/Kaalateetham/status/1158204046085246976> (Accessed April 22, 2023).

⁵¹⁴ <https://Twitter.com/mohammadkaif/status/1158308777302454272> (Accessed April 22, 2023).

⁵¹⁵ https://Twitter.com/bhogleharsha/status/1158982371330314241?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw (Accessed April 22, 2023).

⁵¹⁶ <https://Twitter.com/Memeghnad/status/1158569444680929286> (Accessed April 23, 2023).

LIFE STORY OF A KASHMIRI BOY COULD GET. THANK YOU GOD, #GovtOfIndia, PM @narendramodi, @AmitShah. CONGRATULATIONS INDIA.⁵¹⁷

It took 370 votes inside Lok Sabha (Indian Parliament) to abolish Article 370 from Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh. 😊 #ProudKashmiri.⁵¹⁸

It is noticeable from the tweets that there is a spirit of joy and pride. The revocation is viewed as a symbolic gift for a Kashmiri boy's life tale. God, the Indian government, and in particular Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Amit Shah, who painstakingly oversaw the decision, are greatly appreciated. Further, the hashtag #ProudKashmiri conveys a sense of positivity and personal pride as a Kashmiri in relation to the revocation. The tweet reinforces a sense of accomplishment and legitimacy in the decision-making process.

It should be noted that the visible support from Kashmiris contributes to a favourable image of India's policy and actions. That is, the endorsement of the revocation by the Kashmiri population adds credibility and legitimacy to the decision in the eyes of both domestic and international audiences.

Public also highlighted the benefits of the revocation of Article 370. Framing it as a positive step toward peace, development, and growth in Jammu and Kashmir. They employ persuasive language, emotional appeals, and praise for key figures involved in the decision to shape public opinion and generate a favourable discourse around the revocation. As an illustration, consider a handful of tweets below:

Landmark move - scrapping of #Article370! Looking forward to smoother, and more inclusive times. #JaiHind.⁵¹⁹

⁵¹⁷ <https://Twitter.com/AnupamPKher/status/1158317562171678720> (Accessed April 23, 2023).

⁵¹⁸ <https://Twitter.com/adityarajkaul/status/1158740204510838789> (Accessed April 23, 2023).

⁵¹⁹ <https://Twitter.com/ImRaina/status/1158299458645348352> (Accessed April 23, 2023).

Kashmiris from North Kashmir say they are happy with the abolition of Article 370 and want peace and development to now begin with the end of Funds Raj (Criminal rule). This is in the interiors of North Kashmir which does often see infiltration from Pakistan. Brave voices.⁵²⁰

PM @narendramodi ji ne kamaal kar diya. Desh ki ummeedon pe khare utre. Many many congrats to @narendramodi ji and @AmitShah ji on this historic decision regarding #Article370. This has opened up the path of growth and development for #JammuAndKashmir.⁵²¹

These tweets describe the revocation of Article 370 as a historic moment in Indian history. It highlights Home Minister Amit Shah's announcement in parliament and attributes the decision to the advice of the President of India while conveying a sense of emotional intensity through phrases like "goosebumps" and "emotional moment for us all." Further, revocation is framed as an opportunity for peace and development and criticizes the previous governments' failure as "Funds Raj" or "Criminal rule." By mentioning the infiltration from Pakistan, the tweet suggests that the revocation is seen as a measure to address security concerns.

The use of the phrase "Brave voices" implies that those expressing support for the revocation are courageous in their stance. Tweets also applaud Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah for the historic decision to revoke Article 370. It portrays the decision as extraordinary ("kamaal kar diya") and states that it has raised the hopes of the country. In doing so, the tweets suggested that the revocation would pave the way for growth and development in Jammu and Kashmir. By using congratulatory language and including the hashtags #Article370 and #JammuAndKashmir, the tweet seeks to rally support and generate positive sentiment around the decision.

Public opinion also emphasised India's democratic values, commitment to the rule of law, and willingness to take bold steps to address long-standing issues. It also emphasizes

⁵²⁰ <https://Twitter.com/AdityaRajKaul/status/1158973120625049600> (Accessed April 24, 2023).

⁵²¹ https://Twitter.com/ShahnawazBJP/status/1158262088881491971?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw (Accessed April 24, 2023).

the leadership's commitment to ensuring security and acknowledges the sacrifices made by the security forces.

A historic decision taken by @narendramodi Govt by reorganizing J&K & abrogating #Article370. What a statesman like address by Home Minister @AmitShah in Rajya Sabha. It is time to undo many historic wrongs and create a New India. Proud moment for every Indian. Jai Hind!⁵²²

Victory of democracy. Victory of India. Azaadi from separatists! 1. #Article370 finished. 2. Article 35A scrapped. Constitution of India will now apply to Jammu Kashmir. Indian Preamble will now apply. History made. thankyou @PMOIndia @narendramodi @AmitShah.⁵²³

Thank you to NSA Ajit Doval for giving the green signal and shouldering the responsibility for entire security and safety of people in Jammu & Kashmir as well as Ladakh. The resolve you have shown is unparalleled. As you say, this is to help people in Kashmir as equal Indians.⁵²⁴

These tweets reflect positively on public diplomacy as they display that Kashmiris, including those living outside the region, have welcomed the government's decision. Their opinions can influence how the issue is discussed and framed in the media and public discourse and can shape the attitudes and perceptions of the foreign public towards the issue and the country as a whole. These tweets also emphasize the positive impact of the move on the lives of Kashmiris, which can help to counter negative narratives about the government's policies in the region. It is essential to mention the importance of local support for the success of public diplomacy initiatives. In this case, the positive reactions from the people of Kashmir can be seen as a contribution to the Indian government's public diplomacy strategy.

⁵²² <https://Twitter.com/rsprasad/status/1158424830992977927> (Accessed April 24, 2023).

⁵²³ <https://Twitter.com/pradip103/status/1158255547822432256> (Accessed April 24, 2023).

⁵²⁴ <https://Twitter.com/AdityaRajKaul/status/1158285480951238656> (Accessed April 26, 2023).

What is more, public tweets also called out Pakistan and mocked and trolled the country for its inability to act. Further, Pakistan's support of terrorism against India was a subject of public criticism. This contributes to India's public diplomacy of countering Pakistan's narrative and presenting India as a victim of cross-border terrorism. By ridiculing Pakistan's actions and highlighting their economic repercussions, these tweets sought to discredit Pakistan's stance and position India as a responsible and victimized nation. A couple of the tweets listed below are examples:

#BREAKING: Minutes after Imran Khan lies about support from 'Muslim countries', UAE supports India on abrogation of Article 370 from Jammu & Kashmir. UAE views it as an Internal matter of India to reduce regional disparity and improving efficiency.⁵²⁵

Pakistan wants to suspend trade with India. Yet will keep exporting terrorists, & Jihadis with weapons and bombs to both India and Afghanistan. Pakistan wants to punish India with such measures for Kashmir move. Laughable. It will only ruin Pakistan economy further. Such jokers!⁵²⁶

Ok folks drumroll..... the UNITED ARAB EMIRATES yeah you heard that right ARAB ... SUPPORTS #KashmirIntegrated so much for Imran Khan & Pakistan's "diplomatic offensive."⁵²⁷

Good thing is @ImranKhanPTI & @OfficialDGISPR have tested the resolve of @narendramodi and paid dearly for it. Twice over. Hopefully, Generals in Pakistan Army will realise that any folly will cost them heavily and steer clear of any misadventure in Kashmir or the heartland.⁵²⁸

⁵²⁵ <https://Twitter.com/adityarajkaul/status/1158708814830624781?lang=ar-x-fm> (Accessed April 26, 2023).

⁵²⁶ <https://Twitter.com/adityarajkaul/status/1159105953989562368> (Accessed April 26, 2023).

⁵²⁷ <https://Twitter.com/Iyervval/status/1158715759230517254> (Accessed April 26, 2023).

⁵²⁸ <https://Twitter.com/rahulkanwal/status/1158265317845549057>(Accessed April 26, 2023).

These expressions further reflect the discursive characteristic of calling out Pakistan and countering narratives playing a crucial role in shaping international perceptions and garnering support for India's actions.

Furthermore, the public was also engaged in emphasizing the government's normalcy narrative, which was aimed to counter negative narratives and present a positive image of the situation in Kashmir. Consider the following tweets:

Kashmir is absolutely normal right now. Latest picture from Srinagar.⁵²⁹

Srinagar is calm and free of any violence. Spoke to District Administration Srinagar. Dental college students who have desired to move back will start tomorrow at 730am from Srinagar. Buses provided to college management by the administration. #Kashmir.⁵³⁰

Spoke to a senior police functionary in Jammu & Kashmir. No violence reported in any part of the valley. Situation normal. Politicians trying to provoke hence would remain under house arrest in Kashmir. NSA Ajit Doval is on way to Kashmir to monitor security situation on ground.⁵³¹

For all that bravado, all those threats, Kashmir is peaceful. No violence has been reported. If local, now redundant politicians like Omar and Mufti shut up, the UT will remain peaceful.⁵³²

Director General of J&K Police Dilbagh Singh to India Today: Zero violence in Kashmir Valley. Any report of violence in Kashmir valley is incorrect. South, north and central Kashmir are completely peaceful. Reports @kamaljitsandhu.⁵³³

⁵²⁹ <https://Twitter.com/adityarajkaul/status/1158280632637825024> (Accessed April 30, 2023).

⁵³⁰ <https://Twitter.com/AdityaRajKaul/status/1158331597516607488> (Accessed April 30, 2023).

⁵³¹ <https://Twitter.com/adityarajkaul/status/1158301830654418944?lang=en> (Accessed April 30, 2023).

⁵³² <https://Twitter.com/UnSubtleDesi/status/1158316013370273792> (Accessed April 30, 2023).

⁵³³ <https://Twitter.com/rahulkanwal/status/1158581570208485378> (Accessed April 30, 2023).

Lots of queries about Kashmir situation. Here is what I know: 1) No major violence. 10 minor stone pelting incidents that ended within minutes. Kashmir is calm. 2) No protest or shutdown call. 3) NSA Ajit Doval camping in Kashmir. 4) Mufti, Omar, Sajad, Imran under detention.⁵³⁴

These tweets shared images and reports of peace and stability to portray the revocation as a positive step towards development and progress. To put it differently, by sharing a picture that portrays a peaceful scenario, it aims to counter claims of unrest and emphasize stability in the region. The discursive characteristic of tweets is one of downplaying concerns and projecting a positive image, potentially intended for international audiences to present India's actions in a favourable light. Specifically, this discursive strategy was aimed at shaping international perceptions and countering narratives of unrest and human rights violations.

However, public opinion also included criticisms. Public criticism collectively reflects a range of emotions, including frustration, scepticism, compassion, urgency, concern, and anger. It echoed the frustration and disbelief towards the revocation of Article 370. Such expressions highlighted a perception of hasty decision-making and lack of democratic process, perceived injustice in the curtailment of communication and the detention of leaders hindering the expression of consent, and concerns and questions of the legal validity of the policy without the consent of the people. The tweets also reflect concerns about many ordinary people of Kashmir as to their everyday life being hampered by the imposition of curfew and communications blackout leading to perceived isolation. Additionally, they express displeasure with the perceived lack of transparency on the actual situation as well as the seeming disdain for human rights and welfare. Let's look at a few tweets from the samples below for the sake of illustration.

1.5 hours to decide the fate of #Kashmir. If this is not a banana republic I don't know what is. #Article370 that gives #JammuKashmir special status is scrapped.⁵³⁵

⁵³⁴ <https://Twitter.com/AdityaRajKaul/status/1158447510471548928> (Accessed April 30, 2023).

⁵³⁵ https://Twitter.com/rohini_mohan/status/1158254240793415683 (Accessed May 3, 2023).

Let's make one thing clear today: Consent of Kashmiris was NOT taken for a law which directly affects them. Communication being cut off, leaders being house-arrested and increasing military presence in the state does NOT equal consent. #Article370.⁵³⁶

The @AmitShah announcement revoking #Article370 says it has the consent of the Jammu and Kashmir government. But there is no elected government or assembly in place. So consent is that of the Governor. What happens when a new assembly is elected? All sorts of questions persist.⁵³⁷

“He was just a Class XI student and loved to play cricket. He didn't know anything about this whole #Article370 issue,” Osaib Altaf's father, Mohammad Altaf Marazi, tells @safwatzgr. Read @HuffPostIndia's ground report from #Kashmir.⁵³⁸

IMPORTANT. Please RT. We strongly condemn the communications blackout in Jammu and Kashmir and urge an end to internet shutdowns across India https://internetfreedom.in/kashmir_shutdowns/ #KeepItOn #KeepUsOnline.⁵³⁹

Mobile and Internet services have often been snapped in Jammu and Kashmir. Today landlines and television networks added to that list. Creating a black hole as we await the cabinet announcement. #Kashmir.⁵⁴⁰

What justification is there for the continued communication crackdown in Jammu and Kashmir? If safe enough for the NSA to interact freely with residents, so must that freedom be allowed to elected politicians and the people at large #Kashmir #Article370.⁵⁴¹

⁵³⁶ <https://Twitter.com/Memeghnad/status/1158299641273655297> (Accessed May 3, 2023).

⁵³⁷ <https://Twitter.com/BDUTT/status/1158254945247756288> (Accessed May 3, 2023).

⁵³⁸ <https://Twitter.com/betwasharma/status/1159075923318079488> (Accessed May 3, 2023).

⁵³⁹ <https://Twitter.com/internetfreedom/status/1158566971455074304> (Accessed May 3, 2023).

⁵⁴⁰ <https://Twitter.com/bdutt/status/1158209219876704256> (Accessed May 4, 2023).

⁵⁴¹ <https://Twitter.com/BDUTT/status/1159096571566276608> (Accessed May 4, 2023).

“BSNL spokesperson told @IndianExpress that all BSNL services, except internet services, were working in Kashmir”. Why do the govt officials lie so much, and so blatantly, to its own people? Anyone who has tried calling a Kashmir number knows the truth.⁵⁴²

Citing section 144, security forces are not allowing patients, even accident victims to reach hospital in Srinagar. And RW morons are celebrating such inhuman treatment of fellow citizens as Modia’s victory.⁵⁴³

4.7 How Did the Major Opposition Party React?

The INC the principal opposition party, voiced their criticisms and apprehensions. Their Tweets represent a spectrum of viewpoints on Jammu and Kashmir, encompassing concerns about civil liberties, the impact of government decisions, the role of international actors, and the need for transparent democratic processes.

The opposition leaders censured the government’s measures aimed at restricting civil liberties in Jammu and Kashmir. They contend that the forceful revocation of Article 370 has adverse consequences on the rights of the region’s inhabitants. These leaders assert that actions taken by the government, such as the internet shutdown, the confinement of political leaders to their homes, and the imposition of movement restrictions, are eroding the basic rights and freedoms of the local population. As a result, they are advocating for the safeguarding of civil liberties and the resolution of the issue without external interference, with a specific focus on Pakistan’s role.

Restore Internet, End Detentions In Jammu&Kashmir, Says Bipartisan Resolution In US House. Admirable effort by US reps, whereas in our Parliament we have been unable even to have a discussion on the subject of Kashmir in the entire winter session. Shame.⁵⁴⁴

⁵⁴² <https://Twitter.com/sushantsin/status/1158949033982877696?lang=ar> (Accessed May 4, 2023).

⁵⁴³ https://Twitter.com/t_d_h_nair/status/1158922734820184064 (Accessed May 4, 2023).

⁵⁴⁴ <https://Twitter.com/ShashiTharoor/status/1203557715575918593> (Accessed September 11, 2023).

I disagree with this Govt. on many issues. But, let me make this absolutely clear: Kashmir is India's internal issue & there is no room for Pakistan or any other foreign country to interfere in it.⁵⁴⁵

Further, Rahul Gandhi expressed concerns regarding the situation in Kashmir, emphasizing that the detention of mainstream political figures in undisclosed locations is not only unconstitutional and undemocratic but also shortsighted and reckless. He warned that such actions could lead to a leadership vacuum, which could potentially be exploited by terrorists. Gandhi called for the immediate release of the imprisoned leaders and accused the government of attempting to sideline nationalist figures like Farooq Abdullah Ji to create a void in Jammu & Kashmir, which he argued could be exploited by terrorist elements. He also warned that this could perpetually use Kashmir as a political tool to sow division in the rest of India.⁵⁴⁶

P. Chidambaram asserted that the government's claims of normalcy in Jammu & Kashmir are misleading. Despite schools being open, the absence of students suggests a lack of genuine normalcy. The repeated shutdown of the internet further undermines claims of normalcy. Chidambaram also highlighted the case of Mehbooba Mufti's daughter being placed under house arrest without any explanation from authorities, raising questions about the true state of affairs in the region.⁵⁴⁷

Furthermore, Rahul Gandhi, Kapil Sibal, and Shashi Tharoor all voiced criticism over the unequal treatment of foreign and Indian visitors to Jammu and Kashmir. They expressed dismay and concern over the preferential treatment afforded to European MPs, who were allowed guided tours of the region while Indian MPs faced entry restrictions or were

⁵⁴⁵ <https://Twitter.com/RahulGandhi/status/1166556113715810304> (Accessed September 11, 2023).

⁵⁴⁶ <https://Twitter.com/RahulGandhi/status/1158674735460282368> (Accessed September 11, 2023); <https://Twitter.com/RahulGandhi/status/1173950004039340032> (Accessed September 11, 2023).

⁵⁴⁷ https://Twitter.com/PChidambaram_IN/status/1163408126382678016 (Accessed September 11, 2023).

denied access altogether. This disparate treatment raised questions about fairness, transparency, and the government's commitment to upholding democratic principles. Tharoor specifically highlighted the government's failure to accept his request for an All-Party delegation of MPs to visit Kashmir, contrasting it with the hospitality extended to European Parliament members. This inconsistency was seen as an affront to Indian democracy and a tarnishing of the country's global image.⁵⁴⁸

What is more, Kapil Sibal highlighted the paramount importance of prioritizing the welfare of the people above political motives. He critiqued the government's focus on contentious issues such as Article 370 and the National Register of Citizens, which, in his perspective, divert attention away from critical socio-economic challenges. Sibal outlines the government's agenda as centered around topics like the NRC, Article 370, and Triple Talaq. However, he argued that the true agenda should revolve around addressing fundamental needs such as access to clean drinking water and air, ensuring quality education and healthcare, generating employment opportunities for the youth, and achieving a GDP growth rate exceeding 8%. He emphasized that the well-being of the people should take precedence over political considerations.⁵⁴⁹

Thus, the opposition party's stance remained significantly at odds with the government's policy. Opposition leaders criticized the government's measures aimed at curtailing civil liberties in Jammu and Kashmir. The government's actions, such as the house arrests of political figures, the internet shutdown, and constraints on movement, were deemed as eroding the fundamental rights and freedoms of the people in the region. That is, the

⁵⁴⁸ <https://Twitter.com/RahulGandhi/status/1188853216160567297> (Accessed September 11, 2023); <https://Twitter.com/KapilSibal/status/1189021236350705665> (Accessed September 11, 2023); <https://Twitter.com/ShashiTharoor/status/1188799877951741952> (Accessed September 11, 2023).

⁵⁴⁹ <https://Twitter.com/KapilSibal/status/1168029425348177920> (Accessed September 11, 2023).

abrogation of Article 370 has adverse repercussions on the rights of the region's inhabitants, leading them to advocate for the protection of civil liberties and the resolution of the issue.

4.8 Conclusion

The analysis suggests that India's digital public diplomacy during the Article 370 withdrawal sought to engage with the international community to influence the narrative around the issue by promoting its viewpoint, giving facts, and dispelling rumours. As part of public diplomacy, there were various narratives and discursive representations of the move. The revocation was constructed and represented in the public discourse as imperative in many senses. That is, India's leadership narrated the events of Article 370 revocation in terms of social justice, development, and national security. They contended that rescinding Jammu and Kashmir's special status would guarantee that all residents had equal rights and opportunities and end the perpetuation of inequity and exclusion. The leadership underlined that completely integrating the state into the Indian Union would promote employment possibilities, infrastructure growth, and economic progress in the area. Not only that, integration would also enable managing issues of national security, such as separatist movements and global terrorism.

However, critics, on the other hand, essentially projected a perspective of the situation involving the deployment of significant security forces and limitations on movement and restrictions on all forms of communication, including the internet and phones, which had crippled daily activity in the Kashmir Valley. To elaborate, critics contested whether the decision was reached following consultation with the affected communities and whether their opinions were adequately taken into account. They claimed that the massive deployment of security forces, travel restrictions, and communication breakdowns have endangered democratic values and human rights in addition to obstructing daily activity. These critiques provided a helpful reminder that a thorough strategy is required to address the situation in the Kashmir Valley. They put a great deal of emphasis on the importance of defending human rights, encouraging communication and dialogue, and coming to agreeable solutions that respect everyone's interests and rights.

The major challenge for India's public diplomacy was the need to balance transparency and national security concerns and the need to deal with misconceptions and disinformation. The policy's success depends on the extent to which it anchored in the larger public support and peaceful environment, and, therefore, normalcy, countering any misinformation or misinterpretation was essential. Fake news was being spread in large quantities, primarily through videos and pictures. S.P. Pani, the Inspector General of Police for Kashmir, responded by addressing the media and informing the public of a harmful campaign on social media. He asked citizens to ignore such false information and emphasized that proper legal action would be taken. The Home Ministry then contacted Twitter to ask for the suspension of eight Kashmir-based accounts that were involved in spreading misleading information. Similarly, several Twitter accounts based in Pakistan that were using fake accounts of officials from India were thus suspended or taken down at the request of the Indian government.⁵⁵⁰ Reportedly there were eight rounds of requests from the government in the month of August itself.

The disinformation campaign from Pakistan makes sense in the context of Pakistan's inability to garner international support. In fact, it seems as though India's use of public diplomacy during the Pulwama-Balakot episode diminished Pakistan's ability to successfully resist and respond, which was advantageous for India in its quest to integrate Kashmir through the repeal of Article 370. The Pulwama attack damaged Pakistan's reputation and credibility, India's counterattack in Balakot beyond LoC in Pakistan which India characterized through public diplomacy outreach as a pre-emptive strike to prevent terrorists from more attacks against India had garnered much international support.

All this had rendered Pakistan vulnerable to its inclusion in the Financial Action Task Force's (FATF) blacklist because Islamabad was already on the grey list, which could

⁵⁵⁰ Sudhi Ranjan Sen, "Fake Twitter Handles of Indian Army Officers Spawn as Pakistan Ups Propaganda," *Hindustan Times*, September 18, 2019, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/fake-Twitter-handles-of-indian-army-officers-spawn-as-pakistan-ups-propaganda/story-w1k7ONA4oqZkYKZWtgzS9M.html> (Accessed May 4, 2023); Abhishek Bhalla, "Pakistan's Fake News Plot Busted: Twitter Suspends 50 Bogus Handles for Top Army Officials," *India Today*, September 17, 2019, <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/pakistan-s-fake-news-plot-busted-Twitter-suspends-50-bogus-handles-for-top-army-officials-1600194-2019-09-17> (Accessed May 4, 2023).

result in harsh economic sanctions and drive Pakistan into bankruptcy. *New York Times* notes: “A conventional military reaction is probably too costly as Pakistan seeks to shore up its finances. And one of the most effective strategies Pakistan has traditionally employed — using an array of militant groups as proxies to keep neighbours in check — has become a liability, amid the threat of international sanctions.”⁵⁵¹

Nonetheless, critics expressed reservations about the transparency of the Indian government’s attempts to address disinformation by requesting Twitter to block specific accounts. This raised concerns due to existing restrictions on other communication channels such as the Internet and phones.⁵⁵² They accused the government of colluding with Twitter to suppress freedom of expression in India.

Nevertheless, in addition to efforts to combat disinformation, the government and security officials actively countered and debunked fake news. In response to these critical voices and the spread of misinformation, the government sought to present a multifaceted portrayal of the territory. Through postings and videos shared on Twitter, glimpses of Kashmir were showcased to defend the policy’s success. Furthermore, consistent updates were provided on the peaceful situation in the region, along with information about the measures being implemented to promote peace, stability, and development in Jammu & Kashmir.

In all, despite facing criticism, the government’s policy garnered substantial support, reflecting a positive public sentiment and approach. The alignment between the public discourse and the government’s narrative of development, unity, and national security demonstrates how the government’s messaging resonated effectively with supporters, reinforcing the desired message.

⁵⁵¹ Maria Abi-Habib, “Pakistan Runs Out of Options as India Tightens Grip on Kashmir,” *The New York Times*, February 25, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/09/world/asia/kashmir-india-pakistan.html> (Accessed January 10, 2023).

⁵⁵² Anuj Srivas, “Kashmir: Modi Govt’s Blocking Orders to Twitter Raise Questions Over Transparency,” *The Wire*, <https://thewire.in/tech/kashmir-Twitter-modi-government-takedown-orders-transparency>, (Accessed January 10, 2023).

This significant level of support is a testament to the Indian government's ability to gain favorable reception among a considerable portion of the population, which is crucial for managing its international reputation. However, it is important to note that this alignment must be seen in the larger context of the shared sentiment of popular nationalism in the country, which facilitates the mutual reinforcement and reproduction of messages. Ultimately, the prevailing discourse portrays India as a confident power that fearlessly undertakes calculated risks in the pursuit of its objectives.

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CHAPTER 5

PANDEMIC DIPLOMACY: INDIA AS WORLD'S PHARMACY AND HUMANITARIAN STATE

COVID-19 has arguably posed the most significant public policy challenge that nation-states have encountered in recent decades. By bringing a grinding halt to the usual business of international relations, the pandemic, especially at its peak with enforced social distance, lockdowns and pushing an inward orientation among countries, considerably altered the landscape of communication and interaction between nation-states. Concerns of political and economic power shifts among countries and regions, and heightening nationalist sentiments casting a shadow over the future with a potential intensification of power struggles posed significant challenges for nation-states worldwide. Amidst all this remained the imperative of collective efforts in international cooperation and coordination to navigate the pandemic. At the same time, disruptions in routine practices coupled with a momentary shift of expectations add another layer of complexity to various states' responses to the global health crisis. The latter explains that coping with the pandemic is closely tied to exploring the affordances and opportunities to engage in diplomatic activities.

For India, even as the pandemic sounded the death knell for its public health system,⁵⁵³ Delhi remained proactive on the global stage.⁵⁵⁴ India provided aid even as the country itself was facing the COVID-19 crisis, suggesting there could be more than meets the eye.⁵⁵⁵ Apparently, India's activism was mainly centred around wide spread vaccine and

⁵⁵³ India's Rank was 145 out of 195 countries in the Healthcare Access and Quality Index (HAQ).

⁵⁵⁴ Harsh V. Pant and Anant Singh Mann, "India's Public Health Diplomacy in the Time of COVID19," *Observer Research Foundation, Expert Speak, Raisina Dabates* 13 (2020), <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/indias-public-health-diplomacy-in-the-time-of-covid19-67783/>, (Accessed November 16, 2022).

⁵⁵⁵ Huma Siddiqui, "India Gets Ready to Send Aid to 13 Countries Including Neighbourhood," *Financial Express*, April 11, 2020, <https://www.financialexpress.com/defence/india-gets-ready-to-send-aid-to-13-countries-including-neighbourhood/1925732/>; Sidhant Sibal, "India Sends Aid to Italy, the New Global Epicentre of Coronavirus Pandemic," *WION*, March 22, 2020, <https://www.wionews.com/india-news/india-sends-aid-to-italy-the-new-global-epicentre-of-coronavirus-pandemic-287940>, (Accessed November 16, 2022).

medical supplies, revitalising global collective efforts, and leading the regional emergency response in South Asia. This chapter broadly explores the meaning of these actions for India's foreign policy. In other words, how does one explain India's international activism during COVID-19? Specifically, how did India imagine, construct, and operationalize its COVID-19 response at national and global levels (key engagement strategies)? What does India's diplomatic activism reveal about how India imagines and represents itself in the international system? What status representations underlie it? What narratives did India project during the pandemic? Finally, how is India's pandemic response instrumentalized in the foreign policy discourse of India as a rising super power and its aspirations for great power status?

These questions are answered through discussions in two parts; first, a descriptive and analytical account of India's global engagements in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic, and second, an empirical examination of political discourse centred around India's global engagements during the pandemic. The analysis studies Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's speeches on various occasions of international significance.

The current chapter is structured in the following manner: The subsequent section focuses on the methodology employed in this study. Subsequently, an extensive analysis is presented, encompassing the global context and the specific circumstances pertaining to India's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This analysis encompasses diverse aspects of India's international engagements and its humanitarian responses during the aforementioned crisis. Furthermore, a comprehensive account of India's strategic communication during the pandemic is provided, drawing upon an analysis of the speeches delivered by India's Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, on various occasions of international significance.

5.1 Methodology

The study employs qualitative content analysis to examine the institutional deployment of narrative in India's international engagement and public engagement during the first wave from 1 March 2020 to 31 March 2021 (First Wave of the pandemic in India). The corpus of data for institutional engagement is Prime Minister Narendra Modi's speeches and addresses during various bilateral and multilateral events and summits of global

significance participated by multiple heads of state, business delegations, state representatives, and the diaspora. The rationale for choosing the Prime Minister is that the growing importance assigned to political figures within the domain of international diplomacy suggests that the term “diplomat” encompasses not only formally appointed individuals like foreign ministers and ambassadors, but also influential political leaders who undertake the responsibilities of representatives and negotiators on a global scale.⁵⁵⁶ Moreover, in an environment of increasingly personalized politics, democratic governments have come to be known by the name of their leader not only in the presidential system but also in the parliamentary system.⁵⁵⁷ This model makes the government’s leader the country’s public face.

Still, surprisingly, the role of the Prime Minister as a pivotal agent of public diplomacy has not been thoroughly examined, especially within the Indian context, despite the prominent position as a key figure in India’s diplomatic endeavors. In this context, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, often regarded as the “diplomat-in-chief” for his proactive engagement as the central figure in India’s foreign policy matters and extensive popularity presenting an intriguing subject for analysis, which is also highly relevant and worthwhile.⁵⁵⁸

Besides, the significance of events and occasions selected for the analysis lies in the fact that these are vital diplomatic interactions aimed at strengthening bilateral and multilateral relations and international cooperation whose importance cannot be overstated during the pandemic. For this reason, such gatherings also attract extensive media visibility, especially in today’s hybrid news media environment where “interactions take place across and between different older and newer media,” thus forming significant pathways for reaching out to the international public.⁵⁵⁹

⁵⁵⁶ Maja Šimunjak and Alessandro Caliandro, “Twiplomacy in the Age of Donald Trump: Is the Diplomatic Code Changing?,” *The Information Society* 35, no. 1 (2019): 13-14, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01972243.2018.1542646>

⁵⁵⁷ Ian McAllister, “The Personalization of Politics,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Behavior* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 571.

⁵⁵⁸ Chaulia, *Modi Doctrine*, 24-50.

⁵⁵⁹ Jason Gilmore and Charles M. Rowling, “Lighting the Beacon: Presidential Discourse, American Exceptionalism, and Public diplomacy in Global Contexts,” *Presidential Studies*

Other sources like academic papers, speeches, and official statements from the government of India, regular media publications and social media posts were used to provide a descriptive account of India's international engagements during the pandemic and as auxiliary data to effectively engage with the primary data and key arguments in analysing political discourse centred around India's global communication and diplomacy during the pandemic.

