



Vivekananda  
International  
Foundation

# THE CIVILISATIONAL DIASPORIC APPROACH

---

UNDERSTANDING THE ENGAGEMENT  
OF THE CHINESE & THE INDIAN STATE  
WITH DIASPORAS

APURVA JHA



**VIF BRIEF**

**THE CIVILISATIONAL  
DIASPORIC APPROACH**

UNDERSTANDING THE ENGAGEMENT  
OF THE CHINESE & THE INDIAN STATE  
WITH DIASPORAS

APURVA JHA

© Vivekananda International Foundation

Published in 2024 by  
Vivekananda International Foundation  
3, San Martin Marg | Chanakyapuri | New Delhi - 110021  
Tel: 011-24121764 | Fax: 011-66173415  
E-mail: [info@vifindia.org](mailto:info@vifindia.org)  
Website: [www.vifindia.org](http://www.vifindia.org)

Follow us on:

Twitter | [@vifindia](https://twitter.com/vifindia)  
Facebook | [/vifindia](https://www.facebook.com/vifindia)

Disclaimer: The paper is the author's individual scholastic articulation. The author certifies that the article/paper is original in content, unpublished and it has not been submitted for publication/web upload elsewhere, and that the facts and figures quoted are duly referenced, as needed, and are believed to be correct.

All Rights Reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form, or by any means electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without the prior permission of the publisher.

## **About The Author**



Apurva Jha a fourth year International Relations student in the department of International Relations and Governance Studies in Shiv Nadar University, Delhi NCR. Her research interests include China studies, issues of Securitisation, Science and Technology studies. Her other research work includes a paper titled "The Red Dragon's Indemnity of its Mountains: Understanding Chinese Environmental Politics", presented at the IHSSRC conference held by BITS Pilani Dubai Campus and a research project titled "Nomadic Groups in India and China- A Comparative Study" funded by the Shiv Nadar University for Opportunities for Undergraduate Research (OUR) projects.

## **Introduction**

Diasporic populations play increasingly important roles in a globalised economy. Their contributions are not limited just to remittances to the country of origin. They also help attract trade and investment, facilitate technology and skill transfer, encourage entrepreneurship,<sup>1</sup> and engage in political lobbying. Countries like India and China have a sizeable diasporic population across the world. According to a report by the UN in 2020, India has the largest diaspora, with 18 million people, while China ranked fourth on the list with 10 million people.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, diasporic populations become not just an important source of economic contribution but also a significant soft power tool and a source of strategic influence.

Other than having familial and emotional roots in their country of origin, an important aspect to examine here is how the state engages with its diaspora. The state moves beyond allowing smooth economic transactions and movement of people to recognise the diasporas and provide them with a sense of identity that continues to link them with their country of origin. How does the state form this link and the underlying basis of this formulation needs to be understood. Over the decades, there has been a shift in the approach of the Indian and the Chinese states when it comes to engaging with their respective diasporic groups. This shift can be further narrowed down to the policies that were implemented after a change in leadership in both countries. In the case of India, when Narendra Modi became the Indian PM in 2014, in the Chinese case, it was when Xi Jinping

took over as General Secretary in 2012 and then the position of Chinese President in 2013. Both states have pushed for a more civilisational narrative to maintain a link with the diasporic populations.

This study aims to address the aspect of this civilisational shift in the Government's approach to engaging with their diasporic groups. The study addresses the following three questions: First, how have the Indian and Chinese states historically interacted with their diasporic populations? Second, what are the basis and underlying values of this civilisational shift that the Indian and Chinese states are capitalising on? And, third, what is the strategic utility of these approaches, and what are the implications of this civilisational approach?

The study mainly observes and argues over three aspects. First, this change in the trend to capitalise on soft power has been geared towards creating a larger civilisational narrative by the state. Second, this shift is aimed at achieving the domestic goals of the Indian and Chinese states while at the same time carving a leading role for themselves in the international arena. Third, the effects and results of the civilisational diasporic engagement differ for both states, which is subsequently linked to the fundamental political nature of the states.

## **Strategic Utility of a Civilisational Narrative and its Implications**

Creating solidarity based on civilisational values and identities has allowed both India and China to envisage a development path for not just their respective countries but also for the rest of the world they aim to lead. There are similarities in the civilisational approaches of both countries in terms of the nature of the values they hold and the consequences they are intended to have. The underlying values of both the civilisational narratives to a path of development are non-threatening in nature. These values aim to benefit not just India or China but, ultimately, the larger global community as well. Although such values are an outcome of a certain country's civilisational

values, these are based on a sense of universalism that goes beyond any specific religious, social, cultural or ideological distinctions.

There is a central focus on people-to-people exchanges to further validate the civilisational approaches as non-threatening. The people are at the forefront of spreading these values and cooperate to achieve the larger goals. The role of diaspora is expanded not just from the usual social, cultural, economic and skill transfers but also in terms of challenging the modern Westphalian conceptualisation of the nation-state and citizenship. The understanding of nation-states is guided by sovereignty, territoriality and state-centric identities, as opposed to civilisations that have cultural and historical foundations and identities unbound by territories. That gives the diaspora populations a sense of identity and belonging that is not limited to their passports. That is also effective in pushing for a global public narrative and eventually pursuing one's strategic interests.

