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**Modiplomacy and Diaspower**  
The discursive construction of modernity and  
national identity in Narendra Modi's  
communication with the Indian diaspora

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MSc in Politics and Communications

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# **Modiplomacy and Diaspower**

## The discursive construction of modernity and national identity in Narendra Modi's communication with the Indian diaspora

**Saanya Gulati**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study seeks to examine the discursive construction of modernity and national identity in Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's communication with the diaspora. By applying Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to Modi's diasporic speeches, it views his engagements as discursive sites of power where governments extend their national influence beyond the state's legal jurisdictions. Using the framework of nation branding, which represents a powerful tool to reinforce modernist conceptions of nationhood, this study investigates the dialogical production of national identity and modernity in the version of brand India that Modi constructs for diasporic audiences. In other words, it asks: how is the idea of India being 'sold' to Indians who live overseas?

The findings indicate that Modi's discourses emphasise the pursuit of modernisation as an unequivocal reality and aspirational goal, but exclude alternative voices, downplay diversity, and shun social inequities. They thus embody the fundamental tensions and Janus-faced forms of knowledge that underlie nation branding exercises, and modernist interventions. Amplified by the strategic choice of target audience, who espouse an amorphous sense of nationalism, and prior political predispositions to the party that Modi represents, these engagements shape a new political sphere of power, which the study calls 'diaspower.' Diaspower represents a strategic avenue for the ideological consolidation of Modi's neoliberal agenda, which is intrinsically wedded to the political brand around which his individual premiership is constructed. It thus assists in exercising governmentality as a form of transnational power, embedding his hegemonic status, and translating this support into national monetary gains. Far from being a superficial practice, diaspower foreshadows profound implications for a democratic nation to imagine alternative visions of social progress.

## INTRODUCTION

On 28 September 2014, Narendra Modi delivered an hour-long speech at Madison Square Garden, New York. Among the 19,000-member audience, many were Indians settled overseas, belonging to the diaspora. The fanfare was in no shortage, from those clad in Modi t-shirts, masks, or waving Modi posters. The speech was preceded by a series of cultural presentations including a folk dance from Gujarat, Modi's home state, and a live performance of a classic Bollywood song, 'I Love My India,' by its original singer (Deb, 2014). Far from being an isolated incident, this event soon became characteristic of diaspora speeches that Modi went onto deliver in other parts of the world. Between September 2014 and April 2016, Modi delivered 12 diasporic speeches at events that followed a format similar to the one in New York.

Diaspora engagements are a prevalent public diplomacy tool considering the international leverage, and the material wealth and skills that these communities possess (Hall, 2012: 1105; Sutherland, 2012: 2; Khanna, 2015: 18). Both factors are salient considering India is an emerging economy and has one of the largest diasporas in the world, with 16 million people of Indian origin settled overseas (UNDESA, 2015: 19). However, the scale and style of diaspora engagement under Modi's leadership are distinct.

Modi's personalised and direct style of communication is characteristic of his political persona. Described as a 'compulsive publicist,' (Fernandes, 2014: 34) Modi has been widely hailed for his oratory skills and ability to captivate crowds (Datta, 2013; Price, 2015; Jaffrelot, 2015). His electoral success, which marked a monumental victory for his political party, paved the way for a new kind of technology-driven and personality-centric campaigning style (Fernandes, 2014).

Similar to how Modi's electoral campaign is considered a case study in political branding, his diaspora engagements represent an exercise in nation branding, whereby governments manage and control their global image (Anholt, 2008; Aronczyk, 2009; Jansen 2009). Given their unique relationship with the nation-state, the diaspora is simultaneously a consumer, stakeholder, and ambassador of this brand. This paper examines the discourses mobilised by Modi in constructing a version of brand India for diasporic communities, or in simple terms, asks: how is Modi 'selling' the idea of India to Indians who live overseas? By using Critical

Discourse Analysis (CDA), this study investigates how ideas of national identity and modernity are represented in Modi's brand India.

Diasporic engagements represent a compelling site for examining these discursive constructions given that the advent of governments courting their diasporic populations is fundamentally linked to modernist conceptions of development and nationalism, which are often articulated through the agenda of neoliberalism. In particular, this study seeks to identify the discursive tension that confronts nation-branding exercises, in terms of balancing a progressive image that is compatible with modernist conceptions of nationhood with its more messy materialisations (Kaur, 2012). This has relevant parallels with the duality inherent in Modi's own political brand, where his association with sectarian politics continues to co-exist alongside his contemporary image that is reconstructed around neoliberal governance and economic progress<sup>1</sup>.

Far from being superficial trends, the notion of power underscores the interdisciplinary framework of diasporic engagements, national identity, modernity, and nation branding that this study adopts. The objective of this study is therefore to identify how this power is constructed and represented in Modi's discourses, and its wider implications for nation branding, diasporic engagements as well as India's socio-political fabric and democracy in general.

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<sup>1</sup> Protests have occurred outside several venues where Modi has delivered diasporic speeches, by those who stand against the communal violence that his political legacy is associated with. The proceeding chapter outlines these dynamics in more detail.

## **Context**

Before delving into the theoretical concepts that underpin the study, this section provides a brief overview of Modi and his political background, which contextualises the proceeding discussions.

### **Modi's coloured political past**

Narendra Modi was sworn in as India's new Prime Minister on 26 May 2014, following an overwhelming majority in the country's General Election, where his party, the BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party, or Indian People's Party) won 282 out of 543 seats in the lower house of Parliament. Prior to becoming the Prime Minister, Modi had served as the Chief Minister of the north-western state of Gujarat for three consecutive terms.

Modi's coloured political past emanates from the communal riots of 2002 that occurred under his leadership in Gujarat (Biswas, 2010: 701). The riots were sparked by an incident in which a Muslim mob attacked a group of Hindu pilgrims who were returning to the city of Godhra by train (Price, 2015: 38). The event escalated into violent riots that resulted in over 2,500 deaths and the displacement of over 200,000 Muslims (Mani and Varadarajan, 2005: 59). Several human rights organisations have accused Modi of condoning the systematic destruction of Muslim communities, and have compiled a wealth of first-hand evidence that suggests the attacks were planned well in advance of the Godhra incident, and in close cooperation with BJP officials and the state police (ibid: 66; Price, 2015: 39-40; Biswas, 2010: 701).

In 2012, the Supreme Court concluded that there was not enough evidence to convict Modi. However, the history of Godhra has continued to haunt him. In 2005, Modi was denied an American visa for violations of religious freedom, while the U.K. government shunned official contact with him during his visit in 2003 (Price, 2015:40; Biswas, 2010: 704). The international press stayed sceptical of Modi right through his electoral campaign of 2014, labelling him 'a man who has thrived on division,' worried that his election as Prime Minister could exacerbate sectarian tensions (Price, 2015: 35). Domestically, however, Modi's efforts to rebrand his political image were well underway.

### **The modi-fied political image**

On 13 September 2013, the BJP officially endorsed Modi as their Prime Ministerial candidate for India's imminent General Election (Fernandes, 2014: 25). Modi's campaign was unique in

that it was modelled on the presidential system with the focus on the individual (Price, 2015: 19; Jaffrelot, 2015: 157). The campaign's driving message was good governance and development, with an emphasis on Modi's economic successes in Gujarat (Mehta, 2010; Price, 2015; Ruparelia, 2015). Exemplary of the campaign's personalised nature were its slogans such as, such as *Ab Ki Bar Modi Sarkaar*, and *Ghar Ghar Modi* ('This time Modi's Government,' and 'let there be Modi in every household') (Jaffrelot, 2015: 175; Fernandes, 2014: 27). While this style of campaigning is not entirely unprecedented in India, the carefully crafted messaging, the extensive use of PR machinery and digital technology paved the way for a new kind of professionalised communications in politics (Kaur, 2015; Price, 2015). As Fernandes (2015: 26) writes, 'his was political marketing like the country had never seen.'

Modi's rebranded political image served a dual purpose. Firstly, it re-assured voters of economic growth, amidst a period of high inflation and diminishing employment. Secondly, it helped divert attention from the public scrutiny over the riots, or at the very least, neutralise Modi's reputation for religious extremism by focusing on economic development (Kaur, 2015: 6; Price, 2015: 49).

### **RSS and Hindu nationalism**

Modi's journey in Indian politics began through the RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, or National Volunteer Association), which he joined as a volunteer, at the age of eight (Price, 2015: 31). The RSS, which is the BJP's ideological parent, has historically considered itself a guardian of Hindu nationalist beliefs or *Hindutva*, the ideology that equates Indian identity with Hindu identity (Therwath, 2012: 552-4).

Although the BJP is officially independent of the RSS, it has derived its founding philosophy, as well as many of its members, including Modi, from its cultural predecessor, and benefited from the RSS' widespread reach in mobilising voters during the 2014 election (Price, 2015: 29; Fernandes, 2014: 29). Of particular interest to this study, however, is the longstanding association between the RSS and the Indian diaspora.

### **Overseas friends of the BJP**

The RSS' transnationalisation began as a result of Indians migrating westward in the 1960s (Jaffrelot and Therwath, 2007: 280). Its eventual success in replicating its organisational structure overseas, particularly in the U.S.A., U.K., and Canada has allowed *Hindutva* to gain global relevance (ibid; Biswas, 2010: 699). This success owes partly to the modernist streak in the variant of Hindu nationalism espoused by the RSS (Therwath, 2012: 552). For

example, some RSS doctrines go as far as to attribute mathematics and astronomy to ancient Hindu civilisation, while its contemporary communication tactics extensively rely on online platforms (ibid).