The primary data regarding institutional outreach was collected from the official websites of the Press Information Bureau (PIB) and the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA).⁵⁶⁰ The study employed qualitative content analysis. Content analysis is an established research method frequently used to analyze text data.

Although effort intensive, the study employed manual content analysis. To start with, 37 speeches were selected based on Prime Minister's address to various foreign policy meetings and gatherings between March 1, 2020 and March 30, 2021. This corpus does not include telephone conversations between the Prime Minister, foreign heads of state, or other dignitaries. These speeches were then subjected to a preliminary screening by way of reading by the researcher to apprehend the main content of the speeches to verify their conformity to discussions relevant to the pandemic. During this stage, as many as 13 speeches that were found not fit for the purpose of data analysis were excluded. These speeches were excluded for they did not contain or evoke any direct or indirect expression or discussion about the pandemic, while those mentioned only did it passingly - no more than just acknowledging the situation. By this way of filtering, 24 speeches were finally selected for further analysis.

Keeping in mind the context and nature of the study, statements and propositions in the speeches constituted the unit of analysis and not the speeches in their entirety. Statements and propositions unrelated to COVID-19 and/or directly connected to the main agenda of the Prime Minister's meetings were excluded to reduce any potential bias in identifying major and relevant themes. For instance, Prime Minister's remarks on sustainable

Quarterly 48, no. 2 (2018): 280, <https://doi.org/10.1111/psq.12445>; Chadwick, *The Hybrid Media System*, 21.

⁵⁶⁰ www.pib.gov.in /and www.mea.gov.in/

development at the World Sustainable Development Summit were excluded. Excluded were also statements calling for strengthening bilateral relations as part of bilateral meetings, construed mainly as usual diplomatic routines. In other words, only statements made in connection with or against the backdrop of the pandemic that deals with relevant discussion topics such as the status quo, change, policy action, and future vision were selected for coding.

Manual coding was employed for the analysis. A code in qualitative inquiry is understood typically consisting of words or concise phrases that serve as symbolic representations that succinctly capture the essential, salient, and evocative attributes of specific language-based or visual data segments.⁵⁶¹ Further, to reduce risks of miscoding due to oversight or misreading, and to ensure the credibility of the coding procedure that would impact identifying consistent themes across the speeches, Krefting's code-recode procedure was followed. This method advises that the researcher should wait at least 2 weeks before returning to recode the same data for comparison of results.⁵⁶²

On the other hand, to examine the public dimension of India's public diplomacy, Tweets were collected through manually by searching on Twitter. Twitter's Advanced Search functionality was utilized to delimit the data in the collection process. The search was narrowed down using key terms such as "India COVID export vaccine," "India Corona HCQ," and "India COVID export HCQ." The selection of these keywords aimed to ensure the retrieval of tweets pertinent to the study's focus. That is, while public opinion during the one-year study period may encompass diverse aspects of domestic public health and various socio-political and economic considerations, the specific data requirement of this investigation was public opinion within the domain of India's international affairs. The collected tweets include original tweets and replies. The collection of tweets involved a manual process, which entailed meticulous examination of the content and the account holder's relevance to the study. To ensure the inclusion of

⁵⁶¹ Johnny Saldaña, *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers* (London: Sage Publication, 2010), 3.

⁵⁶² Laura Krefting, "Rigor in Qualitative Research: The Assessment of Trustworthiness," *The American Journal of Occupational Therapy* 45, no. 3 (1991): 221, <https://doi.org/10.5014/ajot.45.3.214>

pertinent Indian public perspectives, Twitter accounts associated with the tweets were individually scrutinized based on the account names and descriptions suggesting their Indian origin. Only tweets in English language were collected.

5.2 The Global Context and the Indian Scenario for COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic that upended people's lives by challenging the global economic and public health system in a short- span of time called for an integrated global approach grounded in global solidarity. The devastating enormity of the crisis wired to the global context of interconnectedness and interdependence between nation-states profoundly revealed that no state was realistically able to contain it by its own devices. Therefore, any understanding of the national pandemic scenario in terms of the impact, response and recovery mechanism needs to be situated within the dynamic global context in which the struggle to contain the virus became the collective imperative of the nation-states.

The COVID-19 was first reported in the month of December as per the reports from World Health Organisation. The COVID-19 outbreak first occurred in Wuhan, Hubei Province of China in early December 2019. The outbreak was associated with the Huanan seafood market in Wuhan. On 30th January 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared an outbreak, a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) and on Feb 2020, WHO officially named this outbreak of the disease associated with the coronavirus as COVID-19.⁵⁶³ Subsequently, it was declared a pandemic on 11 March as the global transmission extended to 113 countries.⁵⁶⁴

The pandemic, globally disruptive as it is for the pervasive nature of human sufferings it brought about in the social, economic and health domains, among others, was indeed much more than a health calamity. Based on preliminary data collected during the pandemic, a UN assessment suggested that the poor were unequally impacted by the

⁵⁶³ Aritra Ghosh, Srijita Nundy, and Tapas K. Mallick, "How India is Dealing with COVID-19 Pandemic," *Sensors International* 1 (2020): 1-8, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sintl.2020.100021>

⁵⁶⁴ Rohit C. Khanna et. al, "COVID-19 Pandemic: Lessons Learned and Future Directions," *Indian Journal of Ophthalmology* 68, no. 5 (2020): 703, https://doi.org/10.4103%2Fijo.IJO_843_20

economic and health effects of the virus.⁵⁶⁵ For instance, those without a safe place to live, such as the homeless, were more likely to contract the virus. In a similar vein, those without access to running water, as well as refugees, migrants, and internally displaced people, were also increasingly likely to bear the brunt of the pandemic and its aftereffects, which included restricted mobility, fewer job possibilities, a rise in xenophobia, and other difficulties. Individuals who experienced prejudice also included the youth, indigenous people, and elderly adults with impairments.⁵⁶⁶ For example, Vall d’Hebron Hospital in Spain recommended against allocating ventilators to patients aged 80 and above, while also considering the frailty scale for candidates between 70 and 80.⁵⁶⁷ Individuals with disabilities faced precarious situations due to physical impairments, environmental barriers, or disrupted services.⁵⁶⁸ Similarly, notably greater rates of communicable and non-communicable diseases, restricted access to basic services, a lack of healthcare that is culturally appropriate, and, where accessible, insufficiently staffed and inadequately equipped local healthcare facilities are all linked to the heightened vulnerability of Indigenous populations.⁵⁶⁹

Millions of deaths and reduction of life expectancy demonstrate the impact on health care services. The pandemic exposed the lack of universal health care even in advanced post-industrial, Western countries like the US, despite the latter spending 19.7 per cent of its gross domestic product (GDP) on health care, higher than any other country in the world.⁵⁷⁰ The delivery of essential health services was disrupted, among others, by

⁵⁶⁵ United Nations, “Everyone Included: Social Impact of COVID-19,” *UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs*. (n.d), <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/everyone-included-COVID-19.html> (Accessed December 16, 2022).

⁵⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁷ Jon Rueda, “Ageism in the COVID-19 Pandemic: Age-based Discrimination in Triage Decisions and Beyond,” *History and Philosophy of the Life Sciences* 43, no. 3 (2021): 1-7, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40656-021-00441-3>

⁵⁶⁸ United Nations, “Everyone Included: Social Impact of COVID-19.” *UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs*. (n.d).

⁵⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁰ Amy Alspaugh et al, “Universal Health Care for the United States: A Primer for Health Care Providers,” *Journal of Midwifery & Women’s Health* 66, no. 4 (2021): 441-451, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jmwh.13233> ; CMS.gov. (n.d), [https://www.cms.gov/Research-](https://www.cms.gov/Research-Statistics-Data-and-Systems/Statistics-Trends-and-)

insufficient staff availability, lack of protective equipment, fear and mistrust in seeking health care, financial difficulties, and travel restrictions.⁵⁷¹ It shows that health policy planning and action are still fundamental, even though intense national efforts to address the issues are making most countries' responses to the challenges better. This is because nations must continue to tailor their health strategies to the ever-changing needs and priorities of their populations in order to maintain access to and delivery of healthcare.⁵⁷²

Apart from these, the impact on COVID-19 on the global economy and business and trade was profoundly marked by declined economic growth, supply chain destructions, diminished manufacturing production and shrinking international trade.⁵⁷³ The global economic growth registered a decline of 3 per cent due to the instability in the financial and capital markets and regulated human mobility leading to reduced economic activities.⁵⁷⁴ Global economic development was slowing, commerce was slowing, global imbalances were growing, and the financial system was becoming so fragile that the monetary system was frozen in many of the countries. As a result, negative effects on world poverty were anticipated.⁵⁷⁵

[Reports/NationalHealthExpendData/NationalHealthAccountsHistorical](#) (Accessed December 19, 2022).

⁵⁷¹ World Health Organization, *Second Round of the National Pulse Survey on Continuity of Essential Health Services During the COVID-19 Pandemic: January-March 2021: Interim Report*. April 22, 2021, <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/WHO-2019-nCoV-EHS-continuity-survey-2021.1> (Accessed December 19, 2022).

⁵⁷² World Health Organization, *Second Round of the National Pulse Survey on Continuity of Essential Health Services*...., 63.

⁵⁷³ C.T. Vidya and K. P. Prabheesh, "Implications of COVID-19 Pandemic on the Global Trade Networks," *Emerging Markets Finance and Trade* 56, no. 10 (2020): 2408-2421, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1540496X.2020.1785426>

⁵⁷⁴ Md Mofijur et. al, "Impact of COVID-19 on the Social, Economic, Environmental and Energy Domains: Lessons Learnt from a Global Pandemic," *Sustainable production and consumption* 26 (2021): 346, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.spc.2020.10.016>

⁵⁷⁵ C.T. Vidya and K.P. Prabheesh, "Implications of COVID-19 Pandemic on the Global Trade Networks," 2408.

India reported its first COVID-19 case on 30 January 2020 and registered the first death related to COVID-19 on 14 March 2020.⁵⁷⁶ Given the devastating nature of the virus unfolding in many parts of Europe and America, crippling the public health machinery in countries known for their efficient health sector, the potential ramifications of the epidemic on India, home to a 1.3 billion population and with fragile health infrastructure, was beyond any imagination. Owing to the fear of a potential health catastrophe in a dense population with over-stretched public health apparatus, the government of India declared a nationwide lockdown on 24 March 2020.

Soon embarking on the lockdown, India announced a \$22.5 billion stimulus package to cope with the pandemic and especially targeting those affected by the lockdown that mainly included, low-income households, daily wage labourers, and small business owners. The package included food security measures, medical insurance, and direct cash transfer as social and economic security measures.⁵⁷⁷ While food security measures subsidized the supply of rice and wheat for low-income earners, the direct cash transfer was to benefit rural workers, poor pensioners, construction workers, farmers and low-income widowers.⁵⁷⁸ The national lockdown, which was initially meant for 21 days, endured for 68 days (in four phases) up to 31 May 2020 as the COVID-19 cases spiked despite the lockdown, manifesting a lack-of-preparation-spoiled pre-emptive measure.

The country, which reported 500 cases at the time of the imposition of the lockdown as a pre-emptive measure, became the 7th most affected country in about two months after the lockdown by 31st May with a tally of 1,82,143 cases, including 5,164 death.⁵⁷⁹ As of 11th

⁵⁷⁶ Azizah F. Siddiqui, Manuel Wiederkehr, Liudmila Rozanova, and Antoine Flahault, "Situation of India in the COVID-19 Pandemic: India's Initial Pandemic Experience," *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 17, no. 23 (2020): 8994. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17238994>

⁵⁷⁷ Saheli Roy Choudhury, "India Announces \$22.5 Billion Stimulus Package to Help those Affected by the Lockdown." *CNBC [online]*, March 26, 2020, <https://www.cnbc.com/2020/03/26/coronavirus-india-needs-a-support-package-larger-than-20-billion-dollars.html> (Accessed December 19, 2022).

⁵⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁹ The Hindustan Times, "COVID-19: India Now Seventh Worst-hit Country in the World," May 31, 2020, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/COVID-19-india-now-seventh-worst->

July 2020, India was the 3rd most COVID-19 infected country with 2,922,58 active cases and 22,674 COVID-19 deaths.⁵⁸⁰ Although the infection rate might have been controlled, reports of massive underreporting of the cases and fatalities during the rounds questioned the efficacy of the lockdown in preventing the spread of the virus.⁵⁸¹

Following the easing of lockdown restrictions by the end of May, the country's healthcare system came under pressure as the infections spiked.⁵⁸² By mid-November 2020, India had become the second-worst affected country after the United States, reporting over 8.81 million cases and 129,635 deaths.⁵⁸³ However, the sheer number of cases obscures India's performance on other crucial indicators such as the case fatality rate and cases per million population.⁵⁸⁴ For instance, as of December 2020, India had reported the lowest cases per million population worldwide, and its case fatality rate, standing at 1.5% as of mid-November, was notably lower than that of other countries with similar levels of economic development.⁵⁸⁵ Therefore, India was still in a position to claim relative success in containing the spread of the virus and received appreciation globally.

However, the national lockdown as a response to the pandemic was harsh on its citizens. The lockdown was announced by the Prime Minister in a virtual address to the nation on

hit-country-in-the-world/story-gZ3Nf3jvmeqOj5wVEfU44H.html (Accessed December 19, 2022).

⁵⁸⁰ Aritra Ghosh, Srijita Nundy, and Tapas K. Mallick, "How India is Dealing with COVID-19 Pandemic," *Sensors International* 1 (2020), 2, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sintl.2020.100021>

⁵⁸¹ Abhishek Anand, Justin Sandefur, and Arvind Subramanian, "Three New Estimates of India's All-cause Excess Mortality During the COVID-19 Pandemic," *Center for Global Development* (2021), <https://cgdev.org/sites/default/files/three-new-estimates-indias-all-cause-excess-mortality-during-COVID-19-pandemic.pdf> (Accessed December 19, 2022); Patralekha Chatterjee, "Is India Missing COVID-19 Deaths?," *The Lancet* 396, no. 10252 (2020): 657, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(20\)31857-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(20)31857-2)

⁵⁸² RFI, "India's Healthcare System Under Pressure as COVID-19 Infections Spike," June 14, 2020. <https://www.rfi.fr/en/international/20200614-india-s-healthcare-system-under-pressure-as-COVID-19-infections-spike>, (Accessed December 19, 2022).

⁵⁸³ Pradeep Taneja and Azad Singh Bali, "India's Domestic and Foreign Policy Responses to COVID-19," *The Round Table* 110, no. 1 (2021): 50, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00358533.2021.1875685>

⁵⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁵ Ibid.

23 March at 8pm came into effect about four hours after it was declared. It was a measure hastily implemented with little planning and consultations with the various state governments.⁵⁸⁶ Having no time for preparedness, the livelihood of the millions went for a toss. While the government attempted to defend the abrupt lockdown by pointing to the high level of uncertainty that required an unprecedented response in terms of policy, the reasoning behind the lockdown appeared to ignore the socioeconomic realities that the vast majority of Indians, especially those employed in the informal sector, face, as well as the diversity of the nation.⁵⁸⁷ The consequences were visible for everyone, although how one may put it in perspective is a different matter altogether, partly for the impact of the lockdown was unequally experienced by different sections of the population.

As a matter of fact, the early impact of the pandemic including socio-economic consequences of lockdown were immediately apparent. Human rights violations were rampant.⁵⁸⁸ Loss of job and income, and shortage of food forced thousands of domestic migration workers and other labourers to walk or cycle home as the national transportation facilities were shut in compliance with the lockdown.⁵⁸⁹ Their situation was made worse by the fact that a large number of them were detained for breaking lockdown protocols in interstate forests, near interstate borders, or even on boats trying to cross rivers. Sadly, a significant number of people died from malnutrition, killed themselves, or died from weariness, car and train crashes, violence by police, or a lack of

⁵⁸⁶ Pradeep Taneja and Azad Singh Bali, "India's Domestic and Foreign Policy Responses to COVID-19." *The Round Table* 110, no. 1 (2021): 47, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00358533.2021.1875685>

⁵⁸⁷ Uma Purushothaman and John S. Moolakkattu, "The Politics of the COVID-19 Pandemic in India." *Social Sciences* 10, no. 10 (2021): 1, <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci10100381>

⁵⁸⁸ Shailendra Kumar and Sanghamitra Choudhury, "Migrant Workers and Human Rights: A Critical Study on India's COVID-19 Lockdown Policy," *Social Sciences & Humanities Open* 3, no. 1 (2021): 100130. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2021.100130>

⁵⁸⁹ Maurice Kugler and Shakti Sinha, "The Impact of COVID-19 and the Policy Response in India," *Brookings Future Development Blog* (2020), <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/future-development/2020/07/13/the-impact-of-COVID-19-and-the-policy-response-in-india/> (Accessed December 21, 2022); Shailendra Kumar and Sanghamitra Choudhury, "Migrant Workers and Human Rights..."

access to prompt medical care.⁵⁹⁰ At the same time, those who tried to reach their home were determined to suffer under any worst-possible conditions or inhuman treatment. To provide an illustration, 18 migrant workers were caught by the police while travelling 1380 km from Maharashtra to Uttar Pradesh inside a concrete mixer in extreme temperatures.⁵⁹¹ On the Haryana–Uttar Pradesh border, migrants even risked their lives to cross the Yamuna River using rubber tyre tubes to enter UP from Haryana.⁵⁹²

In the economic arena, the impact of the pandemic was widespread. The pandemic pushed India into recession.⁵⁹³ The middle class in India was estimated to have shrunk by 32 million in 2020, while the number of poor (with incomes of \$2 or less a day) increased by 75 million.⁵⁹⁴ Individual income dropped by approximately 40% between April and May 2020, and millions of Indians were pushed into poverty.⁵⁹⁵ It was estimated that 230 million people were thrown into poverty after the first wave of the pandemic.⁵⁹⁶ Not only that, temporary closure of factories and business enterprises hit the economy, with India's

⁵⁹⁰ Pradyut Guha, Bodrul Islam, and Md Aktar Hussain, "COVID-19 Lockdown and Penalty of Joblessness on Income and Remittances: A Study of Inter-state Migrant Labourers from Assam, India," *Journal of Public Affairs* 21, no. 4 (2021): 1-9, <https://doi.org/10.1002/pa.2470>

⁵⁹¹ The Wire, "Police Find 18 Migrant Workers Travelling to UP From Mumbai in Concrete Mixer Truck," May 3, 2020. <https://thewire.in/rights/migrant-workers-lockdown-concrete-mixer>, (Accessed December 21, 2022).

⁵⁹² K C Archana, "Desperate Migrants Risk Their Lives, Use Tyre Tubes To Cross Yamuna And Enter UP," *Indiatimes*, May 21, 2020, <https://www.indiatimes.com/trending/human-interest/desperate-migrants-risk-their-lives-use-tyre-tubes-to-cross-yamuna-and-enter-up-513749.html> (Accessed December 22, 2022).

⁵⁹³ Shalini Venugopal Bhagat and Hari Kumar. "India's Economy Exits Deep Recession as Fledgling Recovery Strengthens," *New York Times*, February 26, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/26/business/india-economy-recession-recovery.html#:~:text=India's%20economic%20output%20grew%200.4,consecutive%20quarters%20of%20economic%20shrinkage>, (Accessed December 22, 2022).

⁵⁹⁴ Rakesh Kochhar, "In the pandemic, India's Middle Class Shrinks and Poverty Spreads while China Sees Smaller Changes." March 18, 2021. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/03/18/in-the-pandemic-indias-middle-class-shrinks-and-poverty-spreads-while-china-sees-smaller-changes/>, (Accessed December 22, 2022).

⁵⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁶ Azim Premji University, "State of Working India 2021: One Year of COVID-19," *Centre for Sustainable Employment*, Azim Premji University. 2021. <https://cse.azimpremjiuniversity.edu.in/state-of-working-india/>, (Accessed December 22, 2022).

GDP witnessing a record high contraction of 23.9% in the first quarter (April, May, June) of the financial year 2020-21.⁵⁹⁷ Average per capita consumption spending continued to fall not less than 20% after the first lockdown in August 2020 as compared with August of the previous year. The latter also remained 15% lower for the year by the end of 2020.⁵⁹⁸

Generally speaking, like any other country, India was also confronted with the problems of effective conceptualisation and structuring of standard policy owing to the barely sufficient knowledge about the Corona virus and the absence of previous experience in handling it.⁵⁹⁹ The uncertainty and fear in the context of the limited and emerging scientific understanding of the nature of the novel coronavirus gave way to rampant misinformation about COVID-19 transmission, symptoms, prevention, and treatment.⁶⁰⁰ This was compounded by issues of cultural and social specificities, including behavioural attitudes and practices of Indian society, presenting a major challenge for public health communication.⁶⁰¹

⁵⁹⁷ Udit Misra and Nushaiba Iqbal, "India's GDP Growth Contracts 23.9%: What is the Economics Behind the Math," *The Indian Express*, September 6, 2020, <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/gdp-contraction-23-9-the-economics-behind-the-math-6578046/> (Accessed December 22, 2022).

⁵⁹⁸ Swati Dhingra and Maitreesh Ghatak, "How Has COVID-19 Affected India's Economy?," *Economic Observatory*. June 30, 2021, <https://www.economicsobservatory.com/how-has-COVID-19-affected-indias-economy>, (Accessed December 22, 2022).

⁵⁹⁹ Giliberto Capano, Michael Howlett, Darryl SL Jarvis, M. Ramesh, and Nihit Goyal, "Mobilizing Policy (in) Capacity to Fight COVID-19: Understanding Variations in State Responses," *Policy and Society* 39, no. 3 (2020): 285-308, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14494035.2020.1787628>

⁶⁰⁰ Elaine Okanyene Nsoesie, Nina Cesare, Martin Müller, and Al Ozonoff, "COVID-19 Misinformation Spread in Eight Countries: Exponential Growth Modeling Study," *Journal of Medical Internet Research* 22, no. 12 (2020): 1-6, <https://doi.org/10.2196/24425>; Sumtra Badrinathan, "India is Facing an Epidemic of Misinformation Alongside COVID-19," *The Bloomberg*, June 7, 2021, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2021/06/07/india-misinformation-COVID-19-pandemic/>, (Accessed December 22, 2022).

⁶⁰¹ Mufsin P. P and Muhsin P. P, "Sociocultural and Religious Factors Complicate India's COVID-19 Response," *The Diplomat*. March 25, 2020, <https://thediplomat.com/2020/03/socioculturaland-religious-factors-complicate-indias-covid19-response/> (Accessed December 22, 2022).

However, the public health communication problem was not complicated by just the inability to communicate in a public health crisis but the evident lack of political will and commitment was part of it. Since the recovery rate began improving in mid-September 2020, political parties in India initiated their campaigns for the forthcoming state elections in West Bengal, Assam, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu as well as local council elections scheduled in specific regions of Uttar Pradesh and Telangana states.⁶⁰² Despite governments being the only institution that can deal with a nationwide pandemic of this scale, political leaders, ironically, overlooked the importance of showcasing themselves as a model for others to follow and emulate.⁶⁰³ This is at a time when motivation fundamental to positive outcomes becomes even critical in a democratic society. Appealing to the sensibilities of people predisposed to democratic norms and values of freedom, equality and the rule of law would hardly work unless governmental actions align with its advocacy.

However, despite confronting numerous domestic challenges of economic downturn, flawed public healthcare system, societal fragmentation, and massive internal migration crisis, India rendered itself greater visibility in the pandemic diplomatic landscape of the international system. It sought to reconcile an embrace of humanity with securing raw national interests, even as both are not invariably easy to achieve together. An eclectic balancing between the two is difficult because the lack of sufficient resources to deal with the pandemic often forces countries to reckon with national priorities over international commitments and moral obligations.

Nonetheless, India's intervention was for more than just political optics considering the pressing need for action beyond self-regarding at the time. The palpability of its absence could be seen from the deeply contested nature of the international system whose hollowness "was especially obvious at the end of 2019, when the COVID-19 pandemic

⁶⁰² Shruti Menon and Jack Goodman, "India Covid Crisis: Did Election Rallies Help Spread Virus?," *BBC News*, April 29, 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/news/56858980>, (Accessed December 24, 2022).

⁶⁰³ Travis Bias, "Public Health is Always Political," *Think Global Health*, May 5, 2020, <https://www.thinkglobalhealth.org/article/public-health-always-political> (Accessed December 24, 2022).

broke out.”⁶⁰⁴ Most governments focused on the immediate national interest of mitigating the pandemic domestically rather than taking a long view of the present culminating in robust international cooperation. Additionally, scepticism towards science, lack of transparency in pandemic communication, fostering social polarization, and retreat from global responsibility like investing in global public goods during the pandemic formed the typical markers of crisis management and communication of countries led by populist leaders. Boris Johnson scrapping the Department for International Development (DfID) during the COVID-19 pandemic that provides foreign aid to poor countries of Global South, the United States’ pull-out from the WHO while putting a halt to funding at the peak of the pandemic, and the Brazilian Prime Minister Bolsonaro’s public dismissal of pandemic’s risk are instructive.

Under these circumstances, India was in a position to look at the pandemic as an excellent opportunity to project itself at the centre of the international system even as major powers, including the US, consumed time to jettison their inward focus.⁶⁰⁵ The inward focus was strongly associated with the great power’s competitive dynamic and national supremacy in the global engagement as evidenced from the US reluctance to transfer technology and knowledge about vaccines to other countries.⁶⁰⁶ Thus, it is in this context that through proactive engagements (as will be seen in detail in the next section) Delhi actively took part in the global system to present the country’s desired image to the rest of the world, seemingly, very effectively. Zaharna emphasizes that presenting oneself in this manner during the pandemic communicates meaningful messages to the observing public.⁶⁰⁷

⁶⁰⁴ Philip Zelikow, “The Hollow Order: Rebuilding an International System That Works,” *Foreign Affairs*, 101, (July/August 2022): 107, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/world/2022-06-21/hollow-order-international-system>, (Accessed December 24, 2022).

⁶⁰⁵ Economic Times, “Yearend 2020: Health Diplomacy Dominates India’s Foreign Policy Amidst COVID-19,” December 29, 2020, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/yearend-2020-health-diplomacy-dominates-indias-foreign-policy-amidst-COVID-19/articleshow/80013768.cms> (Accessed December 24, 2022).

⁶⁰⁶ Anoo Bhuyan, “Patent Waiver for Covid Vaccine Without Tech Transfer Won’t Speed up Supply,” *Business Standard*, May 18, 2021, https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/patent-waiver-for-covid-vaccine-without-tech-transfer-won-t-speed-up-supply-121051800392_1.html, (Accessed December 24, 2022).

⁶⁰⁷ Rhonda S. Zaharna, “The Pandemic’s Wake-up Call for Humanity-centered Public Diplomacy,” *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy* 18, no. 1 (2022): 4, <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41254-021-00244-0>

5.3 Harnessing Cultural Riches

India's response to the COVID-19 pandemic included a range of activities grounded in outward orientation. To start with, India swiftly adjusted and adapted to the new environment brought about by the pandemic in early 2020.⁶⁰⁸ India's efforts to manage and enhance the country's image abroad during the pandemic were discernibly entrenched in international cooperation and solidarity. By providing medical supplies and services, India attempted to reinforce its image as a country both responsible and capable of responding to a global crisis.

As a matter of fact, India's global outreach reflected proactive engagement with an eclectic blend of what Melissen considers affective and normative dimensions of soft power.⁶⁰⁹

While the affective side of soft power represents attraction through the cultural richness and responsive political activism and leadership, the normative dimension aimed at legitimacy takes the form of soft power engagements based on universal and shared values, concern for public health in the form of humanitarian and medical assistance.⁶¹⁰ On the affective front, India promoted the non-contact customary Indian style of greeting *Namaste* (folded hand greeting) in line with the pandemic enforced social distancing. The promotion of *Namaste* received a fillip when ordinary citizens, celebrities, and corporates voluntarily got involved in the promotion. Young adults and students took out a "Namaste march" in Delhi to spread awareness about COVID-19 and advocated the practice of

⁶⁰⁸ C. Raja Mohan, "South Block is Turning the Covid Crisis into an Opportunity to Conduct Diplomatic Engagement Online," *The Indian Express*. May 5, 2020, https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/diplomacy-in-a-virtual-world-c-raja-mohan-6393950/lite/?_Twitter_impression=true&fbclid=IwAR2g7RapDYYKLfdnr5FjhqrUUzXNcg_n6g97aAyuf3jm4pzuUGlEZlAnqyoM, (Accessed December 24, 2022).

⁶⁰⁹ Jan Melissen, *Beyond the New Public Diplomacy* (p. 3), (Clingendael Institute, 2011), Chapter Soft Power. https://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/20111014_cdsp_paper_jmelissen.pdf, (Accessed December 24, 2022).

⁶¹⁰ *Ibid*, 52-53.

Namaste instead of handshake as a greeting.⁶¹¹ The Indian state of Karnataka launched a social media campaign to promote Namaste over handshake.⁶¹²

Apart from Prime Minister Modi himself, actress Priyanka Chopra, Indian company Amul actively promoted Namaste so much so that it received global acceptance as an alternative to handshaking with several heads of state, dignitaries and high profile people, including US President Donald Trump, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, French President Emmanuel Macron, Irish Prime Minister Leo Varadkar, Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Britain's Prince Charles, King Willem-Alexander of the Netherlands, seen preferring it.⁶¹³ India also utilized Trump's visit as an opportunity to promote Namaste by holding a *Namaste Trump* rally in the Narendra Modi Stadium in Gujarat. At the peak of the pandemic India appeared to have sold the "Indian greeting" on the world stage in a way that seemed the practice promising to go into the habits of many in the post COVID-19 era.

Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), the leading organization for the promotion of India's global cultural relations, led the rise of Indian culture by going digital during the peak of the pandemic with teachings of Indian music and dance coupled with an international art competition, all held online.⁶¹⁴ In a similar vein, Yoga was projected as effective in improving COVID-19 patients' and others' mental and physical health and

⁶¹¹ Rajesh K. Thakur, "'No Hugs, No Kisses': Activist Starts 'Namaste March' to Fight Coronavirus Outbreak," *The New Indian Express*, March 17, 2020, <https://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2020/mar/17/no-hugs-no-kisses-activist-starts-namaste-march-to-fight-coronavirus-outbreak-2117762.html>, (Accessed December 24, 2022).

⁶¹² India Today, "Coronavirus Outbreak: Karnataka Govt Launches Campaign, Advises People to Greet with Namaste," March 11, 2020, <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/karnataka-coronavirus-campaign-1654341-2020-03-11>, (Accessed December 24, 2022).

⁶¹³ Moneycontrol, "India's 'Namaste' Catches World's Fancy as it Strives to Contain COVID-19," April 6, 2020, <https://www.moneycontrol.com/news/photos/world/coronavirus-pandemic-indias-namaste-catches-worlds-fancy-as-it-strives-to-contain-COVID-19-5038451.html>, (Accessed December 25, 2022).

