Indian Soft Power and Associations of the American Diaspora

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Introduction

The objective of this paper is to examine the 'soft power'[1] exercised by associations formed by the Indian diaspora in the United States, as it relates to: (a) building up the image of India as a deserving member of the global elite – politically, culturally and economically, and, then, (b) using that image to achieve certain goals for their country of origin. The term 'association' is used to denote both formal non-profit organizations, such as trade associations, and informal non-profit organizations. The latter includes informal networks created by email groups, as well as initiatives of limited life-span created to achieve specific aims, such as reducing anti-dumping tariffs on steel imports from India or passing the US-India nuclear fuel agreement.

We take as given that American society, up to and including the political process, has generally been receptive to civil society organizations as part of the pluralistic governance process (Rose, 1967)[2]. Within this broader context, this paper asks the following questions:

(1) Given multiple possibilities for the exercise of Indian soft power, why might diaspora associations be relevant? For instance, civil society or state-sponsored organizations originating in India may be a more appropriate channel, as exemplified by the successful role played by civil society organizations from western countries, such as Alliance Francaise, or government-sponsored organizations such as the British Council and the Goethe Institut.

(2) How have these associations evolved over time? Apart from the possibility that an association may have been formed explicitly to project some aspect of Indian soft power, there are multiple other possibilities: for instance, if the diaspora initially faced racial discrimination, one way to counter this could have been through an association that projected the community's high cultural values that derive from its country of origin; success on this front may then have led to incorporating the projection of high culture into the association's objectives. Alternatively, associations may have evolved out of specific initiatives, such as to lobby for the US-India nuclear fuel agreement or for more open immigration laws; or, it may have been a less deliberate process, whereby associations that were formed to meet local needs, such as a trade association of liquor-store owners in a particular city, might add or change their character and achieve, either deliberately or unexpectedly, wider aims of projecting Indian soft power.

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[1] 'Soft power', coined by Joseph Nye, refers to the ability to exercise power without coercion. Source: Nye, J., Bound to Lead: the Changing Nature of American Power, New York: Basic Books, 1991

[2] Rose, A. The Power Structure: Politcal Process in American Society, London: Oxford University Press, 1967.

A second set of questions in this group is how the memberships of these organizations changed with time. Did they respond to success or particular challenges by widening their focus or field of membership. An example is the The Indus Entrepreneurs, which has done both in response to the success of its earlier, narrow approach and deciding that course corrections were needed[3].

(3) Which are the associations that matter and what lay behind their success? As we discuss below, the associations are many in number and most do not have the explicit objective of projecting some aspect of Indian soft power, such as Indian values. Yet, some have been more successful than others in doing so, often more than those with explicit objectives around Indian soft power. We would like to understand what were the factors behind the successes. For instance, was it that the objectives were of a particular type, such as cultural rather than political, that were behind a successful organization; or, was it a broad appeal to the diaspora, which is quite evidently not homogeneous[4], and yet was able to come together because the association appealed to their diverse needs.

(4) What have the associations achieved, i.e., in what ways have they successfully projected Indian soft power, and what is the scale, scope and sustainability of these projections.

(5) What factors will determine the future of such associations? Examples of relevant factors are the likely integration of the diaspora into the US national fabric and the retention of their Indianness[5]; and the extent to which associations and other initiatives arising from India or other locations outside the United States might supplant the diaspora's associations in soft power projection.

The paper proceeds as follows. Section 2 deals with the origins and growth of the diaspora. Section 3 provides the basis for the importance of diaspora activities in association formation in the context of the evolution of Indian soft power. Section 4 looks at the associations formed by the diaspora, their evolution, success and future. Section 5 provides a conclusion.

Section 2: Origins and Growth of the Diaspora[6].

The word *desi* in Hindustani means a native. The nonresident Indian (NRI, to use the Indian government's term) is sometimes referred to as an ABCD, an American-Born Confused Desi.

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[3] Interview with Suren Dutia, president of TiE Global, April 17, 2009

[4] India's ethnic diversity is the highest among countries with a population of more than 50 million people. The ethno-linguistic-fractionalization index (ELFI) measures India at 89%, which is the probability of two randomly drawn individuals from the overall population belonging to different ethnic groups.

[5] It has been hypothesized that, like other 'native' English speakers, Indian identity in the United States will, at some point in the near future, disappear in the sense that Indian-American will mean more American than Indian.