There are differences in the civilisational approaches of India and China that arise in the scale of execution along with the methods of implementation and its consequences. Even though the two countries are pushing for a civilisational approach, they are still limited by the rules and norms of sovereignty. The political nature of the state ultimately impacts how the state engages with the diaspora and is reflected in its schemes. In that, China has been far more extensive in its efforts, structures, and organisations than India. This distinction is two-fold. In the domestic realm, the organisations that deal with the diaspora do not operate at just the national level but go down to the local level in terms of engagement with family members of diasporas who remain back in the country like the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) and All-China Federation of Returned Overseas Chinese (AFROC).

China's authoritarian system is reflected in its engagements. Even in the international realm, there are multiple organisations like the United Front and the Chinese Service Centres that engage with the diaspora populations. Ultimately, such deep structures of engagement are not limited to maintaining contact but also to ensure surveillance and control of the party-



state. Often, coercive measures are employed to ensure that the overseas Chinese are involved in not just information collection but also to protect the reputation of the party-state. Such measures are implemented not just within China but also internationally, therefore violating the sovereignty and national security of other countries. Such incidents negatively impact the overall narrative-building efforts and create distrust among nations and even towards the diasporas. Democratic states like India do not engage in coercive measures to deal with its diaspora. However, there have been issues with the Persons of Indian Origin (PIO) and Overseas Citizens of India (OCI) cards that were issued. There has been an increase in financial fraud in the bank accounts of the Non-Resident Indians (NRI)/PIO.<sup>3</sup> The PIO scheme was discontinued in 2015, and cardholders were asked to get OCI cards issued by 31st December 2024.<sup>4</sup>

There is a vast pool of literature available on both the Chinese and Indian diaspora that cover a variety of themes. Diasporic populations have played a significant role in the development and growth of both countries. These themes include accounts of diasporic populations in specific countries, drawbacks and shortcomings of government engagements, studies of the diasporic population's attitudes towards their country of origin, and changes in domestic attitudes towards diasporas.

## **Deciphering the *Rashtrdoot***

Since both these countries have large diaspora populations spread across the world, there have been specific historical, political and sociological studies to study the trajectory and assimilation of these groups. For example, work has been done on the PIO in the USA and Africa. There is a sense of uniqueness or even exceptionalism that is attached to the Indian diaspora, especially when it comes to their contributions, as a result of their contributions in the country of residence as well as to the world economy.<sup>5</sup> The impact of their contributions has been two-fold. It has benefitted both the country of residence and the country of origin. Like the Indian diaspora that migrated to the US in the 1960s and 1970s, they pursued

their graduate degrees. They worked as medical professionals, engineers, doctors, etc. and worked in mid to large-scale firms. Specifically in the IT sector, the growth of these professionals constituted about 3 percent of the total American IT sector. These professionals aided the growth of the Indian IT sector, which was rising at the same time, through investments, contracts for low-end work, and coaching and training to enhance the performance of these firms.<sup>6</sup> This model of cooperation is viewed as unique since it also allowed Indian IT firms to overcome bureaucratic and trade barriers that negatively impacted their growth. Many authors have advocated for a replication of this model in not just other sectors for India but also for diasporas of other countries.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, cooperation of this kind cannot flourish to its full potential without focused governmental support.

The historical lack of government support can be traced back to the attitudes of the Indian state towards the diasporic populations before the independence and the post-1951 setting up of the first indigenous government. In 1927, Jawaharlal Nehru wrote a paper titled “Foreign Policy of India”, which also addressed the Indian settlers in foreign countries at the time and called them the “hireling of exploitative British Government”.<sup>8</sup> He advocated for Indians in foreign countries to cooperate and extend friendship to the natives through friendship and service. This was opposed to the demands of the conservatives in the Indian National Congress, who wanted better treatment for the Indian settlers outside. Post-independence, a policy of active dissonance was implemented when it came to Indian diasporas, as they were not seen as a priority in India’s foreign policy at the time.<sup>9</sup>

A formal push away to the diaspora was in 1947 when the first independent government defined national identity on the basis of territorial boundaries, wherein those who lived within the boundaries were Indians. This policy was implemented to protect the people who had come to independent India as a result of the partition.<sup>10</sup> Nehru was in favour of cultural and humanitarian relations instead of political relations if the Indian settlers

outside adopted the nationality of their country of residence. In 1955, the India Citizenship Act was implemented which removed the right to citizenship that was provided by the Indian constitution to Indians overseas.<sup>11</sup>

Over the decades, the Indian Government's approach shifted to facilitating easier transactions and increased interactions with the diasporic populations. In the 1980s, the Government implemented policies and set up institutions that made it easier for the NRIs to set up bank accounts and invest in India. The Government came up with the PIO and OCI cards in 1999 to facilitate investment in property, holding Indian rupee bank accounts and easier movement to India.<sup>12</sup> In the 2000s, a report was published by a Government-mandated high-level committee based on which the first annual international conference of overseas Indians or the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas was celebrated on 9th January 2003. The Ministry for Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA) was also created in 2005.<sup>13</sup>

The Indian diaspora's position in India's foreign policy significantly shifted when Narendra Modi became the Prime Minister (PM) in 2014. This shift is especially marked by a prominent cultural turn in its nature. The MOIA was dissolved and absorbed into the Ministry of External Affairs in 2016 to ensure more efficient functioning in matters involving the Indian diaspora.<sup>14</sup> There has been a clear shift in forming the cultural engagements with the Indian diasporas.<sup>15</sup> The larger ambit of cultural diplomacy has included soft power to capitalise on the popularity of Bollywood films, principles like Ahimsa, and practice of Yoga and Ayurveda medical practices. By 2017, the Indian PM had visited 49 countries where he would often encourage the Indian diaspora to invest in developmental projects or even donate to initiatives like the Clean River Ganges program.<sup>16</sup> The Government has also issued a single diaspora card to all Indian diasporas and allowed visitors who have Indian cultural roots from 43 countries to get visas upon arrival in India.<sup>17</sup>

There have also been studies on the Indian diaspora's attitudes towards developments in Indian politics or their general view attached to India.

