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## Modi's Foreign Policy: Focus on the Diaspora

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### Abstract

*Engagement with overseas communities has become a major element of India's dynamic foreign policy under Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Although the problems and opportunities presented by the diaspora have gained traction in India's post-Cold War foreign policy, they have drawn particular attention from the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led governments. If Atal Behari Vajpayee's tenure (1998-2004) saw Delhi attach greater importance to the overseas Indian communities, Modi has injected a new vigour in the few months that he has been the Prime Minister. Modi sees the diaspora as central to India's development journey and as a strategic asset in promoting India's foreign policy interests abroad. At the same time the Modi government has had to spend considerable time and energy dealing with the problems arising from India's expanding global footprint. The paper reviews the evolution of India's diaspora policy and examines the possibilities and pitfalls that could arise from Delhi's new political enthusiasm for overseas Indian communities.*

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## Introduction

Among the many surprises that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has sprung since he took charge of the nation at the end of May 2014 is the extraordinary emphasis on connecting with the overseas communities of India. The new importance of diaspora in Modi's diplomacy was reflected in the special outreach to Indian communities during his visits to the United States, Australia and Fiji. The spectacular gatherings of the diaspora in New York and Sydney in 2014 are likely to be followed by similar events in the United Kingdom, Canada and South Africa when Modi travels there in 2015. The Modi government's enthusiasm for the diaspora saw the transformation of the annual gathering of the Indian diaspora into a special affair when the 13<sup>th</sup> Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) was held in Modi's home state, Gujarat, in January 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.<sup>3</sup> 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'.<sup>4</sup> 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.<sup>5</sup> The PBD also saw the participation of nine chief ministers who joined the central government to woo the diaspora.

That Modi is trying to redefine India's engagement with the diaspora is not in doubt. Nor is it in question that Modi has struck a chord with the Indian diaspora. Explaining Modi's popularity with the diaspora, Ronak Desai argues that Modi has effectively branded himself as a new kind of leader "capable of eradicating byzantine bureaucracies, endemic corruption and abject poverty. His vision has resonated with the millions who left India precisely for these reasons but have still maintained close ties with their motherland and want it to succeed". He adds, "Modi engenders pride among the diaspora on a more visceral level. To

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<sup>3</sup> External Affairs Minister's address at the Youth Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (7 January 2015) [http://www.mea.gov.in/SpeechesStatements.htm?dtl/24652/External\\_Affairs\\_Ministers\\_address\\_at\\_the\\_Youth\\_Pravasi\\_Bharatiya\\_Divas](http://www.mea.gov.in/SpeechesStatements.htm?dtl/24652/External_Affairs_Ministers_address_at_the_Youth_Pravasi_Bharatiya_Divas). Accessed on 10 January 2015.

<sup>4</sup> Prime Minister Narendra Modi's address at the Inauguration of Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (8 January 2015)

<sup>5</sup> Bharti Jain, "Citizenship ordinance merging PIO, OCI schemes gets President's nod", *Times of India*, January 6, 2015. Available at <<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Citizenship-ordinance-merging-PIO-OCI-schemes-gets-Presidents-nod/articleshow/45783266.cms>> accessed on 23 January 2015.

many, his muscular rhetoric, decisive action and unapologetic ambitions represent the qualities India needs to achieve status as a world power”.<sup>6</sup>

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”.<sup>7</sup> 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”.<sup>8</sup> 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.<sup>9</sup> 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.

## **Expanding Footprint**

Indian diaspora is an inclusive term that refers to the people of Indian origin as well as Indian citizens living abroad for work or business. Several studies have attempted to define the term. The High-Level Committee on the Indian Diaspora, used “diaspora” to refer to “Indians who migrated to different parts of the world and have generally maintained their Indian identity”.<sup>10</sup> Arguing that the term is contested, Latha Varadarajan explained the

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<sup>6</sup> Ronak D Desai, “Modi’s NRI, NRI’s Modi”, *The Indian Express* (2 December, 2014 ) <http://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/modis-nri-nris-modi/99/>. Accessed on 12 December 2014.

<sup>7</sup> BJP Election Manifesto (2014) p.40. <http://bjpelectionmanifesto.com/pdf/manifesto2014.pdf>. Accessed on 12 June 2014.

<sup>8</sup> Shiv Visvanathan, “Politics of Performance: BJP in Power”, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 35, No. 42 (14-20 October 2000), p. 3720.

<sup>9</sup> Ramachandra Guha, "How the Congress lost the diaspora", *The Indian Express* (27 September 2014) <http://www.hindustantimes.com/comment/ramachandraguha/how-the-congress-lost-the-diaspora/article1-1269211.aspx>. Accessed on 2 November, 2014.

<sup>10</sup> Report of the High Level Committee on Indian Diaspora, Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, Government of India, (18 August 2000) <http://moia.gov.in/services.aspx?ID1=63&id=m9&idp=59&mainid=23>. Accessed on 2 June 2014.

