

Theorizing State-Diaspora Engagement as a Social Practice  
Decentering the Hindu Nation Through Narendra Modi's Diasporic Activism

by

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## **Supervisory Committee**

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## Abstract

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To make sense of why states are dramatically shifting their agendas to focus on their diasporic population abroad, this project builds a theoretical model which makes sense of decisive shifts in political behavior between states and their external populations. A two-fold argument is presented to explain these shifts. First, analyses of diaspora should treat diaspora not as a bounded entity but as a process or social practice. This allows for a multi-level analysis which neither negates the role individuals play in the formation of diasporic identity nor denies the agency of states which actively engage in their own unique approach to identify, label or shape what constitutes their diaspora. Second, state-diasporic engagement practices can be better understood as an institutional practice, which in turn allow us to explain state behavioral change in terms of their diasporic populations and what factors elucidate diaspora to respond. It also allows us to ask two-fold questions – a) who the sending state targets, why they are targeted and when states increase their engagement with their diasporic populations abroad; and b) what policy tools states develop to encourage dependable contributions of the diaspora to its political agenda. These theoretical arguments are then applied to address the modern Indian state's approach and its shifting agenda to its diaspora. The intent is to provide a historical foundation from which to make sense of why the Indian diaspora evolved from a political liability under Jawaharlal Nehru to an instrument of strength in the early 1990s. This thesis concludes with an exploration of the current Prime Minister Narendra Modi's discourse and state practices and suggests that India's accelerated engagement of the Indian diaspora to be representative of a muscular Hindu nationalist agenda. In short, Modi's engagement of the Indian diaspora should be understood as part of a nation-building project which seeks to communicate to both domestic and international audiences alike that India and Indians are first and foremost Hindu.

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## Preface

Like many observers of Indian politics in 2014, I have been interested in the underlying factors which have accelerated Narendra Modi's engagement with the Indian diaspora. For instance, in September 2014, at Madison Square Garden in New York, as India's recently elected Prime Minister, Narendra Modi addressed a sold-out crowd of nearly 20 000 people. As a spectacle, it more shared the features of a rock concert or Bollywood production than a political event, with video displays flashing images of Modi alongside a collection of warm-up dancers ginning up an eager crowd of onlookers and well-wishers. Awaiting Modi onstage were a bipartisan assemble of American politicians, including senators Chuck Schumer and Robert Menendez and then South Carolina governor Niki Hailey, who is of Indian descent. When Modi entered the stadium, dressed in saffron, a color likely chosen to evoke the ascetic traditions of Hinduism, his first words to the chanting crowd were "Bharat Mata Ki," words chosen to conjure an image of India as a Hindu goddess which translates as "For Mother India." Modi's subsequent address to the largely Indian-American crowd recounted a theme replicated in similar concerts around the world, one which emphasized an emergent India that had shifted from slum-dogs into millionaires. As Modi continued his call of "Bharat Mata Ki" the gathering of largely well-heeled professions voiced their approval in unison, shouting "Jai" or victory. "Close your fists and say it with full strength," Modi shouted, to which the gathering responded, "Bharat Mata Ki Jai," or "Victory for Mother India." "Our country has become devalued," Modi said, a pronouncement which evoked long-held memories of humiliation and shame many of India's diaspora have held in their estimation of India's place in the world. However, the stillness that hung over the stadium quickly faded as Modi proclaimed: "Our ancestors used to play with snakes. We play with the mouse." The deafening applause which followed signaled the triumphant rise that many in the crowd shared, that India had finally shed its image as a land of snake charmers for that of savvy high-tech entrepreneurs.

Modi's personal history, a "rags to riches" story from simple *chai wallah* to Chief Minister of Gujarat, culminating in his subsequent ascent to victory in the 2014 Indian Parliamentary elections, was emblematic of India's own meteoric rise. With a new-found swagger, India, with the world's third-largest military by personnel strength, fifth-largest defense budget and soon-to-

be fourth largest economy seemed eager to signal that “our time has come.” Following Modi’s swearing-in ceremony, he embarked on a hectic series of foreign visits in which he made connecting to the diaspora a prominent plank of each visit. Although the underlying motivation stoking Modi’s diaspora activism piqued my initial interest, it was buttressed by its unprecedented nature in India’s political history. Strikingly, during the run up to his party’s majority electoral victory, courtship of the diaspora wasn’t even a feature of his policy platform. Instead, Modi confined himself to domestic issues such as inclusive development, policy-oriented governance, growth and employment, eradication of corruption, removal of dynastic elites all the while underscoring the comparative advantage of India’s three ‘D’s’-democracy, demographic dividend and demand for goods. However, upon his electoral victory, Modi’s vociferous championing of another ‘D,’ the Indian diaspora, signaled a new element amidst his government’s already busy foreign and domestic agenda. While Modi’s interactive engagement of the diaspora has piqued my own interest, it has yet to receive much in the way of sustained academic interest, despite his diasporic engagement emerging as a core feature of his government’s agenda. Perhaps the dearth of scholarly interest exists because state-diasporic engagement straddles a variety of fields, disciplines and sub-disciplines. That is not to suggest that diaspora and diaspora talk has suffered from scholarly oversight. It would be fair to say that over the past few decades ‘Diaspora studies’ has developed into a veritable cottage industry. And yet, a robust and mature body of scholarly discourse exploring the phenomena of states activating, claiming or engaging their external communities has only begun to develop, in spite of the fact that many states have displayed an increasing interest in courting their expatriates. In terms of Modi’s diaspora-engagement, there exists only a smattering of in-depth analysis. What does exist remains confined to largely journalistic accounts treading an all-to-familiar path heralding the economic or political clout of India’s diaspora as factors guiding his connection strategy. Most maintain that India has but two approaches to its diaspora; under Nehru, Indian citizenship was territorially defined, thereby excluding diasporic communities overseas; and, from the 1990s onwards, India’s approach was articulated in instrumentalist terms. With its diasporic population located in high-valued states, its members as reputational and ideational intermediaries during its entry into the global economy, lobbied foreign governments on behalf of the state and emerged as a source of soft power. Nevertheless, the style, tenor and acceleration

of Modi's diasporic activism is not only unique in India's political history but is suggestive of what I maintain to be a shift in India's approach to its diaspora.

This project makes a number of contributions to the growing literature on state-diasporic engagement. Asserting state-diasporic engagement as a form of institutional practice opens up what I believe to be venues of inquiry that explain why states have shifted their agendas in a concerted fashion to focus on diasporic communities today. However, as states shift their policy frameworks to engage their external populations, this project rejects the parsimonious and reductive framings that often accompany how diaspora are defined. Instead, I assert that we must begin to conceive of these communities as a form of process or social practice. In so doing, I shift the dominant discourse on diaspora that understands diaspora as a bounded or static group and instead open our understanding of the coercive force of external identification that states wield in terms of labelling, forming and shaping political identities for state purposes. In so doing, I provide the conceptual space to explore Modi's interactive engagement as signaling a shift in India's approach to its modern diaspora, this shift announces the articulation of an increasingly muscular nation building agenda that aims to project a political identity amidst a globally disparate and disperse population that what it means to be Indian is Hindu.

## Chapter One

### Theorizing State-Diaspora Engagement from an Institutional Approach: Diaspora as Social Practice

In 2014, Narendra Modi and his Bharatiya Janata party (BJP)- right wing, pro-business and Hindu nationalist in orientation- captured a majority of seats in the Indian general election. Following his installation as Prime Minister, Modi has made a distinct effort to strengthen ties between the Indian state and its vast diasporic community abroad. With stops in high profile cities such as New York, Sydney, Toronto, Vancouver and Singapore, Modi regularly has drawn crowds of 20 000 or more, speaking to enthusiastic diasporic supporters in capacity filled stadiums. Considering Modi's efforts to reach out to a global Indian diaspora, what factors explain the growing salience of India's diasporic population to the Indian state today?

A cursory reading of global politics at the beginning of the twenty-first century reveals that diasporic communities are often courted for their development assistance in the form of remittances and investment capital as well as their political influence in their country of residence. In the case of India, remittances have emerged as a considerable source of income for the Indian state, totalling some 65 billion dollars in 2016 and the inflow of these remittances into India has steadily increased since the late 1970s. Given that India has emerged as the world's 7<sup>th</sup> largest economy, remittance inflows, though substantial, have perhaps less impact today than compared to the early to mid-stages of India's liberalization policy. The push for increased level of remittance do not account for Modi's interest in the Indian diaspora. Similarly, from a lobbying perspective, although the Indian state has enjoyed increased political influence through the efforts of its diaspora, particularly in the United States and the United Kingdom, their ability to lobby foreign governments on behalf of the Indian state has figured prominently for the last two to three decades.<sup>1</sup> Equally, the much-vaunted success of Indian-Americans working in the Silicon Valley and the potential, both financial and experiential, they might offer India's own budding tech sector is regularly highlighted as the rationale for India's engagement of its diaspora. Nevertheless, while their contribution has been well documented, their impact on the

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<sup>1</sup> Arthur G. Rubinoff, "The Diaspora as a Factor in U.S.-India Relations," *Asian Affairs: An American Review*, 32:3 (2005): 173-180 and Jason A. Kirk, "Indian Americans and the U.S.-India Nuclear Agreement: Consolidation of an Ethnic Lobby?" *Foreign Policy Analysis* Vol. 4, no.3 (July 1, 2008): 286-89.

development of India's domestic economy has also been ongoing for some time. Taken together, these factors do not hold a sufficient explanation as to why Modi, unlike any previous Indian Prime Minister, has since chosen to speak directly to India's diaspora nor does it explain why Modi has dramatically shifted the state agenda to focus on its diasporic population abroad.

To make sense of Narendra Modi's decisive shift, this chapter, through a comparative framework, establishes the theoretical foundation to make sense of what is driving and shaping various states' policy vis-a-vis their diasporic communities. One of the major challenges in generating a theoretical explanation results from significant gaps in the literature on diaspora devoted to sending state policy. For instance, despite an increase in state involvement in the lives of its expatriates, the bulk of migration/immigration literature and diaspora studies have largely focused on the family, community, village or immigrant level, dealing only in passing with the sending state's policy towards their diaspora.<sup>2</sup> As a result, we cannot point to a developed literature on sending state's policy regarding diaspora in the same way that could be said of, for instance, receiving state immigration policy. Such a shortage in literature examining the role of the sending state is even more striking given the dramatic shift in sending states' recent interest and engagement their diaspora. The intent of the chapter is, therefore, to provide a conceptual roadmap that deepens our understanding of these ties. By applying Institutional Theory to state-diaspora engagement practices I consider the ways in which these engagements can be understood as a form of institutional practice. In so doing, I argue that conceptualizing state-diasporic engagement as an institutional practice provides the theoretical space to further our understanding of why states have since changed their behaviour regarding their external populations, which particular diasporas are targeted and why, and what factors trigger diasporas to respond to sending states through the tools states utilize to increase engagement. I develop this argument further by drawing upon new institutionalism as an integrated approach to deepen our analysis and theorization of the relationship between states and their diaspora and to make sense of the decisive shift in courting their diasporas of the political leadership of the sending countries.

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<sup>2</sup> Laurie Brand, *Citizens Abroad: Emigration and the State in the Middle East and North Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 2-6.

In constructing a theory of state-diaspora engagement I focus on two key elements. First, if states have dramatically shifted both their attitude and institutional frameworks towards courting their diaspora communities, we first need a model of political change. As Sven Steinmo argues, behaviour change within the political sphere is too often chalked up to “stuff happens.” While it is certainly true that “stuff happens” we could do with a better understanding of “why stuff happens.” To this end, I argue that an institutional approach provides the theoretical ballast for understanding the elements that shape the process of state behaviour change.<sup>3</sup> As I will demonstrate, a primary reason why states have historically overlooked or even excluded their diasporic populations is, in large part, the product of institutional path dependency. In this sense, the decision by states to distance themselves from their diasporic populations should be regarded as either a formal or informal procedure, routine or norm developed as a response to a set of specific historical conditions. Those conditions then produce periods of continuity punctuated only during critical junctures, i.e., “moments when substantial institutional change takes place thereby creating a branching point from which historical development moves onto a new path.”<sup>4</sup> My principal concern is not only to address the conditions that produced continuity but also to determine what precipitates such critical junctures. In that sense, we need to have a more complete understanding of “why exogenous shocks get refracted in particular ways” as well as an understanding of the “role endogenous variables play in the change process.”<sup>5</sup> As I demonstrate in chapter two, while the post-independent Indian state’s decision under India’s first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, to disengage from its overseas population was motivated by an ideological commitment to non-interference in other countries’ domestic affairs, anxiety over national unity and geopolitical calculations, its decision after the end of Cold War to re-engage its diasporic populations was driven by a host of factors such as the collapse of its largest trading partner, the Soviet Union, liberalization of the Indian economy and a balance of payments crisis.

However, to make sense of Modi’s recent shift in engagement strategy toward the Indian diaspora I push the institutional argument further to understand how states construct diasporic communities into agents of nation building. Drawing on sociological institutionalism I analyze

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<sup>3</sup> Sven Steinmo, “Institutionalism,” *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences* (2001): 10.

<sup>4</sup> Peter A. Hall and Rosemary C.R. Taylor, “Political Science and the Three New Institutionalism,” *Political Studies* XLIV (1996): 942.

<sup>5</sup> Steinmo, “Institutionalism,” 10.

how the conceptual divide between institutions and culture has broken down. In that, I reflect upon the manner through which culture itself is an institution, reflecting a cognitive turn toward culture as a network of routines, symbols or scripts providing templates for behaviour. As the state strives to construct new participants for nation-building projects it employs cultural symbols that codify norms of behaviour. By coding within diasporic communities signifiers of membership in the nation and loyalty to that nation, the state is constructing behavioural norms within the diaspora with the goal that these same communities will respond to the discourse of nation building by acting according to social conventions.

The second element to building a theory of state-diasporic engagement flows from the first, in that, if states are altering their relationship to their diaspora, the challenge remains in providing context specific, theoretically grounded explanations that make sense of why, when and how change occurs. Following Waterbury, I develop a comparative framework focusing on the actions states use to engage and mobilize populations abroad. Utilizing a wide range of cases I outline three main arguments. First, while states ostensibly hail the ‘global nation’ they often target and craft different policies based upon the potential those populations might offer the sending state. Second, states increase their connections and engagement strategies with select populations because it serves a political or strategic purpose. As Waterbury notes, diasporic communities represent a mixture of “cultural, material and political resources, which homeland state elites come to recognise and seek to capture.” And finally, states regularly employ a standard toolkit of policy measures such as broadening the perimeters of citizenship and reassuring a sense of membership so as to co-opt and control access to diasporic resources.<sup>6</sup>

To explore these issues, the discussion in this chapter is divided into three sections. As this project is about diaspora, the first section is an attempt to clarify the widely contested and discussed concept of diaspora. Here, after providing a short history of the concept, three main

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<sup>6</sup> Myra A. Waterbury, “Bridging the divide: Towards a comparative framework for understanding kin state and migrant-sending state diaspora politics,” in *Diaspora and Transnationalism: Concepts, Theories and Methods* edited by Rainer Baubock & Thomas Faist (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010), 135. As I will demonstrate in greater detail, citizenship carries with it formal codified status while membership in a nation-state signifies an informal sense of belonging and acceptance. While the two terms are often closely related, citizenship may not always entail membership in the same sense that members of a political community may not always be fully fledged citizens. For more please see chapter 6. “Migration, Membership and the Nation-State” in Rogers Brubaker, *Grounds for Difference* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015), 131-144.

prevailing types of definitions of the concept will be discussed: Open Definitions, Categorical Definitions; and Oxymoronic Definitions. This study proposes, following Ted Swedenburg, Lata Lavie (both with oxymoronic conceptions) and Roger Bubaker (social practice conception), an alternative conceptualization of diaspora as both *process* and *practice* through which attention must be paid to the political projects-and by extension, modes of power- that produce the links between diasporic communities and their homelands. In other words, it is suggested that diaspora can alternatively be conceived as a social practice. In this sense, diaspora is less an empirical reality than a project to be constructed, one in which the making and shaping of what and who are constituted as members of a diaspora are fundamentally contingent upon the cultural, social and political actors involved in the shaping. Because diaspora is invoked and employed, both by the members themselves and by state institutions to “make claims, articulate projects, formulate expectations, mobilize energies, and appeal to loyalties,” the term must be explored in concert with the way in which that identity is being constructed. The second sections suggest that new institutionalism provides the best explanation for responding to the question: why have states changed their behaviour regarding their external populations and what factors elucidate diaspora to respond accordingly? The final section presents a comparative analysis focusing on who the sending state targets, why they are targeted and when states increase their engagement with their diasporic populations abroad. It concludes with an analysis of the policy tools states develop to encourage dependable contributions to their political agendas.

### **1.1 Concepts: Defining Diaspora**

Quite strikingly, over the course of the past 15 years, the term diaspora has become exceptionally popular both in public discourse and academic literature. The concept has been utilized to mobilize support for a group identity or a specific political project. More recently, diaspora has been invoked to encourage development assistance through remittances and investment or to promote political loyalty among its more prosperous and successful expatriates. Because of its increased politicization and even overuse, a number of scholars have begun to question whether the capricious handling of the term has since stretched its meaning beyond recognition. As Thomas Faist laments, “striving for definitions of terms like diaspora may seem a futile exercise”

particularly because of its evolution into an multi-purpose word.<sup>7</sup> And yet, doing away with the term altogether would be throwing the baby out with the bath water. As Rogers Brubaker asserts, diaspora as a term still holds a great deal of analytical purchase provided it is used with care.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, it is important to understand how diasporas have been and continue to be constituted, the consequences for both the agents and institutions involved and how the boundaries of the concept have changed over time. This section sets the framework for understanding diaspora as a processual concept in which there exist a multitude of complex and competing power relations at work in its constitution.

### **Diaspora: Tracing its Genealogy**

With countless studies devoted to the term diaspora, Stephane Dufoix's *Diasporas* is one of the more accessible publications to date, an exhaustively researched and lucidly written account of diaspora's historical application and introduction as a concept of analysis. In it, Dufoix argues that diaspora was typically restricted to either the Jewish or African diaspora. Dufoix points out that the Jewish people had to this point represented the "classic diaspora phenomena" by reason of their capacity to preserve their integrity as an ethno-religious community despite more than 2000 years of existence without any form of political power over their country of origin.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, the African dispersion precipitated by the slave-trade began to be conceived by prominent Africanists during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century as a diaspora, a term that resonated deeply with an African community viewing their own tragic experience of alienation as conterminous to the Jewish paradigmatic case. Although not without equivocation, these two cases of dispersion and alienation have generally been the standard models by which the term diaspora was both understood and explored throughout much of early 20<sup>th</sup> century scholarship.<sup>10</sup>

Although the social sciences were seemingly oblivious to diaspora as a concept of analysis during this period, researchers in the field of the humanities began to apply the term to explain or trace the dislocation of a people from their homeland in response to the violence of decolonization. Diaspora quickly gained prominence among historians who began to study two

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<sup>7</sup> Thomas Faist, "Diaspora and transnationalism: What kind of dance partners?" in *Diaspora and Transnationalism: Concepts, Theories and Methods* edited by Rainer Baubock & Thomas Faist (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010), 14.

<sup>8</sup> Rogers Brubaker, *Grounds for Difference*, 124.

<sup>9</sup> Stephane Dufoix, *Diasporas* (Los Angeles, CA: University of California, 2008), 5-17.

<sup>10</sup> Stephane Dufoix, "W.E.B. Du Bois: Race et 'diaspora noire/africaine,'" *Raison politiques* 21(2006): 97-116.

different types of diaspora: the exiled Palestinians impacted by the 1967 war between the Arab states and Israel and the growing prominent overseas Chinese populations.<sup>11</sup> Dufoix suggests, that despite its growing application, it nevertheless failed as an analytical concept due to its lack of definitional clarity. Dufoix argues that until the later part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century “diaspora” was used as a loose catch-all for certain populations living outside a reference territory - in this case referring to Jews, people of African origin, Palestinians and Chinese. As the term gained traction within the field of social sciences, definitions of diasporas typically fell within one of three frameworks: open, categorical and oxymoronic.<sup>12</sup> Broadly speaking, an open definition of diaspora, suggests one that is open and all encompassing; categorical requires some fulfilment of basic criteria; an oxymoronic definition is blended, hybridized and fundamentally fluid, espousing any strict delineation. What follows below is an examination of these three broad definitions of diaspora. I complete the discussion by offering a fourth option to Dufoix’s typology, suggesting that diaspora can alternatively be conceived as a social practice. In this sense, diaspora is less an empirical reality than a project to be constructed, one in which the making and shaping of what and who is constituted as the membership of a diaspora are fundamentally contingent upon the cultural, social and political actors involved in the shaping.

### **Open Definitions**

Dufoix argues that an open definition of diaspora offered a loose and non-discriminating view of the object of study leaving open the door to an undetermined number of cases still largely defined by some common thread of ethnicity. He traces the initial attempt to define diaspora to John Armstrong, an American Political Scientist who proposed a typology of “diasporas” as “mobilized” or “proletarian” by which diaspora should be conceived of as an “ethnic collectivity which lacks a territorial base within a given polity, i.e., a relatively small community throughout all portions of the polity.” Armstrong included within his definition, among others, widely dispersed hunting or pastoral nomads and certain semi-tribal groups like Gypsies. Published in the *American Political Science Review*, Armstrong’s attempt at defining diasporas is often regarded as the first instance of any social researcher to take seriously the lack of definitional clarity surrounding diasporas. Despite Armstrong’s initial attempt, diasporas, according to his

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<sup>11</sup> See Maurice Freedman, “Immigrants and Associations: Chinese in Nineteenth-Century Singapore,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 3, no.1 (October 1960): 25-48 and Walid Khalidi, “A Palestinian Perspective on the Arab-Israeli Conflict,” *Journal of Palestinian Studies* 14, no.4 (Summer 1985): 35-44.

<sup>12</sup> Dufoix, *Diasporas*, 17-21.

expansive criteria, is one in which nearly any society which conceives of itself as a “separate society” is itself diasporic. While the glue binding these groups together is undoubtedly ethnic, Armstrong’s inclusion of “Gypsies” and pastoral herdsmen suggests such a broad criterion for diaspora as to render the term as a concept of analysis not very useful.<sup>13</sup>

Dufoix argues that it was not until the 1986 publication of *Modern Diasporas in International Politics* by Gabriel Sheffer, an Israeli Political Scientist that any perceptible shift towards a general theoretical approach to diasporas took shape, one grounded primarily in the “maintenance” with a place of origin. Sheffer, who looks at diaspora from a comparative perspective comparing Jews, Armenians, Turks, Palestinians, Chinese, Indians, and so forth, points out that “modern diasporas are ethnic minority groups of migrant origins residing and acting in host countries but maintaining strong sentimental and material links with their countries of origin-their homelands.”<sup>14</sup> Sheffer returned to his conceptual framework with a full-length publication on diaspora in 2003 where, in the opening pages, he analyzes “the highly motivated Koreans and Vietnamese toiling hard to become prosperous in bustling Los Angeles, the haggard Palestinians living in dreary refugee camps near Beirut and Amman, the beleaguered Turks dwelling in cramped apartments in Berlin, and the frustrated Russians in Estonia, all have much in common. ....they are members of ethno-national diasporas.”<sup>15</sup> While Sheffer’s caveat to his 1986 definition of diaspora now conceived of them more specifically as “Ethno-National Diasporas,” his publication has, nevertheless, received considerable criticism. Scholarship has questioned his treatment of diaspora as a distinct entity as well as his indiscriminate privileging of ancestry or heritage as the main criteria of diasporic membership. Although Sheffer has claimed to have made the “first attempt to estimate the real numbers of the main historical, modern, and incipient diasporas,” concerns have been raised with regard to the paucity of guidance concerning the question of who is being counted and how one precisely calculates the

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<sup>13</sup> John Armstrong, “Mobilized and Proletarian Diasporas,” *American Political Science Review* 70, no. 2 (June 1976): 393-408.

<sup>14</sup> Gabriel Sheffer, “A New Field of Study: Modern Diaspora in International Politics,” in *Modern Diasporas in International Politics*, ed. Gabriel Sheffer (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 3.

<sup>15</sup> Gabriel Sheffer, *Diaspora Politics: At Home Abroad* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003). See also Gabriel Sheffer, “The Diaspora Phenomenon in the Twenty-First Century: Ideational, Organizational, and Behavioural Challenges” in *Opportunity Structures in Diaspora Relations: Comparisons in Contemporary Multilevel Politics of Diaspora and Transnational Identity*, ed. Gloria Toticaguena (Reno, Nevada: University of Nevada, 2007): 187-214.

numbers of the diasporic population. Setting aside these criticisms, the primary takeaway from Sheffer's work is that he and numerous others following his analysis continue to conceive of diasporas as an empirical reality. This approach to diaspora has gained increasing prominence in contemporary society due to increased migration as well as to the advances made in communication and transportation technologies that have aided the growth and prominence of diasporas as an emerging global phenomenon.

### **Categorical Definitions**

The development of categorical definitions of diasporas was an attempt to tighten and restrict Sheffer's open definition based on ethnicity. Placing the object of study (diaspora) within a set of criteria supplied researchers with a checklist of sorts, allowing scholars to more easily differentiate between what are true and false diasporas. Dufoix traces the emergence of categorical definitions to Yves Lacoste who has argued that true diasporas included "the dispersion of a major part of a people." Lacoste's definition still retains much of Sheffer's ethnicity based criterion but it is more restrictive in its application. In this case, neither the 20 million Chinese nor the 25 million Indians living outside their home state would be recognized as Chinese or Indian diaspora because they constitute only a minor portion of the entire Chinese or Indian population. In fact, perhaps only the Jewish, Lebanese, Palestinian, Armenian and Irish would fit Lacoste's criteria for diaspora because each of these groups comprise the bulk of their population living outside their homeland.<sup>16</sup>

Shortly after Lacoste's attempt at definition, William Safran, writing in the 1991 inaugural edition of the Journal *Diaspora*, cautioned against looser and broad-based definitions, "lest the term lose all meaning." Instead, he attempts to construct a closed conceptual model with multiple criteria which limited the term "diaspora" to minority expatriate communities whose members shared several of what he believed to be six necessary characteristics. The criteria included dispersal from a specific original center to two or more peripheral regions, retention of collective memories of the original homeland, partial alienation and insulation from the host society, a lingering desire to return to the homeland, a commitment to the maintenance or restoration of the safety and prosperity of that homeland and the derivation of a communal consciousness and

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<sup>16</sup> Yves Lacoste, "Editorial: Geopolitique des diasporas," *Herodote* 53 (April-June 1989): 3.

solidarity from that relationship. Unlike Sheffer's, Armstrong's or Lacoste's, Safran's definition would seem to bear a strong resemblance to the Jewish diaspora, at least in terms of structure.<sup>17</sup>

Building on Safran's criteria, Robin Cohen's *Global Diasporas*, adds a further caveat, the eventual creation of a state. In addition, Cohen offers up nine common characteristics coupled with a typology that distinguishes diaspora according to their primary identity: victim (Jews, Africans, Armenians, and Palestinians), labour (Indian), trade (Chinese), cultural (Caribbean) and imperial (British, French, Spanish, Portuguese).<sup>18</sup> Although most scholarship, including Dufoix's, acknowledges Cohen's publication to be the gold standard in terms of defining diaspora, his typology still fails to fully address the complexity of what or how primary identity is maintained or how that identity is permeated over time. For instance, did Sikh communities in Kenya or Canada view themselves primarily as Sikh, Indian or both? While Cohen groups all Indians displaced through labour-mobility as bound by some special affinity, such typology may serve to ease classification, but it hardly accounts for the complex ways in which cultural, religious or ethnic identity may just as easily trump national identity. Despite the categorization of diasporas, based on what some might conclude to be a rather arbitrary typology, the attempt should be lauded, at the very least, as an effort to corral a growing object of study that needed some boundaries, groundless or otherwise.

### **Oxymoronic Definitions**

Oxymoronic definitions of diaspora are rooted in the appearance of postmodern thought in the 1980s and are the heirs to various currents of scholarship sharply critical of modernity.<sup>19</sup> If the modern society was characterized by reason, progress, universalities and stability, postmodern societies by contrast are increasingly predicated on racial mixing, doubt, fragmentation and fluid identities.<sup>20</sup> Jacques Derrida, a leading voice of the postmodern movement viewed all conceptual systems as prone to a falsifying, distorting "hierarchization", a premise which would

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<sup>17</sup> William Safran, "Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return," *Diaspora* 1 no. 1 (Spring 1991): 83-99. More recently, please see William Safran, "Democracy, Pluralism and Diaspora Identity: An Ambiguous Relationship" in *Opportunity Structures in Diaspora Relations: Comparisons in Contemporary Multilevel Politics of Diaspora and Transnational Identity* ed. by Gloria Toticaguena (Reno, Nevada: University of Nevada, 2007): 157-185.

<sup>18</sup> Robin Cohen, *Global Diaspora: An Introduction* (London: UCL Press, 1997).

<sup>19</sup> Dufoix, *Diasporas*, 22.

<sup>20</sup> Although it is simplification to the extreme postmodernism has been defined as incredulity towards metanarratives because those narratives were seen as providing cultural practices with some form of legitimation or authority.

naturally question any conceptual framework of diaspora to be misleading at best and more likely to buttress hegemonic structures present in contemporary society. In response to this intellectual strain, Dufoix suggests that the oxymoronic definition of diaspora is one that stressed the importance of the non-center and hybrid forms of identity. He argues that this important shift in definition occurred as the cultural studies movement of the 1980s which studied subaltern or postcolonial subcultures (workers, minorities, immigrants etc....) encountered and borrowed heavily from the postmodern literature to make sense of new notions of identity.<sup>21</sup>

Three leading proponents of this shift in diaspora definition were Stuart Hall, James Clifford and Paul Gilroy who viewed categorical or open definitions of diaspora to be imperializing and hegemonic forms of ethnicity which invariably privilege and reinforce the nation-state, a structure that has, in their view, succeeded only in perpetuating violence and division. For example, Gilroy opposed all forms of “ethnic absolutism” whether of the Eurocentric or Afrocentric variety. He was highly critical of all treatments of the African diaspora that came to view African diasporic individuals everywhere-dispersed across numerous continents- as linked by a common heritage, history and racial descent. For Gilroy, such “diasporic conceptions” homogenize difference and form the kind of ethnic absolutism he was so critical of in his seminal work, *The Black Atlantic*.<sup>22</sup> Similarly, Stuart Hall writes that diaspora is a metaphorical term not a literal one, arguing that diaspora is defined by experience, “not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of identity which lives with and through, not despite, difference; by hybridity.” For Hall, the “old center-periphery, national-nationalist-culture model is exactly what is breaking down.”<sup>23</sup> Instead, diasporic identities are those which are constantly “producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference.”<sup>24</sup> And finally, Clifford argues that the “age of diaspora” heralds the opening of new possibilities for what he has called “the non-exclusive practices of community, politics and cultural difference.” From these authors’ perspectives, diaspora should be conceived as a form of consciousness or perhaps as a social

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<sup>21</sup> Dufoix, *Diasporas*, 24.