⁶¹⁴ Dipanjan Roy Chaudhury, "India Launches Soft-power Initiative to Unite Global Citizens Fighting Covid Menace," *The Economic Times*, March 31, 2020, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/india-launches-soft-power-initiative-to-unite-global-citizens-fighting-covid-menace/articleshow/74916444.cms?from=mdr> (Accessed December 25, 2022).

promoting brotherhood and family values through marketing it with the campaign *Yoga at Home and Yoga with Family* on the occasion of International Day of Yoga. Further, India also invoked its philological ethos of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* (the world as one family) and *Seva Paramo Dharma* (service is the greatest virtue) as the basis of its shared concern. It called for collective action at the global level.

To be sure, the projection of vernacular expressions such as “*Seva Paramo Dharma*” (service is the greatest virtue) and “*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*” (the world is one family) exemplified India’s strategic use of cultural and philosophical heritage to reinforce its diplomatic narrative. Amid the unprecedented challenges posed by the pandemic, these expressions became pivotal components in India’s endeavours to frame discussions and influence perceptions. They were seamlessly integrated into diplomatic actions, outreach efforts, and domestic campaigns, collectively working to strengthen the nation’s reputation. By aligning itself with these profound expressions, India projected an image of a responsible and compassionate nation, navigating the complexities of the global crisis with a commitment to shared well-being.

However, India’s efforts to project values and philosophies notwithstanding, admittedly, the serendipitous enhancement of the soft power value and the utility of India’s cultural capital brought about by the pandemic provided this normative foundation for engaging in conversation about India’s international engagements. Plainly put, India’s cultural capital in the form of ideas, values, beliefs, customs, and practices was unique in its alignment with the pandemic scenario. In effect, Indian ethos discernibly gained more relatability within the situational environment of the pandemic that the world was trying to comprehend.

5.4 Combating Chinese Influence

India also took to political activism as an early respondent and played leadership roles in reactivating and rejuvenating regional organizations and multilateral forums. Modi initiated a virtual SAARC Summit in a way to revive the SAARC which had been dormant since 2016. He also participated in the virtual summit of the NAM for the first time since he came to power in 2014. India also called upon Saudi Arabia, the Chair of the G-20, to set up an extraordinary virtual G-20 leader’s summit to discuss challenges

of the pandemic and collective response.⁶¹⁵ To speak from a public diplomacy perspective, the effort was also to reach out to the widest range of stakeholders and showcase India's response to the largest possible audience. To be more specific, such engagements were about shaping global discourse about India's leadership role.⁶¹⁶

In this respect, in its South Asian neighbourhood, Delhi emerged as the first responder by providing medical assistance by supplying hydroxychloroquine, Remdesivir, paracetamol tablets, diagnostic kits, ventilators, masks, gloves and other medical supplies.⁶¹⁷ On 15 March 2020, Prime Minister Modi took the lead in arranging a video conference to discuss pandemic preparedness among SAARC countries. In this regard, Modi established a SAARC COVID-19 Fund based on voluntary contributions from the region to meet the needs of SAARC members, with India extending a contribution of US\$10 million to it. The emergency fund idea was well received as the member states, except Pakistan, pledged their contribution. As such, Sri Lanka contributed US\$5 million, Bhutan US\$100,000, Bangladesh US\$1.5 million, and the Maldives US\$200,000. Pakistan not supportive of India's initiative outside the SAARC process, pledged its contribution of US\$3 million to be placed with SAARC Secretariat.⁶¹⁸

Additionally, India maintained the momentum in its health diplomacy through bilateral engagements in the supply of critical COVID-19 vaccines. Enacting India's steadfast commitment to the larger regional good and the Neighbourhood First Policy, India delivered the first consignment of 150,000 doses to Bhutan, barely a week into the commencement of India's first vaccination programme in the country on 16 January

⁶¹⁵ Narendra Modi, "Extraordinary Virtual G20 Leaders' Summit," March 26, 2020, <https://www.narendramodi.in/theprime-minister-narendra-modi-at-address-the-g20-virtual-summit-548983> (Accessed December 25, 2022).

⁶¹⁶ Harsh V. Pant, "Modi Tryst with NAM," *ORF Online*, May 8, 2020, <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/modi-tryst-nam-65841/> (Accessed December 25, 2022).

⁶¹⁷ Smruti S. Pattanaik, "COVID-19 Pandemic and India's Regional Diplomacy," *South Asian Survey* 28, no. 1 (2021): 99-100, <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0971523121999293>

⁶¹⁸ Chulanee Attanayake and Zheng Haiqi, "China's Pandemic Diplomacy in South Asia," *ISAS Insights*, National University of Singapore, June 15, 2021, <https://www.isas.nus.edu.sg/papers/chinas-pandemic-diplomacy-in-south-asia/>, (Accessed December 26, 2022).

2021. In expressing gratitude for India's assistance, Prime Minister Lotay Tshering commended it as the epitome of altruism. He emphasized the immense value in sharing essential resources even before fulfilling domestic requirements, contrasting it with providing aid only after achieving self-sufficiency.⁶¹⁹ Without any delay, the first phase of vaccine delivery was extended to other South Asian countries. In this regard, vaccines to the tune of Bangladesh 2 million doses; Nepal 1 million doses; Maldives 100,000; Myanmar 1.5 million, and Sri Lanka 500,000 doses were supplied as part of grant-in-aid.⁶²⁰ On 7 February 2021, India gifted 500,000 doses to Afghanistan, and earned appreciation from the Afghanistan government which described India's vaccine drive as a "a strong sign of generosity and sincere cooperation of the Republic of India with the government and people of Afghanistan."⁶²¹

Besides, various initiatives were taken for sharing knowledge, expertise, and best practices among all the member countries as part of a collective fight against the pandemic. In this respect, India developed the SAARC COVID19 Information Exchange Platform (COINEX) for the member countries to facilitate information dissemination and more interactions among the members about evolving COVID-19 situation in the region. India also offered IT enabled disease surveillance system Integrated Disease Surveillance Portal and online training to emergency response teams in the SAARC countries. The training was aimed to enhance and strengthen the clinical capabilities of the countries under the PACT program (Partnerships for Accelerating Clinical Trials).⁶²² Further,

⁶¹⁹ Lotay Tshering quoted in Smruti S. Pattanaik, "COVID-19 Pandemic and India's Regional Diplomacy," *South Asian Survey* 28, no. 1 (2021): 99.

⁶²⁰ Ibid.

⁶²¹ The Print, "Afghanistan Receives First Batch of COVID-19 Vaccine from India," February 7, 2021, Para 6. <https://theprint.in/diplomacy/afghanistan-receives-first-batch-of-COVID-19-vaccine-from-india/600756/>, (Accessed December 26, 2022).

⁶²² Ministry of External Affairs, "Supply of Indian Manufactured Vaccines to Neighbouring and Key Partner Countries." January 19, 2021, Para. 5, https://mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/33399/Supply_of_Indian_manufactured_vaccines_to_neighbouring_and_key_partner_countries, (Accessed December 26, 2022); The PACT (Partnerships for Accelerating Clinical Trials) programme was launched for supporting COVID-19 vaccine development activities in partnering countries. The initiative was implemented by Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC) and Clinical Development Services Agency (CDSA) under the aegis of the National Biopharma Mission and Ind-CEPI Mission of DBT.

under the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) programme,⁶²³ India provided e-training to medical professionals of the South Asian countries in collaboration with All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education & Research (PGIMER), Chandigarh alongside a training in Bengali conducted by AIIMS, Bhubaneswar for participants from Bangladesh.⁶²⁴

Additionally, India utilized social media platforms for political communication. On March 13, 2020, Modi proposed via Twitter that the leadership of SAARC nations formulate a robust strategy to combat Coronavirus. He suggested convening a video conference to discuss methods for maintaining public health. Modi envisioned that collectively, they could set a global example and contribute to a healthier planet.⁶²⁵ Following the virtual meeting of SAARC leaders, Home Minister Amit Shah took to Twitter on March 15, 2020. He hailed the event as marking the emergence of a novel form of diplomacy, setting a precedent for the international community. Shah affirmed that under Prime Minister Modi's guidance, India would assume a pivotal role in addressing global challenges.⁶²⁶ Similarly, on January 21, 2021, as India delivered its inaugural consignment to Nepal, External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar tweeted a message emphasizing prioritizing neighboring countries and their people.⁶²⁷

⁶²³ The Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation Programme (ITEC) was launched by Government of India on 15th September 1964 as a programme of bilateral cooperation and technical assistance. For more information see, <https://www.itecgoi.in/index#>, (Accessed December 26, 2022).

⁶²⁴ Smruti S. Pattanaik, "COVID-19 Pandemic and India's Regional Diplomacy," *South Asian Survey* 28, no. 1 (2021): 100.

⁶²⁵ Narendra Modi, "I Would Like To Propose That The Leadership Of SAARC Nations Chalk Out A Strong Strategy To Fight Coronavirus..." March 13, 2020, <https://Twitter.com/narendramodi/status/1238371182094639104?lang=en> (Accessed December 26, 2022).

⁶²⁶ Amit Shah, *With Today's SAARC Conference World Has Witnessed Dawn of A New Kind of Diplomacy...* March 15, 2020, <https://Twitter.com/AmitShah/status/1239214296464326659>, (Accessed December 26, 2022).

⁶²⁷ Dr. S. Jaishankar, "Nepal Receives Indian Vaccines. Putting Neighbours First, Putting People First! #VaccineMaitri," January 21, 2021, <https://Twitter.com/drsjaishankar/status/1352148443322605568>, (Accessed December 26, 2022).

India's engagement was driven by the fact that general expectations have risen in recent years about India's commitments as a responsible actor largely owing to the country's growing economic capacity and its increasing willingness to play a greater role in the global order, as noted in the growing significance of the concept of "net security provider"⁶²⁸ as well as "first responder" in the region.⁶²⁹ However, beyond this normative fare, India's proactive diplomacy also had a strong reactive dimension. Delhi's strategic competition with Beijing also shaped its global pandemic response.⁶³⁰ As the pandemic brought profound concerns about enduring impact on the international order, championing global engagement became a key to preserving India's equities.

It is notable that despite some initial missteps and mismanagement in handling the spread of the coronavirus, including the delay in communicating the pandemic to the world, China remained a formidable global player in the pandemic altered diplomatic landscape beset with virtual meetings and health diplomacy. The result was that, India faced a substantial challenge in confronting Beijing's assertive diplomatic and communication campaign, commonly known as "wolf warrior diplomacy."⁶³¹ This campaign was designed to enhance China's strategic influence in its proximate regions and beyond, while concurrently striving to rebuild its damaged reputation resulting from the mishandling of the pandemic during the initial outbreak phase.

⁶²⁸ Saneet Chakradeo, "Leveraging Greater Quad Cooperation Through Disaster Management in the Indo-Pacific," *South Asian Voices*, January 22, 2021, <https://southasianvoices.org/leveraging-greater-quad-cooperation-through-disaster-management-in-the-indo-pacific/?fbclid=IwAR1nQ-2xcPWEHuFDiQrTxG0eNUn6fwFL3uGSvMai6ui-m9KAwNQcJmJTzmM> (Accessed December 27, 2022).

⁶²⁹ MEA, "Responding First as a Leading Power," https://www.mea.gov.in/Portal/IndiaArticleAll/636548962666860480_Responding_First_Leading_Power.pdf (Accessed December 27, 2022).

⁶³⁰ Deep Pal, Rahul Bhatia and Suchet Vir Singh, "Health Silk Road—How China Plans to Make BRI Essential in Covid-hit South Asia," *The Print*, June 11, 2020, <https://theprint.in/opinion/health-silk-road-how-china-plans-to-make-bri-essential-in-covid-hit-south-asia/439603/>, (Accessed December 28, 2022).

⁶³¹ Zhao Alexandre Huang, "'Wolf Warrior' and China's Digital Public Diplomacy During the COVID-19 Crisis," *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy* 18, no. 1 (2022): 37-40, <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41254-021-00241-3>; Zhiqun Zhu, "Interpreting China's 'Wolf-Warrior' Diplomacy," *The Diplomat*, May 15, 2020, <https://thediplomat.com/2020/05/interpreting-chinas-wolf-warrior-diplomacy/>, (Accessed December 28, 2022).

South Asia is a region where China has consistently been engaging with foreign aid and investments for years.⁶³² In this context, COVID-19 crisis came off as a geopolitical opportune moment for China to both consolidate the gains already made and further bolster its presence and influence in the region. Therefore, China was overwhelmingly forthcoming in assisting South Asian countries battling the COVID-19 crisis. To briefly elaborate, starting from July 2020 China held a series of meetings with South Asian countries. Meetings with Foreign Ministers of Afghanistan, Nepal, Pakistan; Vice-Foreign Minister of Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Nepal and Director General of all the six South Asian countries made discussions on varying issues and topics from the ongoing fight against the pandemic to post-pandemic economic recovery.⁶³³

Apart from the China's government, Chinese companies, and philanthropic foundations such as Jack Ma foundation was also active in providing medical aid in a way assisting government's public diplomacy. Companies like China Merchant Port Group (CMPort), Hambantota International Port Group (HIPG), China National Aero-Technology International Engineering Corporation (AVIC-ENG), Metallurgic Corporation of China (MCC), and Huawei provided medical help in Sri Lanka. Chinese billionaire and the co-founder of Alibaba, Jack Ma also provided medical assistance to several countries in the region including Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Bhutan, Pakistan, Nepal, Maldives, and Bangladesh.⁶³⁴ Further, when India suspended its export of vaccines for a short while following a critical shortage of vaccines for domestic use, China made no mistake in utilizing the opportunity to engage the South Asian countries with made in China vaccines.⁶³⁵

⁶³² Amit Ranjan, "Chinese Aid to the South Asian Countries at the Time of COVID-19 Pandemic: Norm or for Political Gains?," *Contemporary Chinese Political Economy and Strategic Relations* 7, no. 3 (2021): 1530, <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/chinese-aid-south-asian-countries-at-time-covid/docview/2640106391/se-2>, (Accessed December 28, 2022).

⁶³³ Amit Ranjan, "Chinese Aid to the South Asian Countries at the time of COVID-19 Pandemic," 1539-41.

⁶³⁴ Amit Ranjan, "Chinese Aid to the South Asian Countries at the time of COVID-19 Pandemic: Norm or for Political Gains?," *Contemporary Chinese Political Economy and Strategic Relations* 7, no. 3 (2021), 1521-1550 <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/chinese-aid-south-asian-countries-at-time-covid/docview/2640106391/se-2>, (Accessed December 28, 2022).

⁶³⁵ Chinese vaccines include Sinovac, Sinopharm, CanSino, and AstraZeneca (produced in China under a deal with Shenzhen Kangtai). Anjana Pasricha, "South Asia Turns to China for COVID Vaccines after India Halts Exports," *VOA News*, May 28, 2021,

India's concern about China's influence at the time was conspicuously clear from the statements of Harsh V. Pant of ORF, New Delhi. He argues that given the prolonged duration of this crisis, if India fails to assume a prominent role within a few months and the situation stabilizes, many nations will come to view China as a significant and potentially advantageous player for them.⁶³⁶

However, all this is not to argue that China's global outreach was without challenges. As a matter of fact, China had its own distinctive vulnerabilities. Spending millions on developing countries for medical assistance, including supply of vaccines and other medical equipment notwithstanding, Beijing had a tough time credibly conveying its intentions. Allegations were levelled that Beijing was using vaccine diplomacy as a force to coerce recipient countries. China putting conditions on and seeking quid pro quo for the supply of vaccine at the core of this discourse, casting a shadow over the altruistic image that China sought to propagate. For instance, the Paraguay government reported that unofficial brokers approached it offering access to the Chinese-manufactured COVID-19 vaccine in return for cutting diplomatic ties with Taiwan. Likewise, Papua New Guinea was reportedly requested to prioritise vaccination of Chinese nationals in the country.⁶³⁷

However, it is important to note that offsetting these allegations are not that easy, for they are built on the common narrative of Beijing coercing smaller nations using debt-trap diplomacy⁶³⁸ mainly pursued through its infrastructural projects worth US\$1 Trillion

https://www.voanews.com/a/COVID-19-pandemic_south-asia-turns-china-covid-vaccines-after-india-halts-exports/6206320.html, (Accessed December 28, 2022).

⁶³⁶ Pant quoted in Anjana Pasricha, "South Asia Turns to China for COVID Vaccines after India Halts Exports."

⁶³⁷ Ben Doherty, Daniel Hurst, and Kate Lyons, "Coercion or Altruism: Is China Using its Covid Vaccines to Weild Global Power?," *The Guardian*, March 27, 2021, Para. 3-4, <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2021/mar/28/coercion-or-altruism-is-china-using-its-covid-vaccines-to-wield-global-power>, (Accessed December 28, 2022).

⁶³⁸ A report by Carnegie Endowment for International Peace notes debt-trap diplomacy as a "practice of offering easy money for unviable projects with the aim of gaining control of assets," <https://carnegieendowment.org/2021/10/13/china-s-influence-in-south-asia-vulnerabilities-and-resilience-in-four-countries-pub-85552>, (Accessed December 28, 2022).

under the Belt Road Initiative.⁶³⁹ However, rebutting all accusations, China's foreign minister Wang Yi, addressing a gathering in Moscow in March 2020, dismissed claims that China was engaging in what critics termed as "vaccine diplomacy," deeming it hypocritical. He instead accused Western nations of selfishly stockpiling vaccines on a large scale.⁶⁴⁰

Thus, as self-evident from the discussion above, India's need to assume a greater decisive role was vehement and indisputable. Chinese dominance and its competitive edge over India economically and politically in the South Asia region and elsewhere provided a strong strategic impetus for India's active public diplomacy. More so, in the wake of the Indo-China relations becoming intensely fraught with dangers of major conflicts following the bloody Galwan Valley skirmish of the Ladakh crisis in the mid of June.⁶⁴¹ This means any backsliding, even if induced by severe domestic economic and health concerns, was expensive and risky. Ultimately, the idea behind India becoming a fulcrum in the regional pandemic response was to send the message that Delhi's foreign policy outlook has changed in the 21st century and that it now increasingly sees itself as a prominent player in the international system and not just a regional power.⁶⁴²

5.5 Health Diplomacy and Vaccine Maitry (Vaccine Friendship)

In the normative dimension of soft power engagements, India's health diplomacy (medical equipment and vaccine supplies) marked a hallmark of India's crisis response to the distinctive global public health scenario brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. For starters, a significant departure of the COVID-19 crisis from other health crises and issues in the past is that the former transcends the dominant humanitarian concerns that fostered cooperation among nations. In contrast, the COVID crisis unprecedentedly laid

⁶³⁹ Brahma Chellaney, "China's Debt-trap Diplomacy," *Project Syndicate*, January 23, 2017, <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/china-one-belt-one-road-loans-debt-by-brahma-chellaney-2017-01>, (Accessed December 29, 2022).

⁶⁴⁰ As cited in Ben Doherty, Daniel Hurst, and Kate Lyons, "Coercion or Altruism: Is China Using its Covid Vaccines to Wield Global Power?," para. 28.

⁶⁴¹ Muhsin Puthan Purayil and Mufsin Puthan Purayil, "The Ladakh Crisis and India's Ontological Security," *Global Change, Peace & Security* 33, no. 1 (2021): 85-91, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14781158.2021.1823359>

⁶⁴² Pant and Mann, "India's Public Health Diplomacy in the Time of COVID19."

bare the national security and global security threats from public health issues while testifying to the vitality of bringing health-related security concerns to the fore of foreign policy. The multiple threats - intra-state and inter-state - entailing securitization of public health at national and international levels blurred the dichotomous political conceptualization of issues based on a hierarchy, namely “high politics” and “low politics,” that drives the allocation of resources and attention in policymaking. In so doing, the COVID-19 crisis assertively pitched for reframing public health as “high politics.”⁶⁴³ At the same time, it also expanded the scope for leveraging public health in international relations.

Amplly responding to the changed scenario, India chose the paradigm of vaccine internationalism as the guideline for its pandemic response. India started right from the beginning of the pandemic by supplying personal protective equipment (PPE) such as surgical masks, face shields, gloves, N95 masks, disposable gowns, hand sanitizers, etc. for frontline health care workers in various countries and coupled it with exporting a large amount of antiviral drug remdesivir and paracetamol tablets used for the COVID-19 treatment.

Although India was not new to employing health diplomacy to leverage its goodwill and influence, the vaccine internationalism this time around had more substantive moral and humanitarian dialectics. Particularly, it aligned well with the global health matrix that exposed wide disparity between the developed and developing world regarding their ability to acquire critical vaccines and other medical supplies. That is, amidst the global scramble for vaccines, the Global South had fared poorly and lagged behind the developed countries in inoculating their population, the national priority for any government at the time.

⁶⁴³ From the realist and neorealist perspectives about international relations and foreign policy, “high politics” comprises all matters related to the national security and survival of the state. It involves issues such as war, peace, security, coercion, and competition for power. “Low politics” includes all matters that are not vital to the security and survival of the state and that can be managed by sub-national units. Broadly, it signifies the realm of the state’s welfare. This involves the social, economic, and environmental issues, including public health.

In contrast, the rich and developed western countries hoarded vaccines many times over the number of vaccine doses needed to vaccinate their whole population.⁶⁴⁴ To put it in perspective, rich countries representing just 14% of the global population were holding 53% of the vaccines produced. To give a more specific instance, Canada bought doses five times enough to vaccinate every single citizen of the country.⁶⁴⁵

Even worse, vaccines produced by the Western countries turned out to be primarily and often exclusively for self-consumption and the consumption of the rich. Fatima Bhutto, writing for *The Guardian*, highlights this disparity, noting that nearly all Pfizer/BioNTech vaccines were earmarked for wealthy nations, while the Moderna vaccine was exclusively allocated to them, with no provision for poorer nations. South Africa, the hardest-hit country in Africa, was acquiring the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine at a per-unit cost nearly two and a half times higher than European countries. Despite AstraZeneca's French division announcing a price cap of €2.50 per dose in November 2020, European nations were securing doses below this cap, while African countries were paying substantially more.⁶⁴⁶

In this worse scenario, as a world leader in the production of generic medicines accounting for 20 per cent of their global production and more than 60 per cent of global demands for vaccines,⁶⁴⁷ India found both moral and strategic rationale to step up its role. India's pharmaceutical industry, widely known for manufacturing high-quality, affordable generic medicines accessible to developing countries, had earned the country

⁶⁴⁴ Fatima Bhutto, "The World's Richest Countries are Hoarding Vaccines. This is Morally Indefensible," *The Guardian*, March 17, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/mar/17/rich-countries-hoarding-vaccines-us-eu-africa>, (Accessed January 2, 2023).

⁶⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁴⁷ Arvind Sahay, "India Can Become the Pharmacy of the World," *Business Line*, May 7, 2020, <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/opinion/india-can-become-the-pharmacy-of-the-world/article31516558.ece> (Accessed January 2, 2023); Pharmaceuticals Sector, <https://www.investindia.gov.in/sector/pharmaceuticals>, (Accessed January 2, 2023); Business Standard, "India 'Pharmacy of the World' During COVID-19 Crisis, Says SCO Secy General," June 21, 2020, https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/india-pharmacy-of-the-world-during-COVID-19-crisis-says-sco-secy-general-120062100435_1.html, (Accessed January 2, 2023).

the sobriquet of “pharmacy of the world.” It was quite natural that pharmaceutical industry became the key resource India tried to leverage.

India launched “Vaccine Maitri” (Vaccine Friendship) on 20 January 2021 to supply vaccines to nations across the world with the projected aim of bridging the gap in vaccine access between the rich and the poor countries.⁶⁴⁸ India also pledged \$15 million as contribution to the vaccine alliance GAVI (Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunizations) at the Global Vaccine Summit hosted by the UK. India’s vaccine diplomacy was driven chiefly by three made-in-India vaccines – Covishield, COVOVAX and Covaxin (the first two are in foreign collaboration, and the last is indigenously developed). While Oxford-AstraZeneca’s Covishield and COVOVAX are manufactured by the Pune-based Serum Institute of India (SII), Covaxin is produced by Bharat Biotech.

Other top manufacturers of vaccines including Dr Reddy’s Labs, Gennova Biopharmaceuticals, Zydus Cadila, and Biological E. Serum Institute of India signed pacts with international health NGOs and vaccine developers such as the Bill and Milinda Gate Foundation to manufacture vaccines for developing countries.⁶⁴⁹

Remarkably, the highest order of Indian magnanimity, however, came to display when Delhi prioritised the vaccination of the high-risk population across the border, irrespective of nationality, over the low-risk Indian population.⁶⁵⁰ To put in perspective, India launched its vaccination drive on 16 January 2021. The first phase prioritised the high-risk group of individuals such as healthcare and frontline workers. The second phase, which began on 1 March 2021, covered all residents over the age of 60 and

⁶⁴⁸ Jyoti Sharma and S. K Varshney, “India’s Vaccine Diplomacy Aids Global Access to COVID-19 Jabs,” *Nature*. 2021, February 17, 2021, <https://www.nature.com/articles/nindia.2021.31>, (Accessed January 2, 2023).

⁶⁴⁹ Leroy Leo, “Gate Foundation Gives Serum Institute \$150 million Funding for 2 Vaccines,” *The Live Mint*, August 07, 2020, <https://www.livemint.com/companies/news/gates-foundation-provides-serum-institute-150-million-funding-for-2-vaccines-11596791715498.html>, (Accessed January 2, 2023).

⁶⁵⁰ Oommen C. Kurian, “India as the Friendly Neighbourhood Vaccinator: Vaccine Internationalism and the Pandemic,” *ORF*, January 23, 2021, Para 4, <https://www.orfonline.org/research/india-as-the-friendly-neighbourhood-vaccinator/>, (Accessed January 2, 2023).

residents between the ages of 45 and 60 with one or more qualifying comorbidities. Meanwhile, between January 20 and March 1, India was exporting vaccines to its neighbouring countries, effectively demonstrating that India's commitment to reinforcing moral pretensions.



As of 8 August 2022, India's vaccine supply, including grants, commercial delivery, and through COVAX (COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access)⁶⁵¹ stood at 242 million, benefiting 99 countries as well as UN health workers and peacekeepers.⁶⁵² During the pandemic, India was exporting more than three times the number of doses it had used to inoculate its citizens.⁶⁵³ Moreover, towards ensuring fair and equitable access to the vaccines, India proposed a suspension of intellectual property rights of the vaccines at the World Trade Organization.⁶⁵⁴ However, despite the WHO Director General's support, the proposal was stiffly resisted by the USA, the UK, Canada, Norway and the European Union.⁶⁵⁵ Further, as the fight against the pandemic turned intense, Prime Minister Modi held a virtual interaction in April 2021 with top vaccine manufactures - Serum Institute, Bharat Biotech, Dr Reddy's Labs, Gennova Biopharmaceuticals, Zydus Cadila, and Biological E, and urged them to ramp up production to meet domestic and international demands.⁶⁵⁶ Positively responding to Prime Minister's call, the Serum Institute almost quadrupled its monthly production capacity of AstraZeneca from around 65 million in April to 240 million by October 2021.⁶⁵⁷

⁶⁵¹ COVAX is a global initiative to provide equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines to every country in the world. It is directed by the GAVI vaccine alliance, the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations, and the World Health Organization, alongside key delivery partner UNICEF.

⁶⁵² MEA, "Vaccine Supply," <https://www.mea.gov.in/vaccine-supply.htm>, (Accessed January 2, 2023).

⁶⁵³ Yaroslav Trofimov and Eric Bellman, "In COVID-19 Diplomacy, India Emerges as a Vaccine Superpower," *The Wall Street Journal*, February 12, 2021, Para. 14, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/COVID-19-vaccines-are-becoming-important-diplomatic-currency-11613152854>, (Accessed January 2, 2023).

⁶⁵⁴ Bawa Singh et al, "COVID-19 and Global Distributive Justice: 'Health Diplomacy' of India and South Africa for the TRIPS Waiver," *Journal of Asian and African Studies* (2022): 2, <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F00219096211069652>

⁶⁵⁵ Khan Sharun and Kuldeep Dhama, "India's Role in COVID-19 Vaccine Diplomacy," *Journal of Travel Medicine* 28, no. 7 (2021): 4, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jtm/taab064>

⁶⁵⁶ Money Control, "COVID-19: PM Modi Urges Vaccine Manufacturers to Continue Scaling up Production," April 21, 2021, <https://www.moneycontrol.com/news/india/COVID-19-pm-modi-urges-vaccine-manufacturers-to-continue-scaling-up-production-6793751.html>, (Accessed January 3, 2023).

⁶⁵⁷ Krishna N. Das, "India's Serum Sees 'large' Exports as Output Nearly Quadruples," *Reuters*, October 21, 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/indias-serum-could-export-20-30-mln-vaccine-doses-month-covax-says-ceo-2021-10-21/>

To be sure, given such global reach India has acquired through the purpose and formulation of its vaccine diplomacy by combining national interests and universal values, the statement of Ashok Malik, policy advisor to India's MEA, that "Many countries, when they think vaccines, they think India"⁶⁵⁸ carries weight. It profoundly captures the essence of nation-branding not least because the pandemic helped further promote and market the Indian pharmaceutical industry in terms of its manufacturing capacity and competence. The credibility of India's pharmaceutical sector thus enhanced seems to have been a major factor facilitating intensified foreign collaboration and bilateral relations with New Delhi.⁶⁵⁹

It is important to note that India's pursuit of vaccine internationalism was driven by compelling geopolitical and strategic considerations. India's esteemed status as a global leader in generic drugs entails significant normative expectations, particularly in terms of the country's contribution to assisting others during times of global health instability. Therefore, it was both expected and necessary for India to rise to the occasion and fulfil its role in addressing the prevailing circumstances

However, the sheer scale and magnitude of the pandemic and the hovering uncertainties surrounding the spread of the virus in the initial stages left the supply of generic drugs a matter of serious political choice and a policy question for India, even belittling the usual economic rationale of international trade based on profiteering. This is because as India was battling the virus, there were genuine domestic concerns about the shortage of drugs. Nonetheless, despite such public reservations, India placed emphasis on the supply of drugs to numerous countries fighting the pandemic with an alarming shortage of generic drugs. As Nicholas Cull aptly noted, the crisis has subjected all nations to global scrutiny. If positive actions can be associated with pre-existing positive attributes, such as German

⁶⁵⁸ Yaroslav Trofimov and Eric Bellman, "In COVID-19 Diplomacy," Para. 11.

⁶⁵⁹ Muhsin Puthan Purayil and Anudeep Gujjeti, "What the Second Wave of COVID-19 Means for India's Public Diplomacy," *The Diplomat*. April 20, 2020, <https://thediplomat.com/2021/04/what-the-second-wave-of-COVID-19-means-for-indias-public-diplomacy/>, (Accessed January 3, 2023).

efficiency or Israeli innovation, states have the opportunity to bolster their reputation.⁶⁶⁰ Therefore, had India turned down several drug requests from countries, it would have played negatively overseas.

