

South Asian Diasporas and Security

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Diaspora studies remained focused on cultural and economic aspects for a long time. In recent decades, however, after the end of the Cold War and spread of globalization, attention also started being paid to the security aspects of Diaspora. This has been so, primarily, because Diaspora has come to be identified as an important source of support to various ethnic and ideological insurgencies and even terrorist movements and organisations in the developing world. A Rand Corporation Study released in 2001 went to the extent of suggesting that, in the post-Cold War period, “Diasporas have become a key factor in sustaining insurgencies.” Earlier these insurgencies attracted state sponsorship and support during the Cold War from the great powers and their allies.² The study noted:

The withdrawal of super power support in the early 1990s has already caused the collapse of several insurgencies that depended on Moscow to survive.

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2 For a reference to this study in relation to South Asia, see Aziz Hanifa, “Diasporas growing clout over home countries”, Times Internet Network, December 03, 2000, https://m.timesofindia.com/Diasporas-growing-clout-over-home-countries/amp_articleshow/1812033440.cms

In addition, the increasing number of ethnic and communal insurgencies relative to ideological conflicts increases the relative prevalence of Diaspora support.³

The security role of Diaspora may be seen in a much wider canvas involving both positive and negative aspects. The positive aspects may include the role of even a passive Diaspora by contributing to the home country's economic stability and its foreign exchange resources through remittances, or through political support on issues of relevance to the interests of the home country. Diaspora achievements and even presence also give greater visibility to the home country in the host country and the world at large, through skills, competence and entrepreneurship. This in the long run contributes towards building traditional and non-traditional security of the home country. In case of many countries Diaspora representatives lend their experience, skills and resources (in the form of investments) in improving developmental conditions in the home country. The names of Sam Pitroda in launching India's communication revolution, and that of the Nobel laureate Dr. Amartya Sen, Raghuram Rajan and many other economists in improving India's economic management, may be recalled as examples.⁴ Pakistan has drawn many of its Ministers and even Prime Ministers from its Diaspora community.⁵ To

3 "Trends in Outside Support for Insurgent Movement", RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, California, 2001, Chapter Three of the study. www.rand.org/publications/MR/MR1405.Ch.3.pdf. As quoted in the study, the shift of support to insurgencies from great powers to the Diaspora has been documented in Byman and van Evera's work of 1998. (pp. 39-43).

4 For a detailed discussion of India's outreach to Diaspora, see: Davesh Kapur, *Diaspora, development and Democracy: the domestic Impact of International Migration From India*, Oxford University Press, 2010.

5 S. Akbar Zaidi, "Influencing from Afar: Role of Pakistani Diaspora in Public Policy and Development in Pakistan", in Tan Tai Yong and Md. Mizanur Rahman (eds); *Diaspora Engagement and Development in South Asia*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2013, pp. 41-55.

facilitate such a positive role of the Diaspora community, India embarked on a systematic Diaspora policy in 2001 that has gained further momentum subsequently. Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Diaspora has emerged as a forceful factor in India's exercise of soft power in its foreign policy.

Negatively, the Diaspora has also been involved in hurting the economic stability and strength of the home country by indulging in money laundering and tax evasion. In recent years, the Diaspora has acquired critical significance with regard to their involvement in a number of raging insurgencies.

Considerable theoretical efforts have been made and are being made to delineate various dimensions of the Diaspora's security role. The gathering momentum of globalization – under which communities are moving and settling beyond national boundaries, and where the concept of ethnic identity has acquired a global spread due to faster and effective means of communications – has naturally made the subject of Diaspora studies far more complex and challenging. Post-9/11 concerns have led the US to get yet another Rand study completed on the Muslim Diaspora, so as to find ways and means to deal with the security aspects arising out of the presence of Muslim groups all over the world.⁶

The term Diaspora dates back to 800-600 BC, when it was used as a Greek expression ('sow widely') in reference to the "colonization of Asia Minor and the Mediterranean."⁷ In the contemporary sense, "Alam Gamlen identifies three essential attributes of Diaspora: dispersion to two or more locations, ongoing orientation towards a 'homeland' and group boundary

6 Angel M. Rabasa, Cheryl Benard, Peter Chalk, C. Christine Fair, Theodore Karasik, Rollie Lal, Ian Lesser and David Thaler, *The Muslim World After 9/11*, Rand Project Air Force, MG-246-AF, pp. 1-564.

