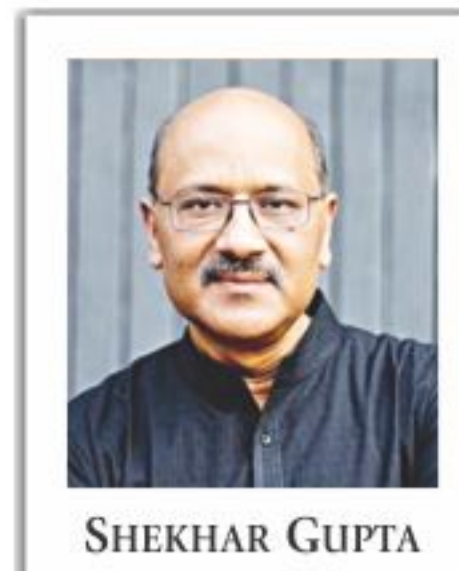


Soft power, hard battles

Soft power is not just about movies, sport, music and culture. It's also about quality of democracy and institutions and moral influence.



SHEKHAR GUPTA

THE night before Atal Bihari Vajpayee was to leave for Lahore on his historic bus ride in February 1999, his office was frantic. How to reach film star Dev Anand in the middle of the night? It seems that it had just occurred to the prime minister that his Pakistani counterpart Nawaz Sharif was a *pukka* Dev Anand fan. Anyway, another Dev Saab fan was roused to reach him and ask if he could reach in time to travel with Vajpayee on the bus, which he cheerfully did. Sure enough, his arrival became the highlight of that visit. The showman charmed politicians, elites, common Pakistani media, and took TV cameras to the exact spot in his college where he (supposedly) kissed a girl for the first time: in the conservative early-1940s, of course. Vajpayee, about the same vintage (a year younger, in fact), wasn't trivialising his visit. He was exercising India's soft power.

The latest campaign calling for total cultural, sporting and academic boycott of Pakistan harks back to an era when soft power wasn't an acknowledged term. The essence of the current angry campaign, joined by talented cricketers like Gautam Gambhir and Sourav Ganguly, both with stellar records against Pakistan in more violent times, is that soft power is for softies, *jholawalas* or rather, in this context, *mombattiwalas*, as candle-light peace marchers are mocked. There is no lily-livered approach to Pakistan. Cut everything off, make them a global pariah state, persuade the rest of the world to join the war against (Pakistani) terror led by India, and then watch. Some recent developments, before and after BRICS in Goa have underlined the limitations India's new-found, post-May 2014 global power that, in reality is a far cry from what is believed in our own warrior TV studios and "war-nik" (counter to peacenik) retired soldiers and spooks.

Donald Rumsfeld, US Defence Secretary under junior Bush's first presidency, when asked if he believed in soft power, had famously answered with an innocent: "What is it?" He was the foremost votary of hard, military coercion. We also know the mess he left behind in the world and US interests like a surgeon slashing open patients on an operating table (Iraq and Afghanistan) and leaving without taking out the tumours or stitching the bodies back. Joseph Nye Jr., Harvard professor and the first to articulate the concept of soft power in his 1990, post-Cold War

classic, "Bound to Lead: the Changing Nature of American Power", noted this in a subsequent 2006 article in Foreign Policy magazine. He said that Bush had learnt his lessons in his second term and, under Condoleezza Rice, invested a great deal more in soft power and public diplomacy.

In the 2006 paper, he devoted more attention to defining soft power better in terms of what it is, and isn't. At this point when any mention of it will have you laughed out of almost any place, a studio, party circuit—in fact any place except perhaps New Delhi's JNU—it is worthwhile fleshing out his arguments,

the result is still theft...it isn't necessarily better to twist minds than to twist arms."

Extend this to India's global power interests. Or, more precisely to India-Pakistan relations. Is soft power only about food, culture, literature, sports? If that were so, Coca Cola and McDonalds, Michael Jackson and Madonna would have conquered the Soviet Bloc early on. Or the Chinese would rule our minds and hearts through their food, or gone to war with us for desi-fying it to ruin. Soft power is also about national values, policies, quality of democracy and politics and strength of institutions.

terrorists to create mayhem but also with the kind of example it sets. This has always worked well for the more liberal, democratic powers competing with autocracies. Almost 25 years ago, in a commemorative volume of Malvika and Tejbir Singh's respected Seminar magazine, I had written a piece headlined "Pakistan: A Hawk's Agenda". It described how the Western Bloc, particularly America, had used its democratic, liberal and cultural influences (term Soft Power wasn't in use then) to defeat the Soviet Bloc in Cold War and India should make a close study of it and weave it into its Pakistan policy. On many visits to Pakistan as a reporter, I was struck by the influence India's institutions had on its leader. Among things I was asked to send them, by influential people, was the Justice Sarkaria Commission report on Centre-state relations (by Shah Mehmood Qureshi, later Foreign Minister but then Finance Minister of Pakistani Punjab when inter-state water wars were breaking out there) and our Armed Forces Special Powers Act, when Nawaz Sharif (in his first term) wanted to lay down a book of rules for his army insisting on operating autonomously in Karachi. I have written about both in detail in the past. Today, the fact that India has had 27 army chiefs, each having gone on retirement date or earlier while Pakistan has had just 13, is an argument of positive influence.

