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HANDBOOK OF Cultural Security

Edited by
Yasushi Watanabe



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Yasushi Watanabe

*Graduate School of Media and Governance, Keio University,
Japan*



Cheltenham, UK • Northampton, MA, USA

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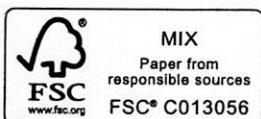
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16. Indian diaspora as an instrument of India's soft power

Amber Pande and Sanjay Kumar Pandey

DIASPORA AS SOFT POWER

According to Joseph Nye, 'Power is the ability to affect others to obtain the outcomes you want. You can affect their behaviour in three main ways: threats of coercion ("sticks"), inducements or payments ("carrots"), and attraction that make others want what you want' (Nye, 2014). Nye calls the third method 'soft power'. He further adds, 'A country may obtain the outcomes it desires in world politics because other countries want to follow it – admiring its values, emulating its example, and aspiring to its level of prosperity and openness' (Nye, Current History, 20). Thus goals are achieved by nations not through coercion but by adopting attractive ways to influence others. According to Antwi-Boateng (2012, p. 58), 'The ability to shape the preferences of others lies at the core of soft power.' A great power needs the traditional dimensions of military, economic and technological hard power, as well as soft power to maintain an advantageous position in international politics. According to Li Mingjiang (2008) 'soft power is an aspect of the "comprehensive power" a major nation is expected to possess.' In the words of Shashi Tharoor (2009), 'Hard power without soft power stirs up resentments and enmities and soft power without hard power is a confession of weakness.' As Ferguson (2004, p. 24) explained, 'Soft power is merely the velvet glove concealing an iron hand.'

Over the years, soft power has become an important strategy to pursue diplomacy and foreign policy goals. There is also competition among nations to project the superiority of their values, institutions, civilisation and strategies, which are essentially aspects of soft power. The rubric of soft power has also expanded, with the inclusion of several new determinants and strategies. Some of the determinants of soft power according to Nye (2004, p. 11) and others are culture, education, tourism, political ideology, the development model and international institution-building capacity. Soft power resources can be used to influence public opinion, enabling policy makers to shape the environment for suitable policy outcomes. Nevertheless, soft power resources are intangible and thus

are difficult resources to leverage. It is equally difficult to bring in policy changes and initiatives to pursue soft power, and to measure the success of whatever effort a government makes in this regard. Soft power resources can also be different for different countries and different regions.

It would also not be fully correct to consider culture and education, *per se*, as the instruments of soft power. Historically, both culture and education have been used, coercively, by the colonial powers and superior powers to transform the colonies and subordinate powers socially and culturally. France's policies towards its colonies and territories are a good example of this. In the same way, the military, if used for relief and peace purposes, can act as an instrument of soft power. The goodwill that the Indian Army created during some of the peace missions in African countries is an example. Even the United States (US) military is involved in several actions that can be categorised as soft power manoeuvres. This leads to the conclusion that any instrument of state can be used either as a hard power or a soft power; the difference is in the attitude or approach. Instead of coercion, it is the 'power of example', as the exponents of soft power describe it. Has a country a better story to tell in terms of a free press, a thriving mass media, with a people whose creative energies are daily encouraged to express themselves in a variety of appealing ways? If yes, then it would qualify as a global player (see Tharoor 2009).

Diasporas too can be used either as hard power,¹ or as soft power, or as soft agents to pursue hard power goals. The hard power influence can be seen in the coercive role the diaspora can play by helping militant groups in the home country. The Khalistan movement in India, and the support it received from the Sikh diaspora, is an apt example of the hard power of the diaspora. Unfortunately the Punjabi diaspora's ability to exert its soft power was neither fully utilised nor highlighted at the time of the peace-building in Punjab. In this chapter we are focusing more on the Indian diaspora as an instrument of India's soft power. Diasporas are regarded as one of the important instruments of soft power by nations which have large diaspora populations. However, as the diasporas are connected to both the home and the host country simultaneously (see Pande 2013), their role as soft agents should be assessed in terms of both home and host country. For example, a comprehensive study of the Indo-Americans as agent of soft power should highlight their role as India's soft power in America and the rest of the world as well as America's soft power in India and the rest of the world. The Indo-Americans, as well as being soft power agents of India, are also soft power agents of the United States.

