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PAPER 2:
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INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES

This insert contains the passage for Paper 2.

The following article is an edited version of an abridged essay from Shashi Tharoor's latest book, The Elephant, The Tiger And The Cell Phone.

Soft Power, Hard Truth

- 1 It is increasingly axiomatic today that the old calculations of 'hard power' are no longer sufficient to guide a country's conduct in world affairs. Informed knowledge about external threats to the nation, the fight against terrorism, a country's strategic outreach, its geopolitically derived sense of its national interest, and the way in which it articulates and projects its presence on the international stage are all intertwined and are also conjoined with its internal dynamics. There can no longer be a foolproof separation of information management from policymaking, of external intelligence and internal reality, of foreign policy and domestic culture. A country's role on the world stage is seen more and more as a reflection of its society. 5
- 2 At the same time, states operate in an era of competition with others, seeking to promote their security by leveraging their assets. This is where 'soft power' comes in. The soft power of a country rests primarily on three resources: its culture, its political values, and its foreign policies. In the case of India, much of the conventional analyses of India's stature in the world relies on the all-too-familiar indices of GDP, impressive economic growth rates, and its undoubted military power. However, if there is one attribute of independent India to which increasing attention is now being paid around the globe, it is the quality that it would do well to cherish and develop in today's world: its soft power. 10
- 3 The term 'soft power' was coined by Prof Nye to describe the extraordinary strengths of the United States that went well beyond American military dominance. Traditionally, power in world politics was seen in terms of military power: the side with the larger army was likely to win. Even in the past, though, this was not enough; after all, the US lost the Vietnam War, and the Soviet Union was defeated in Afghanistan. Enter soft power. 20
- 4 For Prof Nye, the US is the prototypical exponent of soft power. The US is the home of Boeing and Intel, GM and the iPod, Microsoft and MTV, Hollywood and Disneyland, McDonald's and Starbucks - in short, home of most of the major products that dominate daily life around our globe. The attractiveness of these assets, and of the American lifestyle of which they are emblematic, is that they permit the US to maximise its soft power - the ability to attract and persuade others to adopt the US agenda, rather than relying purely on the dissuasive or coercive hard power of military force. Its subtly deployed soft power is therefore as important to the US as - perhaps more so than - its well-established hard power. 25
- 5 In today's information era, three types of countries are likely to gain soft power and so succeed: 'Those whose dominant cultures and ideals are closer to prevailing global norms (which now emphasise liberalism, pluralism, autonomy); those with the most access to multiple channels of communication and thus more influence over how issues are framed; and those whose credibility is enhanced by their domestic and international performance'. 30
- 6 At first glance this seems to be a prescription for reaffirming today's reality of US dominance, since it is clear that no country scores more highly on all three categories than the US. But Prof Nye himself admitted this is not so: soft power has been pursued with success by other countries over the years. The United Kingdom has the British Council, the Swiss have Pro Helvetia, and Germany, Spain, Italy and Portugal have, respectively, institutes named for Goethe, Cervantes, Dante Alighieri and Camoes. Today, China has started establishing 'Confucius institutes'. 40
- 7 Soft power, however, does not rely merely on governmental action: Hollywood and MTV have done more to promote the idea of America as a desirable and admirable 45

society than the Voice of America or the Fulbright scholarships. 'Soft power is created partly by governments and partly in spite of them.'

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- 8 In the information age, it is often the side that has the better story that wins. India must remain the 'land of the better story'. As a society with a free press and a thriving mass media, and with a people whose creative energies are daily encouraged to express themselves in a variety of appealing ways, India has an extraordinary ability to tell stories that are more persuasive and attractive than those of its rivals. This is not about propaganda; indeed, it will not work if it is directed from above, least of all by government. But its impact, though intangible, can be huge. 55
- 9 To take one example: Afghanistan is clearly a crucial country for India's national security. The most interesting asset for India in Afghanistan comes from one simple fact: don't try to telephone an Afghan at 8.30 in the evening. That is when the Indian TV soap opera *Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi*, dubbed into Dari, is telecast on Tolo TV, and no one wishes to miss it. *Saas* has so thoroughly captured the public imagination in Afghanistan that, in this deeply conservative Islamic country where family problems are usually hidden behind the veil, it is an Indian TV show that has come to dominate society's discussion of family issues. That is soft power, and India does not have to thank the government or charge the taxpayer for its exercise. 60 65
- 10 Even more important, however, are the values and principles for which India stands. After all, Mahatma Gandhi won independence through the use of soft power - because non-violence and satyagraha* were indeed classic uses of soft power before the term was even coined. Pandit Nehru was also a skilled exponent of soft power: he developed a role for India in the world based entirely on its civilisational history and its moral standing, making India the voice of the oppressed and the marginalised against the big power hegemony of the day. This gave the country enormous standing and prestige across the world for some years, and strengthened its own self-respect. 70
- 11 But the great flaw in Nehru's approach was that his soft power was unrelated to any acquisition of hard power; soft power has crippling limitations. Instead of (former US President) Theodore Roosevelt's maxim 'Speak softly and carry a big stick', India spoke loudly but had no stick at all. Soft power becomes credible when there is hard power behind it; that is why the US has been able to make so much of its soft power. Let us be clear: soft power by itself is no guarantee of security. 75 80
- 12 As Prof Nye himself has admitted: 'Drinking Coke or watching a Bollywood film does not automatically convey power for the US or India. Whether the possession of soft power resources actually produces favourable outcomes depends upon the context'. That context is often one of hard geopolitics. Soft power is one arrow in a nation's security quiver. It is not an all-purpose panacea. It would be naïve to suggest that soft power can solve all security challenges. To counter the terrorist threat, there is no substitute for hard power. However, there can be a complement to it. Where soft power works is in attracting enough goodwill from ordinary people to reduce the sources of support and succour that the terrorists enjoy, and without which they cannot function. So as we speak of leveraging our soft power, we must look within. We must ensure that we do enough to keep our people healthy, well-fed and secure, not just from jihadi terrorism but from the daily terror of poverty, hunger and ill health. 85 90

**Satyagraha refers to a philosophy and practice of non-violent resistance developed by Mahatma Gandhi.*