

# Chapter 5

## Diaspora Diplomacy: Conflict Resolution through Informal Ties

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### Abstract

*Diplomacy is traditionally seen as a task for ambassadors and other officials who act as representatives to facilitate and maintain government-to-government communication. Modern statesmanship is much broader and diaspora communities play a significant role in generating and maintaining dialogue. The networks that develop between receiving and sending countries provide informal avenues for mutual understanding and shared experiences to build bridges between diverse peoples and cultures. In addition to official relationships, links produce broad interactions that allow misunderstandings—caused by linguistic or cultural differences—to be overcome. When diplomacy works, new partnerships develop and there are avenues to de-escalate tensions and misunderstandings. The networks that emerge through diasporas build important bridges between the host and home country and provide a means to acquire connections to enhance political, cultural and economic connections. When individuals travel to the Middle East, they maintain communication with colleagues at home when they share their experiences and facilitate interaction. Social media allows one's experiences to be shared with thousands—when someone is helped or treated unfairly, many people hear of it and this becomes*

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*the basis for how they perceive the recipient country. Diaspora networks build bridges that allow communication to take place much more broadly than through official relationships.*

### **Cultural Exchange and Dialogue**

When many individuals from the same nation move to a foreign place to live and work, they face many challenges that impact on their identity. Immigrants have always had to walk a fine line between assimilating into their new home and keeping their cultural identity intact. In American history, nineteenth century government policies sought to eliminate the immigrants' cultural heritage and tie their identity to the United States. The newly-arrived residents would often speak only English in an effort to make life easier for the next generations. In other words, it was a zero-sum game. The immigrants would give up their cultural uniqueness and language to better fit in to a new culture. Cultural identity was sacrificed in the name of assimilation. Even when diaspora communities gave up their ethnic heritage, the broader American communities reacted negatively to their presence.

In the West today, immigration is a divisive issue due to the changes they bring to the local market. The indigenous non-skilled workers bear the economic costs as immigrants accept lower wages and work longer hours. As a result, citizens have become resentful of immigrants and blame them for unemployment and a lack of social mobility. Governments have also tried to limit immigration and allow migrants only in special circumstances, often giving preferential treatment to individuals from countries that were deemed to be relatively close to the host country's culture. Unless there is a demographic or economic need for immigrants, diaspora communities may generate resentment from people whose livelihoods are jeopardised by the new residents.

Beginning after World War II, immigration patterns began to change. Governments were still skeptical of allowing many immigrants in, especially since they were often worried about their impact on the economy. However, immigrant

populations began to be less concerned with assimilation and more concerned with retaining their own cultural identities. While diasporas had often retained close ties within their own communities, the new era of immigration led to diasporas focusing on being the arbiters of original culture and working to preserve that culture. While leaders and diasporas would often still urge their fellow immigrants to try to understand the culture of the host nation, they also began to push to keep their local culture alive.

One example of a diaspora that tried to keep its culture alive was the Russian immigrant community in San Francisco, California. While many of the children of immigrants refused to try to speak or learn to speak Russian, the adults continued with cultural traditions, speaking the language, and often telling their children that they would one day be proud of their heritage. One result of this was the establishment of the museum of Russian culture in San Francisco, which opened its doors not only to the immigrant community, but also welcomed people from other cultures to learn about Russian culture, language, religion and history.

The Russian diaspora was often very vocal on political issues, especially those related to defeating communism. Many of those in the Russian diaspora had emigrated during the Russian revolution and civil war and were eager to fight the communists in the Soviet Union. They did this through lobbying politicians and making sure that the history of communist repressions was understood in the United States. Politicians, in turn, were happy to speak to the Russians to advance their own agenda. They were less interested in learning about Russian culture and identity than they were in advancing their objective of fighting communist ideology. Nevertheless, Russian culture and history did make a big impression on the intellectual community in the United States. For example, Russian literature, ballet and classical music gained tremendous popularity, as did the tragedy of the end

of the Romanov dynasty.<sup>3</sup> Our chapter will illustrate how diaspora communities contribute to the diplomatic service of their country—in this example, the Russian population in America helped to discredit communism and advance U.S. interests during the Cold War.