Culture, economy, trade, sports then follow as force multipliers in the national interest. Was Raj Kapoor not such a positive influence over the entire Communist block for four decades? Not just in Soviet Union, even in Beijing. Tiananmen Square massacre week, summer of 1989, staff at the hotel faxed our story (without authorisation) on the condition we'd sing Awara Hoon non-stop until all pages were transmitted and they were humming along. The Americans made Hollywood, even Disney visits, an essential part of their International Visitor Leadership Programme visits, besides Congressional hearings and National Press Centre. They were building a much larger conventional and nuclear arsenal, but politically and philosophically, they weren't responding to Soviets by being more closed and cussed. Openness is a great weapon in the armoury of more open societies. That's why the fight with Pakistan isn't just about India being six times bigger, but equally bitter and insecure as Pakistan. It needs to be a smarter, tougher, large-hearted India, as an aspiring global power.

The writer is an eminent Indian journalist who is currently working with Business Standard. He was also the Editor-in-Chief of Indian Express for 19 years.

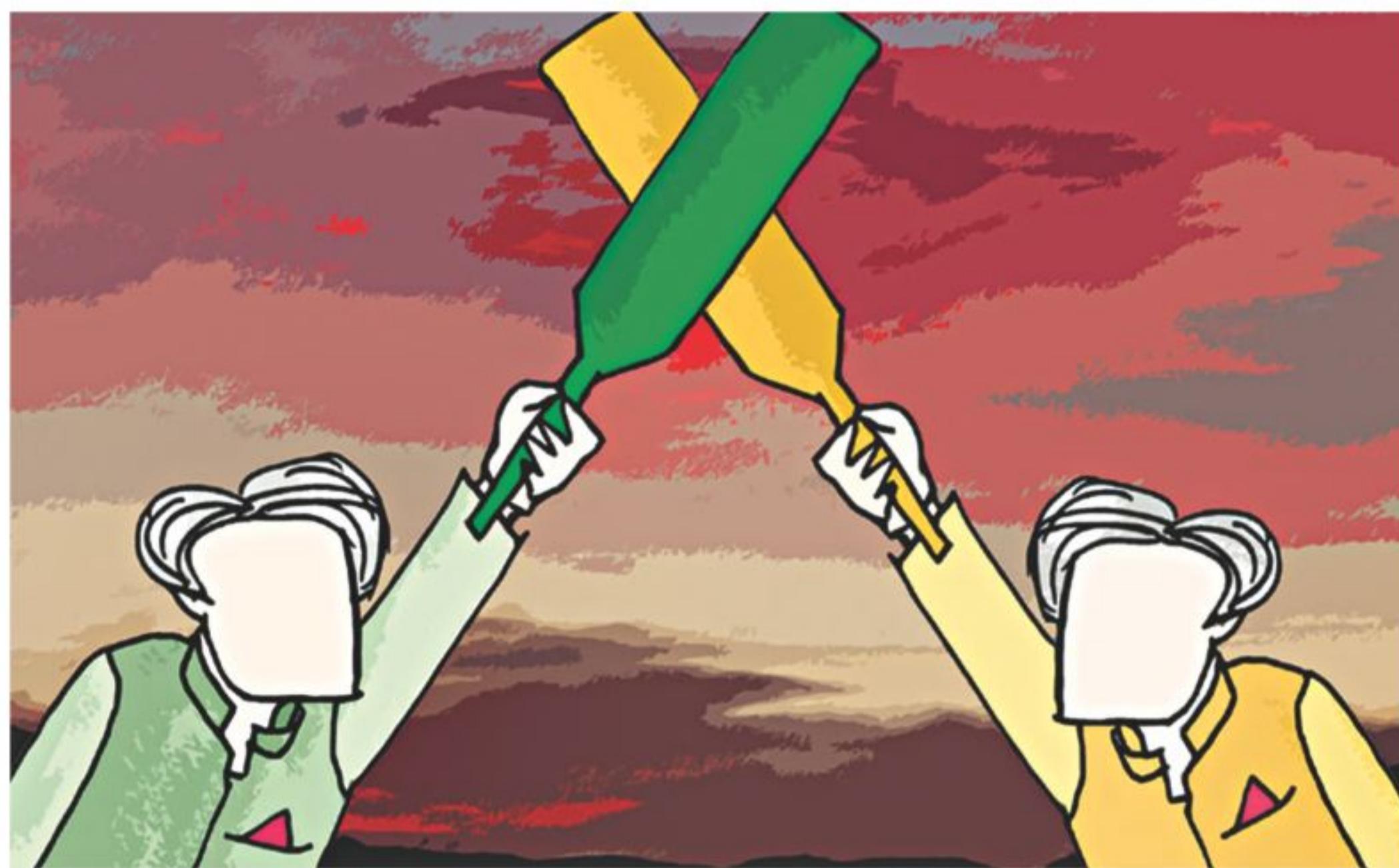


ILLUSTRATION BY: ABRO

with the benefit of hindsight. Particularly as he said the concept had been "stretched and twisted, sometimes beyond recognition".

His basic contention was that soft power wasn't necessarily soft or more humane, just "a description not an ethical prescription". Your use of hard or soft power depends, he implied, on what is needed in a situation just as a general may employ a large force of tanks to win a battle in the desert, but would need other methods in Vietnamese jungles. The professor explained this further to say you can rob the other's money at gun-point, swindle him through a fake get-rich-quick scheme or persuade him to join a spiritual journey by willing his wealth to you. First two are examples of hard power, and the third soft: "But

It isn't just about Pakistanis watching our movies and TV channels, holding our sporting heroes in awe or singing our tunes. It also isn't merely about more and more prominent Pakistanis, sportsmen and actors in particular, earning their living in India and thereby acquiring a vested interest in better relations. All these matter, but only if the larger Indian influence is morally more attractive. A better democracy, a more liberal society, treatment of minorities, greater free speech, a robust, questioning media, courts, environmental laws all must form the core of that brand appeal, and you can call it soft, hard, or undefinable.

One country, and society influences the other not only when it infiltrates saboteurs and

The unbecoming public servant

STRAIGHT LINE



MUHAMMAD NURUL HUDA

WHILE the prevalent wisdom seems to lay all the blame at the door of the politicians for most of our ills, if not all, this writer does not know how our discerning citizens have reacted to the indiscreet behaviour of a prime public servant of a prominent district who, on the eve of his departure on transfer, reportedly, attended 33 farewell receptions and accepted quite unabashedly expensive gifts including gold jewellery. The positive action in an otherwise disconcerting scenario is that the controlling authority has taken prompt steps to initiate disciplinary action against the defaulting official following the disclosure of the unlikely happenings in the media.

