



Comparing Indian and Chinese Engagement with their Diaspora

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A lot has been said and written about Indian diaspora lately especially in the context of its engagement with the current Indian government, but is it enough and is it in the right direction? It has been recognized in India that the diaspora is a valuable strategic asset and the new elite of this world. But unlike China, India does not seem to reap its potential fully. The Indian government's engagement with its diaspora despite recognizing its importance is still at a very nascent stage, in comparison to the Chinese government's engagement with its diaspora. India has a lot to learn.

If diaspora were to constitute in one nation, it would be the world's fifth largest (*Diaspora Matters* 2013). Chinese and Indian diaspora are two giant diasporas in

the world, which if combined together roughly ranges from 80-90 million. The growing demand for labour in global job markets, advancement in technology and transport facilities, various political-economic, historical and environmental forces accentuate this growth.

China's Diaspora Policies in Action: 'going out and inviting in'

The overseas Chinese enjoy an extremely strong sense of shared identity as well as a powerful attachment to China, feelings that tend to override regional and political differences. They have played a crucial role in China's economic growth, providing the

lion's share of inward investment. But this is not solely due to the patriotic feeling one has towards his motherland but due to China's policies and institutional apparatus for extensive diaspora engagement (*The Guardian* 2008).

China's diaspora reach is a nexus of five institutions namely the State Council's Overseas Chinese Affairs Office, the China Zhigong Party, the Overseas Chinese Affairs Committee of the National People's Congress, the Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan Compatriots and Overseas Chinese Affairs Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, and the All-China Federation of Returned Overseas Chinese. These institutions operate at several levels from national to local and work together with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other ministries to formulate and implement policies towards the Chinese overseas. The cooperation is thus between three different types of agencies, namely 'state administration agencies, the important structures of multi-party cooperation and political consultation under the leadership of the CCP, and the people's organizations'. This integration of overseas Chinese affairs institutions into both vertical and horizontal structures serves as the foundation of their transnational expansion and increasing global reach (Liu and Els 2016).

In addition, China has an overseas expert advisory committee of the overseas Chinese affairs office comprising of prominent scientists, scholars and entrepreneurs from various countries (Zhejiang 2011). They contribute to China's modernization by giving policy recommendation and feedback

on its policies towards overseas Chinese. Beijing has made a concerted attempt to embrace all ethnic Chinese, regardless of nationality or date of migration, as part of the Chinese family and hence, inextricably tie them to the Chinese nation.

At the Third Plenum of the 14th Party Congress in 1993, the Chinese government launched the 'twelve words' policy of supporting overseas studies, encouraging the return of Chinese students. Xi Jinping in 2013 expanded the 'twelve words' policy

*China's policies have made
use of the diaspora in
myriad ways to bring in
investments and expertise
back to China*

by adding four additional characters *fahui zuoyong* (playing a role), pledging that the CPC and the government would ensure that the Chinese diaspora when returning to China could play a significant role and also could contribute to China's development when remaining overseas (Liu and Els 2016). There are several programs such as the Changjiang Scholars programme or the 100 Talents programme which offer high salaries and research funds for overseas Chinese. Similarly, 1,000 Talents and 10,000 Talents programme offers high-level academic positions to senior Chinese scholars with PhDs up to 20 times higher than what local faculty make (Migration Policy Centre 2012). It also seeks to draw innovators in specialist engineering and high technology sectors that will create companies or jobs in

China. Also, China's "Roots-Seeking" programmes for overseas youth promote Chinese language and culture abroad. It has over the last two decades aggressively courted the return of its highly-skilled diaspora through a variety of employment and scholarship programmes (*Foreign Policy* 2016).

*China is expanding its reach
space through state
broadcasters China Radio
International and China
Central Television*

China is expanding the state's space through communication pathways. China Radio International (CRI), China's official radio broadcaster broadcasts in 43 foreign languages and dialects to the whole world. China Central Television (CCTV), China's official television broadcaster has infiltrated the diaspora market, with CCTV 4 reaching 10 million viewers globally and its English language channel CCTV9 now having 40 million viewers overseas (Tan 2013). China International Communications Co (CICC), the commercial arm of CCTV, streams Chinese content from CCTV and provincial broadcasters to overseas Chinese audiences and is now setting its sights at non-Chinese audiences, too. The channels also have three different time-shifted feeds—Beijing Time, Greenwich Mean Time, and Eastern Standard Time (Ding 2014).

