

# South Asia Analysis Group

Published on *South Asia Analysis Group* (<http://www.southasiaanalysis.org>)

[Home](#) > US Presidential Elections – Hard Choices for Indian Americans

---

## US Presidential Elections – Hard Choices for Indian Americans

Submitted by asiaadmin2 on Tue, 09/18/2012 - 10:47

**Paper No. 1140**

**11/10/2004**

**Guest Column-by Hari Sud**

People of Indian origin in US generally support the Democratic Party Candidate. The Democratic Party welcomes this choice as it identifies itself with the minorities, immigrants and dispossessed people. Indian immigrants after their arrival start their life in America at the very bottom of the ladder. As the time passes they acquire wealth and prosperity and wish to play a role in the political process. The Democratic Party becomes their favorite political party, although a few admire the conservatism of the Republican Party.

The phenomenon of immigration from India is only a generation old. Students from India arrived at the American universities in early sixties and seventies in large numbers. Prior to that, a few Indian immigrant communities existed in USA but their numbers were small. Arriving as students (including this author), the Indians completed their studies and took up jobs and acquired prosperity. Soon they became citizens and acquired a right to vote. Other immigrants from India followed and became American citizens. As more and more immigrants from India arrived, the Democratic Party made an effort to enlist their support. The Republicans did not attract many Indian immigrants as they were hostile to India's cause (Nixon's famous tilt in favor of Pakistan in 1971) and also made no effort to welcome the newly arrived immigrants to its fold.

As time passed from sixties and seventies into eighties and nineties, the Democrats offered the Indians minor positions in the party hierarchy in lieu of community's financial support. The latter responded in small ways here and there. But it was still unorganized and too small. In nineties the situation changed dramatically. First, with the advent of Internet and computer

engineering, people of Indian origin saw it as a means of progress and prosperity. This allowed them to accumulate wealth. Second, they took a cue from other immigrant communities and started to assert themselves politically in local, provincial and national election process. President Clinton's era proved to be the turning point where Indians were appointed to political jobs and were welcomed at the Democratic Party meetings, fund raisers and political discussions. The Indians community at large ignored the Republicans Party. A few Indians did join the Republicans also but their numbers were too small.

### **What Shapes Indian's Attitude towards Any Party.**

An average Indian immigrant or his next generation is a hard working, self-respecting and a docile person. For him political process does not offer much attraction. Occasionally international diplomacy and US Administration's attitude towards India (his mother country) shape up his attitude towards one party or the other. During the Vietnam War era, the Indians were hostile to President Nixon. They were also hostile to President Jimmy Carter as he held up nuclear fuel supplies to Tarapur Power Plant. This hostility continued during the President Reagan era when Pakistan was armed in lieu of proxy war in Afghanistan. They were hostile to the first administration of President Clinton as he welcomed Ms Benazir Bhutto to Whitehouse and returned the frozen monies of the F-16 deal. Some officials of his administration (Madam Albright) were openly hostile to India. They held a pro Pakistani attitude. With the start of his second term and election of AB Vajpayee in India, doors for warm and friendly business relation were opened. Concurrently the Indian community in US started to exert itself politically. President Clinton understood the dynamics of the Indian community and bypassed officials hostile to India while formulating the policy. India – US relations dramatically changed and people of Indian origin in US became supporters of the Democrats in general.

Hence, much of the Indians attitude towards presidential candidates is determined by how these candidates view India.

### **How Does John Kerry View India?**

This Boston aristocrat has traveled the world, except India. He has not shaken hands with either AB Vajpayee or Manmohan Singh and holds an openly anti Indian sentiment on BPO and other business matters, which are important to India. Yet he is the Democratic Party candidate for the current year's Presidential elections. His utterances on job losses (although BPO is beneficial to the American businesses) have not sounded a happy note amongst the Indian community. In-spite of this, the Democratic Party is expecting Indian communities across America to support John Kerry both financially and in the ballot boxes. His recent utterances on nuclear proliferation sound like that his administration will rollback the clock on India – US relations. Presence of Madam Albright in his advisory group is bad news for India.

Now, let us look at John Kerry's other policy perceptions if he is elected as president. He thinks that the Iraq war is a colossal

mistake, which need to be corrected. He wishes to chase Osama Bin Laden more vigorously than the current administration has done (read in between the lines - get tough with Pakistan). As an anti nuclear proliferation candidate, he is going to be tough with Pakistan and hold Pakistan accountable for its scientist's proliferation activities. He may hold up the scientific and other dual use technology exports to India, which have been recently announced by President Bush.

His policies on China are unclear. As an anti BPO candidate, China is to watch out for taking jobs away from America. The huge trade surplus, which China enjoys vis-à-vis US will have to be redressed.

After his election, if Kerry orders a quick withdrawal from Iraq then the Oil prices may fall. India especially will be overjoyed, should the oil prices come down. If he repeals some of the tax breaks President Bush has given to the very rich, the middle class Indian community in America will welcome that.

