

Widening the Arc: Recalibrating India's Diaspora Policy towards Latin America and the Caribbean

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The Diaspora has increasingly come to be viewed as a 'strategic asset' in India's foreign policy discourse. The growing prominence of the Diaspora, however, does not mean that all its constituents are accorded equal policy consideration. In fact, India's policy towards its Diaspora is premised on differential treatment of its various constituents. Seemingly, it accords relatively greater importance to the Diaspora in the developed world and the Middle East. By contrast, it shows a studied indifference towards the Diaspora living in the developing world in general, and Latin America in particular. Against this backdrop, this paper examines India's Diaspora policy with a particular focus on Latin America. While bringing in a comparative perspective, this paper outlines the possible takeaways from the Chinese policy towards its Diaspora in the region. The paper makes a plea for recalibrating India's Diaspora policy towards inclusiveness. Such an inclusiveness is likely to impart a certain dynamism to India's foreign policy.

Indian foreign policy has undergone substantive changes in the last two decades. One of the significant changes has been the inclusion of India's newly defined Diaspora policy. Often projected as a 'strategic asset', succeeding governments have, in the pursuit of their domestic and foreign policy goals, undertaken manifold initiatives to harness the Diaspora. This new found significance of the Indian Diaspora can be inferred from Prime Minister Narendra Modi's oft repeated references to the people of Indian origin, be it in New York, Sydney, London, or even during the special themed rallies like 'Shared Dreams, Bright Futures' organised in Dallas, and referred to as 'Howdy Modi'. The sub-text of this new narrative around the Diaspora often draws on the patriotic, nostalgic, cultural, and familial ties between India and the people of Indian origin scattered all around the world. Manifestly, the policy documents of the government refer to civilisational, political, and

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economic linkages. As a corollary, the Diaspora is now formally lodged in India's foreign policy agenda, going beyond the rhetorical calls of yester years. There are now a series of institutions exclusively dedicated to pursuing this policy agenda. For instance, there exists an entire division within the Ministry of the External Affairs, Government of India, that deals with the Diaspora.

The Indian Diaspora is one of the largest Diasporas in the world, and is found in almost all continents.¹ This paper contextualises India's policy towards its Diaspora in relation to its neighbour, China. It finds India's policy lacking in the fulfillment of its prescribed and much glorified policy mandate as compared to China's. Surprisingly, there remains serious gaps in India's achievement on this front, notwithstanding high-sounding public pronouncements and a handful of concrete institutional initiatives. This could be one of the major limitations in India's appropriation of its Diaspora as an asset for effecting its actions as a global power. This contrasts sharply with China as is evident in India's policy towards its Diaspora in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). Against this backdrop, this paper highlights certain distinctive features of Chinese policy towards its Diaspora in Latin America and the Caribbean, and the potential takeaways for India's foreign policy establishment. The paper also discusses the specific initiatives made by the Indian and the Chinese governments towards their Diaspora in the LAC region. A deeper reflection reveals certain key differences in their engagements. The paper makes a plea for recalibrating India's Diaspora policy towards inclusiveness. Such inclusiveness is likely to impart certain dynamism to India's foreign policy.

The antecedents of India's 'New' Diaspora policy can be traced to the report submitted by the L. M. Singhvi committee, which emphasised the need to expand and widen the scope and efforts of the Indian government to revitalise India's Diaspora policy. L. M. Singhvi drew a comparison with China, and stated that the Indians operated in a web of relationships just like the Chinese. Therefore, a 'networked economy' had tremendous possibilities for the prosperity of the Indian Diaspora.²

While the initiative was impressive, the Diaspora policy has been plagued by 'discriminatory' practices since the very beginning. The two categories that emerged within the Diaspora — the NRIs (Non-Resident Indians) and the PIOs (People of Indian Origin) — were not necessarily based on their citizenship status instead of on their adopted homelands. The visible importance that is given to the NRIs over the PIOs clearly highlights India's prejudiced position. This leads to the important question as to whether the Diaspora

policy has impacted India's foreign policy in the region, or is it just the opposite.

India and China have made significant efforts to attract their Diaspora and engage with it, especially in economic development. Both the countries have extended propitious policies to attract foreign direct investment towards their homeland. On the one hand, there appears to be a disconnect between India and her Diaspora when it comes to economic development and growth. A lack of response and a sense of mutual distrust continue to dominate the mind set. On the other hand, China and the overseas Chinese have long identified themselves with their ancestral homelands even after emigration. The Indian Diaspora has been associated actively with domestic politics in some of the countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, while in others, they have largely been ignored.

The Chinese Diaspora have merged, and made themselves an integral part of the Latin American and the Caribbean societies. Moreover, recent Chinese migration to the region has been essentially a part of the work force accompanying the various large-scale infrastructure projects in the region. Consequently, it has often led to local voices being raised about the Diaspora's presence as usurpers of local jobs, making it an issue of locals versus the immigrants. Also, the Chinese have been accused of bringing in low-skilled labour to these countries. These immigrants often tend to overstay even after the projects are completed, or disappear within these countries without a trace (Chile, Venezuela, etc.), creating unnecessary stress between the locals and the immigrants, with perceived hostility towards the 'new immigrants'.