<sup>22</sup> Please see James Clifford, “Diasporas,” *Current Anthropology* 9, no. 3 (August 1994): 302-38 and Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).

<sup>23</sup> Stuart Hall, “Thinking the Diaspora: Home-Thoughts from Abroad,” *Small Axe* 6 (September 1999): 1-18.

<sup>24</sup> Stuart Hall, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora,” in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference* ed. Jonathan Rutherford (London, UK: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990). 235.

condition that privileges neither the transnational nor the translocal but theorize and reflect upon diaspora as a hybridized amalgamation, which, in turn, generates complex identity formation.

Research treating diaspora as a form of consciousness has developed across disciplinary boundaries and has been undertaken not only by those working within the traditions of cultural studies but also by sociologists, anthropologists, literary critics as well as communication and media critics. Their main contribution has been to introduce the complex ways in which diasporic practices of identity formation should then be understood as bottom-up resistance to processes of cultural homogenization originating from the nation-state, from discourses on race and ethnicity, or from processes of globalization. In this sense, diaspora not only differ from nation-states, they also present a challenge to the nation-state as an organizational form. For instance, the anthropologist Michael Kierney, in his 1991 ethnographic study of Mexican migration into the United States argued that the Mexican state has become noticeably weaker in its attempts to reach across borders as it lost its control over citizens as they leave. Kierney contends that as streams of undocumented workers flow over the Mexican-U.S. border, they effectively escape the power of the state to define their identity by avoiding the official process of documentation. Within the confines of Mixtec emigrants, nationality, the subject matter of his studies, was increasingly replaced by, what he refers to as a transnational identity, an ethnic identity that was neither fully American nor entirely Mexican but something profoundly new. Kierney suggests that such processes of hybridized identity have fundamentally de-substantiated the importance of the nation-state as “history and anthropology have entered a post-national age.”<sup>25</sup>

Similarly, Arjun Appadurai points out that “one major fact that accounts for the strains in the union of nation and state is that the nationalist genie, never perfectly constrained in the bottle of the territorial state, is now itself diasporic. Carried in the repertoires of increasingly mobile populations of refugees, tourists...it is increasingly unrestrained by ideas of spatial boundaries and territorial sovereignty.”<sup>26</sup> If “India always exists off the turnpikes of America” so too do

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<sup>25</sup> Michael Kearney, “Border and “Borders and Boundaries of State and Self at the End of Empire,” *Journal of Historical Sociology* 4(1): 52-74.

<sup>26</sup> Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 160-161.

villagers in India now think of moving not only to Madras but also to Houston or Dubai. In what Appadurai refers to as an *ethnoscape*, the image, the imaginary and the imagination become constitutive in global cultural processes, processes through which human movement and motion are increasingly calling into question the stability and permanence of the nation state. For Appadurai, who structures this discussion within Benedict Anderson's framework of nation, nationalism and imagined communities, if the nation state is merely an imagined community, constructed through print capitalism and precipitated by the power of mass literacy by which the collective consciousness of a national identity is forged, the motion and movement of people around the world are themselves imagining a new global cultural economy predicated upon the disjuncture of states. It is through the movement of peoples like diasporic communities that the horizons of the mind are expanding, where imagination becomes a social practice which conjures up a global cultural world increasingly marked by fracture, fluidity and hybridity rather than the permanence of past forms of collective belonging such as the nation-state.<sup>27</sup>

Similarly, Smadar Lavie and Ted Swedenburg in *Displacement, Diaspora and Geographies of Identity* argue for a disruption of the conventional understanding of identity based upon notions of nation and culture as bounded or discrete. Nevertheless, they caution us against too readily embracing notions of hybridity without the recognition that hybrid products are often the results "of a long history of confrontations between unequal cultures and forces, in which the stronger culture struggles to control, remake or eliminate the subordinate partner." Likewise, they fear that a wholesale shift to conceiving of identity solely in terms of hybridity ignores the fact that many in the subaltern world, be they "racial minorities, immigrants, women, refugees, colonized peoples, or queers, cannot *not* desire the basic privileges that accompany membership and citizenship in a community, group, or nation." More to the point, they caution that examples of identity essentialism are frequently a political necessity as is the case of Palestinians, whereby

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<sup>27</sup> Arjun Appadurai, "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy," in *Theorizing Diaspora*, ed. Jana Evans Braziel and Anita Mannur (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 26-33. For an analysis of Indo-American diasporic identity please refer to R. Radhakrishnan, "Ethnicity in an Age of Diaspora," in *Theorizing Diaspora*, ed. Jana Evans Braziel and Anita Mannur (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 119-131. Radhakrishnan argues that ethnicity is always in a state of flux; "far from being static, unchanging and immutable," Radhakrishnan suggests that "understandings of ethnicity are always context-specific, so that, for instance, being Indian-American, in a hyphenated sense, is completely different from being Indian."

hybridity does not appear to be an effective strategy in their struggle for a return to their historical territory.<sup>28</sup>

For Lavie and Swedenburg, diaspora is neither essential nor conjectural but something that challenges the lapse into a “neo-relativism” of postmodernism as well questions identity as an essence. Instead, they argue for a third time-space, one in which “borders and diaspora are phenomena that blow up-both enlarge and explode-the hyphen: the Arab-Jew, African-American, Franco-Maghrebi, Black-British.” Hyphenated time-space is a process, not of becoming something, but one that remains active and intransitive. In *Coolie Woman: The Odyssey of Indenture*, Gaiutra Bahadur reflects upon the complexity of diaspora experienced through her own Indo-Caribbean heritage. In returning to the ancestral village of her Great-grandmother in India, Bahadur writes: “The riches I was after were stories: theirs, my great-grandmother’s, my own. Call it a quest for identity, or an exploration for narrative gold. Even use the awful word ‘roots’. It may be clichéd, but it’s raw and nervy and real nonetheless. Many Indo-Caribbean’s I know suffer from a kind of phantom leg syndrome. Dismembered from our imaginary homeland, we have felt the absence of the severed limb of India for generations.”<sup>29</sup> As we explore and consider the identity of diaspora populations it is crucial that one acknowledges the reality that they frequently occupy no “singular cultural space but are enmeshed in circuits of social, economic and cultural ties encompassing both the mother country and the country of settlement.”<sup>30</sup>

Similarly, Ruth Frakenberg and Lata Mani argue for a recognition that diaspora as identity is both relational and situated whereby what diaspora means is profoundly dependent upon the positionality of a diasporic member. Too often, they argue, notions of identity as multiplicity or hybridity lead critics down the very problematic path of what one might call neo-relativism such that it is sometimes argued that “we” are all “decentered, multiple, minor or mestizo in exactly comparable ways.” This failure to grasp the specificity of the location or the moment obfuscates the crucial “relationship between subjectivity and power, subjectivity and specific relations of

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<sup>28</sup> Smadar Lavie and Ted Swedenburg, “Introduction,” in *Displacement, diaspora and geographies of identity*, ed. Smadar Lavie and Ted Swedenburg (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), 14-23.

<sup>29</sup> Gaiutra Bahadur, *Coolie Woman: The Odyssey of Indenture* (London: The University of Chicago, 2014), 176.

<sup>30</sup> Lavie and Swedenburg, “Introduction,” 14.

domination and subordination.” Drawing upon feminist critiques, Frakenberg and Mani point out that any exploration of identity, in particular, diasporic identity, must invariably attend to the politics of location, to the “historical, geographic, cultural, psychic and imaginative boundaries which provide the ground for political definition and self-definition.”<sup>31</sup>

Oxymoronic definitions of diaspora disrupt the often reductive and overly deterministic notions of identity based upon a parsimonious analysis of the conjuncture of nation and culture. By way of an alternative to open and categorical definitions of diasporic identity, Oxymoronic definitions provide a nuanced understanding of the fluid, fractured and hybrid nature of any self-identification. Despite the efforts of Hall, Gilroy, Clifford and others in overturning reductive framings of identity, Swedenburg, Lavie et al remind us that any analysis of identity should always be accompanied by a critical reflection of the positionality of the individual as well as attention to latent structures of domination within a given society. The final section on diasporic definitions bears much in common with oxymoronic definitions while also emphasizing the crucial role political actors play in its construction. By emphasizing the practical struggle of cultural, political and social actors in the making and remaking of groups we can then shift the analysis from diaspora as a bounded group to diaspora as a practice, stance, project, claim or idiom.

### **Diaspora as Social Practice**

Echoing oxymoronic conceptions of diaspora, Rogers Brubaker argues that a diaspora is not a bounded group set in stone but instead should be conceived as a social practice in which the boundaries of diaspora are negotiated through practical struggle. Often recognized for studies of nationalism, Brubaker’s seminal article “Diaspora Diaspora” responds critically to the question of what constitutes a diaspora, excoriating scholars who, “willy nilly,” engage in what he determines to be definitional fiat. Brubaker points out that the problem with any imposed criteria such as either open or categorical definitions lies with the possibility that not all whom others claim as members of an alleged diaspora themselves claim to be members of a diaspora. As he notes, “those who consistently adopt a diasporic stance are often only a small minority of the

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<sup>31</sup> Ruth Frakenberg and Lata Mani, “Crosscurrents, Crosstalk: Race, “Postcoloniality,” and the Politics of Location,” in *Displacement, diaspora and geographies of identity*, ed. Smadar Lavie and Ted Swedenburg (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), 273-287.

population that political or cultural entrepreneurs formulate as a diaspora. What is casually called ‘the Armenian diaspora’ in the United States, for example, is not very diasporic at all, according to a comprehensive sociological analysis and could better be described in many instances as nothing more than “symbolic ethnicity.”<sup>32</sup> For Brubaker, it is less a question of whether a diaspora exists, instead, the pertinent consideration is how they come to be construed as a diaspora in the first place. Brubaker would prefer diaspora to be recognized as a category of practice- and only then can one “ask whether or how it can fruitfully be used as a category of analysis.” For example, Brubaker argues that the appropriate question should not be whether a first-generation migrant views her or himself as both Indian and American, which is to be expected. Instead, we should reflect on the degree to which and in what forms second, third and subsequent generations maintain a multigenerational diasporic identity, if at all. To his mind, because diasporas are used to “make claims, articulate projects, formulate expectations, mobilize energies, and appeal to loyalties,” the term must be explored in concert with the way in which that identity is being constructed.<sup>33</sup>

Drawing upon his own scholarship devoted to the ways in which the presumption of a primordial nation is in fact contingent, variable and wholly constructed, Brubaker would prefer analysis of diaspora to recognize what is at stake in any labeling or (re)branding of diaspora.<sup>34</sup> For Brubaker, diaspora is neither permanent nor predetermined but should be understood instead as a practical struggle, one in which the cultural, political and social are all part of an exercise which seeks to make and remake groups. To this end, he writes “we should treat diaspora as a category of practice, project, claim, and stance rather than as a bounded group.” Likewise, Thomas Faist argues that diaspora “cannot be thought of as independent from states and non-state actors. To the contrary, they are constituted by (these agents).”<sup>35</sup> Such recognitions open the venues of inquiry about the relationship between political institutions and their role in constructing diaspora through offerings of membership in the national community or, in some cases, even the granting of citizenship to diasporic members.

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<sup>32</sup> Brubaker, *Grounds for Difference*, 125-127.

<sup>33</sup> Brubaker, *Grounds for Difference*, 128.

<sup>34</sup> See Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the national question in the New Europe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 16.

<sup>35</sup> Faist, “Diaspora and transnationalism: What kind of dance partners?” 23.

In differentiating membership or belonging to the nation-state from citizenship in the nation-state it is important to note that while citizenship carries with it formal codified status, not all citizens are automatically accepted as full members of a national community. As Brubaker points out, national membership is often more informal, administered in the course of everyday life using “tacit understandings of who belongs and who does not, of us and them.” While citizenship may generate formal membership, it does not automatically extend the same gesture of inclusion within the national community. Everyday membership practices of identification and categorization, of inclusion and exclusion, are often at odds with codified forms of official, formal membership. However, for our purposes, it is the external not internal level of belonging that concerns this study. For instance, internal politics of belonging represent populations that lie within the territorial confines of the state but are not or have yet to be fully accepted members or whose membership to that state is contested regardless of their formal citizenship status. Alternatively, external politics of belonging involves those populations such as diaspora whose populations are situated outside the jurisdiction of the state but still claim - or are in the *process* of being claimed - to “belong, in some sense, to the state or its nation.”<sup>36</sup> As a result, the making or shaping of diaspora can often resemble a nationalist project whereby by some are claimed to be members of a nation or collectivity and some are not. In short, the question isn’t whether a diaspora exists but how, why and by whom the label has been applied. For Brubaker, diaspora as a concept should have categorical limits which are infinitely more refined, variable and subject to contestation than would seem to be afforded by its recent application in contemporary scholarship.

Therefore, by way of a summary, this study proposes that the term “diaspora” must be understood as both *process* and *practice* through which attention must be paid to the political projects- and by extension, modes of power - that produce the links between diasporic communities and their homelands. Because diaspora is invoked and employed, both by the members themselves and by state institutions to “make claims, articulate projects, formulate expectations, mobilize energies, and appeal to loyalties,” the term must be explored in concert with the way in which that identity is being constructed. That is not to suggest that diasporic

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<sup>36</sup> Brubaker, *Grounds for Difference*, 133-34.

identity and its construction is only or even primarily a top down, state lead process. Hall, Clifford, Gilroy, Kierney and Appadurai, Lavie and Swedenburg each has argued for a disruption of the conventional understanding of identity based upon notions of nation and culture as bounded or discrete. Nevertheless, one should be cautious of too readily embracing notions of hybridity without recognition that hybrid products are often the results “of a long history of confrontations between unequal cultures and forces, in which the stronger culture struggles to control, remake or eliminate the subordinate partner. If what it means to be “diasporic” changes location to location, the “Other” should be acknowledged as a product of its environment.” In other words, we must remain sensitive to the circumstances that form, shape and construct diasporic identity.

### **1.2 Towards a Theory of State-Diaspora Engagement: An Institutional Approach**

Over the past few decades we have witnessed a significant increase in the number of states engaging members of their national communities who otherwise reside outside the boundaries of the state. For instance, since the fall of communism and the end of Soviet dominance there has been a noticeable increase in the attention states have paid to renewing a relationship with their ancestral or ethnic populations laying outside their state boundaries.<sup>37</sup> As a growing number of states build ties to their diaspora abroad, these populations respond by demanding recognition of their special status as members of cultural or political communities that straddle one or more sovereign countries. In providing sufficient explanations to this emerging phenomenon, the challenge is to provide theoretically grounded explanations that make sense of the growing ties between these communities and their home states. In providing a conceptual roadmap that deepens our understanding of these ties I analyze these engagements as an institutional practice. In so doing, I argue that conceptualizing state-diasporic engagement as an institutional practice provides the theoretical space to further our understanding of why some states have since changed their behaviour regarding their external populations, who particular diaspora are and why they are targeted and what factors trigger diasporas to respond to sending states through the tools states utilize to increase engagement.<sup>38</sup> To develop this argument further I argue ‘new

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<sup>37</sup> Much of this is the result of the dissolution of multinational states cobbled together under Soviet reign. As the erosion of the Soviet Union resulted in the fragmentation of nation-states these newly formed polities have increasingly sought to re-energize their relationship to ethnic kin who have since found themselves excluded from their host state due to shifting borders.

<sup>38</sup> Despite increased state engagement of diasporic members, it is worth reminding that this is not a universal shift. Many states continue to view overseas members as a threat to the regime or as traitors of the national community.

institutionalism” deepens our analysis and theorization of the relationship between states and their diaspora.

‘New Institutionalism’ is a term appearing frequently within political science.<sup>39</sup> However, despite its growing application the term has generated a good deal of confusion within the discipline because it amalgamates three institutional approaches; Historical Institutionalism, Rational Choice Institutionalism and Sociological Institutionalism. Each of these approaches were developed as a response to behavioural perspectives influential in the 1960s and 1970s, and each attempts to explain the role institutions play in the determination of social and political outcomes. However, each approach paints a slightly different picture of the political world. For instance, Historical Institutionalists by and large accept that conflict among rival groups for sparse resources lies at the heart of politics -essentially competition over “who gets what, when and how.” More to the point, Historical Institutionalists are primarily concerned with understanding and explaining world events and outcomes. Perhaps most eclectic of any approach, Historical Institutionalists view institutions as only one important variable among many structuring political outcomes. From this perspective, institutions are understood to be intervening variables from which a battle over ideas, interests and power are waged. In this case, Historical Institutionalists argue that the early choices made in the history of any policy are critical. However, they equally stress that without a fundamental understanding as to why a particular policy was initially chosen it is difficult to understand the “logic behind the development of that policy.”<sup>40</sup> Alternatively, Rational Choice Institutionalists, by and large, argue that political behaviour is the result of rules and incentives. Institutions, therefore, are “systems of rules and inducements to behaviour in which individuals attempt to maximize their own utilities.”<sup>41</sup> For Rational Choice Institutionalists, institutions are explicitly functional and emerge or develop as a response to meet social or economic necessities. And finally, Sociological Institutionalism grew from the study of organizations and has focused predominantly upon the way norms and culture function as institutions. Scholarship within this

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<sup>39</sup> The term was derived from the work of J. G. March and J. P. Olsen. For more please see March and Olsen, “The New Institutionalism: Organizational Factors in Political Life,” *American Political Science Review* 78, (1984): 738-49

<sup>40</sup> B. Guy Peters, *Institutional Theory in Political Science: The New Institutionalism* (New York: Continuum International Publishing, 2012), 19-20.

<sup>41</sup> Peters, *Institutional Theory in Political Science*, 21.

approach emphasizes how patterns of behaviour, cognitive maps and normative and cultural statements function as guidelines for action within institutions. Some argue for adopting only one of the approaches while others, such as Peter Hall and Rosemary Taylor argue for greater interchange between the three. As Hall and Taylor point out, none of these literatures seems to be substantially untrue. Instead, each approach seems either to provide a “partial account of the forces at work in a given situation or capture different dimensions of the human action and institutional impact present there.”<sup>42</sup>

A fundamental question, therefore, is to understand how each approach defines an institution. Within the discipline of political science, ideas about institutions can be vague, ranging from analyses of formal structures like parliaments to less defined concepts like social class with the law or markets frequently labeled as institutions. From the perspective of Rational Choice, institutions are conceived as a collection of rules and incentives that establish the boundaries on the collective behaviour of individuals. Rules establish the conditions for rationality from which a political space can emerge allowing interdependent political actors to function. While an individual politician is expected to maximize personal utilities, their behaviour is constrained by the operating limits inherent within the rules of an institution. Alternatively, Historical Institutionalists argue institutions to be “the formal or informal procedures, routines, norms and conventions embedded in the organizational structure of the polity or political economy.”<sup>43</sup> Conversely, Sociological Institutionalists agree that institutions are comprised of routines and norms but also view institutions as “the symbol systems, cognitive scripts and moral templates that provide the frames of meaning guiding human action.”<sup>44</sup>

Despite the differences in how the three paradigms define an institution each provides a measure of understanding in determining social and politics outcomes. At its core, institutional analysis responds to two central questions: how do institutions affect behaviour and how do they originate and change? In terms of behaviour, Hall and Taylor argue that new institutionalism provides two different responses which they label the “calculus approach” and the “cultural approach.” They

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<sup>42</sup> Peter A. Hall and Rosemary C.R. Taylor, “Political Science and the Three New Institutionalism,” *Political Studies* XLIV (1996): 955.

<sup>43</sup> Hall and Taylor, “Political Science and the Three New Institutionalism,” 940-41.

<sup>44</sup> Hall and Taylor, “Political Science and the Three New Institutionalism,” 947.

argue that each provides slightly different answers to how actors behave, what institutions do and why institutions hold over time. From a calculus perspective, the behaviour of actors is assumed to be instrumental, strategic and calculating, and an actor's goals are given exogenously to institutional analysis. Likewise, from a calculus approach, what institutions do is to provide a measure of certainty about the behaviour of other actors. Crucially, a calculus approach suggests that institutions affect individual action by altering the expectations an actor might have about the actions others are most likely to take simultaneous to or in response to her/his own action.

Alternatively, a cultural approach emphasizes the extent to which behaviour is not always strategic but is also a result of an individual's worldview. As anyone waiting at a traffic light in the dead of night must admit, the correlation between institutions and action is never entirely rational or instrumental but also carries with it significant behavioural patterns. That is not to suggest that a cultural approach limits the role of rationality or calculation but instead stresses the way in which action is also guided by routines and familiar courses of action to attain their goals. In this way, institutions provide individuals or organizations moral or cognitive templates for action. Individuals are enmeshed within circuits of institutions which themselves are composed of symbols, routines and cognitive scripts constructing templates for individual action. Each approach also provides varying accounts of why patterns of behaviour linked to institutions seem to consistently display a measure of continuity over time. From a calculus perspective, individuals stick with patterns of behaviour because an alternative course of action would adversely affect an individual over time. Institutions then appear resilient because of the contribution they make to resolving collective action dilemmas. On the other hand, a cultural approach views the durability of institutions resulting as both strategic calculation and convention, resisting change because they structure the decisions an individual is likely to make.

For our purposes, the aim is not to emphasize the divisions between the approaches but to apply new institutionalism as an integrated method that assumes both calculus and culture as embedded within social and political outcomes.<sup>45</sup> For example, it is widely acknowledged that, until the last

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<sup>45</sup> Hall and Taylor encourage interchange between all three approaches arguing that the best available analyses thus far have tended to integration rather than embracing one approach at the expense of the others. See Hall and Taylor, "Political Science and the Three New Institutionalism," 955.

couple of decades, states have ignored or resisted courting their external populations such as diasporas. Why then did this practice become commonplace amongst most states for decades? Was it strategic, routine or both? If diasporic communities occupy development promise in terms of remittances, investment capital, political influence etc...., why did most states overlook these communities? In response, I would highlight two key insights of ‘new institutionalism.’ First, we need to examine why some states adopted policy that excluded these populations originally and second, it bears reminding that, once chosen, institutional practices become relatively persistent features of the policy landscape. That persistence then pushes policy development along structured paths that resist alternatives courses of action.<sup>46</sup> From a nation building perspective, oversight to the instrumental potential of diaspora then became a historical norm, ossified in its path dependence, in contrast to a belief that institutions are responsive, purposive and efficient.

The straightforward answer is that states distanced themselves from their diaspora because of a commitment to international conventions emphasizing territorial sovereignty. As newly independent states continued to emerge in response to decolonization etc... they adopted behavioural routines or conventions already embedded within the international system. As a result, diasporic communities remained marooned outside the sharply delineated territorial confines of the nation-state and its political community. For many newly independent states such as India, territorial sovereignty was a universal convention upon independence. Through their acceptance of pre-existing boundaries set by colonial administrators, territorial sovereignty took on the fiction of a universal norm. Controlling territory then became a precondition for political life and the permanence of the nation-state. As Henri Lefebvre suggests, “each state claims to produce a space wherein something is accomplished—a space even, where something is brought to perfection: namely, a unified and hence homogenous society.”<sup>47</sup> Territorial sovereignty then assumes the trinity of nation, state and territory as timeless and eternal. Consequentially, for diasporic communities lying outside the territorial boundaries of the state, such a policy stance was to render them invisible to the nation-state. The commitment by the nation-state to territorial

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<sup>46</sup> Hall and Taylor, “Political Science and the Three New Institutionalism,” 942.

<sup>47</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: Wiley-Blackwell, 1991), 281.

sovereignty was, in effect, to lose out on the resource potential of their external communities.<sup>48</sup> In keeping with this perspective, new institutionalism often divides the flow of policy choices into periods of continuity interrupted by critical junctures. When substantial institutional change occurs, it is often in concert with either internal or external pressures that create branching points diverting them from established courses.<sup>49</sup> Within this theory of institutional change, one could explain the behaviour of states to engage their diaspora as a response to a series of systemic historical transformations such as the acceleration of globalization, the rise in liberalization policies, or political change such as the fall of communism or the end of central state economic planning. From an institutional approach, it is not random that these transformations coincided with states rethinking their “informal or even exclusionary stances towards diasporic populations residing abroad.”<sup>50</sup> Rather, when institutional ruptures take place, states strive to maximize nation building potential and they do so in highly strategic ways that presume extensive calculation.

In many respects, the pressure for states to discover new sources of nation-building required a reconfiguration of how it conceived of territory. In keeping with Appadurai’s contention that territory is the “hyphen” that joins and divides nation and state, I would argue that states have strategically conceptualized territory as a concept of political power that extends beyond land and terrain.<sup>51</sup> Territory is about power, the power to shape and to lay claim over land and territory by social or political forces.<sup>52</sup> In this way, states have begun to conceive of diaspora as shifting forms of territory, territory that the state seeks to control and define. Just as John Ruggie declares that “systems of rule need not be territorial and systems of rule need not be territorially fixed. . . .but also, the prevailing concept of territory need not entail mutual exclusion,” suggests

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<sup>48</sup> Itty Abraham, *How India Became Territorial: Foreign Policy, Diaspora, Geopolitics* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2014), 19-22.

<sup>49</sup> See for instance, B. Guy Peters, *Institutional Theory in Political Science: The New Institutionalism* (New York: Continuum International Publishing, 2012)., S. Krasner, “Approaches to the State: Alternative Conceptions and Historical Dynamics,” *Comparative Politics* 16, (1984): 223-46 and P. Pierson and T. Skocpol, “Historical Institutionalism in Contemporary Political Science” in *Political Science: State of the Discipline* ed. I. Katznelson and H.V. Milner (New York: Norton, 2002).

<sup>50</sup> Myra A. Waterbury, “Bridging the divide: Towards a comparative framework for understanding kin state and migrant-sending state diaspora politics,” in *Diaspora and Transnationalism: Concepts, Theories and Methods* ed. Rainer Baubock & Thomas Faist (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010), 131.

<sup>51</sup> Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

<sup>52</sup> Stuart Elden, “Land, Terrain, Territory,” *Progress in Human Geography* 34, no. 6 (December 2010): 799-817.

an alternative conceptual framework to makes sense of the way in which states are now laying claim to diaspora populations that lie outside their territorial boundaries.<sup>53</sup> For instance, James C. Scott reminds us that territorial sovereignty has little historical precedence. Rather, “the concentration of manpower was the key to political power in premodern Southeast Asia. Scott writes that, at least in the Southeast Asian context, valuing and, by extension, controlling manpower often took precedence over territory not so much because “manpower was wealth as that it was the only means by which wealth could be securely held.”<sup>54</sup> Likewise, Clifford Geertz argues that Balinese political rivalries were “a struggle more for men than for land.”<sup>55</sup> Sovereignty over land, therefore, had little value in the absence of labor. The critical point here is that while territorial sovereignty is regularly taken to be homogenous, fixed and timeless, the historical record suggests otherwise. The dilemma in conceiving of diaspora as modes of territory, however, is to wholly privilege the agency primarily to the state. That is not to imply that diasporas are independent or disconnected from the state. Diasporas are themselves increasingly being constituted by the state and for the state.

The challenge is to understand how diasporas become constructed as agents for nation building. As we have seen ‘new institutionalism’ increasingly calls into question the delineation between institutional explanations based on organizational structures and cultural explanations based on an understanding of culture as shared attitudes or values. This turn has tended to “redefine culture itself as an institution.... viewing culture as a network of routines, symbols or scripts providing templates for behaviour.” Hall and Taylor go on to suggest that institutions influence behaviour not simply by specifying what one should do but also by specifying what one can imagine oneself doing in a given context.”<sup>56</sup> In this sense, institutions not only affect the strategic calculations of individuals but also their basic preferences and the very identity of an individual. The self-images and identities of social actors are formed by the institutional forms, images and signs provided by social life. At this point it’s worth reminding that membership in a

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<sup>53</sup> John Ruggie, “Territoriality and Beyond: Problematizing Modernity in International Relations,” *International Organization* 47, no. 1 (1993): 139-174.

<sup>54</sup> James C. Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* (London: Yale University Press, 2009), 64-66.

<sup>55</sup> Clifford Geertz, *Negara: The Theatre State in Nineteenth-Century Bali* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1980), 24.

<sup>56</sup> Hall and Taylor, “Political Science and the Three New Institutionalism,” 948.

nation or political community involves at the very least a tacit understanding of who belongs and who does not. The politics of belonging involves a process of claiming and *being* claimed, of *belonging* in the state or in the nation. To be accepted as a fully-fledged member in a nation, therefore, is to act and contribute in meaningful and socially appropriate ways. The sociological element of ‘new institutionalism’ suggests that what individuals perceive as a rational action can itself be socially constituted and frequently contend that individuals “seek to define and express their identity in socially meaningful ways.”<sup>57</sup> From this perspective, institutions are systems of meaning and that institutional behaviour and the behaviour of individuals within them greatly depend on the means incorporated and the symbols engineered. A classic example of this is Herbert Kaufman’s analysis of the U.S. Forest Service. Kaufman’s study was concerned with the way forest rangers were induced to carry out the edicts and terms developed by headquarters. Kaufman examined the way in which the Forest Service used symbol manipulation to define itself and to create patterns of behaviour within the lower ranks of the organization. Crucially, Kaufman highlights the role of training and the use of symbols in that training to elicit preferred behavioural patterns by its membership.<sup>58</sup> India has been a leader in this respect, with symbolic manipulation visibly on display during Modi’s *Swachh Bharat* Abhiyaan, a national cleanliness campaign launched to coincide with the birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, a campaign aimed at both a domestic and diasporic audience.<sup>59</sup> By playing on symbols of nationhood such as the state’s symbolic father, one can see how India manipulates cultural symbols to elicit contributions both at home and amongst the diaspora. Using cognitive scripts bound up within cultural symbols, sending states are at some level attempting to construct the behaviour of individuals to respond to the discourse of nation building by acting according to social conventions. Individuals then “simultaneously constitute themselves as social actors, in the sense of engaging in socially meaningful acts, and reinforce the convention to which they are adhering.”<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Hall and Taylor, “Political Science and the Three New Institutionalism,” 949.

<sup>58</sup> Herbert Kaufman, *The Forest Ranger, A Study in Administrative Behaviour* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1960), xi.

<sup>59</sup> Express Web Desk, “Swachh Bharat: How Mahatma Gandhi Became Torchbearer for Cleanliness,” *The Indian Express*, October 2, 2017.

<sup>60</sup> Hall and Taylor, “Political Science and the Three New Institutionalism,” 949.

