

Rethinking Modi's Vision on Indian Diaspora

Manas Ranjan Pati¹, Dr. Bindhushree Mishra²

¹Ph.d Research Scholar, PG Department of Political Science, Utkal University, Bhubaneswar, Odisha

²Reader, Department of Political Science, PN College Khordha

Abstract

The engagement of India's overseas communities has become a crucial part of its foreign policy, particularly under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership. The problem and Opportunities offered by the Diaspora Foreign policy, are paying special attention from the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) - Leading government. When Atal Behari Vajpayee's Tenure (1998-2004) is big. The importance of Indian communities overseas has injected new power into a small number of people, A few months when he was prime minister. As development travel and strategic capital to promote the interests of India's foreign policy abroad. At the same time, the Modi government had to spend a lot of time Energy dealing with issues arising from India has expanded its global footprint. The Indian diaspora, once primarily seen as a source of remittances and economic support, is now positioned at the heart of India's global strategy. Modi's government sees the diaspora not just as an economic asset, but also as a tool to further India's political, strategic, and cultural interests globally. The study looks at how India's diaspora policy has changed over time and considers the potential benefits and drawbacks of Delhi's renewed political fervour for Indian communities abroad.

Keywords: Engagement, Opportunities, Diaspora, Energy, Political, Strategies

Introduction

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's remarkable focus on fostering relationships with India's abroad populations is just one of the many surprises he has unleashed since taking office at the end of May 2014. The diaspora's growing significance in Modi's diplomacy was demonstrated by his unique outreach to Indian communities while he was in the United Fiji, Australia, and the United States. The magnificent diasporic events in 2014 Sydney and New York are probably going to be followed by such incidents in South Africa, Canada, and the United Kingdom in during Modi's 2015 visit. The zeal of the Modi administration for the diaspora witnessed the yearly Indian diaspora meeting being transformed into a unique event, when Gujarat, Modi's home state, hosted the 13th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) in January of 2015.

Addressing the PBD, India's External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj summed up the new government's diaspora policy in terms of 3 C's. She invited the diaspora to 'connect' with India, 'celebrate' their cultural heritage and 'contribute' to the development of the homeland. Modi pointed to the vast opportunities awaiting them in the land of their ancestors and urged them to contribute to his domestic initiatives like 'Make in India'. Demonstrating that this was not just talk, Modi issued an ordinance a day before the PBD to address one of the major concerns of the diaspora – securing an Indian visa. The PBD also saw the participation of nine chief ministers who joined the central government to woo the diaspora.

There is no doubt that Modi is trying to redefine its commitment to India's diaspora. That's still It is doubtful that Modi has hit a chord into the Indian diaspora. I'll explain the mod Popular in the Diaspora, Lonak Desai claims that mode effectively refers to itself Endemic corruption as a new type of leader capable of eradicating Byzantine bureaucrats and bitter poverty. His vision has to the millions who have left India for that reason. However, these reasons still had close ties with their homeland and wanted it make out.

If Modi's purposefulness towards the diaspora is new, he is hewing to the tradition of BJP's special interest in the diaspora. In the run-up to the 2014 general election, both the BJP and the Congress highlighted their commitment to the diaspora. But their approaches were starkly different. The BJP manifesto said, "The NRIs, PIOs and professionals settled abroad are a vast reservoir to articulate the national interests and affairs globally. This resource will be harnessed for strengthening Brand India". The Congress manifesto limited itself to protection of the "Indians overseas from exploitation". There was no hint of seeing them as a "strategic asset" for the nation. The BJP, of course, had always taken a greater interest in overseas Indians and was better organised in garnering their support for the party and its causes. Even sceptics have agreed that "BJP understands the nostalgia of the diaspora and the need to serve the country from 10,000 miles away". The Congress, whose tradition of engaging the overseas Indians goes back nearly a century, appears to have lost the plot with the diaspora in recent decades. This paper examines the growing salience of the diaspora in India's engagement with the world and some of the implications and opportunities arising from it.

Objective:

The Objective of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's foreign policy with respect to the Indian diaspora can be understood through a mix of strategic, economic, cultural and political goals. Since taking office in 2014, Modi has emphasized the importance of the Indian diaspora as a key pillar of India's global engagement. Here's a breakdown of the main objectives,

- Strengthening India's Global influence through the Diaspora, soft power Diplomacy and Public Engagement.
- Economic Diplomacy and Investment, Promoting FDI and Economic Ties, Startups and Innovation.
- Political and Strategic Support for Building Political Alliances in International Forums.
- Cultural and Civilization Links for reviving cultural identity.
- Consular and Welfare Services for protecting Indian Citizens abroad.

Methodology:

The present research will be based on data collected from various primary and secondary sources relating to government, non-governmental organizations and the relevant important policy documents, reports, and debates to understand the Indian diaspora can be understood through a mix of strategic, economic, cultural and political goals along with challenges and opportunities during the period.