Evolution and Growth of the Diasporas: The Indian and Chinese Experiences

The Indian Diaspora in Latin America and the Caribbean can be divided into two categories: the people who are born there, or the old Diaspora; and those who are there for employment and other opportunities, or the new Diaspora. Similarly, Chinese immigrants are divided into two distinct phases: the new and the old. A brief history of the Indian Diaspora reveals that immigration overseas was also in two distinct phases. Firstly, during the colonial period, the overseas migration to a great extent was of indentured labourers who were transported to different British colonies as far away as those in Latin American and the Caribbean as well as in the Pacific. This was followed by the significant exodus of small and petty traders as well as employees of the British, French, and Dutch colonies in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Secondly, post-Independence migration was largely to the Middle East, and

to the developed states in the West, like the USA, the UK, Canada, Australia, and others. This has often been referred to as the 'brain drain' from India.

Indians are found in more than twenty-five countries and islands in the Caribbean, while the Chinese are in large numbers mostly in South and Central America.³ During the 19th and the 20th centuries, Indian migration was to the British, French, and Dutch colonies. The emancipation of slaves had led to a shortage of labour in sugar, tea, coffee, rice, and rubber plantations in the colonies. In Cuba, and other islands in the Caribbean, Chinese labour had been brought in from Macao, a Portuguese settlement, to work in the plantations, while the Indians were procured to work on public works - like roads, harbours, offices and jails - of the colonial powers. In the Caribbean, both Indian and Chinese indentured labour arrived from the 1850s onwards. Most Indian indentured labour settled down in British Guiana, Trinidad, Jamaica, Grenada, and in the French colonies in the region - like Guadalupe, Martinique, and French Guiana.⁴ The Dutch settled their indentured labour in Suriname. It is estimated that 28 million Indians migrated between 1846 and 1932, largely due to colonial expansion.⁵ The Indian labour migration under the Indenture system recorded a movement of some 1.5 million persons to these far-off lands.⁶ The indentured labour immigrants were from the former Central Provinces - Bhojpuri-speaking people from the present-day states of Bihar and eastern Uttar Pradesh formed the largest cluster of the Diaspora. These were followed by those originating from the Tamil, Telugu, and Malayalam speaking regions of Southern India. Another version of the same process was the Kangani (derived from Tamil Kankani, meaning foreman or overseer) system prevailed in recruiting labour for migration to Ceylon and Malaya, and was unlike the Indentured System for the Caribbean.⁷ The first half of the 20th century also witnessed the movement of mostly petty traders from Gujarat and Punjab to South Africa and East Africa (Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda), and those from South India to South-East Asia under the Free Passage system.⁸ During the second phase, mainly professionals moved to the industrialised nations of the West, followed by the later migration of skilled and semi-skilled workers to countries of West Asia and the Gulf.

Denial and indifference dominated India's policy towards the Diaspora for almost five decades after independence. This was a part of a conscious Nehruvian policy, which focused on non-alignment and good relations with the developed and the developing nations (especially the newly emerging Asian and African countries). Consequently, the overseas Indian community became excluded from all political, economic, and social decision-making at home. Nehru had "made the expatriate Indians alien in a legal sense," and their status

did not allow for any special relationship between them and the Indian state.⁹ Having put India on the world map and sought the acceptability of India's independence, it used non-interference for gaining respect and moral authority. This position had several drawbacks: India could not get involved even when part of its Diaspora was going through political, economic, and social discrimination - or even severe crisis - in their adopted countries. For instance, "India became supportive of Africanisation even to the detriment of Indian settlers."¹⁰ However, informal ties continued. Although the overseas Indians took considerable interest in India, this did not develop a tradition of discourse comparable to the Jewish, English, Irish, and other Diasporas about their respective homelands.

After independence, it was clear that successive Indian governments adopted an attitude of studied indifference towards overseas Indians lest they should appear to be interfering in the internal affairs of another country. They were anxious not to appear as their protector, or to encourage their return to India, or to expose them to the suspicion of divided loyalty. This was mainly because first, India did not want to be perceived as interfering, especially from the point of view of its new diplomatic overtures towards the newly decolonising world. Second, India came to strongly believe that the expatriate Indians had become part of the controlling category in many of these former colonies, given that many in the opposition within these new countries of Africa were against them.¹¹ Prime Minister Nehru pointed to the economic success of the expatriates in such countries, and stated that it was their turn to support their political struggles. In the Lok Sabha, he stated:

Now these Indians abroad, what are they? Indian citizens? Are they going to be citizens of India or not? If they are not, then our interest in them becomes cultural and humanitarian, not political ... Either they get the franchise as nationals of the other country, or treat them as Indians minus the franchise and ask for the most favoured treatment given to an alien.¹²

The Indians abroad were advised to accept local citizenship, and cease to separate their future from those of the local people. Thus, the Diasporic perceptions of the homeland became largely nostalgic, sentimental, patchy, and without a focus, especially for those who had left Indian shores during colonial times.