Analyzing why states are altering their diasporic policy would, at first blush, then seem almost entirely calculated and instrumental. However, a cultural approach would argue that organizations often adopt new institutional practices, not only because they advance efficiency within the organization but because it “enhances the social legitimacy of the organization or its participants.” In this case, the adoption of a new institutional practice emerges because of its value within a broader cultural environment. At times, these institutional changes can occur despite their overall utility or in some cases, outright dysfunction for the organization. For instance, Yasemin Soysal argues that in the early 1990s, European states adopted policies toward their migrant workers, not because they were the most efficient or functional policy decision, but because a cultural climate emphasizing human rights made these decisions seem appropriate.<sup>61</sup> That is to say, organizations may adopt institutional practices as the result of the “logic of social appropriateness in contrast to the logic of instrumentality.”<sup>62</sup> States, therefore, may adopt or implement policy practices toward their diasporic communities not solely as the result of an instrumental logic but also due to the emergence of a widespread norm that it is appropriate to do so. The dilemma for researchers, Hall and Taylor point out, is to determine why legitimacy or social appropriateness is conferred upon some institutional arrangements and not on others. Ultimately, they argue, it boils down to sources of cultural authority. While no consensus exists on why certain institutional practices are adopted and some are not, there seems to be some agreement of an interactive process between varying actors on “shared problems, how to interpret them and how to solve them.” At the international level, the dilemma of how best to tackle state development may have encouraged shared agreement which translated into common practices across national boundaries. In this case, state led diaspora engagement strategies may be understood as an emerging cultural norm that cuts across national boundaries. However, as we will see in the next section, while states may adopt to international conventions that strengthening relationships with diasporic communities is socially appropriate, their interest only lays with a portion of that population. As a result, on the surface, states ostensibly engage the ‘global nation’ but in actual fact their policies only target specific populations abroad.

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<sup>61</sup> Yasemin Nuhoglu Soysal, *Limits of Citizenship: Migrants and Postnational Membership in Europe* (London, University of Chicago Press, 1994), 2-12.

<sup>62</sup> C.f. Campbell, “Institutional analysis and the role of ideas in political economy,” in *Rediscovering institutions: the organizational basis for politics* ed. James G. March and Johan P. Olsen (New York: Free Press, 1989), ch.2.

As we have seen ‘new institutionalism’ offers much in the way of theorizing social and political outcomes related to shifting state practices of engaging their diasporic populations. Crucially, by blending both a calculus and cultural approach I have shown the analytical potential of bringing to bear both a calculus and a cultural approach to our study. For instance, a calculus approach assumes behaviour to be instrumental and strategic while a cultural approach stresses routines and cognitive scripts as important indicators as to why actors behave in certain ways. And finally, I explored the international convention of territorial sovereignty, both in terms of how it applied to diaspora policy and, perhaps most crucially, why international norms have changed allowing for an emerging conception of territoriality, state and nation to draw diasporic communities within the broader nation-state. The remainder of the chapter outlines a comparative framework for understanding why and when states increase their engagement with diaspora. Following Myra Waterbury’s research, I argue, first, that while states ostensibly hail the global nation, their policies often target selective populations abroad, depending on what these populations can provide the sending state. Second, I argue that states ratchet up their engagement with certain populations because it serves a political purpose. In this case, diasporas represent a diverse set of assets ranging from cultural, material or political that sending state elites are eager to lay claim. And finally, I survey the policy tools used to capture these resources such as broadening the boundaries of citizenship and membership in the nation to co-opt and provoke diasporic populations to respond to the sending state.

### **Global Discourse, targeted policies**

In considering the potential reservoir of diaspora members for a given state it becomes patently obvious that categorizing who counts as a legitimate member of a state’s diasporic population is no easy task.<sup>63</sup> Forced or voluntary labour migration, the redrawing of international boundaries, political exile, sporadic or voluntary exile and state-sponsored migration suggests that states are likely to have strained relationships with elements of their diasporic populations. As a result,

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<sup>63</sup> There is clearly a tension that exists between treating diaspora as a process or social practice and diasporic populations as an already existing group that states might fruitfully engage. The goal, as Brubaker regularly points out is to “deflate diaspora, not to desubstantiate” them altogether. Avoiding the concept runs the risk of a descent into semantics leaving analysts with no common language, while the uncritical use of the term leaves one open to charges of essentialization. While I acknowledge that the use of diaspora is problematic that does not negate the fact that states regularly employ the term for their own political, social or cultural purposes. Rather than throwing the conceptual baby out with the bathwater, let us instead consider the constitutive power of the state to establish or give organized existence to whom it determines to be its expatriates. In turn, while I recognize the inherent tension of employing diaspora as a term within the project, I reject the notion that avoiding the use of diaspora is the only way forward.

states ostensibly hail their ‘global nation’ but target only selected members within that population. In this sense, employing the discourse of ‘global nation’ is frequently a rhetorical instrument obscuring the underlying motives driving diasporic engagement on the part of the sending state. For example, both Haiti and India have dramatically expanded their engagement with their diaspora populations but have rejected any potential role as a kin state across the border.<sup>64</sup> In Haiti, the post-Duvalier government of Aristide made connecting with its diaspora communities abroad a key plank in its development agenda. The Haitian government targeted wealthy Haitians living in Canada and the United States for their economic or political influence in their host state, while avoiding altogether Haitians living in nearby Dominican Republic for fear of exacerbating historical tensions over their common border.<sup>65</sup> Such has also been the case in India, whereby the Indian state ostensibly hailed its “long lost sons and daughters” as equal members within ‘the global Indian family’ and emphasized India as “Mother India” throughout the late 1990s and early 2000s. Despite employing a discourse aimed at the broader Indian family, the state primarily targeted only those Indians residing and working in the United States and Western Europe.<sup>66</sup> Meanwhile, the Indian state continues to specifically exclude citizens of neighboring Pakistan or Bangladesh for fears of inflaming regional tensions despite enacting laws meant to extend the benefits of the state to ‘people of Indian origin’ who presumably could also reside in Pakistan or Bangladesh. Alternatively, Itty Abraham proposes that the chief motivation behind India’s recent mobilization of its diaspora stems primarily from a need for international recognition whereby only certain segments of the Indian diaspora are of interest. In this case, non-resident, upper-caste and middle-class Indians are folded back into the Indian nation while “lower-caste, possibly Muslims and overseas residents of less developed countries or the Indian working class” are excluded.<sup>67</sup>

Conversely, Kazakhstan has molded state policies that focus on linguistic ties, targeting those residing outside of the Soviet sphere in “smaller Kazakh-speaking communities who would more

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<sup>64</sup> In the case of India, the analysis is restricted to its early engagements with its diaspora, not the more recent mobilization by Modi.

<sup>65</sup> John Itzigsohn, “Immigration and the boundaries of citizenship: The institutions of immigrant’s political transnationalism,” *International Migration Review* 36 (3) (2000): 767-798

<sup>66</sup> Varadarajan, *The Domestic Abroad* (New York: Oxford University Press), 19.

<sup>67</sup> Itty Abraham, *How India Became Territorial: Foreign Policy, Diaspora, Geopolitics* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2014), 106.

effectively contribute to the cultural rebirth of Kazakhstan.” As a result, the Kazakhstani government ignored those who had migrated to former Soviet republics who likely would only speak Russian and thereby have little to contribute to the cultural development of the state.<sup>68</sup> Likewise, Hungary has since reserved special benefits and national identification certificates to ethnic Hungarians in neighboring countries such as Romania, Slovakia, Ukraine and Serbia but not for those members assimilated into Hungary’s vast Western diaspora.<sup>69</sup> And finally, Fiona Adamson and Madeleine Demetriou’s study of Greek-Cypriot engagement of its diaspora assert that Cypriot political leadership have engaged in a new form of nation-state building aimed at developing a “political discourse which encourages the populations that make up its diaspora to continue to see themselves as citizens of their ancestral home.”<sup>70</sup> While the Greek Cypriot political elite are well aware that their diaspora are citizens of other states, official discourse still addresses them as if they are nationals of the country. Adamson and Demetriou argue that the trend of targeting the whole rather than specific diasporic members has become increasingly common amongst small states with substantial residents abroad.

The specific targeting of policies directed towards certain diasporic populations described above suggests that the state crafts and develops different connections to its external populations based primarily upon the potential those diasporic populations might offer to the sending state. However, in each case, the sending state was hailing its diaspora in response to a series of institutional ruptures. In the case of India, liberalization and the collapse of the Soviet Union as its main trading partner precipitated targeting diasporans with investment capital. For Haiti, structural adjustments and economic collapse produced a need to capture external revenue while Kazakhstani searched for nation building materials in terms of cultural and linguistic resources following its departure from the Soviet Union.<sup>71</sup> However, one could also read into the strategic targeting of particular groups as an effort to construct states and nations through exclusion. By

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<sup>68</sup> A. Diener, “Kazakhstan’s kin state diaspora: Settlement planning and the Oralman dilemma,” *Europe-Asia Studies* 57 (2) (2005): 334.

<sup>69</sup> Other countries that have followed the Hungarian example of targeting select ethnic minorities include Germany, Poland and Russia. See Myra A. Waterbury, *Between State and Nation: Diaspora Politics and Kin-State Nationalism in Hungary* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 1-23.

<sup>70</sup> Fiona B. Adamson and Madeleine Demetriou, “Remapping the Boundaries of ‘State’ and ‘National Identity’: Incorporating Diasporas into IR Theorizing,” *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 13(4): 507.

<sup>71</sup> Waterbury, “Bridging the divide: Towards a comparative framework for understanding kin state and migrant-sending state diaspora politics,” 136-137.

targeting select elements of diasporic populations states are attempting to promote an ideal type of national community based on the material conditions unique to each state.

### **Instrumentalising Diaspora for Development**

As recently as 1980, only a handful of states had created institutions aimed at their diaspora; now over half of all United Nations member states have formed or are forming institutions aimed specifically at renewing ties between themselves and their diasporas.<sup>72</sup> Much of this shift has coincided with a surge of research emphasizing the role diasporic communities can play in the development of the sending state. For instance, states have discovered that their diasporas can be an important source of material resources such as remittances which are sent home to the sending state as a source of diaspora-led investment or by offering the sending state a crucial export market for its exports, cultural output or even a temporary source of labour. Current research has also analyzed the potential role of diaspora members in accelerating economic, social and political reforms for development resulting from their “in-between advantage.”<sup>73</sup> As Agnieszka Weimer notes, there has been a “growing body of official documents of United Nations agencies, policy recommendations of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), World Bank studies on remittances and OECD work and research” that have alerted policy makers in the sending state to the developmental potential of their diasporas.<sup>74</sup>

Interest in diaspora populations coincides with large numbers of states integrating into economic and trade organizations, entry that often forces the state to deepen liberalization of its economy. In turn, these structural changes provoke a need to stabilize the domestic economy through an increase from remittances and investment. Over the past few years, Development Studies research into diasporic communities argues that diasporas represent a potentially lucrative source of revenue to boost development within a given state. From a Development Studies perspective, there is an assumption that immigrants maintain familial, economic, political and cultural ties across international borders.<sup>75</sup> As a result, there is an increased chance that the sending and host

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<sup>72</sup> Alan Gamlen, “Diaspora Institutions and Diaspora Governance,” *International Migration Review*, 48: 180-217.

<sup>73</sup> Jennifer M. Brinkerhoff, *Institutional Reform and Diaspora Entrepreneurs* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

<sup>74</sup> Agnieszka Weinar, “Instrumentalising diasporas for development: International and European policy discourses,” in *Diaspora and Transnationalism: Concepts, Theories and Methods*, ed. Rainer Baubock & Thomas Faist (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010), 73-74.

<sup>75</sup> See for instance, “U.S. Foreign Aid in the National Interest: Promoting Freedom, Security and Opportunity,” *United States Agency for International Development (USAID)*, Washington, D.C.: 2002., Gilbert Manda, “Brain

societies may constitute a single arena of social action,” thereby aiding a sending state’s development agenda.<sup>76</sup> However, determining who constitutes legitimate members of a given nation and is therefore willing to assist in development goals is not always straightforward. As Weimar notes, within development research focusing on diaspora, the criterion for who constitutes a legitimate member of a given community is non-descript, “the “ultimate defining indicator is whether the actors engage in development policy. Diaspora includes practically anybody with a migrant background who contributes to the development of the sending state. Such a person can be included regardless of his or her legal status and country of birth.”<sup>77</sup> In this sense, the category or concept of diaspora from the perspective of development studies suggests that membership in the nation is constituted through the practice of developing or assisting a nation building agenda. Furthermore, and perhaps more insidiously, membership in the nation would seem to be based on willingness to act in economic terms rather than any cultural or ethnic affiliation.

### **Remittance, Investment and the State: Diaspora as Strategic Asset**

The primary emphasis of nearly all development studies on diaspora promote their latent economic power in generating development in the home state. Aided through enhancements in communication and transportation but also through the transnational movement of capital, home states are eager to facilitate a flow of resources from diasporic communities back to themselves, in effect, reversing the brain drain into a brain gain. Financial remittances and the ever-increasing financial clout of some diasporic members are typically flaunted as the key drivers in this relationship. Many states with large diasporas such as the Philippines, Turkey, and many Latin American, Middle Eastern and some South Eastern European countries rely heavily on their diasporas working in richer economies to contribute to the country’s GDP.<sup>78</sup> Relatedly, a policy brief developed by the World Bank heralded the wealth of diasporas for home states as an

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Drain or Brain Gain?” *New African* 435 (December 2004): 74., Dilip Ratha, “Leveraging Remittances for Development,” *Policy Brief* 3, Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, (June 2007)., Jennifer M. Brinkerhoff, *Diasporas and Development: Exploring the Potential* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2008) and *Realizing the Development Potential of Diasporas*, ed. Krishnan Sharma, Arun Kashyap, Manuel F. Montes and Paul Ladd (New York: United Nations University Press, 2011).

<sup>76</sup> Nancy Foner, “What’s So new about Transnationalism? New York Immigrants Today and at the Turn of the Century,” *Diaspora* 6, no. 3 (1997): 354-75.

<sup>77</sup> Weinar, “Instrumentalising diasporas for development,” 78.

<sup>78</sup> Kathleen Newland and Erin Patrick, “Beyond Remittances: The Role of Diaspora in Poverty Reduction in their Countries of Origin,” Scoping study by the Migration Policy Institute for the Department of International Development (July 2004), [http://www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/Beyond\\_Remittances\\_0704.pdf](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/Beyond_Remittances_0704.pdf).

“untapped pool of oil” that can be tapped-into, mobilized and channelled into state development strategies.<sup>79</sup>

The World Bank has co-authored many of the in-depth studies devoted to the benefits of leveraging diasporas for developmental purposes, an example of which is a recent full-length study commissioned by the World Bank titled *Diaspora for Development in Africa* offering practical measures states can take to extract diasporic potential abroad. The publication offers useful tips such as where the bulk of African diasporas are located, the benefits of diasporas in terms of remittances, trade, various kinds of investment and transfer of technology and the policies that African countries should consider to increase the diasporas contribution to development.<sup>80</sup> The principle focus in terms of the economic effects of diasporas on the home state has been on their substantial financial contributions through remittances-private transfers from migrants to their families.<sup>81</sup> There now exists credible evidence that for a large number of low and even middle income countries, remittances are the single largest source of net foreign exchange flows and, by all accounts, foreign exchange receipts from remittances are comparable to those from exports. Undoubtedly, the international community has awakened to the potential of diasporas and their role in financing development through investment and remittances over the past decade with recorded remittances estimated to have totalled US\$316 billion in 2009, in comparison with US\$113 billion in 2002. Indeed, most authors within the field of development studies would agree that over the past decade recorded remittances have outpaced those of private capital flows and official development assistance while, in absolute terms remittances have nearly equalled foreign direct investment (FDI) and are almost double the official aid received by developing countries; but their true size, if one accounts for unrecorded flows through informal channels is infinitely larger.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> World Bank, “Harnessing the Diaspora’s Resources to Boost African Development,” press release, 16 June 2011, [go.worldbank.org/DGS98YYPBO](http://go.worldbank.org/DGS98YYPBO).

<sup>80</sup> Sonia Plaza and Dilip Ratha, “Overview: Harnessing Diaspora Resources for Africa,” in *Diaspora for Development in Africa*, eds. Sonia Plaza and Dilip Ratha, (Washington DC: World Bank, 2011): 1-55.

<sup>81</sup> Daves Kapur, *Diaspora, Development and Democracy: The Domestic Impact of International Migration From India* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), 28-30.

<sup>82</sup> *Realizing the Development Potential of Diasporas*, eds. Krishnan Sharma, Arun Kashyap, Manuel F. Montes and Paul Ladd (New York: United Nations University Press, 2011).

The growth of remittances over the past decade, significant as they may be, comprise only one facet of the positive impact transfers of private capital by diasporas make on their sending state. Research often underscores their relative stability and consistency as well as the tendency for remittances to increase in response to negative shocks or general downturns in a state's economy, factors when contrasted against the sporadic nature of FDI make them particularly lucrative sources of income for home states. Remittances have also been shown to reduce incidences of poverty and aid households in diversifying their sources of income as well as growing household investments in education, entrepreneurship and health. Alternatively, with respect to trade, diasporas often exhibit a preference for their home state's goods and services, a behaviour referred to as "home bias" a type of nostalgic trade in ethnic products which can be a significant means of boosting a home state's net exports.<sup>83</sup> Meanwhile, host states trade more frequently with countries from which they have received large numbers of immigrants, an increase in bilateral trade often attributed to the ability of diasporic communities to navigate the particularities of their home state regulatory frameworks or in easing cultural and language barriers.<sup>84</sup> At the same time, a diaspora can be an indirect source of advantage to the country of origin when its members act as reputational intermediaries by connecting trading partners, leveraging long-term relationships between business interests in both the host and home states, and through overcoming negative national stereotypes through evidence of their capabilities abroad.<sup>85</sup>

Beyond their ability to facilitate trade, governments are readily embracing the idea that the human and financial capital held by their diaspora members are a potential source of investment and entrepreneurship, which is proving to be more dependable than developmental strategies traditionally targeting FDI. One reason accounting for the change in approach stems from the recognition that diaspora, unlike fickle and largely risk adverse foreign investors, are increasingly recognized as development partners due to their willingness to assume higher levels

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<sup>83</sup> Maurice Obstfeld and Kenneth Rogoff, "The Six Major Puzzles in International Macroeconomics: Is There a Common Cause?" *National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper No. 7777* (Cambridge, MA: NBER, 2000).

<sup>84</sup> Plaza and Ratha, "Overview: Harnessing Diaspora Resources for Africa," 1-55.

<sup>85</sup> Ajay Agrawal, Devesh Kapur, and John McHale, "How Do Spatial and Social Proximity Influence Knowledge Flows? Evidence from Patent Data," *Journal of Urban Economics* 64 (2008): 258-69 and Ajay Agrawal, Devesh Kapur, John McHale and Alexander Oettl, "Brain Drain or Brain Bank? The Impact of Skilled Emigration on Poor-Country Innovation," *Journal of Urban Economics* Vol. 69, Issue 1 (January 2011): 43-55.

of financial risk because of their favourable placement to evaluate investment opportunities and nurture contacts in home states quickening investment opportunities.<sup>86</sup> In other cases, emotive factors such as attachment to home and sense of duty as well as the frequency and duration of visits to the home state have all been shown to boost investment by diaspora. Brinkerhoff has referred to this feature as “hot” contributions whereby, in contrast to “cold” money, devoid of human attachment, “hot” donations “bring with them a more direct experience and commitment, with personal warmth, attachment, and expectations, which ultimately may sustain and broaden the original contribution.”<sup>87</sup> Beyond direct investment in a home state’s economy, diasporas also transfer funds directly to households for the purpose of investment in agricultural equipment, the building of houses, businesses, land purchases, improving agricultural farmland and so forth. In sum, the private transfer of funds in the form of remittances has dramatically increased over the past decade and all signs appear that this trend will continue to increase in the future.<sup>88</sup>

To summarize, diaspora has increasingly become an instrument for economic development for sending states. It is, however, worth considering that the reification of diaspora may be actively constructed through the efforts of International Governmental Organizations (IGOs) such as the IMF, World Bank and others. In this case, policy entrepreneurs contribute to the construction of diaspora as a discrete concept because of their willingness to positively contribute to the economic wellbeing of a given sending states. In response, Alissa Trotz and Beverly Mullings argue that the turn to diaspora in development policy circles devalues and renders invisible “the vast majority of Caribbean’s abroad who are concentrated in the low-paid and marginal segments of labour markets” and comprise little value to the sending state. They go on to argue that the emphasis on the economic potential of migrants’ economic and human capital severs the mutually reinforcing relationship between social reproduction and economic production that these transnational flows animate. The power of the state to label, brand or designate identity, particularly in cases where sending states are attempting to profit from diasporic communities is considerable.

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<sup>86</sup> R. Lucas, “Diaspora and Development: Highly Skilled Migrants from East Asia,” *Institute for Economic Development Working Paper Series 120*, Boston University Department of Economics, Boston, 2001.

<sup>87</sup> Brinkerhoff, *Institutional Reform and Diaspora Entrepreneurs*, 5.

<sup>88</sup> Plaza and Dilip Ratha, “Overview: Harnessing Diaspora Resources for Africa,” 16,

### **Diaspora as Political Capital**

Beyond development, diasporic engagement can play a role in political legitimation, both at home and abroad. Hailing diasporic communities abroad and establishing cross-border ties often provides governments and political elites opportunities to shore up their legitimacy during economic or political crisis, or in cases when the sovereignty of a state is weakened through external pressures. For instance, during moments of structural unrest in Mexico, Sherman argues that the Mexican state mobilized its populations abroad “during moments in which political legitimacy was being questioned, and the state was trying to consolidate a particular institutional order.” In this sense, gaining access to material resources comprised an acute strategy for “the process of nation building and maintaining elite dominance at home.” Similarly, diasporic communities can serve a key culturo-linguistic function, particularly as a means of constructing national identity or cultural reproduction.<sup>89</sup> They can often serve as key agents in the construction of national myths, myths which are then utilized to legitimate nationalist political agendas providing cover for politicians to then include or exclude access to the political power and the resources of the state. And finally, these communities can provide key sources of political influence in the state of residence in the form of political lobbying. As Devesh Kapur contends, the influence of any diaspora depends on its size, socioeconomic characteristics and access to points in the power structure in the host country.<sup>90</sup> For many states, a primary motivation in hailing their diasporic communities is to gain access to the political influence these communities have harnessed in their country of residence in the hope of constructing favorable policies vis a vis the sending state. In short, diasporas offer a valuable ingredient to nation building efforts in the home state, the result of which is to broaden the concept of the nation and state from a spatially restricted understanding, to a concept which crosses territorial borders.

### **Nation Building and Diasporic Engagement**

I now turn to understand how the sending state maintains dependable access to diasporic resources. For the sending state, to maintain a dependable flow of resources often requires the building of durable connections to its external population. A frequent strategy for states is to extend their sovereignty and redefine the boundaries of citizenship and membership. For the

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<sup>89</sup> Adamson and Demetriou, “Remapping the Boundaries of ‘State’ and ‘National Identity’: Incorporating Diasporas into IR Theorizing,” 489.

<sup>90</sup> Kapur, *Diaspora, Development and Democracy*, 50-84.

sending state, political elites often craft institutional frameworks that can lure and cement its relationship to its diaspora through the construction of clientelistic relationships that extend beyond the boundaries of the state. Francesco Ragnazzi, Alan Gamlen and James To each argue that “diaspora engagement policies’ form part of an effort to “transnationalize governmentality” whereby states seek to “cooptate” their diasporic communities.<sup>91</sup> Ragnazzi goes on to say that within the framework of transnational governmentality we should begin to consider how the response of the state to its diasporic communities represents a full-scale shift in governing approach. To his mind, it is primarily a “political process that ultimately seeks to legitimize a radical shift in the way governments organize the relationship between power and territory, a shift which deeply questions the traditional Westphalian principle of territoriality.”<sup>92</sup> However, in this case, territory does not refer so much to land and terrain but to the diasporic members themselves. In this way, governments are increasingly searching for new methods and tools to both lure and incorporate diasporic communities into the institutional fabric of the sending state thereby constituting diasporas as governable subjects.

Likewise, Alan Gamlen’s research reflects on the growth of formal government offices dedicated to emigrants and their descendants - or diasporic institutions - that states create to facilitate, support and coordinate the exchanges between the sending state and their diaspora. Their emergence relates to the evolution of new forms of global governance in the arena of diasporic politics, to new types of state sovereignty, new forms of citizenship, and increasingly, they relate to new forms of individual identity. As Gamlen argues, diaspora is progressively developing into a form of dispersed belonging defined by nation-states (and IGOs) rather than in opposition to them.<sup>93</sup> Governmentality has gained ground in studies of state-diaspora relations primarily because governments lack the coercive authority to extend power beyond their territorially rooted legal jurisdictions. The effectiveness of extra-territorial policies depends on the ability to make migrants self-identify as loyal and self-disciplining subjects willing to contribute to nation building efforts.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Gamlen, “Diaspora Institutions and Diaspora Governance,” 183-185., Francesco Ragnazzi, “Governing Diasporas,” *International Political Sociology* (2009) 3: 378-397 and James Jiann Hua To, *Qiaowu: Extra-territorial Policies for the Overseas Chinese* (Leiden: Brill, 2014).

<sup>92</sup> Francesco, “Governing Diasporas,” 391.

<sup>93</sup> Gamlen, “Diaspora Institutions and Diaspora Governance,” 183-185

<sup>94</sup> Gamlen, “Diaspora Institutions and Diaspora Governance,” 194.

Likewise, Waterbury's research into the Hungarian state's relationship to its diaspora argues that political parties regularly compete to co-opt diasporan leaders to build clientelistic relationships that extend beyond the boundaries of the Hungarian state.<sup>95</sup> In Mexico, the government of Vicente Fox often shaped the message and the allegiance of Mexican communities living in the US. Similarly, in the Middle East, Laurie Brand's research suggests that both Tunisia and Morocco utilized institutions of external affairs such as expatriate affairs offices as elements of control to strengthen their domestic security objectives. In Cyprus, political elites developed a series of incentives for any Greek-Cypriot who planned to repatriate such as, "rent rebate for a year, the facility to import duty free household goods and a duty-free car, currency concessions, medical coverage, free Greek-language classes and certain exemptions from military service."<sup>96</sup> In most cases, the instruments by which the sending state attempts to shape those ties are remarkably similar. The sending state can "(1) seek to change host state policies through diplomatic advocacy or treaty protections; (2) fund diaspora community organisations and the creation of educational, cultural, political and entrepreneurial institutions; (3) offer full or limited forms of political citizenship or dual nationality; (4) offer full or limited forms of social citizenship through the welfare state; or (5) extend the benefits of cultural and symbolic membership through rhetorical inclusion, ethnic identity cards and trans-border cultural exchanges."<sup>97</sup>

Of all the tools that sending states employ, perhaps the most powerful is the extension of various forms of citizenship, whereby those abroad are offered preferential access and claims to the institutional structures of the state. Traditionally, citizenship clung to individuals when moving across borders and they clung to it when moving across international borders. But as migration has accelerated, an increasingly number of sending states have begun to reconfigure their conception of citizenship and political community through the extension of external citizenship as a "persistent link with their diaspora abroad that could be activated for economic, political and

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<sup>95</sup> Myra A. Waterbury, *Between State and Nation: Diaspora Politics and Kin-State Nationalism in Hungary* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

<sup>96</sup> Adamson and Demetriou, "Remapping the Boundaries of 'State' and 'National Identity': Incorporating Diasporas into IR Theorizing," 507.

<sup>97</sup> Waterbury, "Bridging the divide: Towards a comparative framework for understanding kin state and migrant-sending state diaspora politics," 142.

cultural policy goals.”<sup>98</sup> Baubock argues that we need to consider transnational citizenship in the sense that it now refers to an institutional transformation of membership and legal rights. This change is less the direct result of migration and more the outcome of shifts in “normative conceptions of political community that respond to perceived challenges and opportunities created by migration.”<sup>99</sup> The goal of extending new forms of citizenship such as dual citizenship or “ethnizenship” (a form of symbolic citizenship based ethnic ties) is to produce a relationship of rights and obligations with external populations that functionally tie populations to the sending state or state of origin. These new forms of citizenship replace the need for diasporic populations to live in the physical territory of the sending state while compelling diaspora to engage with it from abroad.<sup>100</sup> Through the extension of new forms of citizenship the state has, in effect, created an institutional framework that extends the sovereignty of the nation-state beyond land and terrain without resorting to (or, in its very absence) coercive forms of home state power, thereby allowing continued access to diasporic resources. Therefore, the extension of various new forms of citizenship is constructing new forms of belonging to a political community which extend traditional forms of citizenship as primarily a relation between an individual and a single polity. As sending states develop new institutional frameworks to capture and control their external populations Waterbury argues “diaspora politics” as a useful term that captures the *intentionality* of the state in constructing a relationship which often preys upon a desire among segments of a diasporic population to reconnect their “phantom leg” with an “imaginary homeland” through the application of a variety of policies and institutional frameworks.<sup>101</sup>

The discussion in the chapter has focused on building a theoretical model which makes sense of decisive shifts in political behaviour between states and their diasporic populations. I have suggested that in order to explain these shifts, first, diaspora should be defined as both a process and a practice. This allows for a multi-level analysis which neither negates the role individuals

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<sup>98</sup> Rainer Baubock, Cold Constellations and hot identities: Political theory questions about transnationalism and diaspora,” in *Diaspora and Transnationalism: Concepts, Theories and Methods*, ed. Rainer Baubock & Thomas Faist (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010), 298.

<sup>99</sup> Baubock, Cold Constellations and hot identities,” 299.

<sup>100</sup> Kim Barry, ‘Home and away: The construction of citizenship in an emigration context’, *New York University Law Review* 81 (1) (2006): 21.

<sup>101</sup> Waterbury, “Bridging the divide: Towards a comparative framework for understanding kin state and migrant-sending state diaspora politics,” 148.

play in the formation of diasporic identity nor denies the agency of states which actively engage in their own unique approach to identify what constitutes their diaspora. Second, the chapter makes a case for the application of ‘new institutionalism’. I have suggested above that through the theoretical approach of ‘new institutionalism’ state-diasporic engagement practices can be better understood as an institutional practice, which in turn allow us to explain state’s behaviour change in terms of their diasporic populations and what factors incline diaspora to respond. It also allows us to ask a two-fold question – a) who the sending state targets, why they are targeted and when states increase their engagement with their diasporic populations abroad; and b) what policy tools states develop to encourage dependable contributions of the diaspora to its political agenda.

The next chapter turns to address the modern Indian state’s approach to its diaspora. The intent of the chapter is to provide a historical foundation from which to make sense of why the Indian diaspora evolved from a political liability to an instrument of strength.