[6] See also Dossani, R, India Arriving, Chapter 11, Amacom Books, 2007

Nearly two million American NRIs live in America. The original ancestors came in waves rather than all at once. Their origins in the U.S. go back to the economic opportunity that came with building the West in the early twentieth century. About 8,000 South Asians migrated to the U.S. and Canada between 1899 and 1920, the largest ethnic group being Sikhs (85%) and Muslims (13%) from the Punjab. The majority worked as farmhands, loggers, and steelworkers. They braved the discrimination common to such groups at the time and slowly moved into businesses they had been comfortable with in India, such as farming.

Over time, the Sikhs established large farming enclaves in northern California. Today, their descendants make up about 15% of the total NRI population in the United States, as much as the Gujaratis, who hail from western India. The rest of today's NRIs are people of diverse age groups, origins, and destinations.

This implies that that there is considerable diversity among the NRIs. This might lead them to differ in political orientation and culture as well. In recent times, they have come together for common causes--lobbying for the U.S.-India nuclear fuel agreement, for example--but in many other ways they remain different from one another.

After the initial migrations that ended in 1920, there was an extended lull for about four decades. In the mid-1960s, as the promise of India faded into the socialist embrace from which it would not emerge until 1991, the country's technically skilled professionals first began migrating to the U.S. Initially, they consisted mainly of medical doctors due to the availability of immigrant visas for this category. These Indians were from wealthy backgrounds at home. Though disgusted at India's failure, they were rooted in its culture. Hence, they became Americans outside while remaining Indians within[7].

Their politics had nothing to do with India; they wanted themselves and their children to grow up rooted in the U.S.--a near impossibility as they found glass ceilings for themselves and their children, and other barriers[8]. They located themselves mostly in the big cities--New York, Chicago, Boston, and Washington, D.C., but, due to the nature of the medical profession rather than by choice, could be found even in small-town America.

In the early 1970s, the doctors were joined by a third wave: students graduating from the best Indian undergraduate engineering and management institutions who entered the upper tier of American universities with a desire to stay on in the U.S. The motive was again economic opportunity, but this wave included émigrés from more diverse backgrounds. With less openness to new immigrants, direct employment in the U.S. was

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[7] Their homes were perfect replicas of the India they had left behind, with cane chairs, dark curtains, and ornate wall hangings favored by the wealthier Indians of India. This gave an anachronistic, outdated feel to a more recent visitor from India because India had changed even though their homes had not.

[8] Some were of their own making, such as the desire to have their children wed within the community. Given the sparseness of the NRI population, this sometimes meant that a daughter had to be wed to a son-in-law in India--not necessarily her choice of groom or location.

difficult. Like students from many other countries at the time, Indians recognized that higher education was the easiest route to immigration.

Although younger at arrival than the earlier migrants, they embraced the "we don't care about India" attitude of their India-educated elders; they, too, had felt left out of economic opportunity in India due to its stifling bureaucrat-led culture that rewarded only mediocrity. But not having worked in India and being younger, they were less tied to the atmosphere of India in their culture, more willing to experiment, and liberal in their politics. They tended to look on the older migrants as unduly conservative, which they ascribed to mixed identities. This group was willing to embrace America more fully. Of course, like the earlier group, they largely could not, due to the glass ceiling of color and, sometimes, faith, even though many married outside the community.

At about the same time, there was a fourth wave of immigrants that extended into the 1980s. These were less educated and came from relatively underprivileged backgrounds in small-town India, particularly from Gujarat. Primarily, they were in search of a decent living. Their aspirations were simpler than the Indians of the 1960s and 1970s: to work hard at a restaurant, store, or security company, earn a good living, send money back to the parents, and, finally, become shop owners themselves. Often they arrived as tourists without the necessary immigrant paperwork and then overstayed their official welcome. It was relatively easy to do so in those days, easy even to buy businesses and own homes as illegal immigrants while waiting for an immigrant amnesty program (usually targeted at Hispanics but which would necessarily include them) that would allow them to become legitimate residents.

Initially landing in New York, where jobs were easy to find and support groups extensive, this group migrated over time for lower business and living costs to the South, particularly Florida, Georgia, and Texas. The climate in the South was also more familiar and it was possible to live in large Indian enclaves and build businesses in the dry cleaning, fast food, and convenience-store industries.

Culturally, too, the rising conservative climate of the South suited these migrants. It matched their humble origins to rub shoulders with Southerners with small-town roots, including strong religious backgrounds and family ties. Although they shared little in common with the liberal Indian-student communities that were building up around the country, they integrated very quickly into their local communities.