A more recent example of the symbiotic relationship between diasporas and diplomacy occurred in the 1990s, when US President Bill Clinton met with many leaders of Eastern European diasporas to try to earn their support for the Democratic Party. One of the issues that he realised would endear him to the diasporas was the expansion of NATO into Eastern Europe. Since the end of the Cold War meant that the Soviet Union was no longer a threat to the United States, expanding NATO seemed like a low-cost means of securing the support of Eastern European diasporas in domestic politics. Thus, Clinton pushed to expand NATO into Central and Eastern Europe. Indeed, the diasporas of those countries supported Clinton and helped to propel him to a second term in office.<sup>4</sup>

Some states have been able to use diasporas to influence the domestic politics in other countries. For example, Russia has used the Russian diaspora in the Baltic states to influence public policy there and to affect change related to policy towards the diaspora. This is especially true for issues like language use and teaching language and culture in public schools.<sup>5</sup>

Few studies have examined the role of diasporas in helping host countries resolve conflicts. However, diasporas

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3 Davis, G. D., & Slobodchikoff, M. O. (2018). *Cultural Imperialism and the Decline of the Liberal Order: Russian and Western Soft Power in Eastern Europe*. Rowman & Littlefield; Slobodchikoff, M. and G. Doug Davis (2017). Roots of Russian soft power: rethinking Russian national identity. *Сравнительная политика*, 8(2), 19–36.

4 Slobodchikoff, M. O., Stewart, B., & Davis, G. D. (2021). The Challenge to NATO: Global Security and the Atlantic Alliance. *The Challenge to NATO*. University of Nebraska Press.

5 Slobodchikoff, M. O. (2010). The New European Union: Integration as a Means of Norm Diffusion. *JEMIE*, 9, 1.

play an especially important role in track-two diplomacy—the term refers to unofficial or ill-defined groups of adversarial states who attempt to find strategies and influence public opinion to solve conflicts.<sup>6</sup> This activity is not carried out by official diplomats, but by informed citizens who are well-placed to find solutions to problems or who are able to impact public opinion. Diaspora communities are particularly good at carrying out track-two diplomacy by being able to bridge the conflicting sides and by sharing their discussion with government officials. The national communities working in foreign states have incentives to find solutions to disputes and are well-placed to contribute because they have connections on both sides. There have been efforts during the Ukraine war to use members of the Russian diaspora, specifically those who had emigrated from Russia in recent years, to try to create back-channel communications with the Russian government. Diasporas play a vital role in creating those ties and providing opportunities for conflict resolution that regular diplomacy cannot possibly provide.

The use of diasporas not only provides plausible deniability in any negotiation, but the diasporas themselves can be used as sounding boards to see if certain proposals will be palatable in trying to reduce conflict. For example, the Indian diaspora in the United Arab Emirates can be used by the UAE to see if certain proposals would meet with approval in New Delhi. Further, if a diaspora is mistreated by a host country, that can lead to increased tensions between the host country and the country from which the diaspora came. The Indian diaspora in the UAE increases the incentives for New Delhi to strengthen and sustain its relationship with the UAE.

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6 Track two diplomacy is somewhat challenging to define because all ad hoc networks where it has occurred are unique and often not repeated. For a good summary of Track Two diplomacy see: Jones, Peter (2015). *Track Two Diplomacy in Theory and Practice*. United States: Stanford University Press.

## Diaspora in the MENA Region and Beyond

The Indian diaspora in the UAE comprises approximately 30% of the total population of the UAE.<sup>7</sup> There are many social and cultural organisations specifically geared towards the Indian diaspora. Due to the size of the diaspora and its various social and cultural organisations, cooperation has occurred between the government in the UAE and the Indian diaspora, as well as the Indian Embassy in the UAE, to create a special organisation that will uphold the rights of Indian workers within the UAE. This trilateral cooperation is necessary to avoid the human rights violations such as those which happened to Indian migrant workers in Qatar prior to the World Cup in 2022.<sup>8</sup> The plight of migrant Indian workers in Qatar caused relations between India and Qatar to sour. However, the UAE has been able to better manage Indian workers by collaborating closely with the Indian diaspora as well as the Indian Embassy.