## Chapter Two

### Political Liability or Strategic Asset? Understanding Modern India's Approach to its Diasporic Community

The intent of the chapter is to trace historically the modern Indian state's approach to its potential diaspora. This historical understanding is imperative to understand the present Modi government's engagement with the Indian diaspora as a crucial component of a muscular Hindu nation-building project which aims to redefine what it means to be Indian. The Indian diaspora referred to in this study starts with those who were transported in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to various British colonies as indentured labour to work on sugar, tea and rubber plantations (Fiji, Surinam, Guyana, Mauritius, Malaysia, Trinidad and South Africa), and includes all those who left India in the twentieth century for Europe, North America and the Middle East. The latter migration was different from its earlier version as it included the professional educated middle class; those who joined their families (through a family reunification program); veterans of the Indian army who had participated in the two world wars and other labouring classes who were recruited to build the shattered economies of Britain, Holland and Germany in the aftermath of World War II; as well as a secondary strand of this working class which provided labour for the development of the wealthy petro-states of the Middle East. Comprised of varying ethnic, linguistic, and religious traditions and with a strong presence in over 100 countries, the modern Indian diaspora is consistently referred to as an international phenomenon.

Despite a diaspora population of nearly 30 million, the Indian state has not always maintained a consistent diasporic policy. For instance, following independence, India's official diaspora policy was strict neutrality. India's first Prime Minister Nehru urged the scattered Indian communities to naturalize within their country of residence so as to avoid the deterioration of India's reputation on the global stage.<sup>102</sup> From the vantage of New Delhi, while the diaspora were culturally Indian, politically they were not. And yet, in recent years the redrafting of the official boundaries between the diaspora and the state, reflected in the decision to alter the legal definition of its diaspora according to two categories, Non-Resident Indians (NRI's) and Persons of Indian Origin (PIO), suggests that the cultural and the political no longer remain categorically

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<sup>102</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru, "Debate on Foreign Affairs in Lok Sabha," December 17, 1957.

distinct. As this chapter will point out, for the contemporary Indian state, its diaspora no longer represents a liability, but it is considered a source of strength.

To make sense of this policy shift, the discussion in this chapter has been divided into two parts. I begin by placing within historical context the colonial practices that aided the development of the modern Indian diaspora and its relationship to early Indian nationalists. The second section reviews the post-colonial period. Here I point to two approaches by independent India to its modern diaspora: a) the political exclusion from the Indian state where Indian citizenship was territorially defined, b) the reclaiming of the Indian diaspora by the Indian state for instrumental purposes. This chapter argues that following independence, Jawaharlal Nehru's emphasis on popular sovereignty resulted in the defining of Indian citizenship along distinct political boundaries, boundaries that precluded the diaspora from any deep connection to the Indian state. However, during the early 1990s, the stage was set for India's reengagement with its modern diaspora. It suggests that external pressures such as globalization, structural adjustment and economic liberalization required India to search for policy tools capable, both as a means of shoring up a flagging domestic sector and as an avenue of softening its entry into the global economy. In so doing, the realignment of the Indian state's relationship to its modern diaspora is very much the manifestation of this recent recognition. As a result, this chapter lays the interpretive groundwork necessary for both understanding the evolution of the modern Indian diaspora as a multilevel instrument of the state; capable of simultaneously achieving domestic development, rebranding the global conception of India and signifying what it means to be Indian, as well as setting the stage for understanding Modi's objectives in courting the Indian diaspora at a different scale and with different intent (the theme of the next chapter).

Modern India's shifting approach to its diaspora also offers concrete examples from which to analyze and apply institutional theory to India's state-diasporic engagement. Chapter one conceptualized state-diasporic engagement as an institutional practice. In so doing, I provided the theoretical space to broaden our understanding of why states have since changed their behaviour regarding their external populations, who and why particular diaspora are targeted and what factors trigger diaspora to respond to sending states through the tools states utilize to increase engagement. By synthesizing new institutionalism, I argued states' behaviour vis-à-vis their

diaspora as comprising both strategic and culturally patterned behaviour. In terms of post-colonial India's relationship to its diaspora, a cultural perspective explains its approach as an adaptation to behavioural routines embedded in the international system emphasizing territorial sovereignty. At the same point, Nehru's official policy of strict neutrality was also driven by strategic priorities whereby foreign policy calculations and internal concerns over safeguarding national unity and establishing citizen's loyalty determined India's diaspora policy. The decision by India to distance itself from its diaspora then guided policy development along structured paths that resisted alternative courses of action.

The decision by India to re-engage its diaspora in the early 1990s followed a predictable interactive process between varying global actors on shared problems including discussions on, how to interpret them and how to solve them. As a series of critical junctures disrupted long held state policy decisions, India began to reconfigure its conception of who constitutes an Indian as a means of shoring up a flagging economy. As globalization altered the domestic and international landscape India began searching for reliable partners, partners which emerged in the form of economically prosperous, politically connected Indians living in high value states. As was the case in many states, India's main challenge was in developing their diaspora into reliable partners for development. Perhaps its most potent weapon was to play on a politics of belonging, manipulating a desire to restore what Gaiutra Bahadur referred to as the diaspora's "phantom leg syndrome." However, despite India's rhetoric of hailing its global family it mainly sought to connect with high valued segments of its diaspora. In the case of India, an external politics of belonging developed into a state agenda which manipulated cultural symbols to elicit contributions amongst the diaspora. As a result, this chapter reflects on how India constructed the behaviour of segments of its diaspora to respond to the discourse of state development.

### **2.1 The Origins of the Modern Indian Diaspora**

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century of the British colonial period, mass migration from India in the form of indentured labour to countries such as Fiji, South Africa, East Africa, Mauritius, Malaysia, and many parts of the Caribbean, South Asians serving in the British army as well as economic migrants to Canada, the UK and the United States occurred.<sup>103</sup> These early migrations played a

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<sup>103</sup> For treatment of early forms of Indian migration please see Ashok Rao, "The Indian Diaspora-Past, Present and Future," <https://www.tie.org/article/indian-diaspora-past-present-and-future-ashok-rao>.

vital role in amplifying the visibility and importance of the Indian diaspora across the globe as they put down roots in various locales while retaining vestiges of their cultural heritage. Crucially, these early migrants broke important ground for successive waves of Indian migration in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. That is neither to imply an overly romanticized version of this early wave of migration nor to conflate the experience of each diasporic community as comparable. As Vijay Mishra, writing on the nature of the Indian diaspora, wryly notes: “All diasporas are unhappy, but every diaspora is unhappy in its own way.”<sup>104</sup> The pressures, challenges and lived experience of each Indian community are unique. It is, therefore, a challenging task to write about such an expansive community of Indians in a way that is critical while not opening up considerable space to assertions of reductionism. Despite these words of caution, this section, while neither exhaustive nor comprehensive, accounts for the broader structural processes, which generated the origins of the modern Indian diaspora and its future association with an independent Indian state.

### **Indentured Labour: A New Form of Slavery**

*Despite the fact that over 60% of the population even wants for minimum necessities, the migratory instinct is practically non-existent among the Indian peasantry, free emigration beyond the seas being unthinkable.*<sup>105</sup>

Between the 1830s and the 1930s, nearly thirty million Indians travelled overseas with approximately 24 million returning. Sugata Bose argues that the steady stream of Indians flowing out by the 1830s should be understood as constituting a type of circular migration rather than pure emigration.<sup>106</sup> The sheer volume of overseas travel by Indians is ironic considering the Indian sociologist Lanka Sundaram’s observation that most Indians were not known for their “migratory instinct” at this time.<sup>107</sup> How then do we make sense of nearly 2.5 million Indians living overseas in the 1930s and nearly 4 million by independence? Perhaps no single event has had a greater impact on the emergence and growth of the Indian diasporic community than the passing of the Act of Abolition by the British Parliament in 1833 banning slavery across the

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<sup>104</sup> Vijay Mishra, *The Literature of the Indian Diaspora: Theorizing the Diasporic Imaginary* (London: Routledge, 2007), 1.

<sup>105</sup> Lanka Sundaram, *Indians Overseas: A Study in Economic Sociology* (Madras: G.A. Natesan and Co, 1933) 4. Quoted in Varadarajan...

<sup>106</sup> Sugata Bose, *A Hundred Horizons: The Indian Ocean In The Age Of Global Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 73.

<sup>107</sup> For most Indians global travel was not a reality, partly the result of a parochial worldview but also due to the sheer cost of overseas travel, a material expense that restricted most Indians from travelling abroad.

British Empire.<sup>108</sup> The British decision to abolish slavery generated the recruitment of Indians as indentured labourers for British plantations, and as a result, generated a massive flow of Indians overseas which produced what Hugh Tinker has coined “A New System of Slavery.”

In the aftermath of the ban on slavery and with no alternative to cheap labour, a period of intense decay set in throughout much of the British West Indies. William Sewell, observing the deteriorating situation in St. Vincent in May 1840 wrote: “the streets are overgrown with weeds; the houses look as though something much less than a hurricane would level them with the ground.”<sup>109</sup> In the face of near complete financial devastation, British planters, using their considerable influence in the British Parliament, were able to encourage labour migration from India to replace slaves who, following their emancipation, refused to work the plantations any longer. As a result, millions of Indian labourers were recruited, typically from the states of Bihar, Bengal and Tamil Nadu to work for plantations in Mauritius, Reunion, South Africa, Trinidad, Guyana, Jamaica, Burma, Sri Lanka, Malaysia and Fiji. Those who were recruited were, by and large, drawn almost exclusively from lower castes, (many of the Tamils were Untouchables) under the age of 30, and desperate. Tinker, quoting the Colonial Office circa 1913: “it does not appear to be generally understood that we are confined in our recruiting to a class of people who are not the most robust of the natives of India...we are confined to drawing our recruits from people who are exposed to famine, drought and flood...and who at times are forced to undergo long periods of semi-starvation.”<sup>110</sup> In other words, the British may have ended slavery but they were all too aware that the global labour practices replacing it were profoundly exploitative and predatory.

The term indenture implied a signed contract, whereby the labourer was expected to work for an employer for a period of five years to which he/she was to perform whatever task was assigned. During their five-year contracted term, the labourer received a basic pay, accommodation, food and health services. Following the initial five-year contract, the labourer was entitled to re-indenture or could choose to work somewhere else in the colony. At the end of a ten-year period,

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<sup>108</sup> Varadarajan, *The domestic abroad*, 53-54.

<sup>109</sup> Hugh Tinker, *A New System of Slavery: The Export of Indian Labour Overseas: 1830-1920* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), 18.

<sup>110</sup> Tinker, *A New System of Slavery*, 59-60.

he or she was then provided a free or partly paid return passage to India or a piece of crown land in lieu of the return passage fare.<sup>111</sup> For the Indians who were brought to work as labourers on the plantations, the conditions of labour were exceptionally harsh. Charles Anderson, sent by the Indian government to investigate the conditions of indentured labour in Mauritius in 1839, wrote to the colonial secretary: “With few exceptions they (Indians) are treated with great and unjust severity, by overwork and by personal chastisement; their lodging accommodations is either too confined and disgustingly filthy, or none is provided for them; and in cases of sickness (there is) the most culpable neglect.”<sup>112</sup>

**Table 1. A sample of indentured Indian immigrants by colony in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries**

Colony (Country)	Period	Indian Immigrants	Indian Population (Est.) 1980.
Mauritius	1834-1912	453,063	623,000
British Guiana (Guyana)	1838-1917	238,909	424,400
Natal (South Africa)	1860-1911	152,184	750,000
Trinidad	1845-1917	143,939	421,000
Reunion	1829-1924	118,100	125,000
Fiji	1879-1916	60,969	300,700
Guadelope	1854-1885	42,326	23,165
East Africa (Kenya, Uganda)	1895-1901	39,771	79,000/430*
Jamaica	1854-1885	36,420	50,300
Dutch Guiana (Suriname)	1873-1916	34,000	124,900
Martinique	1854-1889	25,509	16,450
Seychelles	1899-1916	6,319	NA

\* These figures are much lower than those prior to the expulsions of 1972.

Source: Kadekar, “Global Indian Diaspora: A Brief History,” 33.

### Beyond Indenture: Soldiers, Students and Revolutionaries

Although the Indian overseas population was largely comprised of those living on the margins of Indian society, it was not solely lower caste Indians who made their way overseas. As Itty Abraham notes, both Hindu and Muslim trading families and networks were heavily concentrated in trading

<sup>111</sup> Laxmi Narayan Kadekar, “Global Indian Diaspora: A Brief History,” edited by Ajaya Kumar Sahoo and Laxmi Narayan Kadekar (New Delhi: Rawat Publications, 2012), 30.

<sup>112</sup> Tinker, *A New System of Slavery*, 69. For a breakdown of Indian migration from the 1830s to the 1930s see Table 1.

ports such as Malacca, Surat, Canton, and Basra. By the end of the nineteenth century a network of merchant capitalists could be found across much of the British Empire.<sup>113</sup> Bose suggests that for the period between the 1830s and the 1930s, nearly one and a half million Indians were estimated to have engaged in commercial enterprises.<sup>114</sup> Beyond indentured servitude and commercial interests, Bose draws our attention to the other primary process which spread Indians around the globe in the latter half of the 18<sup>th</sup> and early part the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, chiefly the hundreds of thousands of Indians who served overseas in the Indian Army.

Although somewhat of a misnomer, the Indian Army was a fundamental plank of British Imperialism. Following the 1857 mutinies and the decision to officially declare British conquest finished, Indian regiments were deployed, not to shore up defense within India but to strengthen British imperial interests in Asia and Africa.<sup>115</sup> In particular, Bose draws our attention to the experiences of subaltern Indian soldiers and how their experiences overseas were a crucial “spatial venue for Indian soldiers to rethink their identities and loyalties. The stark choice between the global British Empire and the territorial Indian nation with rigid borders was not necessarily the only one available to them. Lurking in the background of the rival claims of king and country, the complex and yet not fully understood phenomenon of a diasporic patriotism confronted the soldiers.”<sup>116</sup>

In addition to merchants, labourers and soldiers, the overseas Indian population also included students and revolutionaries in exile. Emerging in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Harald Fischer-Tine traces the root of what he labels “radical diaspora nationalism,” a well-organized and tightly knit anti-imperialist web of Indian revolutionaries who appeared on the eve of the First World War and stretched over three continents. Aided in large part by technological developments in

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<sup>113</sup> Abraham, 80.

<sup>114</sup> Bose, *A Hundred Horizons*, 73.

<sup>115</sup> Partha Sarathi Gupta and Anirudh Deshpande, eds., *The British Raj and Its Indian Armed Forces: 1857-1939* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002).

<sup>116</sup> Bose, *A Hundred Horizons*, 147. For more, please pay particular attention to chapter 4 “Waging War for King and Country.” Bose argues that despite the various elements of race, religious and linguistic community, as well as class and rank, the shared experience of South Asian men and women fighting for the British overseas sowed the seeds of a collective consciousness that was neither fully British nor completely South Asian. Rather, Bose suggests that the experiences of South Asian soldiers shattered the boundary between allegiance to King or country and instead offered a glimpse into diasporic hybridity, a form of in-between, which would become the hallmark of many diaspora communities scattered around the globe.

communication, travel and mass media the revolutionaries spread their Indian independence movement from its original base in London to cells in North America and East Asia.<sup>117</sup> Similarly, the young Indian political activist Lala Lajpat Rai, in his book *Young India*, acknowledged the cumulative impact that world forces played in shaping the Indian national movement:

*There can be no doubt that Indian nationalism is receiving a good deal of support from the world forces outside India.....Indian Patriots travelling abroad...seek and get opportunities of meeting and conversing with the Nationalists of other countries. Some of them are in close touch with Egyptians or Irish Nationalists, others with Persians and so on. Indian Nationalism is thus entering on an international phase which is bound to strengthen it and bring it to the arena of the world forces.*<sup>118</sup>

Although indentured Indian labourers comprised the bulk of overseas Indians their numbers were also added to by a slew of radicals, nationalists, anarchists and communists living abroad.<sup>119</sup> The Ghadar Movement, active in San Francisco was, as Maia Ramnath argues, a phenomenon of hybrid radicalism possible only in the context of diaspora.<sup>120</sup> It was within this stew of radicalization, student associations, journals published and transnational solidarities fashioned, that Mohandas Gandhi emerged as both the most famous Indian diaspora member and the force behind India's nascent nationalist movement in South Africa.

### **The Modern Diaspora: Left to Resolve Their Own Problems**

It was Gandhi who finally exposed the exploitation of indentured Indians labouring overseas to the notice of the Indian national opinion. Until that time most politically conscious Indians assumed emigration to be largely beneficial to their countrymen.<sup>121</sup> However, as awareness grew

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<sup>117</sup> Harald Fischer-Tine, "Indian Nationalism and the 'World Forces': transnational and diasporic dimensions of the Indian freedom movement on the eve of the First World War," *Journal of Global History* 2, no. 3 (2007): 325-344 and Maia Ramnath, "Two Revolutions: The Ghadar Movement and India's Radical Diaspora, 1913-1918," *Radical History Review* no. 92 (Spring 2005): 7-30.

<sup>118</sup> Lala Rajpat Rai, *Young India. An interpretation and a history of the nationalist movement from within* (London: Home Rule for India League, 1917), 183.

<sup>119</sup> The Ghadar Movement/Party was an organization founded principally by Sikh's residing in the U.S. and Canada with the expressed intent of securing India's independence from British rule. The bulk of their membership had emigrated to North America following economic downturn in India, however, the discrimination they experienced upon arrival fuelled their drive for independence from colonial rule.

<sup>120</sup> For more, please see Hugh J.M. Johnston, *The Voyage of The Komagata Maru: The Sikh Challenge to Canada's Colour Bar* (Vancouver, BC: UBC Press, 2014). Johnson's work is a lucid and in-depth account of the notorious Komagata Maru incident, a powerful symbol of prejudicial immigration policies by Canadian authorities toward Sikh emigrants. Policies, which served to coalesce a shared Indian experience of oppression and thereby fuel the emerging anti-British movement in India.

<sup>121</sup> For more please see Hugh Tinker, *Separate and Unequal: India And the Indians In The British Commonwealth: 1920-1950* (Vancouver, BC: University of British Columbia Press, 1974), 21-42. As Tinker points out the colonial office had, by 1985, decreed that all Indian settlers throughout the empire "will be in all respects free men, with privileges no whit inferior to those of any other class of Her Majesty's subject's resident in the colonies." The

of the horrendous conditions of Indians living overseas, this proved the necessary spark, which ultimately shaped anticolonial actions, not only within India but wherever Indians were to be found globally. In 1901, Gandhi, starting from his base in South Africa, demanded the recognition of the rights of Indians. More than any other issue, it was the campaign, waged on the part of Indians overseas, by Gandhi, which awakened the conscience of the British people to the devastation inflicted upon Indians overseas. As John Morley, Secretary of India said in 1908, “The great topic of the hour is the question of Asiatics in the Transvaal-only a part, however, of one of the largest questions concerning the Empire as a whole and indeed not only the Empire but all white governments against all yellow, brown and black immigrants. It is and will grow to be more and more a World question, if ever there was one.”<sup>122</sup> Wherever Indian emigrants travelled, they faced institutionalized and often violent discrimination. The goal of the nationalist leadership was to forge a direct connection between the obstacles and inequality Indian emigrants faced and British rule. Emigrants were then, as nationalists attempted to portray them to be, *Indians* overseas, facing injustice at the hands of the colonial empire:

“Wherever they may be and howsoever difficult their existence, they constitute little bits of India and take to the lands where they live the culture and the religion, the traditions and the ways of their great motherland. Neither the passage of centuries nor in some cases, the complete break with the past, has made them forget the glory that was India.”<sup>123</sup>

For many nationalists, India’s failure to ameliorate the needs of her overseas population by addressing the ongoing and brutal discrimination was directly correlated to its status as a colonial state. For those seeking independence, the colonial state was not, nor would it ever be, a true representative for the Indian people. The continued injustices that Indians faced both at home and abroad were merely the manifestation of Indians lack of self-determination at the political level.

The indenture system was dismantled on August 1<sup>st</sup>, 1920 in large part the result of lobbying by Indian nationalists. And yet, for the vast numbers of Indians who returned, they soon found themselves to be strangers in the land of their birth. Most experienced great difficulty in obtaining suitable employment, while the Colonial-born found themselves to be strangers in India. Gandhi

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upshot, as Tinker notes was that the declaration had the effect of a kind of Magna Carta in style but achieved very little beyond assuaging the political consciousness of an otherwise blissfully ignorant political class in India.

<sup>122</sup> Tinker, *Separate and Unequal*, 23-24.

<sup>123</sup> N.V. Rajkumar, *Indians outside India: A General Survey* (New Delhi: All India Congress Committee, 1951), 11.

himself noted that many of the returnees were akin to “social lepers, not even knowing the language of the people.” Similarly, the Indian-born discovered that their long residence in the colonies had rendered them unfit for the social conditions of their native land. Many drifted back to various ports of call in India in the hope of finding ships to return them to their previous home in the colonies while other roamed the Indian countryside in search of work. The Calcutta YMCA’s secretary of the time noted: “All of them, disillusioned on their return to India, had come to the riverside with the vague hope that a ship might somehow and sometime take them back to the colony they had left.”<sup>124</sup> While the indentured labour system had officially come to a close, the bitter irony remained that India had no place for them when they finally returned.<sup>125</sup> The dream of returning to India, which much of the indentured labourers had maintained through their time abroad, had been jolted into reality upon their return. Ultimately, for scores of expatriates, the dream of return had turned into “the blunder of returning to India.”<sup>126</sup>

As the impact of the world depression began to be felt throughout India, Tinker notes that the plight of Indians overseas quickly faded as a sustained source of national protest in India. Despite the fact that the condition of the overseas population had once served as a marshalling point for the anti-imperialist struggle, it no longer rallied the domestic population in the way it once had. Instead, the public leadership’s central concern was with the movement for *Swaraj*, for independence. Tinker goes on to suggest that, by 1920, “independence now dominated every aspect of Indian politics, from that of the Supreme Congress leadership down to the level of the municipality or the district council. To a degree, the overseas Indians were ignored by their brethren at home.”<sup>127</sup> For Nehru, the ultimate vehicle for correcting the injustices inflicted upon Indians overseas could only be achieved through independence: “Our countrymen abroad must realise that the key to their problems lies in India. They rise or they fall with the rise and fall of India. . . . Surely, the only way is to put an end to our subjection, to gain independence and the power to protect our people wherever they might be. All other attempts are trivial and petty and incapable

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<sup>124</sup> Benarsidas Chaturvedi, “A Report on the Problem of Returned Emigrants from All Colonies,” Sasaram, India: B.D. Sannyasi, 1931, 2-4. Quoted taken from Gaiutra Bahadur, *Coolie Woman: The Odyssey of Indenture* (London: Hurst & Company, 2013), 169-170.

<sup>125</sup> Tinker, *A New System of Slavery*, 362-370.

<sup>126</sup> Bahadur, *Coolie Woman*, 170.

<sup>127</sup> Tinker, *A New System of Slavery*, 375.

of taking us far.”<sup>128</sup> Despite the nationalists’ staunch assertion that salvation for all Indians could only be achieved through independence, they did not ignore Indians overseas entirely. Three of the great leaders of Indian independence, Gandhi, Nehru and Rabindranath Tagore, visited many of the neighbouring countries where Indians laboured-Ceylon, Burma, Malaysia attempting to instil within them a sense of patriotic duty and loyalty to the motherland. And yet, for the leaders of Indian independence, the realization grew that the battle was to be waged inside India on one great issue - independence. The problems that Indians labouring overseas faced were ultimately left for them to resolve.

In sum, the development of the modern Indian diaspora can be traced to a set of composite elements of racial, religious and linguistic communities forged through shared experiences of a predatory labour apparatus, military service and economic exile. The prejudicial attitudes and discriminatory practices endured abroad by the Indian diaspora served to coalesce a shared Indian experience of oppression, thus providing an additional agenda to an emergent anti-British movement in India. The next section examines the way in which an independent Indian state grappled with the complexities of sovereignty and citizenship in a post-colonial environment, a climate resulting in a political relationship between India and its modern diaspora based firmly upon the strict neutrality of the new state toward diaspora. This was, however, to change with the changing global economic and geopolitical environment with the end of the cold war whereby the Indian state was to alter its relationship to its modern diaspora - from a liability to a source of strength.

## **2.2 India’s Approach to its Diaspora in the Post-Colonial Era: Political Sovereignty Outweighs Cultural Connections**

In the wake of decolonization, many of the newly independent African and Asian states were confronted with the vestiges of colonial labour practices. While the perfect model of a nation-state would comprise a series of congruencies-of territory and citizenry, state and nation, polity and culture, legal citizenship and ethno-cultural nationality, most, if not all the recently independent states did not conform to this idealized framework. In fact, as James Scott makes clear in his assessment of Southeast Asia, “unambiguous, unitary sovereignty, of the kind that is normative for the twentieth century nation-state, was rare outside a handful of substantial rice-growing cores, whose states were, themselves, prone to collapse. Beyond such zones, sovereignty was ambiguous,

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<sup>128</sup> Tinker, *A New System of Slavery*, 378.

plural, shifting, and often void altogether. Cultural, linguistic, and ethnic affiliations were, likewise, ambiguous, plural, and shifting.”<sup>129</sup> However, European colonialization reconstituted political order which, in the aftermath of decolonization, had the effect of constructing territorial norms of sovereignty. For the newly formed government of Jawaharlal Nehru, a swelling population of Indian migrants living overseas only contributed to the burden of Indian decolonization. The potential for conflict between Indians migrants residing overseas and freshly independent states posed a challenge, at home to its India’s nation-building project, and, beyond its shores, to its efforts in cultivating a credible and influential foreign policy. As the age of empire rapidly ended, India’s utmost urgency was to defend its political sovereignty within a fragile post-colonial order, a competitive geo-political environment. The first stage in post-independent India’s approach to its diaspora was guided by India’s primary concern to safeguard national unity and establish its citizens’ loyalty to post-independence India. Within this context, citizenship was to emerge as the most significant framework to chart out India’s relationship with its diaspora. Despite their shared cultural heritage and the concerns of the oppression and subjugation of the Indian diaspora, the political leadership of independent India was to construct a policy of strict neutrality between itself and its diaspora.

### **Citizenship and Sovereignty at the End of Empire**

In anticipation of the end of colonial rule, the assumption by many was that, once independent, a free Indian state would seek to re-establish a connection to its overseas population. For instance, shortly after independence, Foreign Secretary K.P.S. Menon, addressing the “Heads of Indian Missions and Posts Abroad” conveyed what he expected from them on an ongoing basis: “Where there is any large body of persons of Indian descent, a report, once a year, on their number, employment, economic and political position, treatment, all relevant matters as well as on consular work generally. This should be sent in January.”<sup>130</sup> While Menon had not expressed any firm policy position on the Indian state’s orientation to its diaspora communities, it would seem that Indians overseas still registered as an important constituency for the nascent state.

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<sup>129</sup> James C. Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* (London: Yale University Press, 2009), 61.

<sup>130</sup> Foreign Secretary KPS Menon to All Heads of Indian Missions and Posts Abroad, September 10, 1949.

Nevertheless, shortly after the address by Menon, the Indian government appeared to counter what Menon had earlier asked the missions to carry out. India's orientation to its overseas population, as communicated by Nehru, had settled: "the *consistent policy* of the Government that persons of Indian origin who have taken foreign nationality should identify themselves with and integrate in the mainstream of social and political life of the country of their domicile."<sup>131</sup> Nehru's comments reflected a central political problem plaguing many of the newly independent states with long histories of circular migration. Although many of the migrants returned to their sending state, for those that remained behind, their citizenship became a pressing issue for former colonial states. In a speech to the Indian Legislature in 1948 Nehru asserted: "the real difficulty is the question of citizenship. Now, these Indians abroad-what are they? Are they Indian citizens? Are they going to be citizens of India or not? If they are not, then our interest in them becomes cultural and humanitarian, not political."<sup>132</sup> Under Nehru, the challenge was in forging an otherwise heterogeneous and inherently divided society into a cohesive nation. With the added burden of partition (dislocation of more than fifteen million people), citizenship became the vehicle through which the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion to the Indian state were to be defined. Citizenship, therefore functioned not only as a "bundle of formal rights, but as the entire mode of incorporation of individuals and groups in society."<sup>133</sup> Citizenship became the avenue to delimit, exclude or silence groups such as the diaspora who otherwise chose not to migrate back to independent India as legitimate members of the Indian state. In a sense, those who counted as "Indians" to the state remained restricted to those who had embraced citizenship following independence. In the course of time, the path dependence or inertia of citizenship as a mode of inclusion or exclusion in promoting a sense of "Indianness" ossified into an institutional practice guiding how the state approached its diaspora.

### **Silencing the Diaspora in Post-Independent India**

When India gained independence, it was "the moment to make Indians."<sup>134</sup> In its wake, a key challenge facing Nehru was how to go about safeguarding India's national unity and establishing

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<sup>131</sup> Kapur, 189. Emphasis added.

<sup>132</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru, *India's Foreign Policy: Selected Speeches, September 1946-April 1961* (New Delhi: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Government of India, 2004), 128

<sup>133</sup> Gershon Shafir and Yoav Peled, *Being Israeli: The Dynamics of Multiple Citizenship* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 11.

<sup>134</sup> Ornit Shani, "Conceptions of Citizenship in India and the 'Muslim Question,'" *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 44, No. 1. (January 2010): 145-173.

loyalty to post-independent India. In a series of letters written to the Union's Chief Ministers, Nehru conveyed a deep-seated anxiety "that our progress as a nation will be much delayed and, indeed, we will go backwards rather than forwards. There is an inherent tendency towards disintegration of India, possibly resulting from our caste system and our general outlook on life. We do not mix easily and we live in our compartments. Even in foreign countries, Indians are apt to lead their separate provincial lives. How are we to build up a nation if we think and act more or less in a tribal way?"<sup>135</sup>

Besides his concerns over the heterogeneity and inherent divisiveness of Indian society, Nehru's fear of a potential disintegration of India also developed, in part, as the result of its own creation. The partitioning of the subcontinent into two states derived from what was perceived to be an intractable religious conflict. Upon independence in 1947, British India was carved into Hindu-majority India and Muslim-majority Pakistan while, in 1971, East Pakistan split from the western part of the country to form modern-day Bangladesh. The division of British India in 1947 led to a massive migration of people, estimated at between 12-18 million. Approximately half the migrants (mainly Muslims) moved to Pakistan while the other half (largely Hindus and Sikhs) travelled to India. For Nehru, the division of the subcontinent set, at the very least, a precedent for the potential break up of India, as Pakistan later experienced. Citizenship, therefore, became a crucial institution through which the process of inclusion and exclusion to the Indian state was to be defined. Nehru's preoccupation with the delineation of legal citizenship was also likely provoked by the "immediate challenge of the integration of the 10 million partition refugees living in various refugee camps, an enormous task made all the more difficult since neither country was able to convince the United Nations to provide assistance or protection to their refugee populations."<sup>136</sup> The task of consolidating a broad swath of distinct ethnic and religious groups in conjunction with a vast external diaspora and 10 million or more displaced refugees only added to Nehru's anxiety over the integration of post-independent India.