The RSS' overseas presence has leveraged the diaspora's potential as a source of symbolic support and material wealth, which has financially benefited the BJP during its electoral campaigns (Khanna, 2015: 24; Jaffrelot and Therwath, 2007: 289). This association has however been linked to the funding of hate politics (Sabrang, 2002; Awaaz, 2004). Particularly noteworthy are two reports from 2002 and 2004, which exposed the sectarian nature of RSS activities funded by Indians living in the U.S.A. and U.K., who were misled into believing that they were supporting relief activities or charitable causes (Jaffrelot and Therwath, 2007; Therwath, 2012).

Notwithstanding controversies, the RSS' global network is significant for understanding the culturally unique factors that influence diasporic engagements, and modernity in India. This provides a good segue into the next chapter, which discusses these concepts in more depth.

## **THEORETICAL CHAPTER**

In order to adequately assess Modi's communication with the diaspora, this study is grounded in the scholarship on state-diaspora engagements, the discursive construction of national identity and modernity, and nation branding. Together, these concepts comprise the study's key analytical categories.

### **State-Diaspora engagements**

#### *Disasporic engagements and the nation-state*

State-diaspora engagements, the practice of states reaching out to and engaging with populations settled overseas, shares a complex relationship with the nation-state (Gamlen, 2008: 843; Gamlen, 2006: 3). A widely accepted paradigm characterising this association is Anderson's (1998) 'long-distance nationalism,' which emerges among communities who do not live with the consequences of voting (Ragazzi, 2014: 87; Mani and Varadarajan, 2015; Therwath, 2012; Lerner, 2007; Jaffrelot and Therwath, 2007; Gamlen, 2008; Brubaker, 2005). This is particularly relevant to the Indian state, which does not permit dual citizenship (Mani and Varadarajan, 2005: 57). Moreover, diasporic members who choose to retain their citizenship are required to physically travel to their constituency to vote (Jaffrelot, 2015: 181).



The advent of states reaching out to their diasporas marks what academics have termed a 'diasporic turn,' which marks a shift from erstwhile governmental policies that excluded or opposed diasporas to (re)-including them into the national fold (Drzewiecka et al., 2002: 346; Ragazzi, 2014: 75). In the Indian context, scholars have documented this shift through the commemoration of Pravasi Bharatiya Divas or 'Overseas Indians Day' in 2003, which was a radical departure from previous governments' diaspora policies (Mani and Varadarajan, 2005; Ragazzi, 2014: 75).

The orientation to a 'homeland,' as an authoritative source of value, identity, and loyalty is considered an essential feature when studying the diaspora (Brubaker, 2015; Dufoix, 2011; Tsuda, 2010; Varadarajan, 2010). While this association is also theorised from the perspective of diasporic identity formation, or how diaspora communities negotiate their identity in relation to the nation-state (See for example Radhakrishnan (2002) and Hall (2003)), this study is concerned with how states use forms of power to maintain ties with the diaspora, as a top-down policy and one-way communication strategy.

#### *Diasporic engagements and power*

The notion of power is salient when studying diaspora engagements, as they represent a strategy for nation-states to assert their national influence over populations who live outside the state's geographic confines (Ho et al., 2014: 154). This is inherently linked to the Foucauldian understanding of governmentality, the art of managing individuals, or the means through which a population is rendered governable (Gamlen, 2006: 5). Foucault (1987: 102-103) defines governmentality as a 'very specific albeit complex form of power' that uses governmental apparatuses, and political and economic forms of knowledge over a target population. While a growing body of scholarship alludes to the relationship between diasporic engagements and governmentality (Ho et al., 2014; Gamlen, 2006; Gamlen, 2014; Ragazzi, 2014; Larner, 2007), this study is concerned with examining *how* this power is represented. This approach derives merit from scholars who have pointed to a gap in the literature that attempts to unravel the underlying 'webs of power' in diasporic engagements and advocated for more work in this direction, given its significant implications for citizenship, identity politics, cultural production, international relations, and geography (Ho et al., 2014: 156). However, one factor worth considering is the seeming difficulty in detecting how governmentality is exercised, given the qualitative and interpretative nature of the Foucauldian concept (Ragazzi, 2014: 82). To thoroughly explicate the relationship between diasporic engagements and governmentality, it is thus useful to turn to framework of neoliberalism, which underpins much of the contemporary literature around state-diaspora engagements (Gamlen, 2006; Gamlen, 2014; Ho et al., 2014; Larner, 2007; Ragazzi, 2014;

Mani and Varadarajan, 2005).

*Diasporic engagements and neoliberalism*

There is a new neoliberal inflection to the emerging policy focus on the potential presented by diasporas to assist in development (Ho et al., 2014: 154)

Neoliberal governmentality is central to understanding the rationale behind the 'diasporic turn,' which is geared primarily toward advancing development in the knowledge-based economy (Ho et al., 2014: 154; Gamlen, 2006: 11). The conceptual compatibility between diasporic engagements and neoliberal policies stems from the fact that neoliberal principles do not conform to a territorialised conception of economic development, but support economic deregulation, the free-flow of capital, and transnationalising commerce and finance (Ragazzi, 2014: 86; Varadarajan, 2010: 49-50). To this effect, the neoliberal restructuring of states both enables and necessitates the advent of diasporic engagements, as the (re)-constitution of diasporic subjects into the national body politic advances a transnational model of development and deterritorialised model of citizenship (Sutherland, 2012: 28; Varadarajan, 2010: 48). These models are often focused around tapping into the diaspora's investment potential and business know-how, which is salient for India's emerging economy (ibid).

Diasporic engagements thus represent the means by which the global knowledge economy is made governmental (Larner, 2007: 332), and diasporic populations become governable subjects of a neoliberal government apparatus and agenda. This framework is relevant to the Indian context considering its adoption of neoliberal principles in 1991 (Kaur, 2012; Varadarajan, 2010; Mani and Varadarajan, 2005; Mazzarella, 2010; Ram, 2012), which initiated a series of reforms including the provision of tax incentives to facilitate domestic investment by overseas Indians, and the establishment of the first governmental committee on the Indian diaspora (Mani and Varadarajan, 2005: 57). In the context of India's current political leadership, this framework is all the more applicable, considering Modi's language of good governance and development, which is understood by audiences universally (Kaur, 2015: 5).

While previous scholarly works have used 'Overseas Indian Day' as a case study in diasporic engagements, and examined the interplay between neoliberalism and nationalism (Mani and Varadarajan, 2005), the unique approach of this study is twofold. Firstly, it is methodologically distinct in that it examines the production of discursive techniques, rather

than their reception. The proceeding section elaborates on this aspect in more detail. Secondly, it seeks to critically examine the underlying power structures in Modi's dialogical productions, while remaining particularly attentive to the unique format of these events, and his rebranded political image.

To further elucidate the discourses that will be examined in Modi's speeches, the latter half of this section will discuss the discursive construction of national identity, modernity, and their contemporary manifestation through nation branding.

## **Modernity and its discursive construction**

### *Early conceptions of modernity*

Modernity is a multidimensional and abstract concept whose meaning has changed over time (Cassasas and Wagner, 2016; Chakrabarty, 2011). Giddens (1990:3) describes modernity as a distinctive form of social and cultural organisation. The idea of discontinuity is central to modernity, as it denotes a transition between different phases in human history, or a fundamental shift in the nature of the world system (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999: 79; Giddens, 1990: 4; Chakrabarty, 2011: 666; Snodgrass, 2004: 81; Blaikie, 2011: 417; van Eijnatten et al., 2013: 11). These discontinuities are characterised by the sheer pace and scope of change, which are intrinsic to the nature of modern institutions (Giddens, 1990: 6).

Rooted in Enlightenment thought, early conceptions of modernity mark a commitment to autonomy, and an expression of scientific rationality, which are considered the institutional foundations of modern society (Casassas and Wagner, 2016: 161; Selvaraj et al., 2015: 12; van Eijnatten et al., 2013: 3). While this is fundamentally different to the Indian context, wherein modernity has co-existed with religious worldviews (Nanda, 2006), the relevance of modernity to this study is more from the perspective of the nation-state and neoliberalism, which represent vital modern institutions.

### *Modernity: from capitalism to neoliberalism*

Giddens (1990: 4) identifies capitalism as one of the key institutional dimensions of modernity through which the nation-state exercises power. Characterised by a growing distance between the polity and economy, the market gains predominance as a modern, rational, and efficient institution that embeds itself in the everyday existence (Hall, 2011: 713; Selvaraj et al., 2015: 21; Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1990: 79). The growing influence of this economic system is captured in Wallerstein's conception of the 'world economy,' which took

root in the late nineteenth century (Giddens 1990: 68-69; Billig, 1995: 130). More relevant to this study, however, is the onset of transnational or post-industrial capitalism, owing to the emergence of globalisation, the growth of the service sector, and greater capital mobility, which gave rise to neoliberal economic policies (Halperin, 2016; Billig 1995; Hall, 2011).

Like modernity, it is difficult to define neoliberalism, as it has several variants (Hall, 2011). Essentially, it advocates for a reduction of government regulation in order to allow for the successful pursuit of global capitalist enterprise (Halperin, 2016: 183; Hall, 2011: 716). Neoliberal policies have long held the fantasy of modernist development for India, articulated through the meta-narrative of economic progress (Banerjee, 2003: 170; Selvaraj et al., 2015: 8). India's adoption of neoliberal reforms in 1991 and their continuing relevance under Modi's leadership have been alluded to previously, thus establishing the concept's centrality to this study. However, to critically examine the discursive manifestation of neoliberalism, which is a primary objective of this study, it is worth turning to some of the problematic aspects underlying neoliberal discourses.