Not only that, vaccine internationalism had more to do with the competitive space of global health diplomacy. India's strategic competition with China catalysed Delhi's global pandemic response within the context of the narrative of plausible global re-ordering doing the rounds.⁶⁶¹ There was a general worry among China's strategic competitors that "where Beijing's inoculations go, its influence will follow."⁶⁶² But for China, health diplomacy was critical to manage its negative national reputation for the virus's origin and spread as questions were raised about Beijing's callous or deliberate involvement in the form of delayed communication of the pandemic to the outside world.⁶⁶³ Offsetting this reputational damage was all the more pertinent in the context of China's aggressive public diplomacy under the leadership of President Xi Jinping, which replaced culture as the centrepiece of soft power engagement with the promotion of China's domestic and global governance models.⁶⁶⁴

Moreover, demonstrating national resilience and leadership was also critical to utilize the opportunity to take the mantle of global leadership when the US was severely battling the pandemic domestically.⁶⁶⁵ In fact, China's health diplomacy during the pandemic was

⁶⁶⁰ Nicholas J. Cull and Mark Magnier, "International Reputation & COVID-19: China, U.S and Beyond," *USC CPD Blog*, Apr 30, 2020, <https://uscpublicdiplomacy.org/blog/international-reputation-COVID-19-china-us-and-beyond>, (Accessed January 3, 2023).

⁶⁶¹ Harsh V. Pant and Aarshi Tirkey, "India's Vaccine Diplomacy," *Foreign Policy*, January 22, 2021, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/01/22/india-world-pharmacy-vaccine-diplomacy-compete-china/>, (Accessed January 3, 2023).

⁶⁶² Yanzhong Huang, "Vaccine Diplomacy is Paying off for China," *Foreign Affairs*, March 11, 2021, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2021-03-11/vaccine-diplomacy-paying-china>, (Accessed January 3, 2023).

⁶⁶³ Jabin T Jacob, "'To tell China's Story Well': China's International Messaging During the COVID-19 Pandemic," *China Report* 56, no. 3 (2020): 377, <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0009445520930395>

⁶⁶⁴ Ingrid d'Hooghe, "China's Public Diplomacy Goes Political," *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy* 16, no. 2-3 (2021): 299-305, <https://doi.org/10.1163/1871191X-BJA10067>

⁶⁶⁵ Denny Roy, "China's Pandemic Diplomacy," *Asia-Pacific Issue by East-West Center*, (September 2020): 144, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep28881>

based on the last few years' efforts to bring health sector under the rubric of the ambitious Belt Road Initiative.⁶⁶⁶ The pandemic scenario therefore seems to have provided an opportune moment to leverage and build upon the existing engagements to strengthen "the prospect of post pandemic cooperation within the BRI framework." Naturally, China promoted what is called the "health silk road" to demonstrate China's resourcefulness as much as to showcase itself internationally as a responsible great power.⁶⁶⁷

In this respect, after a quick recovery from the initial COVID-19 outbreak, China swung into action by providing medical relief to countries battling the virus. Being the world's largest producer of masks and medical kits, China was in a position of strength to offer a decisive response. It swiftly sent medical supplies to nearly all the countries in the world apart from sending medical teams, including doctors, to 43 countries.⁶⁶⁸ The medical aid which was framed as symbolic of an inclusive vision of "global community of common destiny" was ostensible in actions when Beijing offered medical assistance to states that do not have formal diplomatic relations, like in Latin America.⁶⁶⁹ Although not official, Chinese enterprises also chipped in, supplementing government's diplomacy. For instance, Jack Ma, the founder of Alibaba and his philanthropic foundation offered medical assistance in the form of masks and testing kits to the US and Africa.⁶⁷⁰ The whole idea was to "showcase China's global health leadership" and "demonstrate its technological prowess and the superiority of its authoritarian model of governance."⁶⁷¹

Vaccine diplomacy was another dimension in China stepping up its efforts to make strategic inroads and maintain favourable voices in many parts of the world. Beijing made foray into the vaccine arena in July 2020 by conducting the first Chinese vaccine trial

⁶⁶⁶ Moritz Rudolf, "China's Health Diplomacy During COVID-19: The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in Action," (SWP Comment, 9/2021), *Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik -SWP- Deutsches Institut für Internationale Politik und Sicherheit*, <https://doi.org/10.18449/2021C09>

⁶⁶⁷ Ibid, 1

⁶⁶⁸ Roy, "China's Pandemic Diplomacy," 3.

⁶⁶⁹ Ibid, 4.

⁶⁷⁰ Jacob, "'To tell China's Story Well,'" 378.

⁶⁷¹ Huang, "Vaccine Diplomacy is Paying off for China."

outside China in Brazil.⁶⁷² However, a few months later China would become the world's largest exporter of COVID-19 vaccines as several countries in Asia, Latin America and Africa embracing Chinese vaccines.⁶⁷³ In South America, China's vaccine found huge success as all the countries except Suriname and French Guyana embraced Chinese vaccines.⁶⁷⁴ As of March 17, 2021, China was producing about 33% of COVID-19 vaccine doses in the world and exporting about 62% of it to other countries.⁶⁷⁵

As such, amidst this competitive dynamic of global health diplomacy, India hugely contributed to global vaccine requirements central to contain the pandemic. India's medical assistance and vaccine internationalism attempted to firmly place the country in a moral high ground. The banner of humanitarianism was aspired to be held high as "India...tried to live up to its title of the pharmacy of the world."⁶⁷⁶

5.6 Evoking a Humane Vision

Beyond the material substance of engagement, India's pandemic response also extended a view of the global health context through social ideals. In this respect, reference to good society with a discursive emphasis thereupon indicated by normative prescriptions was conspicuous. As India and elsewhere in the world witnessed selective targeting of particular communities based on their religion or race for the spread of the pandemic, Modi urged people to refrain from engaging in discriminatory behaviors. Emphasizing the collective vulnerability of humanity necessitating unity against a shared adversary, he shared on LinkedIn that COVID-19 does not discriminate based on race, religion, color, caste, creed, language, or borders. He underscored the importance of prioritizing

⁶⁷² Seow Ting Lee, "Vaccine Diplomacy: Nation Branding and China's COVID-19 Soft Power play," *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy* (2021): 64, <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41254-021-00224-4>

⁶⁷³ Ibid, 70.

⁶⁷⁴ Ibid, 72.

⁶⁷⁵ Ibid, 68.

⁶⁷⁶ Harsh V. Pant, "Indian Diplomacy in the Age of COVID-19," *ORF*. May 02, 2020, Para. 4. <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/indian-diplomacy-in-the-age-of-COVID-19-65533/>, (Accessed January 5, 2023).

unity and brotherhood in our response and behavior. Additionally, he highlighted that the ability to acknowledge our own susceptibility has been crucial tool in the fight against public health challenges.⁶⁷⁷

The medium of exchange – LinkedIn – itself indicates the message was not just for Indians.⁶⁷⁸ It was intended to reach a larger global audience when discriminations along nationality, race, creed, and religion were rampant. Later, he tweeted the same message.⁶⁷⁹ The message envisions a pluralist, cosmopolitan society with a larger need for human solidarity and support beyond narrow primordial considerations. The intent was to showcase itself as a symbol of unity and compassion. The idea was also reflected in Modi's calling upon the public to "switch off the lights of their homes, stand at their doors and light candles, lamps, torches or their mobile flashlights" to fight their loneliness and maintain equanimity.⁶⁸⁰ The call for harnessing the collective strength as a communion was a way of emphasising the mutuality and sanctity of community life during a critical crisis that exposed human frailty as individuals. From this perspective, the call was a reckoning for an inclusive mind to collectively envisage a cooperative world.

However, the government was not all upright in holding the standard it preached. That is, the adoption of what the Prime Minister preached in political practice manifested contradictoriness. Global vaccine supply had its own problems. India was not quite able to lead through the challenge of equitable distribution of vaccines arising from vaccine affordability and accessibility. African countries were largely left to their own devices

⁶⁷⁷ Sandro Galea, "Compassion in a Time of COVID-19," *The Lancet* 395, no. 10241 (2020): 1897, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(20\)31202-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(20)31202-2)

⁶⁷⁸ Seemi Pasha, "India's Coronavirus-Related Islamophobia Has the Arab World Up in Arms," *The Wire*, April 20, 2020, <https://thewire.in/communalism/indias-coronavirus-related-islamophobia-has-the-arab-world-up-in-arms>, (Accessed January 5, 2023).

⁶⁷⁹ PMO India, "COVID-19 Does Not See Race, Religion, Colour, Caste, Creed, Language or Borders Before Striking....," April 19, 2020, <https://Twitter.com/PMOIndia/status/1251839308085915649>, (Accessed January 5, 2023).

⁶⁸⁰ Prime Minister quoted in Business Standard, "COVID-19: Let's Unite in Lighting Lamps at 9 pm on Apr 5, PM Urges Nation," April 3, 2020, Para 3. https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/pm-modi-addresses-nation-120040300173_1.html, (Accessed January 6, 2023).

without vaccines while the western countries amassed staggering quantities of vaccines sufficient to vaccinate their populations multiple times.⁶⁸¹ Domestically, Prime Minister was called out by critics for not timely stepping in to sensitize and control his own party members, who along with the mainstream media deeply biased towards the ruling party,⁶⁸² were in the forefront of stigmatizing the minority Muslim community⁶⁸³ after several attendees of a Tablighi Jamaat congregation in Nizamuddin in Delhi tested positive for COVID-19.⁶⁸⁴ The stigmatization soon descended into hatred against the Muslims took the form of lynching, attacks on Mosques, call for boycott of Muslim shops and vendors, among others, were blamed on the majoritarian, Hindu nationalist government of Narendra Modi whose party, BJP, has effectively mobilised the Majoritarian Hindu population along ethno-religious identities leading to deep communal and political polarisation in recent years.⁶⁸⁵

⁶⁸¹ Abdi Latif Dahir and Josh Holder, “Africa’s Covid Crisis Deepens, But Vaccines Are Still Far Off,” *The New York Times*, July 16, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2021/07/16/world/africa/africa-vaccination-rollout.html>, (Accessed January 6, 2023); Kerry Cullinan, “Western Countries Sit on Massive COVID-19 Vaccine Stockpiles While COVAX is Short of 500m Doses,” *Health Policy Watch*, October 21, 2021, <https://healthpolicy-watch.news/western-vaccine-stockpiles/>, (Accessed January 6, 2023)

⁶⁸² Justin Rowlett, “The Story Barely Reported by Indian Media,” *BBC News*, May 28, 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-44280188>, (Accessed January 6, 2023).

⁶⁸³ Muslim population in India is about 15 percent of Indians, while Hindus make up around 80 percent. However, Muslim population is the third largest in the world, after Indonesia and Pakistan.

⁶⁸⁴ The Telegraph, “Virus Doesn’t See Religion: PM,” April 19, 2020, <https://www.telegraphindia.com/india/coronavirus-doesnt-see-religion-pm-narendra-modi/cid/1766356>, (Accessed January 6, 2023); Jeffery Gettleman, Kai Schultz, and Suhasini Raj, “In India, Coronavirus Fans Religious Hatred,” *New York Times*, April 12, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/12/world/asia/india-coronavirus-muslims-bigotry.html>, (Accessed January 6, 2023); Rohan Venkataramakrishnan, Now the World Has Spotted Hindutva Bigotry, Modi Insists that Coronavirus Does Not See Religion, *Scroll*, April 21, 2020, <https://scroll.in/article/959749/now-that-the-world-has-spotted-hindutva-bigotry-modi-insists-that-coronavirus-doesnt-see-religion>, (Accessed January 7, 2023).

⁶⁸⁵ Jeffery Gettleman, Kai Schultz, and Suhasini Raj, “In India, Coronavirus Fans Religious Hatred,”; Venkataramakrishnan, “Now the World Has Spotted Hindutva Bigotry”; Niranjan Sahoo, “Mounting Majoritarianism and Political Polarization in India,” *Political Polarization in South and Southeast Asia – Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, August 18, 2020, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2020/08/18/political-polarization-in-south-and-southeast-asia-old-divisions-new-dangers-pub-82430>, (Accessed January 8, 2023).

The government of Prime Minister Modi was already under international public scrutiny even before the pandemic for its debilitating impact on democracy.⁶⁸⁶ Progressively accelerated erosion of democratic institutions, intolerance of public dissent, use of brute force, shrinking freedom of speech, and increasing governmental interference in journalism are featured as reasons for India's democratic decay and accelerated descension towards what critics call a tyranny.⁶⁸⁷ Last year, Sweden's V-Dem Institute downgraded India to an "electoral autocracy," while Washington-based Freedom House called India "partly free."⁶⁸⁸ Moreover, as the Chief minister of the State of Gujarat Modi was accused of encouraging anti-Muslim rioting in the state in 2002⁶⁸⁹ and for which he was denied visa by the US for years until he became the Prime Minister of the country.⁶⁹⁰

Bringing into congruence with this view, critics also notably highlighted Prime Minister's delayed response. Prime Minister's intervention came only after the communalisation of the pandemic gathered international media attention and led to strong international reaction, including from the Islamic countries represented by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (UNCIRF), among others, of the mistreatment of Muslims as part of an ongoing

⁶⁸⁶ Debasish Roy Chowdhury, "Modi's India Is Where Global Democracy Dies," *The New York Times*, August 24, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/24/opinion/india-modi-democracy.html>, (Accessed January 8, 2023).

⁶⁸⁷ Vindu Goel and Jeffrey Gettleman, "Under Modi India's Press is not Free Anymore," *New York Times*, April 2, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/02/world/asia/modi-india-press-media.html>

⁶⁸⁸ "Autocratization Turns Viral DEMOCRACY REPORT 2021," *V-Dem Institute at the University of Gothenburg*, March 2021, https://www.v-dem.net/static/website/files/dr/dr_2021.pdf, (Accessed January 8, 2023); Freedom House, "FREEDOM IN THE WORLD 2021: Democracy Under Siege," https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2021-02/FIW2021_World_02252021_FINAL-web-upload.pdf, (Accessed January 8, 2023).

⁶⁸⁹ The Supreme Court of India approving the Special Investigation Team's (SIT) investigation report on the 2002 Gujarat riots exonerated Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2022.

⁶⁹⁰ Sanjoy Majumder, "Narendra Modi 'Allowed' Gujarat 2002 Anti-Muslim Riots," *BBC*, April 22, 2011, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-south-asia-13170914>, (Accessed January 8, 2023); James Mann, "Why Narendra Modi was Banned from the U.S," *The Wall Street Journal*, May 2, 2014, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/why-narendra-modi-was-banned-from-the-u-s-1399062010>, (Accessed January 8, 2023).

islamophobia in India that has increased recently.⁶⁹¹ In such a prevailing situation, it is reasonable to assume that Prime minister's response in the form of a call for unity and brotherhood was a damage control measure, as the country image and reputation took a beating under his government.

5.7 India's Pandemic Response: Discursive and Performative Aspects

Broadly, three interrelated themes emerge from India's international communication during the pandemic - national competence: India's resilience and success, universal compassion: humanity, human security and global welfare, international credibility: reliable partner and shared responsibility in the comity of nations. The three recurring themes represent the larger narrative projected about India as an active global power. The themes suggest that India was seeking recognition of its identity as a vibrant global super power by constructing and projecting a discourse of India as a globally competent (to some extent material parity with great powers), responsible, power with exceptional civilizational qualities and capable of guiding the world both during the pandemic and in the post-pandemic world order.

Robust Domestic Response

Political leadership and public governance at the national level is one significant arena of image and power projections during the pandemic. Domestic success contributes to reputation building at the international level. On the contrary, poor handling of the pandemic is consequential for a country's international image.⁶⁹² In that sense, communicating domestic success as well as managing and offsetting governance failures, if any, has become a reputation imperative that demands communicating effectively about the government's actions catering to citizens' needs and the overall public governance during the public health emergency.

⁶⁹¹ Venkataramakrishnan, "Now the World Has Spotted Hindutva Bigotry."

⁶⁹² Richard Wike, Janell Fetterolf, and Mara Mordecai, "US Image Plummets Internationally as Most Say Country has Handled Coronavirus Badly," *Pew Research Center* 15 (2020). https://www.pewresearch.org/global/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/09/PG_2020.09.15_U.S.-Image_FINAL.pdf, (Accessed January 9, 2023).

In line with this insight, India crafted narratives out of the country's counter-pandemic policy measures and associated events and processes to provide a big positive picture of the country. Many of the Prime Minister's international addresses described and explained India's pandemic approach, which was projected as effective. In this regard, the story of India's resilience was constructed mainly by presenting the country's response capacity and national resolve. While the response capacity indicates the overall ability to manage the pandemic and its consequences, the notion of national resolve reflects a more dynamic aspect of the indomitable spirit of the public for policy action to contain the virus.

In the context of the pandemic, if the former is about testifying to the years of governmental efforts to build the economic and development infrastructure in the country, the latter has primarily to do with the political will to rise to the occasion swiftly. However, ultimately, the two rest upon the efficiency of the government of India. As per the OECD report on the policy response to COVID-19, the implementation of containment measures to lessen the impact of the pandemic while ensuring the provision of critical services requires centralized political leadership which is able to maintain the complex balance between political, social, and economic factors.⁶⁹³

As such, concerning India's response capacity and national resolve as the critical elements of the country's pandemic response, Prime Minister remarked: "India has shown remarkable resilience in this pandemic, be it fighting the virus or ensuring economic stability. This resilience is driven by the strength of our systems, support of our people and stability of our policies."⁶⁹⁴ This assertion reflects the construction of India's resilience as a compelling story of defiance and courage. A story that speaks of India's dynamism, decisiveness, innovation, technology, and competitiveness, all of that has become more central to efforts at image and reputation management of countries during the pandemic.

⁶⁹³ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, *Building Resilience to the COVID-19 Pandemic: The Role of Centres of Government*, (OECD Publishing, 2020): 2.

⁶⁹⁴ Prime Minister's Office, "Text of PM's Address at the Virtual Global Investor Roundtable," (November 5, 2020), para. 2, <https://pib.gov.in/Pressreleaseshare.aspx?PRID=1670429>, (Accessed January 9, 2023).

In this regard, some of India's vital, positive moments in response to the virus, such as "focus on people's health... [and]...on the health of the economy," the two core areas of nation-states underwent the test of the pandemic worldwide, were conveyed to depict India's unique and impactful achievement of securing well-being.⁶⁹⁵

Accordingly, enlightening the global audience during his address at the World Economic Forum, Modi noted: "we are vaccinating our 30 million health and frontline workers...In just 12 days, India has vaccinated more than 2.3 million health workers. In the next few months, we will meet the vaccination target of about 300 million elderly and co-morbidity patients."⁶⁹⁶

He further reflected on the same during his address in ECOSOC commemoration of UNs 75th Anniversary, when he claimed, India's "'Ayushman Bharat' scheme is the world's largest health protection programme, covering 500 million individuals."⁶⁹⁷

Likewise, to drive home a big picture and enormity of India's achievement, the public discourse in its early stage about the unprecedented nature of the pandemic and its impending catastrophic impact upon India was contrasted with India's performance months later. Prime Minister recalled: "It was predicted that India would be the most affected country from corona all over the world. It was said that there would be a tsunami of corona infections in India, somebody said 700-800 million Indians would get infected while others said 2 million Indians would die."⁶⁹⁸

⁶⁹⁵ Prime Minister's Office, "Text of PM's Inaugural Address at India Global Week," (July 9, 2020): para. 4, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1637540>, (Accessed January 10, 2023).

⁶⁹⁶ Prime Minister's Office, "English Rendering of PM's Address at the World Economic Forum's Davos Dialogue," (January 28, 2021): para. 8, <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleseDetail.aspx?PMO=3&PRID=1693019>, (Accessed January 10, 2023).

⁶⁹⁷ Prime Minister's Office, "PM's Address in ECOSOC Commemoration of UNs 75th Anniversary," (July 17, 2020): para. 8, <https://pib.gov.in/pressreleaseiframepage.aspx?PRID=1639468>, (Accessed January 10, 2023).

⁶⁹⁸ PM's Address at the World Economic Forum, para. 2

To top it off, rhetoric phrases like “bravely fought” and “strong battle”⁶⁹⁹ were also used to reinforce the image of the contingent and unprecedented nature of the virus and India’s victorious rise against it.

Another prominent sub-theme was the dissemination of information about India’s various domestic welfare policy initiatives specific to COVID-19 and in general over the last few years of the current government as the basis of the country’s robust pandemic counter-response. For instance, the government proudly highlighted its provision of free food grain to 800 million individuals and free cooking gas to approximately 80 million households. Despite facing logistical hurdles, the government efficiently ensured the direct transfer of funds to over 400 million farmers, women, and individuals in need in recent years. This portrayal underscores the government’s commitment to effective governance and its capacity to swiftly address the needs of its citizens, thereby projecting a positive image of its leadership and administrative capabilities.⁷⁰⁰

To cite another instance, in his virtual keynote address in the United Nations at the High-Level Segment of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), Prime Minister credited India’s health system for the country’s better performance in the COVID-19 infections in the world at the time. Prime Minister stated: “In fight against COVID, our grass-roots health system is helping India ensure one of the best recovery rates in the world.”⁷⁰¹ This attribution of India’s relative success to the health system in the country, notwithstanding the fact that India’s public health system is known to be highly insufficient and inefficient to deal with the global pandemic of this magnitude, also serves as a counter-narrative against the popular image of a poor public health system in India.

⁶⁹⁹ Prime Minister’s Office, “Text of PM’s Address at the Virtual Global Investor Roundtable,” para. 2; Prime Minister’s Office, “Text of PM’s Inaugural Address at India Global Week 2020.”

⁷⁰⁰ Ministry of External Affairs, “Prime Minister’s Keynote Address at the Invest India Conference in Canada,” (October 8, 2020): para. 4, https://mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/33105/Prime_Ministers_Keynote_Address_at_the_Invest_India_Conference_in_Canada, (Accessed January 10, 2023).

⁷⁰¹ Prime Minister’s Office, “PM’s Address in ECOSOC Commemoration of UNs 75th Anniversary,” para. 8.

Moreover, counter-narratives of the like also contribute to crafting a compelling legitimacy narrative about strong leadership, better governance, and welfare politics - some of the major electoral planks of the Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the basis of the popular, grand narrative of a “new India” that the ruling BJP has been promoting.⁷⁰² The narrative of new India also found place in Prime Minister’s national promotions. During the virtual global investor roundtable, Modi stated: “We are building a New India which is free of old practices. Today, India is changing and for the better.”⁷⁰³ In line with this political orientation, emphasis was placed on conveying India’s policy response as people-centric and public welfare-oriented. The latter was rhetorically cast as an appropriate policy behaviour yet not seemingly adopted universally but India bringing it to the core of its pandemic response.

This way, the story of India’s resilience and success was narratively presented as a unique story of the government’s people-centred governance that fosters the people’s voice. This is reflected in the following statement of the Prime Minister: “India moved ahead with a proactive approach with public participation.”⁷⁰⁴ The same is echoed by the statement on the occasion of the commemoration of UNs 75th Anniversary: “The COVID-19 pandemic has severely tested the resilience of all nations. In India, we have tried to make the fight against the pandemic a people’s movement, by combining the efforts of government and society.”⁷⁰⁵

Additionally, making India’s fight against the pandemic a people’s movement, an image is built, in a more implied manner, on the public trust and credibility the government enjoys. The latter speaks of cordial state-citizen relations and the government’s ability to

⁷⁰² Yamini Aiyar, “Modi Consolidates Power: Leveraging Welfare Politics.” *Journal of Democracy* 30, no. 4 (2019): 78-83, <http://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2019.0070>; Catarina Kinnvall, “Populism, Ontological Insecurity and Hindutva: Modi and the Masculinization of Indian politics,” *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 32, no. 3 (2019): 296-97, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09557571.2019.1588851>.

⁷⁰³ Prime Minister’s Office, “Text of PM’s Address at the Virtual Global Investor Roundtable,” para. 3.

⁷⁰⁴ Prime Minister’s Office, “English Rendering of PM’s Address at the World Economic Forum’s Davos Dialogue,” para. 3.

⁷⁰⁵ Prime Minister’s Office, “PM’s Address in ECOSOC Commemoration of UNs 75th Anniversary,” para. 10.

cooperate and collaborate for shared actions with civil society. While public compliance during the pandemic is hardly less crucial for effectively implementing pandemic responses, the validation of domestic leadership that this framing brings to the fore also serves as an instrument for external image projection.

However, significantly, this projection of credibility and inclusiveness originates from the motivation that the former has become a marker of distinction for those liberal democracies that resisted rampant autocratic impulses amid the pandemic, including enhanced control and exercise of power over the public in the form of denial of democratic values and crushing dissent, “damaging the credibility of many democratic governments.”⁷⁰⁶

Be that as it may, from a broad public diplomacy angle, this narrative is also directed at countering the growing discourse about India’s democratic decline that has come to damage its reputation in recent years although domestic political scenario during the pandemic in India was not a euphoric site of democratic freedom of speech.⁷⁰⁷ Like in many countries’ pandemic response, voices critical of the ruling party was crushed. Dissenters were met with the might of the state often on the pretext to ensure good governance and effective pandemic response. Moreover, nation-wide lockdown left millions of migrant workers belonging to India’s informal economy stranded without livelihood and immediate health services, virtually setting off “a crisis within crisis” scenario.⁷⁰⁸

⁷⁰⁶ Richard Youngs et. al, “Civil Society and the Global Pandemic: Building Back Different?” *Carnegie Civic Research Network* (2021), <https://carnegieendowment.org/2021/09/30/civil-society-and-global-pandemic-building-back-different-pub-85446>, (Accessed January 12, 2023).

⁷⁰⁷ Sumit Ganguly, “India’s Democracy Is Under Threat,” September 18, 2020, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/09/18/indias-democracy-is-under-threat/>, (Accessed January 12, 2023); The Week, “India Among Least Free Democracies, Modi Govt Threatens Democratic Future: Report,” (September 18, 2020), <https://www.theweek.in/news/india/2020/03/06/india-among-least-free-democracies-modi-govt-threatens-democratic-future-report.html>, (Accessed January 12, 2023).

⁷⁰⁸ Asma Khan and H. Arokkiaraj, “Challenges of Reverse Migration in India: A Comparative Study of Internal and International Migrant Workers in The Post-COVID Economy,” *Comparative Migration Studies* 9 (2021): 2, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40878-021-00260-2>, (Accessed January 12, 2023).

Finally, the content and rhetoric of the Prime minister's speech and keynote address on various occasions of bilateral and multilateral relations also elicit attention to two interrelated aspects of India's pandemic performance. First, it drives home the notion that India's policy measures and national resilience are essential accessories to the global pandemic response. To this end, India's crisis management in the short term is rhetorically framed as a uniquely successful enterprise. For example, addressing the ten neighbouring states in the Workshop on COVID-19 Management, Prime Minister claimed: "In March last year, we were the first to come together for recognizing the threat and committing to fight it together. Many other regions and groups followed our early example."⁷⁰⁹

Second, India's pandemic response contributes to strengthening the desirable post-covid world order. Therapeutically framed messages from the Prime Minister are illustrative: "In the post-Covid world,...problems of manufacturing, problems of supply chains, problems of PPE, etc....are natural. However, India has not let those problems be. We showed resilience and emerged as a land of solutions."⁷¹⁰ Another example: "We have announced a package of more than 300 billion dollars. It will bring the economy back on track, build modern infrastructure and put in place a technology-driven system."⁷¹¹

Overall, these frames call attention to India's performance while exuding positive, optimistic expectations about the country are aimed at building international trust in India's governance, which can foster international cooperation. More importantly, by disseminating the story of India's national competence, India sought to convey the point that Delhi can offer a constructive vision for the world as it has proved capable of managing, in an unprecedented global pandemic, a population of more than 1.3 billion of multicultural character, constituting about 18 per cent of the global population.

⁷⁰⁹ Prime Minister's Office, "Text PM'S Address to the Workshop on COVID-19 Management: Experience, Good Practices and Way Forward with 10 Neighboring Countries," (February 18, 2021): para. 1, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1699031>, (Accessed January 12, 2023).

⁷¹⁰ Ministry of External Affairs, "Prime Minister's Keynote Address at the Invest India Conference in Canada," para. 4.

⁷¹¹ Prime Minister's Office, "PM's Address in ECOSOC Commemoration of UNs 75th Anniversary," para. 8.

Beacon of Compassionate Humanitarianism

Prime Minister's speeches outline humanitarianism that focuses on people and global welfare as two central tropes representing India's global pandemic response, both as an immediate measure and as a long-term policy in anticipating the future. India as committed to the core principle of shared humanity is narratively constructed as the underpinning of the country's leadership in the global crisis. The following statements are instructive. "India has always thought about the interests of the whole humankind...this philosophy has always been the driving force of India's policies" and "India's vaccine production and delivery capacity will be used to help all humanity in fighting this crisis."⁷¹² "We need to promote human welfare."⁷¹³ "We must keep humanism at the core of our policies."⁷¹⁴ "I want to assure you that we will continue to support the entire humanity to our potential."⁷¹⁵ In doing so, India sought to bring global attention to the importance of transcending public health beyond the narrow considerations of national interest confined to national territories to a wholistic perspective of human security and human welfare. The objective was to reinforce the idea that India's national values are common norms rather than narrow nationalist motives in which self-gratification forms the only rationale for policy response.

In this respect, stressing the need for a global approach grounded in humanity, Prime Minister called for action on multiple occasions. He encouraged the necessity of unity, joint effort, and collaboration: "Like today, the world is facing a huge challenge in the form of 'Corona Virus'...we all have to face this challenge together. We have to be

⁷¹² Ministry of External Affairs, "English Translation of Prime Minister's Address at 75th United Nations General Assembly," (September 26, 2020): para. 7-8, https://mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/33064/English_translation_of_Prime_Ministers_address_at_75th_United_Nations_General_Assembly. (Accessed January 12, 2023).

⁷¹³ Prime Minister's Office, "Intervention by the Prime Minister at Video Conference of NAM Contact Group in Response to COVID-19," (May 4, 2020): para. 11, <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1621067>, (Accessed January 14, 2023).

⁷¹⁴ Prime Minister's Office, "PM's Message at India-Japan SAMVAD Conference, (December 21, 2020): para. 10, <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleaseDetail.aspx?PMO=3&PRID=1682323>, (Accessed January 14, 2023).

⁷¹⁵ Prime Minister's Office, "English Rendering of Prime Minister's Opening Remarks at the India-Finland Virtual Summit," (March 16, 2021): para. 2, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1705226>, (Accessed January 14, 2023).

victorious with the power of our resolution of ‘Collaborate to Create’”⁷¹⁶ Likewise, at the concluding video conference of SAARC leaders on combating COVID-19, he said “We have to fight this battle together, and we have to win it together.”⁷¹⁷ It is to be noted that the refrain “we” in his statements can bring togetherness and enable the message resonate with the audience, especially as the pandemic left everyone with his own devices for survival. The thought of a humanity-centred response and collective action to deal with the pandemic is an effective public diplomacy device, for publics going through suffering can identify with the message. Emphasizing the importance of such statements, Zaharna (2022) notes, “The most critical public diplomacy function, and the one at which states failed most miserably at during the pandemic, is collaborative problem-solving” and this is due to the lack of a humanity-centred perspective of pandemic counter-response.⁷¹⁸

Needless to say, this is the void that India was projecting to fill through its progressive global engagement. Cast as profoundly ingrained in India’s international relations, the instrumentalized notion of shared humanity in terms of ways of seeing and dealing with the COVID-19 crisis was a powerful way of projecting India’s worldview. The latter is reflected in Prime Minister’s statements on various occasions. Prime Minister’s virtual address at the NAM Contact Group in response to COVID-19: “In the post-COVID world, we need a new template of globalization, based on fairness, equality, and humanity.”⁷¹⁹ At the 15th India-EU (Virtual) Summit, he spoke about “building a human-centric and humanity-centric globalisation.”⁷²⁰ At the address of ECOSOC commemoration of UNs 75th Anniversary he reiterated it with more clarity: “Our motto

⁷¹⁶ Prime Minister’s Office, “English Rendering of PM’s Address at Economic Times Global Business Summit,” (March 06, 2020): para. 3, <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1605642>, (Accessed January 14, 2023).