“understanding of diaspora as capturing the essence of a link between mobile populations perceived by themselves, and others as living outside the territories of their ‘homeland’”.<sup>11</sup> 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.<sup>12</sup> 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.<sup>13</sup> 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.<sup>14</sup>

In the last few decades the number of Indians travelling abroad for education has grown rapidly. The current estimate of Indian students abroad is said to be close to 189,472.<sup>15</sup> More Indians are travelling abroad for business and pleasure. According to United Nations World Tourism Organization about 15 million Indians go overseas every year, and by 2020, that figure is expected to increase to 50 million.<sup>16</sup> In 2013, around 8.5 million passports were issued by the Ministry of External Affairs. For 2014 the number was expected to reach 10 million. India’s Chief Passport Officer Muktesh Kumar Pardeshi has explained, “We have

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<sup>11</sup> Latha Varadarajan, “Out of Place: Re-thinking Diaspora and Empire”, *Millennium - Journal of International Studies*, Vol.36 No.2, (2008), p. 270.

<sup>12</sup> For details see “India and its Diaspora” Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, Government of India (2012) <http://moia.gov.in/accessories.aspx?aid=10>. Accessed on 2 June 2014. For country-wise population of overseas Indians see Appendix A.

<sup>13</sup> Sharon Stanton Russell, “International Migration and Political Turmoil in the Middle East”, *Population and Development Review*, Vol. 18, No. 4 (1992), p.720.

<sup>14</sup> See “Remittances to developing countries to stay robust this year, despite increased deportations of migrant workers”, World Bank Press Release (11 April, 2014). <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2014/04/11/remittances-developing-countries-deportations-migrant-workers-wb>. Accessed on 24 June 2014.

<sup>15</sup> The Global Flow of Tertiary-level Students, UNESCO Institute for Statistics (Updated 5 May 2014 ) <http://www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Pages/international-student-flow-viz.aspx>. Accessed on 2 June 2014.

<sup>16</sup> “The Indian Outbound Travel Market with Special Insight into the Image of Europe as a Destination”, United Nations World Tourism Organization (2009) [http://publications.unwto.org/sites/all/files/pdf/090616\\_indian\\_outbound\\_travel\\_excerpt.pdf](http://publications.unwto.org/sites/all/files/pdf/090616_indian_outbound_travel_excerpt.pdf), Accessed on 2 June 2014.

issued staggering 85 lakh passports in 2013 calendar year by recording 15 per cent growth. If we grow with the same rate, we are sure to breach one crore mark in 2014”.<sup>17</sup> That would make India the only country after US and China to issue 10 million passports in a year. As the scale and scope of the Indian footprint grows across the world, many old challenges of dealing with the diaspora become more acute even as new challenges and opportunities present themselves.

## **Evolution of Policy**

Many of the themes of India’s contemporary diaspora policy had their origins in the approach of the Indian national movement before independence. Concern for the treatment of Indian indentured labour around the world became an important issue in the rise of the national movement in the early-20<sup>th</sup> century and the formation of its international consciousness. Mahatma Gandhi’s struggle for ending institutionalised discrimination against Indians in South Africa became an inspiring legend for the Indian national movement and the source of enduring sentimentalism about the diaspora in modern India. The diaspora also became a vehicle for promoting the cause of Indian independence among the political elites of major countries. As the independence movement gathered momentum at home, it began to influence many Indian communities abroad. Meanwhile, the enclaves of business communities around the world too became important links between the Indian capital and the world. Indian leaders were concerned about the diaspora, and the Indian National Congress sent missions abroad to inspect the condition of indentured Indian labour. While the Indian leaders usually stressed the need to “safeguard the interests of the people who had to leave the shores of India to cater for the economic interests of the United Kingdom”, overtime the Indian diaspora was also used to “push the cause of Indian independence”.<sup>18</sup>

India’s independence produced its own challenges in dealing with the diaspora. As India defined its citizenship on a territorial basis and accommodated the consequences of the Partition, the new rulers in Delhi had to inevitably differentiate between its citizens and the people of Indian origin living beyond the Subcontinent. The common identity of being ‘Indian’ now had to be administratively divided into citizens and ‘aliens’ of Indian origin. As the first Prime Minister of the Republic of India, Jawaharlal Nehru insisted that Delhi’s

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<sup>17</sup> “PSKs receiving huge response, says Chief Passport Officer” *The Hindu* (18 January 2014).

<sup>18</sup> Ajay Dubey, "India and the Indian Diaspora" in David Scott eds., *Handbook of India's International Relations* (UK: Routledge, 2011), p.256.

interest in “Indians abroad” who are not its citizens should be limited to cultural and humanitarian dimensions. He said that “if they adopt the nationality of that country we have no concern with them. Sentimental concern there is, but politically they cease to be Indian national”.<sup>19</sup> Nehru consistently urged overseas Indians to adapt to the local circumstances, demonstrate loyalty to the state of their adopted nation, and always keep in mind the interests of the local population. Nehru’s priority was on building political solidarity with post-colonial states in the non-Western world. He did not want to be dragged into their domestic politics where large Indian minorities were present. According to J C Sharma, “After independence, Jawaharlal Nehru gave primacy to the larger foreign policy goals. He abolished the Ministry for Overseas Indian Affairs in 1947. Anti-colonialism and nonalignment became major pillars of India’s foreign policy. He advised overseas Indian communities to fully identify with the country of their residence”.<sup>20</sup> Indira Gandhi continued the same policies, although she often tapped into the international influence of Indian business groups like the Hinduja for specific diplomatic purposes.