### *Critiques of neoliberal discourses*

Claims to modernity in any age, are artefacts of both ideology and imagination  
(Chakrabarty, 2011: 676).

Neoliberalism exists as a set of ideas that derive from classical liberal knowledge, whose principles have been transformed to suit modern, global, post-industrial capitalism (Hall, 2011: 711). Like modernity, its character is contingent and constructed (Snodgrass, 2004: 82). It thus exists as a discursive practice, which is constituted by knowledge that appears as a specific institutional and organisational practice (Banerjee, 2003: 148). By translating its ideas into discursive forms, the neoliberal project thus develops a distinctive lexicon (Hall, 2011: 711). Generally speaking, its discourses emphasise the overarching goal of progress and modernity, and the freedom of customers to exercise their choices in the marketplace (Hall, 2011: 716; Banerjee, 2003: 144).

Neoliberalism's equivocal nature shares parallels with critiques of modernity. While modern institutions have created greater opportunities for individuals, they also have a 'sombre' face (Giddens, 1990: 7) or what Escobar (1992: 23) calls their dark side of domination. These critiques generally take one of two approaches. The first is concerned with a sense of loss and insecurity that accompanies the pursuit of modernisation. These works problematize neoliberal and modern discourses from the perspective of marginalised populations who are often excluded from the benefits and opportunities that neoliberalism masquerades as a custodian of (Selvaraj et al., 2015; Banerjee, 2003; Ram, 2012; Tomic et al., 2006). The

second approach is concerned with how states employ neoliberal and modernist discourses as a hegemonic project (Escobar, 1992; Datta, 2013; Yang, 2012; Nordholt, 2011; Hall, 2011). Both approaches, however, are generally concerned with how states deploy modernist discourses domestically to discipline populations as part of larger institution-building projects (Yang, 2012; Nordholt 2011; Selvaraj et al., 2015). Some studies also apply post-colonial frameworks to critique the hegemonic neoliberal agenda that international development institutions impose (Escobar, 1992; Banerjee, 2003). As a unique point of departure, this study seeks to critically examine how states deploy neoliberal discourses through the practice of governmentality as a form of transnational power, by courting its diasporic populations. Consequently it views diasporic engagements as discursive sites, where meaning is produced, and relations of power are constructed.

## **National identity and its discursive construction**

### *Nations and nationalism*

Most contemporary scholarship agrees that the nation-state and nationalism are products of modernity (Smith, 1998: 47; Gellner, 1983: 22; Billig 1995: 128; Giddens, 1990: 79; Bhabha, 1990: 1). Similar to modernity, the nation-state and nationalism are abstract concepts. This is best captured in Anderson's (1991) seminal work on the nation as an 'imagined political community.' According to Anderson (1991: 36), the possibility of imagining the nation arose due to the advent of modernity, particularly the emergence of print capitalism, which allowed people to relate to each other in new ways.

The nation-state, as a modern institution, is predicated on the idea of political legitimacy, which purports that ethnic and political boundaries should overlap, in order to validate and accommodate the conditions of industrialism (Gellner, 1983: 46). According to Gellner (1983: 22-23), this is what gives nationalism an underlying power, since there are far more potential nations than actual nations-states. Nationalism is therefore not a pre-existing sentiment, but a process of creating or unifying nation-states (ibid). This is particularly relevant to the Indian state, which comprises multiple ethnic identities, and has seen a number of ethno-nationalist movements since its Independence (Manor, 1996; Mishra, 2014). While post-colonial critiques have problematised this through the Eurocentric epistemology of modernity, which is largely alien to the South-Asian region (Shome and Hegde, 2002; Mishra, 2014; Nanda, 2006; van Eijnatten et al., 2013), this study is concerned with the broader and more fundamental contentions inherent in national identity discourses.

### *Discursive construction of national identity*

If the nation is an imagined community, then national identity is considered the way in which a community is imagined (Anderson, 1983: 6), or how the nation comes into being as a system of cultural significations (Bhabha, 1990: 2). Discursive practices therefore play a central role in the formation and expression of national identity, which can be best described as a complex set of similar beliefs, opinions and behavioural dispositions that are socially internalised (Wodak et al., 1999: 28-29).

Given the fluid and dynamic nature of national identity, its discursive construction is multidimensional (Guibernau, 2013: 11). Two main discursive strategies are identifiable from the literature. The first is establishing a sense of temporal continuity, by emphasising the nation's historical origins, shared traditions, common values (Wodak et al., 1999: 26). The second is differentiating from others, by constructing a common enemy or shared memories of sorrow endured by the nation (Guibernau, 2013: 18).

Like modernity, there is an element of underlying power associated with the discursive construction of national identity. Scholars describe this as a process wherein meanings of cultural and political authority are negotiated, and the perception of the past and present is transformed (Bhabha, 1990: 2; Martin in Wodak et al., 1999: 28). This is particularly relevant for diaspora engagements, which cause questions around national identity to resurface. Particularly relevant to this study are the questions of who is discursively constructed as part of the national body politic in the context of diasporic engagements, and to what end states deploy nationalist discourses to expand their sovereign domain over diasporic subjects (Ho et al., 2014: 155; Mani and Varadarajan, 2005: 47).

### *Nation branding: definition, implications, and context*

Nation branding has emerged as a popular commercial practice in the last two decades, used by governments to manage and control their country's global image (Anholt, 2008; Aronczyk, 2009; Jansen 2009). Effectively, it is an instrument of public diplomacy through which governments mobilise soft power to promote a positive image and cultivate favourable relationships with stakeholders overseas (Nye, 2008; Anholt, 2008; Gilboa, 2008; Hall, 2014; Varga, 2013). As an overseas audience, diasporic communities represent an important stakeholder and consumer of the nation brand. However, while nation-branding scholarship has referenced the diaspora's relevance (Clancy, 2011; Aronczyk, 2008; Anholt, 2008), it has not explicitly examined how national brands are discursively constructed for and targeted

toward diaspora communities. The relatively understudied nature of diaspora diplomacy further strengthens this study's relevance (Gilboa, 2008: 73).

The phenomenon of nation branding neatly intersects with the discursive construction of modernity and national identity. Three sequential factors are worth considering here. Firstly, nation branding is a product of the modern consumer driven world, where advertising and marketing are prevalent communication tools (Clancy, 2011: 285). Consequently, it represents a powerful tool to reinforce a corporatised and commodified notion of national identity (Clancy, 2011: 283; Aronczyk, 2008: 43; Kaur, 2012: 605; Jansen, 2008: 121; Volcic and Andrejevic, 2011: 599). This second factor is what Anholt (2007: 75) refers to as making national identity tangible, communicable, robust, and useful. Thirdly, the advent of neoliberalism is inherently linked to the discourses mobilised in national brands, which often operate through a fundamental tension of trying to project a modern image of nationhood that is compatible with the tenets of globalisation and navigating its more complex socio-political realities (Varga, 2013: 827; Aronczyk, 2008: 43; Clancy 2011: 286; Kaur, 2012: 605; Anholt, 2008: 268).

While some scholars have highlighted the positive impacts of nation branding, including its potential to attract greater tourism, foreign investments, and marginalise nationalist chauvinism (Van Ham, 2011; Anholt, 2003), a growing body of academic voices is equally critical of its democratic implications (Volcic and Andrejevic, 2011; Varga, 2013; Jansen, 2008; Aronczyk, 2008). Firstly, the top-down communication used in disseminating national brands results in a brand identity that is unrepresentative of the multitude of voices constituting the nation-state (Varga, 2013; Aronczyk, 2008; Volcic and Andrejevic, 2011). Secondly, privatising functions traditionally associated with the public sphere, namely governments hiring private agencies to create national brand identities, involves vested interests that are not transparently communicated (*ibid*).

The power relations and dichotomies that underlie nation branding are relevant to India, where an upsurge of nation branding has been evidenced, especially through the government's 'Incredible India' campaign (Anholt, 2008; Hall, 2012; Jansen 2009; Kaur, 2012; Suri, 2011). While these efforts have been lauded as a successful endeavour to project a market-friendly image of India (Hall, 2012: 1107; Suri, 2011: 209), they have also been critically examined as a site of discursive ruptures, wherein undesirable images of poverty, corruption and violence, which refuse to disappear from the global gaze, directly confront the aspirational neoliberal agenda that nation branding exercises seek to advance (Kaur, 2012). While this study examines similar tensions, albeit through a more contemporary nation

branding initiative, its specific focus is on how meanings of modernity and national identity are reconciled with Modi's political image and the fragile brand around which his leadership is constructed.

## **CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

Having contextualised Modi's political background, reviewed relevant literature, and the scholarly gaps that this study seeks to address, this section outlines the interdisciplinary framework and key theoretical assumptions underlying this research.

First, diasporic engagements are discursive sites that arise from, and advance, a neoliberal rationality of government (Gamlen, 2006; Ragazzi, 2014). Using the framework of governmentality, this study views Modi's engagements as a transnational practice of power whereby diasporic communities are transformed into self-disciplined, consenting, and governable subjects of a neoliberal apparatus (Gamlen, 2014: 193).

Second, while modernity and national identity exist as dialogical productions, this study is concerned with how states, or a state leader in this case, can use discursive power to construct, communicate and legitimise specific political and economic forms of knowledge. It thus views modernity and national identity as a 'set of discursive power relations' (Escobar, 1992: 47).

Third, it explores the discursive manifestation of modernity and national identity through the contemporary prism of nation branding. It thus takes the view that nation branding is an endeavour to construct meaning (Clancy, 2011: 288; Varga, 2013: 827), which is accompanied by a discursive power, and embodies fundamental tensions surrounding modern conceptions of nationhood.

