

ifa ECP Monitor Country Report

India

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1. External cultural policy objectives in geopolitical context

As the second most populous state in the world and a major power on the Asian continent, India is a country with an expanding global footprint. Particularly in recent years, India has demonstrated geostrategic ambitions that far exceed the country's current standing. Despite "India First" pledges, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has demonstrated awareness of the changing world order and the ambition for India to play a cardinal role in it. His foreign policies have aimed to create "a New India by 2022, when independent India turns 75" (Ministry of External Affairs, 2017, p. 1). With a strategic focus on India's neighborhood, Modi seeks to create a favorable and peaceful reputation of India in the non-Western world, while at the same time fostering and intensifying old ties to Europe and North America. Historically, this has been framed by a policy of nonalignment with the world's major players, which India has officially used to put the idea of peaceful international relations at the forefront of international relations (ibid.).

India is home to a linguistically, ethnically and religiously diverse population with a rich, globally known cultural heritage. The country is particularly well known for its film industry nicknamed "Bollywood" as well as world-famous heritage sites. Yoga, too, is an important "export", which has led to a great soft power success in 2015, when the United Nations accepted India's plea to introduce an "International Yoga Day" (ICCR, 2016). In recent decades, India has additionally gained a favorable reputation with the provision of technological services and the standing of highly skilled Indian professionals at home and abroad. What is more, five Indian cities were admitted to the UNESCO Creative Cities Network between the years of 2015 and 2019, demonstrating the international recognition awarded to India's cultural riches (Ministry of Culture, 2020).

Nevertheless, while India's global engagement receives some positive attention, the country is also home to high levels of domestic inequality and comparatively low human development: in 2020, India was ranked 131st in the United Nations Development Programme's Human Development Index (2020). Further, repeated international headlines related to the treatment of India's farmer protests, breaches to freedom of speech, and discriminatory actions towards the country's Muslim population continue to discredit India's claim to be the world's largest democracy (Ganguly, 2021). Indeed, India's global freedom status was downgraded in 2021, from "free" in 2020 to only "partially free" in 2021 – a substantial blow to India's soft power potential (Freedom House, 2021a).

Table 1: Economy of India

	2019	% change since 2015
Population (millions) / ranking	1.336 billion / 2 nd	4.3%
GDP ranking	5 th	8 th
GDP per capita	\$2,099.6	\$1,605.6 / 30.7%
Cultural economy (%GDP)	(see below)	(see below)
Education economy (%GDP)	3.0 ¹	2.8
R&D economy (%GDP)	0.65 (2018)	0.69

Sources: The World Bank; Ministry of Finance, 2021

To contextualize the leverage potential of a given country's ECP tools, this monitor assembles a number of indices describing their relative geopolitical and geo-economic position in the world. More specifically, global rankings of military standing, economic performance, the size of diplomatic networks and the availability of soft power resources were selected to offer a framework to India's ECP. In recent years, India has improved its comparative economic standing in the world, with an increase from 8th place in 2015 to 5th place in 2019. Additionally, despite a population growth of a mere 4.3%, India increased its GDP per capita by 30.7% over the same period. Although India has increased its spending on education to 3% of GDP, this number is still considerably lower than the world average of 4.5% (The World Bank, 2020).

India's 4th place hard power rank and its world trade rank of 13th place remained constant between 2015 and 2019. In line with Prime Minister Modi's strategic foreign policy emphasis, the country's diplomacy rank, reflecting its diplomatic network abroad, has improved slightly from 13th in 2016 to 12th in 2019.

Table 2: India's geopolitical and geo-economic position

	2019	2015	
Hard power rank	4	4	
World trade indicators / ranking (\$ million)	13	13	↑
Soft power rank	-	-	-
Diplomacy rank	12	13 (2016)	↓

Source: Ministry of Finance, 2021

India allocates 10.4% of its total spending on education – once again less than the average of 14.3% listed by the World Bank (The World Bank, 2020). This spending remains a controversial issue, as the majority of India's domestic education sector has been underfunded for

¹ Expenditure on 'Education' refers to expenditure on 'Education, Sports, Arts and Culture'.

decades and education outcomes have consequently been poor (Ministry of Finance, 2021). What is more, economic shortfalls as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic have caused the Indian government to instate further cuts to India's public education spending (Khaitan, 2021).