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<sup>135</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru, *Letters to Chief Ministers: 1947-1964, Vol 3, 1952-1954*, Government of India, Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund (Oxford University Press, 1987), 367.

<sup>136</sup> Reeta Chowdhari Tremblay, "Protracted Displacement in Conflict Zones: Refugees and Internally Displaced People in Jammu and Kashmir," *Migration, Mobility, & Displacement* 2 (2): 91-109.

The Indian state's approach to its large overseas population during this period should be balanced with the broader regional context of partition and the domestic challenge of splicing together a diverse polity. As Nehru put it in 1952, "the most important factor, the overriding factor, is the unity of India." Again in 1957, Nehru wrote: "Personally, I feel that the biggest task of all is not only the economic development of India as a whole, but even more so the psychological and emotional integration of the people of India."<sup>137</sup> If nation and nationhood are about demanding sentiments of consensus from certain groups, claims for membership in the nation are established within politics.<sup>138</sup> The challenge for Nehru was in the transformation of otherwise heterogeneous peoples into a nation or nationhood.

Following independence, citizenship became a crucial signifier of belonging to the state and in the nation. Citizenship is the point through which individuals, social groups and the state engage. It is made up of an assortment of rights and obligations that form the basis for achieving full membership, the terms of association and a sense of belonging to the social body. As Brubaker regularly points out, citizenship also defines the boundaries of exclusion. As a result, citizenship can often be the manner through which nationhood is experienced in practice.<sup>139</sup> In terms of the vast number of overseas Indians, Nehru's address to the Indian Legislature in 1948 ("if they are not (our citizens), then our interest in them becomes cultural and humanitarian, not political") on how India should view its diaspora must be balanced against the broader debate over citizenship ongoing during this period.

The Indian Constitution of 1950 specifically addressed the question, "Who is a citizen of India?" Although the establishment of the boundaries between citizens and non-citizens/aliens set out in the Constitution was largely a response to the broader context of Partition, the challenge presented by large segments of Indians abroad potentially seeking future recognition by the Indian state posed a significant problem, as did vast numbers of refugees. Legally, all overseas Indians residing outside the state at the time of independence would be eligible for citizenship.

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<sup>137</sup> Bipan Chandra, Aditya Mukherjee and Mridula Mukherjee, *India after Independence, 1947-2000* (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2000): 84.

<sup>138</sup> H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (eds.), *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (London: Routledge, 2009), 176.

<sup>139</sup> Rogers Brubaker, "Immigration, Citizenship, and the Nation-State in France and Germany," in *The Citizenship Debates: A Reader*, edited by Gershon Shafir (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998): 132.

However, Section 9(1) of the 1955 Citizenship Act added a provision that any citizen of India who by naturalization or registration acquires the citizenship of another country shall cease to be a citizen of India. Although the clause was largely directed to exclude populations residing in East and West Pakistan, it undoubtedly was written with some acknowledgement of its overseas kin. To make matters worse, partition presented the state with an added complexity in terms of millions of refugees and displaced persons. To address the issue, the 1955 Citizenship Act established the relationship between the state and the refugees creating specific categories of citizenship and belonging to the nation—who is included and who is excluded.<sup>140</sup> Under the statutes set forth in the Citizenship Act, refugees were legally considered ‘foreigners’ because they failed to meet three requirements of the Act: born in the country, either of whose parents were born in India, or being an ordinary resident in India for not less than five years immediately preceding the Act. Defining categories of identity such as evacuees, refugees, displaced persons, aliens and infiltrators was of crucial importance to the process of transforming colonial subjects into national citizens. Refugee documents, border slips and passports became the avenue through which state immigration officials delineated between “refugees, migrants, aliens and citizens.” As Haimanti Roy argues, implicit to these negotiations at India’s borders was the attempt to “establish a minority citizen’s loyalty to the state” and by extension, the rights and privileges associated with citizenship.<sup>141</sup>

In order to understand the approach of the Indian state to its diaspora in the aftermath of independence, the discussion must therefore, be contextualized within the broader political environment through which citizenship was being established by the post-independence leadership. Undoubtedly, citizenship was viewed as a social or political practice of both establishing loyalty and safeguarding national unity. When *The Resurgent* docked in Calcutta in 1955, carrying with it the final returnees of indenture to India’s shores, Nehru proclaimed “*Thetar log agaye,*” (The stubborn people have come). As Gaiutra Bahadur notes, “Nehru sounded irked by the prospect of any more displaced people—even just 243 more.” For much of

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<sup>140</sup> There is no national refugee law and India is also not signatory to the United Nations 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. India, however, is signatory to other international treaties dealing with human rights and refugees, such as the UN Declaration on Territorial Asylum; the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Convention on civil and Political Rights.

<sup>141</sup> Haimanti Roy, *Partitioned lives: migrants, refugees, citizens in India and Pakistan, 1947-1965* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2012), 5.

the indenture population, their time abroad had transformed them into a people apart, “branded as *tapuhas* or islanders. It had transformed them into a social problem.”<sup>142</sup> Earlier waves of indentured populations had already failed to incorporate themselves into the social fabric of Indian society. Clearly, the prospect of any further burden from an overseas population worried Nehru, already overwhelmed by partition’s uprooted millions and tasked with the uphill demands of integrating a complex domestic society. I would also argue that Nehru’s reluctance to even acknowledge the overseas population was in itself a political act. For instance, if we understand diaspora as a category of practice, used to articulate projects and formulate expectations, an appropriate question to ask is -what is evoked in silence? Brubaker claims diaspora to carry with it “strong normative change. It does not so much *describe* the world as seek to *remake* it. As an idiom, stance and claim, diaspora is a way of formulating the identities and loyalties of a population.” The distancing of the Indian state to its overseas population should be viewed as a way of projecting who counts as an Indian, both to a domestic population and to the diaspora.

Claiming a diaspora can also be a useful method of imagining or projecting a community among a dispersed, cross-border population.<sup>143</sup> Benedict Anderson’s reminder is pertinent here. The simple fact that nations are imagined communities does not imply that they are any less real. Imagined communities, be they a nation, an ethnic group or in this case a diaspora are no less real just because they are imagined as real. Nevertheless, just because identities are regularly essentialized within political contexts does not, ipso facto, require them to be taken at face value. Rather, it requires us “to ask how, why, by whom and for which purpose such identities are deployed.”<sup>144</sup> I would suggest here that the reverse can also illuminate a political project. In the case of Nehru, deemphasizing the political relationship between the Indian diaspora and the state was undeniably a political act directed at destabilizing their own “Indianness”. Confronted by partition, a refugee crisis, and a vast overseas population, citizenship functioned as a necessary means through which to communicate what it meant to be Indian. It was not only a vehicle of integrating individuals and groups in society but also served as a powerful symbol of exclusion to groups such as the diaspora. In effect, citizenship determined the boundaries of who counted

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<sup>142</sup> Gaiutra Bahadur, *Coolie Woman: The Odyssey of Indenture* (London: Hurst & Company, 2013), 169

<sup>143</sup> Martin Sokefeld, “Mobilizing in Transnational Space: A Social Movement Approach to the Formation of Diaspora,” *Global Networks* 6(3): 265-284.

<sup>144</sup> Sokefeld, “Mobilizing in Transnational Space, 267.

as Indian, not only for the Indian state but also for its domestic, regional and international audiences.

Beyond the challenge of citizenship which many former colonies would soon confront, there was a geo-political element to Nehru's handling of the diaspora. Putting aside concerns that India itself might disrupt the political sovereignty of former colonies, there was equally a fear that Indians overseas could adversely impact relations between their state of residence and India. For example, at the Asian Relations Conference held just before Indian independence, much of the discussion among the participants revolved around to whom overseas Indians owed their primary loyalty. As Itty Abraham notes, most delegates suspected that their loyalty would always remain to their homelands, not their current country of residence. Moreover, due to the enormous overseas Indian and Chinese populations located throughout Asia, many of the delegates feared that India and China would become the new regional hegemony, "using these overseas nationals as a fifth column."<sup>145</sup> A Burmese delegate bluntly summed up their collective fear: "While it was terrible to be ruled by a Western power.....it was even more so to be ruled by an Asian power."<sup>146</sup> Furthermore, a growing birthrate of Indians in Burma set against a rising death rate among the Burmese both alarmed and stoked a growing anxiety that the Burmese would soon find themselves a minority in their own state.<sup>147</sup> Similarly, a Malayan delegate pointed out that only 40 percent of his country's residents were Malayan's, the rest were Indian and Chinese. Another delegate argued that citizenship would only be offered to those "regarding Malaya as the sole object of their loyalty." In the hope of decreasing their growing anxiety, delegates reaffirmed their commitment to distance their states from their overseas populations and exhibited little distress over cutting ties. For their part, Indian delegates stressed that the issue was an imperial legacy that had come about through no fault of either the sending or receiving state, a position clearly designed to disassociate India from the dilemma their overseas population were creating for many newly independent Asian states. Indian delegates were quick to point out, particularly in the case of Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), that Indians there had "lost touch with India" and were therefore "not in a position to get help from India." The Indian response to

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<sup>145</sup> Abraham, *How India Became Territorial*, 90.

<sup>146</sup> Itty Abraham, "From Bandung to NAM: Non-Alignment and Indian Foreign Policy, 1947-65," *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics* 46 (April 2008): 195-219.

<sup>147</sup> Abraham, "From Bandung to NAM, 198.

their ethnic communities was clear, “countries like India and China should not encourage emigrants to look for help to their home country.... emigrants permanently settling in a foreign country should be advised to identify themselves with that country.”<sup>148</sup>

### **The Modern Diaspora: An Obstacle to India’s Foreign Policy Agenda**

A primary emphasis in the development of Nehru’s foreign policy agenda was the construction and establishment of friendly relations with its neighbors. The framework for Nehru’s “neighborhood policy” was first developed in a bilateral agreement reached with China, whereby India ceded its British-inherited extraterritorial rights over Tibet, effectively signalling China’s sovereignty over Tibet. Guiding the agreement was what became known as the Panchsheel principles: “mutual respect for each other’s territorial integrity and sovereignty, mutual non-aggression, mutual non-interference in each other’s internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful co-existence.”<sup>149</sup> For their part, both India and China agreed to act in accordance with the principles of Panchsheel, principles that were later endorsed in 1955 by the Asian-African Conference in Bandung, Indonesia and soon became the basis of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), established in Belgrade in 1961.

Despite the broader intentions of generating a cordial regional environment for India based firmly upon an underlying adherence to Panchsheel, Abraham argues that India’s neutrality to its overseas population was partly motivated by Nehru’s ambition of acquiring a leadership role in NAM, a leadership position that would have placed India in direct competition with the other regional hegemon, China. It was then, not entirely coincidental, he argues, that the People’s Republic of China (PRC), with a similarly large overseas population, chose to mirror the Indian position.<sup>150</sup> When the PRC’s consolidated mainland China, their economy had become heavily reliant upon its overseas Chinese. However, as William Skinner argues, “earlier stresses on remittances, investment in China and promotion of China’s foreign trade” through its overseas population was soon replaced by recommendations to that population to invest locally, naturalize and avoid any future appeals to Peking for protection. This, Skinner argues, was the result of the PRC’s growing reliance on the goodwill and active support of Asian governments in

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<sup>148</sup> Abraham, *How India Became Territorial*, 92.

<sup>149</sup> Tremblay and Kapur, *Modi’s Foreign Policy* (Sage, 2017).

<sup>150</sup> Abraham, *How India Became Territorial*, 90-93.

international relations, support which overshadowed the value their overseas Chinese had previously offered.<sup>151</sup> China offers, by way of comparison, the politically inspired strategies motivating both China and India to bracket their diaspora off from the sending state. In one of Nehru's final addresses to the Indian Parliament on the issue of Indian's overseas he was emphatic:

"There are the other people who have been in countries like Ceylon for 30, 40, 50 or 60 years, whatever the period may be, whom we do not consider our nationals. They have settled down in these countries and many of them have been born there. So far as we are concerned, strictly, legally and constitutionally, it is none of our problem. They are not our nationals."<sup>152</sup>

The production of the sovereign, modern Indian nation-state necessitated a positioning of Indians abroad as politically distant from India, that is, unless they accepted Indian citizenship.

Nevertheless, Nehru's fierce protection of sovereignty was, at least in part a reflection of broader foreign policy agenda that necessitated newly independent states to be acknowledged as the sole masters of their own affairs. The upshot, however, was the implicit agreement among all newly independent states that the "fate of 'their' people - people who had migrated, moved, traveled - were ultimately to be left to the decision of another state."<sup>153</sup>

The expulsion of 40 000 "Asians" from Uganda by President Idi Amin in 1972 offers a useful illustration of the consolidation of Nehruvian foreign policy vis a vis its diaspora. On August 4<sup>th</sup>, 1972, Ugandan President Idi Amin announced that 40 000 Asians, mostly of Pakistani or Indian origin, who had been living in the country for generations were to be given 90 days to pack up and leave. The majority would eventually make their way to England, Canada and Australia with only 5000 begrudgingly "returned" to India on short-term visas. Although Anirudha Gupta notes that India's initial reaction to the expulsion was "sympathetic to the plight of the Asians," the Indian state's response was anything but supportive. Immediately upon learning of Amin's order of expulsion, India set up a visa regime to restrict inflows from Africa, thereby ensuring that "its

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<sup>151</sup> G. William Skinner, "Overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 321, no. 1 (1959): 140-147.

<sup>152</sup> Nehru, *India's Foreign Policy*, 130.

<sup>153</sup> Itty Abraham, "State, Place, Identity: Two Stories in the Making of a Region," in *Regional Modernities: The Cultural Politics of Development in India*, ed. K. Sivaramakrishnan and Arun Agrawal (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003): 415.

territory not be made a dumping ground for fleeing refugees.”<sup>154</sup> The callous response by the Indian state should, Gupta argues, be couched within the foreign policy climate at the time. Gupta points out that in the aftermath of China’s military victory over India in 1962, the Chinese had unleashed a diplomatic offensive to isolate India from the Afro-Asian camp. As a result, India was finding it increasingly necessary to extend “effusive support to African nationalism” even if that meant “squeezing a few Asians” from Africa. Moreover, the widespread belief in Delhi held that Uganda’s “Asians” had largely brought this crisis upon themselves through their exploitative behaviour, racial prejudice and a reluctance to assimilate into local society.<sup>155</sup> Conversely, Indians living in Uganda and elsewhere in Africa complained that Indian diplomats offered little in the way of guaranteeing protection for themselves or their property, other than to lecture on the need to integrate themselves further into local society. For its part, India simply dragged its heels on resolving the crisis until Britain resolved the situation itself.<sup>156</sup> The Indian approach to the crisis in Uganda is largely reflective of its overall approach to its diaspora from the edge of independence up to the early 1990s. India would privilege state-to-state relations with the government of the countries in which Indians lived, rather than extend to the diaspora the help they often requested and needed.

The first signal that India’s approach to its diaspora might finally soften occurred in 1987, when the Fijian military overthrew the elected Indian-dominated government of Dr. Timoci Bavadra. Fiji, like many other former plantation colonies, had a large emigrant Indian population. Ethnic tensions had simmered for decades between the Indo-Fijian population, now a demographic majority, and the ethnic Fijians. Much of the tension stemmed from economic concerns. The Indo-Fijian community controlled much of the commercial activity while ethnic Fijians dominated much of the land. General Sitiveni Rabuka, an ethnic Fijian, orchestrated the military coup asserting that the coup had become necessary to prevent the Indian community in Fiji from attaining complete control of the state. The Indian diplomatic response suggested a reversal of its previous position as K. Natwar Singh, the Indian foreign minister at the time, proclaimed that

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<sup>154</sup> Anirudha Gupta, “Ugandan Asians, Britain, India and the Commonwealth,” *African Affairs* 73, no. 292 (July 1, 1974): 312-324.

<sup>155</sup> Gupta, “Ugandan Asians, Britain, India and the Commonwealth,” 318.

<sup>156</sup> Gupta, “Ugandan Asians, Britain, India and the Commonwealth,” 318.

“what was happening in Fiji has distinct and unacceptable racial overtones.”<sup>157</sup> As events on the ground unfolded, the then Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi fruitlessly attempted to impose Commonwealth sanctions. With no assistance from the Commonwealth forthcoming Rajiv turned to regional powers, Australia and New Zealand in hopes that they might muster some protection for the ill treatment of Indo-Fijians.<sup>158</sup>

Despite the official rhetoric, which played well to a domestic population, India’s response was largely in keeping with India’s neighbourhood foreign policy, developed after Nehru, rather than a shift in Indian stance on its relationship with the diaspora as articulated during the Nehru regime. Undoubtedly the Panchsheel principles, developed under Nehru, had lost their credibility in the aftermath of the Sino-Indian war of 1962. However, under the leadership of Nehru’s daughter, Indira Gandhi, ascending to the office of Prime Minister in 1966, Indian foreign policy towards its neighbours would emphasize India’s role as a regional hegemon. Known as the Indira doctrine, regional hegemony remained the hallmark of first Indira and later Rajiv Gandhi’s governments’ neighbourhood policy until the 1990s, and this, I would suggest, was the primary policy framework motivating Rajiv’s response to the Fijian coup. While both Abraham and Varadarajan argue that India’s official approach to its diaspora began to show signs of change during the Fijian coup, I would argue that India’s primary consideration had far less to do with its diaspora and more in ensuring its position as the dominant regional hegemon. What is noteworthy, despite the overarching geo-political motivation, was the use of the diaspora as serving both as a symbolic power capable of garnering domestic support and functioning as an instrument of foreign policy. For instance, Rajiv’s rhetorical claim of addressing human rights violations of the global Indian diaspora played well to a domestic population, particularly as a response to the popular decline of Rajiv’s Congress Party’s on the eve of a domestic election in 1989. At the same time, the rhetorical use of the diaspora offered Rajiv’s government a useful instrument capable of providing the necessary diplomatic cover for pursuing a muscular foreign policy aimed at defending and preserving its hegemonic status within the region. Juxtaposing the Ugandan and Fijian examples reflects the underlying national interest motivating India’s response. Where, in the case of Uganda, New Delhi was constrained in its response by a fear of

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<sup>157</sup> Varadarajan, *The Domestic Abroad*, 111.

<sup>158</sup> Ramesh Thakur and Antony Wood, “Fiji in Crisis,” *The World Today* 43, no. 12 (December 1, 1987): 206-211.

isolating itself from the Afro-Asian camp, the Fijian example illustrated India's willingness to assert its dominance when its regional hegemony was challenged.<sup>159</sup>

The above discussion has examined the approach of the Indian state to its modern diaspora in the aftermath of decolonization. As we have seen, the strict neutrality of New Delhi toward India's overseas population was primarily driven by the pursuit of a foreign policy agenda and the restraints of political sovereignty. However, in the case of the Fijian military coup, we can see a slight rupture in the Nehruvian approach of neutrality towards its diaspora. Although the Indian state's response was fundamentally shaped by geo-political calculations, its willingness to capitalize on the symbolic power of its diaspora does represent a shift, though slight, in India's relationship to its modern diaspora. The following discussion explores the contextual environment which has genuinely altered the Indian state's relationship with its modern diaspora from a liability to a source of strength.

#### **Giving Back to India: Harnessing the Instrumental Power of the Modern Diaspora**

External pressures during the 1990s such as globalization, structural adjustment and economic liberalization required India to search for policy tools capable, both as a means of shoring up a flagging domestic sector and as an avenue of softening its entry into the global economy. As we shall see, the salience of the modern diaspora to the Indian state developed as a key by-product of the economic instability of the early 1990s, but has since emerged as an effective multi-level policy instrument of the contemporary Indian state. While remittances and savings from Indian migrants eased a balance of payment crisis for the Indian state in the early 1990s, members of its diaspora also acted as reputational and ideational intermediaries during its entry into the global economy, lobbied foreign governments on behalf of the state. The diaspora has since emerged as a pivotal source of soft power. And yet, the recognition by the state of the instrumental value of the Indian diaspora will also be shown to be a form of reciprocity. To lure a dormant population back into the folds of "Mother India" required an emphasis on cultural connectivity whereby

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<sup>159</sup> The Indira doctrine emphasized the Indian subcontinent to be India's exclusive sphere of influence whereby any foreign intervention in South Asia would be interpreted as opposing India's interest. Furthermore, the doctrine articulated that no South Asian government should seek external assistance. Instead, help should be sought solely from the Indian state. The Indian doctrine was a pragmatic foreign policy approach to India's neighborhood, an approach that did not jettison Nehru's non-alignment policy predicated on idealism but instead added a realpolitik analysis to India's foreign policy approach within its regional environment. For more, please see Tremblay and Kapur, *Modi's Foreign Policy* (Sage, 2017).

global pressures encouraged the re-articulation of the boundaries of membership in the broader Indian nation. In recognition of the potential of its modern diaspora this section will conclude by highlighting the alteration of India's citizenship laws in recent years, a policy approach that has broadened the very definition of an Indian citizen through the adoption of categorical definitions of Non-Resident Indian (NRI) and a Person of Indian Origin (PIO) while also introducing a dual citizenship scheme. The move is indicative of a comprehensive trend by the Indian state to reconfigure the contours of the Indian nation and, in the process, construct a domestic constituency abroad. As a result, this section lays the interpretive groundwork necessary for understanding the evolution of the modern Indian diaspora as a multilevel instrument of the state; capable of simultaneously achieving domestic development, rebranding the global conception of India and signifying what it means to be Indian.

### **2.3 India, Liberalization and Instrumental Value of the Diaspora**

The opening of the Indian economy to the global capitalist order during the 1990s was a pivotal development in a liberalization process set in motion by two key events; the loss of the Soviet Union as a crucial trading partner and the concomitant balance of payment crisis exacerbated by the Soviet collapse. As India began to restructure its economy which until then had been a closed economy, it worked to offset domestic declines by tapping the diaspora as a source of growth and development. A key element in that transition was a lucrative influx of remittances from recent migrants abroad.<sup>160</sup> The cushioning of India's economy through remittance inflows at a pivotal period in its history awakened the Indian state to broader potential of its diaspora. The modern Indian diaspora had come to be viewed as a prized instrument of the state and a lionized symbol of India's future economic promise.

In a globalized economy, migrant remittances and savings represent one of the most direct and measurable benefits of international migration in migrant-sending areas. Remittances have been demonstrated to contribute to the national economy, in particular positively impacting the balance of payment framework, compensation of employees, workers' remittances, and migrants' transfers.<sup>161</sup> Studies have also shown that remittances can offset the social loss of

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<sup>160</sup> Anjali Sahay, *Indian Diaspora in the United States: Brain Drain or Gain?* (New York: Lexington Books, 2009), 28.

<sup>161</sup> Sahay, *Indian Diaspora in the United States*, 22-25.

developing nations due the “brain drain,” increase foreign exchange reserves, provide a positive effect on savings and investment, output growth and offer multiplier effects if consumed.<sup>162</sup>

Hence, the factors influencing remittances by non-residents and first-generation migrants to their sending state is of considerable interest to policy makers. And yet, despite a large outflow of migrant labourer out of India since independence, it has only been since the early 1980s that India began to acknowledge the impact of these financial flows.<sup>163</sup>

On the heels of the oil shocks of the 1970s, enormous economic windfalls streamed into the Arab member states of OPEC producing a massive demand for local infrastructure, goods and services. To meet the labour demands brought about by the building boom, South Asian workers, mainly men from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka migrated to the Gulf region to work in the construction, sanitation, retail and household services. While, on the one hand, as Robina Mohammad argues, these workers, enduring brutally harsh labour conditions and widespread discrimination, were regarded by locals as “outcasts in a society that depends upon their labour.”

<sup>164</sup> On the other hand, despite low wages, the sheer number of Indians working in the region generated a significant flow of remittances. Furthermore, research has shown that in the face of uncertain or insecure labour, migrants are more likely to transfer wages to families as insurance in the face of precarious employment.<sup>165</sup> As the Indian state suffered from particularly acute weak balance of payments in the 1980s these remittances became a crucial component of external financial support.<sup>166</sup> However, their value to the Indian economy decreased as a drop in

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<sup>162</sup> Anjali Sahay, “Giving Back to India: Investment Opportunities and Challenges” in *Tracing the New Indian Diaspora*, ed. Om Prakash Dwivedi (New York: Rodopi, 2014), 82-85.

<sup>163</sup> Rupayan Gupta, “An Explanatory Study of Financial Remittances Among Non-Resident Indians in the United States,” *J Fam Econ* issue. 30 (2009): 184-192. There is a certain tension in the literature surrounding the precise moment when India began to acknowledge remittances as a key source of financial investment. Some have argued that India was aware of their impact even as far back as the mid to late 1970s while others argue that only under the government of Rajiv Gandhi and the onset of weak balance of payments did the Indian state begin to recognize their sizeable contribution to the state.

<sup>164</sup> Robina Mohammad and James D. Sidaway, “Spectacular Urbanization amidst Variegated Geographies of Globalization: Learning from Abu Dhabi’s Trajectory through the Lives of South Asian Men,” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* vol. 36.3 (May, 2012): 606-27

<sup>165</sup> Margaret Walton-Roberts, “Globalization, national autonomy and non-resident Indians,” *Contemporary South Asia* 13:1 (2004): 58.

<sup>166</sup> Deepak Nayyar, *Migration, Remittances and Capital Flows: The Indian Experience* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994), 61-117

oil prices in the late-1980s and the onset of the Gulf war constricted both labour outflows to and remittances from the Middle East.<sup>167</sup>

The decreased flow of remittances from the Gulf was offset in the mid-1980s by a steady growth of remittances from Indian migrants (NRIs) living in the global north. With changes to U.S. immigration laws in 1965, Indians, drawn largely from the upper crust of Indian society, took advantage of professional skills acquired through India's highly subsidized education system began to emigrate to the U.S. Mainly concentrated in the U.S., but also in Canada, Singapore, the U.K. and Australia, Indian communities began to congregate in business and high-value service sectors such as banking and information technologies as well as professional sectors such as higher education, medicine and engineering.<sup>168</sup> As India ran into an acute balance of payments crisis by the end of 1990, the situation deteriorated into a near default situation by mid-1991. Aggravating the crisis further were two factors; a) decreased remittance inflows from migrant workers living in the Gulf region and b) nervous NRIs from the global north who increasingly pulled their money from India. The withdrawals, which ran upwards of \$80 million US per week at the height of the crisis, contributed to an increased loss of confidence in the Indian economy leading the country precariously to the edge of an economic default situation. Forced into seeking a \$4 billion structural adjustment loan from the IMF, the Indian government was pressured into liberalizing its economy. In the face of economic crisis, the government awakened to the impact its overseas population could make on the Indian state.

The challenge for the Indian state was how to ensure a steady and reliable flow of remittances back to the state. In the case of migrants working in the Gulf region, the uncertainty and tenure of their labour paradoxically provided the Indian government consistency in terms of flows of foreign reserves as well as incentives to remit their wages home. But in the case of those working and living in the global north, the Indian state had to discover new strategies to encourage a dependable flow back to the sending state. One method was to float the 'Resurgent India Bonds' scheme to draw investment primarily from Indians living in the US, Canada and Europe (both Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) and former citizens). The exclusion of overseas Indians living in

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<sup>167</sup> Nayyar, *Migration, Remittances and Capital Flows*, 61-117

<sup>168</sup> Kapur, *Diaspora, Development and Democracy*, 140.

less affluent countries such as Mauritius, Fiji and the Caribbean produced allegations of “dollar and pound apartheid.” The success of the scheme caused India to develop a second bond program, the India Millennium Deposit in 2000. Combined, these two offerings raised nearly \$10 billion US dollars. Likewise, the repeal of the Foreign Exchange Regulation Act allowed NRIs to hold deposit accounts in Indian Rupees as well as the reduction of transactional costs were other measures the Indian government took to increase remittances.<sup>169</sup> The success of the schemes is underscored by the fact that by the late 1990s overseas labour migrations represented almost 30% of the Indian state’s exports (see table 2).

**Table 2. India: Worker remittances and exports (all figures in US millions)**

Year	Worker Remittances*	Exports**	Worker Remittances as % of Exports
1990/1	2352	18,145	13%
1991/2	3275	17,865	18%
1992/3	2891	18,537	16%
1993/4	3495	22,238	16%
1994/5	5782	26,330	22%
1995/6	6139	31,795	19%
1996/7	8453	33,470	25%
1997/8	10,297	35,006	29%
1998/9	9453	33,218	28%
1999/00	11,001	36,822	30%
2000/01	9034	44,560	20%

Sources:\* IMF Balance of Payments Statistics Yearbook (1997 & 1999), Workers remittances, Table B-19, Washington D.C.; \*\* Foreign Trade in US Dollars, Statistical Outline of India (Tata Services, 1998).

Beyond financial incentives, India actively began to utilize a cultural discourse of belonging to elicit investment from its diaspora. The High-Level Committee (HLC), commissioned by the Indian government in 1999, itself reiterated the need to forge greater cultural connections to generate investment. The HLC concluded: “the members of the Indian Diaspora are naturally keen to pass on their value systems, which have been an essential part of their success - to coming generations and would welcome the mother country’s support in this endeavour. India should also initiate constructive measures to ensure that the Diaspora’s pride and faith in its heritage is strengthened, which would inter-alia revitalise its interest in India’s development.”<sup>170</sup>

<sup>169</sup> Rupayan Gupta, “An Explanatory Study of Financial Remittances Among Non-Resident Indians in the United States,” *J Fam Econ* issue. 30 (2009): 184-192

<sup>170</sup> High Level Committee, *Report on the Indian Diaspora*. (Emphasis added)

Among the HLC's many cultural recommendations included the launch of *Pravasi Bharatiya Divas* (Overseas Indian Celebration Day), emulation of Israel's Birthright Programme in the hopes of connecting future generations to India and deepening the Indian Council for Cultural Relations linkages with the diaspora. Perhaps the most striking aspect of the HLC report, however, is the unadulterated championing of an overseas population that, since independence, had been ignored or as an embarrassing reminder of a time when India was weak and colonized. Times had clearly changed. In the ten years since India had embarked on an economic liberalization policy, the diaspora had quickly become a venerated symbol of all that India could and would achieve if they remained united in the decades to come.