INDIAN DIASPORA: AN OVERVIEW

Diasporas are a specific type of transnational communities marked by migrations, continuity, rupture, hybridity, and dual or multiple belongingness, which are manifested through economic, political and social interaction with the home and the host land simultaneously (Pande 2013). Rather than being lodged in either the home or the host land, the diasporas are embedded in both cultures, and in the process negotiate and create new hybridised cultures and identities that intersect nations, races, class and gender (see Bhabha 1994; Sheffer 1986; Clifford 1994; Safran 1991; Cohen 1997).

Diasporas can be conceptualised on the basis of four basic characteristics or core elements:

1. Cross-border migration or dispersion and settlement, which implies voluntary or involuntary cross-border movement leading to permanent or long-term settlement.
2. Host land participation, which signifies not only residence but also participation in the socio-economic and political processes of the receiving country.
3. Homeland consciousness, which can also be termed as continuity or the manifestation of 'roots'.
4. Creation and re-creation of a multi-locational 'self' or identity which involves re-creating an identity that draws from both home and host lands, and which is hybrid and distinct in itself. (Pande 2013: 59–65)

The 'Indian diaspora' is an overarching term which includes a wide variety of people who have emigrated from India over a long period of time. The diversity in the Indian diaspora is not only representative of the diverse Indian social set-up (in terms of region, religion, language, caste, creed, and so on) and heterogeneity in the phases and patterns of migration, but also emerges out of the host country variations (see Pande 2013). While the government definition puts the Indian diaspora into three categories – 'Non-Resident Indians' (NRIs),² 'People of Indian Origin' (PIOs)³ and 'Overseas Indian Citizens' (OICs),⁴ on the basis of history and the nature of migration the Indian diaspora can be divided into the 'old diaspora' that emerged out of colonial migrations, and the 'new diaspora' that emerged out of post-colonial migrations. There are further diversities within these categories which have their own specific identities and relations with India. The old diaspora consists of: labourers under indentured and similar systems; government-sponsored junior officers and service providers; and the 'free passage migrants', which included traders and

skilled professionals. The new diaspora mainly includes: highly skilled and skilled professionals who migrated to Western countries; semi-skilled and unskilled workers in the Gulf countries; student migrants; political diasporas; and the mixed races.

The story of the old diaspora starts with the abolition of slavery in British, French and Dutch colonies in 1834, 1846 and 1873, respectively. To meet the acute shortage of workers in the sugar, tea, coffee, cocoa, rice and rubber plantations the colonialists started to take indentured labour from India (Rath 2010, pp. 101–102). This notorious system, which Tinker (1974) calls 'a new system of slavery', was dehumanising and came under sharp criticism soon after it was introduced. The struggle against indenture became part of India's struggle for independence. Ultimately, further recruitments to the colonies were stopped and by 1920 the indenture system officially came to an end. However, there are others who give a more complex and nuanced picture, which differed from one colony to another. While acknowledging the fact of exploitation and oppression, they maintain that many of the formerly indentured subsequently became quite successful and prosperous.

Around 3.5 million Indians were recruited under the system and went to countries and regions such as South Africa, Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique, Madagascar, Zambia, Zanzibar, Uganda, Malawi, Seychelles, Réunion and Mauritius, Fiji, Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, Suriname, St Kitts and Nevis, St Lucia, Belize, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Grenada, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Jamaica. These labourers were recruited under an agreement which was abbreviated as 'Girmi', and thus the indentured labourers came to be known as 'Girmityas'. The contract of indenture was for five years and extendable again for five years after which the labourers were free either to return or to settle down in the colonies. At the end of the period of indenture, the majority of the labourers opted to stay on in their respective colonies instead of returning to India. They settled down by taking land and engaging in agriculture. This was encouraged by the colonial powers as it augmented the workforce and also because the colonialists were reluctant to pay for their repatriation. In Mauritius the Indian immigrants bought marginal lands from the sugar barons who faced financial difficulties after 1870, and emerged as affluent farmers (Vahed and Desai 2012, p. 205). Apart from the government-sponsored migrations, there were also self-sponsored migrants called 'free-passage Indians'. The majority of them belonged to the trading communities or were skilled and semi-skilled professionals from all over India. Indian traders and entrepreneurs established highly successful businesses across Asian and African countries. Such migrations were largely rotational, but permanent settlements followed the Second World War, especially in

colonies where the indentured, kangani or maistry labourers were present. Kangani or maistry systems developed in southern India and were based on a network of headmen or middlemen who recruited and supervised the labourers. These labourers were not bound by a contract but were brought under a debt net by advance payment. Under this system 1.7 million labourers were sent to Malaya, 1.6 million to Burma and 1 million to Ceylon. These systems ceased to operate by 1940.