The fifth wave was comprised of engineers. This wave began with the outsourcing of software to India in the mid-1970s but really grew in the late 1980s and 1990s. These people were largely trained in India and had jobs with IT firms in India before coming to the U.S. They were sent overseas by their Indian employers to undertake software projects for their firms' U.S. clients. Over time, a number of them stayed on, working for high-technology firms. A few found their way to Silicon Valley and absorbed its entrepreneurial culture.

These were the first migrants to come from an India that had already economically benefited them. Their decision to work and live in the U.S. came out of a desire to experience an even better lifestyle and work style than was possible in India--to do cutting-edge work in information technology, for example. But they saw themselves as much Indians as Americans and retained their Indian connections by frequently traveling back and forth.

Sabeer Bhatia, the founder of Hotmail, is an example of such a culture and why this group is important for projecting India's soft power. Educated at the Birla Institute of Technology and Sciences (in the western state of Rajasthan in India), Caltech, and Stanford University, he dreamed up Hotmail after a brief stint at Apple. To develop Hotmail, he actively sought venture capital support from established fellow Indian techies in Silicon Valley. This effort did not succeed and so he turned to the mainstream venture capitalists of Silicon Valley, one of whom, Steve Jurvetson of Draper Fisher Jurvetson, supported him[9]. Bhatia has since done several projects that leverage India, either by using Indian workers for global projects or developing products for the Indian market. Helping his country of birth, while residing in Silicon Valley, is his dream and appears to be a common one among this fifth wave of migrants.

Table 1: Waves of Immigration

Wave	Years of migration	Primary Ethnicity	Proportion
1	1899-1920	Sikh	15
2	1960s	Upper-class metro, 30s	25
3	1970s	Middle-class metro, 20s	25
4	1980s	Gujarati, middle-class, small-town, 30s	25
5	1990s	Middle-class metro, 20s	10

Section 3 Why Soft Power is Important for India and Why the Diaspora and its Associations are Important for its Exercise.

As we shall argue in Section 4 below, association-building by the diaspora was, until the mid-1990s, directed towards meeting their own needs through leveraging the power of association in achieving focus and scale. There was, until this time, little engagement with their country of origin even for meeting their own needs. This was largely because India was a closed economy through most of this period, leaving little scope for cultural, political or economic interaction. We term the earlier phase that lasted till about 1995 the internal phase and the later, post-1995 phase the external phase. Of course, these

[9] The point of noting Bhatia's failure to obtain funding from fellow Indians is not to suggest they had poor judgment but to show that he was then able to tap mainstream venture capitalists. (Information based on Dossani, R and C Holloway, *Hotmail: A Case Study,* Graduate School of Business, Stanford University, 2000.

phases matched the period before and after the arrival and settlement of the fifth phase of the diaspora described in the earlier section.

Only since the late 1990s have diaspora associations that project Indian soft power have been more active. It might be obvious to relate this to Indian economic reforms which began in earnest in 1991, which is certainly at the heart of the change; but it is more than that.

We relate the development of the external phase to four sets of relatively independent phenomena of the 1990s:

(1) Context: India's rising economic power created a middle class with an interest in enriching or exploiting their cultural, educational and economic assets through transnational interactions. Of all countries, the United States was of the greatest interest to them. The diaspora was well-placed to assist this process and benefit from it by being the counterparty. The focus was on exploiting cultural assets, such as language, film and music, and economic assets, such as trade. However, the diaspora played no significant role in helping the Indian middle-classes access American education, nor have their been any initiatives by the American diaspora to access Indian education – although this is a vibrant activity between India and other developing countries.

(2) Need: India's domestic and global aspirations required large infusions of foreign capital and acceptance of its nuclear ambitions. Both of these could be made more acceptable to established global elites through the projection of soft power. The diaspora participated in specific initiatives such as helping the passage of the US-India nuclear fuel agreement, through their associations. The strategies used varied from directly lobbying Congressmen using leverage from earlier interactions on domestic issues, such as trade associations that might have earlier supported a Congressman's campaign through campaign contributions and now requested support of this act; to indirect methods, such as holding seminars on the usefulness of the agreement itself, as well as to informing the public-at-large about India's value to the US as a stable democracy in an unstable world.

(3) Geopolitical openness or space: the mid-1990s marked the beginning of a period when, for a variety of reasons unconnected to India's needs for projecting soft power, there was a need (by America) for countries like India that had values similar to the United States.