The biggest issue of contestation between the government and the Diaspora arose in the mid-1980s over the question of 'dual nationality'. The government had made certain overtures to attract persons of Indian origin, especially those living in developed countries, and called upon them to re-establish cultural

and historical ties with their homeland. These Indian expatriates voiced that the government had many expectations from them and, most importantly, wanted their help to pull the Indian economy out of chaos.¹³ These NRIs felt that by granting them Indian citizenship again, the government would be acting in 'good faith' which would encourage the Diaspora to invest easily in India.¹⁴

Thus, the relations between India and the NRIs remained a case of 'mutual abandonment'. A sense of mistrust continued between the government and the NRIs who felt that the Indian government had shown total disregard towards the expatriates.¹⁵ The Indian government's inability to create the right economic environment was the main cause of the estrangement between India and her Diaspora. Linkages between the expatriates from the developed world and India were limited to preserving only familial relations. By the 1990s, it was quite clear that by now there existed two distinct categories within the expatriates—the NRIs and the PIOs, even if officially the differences between them were not so evident.¹⁶ The treatment meted out to these two categories was markedly different. For instance, various financial and economic benefits were only forwarded to the NRIs. In fact, a special proposal for NRIs was announced with the launching of the People of Indian Origin Card Scheme on 31 March 1999. The PIO card allowed for certain special economic, educational, financial, and cultural advantages, besides acting as a long-term visa at the cost of \$1000 for 20 years. The real change in the Diaspora policy happened in September 2000 when the newly elected NDA government constituted a High-Level Committee on the Indian Diaspora under L. M. Singhvi to investigate matters concerning the NRIs and the People of Indian Origin (PIOs). Subsequently, the government of India's Committee recommended a broad and flexible policy framework after reviewing the status, needs, and role of persons of Indian origin (PIOs) and non-resident Indians (NRIs). The Singhvi committee prescribed an entirely new menu of options for Indians living in foreign lands.

A comparative framework with Chinese expatriates shows that the broad definitions of the present-day Chinese Diaspora include not only those living outside China but those born in China, or those who otherwise identify themselves as Chinese based on the language they speak and/or their ancestry. Sometimes, these definitions refer only to those born in China and have moved to another country for temporary or permanent settlement (for example, the first generation of 'foreign born' immigrants from China in the host country); at other times they refer to those who are of Chinese ethnicity but are born abroad (for example, the foreign-born from China as well as from anywhere

else - Singapore, Taiwan, Brazil, etc. - where people identify themselves as Chinese).¹⁷ The two categories of the Chinese Diaspora include the first and second generations of Chinese migrants. The recent inclusion of two other types of recent Chinese family members include - those who already are residents abroad; and the second involves a new subgroup of migrants who travel abroad to foster China's interests, often with state sponsorship. Such migrants include diplomats, certain business people, and some students on government scholarships.

Chinese migration to Latin America and the Spanish Caribbean in the modern era occurred in two stages: an impressive agricultural labour migration in the second half of the nineteenth century - the so-called coolie trade, known as *la trata amarilla* in Spanish - involving almost exclusively men. Between 1847 and 1874, close to 225,000 coolies landed in Cuba and Peru. This traffic was followed by a period of free immigration (also dominated by men), lasting until the mid-twentieth century. By then, the Chinese population had become largely urban and commercial, most establishing residence and businesses in national and provincial capitals, as well as in mining, railroad towns, and port cities).¹⁸ This second flow paralleled Chinese exclusion in the USA, and continued haltingly despite Chinese immigration restrictions passed by some Latin American countries.¹⁹ With very few exceptions, by the 20th century, the Chinese Diaspora could be found in every Latin American and Caribbean country. Historically, Cuba, Peru, and Mexico hosted the largest Chinese populations. However, politics, weak economies, and continuous miscegenation severely reduced their numbers.²⁰ The Chinese community in LAC is known for its austerity, toughness, low profile, and business acumen. They represent valuable economic and social contributions to the nations of the region. Over time, Chinese communities have increased in Latin American countries, forming clusters of wealthy merchants with thriving family businesses in the industrial, commercial, and agricultural sectors. The Chinese model of integration in Latin America and the Caribbean is exemplary throughout the region. Decades of hard work, especially by the labour that worked in Cuban sugar plantations, the Panama Canal, and the US and Canadian railways across the continent, bear witness. By the 1950s, in Guatemala and El Salvador, Chinese immigrants owned large import/export concerns, textile factories, and restaurants. Furthermore, by the end of the 20th century, the demography increased exponentially around the region of the LAC. Currently, there are more Chinese immigrants in LAC than in Europe/Oceania and Africa.²¹