Expanding footprint:

Indian diaspora is an integrated term that refers to both Indian origins and Indian people Citizens who live abroad for work or business. Several studies have sought to define terms. High Ranking Committee

of the Indian Diaspora Used by the “Diaspora” to refer to Indians They migrate to different parts of the world and generally retain their Indians Identity.

According to the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA), in 2012 there were more than 21 million Indians living in 205 countries around the world. Much of the modern Indian migration can be traced back to India’s economic globalisation under the British Raj when

Indian labour and capital moved across the empire and beyond. After independence, the movement of Indians abroad continued, but the structure and composition has changed.

Before independence, a significant number of migrants working abroad were unskilled workers, often transported as indentured labour. After independence, particularly in the last few decades, a number of high-skilled professionals have joined semi-skilled and unskilled workers overseas. After the oil boom of the 1970s, the Persian Gulf region saw a steady increase in the population of Indian migrant workers. 13 Currently more than 5.5 million Indians live in the Gulf region, with 1.75 million in UAE and 1.78 million in Saudi Arabia; another 2.2 million reside in the US, 1.7 million in the UK and around 1 million in Canada. The remittances from the overseas Indian communities into India are the highest in the world, standing at US\$ 70 billion in 2013, according to the World Bank.

Over the past few decades, the number of Indians traveling abroad for education has increased. The current estimate for Indian students overseas should be near 189,472.15 Traveling abroad in India for business and joy. According to the United Nations world Tourism organization Approximately 15 million Indians go abroad every year, until 2020 this number is expected to increase to 50 million, or 16 in 2013. Approximately 8.5 million passes Published by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. For 2014 the number was expected to reach 10 million.

Evolution of India’s Diaspora Policy:

Numerous of the subjects of India’s modern diaspora arrangement had their beginnings in the approach of the Indian national development some time recently freedom. Concern for the treatment of Indian indentured work around the world got to be an critical issue in the rise of the national movement in the early-20th century and the arrangement of its worldwide awareness. Mahatma Gandhi’s battle for finishing organizing segregation against Indians in South Africa got to be an motivating legend for the Indian national development and the source of enduring sentimentalism almost the diaspora in present day India. The diaspora moreover got to be a vehicle for advancing the cause of Indian autonomy among the political elites of major countries. As the freedom development assembled energy at domestic, it started to impact many Indian communities overseas. In the interim, the enclaves of commerce communities around the world as well got to be imperative joins between the Indian capital and the world. Indian leaders were concerned almost the diaspora, and the Indian National Congress sent missions abroad to review the condition of indentured Indian work. Whereas the Indian pioneers ordinarily stressed the require to “safeguard the interface of the individuals who had to take off the shores of India to cater for the financial interface of the Joined together Kingdom”, extra minutes the Indian diaspora was too utilized to “push the cause of Indian freedom.

The role of the Indian diaspora in shaping foreign policy can be traced back to the tenure of Atal Bihari Vajpayee (1998-2004). During Vajpayee’s tenure, India began to understand the potential of its overseas communities, especially in terms of economic and diplomatic influence. However, it was Modi’s government that has significantly amplified the importance of the diaspora, seeing them not just as passive beneficiaries but as active participants in India’s foreign policy goals. Modi’s “Diaspora

Diplomacy" has been instrumental in creating a more formal, structured engagement strategy. Under this framework, the Indian diaspora is not just encouraged to invest in India but also plays a role in advocating India's interests and values in their respective host countries.

Opportunities from the Diaspora

1. Economic Impact:

The Indian diaspora is one of the largest in the world, with significant populations in countries like the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, the Middle East, and Australia. This population not only sends remittances back to India, but also represents an influential economic group in their host countries. By engaging with the diaspora, India has opened doors to new trade partnerships, investments, and business ventures that benefit both India and the diaspora's host nations.

2. Strategic Capital:

The Modi government has leveraged the diaspora to boost India's global image and influence. The Indian community in the US, for example, has become an important bridge in strengthening Indo-US relations. High-profile figures like IndraNooyi (former CEO of PepsiCo) and SundarPichai (CEO of Google) are seen as global ambassadors of India's soft power. By empowering diaspora leaders, the Indian government can strengthen bilateral relations, especially with major global powers.

3. Cultural Diplomacy:

India's cultural influence around the world is immense, and the diaspora plays a key role in this. Events like Yoga Day, Bollywood film festivals, and Indian cultural festivals overseas are often spearheaded by the Indian community. This cultural exchange further promotes India's soft power and creates a positive image of the country abroad. Modi has used these platforms to highlight India's values and its role as a global leader in areas like sustainable development, climate change, and democracy.