China has also attached great importance to the protection of overseas Chinese citizens. In September 2014, the Chinese Foreign

Ministry established the Emergency Call Center of Global Consular Protection and Service, whose 24 hour-hotline serves overseas Chinese citizens and enterprises (*Xinhua* 2016). It aids in rescuing and evacuating various Chinese nationals across the world. Xi Jinping's efforts to revitalize the nation and to realize the Chinese Dream, since 2012, has provided a foundation for the current efforts in China's diaspora engagement.

The hi-tech investors and technopreneurs have disproportionately been new Chinese immigrants from the US, Japan and other advanced Western countries. Increasing attention has been paid to attracting Chinese talent from overseas because of their technical know-how and their exposure to international practices. Hence, China has claimed success in attracting a significant number of *haigui* or 'sea turtles' (as their returnees are known) back to Chinese universities and research parks, and has also been very successful in attracting ethnic Chinese FDI.

India's Diaspora Engagements: 'going out and *trying* to invite in'

Harnessing the talents and loyalties of India's diaspora for improving the economic conditions and international image of India is not new for India but its importance has got a new vigour lately. At the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas in January 2017, the Indian Prime Minister said. 'We are converting the

brain drain to brain gain' (*The Globalist* 2016). The Pravasi Bhartiya Divas is marked to recognize the contributions of Non-Resident Indian (NRI)/Person of Indian Origin (PIO) individuals and provide a forum to discuss issues and concerns of the diaspora. State governments too, have been hosting such summits with the aim of not just strengthening linkages but also to explore business options and contribute towards the development of the 'home state' (*The Diplomat* 2014). For instance, the Haryana NRI cell has been launched for a focused facilitation of *pravasis* (expats), and NRIs can contact the cell for business queries, investment interest and other suggestions (Media India Group 2017).

With this new energy in the engagements, the diaspora is looking at India as more than just a sentimental ancestral home. The government has eased travel and residency policies for diaspora members, which fosters more back-and-forth exchange. Beginning in 2002 and 2005 respectively, India began offering the PIO and Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) cards. The present government has gone a step ahead by merging the two cards so that many diaspora members can now enjoy lifetime visa access to India and certain educational and financial benefits comparable to those of citizens.

New Delhi has also simplified rules and procedures and has set up single window clearances to attract diaspora investments that are desirous of implementing projects in India (*The Asian Age* 2017). It is also investing in a training plan for low-skilled Indian youth seeking blue collar jobs abroad

so that they are better prepared and less likely to be exploited there.

There is a new energy in India's diaspora outreach with state governments too taking initiatives.

A new kind of outreach towards the diaspora can be seen from the long list of countries Prime Minister Narendra Modi has visited to interact intimately with different classes and categories of the Indian diaspora; thousands were drawn to New York's Madison Square Garden to Sydney's Olympic Park, for example. The output that India gets out of such engagements is that it helps to cultivate soft power among those of Indian heritage. Officials hope that diaspora members can act as informal ambassadors for India in their own country, demonstrating the value of ties with India to foreign governments. The government has also urged diaspora members to invest in social projects such as improving rural sanitation and visiting India every year to boost tourism. In this year's Pravasi Bharatiya Divas, the Prime Minister even proclaimed, "For me, FDI has two meanings: One is the foreign direct investment and the other 'First Development of India'" (*The Diplomat* 2017).

Making Aadhaar cards available to the diaspora, as recently hinted at by the External Affairs Minister, Sushma Swaraj, could be a positive step (*The Hindu* 2016). It can be an important tool to establish identities and linkages with the overseas

community and make them at par with resident Indian citizens. It can especially be an asset for working class economic migrants in West Asia to link them to pension, health and other schemes that India provides. It can also be helpful in making investments easy, verifying identities, streamlining security protocols, opening bank accounts, etc. for the overseas Indians.