For example, a study published in 2021 found general detachment or ambivalence towards Indian politics in Indian Americans. Still, the same was not true when discussing and expressing cultural affinity and identity.<sup>18</sup> Another study suggested that Indian Americans hold broadly favourable views of PM Modi, and one-third of the respondents favoured the Bharatiya Janata Party as opposed to the 12 percent who supported the Congress Party, while two in every five Indian Americans choose to maintain distance from day-to-day Indian politics.<sup>19</sup>

The PIO scheme was abolished in 2015, and its provisions were merged with those of the OCI scheme. The current scheme includes a diverse range of provisions like child adoption programs, scholarship programs, educational programs, and cultural programs to help people get better acquainted with India.<sup>20</sup> There is also the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award, which is the highest award that can be conferred to an overseas Indian for efforts to enhance understanding about India in their country of residence, support India's cause in a tangible way, work for the welfare of the Indian community etc.<sup>21</sup> Another important body under the government of India is the Indian Council of Cultural Relations which was established in 1950 with the goals to “establish, revive and strengthen cultural relations and mutual understanding between India and other countries”.<sup>22</sup>

The term *Rashtradoot* has been used by the Indian PM several times while addressing the Indian diasporic populations abroad. Over the years, the Indian PM has appreciated their role in maintaining bilateral ties while spelling out their future role in India's rise at a global level. In 2017, while addressing the Indian community in Hague, he called them *Rashtradoots* or the “Representatives of our nation”<sup>23</sup> as opposed to the *Rajdoots* or the ambassadors in the Indian embassies. The role of the *Rashtradoots* includes helping the rest of the world understand what India's greatness is about. He further talked about aspects like cultural, linguistic, and religious diversity, of which every Indian can take pride. The strength of India lies in its diversity and the public participation of various social and cultural groups, especially during critical times like natural disasters. In the same year,

during his one-day visit to the Netherlands, the PM addressed the Indian community and put emphasis on the blood ties as well as the cultural ties that they still share with India despite the colour of their passports.<sup>24</sup> Even on other occasions, like the 17th celebration of the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Convention or the Non-Resident Indian Day in 2023, the theme for the event was “Diaspora: Reliable partners for India’s progress in Amrit Kaal”. At the event, he asked the Indian diasporas to be the brand ambassadors and promote aspects like Yoga, the Indian Handicraft industries etc.<sup>25</sup> In 2024, while addressing the Indian community in Russia, he again appreciated the role of the *Rashtradratoos* in Russia in helping strengthen India-Russia ties.<sup>26</sup>

The role of the Rashtradratoos has become central to the government’s larger international narrative of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* and India’s *Amrit Kaal*. The philosophy of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* has been central to the ancient Indian civilisation, which has been translated to ‘The World Is One Family’<sup>27</sup> and has now become central to India’s multilateralism efforts. It does not just address global issues but domestic problems as well while ensuring nobody is left out. This ancient philosophy has been the guiding principle for multiple programs and policies, from influencing the Indian family system<sup>28</sup> to the creation of ‘Alliance for Global Good-Gender Equity and Equality’<sup>29</sup> as well as being the overarching theme for India’s G20 presidency.<sup>30</sup> The role of the Indian diaspora has been crucial in contributing to *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* by aiding India’s growth and becoming a part of its development story.<sup>31</sup> It underscores a path ‘to progress as one universal family, transcending borders, languages, and ideologies’.<sup>32</sup> The concept of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* can be traced back to the Upanishads and is a central tenet of Vedanta. Vedanta has been understood in numerous ways over the centuries. Most of these understandings form a part of Swami Vivekananda’s understanding of Vedanta and his teachings. He viewed Vedanta as an overarching philosophy of India that rose from the ancient Vedic texts and guided man on his path of spirituality. The Vedanta philosophy does not endorse any particular person or God. There is a sense of universalism in the sense that, as a philosophy, it guides the

individual on the path of spirituality and focuses on the divinity within the man himself. Swami Vivekananda spread the message of peace and unity from India and of 'global cultural space or a unity of the world away from discord of political divergences'.<sup>33</sup>

*Amrit Kaal* refers to the era of progress for India that is marked by growth and inclusivity. On 15th August 2023, during India's 75th Independence Day speech, the Indian PM marked the first year of the Amrit Kaal and set the goal for India to become a developed country by 2047 which would also mark India's 100th independence. He also mentioned India's vision of 'One World, One Family, One Future', which was presented during the G20 to the world to join.<sup>34</sup> The vision of Amrit Kaal was outlined in the budget 2023-2024 and put emphasis on all regions and citizens, especially our youth, women, farmers, OBCs, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.<sup>35</sup>

The emphasis on civilisational values like Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam is better understood as cultural diplomacy as opposed to reducing it to simply soft power tactics. The former engages in a dialogue between groups that are culturally or religiously different, while the latter tends to be invasive in nature.<sup>36</sup> This helps promote the co-existence of diversity and prevents it from turning into competition or conflicts between socio-culturally distinct groups. Cultural diplomacy as a tool for achieving foreign policy objectives helps construct a favourable national image of the country by having interactive discussions led by not just embassies but by diasporas as well.<sup>37</sup> Therefore, PM Modi, during his interactions with the diasporas, encouraged them to tell the world about Indian achievements, principles, and ethos while inviting their friends to visit India.<sup>38</sup>

## **Deciphering the *Huaqiaohuaren***

Chinese literature on diaspora broadly highlights two distinct aspects. First, there are several organisations that deal with Chinese diasporas at multiple levels on behalf of not just the Chinese state but, more accurately,

the party-state. Second, the meaning of diaspora for the Chinese state is not bound by the borders and understandings of the modern nation-state.