There were several factors leading to this:

(I) The most important was the end of the Cold War and the reinvention of Russia as a developing country in 1991. America worked hard to support this reinvention, supporting aid and investment flows to Russia and the marketization of the Russian economy. The hope was that Russia would become a key US ally as a result and open up relations with Central Asia and Eastern Europe. By 1995, however, it had become apparent that this strategy was not going to work. Massive corruption and weak

institutionalization of democracy weakened the Russian economy. On the geopolitical stage, Russia was ideologically unwilling to help the West build relations with Central Asia and Eastern Europe and decided, instead, to oppose such moves. Russia also became mired in managing relations with Muslim-majority regions in its own country, a development which hardened it further against ongoing US relationship-building in Central Asia, which became Russia's primary theater of concern. Third, the Russian diaspora in the West consisted of ethnic sub-groups such as Russian Jews who had fled Russia and were not keen to help build Russian soft power.

(II) China's rising soft power in Asia and other developing areas within a context of values, particularly the absence of democracy, was unacceptable to the United States. This was a reversal of earlier American strategy. The initial American strategy after the Clinton Administration took office had been to engage China and offer concessions, such as access to the WTO. However, this strategy's continuance was conditional on the emergence of Japan and Korea also emerging as strong Asian models of development and geopolitical power. The American hope was that, with the emergence of China as an ally, the US would be secure in East Asia and could slowly roll back China's anti-democratic stance in concert with Japan and Korea. After the failures of Japan and Korea to position themselves as acceptable Asian alternatives to China, the US was keen to turn to India.

(III) The attacks of 9/11/2001 raised the question in the minds of American policymakers as to which countries might help stem what appeared to be an unstoppable tide of hostile Muslim attitudes towards the US; and thus help support American efforts to contain such attitudes. Indians' favorable attitudes towards the US[10] (though about on par with Indian attitudes towards other major countries)[11], locational proximity to the Muslim world and history of trade and cultural ties with the Middle East suggested that an opportunity existed, either on the basis of common US-Indian values or economic relations. This could also be leveraged for joint efforts in Muslim-majority countries where Indian influence might be higher than America's.

(4) Capacity for Building Associations. This had two aspects. (I) Maturation of the fifth wave of migrants from India: By the mid-1990s, the latest wave of migrants, the engineers trained in India and living, to the extent possible, a binational lifestyle, was beginning to lay its American roots. Though still young, they had ambitions for the greatness of India that earlier waves of migrants did not. Although initially, they sought to work through associations that had been started either by earlier waves of migrants or by multinationals (MNCs) working in India, they quickly found that such associations did not help project Indian soft power. Earlier migrants tended to be anchored to sub-nationalities and keen to influence local politics rather than the grander sweep that was needed in order to benefit India. MNC groupings, such as the US-India Business Council, had the same ambitions for India as the fifth wave, but could not project Indian culture and values in the way that the diaspora could. Instead, MNCs needed the support of politicians and civil society in India, which was not available (see below). After

[10] http://pewglobal.org/reports/display.php?ReportID=263, downloaded April 15, 2009
[11] http://www.globescan.com/news_archives/bbc06-3/index.html, downloaded April 15, 2009

several unsuccessful and often bruising experiences with older diaspora associations and MNCs, the fifth wave created its own wave of associations. They then found that associations of their own type – urban, English-speaking, and relatively free of sub-national loyalties could easily be built around the idea of professionals coming together to improve their own situation and that of their country of birth.

(II) Limited Grassroots Support in India: Such support can often be critical to the success of diaspora associations seeking to project Indian soft power. We have noted above that the rising Indian middle-class was interested in globalizing. However, it was a different story with the Indian state. Despite the pro-west orientation of senior policymakers in India by the mid-1990s – many of whom had experience of working in the west, Indian politicians firmly followed the dictum that all politics is local. The Indian political system is a parliamentary system and foreign policy is determined by the party in power rather than through votes in parliament. Hence, most members of parliament are not in any way connected with foreign policy. The situation in the provinces (states) was usually worse. A few states, notably Andhra Pradesh, were interested in projecting Andhra Pradesh to the world, but they were few and far between and interest was subject to changes in government that are typical at the state and national level with every voting cycle. Hence, within India, most Indian politicians were initially unprepared to be ambassadors of Indian soft power.

Even in dealings with individuals, the diaspora associations faced the problem that Indian civil society was weak. Undoubtedly, the relations between the diaspora and Indian residents expanded substantially during this period. While earlier relations had been based on family ties, this changed during the period to include commercial ties and cultural ties. However, the weakness of civil society in India meant that the onus for association building lay on the diaspora.

An example of the problem is the functioning of NASSCOM, the National Association of Software and Service Companies. Formed in 1988, it has, at least since 1995, been the industry's premier trade body. NASSCOM is also arguably the best organized trade body in India, with considerable influence over domestic government policy. Since its members include all the large software exporting companies, it has a natural interest in projecting India's capabilities overseas as a reliable provider of software services.