In the last two decades, the Chinese have re-inserted themselves in Latin America, but in a markedly different way from the past.²² Today, Latin America

attracts not cheap labour, but massive capital investment from China, Japan, and Korea. These global economic powers covet the region's mineral resources and new cash crops (such as soybeans), as well as its cheap, largely female, labour for the Asian-owned assembly plants or maquiladoras.²³ A shared identity, a powerful attachment to China - feelings that tended to override regional and political differences - have made the Chinese Diaspora look towards mainland China for emotional and familial sustenance. It has played a crucial role in China's economic growth - the lion's share of inward investment - not merely as a patriotic duty but also as Chinese policies and institutional apparatus have provided for extensive Diaspora engagement. Chinese immigrants have settled in different parts of Latin America and the Caribbean. The two groups of immigrants - the old and the new - have different survival and development strategies. The old immigrants are in Peru, Mexico, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Panama, Costa Rica, and Honduras. The new migrants have settled down in countries like Venezuela, Argentina, Chile, Suriname, French Guiana, and Jamaica. The older immigrants outnumber the new immigrants in Cuba, Trinidad and Tobago, Guatemala, Salvador, etc. This can be explained from their presence in these countries. For instance, Chinese immigrant presence can be traced back to more than two hundred years in Trinidad and Tobago, Brazil, Mexico, and Peru. The Caribbean began receiving Chinese immigrants only since the 2000s. Before China's reforms began, in Latin America, the main places with Chinese immigrants or their descendants were Mexico, and some big countries in South America, Central America, and the Caribbean. The new and old Chinese immigrants view the notion of home and belonging differently. Although there are great similarities in terms of the Indian and Chinese migration to Latin America, and the Caribbean, there exist certain marked differences. The Indian state's engagement with the Diaspora in the region was minimalistic, while the Chinese too did not visibly capitalise on its Diasporic linkages. Unofficially, India's discriminatory policy towards its Diaspora in the region speaks volumes. The PIOs in this region have never been considered as an "asset"; they are seen as being merely a link to colonial India. However, China, began to pursue a well-structured policy towards its Diaspora in these regions by the beginning of the 1980s.

Recent Policies

The Indian Diaspora policy's postures have changed significantly in the last two decades. The hesitancy and disengagement of the past have transformed into a concerted and focused move to re-connect with the Indian Diaspora.

The reticence of the previous governments and the moral dilemma associated with any closeness with the Diaspora has been put aside. The Diaspora is no longer viewed as something that undermines India's leadership goals. Although the changes have been vast and far-reaching, they appear to be more symbolic than substantive. It was impressed upon by the governments that the previous policy, which had kept the Diaspora from attaining its full potential, was put aside. However, it was clear that even though the government was keen to establish linkages with the Diaspora, it was not so keen to do so with those that had left India in the first phase of migration - that is, those that went to Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa, and the islands of Polynesia. The apparent renewed focus on the Diaspora was on the so-called 'successful Diaspora' that identified with the new age highly skilled Diaspora - that is those that had migrated after Independence. This was to be associated with the new leadership's focus on the software and technology sectors and Silicon Valley successes and not with those that left India as indentured labour or as people with free passage. Therefore, it is clear that the government was not keen to identify with that Diaspora which had been part of the colonial system.

The setting up of the L. M. Singhvi committee by the NDA government was considered a new and much-welcomed move. The mandate of the Committee included the examination of the PIOs and NRIs' role in India. It assessed, the rights, and facilities extended to them, studied the conditions of their existence, as also any discrimination faced by them in the countries of their residence. Although the PIO card was announced in 1999, in the budgets of 1999 and 2000, the Diaspora was mentioned very fleetingly. The terms of reference for the committee included the efforts to review the status of PIOs and NRIs in the context of the constitutional provisions as well as to examine the various laws and rules applicable to them, both in India and abroad.²⁴ The aim was to impress upon the government, the role PIOs and NRIs could play in the economic, social, and technological development of India. The committee was also to examine the current regime governing Diaspora's travel and stay, as well as all investments made by them in India. Ultimately, the objective was to recommend measures to resolve the NRIs' problems, and evolve a broad but flexible policy framework and country-specific plans. These would forge a mutually profitable relationship, facilitating their interaction and participation in India's economic development. It was emphasised that the Diaspora had brought forth an alternative lifestyle emanating from Indian culture and civilisation - a moderate, tolerant, and liberal value system, ethnic Indian cuisines, Bollywood, homeopathic and Ayurvedic therapies, medicines, and Yoga medicinal systems. The Indian television, radio, and print media also

contributed to the societies where the Diaspora had settled.

While announcing the setting up of the committee, the then Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee stated:

We are in favour of dual citizenship but not dual loyalty ... loyalty with India will remain but they will also be loyal to the country where they have taken citizenship, but it has been resolved now. I am hopeful that Indians settled abroad will find it suitable.²⁵

The government was aware that the dual citizenship issue was the greatest obstacle vis-à-vis the Diaspora, especially for those who had migrated after independence. Initially, the government decided to modify the Citizenship Act of 1955, and provide dual citizenship to NRIs living in 7 countries and regions: the USA, the UK, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Europe, and Singapore. These NRIs already enjoyed a wide range of benefits: ownership of various forms of property within the country, and even participation in the electoral processes, both through voting and contesting in the elections. What dominated this decision was that those who migrated to these countries belonged to the professional classes, and would have liked to remain part of decision-making process at home. This would portray India as a modern state, an 'emerging power' of the 21st century. However, what these initiatives clearly brought forth was an inherent bias that highlighted that all PIOs were not eligible for dual citizenship; but only those who 'enjoy the material benefits of the West and simultaneously take advantage of the political rights and decision-making capacities back in India'.²⁶

A select list of the Indian Government's Diaspora engagement included the establishment of the Ministry of Overseas Indians (later merged with the Ministry of External Affairs). A review of the same indicates a wide variety of policy initiatives, the setting up of various institutions, and other privileges extended to the overseas Indians by successive governments. The institutional mechanisms included the PM Global Advisory Council, the Indian Centre for Migration, the Overseas Indian Facilitation Centre, the India Development Foundation, the Global Indian Network of Knowledge, and the Overseas Indian Centres, among others.