7 Robin Cohen, "Diasporas and the nation-state: from victims to challengers", *International Affairs*, Volume 72, Number 3, 1996, pp.507-520.

maintenance over time.”⁸ Accordingly, Diaspora is used for the people who have common origins and reside outside their homeland in more than one country. While some analysts emphasize this residence on ‘permanent basis’, others look at it in a broader sense to include ‘expatriates, expellees, political refugees, alien residents, immigrants and ethnic and racial minorities’.⁹ They may also be identified as ‘old’ and ‘new’ Diaspora without differentiating between permanent settlers and short term migrants (such as students, labour working on fixed contracts and temporary assignments, professional and highly skilled workers, illegal migrants, refugees etc.) in terms of their role.¹⁰ Not every Diaspora is either inclined or equipped to play a political and security role. Some of the Diaspora groups are passive. They concentrate on the assignments and obligations for which they are in a foreign country and return after fulfilling such obligations. Other Diaspora groups are active, influencing life in their mother country as also the country of residence and adoption.¹¹

The active Diasporas influence life both in their home as well as their host countries. While some groups concentrate on either of the two, others are effective in both the places. Influence in the home country often works through ethnic linkages. Sympathy and support for ethnic or regional issues in the home country,

8 As quoted in Tan Tai Yong and Md. Mizanur Rahman (eds), *Diaspora Engagement and Development in South Asia*, 2013, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, p. 2.

9 See for instance, Gabriel Shaffer, (Ed.), *Modern Diasporas In International Politics*, 1986, St. Martin’s Press, New York. William Shafran, “Diasporas In Modern Societies: myths of homeland and return”, *Diaspora*, Volume 1, Number 1, 1991. Also see his “Ethno-national Diasporas and Security”, in *Survival*, Volume 36, Number 1, 1994.

10 Gopinath Pillai (Ed.), *Political Economy of South Asian Diaspora: Patterns of Socio-Economic Influence*, 2013, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, p.2.

11 Yossi Shain and Aharon Barth, “Diaspora and International Relations Theory”, *International Organisation*, Volume 57, 2003, pp. 449-479.

that may otherwise be a cause of concern in the home country, generally emerges from a deep-seated psychological search for cultural identity. In due course, political interests also evolve. In the host country, wherever Diaspora size, organisation and economic strength is considerable, it can influence the political and security situation in many different ways. There are instances where the representatives from the Diaspora groups have even assumed political and administrative authority of significance in the host country.

The worst of the security challenge posed by the Diaspora community was evident in the 9/11 incident, where jihadi groups settled in the United States but linked to Al Qaeda were involved in attacks on key political, military and economic targets in their host country, the US. The 'global war on terrorism' launched under US leadership against such groups, which are spread all over the world, and including the US and Europe, has added a new dimension to the presence and role of Muslim Diasporas.

The degree to which the Diaspora can influence life in the host and home countries depends on several factors. The Diaspora must know what precise role it wants to play and whether it has necessary means, motives and opportunity to do so. The nature of the role played by Diaspora would also depend upon the willingness or acceptance of that role by the home or the host country. Globalization has meant, however, that it has become increasingly difficult to deter a determined Diaspora completely from doing what it wants to do. The context of the regional and international situation, as also the nature of the political system operating in the host and/or the home country, may sometimes create difficulties in the role the Diaspora may play, but such a role cannot be completely thwarted.¹² The nature

12 Ibid.

and degree of Diaspora influence would also depend on the numerical and financial strength that come under the ‘means’ and the organization that can mobilize Diaspora resources.¹³ There are, however, instances where a small Diaspora group, even by mobilizing resources from outside the host country, can play a major role. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) of Sri Lanka and Jews are a typical example of the disproportionate role small Diasporas can play. This adds another interesting dimension to Diaspora studies, where their role has also to be viewed from an international level, when a cognate ethnic group, like the Muslims, Tamils, Buddhists, Jews etc., is present in more than one country in significant numbers.

Of critical concern with regard to the security role of Diaspora in the home country is in relation to raging insurgencies and conflicts. This role is played through a series of significant and effective activities. The Diaspora can help fund conflicts back home through fund raising and remittances. Systematic campaigns have been launched by Diaspora groups to raise funds, both through the members of the community and other sources. Studies on Diaspora philanthropy have been carried out, but the use of funds collected often goes beyond the concept of philanthropy.¹⁴ Such funds are not raised for sustaining conflicts and insurgencies alone, but also for a range of social, economic and philanthropic activities. The fund-raising activity may also extend to payments for arms and organizing supplies of such arms to the home based conflict, as was the case with the LTTE of Sri Lanka and the Khalistani

13 Feargal Cochrane, *Migration and Security in Global Age: Diaspora Communities and Conflict*, 2015, Routledge, London/New York.