In 1999, when Indian venture capital laws were under review by the Indian government, the government sought the cooperation of various associations both in India and overseas to gain an understanding of the importance and functioning of venture capital. NASSCOM declined to be part of the process, an ostensibly irrational posture given its objective of promoting the software industry.

There were several reasons for this refusal; but the most important one had to do with its perception that venture capital, while beneficial for its smaller members (who were the majority of its membership), would be of no use to the larger members who controlled NASSCOM's governing board. The Indian government then turned to the overseas diaspora organizations, including The Indus Entrepreneurs (see below) for support.

The last aspect of this example, that of the Indian state turning to its diaspora for support, marks a change of attitude on both sides that is important for enabling the projection of soft power. Through the 1970s and 1980s, it was common for the media and politicians in India to speak disparagingly about the NRIs visiting their home country. The media would mock them for their insistence on drinking only bottled water, their complaints about the heat and bad roads, and their ostentatious displays of wealth while in India. The NRIs, in turn, returned home complaining of the various ills of India.

The situation changed as India's confidence in itself grew. Nowadays, Indians in India have accepted the NRIs as their own even as the NRIs increasingly view India as their real homeland and one that they plan to return to throughout their lives. India even has a big state-sponsored event in Delhi each year that celebrates the "overseas Indian," as they are now increasingly termed.

Such a feeling of Indianness creates its own challenges of fitting in to America. In the old days, the overwhelming economic lure of America forced migrants to adjust to life here. In some respects, it was an easy adjustment, especially when it came to political life. It was a truism till the 1990s that Indian Americans were either highly educated and liberal or poorly educated and conservative. There was a divide but a satisfactory one: the aging conservatives lived in the South and voted Republican; the younger, educated ones lived in the East, Midwest and West, and voted Democrat. It was generally expected that the next generation from the South would most likely choose education-based careers and become more like the young professionals than like their parents.

But now globalization has created some interesting dilemmas. Consider the Indian student body at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, a premier state university located 150 miles south of Chicago. Four thousand strong, Indian students compose 10 percent of the total student body. It is a mix of U.S.-born undergraduate students and largely India-born graduate students. The U.S.-born undergraduates were educated at very good public and private schools, mostly in the Midwest. Their friends in school were mostly the white children who would also, like them, attend elite schools like UIUC. In accent and thinking, these young NRIs may be considered mainstream Americans.

It is interesting then that, as soon as they leave the confines of high schools typically in an upscale suburb of Chicago and enter UIUC, their peer group changes sharply and quickly, becoming all Indian or, more generally, South Asian. Their music and movies now include a substantial mix of Bollywood fare and they follow the cricketing fortunes of the Indian team. They spend junior year in India. Many want to live and work in India. Their domestic political views are increasingly colored by how India might be affected.

This is an unusual development in the sense that it did not happen to Indians elsewhere. In Canada, the UK, Australia, the Caribbean, and other English-language locations with a substantial Indian population, the second- and third-generation Indians are more culturally similar to the majority than in the U.S. Ask a UK-born young ethnic Indian male about his sports team and you will find that the red cross of the English soccer team

means as much to him as to a white Englishman; only one other team evokes even more emotion in him and that is the local soccer team of whichever part of England he hails from. The complex politics of India are of minor interest. In the U.S., on the other hand, it appears that after mainstreaming--in different ways in the south and north, there is a trend toward demainstreaming, or, at least, a transnational identity.

Even when compared with other Asian migrants to the U.S., this trend is somewhat unique. For instance, second generation Japanese and Koreans see themselves as primarily and increasingly American. This may be because they are not as welcome in their parents' countries of birth as the second-generation Indians. The Indians' experience is probably most closely paralleled by the Chinese in the U.S., who feel as proud of China's many successes as those of their adopted land and want to help that success and participate in it.

The above analysis was intended to indicate why the exercise of soft power by India was both a need and a possibility and why diaspora associations were critically important to this process.

The advent of the new US administration under Barack Obama and the seriousness of the global downturn have changed some of the above conditions. American capital is no longer as abundant. The downturn in India has reduced its attractiveness as a destination for foreign capital. China, on the other hand, owns abundant foreign capital and becomes more attractive not just to the US in the near term to help it manage its downturn but to India as well. Hence, one of the geopolitical planks has weakened. The other geopolitical plank that has also weakened is a result of the Obama's administration new strategy of directly reaching out to Muslim countries. India, in any case, had not been able to fulfill this role over the past decade. To the contrary, partnering with the Bush administration in reaching out to Muslim countries had, instead of raising the image of the Bush administration, merely weakened India's image with these countries. This could be said to have happened with India's image in China as well, as a result of its perceived closeness to America.