Table 3: Government spending on ECP fields as a % of total outlays

	2019	% change since 2015
Education	10.4%	10.4%

2. External cultural policy: an overview

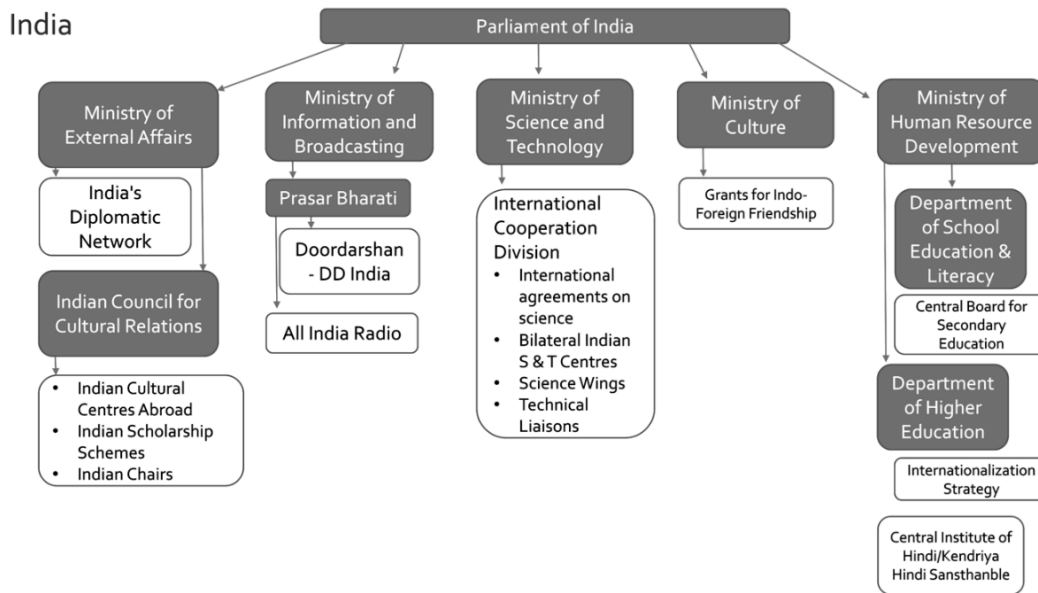
Since the election of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2014, India has put forward a narrative of an “ongoing national renaissance” (Ministry of External Affairs, 2017, p. 1). This narrative has been accompanied by Prime Minister Modi's foreign policy engagement to affirm India's place in the world order. Indeed, Modi has demonstrated a strong awareness for the potential deriving from India's soft power assets and his two consecutive legislative terms have been accompanied by a string of nation-branding campaigns (Sahay, 2019). The expansion of international engagement under Prime Minister Modi and stronger role culture plays in his official state visits abroad now suggests a shift in thinking and stronger integration of culture into India's foreign policy agenda as soft power assets (Mazumdar, 2018; Sahay, 2019).

The level of strategy applied by Prime Minister Modi presents a change for India's international cultural engagement, as the usage of ECP was long motivated by “internationalist idealism” (Isar, 2017, p. 2) rather than the pursuit of strategic advantages. While India's policy controversies (in domestic as well as foreign policy) may now indicate otherwise, the country's ECP approach is still branded in the context of this idealism. ECP is presented in connection to the historically entrenched principles of respect for other peoples and the diversity of cultures. This approach is informed by eminent Indian figures like Mahatma Gandhi and Swami Vivekananda, whose impact on peaceful international cooperation and interfaith awareness is frequently highlighted in Indian policy documents. Indeed, a large number of India's institutions – at home and abroad – bear the name of one of the two figures (ICCR, 2020a).

The institutional mandate for what India frames as “international cultural relations” is shared between the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and the Ministry of Culture (MoC). Beyond India's diplomatic representations abroad, the most important body in the implementation of the country's cultural diplomacy mission is the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), which is subordinated to the MEA, although it is an autonomous agency on paper (akin to the British Council) (Sahay, 2019). This organization's scope extends beyond a narrow understanding of culture, as the Council also takes a leadership role in international scholarship programs and exchanges, Hindi language instruction and important Indian cultural exports such as Yoga. The organization is also in charge of implementing scholarship programs financed by other bodies, such as the MEA (ICCR, 2020a). In this function, the ICCR is a key body to support the internationalization of India's higher education institutions, otherwise in charge of the Ministry of Human Resource Development. Bilateral and multilateral science cooperation, as well as India's international radio and television presence are further central pillars of India's ECP, even though they are not formally included in the MEA's public

diplomacy approach. Their implementation is coordinated through the Ministry of Science and Technology as well as India's public broadcaster Prasar Bharati, subordinated to the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.