### **The Modern Diaspora as an Instrument of Soft Power**

International relations theories define "power" as the ability to do things and control others, to compel others to do what they otherwise would not. More recently, the term soft power, coined by Joseph Nye, was developed as a third dimension of power. He defines soft power as the ability to establish preferences that tend to be associated with less tangible sources of power such as culture, ideology and institutions. According to Nye, soft power allows a state to achieve desired results in the international realm through attraction rather than force. Nye goes on to suggest that the acquisition of soft power in the coming decades will be by those nations (1) whose "dominant culture and ideas are closer to prevailing global norms, (2) that possess the most access to multiple channels of communication and thus more influence over how issues are framed, and (3) whose credibility is enhanced by their domestic and international performance."<sup>171</sup>

The appeal of the idea of soft power within Indian policy circles has grown considerably since Nye first developed the concept in his 1990 publication *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power*. Likewise, Nye himself recognized the potential of Indian soft power, what with its "established democracy, effective leadership of non-aligned countries during the Cold War, an influential diaspora and the largest motion picture industry, competing with Hollywood in Asia and the Middle East."<sup>172</sup> Likewise, Devesh Kapur suggests that from "business gurus to

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<sup>171</sup> Joseph S. Nye, *The Paradox of American Power: Why the World's Only Superpower Can't Go It Alone* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 69

<sup>172</sup> Nye, *The Paradox of American Power*, 26. Despite those such as Harsh Pant who argues that India has long suffered from what he refers to as a lack of an instinct for power, Nye's reference to Nehru's leadership of the non-

religious gurus, Buddhism to yoga, Bollywood to bhangra-rap, classical music to cuisine, there seems to be a cornucopia of Indian soft power.<sup>173</sup> However, the more likely mechanism of India's soft power is quite likely not its export of culture but of its people (see table 3). As Raja Mohan makes clear, "the biggest instrument of our soft power is the Indian Diaspora."<sup>174</sup> Similarly, India's former External Affairs Minister Yashwant Sinha points out, "People of Indian origin are extremely important sources of support for the Indian Government in the execution of its policies through the influence and respect they command in the countries in which they live."<sup>175</sup> However, as mentioned earlier, the acknowledgement on the part of the Indian state of its diaspora as a strategic asset has only recently emerged and even then, it did largely overlook countries where the diaspora had settled during the colonial period as indentured labour-Africa, the Caribbean and Southeast Asia- focusing instead on harnessing predominantly the influence of its Indian communities in the developed north.<sup>176</sup>

**Table 3.0 Indians Overseas (December 2001)**

Country of Residence	Persons of Indian Origin	Non-resident Indians	Country Totals
Australia	160,000	30,000	190,000
Canada	700,000	150,000	850,000
Fiji	336,579	250	336,829
Guyana	395,250	100	395,350
Kuwait	1000	294,000	295,000
Malaysia*	1,600,000	15,000	1,665,000
Mauritius	704,640	11,116	715,756
Myanmar*	2,500,00	2,000	2,902,000
Oman	1,000	311,000	312,000
Qatar	1,000	130,000	131,000
Reunion Islands	220,000	55	220,055
Saudi Arabia		1,500,000	1,500,000
Singapore	217,000	90,000	307,000
South Africa	**	**	1,000,000

aligned movement to which could be added Gandhi's use of Satyagraha (non-violent resistance) and Nehru's concept of Panchsheel suggests that India has a history of utilizing non-conventional sources of power rooted predominantly within Indian civilizational culture. For more, please refer to Harsh V. Pant, *Indian Foreign Policy: An Overview* (London: Manchester University Press, 2016), 8-9.

<sup>173</sup> Kapur, *Diaspora, Development and Democracy*, 188.

<sup>174</sup> C. Raja Mohan, "Indian Diaspora and 'Soft Power,'" *The Hindu*, January 6, 2003

<sup>175</sup> Cited in Raja Mohan (2003).

<sup>176</sup> For an in-depth examination of the political impact of the modern diaspora within their state of reside please see Pierre Gottschlich, "The Political PIO: Thoughts on the Political Impact of the Indian Diaspora," in *Tracing the New Indian Diaspora*, edited by Om Prakash Dwivedi (New York: Rodopi, 2014).

Trinidad & Tobago	500,000	600	500,600
UAE	50,000	900,000	950,000
UK	**	**	1,200,000
USA	**	**	1,678,000
Yemen	100,000	900	100,900

This table is only a sampling of a more exhaustive list of the overseas Indian populations in 134 countries compiled in the report.

\* The total figure in the case of Myanmar and Malaysia includes the population considered stateless and therefore outside of the legal categories of PIO and NRI

\*\* The total PIO's and NRI's are unavailable.

Source: *Report of the High-Level Committee on the Indian Diaspora (2001)*

### **Lobbying as an Instrument of Soft Power: The Diaspora as a Strategic Asset**

Beyond remittances and financial contributions, the development of the modern diaspora as a means of lobbying foreign governments on behalf of the Indian state represents a fundamental evolution of the instrumental value of the diaspora. The Indian state has focused its efforts since the late 1990s to cultivate two of its most significant constituents, its NRI's living in the United States and the United Kingdom (UK) because of their growing economic and political influence in these states. As Devesh Kapur contends, the influence of any diaspora depends on its size, socioeconomic characteristics and access to points in the power structure in the host country.<sup>177</sup> In the years immediately following India's independence when the Indian community in the US was small and largely uneducated, its effect on foreign policy was limited. By the early 1990s, as the skills, education, income and size of the Indian community had accumulated, so too had their ability to influence policy formation in both the U.S. and India (see table 4).<sup>178</sup> Reporting to the Indian cabinet in 2000 the HLC stated: "a section of financially powerful and well-connected Indo-Americans has emerged during the last decade. They have effectively mobilized on issues ranging from the nuclear tests in 1998 to Kargil (the 1999 India-Pakistan war), played a crucial role in generating a favourable climate of opinion in Congress and defeating anti-India legislation there, and lobbied effectively on other issues of concern to the Indian community. For the first time, India has a constituency that constitutes an invaluable asset in strengthening India's relationship with the world's only superpower."<sup>179</sup> As the affluence and salience of the

<sup>177</sup> Kapur, *Diaspora, Development and Democracy*, 50-84.

<sup>178</sup> Arthur G. Rubinoff, "The Diaspora as a Factor in U.S.-Relations," *Asian Affairs: An American Review* 32:3 (2005): 169-187

<sup>179</sup> High Level Committee, *Report on the Indian Diaspora*.

Indian American population increased, their ability to act as ideational intermediaries convincing both the U.S. and Indian elites of their shared common interests has grown remarkably.<sup>180</sup>

**Table 4. Indian Americans in the United States by Decade**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Population</b>
1910	2,544
1920	2,544
1930	3,130
1940	2,450
1950	2,398
1960	8,746
1970	13,149
1980	387,221
1990	815,447
2000	1,678,765

Source: Rubinoff, "The Diaspora as a Factor in U.S.-Relations."

Prior to the 1980s, India, by and large, was almost completely absent from any strategic calculations of the U.S. Government. As the former co-chair of the India Caucus noted, "there was virtually no recognition of the Indian-American community amongst the United States foreign policymaking elites until the 1980s."<sup>181</sup> This oversight is often linked to the negative stereotype of India pervasive throughout much of American society. Unflattering sentiments were spread by a "self-indoctrinating circular information system," including school textbooks, the media and academic writings—all of which described India as a backward, poverty-stricken society. A 1928 poll suggested that Indian immigrants were regarded as "the most undesirable" of all newcomers living in the U.S. American legislators and foreign policy experts were subject to prejudices similar to the general public. This was exacerbated by India's non-alignment policy during the cold war, a pro-Soviet tilt in its foreign policy, its closed command economy and its rejection of the Non-Proliferation treaty. For instance, President Lyndon Johnson was known to

<sup>180</sup> Kapur, *Diaspora, Development and Democracy*, 191.

<sup>181</sup> Jim McDermott (US Congressman and former co-chair of India Caucus), phone interview by Manik Suri, November 18, 2004. Quoted in Kapur, *Diaspora, Development and Democracy*, 192. Impressions of India by mainstream America were largely unfavorable, a product both of sporadic political and economic interaction and uniformed negative perceptions of India dating back to the turn of the century. For more, please see Arthur Rubinoff, "Incompatible Objectives and Shortsighted Policies: US strategies toward India," in *US-Indian Strategic Cooperation Into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* edited by Sumit Ganguly, Brian Shoup and Andrew Scobell (New York: Routledge, 2006), 38-60.

“regard Indians as weak and indecisive” while many key players in the White House, the State Department and the Congress were known to be anti-Indian. Meanwhile, President Richard Nixon’s lean toward Pakistan “was influenced by his long-standing dislike for India and Indians.”<sup>182</sup> Pervasive anti-Indian sentiment only began to decrease during the 1980s with the arrival of hundreds of thousands of Indian migrants.

The Indo-American community swiftly became a form of product placement for the Indian state, a key tool in the rebranding of India within American society. As Davesh Kapur argues, it was only when the Indian diaspora in the U.S. swelled in the mid 1980s that the Indo-American community became acknowledged as a valuable “bridge-builder between the two countries.” At a state dinner, held in then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi’s honour, President Ronald Reagan remarked: “Perhaps your most precious gift to us has been the many Indians who have become proud citizens of our country...they embody the human bond that is between us.”<sup>183</sup> Reagan’s comments reflect the prolific rise of the Indian diaspora, up from 13,746 in 1970 to approximately 815,447 by 1990. With well over 1.6 million Indian Americans (nearly 2.8 million if one includes the second generation) the sheer size of the diaspora had become a formidable constituency. Beyond population, Indian-Americans’ median income was significantly higher than the average American: \$60,093, compared to the national average of \$38,885. The Indian-American community also included over 200,000 millionaires and “has a higher per capita income and a large percentage of its workforce (46 percent) holding a managerial or professional position than any other US ethnic group except Japanese-Americans.”<sup>184</sup> As their economic strength grew, so too did their political activism. Indian-Americans raised nearly 4 million dollars for political candidates in 1992, while the figure nearly doubled, to almost 7 million by 1998. As a result, both Democrats and Republicans began to make concerted efforts to mobilize the Indian-American community’s resources.<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>182</sup> Rubinoff, “The Diaspora as a Factor in U.S.-Relations,” 174-175.

<sup>183</sup> Joy Cherian, *Our Relay Race* (New York: University Press of America, 1997), 16. Quoted in Kapur *Diaspora, Development and Democracy*, 193.

<sup>184</sup> Rubinoff, “Incompatible Objectives and Shortsighted Policies: US strategies toward India,” 52.

<sup>185</sup> Rubinoff, “The Diaspora as a Factor in U.S.-Relations,” 178.

The political impact of the Indian-American diaspora is reflected in the size of the Caucus of India and Indian-Americans in the House of Representatives, which claimed 163 members, making it the biggest country-based caucus in Washington in 2005. In March 2004, a thirty-five member “Friends of India” association was formed in the Senate in concert with the Indian embassy in Washington-the “first such country-focused grouping in the history of that chamber.”<sup>186</sup> Likewise, the India Abroad Center for Political Awareness has encouraged summer sessions for congressional interns. The success of the program is demonstrated by the placement of dozens of staffers of Indian origin in Washington since the late 1990s.<sup>187</sup> The result of many of these developments has been a decisive turnaround in US policy maker’s orientation toward India and US-Indian ties. Arthur Rubinoff has argued that the strength of the Indian lobby to change the perceptions, and as a result, policy orientation from apathy or antipathy, is undeniably linked to its base of support in Washington: “the transformation of congressional attitudes from indifference or deep-seated hostility to their current positive state on Capitol Hill confirms the necessity for a foreign country to have a domestic base of support in the American political system if it intends to be influential in Washington.”<sup>188</sup>

Their growing influence was demonstrated in the aftermath of the 1998 detonation of a nuclear device by the Indian government, a decision which elicited wide-ranging economic sanctions against India by the US government. In response, the Indian diaspora targeted its most influential supporters in Congress pressuring lawmakers to reduce the severity of the sanctions. In assessing the success of India in ultimately reversing sanctions and forging a nuclear agreement, John Newhouse, writing in *Foreign Affairs* was candid: “India’s US-based lobby is the only lobby in Washington likely to acquire the strength of the Israel lobby.”<sup>189</sup> The lobbying effort brought together a diverse range of Indian American groups such as the Asian American Hotel Owners Association and the American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin to larger groups such as the Indian American Friendship Council and the U.S. India Political Action Committee. The 2005 nuclear pact between India and the US was, in many ways, the culmination of a variety of

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<sup>186</sup> Ibid, 52.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid, 182.

<sup>188</sup> Rubinoff, “Changing Perceptions of India in the US Congress,” 57.

<sup>189</sup> John Newhouse, “Diplomacy, Inc. The Influence of Lobbies on U.S. Foreign Policy,” *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2009.

simultaneous processes whereby the Indian diaspora played a key role as both an ideational and reputational intermediary for the emergence of India as a global power.

Perhaps only the UK rivals the US in terms of an economically and politically influential Indian diasporic community. Persons of Indian origin constitute the single largest ethnic minority in Britain and count among the highest per capita and largest earning groups in the UK contributing over 6 per cent to the GDP despite only comprising 1.8 per cent of the total population. Meanwhile, with control of nearly 40 per cent of the retail sector, Indians have earned the reputation as the ‘shopkeepers in the nation of shopkeepers.’ Beyond retail, the diaspora comprises some of the UK’s wealthiest business people working in sectors as diverse as oil, banking and the telecom industries garnering the moniker “the coolie millionaires.”<sup>190</sup> There also exist some 15 prominent PIO (Persons of Indian Origin) commercial organizations in Britain, such as the Indian Development Group (UK) Ltd, Indian Development Fund, Confederation of Indian Organizations, Indian Forum for Business, and the India Group at the London Business School. Beyond economic influence their political impact on the UK is also considerable. There are now 250-300 local councillors of Indian origin spread across the UK while dozens have now been elected as Mayors. At the national level, eleven are members in the House of Lords, four have been elected to Parliament and Lord Dholakia has taken over as chairman of the Liberal Democrat Party, the first case of an Indian heading a national political party in the UK. Furthermore, the Indian diaspora has since formed the British-Indian Parliamentary Association, a group which cuts across party lines and regularly meets to promote India’s concerns to Britain’s political elite.<sup>191</sup> As the examples of both Britain and the US demonstrate the growing influence of the Indian diaspora, reflected by their size, socioeconomic characteristics and access to points in the power structure in their host country, the Indian diaspora has increasingly offered India a formidable constituency capable of projecting India’s interest, both politically and economically globally.

### **Investment, Citizenship, and the Global Indian**

At the 2003 *Pravasi Bharatiya Divas* celebration, the inaugural address was given by then Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee. The date of the celebration, January 9<sup>th</sup> was specifically chosen

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<sup>191</sup> <http://indiandiaspora.nic.in/ch2.pdf>

because it was on that same day that Mahatma Gandhi had returned to India from South Africa nearly a century before. Vajpayee claimed that just as “the Mahatma changed the course of Indian history after his return, I am certain, overseas Indians will play a major role in building a glorious future for India and for the world.” He went on to comment that just as “the Indian diaspora has today come into its own, similarly, India too has arrived on the world stage.” Following Vajpayee, Dr. L.M. Singvi, Chairman of the Organizing Committee remarked, “the Indian diaspora is a force to reckon with and constitute what I have termed long ago as the national reserve and resource of India”.<sup>192</sup> Vajpayee also claimed in his address that Indians over the years had accomplished the difficult task of remaining a part of their country of residence while retaining their loyalty to “Mother India.” Accordingly, he declared that his government would introduce the Dual Citizenship (Amendment) Bill in parliament in 2005.<sup>193</sup>

In December 2003, in a break from Nehru’s citizenship policy that had effectively distanced postcolonial India from its modern diaspora, the parliament unanimously passed a bill granting the right of overseas Indian citizenship to Persons of Indian Origin (PIO) from sixteen countries.<sup>194</sup> The government argued that the PIO card allowed for the “sentiments of persons of Indian origin to be closer to their original country and to reinforce their emotional bonds, as well as respecting their desire to participate in the development of the country of their origin.”<sup>195</sup> Despite the fact that PIO’s were restricted from electoral politics (either from voting or running for political office) or accepting government jobs, they were granted a variety of rights available to both residents and non-resident Indians (NRI’s).<sup>196</sup> For example, the law permitted PIO’s to travel to India without a visa, remain in India without registering with police, invest in agriculture and industry, purchase non-agricultural land and property in India and enroll their

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<sup>192</sup> <http://indiandiaspora.nic.in/ch2.pdf>

<sup>193</sup> The decision by the Indian government was also spurred to action by groups such as the Global Organization of People of Indian Origin who lobbied the Government of India to provide greater official rights, from basic property protections to dual citizenship in recognition of their contribution to the development of India.

<sup>194</sup> A Person of Indian Origin (PIO) is a person of Indian origin or ancestry but who is not a citizen of India but is the citizen of another country. The term has tended to include other categories such as Overseas Indian and expatriate Indian. The list of states with resident PIO’s who could apply for citizenship was initially restricted to countries in Europe, North America, and Australasia

<sup>195</sup> Walton-Roberts, “Globalization, national autonomy and non-resident Indians,” 62.

<sup>196</sup> According to the Indian state a Non-Resident Indian (NRI) is a citizen of India who holds an Indian passport and has temporarily emigrated to another country for six months or more for employment, residence, education or any other purpose.

children in Indian education.<sup>197</sup> By establishing a new legal framework of “Overseas Citizen of India” the Indian state, through the extension of rights, had effectively broadened the definition of Indian from a territorial to a global category.<sup>198</sup>

Beyond such innovations, the Indian government has sought to dramatically increase Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) from its diaspora. While remittances from the Indian diaspora are the largest in the world (remaining highest for four consecutive years: 2006-2010) with over \$64 billion annually, the cumulative FDI from the diaspora has been modest, with remittance inflows nearly three times higher than that of FDI inflows into the country.<sup>199</sup> A primary reason for the lack of investment by the diaspora may be the fact that much of the Indian expatriate community are either professionals or traders and have not gone through the learning process in managing export-oriented labour-intensive manufacturing.<sup>200</sup> In response, the government set up the Overseas Indian Facilitation Center (OIFC) in 2007 to serve as an institutional intermediary for facilitating diaspora investment. In broad terms, the government increasingly began to liberalize the process of regulation and approval to encourage FDI inflows into different sectors such as (1) education; (2) energy and environment; (3) healthcare; (4) infrastructure; and (5) information and communications technology. To this end, the Indian government has also sought to generate greater FDI by offering benefits to NRIs/PIO such as opening bank accounts and deposits, facilities which are normally not afforded to foreign residents. For investments in the road sector, the government increased the accountability of the bidding process to attract more diaspora investments, introducing in 2009 ‘Wealth Management Products and Services’ in addition to ‘National Priority Projects’ which are individual investment avenues and can be customized as per individual needs. Furthermore, the OIFC works with several partners such as states, premium knowledge partners, knowledge partners and media partners whose task it is to assist and/or serve diasporic investment. The OIFC also assists States of India to project and promote investment opportunities to overseas Indians in key focus sectors to facilitate investment

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<sup>197</sup> <https://passport.gov.in/oci/>

<sup>198</sup> Overseas Indian Citizenship (OCI) provides an option to transition from OCI to Indian citizenship within a period of five years.

<sup>199</sup> Kapur, *Diaspora, Development and Democracy*, 261.

<sup>200</sup> Jayanta Roy and Pritam Banerjee, *Attracting FDI from the Indian Diaspora: the way forward* (New Delhi: Confederation of Indian Industry, 2007), 1-26.

opportunities.<sup>201</sup> Today, the Indian diaspora is not courted only for its political or economic influence abroad but also as a means of generating the development of the home state through direct investment.

To sum up, as a result of external pressures such as globalization, structural adjustment and economic liberalization, successive Indian government's have recognized the instrumental value of its overseas population in achieving state development. From financial flows to its soft power advantage the Indian state came to develop consistently and incrementally new domestically and internationally arenas to expand the capabilities of the Indian state using its diaspora. India was now set to use its diaspora as a multi-level instrument of the state.

### **Conclusion**

The discussion in this chapter has focused on explaining the decisive shifts in political behaviour between the modern Indian state and its diasporic populations abroad. In tracing the orientation of post-colonial India to its modern diaspora, this chapter points to the shift in the Indian state's policy of strict neutrality, effectively distancing itself from Indians who had settled abroad, to its re-establishment of a relationship, though with a different agenda and emphasis. In so doing, I have demonstrated how India's active identification of those it constitutes to be its diaspora illuminates why this project defines diaspora as a social practice. In terms of the Nehruvian state, the assumption by many was that, once independent, a free Indian state would seek to re-establish a connection to its overseas population. That presumption was quickly erased as India, following independence, chose to constitute a legal definition of who it determined to be an Indian through the boundaries of citizenship. While claiming a diaspora can be a useful method of imagining or projecting a community among a dispersed, cross-border population, Nehru's decision to deemphasize the political relationship between the Indian diaspora and the state was undeniably a political act directed at undermining their own "Indianness." Faced with the challenge of partition, a refugee crisis and a vast overseas population, citizenship functioned as a necessary means to communicate what it meant to be an Indian. Alternatively, in the post 1990 period, the government's active claiming, organizing, establishing and identification of who it determined to comprise the Indian diaspora signalled a new state project was underway for the Indian state. Claiming high-valued diasporic members living in economically prosperous states

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<sup>201</sup> Sahay, "Giving Back to India: Investment Opportunities and Challenges," 84-86.

as Indians indicated both a new chapter in terms of how the Indian state would approach its diaspora, but it also served as a way of formulating who the state now identified as Indians.

Nehru, determined his political responsibility lay only with those who lived in India.

Alternatively, in the post 1990 period, Indians abroad could also be identified as Indians so long as they partnered to rebrand the global conception of India and aided domestic development through their financial capital and lobbying potential.

The chapter also established within the Indian context how state-diasporic practices should be understood as an institutional practice, a move which in turn allows us to explain state behavioural change in terms of their diasporic populations and what factors elucidate diaspora to respond. Recognizing India's diasporic engagement in these terms then allows us to ask two-fold questions- a) who India targeted, why they are targeted and when India increased their engagement with their diasporic populations abroad; and b) what policy tools India developed to encourage dependable contributions of the diaspora to its political agenda. In terms of the Nehruvian state's behaviour vis-à-vis its diaspora, distancing itself from its external populations abroad developed in response to a particular set of domestic and international challenges. Rather than viewing these populations as an asset to the development of the state, Nehru determined that a policy of strict neutrality was required to safeguard Indian national unity. What cannot be understated was Nehru's ability to act as a policy entrepreneur. While not axiomatic, his policy decision to disassociate the Indian state from these external populations set in motion the political behaviour of successive Indian governments to the diaspora. This policy practice was only ruptured following a series of systemic domestic and international events sustained by the Indian state in the early 1990s. These critical ruptures altered the domestic milieu to such an extent that the Indian government had little choice but to reconceptualise territoriality, state and nation to draw certain diasporic communities within the broader nation-state.

The deliberate targeting of high-valued, economic prosperous or politically influential diasporic members signalled that the act of engaging the diaspora was largely a calculated political act by the state. While the government of India's discourse ostensibly hailed its "long lost sons and daughters," the exclusion of lower-caste, overseas residents of less-developed countries and the Indian diasporic working class signalled the type of state project at work during this period.

More to the point, the specific targeting of certain diasporic populations suggests that the state crafts and develops different connections to its external communities based primarily upon the potential those populations might offer the sending state. In the case of India, liberalization and the collapse of the Soviet Union as its main trading partner precipitated targeting diasporans with access to financial capital or political influence. To maintain dependable contributions to its political agenda, India's playbook followed a familiar path. India (a) funded diasporic organizations and created educational, cultural, political and entrepreneurial institutions such as launching the *Pravasi Bharatiya Divas* festival, emulating Israel's Birthright Programme and deepening the Indian Council for Cultural Relations; (b) offered full or limited forms of political citizenship or quasi forms of dual citizenship; and (c) extended the benefits of cultural and symbolic membership through rhetorical inclusion; ethnic identity cards such as the PIO and OCI card schemes and trans-border cultural exchanges. While the focus of this chapter has sought to explain decisive shifts in political behaviour between the Indian state and its diaspora, one may concede that it very much depends on the dominant concerns of the state (material, cultural or political) that determine whether or not diaspora populations represent a strategic asset or a political liability.

The next chapter explores the evolution of the modern diaspora as a political tool asserting that while the Indian state's focus since the early 1990s has primarily centered upon the development potential of its diasporic population, it has since discovered other potential benefits. Chapter three argues that the modern Indian diaspora remains a potent source of fiscal capital and development assistance but under the government of Narendra Modi, the diaspora has now been utilized as a significant plank of a muscular Hindu nationalist agenda. In short, the Indian diaspora have since emerged as a potential communicative device capable of rearticulating of what it means to be Indian.

## Chapter Three

### **Understanding Modi's Diasporic Engagement Strategy as a Social Practice: Decentering the Hindu Nation through Diasporic Engagement**

Following independence, the challenge for India was in forging an otherwise heterogeneous and inherently divided society into a cohesive nation; to forge a legal definition of who constitutes an Indian. Within the context of partition, citizenship became the vehicle through which the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion to the Indian state were to be defined. Citizenship, therefore, functioned not only as a “bundle of formal rights, but as the entire mode of incorporation of individuals and groups in society.”<sup>202</sup> In this way, citizenship emerged as the vehicle to exclude, delimit and silence the millions of refugees and displaced persons through partition as well as the vast numbers of overseas Indians (diaspora) who chose not to migrate back to an independent India. In a sense, those who counted as “Indians” to the state remained limited to those who had chosen citizenship immediately following independence, a decision which altered their political status affording them membership within the Indian state – or not. The path dependence or inertia of citizenship as a mode of inclusion or exclusion in promoting who counts as a legitimate Indian hardened over time and guided India's approach to its diaspora until the early 1990s – in short, the political exclusion from the Indian state whereby Indian citizenship was territorially defined.

The second stage in India's approach to its population was articulated in instrumentalist terms. Often referred to in diasporic studies as a “tapping perspective,” the sending state's primary interest in its diasporic population emerges as a means to exploit diaspora resources to pursue national interests. In this instance, engagement strategies developed as a means to leverage diasporic resources thereby allowing developing states in the global south to catch up with industrialized states in the global north.<sup>203</sup> After the collapse of the cold war and the loss of its

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<sup>202</sup> Shafir and Peled, *Being Israeli*, 11.

<sup>203</sup> Alan Gamlen, Michael E. Cummings & Paul M. Vaaler, “Explaining the rise of diaspora institutions,” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* (2017): 5 and Alonso, A. Delano, and H. Mylonas, “The Microfoundations of

most significant partner in the Soviet Union, the state was left with no choice but to liberalize its economy and develop an instrumental approach or “tapping perspective” to advance India’s domestic and international interests. In this period, the salience of the modern diaspora to the Indian state first developed as a key by-product of the economic instability of the early 1990s, but later evolved as an effective multi-level policy instrument of the contemporary Indian state. While remittances and savings from Indian migrants eased a balance of payment crisis for the Indian state in the early 1990s, its diaspora has also acted as a reputational and ideational intermediary during its entry into the global economy, lobbied foreign governments on behalf of the state and since emerged as a pivotal source of soft power.

This chapter traces the present Indian government’s approach to its diaspora pointing to another shift in approach which has materialized since the election of Narendra Modi and his Bharatiya Janata party (BJP)- a right wing, pro-business and Hindu nationalist party-captured a majority of seats in the 2014 Indian general election. Since Modi’s election, his government has intensified its engagement of the Indian diaspora and shifted the state’s agenda to focus on its diaspora in a manner unprecedented in its political history. What makes the intensification of diaspora engagement counter-intuitive is the demonstrable fact that there exists no significant material basis for accelerating engagement. With steady remittance inflows and a surging national economy, one would expect Modi to maintain the status quo of previous administrations or to perhaps even decrease engagement. Nevertheless, the opposite appears to be the case. During Modi’s 2014 electoral campaign he underscored the comparative advantage of India’s three ‘D’s’ – democracy, demographic dividend and demand for goods. Upon his electoral victory as the 14<sup>th</sup> Prime Minister of India, Modi assiduously championed another ‘D’, the Indian diaspora. While previous administrations focused their attention on British and American Indian communities, due in large part to their socioeconomic characteristics and access to power structures in their host countries, Modi has effectively connected with the entire global Indian diaspora from Mauritius to Kenya, Suriname to Fiji. It would appear that since Modi’s election, the discourse of “hailing of its global nation” has, in fact, shifted from rhetoric to state practice.

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Diaspora Politics: Unpacking the State and Disaggregating the Diaspora,” *Journal of Ethnic and Migrations Studies* (2017). 11.

To make sense of this shift, we might recall that sociological institutionalism suggests that organizations sometimes adopt new institutional practice, not because they advance “the means-ends efficiency of the organization”, but because they enhance “the social legitimacy of the organization or its participants.” Hall and Taylor describe this as the “logic of social appropriateness” in contrast to the “logic of instrumentality.”<sup>204</sup> In a sense, Modi has embraced the global Indian family because doing so is widely valued within a broader cultural environment. The challenge is to understand how India’s diasporic communities might become agents for nation building within that cultural environment. In chapter one I analyzed the way “new institutionalism” has come to understand culture itself as an institution, viewing culture as a network of routines, symbols or scripts providing templates for behaviour. If we conceive of culture as an institution, it influences behaviour not simply by specifying what one should do, but also by framing what one can imagine oneself doing in a given context. Institutions, therefore, not only affect the strategic calculations of individuals but also their basic preferences and the very identity of an individual. Therefore, the self-images and identities of social actors are formed by the institutional forms, images and signs provided by social life. To be accepted as a member of the Indian nation is, therefore to act and contribute in meaningful and socially appropriate ways. By playing on symbols of nationhood, language and religious idioms Modi manipulates cultural symbols to elicit contributions both at home and amongst the diaspora. The question then arises, what cultural project is Modi constructing? Modi came to power with an electorate almost exclusively devoid of any Muslim constituents. More to the point, while his BJP was a party born only in 1980, its predecessor organizations have long stood for a muscular Hindu nationalism. Now nearly 100 years old, the basic idea of Hindutva, an idea which still guides the BJP, promotes the fundamental belief that India is a Hindu nation. The difference that under Modi’s present engagement with the diaspora, the Hindu nation is being decentered beyond territorial boundaries. Through an exploration of Modi’s discourse and state practices I argue India’s accelerated engagement of the Indian diaspora to be representative of a larger muscular Hindu nationalist agenda. In short, Modi’s engagement of the Indian diaspora should be understood as part of a nation-building project which seeks to communicate to both domestic and international audiences alike that India and Indians are first and foremost Hindu.

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<sup>204</sup> Peter A. Hall and Rosemary C.R. Taylor, “Political Science and the Three New Institutionalism,” *Political Studies* XLIV (1996): 949.