At the operational level, though, Delhi’s new elite viewed the descendants of Indian labour with the disdain that comes naturally to the middle class. It was also embarrassed by the riches of the Indian merchant communities around the world that were accused of exploiting the local population and not making an effort to integrate with their host societies. By the late-1960s, Delhi began to frown at a new wave of outward migration – dubbed the “brain drain” – amid the growing frustration with the lack of opportunities at home.<sup>21</sup> Rajiv Gandhi, the first Prime Minister to recognise the growing clout of the overseas Indians and their potential value in promoting India’s foreign policy objectives, initiated efforts to engage them on a sustained basis. But it was only after the economic liberalisation of the 1990s that the Indian Government began to devote substantive attention to the diaspora. The immediate objective was to overcome the economic crisis of the early-1990s and generate badly-needed flows of hard currency into India. Soon after, Delhi launched a conscious effort to mobilise the diaspora to serve India’s foreign policy interests in their host nations. As J C Sharma explains, the diaspora mobilised “support in the aftermath of nuclear tests in 1998 and Kargil

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<sup>19</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru’s reply to a debate on foreign policy in the Lok Sabha on September 2, 1957. For details see *India’s Foreign Policy: Selected Speeches, September 1946-April 1961* (New Delhi: Government of India, 1961) p. 130.

<sup>20</sup> J. C. Sharma, “India’s Foreign Policy, National Security & Development”, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India (3 December 2013).

<sup>21</sup> A. Gangopadhyay, “India’s Policy towards its Diaspora: Continuity and Change”, *India Quarterly*, Vol 61, No. 4, (2005), p.101.

War in 1999. Its lobbying efforts were extremely useful in signing of Indo-US Civil Nuclear Co-operation agreement”.<sup>22</sup>

The BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) Government that ruled India between 1998 and 2004 had additional ideological and cultural reasons to emphasise the importance of the diaspora. Atal Behari Vajpayee saw the long-term strategic value of the engagement when he called for a “partnership among all children of Mother India so that our country can emerge as a major global player”.<sup>23</sup> He constituted a committee in 2000 under the leadership of L M Singhvi, a BJP Member of Parliament, to suggest a variety of policy initiatives to strengthen the bonds with the overseas Indian communities. The committee recommended “deep administrative and structural reforms” in areas of “economic policies and procedures, including implementing second-generation economic reforms, in the policies relating to NRI/PIO charitable donations, in the mechanisms in place at international entry points, particularly in the immigration and customs departments, in the support structures at Central and State government levels for the lower income group emigrating in search of blue collar employment to the Gulf and other destinations, and a general toning up [of] administration”.

The report emphasised that “in areas such as increasing interaction with the Diaspora at the political levels, and also culture, education, media, science and technology, health, fresh initiatives backed up by adequate funding mechanism are required at many levels”. It further stated, “in order to ensure the effective implementation of the entire agenda of reforms and initiatives, this Committee recommends the setting up of a central organization on the Indian Diaspora”.<sup>24</sup> Consequently, the recommendations led to the initiation of what we now know as Pravasi Bharatiya Divas and the formation of a separate Ministry for Overseas Indians. The cultural, educational and social subjects formed the basis of some innovative initiatives like the Know India Programme (KIP) and Study India Programme (SIP) which have engaged the youth living abroad and the Tracing the Roots Scheme, through which some

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<sup>22</sup> J. C. Sharma, “India’s Foreign Policy, National Security & Development”, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India (3 December 2013).

<sup>23</sup> Atal Behari Vajpayee, “Prime Minister's speech at the inauguration of the International Convention of the Global Organisation of People of Indian Origin”, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India (6 January, 2001) [http://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/5517/Prime\\_Ministers\\_speech\\_at\\_the\\_inauguration\\_of\\_the\\_International\\_Convention\\_of\\_the\\_Global\\_Organisation\\_of\\_People\\_of\\_Indian\\_Origin](http://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/5517/Prime_Ministers_speech_at_the_inauguration_of_the_International_Convention_of_the_Global_Organisation_of_People_of_Indian_Origin). Accessed on 2 June 2014.

<sup>24</sup> Report of the High Level Committee on Indian Diaspora, Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, Government of India, (18 August 2000). <<http://moia.gov.in/services.aspx?ID1=63&id=m9&idp=59&mainid=23>> Accessed on 2 June, 2014

Indians have been able to trace their roots in India. While the celebration of the partnership with Overseas Indians has become a ritual since then, the slow pace of economic reform and the difficulties of doing business with the Indian Government, has disillusioned many Indians abroad who had high hopes that they could partner with post-reform India. Commercial links with the diaspora, however, steadily expanded. Overseas Indians became an important market for Indian cultural products, including films, and an important source of funding for the political parties. While inaugurating the first Pravasi Bharatiya Divas in 2003 at New Delhi, Atal Behari Vajpayee said, “We do not want only your investment. We also want your ideas. We do not want your riches; we want the richness of your experience. We can gain from the breadth of vision that your global exposure has given you”.<sup>25</sup> Modi seems to have internalised Vajpayee’s proposition as he recently asserted, “everything is not measured in dollars or pounds. The relationship we have with Pravasis is beyond that. It’s a bond”.<sup>26</sup>