The laws pertaining to citizenship, residency, and visas were relaxed, although no dual citizenship was offered. The PIO and Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI) card schemes were introduced. NRIs holding Indian citizenship could exercise their voting rights, and special property rights were also extended to them. For instance, the PIO and OCI Card gave the holders the right to purchase property in India (except farms and plantations). Several tax incentives

were provided, like a reduced customs duty regime for the transfer of residence of overseas Indians, provisions of transfer of funds for philanthropy, and tax exemptions. Many of the portable benefits included SSAs (Social Security Arrangements) as well as benefits for workers and professionals abroad. Apart from these, certain general laws were promulgated that provided special incentives for bank deposits, investments in share markets, and special provisions for FDI.

The government also set up the Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas (PBD) and the Pravasi Bhartiya Sanman to acknowledge the contributions of Diasporic communities. The PBD is celebrated each year in January, and coincides with the dates of Mahatma Gandhi's return to India. Other than the political and economic initiatives, several social and cultural prerogatives were also extended to the Diaspora. Some of these included schemes for the Welfare of Overseas Indians, the Indian Community Welfare Fund, the Mahatma Gandhi Pravasi Suraksha Yojna, the Pravasi Bhartiya Bima Yojna, the Know India Programme as well as the scholarship Programme for Diaspora Children, the Overseas Indian Youth Club, Tracing the Roots, and Schemes for Legal/Finance Assistance for Indian Women Deserted/Divorced by their NRI Husbands, among others. An assessment of India's activities in terms of wooing the Diaspora and strengthening its links with the Diaspora were part of the many 'cultural activities' pursued.²⁷

Within the 34 countries in the Latin America and the Caribbean region, the Indian Council of Cultural Relations' has set up four India chairs in the region as a part of the government of India's initiatives for the Diaspora. They are in Trinidad and Tobago (University of West Indies), Suriname (the Indian Cultural Centre), Trinidad and Tobago (Contemporary Indian Studies), Jamaica (Indian Philosophy), and a short-term chair at the FGV-Rio de Janeiro in Brazil. Alongside these Centres, five other cultural centres focus on Yoga, dance, percussion/vocals/harmonium, cultural cooperation, especially those at the India Cultural Centre in Mexico and Suriname. The ICCR offers only seven scholarships for entire Latin America and the Caribbean, and one Commonwealth Scholarship to those from Guyana. The Pravasiya Bharatiya Diwas Sanman have been awarded since 2003 onwards, and are considered a very prestigious honour given to those of the Diasporic communities' contributions which have strengthened relations between their adopted homelands and India.²⁸ Despite the large Diaspora presence in the region, the total number of Sanmans given to the region is abysmal: Guyana 05, Jamaica 02, Mexico 02, Suriname 01, and for Trinidad and Tobago 05. These were awarded over the period of 2003 to 2019, and do not compare well with the

much larger number of such Sanmans given to the Diasporic community in industrialised countries like the USA.²⁹

Chinese policy towards the Diaspora operates at three levels: local, national, and at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (along with other ministries). Together, they formulate and implement policies towards the overseas Chinese. There is cooperation between these agencies which include state administrative agencies, the critical structures of multiparty cooperation, and political consultation under the leadership of the CCP, and the peoples' organisation. The integration of institutions dealing with overseas Chinese affairs into vertical and horizontal structures serves as the foundation for their international expansion and increasing global reach. The 3rd Plenum of the 14th Party Congress in 1993 launched the "12 words"- a policy of supporting overseas studies and encouraging the return of Chinese students. In 2013, Xi Jinping expanded the '12 words' policy by adding 4 additional characters. He pledged that the CPC and the government would ensure that when the Chinese Diaspora returned, they would play a significant role, and those that remained overseas would also contribute to China's development. The overseas expert advisory committee of the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office comprises prominent scientists, scholars, and entrepreneurs from various countries. They have contributed to China's modernisation - giving policy recommendations and feedback on policies regarding the overseas Chinese. The policy is to 'Embrace all ethnic Chinese', regardless of nationality or date of migration, as a part of the Chinese family, and this is inextricably tied to the idea of the Chinese nation. Five institutions are engaged in efforts to engage with the Diaspora: the State Council's Overseas Chinese Affairs Office; the China Zhi Gong Party; the Overseas Chinese Affairs Committee of the National People's Congress; the Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan Compatriots; the Overseas Chinese Affairs Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference; and the All-China Federation of Returned Overseas Chinese. They have, in the last two decades, aggressively courted the return of its highly skilled Diaspora through a variety of employment and scholarship programmes. They introduced the Changing Scholars Programme/100 Talents programme, in which high salaries and research funds are offered to overseas Chinese. The 1000 Talents and 10,000 Talents programme is also extended to high-level academic positions to senior Chinese scholars with Ph. Ds. The remuneration offered is up to 20 times higher than local faculty.³⁰ The Chinese believe that these efforts will draw innovators in specialist and high-tech sectors that will create companies /jobs in China.