Fourth, since the speeches are delivered by the Indian Prime Minister and geared toward Indians living overseas, the analysis is set against the backdrop of Modi's controversial political legacy, and more recent efforts to rebrand his political image through the language of neoliberalism. The dialectic relationship between these two personas, further complicated by the global spread of *Hindutva* from which his political party has traditionally derived diasporic support, is thus key in contextualising the discourses mobilised in his speeches.

## **RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

'Incredible India' and 'Overseas Indians Day' have by and large remained the focus of



previous scholarly works investigating India's nation branding efforts (Kaur, 2012) and diasporic engagements (Mani and Varadarajan, 2005). While Modi's election as Prime Minister is a fairly recent phenomenon, his unique style of diplomacy has generated curiosity over whether it signals a new 'Modi doctrine' in Indian foreign policy (Hall, 2015; Jafrelot, 2015). In unmasking how this doctrine is discursively manifested, it is therefore hoped that this study will contemporise the existing literature around India's diasporic engagements and nation branding, as well as contribute to critically examining how power is constructed and represented in these practices. Furthermore, Modi's coloured political past, and his attempts to diffuse the controversies surrounding his character, make for a compelling case to understand how he navigates these tensions in constructing a national brand that is wedded to his premiership. The research question of this study is thus as follows:

**How are the discourses of modernity and national identity constructed in Narendra Modi's communication with the Indian diaspora?**

In answering this question, this study seeks to understand what is emphasised and legitimised in these discourses, what is obscured or concealed, and the discursive techniques that aid in this inclusion and exclusion.

## **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

As aforementioned, modernity, neoliberalism, and national identity, exist as discursive constructs. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which is concerned with the discursive struggle through which dominant worldviews are created and social reality is constructed (Phillips and Jørgensen, 2002; Fairclough, 1992), therefore follows as an appropriate methodology to investigate how the examined texts advance a particular worldview of modernity and national identity.

At an earlier stage in the research, a pilot study using CDA was attempted on three excerpts of Modi's speeches. While the pilot validated the suitability of CDA for this research question, it also generated valuable insights that have been incorporated into the study to strengthen its methodological framework. This chapter will briefly outline CDA's strengths and weaknesses, and alternative methodologies that were considered, before detailing the research design.

CDA's key strengths include its multidisciplinary nature and analytical depth. CDA comprises a multitude of approaches that can be combined to explore different social domains (Phillips

and Jørgensen, 2002: 1). The interdisciplinary approach it encourages (Fairclough, 1992; Phillips and Jørgensen 2002; Thompson, 2004) is compatible with this study as it draws from a range of academic frameworks. While Fairclough's three-tiered methodology of examining textual, discursive and social dimensions of a discourse is a widely used CDA framework (Attar and Genus, 2014; Fairclough, 1992; Gale, 2004; Phillips and Jørgensen, 2002; Thompson, 2004), the pilot study's preliminary results indicated that it would be valuable to integrate the Foucauldian discourse approach, which pays closer attention to the discursive interaction between power/knowledge and truth (Macdonald, 2003; Hall, 1996; Phillips and Jørgensen, 2002). The merit of this hybrid approach derives mainly from the Foucauldian concept of governmentality, as well as the notion that 'particular knowledges gain the status of truths by virtue of their relationship to power' (Motion and Leitch, 2007: p. 10). This combined methodological approach allows for a more thorough examination of the mechanisms through which various dimensions of the text help it to achieve power, and whether certain claims to truth are made in the way that ideas about national identity and modernity are represented.

CDA is heavily concerned with unmasking obscured structures of power, political control, and dominance (Fairclough, 1992; Phillips and Jørgensen, 2002; Wodak and Meyer, 2009), which is a key objective of this study. The level of analytical depth that the methodology demands is therefore suitable for this study's research question. Further, discourse analysis is attentive to silences, or what is *not* said in the texts (Gill, 1996: 146). This makes CDA an appropriate lens for examining how certain forms of knowledge and identities are obscured in Modi's speeches.

CDA's main limitation is that its context-specific approach cannot be used to identify universal processes (Gill, 1996; Chouliaraki, 2010). Thus, it is important to recognise that this study cannot uncover a larger reality about diasporic engagements or nation branding, but at best extract potential implications that these practices embody. Although content analysis could have more systematically examined broader trends regarding how modernity and identity are represented, it would preclude an analysis of discursive strategies, as it ultimately views texts as artifacts rather than social constructs (Thomas, 1994: 684).

Other qualitative methodologies considered include on-site ethnography, which allows for a first-hand observation of social discourse and yields 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973: 6). However, this was rejected in light of the logistical and financial constraints involved, as the speeches were delivered across 12 international locations. Interviews with members of the Indian diaspora could have supplemented the study, and generated insights into the targeted

audience's consumption of these texts. While both methodologies were used in Mani and Varadarajan's (2005) study of Overseas Indians Day, reflective of their suitability for researching diasporic engagements, it was neither possible, nor deemed necessary to cover each aspect in a single analysis.

Reflexivity is a crucial component of CDA, given the interpretive context and subjectivity involved in analysing discourses (Gill, 1996). This is particularly significant for studies of political language, such as this one, as political biases can arise (Tannen et al., 2007: 399). As an Indian citizen and scholar of politics, it is thus worth recognising how my subject position as a researcher could influence my reading of the texts (Charteris-Black, 2014: 148; Wodak and Meyer, 2009: 88). At the same time my identity could also play a constructive role in the analysis, as an awareness of the context in which discourses are produced is ultimately important, albeit neither neutral nor unproblematic (Gill, 1996: 47). Nonetheless, to address potential biases, the analytical procedures have been designed and implemented in a manner that is reproducible and transparent, so that any 'interpretative leap' involved in the analysis is at the very least discernible (Wodak, 2011: 630).

### **Selection of texts**

The archive of speeches delivered by Modi to diaspora communities were accessible in the form of live recordings and written transcripts on his personal website. Between September 2014 and March 2016, the duration within which the analysis was conducted, Modi delivered 12 diasporic speeches across 11 countries. Although CDA can be applied to text, talk, and gesture (Phillips and Jørgensen, 2002: 18), this study limits its analytical scope to text, in the interest of exploring a wider pool of speeches.

Since CDA avoids prescriptive procedures (Gill, 1996; Wodak and Meyer, 2009), sampling strategies were devised from the wider body of scholarship on qualitative research methods. The criteria used for selecting speeches was based on purposive sampling, where the size of the diaspora community (NRIOL) was considered an indicator of the event's scale, and accordingly how 'typical' and 'critical' the features of these speeches were in comparison to the average majority (Flick, 2009: 122). In that regard, Modi's speeches in the U.S.A., including New York and San Jose, the U.K., Canada, U.A.E., Australia, Singapore and Malaysia were chosen to arrive at a geographically representative pool of eight speeches. As aforementioned, the U.S.A., U.K., and Canada have active BJP and RSS units, which further strengthens the relevance of speeches delivered there.

Excerpts were selected based on discourses of modernity and national identity, which this study examines. This approach was based on theoretical sampling, which seeks to enrich the theory that a study is grounded in (ibid: 118). Dominant ideas were coded paragraph-wise, and then categorised into five broader themes. Excerpts were subsequently chosen based on the three categories most relevant to modernity and national identity: references to Indian history, culture, and national unity, good governance and economic institutions, and developmental projects/capabilities. As a native Hindi speaker, I translated some of the final excerpts into English, as Modi delivered his speeches in both Hindi and English. This allowed for linguistic consistency when performing CDA. As I had established a fair degree of familiarity with the texts by this stage, it was easier to ensure that the original meaning was kept intact.

### **Design of research tools**

To operationalise the methodology, a comprehensive framework was devised based on Fairclough's three-dimensional model. The Foucauldian approach, which supplements the study, does not provide a template for analysing textual devices (Fairclough, 1992; Phillips and Jørgensen, 2002), however its elements have been incorporated as a theoretical perspective in the results, as well as in Table 1.

Initial observations were annotated as separate colour-coded categories on a copy of the text (Appendix J). Upon transcribing my observations, and considering them along with the theoretical literature, it was possible to identify three broader themes, whose interpretation and analysis will subsequently be discussed:

1. Modernity as a desirable and inevitable change
2. Modernity as a newfound neoliberal governmentality
3. Nationalism, from nostalgia to the here and now

**TABLE 1: Methodological framework**

<b>Level</b>	<b>Framework/Assumptions</b>	<b>Operationalization</b>
<b>Textual</b>	<p>Use of vocabulary and grammatical dimensions, which are salient for the overall rhetorical purpose of political speeches (Charteris-Black, 2014; Fairclough, 1992: 75).</p> <p>Language's central role in constructing and structuring everyday social life and its potential to shape political public sphere of power (Phillips and Jørgensen, 2002: 4; Datta, 2013).</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Naming terms for key elements: nation, its history and culture, government institutions, modernity, and economic development</li> <li>2. Cohesion to connect different voices, and deixis to encode identities, spatial and temporal relations (Charteris-Black, 2014: 60)</li> <li>3. Rhetorical devices and figurative language such as irony, metaphors, tropes, rhetorical questions and repetition (Charteris-Black, 2014: 40-41)</li> <li>4. Modalities, particularly objective modality that denotes how reality is constructed and often implies a sense of power (Fairclough, 1992: 161)</li> </ol>
<b>Discursive</b>	<p>Discourse as a social practice, or a 'particular way of talking about and understanding the world' (Phillips and Jørgensen, 2002; Gill, 1996).</p> <p>Intertextuality, the idea that discourses combine elements from other texts either as overt references or subtle echoes (Fairclough, 1992; Attar and Genus, 2014; Phillips and Jørgensen, 2002).</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Larger discourses evoked/utilised to represent national identity and modernity</li> <li>2. Use of reported speech/quotations to attribute ideas to others (Fairclough, 1992: 105)</li> </ol>
<b>Social</b>	<p>Identities, and dominant forms of knowledge activated by the text, and the wider social practices they are embedded in (Fairclough 1992).</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Forms of knowledge, identities, ideologies, and historical elements being utilised to explain modernity and national identity</li> <li>2. Which powers are being talked about in connection to national identity and modernity?</li> </ol>

## INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS

### **Modernisation as a desirable and inevitable change**

Change is a central construct of modernity, as it signals a radical rupture with the past (Snodgrass, 2004: 81; Giddens, 1990: 6). The notion of change is predominant in Modi's discourse, which is presented as a break with the past, and a justification for future modernist expansion. This message is activated through two discursive strategies.

