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DIASPORA AND DIPLOMACY: THE STUDY OF INDIAN DIASPORA IN THE UNITED STATES

Urbi Das



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Global Research Forum on Diaspora and Transnationalism

K-1/114, First Floor, C R Park, New Delhi-110019,

Email: contact@grfdt.org, Contact: +91-9818602718

Website- www.grfdt.org,

Facebook- www.facebook.com/diaspora.transnationalism

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Abstract

Globalization of the present century has created a global village connecting people of various regions, socio-economic, political and cultural backgrounds. Today International relations is about interconnectedness among population of different countries. In the recent years where government is becoming more people-centric, one of crucial agents of diplomacy are the people residing in the country. This has made Diaspora an important agent of diplomacy. Again, globalization has enhanced the role of public in foreign affairs and Diaspora plays an important role in promoting good relations between nations. Diaspora communities also rally for different policies that can bring about significant breakthrough in relations between nations.

The paper delves into the role of Diaspora in diplomacy by studying the role of Indian Diaspora in the United States. The Indian Diaspora is considered as one of the most influential ethnic communities in the U.S. and is the result of the culmination of different phases of Indian migration to the United States. The Indian Diaspora plays a crucial role in promoting and enhancing positive and friendly relations between India and the United States. It often lobbies for positive changes in foreign policy.

The paper evaluates the role Diaspora in the diplomatic relations between countries with special reference to India and USA. It traces the root of Indian Diaspora in the US and how it has evolved as one of the most significant elements of foreign policy. It also studies the influence of Diaspora in foreign policy making. Finally, the paper analyzes the role of Diaspora in soft power diplomacy with special reference to Indo-US relations.

Keywords: India, US, Indian diaspora, Indian-Americans, diplomacy, soft power.

Author(s)

Urbi Das is currently serving as Assistant Professor in the Department of Political Science, Dibrugarh University, Assam. She has Bachelor's Degree in Political Science and Master Degree in Political Science with International Relations from Jadavpur University. She has M.Phil from the United States Studies Programme, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University. She is currently pursuing her Doctoral Research. She has also served as Assistant Professor of Political Science in West Bengal Educational Services (WBES). She has published several peer-reviewed journal articles and presented multiple papers in academic seminars and conferences. Her areas of interest include international relations theory, political economy, American foreign policy, US-India bilateral relations.

She can be reached at dasurbi@yahoo.com

Statement: All the views expressed in the paper are of the author(s).

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Introduction

Diplomacy can be regarded as the fulcrum of international relations in the 21st century. The practice of diplomacy is as old as the system of state itself. The globalized liberal order of the present century has enabled complex interactions among nations. The complex interactions between people of different nations, cultures and religions has resulted in a cosmopolitan culture. The foreign policy of a particular nation can no longer be attributed to a particular factor but are a manifestation of a number of factors interacting with each other in a complex manner. Diplomacy is an essential element in the conduct of inter-state relations. The role of diplomacy is essential to maintaining international peace. However, the practice of diplomacy dates back to the system of state itself and is regarded quintessential by scholars across paradigms.

The 3rd Century BCE scholar Kautilya gives us the most fascinating masterpiece on war and diplomacy in ‘Arthashastra’. ‘Arthashastra’ also referred to as the science of politics offers a wide-ranging discussion on the practice of diplomacy. It is perhaps the oldest text that offers such an elaborate and magnificent understanding of the practice of diplomacy. In Kautilya’s Mandala Theory (the ring of concentric circle of states), diplomacy is one of the most vital state policies. He mainly identified six forms of state policy such as peace (sandhi), war (vigraha), observance of neutrality

(ásana), marching of the army (yána), forming alliances with other states (samsraya) and making peace with one state and waging war with another (dvaidhíbháva) (Mukherjee 1976). The realist Kautilya, whose ultimate aim lies in the survival and the growth of the conqueror states (Vijigisu) underlined diplomacy as of the main instruments of statecraft. The practice of diplomacy analyzed as equally important by the Vijigishu includes the formation of alliances, making treaties, approval for sending secret agents to foreign countries, sending diplomatic missions, the doctrine of silent war and diplomatic means to demoralize the enemy..