Challenges from the Diaspora:

1. Political Divisions within the Diaspora:

One of the challenges in Modi's emphasis on the diaspora is the diversity within the Indian community abroad. Diaspora groups, although united by their Indian identity, have significant political and ideological differences. For example, the Indian diaspora in the United States is divided over issues like the Kashmir conflict, the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), and the farmers' protests. A large segment of the diaspora may not agree with the current government's policies, leading to potential diplomatic tensions when it comes to the representation of India's interests abroad.

2. Balancing Nationalism with Inclusivity:

Modi's government has pushed for a brand of Indian nationalism that is sometimes seen as divisive, particularly with the rise of religious and cultural conservatism. While the diaspora largely embraces its connection to India, some individuals or communities may not align with the government's ideology. Therefore, balancing the growing influence of a unified Indian identity with the diverse political and cultural views of the diaspora can be difficult.

3. Resource Constraints:

The engagement of the diaspora requires significant investments in resources, including human capital, funding, and diplomatic efforts. While India has worked to establish platforms such as the Overseas Indian Affairs Ministry and various diaspora councils, ensuring that these efforts are sustained and inclusive can be a logistical and financial challenge. For example, smaller and less well-represented diaspora groups (like those in African or Latin American countries) may find it difficult to get attention from the Indian government.

4. Risks of "Instrumentalizing" the Diaspora:

Another potential pitfall is the risk of instrumentalizing the diaspora merely as a tool for India's political and economic objectives. If the government is seen as exploiting diaspora communities for short-term political gains, it could erode trust and undermine the long-term engagement strategy. The diaspora should be seen as a partner, not just as a resource.

Future Possibilities of Indian Diaspora:

1. Global Networks for Innovation

The Indian diaspora can help create global networks for innovation and knowledge exchange. India's Silicon Valley connection, for example, offers immense potential for technological collaboration. By focusing on innovation and entrepreneurship, the diaspora can help drive India's next phase of economic growth. India can leverage its global network of entrepreneurs, tech experts, and professionals to build a more innovative economy, focusing on areas like AI, clean energy, and biotechnology.

2. Crisis Diplomacy and Soft Power

During times of international crisis or natural disasters, the Indian diaspora can be a vital resource in shaping perceptions and gathering international support. Modi's government has been proactive in utilizing the Indian community abroad in disaster relief efforts, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, when the diaspora rallied to provide medical supplies and other forms of aid.

3. Greater Political Involvement

The diaspora's political influence is growing, and India can work to engage them more in its democratic processes. Diaspora voting rights, for example, have been a topic of debate, and if extended, could increase the sense of ownership and involvement in India's policy direction. This could also help India understand global issues from a more international perspective and build deeper ties with host nations.

Conclusion:

India's engagement with its diaspora has shifted from a passive to an active and strategic component of foreign policy. Prime Minister Modi's focus on the Indian community abroad has opened up opportunities for economic growth, diplomatic leverage, and cultural influence. However, challenges related to political divisions, resource allocation, and balancing nationalism with inclusivity persist. Going forward, India's diaspora policy has the potential to become even more dynamic and impactful, provided it remains mindful of the diverse perspectives within these communities and nurtures them as genuine partners in India's global journey.

The novelty of Modi's high Profile engagement with Indians abroad is hopefully the beginning of a process that produces a comprehensive strategy towards dealing with the opportunities and challenges that the diaspora present. Modi's political emergence, his ambitions for India and his articulation of a special role for the diaspora in India's rise have generated a surge of optimism and pride within the overseas communities. Without a quick and visible improvement in the ease of doing business and in the ambience for contributing to local economic and development activity, however, many in the diaspora are likely to be once again disappointed. It is quite obvious that without a significant change in the way India operates at home, there is little hope for consequential external contribution by the diaspora. Nevertheless, the big question is whether Modi can leverage the growing weight of the diaspora and its new generations –many of whom had actively participated in Modi's election campaign –to overcome the profound conservatism in the BJP and modernise the archaic thinking of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) about India and its place in the world.

Modi's current enthusiasm must be informed by two important potential dangers that could arise from the new weightage being given to the diaspora. An India that is strong and united will find the diaspora an asset. The breakdown of India's internal harmony, especially along religious and other lines of identity, could quickly divide the diaspora and complicate the conduct of Indian foreign policy with the very countries that host large overseas communities. The other danger is that Modi's high-profile engagement with the diaspora could generate anxieties in some countries of the developing world. While the developed countries like the US and Australia are unlikely to be concerned about Modi's direct appeal to their citizens and residents, many other countries in Asia and Africa might feel threatened by an Indian outreach to their Indian minorities. Nehru was conscious of this problem and sought to distance himself from the domestic politics of nations hosting Indian communities. Modi's new enthusiasm for engagement with the overseas Indian communities must be constantly tempered by reassurances to host-nations that Delhi is not seeking a direct relationship with the diaspora that could be tantamount to intervention in their internal affairs.

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