#### *Juxtaposition of old versus new narratives of India*

One of the vivid metaphors Modi uses to represent change is through a personal anecdote where an interpreter in Taiwan asked him if India was a country of snake charmers and black magic (Appendix A). Assuring the interpreter that India has changed, he responds, 'our ancestors used to play with snakes, but we play with the mouse' (ibid).

The discursive strategy of juxtaposing old versus new narratives of India reinforces the antiquated and undesirable nature of old ideas. To elucidate the metaphor he tells his audience, 'If you had not shown wonders in IT (Information and Technology) we would have still been considered a country of snakes and snake charmers' (ibid). Through intertextuality, Modi distances himself from the antiquated perception of India, by demarcating the interpreter's voice, and attributing the opinion to someone other than himself (Fairclough, 1992: 105).

A similar juxtaposition between the old and new is used to convey a universal predilection for change:

Today everyone's minds are made up in India. Everyone feels that our country shouldn't be like this. We have lived in filth for a long time. The world is changing, India should change – should it or should it not? (Appendix G)

The time deixis, 'this' points to the current state of affairs (Charteris-Black, 2014: 60), to conjure images of filth. Change thus becomes a moral obligation, buttressed by the narrative of globalisation (the world is changing, India should change).

#### *Analysis*

The rupture between old and new ideas of India embodies tensions inherent in the discourse of nation branding projects, which often manifest through a similar duality (Kaur, 2012). However, rather than perceiving the old as an undesired shadow that obstructs modernist fantasies of development (ibid: 604), its very existence is cast aside in the 'new' version of

brand India that Modi sells to the diaspora. This is conveyed by the modality through which change is described as a process that has already occurred (our country *has changed*) and the universal support accompanying the project of modernisation (*everyone* feels that our country shouldn't be like this).

By rejecting the old narrative as antiquated and regressive (a country of snake charmers/living in filth) a certain novelty is assigned to modernity, where the mouse signifies a tech-savvy nation, and 'filth' stands as a direct contrast to the sanitary spaces that modernisation discourses tend to privilege and associate with a more civilised and advanced society (Tomic et al., 2006: 507). Claims to truth are thus identifiable in how modernist narratives are presented as an unequivocal reality. These claims are also supported by categorical assertions implicit in the modal verbs (everyone's minds *are* made up/we *have* lived in filth/our country *has* changed), which intensify the certainty that new ideas have ostensibly replaced the old.

### **The techno-fetishism of digital development**

Modi uses the promise of digital development, which has historically captured Indian policymakers' imaginations (Mazzarella, 2010: 786) to construct modernity as an inevitable force of change. This is visible in the snake-mouse metaphor, which is later extended in the claim: 'our youth move the mouse, and with that they can turn around the whole world' (Appendix A). A similar equivalence is set up in associating technological advancements with a newfound global recognition, wherein he says:

The old ways and ideas that were associated with India have now changed, and the world has no choice but to accept this – all of this is because of the wonders of your hands. By constantly working your hands on the computer, you have given India this new recognition on the global platform. (Appendix E)

Change is thus articulated as an unstoppable force and attributed to a modernised understanding of technology. The idea that one simply has to adapt to change through modernisation is later carried forward in the claim: 'those who refuse to change are going to be irrelevant in the 21<sup>st</sup> century' (Appendix E).

### *Analysis*

The language of technology is influential in shaping modern and neoliberal discourses (van Eijnatten et al 2013; Escobar, 1992; Mazzarella, 2010). In India, the rise of IT has historically been regarded as an opportunity to overcome historical disabilities and catch up with the rest

of the world (Mazarella, 2010: 789). This fascination with the charismatic potential of technology is reflected in how Modi presents digital development as a desirable, and inevitable force of change. However, his assurances also embody fundamental tensions surrounding modern discourses.

The snake-mouse metaphor (our ancestors used to play with snakes, but we play with the mouse), while stylistically powerful in evoking a tech-savvy nation, glibly overlooks underlying structural inequalities, with its inclusive assumption of 'we' and the certainty implicit in the modal verb 'play.' The combined effect of both linguistic devices suggests that technology is uniformly prevalent and accessible, a problematic reduction in a country where Internet penetration is less than 20 per cent and over 250 million people still lack access to electricity (World Bank, 2015). This disparity is evocative of the techno-fetishism inherent in modernist technocratic vocabulary, which tends to neglect local particularities involved in implementing technology-led solutions (Mazzarella, 2010: 798).

The rhetorically consistent and seemingly innocuous images conjured in relation to digital development thus presuppose a universality that belies social reality, but also leave little room for the consideration of diverging viewpoints, by deeming those who may not be in awe of modernity as 'irrelevant.'

### **Modernity as a newfound neoliberal governmentality**

Neoliberal ambitions are often articulated through metanarratives of economic progress and development (Banerjee, 2003; Escobar, 1992). Modi constructs this rationality of progress through three discursive strategies.

### **The neo-liberalisation and nominalisation of development**

Development and progress, the mantra of Modi's electoral campaign, are recurrent lexical concepts in his speeches, and presented as a panacea for all perceived national ailments:

There are many problems in our country, but their solution lies in a single medicine [...] development. This is the solution to all our problems, that we move forward with the agenda of development (Appendix B).

There is only one task I want to undertake: development, development, development. And that development will have the power to wipe the tears of those who suffer from poverty, and that development which will give our youth employment, and that development which will bring happiness in the lives of farmers, that development



which will empower our mothers and sisters, that development which brings the mantra of unity and integrity, and helps India to hold her head high, that is the dream of development with which I have come here. It is not enough that India moves forward, it is as necessary for India to become modern (Appendix G).

The endeavour to become 'modern' is thus explicitly identified as the penultimate goal of development, which is personified as a liberating and protective force that can orient the country toward a better future. Modi also uses temporal references to quantify development as an achievement under his leadership:

In the last one-year, the progress that was made in our road construction was just 2 kilometres (km) everyday. In the last 10 months it has been 11 km per day; so you can see this development...it is 11 km. (Appendix B).

Within 15 months, due to new heights of development, economic stability, and new initiatives for development, a new trust has been born (Appendix E).

Whether it is the World Bank, IMF (International Monetary Fund) or Moody's; in the last 6 months these institutions have said with one voice, my friends. And they have said that today among the large countries, India is rapidly progressing. If there is any country that is rapidly progressing then it is...

*Audience:* India! (Appendix E).

Modi also contrasts the desirability of development with its unwanted adversary, poverty, wherein he says:

In the last 18 months of my experience, I can say that there is no reason for India to still have poverty. We have nurtured poverty without any reason. [...] A country which has so many young people, that country cannot be behind development, and that country can now not stop on its journey toward development (Appendix C).

### *Analysis*

Modernist notions of development tend to privilege rationalities of progress over human experiences (Selvaraj et al., 2015: 20). Neoliberal discourses similarly prioritise capital over labour, the latter of which is construed either in quantitative terms, or neutralised to a

passive production factor (Lemke, 2001: 198). This type of rationalisation is evident in how Modi evaluates the success of development through output and efficiency (11 km of additional road construction). This rationality is also highlighted through economic stability and rapid progress, by adopting interdiscursivity that gives dominance to global economic institutions, such as the IMF and Moody. Social inequities are conversely constructed as the undesirable nemesis, which are either silenced or ridiculed. The statement, 'we have nurtured poverty without any reason,' for instance, is almost scornful in its expression of disdain toward the mere existence of inequalities, which obstruct modernist development rather than merit a constructive solution.

Where human experiences are given precedence in development discourses, they undergo a degree of nominalisation, which mystifies the actual process of development, and denies its participants true agency (Fairclough, 1992: 179). For example, the repetitive syntactic structure of 'that development which will,' while personifying development as a solution for human suffering, portrays its beneficiaries as passive recipients, and leaves the actors and agents spearheading development projects unspecified. The ability of development to catalyse positive change is thus assumed, but not explicated. A similar assumption is inherent in the idea that development is the 'single medicine' to 'all our problems,' wherein actual process of developing is nominalised into an entity, thus making it rhetorically feasible to overlook *which* problems it can medicate, and *how*.

The discursive construction of development thus operates through an oscillation between neoliberal ideals that emphasise the rationality of progress, and a nominalisation of the complex processes that development actually constitutes. While this combination is effective in building confidence around the agenda of development, it leaves little space for questioning the mechanisms and institutions through which development occurs, its eventual impact, and thus precludes reflexivity.

### **The centrality of market-led solutions**

The economy, or *homo oeconomicus*, is considered a central reference point in neoliberalism, as the key institution through which governments exercise power (Lemke, 2001; Foucault et al., 2003: 234). *Homo oeconomicus* is evident in how Modi presents market-based solutions as the a priori vehicle to realise new opportunities and attain prosperity.