China has also initiated the "Root-Seeking" programme for overseas

youth by promoting Chinese language and culture abroad. The Confucius Institutes, sponsored by the government, are present all over the world, and are located in various educational institutes and universities. All are working hard at image creation and image alteration. Other serious efforts made towards the Diaspora are expanding the state's space through communication pathways - the CRI (Chinese Radio International), China's official radio broadcaster, broadcasts in 43 foreign languages and dialects worldwide. The CCTV (China's Central TV), the official TV broadcaster, has infiltrated the Diaspora market, with CCTV 4 reaching 10 million viewers globally. The English language channel CCTV 9 now has 40 million viewers overseas.³¹ China's International Communication Company (CICC), the commercial arm of CCTV, streams content from CCTV and regional broadcasters to overseas Chinese audiences. It has now set its sights even on non-Chinese audiences.

Conclusion

Indian policy towards its Diaspora in the Latin America and the Caribbean region, in a sense, reflects its foreign policy towards the region as a whole - a policy characterised by studied indifference and neglect. Unlike the Diaspora that is settled in Western countries - or even in the Middle East and Southeast Asian countries - India evidently does not consider the Diaspora in Latin America and the Caribbean as an "asset". When assessing the large sections of populations living in countries like Trinidad, Guyana, Suriname, the prism of nostalgia is applied, and they thus come to be considered as being without any political significance or strategic value. Of late, in countries like Argentina, Brazil, and Peru, a small number of Indians have settled, following the private entrepreneurs from India. There have been neither any efforts made to capitalise on this Diaspora in Latin America and the Caribbean; nor have any special incentives been extended to them. With the recent notification (4 March 2021) by the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, the Indian Diaspora, primarily the OCIs, will be even more 'alienated' as compared to the NRIs.³² The Indian Diaspora from the region is not expected to have the economic prowess to assist in India's rejuvenation. The PIOs links with India have, therefore, been reduced to cultural, familial, and civilisational ties only.

The Chinese have had a longer history of migration and travel than their Indian counterparts. The Chinese have been known for their business and trade in far-off lands: "The Confucian virtue of thrift, discipline, industriousness, family cohesion and reverence for education has positively contributed to the success of many overseas Chinese". Chinese efforts at bringing back the

skilled, educated, and entrepreneurial Diaspora is well-established. The belief of the return of “fallen leaves” has been a well-established idea within the Chinese government circles. However, in India, there has been a negative perception about the Diaspora, and vice versa. The common belief that has dominated the thinking among the Diaspora is that their loss of social status has made them outcasts within the Indian social structure. Indeed, newly independent India believed that those who migrated had divided loyalties, and were to be looked at with suspicion.

The Indian and the Chinese Diaspora have brought in huge remittances to their home countries. In order to achieve rapid economic growth, the Chinese have successfully established SEZs, passed preferential laws, and used patriotic appeals. This is quite unlike India. The Indian Diaspora, especially those in the West and the industrialised world, have not shown the same degree of keenness to return, nor to invest in India. Moreover, the huge remittances that the Indian Diaspora sends back - nearly US \$70 billion in 2017-18 - is essentially from the Middle East, and not from the countries that the governments have constantly wooed - that is, from those living in the West.

As discussed earlier, a large section of PIOs live in Latin America and the Caribbean. Their relationship with India is limited to the search for their ‘roots’. In contrast, the effort by the Chinese to include both the old and the new Diaspora has strengthened their economy and their global status, besides exhibiting that their links with their Diaspora transcend familial and kinship relations. They have made various efforts globally to use the Diaspora to improve their image and status. India’s Diaspora policy appears to be almost the shadow of India’s LAC policy, both of which are mired by indifference and negligence. India’s Diaspora policy in the region, therefore, has been impacted doubly: the disinterest in Latin America and the Caribbean as a region on the one hand, and the limited interactions with the Indian Diaspora there, on the other. The current policy almost reflects the Nehruvian policy of conscious detachment. There is no doubt that cultural and civilisational contacts cannot be undermined. For the region’s Diaspora to feel connected to India, a stronger political and economic will is needed, besides having their common interests identified. India’s Diaspora policy in the region needs to be inclusive, equipped with necessary tools, and should provide confidence to the Diaspora in the region. Only then, can India’s foreign policy be more inclusive and strengthen its global image. Unfortunately, there is no concept of the ‘fallen leaves’ like the Chinese have. However, India’s concept of *Vasudevakutumbkam* needs to be realistically assessed from a strategic perspective in order to make India’s foreign policy more dynamic and effective.