Hence, in some of the early driving forces of Indian soft power in the United States, significant changes have occurred over the past two years. Some phenomena driving the projection of Indian soft power are, however, the same. The first is that India's economic development continues and, with it, the need for foreign capital. India's ambitions to be a member of the global elite remains undimmed, requiring an acceptance of its nuclear status. The third is that the middle-classes of India continue to be engaged in globalization and the United States remains the premier point of engagement for economic, cultural and educational interaction. The fourth continuing factor is the rise in the capacity and willingness of the diaspora to support the projection of Indian soft power. Its greatest success has, interestingly, been with the children of earlier 'turned-off' Indian immigrants The children of the earlier waves identify more closely with India than their parents did, an outcome at least partly if not substantially influenced by India's success, the success of the fifth wave and the latter's engagement with India.

The continuing weakness of civil society in India challenges, however, the sustainability of the efforts by the diaspora to project Indian soft power. Whether these be human rights movements, such as movements for women's rights or movements the rights of underprivileged ethnic groups, such as tribal populations, in the sphere of social action; or, socio-economic organizations such as political think-tanks, chambers of commerce, and cultural organizations, these remain weak and draw much of their sustaining power from the state. For instance, even the leading business chamber of commerce, the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce draws substantial financial support from the national government.

Whether the driving forces that are still positive will be sufficient to enable India's soft power to go on rising in the current environment is unknown and depends in large part on how closely the diaspora associations can sustain goodwill towards India even when the global contexts are less positive.

Section 4 Associations Formed by the Diaspora

As noted earlier, the diaspora has formed several associations in America[12]. The overwhelming majority of these are local: myriad local cultural associations representing different ethnic regions in India, local chambers of commerce, and vertically-specialized local trade associations. A few have national reach, including trade bodies such as the American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin and the Asian American Hotel Owners Association (despite its name, AAHOA is primarily an Indian association); and social groups such as the Global Organization of People of Indian Origin. Some have tried to go beyond their specific organizing philosophies to project Indian soft power consciously, but except for participating in specific, energizing initiatives such as the Gujarat earthquake or the US-India nuclear fuel agreement, their concerns and engagements remain largely domestic. Those with national reach face a particular problem in projecting Indian soft power. As national bodies, they lack local connections; while their lack of ongoing engagement with Indian issues limits their access to the corridors of national power.

A more important role in projecting soft power, by contrast, is played by local associations of the diaspora. They do this in two ways. The first is through engagement with the local community. For instance, trade associations tend to work closely with prominent local politicians and regulators, inviting them to their conferences, contributing to their campaigns and, thus, promoting the concept of model citizenship based on inherited (Indian) and learned (American) values. The second way is through participating in national bodies as representatives of their local bodies. Since they are a more cohesive group than mainstreamed groups, they are able to achieve a say beyond their individual capacity. For example, the board of directors of the National Association of Convenience Stores - the primary trade body for the powerful convenience store industry – is dominated by large chains, such as 7-Eleven and Chevron. The only small businessperson on the board is a South Asian who represents a Houston-based trade association of independent convenience-store owners.

[12] A list is at: http://www.garamchai.com/desiassc.htm

To a large extent, the associations discussed above are also limited by the background of their promoters. Many of the associations were formed by immigrants of earlier waves, which included those looking to change their identity, as we discussed earlier. Hence, underlying their activities is the lack of self-confidence in projecting Indian power. Inherently, they did not believe it to be real in comparison with the reality of their greater success in their adopted country. Further, as we have discussed above, the earlier waves had stronger sub-national loyalties and tended to dissociate themselves from initiatives that require looking at India as a whole. Even within the fifth wave, such feelings are not entirely absent, but it is, overall, a better situation for forming associations more interested in projecting Indian soft power.

The following table provides a snapshot of the most important associations. These are associations that are national in charter and successful in achieving their stated goal. Within their industry or profession, they are recognized as successfully representing their members. The second and third columns indicate the association's stated goals and the category of the founder, from Table 1. The final two columns show the main soft power achievements of the associations and this writer's assessment of their success at achieving those soft power goals.