I am telling the world: Make In India [...] India is a country filled with prospects [...] Let the people from foreign countries come and utilise young energy – the output will increase and they should sell Indian goods in the global market (Appendix D)

Everyone wants to see change in India, [...] to see India become modern, to see poverty eliminated, to see the youth employed. To fulfil this work, shouldn't we utilise the energy from wherever we get it? Should we utilise it or not? (Appendix G)

### *Analysis*

The centrality of economic institutions in neoliberal agendas legitimises corporations and foreign experts as agents of development (Selvaraj et al., 2015: 8; Esobar, 1992: 25). This rhetoric of legitimation, evident in Modi's invitation to foreign investors, is consistent with his government's policy framework.

Modi's reference to 'Make in India,' is part of a nation-wide campaign initiated by his government to attract foreign industrialists to manufacture in India, in an attempt to boost GDP and create skilled jobs (Jaffrelot, 2015: 175; Gopalan, 2016: 763). While it is packaged as an enticing opportunity to capitalise on the country's innate potential or 'utilise young energy', it also embodies semantics of flexibility and insecurity that accompany modernist discourses, and raises profound questions about whose interests such agendas advance (Selvaraj et al., 2015: 9). For example, how does Modi's promise of foreign investment delivering better opportunities, namely greater output, guaranteeing employment and eliminating poverty, square with the relaxation of domestic labour laws that was undertaken by his government around the same time that Make in India was launched (ibid)? Specifically, this refers to a set of legislative amendments enacted in September 2015, which made it easier for employers to lay-off workers, and weakened the power of trade unions in the interest of accelerating economic growth (Gopalan, 2016). These reforms were met with demonstrations from 100 million labourers who protested the removal of their basic legal protections (Jaffrelot, 2015: 177).

The idea that market based solutions represent a vehicle to realising better opportunities is thus legitimated through Modi's leitmotifs of development and change. However, it masks the exploitative measures that are silently sanctioned in the pursuit of growth and stability, and is reflective of the profound tensions that underlie neoliberal discourses.

### **The ills of social welfarism**

Neoliberal discourses emphasise the customer's freedom to exercise his/her choices in the marketplace, while state intervention is conversely regarded as tyrannical and oppressive (Hall, 2011). Both messages are evident in how Modi venerates neoliberal principles and discards social welfarism.

The country is made with the countrymen and the strength and power of citizens [...] the least the government can do is to not intervene (Appendix F)

Modi expresses similar sentiments by comparing his government with its predecessor, in order to portray neoliberal reforms as a newfound effort under his leadership:

You will be surprised that the government used to be very proud of the laws that they passed [...] my thinking is the reverse. They enjoyed making laws, and I enjoy doing away with them. They left such a burden...sometimes you need to open the window and let some fresh air in! (Appendix F)

We are eradicating poverty by giving our people the fruits of a modern economy, such as universal access to banks and insurance; not just tying them down in endless programmes. Where in the world will 190 million bank accounts be opened in a few months? (Appendix H)

### *Analysis*

Neoliberalism is predicated on a political rationality that views the social domain as part of the wider economic sphere, and thus prioritises personal responsibility and self-care over welfare state services (Lemke, 2001: 201). This rationality is evident in how Modi redefines the relationship between the state and economy through a neoliberal paradigm that justifies less governmental action, limited legislative intervention and fewer social programmes. Social welfarism is conversely conceived as a burden that ties citizens down in endless programmes.

The rhetoric of liberation is manifest in how Modi construes his leadership as the bastion of neoliberal principles – '[the previous government] enjoyed making laws, and I enjoy doing away with them...open the window and let some fresh air in!' (Appendix F). However, this discourse is silent of the legal amendments actually enacted under his government, which include the aforementioned weakening of labour protocols, and the easing of clearance processes and environmental regulations pertaining to the industrial acquisition of agricultural land and forest conservation (Ruparelia, 2015: 758; Jaffrelot, 2015: 178). This

tension is emblematic of the Janus-faced relations evoked by modernist discourses, which often use the rhetoric of rationality and emancipation to suppress or subvert democratic rights at the cost of economic development (Selvaraj et al., 2015: 21; Escobar, 1992: 23).

The discursive project of reifying neoliberalism as an emancipatory force thus conceals the democratically unjust policies being implemented under the veneer of ‘giving people the fruits of a modern economy’ (Appendix H).

Consequently, it entrenches neoliberalism as a normative reality, in which citizens are rendered responsible individuals (the country is made with the strength and power of citizens), and the state absolves itself of conventional welfarist duties (the least the government can do is not intervene). The cautionary warning against the ills of social welfarism, however, drowns out any mention of the social inequalities that are silently created, reproduced, and ultimately naturalised. This enables the state to indirectly extend its control over citizens without appearing responsible for them (Lemke, 2001: 201).

### **Nationalism, from nostalgia to the here and now**

The discursive construction of national identity combines temporal axes of the past, present and the future to build narratives that emphasise a shared historical memory as well as a collective sense of continuity and anticipation for the future (Wodak et al., 1999: 26-7). This temporal continuity is central to how Modi incorporates the diaspora into the nation by using nostalgia to construct a collective sense of the past, the notion of transformation to evoke a renewed sense of pride in the present, and the idea of common future that is contingent on a delineated set of citizenly duties.

### **Historical nostalgia and assumed national pride**

Historical memory is considered an indispensable prerequisite for national identity, as it evokes a collective sense of the past (Wodak et al., 1999: 25-6). These memories can also be used to trace the nation’s origins, or its ‘nameable beginning’ (Kolakowski in Wodak et al., 1999). Modi’s construction of historical memory through the Independence movement utilises imagery associated with the nation’s nameable beginning to instil a sense of national consciousness. He asks his diasporic audience in the UK:

Which Indian would not take pride in the fact that there is a statue of Mahatma Gandhi outside the British Parliament? This is the UK’s soil. Even Indians came to

this soil and fought the war of Independence and gave strength to this fight (Appendix C).

For those in California, he tailors the image to suit local circumstances:

Our Sikhs who had settled in the West Coast and in California, did everything in their capacity for India to achieve Independence – this is the relationship they share with us. (Appendix E)

Historical memory also indicates the resilience of national pride, whose spirit cannot be tempered by spatial and temporal distances:

Whenever you came here, whatever circumstance you came in, time or distance has not reduced your love for India. I see this in the light and colour of the festivals (Appendix H).

Here, the narrative of the nation is constructed through shared rituals, and traditions, which connect the everyday existence to a collective national orientation (Wodak et al., 1999: 24).

### *Analysis*

The Independence movement is traditionally considered the basis for articulating a coherent Indian nationality (Mishra, 2014: 73). Yet, despite attempts by the national leadership to capitalise on the nationalist wave that swept the country during the freedom struggle, the postcolonial nation-state has encountered several instances of religious and linguistic nationalism, which co-exist alongside the more elusive ideal of an overarching Indian national identity (ibid; Manor, 1996). Modi's invocation of the Mahatma Gandhi statue and the anti-colonial struggle reflects an attempt to re-invent this unified sense of nationalism by evoking a historical narrative that conceives the diaspora as a cohesive nationalistic body. The rhetorical phrasing of his question – 'which Indian would not take pride in a statue of Mahatma Gandhi?' (Appendix C) – implicitly imposes the moral obligation of feeling national pride. Similarly, the use of simple present tense in the statement 'time or distance *has not* reduced your love for India,' (Appendix H) conveys a certainty (Fairclough, 2000: 107) that attempts to invent a sense of national pride that it suggests already exists.

Historical nostalgia creates a shared sense of time in which the fate of diasporic communities is intertwined with that of the nation-state. However, the glorified narrative of the freedom struggle, which emphasises sacrifice and patriotism, belies the more sombre relationship between the nation-state and anticolonial movements. The relationship that Modi declares

Sikh communities in California share with their Indian counterparts, through their valiant contribution to the Independence struggle, is unheeding of the racial exclusion, violence, and state surveillance that the Sikh diaspora was subject to for their involvement in anticolonial politics (Sohi, 2014). Violent displacements also underscore the actual moment of Independence, where narratives of national triumph and sovereignty coincide with those of rape, abduction and loot, as millions migrated across the newly created borders of India and Pakistan (Pandey, 2001; Mani and Varadarajan, 2005). By framing the diaspora into grand nationalist narratives of high politics, Modi's discourse ignores the more liminal reality of Indian nationhood, and fragmented nature of identity politics. It thus excludes the alternative voices and identities, or 'competing dispositions of human associations' that constitute the nation (Bhabha, 1990:2).

### **A renewed sense of pride and a shared future**

The narrative of change, through which Modi's modernist and neoliberal discourses are articulated, are also used to evoke a renewed sense of progress, and anticipation around the future, which constitute integral aspects of national identity (Wodak et al., 1999: 25). The emphasis on positive transformation seeks to reinterpret the contours of nationalism in the present.

Today on hearing India's name itself, don't you see eyes of the person standing in front of you shining? Don't you feel proud of your country? Doesn't your chest swell with pride? Don't you experience a feeling of pride? Brothers and sisters, today the world is looking toward India with a very different outlook (Appendix D)

A similar national orientation is evident in how Modi creates a shared set of future aspirations in which the diaspora is both urged and expected to play a role:

We didn't have the good fortune of fighting for India's Independence. We didn't have the good fortune of sacrificing our lives for the country, or of going to jail and spending our youth in jail to uphold the respect and pride of India. We should feel a little pain that we weren't part of the fight for Independence. We couldn't die for the country, but since we were born after independence, at least we can do something for the country (Appendix F)

## *Analysis*

Discursive strategies of transformation can construct a sense of national identity, by emphasising the difference between then and now, or now and the future (Wodak et al., 1999: 40). These temporal distinctions are evident in the use of 'today' as time deixis to highlight the changed current state of affairs, namely India's place in the neoliberal global order, as a source of national pride, and a justification to assume greater national responsibility in the future.