Figure 1: Institutional map of India's ECP



India's history of emigration and its large diaspora provide much of the framework for the country's engagement abroad. According to the United Nations' World Migration Report, India is the country of origin for the largest number of migrants living abroad. Their number amounted to 17.5 million in 2019 (International Organization for Migration, 2019). Depending on different definitions of the diaspora, this number is sometimes assumed to be closer to 25 million (Isar, 2017). Similarly, the country ranks highest in the reception of remittance payments from its diaspora (International Organization for Migration, 2019). Historically, this group of people has formed an important component of India's cultural engagement abroad. They are simultaneously a key target for international programming, broadcasting and education, as well as a central asset for the Indian government in order to amplify the ECP impact abroad (Isar, 2017). There is a strong diversity of Indians abroad, not least in terms of their languages, ethnicities and religions. Professionals of Indian origin have a growing visibility and have made names for themselves in high-ranking positions at international universities, companies and organizations. India's focus on the diaspora therefore also intends to stimulate investment from these communities (Thussu, 2013). To acknowledge their importance and foster close ties to their country of origin, India has celebrated "Pravasi Bharatiya Divas", the "Non-Resident Indian Day", sponsored by the Ministry of External Affairs, every other year since 2001 (Ministry of External Affairs, 2021).

This engagement with the Indian diaspora informs the regional focus of India's ECP abroad. Its largest concentration can be found in the United Arab Emirates, followed by the United States and Saudi Arabia (International Organization for Migration, 2019). This is roughly mirrored in the spread of Indian schools abroad: from a total 183 schools, 63 are located in the United Arab Emirates and 36 in Saudi Arabia (The Learning Point, n.d.). India's foreign policy further emphasizes cooperation with the South Asian neighborhood (Shital, 2020). According to Isar (2017), the rationale behind India's presence abroad roughly divides the host

countries into two groups: those home to a large Indian diaspora and those with a general interest in the country. While India's engagement in Europe – where the UK is home to the largest diaspora – primarily uses Indian Chairs to drive forward the momentum of Indian studies abroad, India has mostly operated Indian Cultural Centres (ICC) in its neighborhood (Sahay, 2019). These emphases are supported by the numbers published by the ICCR: in 2019, 18 of India's 38 ICCs were in Asia, compared to only 6 in Europe. Conversely, 28 of a total 69 Indian chairs were in Europe, compared to 19 in Asia (ICCR, 2020a).

Table 4: Key ECP Statistics for India

	2019
Number of countries with ECP activities	> 64 Indian Cultural Centres, Indian Schools, Indian Chairs
Total number of institutions abroad	> 221 38 Indian Cultural Centres, 183 Indian Schools
Total number of FTE staff engaged in ECP activities	> 249 ICCR Staff, Indian Chairs, Teachers in Centers (approximately), Scientific Liaison Agents
Government financial support (€ million)	> 57.5
Total expenditure of all ECP operators (€ million)	> 68.6
Comparative ECP ranking	major

3. Fields of ECP

3.1. Culture and the arts

India is a well-connected international player in culture and the arts. As at 2021, the country has signed 121 cultural agreements (Ministry of Culture, n.d.). Over time, their scope has expanded from more generic stipulations to more specific areas of cooperation, including the audio-visual sector – a central area for India, the home of Bollywood (Sahay, 2019). Despite the reach of this network of agreements, it was found that many were still lagging behind in their implementation, as the financial endowment for culture in foreign policy is lacking. This tendency is particularly visible in the ICCR. As an arms-length body and the main agency entrusted with overseeing India's ECP, the ICCR assumes the position of a connector of India's government with audiences abroad. Placed within the formal strategic framework of the MEA, but largely free to implement its own programming, the ICCR aims to “foster and strengthen cultural relations and mutual understanding between India and other countries”, to “promote cultural exchange with other countries and peoples” and to “establish and develop relations with national and inter-national Organization in the field of culture” (sic) (ICCR, n.d.). Considering the importance attributed to the ICCR and the plethora of activities coordinated, its budget of €39.3 million is, and has been historically, surprisingly low (Isar, 2017).