The strength of the Indian diaspora in the UAE is a great example of how governments can work in tandem with diasporas to achieve peaceful relations and good diplomacy. By cooperating with the diasporas as well as with foreign governments, a second-tier diplomacy system is established, which in turn facilitates communication and ultimately serves to prevent conflict.

### Vienna Convention and Diaspora Diplomacy

The diaspora populations build networks that assist in both the sending and host countries foreign ministry. In addition to track-two diplomacy, which is unofficial but direct, there are multiple ways in which immigrant communities can work to provide vital assistance to ambassadors and other accredited representatives of their home country.

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7 Embassy of India, Abu Dhabi, U.A.E. (indembassyuae.gov.in)

8 Babar, Z., & Vora, N. (2022). The 2022 World Cup and migrants' rights in Qatar: Racialised labour hierarchies and the influence of racial capitalism. *The Political Quarterly*, 93(3), 498-507.

The Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations was signed in 1961<sup>9</sup> and outlined the tasks for diplomatic missions. First, they need to act as a representative of the sending state in more than a social or ceremonial role. Second, they need to protect host state interests and the property and ownership of firms in the host country. Third, diplomats should negotiate and sign treaties. Fourth, they need to gather information on the state of affairs and developments through all legal means, and report home. Finally, they need to promote relations and deepen economic, commercial, cultural and scientific relations. Ambassadors normally devote the largest amount of their work to assisting private enterprises in local commercial disputes. Diaspora communities are not able to accomplish each of these tasks as they have no possibility of bargaining or signing treaties, but they can help fulfill the diplomatic tasks in the other areas. This is referred to as track-one diplomacy.

In contrast to track-one diplomacy, all citizen-to-citizen diplomacy, as opposed to official government-to-government diplomacy, is known as track-two diplomacy. One of the most famous types of track-two diplomacy occurred during the Cold War where Soviet citizens and United States citizens would get together to accomplish tasks. Project RAFT (Russians and Americans for Teamwork) was created by river runners to cooperate in rafting the Chuya River in the Soviet Union, and the Colorado River in the United States. The whole idea was that by individuals getting to know each other through cooperating in running rivers, that it would be difficult to remain enemies and that governments would then follow and peace would be achievable. Thus, peace would be possible through sport.<sup>10</sup>

While track-one diplomacy and track-two diplomacy are opposites, it is possible to combine the two tracks. Known

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9 Johnson, D. H. N. (1961). Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations. *The International and Comparative Law Quarterly*, 10(3), 600–615.

10 World Rafting Championship History - International Rafting Federation (<https://www.internationalrafting.com/racing/wrchistory>)

as track one and a half diplomacy, governments work with private citizens to achieve diplomacy.<sup>11</sup> Diasporas can work in either track one and a half diplomacy as well as track-two diplomacy. Diplomacy does not simply mean engagement, but strategic communication to promote and protect national interests.<sup>12</sup> While social and market interactions all work to promote understanding, build relationships and mitigate disagreements, this contact does not constitute diplomacy. Diplomacy refers to communication that impacts the national interest and this applies to both the host and the sending nation. A diaspora community can work to enhance communication, understanding and knowledge between states and work to build bridges where people were previously divided, thereby becoming an important diplomatic actor.

One important distinction is that diplomatic advantages from diaspora communities are much greater than any benefits that originate from tourists. There is a great difference between visiting and living in a foreign country. Short-term visitors normally travel to scenic, cultural, or historical areas for enjoyment, but rarely does this interaction generate long-term relationships. On the other hand, living and working abroad requires the resident to live and shop in their community, and this generates many opportunities to establish long-term friendships. A resident has to receive and maintain permission from the local government to live and work there. It is only possible to keep residency when the immigrant contributes to and benefits the host country. An effective diaspora community offers a unique service that directly profits and serves its new community. In establishing

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11 Mapendere, J. (2005). Track One and a Half Diplomacy and the Complementarity of Tracks, *Culture of Peace Online Journal*, 2: 1, 66–81.