Before the formation of the modern Chinese nation-state or Republic of China in 1912, there were no formal structures or detailed policies for overseas Chinese. In the late period of the Qing dynasty till 1911, policies regarding overseas Chinese were a part of the international trade policies. Even from 221 BC to 1368 AD, during the Qin and Yuan dynasties, the authority apparatus did not interfere with the business of Chinese traders. It was during the Ming dynasties when there was a ban put on individuals who engaged in private international trade, but it was eventually lifted in 1567 due to the rise of rebels and its unsuccessful implementation.<sup>39</sup> After the Republic of China came into existence in 1912 under the Kuomintang government, there were efforts made to engage with the Chinese diaspora mainly for political and financial support during the anti-Japan and against the Communist Party of China (CPC). After the People's Republic of China was formed in 1949, there was a major shift in the Chinese government's attitudes towards the diaspora. The situation became particularly grave during the Cultural Revolution when Chinese diasporas were viewed as bourgeoisie and imperial agents and were persecuted. Even the Chinese people living in mainland China who were associated with the Chinese diaspora were punished.<sup>40</sup>

Goals of Chinese diasporic engagements have been explained to be economic aid, technology transfer and discourse power.<sup>41</sup> China does not recognise dual citizenship. Nevertheless, people of Chinese race or ancestry are considered to be a part of the Chinese nation. The most appropriate term for overseas Chinese is *huaqiaohuaren* which includes both Chinese citizens abroad or *huaqiao* and ethnic Chinese with non-Chinese nationalities or *huaren*.<sup>42</sup>

There are five main bodies responsible for engaging with the Chinese diaspora. First, the Overseas Chinese Affairs Commission (OCAO) or *guowuyuan qiaowu bangongshi/ qiaoban* was initially set up in 1954 and reinstated in 1978. It is responsible for policy formulation, research and

implementation on behalf of not just the State Council but also the CPC to attract overseas capital, technology and skills.<sup>43</sup> Second, the China Zhi Gong Party or *Zhongguo zhi gong dang* that was founded in San Francisco in 1925 and now operates in over forty countries. The party became a part of the CPC's United Front Work Department (UFD) in 1947. It mainly focused on encouraging overseas Chinese to return or serve the Chinese interests from their country of residence.<sup>44</sup> Third, the Overseas Chinese Affairs Committee (OCAC) of the National People's Congress or *quanguo renmin daibiao dahui huaqiao weiyuanhui* was formed under the December 1982 Chinese constitution's clause 70, which gave the committee the power to "draft legislative proposals and to examine bills and inquiries".<sup>45</sup> It works not just with the State Council and its ministries but also with the local governments on legislative deliberations and formulations. Fourth, the Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan Compatriots and Overseas Chinese Affairs Committee of the CPPCC *quanguo zhengxie gang'aotaiqiao weiyuanhui*. It has more of a consulting role but still has members of the CPC who are officially part of the organisation. It focuses on bringing together the organisations of returned overseas Chinese and also Chinese overseas outside of mainland China. Fifth, the AFROC or *Zhonghua quanguo guiguo huaqiao lianhehui* or *quanguo qiaolian* acts as the link between the party, the government and the Overseas Chinese. The group has its roots in the 1930s when it worked against the Japanese occupation of China. They are mainly involved in liaising with the returned overseas Chinese, their dependents and with overseas Chinese till the village level. Their outreach is widespread in terms of having their own publishing house, research institute and museum.<sup>46</sup>

There has been a major shift in the structure of these organisations since the arrival of Xi Jinping. The goals of diasporic engagement have shifted from domestic and national development to soft power outreach overseas.<sup>47</sup> Post-2018, the OCAO, which formed part of the government apparatus, has been absorbed into the UFD and AFROC, which are under the party apparatus. This sort of merger between the organisations has further blurred the distinction between huaren or ethnic Chinese with non-Chinese nationalities and huaqiao or Chinese citizens abroad.<sup>48</sup>



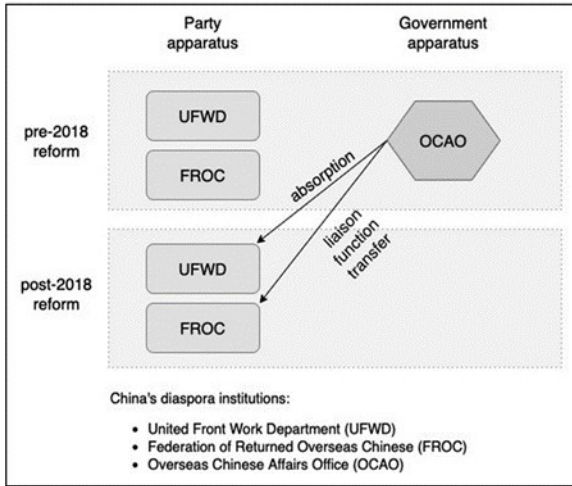


Figure 1: 2018 Organizational reform of diaspora institutions in China<sup>49</sup>