The deviance in question assumes heightened significance because quite clearly it relates to the conduct of an individual belonging to a class of persons who, constitutionally speaking, are employed in the service of the Republic and is paid out of the taxpayer's money. Of particular importance is the fact that the inappropriate conduct of such core official impinges upon the attitude and actions of junior officials and thus surely imperils the growth and nurturing of healthy service ethos.

One additional reason for dwelling on the issue needs to be spelt-out before we venture

to refer to the relevant rules and regulations guiding the conduct of public servants. That reason is this writer's own and may perhaps be subscribed to by others. On a point of illustration of that reason, it is submitted that public servants are constitutionally appointed on the basis of open impartial competition and thus in their own right constitute a body of appointed representatives. Their conduct should be exemplary and definitely above reproach. In particular, the public servants in the regulatory organs of the State need to be circumspect and discreet.

From a historical perspective, one might recall the diligence and experience of key public servants of different State organs of the immediate post-partition (1947) period of the subcontinent that were largely instrumental in holding the polity together. The service calibre was demonstrably high as was expected to be. As a body it might have been zealous in the promotion of group interests but the fact remains that it also delivered significantly to the public cause.

It is worth recalling that a Member of Parliament from Chittagong has raised the issue of the mentioned public servant's improper conduct and has commented that quite a number of public servants are acting and behaving like politicians and that the pernicious trend needs to be halted. This writer does not know if the deviant officer's own service association has taken an appropriate note of the concerned officer's undesirable conduct. Their proactive role in this matter would be more than welcome in public interest.

The Civil Service Management Code of United Kingdom says "civil servants are under a duty to endeavor to deal with the affairs of the public sympathetically, effectively, promptly and without bias or maladministration of public money". It also adds that "civil servants must not misuse their official position to further their own, or another's, personal interests."

Coming to our own The Government Servants (Conduct) Rules, 1979 clause 5 provides as under:

Gifts - (1) Save as otherwise provided in this rule, no Government servant shall, except with the previous sanction of the Government, accept, or permit any member of his family to accept, from any person any gift the receipt of which will place him under any form of official obligation to the donor. If the offer of a gift cannot be refused without giving undue offence, it may be accepted and delivered to the Government for decision as to its disposal.