14 Geithner Peter F, Paula D. Johnson and Lincoln C. Chen (Eds), *Diaspora Philanthropy and Equitable Development in China and India*, 2004, Harvard University Press, London.

(Sikh extremists) groups of India, and Diaspora based in Canada and other places.¹⁵ Besides fundraising, the Diaspora groups also perform lobbying for the cause of the conflict at home, such as ethnic rights, autonomy or even political change. They lobby to influence host countries policies in this regard as also to influence world public opinion and catalyze political action. This is also done through the management of publicity and media campaigns. In some cases, Diaspora organizations even recruit volunteers for either fighting in the conflicts at home or in conducting political campaigns and providing logistic and other support. Sri Lankan Tamils and Palestinians are prominent among groups that have engaged rather vigorously in such lobbying. Thus the means through which Diaspora contribute to conflicts at home are many and diverse. All these activities involve commitment, sustained effort and material resources on the part of the politically active Diasporas.¹⁶

Within the parameters outlined above, it is useful to look at the role of the South Asian Diasporas and their impact on security-related issues. To begin with, a general idea of the South Asian Diasporas is necessary.

Structure of the South Asian Diasporas

South Asian countries have widespread Diaspora groups all over the world. The countries accounting for most of such groups are India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. The Nepalese have a huge settlement in India and scattered presence in many other countries, and they too were seen to be very active during the critical phases of the struggle for democracy

15 For more details on these groups see, Christine C. Fair, "Diaspora Involvement in Insurgencies: Insights from Khalistan and Tamil Eelam Movements, Nationalism and Ethnic Politics, Volume II, 2005, pp.125-156.

16 Ibid. Also, Gabriel Sheffer, "Ethno-National Diasporas and Security", in *Survival*, London, Volume 36, Number 1, 1994, pp.60-79

during the 1960s and 1989-90, and even more so during the ten years long (1996-2006) Maoist insurgency.

The Indian Diaspora is perhaps the largest in size and oldest, commensurate with the historical character and largest population size of the home country. Before 1947, almost everyone who went out of South Asia was an Indian, because Pakistan and Bangladesh did not exist, and even Burma (now Myanmar) and Sri Lanka, were the parts of the British Indian empire for significant durations. The British were free to let populations move in imperial interests across their territorial possessions. The British took Indians as indentured labour during the 19th century to countries like Mauritius, Trinidad, Guyana, Surinam, Fiji and South Africa. Indian labour and service people also went to neighbouring countries like Sri Lanka and Burma, to help develop the British colonial economy in the estate sector, or in lower administrative and law and order positions. With labour also went the traders, particularly from Gujarat. According to some estimates, in 1900, Indians constituted half of the Burmese population of about 240,000. Indians were also a sizable presence in the Caribbean and the Pacific Islands.

The latest trend in Indian Diaspora formation is the movement of what is called, Indian “cyber coolies” in the developed North and white collar workers and menial labour in the West Asian countries. It is believed that since 1980, no less than 113,000 Indians have been leaving for work in these countries every year. During the years 1992-97, more than 400,000 Indian workers went to West Asia every year.¹⁷

It is not easy to have a precise calculation of the size of the South Asian Diaspora. Some estimates put their number at more than 50 million, including: the Indian Diaspora: 25 to 30

17 Vinay Lal, “Labour and Longing”, in Seminar, Special Issue on “The Diaspora”, Number 538, June, 2004, pp. 14-26.

million; Bangladeshi (excluding the so-called illegal migrants in India): 7 to 9 million; Pakistani: 5 to 7 million; Sri Lankan: 2 to 3 million; Afghan: 4 to 5 million; Nepali (excluding those in India): 2 million.¹⁸ The latest official number of the persons of Indian origin present overseas, computed in December 2017, is more than 31 million (312,33,234). Of this, Indian citizens are 13,327,438 and Indians of other nationalities are 17,905,796.¹⁹