Since he has become the Prime Minister, Modi has offered a more comprehensive framework for reconnecting with the diaspora. He has discarded the old attitude of reproaching the diaspora, especially that in the West, as abandoning their responsibility to their motherland by leaving its shores. Instead, Modi has affirmed that India is proud of the diaspora’s achievements around the world. He exhorted them to actively contribute to the acceleration of India’s economic and social development. Modi has also recognised that the connection with the diaspora could be leveraged to influence the political classes of the host nations. Modi’s main message was that India is poised to rise and reach its full potential under his leadership and the diaspora is central to his new vision of India.<sup>27</sup> Relaxing the visa norms for the overseas communities, improving physical connectivity and the ease of doing business in India have been the policy consequences of Modi’s more intensive outreach to the diaspora. The Prime Minister seems to have understood that the idea of India should not be defined in narrow territorial terms, but the possibilities should be recognised beyond the borders, working towards building a “global nation”.

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<sup>25</sup> Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's speech at the inaugural session of the First Pravasi Bharatiya Divas celebrations (9 January 2003). <http://pib.nic.in/archieve/lreleng/1yr2003/rjan2003/09012003/r090120035.html>. Accessed on 21 June 2014.

<sup>26</sup> Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s address at the Inauguration of Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (8 January 2015)

<sup>27</sup> Ashok Malik, “Non-resident power” *The Asian Age* (16 November 2014) <http://www.asianage.com/columnists/non-resident-power-801>. Accessed 21 June 2014.



## Opportunities and Challenges

Indian communities abroad are not merely “strategic assets” that Delhi can leverage at will. They also bring significant responsibilities. For the diaspora expects that India will stand by them in their hour of need. For people of Indian origin, a strong India would be an asset while dealing with their problems in the host nations. Indian citizens abroad, who have travelled at their own risk, demand greater protection and support from Delhi when they are caught in difficult situations. On several occasions in recent years, Delhi has had to spend millions of dollars on the protection and evacuation of Indian citizens from crisis zones. These crises have become recurrent thanks to the profound turbulence in the Middle East that is home to one of the largest concentrations of Indians abroad. Over the last decade alone, Delhi had to launch two major military operations to rescue Indian citizens from war zones abroad. In Libya (2011), Indian armed forces evacuated nearly 18,000 people. In Lebanon (2006), the Indian Navy helped get nearly 2,200 Indians, Sri Lankans and Nepalese out of the war zone.<sup>28</sup> There have been other cases that have drawn much public attention in recent years — the violence against Indian students in Australia, the arrest of Indian traders in southern China and students caught in fake universities in the United States, to name a few.

The Modi Government had an early taste of the challenges when it had to deal with the problem of Indian citizens trapped in the civil wars of Iraq and Libya during the second half of 2014. Delhi eventually assisted more than 4,900 Indian nationals to travel back to India from Iraq, providing air tickets to over 3,900 of them and also evacuating hundreds stranded in Libya.<sup>29</sup> If the expectations from Delhi were low in the past, today there is a sense of entitlement among Indians living abroad. Mounting pressures from the state governments and the electronic media compel Delhi to move heaven and earth to rescue citizens endangered abroad. During the recent ordeal the External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj had to give assurances time and again that the government was “regularly and closely monitoring the security situation”.<sup>30</sup> The issue is not merely a humanitarian one. With more than 50 per cent

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<sup>28</sup> Ali Ahmed et al, *Net Security Provider: India's Out of Area Contingency Operations, IDSA Task Force Report* (New Delhi: Magnum Books, 2012). <http://idsa.in/book/NetSecurityProviderIndiasOutofAreaContingencyOperations>. Accessed on 21 June 2014.

<sup>29</sup> Sushma Swaraj, “Statement by External Affairs Minister in Rajya Sabha on ‘Plight of Stranded Workers from India in Iraq’”, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India (4 August 2014) <http://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/23847/Statement+by+External+Affairs+Minister+in+Rajya+Sabha+on+Plight+of+Stranded+Workers+from+India+in+Iraq+on+August+04+2014>. Accessed on 19 August 2014.

<sup>30</sup> *ibid*

of the Indian economy now made up of exports and imports, Indian businessmen tend to have huge commercial stakes abroad. There are a variety of situations — ill-treatment, denial of rights, loss of property, hijacks, natural disasters and military conflicts, to name a few — that demand different degrees of Delhi's involvement, from consular support to the deployment of armed forces for large-scale evacuation.