Table 2: Ranking the Associations

Name	Origin	Goal (stated)	Founders	Soft power	Success
AAHOA	1989	Advocacy – hotels	4th wave	Gujarat, nuclear fuel	1
AAPI	1982	Advocacy – physicians	2nd wave	None	NA
AIF	2001	Social change in India	5th wave	Professionalism, democracy	4
ASHA	1991	Education in India	5th wave	Civil society – education	3
GOPIO	1989	Advocacy – Social change in India	4th wave	Democracy	1
IASLC	2006	Advocacy –democracy	3rd wave	Nuclear fuel	1
ICC	2003	Advocacy – culture	5th wave	Indian culture	2
iForum	2007	Advocacy – public service	3rd & 5th wave	Nuclear fuel	3
INOC	1995	Advocacy – Indian democracy	4th wave	Democracy	1
OFBJP	1991	Advocacy – Indian democracy	4th wave	Democracy	1
SAJA	1994	Advocacy-South Asian & diaspora news	3rd wave	Civil society – Media	5
TiE	1992	Advocacy – South Asian entrepreneurship	3rd & 5th wave	Professionalism, innovation	5
USIFN	1999	Advocacy – US-India relations	3rd wave	Democracy	4
USIBC	1975	Advocacy – MNCs in India	MNCs	Market economy, nuclear fuel, immigration	5
USINPAC	2002	Advocacy, campaign finance – Diaspora socio-economic issues	3rd wave	Nuclear fuel, immigration	3

Notes: AAHOA: Asian American Hotel Owners Association, aahoa.com
AAPI: American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin, aapiusa.org
AIF: American India Foundation, aifoundation.org
GOPIO: Global Organization of People of Indian Origin, gopio.net
IASLC: Indian American Security Leadership Council, indianamericansecurityleadershipcouncil.org
ICC: India Community Center, indiacc.org
iForum: iForum, indoamericancouncil.org
INOC: Indian National Overseas Congress: inoc.org
OFBJP: Overseas Friends of the BJP: ofbjp-usa.org
SAJA: South Asian Journalists Association: saja.org
USIFN: US-India Friendship Net: usindiafriendship.net
USIBC: US India Business Council: usibc.com
USINPAC: US India Political Action Committee: usinpac.com
TiE: The Indus Entrepreneurs, tie.org

The table shows the following: (1) most of the associations exist to serve the needs of their members for improving their prospects in the United States. Only a few of the successful associations have the exercise of soft power in India or the improvement of living conditions in India as their explicit objectives. (2) It has been possible for recent organizations of the diaspora to successfully exercise soft power. On the other hand, older organizations have had greater difficulty. The oldest diaspora group, AAPI, does not even seek to exercise soft power, a remarkable fact given its prominence in its professional domain. (3) A relatively recent group that we have dubbed the 4th wave, the small-town residents who migrated to America in the 1980s and became successful small businesspersons, are the least successful in exercising soft power for India. This is a consequence of their backgrounds and interests, which are primarily local, as discussed earlier. (4) The third wave, the students who came in the 1970s and became professionals, has had success, though not uniformly so. Their success improves when they ally with the 5th wave, with whom they have the most in common, as discussed earlier. (5) The most successful at exercising power are, not surprisingly, the 5th wave. As discussed earlier, they are the most interested in India and are the least divided amongst themselves. Notably, given the recency of such associations, there is a large number of successes. In addition, they address a diverse range of aspects of soft power, from democratic values to civil society and professionalism, thus adding considerable depth to the earlier associations, which largely focused their soft power exercises on democracy. (6) Of the four diaspora associations ranked in the last column with a 4 or higher (the successful associations)[13], there is a divergence in how they exercise soft power. For TiE and SAJA, the exercise of soft power is indirect and independent of their core mission. The associations primarily exist to further their members' professional careers[14]. The success of this primary mission has enabled TiE, for instance, to have had a significant influence on creating the now-widespread perception that Indians have outstanding high-technology capabilities. On the other hand, the other two successful diaspora associations' success at exercising soft power is closely linked with their core mission. AIF's success in its mission of achieving social change in India relies on demonstrating to donors and other stakeholders that its activities are successful because they use the instruments of civil society in India. Thus, they directly improve perceptions of India when they are successful. However, given the continued weakness of Indian civil society, there will be times when AIF's work will be adversely affected as a result, with similarly adverse consequences on its ability to exercise soft power. USIFN's success similarly relies on the quality of democracy in India

[13] Some diaspora associations, such as iForum, have been successful, but given their recency, it is too early to call them sustained successes.

[14] The ethnic professional associations are important for mainstreaming a young professional. For instance, at a regular TiE meeting, the new arrival to Silicon Valley can meet with potential venture financiers, cofounders, and employers, all via an evening of sharing ideas. The more experienced members find the newcomers, in turn, useful because of their new ideas that they might want to fund. Thus, the ethnic association helps to resolve the problem of "trust in entrepreneurship"--a financier and the founder of a startup might trust each other more if both are of the same ethnicity.