Internal conflicts in South Asia have been a major source of the out flow of people. The Sri Lankan Diaspora witnessed a spurt over two decades of civil war, when most of the young Tamil boys left their country to escape ethnic conflict and earn living for themselves and their families. An estimated 700,000 Tamils are living outside Sri Lanka. UN estimates in 2001 put this figure at 817,000. The total number of Sri Lankans, including Sinhalese and other communities, is believed to be around 1.2 million. On an average, more than 70 per cent of them are female domestic workers. The percentage of high level occupational groups is very low, around five per cent.²⁰ It is not clear if those who left Sri Lanka in the wake of the ethnic insurgency have returned after the military elimination of the LTTE in 2009. The Sri Lankan Diaspora is located in significant numbers in the US, Canada, UK, Australia and West Asia. Canada, perhaps, accounts for the largest number of Sri Lankan Tamils, up to 155,000, almost 85 per cent of them located in Toronto.²¹ In Europe, Sri Lankan Tamils are concentrated in the UK, Germany and the Scandinavian region.

18 Tan Tai Yong and Md. Mizanur Rahman, op. cit., Number.7, p. 3

19 Figures put out by the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India. http://mea.gov.in/imagees/attach/NRIs-and-PIOs_1pdf

20 These estimates are based on the data provided by the *Sri Lankan Bureau of Foreign Employment*, Ministry of Foreign Employment, Government of Sri Lanka <http://www.slbfe.lk/>

21 *The Economist*, January 2, 2003. Also see the web magazine *Asian Tribune*, January 6, 2003.

While large sections of these Sri Lankans are domestic servants and menial workers, some in the developed North, like Canada, the US and the UK, are also professionals in the fields of legal and medical practices. A small number of Sinhalese also belong to these professional groups.

The Indian Diaspora is present in large numbers in the US, UK, West Asian countries, Southeast Asia, and immediate neighbourhood, particularly Nepal, Sri Lanka and Myanmar. Independent India faced a large exodus of its people from Sri Lanka, Malaysia and (then) Burma during the early sixties as a result of economic and citizenship policies in these countries. The professional character of the Indian Diaspora in all these countries and regions differs. While in the US and UK, Indians constitute well to do, professionally skilled and trading groups, in South East Asia they are mostly domestic and factory/agricultural workers, petty traders, construction workers and low grade service providers. However, lately the number of professionals is also increasing in some of these countries, particularly Singapore. It is the Indo-Americans who constitute the most influential group, occupying important positions, political clout and economic strength in the US. The per capita income of the Indian community in the US is computed at US\$ 60,000 and more, as compared to the average per capita income of the US citizens at US\$ 38,885. Members of the Indian Diaspora community have also attained notable political clout in the US where they have not only contested for the State Governorship but have also made it to the group of Presidential aides and advisers. In countries like Fiji, Mauritius, and Trinidad-Tobago, Indians have come to dominate the political system, even assuming the highest positions of Prime Ministers and Presidents.

The Pakistani Diaspora is prominent in West Asian countries, as well as the United States and United Kingdom. The strength of the Pakistani Diaspora is officially estimated

(registered with the Overseas Pakistani Foundation) to be four million strong, but there is also a sizable number of Pakistanis abroad illegally. Since the 1960s, most Pakistanis have been going to the UK and US, but in recent years, particularly after 9/11, their numbers have augmented even further in West Asia.²² Pakistanis have also spread out to the Asia-pacific region, particularly to countries like Malaysia. In terms of occupation, most of the Pakistanis living abroad are in the production sector. The percentage of professionals is very low, not more than 10 per cent. Pakistan has also received a large number of migrants from its neighbour Afghanistan over the past three decades and more.

The Nepalese and Bangladeshis have a sizable presence in India. In the former case, under legal provisions of the 1950 treaty, they have free access to India. In the latter case, the principal flows have been as illegal economic migrants.

Security Imperatives

The security role and dimension of the Diaspora impinges both on the host as well as the home country, as noted earlier. South Asian countries are both host as well as home countries in this context. Pakistan hosts about 1.3 million Afghan refugees according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates. Bhutan hosted a large (more than a third of its total population) Nepali Diaspora for a long time, till they were pushed out under its new citizenship laws enacted during the 1990s. As a result, more than a 100,000 refugees had gone to Nepal from Bhutan by 1996. India is the largest host of South Asian Diasporas coming in the form of refugees. As a host country, India has a sizable presence of persons of Nepali and Bangladeshi origin. The presence of Nepalis in India, estimated to be nearly 8 to 10 million is covered