India is not the only country dealing with the problems arising from the large and growing size of the footprint beyond the borders. Around 55 million Chinese are living in over 180 countries abroad.<sup>31</sup> The growing number of Chinese nationals going abroad as well as China's rapidly expanding overseas investments have made Beijing acutely conscious of its stakes overseas. Chinese nationals made around 98 million foreign trips in 2013. For 2014, this number was expected to increase to at least 100 million.<sup>32</sup> Currently, about 20,000 Chinese companies are operating in more than 180 countries, of which several are located in conflict zones. Official sources claim that Chinese consulates received 110 reports every day on an average. Chinese officials handled more than 40,000 cases of kidnappings, murder, attacks and other abuses in 2013. In the last decade, mounting domestic pressures have compelled Beijing to take a variety of measures to strengthen its consular activities abroad. For the Chinese armed forces, non-combatant evacuation has become one of the major missions beyond borders. According to a report published by *SIPRI*, in 2011 China evacuated "a total of 48 000 citizens from Egypt, Japan and Libya – five times more than the total number of people evacuated in the period 1980-2010". Thirteen such operations were also launched between 2006 and 2013.<sup>33</sup> Chinese responses on securing the diaspora have become robust in recent years, and Beijing has often come close to violating its declared principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of other nations.

India needs both additional resources as well as better systems to deal with the recurring challenges of supporting citizens abroad. On the resources front, there is no escaping the fact that India needs more officers and staff on the ground in its embassies abroad and at headquarters for dealing with the expanding consular work. It makes sense therefore to set up

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<sup>31</sup> Zhiqun Zhu, "Two Diasporas: Overseas Chinese and Non-resident Indians In Their Homelands' Political Economy", *Journal of Chinese Political Science*, Vol 12. No 3 (Fall 2007), pp.281-296.

<sup>32</sup> "'Not enough' consular officers to serve Chinese nationals, foreign ministry says", *South China Morning Post* (19 May 2014) <http://www.scmp.com/news/china/article/1515554/consular-staff-struggling-cope-rising-number-foreign-trips>. Accessed on 6 July 2014

<sup>33</sup> Mathieu Duchâtel, Oliver Bräuner and Zhou Hang, "Protecting China's Overseas Interests: The Slow Shift away from Non-interference", *SIPRI Policy Paper 41*, (June 2014), p. 46.

a well-staffed permanent mechanism, say a centre for consular protection, with representation of all stakeholders under the aegis of the Ministry of External Affairs, which for long has been the lead-agency in this domain.

Three important functions present themselves to this new mechanism. The first relates to information collection and dissemination. The government needs more comprehensive and reliable data on the movement of Indians across national borders. Effective tracking is critical for understanding the broad patterns and changes within them over time, identifying potential problems and offering better services. Delhi must ensure that Indian workers get mandatory briefings on local conditions and risks in their specific destinations as well as their rights vis-a-vis the Indian Government. Delhi must find ways to improve global access to information being put out by the government on rapidly-developing situations.

The second relates to the codification of India's rich experience in evacuating Indian citizens abroad. In an important recent study, Constantino Xavier, an international relations scholar at the Johns Hopkins University in Washington, has counted 26 Indian evacuation operations between 1947 and 2003. But there has been no real effort within the government to study this experience, draw lessons from these and build a more secure foundation for protecting Indian citizens abroad. The new mechanism can draft and circulate to all key departments at the Centre and in relevant states comprehensive reports on how each crisis was dealt with and the lessons learnt.

The third relates to coordination among multiple government agencies that will have to participate in responding to the crises. The permanent mechanism for consular protection can help strengthen India's regular engagement on consular issues with key foreign governments as well as develop a partnership with Indian communities abroad. It can help structure regular consultations on diaspora issues with interested state governments. It can also better service the standing committee on crisis management that steps in when situations develop of the type we recently saw in Iraq. The centre must closely monitor developments in regions where there are large concentrations of Indian citizens and provide early warning of negative developments and explore the possibilities for pre-emptive action. The centre could also be made responsible for developing standard operating procedures for quick and effective responses from Delhi.

## Conclusions

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 presents. 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.

Speaking at New York's Madison Square Garden in September 2014, Modi underlined an important reality about India. If the US had people from all over the world within its borders, Modi said Indians are everywhere contributing to progress across the world. This notion of a "universal India" applies to the subcontinent as a whole. South Asian diaspora consists of 35 to 50 million people living world-wide, which is 2.2 to 3.1 per cent of the total South Asian population.<sup>34</sup> If the Indian diaspora today is estimated to be around 25 million, the strength of the overseas communities from the rest of South Asia — Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka — is said to be around 15 million. Like the Indian diaspora, these communities boast of considerable wealth and are as enthusiastic to contribute to the welfare of their respective countries. In the last few years, there has been competitive mobilisation of their respective diaspora by Delhi and Islamabad in pursuit of their foreign policy goals. Overall, the South Asian overseas communities have stood for political moderation, regional reconciliation and economic modernisation of the subcontinent.<sup>35</sup> Modi has a rare opportunity to tap into these positive trends within the South Asian diaspora. An intensive engagement with the South

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<sup>34</sup> Shahid Javed Burki, "South Asian Diaspora: A Changing Landscape" *ISAS Working Paper No. 180*, (March 19, 2014) file:///C:/Users/vista/Downloads/ISAS\_Working\_Paper\_\_180\_-South\_Asian\_Diaspora\_\_A\_Changing\_Landscape\_190\_32014111639.pdf. Accessed on 2 June 2014.