Thus began the formation of the Indian diaspora which is now classified as the old diaspora. Other than the indenture migrations, highly skilled migrations to the Western countries also started during the colonial period and became frequent after India's independence. Marked by what has been termed the 'brain drain', this process came under severe criticism because this elite, highly affluent diaspora mostly obtained their degrees from the publicly subsidised institutions in India. Another group in the new diaspora is the skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled labour migration to the Gulf and the South-East Asian countries. The oil boom in West Asia during the 1980s saw an upsurge in infrastructure building activities, which attracted a large number of migrant workers from India. Although such migrations did not result in permanent settlements, they form a significant section under the category of NRIs and are sending a major share of the remittance received by India. Other than this, student migration has also become one of the major pathways to permanent or long-term settlement leading to the formation of the diaspora. Among the G20 countries, India has the largest number of highly educated emigrants. Their number more than doubled in ten years reaching 2.2 million in 2010/11, which is much ahead of China's 1.7 million (OECD 2017). Indian women, who have been part of almost all the sections and streams of people moving beyond Indian borders, are an important part of the Indian diaspora. Initially, Indian women migrated mostly as part of family migrations but now they also migrate independently as semi-skilled, skilled and highly skilled professionals.

According to a United Nations report on migration trends, India has the largest diaspora population in the world. In 2015 there were 16 million people from India who were living outside of their country, compared to 12 million from Mexico. The report said that the worldwide number of international migrants, defined as 'persons living in a country other than where they were born', reached 244 million in 2015, which is a 41 per cent increase compared to 2000 (the figure includes almost 20 million refugees).⁵ However it is very difficult to give an exact figure for the Indian diaspora because there are various categories of Indians who migrated (or were taken abroad) during different periods. For example, the above estimate does not include the descendants of the Indians who were taken

as indentured labour during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. According to the figures released by the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, in 2016 there were more than 30 million overseas Indians.⁶ There are countries (we are referring mainly to former British colonies) where people of Indian origin constitute a significant proportion of the population, for example, 68.3 per cent (885 000) in Mauritius, 43.5 per cent (327 000) in Guyana, 40 per cent (525 000) in Guyana, 40 per cent (340 000) in Fiji, and 27.4 per cent (135 000) in Suriname. There are other countries where the percentage may not be very high, but people of Indian origin are considerable in terms of absolute numbers, for example, 1.3 million (2.7 per cent) in South Africa. Indians have also done very well and are an important part of the developed countries of North America and Europe. There are more than 3.1 million Indian diaspora (1 per cent of the population of the United States),⁷ 1.2 million in Canada (3.5 per cent), nearly 1.5 million in the United Kingdom (2.3 per cent), more than 390 894 in Australia (2 per cent), and 105 000 in New Zealand (2.6 per cent). Overall the Indian diaspora numbers about 2.2 million in Europe, nearly 5.2 million in Asia (omitting Nepal and the Gulf countries), 6.5 million Indian workers in the Gulf, and more than 2.8 million in Africa.⁸ This clearly shows the widespread presence of the Indian diaspora. India not only has the largest diaspora, but it is also the country which receives maximum remittances, at \$70 billion (followed by China at \$62 billion).⁹

Each of these groups manifests a dual belonging or a consciousness that originates from diverse Indian roots but has developed its own unique features influenced by a wide variety of conditions and locations. These 'hyphenated', hybrid identities are very often more prominent and defined than the Indian identity, and provide immense spaces for creative expressions. Prea Persaud (2015) believes that, 'A hyphenated identity is the characteristic of the diaspora which forces migrants to choose their loyalties. It is not a state but a process in which the migrant continually tries to bring together his or her history with his or her present.' Vijay Mishra (2005) maintains that diasporas do not feel comfortable with their non-hyphenated identities on their passports, and want to explore the meaning of the hyphen. He makes a very profound statement: 'All diasporas are unhappy but every diaspora is unhappy in its own way' (Mishra 1996, p. 189).