A lot of the observers have used the term *Huaqiaohuaren* or *Huaqiao-huaren* in a hyphenated manner to refer to both Chinese citizens abroad or *huaqiao* and ethnic Chinese with non-Chinese nationalities or *huaren*. This distinction between the two has been slowly eroded by the Chinese state when it comes to advancing Chinese foreign policy interests. In the book titled ‘The Governance of China’, which was published in 2014, Chinese President Xi Jinping refers to the idea of the ‘Chinese Family’ that is not bound by the official rules of citizenship and shares the dream of Chinese national rejuvenation.<sup>50</sup> Accordingly, despite their place of residence, all ethnic Chinese will continue to remain a part of the Chinese family. While addressing those Chinese who are going abroad, he gives primacy to the idea of learning to serve the state instead of focusing on one’s own individual interests. He further gives the assurance that the Party will help them serve the country even if they decide not to return to China.<sup>51</sup>

Propaganda and controlling the international discourse have always been an essential part of the Party-state’s administration. In 2013, Xi Jinping coined the phrase “telling China’s story well” while addressing the National Propaganda and Ideology Work Conference.<sup>52</sup> According to

an article published in the People's Daily in 2020, titled "Strengthening Agenda Setting, 'Telling the China Story Well' by Xu Shana, there are four crucial components: the role of the Party as the component actor in spreading the message, the centrality of the Chinese dream of rejuvenation, the importance of Chinese traditional culture and finally, the narrative of win-win cooperation for all that can be achieved through the Chinese dream and overlaps with the rise of China.<sup>53</sup> The CPC has actively worked on developing its civilisational narrative, its principles, and its end goals, along with the issue of how it is presented to the rest of the world. In 2023, during the 20th National Congress of the CPC, it was agreed that 'Xi Jinping's thought on Culture' would serve as the basis for China's National rejuvenation.<sup>54</sup> These cultural traditions and thoughts rooted in five thousand years old civilisational history form the basis for prosperity and the creation of a modern Chinese civilisation.<sup>55</sup> The details of these meetings were made public by the state news agency Xinhua and aimed to inform not just domestic but international audiences of the Chinese President's new political doctrine. This approach emphasises peace, security and economic prosperity bound to transform China. It will ultimately lead to "peaceful development and harmonious coexistence to create a global community".<sup>56</sup> There were also reports of briefings being held at several levels to further spread the new doctrine on culture and propaganda among not just the government officials but among the common public by the party cadres.<sup>57</sup> Xi Jinping even had an online meeting to address the CPC party officials about the future of China's Global Civilisation Initiative, during which he underscored the importance of "inheritance and innovation of civilisations, as well as robust international people-to-people exchanges and cooperation".<sup>58</sup> He also pointed out that, unlike the Western conceptualisation of a clash of civilisations, such an initiative does not consider a particular civilisation superior and is marked by civilisational exchanges between people.

The role of the Chinese diaspora has not been limited to simply pushing the party-state's narrative in their country of residence. Their involvement has also included aspects like carrying out influence options, intelligence collection, interference operations, and conducting propaganda and

perception management campaigns.<sup>59</sup> This has also involved Chinese intelligence organisations and diaspora engagement organisations, like the UFWD, as well as educational settings like the Chinese Student and Scholar Association and Confucius Institutes.

There have been reports that the Chinese state has set up overseas police stations and public security bureaus engaging in activities like intimidation and harassment if they find Chinese diasporas not conforming to the discourse set by the party-state.<sup>60</sup> This has led to major security concerns for countries like Canada, the USA, Japan, Ireland, the Netherlands etc. The Chinese state has dismissed this accusation several times and has publicly termed them as attempts by the countries to malign China's image. They have termed the setups as 'Chinese Service Centres' instead of police stations, which are run by volunteers from the local Chinese communities to help each other.<sup>61</sup> However, in 2017, China's National Intelligence Law was implemented, which included an obligation for Chinese citizens and organisations to actively participate in information gathering and sharing with support from the state.<sup>62</sup> There has been a rise in intelligence reports as well as convictions of Chinese diasporas, organisations and businesses by the governments of their country of residence for engaging in activities on behalf of the party-state. For example, Singapore has started designating Chinese businessmen like Chan Man Ping Philip as "politically significant person"<sup>63</sup> under foreign interference law for working to spread the Chinese influence. His activities have been seen as "directed towards a political end in Singapore" while encouraging the ethnic Chinese in Singapore to tell the "China story well".<sup>64</sup> Another dimension includes involving Chinese immigrants in foreign countries in espionage and intimidation activities to persuade Chinese fugitives to go back to China to be prosecuted. For instance, 'Operation Fox Hunt' included a police officer coming to New Jersey, setting up a stakeout team, and even bringing the target's elderly father to coerce his return to China.<sup>65</sup>

## **Conclusion**

To conclude, there has been a shift in the Indian and Chinese state's approaches to engagement with the diaspora populations. This shift is rooted in both the countries' cultural and civilisational values. The civilizational approach is ultimately geared at securing a prominent position in the international arena while achieving their domestic goals of growth and development. Such an approach allows the state to enhance its position internationally without threatening the existing structures of hierarchy by creating a larger narrative of peaceful rise and collective growth. Nevertheless, beyond the narrative, it is important to note that the success of engagement with diasporas ultimately depends on the initiative, schemes and provisions provided by the country of origin. The goals and underlying intentions of the state in their engagement are reflective not of the civilisational values but the fundamental nature of the state. Therefore, the civilisational narrative needs to be supplemented with strong provisions and schemes that do not threaten the national security of other countries.