Notes:

- ¹ Of the total Indian Diaspora, those living Latin America and the Caribbean equal to about 3.879 percent of India's overseas population. Comparatively, the Chinese Diaspora, which is equally large, has only 0.4 percent living in Latin America and the Caribbean. Source: Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, December 2017.
- ² Aparajita Gangopadhyay, "India's Policy towards its Diaspora: Continuity and Change", *India Quarterly*. 61(4), 2005, p. 96.
- ³ Migrants from India and the surrounding states that once formed part of the British Raj can now be found in just about every country in the world. These millions of people comprise not one homogenous Indian Diaspora but mirror, in fact, the many different waves of Indian migration over hundreds of years. Motivated to leave India for multiple reasons – trade, work, security, education – they landed on many different shores. In contexts where their relation to India is at stake, these migrants and their descendants are referred to as 'persons of Indian origin' (PIO) and 'non-resident Indians' (NRI). See details in Elfriede Hermann and Antonie Fuhse (eds.), Introduction, *Dilemmas of Belonging in Indian Diasporas*, Göttingen: Göttingen University Press, 2018. p. 11.
- ⁴ Most of the indentured labour was brought through the Madras and Calcutta ports.
- ⁵ The British abolished their slave trade in 1807, and the institution of slavery was abolished in the British Empire by the Act of Emancipation, 1834. Subsequently, slavery was abolished in the French and Dutch colonies in 1846 and 1873, respectively.
- ⁶ See n. 3, Hermann and Fuhse, p.13. Later labourers from India also emigrated to Guyana (1838), New Zealand (1840), Hong Kong (1841), Trinidad and Tobago (1845), Malaya (1845), Martinique and Guadeloupe (1854), and to the smaller islands in the Caribbean and the Pacific, like Grenada, St. Lucia and St. Vincent (1856), Natal (1860), St. Kitts (1861), Jamaica (1873), and Fiji (1879). Migration continued to countries like Japan and Surinam (1872), Burma (1885), Canada (1904), and Thailand (1910) even up to the beginning of the 20th century. It first started in 1834, to Mauritius, Uganda, and Nigeria and, in the course of time, extended to thirty countries/colonies worldwide. As there was a constant need for cheap labour for the plantation economies, millions of people were sent to the Caribbean, countries in and around the Indian Ocean and the Pacific, in Africa, and in South and Southeast Asia. Fleeing bad conditions (such as famines and unemployment) in India at that time, many of the indentured labourers were hoping to improve their economic condition and return to India after their work contracts expired. Some of them returned to India, but a large number decided to stay back. See, Chandrashekhhar Bhat, "Indian Diaspora and Global Organizations: Communities and Contested Boundaries Beyond India", in Elfriede Hermann and Antonie Fuhse (eds.), *Dilemmas of Belonging*. Göttingen: Göttingen University Press, 2018, p. 28. Presently, they are spread across all continents. Indian immigrants constitute a 'visible' or 'model' minority in countries like Canada (2.8 percent), the United Kingdom (2.11 percent), New Zealand (1.45 percent), Australia (1.02 percent), and the USA (0.6 percent). Almost all countries in West Asia or the Gulf Region have a substantial workforce (above 3,000,000) recruited from India, even though workers return to their places of

origin after the termination of their contracts.

- ⁷ A variant of this system, called the Maistry (derived from Tamil *maistry*, meaning supervisor) system, was practiced in recruiting labour for migration to Burma. Under Kangani or maistry (himself an Indian immigrant), recruited families of Tamil labourers came from villages in the erstwhile Madras Presidency. Under these systems, the labourers were legally free, as any contract did not bind them. Fixed periods of service-systems began in the first to third quarters of the nineteenth century, but were abolished in 1938. For details, see N. Jayaram, “The Study of Indian Diaspora: A Multidisciplinary Agenda”, Occasional Paper No.1, 1998, Centre for Diaspora Studies, Hyderabad.
- ⁸ Most labourers migrated to East Africa to work on railroad construction. These immigrants were not officially sponsored: they themselves paid for their “passage”. They were “free” in the sense that they were not bound by any contracts.
- ⁹ Bikhu Parekh, “The Indian Diaspora”, in Jagat K. Motwani, Mahin Cosine, and Jyoti Barot Motwani (eds.), *The Global Indian Diaspora: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*, New York: Global Organisation of People of Indian Origin, 1993, pp. 8–9.
- ¹⁰ Jawaharlal Nehru had followed a highly moralistic policy during the national struggle - which spilled over the whole of independent India - by making a conscious nation-state project that excluded the Diaspora. With the larger goal of newly emergent Asian-African solidarity, India adopted a cultivated apathy towards its Diaspora. One of the major drawbacks was that India could not stop human rights violations in the newly emergent states in Asia and Africa.
- ¹¹ It was felt by many in India that these expatriates had adopted discriminatory policies of their colonial masters towards the public in order to maintain their privileged position through their control of the country’s economy.
- ¹² Marie Lall, *India’s Missed Opportunity: India’s Relationship with Non-Resident Indians*, Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate, 2001. p. 115. See also, Vinay Lal, “Labour and Longing”, at <https://www.india-seminar.com/2004/538/538%20vinay%20lal.htm> 2004, accessed 23 February 2021.
- ¹³ It was felt that the ‘prosperous’ Indian Diaspora would help the government to improve India’s dwindling economic conditions. Moreover, there was a pride in the Indians who had gone to developed countries, and doing extremely well economically and socially. The suspicion that was fostered among many in India about the Diaspora slowly declined over time.
- ¹⁴ They complained that while the government expected them to bail out the country, they continued to look at the Diaspora with suspicion, especially over the issue of dual citizenship.
- ¹⁵ The term NRI is being used to represent the Diaspora, as most of the initial efforts made by the government were for the NRIs. The term thus came denote all the Diaspora. The nuanced difference did not play a significant role in government perceptions.
- ¹⁶ The term NRI stood for Non-Resident Indians living largely in the developed world,

such as in Europe, USA, Singapore, and in Australia. The term PIO (Persons of Indian Origin) was meant to denote the Diaspora as a whole. In reality, it merely meant all the Diaspora that did not live in the developed world.