12 Davis, G. Doug & Michael O. Slobodchikoff (2024) *American Global Leadership: Ailing U.S. Diplomacy and Solutions for the Twenty-First Century*. University of Tennessee Press.  
Grossman, Marc. 2024. "US Foreign Policy, or a Policy of the Elites?" edited by Davis & Slobodchikoff in *American Diplomacy Since the Cold War: Essays for Fixing U.S. Foreign Policy*. University of Tennessee Press.

these ties, members of the diaspora need to integrate and build bridges with the local population and build networks that include personal, social, and economic relations that advance their home country's national interest as well as the country in which the diaspora lives.

## **Economic Diplomacy**

Modern statesmanship is much broader than acknowledging formal relations, and diaspora communities play a significant role in generating and maintaining dialogue. The networks that develop between receiving and sending countries provide informal avenues for mutual understanding and shared experiences to build bridges between diverse peoples and cultures. In addition to official relationships, links produce broad interactions that allow misunderstandings—caused by linguistic or cultural differences—to be overcome. When diplomacy works, new partnerships develop and there are avenues to de-escalate tensions and misunderstandings. These connections have commercial benefits that are realised by both the home and receiving country.

When a firm undertakes international operations, it brings greater risks than domestic investment because there are legal, linguistic, social, cultural and political differences. When investment is more unpredictable, firms only take this risk if they can earn higher returns. Firms must assess their likely costs and benefits before investing, and if the potential profits are not high enough to compensate for potential losses, they do not undertake the investment. Historically, this is a vital diplomatic task, and states with more effective foreign service representatives see more economic rewards. Diaspora communities live and work within the host country, and can share their experiences through personal networks that can mitigate the risk. Small communities living abroad provide a great window into the local culture and society that helps firms properly account for risks and provide more realistic expectations for future sales. States and large enterprises rely not only on their diplomats, but on their expatriates to provide

insights that allow them to properly assess the relative costs and benefits. The better the information, the more accurate the models and the smaller returns would be required to justify the investment. The diaspora community's shared knowledge increases the aggregate capital inflows into the host country.

The largest obstacle to international trade and investment is gaining sufficient knowledge to overcome the increased risk associated with global transactions. Firms can generate additional revenue by expanding their production or trade into foreign markets. Diaspora communities provide knowledge to firms that in earlier historic eras was a diplomatic task. One major diplomatic task is, in fact, to learn and report home in order to facilitate international trade and investment.<sup>13</sup> The official diplomatic capabilities, however, are limited to the individual staff in their embassy and offices. This is one area where diaspora communities directly aid the task of diplomats and provide important insights into their host country for strategic players.

Diaspora communities facilitate this expansion by sharing their familiarity and experience of the host country's legal system, society, market, cultural life and political system. Countries sending their citizens abroad that grow into small communities in foreign countries have a resource that allows them to better gauge risks associated with expansion or trade, and this facilitates market growth for firms in their home country. The benefit varies by industrial sector. Financial firms and banks do not expand internationally to gain new clients, but rather to retain their existing clients who move abroad.<sup>14</sup> As diaspora communities grow, financial institutions in the home country are likely to open offices to preserve their clients. When international bank expansion takes place, this opens the door for other industrial sectors to move into the

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13 Davis, G. Doug 2011. "Regional Trade Agreements and Foreign Direct Investment." *Politics & Policy*. 39:3, 401-419.

14 Williams, Barry (2002) "The Defensive Expansion Approach to Multinational banking: Evidence to Date." *Financial Markets, Institutions, & Instruments*. 11:2: 127-203.

host country by allowing them to continue using their home country's financial institutions, where there is a long history.

Merchants focus on importing goods and services when there is local demand for the product. One way in which diaspora communities serve their home country is through their desire to import goods and services from their home country. These goods serve to increase the aggregate demand for the products, and local merchants wishing to capitalise on this potential profit import goods into the host country. This process works in reverse, as diaspora communities integrate into their host state and come to rely on locally produced items. When individuals return home, they continue to desire these items and more goods are traded from the host back to the home country. In this way, the diaspora communities serve both the host and home country's national interest and facilitate economic relations.