22 *Human Development Foundation*, June 18, 2002, <http://www.hdf.com/>

under the provisions of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship signed between the two countries in 1950. Under the provisions of this Treaty, India is obliged to give equal treatment to the Nepalis with that of its own citizens. While Nepalis enjoy equal treatment with the Indians in India, persons of Indian citizen in Nepal do not get reciprocal treatment under the Treaty.²³

The presence of Bangladeshis in India is not covered by any bilateral Treaty or agreement and is outright illegal. Authentic estimates of their strength are not available, but approximations range from 12 to 15 million. Security implications of this large presence of the persons of foreign origin in India have long been a subject of concern and as source of political tensions and conflict over decades. It is in this respect that the project of a National Citizens Register (NCR) was launched in India's North-eastern State of Assam, mainly to identify illegal immigrants from Bangladesh, and has become an issue of national controversy.²⁴ India has seen an inflow of refugees from many other neighbouring countries, and they also raise security concerns that need to be addressed.²⁵ The security concerns of a host country arise out of the burden on economic security and stability, illegal activities like human trafficking, smuggling and socio-economic disruptions, law and order problems and the involvement of outsiders in insurgent and terrorist activities.

The security dimensions of the South Asian Diaspora outside the region have three aspects: the security of the Diaspora in the host countries; security concerns from the Diaspora for the

23 Details have been discussed elsewhere. See S.D.Muni; *India and Nepal: A Changing Relationship*, 1992, Konark Publishers, New Delhi.

24 Naresh Mitra and Rajib Duttal, "40% names not included in the first draft of Assam citizens register", *Times of India*, January 02, 2018.

25 For one of the early studies on this subject see S.D.Muni and Lok Raj Baral (eds), *Refugees and Regional Security in South Asia*, 1996, Konark Publishers, New Delhi,

home country; and security issues posed by the South Asian Diaspora in the host country. The threats to Diaspora in the host country arise from conflicts of the host country, both internal and with its neighbours or other adversaries; political turbulence; economic and other legal changes affecting the living conditions of the South Asian Diaspora; natural disasters; terrorist attacks or impact of terrorism; and lone wolf attacks and hate crimes of the local population against members of the Diaspora. Since the location and jurisdiction of all these sources of threat are beyond the control of the affected home countries, there is not much that the home state can do to pre-empt, deter or control them. The only way out in extreme situations is to evacuate the affected Diaspora population to safe places and take them out of emerging security-traps, depending upon the capability of the affected country.

Security concern of the home country from its Diaspora in situations of ethnic and sectarian conflicts has been a much-debated subject. The Diaspora has organized financial and political support and even mobilization of arms and sanctuaries for their conflict- and insurgency-affected brethren in the home countries. Sri Lanka faced this challenge from its Tamil Diaspora while fighting the LTTE, Nepal faced this problem during its Maoist insurgency, Pakistan has been coping with the support coming to Sindhi and Baluch nationalists from its Diaspora, and India experienced the pressure during the intensification of Kashmir and Khalistani turbulence. A number of studies on the aspects of Diaspora support – fund raising, lobbying for political support etc. – to insurgencies and ethnic conflicts at home in South Asia document details of each of these cases.²⁶

26 Christine C. Fair, n.14; S.D. Muni, “Globalisation and South Asian Insurgencies”, in Jorge Heine & Ramesh Thakur ed., *The Dark Side Of Globalisation*, UN University Press, Tokyo, New York, Paris, 2011, pp. 123-143. Frederic Grare, “Pakistan: The Resurgence of Baluch Nationalism”, *Carnegie*, Paper Number 65, January 26, 2006.

The third security dimension of the South Asian Diaspora becoming a threat to the host country or third countries has not yet been a major issue, except in the case of Pakistan. In post-9/11 terrorism, Pakistan has been increasingly identified as the hub of terrorism and the Pakistanis residing abroad are suspected to be linked to jihadi forces. In relation to the US, a Pakistani scholar Akbar Zaidi notes:

With the Taliban, Al-Qaeda and the Americans, all having a marked presence in Pakistan, the Pakistani Diaspora links itself to any of these signifiers. Faisal Shahzad, the son of a very senior Pakistani armed forces officer, born in Pakistan and a naturalized American, who tried to bomb Times Square in New York, is one such example of Pakistani Diaspora.²⁷