Modern-day technology and the cyberspace have made the diasporic spaces even more real and effective. The Indian diaspora, despite its diverse framework and distance from the mother country, derive a commonality from their Indian origin, and the consciousness of their cultural heritage. The growing connectivity with India, and New Delhi's efforts to engage the diaspora with the idea of a united yet diverse India, has

further boosted the process. It has led to a kind of ‘cultural renaissance’ (Jayaram 2004) or reinvention and reassertion of Indian identity among the diasporic Indians. However, the Indian identity is not homogeneous and is manifested in different forms, and hence the soft power roles of the different categories of the Indian diaspora are also different.

INDIA’S APPROACH TOWARDS ITS DIASPORA

The discourse on Indian diaspora policy ‘cannot take place in isolation, and has to take into account other policy priorities and strategic interests of the country’ (Pande 2011). India’s overall policy approach towards its diaspora can be divided broadly into four phases: (1) the pre-independence period; (2) the phase of ‘passive involvement’ immediately after India’s independence; (3) the phase of ‘reluctant involvement’, from the late 1970s to the late 1990s; and (4) the final phase of ‘proactive involvement’ starting from the late 1990s (see Pande 2011, pp. 131–132; Pande 2016).

In the pre-independence period the overseas Indians, including the Girmit or the labour diaspora, were closely attached with the motherland economically, socially and politically and played an active part in the Indian national movement against British colonialism. Both Gandhi and Bose – although very different in their approaches – always considered overseas Indians as an integral part of national belongingness or the idea of Indian nationhood. They became part of the national movement and played a crucial role in the struggle against the indentured system and colonialism. Overseas Indians remained closely connected to developments in India, often shaping their own political strategies accordingly. Events within India, such as Mahatma Gandhi’s non-violent activism, the Quit India Movement, and Subhas Chandra Bose’s Indian National Army, had a major impact on the activities of the overseas Indians. They formed organisations such as Ghadar, which operated from Canada to free India from the British clutches. The high point of the participation of the overseas Indians in the national movement was the Azad Hind Fauz, or the Indian National Army, which was created by Subhash Chandra Bose. Overseas Indians from all over the world and belonging to all walks of life became part of this fight for India’s independence.

However, as India gained independence, the overseas Indians were excluded from Nehru’s narrative of nationhood. This policy was very much in line with his larger policy framework of ‘Panch Shila’ and Afro-Asian cooperation. India’s limitations as a newly independent state in handling complex issues such as citizenship and related cases, were major factors which dissuaded New Delhi from taking up the issues of overseas

Indians (Lall 2001, p. 87). Nehru insisted on the idea of 'interested in their welfare', which is 'only emotional and not political'; hence, India largely followed the policy of 'maintaining distance from political or legal intervention' (Nehru 1961, p. 128). This phase of 'passive involvement' created a huge gap, often termed a missed opportunity, on the part of India (see Lall 2001).

The overall 'hands-off' policy continued until the 1980s when a slight shift occurred in India's approach. During the 1980s, the oil boom in West Asia led to a huge outflow of migrant workers, followed by an influx of remittances hugely benefiting India's foreign exchange reserves. For the first time the economic potential of the overseas Indians dawned on the Indian government, and as a result, several policy changes were initiated: for example, the welfare of migrant labourers in the Gulf countries, including their evacuation during the Gulf War; the enactment of a new emigration legislation, providing for compulsory registration of recruitment agencies; the facilitation of a banking system for foreign exchange; and the introduction of high interest rates for foreign exchange deposits. This phase, which can best be described as a period of 'reluctant involvement', saw India become aware of the presence of the 'Other India' (Pande 2011, p. 132).

This policy approach continued more or less until the 1990s, when a seismic shift occurred and New Delhi adopted a multi-pronged approach to mend the long-lost ties and engage with its diaspora. The Indian diaspora too had begun to realise the enormous economic potential and rising global stature of India, making for a mutually beneficial and symbiotic relationship (Pande 2011, p. 131). This policy change was propelled by the liberalisation of the Indian economy in the early 1990s. To give concrete shape to this development, the Indian government introduced major policy changes and economic incentives which slowly but visibly yielded results in terms of economic benefits and in the context of soft power. Another important fact about the Indian diaspora is that most of the groups have achieved considerable success in benefiting their respective host countries in a major way, which has given them leverage to effectively help and stand by India.