In general although Kerry is hostile to India's interests but his generally pro middle class attitude will shape how Indian community votes in the upcoming elections.

### **How does Bush Administration View India?**

It is a paradox of American politics. As a Republican president, George Bush has looked after India's interests well. He has encouraged the BPO. He declared early on during his administration that India is a strategic partner of USA. He has made a few minor changes in the nuclear and dual use technology exports to India. The latter he did against the wishes of the stubborn State Department officials. His National Security Advisor Condi Rice is friendly to India, although the Secretary of State, Colin Powell has maintained an 'aloof attitude' towards India. This probably is a left over of Madam Albright's influence in the State Department.

Further more, if President Bush gets re-elected, he may add an additional impetus to the burgeoning BPO trade with India. He may also provide India a few technology items at times to keep the Indians happy. He is most likely to discourage adventurism on the part of Pakistan.

All this could sway Indian origin votes to him. Whether Indian community will support the Republicans with money, is highly unlikely.

Let us look at the flip side of the coin. President Bush has gone to Iraq and has turned the country upside down at a huge cost to Iraqis and the Americans. At the advice of his State Department, he has embraced General Musharraf as a darling of the free world. Does anybody remember General Augusto Pinochet of Chile and he being the darling of the Americans for twenty years.

General Musharraf finds himself in the same position today. This position is very envious but very risky.

All in all, the good points of President Bush's Administration cannot be ignored. Under his stewardship of America, India is getting business opportunities it always wanted. At the same time Pakistan is being cultivated, armed and fattened with monies, which will prove detrimental to India in the long run.

### **What is the Difference between These Two Candidates?**

Domestic policies will hardly change whether one candidate gets elected or the other. The real difference will be – which one of the two decides to leave Iraq sooner. Elections or no elections, Iraq has been divided on the religious lines. The Shiites of Iraq, who form the majority, would wish to rule from Baghdad. The Sunnis, who have been ruling for the last three hundred years, will oppose this. With abundance of arms and ammunition, starting a civil war will be easy. The Muslim Jehadi's from all over the world who are currently fighting the Americans in Iraq will turn their guns on the either side of the religious equation and start a fight. They will eventually return to their homelands and start fights there. In this context, the greatest danger is to the monarchies of the Middle East and then they will turn their attention to Muslim provinces in the free world (Kashmir, Philippines, Chechnya etc.).

Nuclear proliferation is going to go on in a discreet but uncontrollable manner. North Korea and Iran are knocking at the door of the nuclear club. Thanks to Pakistan and its scientists. Kerry or Bush will be able to do nothing other than sanctions. Pre-emptive invasion of Iran or North Korea after Iraq experience is unlikely. To improve his image as an anti nuclear proliferation president; Kerry will stiffen sanctions against India to make it look like an example to others. On the other hand Bush does not wish the spread of nuclear weapons to minor states and may growl at the future aspirants. But he will not penalize India with denial of nuclear and dual use technology. The latter is still a touch and go situation as the entrenched lobby in the State Department could prevent any real implementation of the recent Bush's announcement and agreements.

Under Bush, BPO level will increase at an exponential rate. American corporate world will benefit a lot. India will benefit a lot more by earning hard currency. Science and technology will advance and a real progress for the Indian middle class will be visible. Additional benefits to the Americans jobs will be the increased India – US trade as India buys goods and services from the Americans. Kerry camp seems to be oblivious to these facts and is going headlong into an opposition to BPO.

It does not matter who is in the Whitehouse. Osama Bin Laden will not be caught. General Musharraf while hunting him is also protecting him. The latter is a necessary evil for him. He has to protect his religious support to stay in power. Osama will not survive a day in Pakistan without official patronization. Short of using American troops or anchoring American Fleet at the mouth

of Karachi harbor there are no other means to catch Osama.

Hence no matter how you look at either Kerry or Bush. Both have pluses and minuses. As regards to policy towards India, Kerry has many minuses.

The Indian community is watching the progress of the presidential campaign in the US with interest. They will vote for good governance and personal benefits in taxes and health care expenses. Whether they will consider each of the candidate's position on India before they cast their ballot is yet to be seen. Iraq war and the still eluding Osama Bin Laden are unlikely to affect their judgment. Other likely issues which may sway their votes is toning down of the anti BPO rhetoric by Kerry or huge gifts of arms and money to Pakistan by President Bush in next 30 days.

*(The author is a retired Vice President from C-I-L Inc. and has lived in Canada for the past 34 years. A graduate of Punjab University and University of Missouri; Rolla, USA, the author is a former investment strategies analyst and international relations manager. The Views expressed are his own. email- [harisud@hotmail.com](mailto:harisud@hotmail.com) [1])*

**Category:**

[Papers](#) [2]

**Countries:**

[United States](#) [3]

Copyright ©2012. All Rights are Reserved.

---

**Source URL:** <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/paper1140>

**Links**

[1] <mailto:harisud@hotmail.com>

[2] <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/papers>

[3] <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/united-states>