Among the associations that have been successful (as noted, these are ranked 4 or 5 in the last column of Table 2), there are, somewhat surprisingly, key founders on whom the successes of the associations still depend. This raises questions on the sustainability of these organizations. See the table below. The second column provides the name of the primary founders of the association. The last column is an assessment of the sustainability of the association in the absence of the founders.

Table 3: Key Founders and Sustainability

Name	Key Founders	Sustainability
AIF	Lata Krishnan	Medium
SAJA	Sree Srinivasan	Medium
TiE	Kanwal Rekhi & Suhas Patil	High
USIFN	Ram Narayanan	Low

Notes:

1. AIF was founded by Lata Krishnan and her spouse, Ajay Shah – both successful IT professionals, in the wake of the Gujarat earthquake, to provide help to the victims. It raised over $7 m for the purpose. Observing that support for quake victims came from the diaspora generally and not just those of Gujarati origin, the couple decided to broaden the mandate of AIF to support social development in India generally. It has since been successful in several initiatives, such as creating the equivalent of a peace corps of volunteers who spend time in India on various projects, and a 'digital equalizer initiative' that provides computers and software to underprivileged students.
2. SAJA was founded by journalist and Columbia University professor Sree Srinivasan as a forum for US-based journalists of South Asian origin to communicate with each other. By sticking closely to that simple formula, SAJA has successfully expanded to include conferences and awards.
3. TiE was founded by IT professionals Kanwal Rekhi and Suhas Patil with the intention of providing a networking forum for younger South Asian IT professionals who needed mentoring and training in order to enhance their careers, particularly in the direction of enterprise. TiE decided in 2002 to de-emphasize its IT roots and focus on entrepreneurship generally. This reworking of its mission was accompanied by a massive expansion outside the US, particularly in India. However, the sustainability of TiE outside its Silicon Valley environs is still a question mark.
4. USIFN was founded by a retired marketing executive, Ram Narayanan. It is perhaps the most influential voice on Capitol Hill about Indian democracy (albeit a fairly muscular version) through its regular electronic newsletter.

As the table indicates, the successful diaspora associations have not completely succeeded in creating viable institutions that will survive them. This is despite some of them being quite long-established. The only fully institutionalized association is TiE, an outcome that was achieved around 2002, i.e., about a decade after its founding.

Section 5 Conclusion

The objectives of this paper were to show the context in which India exercises soft power in the United States and the role that the diaspora plays through its associations. It was argued that the role of the diaspora was critical for the exercise of Indian soft power.

This arose from enabling factors in America, such as the capacity of the diaspora, and weaknesses in India, particularly of civil society.

Second, it was shown that, although there are several diaspora associations that, directly or indirectly, seek to help India exercise soft power, only a few are successful at doing so. In most cases, these are recent associations or were formed by migrants who arrived in the 1990s. We related this background of the migrants to their interest in Indian affairs broadly, rather than in sectarian or regional issues. Nevertheless, perhaps in part to recency of establishment, sustainability issues remain. Another factor that challenges sustainability is that sustainability sometimes depends directly on soft power rather than being a secondary objective. Given the weakness of Indian civil society, this can adversely affect the exercise of soft power.

We argued above that a powerful force sustaining the associations lay in what we called the 5th wave: recent immigrants with technical backgrounds and binational lifestyles. The congruence of certain key interests of both the United States and India make them into powerful actors because they share those common interests. However, this raises an interesting challenge for the future. What happens when American and Indian interests diverge?

The reality is that with any two states with global ambitions, it is a matter of time before national interests will diverge. What then? The answer may well lie in the rapidly evolving identity of the 5th wave NRI and how it interfaces with America's evolving identity in the age of globalism and terrorism. It is likely, in the event of divergence, that the 5th wave NRI will behave like his or her Chinese counterpart. The non-resident Chinese, who are a more established group than the NRIs, have not been able to exercise soft power for their country of origin despite having similar capacities as the 5th wave NRI. The reason is that China's value system is opposed by America, particularly on the issues of democracy and human rights. The non-resident Chinese have, therefore, chosen to do nothing to help their country of origin exercise soft power. If this becomes the fate of the 5th wave NRI, India may well end up relying on earlier waves of immigrants to help it exercise soft power in American. In that case, the NRIs who have assimilated better into the local cultures, as those of the 4th wave in the American South seem to have, will be the better ally.