Nevertheless, throughout these four phases, when New Delhi was going through a major shift in its approach towards the diaspora, the soft power dynamics of the Indian diaspora were constantly at work. Even during the phase of 'passive involvement', Nehru insisted on cultural links, and Indian cultural centres were functioning actively in various countries where Indians were settled. The Indians, no matter in which phase or form they migrated, had always been the agents of Indian culture and spirituality. The emergence of Indian entrepreneurial elite in the Western world gave a further boost to this process. Since the 1990s, and the policy shift of

the government of India, there has been a huge realisation of the potential of the diaspora in terms of remittances, philanthropy, tourism and investments. The government appointed a committee under L.M. Singhvi which created a database of all the Indians settled abroad. The Indian government reformed citizenship requirements in 2004 and eased the legal regime governing the travel and stay of PIOs in India. All these efforts can be regarded as vital homeland initiatives to engage with the diaspora. One of the best examples of the symbiotic relationship India has developed with its diaspora is the success of India's information technology (IT) industry. The Indian diaspora has shared a symbiotic relationship with the Indian IT industry, where they have reinforced each other's quantitative and qualitative growth over the decades. On the one hand, the Indian diaspora brought multi-layered gains to the IT industry in terms of enhanced skills, capital formation (human, social and financial), inward remittances, foreign direct investment flows, the creation of networks and markets, and a boost to India's image. On the other hand, the Indian IT industry created a strong incentive for the mobility of highly skilled professionals and provided the diaspora with the much-needed opportunity to engage with their motherland (Pande 2014, p. 121).

INDIAN DIASPORA AS A SOFT POWER INSTRUMENT

Soft power has been an important instrument in India's power dynamics. Indeed in India's case soft power has preceded hard power, as even during the colonial period, or even before, when the country was yet to emerge as a modern state, the world was enamoured by India's spiritualism and knowledge. Hence India's spiritualism and ancient knowledge production have been foremost instruments of its soft power. Historically, the Indian influence on South-East Asia in terms of culture, religion, art, language, statecraft and law, which had 'Indianised' the region, was also a manifestation of India's soft power (Coedes 1968). India's freedom struggle and Gandhian ideology too set an example for freedom struggles in other countries, and acted as India's soft power. Other sources of India's soft power have included films and Bollywood, food, music, yoga, democracy, its reasonably good human rights record and freedom of expression, the IT industry, unity in diversity, and cricket.

Among India's major soft power resources are the Indian diaspora. India has the largest diaspora population in the world, which is also considered a major asset for Indian soft power diplomacy. According to C. Rajamohan (2003), 'The biggest instrument of our soft power is the

'Indian Diaspora'. The Indian elite diaspora in the Western countries have played a significant role in India's soft power status. They gave a new aura to India and its people by holding top positions in IT, commerce, banking and many other sectors that proved the scientific and professional calibre of Indians. However, the other sections of the diaspora too have been important instruments of India's soft power. Even the people of Indian origin belonging to the indentured diaspora contributed significantly to India's soft power status. These immigrants came to play major roles in the political and economic spheres of the countries they migrated to, proving their potential under the most adverse circumstances. Even the countries that are distant from India such as Guyana, Mauritius, Fiji, Tobago, Trinidad, are not only familiar with Indian culture but have also, at some point, been led by people of Indian origin as their heads of state and government. Some of the prominent names in this regard are Mahendra Chaudhary (Fiji), Basdeo Pandey (Trinidad and Tobago), Anerood Jugnauth (Mauritius). The Indians, wherever they are, generally remain flexible, collaborative and endearing people and are often termed as the 'Model Minorities'. All these factors are significant as far as soft power dynamics are concerned.

One can say that the soft power contribution of the Indian diaspora is as diverse as the diaspora itself. In Western countries, and especially in the US where the polity allows the diaspora to work effectively, the Indian diaspora has played a different kind of soft power role than the diaspora in the Gulf countries, which follow a policy of 'exclusion' towards the immigrants. The highly skilled and skilled Indians no doubt have been at the forefront of India's emergence from a country of snake charmers to an IT hub, but the semi-skilled Gulf labourers too have contributed in their own way. In addition, the old diaspora has been the real carrier of Indian culture and is mainly responsible for its geographical spread. Moreover, if we look at the diaspora's contribution to India's soft power, apart from what it is directly doing as a soft power strategy, it is also an indirect carrier of other soft power resources such as culture, education, films, music, and so on. Ultimately all these contribute to India's stature as a global power and can also help in its quest to obtain a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council and other hard power goals.