Kaulitya also elaborated upon the various instruments of diplomacy in the conduct of foreign policy with other states. Known as Chatur Upayas, these four ways of conducting foreign policy such as sama meaning conciliation, dana suggesting concession, bheda that is creating division and ultimately when all means of diplomatic efforts prove to be failure in achieving the goal, the Vijigishu or the aggressor state can take resort to danda which means force.

Arthashastra by Kautilya, though being the oldest Indian text on the science of politics, diplomacy and war is significant due to its fascinating voluminous discussion on the practice of diplomacy and statecraft that would ensure the survival and growth of nation. Kautilya, being a realist concentrated on the goal of the fulfilment of self-interest and power of a nation and

suggested the practice of diplomacy as long as it suited the interest of the state and enabled it to maximise its power and influence. Diplomacy according to him, was an act or a series of acts undertaken by the king with the ultimate objective of gaining power and ultimately leading to conquering another nation. Therefore, he suggested the making of alliances and treaties in such a manner that would be partial and beneficial to the aggressor or Vijigishu and would increase the absolute power of the Vijigishu. Though international politics has changed over the course of history, however, some of the methods and diplomatic statecraft discussed by Kautilya in about 300 BCE is still relevant and finds its place in the international relations of the 21st century.

Thereafter, diplomats, leaders and scholars of international relations have defined diplomacy to explaining and including the current dynamics of international politics. According to Harold Nicholson, ‘Diplomacy is the management of international relations by means of negotiations; the method by which these relations are adjusted and managed by ambassadors and envoys the business or art of the diplomats’. While, K.M. Panikar defines diplomacy as ‘the art of forwarding one’s interests in relation to other countries’, Hans J. Morgenthau suggests that ‘diplomacy is the promotion of the national interest by peaceful means’, and the instruments of diplomacy is persuasion, compromise and the threat of force (Morgenthau, 1948) A more comprehensive definition exemplifies diplomacy as the conduct of relations between and among sovereign states through the medium of officials based at the home country or overseas, the latter being either members of the state concerned, engaged in diplomatic service or working as temporary diplomats. It also entails the stationing of representatives at international organizations to serve the interests of the home country. However, it mainly suggests sending of diplomatic missions to foreign

states. The diplomats or diplomatic missions act as representatives facilitating communication between the states. Hence, diplomacy can be regarded as one of primary means through which states communicate with one another thus enabling them to engage with one another. Diplomacy owes its name to Edmund Burke who first used the term in 1796 which discussing it as system of communication of international society (Berridge and James, 2001).

Diplomacy is significant since it enables regular communication between states which helps them to resolve complex issues. Diplomacy can be of various types (i.e., bilateral and multilateral) and it can be practised through various ways such as commercial diplomacy, coercive diplomacy, cultural diplomacy among others. Again, the global context of international relations led to the emergence of various instruments of diplomacy, one of which is diaspora.

What Is Diaspora?

The word ‘diaspora’ comes from the Greek word ‘diasporás orthografia’ which means to scatter. Diaspora suggests community of people who live outside their home country or country of origin but owes its affinity to the home country. These community of people maintain active connection with their country of origin. Diaspora includes people who are both emigrants and their offspring.

Diasporic communities work to further the interest of their countries of origin in terms of foreign policies. They also help to foster amicable ties between their host and home country. They help in lobbying for positive changes in foreign policy. They share emotional attachment with their country of origin and therefore their presence as a civil society community act as a strong voice in policies relating to the home country.