There are several examples of the involvement of the Pakistan Diaspora in acts of violence and terrorism in the US and other countries. There are several reports on the involvement of members of the Pakistani Diaspora in Islamic State and al Qaeda activities in the Middle East and elsewhere. The jihadi influence is also increasingly visible in the Pakistani Diaspora in Britain.²⁸

Security and the Indian Diaspora

India has one of the largest and most widespread Diaspora, as compared to its other South Asian neighbours. It may not be an unfair to say that India has dealt with Diaspora security issues more successfully than any of its other regional neighbours. The major security challenges faced by India in this respect

27 Akbar S. Zaidi, in Tan Tai Yong and Mizanur Rahman, op.cit, Number 7, p. 43.

28 Pnina Werbner, "Religion, politics and Islam in the South Asian Diaspora", in Gopinath Pillai ed., *The Political Economy of South Asian Diaspora*, Number 9, pp. 125-142.

have been the security of its Diaspora in internal conflicts or radical disruptions in the host countries. As mentioned earlier, it has not been possible to pre-empt situations leading to the security trap for the Diaspora. What has, however, been addressed effectively is the task of rescue and rehabilitation. India's responses to such situations have gradually evolved, building on its experiences and also introducing changes in its overall Diaspora policy.

India was found wanting in situations of exodus of its Diaspora from some of the African countries during the first decade of its Independence. From the beginning of the 1960s New Delhi undertook several operations to evacuate its Diaspora in distress in their respective home countries. In a comprehensive study of such operations, Constantino Xavier observes that there may have been nearly 30 such evacuation operations since 1947, involving land, air and naval lifts. The largest of these operations was in 1990 (August-October) from Kuwait on the eve of the first Gulf War, involving some 200,000 people.²⁹ This was the largest civilian airlift in history, inspiring some Bollywood movies. In these evacuation operations, India was constitutionally obliged to rescue its own citizens. But the Indian evacuation operations have gone beyond the constitutional mandate and, on humanitarian grounds, helped citizens of many other countries trapped in conflict situations, including those of India's neighbours.³⁰

With internal conflicts persisting and becoming intense in some of the countries where Indian Diaspora is present in significant strength, this aspect of security of the Diaspora is

29 Constantino Xavier, "India's Expatriate Evacuation Operations" Carnegie India Study, *Carnegie Endowment For International Peace*, Washington, 2016.

30 Guru Aiyar, "A strategic diaspora security policy", *Live Mint*, July 22, 2016, <https://www.livemint.com/Opinion/1Y8a4IMiP8ibfiXnRNvZpN/A-strategic-diaspora-security-policy.html>

becoming complex and challenging. Acts of terrorism against innocent Indians working in countries affected by religious and sectarian extremism like Afghanistan, Syria, Libya, Lebanon, Iraq, etc., are becoming frequent. There are also instances of terrorist attacks and hate crimes in Europe, Australia and the US. In responding to such situations India's diplomatic and intelligence outreach has been put to severe test. India has responded to such situations generally effectively, but not without lapses and domestic criticism. The grim reality of 39 Indian workers abducted from Mosul in Iraq in 2015, and confirmed dead in March 2018, reveal the complexities involved in such cases. The Indian Government took almost four years to confirm the death of these people, despite evidence available soon after the abduction.³¹

The organization and strength of the Indian Diaspora has also worked against India's own security interests, in terms of support for insurgent groups within India. The Sikh Diaspora's role during the insurgency in Punjab illustrates this point rather vividly. The Kanishka bombing (Air India Flight 182) engineered by Canada-based Sikhs in June 1985, which killed 329 innocent passengers and crew, was dramatic and ghastly evidence of this. The Khalistani movement with its Diaspora support escalated even after the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1984,³² and despite the comprehensive defeat of the movement on Indian soil, continues to agitate elements within the Diaspora. The support to Khalistani separatists

31 Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj made this disclosure in Indian Parliament on March 19, 2018. See news paper reports, *Indian Express*, March 20, 2018; *The Hindustan Times*, March 20, 2018.