Although it is difficult to quantify India's soft power successes that have been achieved by its diaspora, there are some notable accomplishments. The most significant example is the Indo-US rapprochement in which the educated Indian American community played a major role by lobbying American politicians and by educating the American public about the benefits of partnership with India. The efforts of the US India Political Action Committee (USINPAC) proved to be crucial in getting the much

debated Indo-US nuclear deal passed by the US Congress. The Indian diaspora used varied strategies, such as directly lobbying Congressmen, the active role of diaspora associations, and the holding of seminars and discussions (see Kumari 2016; Blarel 2012).

In the Gulf countries, where the Indian diaspora is a major factor in India's policy, it has played a major role in the development of the region. It has showcased Indian culture, social values, education, language and films in those countries. Diaspora associations too have played an active role in this. Thus the labour force has helped India's soft power status in the Gulf (see Abraham 2012). The Indian diaspora is also a crucial actor in India's influence in South-East Asia, where it accounts for an estimated 6.7 million people of Indian origin (Sridharan 1996, pp. 79–80). It has been a factor in India's Look East Policy.

The question arises of whether India has been able to successfully capitalise upon its diaspora as a soft power resource. According to Wagner (2010, p. 333), India is a soft power 'by default'. Wagner (2010, p. 341) calls India a 'Defensive Soft Power' because it 'uses her soft power capacities mainly for image building rather than as an instrument to exert influence'. Tharoor believes that India's soft power emerged independently of the government's policies (see Tharoor 2007). But these observations are only partially correct, especially when we look at some of the concrete measures taken by the government of India in the recent past, to aggressively push its soft power resources and insert culture in its foreign policy. Getting 21st June declared as International Yoga Day is one of the most successful and enduring results of efforts in this regard.

With regard to the diaspora, the same is also true: much has happened spontaneously, but some of the measures taken by the government, especially in the recent past, have been significant. Here it would be relevant to point out that there are some very basic and visible problems with regard to the effective use of the diaspora as a soft power resource. The first problem relates to the nature of the Indian diaspora itself. It is a diverse group and these diversities often result in differences and competing interests. A range of scholars have pointed out that the 'the idea of homeland creates a myth of a region, locality or community rather than India as a whole' because 'the Indian migrants refer to themselves so much as Bengalis, Gujaratis, Telugus, or in terms of their specific sub-castes' (Oonk 2013, p. 4). In the words of Huzan Dordi (2012), 'Indian soft power is spatially splintered', in the sense that 'many Indians associate themselves with the product of the region and not from the country'. Marred by differences and cleavages, the Indian diaspora has often failed to emerge as a united force in the countries of settlement. The diversities are also a hindrance in formulating policies or devising strategies to engage with the diaspora

by the government of India. The second problem relates to the selective approach the government of India has adopted towards some sections of the diaspora. India has mainly concentrated on the well-off sections of the diaspora, largely overlooking the sections that are at the margins in the countries of settlement, either because of socio-economic backwardness, political rivalry with the establishment such as in Fiji, or because of legal constraints of the government to interfere with the internal matters of other countries. A more inclusive approach on New Delhi's part would make all sections of the Indian diaspora feel connected with India and enable them to engage with the mother country in a more positive way.

Some of the credible steps by the government of India to engage with the diaspora have been steps towards dual citizenship¹⁰ in 2004 that eased the legal regime governing the travel and stay of PIOs in India. The Pravasi Bharatiya Divas is also a laudable attempt to enhance the soft power potential of the diaspora. New Delhi's efforts to connect with the younger generations of the Indian diaspora through scholarships offered by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) and cultural centres, organising film and other festivals, and so on, are also effective methods (see Shukla 2006, p. 24). The change in diaspora policy in the 1990s, though mainly aimed at economic gains, has also helped soft power gains.