The future, although not concretely envisioned, is created through anticipation in which historical memories of the freedom struggle are used to awaken national consciousness, but also delineate a shared sense of responsibility for the future. The expectant tone underlying the statement, 'since we were born after Independence, at least we can do something for the country,' implies a nationalistic sense of duty going forward. By presenting this duty as a privilege (we didn't have the *good fortune* of fighting for Independence), it implicitly imposes the moral obligation of participating in some form of national service upon diasporic communities, and tacitly suggests that those who do not participate should at least feel remorse (we should feel little pain that we weren't part of the fight for Independence).

Modi's delivery is fraught with rhetoric persuasion, which is commonly used to discursively depict national identity through the notion of transformation (ibid: 33). The repeated use of rhetorical questions makes the act of feeling pride appear intuitive. While the narrative is emotionally charged, the nationalistic duties it delineates are ultimately grounded in grand historical narratives, or ambivalent notions of sacrifice, (at least we can do *something* for the country). The rhetoric thus appears ambitious, but does not articulate substantive means of participating in national life. It thus nationalises diasporic communities by intertwining their past and future with the country's, but limits meaningful empowerment.

## **The practice of diaspower**

Modi employs the discursive power of language as a means of concealment and method of marginalisation (Finlayson, 2013: 314). The brand India that he constructs is poised at the brink of change and seeks relentless modernisation, which legitimises his neoliberal agenda. However, it does not engage with plurality, acknowledge alternative voices, or address social inequities.

While these silences are reminiscent of discursive techniques utilised in Modi's communication with domestic audiences, which tend to camouflage more than they reveal



(Datta, 2013), the international milieu in which his diasporic speeches are received signify a new discursive terrain of power, which I call **diaspower**. Although the term was previously used in an article tellingly titled, ‘Mr Modi’s Diaspower’ (Haidar, 2016), this study advocates an understanding of its dynamics that move beyond its mere rhetorical expression.

Foucault’s concept of governmentality suggests that neoliberal ideas can become dominant through the consent of, rather than coercion over those being governed (Gamlen, 2014: 193), which the findings of this study support. Building on this notion, diaspower illustrates *how* these ideas are successfully institutionalised. Essentially, it elucidates the unique characteristics of this transnational power that enable diasporic communities to be rendered self-disciplined subjects of a neoliberal apparatus (Gamlen, 2014: 193).

Unlike domestic populations, diasporic communities do not experience their national identity in day-to-day life, but through long-distance nationalism, which tends to be more fluid and tenuous (Varadarajan, 2010: 29). Humdrum realities that constitute the Indian nation – from demonstrations against weakened labour protocols (Gopalan, 2016) and budgetary cuts in education and healthcare (Ruparelia, 2016), to Hindu nationalist vigilantism and continuing caste-based violence (Jaffrelot, 2015) – do not shape their sense of belonging with the nation, as their political identification with the nation-state is limited. Modi’s grand project of re-imagining a new and clean India, vacuous as the narratives may be, is ultimately resonant with diasporic audiences, who emigrated in search of better opportunities. Fully cognizant of this, Modi appeals to these emotional sensibilities, with assertions such as:

There was a pain in the hearts of Indians like you; no matter where you were settled overseas, you wondered, when will my country become like this? (Modi, 2014)

The prospect of change thus becomes bait to lure diasporic audiences into endorsing Modi’s neoliberal agenda. Therefore, the diaspower inherent in this idea of a new India possesses the ability to successfully translate the diaspora’s transnational support into national monetary gains by requiring little cerebral engagement. This is reinforced through two factors: the BJP’s longstanding association with diasporic communities, and the unique format of Modi’s diasporic events, which are designed to entertain rather than intellectually stimulate its audiences.

Diaspower thus represents a strategic avenue for the consolidation of Modi’s neoliberal agenda. In addition to leveraging the diaspora’s investment potential, however, Modi’s systematic endeavour to directly engage with the diaspora tacitly turns the audiences into

self-rendered patrons of his own premiership that is mediated as a catalyst of change. In other words, although neoliberal policies are by no means a new political endeavour in the Indian context (Kaur, 2012; Ruparelia, 2016; Mani and Varadarajan, 2005), they are assigned a certain novelty when packaged through the promise of change under Modi's government. Seemingly extraneous references to the self in third person (Modi is not the medicine, development is/Modi is not the reason for change, you are) serve to subconsciously remind the audiences that change is inherently linked to his individual premiership, thus re-asserting his transnational power, and legitimising his hegemonic agenda. The strategic silences in his discourses thus become akin to a project of erasure (Datta 2013), which deliberately avoid references to social unrest and communal tensions that are evocative of his erstwhile legacy.

Modi's diasporic communication draws on neoliberal and nationalist discourses, while simultaneously institutionalising new forms of knowledge related to modernist conceptions of Indian nationhood, through an ideological project that serves the interests of a few, but portray them as universal (Bourdieu, 1991: 167). This logic of appearance manifests itself grammatically through rhetorical questions and objective modalities, which seek to control representations of reality (Fairclough, 2000: 236), but disguise the internal fractures in the discourses employed. Fuelled by the external context in which these speeches are delivered, namely to audiences who ultimately have a limited stake in the actual implementation of the agenda being consolidated, diaspower is materialised.

## **CONCLUSION**

This paper set out to study the discourses of national identity and modernity mobilised in Modi's diaspora engagements. Its findings indicate that these engagements shape a new political sphere of diaspower, which is predicated on two factors: the hegemonic power of language to exclude and marginalise certain identities from the national discourse and the strategic choice of diasporic audiences, who espouse a more nebulous sense of nationalism and thus possess the ability to consume the incomplete narratives presented.

The discursive site of power that diasporic engagements represent make them worthy of critical examination, as they raise profound implications for a democracy like India and its heterogeneous socio-political fabric, to imagine alternative visions of social progress. As such, these repercussions foreshadow new avenues of research that could be undertaken to yield additional insights about the practice of diaspower, of which this single case study ultimately constitutes a small fraction.

As previously mentioned, complementary methodologies, such as interviews and on-site ethnography would shed greater analytical attention on the reception of these discourses, and ultimately provide a more tangible understanding of diaspower's implications. Visual semiotic analysis, which could have supplemented the existing study, would generate additional insights on how diaspower is represented, by broadening the analytical scope beyond written text, to include talk and gesture. Finally, comparative analyses of diasporic engagements in other countries, such as Israel, the Philippines and Mexico, whose states have active diaspora institutions (Gamlen, 2014) would also be beneficial in identifying the discourses mobilised and techniques of power utilised in different national contexts. After all, it is only through a comprehensive critical intervention of discourse and practice that one can lay the foundation for a more radical collective imagining of alternative futures (Escobar, 1992: 22).

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## **APPENDICES**

### **Appendix A**

The festival of Navratri is a festival of intense worship. Navratri is the festival of purification. The festival of *Navratri* is to strengthen our dedication. I got the opportunity to meet all of you on such an auspicious festival, I am very fortunate that for my countrymen – who have come 1000 miles away – who have stayed here and have increased India's respect. They have increased the prestige of India. Otherwise, there was a time when India was considered to be a country of snakes and snake charmers. If you were not there, there wouldn't have been a younger generation, you have shown wonders in the area of IT –if you had not done this we would have still been considered a country of snakes and snake charmers.

I went to Taiwan a few years ago – then I was neither the Chief Minister, nor the Prime Minister. An interpreter was with me. After living with me for a few days we got to know each other. One day he asked me, *'if you don't feel bad, I would like to ask you a question.'* I said, *'I won't feel bad, what do you want to ask?'* Still, he hesitated. He said, *'I have heard India people believe in black magic, and that it is a country of snakes and snake charmers. People keep playing with snakes.'* He asked me, *'is this true?'* Then I said, *'no, our country has changed, and there has been a devaluation. Our ancestors used to play with snakes, but we play with the mouse.'* Our youth move with the mouse, and with that they can turn around the whole world.

### **Appendix B**

When we were young, we used to hear one song in the cinema – *'See what the circumstances are in your world, God, see how much the people have changed.'* There was a pain in the song at that time – it was part of that period. Today I am seeing that song in the new light. At that time there was a pain in that song – that human beings have changed – and today I am saying with pride that they have changed for the better: They have changed, they have changed!

There are many problems in our country, but their solution lies in a single medicine. There is one medicine for all problems. That medicine is not Modi, that medicine is – development. This is the solution to all our problems: that we move forward with the agenda of development. I can tell you, brothers and sisters, that if we develop, there is strength in India; we just need the opportunity. In the last 1- years, the progress that was made in our road construction was just 2 km everyday. In the last 10 months it has been 11 km per day – so that you can see this development... it is 11 kilometres...this may not be a big matter, but in

comparative terms you can see how we are moving forward. Brothers and sisters, development is the route to take India forward.

### **Appendix C**

In the last 18 months of my experience, I can say that there is no reason for India to still have poverty. We have nurtured poverty without any reason. And I don't know why, it has become a habit for Indians to nurture poverty. India is capable, we have 125 crore Indians, that is 250 arms, and in that country in which out of 800 million, 65% of the population are under 35 years of age, India is a country which is full of youth; a country which has so many young people, that country can't be behind development, and that country can now not stop on its journey toward development.