The current phase of globalization has enabled people

from various corners of the world to come in contact with each other. The concept of borderless world propagated by globalization enables people from various nations, cultures, religions to come in contact with each other. Therefore, the number of people living outside their country of origin has increased tremendously over the past decade. It has been reported that more than 3 percent of the world population lives outside their home country. Conversely if migrants all over the world would make up a single nation, it would be counted as the 5th largest (International diaspora Engagement Alliance, 2016). Therefore, diaspora and its power is enormous in the contemporary policy making of governments in addressing both national and international issues. Diaspora is considered as the largest social network helping in bringing the world together and bridging the political, cultural and geographical distances among nation-states. It has enormous opportunity in terms of global reach and therefore influencing policy making (The Economist, 2011)

The Indian Diaspora in The United States: Phases of Migration

The United States of America is the world's leading military and economic power. As the world's most advanced country and often referred to as the land of opportunity, the United States caught the attention of people around the world. From its very inception, the United States of America is a nation of immigrants. It has attracted businessmen and free thinking people from all over the world as the 'new land' was the land of new opportunity and symbolized freedom.

It the most advanced country and an economic giant. America's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) accounts for close to a quarter of the world (BBC, 2015). The American economy represents about 20 per cent of the world's total output and has a robust and advanced service and manufacturing sector. Consequently, from

the very establishment of the Republic, America has attracted people from all over the world. According to the International diaspora Engagement Alliance (IdEA), the United States of America is home to the world's largest number of diasporic communities accounting for more than 62 million people who belong to first or second generation immigrants (IdEA, 2016). It has also been witnessed that the number of foreign born population has been on steadily rising in the past centuries. The U.S. Census Bureau defines the foreign- born population to refer to anyone who is not either a native or a native born in America. The native born or natives of the United States of America includes those who are born in the United States, Puerto Rico, a U.S. Island Area (American Samoa, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, or the U.S. Virgin Islands), or abroad but whose parent or parents are citizen of the United States of America. Therefore, foreign- born population refers to those who are not United States citizen at birth. This includes those who are naturalized citizens, lawful permanent residents, also referred to as immigrants, temporary immigrants such as students, migrants who have been permitted to the American soil on humanitarian grounds commonly, coming as refugees or through the grant of asylum, and the unauthorized or illegal immigrants in the American soil (US Census Bureau, 2016). Whatever may be the case, the foreign- born citizens have always played an enormous role in diplomatic history of the country.

The Indian diaspora is one of the strongest in the United States of America. Their presence in the American soil is the result of their different phases of migration. As of 2008 there are more than 1.6 million Indian immigrants residing in the American soil, making them the third largest immigrant group in the United States of America after the Mexicans and the Filipinos (Terrazas and

Batog, 2010). In the hyphenated group of Americans, the Indian-American diaspora is one of the strongest and consists of those who are descendants of migrants in the early eighteenth and nineteenth century, the migrants of the post 1965, those who form the twice-migrants and all those who are of Indian origin residing in the United States of America.

The history of Indian migration in the American soil dates back to the 19th century. Indians have begun their journey to the 'new land' as early as in 1820. Most of the Indians who migrated to America in these early years were unskilled and uneducated farmers. They came to work as agricultural laborers in California (Zong and Batalova, 2015). Thereafter, till the post 1960s Indian immigration in the United States has been low due to the 1917 Immigration Act and the subsequent Immigration Act of 1924 which is also known as the Johnson-Reed Act.

The 1917 Immigration Act passed by the Congress on February 5 1917 was referred to as the Asiatic Barred Zone Act since it restricted immigrants from 'any country not owned by the U.S. adjacent to the continent of Asia' along specified longitudes and latitudes were restricted from immigrating. It was exploitative in the sense that a tax of \$8 per head was imposed on immigrants except for children under sixteen accompanying the parent. The immigrants over sixteen must also qualify a literacy test. The immigration law laid down several categories of those who were restricted from entering the borders of the country, for example including '*idiots, imbeciles, epileptics, alcoholics, poor, criminals, beggars, any person suffering attacks of insanity, those with tuberculosis, and those who have any form of dangerous contagious disease, aliens who have a physical disability that will restrict them from earning a living in the United States..., polygamists and anarchists, those who were against the organized government or those*

who advocated the unlawful destruction of property and those who advocated the unlawful assault of killing of any officer' (1917 Immigration Act, 1917). Some of the classification seemed to be vague and illogical such as categorizing immigrants as idiots, aliens. It is a restrictive immigration law and was biased in nature.