The ICCR took on a further important function for India's ECP in 2016, when the organization was assigned responsibility for the "Festivals of India" (Sahay, 2019). Their inception goes back to former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's legislative period in the 1980s, when these spotlight festivals attempted to project India's contemporary culture with large-scale celebrations abroad. Their current scale no longer lives up to their grandiose first years, where they set new records for their proportion in the United Kingdom (1982), the United States (1985-1986) and the USSR (1987-1988) (Isar, 2017). Nevertheless, they offer a platform to frame a variety of events that showcase India's culture while also inviting locals to participate in it. Beyond arts and culture, the festivals have comprised language (like the World Urdu Conference in Mauritius), food and Yoga. Indeed, the first International Yoga Day was kicked off in the context of the Festival of India in Malaysia in 2015 and has been celebrated in India, its embassies and its cultural centers abroad in the years since (Sahay, 2019). Three Festivals of India were organized in 2019, taking place in South Africa, Mexico and Croatia (Ministry of Culture, 2020).

In addition, the ICCR supports a selection of official outgoing cultural delegations every year. For instance, in 2019, the ICCR supported a total of 41 artists in their missions to 10 countries (ICCR, 2020b). Moreover, there has been a steady growth of ICCs abroad over the duration of the last decades. After the first center opened in Guyana in 1972, the ICCR already administered 15 ICCs abroad in 2001 (Sahay, 2019). By 2019, this number has more than doubled to encompass 38 ICCs in 36 countries in addition to special ICCR subsidies to independent centers of Indian culture in South Korea and Spain (ICCR, 2020a). Although ICCs are listed in this report for their most notable engagement in Indian arts and culture, they are also associated with "projecting India's soft power through a wide range of cultural, academic and intellectual activities, promoting, inter alia, knowledge, information and understanding of various aspects of Indian culture including Indian dance, music, yoga, languages, food, festivals, history, ethos and contemporary issues" (ICCR, 2020a, p. 17). In order to convey these different disciplines, ICCs ordinarily house specific teachers for Yoga and classical dance or music (ibid.).

India's diaspora is specifically considered in India's international engagement in relation to arts and culture. In addition to ICCR's range of activities, scholarships and programs, the MoC has created an Indo-Foreign Friendship Scheme. Through this program, grant-in-aid is awarded by way of the Indian diplomatic missions to local Indian cultural associations abroad. The support of these unofficial, non-state organizations demonstrates India's interest in fostering people-to-people cultural relations rather than only top-down government organizations (Isar, 2017). In 2019, the MoC awarded a total of €1.4 million to 44 cultural associations abroad (Ministry of Culture, 2020).

Table 5: Key statistics on culture and the arts

	2019	2015
Number of countries present	Indian Cultural Centres: 36	Indian Cultural Centres: 34
Number of institutes	Indian Cultural Centres: 38	Indian Cultural Centres: 36
Number of FTE staff	ICCR: 138	-
Number of artists in exchange programs	41 artists in cultural missions	-
Number of cultural agreements	121	-
Budget (€ million)	ICCR: 39.3 ² Expenditure for Indian Cultural Centres: 12.8 Expenditure for Teachers in Centres: 4.04 IndoForeign Friendship: 0.9	ICCR: 36.7 Expenditure for Indian Cultural Centres: 9.8
Government financial support (€ million)	ICCR: 31.7 ³ Ministry of Culture: 1.4	ICCR: 26.9 Ministry of Culture: 2.3 (2014)

3.2. Primary and secondary education

India possesses a large network of 183 international schools abroad, which is primarily tied to its global diasporic footprint. Similar to Indian primary and secondary schools in India, they are accredited centrally through the Central Board of Secondary Education. These schools are spread across 26 countries worldwide. There is a strong emphasis on countries in the Middle East with a large number of schools in the United Arab Emirates (63), Saudi Arabia (36), Kuwait (17), Oman (13), Qatar (8) and Bahrain (5). There is also a presence in Asian countries such as Nepal (14), Singapore (4) and Malaysia (3) (The Learning Point, n.d.). Notably, as these schools often offer an English-language alternative to local schools, none of them are located in anglophone countries, despite the sizeable diasporas in the US and the UK. These schools are affiliated, but run independently and are not subject to any central Indian education strategies (CBSE, 2020). India's Ministry of Human Resource Development, responsible for the Department of School Education and Literacy and for the Department of Higher Education, supported education institutions abroad with approximately €922,500 in 2018 (Department of School Education and Literacy, 2018).