⁷¹⁷ Prime Minister’s Office, “PM’s Concluding Remarks at Video Conference of SAARC Leaders on Combating COVID-19,” (March 15, 2020): lines. 8-9, <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1606469>, (Accessed January 14, 2023).

⁷¹⁸ Zaharna, “The Pandemic’s Wake-up Call for Humanity-centered Public Diplomacy,” 5,

⁷¹⁹ Prime Minister’s Office, “Intervention by the Prime Minister at Video Conference of NAM Contact Group in Response to COVID-19,” para. 10,

⁷²⁰ Prime Minister’s Office, “15th India-EU (Virtual) Summit: English Rendering of Opening Remarks by Prime Minister Sh. Narendra Modi,” (July 15, 2020): para. 4, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=1638783>, (Accessed January 14, 2023).

is ‘Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikaas, Sabka Vishwas’ - meaning ‘Together, for everyone’s growth, with everyone’s trust’.”⁷²¹

Not only that, compassion was one of the underlying central characteristics of India’s global communication used to connect with various audiences. PM’s inaugural address at the 16th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Convention: “Today India is ready to protect the humanity.”⁷²²

Further, the Prime Minister’s statement in the NAM virtual meeting that “Despite our own needs, we have ensured medical supplies to over 123 partner countries, including 59 members of NAM”⁷²³ illustrates the same. In fact, “compassionate leaders are perceived as stronger and more competent, able to make decisions and get things done. And, compassion in an organization triggers other positive outcomes: improved collaboration, trust and team loyalty.”⁷²⁴

Although presented as a policy measure and an inherent practice, compassion and humanity functionally and realistically represented a conduit for engaging in building and propagating an international reputation. The scope for projection of compassion was wider. The universal nature of the pandemic as affecting everyone was in reality more unequal as it affected some people and countries more than others.⁷²⁵ provided the

⁷²¹ Prime Minister’s Office, “PM’s Address in ECOSOC Commemoration of UNs 75th Anniversary,” para. 5.

⁷²² Prime Minister’s Office, “English Rendering of PM’s Inaugural Address at 16th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Convention,” (January 9, 2020): para. 15, <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleaseDetail.aspx?PMO=3&PRID=1687278>, (Accessed January 15, 2023).

⁷²³ Prime Minister’s Office, “Intervention by the Prime Minister at Video Conference of NAM Contact Group in response to COVID-19,” para. 5.

⁷²⁴ Rasmus Hougaard, “Four Reasons Why Compassion Is Better for Humanity than Empathy,” *Forbes*, January 08, 2020, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/rasmushougaard/2020/07/08/four-reasons-why-compassion-is-better-for-humanity-than-empathy/?sh=2f9ed9d6f9df>, (Accessed January 15, 2023).

⁷²⁵ Laura Robinson et. al, “An Unequal Pandemic: Vulnerability and COVID-19,” *American Behavioral Scientist* 65, no. 12 (2021), 1603-1607. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F00027642211003141>; Sabrina L. Li et. al. “Higher Risk of Death

fundamental basis for an emphatic projection of compassion in terms of serving the humanity as a whole as well as serving the vulnerable countries. In this context, projecting and emphasizing a sense of collective belonging is as significant for its prospect of articulating and revitalising the notion of common cause and collective responsibility as turning such inspiration into much-needed collective action. In fact, the global pandemic scenario marked by deglobalization and fragmented norms⁷²⁶ very much called for the same. History suggests therapeutic endeavours have viability for foreign policy, as the Marshall Plan during the Cold War indicates.⁷²⁷ By evoking a strong sense of compassion and moral considerations, India's global engagement was depicted as a force for good, bringing at the same time a strong dimension of intimacy into the communication in order to emphasise the imperative of mutual co-existence and interdependence. The effort was thus oriented towards making India an embodiment of various human virtues.

More importantly, the language of “compassion pushes us to understand how we have structured the world and to ask how we can structure it better, not because we may suffer but because others are suffering and that is not how the world should be.”⁷²⁸ In other words, compassion is not about passively joining others' suffering just by feeling sorry; it is action-oriented engagement that starts with the question of how we can help it improve.⁷²⁹ In that sense, the rhetorical embrace of cosmopolitan compassion also forms a way of developing a rationale for restructuring the existing UN system, a long-standing demand by India. In that light, India's frequent invocation of the ancient Indian philosophical worldview *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* as a benevolent discourse appears to correlate with real political goals and strategic interest.

from COVID-19 in Low-income and Non-White Populations of São Paulo, Brazil,” *BMJ Global Health* 6, no. 4 (2021): e004959, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/bmjgh-2021-004959>

⁷²⁶ Juan Luis Manfredi-Sánchez and Paul Webster Hare, “COVID, Deglobalization and The Decline of Diplomacy: Could Tele-diplomacy Revitalize Diplomacy's Capacity to Promote Consensus?,” *Global Policy* 12, no. 4 (2021): 574-576, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1758-5899.12961>

⁷²⁷ Matthieu Vallières, “Joe Biden's Empathy May Result in a ‘Therapeutic’ Foreign Policy,” *The Conversation*. November 12, 2020, <https://theconversation.com/joe-bidens-empathy-may-result-in-a-therapeutic-foreign-policy-149252>, (Accessed January 15, 2023).

⁷²⁸ Galea, “Compassion in a Time of COVID-19,” 1898.

⁷²⁹ Hougaard, “Four Reasons Why Compassion Is Better for Humanity than Empathy.”

Being a Responsible Stakeholder in the International System

India's status and credibility as a reliable partner and responsible stakeholder in the international system were crafted in accordance with the need to counter the prevailing public discourse of India as a 'reluctant' global power.⁷³⁰ In this respect, nothing is more imperative than constructing compelling imagery and narratives about India's international leadership and the broader projection of the same. Needless to say, the latter must reflect a notion of India's decisive role in the global management of the pandemic that highlights both capability and political willingness to contribute to the stability of the international order. As it appeared, Prime Minister's speeches remained stuck to this main objective.

To begin with, India's global leadership was presented through the broader narrative of India at the heart of the global pandemic response, evoking connotations of the world looking up to India. To this effect, the portrayal of India's course of action as having positive global implications was made salient in the communication of India's international engagement. This is reflected in the Prime Minister's statements like "the world is not just waiting for India's vaccine today, but is keenly watching how India runs the world's largest vaccination program"⁷³¹ and "India's pharma production capabilities have been useful to the entire world. We are doing the same in the field of vaccine."⁷³²

General markers of effective pandemic policy response such as resource adequacy in terms of global capacity to contribute to containing the crisis, political willingness, ability to set the right priorities, and decisiveness for global action were woven into the conceptualisation of India's pandemic approach. For instance: "Before the pandemic, India hardly manufactured PPE kits. Today not only does India manufacture millions of PPE kits every month, it also exports them. We are also committed to ramping up

⁷³⁰ Aparna Pande, *Making India great: The Promise of a Reluctant Global Power* (India: HarperCollins, 2020).

⁷³¹ Prime Minister's Office, "English Rendering of PM's Inaugural Address at 16th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Convention," para. 16.

⁷³² Prime Minister's Office, "English Translation of Opening Remarks by the Prime Minister at the India-Denmark Virtual Bilateral Summit," (September 28, 2020): para. 7, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=1659777>, (Accessed January 15, 2023).

production. We want to help the entire world when it comes to vaccine production for COVID-19.”⁷³³

Notably, in illuminating India’s material competence, the country’s pharma industry was made the symbolic representation of the nation. The pharma industry was construed as the backbone of the global fight against the pandemic. For instance, at the inaugural address at India Global Week, Prime Minister noted that “the pandemic has once again shown that India’s pharma industry is an asset not just for India but for the entire world. It has played a leading role in reducing the cost of medicines especially for developing countries...our companies are active in the international efforts for development and production of COVID-19 vaccine.”⁷³⁴

To cite more examples: “We proved this during COVID...we were able to deliver essential medicines to more than 150 countries due to the capability of the Indian pharma industry.”⁷³⁵ “India is playing the role of the pharmacy to the world.”⁷³⁶

Thus, by projecting India’s capacity and political willingness to engage globally, a narrative of India’s credibility as a reliable partner was constructed. Prime Minister emphasizes this in his address at ECOSOC commemoration of UNs 75th Anniversary. He states: “While marching forward on the path to development, we are not forgetting our responsibility towards our planet.”⁷³⁷

⁷³³ Ministry of External Affairs, “Prime Minister’s Keynote Address at the Invest India Conference in Canada,” para. 5.

⁷³⁴ Prime Minister’s Office, “Text of PM’s Inaugural Address at India Global Week,” para. 10,

⁷³⁵ Ministry of External Affairs, “English Translation of Prime Minister’s Opening Remarks at the 12th BRICS Virtual Summit,” (November 17, 2020) para. 5, <https://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/33200/English+translation+of+Prime+Ministers+opening+remarks+at+the+12th+BRICS+Virtual+Summit>, (Accessed January 15, 2023).

⁷³⁶ Ministry of External Affairs, “Prime Minister’s Keynote Address at the Invest India Conference in Canada,” para. 5.

⁷³⁷ Prime Minister’s Office, “PM’s Address in ECOSOC Commemoration of UNs 75th Anniversary,” para. 9.

What is more, India's national preparedness and policy response per se was framed as internationally vital. Such frame elicits narrated constructions of India's victory as the world's victory, for India's success hugely contributes to the world's success. Prime Minister states: "It would not be advisable to judge India's success with that of another country. In a country which is home to 18 percent of the world population, that country has saved humanity from a big disaster by containing corona effectively."⁷³⁸ The representation of India's vision further bolsters this framing - *Atmanirbhar Bharat* (self-reliant India), primarily a domestic-oriented aspiration, is positively impactful globally. For example, "We are moving forward with the vision of 'Self-reliant India' in the changed circumstances of the post Pandemic era. A Self-reliant India will also be a Force Multiplier for the Global Economy."⁷³⁹ Another instance, "This aspiration for India's self-reliance will renew globalism."⁷⁴⁰

However, India's proactive global response to fighting the pandemic was constructed as based on and enrooted in India's philosophical ethos, timeless cultural practices, and political values that the country upholds. India's international response was portrayed as solely guided by its instinctive reaction, thereby emphasising public-spirited motives for action devoid of any interest orientation. This framing is readily evident in Prime Minister's statement at the World Economic Forum when he said: "India has also fulfilled its global responsibility at this time of crisis by practicing thousands of years old invocation सर्वे सन्तु निरामया, i.e., may the entire world remain healthy" [emphasis added].⁷⁴¹ Prime Minister's statement while addressing the 75th United Nations General Assembly echoes much the same: "We treat the whole world as one family. It is part of our culture, character and thinking...India has always given priority to the welfare of the whole world."⁷⁴²

⁷³⁸ Prime Minister's Office, "English Rendering of PM's Address at the World Economic Forum's Davos Dialogue," para. 6.

⁷³⁹ Ministry of External Affairs, "English Translation of Prime Minister's address at 75th United Nations General Assembly," para. 11.

⁷⁴⁰ Prime Minister's Office, "English Rendering of PM's Address at the World Economic Forum's Davos Dialogue," para. 12.

⁷⁴¹ Ibid, para. 9.

⁷⁴² Ministry of External Affairs. "English Translation of Prime Minister's address at 75th United Nations General Assembly," para. 6.

As can be seen, international expectations about India's contribution to the global pandemic response as a rising power and the pressure on India to live up to such role expectations were effectively deemphasized. Instead, this altruistic framing was used to bolster the notion that India was acting of its own volition, purely a normative behaviour unaffected by any external inducement.

What is more, India also used the UN's inadequacy and failures in providing an effective and coordinated pandemic response to drive home the notion of India as a materially capable and politically responsible stakeholder in the international system. The rhetorical pitch of Modi's statement while addressing the 75th General Assembly Session about UN's performance demonstrates it. Implicitly drawing a comparative angle vis a vis India's performance, Modi expressed doubts about the adequacy of the UN's efforts during the global pandemic, highlighting the ongoing challenges posed by COVID-19. He questioned whether the UN's actions were sufficient, both historically and in the present context, by specifically asking about its role in the collective fight against the pandemic and the effectiveness of its response over the past 8-9 months since the crisis began.⁷⁴³

Although discernibly framed as a call for UN's introspection, Modi was also subtly hinting at the P5 countries who were supposed to lead a coordinated global health response. Nonetheless, such framing is directed at showcasing India's relative strength and influence in managing the global crisis. The same also demonstrates India's discursive framing of its response as crucial in future in the context of the current UNSC leadership's lack of willingness or outright reticence to globally engage responsibly. Those practices of contesting the legitimacy of existing international organizations are part of rising powers' strategies of seeking increased legitimation.⁷⁴⁴ The permanent

⁷⁴³ Ministry of External Affairs, Prime Minister's Address at 75th United Nations General Assembly, para. 2.

⁷⁴⁴ Emel Parlar Dal and Samiratou Dipama, "Rising Powers' Quest for Increased Legitimacy Through IOs in an Era of Loose Multilateralism," *Contemporary Politics* (2022): 558-560, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13569775.2021.2023269>

membership in the UN is particularly important for the fact that India perceives the latter as “built on the premise of a great power management of the system.”⁷⁴⁵

5.8 Public Discourse on Twitter

Analysis of English-tweets unveils the prevalent narratives and sentiments circulating within the Indian public sphere during the period. The tweets mainly encapsulate expressions of pride, gratitude, and global solidarity, highlighting the prevailing attitudes and perspectives. The language used in tweets is dominantly infused with patriotic fervour and a sense of superiority. The tone is one of unwavering pride, confidence, and a strong belief in India’s exceptionalism and its commitment to global welfare. The consistent tone of assertion and confidence is often coupled with a hint of defensiveness when countering criticism or comparing India’s efforts to those of other nations.

For a start, a recurring theme revolved around the positive perception of India’s global contributions in combating the virus. This was evident through a public expression of a robust sense of national pride and a shared belief in India’s ability to make meaningful contributions to the international community. In essence, the public widely regarded India’s vaccine production prowess and the global distribution of vaccines as emblematic of the nation’s increasing global influence. Demonstrations of this pride took diverse forms, expressing a robust and unapologetic celebration of India’s achievements and its prominent role on the global stage amid an unparalleled crisis.

The public expressed reverence and appreciation for India’s efforts, with phrases like “India Leading World to Fight Against Corona” and “Mother India cares and protects the world community” reinforcing India’s pivotal role on the global stage. India’s global standing was underscored by highlighting the illumination of the Matterhorn mountains in the Swiss Alps with India’s tricolour flag. This symbolic gesture, expressing gratitude for India’s proactive role in supplying HCQ tablets and leading the global battle against the health crisis, was presented as a clear manifestation of global recognition for India’s contributions and the admiration it has garnered on the international stage.

⁷⁴⁵ Deborah Welch Larson and Alexei Shevchenko, “Status Seekers: Chinese and Russian Responses to US Primacy,” *International Security* 34, no. 4 (2010): 70, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40784562>

INDIA LEADING WORLD TO FIGHT AGAINST CORONA. Matterhorn mountains in Swiss Alps lit with tricolour lights in the name of HOPE Swiss Govt did it out of gratitude towards Hon'ble PM Narendra Modi led India for supplying HCQ tablets & leading COVID 19 battle #IndiaFightsCoronavirus.⁷⁴⁶

Mother India cares and protects the world community!! Jai hind!!⁷⁴⁷

Excellent India to the aid of the world.⁷⁴⁸

IN is not a country like any others. We will do everything to save the world.⁷⁴⁹

Further, India's indispensable role in the global healthcare landscape is projected by citing the presence of Indian medical professionals abroad and the substantial contribution of the country in producing 70% of the world's HCQ, a crucial drug in combating the pandemic. India is also projected as self-sufficient and is claimed to be second to none in the world in advanced medical technology, holding a superior position in the global medical landscape.

India produces 70% of the global requirement of HCQ Hydroquinone currently also used in Corona.⁷⁵⁰

⁷⁴⁶ <https://Twitter.com/rathindraOFC/status/1251526247638724608> (Accessed September 18, 2023).

⁷⁴⁷ https://Twitter.com/yadav_hariharan/status/1351781826822500356 (Accessed September 18, 2023).

⁷⁴⁸ <https://Twitter.com/Krishnmurthy3/status/1351541249904238600> (Accessed September 18, 2023).

⁷⁴⁹ https://Twitter.com/Saptarshi_KGEC/status/1346709163913539585 (Accessed September 18, 2023).

⁷⁵⁰ https://Twitter.com/niteen_india/status/1249679890825089025 (Accessed September 18, 2023).

Most of the doctors and researchers in the USA who had tremendous track record are Indians. If that HCQ would have been a bad drug then why they are advocating it's use. With due respect sir "India is a country where service comes first."⁷⁵¹

We are second to none in the world in the field of advanced medical technology.⁷⁵²

As evident, these assertions not only underscore India's significant contributions but also highlight the global reliance on India's pharmaceutical prowess, cementing its position as a pivotal player in the fight against the virus. At the same time, the phrase "India is a country where service comes first" signifies the moral integrity associated with India's contributions and its commitment to global welfare.

Moreover, the public also contrasts India's actions with those of other nations. It juxtaposes the negative impact associated with China on a global scale with the positive contributions that India has made to the world. European Union was criticised for its decision to halt the export of vaccines while projecting India as serving as the pharmacy of the world.

This comparison positioning India as the world's pharmacy further solidifies the narrative of India's proactive engagement in facilitating global healthcare and contributes to the narrative of India's rising stature in the global healthcare sector. This critical comparison also serves to accentuate India's proactive and humanitarian role, underscoring its significance as a key player on the world stage, especially in combating the challenges posed by the pandemic. For example:

China gave Corona, SARS, Maoism India gave HCQ, Ayurveda, Yoga. Will the world recognise.⁷⁵³

⁷⁵¹ <https://Twitter.com/YogiTriipathi/status/1247967144031055872> (Accessed September 18, 2023).

⁷⁵² <https://Twitter.com/athimoolamias/status/1353225922279845888> (Accessed September 18, 2023).

⁷⁵³ <https://Twitter.com/dchopra78/status/1249387887642021888> (Accessed September 18, 2023).

When it comes to real delivering on humanity, European Union is once again failing the World by halting #COVID19 vaccine exports. They were writing articles & lectured India about humanity. What a shame!! Today, India has become World's Pharmacy.⁷⁵⁴

On one end India is sponsoring HCQ for Corona but on the other end Pak continuing its sponsorship towards Terrorism.⁷⁵⁵

Writing this thread with tears of pride in my eyes. India has become a messenger of peace & humanity with its policy of 'वसुधैव कुटुम्बकम्' by sending life saving Covid vaccine to many countries world over. One more reason to thank @narendramodi.⁷⁵⁶

Also, India's diplomatic gestures during the pandemic were highlighted in referencing the lifting of the ban on the export of medical supplies, especially HCQ, showcasing India's humanitarian approach, even in times of crisis.

Another prevailing element in the public discourse was a resounding sense of accomplishment and applauding for Indian leadership's role in combating the COVID-19 pandemic. The public expressed adulation for Prime Minister Modi's efforts in both protecting Indian citizens and assisting humanity globally. For example:

Phenomenal India Delightfully Salutes Our PM Shri Narendra Modi Ji's Genuine Statesmanship in supporting nations in need against Covid19.⁷⁵⁷

1) HCQ, 2) PPE (From zero to 2nd largest manufacturing) 3) Ventilators 4) Now Vaccines. India has risen in Corona times. This is happening because PM

⁷⁵⁴ <https://Twitter.com/nbrengraju/status/1372513014570569731> (Accessed September 18, 2023).

⁷⁵⁵ <https://Twitter.com/Pranavxe/status/1256814731005841410> (Accessed September 18, 2023).

⁷⁵⁶ <https://Twitter.com/RitaG74/status/1359859776511827978> (Accessed September 18, 2023).

⁷⁵⁷ <https://Twitter.com/Ven070670/status/1351811477099855872> (Accessed September 18, 2023).

Narendra Modi has trusted Indians and their capabilities.
#IndiaRisingUnderModi.⁷⁵⁸

My Prime Minister My Pride.⁷⁵⁹

@narendramodi ji leading from front not only saved our people in India, but also
Inspired & helping humanity across Globe. Noble efforts for Humanity!⁷⁶⁰

The language used in the tweets portrays a sense of national pride and underscores the belief in India's rise as a significant global player under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi, particularly in times of crisis. The phrases "India Rising Under Modi" and "My Prime Minister My Pride" express a strong sense of identity and allegiance to the leadership, indicating a collective sense of unity and loyalty within the public discourse. The tweets also suggest that India's actions under Prime Minister Modi's guidance have not only protected its own citizens but have also inspired and assisted people worldwide, reflecting a larger commitment to global humanitarian efforts.

However, it is notable that even as the government garnered widespread applause, some individuals expressed concerns about the allocation of resources, highlighting the importance of prioritizing the vaccination needs of the domestic population. This sentiment is reflected in tweets pointing to the economic challenges faced by the Indian populace and the need for a focus on providing vaccines to Indian citizens before engaging in extensive vaccine exports.

People lost job. lost loves one.. everything stop..tax payers waiting for vaccine to come .and times has come to get vaccine everyone but my our trusted govt was

⁷⁵⁸ <https://Twitter.com/Manesha76/status/1350850271253958656> (Accessed September 18, 2023).

⁷⁵⁹ https://Twitter.com/sitara_mohan/status/1353172993581621250 (Accessed September 18, 2023).

⁷⁶⁰ <https://Twitter.com/Kaliyugamaya/status/1351824404238397443> (Accessed September 18, 2023).

busy in charity and more than 2x of vaccine no's. vaccinated in India has exported free to other countries.⁷⁶¹

I know. So why govt of India allowed exports when we haven't been vaccinated yet? So that Modi could say Bharat is helping other countries?⁷⁶²

Nonetheless, the prevailing sentiment of nationalistic pride and unity appears not to have endorsed a fully isolationist approach, but rather for a calibrated balance between serving the nation's interests and fulfilling India's global responsibilities. Even many of those emphasizing the primacy of the domestic population's needs appear to acknowledge the importance of maintaining a right balance between catering to internal demands and engaging in international assistance. For instance:

India should supply HCQ to other #corona affected countries, whereas HCQ should be reserved for own nation as well as the counter recovery rapidly from #CoronavirusPandemic. #IndiaFightsCorona #StayHomeStaySafe.⁷⁶³

Respected president Sir, @POTUS @realDonaldTrump India is always with US. We are doing all possible efforts for #covid_19 patients worldwide. We are also ready to export HCQ drug despite of raising patients in our country. #IndiaStands4Humanity.⁷⁶⁴

These tweets demonstrate how Indian public sentiment and certain voices within the country emphasize the importance of global solidarity and cooperation over isolationism. It shows public support for the international community over narrow self-interest. This indicates that the idea of global solidarity resonates with a segment of the Indian

⁷⁶¹ <https://Twitter.com/EDSingh3/status/1368530930181140483> (Accessed September 18, 2023).

⁷⁶² <https://Twitter.com/GarvSeSecular/status/1353016115551604736> (Accessed September 18, 2023).

⁷⁶³ <https://Twitter.com/Subhasi57885965/status/1247595139272282112> (Accessed September 21, 2023).

⁷⁶⁴ https://Twitter.com/Aayushh_07/status/1248077236487376896 (Accessed September 21, 2023).

population, highlighting the importance of fostering a sense of collective responsibility and empathy beyond national boundaries.

5.9 How Did the Major Opposition Party React?

The government's handling of the pandemic drew sharp rebuke from the opposition party. Opposition leaders emphasized the dire consequences of the lockdown for vulnerable segments of society - a multitude of challenges confronting the public, particularly the impoverished, laborers, and marginalized communities. Numerous tweets from the opposition shed light on the predicaments exacerbated by the pandemic, attributing them to the government's inaction and haphazard policies.

To start with, the opposition sharply rebuked the government for swiftly implementing the lockdown, criticizing its hasty decision-making, and accusing it of exacerbating the spread of the pandemic. Another focal point of opposition criticism was the government's perceived lack of proactive policy measures. They demanded greater transparency, openness, and accountability in governmental actions, underscoring the necessity for competent and responsible leadership to effectively navigate the challenges brought about by the pandemic.

GOI is being grossly negligent and overconfident about Covid-19. It's not over yet.⁷⁶⁵

India is now world #2 in #COVID19 count. 30% of all new cases & 20% of deaths that are being reported globally are from India. The Govt seems to have forgotten the pandemic & have left the nation for another #ActOfGod as they don't seem to have a blueprint for the way ahead.⁷⁶⁶

K'taka has had 5000 corona +ve cases/day for 4 days in a row. People are finding it difficult to get access to ambulances, beds & medicines. Govt has lost the plot

⁷⁶⁵ <https://Twitter.com/RahulGandhi/status/1361865481821450243> (Accessed September 21, 2023).

⁷⁶⁶ <https://Twitter.com/kharge/status/1302464375899521030> (Accessed September 21, 2023).

& need to set their priorities right. They should have a single-minded focus on combating the pandemic & nothing else.⁷⁶⁷

@narendramodi's silence on donations & utilization of #PMCAresFund for fighting Corona is deafening. He has got unprecedented support from all quarters to fight this crisis. Over 20000 Cr donated & yet nothing is used to make a difference in this pandemic? #BJPfailsCoronaFight.⁷⁶⁸

Furthermore, the government faced disapproval from opposition leaders for the surge in fuel prices, a move deemed burdensome for individuals already reeling from income losses during the pandemic. Several tweets voiced discontent with the government's management of various issues during this period. Questions were raised about efficacy of government policies, including those concerning farmer protests, fuel price hikes, and fund allocation.

Price rise in fuels will have a great impact on various sectors including agriculture. The cost of every commodity will rise, creating more agony for the people, who are already going through bad times because of the #Corona. Better sense should prevail. #SpeakUpAgainstFuleHike.⁷⁶⁹

The Pandemic has eaten into people's incomes & #FuelPriceHike is a great burden on them. The Govt has lost direction & is not bothered about welfare anymore. All that matters to them are profits for their corporate friends. #SpeakUpAgainstFuelHike.⁷⁷⁰

Lakhs of senior citizens, women, children & youngsters have been protesting for months during the pandemic, many have died, 9 rounds of negotiations have

⁷⁶⁷ <https://Twitter.com/kharge/status/1287960969017098241> (Accessed September 21, 2023).

⁷⁶⁸ <https://Twitter.com/kharge/status/1279797921685237763> (Accessed September 21, 2023).

⁷⁶⁹ <https://Twitter.com/kharge/status/1277539449748901890> (Accessed September 21, 2023).

⁷⁷⁰ <https://Twitter.com/kharge/status/1277545660057710593> (Accessed September 21, 2023).

failed & it is hurting local economies. Things are not looking up & I think it is time @rashtrapatibhvn intervenes.⁷⁷¹

PM Modi called #MGNREGA a monumental failure. With more than 60,000 Cr allocated this year, it has been a savior for people in these difficult times of the pandemic. Hope PM gives more impetus to such poverty alleviation programs rather than mere slogans that don't feed empty stomachs.⁷⁷²

Moreover, the opposition also highlighted the severity of the job crisis and the economic implications of the pandemic. In doing so, there was a strong emphasis on the need for policy interventions to revive the economy and generate employment. It echoes the urgent requirement for proactive measures to mitigate the adverse effects of the pandemic on various sectors. Opposition also called for heightened transparency, receptiveness, and accountability in governmental decisions.

Millions have lost their jobs to the pandemic & Govt needs immediate policy interventions to create more jobs before the job crisis breaks into a social crisis. Image & events management seems to be top priority for PM rather than restarting the economy. #RozgarDo.⁷⁷³

Visited the historic SM Street in Kozhikode to discuss the economic crisis with shopkeepers, garment sellers, fruit sellers, alongside [LRI] @MKMUNEER [PDI] of UDF ally IUML. Heard the same story everywhere, from sidewalk vendors to Khadi Emporium. Businesses are hurting& need help.⁷⁷⁴

⁷⁷¹ <https://Twitter.com/kharge/status/1350650984704299010> (Accessed September 21, 2023).

⁷⁷² <https://Twitter.com/kharge/status/1297418147461361664> (Accessed September 21, 2023).

⁷⁷³ <https://Twitter.com/kharge/status/1292386940516356096> (Accessed September 21, 2023).

⁷⁷⁴ <https://Twitter.com/ShashiTharoor/status/1361637503443169282> (Accessed September 21, 2023).

The #Covid19 #pandemic has plunged India's civil aviation industry into deep crisis (as it has the hospitality & tourism industries).⁷⁷⁵

The #Pandemic has already affected lower & middle income groups with most of them losing their jobs and the ones with jobs have been hit by salary reductions. These kind of decisions will further affect them badly. The Govt should roll back prices and revive demand.⁷⁷⁶

Overall, the examination of opposition's reaction to the government's handling of the pandemic suggests one of criticism, underscoring the necessity for prompt and efficient government measures to tackle the economic hurdles stemming from the pandemic and to extend aid to the impacted sectors and communities. The language and tone reflect an urgent plea and discontentment with the present governmental policies and initiatives.

5.10 Conclusion

The study finds that while the COVID-19 pandemic revealed the vitality of securitizing public health at the international level, India demonstrated that effective global leadership to ensure global public health and security requires moral credentials as much as material capabilities.

As seen, India constructively engaged on the global stage during the pandemic through a variety of public diplomacy and nation branding endeavours. In doing so, India projected itself as a normative power and a global player. India kept engaging the pandemic world for both situational factors prompting India's global activism as well as viewing the pandemic scenario as a unique opportunity to position India in a leading light.

India's active public diplomacy during the pandemic can be attributed to a combination of situational factors, strategic drivers, and a dynamic approach to global issues. One key driver was the global expectation of India as a rising power. The world looked to India with anticipation, viewing it as a player with increasing influence and capabilities on the

⁷⁷⁵ <https://Twitter.com/ShashiTharoor/status/1323866166486462465> (Accessed September 21, 2023).

⁷⁷⁶ <https://Twitter.com/kharge/status/1275252732606025728> (Accessed September 21, 2023).

global stage. Delhi's willingness to meet these role expectations was a crucial aspect, driven by the necessity to maintain and ensure India's credibility in the competitive global power matrix. Concurrently, the aggressive public diplomacy efforts by China, both regionally and internationally, created a geostrategic imperative for India to assert itself and counterbalance its neighbour's influence.