The discussion in this chapter is divided into three parts. I begin, first, by examining the factors that have contributed to a policy change. Here I, following Tremblay and Kapur, suggest that three major factors- the 2014 overwhelming majority electoral mandate, a top-down foreign policy making institutional structure, and Prime Minister Modi as a policy entrepreneur - have each contributed to Modi's ability to foster institutional change. I then shift the focus of the chapter to examine the content and the modus operandi of this policy shift- how Modi administers and communicates to the diaspora, what membership in the Indian nation entails, exploring the way in which Indian national identity is being projected by Modi at the political level. For instance, while the narrative of development is woven throughout his discourse, Modi has begun to shift his discursive agenda emphasizing the diaspora as fully-fledged members of the Indian nation: "Everything is not measured in dollars or pounds. The relationship we have with Pravasis (Overseas Indians) is beyond that. It's a bond." Extending national membership can be both formal and informal but more often than not is accompanied by tacit understandings of who belongs and who does not, of us and them. In this case, because this study understands diaspora as both *process* and *practice*, I pay particular attention to the political projects - and by extension, modes of power - that produce the links between diasporic communities and their homelands.

While Modi's discourse of belonging indicates a cultural shift in approach, the final section lays the ground work for what that cultural shift implies. In a popular refrain, Modi has declared that "we don't see the colour of the passports, but the relations written by blood which matter the most." Nevertheless, the blood that appears to matter is one distinctly measured along implicit religious or cultural affiliation. For instance, Modi's government has recently sought to grant citizenship to Hindu refugees in neighboring states in his pending 2016 Citizenship Amending Bill, while ignoring persecuted minority Muslims residing in neighboring states. Elsewhere, his government's reconstitution of Indian identity is being expressed through efforts to elevate Hindi as an official language at the U.N., and through lobbying for an International Yoga Day and promoting Hindu pilgrimages to the diaspora while ending state subsidization of Muslim's embarking on the Hajj. Moreover, in nearly every trip abroad Modi makes a point of visiting Hindu temples, presenting foreign leaders with overtly symbolic Hindu gifts all the while

presenting himself as a devout Hindu ascetic. In short, this section argues that despite Modi's assertion that the relationship "we have with Pravasis...is a bond," the union he is attempting to project is one based on membership in a Hindu nation. If diasporas are used to "make claims, articulate projects, formulate expectations, mobilize energies, and appeal to loyalties," the shift in India's approach to its modern diaspora should be seen as the articulation of an increasingly muscular nation building agenda that seeks to project among the diaspora that what it means to be Indian is Hindu.

### 3.1 Setting the Stage: Modi Challenges the Status Quo

In setting the stage for a paradigmatic shift we may ask, why now? In the thirty years since India first began engaging its diaspora, its domestic milieu today has experienced a remarkable transformation since engagement strategies began in the early 1990s. For instance, India is projected to become the fourth largest global economy by 2022, has emerged as the fastest growing large economy in the world, has a third-place GDP ranking in terms of purchasing power and a population set to reach 1.3 billion. Furthermore, according to data compiled by the World Bank, while remittance inflows have decreased slightly from a high of 72 billion (US Dollars) in 2014, they have otherwise remained stable in the 60-70 billion-dollar range for the past decade.<sup>205</sup> As a result, one would assume that India's diasporic engagement would remain unchanged or perhaps decrease as a result of greater origin-state wealth.<sup>206</sup> And yet, under Modi a shift in approach seems to have taken place. In the absence of any obvious motivation to change the status quo, one might ask what factors have contributed to a policy change. Tremblay and Kapur provide some insight in their recent publication *Modi's Foreign Policy*, which emphasizes three key elements since Modi's election: the 2014 electoral outcome; a top-down foreign policy making institutional structure; and Prime Minister Modi as a policy entrepreneur.<sup>207</sup>

Due to the structure of India's parliamentary system and first-past the post electoral rules, the results of the 2014 general election granted substantial power to Modi's majority government,

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<sup>205</sup> <http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/migrationremittancesdiasporaissues/brief/migration-remittances-data>

<sup>206</sup> Studies have shown diasporic engagement is less likely with greater origin-state wealth because these states have less necessity to leverage their diasporas for economic gain. See Gamlen et al, "Explaining the rise of diaspora institutions," 7.

<sup>207</sup> Reeta Chowdhari Tremblay and Ashok Kapur, *Modi's Foreign Policy* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2017), 12.

which has succeeded in its ability to exert tremendous institutional control. Following thirty years of successive coalition governments, Modi's delivery of a majority government ensured a level of state authority equivalent to his electoral result. As Tremblay and Kapur note, a crucial consequence of India's parliamentary system and electoral institutions has been to allow political leaders with large electoral power to "pursue, virtually untrammelled, his/her policy agenda."<sup>208</sup> Furthermore, because diasporic engagement typically falls within the purview of the foreign policy arena, this power is greatly augmented by the foreign-policy-making structure. Traditionally, the creation of foreign policy is housed predominantly in the PMO with the Prime Minister playing a principal role while Parliament and Cabinet are consigned to minor functions. Adding further influence on the foreign policy process, despite an already favorable institutional structure and electoral outcome, are Modi's personal attributes. With exceptional entrepreneurial talents, charisma, a persuasive manner of discourse and a positive response by domestic and international audiences alike, Modi has garnered a level of power, unprecedented in recent memory to bring about institutional change.<sup>209</sup>

A significant element of Modi's ability to foster change derives not from his position in government or his electoral victory but by virtue of his persuasive discourse. Since his time as Chief Minister of Gujarat, Modi has displayed excellent oratory skills in Hindi, employed catchy slogans, "created new narratives by reinterpreting traditional idioms and myths and given these new meaning," the result of which has been to galvanize citizens to his new agendas.<sup>210</sup> In his Independence Day speech in 2014, Modi emphasized his outsider status as a means of conveying legitimacy for his ideas and policies: "I am an outsider for Delhi, I am not a native of Delhi. I have no idea about the administration and working of this place....it is not a political platform, rather it is a platform of a national policy, and, therefore, my views should not be evaluated from a political perspective." In this way, Modi has attempted to drill down amongst his constituents a belief that only he can achieve change because he hasn't been institutionalized by the political culture of New Delhi and can therefore function freely to implement his policy agenda.

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<sup>208</sup> Tremblay and Kapur, *Modi's Foreign Policy*, 13.

<sup>209</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi are likely the only two Indian political leaders to share similar levels of political power.

<sup>210</sup> Tremblay and Kapur, *Modi's Foreign Policy*, 14.

Thus, in initiating institutional change, Modi has demonstrated an unparalleled capacity to utilize his personal attributes to capitalize on opportunity structures such as the electoral outcome and foreign policy making structure in promoting his policy agenda. To this end, Modi bears a striking resemblance to what J.W. Kingdon labels a “policy entrepreneur”, that is, an actor who capitalizes on their knowledge of the process to further their own policy goals. Kingdon argues that policy entrepreneurs are “people with the knowledge, power, tenacity, and luck to be able to exploit windows of opportunity and heightened levels of attention to policy problems to promote their ‘pet solutions’ to policymakers.”<sup>211</sup> While the deliverance of his majority government emphasized almost entirely, domestic economic concerns, Modi has since set a course to reshape India’s diasporic engagement in accordance with a dramatic overall shift of foreign policy. Foreign policy and domestic development now share a symbiotic relationship that has become mutually dependent and self-reinforcing. In his first independence message, Modi established his foreign policy goals- to intensify his government’s connection with its diaspora and global powers to further development of the state: “Brothers and Sisters, the world has undergone a change. My dear countrymen, the world has changed. Now India cannot decide its future by remaining isolated and sitting alone in a corner. The economics of the world have changed and, therefore, we will have to act accordingly. My Government has taken many decisions recently, made some announcements in the budget and I call upon the Indians spread the world over....Come, Make in India!”<sup>212</sup>

In making the case for a shift in approach by the Indian state to its diaspora, Paul Cairney’s useful concept of “punctuated equilibrium” makes sense of India’s long periods of stability, however punctuated by rapid and profound change. Punctuations take hold when actors are successful in challenging previously held monopolies on the policy agenda, “prompting previously excluded groups or uninvolved actors to pay attention, and often reconsider their attitude, to that issue.”<sup>213</sup> Cairney argues that punctuation refers to policy change associated with: (a) “the use of a competing policy image to mobilize previously uninvolved actors; and (b) imbalances between competing political forces.” Equilibrium refers to two things: (a) “the

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<sup>211</sup> Paul Cairney, *Understanding Public Policy: Theories and Issues* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan), 271.

<sup>212</sup> Full Text: Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s Speech on 68<sup>th</sup> Independence Day, *Indian Express*, Aug 16, 2014.

<sup>213</sup> Cairney, *Understanding Public Policy*, 273.

creation of institutions (such as policy communities) to support a policy monopoly; and second the defense of that monopoly by mobilizing against challenges by excluded groups.”<sup>214</sup>

Punctuated equilibrium, therefore, occurs when a previous policy strategy is unsuccessful, and the policy monopoly is destroyed. Cairney points out that a new approach to defining and solving a policy problem legitimizes the “involvement of previously excluded groups and encourages previously uninvolved actors (often in different venues) to become involved.”<sup>215</sup> In setting the stage for a paradigmatic shift in approach by the Indian state to its diaspora, the notion of punctuated equilibrium offers much in the way of conceptual space to make sense of Modi’s engagement of the Indian diaspora on cultural rather purely instrumental terms. In this case, because Modi has shifted the state agenda from those living in developed regions to a strategy that courts diaspora living in less developed states we can see his willingness to involve excluded groups and uninvolved actors primarily because of the cultural capital these segments of the diaspora might herald.

The 2014 electoral outcome, a top-down foreign policy making institutional structure and Prime Minister Modi as a policy entrepreneur provided the opportunity structure for Modi to redefine India’s approach to its diaspora, an approach that was previously instrumental and largely concentrated on limited elements of that population. However, since Modi’s election, his government has made a concerted effort to reach out to previously overlooked groups within the diasporic community to conceive of themselves as fully-fledged members of India’s political community. The very act of including otherwise excluded groups and previously uninvolved actors is itself a signal that past policy practices have been challenged. That is not to suggest that by reaching out to new elements of the diaspora that economic or social development have been eliminated from Modi’s agenda. To the contrary, good governance and development are intrinsically tied into its new approach. As Sushma Swaraja, Minister of External Affairs recently proclaimed, the entire overseas Indian community is an “inalienable part of India’s transformation” as she appealed to the diaspora to join hands with India’s government to take its “development agenda” forward. The idea of a strong, united and modernizing India was captured under the phrase *Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat* implying it is the duty of all to work towards

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<sup>214</sup> Cairney, *Understanding Public Policy*, 177.

<sup>215</sup> Cairney, *Understanding Public Policy*, 178.

inclusive development: *Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas*: India is the “Mother India’ to whom all Indians have a responsibility, “All join our hands to serve Mother India. Whatever we can do, we should do for our country” Modi declared. In other words, development and membership in the nation have become both synonymous and self-reinforcing. To be accepted as a fully-fledged member in a nation, therefore, is to act and contribute in meaningful and socially appropriate ways.

### 3.2 Reimagining the Nation through Diaspora Engagement

Since Narendra Modi’s election, there has been little doubt that Modi intends to significantly alter India’s relationship with its diaspora. On nearly every official trip abroad Modi has made a point of relating to the diaspora, many trips culminating with visits to Hindu temples or his large-scale meetings such as to Madison Square Garden, the Allphones Arena in Sydney in 2014 or at Wembley Stadium in the UK during 2015. On nearly every encounter Modi addresses the crowd as though they were comprised of ambassadors and model citizens of India to whom he was fundamentally responsible, despite the fact that many had neither cast a vote in the previous election or were official citizens of the Indian state. Under previous governments, India ostensibly hailed the “global nation” but overtures to the country’s “long lost sons and daughters” smacked more of rhetoric than actual intent, as engagement strategies were aimed primarily at only wealthy, industrialized states. And yet, since Modi’s election, he has made a concerted effort at reaching out to elements of the diasporic community previously overlooked, emphasizing that “we have a special bond with the Indian diaspora which are living in the ‘girmityas’ countries and my government is working to put in place new procedures so that descendants, even if they have moved abroad four or five generations ago could become eligible for Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI) cards.<sup>216</sup> We remain committed to addressing similar difficulties (in obtaining OCI status) of PIOs in Fiji, Reunion Islands, Suriname, Guyana and other Caribbean States.”<sup>217</sup> It would appear that under the leadership of Narendra Modi, the Hindu Indian diaspora appears to be increasing *identified* and *classified* as full-fledged members of the Indian state, despite their residency abroad.

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<sup>216</sup> “Girmityas” are descendants of indentured Indian labourers.

<sup>217</sup> Keynote Address by Prime Minister at the Inauguration of the 14<sup>th</sup> Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Convention on Jan 08, 2017. <http://pbdindia.gov.in/node/5370>

Nevertheless, one should not assume, despite a discourse of national belonging, that Modi has since moved on from material motivations such as lobbying or remittance potential. Far from it. Instead, Modi seems to be evolving India's motivation for diasporic engagement from a material based, instrumental approach to an ideational strategy which aims at decentering or spatially stretching India as a Hindu nation beyond its territorial roots. Jaffrelot argues, "Hindu nationalism defines the national space of India not as an administrative territory, like the Nehruvian state, but as a *punyabhoomi*, whose holiness harks back to the Vedic Golden Age...this Hindu Rashtra is concretely anchored in sacred sites which are mostly natural like rivers and mountains."<sup>218</sup> And yet, a contradiction exists between Hindu ideology espousing a Hindu nation rooted in a particular locale and processes of globalization which "tend to undermine the particularities of places and subordinates them to a universal logic." Therein lies the challenge for Modi and his government. Can a Hindu nation be both globalized in nature while remaining territorially rooted? For instance, significant tension remains between globalization theories emphasizing the diminished significance of territoriality, and the nation-state, which is fundamentally a territorial organization. While it is apparent that the acceleration of global financial, economic, informational and human flows has made boundaries increasingly porous, I would argue that porosity does not necessarily signify that all trans-state activities herald either the end of the nation-state or that trans-state phenomena are reflective of non-state activities. Rather, it is precisely because global processes have contributed to a "spatialisation of economic, political, cultural and social relations that states enjoy the capacity to operate beyond their borders."<sup>219</sup> In terms of Modi and his Hindu nation building agenda, globalization has not signalled the demise of the Hindu nation. Rather, it has offered an added dimension to how one conceives of the Hindu nation. Glib though it may be, globalization is what one makes of it. Modi's fondness for invoking *Vedic* traditions stressing India's philosophy of the globalized world, *Vasudhaiva Kutubakam* (the entire earth is one family), an idea central to the *Vedic* scripture *Maha Upanishad* is then, merely a calculated redress of Hindu philosophy to enable the incorporation of the diaspora within the Hindu nation. As Rainer Baubock argues, the changing

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<sup>218</sup> Christophe Jaffrelot, "From Holy Sites to Web Sites: Hindu Nationalism, from Sacred Territory to Diasporic Ethnicity," in *Religions, Nations, and Transnationalism in Multiple Modernities*, eds. Patrick Michel et al. (New York, Palgrave MacMillan, 2017), 163.

<sup>219</sup> Stephane Dufoix, "From Nationals Abroad to 'Diaspora': The Rise and Progress of Extra-Territorial and Over-State Nations," *Diaspora Studies* 4:1 (2011): 7.

normative conceptions of political community are simply responding to “perceived challenges and opportunities” created by global processes such as migration. Likewise, John Ruggie argues that, while politics is fundamentally about rule, “systems of rule need not be territorial.” The foundation of the human species is “socially individuated and individuals, in turn, are bound together in collectivities which can take (and historically have taken) forms other than territoriality.”<sup>220</sup> Rather than viewing globalization as a hindrance to Modi’s nation building agenda, we should understand the acceleration of migration and the proliferation of connectivity as contributing to new forms of political community and collective belonging. The only difference being that since the election of Modi, Hindutva politics have gone global with the diaspora play a crucial role in its production outside of India.

Although Modi is signaling a shift in emphasis from a land-oriented ethno-religious identity to a decentered Hindu identity, one way in which that identity is communicated is through stories of peoplehood. In a speech to the Indian community in the Netherlands, Modi asserted that “people who live here may have a different coloured passport, but a different passport cannot change blood relations... You are all diplomats here. Every Indian abroad is a diplomat.” Elsewhere, in a speech to the diaspora in Singapore, Modi claimed that FDI meant “First Develop India” a reference designed to formulate loyalty to India. Similarly, Ram Madhar, general secretary of the ruling Bharatiya Janata party (BJP) argued that “we are changing the contours of diplomacy and looking for new ways of strengthening India’s interests abroad. They can be India’s voice even while remaining loyal citizens in those countries. That is the long-term goal behind the diaspora diplomacy. It is the way the Jewish community looks out for Israel’s interests in the United States.” In each instance, an underlying political identity and sense of belonging is communicated. Implied is the notion that the diaspora should conceive of themselves as Indians first, despite their residency abroad. Modi and his government’s discourse bears a striking resemblance to what Rogers Smith argues is the way leaders forge “political peoples.” Smith broadly defines a political people as any and all human associations, groups and communities conceived in terms of their members owing “a measure of allegiance against the demands of

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<sup>220</sup> Ruggie, “Territoriality and Beyond: Problematizing Modernity in International Relations, 148-150.

other associations.”<sup>221</sup> Smith points out that while there can be weaker and stronger varieties of political peoplehood, coercive force rarely maintains loyalty. Rather, it is on the strength of stories of peoplehood that supporters are willing to offer up allegiance. In other words, political legitimacy is fashioned through “stories of peoplehood,” the “making, maintaining and transforming of senses of political peoplehood.” Smith goes on to argue that political peoples are created through interactions between actual and would be leaders. The common denominator he emphasises, shared by virtually all political communities, is that “architects of all forms of peoplehood are engaged in political projects that seek to create stable structures of power.”<sup>222</sup> Stories of peoplehood are more than mere accounts of economic advantage and political power but include “ethnically constitutive stories” about collective identities and belonging. In his speeches, Modi’s repetitive use of words such as “India,” “Mother,” “people,” “brother” and “sister” signify a message of inclusion, a message that appears to be taking root, particularly amongst younger diaspora individuals. For instance, after Modi’s 2014 speech at Madison Square Garden, Savreen Shah, a 33-year-old engineer and Indian-American citizen in San Francisco noted: “Many of us in the diaspora who felt like a severed entity felt reconnected to the Indian mothership when Narendra Modi reached out and embraced us the way he did in New York. It was like pressing the reset button in our relationship with India.”<sup>223</sup> While Modi’s discourse of belonging has seemingly drilled down amongst segments of the diaspora, it would appear that his rhetoric is also aimed at capitalizing on a romanticization present in at least some diasporic members. As Peter van der Veer argues, “those who do not think of themselves as Indians before migration become Indians in the diaspora. The element of romanticization which is present in every nationalism is even stronger among nostalgic migrants, who often form a rosy picture of the country they have left and are able to imagine a nation where it did not exist before.”<sup>224</sup> At work is a “defense of the nation” which capitalizes upon perceived romanticization within the diaspora and deep sense of dislocation among its members. In other words, Modi’s

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<sup>221</sup> Rogers M. Smith, *Political Peoplehood: The Roles of Value, Interests, and Identities* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 3-4.

<sup>222</sup> Smith, *Stories of peoplehood: The politics and morals of political membership*, 19-38.

<sup>223</sup> Rama Lakshmi, “Narendra Modi urges the Indian diaspora to become an extension of foreign policy,” *The Guardian*, March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2015.

<sup>224</sup> Peter van der Veer, “Introduction: The Diasporic Imagining,” in *Nation and Migration: The Politics of Space in the South Asian Diaspora* edited by Peter van der Veer (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), 7.

discourse is chiefly a constitutive narrative aimed at fashioning a political peoplehood amongst the Indian diaspora.

Implied within the discourse of peoplehood is an implicit extension of membership, a tacit understanding of who belongs in the Indian nation. The politics of belonging involves a process of claiming and *being* claimed, of *belonging* in the state or in the nation. To be accepted as a fully-fledged member in a nation, therefore, is to act and contribute in meaningful and socially appropriate ways. As Modi asserted in San Jose during his interactions with Indian IT engineers “the world has changed its impression about India because of your talents in computers. With your talent, commitment, innovations you are forcing the world to change. If they do not change their view about India, they would become irrelevant in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.” While some quip that the NRI category to be more accurately represented as “Not Really Indian”, Modi’s engagement of the diaspora seems intent on dispelling any notion of their outsider status. Shashi Tharoor, writing on the internal debate of many Indians abroad, notes: “NRIs are the prodigal sons of a motherland they have left but not forgotten, clinging to a sense of nationhood they cannot define but will not surrender.”<sup>225</sup> What Modi’s discourse of belonging implies is an attempt to reimagine how the diaspora fits within the broader Indian nation and how their accomplishments overseas signal their acceptance within that nation.

For instance, at the 2017, Pravasi Bharatiya Divas celebrations, the Minister for External Affairs, Gen. (Dr.) V.K. Singh (Retd.) proclaimed in the key note address to the diaspora youth assembled: “the common thread, the indestructible filament that binds all of you together is the enduring connection with a country whose history dates back to five millennia, whose contemporary reality takes you on an incredible journey and whose future offers you endless possibilities. We consider you as one of our own and we offer you the best of what we have.” The discourse from Indian leadership directed at the diaspora is consistent in its emphasis that those of Indian origin are not only part of a global Indian family but should conceive of themselves as full-fledged members of the Indian state. As Brubaker and Cooper note, the state

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<sup>225</sup> Shashi Tharoor, *India: From Midnight to the Millennium and Beyond* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 2011), 158.

has the power to “name, to identify, to categorize, to state what is what and who is who.”<sup>226</sup> The state has the power or attempts to lay claim to the power to determine who is included and who is excluded. That is not to suggest that the state has the power to create identities, but rather to emphasize that the state has the material, legal and symbolic resources to impose categories, categories which convey both a tacit and explicit understanding of inclusion or exclusion to the nation.

For instance, the nascent Indian state under Nehru had the symbolic power to identify, to doubt as he did, overseas diasporic populations very status as Indians when he questioned: “these Indians abroad-what are they?” Nehru wielded the legal authority of the state to formalize, codify and determine who is who and what is what through the boundaries of citizenship. In the case of Modi, what it means to be “Indian” or a member of the “Indian nation” appears to be reified through his boundary making appeals to the Indian diaspora to conceive of themselves *as* Indians. According to Brubaker and Cooper, “identity is used by political entrepreneurs to persuade people to understand themselves, their interests, and their predicaments in a certain way, to persuade certain people that they are (for certain purposes) “identical” with one another and at the same time different from others, and to organize and justify collective action along certain lines.” We should see Modi’s systematic connection with the Indian diaspora as an attempt to project a sense of collective belonging amongst the diaspora and to ensure that both present and future generation come to view their own political identity as Indian in the sense of Hindu.

An examination of the discourse employed by Modi at rallies and political events shows that the Indian state is attempting to claim symbolic power over the boundaries of who counts as Indian and, this attempt could be better understood as a political enterprise producing links between diasporic communities and their homeland. However, it is not only through symbolic power that the state can inscribe a sense of belonging. As we shall see in the next section, it is also through the formal institution of citizenship that the Indian state has now begun the process of decentering the state. By stretching the borders of the “nation” through the potential granting of

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<sup>226</sup> Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, “Beyond Identity,” *Theory and Society*, vol. 29, no. 1 (Feb, 2000): 14-16.

citizenship to Hindu refugees in select neighboring states, the easing of visa rules to Non-Resident Indians (NRIs), the extension of life long membership cards to both Persons of Indian Origin and Overseas Citizens of India and provisions granting e-voting rights to NRIs, India is reconfiguring and stretching the frontiers of the state beyond the territorial boundaries of the Indian state. In effect, the Prime Minister of India seems focused on redefining the idea of India—a dramatic reversal of what being an Indian entailed, defined under Nehru in narrow legalistic territorial terms—to a new normative conception of political community constructed in the mold of a global Indian nation.

At the 2015, Pravasi Bharatiya Divas, Modi stated: “everything is not measured in dollars or pounds. The relationship we have with Pravasis is beyond that. It’s a bond.”<sup>227</sup> The making or shaping of diaspora can, therefore, often resemble a nationalist project whereby some are claimed to be members of a nation or collectivity and some are not. Under Modi, I believe the approach of the Indian state to its diaspora is coinciding with just such a project, one that stretches beyond mere instrumental terms but is indicative of a nationalizing project that seeks to reimagine an Indian political community beyond the territorial soil of the Indian state. As Benedict Anderson points out, an imagined community is *imagined* “because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.”<sup>228</sup> Likewise, Anderson, following the work of Renan and Gellner, notes that “nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness, it *invents* nations where they do not exist.” Anderson is quick to point out, however, that there lies a significant difference between invention and imagination. Invention implies the potential for the fabrication of a false nationhood while Anderson believes all communities beyond the primordial face-to-face variety to be inherently imagined. Nevertheless, nations, imagined or otherwise are not axiomatic, but should be understood in terms similar to that of a diaspora, one that is inherently contingent and variable. In this way, the nation is neither permanent nor predetermined but should be seen as a practical struggle, one in which the cultural, political and social are all part of an exercise which seeks to make and remake the

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<sup>227</sup> Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s address at the Inauguration of Pravasi Bharatiya Divas, Jan 8, 2015.

<sup>228</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006), 6.

“nation.” In this sense, nations like diasporas are both process and practice where attention should be paid to the political projects-and by extension, modes of power - that produce and/or struggle to make and remake the social world. As Narendra Modi strives to reconnect with the Indian diaspora worldwide his interactive engagement of the Indian diaspora is itself a manifestation of a rebranding exercise reflected in a broader nationalizing agenda. In due course, the approach of the Indian state to its diasporic communities is being profoundly altered from a relationship forged since the early 1990s predominantly upon “dollars and pounds” to one built upon a “common bond”.

As we have seen, India’s approach to its diaspora has change since the election of Narendra Modi. While citizenship and instrumentality considerations drove India’s approach in the past Modi has begun to transform India’s political community whereby the state does not distinguish between the two. Despite one’s residence abroad Modi’s government has begun to communicate a sense of belonging, a discourse of political peoplehood which conveys a reoccurring message to the diaspora that development and membership in the nation comprise a symbiotic relationship. The next section argues that despite Modi’s inclusive messaging of collective belonging, state practices since his government’s election are communicating a particular image of what it means to be India. The self-images and identities of social actors are formed by the institutional forms, images and signs provided by social life. In this regard, while the discourse of Modi and his government may indicate a tacit sense of inclusion or membership in the broader nation, the state practices of his government imply an overtly religious or cultural element to that belonging. As I demonstrate in the following section; the strengthening of Hindi within international settings; the singular attention paid to the persecution of Hindus in neighboring states; or the presentation of Modi as a devout Hindu ascetic all imply a shift in the type of political identity conveyed to audiences both at home and abroad. In short, through the state practices of Modi’s government, this section concludes that Modi has sharpened the boundaries of Indian identity in accordance with a muscular nation-building agenda intent on reshaping and decentering India as a Hindu nation.

### **3.3 Decentering the State: Diaspora, Hinduism and State Practice**

*We don't see the colour of the passports, but the relations written by blood which matter the most (Speech of Narendra Modi during the Pravasi Bhartiya Divas, Bangalore, 8 January 2017)*

At the 14<sup>th</sup> Pravasi Bharatiya Divas festival held in Bengaluru on January 8<sup>th</sup>, 2017, Modi showered praise on India's diasporic community abroad, claiming that with "over 30 million overseas Indians living abroad.... their footprints are all over the world. Indians abroad are valued not only for their strength in numbers...they are respected for their contributions to India and societies where they live. In foreign lands and communities across the globe, the Indian diaspora represents for their values. They are hardworking, law abiding and peace loving and are role models for other communities," the PM said. Going on, Modi claimed that "for my government and for me personally, engagement with Indian communities (abroad) is a priority. I have interacted with hundreds of thousands of Indians abroad during my travels to other countries." The PM stressed that his government remains committed to the protection of Indians abroad, stating that "we have taken several measures to protect Indian immigrants...irrespective of their background and profession, the welfare and safety of all Indians abroad is our top priority" citing the state's efforts to rescue Indian nationals from conflict zones.<sup>229</sup> The recent operation to extricate an Indian-origin Vatican priest, Father Tom Uzhunnalil, who was rescued from Yemen over a year after he was abducted by ISIS, is emblematic of the new approach. Father Uzhunnalil's rescue operation was largely facilitated by the Government of India with Indian External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj noting that Father Uzhunnalil "profusely thanked the Government of India, especially the Prime Minister for efforts to rescue him."<sup>230</sup> More recently, on November 10<sup>th</sup>, 2017 a Hindu village in Bangladesh was attacked with approximately 30 homes destroyed over a purported Facebook post. In the days following the attack, Sushma Swaraj assured India that the victims of the attack would receive compensation while India's assistant high commissioner was quick to visit with Hindu's affected by the violence.<sup>231</sup> Although Bangladesh and India have maintained close ties, the assurances given by Swaraj, considering that the attack occurred on Bangladeshi soil and involved Bangladeshi citizens would indicate a transformation both in terms of how India constitutes an Indian and by extension, whom it bears responsibility for. While Indira Gandhi effectively ignored persons of Indian origin during the Ugandan Crisis of 1972, now it would appear that under Modi's

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<sup>229</sup> Keynote Address by Prime Minister at the Inauguration of the 14<sup>th</sup> Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Convention on Jan 08, 2017. <http://pbdindia.gov.in/node/5370>

<sup>230</sup> Tushaar Kuthiala, "Resuce from ISIS, Indian-origin Vatican priest set to visit India," *Connected to India*, Sept 27, 2017.

<sup>231</sup> Shoaib Daniyal, "From Indian to Hindu Nationalism: Why the Modi government commented on a communal riot in Bangladesh," *Dhaka Tribune*, Nov 23, 2017.

government there is no length to which the state of Indian is unwilling to go to protect the lives of Indians abroad. As Modi continues to emphasize, “we do not see the colour of the passports, but the relations written by blood which matter the most. As Indians we have a common heritage that brings us altogether.... we may be around the globe, but it is the common bond that makes us strong,” Modi remarked.

Despite indications that a shift has occurred there is historical precedence that Modi’s interactive engagement is merely an extension of a political strategy he perfected during his tenure in Gujarat. The BJP, and in particular, Gujarati politicians, for whom Modi was the Chief Minister, have long cultivated a relationship with the diaspora, particularly those residing in the United States with Modi making repeated trips to the US in the 1980s and 1990s.