² Budget for total ICCR activities, also including non-related to arts and culture.

³ Transfer to the ICCR from Ministry of External Affairs, includes total ICCR activities.

Table 6: Key figures on primary and secondary education

	2019	2015
Number of countries	26	~26
Number of schools	183	-
Government financial support	€922,563 (2018)	-

Sources: The Learning Point, n.d; Department of School Education and Literacy, 2018

3.3. Tertiary education and science

There are a total of 967 universities in India, many of which offer degree courses in English (University Grants Commission, 2020). The country is particularly well-known for the excellence of its science, technology, engineering and mathematics instruction, although the most popular subjects for domestic students remain the humanities (Department of Higher Education, 2017). Despite this wide array of local institutions, higher education often functions as an entry-point into other economies and a starting point for India's diaspora abroad. Especially this migration for highly skilled workers often happens without much intervention on the part of the Indian government – perhaps due to the country's large population (Cerna & Czaika, 2021). Consequently, the number of Indian students studying abroad is almost eight times the size of the number of inbound international students. Among the 375,000 outbound Indian students, the most popular destinations were primarily economically strong English-speaking countries, with the United States, Australia, Canada, United Kingdom and Germany leading the list (UNESCO, n.d.). In turn, there were 47,000 inbound students in 2019, with the majority originating from India's neighborhood. The most frequent countries of origin were Nepal, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nigeria (ibid.).

India's premier ECP body, the ICCR, also plays an important role in the provision of academic scholarships. The organization administers a total of 24 international scholarship schemes for inbound students. Among these, 15 programs are specifically administered on behalf of the MEA and three programs on behalf of the Ministry of AYUSH⁴. Several of these target specific regions, like the Africa Scholarship Scheme, or even particular countries, like the Special Scholarship Scheme for Afghan Nationals (ICCR, 2020a).

Despite the importance of offering scholarships to students in the Indian neighborhood, the range of countries from which international students in India originate is also the subject of review. From countries beyond the Asian continent, India has not yet sustainably positioned itself as a top study destination. Students from these countries have tended to opt for semester abroad schemes rather than attending Indian universities for full degree programs. This is also tied to the fragmentary recognition of Indian degrees abroad as well as to their limited reputation (Sahay, 2019). Consequently, India's internationalization attempts are dragging on: Among the scholarships administered by the ICCR, there has been a consistently moderate utilization rate. For instance, of 3,930 scholarship slots available to international students in 2019, only 2,498 were filled, which amounts to 64% utilization (ICCR, 2020a).

⁴ The Ministry of Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy.

In light of the low utilization rate and the imbalance of inbound and outbound students, the Indian government has announced ambitious goals in the framework of higher education internationalization. India's "New Education Policy" wants to promote the country as a "global study destination" (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2020, p. 39). In pursuit of this goal, the Ministry plans to set up mandatory international student offices at each higher education institution in India and expand the direct engagement with higher education institutions abroad. As a result of these partnerships, formalized through Memoranda of Understanding, Indian universities will be encouraged to set up campuses abroad or invite foreign branch campuses into the country (ibid.). This adds a new element to the Indian education portfolio: setting up international branch campuses was only allowed in 2021 and the associated bureaucratic process still remains strict (Niazi, 2021). With a higher education strategy spanning the years from 2019-2024, India intends to (more than) quadruple inbound international students to 200,000 by 2023 (Department of Higher Education, 2018). With the help of this strategy, India intends to attract top talents internationally but also to counteract a "brain drain" of India's well educated-workers and students (ibid.). Though certainly timely, India's goal nevertheless presents an extremely ambitious target that seems implausible, not least because of mobility restrictions related to COVID-19.