(2) If any question arises whether receipt of a gift places a Government servant under any form of official obligation to the donor, the decision of the Government thereon shall be final.

(3) If any gift is offered by the head or representative of a foreign State the government servant concerned should attempt to avoid acceptance of such a gift, if he can do so without giving offence. If, however, he cannot do so he shall accept the gift and shall report its receipt to the Establishment Division for orders as to its disposal.

(4) Secretaries to the Government, or officers of equivalent status may accept gifts, offered abroad or within Bangladesh by institutions or officials dignitaries of foreign Government of comparable or higher level provided that the value of the gift in each case does not exceed Taka 500 (Taka five hundred). If the gift is capable of being used in a Government office or department or at official residence, it should be used, accordingly. If the gift cannot be so used, the Government servant may retain it for his own use.

Clause 7 of the conduct rules states as under: Public demonstrations in honour of Government servants - (1) No Government servant shall encourage meetings to be held in his honour or presentation of addresses of which the main purpose is to praise him or any entertainment to be held in his honour.

(2) Subject to the provisions of any general or special order of the Government, a Government servant may attend a fare-well entertainment of a substantially private and informal character held as a mark of regard to himself or to some other Government servant, or to a person who has recently quitted the service of Government, on the occasion of retirement from service or departure from a district or station of himself or such other Government servant or person.

Clause 32 of the conduct rules says: Contravention of rules- Contravention of any provision of these rules shall be construed as misconduct within the meaning of the Government Servants (Discipline and Appeal) Rules, 1985 and if a Government

servant is found guilty of such contravention he shall be liable to disciplinary action for misconduct under the aforesaid Rules.

Finally, it may be pertinent to benefit by the wisdom and experience of a practitioner cum academic. Dr. A. M. M. Shawkat Ali, an eminent civil servant and a former advisor to the Caretaker Government, in his much acclaimed book THE LORE OF THE MANDARINS, comments that the civil service in 1972 "lost its homogeneous character which is so vital for the morale of the civil service and the element of the esprit de corps that are necessary for maintaining good working relationship and environment. The impact of such division on the concept of a homogeneous and politically neutral civil service is something which is devoutly to be wished but unlikely to be achieved in near or distant future given the trend in the quality of political leadership." (Page 277-278)

The above author laments at the unsatisfactory state of initial recruitment and post-entry requirement of improving skills and efficiency in public service and comments that "Reversal of this situation will demand very high level of maturity, vision and wisdom of the political decision makers. It will be for them to realise that it is not conducive for a strong and mature political government to have a bureaucracy about whose quality not only the recruitment agency....., but the society at large" is doubtful. He adds, "The long term consequences of the existing scenario can only lead to a stateless society." (Page 282-283)

The writer is a columnist of The Daily Star.

QUOTABLE Quote

GEORGE ORWELL

Freedom of the press, if it means anything at all, means the freedom to criticise and

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- Swear
- Health hazard
- Emmy's cousin
- Pan, for one
- T-shirt choice
- Supreme Court Justice Kagan
- Homer's dad
- Took the wheel
- Rained in December
- Clark's "Mogambo" costar
- Follow
- Sirius, for one
- Holy terror
- Electric flux symbol
- Nape growth
- Kids with curfews
- Chick holders
- Ran
- Painter John Singer--
- Old auto
- Coral island
- Home of the Huskies
- Cry
- Shot

DOWN

- Iowa city
- Love, Latin-style
- Fast food drinks
- Not worthless
- Studio fixture
- Slump
- Alacrity
- Odometer unit
- Hospital fixture
- Red Cross location
- Prepare for a big day
- Speed checker
- Links need
- Salinger girl
- Former home of the Mets
- Confined
- Buttes' kin
- Hercule's creator
- Earth shade
- Handled
- Tuna sandwiches
- Generous one
- Sticky stuff
- Chinese tea

BEETLE BAILEY by Mort Walker

WHAT MEANINGLESS MANUAL LABOR ARE YOU DUMPING ON ME TODAY?
TAKE YOUR PICK

NONE OF THE ABOVE!

YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

RIBS JAMES
AMOUR ALONE
CARVE DANTE
EGO SPENDER
RENDER ARE
ENOS LED
SLAT EYED
APIC SAVE
MIC GENDER
BLENDER IRE
ELROY EVENS
RINSE DIGIT
STEED GOES

BABY BLUES by Kirkman & Scott

REALLY? YES, I UNDERSTAND. THANK YOU.

WHO WAS THAT?

THE PEDIATRICIAN.

APPARENTLY, KIDS WHO DON'T PICK UP THEIR TONS NEED MORE CAULIFLOWER IN THEIR DIET

DAUGH!!!