The 'Know India' intake is around 35 each year while Chinese diaspora programmes cater to some 30,000

During the Indian Prime Minister's visit to the United States in 2015, the then President Barack Obama launched a new public-private partnership called the 'Indian Diaspora Investment Initiative' making it easy for the Indian diaspora to invest in small and medium businesses in India. Led by the US Agency for International Development and the Calvert Foundation, it seeks to channel diaspora investments in a strategically focused and sustainable manner (USAID 2015). India needs more initiatives like these.

India Needs to Walk the Talk

According to a report of the World Bank, if one person out of every ten diaspora members were to invest US\$1,000 in their home country, developing countries could raise \$20 billion annually (The World Bank Group 2013). Therefore, in an increasingly globalised world, diaspora can truly function

as an asset of utmost value. India gets remittances worth 3.4% of its GDP making India the largest-remittance receiving country in the world (World Bank).

To reap the dividends coming from the diaspora however, India has to do a lot more. To start with, challenges such as poor infrastructure, red tape, labour market regulations, etc., need to be taken care of, which prevents a PIO or NRI from investing in India. While India also has programmes like 'Know India', they are not extensive like in China, considering the number of intakes that India has is around 35 each year (Ministry Of External Affairs) and in China, around 30,000 (Xinhua 2013). India's record in offering lucrative employment opportunities to the overseas Indians also has its problems in comparison to the Chinese '1,000 talents' programme or 'twelve words' support for overseas studies and encouraging the return of students. The Chinese Scholarship Council sponsors around 3,000 citizens annually to undertake studies or research in more than 80 countries (Liu 2006). India has nothing of the sort that comes remotely close and its scholarship programme for diaspora children is only limited to 100 per year and mostly for undergraduate courses (Ministry Of External Affairs).

Although India's official radio broadcaster, All India Radio, covers over 108 countries in 27 languages (All India Radio n.d.), India's official television broadcaster, Doordarshan, lags behind. Despite having many national and regional channels, Doordarshan is struggling in its international presence. In comparison both CRI and

CCTV have emerged as definitive voices of China and bind its diaspora worldwide.

As regards protecting the diaspora in difficult circumstances, India does have successful stories of evacuations in Africa and West Asia but lacks a formal strategic diaspora protection and rehabilitation policy or an emergency plan or a 24-hour hotline along the lines the Chinese government provides. A permanent mechanism like Centre for Consular Protection equipped with more resources and additional officers for dealing with expanding consular work and with representation from key stakeholders of Ministry of External Affairs could be useful (Carnegie India 2017). China has an integrated set of institutional apparatus working at different levels, interconnected with its political structure, and helping to formulate policies for the Chinese diaspora (Liu and Els 2016). India, on the other hand has an overburdened and understaffed Overseas Indian Affairs department in the Ministry of External Affairs leading to a lack of much needed specific intellectual expertise. These bottlenecks make India's diaspora policy reactive rather than pro-active (*The Hindu* 2015).

so many Indians today in high positions in various fields globally as scientists, engineers, doctors, businessmen, and so on, India surely has enough to learn from them and can use their expertise for the domestic development. India can use the Chinese model of overseas expert advisory committees to harness the talents of overseas Indians. India can also have its own World Indian Congress on the lines of World

Jewish Congress to streamline the participation and contributions of NRIs and PIOs scattered around the world (*The Asian Age* 2017).

All India Radio, covers over 108 countries but Doordarshan lags well behind

Hence, with some policy initiatives, the Indian government can further connect to its diaspora worldwide, multiply the economic value of diaspora contributions, use their talent and industriousness and make it more attractive for them to step up participation in India's development.

Further, India needs to expand its globally-oriented programmes and schemes in number and reach. These have to become visible worldwide for promoting India's interests and to attract a much wider diaspora than the current small numbers. Moreover, currently some Indian states are relatively deficient in diaspora engagement whereas others, such as Kerala and Gujarat, have developed an extensive diasporic infrastructure of their own. So, the policy initiatives have to come not only from the central government but also from the states. To conclude, although the focus of the Chinese and Indian governments differ, both recognize their respective diaspora not just as sources of economic remittances but also of social remittances in the form of access to markets, knowledge, foreign capital, know-how, expertise, ideas and best practices. India however, needs to ramp up its efforts

to reap the full potential of its diaspora along the lines China has.

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