## Endnotes

1. “Finance and Development,” Finance and Development | F&D, September 1, 2011, <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/fandd/2011/09/ratha.htm>.
2. United Nations, “International Migration 2020 Highlights | United Nations,” n.d., <https://www.un.org/en/desa/international-migration-2020-highlights>.
3. MEA, “In a major initiative, the Government of India had set up a High Level Committee on the Indian Diaspora, in September 2000 under the Chairmanship of Dr. L M Singhvi, MP,” Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 2002, <https://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/12631/In+a+major+initiative+the+Government+of+India+had+set+up+a+High+Level+Committee+on+the+Indian+Diaspora+in+September+2000+under+the+Chairmanship+of+Dr+L+M+Singhvi+MP>
4. ET Times, “India Extends Validity of PIO Cards to up to December 31, 2024,” *The Economic Times*, February 5, 2024, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/nri/migrate/india-extends-validity-of-pio-cards-up-to-december-31-2024/articleshow/107424103.cms?from=mdr>.
5. Abhishek Pandey et al., “The Indian Diaspora: A Unique Case,” in *Diaspora Networks and the International Migration of Skills*, 2006, <https://doi.org/10.1596/978-0-8213-6647-9>.
6. Pandey et al., “The Indian Diaspora: A Unique Case,” 80.
7. Pandey et al., “The Indian Diaspora: A Unique Case,” 95.
8. Ajay Dubey, “India and the Indian Diaspora,” in *Handbook of India’s International Relations*, ed. David Scott, n.d., 257.
9. Dubey, “India and the Indian Diaspora.”
10. Rina Agarwala, “Tapping the Indian Diaspora for Indian Development,” in *The State and the Grassroots : Immigrant Transnational Organizations in Four Continents*, 2018, 85, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt9qd9c9.8>.
11. Renu Modi and Ian Taylor, “The Indian Diaspora in Africa: The Commodification of Hindu Rashtra,” *Globalizations* 14, no. 6 (February 28, 2017): 911–29, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14747731.2017.1287451>.

12. Rina Agarwala, "Tapping the Indian Diaspora for Indian Development," in *The State and the Grassroots : Immigrant Transnational Organizations in Four Continents*, 2018, 85, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt9qd9c9.8>.
13. Rina Agarwala, "Tapping the Indian Diaspora for Indian Development," in *The State and the Grassroots : Immigrant Transnational Organizations in Four Continents*, 2018, 85, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt9qd9c9.8>.
14. "Merger of Ministries," n.d., <https://pib.gov.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=137567>.
15. Junuguru Srinivas, "Modi's Cultural Diplomacy and Role of Indian Diaspora," *Central European Journal of International and Security Studies* 13, no. 2 (June 26, 2019): 83, <https://doi.org/10.51870/cejiss.a130201>.
16. Junuguru Srinivas, "Modi's Cultural Diplomacy and Role of Indian Diaspora," *Central European Journal of International and Security Studies* 13, no. 2 (June 26, 2019): 74, <https://doi.org/10.51870/cejiss.a130201>.
17. Junuguru Srinivas, "Modi's Cultural Diplomacy and Role of Indian Diaspora," *Central European Journal of International and Security Studies* 13, no. 2 (June 26, 2019): 85, <https://doi.org/10.51870/cejiss.a130201>.
18. Anjali Singapur, "Dis/Connections: Political Detachment, Religious Identity, and Nostalgic Evocation in the Indian-American Diaspora," by Swarthmore College, *Swarthmore College* (Undergraduate Senior Thesis in Sociology & Anthropology, 2021), <https://scholarship.tricolib.brynmawr.edu/server/api/core/bitstreams/0502a78c-0240-4202-8901-a8f901ac8185/content>.
19. Sumitra Badrinathan et al., "Social Realities of Indian Americans: Results From the 2020 Indian American Attitudes Survey," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, June 2021, <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2021/06/social-realities-of-indian-americans-results-from-the-2020-indian-american-attitudes-survey?lang=en>.
20. "MEA | FAQ on Overseas Indians," Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, n.d., <https://www.mea.gov.in/faq-overseas-indians.htm>.
21. "MEA | Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award (PBSA)," Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, n.d., <https://www.mea.gov.in/pravasi-bharatiya-samman.htm>.
22. ICCR, "History | Official Website of Indian Council for Cultural Relations, Government of India," n.d., <https://www.iccr.gov.in/about-us/history>.