<sup>35</sup> See Gopinath Pillai, *The Political Economy of South Asian Diaspora: Patterns of Socio-Economic Influence* (Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2013).

Asian diaspora would be a valuable complement to Modi's declared strategy of befriending neighbours.

Another interesting possibility is the potential role of the diaspora in transforming India's relationship with the Anglo-American states that have remained the dominant force in the world for more than two centuries. It has been argued that in India, "the Indian-American community is now viewed as helping further Indian foreign policy and security goals as well as contributing towards its economic development".<sup>36</sup> In the UK, Indian diaspora is the largest ethnic group and has been involved in lobbying for the Indian Government.<sup>37</sup> It is not by accident that the richest and most successful people among the Indian diaspora are resident in the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. The relative openness of these societies to outsiders has resulted in the emergence of impressive Indian minorities in these countries with considerable influence in social, economic and political domains. It is certainly possible to imagine that these communities can play a critical role in building a genuine strategic partnership between India and the Anglo-Saxon world. The run-up to India's independence, the Partition of the Subcontinent, the Cold War and India's inward economic orientation resulted in extended estrangement between India and the Anglo-American world. Although India's relations with all these countries have improved considerably in recent years, Delhi has remained politically ambivalent about entering into close security and political relations with the Anglo-Americans. Modi, however, seems less inhibited than either the Congress or the BJP in establishing strong economic and security relations with these countries. His personal commitment to the US relationship and the recent elevation of Australia in India's strategic thinking suggest that Modi might be more open to a historic political embrace of the Anglo-American world. He probably sees a major role for the diaspora in facilitating new partnership between India and the Anglo-Saxons. That partnership, in turn, could open the door for a stronger Indian commitment and leadership of the Commonwealth, which as the legatee of the empire holds some of the oldest and largest overseas communities. Above all it is possible to imagine that the partnership will smoothen India's rise to assume its rightful place at the global high table.

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<sup>36</sup> Amit Gupta, "The Indian Diaspora's Political Efforts in the United States", ORF Occasional Paper, (September 2004) [http://www.orfonline.org/cms/export/orfonline/modules/ocasionalpaper/attachments/op040918\\_1163398084234.pdf](http://www.orfonline.org/cms/export/orfonline/modules/ocasionalpaper/attachments/op040918_1163398084234.pdf). Accessed on 6 July 2014.

<sup>37</sup> Nicholas Van Hear et al, "The contribution of UK-based diasporas to development and poverty reduction", ESRC Centre on Migration, Policy and Society (COMPAS), report, University of Oxford (2004). <http://www.ethnopedia.org.uk/resources/The+contribution+of+UK-based+diasporas.pdf>, Accessed on 16 November 2014.

Finally, 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 the 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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## Appendix A

### Country-Wise Population of Overseas Indians, as in May 2012

Sl. No.	Country	Total Overseas Indians	NRI (Assumed *)	PIO (Assumed *)
1.	Afghanistan	3504	3502	02
2.	Albania	20	20	00
3.	Algeria	450	447	03
4.	Andorra	140	140*	00
5.	Angola	6000	6000	NA
6.	Anguilla	NA	NA	NA
7.	Antigua & Barbuda	630	20	610
8.	Argentina	1400	300	1100
9.	Armenia	450	445	5
10.	Aruba	800	00	800*
11.	Australia	448430	213710	234720
12.	Austria	23000	12000	11000
13.	Azerbaijan	524	499	25
14.	Bahamas	410	400	10
15.	Bahrain	350000	350000	00
16.	Bangladesh	10012	10000	12
17.	Barbados	3330	330	3000
18.	Belarus	202	200	2
19.	Belgium	18000	7000	11000
20.	Belize	2150	1750	400
21.	Benin	NA	NA	NA
22.	Bhutan	33010	33010	00

23.	Bolivia	200	200	00
24.	Bonaire & Smaller Islands	100	00	100*
25.	Bosnia and Herzegovina	30	30*	00
26.	Botswana	11000	9000	2000
27.	Brazil	2000	2000*	00
28.	Brunei Darussalam	10068	10000	68
29.	Bulgaria	270	270	00
30.	Burkina Faso	100	100	00
31.	Burundi	250	200	50
32.	Cambodia	1500	1500	00
33.	Cameroon	NA	NA	NA
34.	Canada	1000000	200000	800000
35.	Cape Verde Islands	12	12	00
36.	Cayman Islands	860	850	10
37.	Central African Republic	NA	NA	NA
38.	Chad	NA	NA	NA
39.	Chile	1200	350	850
40.	China	14950	14950	00
41.	China (Hong Kong)	37250	23000	14250
42.	China (Taiwan)	2525	2500	25
43.	Colombia	233	200	33
44.	Comoros	300	50	250
45.	Congo (Dem. Rep. of)	4000	3600	400
46.	Congo (Republic of)	NA	NA	NA
47.	Cook Island	NA	NA	NA
48.	Costa Rica	96	80	16
49.	Cote d'Ivoire	470	470	00
50.	Croatia	38	25	17
51.	Cuba			
52.	Curacao	2000	00	2000*