It is correct to say that India's soft power is a work in progress. However, the strategies should be evolved to engage all the resources to meet foreign policy ends. Special efforts are needed to transform the capabilities into resources. India is yet to realise the full capability of its diaspora as a soft power instrument. What we need is a diaspora policy that takes into account the diversity within the diaspora. There is a need to create a credible mechanism to make the Indian diaspora play a more active role in spreading the soft power of India through the influence that they possess in their respective countries. The diaspora's potential in promoting tourism and philanthropy can be harnessed. India needs to enhance its capabilities to reach out to its diaspora by setting up new institutions to look after their welfare and help them relate to and connect with India.

CONCLUSION

The Indian diaspora is a hugely diverse construct, and equally diverse are its identity formations and affiliations with the mother country. As India opens up towards its diaspora after a period of neglect and apathy, there is scope and tremendous potential for a symbiotic and long-lasting relationship. Soft power is one of the important aspects of this emerging relationship. India, with its growing stature in the world order, is looking

for partners for multiple roles it hopes to play. It is a well-timed opportunity to engage and make the best use of the country's diaspora resource. However, New Delhi needs an inclusive policy approach that can cater to the needs of and responsibilities towards the various diaspora groups. This will broaden the scope of engagement. India has benefited from all sections and categories of its diverse diaspora, be it the highly skilled elite diaspora or the semi-skilled blue-collar workers or the indentured diaspora. They have been soft power agents for India, spreading Indian culture, cuisine, films and music far and wide. In recent times there are also instances of the Indian diaspora acting as an instrument to further India's political and economic interests.

An interesting aspect is the multiple belongingness of diasporas, as they are simultaneously connected to the home and the host country and play an important role in the political, social and economic lives of both countries. This highlights their contribution towards two countries, and also opens up avenues for multiple relationships between nations. The soft power role of diasporas is also manifested in the same context: diasporas are the soft power agents for both the home and the host country, and hence both countries benefit from the presence of the diaspora.

Some of the factors that can impact upon or aid the role of diasporas as a soft power are:

- Homeland policies: Homeland policies are extremely important for effective engagement with the diasporas. Although engagement with the diaspora takes place both at the government level as well as the personal level between communities, unless and until the government intervenes with suitable policies much of the diaspora resources can go to waste.
- Host country policies: It is also important that the host country has enabling policies that create space for diasporas to engage fruitfully and act as a soft power.
- The level of success and activeness of the diaspora groups: The level of success of diaspora groups adds to their attractiveness that can make others emulate them, thus increasing their value as soft power. It is also important that the groups are actively participating in the homeland as well as the host country, to be effective players as soft power agents.
- The effectiveness of diaspora networks and organisations: Diaspora networks and organisations play an important role in the emergence and existence of the diaspora. Through effective use the networks can convert simple migrants into successful agents of economic development and soft power diplomacy.

NOTES

1. That China has used its diaspora to pursue its hard power interests in South-East Asia is a well-known fact.
2. NRIs are Indian citizens and hold Indian passports. The Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs records their number as 10037761.
3. PIOs are no longer Indian citizens, and number around 11872 114.
4. OIC is a partial citizenship given to PIOs. Until 2014, around 1 203 613 OCI cards were issued by the government of India.
5. <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2016/01/244-million-international-migrants-living-abroad-worldwide-new-un-statistics-reveal/>. See also Sims (2016).
6. <https://www.mea.gov.in/images/pdf/NRIs-and-PIOs.pdf>.
7. <http://www.nriol.com/indiandiaspora/statistics-indians-abroad.asp>.
8. Non Resident Indians Online, <http://www.nriol.com/indiandiaspora/statistics-indians-abroad.asp>.
9. <http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/migrationremittancesdiasporaissues/overview>.
10. The Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI) scheme was introduced by amending the Citizenship Act, 1955 in August 2005. The scheme provides for registration as OCI of all PIOs who were citizens of India on 26 January 1950 or thereafter, or were eligible to become citizens of India on 26 January 1950, except those who are or have been a citizen of Pakistan, Bangladesh or a neighbouring country. OCI does not confer political rights but grants multiple entry, multipurpose, lifelong visas for visiting India, exemption from registration with the Foreign Registration Officer for any length of stay in India, and entitlement to general 'parity with non-resident Indians in respect of all facilities available to them in economic, financial and educational fields, except in matters relating to the acquisition of agricultural or plantation properties'.

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