32 Vipin Pubby, "Khalistan stays alive abroad", *Indian Express*, October 3, 2012; Ushinor Mojumdar, "Panth and a foreign hand", *The Outlook India*, February 12, 2018; Also see for background, a CIA Report, "India and the Sikh Challenge", Central Intelligence Agency, <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP06T00412R000606740001-7.pdf>

in India from Canada became a sensitive issue during the Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's visit to India in February 2018.³³ There was, similarly, strong support to the Kashmir issue from Kashmiri Diaspora in the US and Britain. However, in view of improved relations between India and these countries over the past decade, this support has been substantially contained.³⁴

Policy Perspective

With dynamic economic growth and deepening engagement with the forces of globalization, the South Asian Diaspora is going to become larger and more diversified. The policies and strategies to approach and outreach to Diaspora will also have to evolve in the process. At present, not many South Asian countries have such policies and those, including India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, that have evolved the rudiments of policy, will also need revamping on many counts.³⁵ India made its first systematic attempt to define its Diaspora policy in 2001, largely with a focus on economic and developmental aspects, to harness the Diaspora as a resource. The basic document prepared after extensive field work at various places of concentration of the Indian Diaspora, the Report of the High Level Committee

33 Suhasini Haider, "Khalistan becomes issue between India and Canada again", *The Hindu*, February 19, 2018. <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/khalistan-becomes-an-issue-between-india-and-canada/article22799232.ece>

34 Martin Sokefeld, "The Kashmiri Diaspora in Britain and Limits of Political Mobilisation", in Astrid Wonneberger, Mijal Gendelman-Trier, Hauke Dorsch eds., *Migration-Networks-Skills. Anthropological Perspectives on Mobility and Transformation*, Bielefeld, transcript, 2016. <https://epub.ub.uni-muenchen.de-41164/1/Sockefeld-2016-kashmiri-Diaspora-in-Britain-and-the-limits-of-political-mobilisation.pdf>

35 For a comparative analysis of South Asian Diaspora policies see, Smita Tiwari, "Diaspora Engagement Policy in South Asia", in Tan Tai Yong and Mizanur Rahman eds., Number 7, pp. 212-230.

on the Indian Diaspora,³⁶ did not reflect any concern for the security aspect. The Diaspora outreach policy that emerged out of that document has been periodically reinforced by providing facilities and incentives to the Diaspora to encourage involvement in India's development process. India has also mobilized its Diaspora on critical political and strategic issues, such as the Indo-US Nuclear deal. There has, however, been no attention to potential threats to and threats from the Diaspora.

As noted earlier, India has carried out many successful operations to get its Diaspora out of security traps in various countries. But this has not been without many lapses and shortcoming, and Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for such operations remain undefined. There has also been a demand for the past nearly eight years to set up a Non-Combatant Evacuation Organisation (NEO), which remains on files. The then Navy Chief N.K. Verma noted in 2011, based on his experience of evacuation from Lebanon, that NEO must be a priority;

With the increasing presence of our people and investment overseas, the need to provide security assurance in times of crisis is also growing. In the recent past, the Navy has been called upon to provide relief to our Diasporas in the form of non-combatant evacuation... Given the prevailing strategic uncertainty, it is likely that such instances would increase in the future. Our future maritime strategy must therefore build in the capability to provide requisite security assurances to our Diasporas abroad.³⁷

In past evacuation operations, difficulties in coordination between different services, particularly the Navy and Air

36 "Report of the High Level Committee on Indian Diaspora, *Ministry of External Affairs*, Government of India, December 19, 2001, <https://www.mea.gov.in/images/pdf/1-executive-summary.pdf>

37 As quoted in Constantino Xavier, *Carnegie Report*, op.cit,

Force, as also among different departments and ministries, have been experienced. Adequate guidelines and procedures need to be laid down to make future operations more effective and streamlined.³⁸

There is also need for closely monitoring the movements of various Diaspora groups and the activities of their organisations and networks to ensure that there is no support from them to insurgent, extremist and separatist movements within India. India's intelligence agencies and the diplomatic missions abroad do this on a casual and ad hoc basis. It was hoped that the creation of a new ministry for Persons of Indians Origin (PIOs) would handle such responsibilities more systematically, but this Ministry has now folded up as a result of lack of coordination with Ministries of External Affairs and Home.³⁹ Lack of coordination among different relevant departments and stake holders, corruption, inefficiency and political interference have also complicated the task of dealing with the security challenges posed by the Diaspora of other countries (including illegal migrants) within India.

The Diaspora is a powerful national asset as well as a source of concern. South Asian countries need to shape resilient and credible policies to harness this asset properly and safeguard their respective national interests from its negative, security related hazards.

38 Discussed in Constantino Xavier, *ibid.*

39 The Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs was set up in May 2014, and was merged with the Ministry of External Affairs in January 2016.