Along the similar lines, the US Congress passed the Immigration Act of 1924 which limited largely the number of immigrants from entering into America through the system of origin based quota, providing immigration visas to two percent of the total number of people of each nationality residing in the United States of America according to the national census of 1890. However, the most glaring part of the Immigration Act of 1924 is that it completely excluded immigrants from the continent of Asia (Immigration Act of 1924, 1924). Through these two Acts the United States sought to protect the national security of the country and also maintain the cultural homogeneity of the nation. However, these widely biased and restrictive immigration acts strained America's with its Asian partners.

The Immigration Act of 1924 limited the number of immigrants allowed entry into the United States through the system of national origins quota. The quota provided immigration visas to two percent of the total number of people of each nationality in the United States as of the 1890 national census. It completely excluded immigrants from Asia. Both the 1917 and 1924 Immigration Act were exploitative and biased in nature. Reports as of 1960 state that there were only 12,000 Indian immigrants present in the American soil which represented less than 0.5 per cent of the 9.7 million foreign-born inhabitants at the point of time (Zong and Batalova, 2015). This was by and large because of the restrictive nature of the 1917 and 1924 Immigration Acts.

However, things changed in 1965 after the passage of the new Act on Immigration, known as the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965, also referred to as the Hart-Celler Act (The Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965, 1965). The change in the immigration policy of the United States of America was done in consideration with the changed international environment. The United States of America was no longer following the isolationist policy. It was done in cognition with the changing international scenario after the Second World War where the foreign policy priorities suggested a different role for the United States of America. The change from the previous 1924 Immigration Act was also due to the civil rights movement in USA which concentrated on equal treatment of all in American soil irrespective of race or nationality. The Immigration Act of 1965 sought to abolish the quota system which was referred to backward and discriminatory. In place of the quota system of the Immigration Act of 1924, the Act of 1965 provided preferences based on categories such as relatives of American citizens, skilled labors and refugees. The quote was removed and instead limits were placed on each category of immigrants per country and also on immigrants as a whole.

It was witnessed that immigration in the United States in general and Indian migration to the United States increased to a great extent after the passage of the Immigration Act of 1965. The United States of America is reported to have received the largest number of immigrants in the 1960s and 1970s (Min and Park, 2014). It must be noted that international politics had changed from what it was in the first half of the 20th century. In the latter half of the 20th century, after the conclusion of the Second World War, the United States of America emerged as the most powerful nation whose supremacy in military and economic terms was unmatched. America's industrial and managerial capitalism required new talents and professionals. Again, during this phase, the world saw

the emergence of newly independent nations, freeing themselves from the clutches of their colonial masters and rising in the world stage and vouching for their rightful place in the international arena.

So, in cognition with the changing nature of world politics, along with significant changes in America's immigration policy during the post 1965, the nature and kind of immigration from India to America also changed. The United States of America was an economic giant and it attracted highly skilled professionals from all over the world, who gladly migrated to the 'new land', taking up professional occupations and settling down in America. America to them was a land of new opportunity promising good life with an unmatched standard of living. The 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act was nothing short of a tool devised by American policy makers to enable highly skilled migration to their country.

During the post 1965, large number of professionals and students from India migrated to the United States of America. Again, there was a large number of 'twice-migrant' people who re-emigrated from another country to the United States of America. Statistics show that approximately 270,000 ethnic Indian immigrants in the American soil belong to the category of 'twice-migrants' which is about 13 per cent of the total Indian immigrants residing in the United States of America (Min and Park, 2014).