- ¹⁷ Daniel Goodkind, *The Chinese Diaspora: Historical Legacies and Contemporary Trends*, Maryland: US Census Bureau, 2019, p. 2.
- ¹⁸ Evelyn Hu-DeHart and Kathleen López, “Asian Diasporas in Latin America and the Caribbean: An Historical Overview”, *Afro-Hispanic Review*, 27(1), 2008, pp. 9–21.
- ¹⁹ Mexico dealt the harshest blow in 1929–31 when it expelled the well-established Chinese community on the Sonoran border with Arizona. Many of them were shopkeepers and, at around five thousand strong, Mexico's largest expatriate community. After the war, Chinese immigration would be revived, but it never came close again to the high levels seen in the nineteenth century.
- ²⁰ By the time large-scale Chinese migration reached Latin America and the Caribbean in the mid-nineteenth century, they were already seasoned migrants, and were practiced members of the Diaspora, with tens of millions living outside China itself. At the end of the twentieth century, one source estimated as many as 55 million ethnic Chinese were distributed worldwide outside their ancestral homeland, about 3.5 million of them in the Americas.
- ²¹ Jacqueline Mazza, *Chinese Migration to Latin American and the Caribbean*, Washington, D.C.: Inter-American Dialogue, 2016. pp. 3–4.
- ²² Yet, upon closer examination, a certain pattern repeats over time. From the mid-sixteenth to the early nineteenth centuries, sea voyages ushered in the first era of modern globalisation. They laid the groundwork for the Manila galleon trade, which linked Europe to Asia to America through the exchange of American silver for Asian-made consumer goods. When post-slavery globalisation dawned in the mid-nineteenth century, cheap and seemingly docile Chinese coolies were recruited for New World plantations stretching from Cuba through Louisiana to California and Hawaii, fuelled by the voracious appetite for raw materials of the industrialised nations.
- ²³ Evelyn Hu-DeHart and Kathleen López, op. cit., n.18,
- ²⁴ The committee's mandate was to study the characteristics, aspirations, attitudes, requirements, strengths, and weaknesses of India's Diaspora and its expectations.
- ²⁵ See, <https://www.rediff.com/news/2002/jan/08nri1.htm>, accessed 5 March 2021. See also, Jayati Ghosh, “More Equal than Others”, at <https://frontline.thehindu.com/columns/article30243734.ece#!>, 2002, accessed 23 February 2021.
- ²⁶ See, <https://www.mea.gov.in/overseas-citizenship-of-india-scheme.htm>, accessed 5 March 2021.
- ²⁷ See, <https://www.TwoDiasporas:OverseasChineseandtheNonResidentIndiansintheirHomeland'sPoliticalEconomy>, at [mea.gov.in/autonomous-bodies.htm](https://www.mea.gov.in/autonomous-bodies.htm), accessed 5 March 2021.

- ²⁸ The total Indian Diaspora worldwide is 312,33,234, of which 1,211,667 live in Latin America and the Caribbean. Compiled in December 2017, at mea.gov.in/images/attach/NRIs-and-PIOs-1.PDF
- ²⁹ Ibid.
- ³⁰ See, Zhiqun Zhu, *Journal of Chinese Political Science*, 12(3), 2007, pp. 281–296. Also see, Benjamin Cruetzfeldt, *Overcoming the Greatest Distance: China in Latin America*. Overcoming the Greatest Distance: China in Latin America (e-ir.info) 2019, accessed on 5 March 2021. See also, Gauri Agarwal, “Comparing Indian and Chinese Engagement with their Diaspora”, *ICS Analysis*, 44, 2017, p. 2, at <https://www.icsin.org/uploads/2017/05/12/79170556f0718143783ce8d80f142f84.pdf>, accessed 5 March 2021.
- ³¹ Weinong Gao, “New Chinese Migrants in Latin America: Trends and Patters of Adaption”, in Min Zhou (ed.), *Contemporary Chinese Diasporas*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017, pp. 333–348. See also, Mette Thuno, “China’s New Global Position: Changing Policies Towards the Chinese Diaspora in the Twenty-Frist Century”, in Bernard Wong and Tan Chee-Beng (eds.), *China’s Rise and the Chinese Overseas*, Oxford: Routledge, 2018, pp.184–208.
- ³² See, <https://www.dpncindia.com/blog/ministry-of-home-affairs-mha-specifies-rights-of-overseas-citizen-of-india-oci-cardholders/>

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