53.	Cyprus	3220	3200	20
54.	Czech Republic	450	400	50
55.	Denmark	7381	4889	2492
56.	Djibouti	350	350	00
57.	Dominica (Commonwealth of)	530	30	500
58.	Dominican Republic	10	3	7
59.	East Timor	70	70	00
60.	Ecuador	133	100	33
61.	Egypt	3600	3450	150
62.	El Salvador	99	99	00
63.	Equatorial Guinea	100	100	00
64.	Eritrea	500	00	500*
65.	Estonia	235	200	35
66.	Ethiopia	994	992	2
67.	Fiji	313798	800	312998
68.	Finland	4200	3500	700
69.	France	65000	10000	55000
70.	France (Reunion Island)	275200	200	275000
71.	France (Guadeloupe, St. Martinique)	145000	00	145000
72.	Gabon	NA	NA	NA
73.	Gambia	333	329	04
74.	Georgia	200	200	00
75.	Germany	70500	42500	28000
76.	Ghana	10000	10000	00
77.	Greece	12013	12000	13
78.	Grenada	5100	100	5000
79.	Guatemala	53	50	03
80.	Guinea (Republic of)	550	550	00
81.	Guinea Bissau	31	31	00
82.	Guyana	320200	200	320000

83.	Haiti	NA	NA	NA
84.	Holy See	NA	NA	NA
85.	Honduras	99	99	00
86.	Hungary	350	30	320
87.	Iceland	301	101	200
88.	Indonesia	36050	1050	35000
89.	Iran	4200	4000	200
90.	Iraq	9000	8995	05
91.	Ireland	19365	18018	1347
92.	Israel	78000	8000	70000
93.	Italy	99127	97719	1408
94.	Ivory Coast	500	500	00
95.	Jamaica	53500	3500	50000
96.	Japan	22500	22500	00
97.	Jordan	7000	6975	25
98.	Kazakhstan	2050	2000	50
99.	Kenya	75000	37500	37500
100.	Kiribati	14	04	10
101.	Korea (DPR)	17	17	00
102.	Korea (Republic of)	7939	7900	39
103.	Kuwait	579390	579058	332
104.	Kyrgyzstan	2500	2500	00
105.	Lao, PDR	130	80	50
106.	Latvia	40	40*	00
107.	Lebanon	10000	10000*	00
108.	Lesotho (Kingdom of)	1200	800	400
109.	Liberia	1501	1500	01
110.	Libya	15000	14995	05
111.	Liechtenstein(principality of	03	03	00
112.	Lithuania	300	280	20
113.	Luxembourg	1000	500	500

114.	Macedonia	10	10	00
115.	Madagascar	23000	3000	20000
116.	Malaysia	2050000	150000	1900000
117.	Malawi	7000	1500	5500
118.	Maldives	26001	26000	01
119.	Mali	201	200	01
120.	Malta	158	150	08
121.	Marshall Islands (Republic of)	15	14	01
122.	Mauritania	30	30	00
123.	Mauritius	882220	15000	867220
124.	Mexico	2000	1750	250
125.	Micronesia	03	03	00
126.	Moldova	18	15	03
127.	Mongolia	60	60	00
128.	Montserrat	210	10	200
129.	Morocco	300	300	00
130.	Mozambique	21500	1500	20000
131.	Myanmar	356560	3160	353400
132.	Namibia	160	140	20
133.	Nauru	21	04	17
134.	Nepal	600000	112500	487500
135.	Netherlands	215000	20000	195000
136.	Netherlands Antilles	4500	00	4500*
137.	New Zealand	110000	35000	75000
138.	Nicaragua	99	99	00
139.	Niger	60	60	00
140.	Nigeria	30000	00	30000 *
141.	Norway	9747	3865	5882
142.	Oman	718642	718000	642
143.	Pakistan	NA	NA	NA
144.	Palau (Republic of)	14	14	00

145.	Palestine (PLO)	81	80	01
146.	Panama	15000	15000	00
147.	Papua New Guinea	800	00	800*
148.	Paraguay	730	400	330
149.	Peru	443	400	43
150.	Philippines	50000	47000	3000
151.	Poland	2000	1800	200
152.	Portugal	80000	11272	68728
153.	Qatar	500000	500000	00
154.	Romania	948	878	70
155.	Russian Federation	15007	14500	507
156.	Rwanda	1040	1000	40
157.	Samoa	70	40	30
158.	San Marino	NA	NA	NA
159.	Sao Tome and Principe (Republic of)	04	04	00
160.	Saudi Arabia	1789000	1789000	00
161.	Senegal	440	412	28
162.	Serbia and Montenegro (State of)	13	13	00
163.	Seychelles	8500	4000	4500
164.	Sierra Leone	710	700	10
165.	Singapore	670000	350000	320000
166.	Slovak Republic	245	200	45
167.	Slovenia	46	34	12
168.	Solomon Islands	20	20	00
169.	South Africa	1218000	18000	1200000
170.	Spain	30000	15000	15000
171.	Sri Lanka	1601600	1600	1600000
172.	St. Kitts and Nevis	450	300	150
173.	St. Lucia	5250	250	5000