Interestingly, domestic politics played a pivotal role in shaping India's global response and communication strategies. Considerable popular support for India playing a greater role on the global stage eliminated a significant domestic constraint—public opinion. The prevalent majoritarian Hindutva notion of India as a legitimate global leader found expression on social media, reflecting the widespread belief in India's civilizational power status. Furthermore, the positive public opinion about Prime Minister Modi reflected the resonance of India's international activism with the domestic audience, highlighting the effectiveness of India's public diplomacy in maintaining a positive image even in the face of potential domestic policy missteps.

India's public diplomacy efforts were also evidently in pursuit of international support for UN reforms and its bid to become a permanent member of the UN Security Council. By framing India as different from most other countries, including the major powers like the US that pursued an inward orientation, India's pandemic communication called for global attention to the need for combining ethical leadership with material power on the global stage. Emphasizing its intervention in critical public issues and its commitment to serving humanity India sought to position itself as deserving of all the countries in shaping the future of global governance.

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CHAPTER 6

PLAINSPEAK OF A RISING POWER: RESPONDING TO UKRAINE WAR

This chapter investigates India's strategic messaging to shape international public opinion to resist and counter narratives, rumors, and disinformation about India's foreign policy towards the Russo-Ukraine war. Put differently, how can we understand the dynamics of India's public diplomacy, especially what Nye calls the "day-to-day dimension" of public diplomacy involving "explaining the context of domestic and foreign policy decisions," as well as "dealing with crises and countering attacks"?⁷⁷⁷ What does it encompass and entail in its entirety? To answer these questions, this chapter examines two sources of data: first, public statements, media interviews, and other interactions in conferences and summits by Indian External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and the Minister of Petroleum and Gas, Hardeep Singh Puri. Second Indian Twitter users' discourse.

Grasping how India marshaled public outreach in defending its foreign policy stance can give us a deeper understanding of not only the legitimization strategies and tactics but also how India's assertion of itself as a rising power featured in India's legitimization dynamics? It is crucial to keep in mind that in the contemporary global arena, material power needs the support of legitimizing power to function efficiently.⁷⁷⁸ In this light, the chapter illuminates how rising powers leverage public diplomacy within a dynamic and changing global geopolitical context to pursue their agendas assertively and proactively.

6.1 Background

On 24 February 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine in a major escalation since the Russo-Ukrainian conflict began in 2014. Indian diplomacy was confronted with the challenge of smoothly navigating the repercussion of the war. If anything, the war intensified

⁷⁷⁷ Nye, *Soft Power*.

⁷⁷⁸ Daniel F Wajner, "'Battling' for Legitimacy: Analyzing Performative Contests in the Gaza Flotilla Paradigmatic Case," *International Studies Quarterly* 63, no. 4 (2019): 1035–50, <https://doi.org/10.1093/isq/sqz047>.

India's challenge of dealing with a quantum of entanglements involving various actors and their complex equations. It essentially involved balancing the relations between the West and Russia on the one hand and securing a positive global image versus securing the national interests regarding domestic demands of the Indian economy on the other hand. Nonetheless, in seeking to navigate the complexity, Delhi remained reluctant to explicitly condemn Russia's aggression against Ukraine and instead advocated for dialogue between the concerned states. India also marked abstained from nearly all resolutions criticizing Russia.⁷⁷⁹

To be sure, constraints were imposed on India by long-standing equities with Russia, not least because the two countries enjoy decades of close ties. The policy had strong economic and political drivers - India's energy needs for the economy recovering from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the strategic necessity of not pushing Russia closer to China and Pakistan.⁷⁸⁰ Russia is also the largest supplier of arms to India, although the latter share of arms imports from Russia fell from 69 per cent in 2012-17 to 46 per cent in 2017-21.⁷⁸¹

6.2 Soft Pedalling or Striking the Right Balance?

Despite the pro Russia outlook, a nuanced look into India's repertoire of response amply indicates that Delhi was not in wholehearted support of Russia. To the extent that India was cautious in conveying its concerns and displeasure regarding Russia's disregard for

⁷⁷⁹ Derek Grossman, "India's Maddening, Frustrating Russia Policy Isn't as Bad as Washington Thinks," *Foreign Policy*, December 9, 2022, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/12/09/india-russia-ukraine-war-putin-modi-biden-sanctions-geopolitics/> (Accessed February 18, 2023).

⁷⁸⁰ Ashley J Tellis, "'What Is in Our Interest': India and The Ukraine War," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, April 25, 2022, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2022/04/25/what-is-in-our-interest-india-and-ukraine-war-pub-86961> (Accessed February 19, 2023); Neeraj Thakur, "Why India Can't Afford Expensive Morality of The West in Russia Vs Ukraine Conflict," *Outlook India*, March 3, 2022, <https://www.outlookindia.com/business/russia-ukraine-conflict-news-why-india-can-t-afford-expensive-morality-of-the-west-in-russia-vs-ukraine-conflict-news-184927> (Accessed on 19 February 2023).

⁷⁸¹ Pieter D Wezeman et al., "Trends in International Arms Transfers 2021," *SIPRI Fact Sheet*, March, 2022 https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2022-03/fs_2203_at_2021.pdf (Accessed February 19, 2023).

international norms and gross violations of human rights, it did so through guarded comments and implicit gestures. For starters, India in the UN Security Council asserted that the current global order “has been built on the UN Charter, international law, and respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of states... all member states need to honour these principles in finding a constructive way forward,” while urging for “respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of states” and calling for “the immediate cessation of violence and hostilities.”⁷⁸² India also voted against Russia in the United Nations Security Council during a “procedural vote” on Ukraine, when the 15-member strong U.N. body invited Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to address a meeting via video teleconference.⁷⁸³ Further, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi reportedly told Russian President Vladimir Putin on Friday that “now is not an era of war.”⁷⁸⁴ Indian also condemned the killings of civilians in Ukraine’s Bucha in UN Security Council meeting and called for an independent investigation.⁷⁸⁵ On the humanitarian front, India has provided humanitarian assistance comprising medicines and medical equipment.⁷⁸⁶

⁷⁸² T.S Tirumurti, “UNSC Adoption of Resolution on The Situation in Ukraine,” *Permanent Mission of India to the UN*, <https://pminewyork.gov.in/statementsearch?id=eyJpdil6IjRyT01pd3pyVHBOalXNW5WVEY3aHc9PSIsInZhbHVlIjo1SzdnafWvS3M4bFpBXC9aSW93SXQrVGFRPT0iLCJtYWMiOiIyNTRiOTFjNTY5YmFjZmNhMzZiNWZk0M2FhYmU1ZDQ5YWQ1ZmY5NDk5ZjM1ODkxNWRiZTU2NTNiOTk3MmEwIn0=> (Accessed February 25, 2023).

⁷⁸³ “For The First Time, India Votes Against Russia In UNSC During Procedural Vote On Ukraine,” *The Hindu*, August 25, 2022, <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/for-first-time-india-votes-against-russia-in-uns-c-during-procedural-vote-on-ukraine/article65809107.ece> (Accessed February 18, 2023).

⁷⁸⁴ Brian Bushard, “India PM Modi Tells Putin Now is ‘Not An Era’ for War in First Public Comments against Russian Invasion,” *Forbes*, September 16, 2022, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/brianbushard/2022/09/16/india-pm-modi-tells-putin-now-is-not-an-era-for-war-in-first-public-comments-against-russian-invasion/?sh=3ce4f8cb13aa> (Accessed February 19, 2023).

⁷⁸⁵ “Ukraine: India Strongly Condemns Bucha Civilian Killings,” *BBC News*, April 6, 2022, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-61006169> (Accessed February 19, 2023).

⁷⁸⁶ “Handover of Humanitarian Aid Comprising 7,725 Kgs Of Essential Medicines And Supplies From The People Of India To The People Of Ukraine,” *Press Release of Embassy of India, Kyiv*, 2022, <https://www.eoiukraine.gov.in/pdf/Press%20Release%20Hum%20Aid%20May%206.pdf> (Accessed February 18, 2023).

However, India's measured response was widely regarded as an affirmation of full support for Russia. It triggered sharp reactions in the West. The Western media did not mince words in criticizing India's policy for the perceived absence of the country's performative enactment of its moral stature and well-consolidated democratic character on the world stage to the extent of calling India a financier of Russia's war.⁷⁸⁷ The Western opprobrium revolved around the narrative of a paradox of India's policy in relation to its state identity and status. More clearly, this moral outrage stemmed from two standpoints.

First, it is premised on the incongruence of why the largest democracy neither acts in support of rule-based international order nor responds against violations of human rights and international norms. It is to be noted that despite normative discrepancies in practice, the international legal order was founded on the principles of sovereignty, non-intervention, and territorial integrity. These ideals have evolved as strong norms through collective acceptance by international actors as well as institutionalization through legal codification.⁷⁸⁸ Norms in contemporary international politics can be understood as "appropriate state behaviour and are standards against which state behaviour can be judged."⁷⁸⁹ Second, there were global expectations of India as a rising power and its willingness to catch up with such role expectations as standing against sinister actions of authoritarian powers to subvert the liberal international order.

Given these circumstances, India found itself in a predicament characterized by a dilemma of prestige resulting from the tension between domestic preferences (sovereignty and national interests) and the expectations embedded in its normative role as the largest emerging democratic power. The weight of these expectations, centered

⁷⁸⁷ Clifford Krauss et al., "In Russia's War on Ukraine, China and India Emerge as Financiers," *The New York Times*, June 24, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/06/24/business/russia-oil-china-india-ukraine-war.html> (Accessed February 18, 2023).

⁷⁸⁸ Michal Ben-Josef Hirsch and Jennifer Dixon, "Conceptualizing and Assessing Norm Strength in International Relations," *European Journal of International Relations* 27, no. 2 (June 1, 2021): 521-26, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066120949628>.

⁷⁸⁹ Neil MacFarlane and Natalie Sabanadze, "Sovereignty and Self-Determination: Where Are We?," *International Journal* 68, no. 4 (2013): 609-627, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0020702013511184>.

around the notion of assuming a responsible role, exerted significant pressure. Plagemann and Prys-Hansen notes, “one of the defining features of rising powers is that they are confronted with new and more vigorous expectations than most other countries.”⁷⁹⁰ Neumann conceives of prestige as “the symbolic resource of exemplary behavior according to some civilization-specific standards.”⁷⁹¹ In that sense, international prestige is regarded as a type of social recognition bestowed by other players in the global system. It is acquired by the perception of a state’s acts, behaviour, and adherence to global standards, values, and ideals. Prestige includes intangible elements like cultural, ethical, and normative qualities in addition to material capabilities. For instance, a state may gain prestige by being perceived as a responsible global citizen, a leader in a particular issue area, or by preserving particular ideals or principles in its foreign policy. Similarly, a state may suffer blows to its prestige if its actions are seen as going against international law, being aggressive, or conflicting with expectations around the world.

In that regard, nuancing the situation further suggests that contextual dynamics entrench the prestige concerns. Notably, rising powers are often looked down upon for their reluctance to assume greater responsibility and contribute to crisis management in global governance.⁷⁹² Moreover, the international community has widely accepted the responsibility to contribute towards preventing atrocity crimes such as genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and ethnic cleansing in case prevention efforts fail to respond to such crimes.⁷⁹³ It is worth pointing out that China endured a setback to its prestige in the 1990s due to Western perceptions that China’s leaders were “on the wrong

⁷⁹⁰ Johannes Plagemann and Miriam Prys-Hansen, “‘Responsibility’, Change, and Rising Powers’ Role Conceptions: Comparing Indian Foreign Policy Roles in Global Climate Change Negotiations and Maritime Security,” *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, May 1, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1093/irap/lcy028> (Accessed March 12, 2023).

⁷⁹¹ Iver B. Neumann, “Status Is Cultural: Durkheimian Poles and Weberian Russians Seek Great-Power Status,” in *Status in World Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 86.

⁷⁹² Sandra Destradi, “Reluctant Powers? Rising Powers’ Contributions to Regional Crisis Management,” *Third World Quarterly* 39, no. 12 (2018): 2222-2227, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2018.1549942>; Stewart Patrick, “Irresponsible Stakeholders? The Difficulty of Integrating Rising Powers,” *Foreign Affairs* 89, no. 6 (2010): 44, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20788715>.

⁷⁹³ Mauro Barelli, “Preventing and Responding to Atrocity Crimes: China, Sovereignty and the Responsibility to Protect,” *Journal of Conflict and Security Law* 23, no. 2 (July 1, 2018): 185–87, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jcsl/kry016>.

side of history.”⁷⁹⁴ In such a situation, it was natural for India, which aspires to present itself as a significant player in international politics, to defend its position through public diplomacy - explaining its stance to the international community while dispelling the narrative that Delhi was aiding Russia or working against the international order.⁷⁹⁵

6.3 Methodology

The study analyses public statements, media interviews, other interactions in conferences and summits by Indian External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and the Minister of Petroleum and Gas, Hardeep Singh Puri, from February 19, 2022 to January 04, 2023. Twelve videos were analyzed. Further, public dimension of engagement is examined through selective tweets of the Indian public during the same period. Twitter’s Advanced Search functionality was utilized to delimit the data in the collection process. The search was narrowed down using key terms such as “Ukraine crisis” and “Ukraine War” The collected tweets include original tweets and replies. Tweets were manually gathered after careful examination of their content and the account holders’ relevance to the study. To ensure selectivity with regard to the Indian public, each Twitter account associated with the collected tweets was individually assessed based on the account holder’s name and profile description, which indicated their affiliation with India. Tweets in English were exclusively collected, resulting in a total of 103 samples.

6.4 Dynamics of Engagement

Without any claims to be exhaustive, India’s public diplomacy in the present setting can be understood at four dimensions of communicative influence.

Negative Soft Power Strategy

⁷⁹⁴ Deborah Welch Larson and Alexei Shevchenko, “Prestige Matters: Chinese And Russian Status Concerns and US Foreign Policy,” *Quarterly Journal: International Security*, April, 2010, <https://www.belfercenter.org/publication/prestige-matters-chinese-and-russian-status-concerns-and-us-foreign-policy> (Accessed March 18, 2023).

⁷⁹⁵ Krishna Das and Devjyot Ghoshal, “Analysis: India Sharpens Stand on Ukraine War But Business as Usual With Russia,” *Reuters*, September 28, 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/india-sharpens-stand-ukraine-war-business-usual-with-russia-2022-09-28/> (Accessed March 17, 2023).

One of the modes through which India's public diplomacy operated was the negative soft power strategy. Negative soft power strategy rests on the main objectives of damaging the adversary's reputation, undermining its position, and taking advantage of the situation. Fundamentally, it aims to discredit the opponent's authority, reputation, or position, often the normative basis of policy advocacy. The strategy entails spoiling the image of the opponent by creating doubt about the opponent's intentions or trustworthiness. In other words, its efficacy stems from its capacity to undermine the adversary's credibility and raise doubts about its integrity in the eyes of the audience.

Soft power proponent Nye asserts that governments engage in competition with both other governments and various institutions to enhance their own credibility while simultaneously diminishing that of their adversaries.⁷⁹⁶ In that sense, a negative soft power strategy which comes across as exposing double standards or hypocrisy, performs the public diplomacy function of undermining the credibility of opponents at a time when "politics has become a contest of competitive credibility" wherein alignment between what is said and done is a significant measure of international credibility and reputation.⁷⁹⁷ India's employment of this strategy is discernible on several occasions during the Russia-Ukraine crisis.

For a start, at the Biden administration hosted fourth 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue in Washington in April, amidst the Ukraine conflict which had entered its second week, Jaishankar was asked why India was not condemning Russia for the war in Ukraine and why the country was increasing oil imports. External Affairs Minister (EMA) snapped back, "If you are looking at energy purchases from Russia, I would suggest that your attention should be focused on Europe. We do buy some which is necessary for our

⁷⁹⁶ Joseph S Nye Jr, *The Paradox of American Power: Why the World's Only Superpower Can't Go It Alone* (Oxford University Press, 2002), 68.

⁷⁹⁷ Nye Jr, "Public Diplomacy and Soft Power," 100; Ben D Mor, "Credibility Talk in Public Diplomacy," *Review of International Studies* 38, no. 2 (2012): 393-96, doi:10.1017/S0260210511000489.

energy security but I suspect looking at the figures, our total purchases for the month would be what Europe does in an afternoon.”⁷⁹⁸

Along similar lines, when asked about India’s purchase of Russian oil during the Bratislava Security Conference 2022, Jaishankar responded more pointedly “...tell me if buying Russian gas is not funding the war? Why is only Indian money and oil coming to India that funds and not gas coming to Europe? Let’s be a little even handed out here.”⁷⁹⁹ India’s Petroleum Minister Hardeep Singh Puri further displayed the purposefulness of India’s media engagements elsewhere. For instance, speaking to CNBC TV in September 2022, explaining India’s position about navigating the crisis Puri proclaimed in sharp tone that “those who want to do that ideological punitive action, they are still buying and there is going to be buying for a while...so the moral conflict question should be asked to them.”⁸⁰⁰ Puri maintained the same stance while responding to the CNN news channel wherein he retorted, “we have a situation where Hungarian oil can come in through a pipeline and it is exempt from the so-called price cap, Russian oil goes to China through the pipeline, it is exempt, Japan can buy it. So, I would like to find out whom the price cap is aimed at.”⁸⁰¹

What is more, at the Munich Security Conference 2022 (MSC) on February 19, as the Ukraine Russia crisis was deepening, the moderator asked Jaishankar, “we know that how France and Europe in general are contributing to Indo-Pacific security, so, how India

⁷⁹⁸ CRUX, (2022, April 12). “India-US 2+2 Meet: Jaishankar Slams West’s Hypocrisy on Russian Oil Purchase & Putin’s Ukraine War [Video],” *YouTube*, April 12, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K6wsVn3C2ls> (Accessed March 17, 2023).

⁷⁹⁹ Ministry of External Affairs India, “EAM at GLOBESEC-Taking Friendship to the Next Level: Allies in the Indo-Pacific,” *YouTube*, June 03, 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9KwXJ-lY44&ab_channel=MinistryofExternalAffairs%2CIndia (Accessed March 10, 2023).

⁸⁰⁰ CNBC International TV, “Watch CNBC’s Full Interview with India’s Petroleum Minister Hardeep Singh Puri [Video],” *YouTube*, September 5, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0F1B2FOcY6M> (Accessed March 17, 2023).

⁸⁰¹ Becky Anderson, “Absolutely None. There Is No Moral Conflict,” I Asked India’s Minister Of Petroleum @Hardeepspuri Whether There Was Any Moral Conflict Around His Country’s Importing Russian Oil, He Tells Me Without Russian Oil, Prices Will Only Go Up, *Twitter*, November 1, 2022, <https://Twitter.com/BeckyCNN/status/1587150838803439616> (Accessed March 20, 2023).

is contributing to European security? India has spoken vociferously against China but India has abstained from voting on Ukraine in the UN Security Council. Why different principles should apply in different parts of the world?” Jaishankar addressed the question, started off by dismissing the comparison between Indo-Pacific and Transatlantic regions. He continued, stating that the notion of a trade-off, where one country takes action in the Pacific expecting reciprocation elsewhere, does not align with the reality of international relations. He argued that if such a connection existed, European powers would have taken a firm stance in the Indo-Pacific early on, which was not the case.⁸⁰²

In another exchange about energy security, Hardeep Singh Puri highlighted the West’s past failures and inconsistencies in applying the same principles elsewhere. Puri resorted to narrative persuasion in messaging because the persuasive impact of narrative message is generally more significant than non-narrative communications.⁸⁰³ Puri responded, “I was a diplomat for 39 years...I was in the Security Council, presiding over the UN Security Council when the Resolution 1973 was passed on Libya. I was warning don’t use force, don’t use force, even though it was with Security Council sanction. See what is happening in Libya today. Then in Syria there was no authorization, see what is happening.”⁸⁰⁴

Ultimately, these assertions that attempted to draw attention to the moral-political inconsistencies were meant to defy and demonstrate to the rest of the world that neither Europe nor the West generally has moral superiority over others. Further, it just goes without saying that the presentation of a dissonance between policy narratives and practise was intended to cast doubts about and cause reputational damage to EU’s image

⁸⁰² Ministry of External Affairs India, “EAM at MSC2022 Panel Discussion [Video],” *YouTube*, February 19, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1m0UjUqVJoU> (Accessed March 17, 2023).

⁸⁰³ Corinna Oschatz and Caroline Marker, “Long-Term Persuasive Effects in Narrative Communication Research: A Meta-Analysis,” *Journal of Communication* 70, no. 4 (2020): 473–74, <https://doi.org/10.1093/joc/jqaa017>; Fuyuan Shen, Vivian C. Sheer, and Ruobing Li, “Impact of Narratives on Persuasion in Health Communication: A Meta-Analysis,” *Journal of Advertising* 44, no. 2 (2015): 105–106, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.2015.1018467>.

⁸⁰⁴ CNBC International TV, “Watch CNBC’s Full Interview with India’s Petroleum Minister Hardeep Singh Puri [Video].”

“as an elaborator and epitomizer of European and ‘civilized’ values, ...[and] a model for other regions and states and as inherently an ethical actor.”⁸⁰⁵

In this reading, Hocking’s observation—which at first focused on the role that NGOs play in influencing a nation’s image and reputation—remains relevant. According to Hocking, taking advantage of differences between a nation’s self-projected image and the one that other actors believe to be more authentic—a.k.a. “image dissonance”—has become a modern-day “great game” that involves controlling the views of other actors.⁸⁰⁶

“What About Europe”?

India’s engagements showcase the conception and practice of public diplomacy as an excellent plank for common sense-making that can be leveraged to explain foreign policies to the global audience. In this regard, the fact that hardly any country in the world is immune from the charges of unethical actions in the name of national interest enables an effortless and contented argumentation that helps set the ground for compellingly provide an understanding of foreign policy stances. Such argumentation is supposedly effectively persuasive if the messaging is seemingly relevant, logical, believable, and trustworthy to the audience. In other words, persuasiveness depends on credibility of the content of the message.

Authentic and cognitively appealing communication captures listeners’ attention as the commonsensical starting point for engaging the global audience and building effective narrative. While addressing strategic narrative in international politics, Miskimmon, Ben O’Loughlin, and Zeng argue that if and when the narratives are convincing, domestic and international players’ behavior is subsequently impacted by them.⁸⁰⁷ In this process, public reaction to critical foreign policy stances could potentially be ameliorated by making the latter a routine, organic and familiar domain of response by countries in the

⁸⁰⁵ James Headley, “Challenging the EU’s Claim to Moral Authority: Russian Talk of ‘Double Standards,’” *Asia Europe Journal* 13, no. 3 (2015): 297, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10308-015-0417-y>.

⁸⁰⁶ Mor, “Credibility Talk in Public Diplomacy,” 394.

⁸⁰⁷ Alister Miskimmon, Ben O’Loughlin, and Jinghan Zeng, eds., *One Belt, One Road, One Story?: Towards an EU-China Strategic Narrative* (Cham: Springer Nature, 2020), 213.

international system. Again, Jaishankar's comments which were widely shared and watched on YouTube including by foreign youtubers are noteworthy in this regard.⁸⁰⁸ For instance, speaking to Austria's Public Broadcast, ORF, Jaishankar articulated India's position by providing a glimpse into historical case. He proposed that the key to resolving disputes among nations lies in re-establishing dialogue and diplomacy. Jaishankar highlighted the prevalence of countries violating the sovereignty of others and expressed concern that questioning Europe's stance on such matters would likely yield silence.⁸⁰⁹

In the same vein, Jaishankar at the GLOBESEC Conference asserted:

It is also a useful reminder to Europe that there were other things happening in the rest of the worlds which sometimes Europe perhaps does not pay enough attention to. There has also been Afghanistan. There were circumstances when in which the Western, particularly American military forces left finally. And now we have Ukraine...it is important for people in the region to realize that how this (Ukraine war) is playing out to the rest of the world. That it is creating a huge fuel crisis, a food crisis, a fertilizer crisis, pushing inflation high in low-income societies which do not have the margins to absorb that.⁸¹⁰

In conjunction, he also stated "We make judgments in foreign policy based on what we think are our long-term interests and what is good for the world"... and war is not in "anybody's interest."⁸¹¹

In the same frame, he further defended India's right to get cheaper oil. Jaishankar stressed that although Europe has successfully cut back on oil imports in accordance with its preferences, nations like India, which have lower per capita incomes, still need energy. Nonetheless, the doubling of oil prices and European actions—such as shifting output

⁸⁰⁸ Emil Cosman, "That's How an Intellectual Speaks to a Weasel. India's FM Jaishankar 'Smacks' Rude Austrian Anchor [Video]," *YouTube*, January 13, 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EvKEA55zQ4g&ab_channel=EmilCosman (Accessed March 19, 2023).

⁸⁰⁹ Indian Geopolitics. "S. Jaishankar Austria Interview #jaishankar #indiangeopolitics #geopolitics #india #austria," January 4, 2023. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mAvPvWJgB-g> (Accessed May 8, 2023)

⁸¹⁰ Ministry of External Affairs India, "EAM at GLOBESEC-Taking Friendship to the Next Level."

⁸¹¹ Ibid.

from the Middle East to Europe - are putting pressure on the world oil market and affecting India's imports because of the continent's limited capacity to pay higher prices.⁸¹²

Jaishankar further spelt out the nuances in the Europe's call for boycott of Russian oil at the GLOBSEC Bratislava Security Conference: "Today Europe is buying oil. Europe is buying gas. I just read the new package of sanctions. The package is designed in a way in which consideration has been given to the welfare of the population (in Europe). Pipelines have a carveout and timelines have been given. It is not like tomorrow morning everything is going to be cut off. So, people need to understand if you can be considerate of yourself, surely you can be considerate of other people."⁸¹³

He also said, "we don't send people out there saying go buy Russian oil. We would send people out there saying go buy oil. Now you buy the best oil you can in the Market."⁸¹⁴ He continued by stating, "if countries in Europe and the West and US are so concerned, why don't they allow Iranian oil to come into the market? Why don't they allow Venezuelan oil come into the market? I mean they have squeezed every source of oil we have. The saying not go to the market and get the best deal is not a fair approach."⁸¹⁵

However, while being outspoken about the intricate issues of oil purchase, Jaishankar has sought to communicate the core of India's stance and its efforts. He expounded, "I recognize today that the conflict in Ukraine is the dominant issue, if not among the dominant issues of the day. And it is a dominant issue, not just in terms of principles and values alone, also in terms of the practical consequences of it – the knock-on effects. The truth is there is really nobody who wants to see this conflict...we all want diplomacy and

⁸¹² Indian Geopolitics, "S. Jaishankar Austria Interview."

⁸¹³ Ministry of External Affairs India, "EAM at GLOBSEC-Taking Friendship to the Next Level."

⁸¹⁴ Ibid.

⁸¹⁵ Ibid.

dialogue. And to do that, fighting must stop. That is the focus of what we are trying to do.”⁸¹⁶

The statement shows India expresses its recognition of the seriousness of the conflict in Ukraine. India is conveying that it values these principles highly and works to uphold them in its foreign policy. India also wants to emphasize how crucial it is to see the dispute in a broader context, including its practical ramifications and cascading repercussions, which prevent India and many other nations from adopting a posture of a complete boycott of Russia and its oil.

In an interview for CNN News in the US, Hardeep Singh Puri afterwards reinforced this narrative by further elaborating for a global audience. He ventured to say, “let me first try and correct your perspective. [When] we ended the financial year 2022 [March 31], the purchases of Russian oil were not 2 per cent but 0.2 per cent. We still buy only in a quarter what Europe buys in one afternoon.” He added, “I bought last year from the United States, \$20 billion worth, which is almost half of what I buy from OPEC. We will buy oil, and gas from wherever we can get it.”⁸¹⁷

Connected to this, when Jaishankar was asked about making a choice between two axis - the US and China, Jaishankar disagreed with the construct as not reflective of how international relations work and pointedly affirmed, “I don’t think it is necessary for me [India] to join any axis [the US versus China]...my [India’s] choices...will be a balance of my values and my interest. There is no country in the world which disregards its interest.”⁸¹⁸

The expression was not only gesturing towards realist politics of international relations as being a blend of pragmatism and principle in general but also to the specific of EU’s

⁸¹⁶ ORF, “Asia Has Problems of Unsettled Boundaries, Terrorism, And Challenges to The Rules-Based Order,” May 19, 2022. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pm7BMCS7qqg> (Accessed April 23, 2023).

⁸¹⁷ Anderson, “Absolutely None.”

⁸¹⁸ Ibid.

which emphasizes that interests and values should go “hand in hand.”⁸¹⁹ In this sense, the explicit and implicit incantation “whatabout Europe” is aimed at finding faults in the policy of the West in the form of general selective concern and a contradiction between policy and position on the Ukraine case. Most notably, drawing parallels to point fingers at the moral dichotomy not just helps to demolish any moral high ground that Europe holds. But also, in the process, it brings them as equals having political differences ultimately concerned about their national interests and the welfare of their population. Jaishankar articulated this more shrilly in an international discussion forum organized by Observer Research Foundation (ORF). He stated:

You speak about Ukraine. I could also remember less than a year ago what happened in Afghanistan where an entire civil society was thrown under the bus by the world. We in Asian have our own set of challenges which often impact on the rules-based order. So, all of us would like to find the right balance of our beliefs, of our interests, of our experience, and that’s really what are all trying to do. And it looks different from different parts of the world, the priorities are different, that is quite natural.⁸²⁰

As can be seen, through the conversational presentation of India’s viewpoint, the Minister emphasizes the significance of striking a balance between economic interests and humanitarian issues. The general people can relate to and grasp the message better as a result. The conversational tone makes it possible to engage the audience and explain complicated diplomatic topics in plainer, easier-to-understand terms. In other words, this common parlance reconstituted the narrative of India’s support to Russia by bringing out political intricacies and policy nuances so as to make it intelligible and palatable.

It is notable that rhetorical techniques like appealing to logos through logical arguments with evidences to support were summoned to persuade the audience of the fairness of India’s foreign policy. This endeavour overlaps with the claim that international

⁸¹⁹ Ministry of External Affairs India, “EAM at GLOBESEC-Taking Friendship to the Next Level”; “A Stronger Europe: A Global Strategy for The European Union’s Foreign and Security Policy,” *European Union*, June, 2016, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2871/9875> (Accessed April 14, 2023).

⁸²⁰ Observer Research Foundation, “Custodians of Multilateralism Have Triggered Its Failure [Video],” *YouTube*, September 26, 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ikuzs3_vQBw (Accessed March 18, 2023).

opprobrium is nothing more than unfounded preconceptions about India. This formulation ultimately seeks to drive home the point that the Russian war on Ukraine is very complicated just like any other wars or conflicts in the past. Therefore, it cannot be easily appraised of through the lens of binaries - supporting Russia or opposing Russia and cannot be dealt with as a matter of picking sides. Simply put, the response aptly captures how the binary optic was characterized as an inaccurate and flawed way of understanding the war scenario, if not the worst.

Agenda and Coalition Building Through Strategic Narratives

It is notable that strategic narratives serve as a foundation for effective agenda and coalition building strategy for aspiring powers to set an alternative vision for their desired international order. For this purpose, power-hierarchy in the international order can be played up. Strategic narratives about power hierarchy and inequality may be utilized to mobilize grassroots support for the agenda by presenting the problem in a way that appeals to the general audience. This fostering of a common understanding of the problem and the necessity for action can facilitate in building coalitions. That is, strategic narratives can set the stage for generating potential alignment of common sentiment and solidarity among stakeholders. Such shared understanding through stories appealing to wide range of stakeholders tends towards groupthink, eventually leading to collective action and change.