Another immigration act along similar lines, but enhancing the level of migration to the United States of America was the Immigration Act of 1990. The 1990 Act increased the world-wide quota for employment based immigrants including their family from 54000 to 140,000 in a fiscal year (Immigration Act of 1990, 1990). The Immigration Act of 1990 further increased the entry of highly skilled labor in America especially those specialized in the fields of science. Medicine,

technology, furthering the brain drain from the homeland and enhancing brain gain in America. The Immigration Act of 1965 and 1990 helped in furthering the coloring of America and making it a racially diverse nation.

Post the Immigration Act of 1990, the US has experienced a rapid increase in the number of Indian-born immigrants. Unlike the immigration pattern in the pre-1965 era, the Indians migrating to the United States were the highly skilled, young professionals, proficient in English and therefore recipient of permanent work-based visas.

In the wake of the 21st century, one significant event altered the priorities of international politics. The world's supreme power was challenged by a group of terrorists who used aircrafts to bring down the citadels of American power. It was something very shocking and unthinkable to the world and to the United States. All the U.S. policies and priorities changed since international peace and security was at stake and at the center of it remained the United States of America.

Taking cognizance of the changed circumstances and national priorities, the United States brought certain changes in its immigration policies, since all the nineteen terrorists who launched the massive attacks on September 11, 2001 were foreign nationals, who entered into the US territory through legal travel channels. The change in the immigration policy post 9/11 was done to detecting and preventing terrorist activities and protecting the homeland.

America under President George W. Bush undertook serious measures and policies to fight international terrorism. The Bush administration analyzed enforcement of immigration laws as an instrument to fight terrorism. In 2002, the Homeland Security Act was passed which worked as an umbrella body charged with maintaining the security of the United States of

America (Hessson, 2012). The new department of Homeland Security abolished the earlier Immigration and Naturalization services and itself gave rise to three federal agencies, all these serving under the newly established Department of Homeland Security. These new agencies are the Customs and Border Patrol (CBP), the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, Department of Homeland Security, 2016). As the situation now stands, non-US citizens are allowed to enter into US in either of the two ways, either by receiving temporary admission, that is, non-immigrant or by permanent, that is, immigrant admission. The permanent ones are those who receive a green card giving them the eligibility to work in America and also apply for citizenship (History.com Staff, 2010).

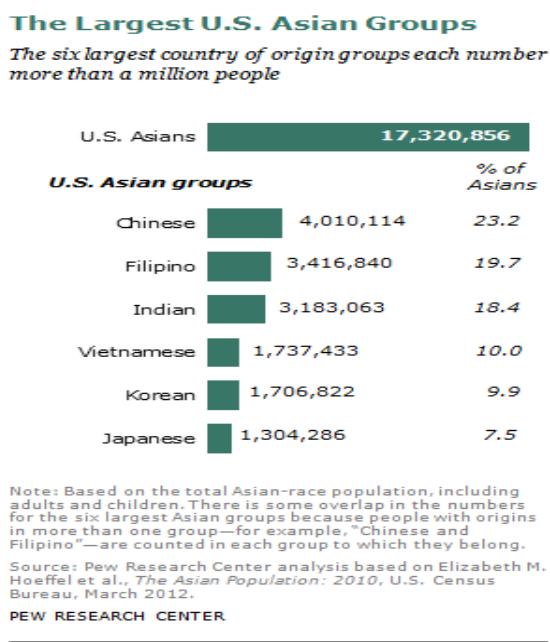
While this remains the brief history of Indian immigration in the United States of America, it remains a glaring fact that Indians immigration and consequently the diasporic strength of Indian-Americans is one of the strongest among hyphenated Americans living in the United States of America. Presently, there are three categories of Indians residing overseas. They are the NRIs that is, Non-Resident Indians, the PIOs that is, overseas Indians who have now become citizen of their country of settlement and the SPIOs that is, Stateless Person of Indian Origin (Sharma, 2012). Among these three categories, the United States caters to the first two categories.