23. “English Translation of Prime Minister’s Speech at Community Event in the Hague (June 27, 2017),” June 2017, <https://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/28612/English+translation+of+Prime+Ministers+speech+at+Community+event+in+the+Hague+-+June+27+2017#:~:text=There%20are%20embassies%20which%20have,i.e.%20Representatives%20of%20our%20Nation.>
24. Ahamad Fuwad, “You Are Our ‘rashtradoots’ to the World, Narendra Modi Tells Indian Diaspora in Netherlands,” *Https://Www.Indiatvnews.Com*, June 27, 2017, <https://www.indiatvnews.com/news/world-you-are-our-rashtradoots-to-the-world-narendra-modi-tells-indian-diaspora-in-netherlands-388390.>
25. Revathi Hariharan, “Indian Diaspora Is Our ‘Rashtradoot’: PM Modi at Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Convention in Indore | LIVE Update,” *News18*, January 9, 2023, <https://www.news18.com/news/india/pravasi-bharatiya-divas-pm-modi-to-flag-off-mega-convention-inaugurate-the-first-ever-digital-pbd-exhibition-6787009.html.>
26. Firstpost, “‘We’ll Write World’s Destiny’: PM Modi Hails Indian Spirit, Asserts Centrality to Global Growth,” *Firstpost*, July 9, 2024, <https://www.firstpost.com/india/pm-narendra-modi-india-russia-relations-visit-moscow-diaspora-speech-13791018.html.>
27. India in the Security Council, “International Conference on ‘Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam’ Celebrates Unity and Global Cooperation,” Welcome to Permanent Mission of India to the UN, New York, n.d., <https://www.pminewyork.gov.in/press?id=eyJpdiI6IjI5NVAzNENQZGFpGeTRD-Q2N6RmxPUUE9PSIsInZhbHVlIjoiaHhGRXEzSEpyZXVVM-1dQS1NaUCt0Zz09IiwibWFjIjoiN2U3YzExNjQyMWFjZjFkM-jlkZWRmZTg0MmZjZTBjOGU2YTU2ZjNiM2ZjZWJlYmJlZT-E3NmFINDFmMzEwMmJhZCJ9.>
28. Government of India Vice President’s Secretariat, “Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam’ Has Been the Guiding Light for Indian Family System- Vice President,” Press Information Bureau, n.d., <https://pib.gov.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=194493.>
29. Ministry of Women and Child Development, “Launch of ‘Alliance for Global Good- Gender Equity and Equality’ by India at World Economic Forum, Annual Meeting Davos, 15-19 January, 2024,” n.d., <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1997896.>
30. NIC, GOI, “The Group of Twenty (G20)| National Portal of India,” n.d., <https://www.india.gov.in/spotlight/group-twenty-g20.>

31. Ministry of Science & Technology, “Union Minister Dr Jitendra Singh Says, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi Has Raised the Esteem of Indian Diaspora Abroad,” n.d., <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=1920767>.
32. PIB Delhi, “Human-Centric Globalisation: Taking G20 to the Last Mile, Leaving None Behind -Narendra Modi,” 2023, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1955326>.
33. Ministry of External Affairs, “Distinguished Lectures Details,” Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, n.d., <https://www.mea.gov.in/distinguished-lectures-detail.htm?824>.
34. Prime Minister’s Office [PMO], “English rendering of Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi’s address from the ramparts of Red Fort on the occasion of 77th Independence Day,” 2023, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1948808>.
35. Ministry of Finance, “BUDGET 2023-24 PRESENTS VISION FOR AMRIT KAAL- BLUE PRINT FOR AN EMPOWERED AND INCLUSIVE ECONOMY,” Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav, n.d., <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=1895313>.
36. Ministry of External Affairs, “Cultural Diplomacy- a New Dimension in International Relations and the Role of North Eastern States of India in India’s Look East Policy,” Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 2013, <https://www.mea.gov.in/distinguished-lectures-detail.htm?163>.
37. Ministry of External Affairs, “Diaspora: A key resource for India’s Foreign Policy Objectives and Cultural Diplomacy,” Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 2016, <https://www.mea.gov.in/distinguished-lectures-detail.htm?561>.
38. NDTV, “Inspire at Least 5 Friends to Visit India”, PM Tells Indians in Denmark,” NDTV.com, 2022, <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/inspire-at-least-5-friends-to-visit-india-pm-narendra-modi-tells-indians-in-denmark-2943938>.
39. Zhuang Guotu, “China’s Policies on Chinese Overseas: Past and Present,” in *Routledge Handbook of the Chinese Diaspora* (Routledge, 2013), 31.
40. Sheng Ding, “Engaging Diaspora via Charm Offensive and Indigenised Communication: An Analysis of China’s Diaspora Engagement Policies in the Xi Era,” *Politics* 35, no. 3–4 (April 28, 2015): 230–44, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9256.12087>.



41. Carsten Schäfer and Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, “China’s Diaspora Policy Under Xi Jinping,” report, *SWP Research Paper*, vol. 10 (Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, November 2022), <https://doi.org/10.18449/2022RP10>.
42. Schäfer and Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, “China’s Diaspora Policy Under Xi Jinping,” 10:9.
43. Hong Liu and Els Van Dongen, “China’s Diaspora Policies as a New Mode of Transnational Governance,” *Journal of Contemporary China* 25, no. 102 (June 16, 2016): 809, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10670564.2016.1184894>.
44. Liu and Van Dongen, “China’s Diaspora Policies as a New Mode of Transnational Governance,” June 16, 2016, 811.
45. Liu and Van Dongen, “China’s Diaspora Policies as a New Mode of Transnational Governance,” June 16, 2016, 812.
46. Liu and Van Dongen, “China’s Diaspora Policies as a New Mode of Transnational Governance,” June 16, 2016, 813.
47. Jiaqi M. Liu, “When Diaspora Politics Meet Global Ambitions: Diaspora Institutions Amid China’s Geopolitical Transformations,” *International Migration Review* 56, no. 4 (January 19, 2022): 1255, <https://doi.org/10.1177/01979183211072824>.
48. Kalpit A Mankikar, “CCP’s use of overseas Chinese to influence western democracies,” orfonline.org, December 4, 2023, <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/ccps-use-of-overseas-chinese-to-influence-western-democracies>.
49. Liu, “When Diaspora Politics Meet Global Ambitions: Diaspora Institutions Amid China’s Geopolitical Transformations,” January 19, 2022, 1257.
50. Xi Jinping, “The Rejuvenation of the Chinese Nation Is a Dream Shared by All Chinese: [English Language Version],” in *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China Volume 1* (Shanghai Press, 2015), 84.
51. Xi Jinping, “Right Time to Innovate and Make Dreams Come True: [English Language Version],” in *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China Volume 1* (Shanghai Press, 2015), 81.
52. CMP, “Telling China’s Story Well - China Media Project,” China Media Project, April 18, 2021, [https://chinamediaproject.org/the\\_ccp\\_dictionary/telling-chinas-story-well/](https://chinamediaproject.org/the_ccp_dictionary/telling-chinas-story-well/).