Table 7: Key figures on tertiary education

	2019	2015
Number of countries	0	0
Number of universities / colleges abroad	0	0
Number of domestic universities / colleges	967 (2020)	-
Number of students		
Number of international students	Outbound students: 375,055 Inbound students: 47,424	Inbound: 41,993
Number of government scholarships awarded	2069	2308
Budget (€ million)	-	-
Government financial support (€ million)	17.6 ⁵	13.6

Sources: University Grants Commission, 2020; UNESCO, n.d.; ICCR, 2020; ICCR, 2016

India's STEM sectors have grown significantly and garnered a global reputation. Closely related to this distinguishing feature, the country's science policy possesses a strong international component. India's Department of Science and Technology (DST) has delegated these functions to its International Cooperation Division, which is in charge of overseeing the country's bilateral science agreements with 83 different countries. In 2019, the DST supported 340 scientific projects in bilateral partnerships, as well as providing travel grants to 60 researchers

⁵ Refers to expenditure on scholarships administered through the 24 schemes of the ICCR.

(Department of Science & Technology, 2020). Grants for international projects amounted to €3.5 million in 2017 (Department Of Science & Technology, 2018). The division follows three strategic goals: “Enlarging India’s pursuit of influence in global arena/platforms and mainstreaming Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) into international diplomacy and foreign relations; Showcasing and projecting India’s scientific excellence in the global research landscape” and “Leveraging foreign alliances and partnerships to accelerate key priorities and programs devoted to strengthening India’s national science and technology” (Department Of Science & Technology, n.d.-a). In recent years, India has strengthened scientific cooperation with Australia, Canada, the EU, France, Germany, Israel, Japan, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States (ibid.). This regional emphasis is mirrored in India’s presence abroad. The DST has established four science wings abroad: in Germany, Russia, Japan and the United States. These are complemented by technical liaison officers in the Indian embassies in Austria, France, the United Kingdom and the United States (Department Of Science & Technology, n.d.-b). Among the responsibilities of these liaison officers is also the facilitation of three bilateral (but independent) research centers with Indian contributions: Indo French Centre for the Promotion of Advanced Research, Indo-US Science & Technology Forum, Indo-German Science & Technology Centre (Department Of Science & Technology, n.d.-a). However, only the latter institution possesses a branch office outside of India, located in Germany (IGSTC, n.d.). The India-Africa Science & Technology Initiative has similarly increased cooperation with more than 48 African countries, with a strong emphasis on capacity-building projects (Ministry of External Affairs, 2015).

Under the auspices of the ICCR, India is also in charge of deploying the so-called “Indian Chairs” abroad. This refers to a selection of professors supported at higher education institutions abroad and supported by the Indian government. The election of institutions is based on Memoranda of Understanding between the international host institution and the ICCR. 69 Indian Chairs are allocated in total, with a majority working on Indian studies or a variety thereof, for instance pertaining to Indian philosophy (ICCR, 2020a). More information on the Indian Chairs will follow in the section on language below.

Table 8: Key figures on science and research

	2019	2015
Number of countries	ICCR Chairs: 27	ICCR Chairs: 35
Number of institutes	4 Science Wings	-
Number of researchers / staff	ICCR Chairs: 33 Liaison Officers: 8	ICCR Chairs: 51
Number of projects	340 (joint scientific projects, bilateral partnerships)	324 (2017)
Number scientists in exchange programmes	International Travel Grant: 60 Researchers	-
Budget (€ million)	> 5.9	-

	2019	2015
Government financial support (€ million)	ICCR Chairs ⁶ : 1.1 Science Counsellors Abroad: 1.3 Scientific Projects: 3.5 (2017)	-

3.4. Language

One of the world's largest countries by population and by area, India is known for its immense linguistic, ethnic and religious diversity. A census taken in 2018 found that over 19,500 languages or dialects were actively spoken by the Indian population. Even though Hindi is the official language of the Indian constitution, 21 further languages are also mentioned and 96.7 percent of the Indian population speak one of these languages as their mother tongue (The Indian Express, 2018). In light of the British colonial history in India, English has remained a vital and widely spoken second language, although its association with British imperialism has not been forgotten (Bhattacharya, 2017). In fact, many policy documents are either available in English or in a bilingual version with both Hindi and English included.

Due to this linguistic diversity, Indian ECP relating to language is not only associated with one single language. While the largest portion of the Indian Chairs abroad, deployed by the ICCR, are in charge of instructing Indian Studies, several professors are also delegated to instruct Indian languages. In 2019, 32 Chairs were deployed for the instruction and study of Hindi, Sanskrit, Tamil and Urdu in a total of 23 countries. Total support for Indian Chairs by the ICCR amounts to €1.1 million⁷ (ICCR, 2020a). Their function exceeds the mere instruction of Indian languages to also multiplying research pertaining to them. The specific curricula and contents of Hindi studies are coordinated with Kendriya Hindi Sansthan, the Central Hindi Institute, which is also (and primarily) responsible for promoting Hindi as a national language within India (Kendriya Hindi Sansthan, 2020).