Census data from 1980 to 2013 shows that the population of Indian immigrant increased ten-fold, roughly doubling every decade, and increased from 206,000 to 2.04 million. It has been observed that the Indians are among the highest recipient of H-1B visas, accounting for accounting for 70 percent of the 316,000 H-1B petitions (initial and continuing employment)

approved by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) in fiscal year (FY) 2014. India is the second largest country after the People's Republic of China in terms of sending students to the United States. In the school year 2013-14, about 103,000 Indian-born students were enrolled in U.S. educational institutions (Zong and Batalova, 2015).

Among the Asians in the United States, the Indians stand as the third largest group. Indians comprise 18.4 per cent of the total Asian immigration to the United States as of 2010. The chart below shows the immigration pattern of Asians to America in general and India in particular.

Chart No.- 1



Source: Pew Research Center (2013), The Rise of Asian Americans. <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2012/06/19/the-rise-of-asian-americans/>. Accessed on 30 October 2016

In terms of English speaking skills, data in 2010 reveals that 73 per cent of Indian immigrants above 18 years have proficiency in English compared to 63 per cent of rest of the Asian Americans (Pew Research Center, 2012). Therefore, it can be contended all these

factors contributed to a very strong presence of Indian-Americans which in turn led to the formation of an affluent, effective and dynamic Indian diaspora in the United States of America.

Engaging with The Diaspora: The Role of The Government of India

The government of India has played its due role by diversifying and amplifying the engagement with the Indian diaspora. Since 1977, the Government of India has devoted a separate ministry to cater to the Indian immigrants and diaspora (Migration Policy Institute, 2014). The Ministry of External Affairs and its ministerial division, namely the Overseas Indian Affairs provides dedicated services to Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs) settled abroad and to Non- Resident Indians (NRIs). Even the first Prime Minister of independent India Jawaharlal Nehru had taken keen interest in the welfare of the overseas Indian Communities.

It has to be noted that Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi played a pioneering role in changing the policy towards the diasporic communities by inviting Indians residing abroad to participate in nation-building. He promised them opportunities to work and invest in India, as in case of Sam Pitroda, who was given the task of modernizing telecommunications in India (Sreenivasan, 2016). A major initiative was undertaken by the NDA government in 1999 through the launching to PIO card scheme, the Persons of Indian Origin (PIO) is an identification card issued to Persons of Indian origin, holding a passport in a country other than Afghanistan, Bhutan, People's Republic of China (PRC), Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh.

The Indian Diaspora had been re-invigorated in the wake of 1991 when the Indian economy was liberalized and India entered the phase of globalization. During the phase of foreign exchange crisis of 1991, the

government leveraged the financial resources of the diaspora, who contributed substantially to the India Development Bond and the Millennium Bond (Sharma, 2012).

Another commendable initiative by the Government of India was the establishment of a High-Level Committee on Indian Diaspora under the Chairmanship of Dr L.M. Singhvi in September, 2000. The High-Level Committee recommended the improvement of PIO card scheme and with reduction in the fees, to declare January 9 as Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) and institute Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Awards. Other recommendations included the establishment of a PIO University, intensive engagement in culture, economic development etc. Accordingly, the first Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) was organized by the Government of India in New Delhi from 9th to 11th January, 2003 in partnership with Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI). It met a great success as it was the biggest even gathering of overseas Indians with over 2000 delegates from 62 countries. Vital objectives were undertaken as part of the celebration of the Pravasi Divas such as developing a consciousness of global Indian family, creating awareness about diaspora, more intensive relationship between India and her diasporic communities and broad based engagement of the government of India towards the diasporic communities (Sharma, 2012). The new positive approach of the Government of India opened a new chapter in India's relationship with its diasporic communities. Such a move was well articulated in the inaugural address by Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, "*We are prepared to respond to your expectations from India. We invite you, not only to share our vision of India in the new millennium, but also to help us shape its contours. We do not want only your investment. We also want your ideas. We*

do not want your riches; we want the richness of your experience. We can gain from the breadth of vision that your global exposure has given you" (Vajpayee, 2003).