Modi traveled far and wide in the US using NYC as a pitstop, remembers Prakash Swamy, one of several Indian scribes Modi kept in touch with in the Big Apple where he stayed weeks at a time. He also traveled, often by road, to and around cities such as Chicago and Boston, and flew to Texas and California. Everywhere he went, he was interested in governance and infrastructure—roads and rivers and urban regeneration; how Americans were approaching problems and what India can learn from it.<sup>232</sup>

In the fallout of the 2002 Gujarat anti-Muslim pogroms, Modi was declined his visa by US officials who believed that Modi was, at the very least, somewhat responsible for the subsequent tragedy. Despite Modi’s inability to connect with Gujarati’s on the ground in the US he remained connected to this segment of the diaspora through video conferencing.<sup>233</sup> He also attempted to evade the visa dilemma organizing the Vishwa Gujarati Parivar Mahotsav in January 2004, a fixture aimed at Non-Resident Gujarati’s likely to invest in Gujarat.<sup>234</sup> As Chief Minister a significant plank of his state government was to leverage the Non-Resident Gujarati Foundation which was a key component of the NRI Division of the state government. A primary aim of the division was “to channelize the savings and surplus financial resources of the NRGs (“Non-

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<sup>232</sup> Chidanand Rajghatta, “Narendra Modi Returns to His Stomping Ground as Prime Minister After a 14-year Exile,” *The Times of India*, Sept 25, 2014.

<sup>233</sup> It is worth noting that Gujaratis form a major component of the Indian diaspora in the United States. According to some estimates they comprise nearly 1.7 million, working largely in the hotel and motel sector. For more, please see Pawan Dhingra, *Life Behind the Lobby. Indian American Motel Owners and the American Dream* (Los Angeles: Stanford University Press, 2012).

<sup>234</sup> Ajaya Kumar Sahoo, “Issues of Identity in the Indian Diaspora: A Transnational Perspective,” in *Transnationalism: Diasporas and the Advent of a New (Dis)order*, eds. Eliezer Ben-Rafael and Yitzhak Sternberg (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 535.

Resident Gujaratis”) into Gujarat’s development efforts for mutual gain.”<sup>235</sup> Meanwhile, during Modi’s 2007 election campaign he successfully leveraged support from Gujarati Hindus living in the US. In 2008, Modi again addressed Gujaratis living in America during the World Gujarat conference “celebrating Gujarati language, culture, heritage, art, history, enterprise and people in all its grandeur.”<sup>236</sup>

Following his BJP party’s electoral victory in 2014, Prime Minister Modi was once again free to travel to Western state where he pursued engagement strategies perfected as the Chief Minister of Gujarat. In San Jose (California) during his interactions with Indian information technology engineers he remarked: “The world has changed its impressions about India because of your talent in computers. With your talent, commitment, innovations you are forcing the world to change. If they do not change their view about India, they would become irrelevant in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.”<sup>237</sup> Despite Modi’s efforts not to overtly collapse the Indian diaspora within the rubric of Hinduism, his discourse purports the diaspora to be “hard-working, disciplined, law abiding and peace loving in nature which makes them role models for other immigrant communities abroad.”<sup>238</sup> Modi’s hyperbolic characterization of the diaspora runs parallel to various media outlets such as *The Organiser*, a mouthpiece of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS (the largest Hindu nationalist organization)) which unabashedly emphasizes that Hindus stood apart within the Indian diaspora:

Global Indians have also played an important role in elevating India’s image in the world, They are making enormous contributions to the various communities where they live. They are the cultural ambassadors of India and have promoted the right perspective of our cultural heritage, inter-cultural understanding and youth development. Indeed, in many cases their impact has transcended national boundaries and has been truly global. Hindus in general are a highly educated, qualified, accomplished community, deeply rooted in their traditional values. They contribute in economy, education, health, science and technology, and culture. Hindus are a peace loving, law abiding, co-existing and contributing community throughout the world and they don’t depend on welfare from the government.<sup>239</sup>

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<sup>235</sup> See <http://www.nri.gujarat.gov.in/objective-nrg-found.htm>.

<sup>236</sup> Christophe Jaffrelot, “From Holy Sites to Web Sites: Hindu Nationalism, from Sacred Territory to Diasporic Ethnicity,” in *Religions, Nations, and Transnationalism in Multiple Modernities*, eds. Patrick Michel et al. (New York, Palgrave MacMillan, 2017), 165.

<sup>237</sup> “Brain Drain Can Become Brain Gain: Modi,” *The Hindu*, September 28, 2015.

<sup>238</sup> Modi is himself a lifelong RSS member, an organization which espouses the idea of a pure Hindu nation at its core.

<sup>239</sup> Guna Magesan, “Exploring Brand NRI,” *The Organiser*, January 11, 2015. Viewing overseas Hindus as ambassadors of Hinduism has long been a staple of Hindutva. There is a long standing belief that the civilizational greatness of Hinduism will naturally “flow beyond national borders.” See C. Jaffrelot and I. Therwath, “The Sangh

In his interactions with the Indian diaspora Modi presents himself as an ascetic and devout Hindu. For instance, Modi's first visit to the U.S. coincided with Navratri, a Hindu festival derived from the ancient Sanskrit words meaning 'nine nights' in which devotees honor the Goddess Durga with a nine day fast. Modi's willingness to abstain from food during his trip served to showcase his religious devotion and personal stamina, adding to his religious credentials among his diasporic supporters:

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi will observe a strict religious fast during his maiden trip to the United States, aides said on Monday, in a test both of the 64-year-old leader's stamina and of protocol in the Obama White House. Throughout a gruelling schedule that features the United Nations General Assembly, a rally of Indian Americans at New York's Madison Square Garden and talks with Obama in Washington, the devout Hindu will abstain from food. In keeping with the habits of a lifetime, Modi will restrict himself to a "liquid diet" throughout the Navratri festival, when India's majority Hindus worship mother goddess Durga in all her manifestations. "He will only consume lemonade with some honey and a cup of tea every day," a senior official in Modi's office in New Delhi told Reuters.<sup>240</sup>

Meanwhile, Modi's abandonment of his wife is presented for public consumption as his undivided passion for service to the nation. His marital status is also offered as an expression of his incorruptibility because, as Modi is without family, he is, therefore, above the allure of money. In Copeman and Ikegame's study of "guru-logics," which explores the linkages between sexuality and Indian nationalism, they write:

While western masculinity was based on physical strength, its eastern counterpart was viewed as an embodiment of spiritual strength deriving from self-control over bodily desires and especially total restraint from sex ... Echoing the militant ascetics of the eighteenth-century ... the ideal model of the ascetic nationalist develops pure loyalty towards the nation and the vital force derived from complete self-control becomes a strong force for countering colonial domination ... Traditionally women have been completely excluded from the guru Kula system in which student-disciples reside with the guru and study at his feet, enabling master-gurus and student-disciples to develop intimate relationships and lineages of philosophical thought. Women represent 'domesticity' (marriage, kinship, practicality), defined in opposition to the kinless creation of the guru lineage, within which they thus cannot hope to participate ... gurus' 'kinlessness' can cause them to be viewed as trustworthy political actors.<sup>241</sup>

Elsewhere, Modi portrays himself as paternal- as a father figure to Indian audiences, a ploy designed to evoke comparisons to Mahatma Gandhi, India's symbolic father. For instance, in 2015 Modi launched a national social media campaign for fathers and daughters to take "selfies" together and post the photos online, a campaign he was quick to exploit during his subsequent

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Parivar and the Hindu Diaspora in the West: What Kind of 'Long-Distance Nationalism'?", *International Political Sociology* 1, (2017): 278-295.

<sup>240</sup> R.J. Nair, "Modi to observe strict fast during maiden trip to U.S.," *Reuters*, September 22, 2014.

<sup>241</sup> J. Copeman and A. Ikegame, "Guru Logics," *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 2(1) (2012): 320.

visit to Britain's diasporic community in 2015. With Bollywood actors heralding Modi as a paternal father and a Gujarati actress proclaiming, "Narendra Modi to be a father figure for all girls in India," Modi has since capitalized on his paternal manipulation.<sup>242</sup> In the weeks following his election Modi launched *Swaachh Bharat* Abhiyaan, a national cleanliness campaign established to coincide with the birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, a campaign aimed at both a domestic and diasporic audiences.<sup>243</sup> Creating a *Swaachh Bharat* is "making Mother India pristine once again. I have come with the determination that 125 crore Indians will not let Mother India remain dirty." Likewise, India's "Ganga Action Plan" which aims to clean up the holy Ganges river, or "mother Ganga," worshipped by Hindus who believe a dip in the river absolves a lifetime of sins, has played well amongst the diaspora who have increasingly contributed to state clean-up efforts. By playing on images of nationhood or religious significance Modi's manipulation of cultural symbols has been engineered to elicit contributions both at home and amongst the diaspora.

More recently, Modi's government has ended a decade-long policy of offering discounted airfares to Muslims embarking on the hajj pilgrimage. Ostensibly, the decision was to ensure India maintained religious neutrality. Critics, however, maintain that Modi's BJP government has assiduously endorsed subsidizing transportation and accommodation for Hindus undertaking pilgrimages to the Kailash Maharovar and Kumbh Mela festivals, (a sacred bathing ritual which draws millions of religious devotees from around the globe). The Ministry of Tourism has since launched a new measure called *Swadesh Darshan* which aims to develop a range of tourist circuits on specific spiritual heritage sites in the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Maharashtra, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Uttarakhand, Punjab and Tripura. The Ministry has also prepared a number of spiritual circuits including a Buddhist Circuit, a Jain Circuit and a Sufi Circuit. Meanwhile, following intense lobbying by Modi's government, the United Nations declared June 21<sup>st</sup> as International Yoga Day- something he called for in his first address to the U.N. General Assembly in New York where he remarked: "By changing our lifestyle and creating consciousness, it can help us deal with climate change. Let us work

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<sup>242</sup> Nitasha Kaul, "Rise of the Political Right in India: Hindutva-Development Mix, Modi Myth, and Dualities," *Journal of Labour and Society* 20, 4 December (2017): 533.

<sup>243</sup> Express Web Desk, "Swachh Bharat: How Mahatma Gandhi Became Torchbearer for Cleanliness," *The Indian Express*, October 2, 2017.

towards an International Yoga Day.”<sup>244</sup> At the same time, Modi rarely misses an opportunity to offer symbolic gifts to foreign leadership, such as the Bhagavad Gita (a Hindu Holy scripture) to former U.S. President Barack Obama and the Japanese Emperor. Elsewhere, Modi has made a habit of visiting religious sites in neighboring countries or during international trips. In other instances, Modi has officiated over the launching of Hindu temple’s such as the launch of one such construction project in Abu Dhabi during his recent visit on February 11<sup>th</sup>, 2018. Speaking to members of the Indian community in Dubai, Modi described the future site to be a “medium of India’s identity” heralding the temple as a “catalytic agent of humanity and harmony.”<sup>245</sup>

Besides overt symbolic gestures, Modi’s government has eased visa rules that apply to non-resident Indians. According to an executive order passed in January 2015, Persons of Indian Origin and Overseas Citizens of India (OCIs) are no longer required to renew their identity cards, a pronouncement that guarantees cardholders life-long validity. Meanwhile, the decision to issue only one identity card has effectively merged the two categories, implying that in the eyes of the Indian government, the diaspora is made up of citizens of India. The boundaries between citizens living in India and its overseas population was further blurred when, in 2015, NRI’s were granted e-voting rights. This new provision allows them to cast their ballot without any further need to physically travel to their constituencies-something they previously required following the granting of NRIs right to vote in 2010. Since the new OCI card scheme was implemented, Modi’s government has also expanded the perimeters of how his government identifies and classifies Persons of Indian Origin. For instance, in 2016 Modi’s government hosted a number of prominent Roma from 15 countries in New Delhi at the International Roma Conference and Cultural Festival, claiming the disperse community as inherently Indian for their Hindi and Hindu origin. The Roma community spread over 30 countries and 5 continents, with a population of approximately 20 million, are believed to have migrated out of northern Indian in the 5<sup>th</sup> century. With the move welcomed by a community facing increasing discrimination and persecution in many European countries, the conference was largely orchestrated by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) which has long-standing ties to the RSS. Of the 18 Indian scholars chosen to speak at the conference each unanimously signaled the need to “reintegrate

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<sup>244</sup> Joanna Sugden, “Modi Gets Interantional Yoga Day,” *The Wall Street Journal*, December 12, 2014.

<sup>245</sup> Modi launches project for first Hindu temple in Abu Dhabi, *The Tribune*, February 11<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

the community to Barat.” While underscoring the linguistic ties linking Roma to India (the Roma dialect has approximately 1500 Hindi words) organizers hinted at the potential of adding the 20 million Roma to the “Hindu nation” through measures like granting People of Indian Origin (PIO) status. Inaugurating the conference, External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj referred to the Roma community as “children of India” who migrated and lived in “challenging circumstances in foreign lands for centuries.”<sup>246</sup>

Meanwhile, in an acknowledgement of the difficulty faced by Persons of Indian Origin from girmitya countries in obtaining an OCI card if they moved abroad four or five generations ago, Modi declared that his government, starting with Mauritius, is “working to put in place new procedures and documentation requirements so these descendants could be eligible for OCI cards.” Provisions such as this contravene the Indian Citizenship Act of 1955 which detailed the way through which individuals may acquire citizenship in India, an act that specifically denies citizenship to undocumented migrants. While Modi widens the net for OCIs, the pending 2016 Citizenship (Amendment) Bill aims to grant citizenship to Hindu refugees, a scheme designed to make India a “natural home for persecuted Hindus.” During Modi’s election campaign he promised to grant citizenship status to Hindu-Bangladeshis stranded in migrant camps arguing that “we have a responsibility towards Hindus who are harassed and suffer in other countries. India is the only place for them. We will have to accommodate them here,” Modi proclaimed.<sup>247</sup> However, the Amendment Bill has since expanded on Modi’s election promise, now aimed toward making India a sanctuary for Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians from neighboring countries such as Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan.<sup>248</sup> The provisions of the bill would affect over 200 000 Hindus from Pakistan and Bangladesh, with its professed aim to save religious minorities from violence and blasphemy in Muslim dominated Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan. On the surface, the bill’s intent is strictly humanitarian, nevertheless, Muslim minority communities facing religious persecution in these same states

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<sup>246</sup> Sangeeta Barooah Pisharoty, “The Modi Government, and RSS, Are Keen to Claim the Roma as Indians, and Hindus,” *The Wire*, February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

<sup>247</sup> PTI, “Government introduces Bill to amend citizenship Act,” *The Indian Express*, July 19<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

<sup>248</sup> The inclusion of Christians likely occurs because there is no true political cost for Modi. In the same sense, occluding Muslims is not only a way of signifying belonging in the home state but is clearly a strategic calculation that avoids a stampede of Muslims living in Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Pakistan or Myanmar from gaining Indian citizenship.

have been excluded from the measure. For instance, the bill denies citizenship status to minority Muslim communities such as the Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar, Uyghur Muslims in China and the Ahmaddiya Muslims in Pakistan and Bangladesh, communities that have endured persecution for decades.<sup>249</sup> Furthermore, because India is not a signatory to the United Nations Refugee Convention it is not required to provide refugee status or asylum for those seeking respite from persecution, an exemption that allows India to construct citizenship laws that favorably construe an “ideal” type for admission.

Despite the charge that the Amendment Bill is designed at altering voter demographics favouring the BJP in future elections, there is clearly a symbolic feature at work. By framing whom the state has an inherent obligation to, the measure communicates an understanding of sameness and difference. As Henri Lefebvre suggests, “each state claims to produce a space wherein something is accomplished—a space even, where something is brought to perfection: namely, a unified and hence homogenous society.”<sup>250</sup> Similarly, Peter van der Veer argues that nationalism stresses *Blut und Boden*, “the sons of the soil” (*bhumiputra*) and as such “the soil or territory.”<sup>251</sup> To a degree, nationalism functions by denying the mixing and merging of populations by its metaphor of “roots” stressing the “boundedness of populations in time and space.” Outsiders, therefore, do not belong because they are not rooted in the soil. It is through the story of migration, or in this case, emigration, that nationalism “establishes the rootedness of the nation.” Van der Veer argues that outsiders function as a communicative device which then creates “social cohesion among the established.”<sup>252</sup> In this way, the formation of national identity is functionally dependent upon outsiders to maintain or construct national identity.

Citizenship is often the point through which individuals, social groups and the state engage. It is made up of an assortment of rights and obligations that form the basis for achieving full membership, the terms of association and a sense of belonging to the social body. As Brubaker argues, citizenship also defines the boundaries of exclusion. As a result, citizenship can often be

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<sup>249</sup> Wmika Kapur, “The Trouble With India’s New Citizenship Bill,” *The Diplomat*, March 11<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

<sup>250</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: Wiley-Blackwell, 1991), 281.

<sup>251</sup> Peter van der Veer, “Introduction: The Diasporic Imagining,” 7-8.

<sup>252</sup> Peter van der Veer, “Introduction: The Diasporic Imagining,” 7.

the manner through which nationhood is experienced in practice.<sup>253</sup> In the aftermath of partition citizenship became the vehicle through which the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion to the Indian state were to be defined. Citizenship, therefore functioned not only as a “bundle of formal rights, but as the entire mode of incorporation of individuals and groups in society.”<sup>254</sup>

Citizenship became the avenue to delimit, exclude or silence groups such as the diaspora members who chose not to migrate back to independent India. In a sense, those who counted as “Indians” to the state remained restricted to those who had embraced citizenship following independence. For instance, in the statutes set forth in the Citizenship act under Nehru, refugees were legally considered ‘foreigners’ because they failed to meet three requirements of the Act: born in the country, either of whose parents were born in India, or being an ordinary resident in India for not less than five years immediately preceding the Act. While citizenship remains a crucial institution signifying inclusion or exclusion, the basis for inclusion or exclusion within the Indian state has shifted to religious or cultural affiliation. By framing persecuted Hindus as “sons of the soil” while at the same time projecting marginalized Muslim groups as outsiders not worthy of state protection, Modi’s Amendment Bill serves as a powerful communicative device aimed at forging a national identity predicated on India as a Hindu homeland.

While religion is a domain which can simultaneously unite or divide, so too is language. Asha Sarangi argues language to be cultural capital which instantly provides a “sense of belonging to communities-religious and linguistic-which need to be integrated within the territorial limits of nations and nationalities.”<sup>255</sup> Brubaker suggests that language and religion sort people into “distinct, bounded and largely self-reproducing communities... and form the basic sources and forms of social, cultural and political identification.” They are understood by participants and observers alike in providing crucial sign posts of identifying oneself and others, “construing sameness and difference and naming fundamental social groups.”<sup>256</sup> Brubaker argues that both language and religion are at the very least central and perhaps constitutive of most ethnic and national identifications “frequently serving as the key diacritical markers, emblems or symbols

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<sup>253</sup> Rogers Brubaker, “Immigration, Citizenship, and the Nation-State in France and Germany,” in *The Citizenship Debates: A Reader*, edited by Gershon Shafir (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998): 132.

<sup>254</sup> Shafir and Peled, *Being Israeli*, 11.

<sup>255</sup> Asha Sarangi, “Introduction,” in *Language and Politics in India*, ed. Asha Sarangi (Oxford University Press, 2009), 4.

<sup>256</sup> Brubaker, *Grounds for Difference*, 85-87.

of such identifications.” Likewise, Otto Jespersen argues that “nation means a linguistic unit, a linguistic community” while according to Bhabha, nations require the “performativity of language in the construction of national narratives.”<sup>257</sup> It is then, hardly surprising that Hindi has long comprised a key component delineating the Hindu nation. V.D. Savarkar’s 1923 publication *Hindutva: Who Is a Hindu?* argues language to be a pillar of Hindu identity. Referring not only to Sanskrit but also to Hindi, Savarkar established the criterion for Hindutva: “Hindu, Hindi, Hindustan.”<sup>258</sup> Since Modi’s election, language has gained prominence as a key communicative device signifying national identity. In what Tremblay and Kapur have coined the *vernacularization* and Hinduization of Indian Foreign Policy, Modi has increased the use of the Hindi language in official communication, particularly within foreign and multilateral venues and Sanskritized idioms in spoken Hindi. Modi’s speeches to the Indian diaspora are conducted almost entirely in Hindi, while his initial speech to the UN General Assembly Session in September 2014 was conducted in Hindi. Of late, Modi’s government has promoted making Hindi an official language in the United Nations. The major hurdle for Hindi’s ascension to official language status seems less with gaining the votes needed but rather the added expense borne by member states. The Minister of External Affairs, Sushma Swaraj argued that the “difficulty arises from the fact that they not only have to give their vote, but also bear the expense. The countries which are economically weaker, who otherwise support us, hesitate in supporting us here because of the economic burden which will fall on them.” Swaraj reasoned that in time her government would successfully garner support from Indian origin countries such as Fiji, Mauritius, Suriname, Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago, countries that, despite scarce financial resources, still have substantial Hindi speaking populations with assurances that India would shoulder the financial burden. Swaraj went on to add that regardless of whether the initiative costs 40 crore or 400 crore, they were ready and willing to spend, whatever the sum.

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<sup>257</sup> Otto Jespersen, *Mankind, Nation and Individual from a Linguistic Point of View* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd, 1954).

<sup>258</sup> Jaffrelot, “From Holy Sites to Web Sites: Hindu Nationalism, from Sacred Territory to Diasporic Ethnicity.” Savarkar’s brand of ethnic nationalism, at odds with the multiculturalism promoted by Nehru and Gandhi led to his expulsion from the Congress party in 1937. Jaffrelot argues Savarkar to be a chief architect of Hindu nationalism paving the way for a future wave of his followers such as K.B. Hedgewar, who founded the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS).

### **Conclusion**

The discussion in this chapter has focused on making sense of the dramatic shift in political behaviour between Narendra Modi's government and the Indian diaspora. I have suggested that in order to explain these shifts we first need to recognize that diaspora is not a bounded group but as a process or social practice. Acknowledging this fact allows us to understand the active role states play in the identifying what constitutes their diasporic members. Under Nehru, by deemphasizing the political relationship between the Indian state and its external communities he effectively communicated to both a domestic audience and those abroad that Indians lived in India and that Indian citizenship was territorially bound. In the early 1990s, the government opened a new chapter in its political relationship with the diaspora. State efforts to organize, establish and identify high-valued economically prosperous or political influential diasporic members as Indians signaled a shift in how the state categorized its external population. Since the election of Narendra Modi, the state has again shifted its global outreach to the diaspora albeit from an overtly religious or cultural basis. It would now appear that from the vantage point of the Indian state those that it actively engages and identifies as Indian would seem to be largely Hindu in origin, orientation or carry some form of Hindu cultural affiliation. However, in each case, be it the Nehruvian era, the post 1990s period or since the election of Narendra Modi, the Indian state has either ratcheted up or scaled down its engagement and identification of the diaspora primarily because the latter serves a political purpose.

A secondary component of this project has been to make the case that state-diasporic engagement practices can be better understood as an institutional norm or rule. Nehru's policy decision to distance the state from its diasporic population set in motion how successive governments would approach its external populations. It was only following a series of critical ruptures that the state altered its policy to then focus on rekindling a political relationship with these populations, albeit with a different agenda and purpose. This chapter has again made the case for state-diasporic engagement as a rule arguing that a shift in political behaviour toward these external communities was only made possible due to three significant elements- the 2014 overwhelming majority electoral mandate, a top-down foreign policy making institutional structure and Prime Minister Modi as a policy entrepreneur- arguing that each have advanced Modi's ability to foster institutional change.

Implicit to such policy change is the acknowledgement of a crucial and overarching theme of this project - the specific targeting of policies directed towards certain diasporic populations suggests that the state crafts and develops different connections to its external populations based primarily upon the potential those diasporic populations might offer the sending state. In the case of Modi, a dominant agenda of his BJP government has been the construction and projection of India as a Hindu nation. Particularly for Modi, a Hindutva message delivered to the diaspora signals back to the home population of a Hindu India. As a result, making sense of who India now targets and why they are targeted is elucidated. The creation of Hindu language laws, celebration of Hindu cultural festivals, courting of persecuted Romas and Hindu refugees and the expansion of membership to Overseas Indians living in giritriya states each suggest the transformation of a larger government agenda.

And finally, the policy tools the Indian state has developed to encourage contributions of the diaspora illuminate its political agenda. By expanding the boundaries of membership to the Indian nation, the perimeters for inclusion are increasingly dictated by a particular brand of culture predicated on India's Hindu past. By stretching the borders of the Indian nation through the granting of citizenship to Hindu refugees, easing of visa rules to NRI's, extending lifelong membership cards to Persons of Indian Origin and Overseas Citizens of India etc. ... India is reconfiguring the frontiers of the state beyond its territorial boundaries. In chapter one, I questioned whether the emergence of transnational citizenship should be viewed as an institutional transformation of membership and legal rights. The goal of extending new forms of citizenship such as dual citizenship or "ethnizenship" such as the granting of OCI cards has produced a relationship of rights and obligations with external populations which functionally tie populations to the sending state. These new forms of citizenship replace the need for diasporic populations to live in the physical territory of the sending state while compelling diaspora to engage with it abroad. In terms of Modi's government's willingness to act on behalf of those it perceives as "Indians," the sovereignty of the state is being extended beyond land and terrain. While this thesis in no way suggests or implies the end of the nation-state, it would appear that membership to the nation-state is being reconfigured beyond the territorial boundaries of the state. However, as India signals who is worthy of state protection, membership would appear to

be constructed along explicitly religious or cultural lines. In short, the Indian diaspora is emerging as a potential communicative device capable of rearticulating what it means to be Indian.

### **Concluding Reflections**

While progress has been made in recent years accounting for how, when and why states structure increasingly complex ties to their diaspora communities, many facets to the phenomena of state-diasporic engagement still remain to consider. One reason could be the ongoing debates over concepts such as diaspora, which still suffers from crude and reductive representations of identity that fail to grasp the relation between politicians who often seek to transform categories into unitary and exclusive groups. One contribution of this project, therefore, has been to shift our understanding of diaspora from that of categorical definitions reifying diaspora as a bounded group, to a more sophisticated analysis, which explores diaspora as *process* or *practice*. In so doing, this project opens up, I believe, venues of inquiry into how states are able to actively construct diaspora for strategic purposes. While a first-generation migrant may view him or herself as both Indian and American, the degree to which and in what forms second, third and subsequent generations might maintain a multigenerational identity through state discourse and practice, therefore, comprises a significant feature of this project. Diasporas are neither permanent nor predetermined, but should be understood as a practical struggle, one in which the cultural, political and social are all part of an exercise which seeks to make or remake groups. Acknowledging this fact provides greater understanding into the complex manner by which Modi's counter-intuitive engagement of the diaspora has since emerged as a potential communicative device capable of rearticulating what it means to be Indian

Although one aspect of this project was to provide an analysis of India's shifting approach to its diaspora, a secondary element was to provide theoretical insight into state-diasporic engagement as an emergent theme of global politics. Chapter one began by providing a short review of the three prevailing definitions of diaspora; Open Definitions, Categorical Definitions and Oxymoronic Definitions. Following the work of Brubaker, I offered an alternative conception of diaspora as both *process* and *social practice*. Conceptualizing diaspora in such a way provided the space to understand how political projects - and by extension, modes of power - produce links between diasporic communities and their homelands, modes of power which often use

coercive force of external identification. As a result, diaspora was less an empirical reality than a project to be constructed, one in which the making and shaping of what and who are constituted as members of a diaspora are fundamentally contingent upon the cultural, social and political actors involved in the shaping.

Although states play a role in the constitution of diasporas, I argued that a fuller understanding was needed as to why there has been a significant increase in the number of states fulsomely engaging members of their national communities in recent decades. In responding to the question of why states have since changed their behavior regarding their external populations, who and why particular diaspora are targeted and what factors trigger diasporas to respond to their sending states, I demonstrated how state-diaspora connections could be alternatively understood as a form of institutional practice. In so doing, I explored how ‘new institutionalism’ as an approach could provide the space to deepen our analysis of these exchanges. Rather than solely emphasizing a historical, sociological or rational approach, I suggested that by bringing both a cultural and a calculus perspective offered a more nuanced perspective that explains social and political outcomes. For instance, a calculus approach assumes the behavior of states engaging their diasporic communities to be wholly instrumental and strategic because of the development assistance, economic clout and political capital they might possess. Alternatively, a cultural approach underscores the manner through which international routines and cognitive scripts are equally significant indications as to why states may simply be following the global herd.

Meanwhile, as states reach across territorial boundaries to tighten their grip on their external communities, their actions draw into question the persistent narrative that territorial sovereignty is fixed, timeless and homogenous. State-diasporic engagement, therefore, highlights the tension between theories of globalization arguing for the erosion of territoriality and the seeming durability of the nation-state. While it may be true that the acceleration of global financial, economic, informational and human flows has made boundaries increasingly porous, such porosity does not necessary herald the end of the nation-state. Rather, conceiving of diasporas themselves as modes of territory provides the conceptual space to make sense of these developments. The pressure for states to acquire new sources of nation-building demanded a reconfiguration of how it conceived of territory, a remapping of the conceptual boundaries of

territoriality, state and nation that allows diasporic communities abroad to be folded within a broader nation-state. In its wake, state-diasporic connections may increasingly contribute to changing normative conceptions of political community as states respond to perceived challenges and opportunities created by global processes such as migration.

Potentially the greatest challenge is not only in terms of why states have increasingly acknowledged the latent potential of their diaspora, but also in determining how these communities are enticed into contributing to nation-building agendas. A tool states wield in this regard are the inherent homing tendencies of these communities. The desire by many diasporic members to retain membership in their ancestral nation or political community, despite residency abroad provides states the opportunity to leverage what Brubaker terms a “politics of belonging.” The politics of belonging involves a process of claiming and being claimed, of belonging in the state or in the nation. To be accepted as a fully-fledged member in a nation, therefore, is to act and contribute in meaningful and socially appropriate ways. By playing on symbols of nationhood, states often manipulate cultural symbols to elicit contributions amongst their diaspora. As the frequency and consistency of these donations increase, their behavior develops into a social convention. That is not to suggest states solely incentivize their external communities through offerings of national membership. However, in most cases, the tools sending states utilize to shape and encourage dependable contributions of the diaspora to its political agenda are remarkably similar. The extension of sovereignty and the redefinition of the boundaries of state citizenship and national membership are then often enacted to create, coopt and maintain ties to diasporic populations abroad.

In closing, it is high time that we shed our reductive and parsimonious framings of identity and begin to build into our discursive analysis a recognition of diaspora, not as an entity or bounded group, but as a stance, project, claim, idiom or practice. As Brubaker and Cooper cogently declare: “If identity is everywhere, it is nowhere. If it is fluid, how can we understand the ways in which self-understandings may harden, congeal and crystallize? If it is multiple, how do we understand the terrible singularity that is often striven for-and sometimes realized-by politicians seeking to transform mere categories into unitary and exclusive groups? How can we understand

the power and pathos of identity politics?”<sup>259</sup> As an expanding number of states lay claim to their putative external communities, analysis of these engagements should always be accompanied by a critical reflection of the way in which that identity is being actively shaped for state agendas.

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<sup>259</sup> Brubaker and Cooper, “Beyond Identity,” 1.

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