174.	St. Martin	3000	00	3000*
175.	St. Vincent & the Grenadines	3050	50	3000
176.	Sudan	3599	3500	99
177.	Suriname	140300	300	140000
178.	Swaziland	700	200	500
179.	Sweden	18000	4000	14000
180.	Switzerland	12354	10785	1569
181.	Syria	650	635	15
182.	Tajikistan	369	362	7
183.	Tanzania	54700	5300	49400
184.	Thailand	150000	90000	60000
185.	Togo	510	500	10
186.	Tonga	NA	NA	NA
187.	Trinidad & Tobago	551500	1500	550000
188.	Tunisia	199	199	00
189.	Turkey	239	200	39
190.	Turkmenistan	1650	1650*	00
191.	Turks & Caicos Islands	810	800	10
192.	Tuvalu	NA	NA	NA
193.	Uganda	20000	15000	5000
194.	Ukraine	4000	3850	150
195.	UAE	1750000	1750000 *	00
196.	UK	1500000	1500000 *	00
197.	USA	2245239	927283	1317956
198.	Uruguay	90	90	00
199.	Uzbekistan	200	200	00
200.	Vanuatu	50	50	00
201.	Venezuela	100	100*	NA
202.	Vietnam	780	750	30
203.	Yemen	111000	11000	100000
204.	Zambia	20500	12500	8000

205.	Zimbabwe	10500	500	10000
<b>TOTAL</b>		21909875	10037761	11872114

Source: Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs Survey, 2012

(Available at [http://moia.gov.in/writereaddata/pdf/NRISPIOS-Data\(15-06-12\)new.pdf](http://moia.gov.in/writereaddata/pdf/NRISPIOS-Data(15-06-12)new.pdf))

## Appendix B

### Country-wise figures of Annual Labour Outflow from 2008-2012

COUNTRY	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
AFGHANISTAN	405	395	256	487	125
BAHRAIN	31924	17541	15101	14323	20150
INDONESIA	33	9	3	22	11
IRAQ	-	-	390	1177	917
JORDAN	1377	847	2592	1413	1819
KUWAIT	35562	42091	37667	45149	55868
LEBANON	75	250	765	534	288
LIBYA	5040	3991	5221	477	1
MALAYSIA	21123	11345	20577	17947	21241
OMAN	89659	74963	105807	73819	84384
QATAR	82937	46292	45752	41710	63096
S.ARABIA	228406	281110	275172	289297	357503
SUDAN	1045	708	957	1175	491
SYRIA	74	0	2	118	0

THAILNAD	15	5	5	27	9
U.A.E	349827	130302	130910	138861	141138
YEMEN	492	421	208	29	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>8,47,994</b>	<b>6,10,270</b>	<b>6,41,355</b>	<b>6,26,565</b>	<b>7,47,041</b>

*Source: Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, Annual Report 2012-2013*

### **Appendix C**

#### **State-wise figures of Workers Granted Emigration Clearance/ECNR Endorsement from 2008-2012**

<b>COUNTRY</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>
A&N ISLANDS	89	75	80	93	97
ANDHRA PRADESH	97530	69233	72220	71589	92803
ARUNACHAL PRADESH	244	181	188	175	153
ASSAM	1517	1788	2133	2459	3384
BIHAR	60642	50227	60531	71438	84078
CHANDIGARH	1768	966	831	861	823
CHATTISGARH	80	51	81	114	111
DAMAN&DIU	27	8	11	13	31
DELHI	4512	2501	2583	2425	2842
DNH/UT	17	3	11	53	20
GOA	2210	1659	1380	1112	1338
GUJARAT	15716	9185	8245	8369	6999
HARYANA	1779	1052	958	1058	1196
HIMACHAL PRADESH	1345	776	743	739	847
JAMMU & KASHMIR	3588	4307	4080	4137	4737
JHARKHAND	3561	3545	3922	4287	5292
KARNATAKA	22413	18565	17295	15394	17960
KERALA	180703	119384	104101	86783	98178

LAKSHDWEEP	23	19	18	11	13
MADHYA PRADESH	2321	1897	1564	1378	1815
MAHARASHTRA	24786	19128	18123	16698	19259
MANIPUR	30	18	22	11	7
MEGHALAYA	24	21	11	16	39
MIZORAM	8	2	4	0	3
NAGALAND	10	5	2	39	3
ORISSA	8919	6551	7344	7255	7478
PODICHERRY	397	320	223	211	257
PORT BLAIR	0	0	0	0	0
PUNJAB	54469	27291	30974	31866	37472
RAJASTHAN	64601	44744	47803	42239	50295
SIKKIM	18	12	8	8	13
TAMIL NADU	128791	78841	84510	68732	78185
TRIPURA	592	324	454	465	514
UTTAR PRADESH	139254	125783	140826	155301	191341
UTTARAKHAND	523	623	1177	1441	2470
WEST BENGAL	26094	21187	28900	29795	36988
OTHERS	0		0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>8,48,60</b>	<b>6,10,27</b>	<b>6,41,35</b>	<b>6,26,56</b>	<b>7,47,04</b>
	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>

*Source: Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, Annual Report 2012-2013*