[Cameron's] positive feeling toward the Indian community is very visible. The love that he has for Indians, I enthusiastically praise him for it, I am grateful to him for that, and for the relationship that you share with him and through you the way that he has come to know India and for that reason he has the same love and respect for India which you have toward India. Which Indian would not take pride in the fact that there is a statue of Mahatma Gandhi outside the British Parliament? This is the UK's soil. Even Indians came to this soil and fought the war of Independence and gave strength to this fight.

### **Appendix D**

Brothers and sisters, you have been outside India for many years. Today on hearing India's name itself, don't you see eyes of the person standing in front of you shining? Don't you feel proud of your country? Doesn't your chest swell with pride? Don't you experience a feeling of pride? Brothers and sisters, today the world is looking toward India with a very different outlook, and there's one reason for it...what is that reason? Is the reason change? Modi is not the reason – it is the change that has come –it is from 150 crore countrymen's immense strength. 150 crore countrymen in May 2014, elected a government with full majority after 30 years. Today, any great man in the world any leader in the world who shakes hand with Modi, doesn't see Modi. He sees 150 crore Indians. He sees the way India's economy is moving ahead.

Brothers and sisters - whether it is the IMF, World Bank, or Moody, whichever economic rating institution it is, all of them have said in one voice that among the large countries of the world, if there is economic reform, rapid economic growth, then that country's name is...[audience]: *India*. You tell me; will your chest swell with pride? Will you look up with pride – will you or will you not look up with pride? This change has come within one year.

Brothers and sisters, a few months ago we started the campaign Make In India. I am telling the world – make in India – it is a country filled with prospects – opportunities and opportunities. This is a country filled with good fortune to have 65% of the population that is under 35 years of age. India is a young country – there is youth and youth everywhere. Let the people from foreign countries come and utilise our young energy – the output will increase and they should sell Indian goods in the global market. And today – this is a matter of a few months – there has been a 48% increase in in FDI; 48%, brothers and sisters, to attain new heights of progress, through the ease of doing business. To utilise our young energy we have undertaken a campaign of skill development. To make a modern India, and to make a Digital India, we are working day and night. So it is natural for the world to come to India, brothers and sisters, it is very natural.

## **Appendix E**

Today India has a new recognition in the world; a new image of India has been created. The old ways and ideas that were associated with India have now changed, and the world has no choice but to accept this – all of this is because of the wonders of your hands. By constantly working your hands on the computer you have given India this new recognition on the global platform. This is your capability, your commitment, your innovations – you are sitting here and encouraging the whole world to change. And those who refuse to change, those who sit and decide that they won't change – they are going to be irrelevant in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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But if we look at the annals of history, look at the 19<sup>th</sup> century...in the 19th century my Sikh brothers came here as farmers, and left India's mark on Napa. The war of Independence was being fought in India, the hope for freedom was in India, but who can forget the revolution and the movement where the lamp of freedom was lit? Our Sikhs who had settled in the West Coast and in California, did everything in their capacity for India to achieve Independence – this is the relationship they share with us. If in the 19<sup>th</sup> century those who came to work at the mercy of the farms were so restless about India's slavery, then in the 21<sup>st</sup> century the youth of India are restless about the poverty in India, and will do something for this. What can be a bigger inspiration than this?

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My countrymen today I can say with pride that if there is any country moving ahead with great stamina then it is India. Within 15 months, due to new heights of development, economic stability and new initiatives for development, a new trust has been born that India has upheld peoples' imagination about the BRICS

There are different rating agencies – whether it is the World Bank, IMF or Moody's; in the last 6 months these societies have said with one voice, my friends. And they have said that today among the large countries, India's economy is rapidly progressing. If there is any country that is rapidly progressing then that countries name is... ..[Audience]: *India*

That country's name is...[audience]: *India*

## **Appendix F**

There must be many Indians here who were born after Independence, and it is my good fortune to be the first Prime Minister who was born in Independent India, and that's why I feel even more responsibility, because there are many people here who were born in Independent India. We didn't have the good fortune of fighting for India's independence. We didn't have the good fortune of sacrificing our lives for the country, or of going to jail and spending our youth in jail for to uphold the respect and pride of India. We should feel a little pain that we weren't part of the fight for independence. We couldn't die for the country, but since we were born after independence, at least we can do something for the country. It is not in everyone's fate to die for the country. It is not in everyone's fate to live for the country, and this is why we should make this resolution: If you live it should be for the country, if you suffer it should be for the country, and it is this sentiment that has risen in the hearts of 150 crore Indians.

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Some times we read in our holy books that some or the other God has 100 arms. It's not as though those arms are hanging there. What this means is that they have 500, 1000 arms with which they can fulfil everyone's wishes, and plans. God had 100 arms, but India has 2.5 crore arms. That God, that country, which has 2.5 crore arms, and that too of which 100 crore are under 35 years of age. India is a young country, it is full of young people, they have good dreams and desires, a strong determination, they are capable of holding up their firm resolutions. And that trust, I can assure you, that trust which Swami Vivekanand saw in his second dream, that great man said that 'I am seeing this before my eyes' ...that great man who said at the end of his life, and the dream which he saw that would happen after 50 years, has been fulfilled.

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The country is made with the countrymen and the strength and power of citizens. If we give our youth the opportunity they can fulfil their potential, no one can stop them. The least the government can do is to not intervene. You will be surprised that the government used to be

very proud of the laws that they passed. You must have heard it before the elections as well – I made this law and that law. My thinking is the reverse. They enjoyed making laws, and I enjoy doing away with them. They left such a burden...open the window a little and let some fresh air in! Let people live! The country will blossom. This is why I say that I have confidence in the people of India, in their capabilities, and it is on this confidence that the country will move ahead. Countries cannot move ahead only with confidence in the government, they won't and they shouldn't. As an individual, I believe in this idea.

## **Appendix G**

Today, everyone's minds are made up in India. Everyone feels that our country shouldn't be like this. We have lived in filth for a long time. The world is changing; India should change - should it or should it not? And the good thing is that our 150 crore Indians have also made up their minds to change. Countries are not made by their governments; countries don't progress with governments; they are made from the wishes of the citizens, with the promises of citizens, with their labour, with their sacrifice and dedication. With the sacrifice and dedications of citizens, it takes generations, only then a nation is made. That is the mood of Indians today. All Indians have started to feel that we will take we will take the country forward together.

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In India's foreign investment, one thing is certain. Does any person sitting here want that India remains the way it is right now – does anyone want that? Everyone wants to see change in India, to see India move forward, to see India become modern, to see poverty eliminated, to see the youth employed. To fulfil this work, shouldn't we utilise the energy from wherever we get it? Should we utilise it or not? If someone is sick in the family, and we need medicines from overseas, should we get them or not, should we find a remedy for the illness or not?

India needs huge amounts of foreign investment. It needs Foreign Direct Investment, and when I say FDI, I am talking about two subjects. According to the world, FDI is Foreign Direct Investment. But in my mind, I had another thought – First Develop India. This is why, FDI to FDI: Foreign Direct Investment to First Develop India. Now, you tell me if you have been living next-door to your neighbour for years, and suddenly if you need 5-10,000 will he give this to you or not? He will say yes, yes definitely, I will help you. You people do something, my owner has gone out, he'll be back on Monday, and then I can do something. This is how people behave right? No one is ready to give 10,000 rupees. Today in FDI there has been a 40% growth since I came to power. Why do we need this money? Not to show it on paper. We want to bring change.

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Brothers and sisters, I have come here with one task in mind, and to complete that task I need your blessings. I want the blessings of 150 crore countrymen and my Indian brothers and sisters who have settled around the world. And that task is, there is only one task I want to undertake: development, development, development, and that development will have the power to wipe the tears of those who suffer from poverty, and that development which will give our youth employment, and that development which will bring happiness in the lives of farmers, which will empower our mothers and sisters, that development which brings the mantra of unity and integrity, and helps India to hold her head high, that is the dream of development with which I have come here. It is not enough that India moves forward, it is necessary for India to become modern.

## **Appendix H**

Generations ago, many of your ancestors came to an unknown land. Many of you came here more recently in the mobility of our globalised world. Whenever you came here, whatever circumstances you came in, time or distance has not reduced your love for India. I see this in the light and colour of the festivals. They are as bright as they have always been. I see this in the pure strains of music, the grace of the dancer, the bells of devotion and the call to prayer. And, Malaya-Indians are the largest contingent to the annual *Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas* in India. And, Malay Indians make Vibrant Gujarat Summit more vibrant. India and Malaysia were once under the same colonial power. We both became free within a decade of each other. And, Independent India owes a debt of gratitude to Malaya-Indians. The glory of India's freedom struggle was written, in part, by the struggles and sacrifices of Malaya-Indians. Thousands of your forefathers came forward to join Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and the Indian National Army. Women poured out in large numbers from the comfort of their homes to march shoulder to shoulder with Netaji Subhash Bose.

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We are eradicating poverty, by giving our people the fruits of modern economy, such as universal access to banks and insurance, not just tying them down in endless programmes. Where in the world will 190 million bank accounts be opened in a few months? We are empowering them with skills and education. We are creating an environment in which enterprise flourishes and people have opportunities to raise their income levels. We are creating infrastructure that gives people their basic needs of roof, water, sanitation, electricity, schools, and medical help within the reach and means. We are facilitating business. And, we are creating a national digital infrastructure that allows ideas, information, communication, business and innovation to flow freely on the cyber space. We are making our railways the engine of a new economic revolution in the country. And, we are turning our

ports and airports into gateways to prosperity. And, we have pledged to make our cities clean and healthy; restore our rivers; and transform our villages.



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