The fourth task specified in the Vienna Convention is that diplomats need to learn as much as possible about their host country—through legal means—and report this back to local authorities. This is greatly aided by diaspora communities who have many informal connections and are able to anticipate policy, social, or market changes and communicate this to actors in their home country that would be affected. When firms invest abroad they are at an initial disadvantage when it comes to being able to influence government and understand social or market changes. Diaspora communities are deeply networked within their host country and have the experience to distinguish and understand what elements may pose future risks and what will pass. Wise diplomats need to establish deep relations with their own citizens who can provide them with knowledge and warnings of changes that may affect their home country, its enterprises, or its citizens. Official diplomats need to foster these relations to be able to do their job and complete their tasks. This is especially important for businesses that need to anticipate any political or social change that could impact their overall profitability. The diaspora community, when it works well, is able to identify these risks and petition the government to prevent the negative policy

from taking effect. When this is successful, no-one will be aware because the problem was effectively countered and prevented. Diplomats rely on their diaspora communities to identify potential problems and report them while working on mitigating their negative impact.

There are important dangers a country faces when its political leader leaves and is replaced by another who is not widely understood. This is a particularly perilous time for a country's foreign policy, because the new leader will need to consolidate power and normally install a new foreign minister. In some cases, such as the United States, thousands of political appointees working in the highest offices leave their positions and are replaced. Even when the changes are smaller in magnitude, a leadership transformation generates a lot of insecurity. Will the new leader follow the same policies as their predecessor, or will they seek to revise the status quo? In these circumstances, a diaspora community works to overcome the instability in this transition by providing the incoming ambassador and staff with their network of contacts and by their willingness to preserve strong relations. When a strong diaspora community is present, this overcomes institutional weaknesses created by leadership changes (Davis & Slobodchikoff, 2024). The diplomats who arrive in the host country need to rely on the diaspora community leaders to build the most effective bridges to community, economic, and political leaders in the host country. As such, the overall diplomatic task is greatly aided by a diaspora community that provides a long-term perspective and works to preserve relations even following a leadership change.

Diaspora communities do pose one challenge to official diplomacy when it comes to sanctions. When one country engages in behaviour that the international community wishes to punish, Western states find it politically expedient to impose economic sanctions on the offending state. The idea behind this policy is to create incentives to change behaviour by levying economic penalties that produce harm by restricting access to currency, markets, or goods. Sanctions are used to change the cost and benefits to encourage the

targeted state to alter its conduct. Diaspora networks work to undermine these measures for two reasons. The community has an interest in maintaining trade and keeping other market exchanges open. When there are sanctions, the personal livelihood of the diaspora community is in jeopardy and they are likely to quietly find alternative means to preserve their local market. At the same time, the community has the means through connections and a network to bypass the restrictions and provide access to the limited products through alternative means. This makes it possible for the sanctioned country to continue participating in the global economy. In this case, even when a state is engaging in negative policy, it is an advantage to host diaspora communities because their informal networks and personal incentives allow them to overcome sanctions.

## **Diaspora Communities De-escalate Conflict**

When large diaspora communities are present, they work to build bridges that can work to overcome and mitigate disputes between their home and host countries. When diaspora communities function well, the home country needs to devote more attention to the country hosting their citizens. The country sending the workers abroad benefits through the financial remittances that are provided to their families—it provides social welfare to a significant population who is often dependent on these transfers. The enhanced market interdependence leads to economic expansion that works to build incentives for the home country to deepen and maintain their relations with the host state. The political calculus changes and there is a need to mitigate disputes and adjust early while they are small. Their diplomatic staff and mission will change its focus to support and strengthen relations with the host.

A large diaspora requires a larger, more active diplomatic staff to provide services to their nationals and learn as early as possible of any changes in the host country that could impact their citizens. The additional diplomats can help their nationals who get into legal trouble or have other emergencies.

