



Indian Diaspora

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This article is based on “**The diaspora dilemma**” which was published in The Hindustan Times on 10/01/2021. It talks about the Importance and issues associated with the Indian Diaspora.

Recently, India celebrated the **16th annual Pravasi Bharatiya Divas**. It is an occasion to reach out to India’s vast diaspora, celebrate their achievements, connect them to their roots, and provide a framework for the diaspora’s engagement with India’s development story.

The diaspora’s ability to spread Indian soft power, lobby for India’s national interests, and contribute economically to India’s rise is now well-recognized.

However, in order to leverage this **diaspora dividend**, India needs to conduct diplomacy keeping in mind the sensitivities involved.

Importance of Indian Diaspora

- **Enhancing India’s Soft Power:** Indian diaspora is one of the richest minorities in many developed countries. Their advantage is evident in “diaspora diplomacy”, whereby they act as “bridge-builders” between their home and adopted countries.
 - For example, **Indo-US Civil Nuclear Deal** is a case in point, as ethnic Indians in the United States successfully lobbied for the signing of the Nuclear Deal.
 - Further, the Indian diaspora is not just a part of India’s soft power, but a fully transferable political vote bank as well.
 - Also, many people of Indian origin hold top political positions in many countries, which enhances India’s political clout at multilateral institutions like the United Nations.

- **Economic Contribution:** Remittances sent by the Indian diaspora have positive systemic effects on the balance of payments, which help to bridge a wider trade deficit. Also, India is the highest receiver of remittances in the world.
 - The migration of less-skilled labor (especially to West Asia) has helped in bringing down disguised unemployment in India.
 - Further, the migrant workers facilitated the flow of tacit information, commercial and business ideas, and technologies into India.

Issues Related to Indian Diaspora

- **Role of Diaspora in Indian Democracy:** Indian diaspora is a non-homogeneous group and it has different demands from the Indian Government. This also leads to negative campaigning and foreign funding.
 - It is due to this, these demands are in conflict with the policies of the Indian government. This can be seen in the recent demonstration in support of farmers' protests.
 - In the past, many groups of the Indian diaspora demanded nullification of Article 370 in Kashmir, the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, the National Register of Citizens (NRC).
- **Impact of Covid-19:** Covid-19 has triggered an anti-globalization wave, whereby many migrant workers had to return to India and now facing restrictions regarding emigration.

This has led to economic hardship for both the Indian diaspora and the Indian economy.
- **Turmoil In West Asia:** Despite the hype surrounding the peace deal with Israel & the four Gulf countries (**Abraham Accords**), the situation in West Asia remains fluid due to prevailing tensions between Saudi-Arabia & Iran.

The event of any war will lead to a massive return of Indian nationals, curtailing remittances, and making demands on the job market.
- **Regulatory Cholesterol:** There are many inadequacies of the Indian system for the diaspora to collaborate with India or to invest in the country.

For example, grievances like red tape, multiple clearances, distrust of government are acting as hindrances in fulfilling opportunities presented by the Indian Diaspora.

Way Forward

- **Transparency in Policy Matters:** Social media tools have made it easy and inexpensive for the Indian Diaspora to stay in touch with family and friends back home, and their link to India has never been stronger.

It is time that the Indian government leveraged this strong bond for the greater good of the nation, by following utmost transparency in all policy decisions.

- **Need For Evacuation Policy:** There is a need for a strategic diaspora evacuation policy from conflict zones in a world where crises materialize without warnings and give very little reaction time for governments.
- **Improving Ease of Doing Business:** Improvement in **ease of doing business** will go a long way in enabling investments from the Indian diaspora.

India's foreign policy aims to translate partnerships to benefits for key projects like Swachh Bharat, Clean Ganga, Make In India, Digital India, and Skill India, the diaspora has plenty of scope to contribute.

Conclusion

The institutionalization of “diaspora diplomacy” is a distinct indication of the fact that the Indian diaspora community has become considerably more important as a subject of interest for foreign policy and associated government activities.

Drishti Mains Question

The diaspora's ability to spread Indian soft power, lobby for India's national interests, and contribute economically to India's rise is now well-recognized. Comment.



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This editorial is based on “**Terror trail: On Pakistan action against terrorists**” which was published in The Hindu on January 14th, 2020. Now watch this on our Youtube channel.