In addition, the ICCR has launched the "Propagation of Hindi Overseas" scheme, also implemented in cooperation with Kendriya Hindi Sansthan. This is also a reaction to what the council has identified as particular interest in learning Hindi and Sanskrit in both Europe and the Indian neighborhood. In this context (and, in part, for this audience) the ICCR publishes the Hindi-language magazine "Gagananchal" bi-monthly, which is widely available online (ICCR, 2020a). The scheme supports Hindi classes for international students in one of the Hindi institutes in India. In 2014, 132 students from 35 different countries were granted this opportunity. The most frequently represented nationalities were Chinese (20) and South Korean (20), followed by Russian (11) (Kendriya Hindi Sansthan, 2016).

Lastly, the Hindi language is promoted abroad by a Hindi language teacher deployed to each of India's ICCs in the 36 countries worldwide. These teachers are centrally selected through the ICCR and deployed to the centers for two years (ICCR, 2020a). Overall, this allows for a relatively wide coverage of Hindi language instruction in terms of the countries covered.

⁶ Total listed expenditure on ICCR Chairs, may include expenditure on chairs involved in the instruction of Indian languages.

⁷ This also contains expenditure for Indian Chairs in Indian studies.

However, with often only one or two teachers or professors in charge per country, the scale of Hindi teaching is not nearly comprehensive – to say nothing of India’s other languages.

Table 9: Key figures on language promotion

	2019	2015
Number of countries where courses are offered	> 52 23 (Indian Chairs) 36 (Indian Cultural Centres)	15 (Indian Chairs) 34 (Indian Cultural Centres)
Number of students enrolled	In-class: > 132 (2014) ⁸	-
Number of language teachers	ICCR Indian Chairs: 32 Indian Cultural Centres: ~38	ICCR Indian Chairs: 20 ICC: ~36
Government financial support (€ million)	> 5.1 ⁹	-

Sources: ICCR, 2020; ICCR, 2016; Kendriya Hindi Sansthan, 2016

3.5. Foreign Media

India’s foreign media presence is coordinated through the public broadcasting corporation Prasar Bharati, which is subordinated to the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. Prasar Bharati engages in international relations in its own right and signed nine Memoranda of Understanding in 2018. International activities include the exchange of contents, organizing capacity-building and training as well as official visits from foreign delegations (Prasar Bharati, 2019). DD India is Prasar Bharati’s English-language TV channel launched in 1995, which has an international reach. While its transmission was divided between Hindi and English language content in 2015, it has since been transformed into an English-only channel primarily focused on news delivery, designed to compete with other international news channels (ibid.).

Prasar Bharati also runs the foreign broadcaster All India Radio, the Indian radio station with the most comprehensive domestic reach, known for broadcasting in 23 languages and 179 dialects. Due to India’s colonial ties to the United Kingdom, All India Radio started broadcasting internationally through its External Services Division shortly after the BBC (1938) in 1939, functioning as a propaganda tool for the Allies during World War II. In recent years, the station has been communicating “the Indian point of view on matters of national and international importance” (Prasar Bharati, 2019, p. 89). Its foreign services are available in 28 languages – 13 Indian, targeting the diaspora and India’s neighborhood, and 15 foreign languages – which are broadcast to 150 countries overall. With the addition of online livestreaming tools and portals, All India Radio is available globally (ibid.). In accordance with this extensive coverage, All India Radio is considered an essential part of India’s foreign policy agenda. Specifically, the station seeks to “present the reality of India as a strong secular, democratic, republic which is vibrant, forward looking and engaged in the task of rapid economic,

⁸ Only refers to the number of international students partaking in the Propagation of Hindi Abroad Scheme implemented by the Kendriya Hindi Sansthan.

⁹ Includes expenditure for Hindi teachers supported by ICCR, ICCR Indian Chairs for languages, Hindi activities such as the publication of a Hindi magazine. Does not include expenditure for the Propagation of Hindi Scheme implemented through the Kendriya Hindi Sansthan.

industrial and technological progress. [...] Similarly, India's faith in non-violence, its commitment to universal human rights and international peace and its contribution to the creation of a new world economic order are frequently discussed" (Prasar Bharati, 2019, p. 90).