Jaishankar's remarks at the Bratislava Security Conference, is a case in point. He said, in a rebuking tone, "Europe has to grow out of the mindset that Europe's problems are the world's problems, but the world's problems are not Europe's problem. That is, if it is you, it is yours and if it me it is ours."⁸²¹ The agenda this statement tries to convey was a sense of urgency with which the West needs to reckon the truly multi-polar world that has arisen. It also emphasizes the vital importance for the West to broaden its foreign policy horizon to accommodate the interest of the Global South if it wants to count on assistance and solidarity from other countries when needed. The same urgency for action

⁸²¹ Ministry of External Affairs India, "EAM at GLOBESEC-Taking Friendship to the Next Level: Allies in the Indo-Pacific [Video]," *YouTube*, June 03, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9KwXJ-jlY44> (Accessed March 18, 2023).

was again reflected in Jaishanker's statement during the Summit, namely, G20 Imperative – Green Growth and Development for All.

During the discussion about the global challenge of climate change at the summit, he eloquently remarked:

Look at the energy predicament we landed ourselves. There was an on opposition to hydel projects, now suddenly hydel is politically correct. There was opposition to nuclear projects, now people are remembering nuclear. There was coal fundamentalism about coal, now coal plants are being lit up again. Now if you look at oil and gas...you put Iran out of the market, you put Venezuela out of the market, you want to put Russia out of the market, so what would the world do?⁸²²

With respect to the remark, the endorsement of the phrase by German Chancellor Olaf Scholz in his speech at the Munich Security Conference 2023 and its subsequent inclusion in the Munich Security Report 2023 testifies to the effectiveness with which the message was communicated to effect a common ground and shared understanding.⁸²³

Yet another rhetorical comment contained the underpinning essence of the Indian perspective about the multilateral order: "it is not about getting energy transition right; it is about getting the politics of the world right."⁸²⁴ Again, implicitly juxtaposing the Western spending of close to 100 billion in the Ukraine war with global challenges from climate change, he rounded out his advocacy in an outspoken manner by saying that, while small-island nations still struggle to arrange financial means to deal with an existential crisis, in fact, "there is no short of money, there is lack of urgency...so this form of multilateralism in the hands of these people perhaps has not delivered."⁸²⁵

⁸²² Observer Research Foundation, "Custodians of Multilateralism Have Triggered Its Failure [Video]."

⁸²³ FRANCE 24 English, "REPLAY: German Chancellor Olaf Scholz Delivers Speech at Munich Security Conference • FRANCE 24 [Video]," *YouTube*, February 17, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XvzBUD-FS4g> (Accessed March 18, 2023); Tobias Bunde et al., "Re:vision. Munich: Munich Security Conference," February 2023, <https://doi.org/10.47342/ZBJA9198> (Accessed March 21, 2023).

⁸²⁴ Observer Research Foundation, "Custodians of Multilateralism Have Triggered Its Failure [Video]."

⁸²⁵ *Ibid.*

Indeed, the idea here was to reinforce public awareness about how hierarchical power dynamics in the current international order work to the disadvantage of the developing and the poor countries. India stressed the need for a “reformed multilateralism” which essentially envisages a structural overhaul of global multilateral institutions with inducting greater voices of the Global South or the developing world that India seeks to lead. India believes this is consistent with the changing times. The same was encapsulated in Jaishankar’s following response to the moderator of the GLOBSEC conference:

Look a lot of things are happening outside Europe – a lot of humanitarian and natural disasters. In our parts of the world today, a lot of people look to us to help out. Then days when they expected Europe to come, which the Europe did at the 2004 Tsunami, the difference today is nobody is even thinking of that anymore. So, the world is changing. New players are coming. New capabilities are coming. But a new agenda must come. The world cannot be that Eurocentric as it used to be in the past.⁸²⁶

Similarly, in a subsequent interview with an Austrian publication, he elaborated further, emphasizing that Europeans required a wake-up call to recognize that challenges cannot always be addressed by external entities. He added that no region can achieve stability if it is dominated by a single power.⁸²⁷

If anything, these statements show the classic employment of strategic narratives to neutralize criticism and increase support for the agenda by anticipating objections and developing a story that answers them. Any opposition is countered in this process by reframing issues and problems and addressing criticisms.

In the aggregate, such public diplomacy exercise provides utility to configuring a desirable foreign policy milieu in espousing a favorable discourse. This string of messages discussed shows India’s effort to amplify the narrative of continued Western hegemony in the international system. It views the Western construction and imposition

⁸²⁶ Ministry of External Affairs India, “EAM at GLOBESEC-Taking Friendship to the Next Level.”

⁸²⁷ “Europeans Needed A Wake-Up Call To Understand...” Jaishankar On New World Order,” ANI, January 4, 2023, <https://www.aninews.in/news/world/europe/europeans-needed-a-wake-up-call-to-understand-jaishankar-on-new-world-order20230104105625/> (Accessed March 4, 2023).

of normative standards in international politics as perpetuating Western pre-eminence. This is evident in India holding a virtual summit - *The Voice of Global South* - under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi on 12-13 January 2023.

The summit was aimed to infuse impetus and substance to the plea and as a way of setting the ground plan further. It brought together countries in the Global South to share their perspective and concerns. At the inaugural session opening remarks PM Modi said, “we supported each other in the fight against foreign rule and we can do it again in this century to create a new world order that will ensure the welfare of our citizens. your voice is India’s voice and your priorities are India’s priorities.”⁸²⁸

The inaugural session was closed with remarks from Prime Minister Modi - “The Voice of the Global South needs to set its own tone. Together, we need to escape the cycle of dependency on systems and circumstances which are not of our making.”⁸²⁹ The messaging presents a story of intrinsic and persistent pathologies of the existing system as intensely fixated on the Western incapacity to resolve global challenges. This discourse is used to convey a sense of the necessity of the Global South’s solidarity.

Stated simply, India, utilized Ukraine crisis as a site for imagining trans-national Global South solidarity to give an impetus to reimagine a more robust multi-polar world based on equitable power distribution in contrasting to the existing international order dominated by the West.⁸³⁰ Indeed, India was capitalizing on similar sentiment prevailing

⁸²⁸ Ministry of External Affairs India, PM’s Opening Remarks at Inaugural Leaders’ Session of #VoiceOfGlobalSouth Summit, *YouTube*, January 12, 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rGLNP2pGJXQ&ab_channel=MinistryofExternalAffairs%2CIndia (Accessed February 22, 2023).

⁸²⁹ Ministry of External Affairs India, “PM’s Closing Remarks at Inaugural Leaders’ Session of #VoiceOfGlobalSouth Summit,” *YouTube*, January 12, 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yvj4lZ5DWzE&t=213s&ab_channel=MinistryofExternalAffairs%2CIndia (Accessed February 22, 2023).

⁸³⁰ “Europeans Needed Wake-Up Call, Says Jaishankar On New Global Order, Proposes World of ‘Multi-alignment’,” *News18*, January 04, 2023, <https://www.news18.com/news/india/europeans-needed-wake-up-call-says-jaishankar-on-new-global-order-proposes-world-of-multi-alignment-6759529.html> (Accessed March 4, 2023).

in different corners of the world, especially in the Global South.⁸³¹ Shivashankar Menon, the former National Security Advisor of India, has observed that emerging nations have a strong belief that the war in Ukraine is about Europe's future, not the global order, and that the conflict has become a diversion from the more urgent global challenges of our day.⁸³² This is demonstrated by data from the Economic Intelligence Unit, which shows that just 36% of people on Earth live in countries opposed to Russia, while two-thirds of people on Earth live in countries that either support Russia or are neutral in the Ukrainian crisis.⁸³³

Further, the notable refusal of India, Brazil and South Africa to join the American global coalition against autocracy and Senegalese president and the current AU Chairperson Macky Sall and South African President Cyril Ramaphosa's call for the need to "serve the interest of all" are also cases in point.⁸³⁴ Thus, it seems fair to assume that India employed public diplomacy as an agenda and coalition-building strategy through strategic narrative to set the ground for embedding an ideological-oriented assertion of collective identity against the tendencies of perceived monopolistic exercise of power/domination.

Politics of Historical-memory for Domestic Outreach

The politics of historical memory is effectively utilized for garnering domestic public support by recalling and revitalizing the collective public memory concerning specific past adverse deeds of the country's opponents. Politics of historical memory is the

⁸³¹ Liz Sly, "A Global Divide On The Ukraine War Is Deepening," *The Washington Post*, February 23, 2023, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2023/02/22/global-south-russia-war-divided/> (Accessed March 7, 2023).

⁸³² Shivshankar Menon, "Out of Alignment What the War in Ukraine Has Revealed About Non-Western Powers," *Foreign Affairs*, February 09 2023, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/world/out-alignment-war-in-ukraine-non-western-powers-shivshankar-menon> (Accessed 3 April, 2023).

⁸³³ "Russia Can Count On Support From Many Developing Countries," *Economist Intelligence*, March 30, 2023, <https://www.eiu.com/n/russia-can-count-on-support-from-many-developing-countries/> (Accessed 3 April, 2023).

⁸³⁴ Jagannath Panda, "As G20 President, Can India Advance Its Multipolar Worldview?," *The Diplomat*, December 2, 2022, <https://thediplomat.com/2022/12/as-g20-president-can-india-advance-its-multipolar-worldview/> (Accessed March 18, 2023).

employment of historical narratives by governments and other political actors to advance particular political objectives and build national identity. It presupposes an explicit legitimization approach, viewing legitimization as forming a sense of favourable, advantageous, intelligible, necessary, or otherwise acceptable action in a certain situation. It entails the support of a dominant historical narrative that represents the objectives of the powerful. Governments can employ historical narratives to instil a sense of unity, loyalty, and shared identity in the populace. At the same time, it can help justifying and building support for foreign policy by highlighting past behaviour of opponents towards the country and framing it as unjust or inappropriate.

It is especially useful in public diplomacy when the past can resurrect massive popular sentiment. To put it differently, evoking sentimental and melancholic historical memory in order to bring the past afresh and contemporary holds relevance to strategic self-presentation. In this sense, the historical baggage of international relations, especially the critical course of bilateral engagements, can play a part in domestic public diplomacy. The domestic public is a crucial element of public diplomacy because individuals now wield an increasing degree of influence as they can affect the perceptions of others across the globe and thereby legitimate or undermine the activities of national and international entities.

Ian Hall notes that while the domestic audience has always been a part of India's public diplomacy, this component has grown more prominent and vigorous in recent years.⁸³⁵ India's public diplomacy, according to Riva Das, who headed the MEA's public diplomacy and Latin American and Caribbean Countries divisions before, is aimed at helping people understand India and its foreign policy aims better. The goal is to create a framework that would enable more meaningful interactions with audiences worldwide that are interested in foreign policy issues as well as Indian individuals.⁸³⁶ Given this reality, politics of historical memory aimed at garnering domestic support embedding in India's public diplomacy was not much of a surprise.

⁸³⁵ Hall, "India's New Public Diplomacy," 1089–1098.

⁸³⁶ USC Center on Public Diplomacy, *Rising Soft Powers India*, April 201: 59 https://uscpublicdiplomacy.org/sites/uscpublicdiplomacy.org/files/useruploads/u20150/India%20soft%20power_0.pdf (Accessed February 19, 2023).

Such practices of evoking historical memory giving public expression to certain ideological propositions and underpinnings has significant impact on generating affective sentiment that enhances public support for government's foreign policy. Take a look at these instances. Following discussions with his Australian colleague Penny Wong in Canberra, Jaishankar addressed queries about whether India should lessen its reliance on Russian weaponry during a joint news conference. Western nations abstained from providing arms to India, opting instead to support a neighboring military dictatorship, implicitly alluding to the Washington's alliance with Islamabad during the Cold War era.⁸³⁷

In such contexts, it helps to build narratives of “exposing the West” and “hollowing out the presupposed righteousness that the West has foregrounded its Ukraine policy in.” At the Times Now 2022, he remarked about Ukraine policy, “look guys [the west], I [India] have lived with a lot of things you have done and said which I don't like. Now sometimes you will, maybe hear something, some of that from me too, live with it (India's foreign policy on Ukraine)!” Relatedly, on another occasion, Jaishankar roundly stated that India is “not sitting on the fence...I am sitting on my ground.”⁸³⁸

These statements made in a more direct and confrontational manner by evoking historical memory speak to the use of a combination of ideological propositions, including non-alignment, self-reliance, national pride, and a desire for recognition and respect. They call attention to a period in which Western countries failed to support India. In fact, the Western nations preferred Pakistan over India, despite Pakistan's poor human rights record and its authoritarian regime. The statements further suggest that the West was willing to overlook these issues in order to further its own interests, which could have been detrimental to India's security and stability.

⁸³⁷ The Indian Express, “Joint Press Conference by EAM S Jaishankar and FM Penny Wong of Australia,” *YouTube*, October 10, 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G_kuAMrrdjg&ab_channel=TheIndianExpress (Accessed on 19 February 2023).

⁸³⁸ The Economic Times, “‘Live With It...’: S Jaishankar To Countries Not Liking India's Stance On Ukraine-Like Conflict,” *YouTube*, November 25, 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=17M1ZGZwfr8&ab_channel=TheEconomicTimes (Accessed 25 February, 2023).

Statements also suggest that India has a long history of dealing with Western interference or domination which has influenced and shaped the distinct viewpoints, beliefs, and attitudes that India hold today. Furthermore, it illustrates that India, despite pressure from the West, has its own worldview and set of principles that Delhi is unwilling to compromise with or abandon. To some extent, the statements propel the assertion that colonialism has not really ended but persists to the present day and that most modern conflicts are caused by the major western powers continuing to pursue their imperial goals while unnecessarily entangling other nations in them. So, what are the implications of these statements India's public opinion on the Ukraine crisis and India's role in it?

In order to respond to this query, it is crucial to recognize that comprehending domestic popular mood plays a role in India's policy toward Ukraine. This dynamic shows a consensus across elites and the wider population. That is, public support is constitutive of India's current position, which is not mere helpless acquiescence from the Indian population but passionate support.⁸³⁹ Tellingly, a global survey by Ipsos Public Affairs India found that 62% of urban Indians supported India continuing its diplomatic ties with Russia, 72% of urban Indians responded in favour of India taking in Ukraine refugees, and 79% rejected India's military involvement/ intervention in the conflict.⁸⁴⁰

After all, in India's domestic messaging, all this works actively to frame India's Ukraine policy as resilience against the western dominance and its patronizing behaviour receives huge domestic public appreciation and support in the context of the enhanced nationalist sentiments among Indians that is increasingly bridging gap between foreign policy, domestic politics, and voter consciousness. In recent years, there is a growing domestic consciousness of India's foreign policy. Public is largely socialized into the political imagination of India's global rise under the current government. The ingrained sense of foreign policy as closely embedded in and a reflection of national pride precipitates the

⁸³⁹ Muhsin Puthan Purayil, "India's Response to the Ukraine Crisis Is a Wake-up Call for the US," *The Diplomat*, March 21, 2022, <https://thediplomat.com/2022/03/indias-response-to-the-ukraine-crisis-is-a-wake-up-call-for-the-us/> (Accessed March 12, 2023).

⁸⁴⁰ Madhurima Bhatia, "7 In 10 Urban Indians Claim Following The Ongoing Russia-Ukraine War: A 27 Country Ipsos Survey," *Ipsos*, 16 May 2022, <https://www.ipsos.com/en-in/7-10-urban-indians-claim-following-ongoing-russia-ukraine-war-27-country-ipsos-survey> (Accessed January 10, 2023).

public perception India's voluble rebuttal and defense of its Ukraine policy as a story of India's power, endurance, and resilience. A large segment of India's mainstream media whom critics accuse of being pro-government, also propagated the narrative of the US instigating Russia's invasion of Ukraine.⁸⁴¹

In this context, it may not be surprising to see social media posts reaffirming a strong wave of the anti-west sentiment among the wide swaths of the Indian public.⁸⁴² In that connection, it is striking that in an Indian public opinion survey published on 17 January 2023 by *Morning Consult*, a global business intelligence company, respondents marked the US as the second biggest military threat after China.⁸⁴³

6.5 Public Discourse on Twitter

Analysis of public tweets unveiled a substantial wave of support for India's foreign policy stance during the Ukraine crisis. India's decision to maintain a position of neutrality garnered widespread approval on social media platforms. Majority of Tweets appreciated India's diplomatic approach, seeing it as a pragmatic and non-confrontational strategy in a volatile and complex international situation. This support showcased how India's stance resonated positively with a significant portion of the Indian Twitterati. Broadly three themes stand at the forefront: anti-Western sentiments, pro-Russia and anti- Ukraine sentiment, and neutrality as legitimate strategic pursuit.

To begin with, a prevalent public sentiment of discontent against the West was apparent. Numerous tweets reflected concerns about Western influence and skepticism toward Western involvement in the Ukraine Crisis and other global matters, indicating a distinct perspective diverging from that of the West. The sentiments expressed touch upon a range

⁸⁴¹ Gerry Shih, "In India, A U.S. Partner, Modi's Base Is Inundated With Anti-U.S. Commentary On Ukraine," *The Washington Post*, March 29, 2022, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/03/29/india-russia-ukraine-media/> (Accessed January 10, 2023).

⁸⁴² Purayil, "India's Response to the Ukraine Crisis Is a Wake-up Call for the US."

⁸⁴³ Scott Moskowitz and Sonnet Frisbie, "India in Between: Modi's Delicate Dance of Diplomatic Moderation Offers Risks and Rewards," *Morning Consult*, January 17, 2023, <https://morningconsult.com/2023/01/17/india-diplomatic-moderation-offers-risks-and-rewards/> (Accessed March 10, 2023).

of issues, from historical grievances to contemporary geopolitical concerns through critical, sceptical, and cautious tones. The critical tone is immediately evident as it attributes the suffering endured by the Ukrainian people to the Western actions, highlighting the past foreign policy actions of the West such as the use of nuclear weapons during the Second World War and several military interventions in various countries. In doing so, questions are raised about the consistency and moral integrity of Western foreign policy, inviting critical analysis of their past actions and their impact on global stability. If anything, questions and concerns raised in the public domain reveals the intricate web of emotions and thoughts that shape Indian public's perception about the West. Consider the following instances:

I would rather trust pakistanis than trust americans.⁸⁴⁴

West has always stood against India... And west has yet to give reasons to India to trust it more than Russia.. As many Indians prefer west to live in than Russia.. Still if we don't trust west the there must be something missing is the India west relationship.⁸⁴⁵

This is because, we Indians never forget who help us in difficult times, Ukrainian peoples are suffering due to hypocrisy of American and western countries, Just thinking Who dropped nuclear weapons Who attacks Afganistan, Syria, Iraq, Somalia and killed millions of peoples.⁸⁴⁶

In simple language, West is Opportunist. Every time they try to put pressure on India by helping Pakistan. They are not trust worthy. First build trust and try to value our perspectives. Then come to compare yourself with Russia.⁸⁴⁷

⁸⁴⁴ <https://Twitter.com/Straighupdudess/status/1629898639610122240> (Accessed September 20, 2023).

⁸⁴⁵ <https://Twitter.com/SachitAg/status/1629897646843502592> (Accessed September 20, 2023).

⁸⁴⁶ <https://Twitter.com/R9Roushan/status/1629911550185340928> (Accessed September 20, 2023).

⁸⁴⁷ <https://Twitter.com/BhuktaDibendu/status/1630040600241389568> (Accessed September 20, 2023).

This, inspite of the fact that Indians & Americans have more in common (values, interests, love for food, culture, freedoms) than Indians & Russians ever will have. But we see how America aided Pakistan in the very recent past, how it's abandoned its allies. Hence very cautious.⁸⁴⁸

What America doing to stop this war?, contrarily encouraging more violence.⁸⁴⁹

Nothing surprising, for following reasons: 1. US backing Pakistan on J&K at the UN. Russian veto prevented international meddling. 2. US tilt towards Pakistan during Nixon era. Russia helped. 3. US sanction on India, denial of space tech & weapons since 1974. Russia supplied.⁸⁵⁰

Further, metaphors and vivid language were used to justify India's commitment to neutrality in Ukraine Crisis. Tweets characterise foreign policy of the US and other European powers as driven by ideas of imperialism and hegemony. It calls for sanctions against the USA military-industrial complex, CIA, and NATO, painting them as negative forces in the global arena while emphasizing the need for unity among the developing world, BRICS nations, and Africa against perceived colonizers, imperialists, and hegemonic powers. For example,

Good, time for the developing world and BRICS and Africa to stand together against the colonisers and the imperialists and the hegemonic so called powers. USA military industry complex and it's stooges like the CIA and the nato should be sanctioned first for creating recession.⁸⁵¹

Yea, we are neutral. We ain't rushing to a war which benefits American

⁸⁴⁸ <https://Twitter.com/nekzaad/status/1630011947730063361> (Accessed September 20, 2023).

⁸⁴⁹ <https://Twitter.com/MankotiaRaj/status/1630265962158243840> (Accessed September 20, 2023).

⁸⁵⁰ <https://Twitter.com/mydearspock12/status/1629911708935258117> (Accessed September 20, 2023).

⁸⁵¹ <https://Twitter.com/RajeshK17874224/status/1629756324606246912> (Accessed September 20, 2023).

weapon industry.⁸⁵²

It is rather obvious that “multilateralism” is a term that is an anathema to AUKUS. No surprises there. US’s whole push, whether against China/Russia or in favour of India -- revolves 100% on maintaining US unilateralism/hegemony, however way you see it.⁸⁵³

India and China will look into their own interest, if they’ve an iota of shame left, the western former colonial powers should come out of the illusion that they can decide the foreign policy of their former colonies !.⁸⁵⁴

The tweets collectively mirror a discourse that critiques Western powers, highlighting a strong inclination to resist what is perceived as imperialism and hegemony. They express doubts regarding the economic motivations behind global conflicts and underscore the importance of self-determination and safeguarding national interests. The tweets also highlight the impact of historical perspectives on contemporary discourse. They suggest that India’s perceptions of the West are influenced by a historical lens that frames Western actions in a particular light. This lens is used to assert a perception of hypocrisy within American and Western nations. In this regard, the tweets reference specific historical events, such as American support for Pakistan during conflicts with India. This historical memory plays a pivotal role in the trust deficit that exists between the United States and India, notwithstanding their shared values, interests, and commonalities. As a result, a call is made upon Western nations to display a willingness to recognize and respect India’s stance on Ukraine Crisis instead of criticizing it.

Another aspect of public sentiment reflects a strong pro- Russia and anti-Ukraine sentiments. Several tweets supporting of India’s officially declared neutral stance

⁸⁵² https://Twitter.com/me_as_pm/status/1630140973631303680 (Accessed September 20, 2023).

⁸⁵³ <https://Twitter.com/BananastanLive/status/1630207123379433477> (Accessed September 20, 2023).

⁸⁵⁴ <https://Twitter.com/kafkasque/status/1629936850197463042> (Accessed September 20, 2023).

strongly emphasized a deep and enduring friendship between India and Russia. Russia was consistently portrayed as a “tried and proven friend,” a “strategic ally,” and a “dependable partner,” evoking a profound sense of trust and an unwavering, all-weather friendship between the two nations. Pro-Russia sentiment is grounded in a historical perspective about India’s close relationship with the USSR and Russia during the Cold War and Post Cold-war period. Take a look at the following tweets:

Russia also transferred technology to India which is necessary to run industries like steel plants etc.⁸⁵⁵

Russia is an ally forever. That’s not changing.⁸⁵⁶

Russia is a strategic and Reliable partner.⁸⁵⁷

Russia just did one favour to India in 1972. When Pakistan and the West was about to attack India all together, Russia stood by India. & That’s it, Russia won the hearts of Indians. Even till today Indians can’t forget that help. Indians never forget their friend.⁸⁵⁸

Soviet Union and Russia stood with India through most difficult times. The ties are tight no matter what.⁸⁵⁹

⁸⁵⁵ <https://Twitter.com/sriramprasann15/status/1629921168886226944> (Accessed September 20, 2023).

⁸⁵⁶ https://Twitter.com/LAKHI_KRIPAL/status/1629940823965188096 (Accessed September 20, 2023).

⁸⁵⁷ <https://Twitter.com/pradeep79185835/status/1629895065593331714> (Accessed September 20, 2023).

⁸⁵⁸ <https://Twitter.com/Sudipta19106156/status/1629903161485033472> (Accessed September 20, 2023).

⁸⁵⁹ <https://Twitter.com/UltramanXXI/status/1629600274401615873> (Accessed September 20, 2023).

No, India's relation with Russia is much more than oil and stats. There is people to people connection and trust.⁸⁶⁰

The pro-Russian discourse in the Indian public domain is deeply rooted in historical ties, perceived strategic interests, and a sense of gratitude for past support. Russia, formerly the Soviet Union, supported India during its early years as an independent nation, fostering solid and enduring relations. The public's historical memory recalls a pivotal moment in 1971 when India faced the threat of an attack from Pakistan with the support of Western powers and how, at that critical juncture, Russia unequivocally stood by India's side. This historical assistance earning the people's gratitude still forms the bedrock of pro-Russian sentiment, as it symbolizes unwavering support during India's darkest hours. Proponents of pro-Russian sentiment in India believe that there is a "people-to-people connection and trust" between the two nations. The assertion that "Russia is an ally forever" reflects the belief that India-Russia friendship remains the same.

The perception of Russia as a "strategic and reliable partner" is another crucial element in constructing a pro-Russian discourse in India. The partnership between the two nations extends beyond mere rhetoric, encompassing various sectors, including defence, technology transfer, and energy. Russia has consistently supplied India with advanced military hardware, contributing significantly to India's defence capabilities. Furthermore, technology transfers from Russia have played a pivotal role in the development of crucial industries such as steel plants. The tangible benefits derived from this partnership reinforce the belief in Russia's reliability as a strategic ally. Tweets suggest geostrategic considerations also play a significant role in shaping pro-Russian sentiment in India. The belief that Russia is a counterbalance to Western dominance is particularly prominent. Consequently, supporting Russia is seen as a means to safeguard India's interests in a world dominated by Western powers. The perceived wisdom of aligning with Russia to navigate the complex global power dynamics is a recurring theme among those who construct the pro-Russian discourse in India.

⁸⁶⁰ <https://Twitter.com/harisun7991/status/1630135714586451968> (Accessed September 20, 2023).

On the other hand, without endorsing military conflict or invasion, a significant portion of the population holds unfavourable sentiments towards Ukraine. At the core of these sentiments lies the long-standing perception of Ukraine as historically opposed to India's interests. This perspective is underscored by a series of tweets as follows:

Not in favour of any war/ invasion but do not support Ukraine, who was always anti- India. #UkraineRussiaCrisis.⁸⁶¹

When there video of Ukraine soldiers treating Indian students badly along the border by pushing them away from crossing the border for safety – someone tweeted –

We knew #ukraine was always anti India but we expected better from Ukraine #Ukrainepresident #UkraineRussiaWar.⁸⁶²

Ukrainins are No Saint. They wanted India's Help in UNSC. When Indian didn't align with them they are showing true colors.. why shud India support them when they are giving military arsenal to Pak. Those supporting Ukraine shud know tht foreign policy is not done with emotions.⁸⁶³

If the world's largest democratic nation is on a neutral position in Ukraine Russia Crisis. There are reasons. Ukraine is something which was always in a stand of Anti-India in UN platforms. Russia on the other hand strategic partner of #India Hence Neutral! #RussiaUkraineWar.⁸⁶⁴

⁸⁶¹ <https://Twitter.com/bidishalolo/status/1497056623323324421> (Accessed September 20, 2023).

⁸⁶² <https://Twitter.com/seeker75926176/status/1498039948313829377> (Accessed September 20, 2023).

⁸⁶³ https://Twitter.com/maneesh_chauhan/status/1498120929322299392 (Accessed September 20, 2023).

⁸⁶⁴ https://Twitter.com/SDtalks_/status/1498682622951981056 (Accessed September 20, 2023).

Ukraine did not support the Indian Nuclear Test in 1998. Ukraine voted against India at the UNSC. Ukraine voted “YES” for UN Interference in Kashmir. Ab unko India ka support chahiye. Karma.⁸⁶⁵

#IStandWithPutin Ukraine always has been anti-India and west countries always has been anti India. I support Russia because it was necessary or NATO and EU will make it very difficult for Russia in upcoming future. Very well planned move by Putin ji.⁸⁶⁶

The sentiment expressed in the hashtag #IStandWithPutin reflects the notion that Ukraine, like many Western countries, has been historically unfriendly to India. A key factor contributing to these negative sentiments is Ukraine’s active provision of military equipment to Pakistan, supported by a longstanding defence ties spanning over three decades. Furthermore, there is a prevalent belief that Ukraine adopted an adversarial stance towards India within the United Nations during India’s 1998 nuclear testing. However, this is a misinformation, as Ukraine was not part of UNSC and in fact it was Russian President Boris Yeltsin who voted against India.

Another prevailing feature of public discourse was the echoing affirmation of India’s pursuit of neutrality as a legitimate strategic decision within the public. India’s Ukraine policy was validated as a genuine representation of its national interests. It is grounded in the fact that India faces numerous concerns and issues that demand its attention and resources. At the same time, New Delhi’s neutrality was also considered and celebrated as a manifestation of a strong, independent India with a foreign policy that prioritizes its national interests. Moreover, policy was viewed as a demonstration of India’s diplomatic prowess and ability to navigate international relations judiciously. Consider the following tweets:

Eh? India has been increasing weapons purchases from the west, defending against Islamic terror from one border, PLA intrusions on the other and Maoist

⁸⁶⁵ <https://Twitter.com/HarshalIdea/status/1497100748089597952> (Accessed September 20, 2023).

⁸⁶⁶ <https://Twitter.com/issWorld/status/1499039983436402692> (Accessed September 20, 2023).

terrorism in another corridor. We have enough problems with feeding a Billion and a Half people and dealing with this crap.⁸⁶⁷

Actually india is not on russia's side it is on people's side! We just need oil at low cost nothing else!⁸⁶⁸

We Are Not Ukraine, We Indians have Geopolitical Advantage, Nuclear Advantage, Population Advantage And Indian Diversity Is Our Power, We Will Fight For It Until We Die Or We Kill our Enemy.⁸⁶⁹

Five Reasons Why India Has Emerged At The Top of Changing World Order. How has India managed to defy global trends and emerge as a strong power? It's neutral and pragmatic approach to the war in Ukraine is the answer.⁸⁷⁰

Yes, India is writing a new world order, practically, slowly n steadily.⁸⁷¹

India is a sovereign country and is not obliged to clarify and or report its stand on any subject to anyone. This hypocrite was buying energy from Russia and then asking India to do this??? Besharam.⁸⁷²

Vishwaguru can stand ALONE!!⁸⁷³

⁸⁶⁷ https://Twitter.com/ak_1490/status/1629874692436770818 (Accessed September 20, 2023).

⁸⁶⁸ <https://Twitter.com/shreyaj39821422/status/1629910363948072960> (Accessed September 20, 2023).