Since then the government of India has taken major initiatives to strength its ties with the diaspora. Recently, Prime Minister Narendra Modi was instrumental in energizing the diasporic community in the United States of America. Addressing a massive crowd of more than 22,000 Indian-Americans and about 20 members from the US Congress, Prime Minister Modi at Madison Square Garden, urged the Indian diaspora in the United states to playing the prime role in shaping a positive image of India not only in America but also around the world at large (Lakshmi, 2015). PM Modi made a commendable effort in harnessing the capability of the India diaspora in the United States of America and making them a powerful asset in India's developmental priorities.

Role of Diaspora in Diplomacy: The Case of Indo-US Relations

While the various historical stages of immigration of the Indians to the American soil has been well enunciated, it has to be noted that the Indian community living in the United States has the most vocal and powerful diaspora. They have played a significant role in influencing American foreign policy towards the Republic of India.

John Gunter Dean, the former American Ambassador to India described the Indian community in the United States as a 'bridge' that could 'soften' the edges of the bilateral relationship between United States and India by bringing technology, investment, knowledge business from America to India and helping both the democracies to collaborate with each other (Bagoria, 2013). President Obama emphasized the role of Indian Diaspora in the United States to bolstering stronger economic ties and 'generate a new stream of financing

for Indian businesses that are investing in non-traditional and too often over-looking market' (Roberts, 2015).

Arguably, the Indian diaspora in the United States is the one of the most educated and prosperous one, with 89 percent having completed high school, 65 percent having a college degree and about 40 percent having completed higher education such as the Master Degree and Doctorates. Their income levels are also higher than many other Asian Americans, Whites and Hispanics and Blacks in the USA (Verma). The Indian- Americans are widely dispersed all over the American mainland with the maximum concentration in important areas such as California, New Jersey and Texas. Categorizing according to metropolitan area, the largest number of Indian immigrants reside in New York city, followed by Chicago and San Jose, California (Migration Policy Institute 2014). Their economic profile is one of the strongest with companies like Boeing and organizations such as NASA employing a significant number of Indian Americans in their technical workforce. It has been estimated that about 35 per cent of Boeing's technical force fore consists of Indian Americans. About 300,000 Indian-Americans are working in California's Silicon Valley, accounting for 15 per cent of high-tech startups and having an annual income of around \$ 200,000. Again, there are more than 650-700 companies in the Silicon Valley that are owned by Indian-Americans. Indian-Americans have done commendable research in the field of biotechnology and they continue to work with sensitive US government projects including nuclear projects. Indians have a thoroughly flourishing record in the United States of America. Some of the prominent names are Amar Bose who established the first acoustic company in the world, Sam Pitroda, the CEO of World Tel that contributed to the expansion of telecommunication in India, Vinod Dham the father of Pentium chip, Sabeer Bhatia the founder of Hotmail, and

the list goes on (NRI-PIO Division, MEA). Therefore, it can be well stated that the Indian-Americans are among the most affluent and prosperous communities in the United States of America. Also, the diaspora considers giving back to their country of origin an ardent responsibility. The diaspora engages in philanthropic activities to their homeland and their main formats for donations include religious, professional and regional organizations. (Migration Policy Institute, 2014).

Indian- Americans are also active and vocal in taking up significant political and strategic issues. As early as 1950s and 1960s, Dalip Singh Saund became the first Asian Indian to be elected in the US Congress from California. Again, the Indian- American community consists of a sizeable voting population of 1.68 million people. They engage in political- leveraging, fund raising for their favorite candidates at the federal, state and local levels. The India Caucus plays a significant role in the United States and about 118 legislators in the US Congress are members of the India Caucus. Some of the prominent Indian- Americans who served in either federal, state or local US legislative and administrative bodies are Satveer Choudhury, Nimi McConigley, John Abraham, Arun Jhaveri among others (NRI-PIO Division, MEA).