Although the outputs of the Bollywood industry, which is primarily based in Mumbai, do not play a significant role in the international programming supported by the MEA, the MoC or the ICCR, the sheer global footprint incurred by the industry is worth mentioning. Though only ranking seventh globally in box office revenue¹⁰, India's immense (mostly Hindi-language) film output has consistently placed the country first in the world's leading film markets (Statista, 2020). In addition to the strong domestic popularity of Bollywood films, the overseas theatrical releases and broadcasting rights are also a substantial component of the industry's revenue (ibid.). With their vast variety and representation of popular Indian music and dance, they have shaped the image of India abroad and highlighted the country's attractiveness as a global tourist destination (Thussu, 2013).

Table 10: Key figures on foreign broadcasting, including social media statistics

	2019	2015
TV		
Number of countries broadcasted to	> 2 ¹¹	-
Number of languages	1	2
Number of channels	1	1
Audience / weekly (million)	-	-
Digital & social media audience (million)	Twitter: 41.2 (2021) Instagram: 7,399 (2021) Facebook: 12,167 (2021)	-
Budget (€ million)	(see below)	-
Radio		
Number of countries broadcasted to	All India Radio: 150 (Short and Medium Wave) Worldwide (online)	-
Number of languages	28	23
Number of channels	1	-
Audience / weekly (million)	-	-

¹⁰ Refers to 2019.

¹¹ Memoranda of Understanding for DD India in South Korea and Bangladesh exist; however it is not reported how many countries are reached in total.

	2019	2015
Digital & social media audience (million)	Twitter: 329,000 (2021) Instagram: 8,516 (2021) Facebook: 181,000 (2021)	-
Budget (€ million)	(357.9 million ¹²)	-
Government contribution (€ million)	-	-

Sources: Prasar Bharati, 2020; Twitter; Instagram; Facebook

4. Challenges and future outlook

Since the creation of India's ICCR, shortly after the country gained independence from its British colonizers, India has engaged in an active ECP policy based on enhancing mutual understanding and fostering people-to-people connections. Since the first ICC opened its doors in Guyana, the country has expanded its global footprint, steadily supported by the strong Indian diaspora (Sahay, 2019). Prime Minister Modi is now pushing this narrative even further: notions of a "Global Indian", interconnected and well-recognized in the world, have shaped the rhetoric during his terms (Isar, 2017). The Prime Minister has demonstrated the political will and the global ambition to enhance India's standing in the world (Isar, 2017)—a political stance not yet reflected in the relatively small budget actually attributed to the ICCR, but with significant implications given the strong emphasis on Hindi culture.

Moreover, India's image abroad is now at risk of diminishing due to the country's deteriorating levels of domestic freedom. Especially international headlines that belie India's claim to peaceful cooperation and interfaith acceptance pose a threat to Modi's global ambitions. The country's extended farmers protests, as well as the discrimination against non-Hindu Indians perpetrated by members of the ruling Hindu-nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party are just a few of such examples (Freedom House, 2021a). Further, bilateral relations between India and Pakistan remain tense, while India has lately contributed to the democratic backsliding in the Indian-controlled part of the Kashmir region (Freedom House, 2020b). Despite the strong cultural links between the two countries, difficult visa regimes and continuously antagonistic political campaigns make cultural cooperation difficult (Sahay, 2019). Due to this disparity of the image India seeks to portray abroad and the domestic policies the country drives forward, India risks losing the ground it has made by virtue of its ECP and gambling away its potential soft power assets (Ganguly, 2021).

Faced with the threat of a deteriorating international reputation despite the country's efforts, India must actively reverse course. The Indian image abroad is a vital component to attract international students. As more and more countries have become aware of the prestige and economic benefits of being a global student destination, higher education has become a highly competitive market. In light of India's domestic controversies, the country will have to invest extra efforts – and resources – into establishing new educational partnerships abroad. To do

¹² Total outlays by Prasar Bharati, which runs both All India Radio and Doordarshan, in 2018. As this figure contains domestic spending, it likely overstates the figure on international spending by far.

so, all existing international links will have to be mobilized and the ICCR must be understood as a key partner in the implementation of India's education strategy. If, however, India's democratic standing remains fragile, its growing ECP strengths risk being nipped in the bud.

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