⁸⁶⁹ https://Twitter.com/arya_shrijan/status/1630011892277325826 (Accessed September 20, 2023).

⁸⁷⁰ <https://Twitter.com/SortedEagle/status/1629696594143764480> (Accessed September 20, 2023).

⁸⁷¹ <https://Twitter.com/sunitpanna/status/1629764935965368320> (Accessed September 20, 2023).

⁸⁷² <https://Twitter.com/CyrusPa41284726/status/1629691518515810306> (Accessed September 20, 2023).

⁸⁷³ <https://Twitter.com/raazindia137/status/1629809212846120961> (Accessed September 20, 2023).

Tweets show a strong public perception of India's emergence as a global power. This perception underscores India actively shaping a "new world order." That is, India is pivotal in redefining global dynamics, indicating a sense of agency and influence on the international stage. Simultaneously, public perception shows a recognition of numerous challenges India faces, including security threats, border disputes, and pressing domestic issues like poverty and population management. This highlights India's primary focus on addressing these concerns rather than getting involved in international conflicts.

Furthermore, there's a significant emphasis on India's robust geopolitical advantages, such as its substantial population, nuclear capabilities, and rich cultural diversity, emphasizing its self-reliance and self-assured pursuit of global interests. This cohesive narrative underscores the public perception of India as a global power with a pragmatic foreign policy guided by economic interests. It reaffirms India's sovereignty and its right to make independent decisions without feeling obligated to explain its stance. The juxtaposition of these factors with India's domestic challenges emphasizes the nation's commitment to addressing immediate issues while actively participating in shaping the evolving world order. In essence, it reflects a complex but coherent picture of India's role in the global arena.

Overall, the discussion surrounding India's Ukraine policy as a legitimate policy choice underscores a blend of national pride, a belief in India's global significance, a sense of sovereignty and strength, political necessity, and criticism of perceived double standards in international diplomacy. It's worth noting that the resounding public support for India's position in the Ukraine war strengthens India's narrative and therefore a significant contribution to India's public diplomacy narrative. The enthusiastic acknowledgement of the pragmatic nature of India's stance in the Ukraine crisis and the embrace of its pursuit of national interests in the face of Western public criticism, evident in tweeter discussions, reflects the public's aspiration for great power status as India continues its ascent as a rising global power.

6.6 How did the Principal Opposition Party React?

Tweets from prominent leaders of the main opposition party, the INC including Rahul Gandhi, Shashi Tharoor, and Mallikarjun Kharge, reflect diverse and critical viewpoints. Foremost among them is the unanimous call for the secure evacuation of Indian citizens stranded in Ukraine. Rahul Gandhi, Mallikarjun Kharge, and their peers underscore the paramount need to guarantee the safety and well-being of these individuals, given the challenges faced by an estimated 20,000 Indians amidst the escalating conflict. The opposition leaders expressed worries over the hardships faced by Indian students, as certain reports indicate they were trapped in eastern Ukraine, an area experiencing intense conflict.

The safety of 20,000 Indians stranded in Ukraine is paramount. Govt must expedite their evacuation.⁸⁷⁴

Conditions of Indians stranded in Ukraine are worsening. Yet, GOI is not taking effective steps to bring them home. As usual, PM is MIA.⁸⁷⁵

India has never abandoned its citizens & always evacuated them from war zones. Gulf War, Kuwait, 1991: 150,000+ Op Sukoon, Lebanon, 2006: 2,300 Op Home Coming, Libya, 2011: 15,000 Op Raahat, Yemen, 2015: 4,650 PM should remember evacuation is his duty not PR exercises for it.⁸⁷⁶

Russia-Ukraine Crisis: India says it can evacuate from neighbouring countries, but how can Indian students get to the border? Any help from the beleaguered Ukrainian authorities to facilitate their exit is all the more unlikely after India's UN abstention.⁸⁷⁷

⁸⁷⁴ <https://Twitter.com/RahulGandhi/status/1496842781628768256> (Accessed September 13, 2023).

⁸⁷⁵ <https://Twitter.com/RahulGandhi/status/1498259229475549185?lang=en> (Accessed September 13, 2023).

⁸⁷⁶ <https://Twitter.com/kharge/status/1498338152376725508> (Accessed September 13, 2023).

⁸⁷⁷ <https://Twitter.com/ShashiTharoor/status/1497421211256901634?lang=en> (Accessed September 13, 2023).

The absence of transparency and a well-defined evacuation strategy was a central criticism against the government. Notably, key opposition figures such as Rahul Gandhi and Mallikarjun Kharge accused the government of its perceived inadequate response in addressing the repatriation of Indian citizens. The tragic loss of an Indian student in Ukraine, highlighted in Rahul Gandhi's tweet, brought a personal and emotional dimension to the conversation.

In what condition has the GOI left the children of India in a dangerous war zone! Harjot was marginally lucky, Naveen unfortunately wasn't. What other message, request or pleading do you require Modi ji, to expedite the evacuation of Indian students from Ukraine?⁸⁷⁸

Received the tragic news of an Indian student Naveen losing his life in Ukraine. My heartfelt condolences to his family and friends. I reiterate, GOI needs a strategic plan for safe evacuation. Every minute is precious.⁸⁷⁹

The government was criticised for what the opposition called a sluggish response and failure to effectively utilize India's diplomatic clout to facilitate safe passage for these individuals. The frustration and disappointment regarding the government's handling of the crisis are evident in these tweets.

"Safe corridor for Indians Students didn't materialize" Three simple reasons: 1. GOI under PM Modi was in deep slumber till the war began 2. India under BJP govt has lost its global clout due to failed foreign policy 3. For PM Modi, Election is more important than Nation.⁸⁸⁰

It is truly disheartening to see @narendramodi Govt asleep even after the death of an Indian student! Urgent steps should have been taken days ago, but our PM

⁸⁷⁸ <https://Twitter.com/kharge/status/1500010623358226438> (Accessed September 13, 2023).

⁸⁷⁹ <https://Twitter.com/RahulGandhi/status/1498606287260631040> (Accessed September 13, 2023).

⁸⁸⁰ <https://Twitter.com/kharge/status/1501103904603664384> (Accessed September 13, 2023).

and his ministers were busy finding “aapda mein avsar” & running their PR campaign even in the middle of a war crisis!⁸⁸¹

Beyond the immediate evacuation concerns, there is a broader discussion about India’s foreign policy and global standing. Shashi Tharoor highlights the need for a strategic plan to ensure that Indian students repatriated from Ukraine do not face disruptions in their education. This calls attention to the long-term consequences and responsibilities that accompany evacuation efforts.

Now that our students are coming back from Ukraine, it’s essential that we don’t consign them to limbo at home. GoI needs to make special arrangements for them to continue their medical studies in Indian institutions. There’s no point rescuing them only to wreck their futures.⁸⁸²

Since submissions under Rule 377 were laid on the Table today for entry in the record of the Lok Sabha proceedings, I submitted this notice on the Indian medical students repatriated from Ukraine, calling for an urgent solution to their plight⁸⁸³

Moreover, these discussions are not limited to the safety of Indian citizens. There is a broader critique of the government’s priorities and performance, especially during the Ukraine crisis. Rahul Gandhi mentions issues like inflation and economic challenges before the war began. This perspective emphasizes the public’s demand for accountability and effective governance.

#Ukraine & Russia account for nearly 30% of the world’s wheat, 17% of corn and over half of sunflower seed oil exports. These have been drastically reduced by

⁸⁸¹ <https://Twitter.com/kharge/status/1498926024649998343> (Accessed September 13, 2023).

⁸⁸² <https://Twitter.com/ShashiTharoor/status/1500824097562906626> (Accessed September 13, 2023).

⁸⁸³ <https://Twitter.com/ShashiTharoor/status/1549335869664169984> (Accessed September 13, 2023).

war. Worse, @FAO estimates that 20-30% of this year's crop won't be planted because of war. A global food crisis looms.⁸⁸⁴

Inflation is a TAX on ALL Indians. Record price rise had crushed the poor & middle class even before Ukraine war began. It will increase further as: - Crude > \$100/barrel - Food prices expected to rise 22% - COVID disrupts Global Supply Chain GOI must act NOW. Protect people.⁸⁸⁵

GOI has no plan for: ₹ at all-time low Record unemployment & inflation Students stranded in Ukraine China occupying our territory Modi Govt = Only PR.⁸⁸⁶

Another dimension of the discourse is the role of the international community. The tweets highlight the importance of global cooperation and humanitarian efforts during times of crisis. Shashi Tharoor raises concerns about India's role in facilitating humanitarian aid, emphasizing the need for collaborative efforts to assist refugees and address the global food crisis triggered by the war.

Japan drops plan to send Ukraine refugees aid supplies via India. What a shame: why couldn't we have permitted humanitarian aid for refugees in Poland & Romania to go from here?⁸⁸⁷

6.7 Conclusion

As observed, India's stance on the Ukraine crisis has garnered diverse voices and perspectives, including those of the government, opposition leaders, and the general Indian public. However, notably, the government's position and the prevailing sentiment among the public largely converged, resulting in a collaborative shaping of the discourse

⁸⁸⁴ <https://Twitter.com/ShashiTharoor/status/1505354110530625536> (Accessed September 13, 2023).

⁸⁸⁵ <https://Twitter.com/RahulGandhi/status/1505024742977421316> (Accessed September 13, 2023).

⁸⁸⁶ <https://Twitter.com/RahulGandhi/status/1500775884042735621> (Accessed September 13, 2023).

⁸⁸⁷ <https://Twitter.com/ShashiTharoor/status/151912737775034368> (Accessed September 13, 2023).

concerning India's Ukraine policy to a great extent. This highlights mutual influence in discourse construction between the government and its citizens.

In terms of its characteristics, India's public diplomacy was more than just explaining its stance. It was distinctive in bringing robustness and emphasis on India's views about the current world order and how it imagines itself (self-description) in that order. Aiming at challenging the authenticity of western understanding of India's position on Ukraine, it sought to de-essentialize the western viewpoint on the invasion of Ukraine, pluralizing the way that nations see responses to Russia's invasion. It featured narrative strategies and policy advocacy as preparation to adapt to and actively shape the emergent international order to suit New Delhi's material and geopolitical interests.

Importantly, in as much as explaining India's position and offsetting the narratives of India's tilt towards Russia in the war, India's public diplomacy also engaged in contestation over norm leaders. In this regard, a striking aspect of India's narrative was the need for Europe to transcend a parochial mindset and broaden its perspective to grasp the repercussions of the war on developing countries. India emphasized changing the world order and the need for a new agenda that makes a departure from Eurocentrism. India's public diplomacy that sought to inform and enlighten the international community about its foreign policy was marked by criticism of certain Western actions or approaches by framing them within the broader context of advocating for a more inclusive, humane, and efficient global order.

In doing so, India stressed the narrative of more equitable concerns for global challenges and solutions while advocating a departure from the notion that only Europe's problems are the world's problems. This emphasis on a reciprocal and shared responsibility dynamic between the West and the Global South to global challenges showcased a firm resolve to assert its own voice in global affairs. The readiness to forcefully express dissent marks a departure from traditional power dynamics, signalling India's increasingly vocal, self-assured, and independent stance. This assertiveness in foreign policy communicates a shift from a relatively passive resistance of Western perspectives to an active role in shaping global narratives in its favour.

CONCLUSION

This dissertation explored the dimensions, manifestations, and discourses surrounding India's public diplomacy, particularly within the context of India as a rising power. The primary focus was on understanding the practical implications of public diplomacy as an integral component of India's foreign policy as a rising power, with the aim of identifying key elements, strategies, and patterns. In this regard, the dissertation aimed to discern the characteristics and recent developments in India's public diplomacy, delving into the major actors and themes at play, along with the contributions they make. Within this overarching framework, the dissertation specifically examined India's public diplomacy across various aspects of power, identity, status, and prestige assertion. By analysing four crisis moments, the research sought to elucidate the role, content, and form of India's public diplomacy, shedding light on the constitutive narrative articulation of India as a rising power. In doing so, it also sought to map and unravel the interplay between institutional messaging and digital public engagement in the Twittersphere during crisis moments.

The four pivotal crisis moments India dealt with such as accomplishing diplomatic support during the Balakot airstrike, executing domestic policy in the face of global scrutiny during the revocation of Article 370, proactive humanitarian and health diplomacy during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the unwavering defense of foreign policy autonomy towards the tumultuous Ukrainian crisis exemplify India's status as a decisive player in global politics and its dynamic approach to global affairs. As demonstrated in the previous chapters, India's public diplomacy during crisis moments showcased different dimensions within the sphere of public diplomacy, encompassing components like nation branding, public relations, cultural diplomacy and even propaganda, although the extent of the latter may be subjectively perceived based on individual perspectives and political stances.

Nonetheless, in the broader context of this discussion about India's public diplomacy, a significant point to emphasize is that, in contrast to Kalathmika Natarajan's observation in 2014, the projection of narratives surrounding India as a global actor is not predominantly a soft power narrative. Instead, it constitutes an eclectic approach that incorporates elements of soft power, hard power, and smart power narratives. Hard power

narrative is considered as the strategic communication and portrayal of a nation's strength, influence, and coercive capabilities on the global stage in a way implying a nation's determination to protect its interests and pursue its objectives. Explicit display of strong political will to use force, counter-terrorism efforts, and emphasizing a country's exceptionalism and historical achievements conveyed through a nationalistic tone are all examples of hard power narrative. There are both hard power and soft power narratives. The four crisis moments analysed in the dissertation have demonstrated the same. Also, the Balakot episode demonstrated India combining soft and hard power elements. This approach recognizes the importance of utilizing diplomatic tools alongside military strength to achieve strategic goals. It emphasizes a balanced and multifaceted approach to influence.

In terms of content, characteristics, and goals, India's public diplomacy appeared as strategically geared towards carving out a nuanced and well-defined space for itself within the prevailing international order. Through carefully crafted narratives, India aimed to position itself as a key player in shaping the trajectory of global affairs, fostering partnerships, and contributing to international discourse on critical issues. India's demonstration of soft power through international activism, particularly in the realm of vaccine diplomacy, provide valuable insights into the country's efforts in nation branding – humanitarian state and world's pharmacy. This initiative, grounded in a dedication to global public health, played a pivotal role in enhancing India's international standing and aspirations for leadership. The overarching objective of these endeavours was to assert India as a leading power on the global stage.

In this regard, public diplomacy during the crises further revealed efforts at strengthening of national identity and dissemination of narratives revealing self-perception and beliefs about the country and how they operate. The latter encapsulates a projection of capability, strength, and resilience even in the face of crises. The emphasis is not merely on economic and military might but also on showcasing India's cultural richness, technological prowess, and diplomatic finesse. To that extent, discursive reinforcement of the country as an emerging superpower is achieved through the dissemination of competitive ideas, stories, narratives, and appealing emotions, forming integral parts of India's public diplomacy.

An important characteristic evident in India's public diplomacy is the utilization of vernacular expressions of cultural and philosophical significance as instruments in communication strategies for shaping narratives on the global stage. It is important to note that vernacular expressions as linguistic tool serves a dual purpose: not only do they communicate a country's foreign policy objectives, but they also wield a distinct form of soft power. India, recognizing the potential of these expressions, tactically deployed them during the challenging terrain of the COVID-19 pandemic, conveying messages centred on global unity, cooperation, and humanitarian values.

This strategic integration of vernacular expressions thus goes beyond mere linguistic symbolism; it becomes a manifestation of India's soft power in action and its projection of normative supremacy in terms of Indian values and norms for the world. "*Seva Paramo Dharma*" encapsulates the essence of India's commitment to service and humanitarian values, resonating not only domestically but also globally. Similarly, "*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*" serves as a philosophical anchor, emphasizing India's dedication to fostering global unity, peace, and cooperation. These expressions, deeply rooted in cultural and philosophical traditions, can potentially act as bridges that connect India with the international community, conveying a message that transcends linguistic boundaries.

Another feature of India's public diplomacy was a discernible orientation towards a more assertive attitude and independent style of foreign policy in defending its perceived national interests, displaying vociferous and robust responses to any perceived infringement upon its national pride, sovereignty, and autonomy in foreign policy. At the core of India's assertive foreign policy lies a national narrative portraying India as a power to be reckoned with on the global stage. This narrative is carefully crafted and communicated through various channels, including official statements, media releases, and public addresses as seen during the Ukraine crisis, Balakot airstrike and Article 370. The intention is to project an image of strength, autonomy, and relevance, contributing to India's standing in the international community. The domestic political landscape and public opinion also contribute to this assertiveness. Ordinary citizens in rising powers harbour a significant interest in their country's international standing, especially in the

context of growing nationalism, which amplifies individuals' sense of attachment to the nation.⁸⁸⁸

What is more, India's public diplomacy derived strength from articulation and invocation of a rich historical perspective and collective memory. This is particularly evident in the context of the Ukraine crisis. Ukraine crisis illustrated national sentiments linked to India's historical disillusionment with the West. The invocation of collective memory served as a potent tool, connecting India's contemporary stance with its past disenchantment, particularly during the Cold War era. This historical lens reveals a persistent perception of the U.S.-India relationship marked by Washington's reluctance to empathize with India, despite their shared democratic values. The discontent emanates from historical events, such as the U.S. alliance with Pakistan and substantial support for Islamabad during the 1971 war against India. Moreover, dissatisfaction arises from the perceived failure of Washington to acknowledge India's Cold War positions, despite a significant increase in strategic proximity in the post-Cold War era. The lacklustre response from Washington to India's calls for isolating Pakistan internationally due to cross-border terrorism and continued military assistance to Islamabad further reinforces this negative perception. In essence, this historical perspective strategically integrated into India's diplomatic discourse, emphasizing a narrative of continuity and resilience.

Furthermore, conveying and projecting an increasingly proactivist stance with greater aspirations to wield significant global influence, India's public diplomacy featured a vigorous advocacy of restructuring the existing institutions of global governance. That is, India's public diplomacy is aimed at challenging traditional power structures and advocate for a more inclusive and equitable global governance system that facilitates collective action and the shared global commons. This is about setting a new format of global engagement. This realm of public diplomacy is important as it challenges hegemonic narratives and advocates for a more nuanced understanding of global issues. This critical engagement fosters healthy debates and encourages a multipolar perspective, contributing to the diversification of a favourable global discourse. However, instead of rejection of the existing international order, India actively expressed and conveyed its

⁸⁸⁸ Larson and Shevchenko, as cited in Elias Götz, "Status Matters in World Politics," *International Studies Quarterly* (2021): 228-247.

interest in participating within it, aiming not to revise but rather to secure enhanced accommodation and influence within international regimes. In other words, India's endeavours do not seek to disrupt or challenge the established norms, but rather focus on attaining greater representation and equal symbolic standing as major powers through active engagement in international forums.

In that sense, India's PD should be particularly seen as generating conversations about how or whether the West is out of touch with the Global South. In this setting, India is acting to be the voice that can serve all better. That is, thinking about the issues of the Global South and multi-polar world order to the extent of forming a pervasive narrative. In this direction, India's public diplomacy sought to weave a discourse gesturing towards the new pathway to address global problems through reforms in the global multilateral order to protect the interests of all stakeholders. Delhi's public diplomacy outreach has arguably been impactful to some extent. It shaped the global discourse about the multipolar world order and the role of the Global South. It ignited conversations that are in India's best interests, such as the need and significance of accounting for the Global South in shaping global affairs and engaging its perspectives to maintain a stable and robust liberal international order.⁸⁸⁹ In doing so, India appeared at the same time both a concerned spectator as well as an optimistic player. All told, India was in the business of actively shaping up a public discourse that signifies the urgency of bringing changes in the international order. It marks a rising major power behaviour - a deep confidence and drive to write its own story by underscoring its status, interest, global vision, and an appetite to shape global affairs through institutional shakeup which involves shaping the structure, policies, and arrangements in a way that aligns with the objective of securing a prestigious seat for India at the United Nations' high table.

Regarding the nature and style of Twitter-based public diplomacy, the analysed cases revealed several shortcomings in India's utilization of Twitter for public diplomacy. Despite the potential for two-way communication and dialogue, which represent an ideal

⁸⁸⁹ Aude Darnal, "U.S. Foreign Policy Must Consider the Global South," *Foreign Policy*, March 06, 2023, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/03/06/us-global-south-diplomacy-multilateralism/> (accessed March 17, 2023); DW News, "One Year Since Russia Invaded Ukraine: Is The West Out Of Touch With The Global South? | Global Eyes [Video]," *YouTube*, February 25, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P9sxHQTFF9M> (accessed March 17, 2023).

mode of social media diplomacy, India's approach appears limited in fostering such interactions. That Indian embassies do not use social media-based public diplomacy to its full potential. Embassies' twitter engagements during the crises analysed evince inadequate interactive communication. The analysis also showed a significantly less active state of India's Public Diplomacy Division's Twitter handle during the crises and the fragmented and uncoordinated nature of public diplomacy efforts by Indian embassies. Moreover, the limited engagement on Twitter, consisting mostly of retweets, suggests a deficiency in creating meaningful conversations or innovative content.

That said, it is noteworthy that Indian Twitterati contributed to shaping India's narrative as a rising power, actively participating in the creation, contestation, and dissemination of crisis narratives through a combination of informative, emotional, and rational exchanges. As the cases demonstrated, the involvement of the Twitterati in the country's public diplomacy signifies a dynamic interaction with policy narratives imbued with ideological and political overtones. The engaged populace becomes not only a recipient of diplomatic narratives but an active participant in shaping and disseminating them. That is, public was involved in deliberate shaping of messages in a politically conscious manner, signifying a heightened awareness of the influence of communication in the public sphere. Public as conscious agents appeared mostly intentionally appropriate government's policy discourse in a way complimenting it. The active participation of the public in expanding on the government's narratives demonstrated a sense of ownership and a desire to contribute to the larger discourse. Such online public's support contributed to shaping and amplifying government narratives towards crafting a relatively unifying narrative.

The public engagement with various official discourses underscored a profound sense of national pride and a general belief in India's capabilities and self-sufficiency in dealing with policy issues. In that light, the undercurrent of nationalistic pride and confidence in India's capabilities was a recurring theme which projected the arrival of India as a major global power on the world stage. That is, India's public diplomacy received a significant boost propelled by the force of nationalism and an increasingly engaged nationalist public. The phenomenon of nationalism generated heightened interest and enthusiasm among the populace in the dialogues about India's foreign policy. Heightened nationalism serving as a powerful catalyst with anti-western sentiment shared a more

ambitious and confident international image of India. This is manifested in the emphasis on the nation's prowess, underscoring its pivotal role in the global community and its adeptness in advancing national interests autonomously, free from external influences.

This interplay of nationalism and public diplomacy creates a unique synergy, where the citizens' pride in their nation becomes a driving force behind the articulation and projection of positive foreign policy narratives. Simply put, the narratives about India a rising power are no longer confined to official channels but resonates organically through a network of individuals who, motivated by nationalism, actively contribute to shaping a positive and dynamic image of India globally. This sentiment serves to foster India's narrative of self-reliance, cultural pride, and global leadership, allowing the country to project a strong and distinct identity on the world stage.

In all, while exploring India's public diplomacy as a rising power through crisis moments, this dissertation presents public diplomacy as an analytical framework for a more holistic understanding of a rising power's assertion of identity, status, and prestige, highlighting various strategies in response to emerging challenges and opportunities. Studying public diplomacy as crisis management provided a lens through which one could analyse a rising power's self-conceptions and global imaginations, which can provide clarity regarding the true desires of rising powers. While it is often evident what rising powers seek to avoid in the international system, there is comparatively less clarity on what they actually want.

Limitations of the Study

The study concedes that there are some limitations which further studies can address to enhance the depth and scope of research in this area. To begin, a limitation of the study is in the method of data collection from Twitter. The public tweets collected using R software runs the risk of including bots and fake accounts.

Another limitation was the modest sample size of the data on which the analysis was based. The researcher is conscious of the small sample size may limit the applicability of the findings. However, because of the qualitative nature of the study, its main objectives did not include statistical generalizability. The objective of the dissertation was to provide

an analytical and thick description of India's public diplomacy against the backdrop of India as a rising power. While offering insights into how various elements, including broader state apparatuses, public engagement, and the interplay of contextual factors and technological affordances, contribute to shaping India's public diplomacy.

Nonetheless, the present study provides a foundation while leaving avenues for future researchers to explore the potential for hybrid methodologies that may contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the subject. The outcome of such research might also be able to contribute to the development or refinement of the prevailing theoretical concepts or introduce new theoretical models that have broader applicability. In refining existing theoretical concepts or introducing novel theoretical models with broader applicability. It's worth noting that the present study, while valuable, was less ambitious to the point of providing any new theoretical model due to its modest scope.

Also, the Twitter analysis in the study focused predominantly on the textual content of tweets, overlooking the rich potential in multimedia elements like images, videos, audios, and links to news outlets. Future research could benefit from a more comprehensive approach, considering these diverse elements as valuable sources of data and essential discursive tools for a more nuanced understanding.

Additionally, the study could have achieved greater methodological rigor by incorporating elite interviews with officials from the MEA, former diplomats, and other opinion leaders. Such interviews would contribute valuable insights and perspectives, thereby strengthening the overall findings and conclusions. Moreover, the inclusion of interviews with public diplomacy officials could offer a more holistic understanding of the dynamics at play.

Furthermore, future research endeavours could expand beyond the confines of Twitter and explore other social media platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and Flickr. The integration of multiple social platforms would provide a more comprehensive view of India's digital public diplomacy efforts, offering a more nuanced analysis of the strategies and effectiveness across diverse digital channels. Addressing these limitations can contribute to a more robust and insightful exploration of India's public diplomacy in the digital age.

Significance of the Study

The present study offers seven major contributions to knowledge. *First*, it contributes to understanding India's public diplomacy by building on previous research and studies. While most of the studies on India's mediated diplomacy on social media mainly adopted a quantitative approach with data collection, this study conducts a qualitative enquiry to capture the nature of public diplomacy involving both the government and the public at large. *Second*, it brings into analysis Prime Minister's public diplomacy, which has not received as much attention as Presidential public diplomacy such as the case of the US. While presidents in a presidential system (such as the President of the US) enjoying excessive power as compared to the head of the government in a parliamentary system can naturally draw scholarly attention to the phenomenon, it shall not justify overlooking the public diplomacy activities of powerful and popular Prime Ministers of emerging superpowers. As such, Prime ministerial public diplomacy is understood as organized efforts by the Prime Minister to communicate a country's policies, culture, values, and political beliefs in order to shape international public opinion favourable towards the country's foreign policy. *Third*, the study discussing the intersections of international crisis communication and country image contributes to the field of public diplomacy, nation branding, and diplomacy studies. *Fourth*, in a largely western dominated public diplomacy literature, this study contributes from the perspective of the Global South. *Fifth*, the study's significance lies in its methodology as well. The study adopted a pluralistic methodology that incorporates various methods of data collection and analysis. This includes examining diverse sets of primary data sources, such as political and diplomatic speeches of the Prime Minister, tweets from political elites, government institutions, and the public, as well as media interviews of political elites. *Sixth*, with much of the literature focusing on India's public diplomacy from a cultural policy or cultural relations perspective, this study which synthesizes and demonstrates the political contexts intersecting with public diplomacy could contribute to the existing literature. *Finally*, as the existing work in public diplomacy predominantly focus on official entities and their online activities,⁸⁹⁰ this study's partial analytical focus on the combined public diplomacy of government entities and the public on Twitter draws attention to the need for a better measure to evaluating the impact of public diplomacy.

⁸⁹⁰ Ingenhoff, Calamai and Sevin, "Key Influencers in Public Diplomacy 2.0," 1.

Directions for Future Research

As recommendations for future research within the realm of India's public diplomacy, prospective studies could delve into the implementation of digital diplomacy by Indian embassies. Scholars have emphasized the efficacy of social-media-based public diplomacy on platforms like Twitter, citing its ability to foster interactive, personalized, and relevant communication across diverse stakeholders. Examining the extent to which these communication strategies are incorporated into the Twitter diplomacy of active Indian embassies in various countries would constitute a valuable contribution to the literature on public diplomacy, particularly in the context of the Global South.

Likewise, India a rising power seeking to shape the global narrative and project its ascent through image management and the promotion of favourable discourse also prompts questions for further research, such as to what extent do Indian narratives genuinely influence international perceptions, and how do recipient countries respond to them? Conducting a qualitative analysis to examine India's narratives could be undertaken by analysing media outlets from both India and a region, say, the Middle East during a defined period to unravel how India seeks to narratively envision a new world order. This can shed light on the diverse patterns of reception, reproduction, and contestation within certain countries in the Middle East region.

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2. Public tweets by Indians (based on location) during the Balakot Crisis, Article 370 revocation, COVID-19 pandemic, and the Ukraine Crisis.
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India and the Balakot airstrike: Reflections beyond hard power

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ABSTRACT

This article argues that while India's Balakot airstrike garnered popular attention as a hardline military approach, the role of soft power, which was very much part of it, received little or scant regard. Moving away from the popular view of the Balakot airstrike as a hard power-oriented military approach, taking a nuanced look at it from the soft power and strategic narrative vantage point, this exegesis explores both the hard and soft dimensions of power employed as means to advance India's aims and ends. In doing so, this examination finds the strike as a smart power strategy.

Introduction

On 14 February 2019, a group of Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) terrorists allegedly backed by Pakistan attacked Indian paramilitary convoy, killing at least 40 security personnel in the Pulwama region of Jammu and Kashmir in India.¹ The incident triggered tremendous public outcry and protests, demanding punitive action against Pakistan. With the general elections around the corner, political and reputational costs of failure to retaliate remained high for Modi.² Nearly two weeks after the Pulwama attack on 26 February, India conducted a counterstrike with the primary objective of destroying the terrorist camps in the town of Balakot in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in Pakistan.³ The strike assumed an important place in India's counterterrorism operations. It was the first Indian airstrike in Pakistan since 1971. Even during the 1999 Kargil war, India had desisted from airstrikes in Pakistani territory.⁴ The strike, therefore, marked a profound departure from India's traditional approach to counterterrorism, specifically, the menace of cross-border terrorism emanating from Pakistan.⁵

For starters, India traditionally followed considerable restraint in the use of military force to counter cross-border terrorism, mainly owing to the fear of it escalating into a fully-fledged war and the potential to trigger a nuclear exchange.⁶ India's nonmilitary responses to the terrorist attack on the Indian Parliament in 2001 and the Mumbai terrorist attack in 2008 are instructive.⁷ At the Pakistani end, however, it has since 1998 resorted to the nuclear card to build up coercion to deter India's conventional response to its proxy terrorism, often to the extent of inducing a self-deterrence on

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Thank you for participating and presenting your paper titled '*Rising Powers and COVID-19: India's National Promotion During the Pandemic*'.

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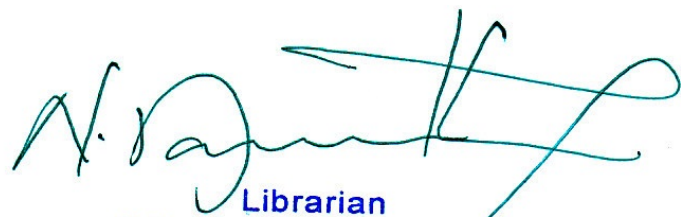
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by Muhsin P P



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