53. CMP, “Telling China’s Story Well - China Media Project.”
54. Xinhua, “Xi Jinping Thought on Culture put forward at national meeting,” 2023, [http://en.cppcc.gov.cn/2023-10/09/c\\_927352.htm](http://en.cppcc.gov.cn/2023-10/09/c_927352.htm).
55. “Xi Jinping Thought on Culture to Serve as Source of Strength for National Rejuvenation,” The State Council of Information Office, 2023, [http://english.scio.gov.cn/topnews/2023-10/11/content\\_116737031.htm](http://english.scio.gov.cn/topnews/2023-10/11/content_116737031.htm).
56. Global Times, “Xi Jinping Thought on Culture Guides China’s Cultural Development,” Copyright 2021 by the Global Times, 2023, <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202310/1300689.shtml>.
57. William Zheng, “China officials hasten to implement Xi’s doctrine on culture and propaganda,” *South China Morning Post*, October 15, 2023, <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/politics/article/3237821/china-officials-hasten-implement-xis-doctrine-culture-and-propaganda>.
58. CHINA SCIO, “3 Things to Know About China’s Global Civilization Initiative,” 2023, [http://english.scio.gov.cn/in-depth/2024-04/03/content\\_117103205.htm](http://english.scio.gov.cn/in-depth/2024-04/03/content_117103205.htm).
59. Col Dcs Mayal, “Chinese Global Exchange Diplomacy and Influence Operations: An Overview,” orfonline.org, February 15, 2024, [https://www.orfonline.org/research/chinese-global-exchange-diplomacy-and-influence-operations-an-overview#\\_edn4](https://www.orfonline.org/research/chinese-global-exchange-diplomacy-and-influence-operations-an-overview#_edn4).
60. Diana Fu and Emile Dirks, “China’s overseas police stations: An imminent security threat?,” *Brookings*, February 16, 2024, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/chinas-overseas-police-stations-an-imminent-security-threat/>.
61. Embassy PRC in Canada, “Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Wang Wenbin’s Regular Press Conference ...,” archive.ph, January 11, 2024, <https://archive.ph/BRiUd>.
62. NPC China, “National Intelligence Law of the People’s Republic of China,” June 27, 2017, [https://cs.brown.edu/courses/csci1800/sources/2017\\_PRC\\_NationalIntelligenceLaw.pdf](https://cs.brown.edu/courses/csci1800/sources/2017_PRC_NationalIntelligenceLaw.pdf).
63. Rachel Chan, “Singaporean businessman designated as ‘politically significant person’ under foreign interference law,” *CNA*, February 26, 2024, <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/singapore/philip-chan-businessman-politically-significant-person-fica-mha-4149331>.

64. Tan Dawn Wei Lim Min Zhang, “The case of Philip Chan: Beijing steps up efforts to co-opt diaspora to ‘tell the China story well,’” *The Straits Times*, February 4, 2024, <https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/tell-the-china-story-well-beijing-s-campaign-to-co-opt-chinese-diaspora-gains-urgency-amid-pressures>.
65. Sebastian RotellaKirsten Berg, “Operation Fox Hunt: How China Exports Repression Using a Network of Spies Hidden in Plain Sight,” *ProPublica*, February 16, 2024, <https://www.propublica.org/article/operation-fox-hunt-how-china-exports-repression-using-a-network-of-spies-hidden-in-plain-sight>.

## **About the VIVEKANANDA INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION**

The Vivekananda International Foundation is an independent non-partisan institution that conducts research and analysis on domestic and international issues, and offers a platform for dialogue and conflict resolution. Some of India's leading practitioners from the fields of security, military, diplomacy, government, academia and media have come together to generate ideas and stimulate action on national security issues.

The defining feature of VIF lies in its provision of core institutional support which enables the organisation to be flexible in its approach and proactive in changing circumstances, with a long-term focus on India's strategic, developmental and civilisational interests. The VIF aims to channelise fresh insights and decades of experience harnessed from its faculty into fostering actionable ideas for the nation's stakeholders.

Since its inception, VIF has pursued quality research and scholarship and made efforts to highlight issues in governance, and strengthen national security. This is being actualised through numerous activities like seminars, round tables, interactive dialogues, Vimarsh (public discourse), conferences and briefings. The publications of VIF form lasting deliverables of VIF's aspiration to impact on the prevailing discourse on issues concerning India's national interest.



### **VIVEKANANDA INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION**

3, San Martin Marg, Chanakyapuri, New Delhi – 110021

Phone: +91-11-24121764, 24106698

Email: [info@vifindia.org](mailto:info@vifindia.org),

Website: <https://www.vifindia.org>

Follow us on twitter@vifindia