The Indian Caucus has always pushed Washington for promoting better US-India ties. The Indian diaspora also been successful in countering America's policies that would likely harm India's national interest. The demonstration by the Indian community against the selling of highly sophisticated airborne surveillance system (AWACKs) to Pakistan is an example in this regard. The National Federation of Indian American Association (NFIAA) and the Association of Indians in America (AIA) voices strong opposition against the proposed selling of AWACKs to Pakistan. In the face of intensified pressure from the Indian-American lobby

the US eventually withdrew the supply the AWACKs to Pakistan. In the wake of nuclear tests by India in 1998, the Indian diaspora worked towards explaining the America government the reasons for undertaking the tests. They lobbied for the lifting World Bank Sanctions on India stating that it amounted to detrimental effect in the US-India business and commercial ties. It petitioned for softening America's nuclear non-proliferation goals in light of India's security concerns. During the Kargil war, it was due to the efforts of the Indian diaspora in the United States and the India Caucus that a resolution was introduced in the House of Representatives by Benjamin A. Gilman, Gary Ackerman, Frank Pallone among others condemning Pakistan's armed intrusion and reestablishment and respect for the Line of Control (Bagoria, 2013). Here lies the success and significance of the diplomatic maneuvers of the Indian diaspora in the United States of America.

Conclusion

Diaspora is the new age instrument of diplomacy. Indo-US relations in the 21st century exemplifies engagement between the world's largest and most powerful democracies. Diaspora forms the backbone of Indo-US bilateral relations in the 21st century. Immigration from India to the United States took place through various stages in history since the 'Land of opportunity and achievement' attracted many Indians, urging them to travel thousands of miles and crossing gigantic oceans.

India's soft power diplomacy now looks beyond the perimeters of films and books and calls and includes diaspora. Here, it should be noted that the power of a nation in the globalized neo-liberal environment goes beyond the traditional conception of guns and barrels, commonly referred to hard power and includes soft power. Soft power as defined by Joseph Nye is essentially the ability to influence the behavior of another state in such a manner that the other country

would be motivated to enact policies that are beneficial to positively oriented towards the own country. It is the ability to attract, persuade and influence another country without resorting to violence or coercive mechanisms. Diaspora's diplomatic success is due to its strong bargaining power and diplomatic skills that adds to India's soft power.

The presence of strong diasporic community in the United states of America, nearly about 3 million Indian-Americans is itself a glaring witness of India's strength. In many ways, Indian diaspora in the United States of America has always influenced the American government to undertake policies having a positive outlook on India's development paradigm. They rally for important changes in foreign policy and better bilateral relations with India. The power of diaspora in influencing diplomacy between nations is enormous given the present context of international relations. The Indian diaspora in the United States of America can be regarded as a robust community having the ability to not only strengthen the relationship between Indian and America but also contributes to both the country's development and prosperity.

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Global Research Forum on Diaspora and Transnationalism (GRFDT) is a consortium of researchers and policy makers drawn from national and international universities, institutes and organizations. GRFDT is presently based in India and is shaping as the largest such group focusing specifically on the issues related to diaspora and transnationalism.

The GRFDT works as an academic and policy think tank by engaging national and international experts from academics, practitioners and policy makers in a broad range of areas such as migration policies, transnational linkages of development, human rights, culture, gender to mention a few. In the changing global environment of academic research and policy making, the role of GRFDT will be of immense help to the various stakeholders. Many developing countries cannot afford to miss the opportunity to harness the knowledge revolution of the present era. The engagement of diaspora with various platform need to be reassessed in the present context to engage them in the best possible manner for the development human societies by providing policy in-put at the national and global context.