## Diaspora in the MENA Region and Beyond

The other critical task is that the diaspora community learns of problematic social, market, or political changes that could negatively impact their community. The advantage is that large diaspora communities will be integrated into the society and be attentive to the legal, economic, and institutional environment. When these areas change, the diaspora community can share this with their diplomatic staff so that they get addressed to minimise any negative consequences. Diaspora communities provide a great advantage to states in that they can observe and identify potential problems while they are small and address them at the micro level before they constitute significant challenges. When this is working it is difficult to perceive from the outside, but maintaining strong relations requires an active diplomacy and for the sending state to prioritise these relations.

The diaspora community will also establish financial, investment, and trade bridges between the two countries and this will play a significant role in mitigating conflict. These communities deepen the economic relationship and generate trade and investment. Firms in the host and home countries will pressure their leaders to preserve good relations so that the commerce can continue. Large private enterprises will have more leverage over governmental policy than individuals, and the commercial transactions between the host and home country will work to deepen the incentives to maintain strong, stable diplomatic relations.

States hosting the diaspora community benefit through the contribution made by the diaspora community. The economic bridges increase revenue to local companies and also provide additional export markets. The longer the diaspora community remains active within the host, the greater the costs of losing it. The host also benefits by having informal networks that provide it with important information about the home state. These networks operate on both sides to increase knowledge and allows communities of different cultures to overcome divisions. It fosters understanding and weakens nationalism.

The home and host state's diplomatic prowess will increase due to the diaspora community. The enhanced social, political and economic connections increase the incentives for broader strategic coordination. Home countries that wish to maintain goodwill with the host country government will support their initiatives and needs in international institutions, such as the UN. The diaspora community works to minimise conflict and increases the partnerships so that one has more friends in the international arena. It is also more likely that this cooperation can lead to additional trade and investment treaties. The diaspora community will work to advance these relations, and one result is that the two countries will have greater international standing as they support each other in global institutions.

The world is filled with division caused by misunderstanding and fear. The diaspora community works to overcome this as individuals share their experience and knowledge with their peers and family members. Social media has connected the world and positive events are more likely to be known broadly. The diaspora community can share its experience and increase the understanding and knowledge of the host country—leading to more support for its community. The host country is also likely to see increased tourism from visiting family members and friends, but the social media posts may also attract additional tourists who become attracted through this exposure.

Large diaspora communities benefit both the sending and host countries through their social, political and economic connections. This partnership is built through thousands of micro-components that manifest themselves in the national relations between these states and this facilitates cooperation in the most important international institutions. When individuals move to work in another country and they are followed by thousands of their peers, the benefits change incentives to deepen cooperation and enhance relationships.

Diaspora communities can play a vital role in diplomacy. They not only aid in economic cooperation which leads to

positive benefits to both the host country as well as the country from which the diaspora originated, but diaspora communities also serve as a tool of conflict resolution when states cannot resolve conflict using track-one diplomacy. They allow information and communication links to continue even if official government channels of communication are broken. The problem with traditional studies of diplomacy is that it is very difficult to directly measure the effect on diplomacy of diaspora communities. While it is relatively simple to observe high-level track-one diplomatic efforts, track one and a half diplomatic efforts are effective precisely because they cannot be easily seen or measured. That gives governments the ability to utilise diaspora communities to lay the groundwork for effective diplomacy both in conflict resolution and economic relations.

Ultimately, diaspora diplomacy is a fundamental, yet sorely overlooked aspect of diplomacy. Future studies of diaspora diplomacy should use focus groups and interviews to parse exact methods in which diaspora communities aid governments in mitigating conflict as well as helping to build economic cooperation between states. Because diasporas are non-governmental actors, their role in diplomacy is often viewed as being non-important. Yet, in reality, diaspora communities are vital links between governments in both economics and conflict resolution. They provide a layer of knowledge and willingness to help governments achieve strategic objectives. While skeptics might argue that their loyalty lies solely with either their country of origin or their host country, the reality is much more complicated. Diaspora communities want to achieve many of the same goals that other individuals want to achieve. They want to create a good and secure life with opportunities for advancement and social mobility. The reason that they emigrated in the first place was often to pursue those opportunities because their country of origin was not able to provide a secure life for them. Thus, it is in the interest of the diaspora communities to help to achieve good relations between their host country and their country of origin. As many members of the diaspora communities still

have family members living in their country of origin, the strengthening of economic ties between the host country and the country of origin directly benefit members of the diaspora communities. Similarly, by aiding in conflict resolution, diaspora communities directly benefit as they are looked upon as aiding peace instead of as enemies. Diaspora communities often suffer if conflict breaks out between their host country and their country of origin.

### **Diaspora Diplomacy in the MENA region**

The MENA region is well-placed to benefit from the diaspora communities employed within the region. The region's energy reserves provide large resources with which to employ foreign workers, and this has attracted many foreigners who can contribute to the host country. The Middle East hosts different types of migrants, some of them being displaced refugees who have escaped a natural disaster or conflict. The non-displaced migrants bring labour and intellectual skills as they come to work or study. The professional foreign workers often bring family members who are also educated and can contribute to the community's cultural and social life, even if they do not work. The non-displaced refugees provide more immediate benefits to both the host country and their home by facilitating the communication that facilitates deeper integration. Migrants escaping disaster or conflict can also serve to bring together and build bridges between countries, but this is not immediate because their first priority is survival, not integration. Since they had to flee their home country, the widespread scattering of their neighborhood to escape a crisis means that there is often no way for them to share their knowledge with the community back home. The primary diplomatic benefit within the Middle East comes from professional, non-displaced migrants.

Not all MENA states are equally endowed to receive migrants, but those possessing the most international energy reserves are able to provide high incomes and reliable positions for educated workers who wish to migrate to those

states. The resource endowments are greater in the Middle East than North Africa, and they host most of the non-displaced migrants.

The migrant population in the MENA region has more than doubled in the past decades.<sup>15</sup> In fact, the twelve Arab Middle Eastern states hosted 24.1 million migrant workers in 2019, constituting fourteen percent of all global migrant labourers.<sup>16</sup> There is another regional uniqueness in the MENA that is not found anywhere else in the world: four states have more migrant workers than citizens. The UAE, Qatar, Kuwait and Bahrain have more than one migrant for each citizen, and rely extensively on foreign labour for their economy and services. In addition, Saudi Arabia is another notable case as it hosts 13.5 million migrants, which is the third most globally after the United States and Germany.<sup>17</sup> Israel also relies on a professional migrant population, as these diasporas compose approximately twenty-two percent of its population. Professional migrants are of vital importance to the MENA region, and can help to provide a unique service to both the new host country as well as to their country of origin by helping to aid in diplomacy.

## Conclusion

Diaspora communities can be a useful tool for states in managing conflict. States need to understand how to properly maintain relations with a diaspora community, and policymakers need to be intentional in building bridges. One of the ways to utilise the diaspora community is to develop

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15 Connor, Philip. 2016. "Middle East's Migrant Population More Than Doubles Since 2005." Pew Research Center, October.

16 The data comes from the International Labor Organization (<https://www.ilo.org/beirut/areasofwork/labour-migration/lang--en/index.htm>) and includes data for Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Occupied Palestinian Territory, Syrian Arab Republic, United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

17 Data from Statistica

ties with leaders within the diaspora communities. There are multiple ways to achieve this, but one place to start is to attend cultural festivals, being open to the cultures represented by different diaspora communities, and being open to meeting with members of the diaspora community. These small steps can go a long way to integrating the diaspora community so that they do not feel or experience isolation. The key is not to push or force integration at the cost of a diaspora's traditional culture, but rather to appreciate the culture while looking to generate true cultural exchange and understanding.

Open communication with leaders of different diaspora communities is of paramount importance. If diaspora communities are to be used effectively in international diplomacy, then diplomacy must exist between the diaspora communities and their host countries. These informal lines of communication are not easy to establish; governments must make efforts to build bridges and create opportunities to improve mutual understanding. If efforts are not made, the diaspora community may cause domestic turmoil and build frustration rather than bonds. It is important to avoid alienating members from the home community who are well-connected with their home country.

Examining diaspora diplomacy is a new area of research. It is important to assess how governments interact with diaspora communities and to learn from the past so that the diaspora community works to benefit both the host and home country.