



**THE ROLE OF DIASPORAS IN INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND
SOFT POWER POLITICS**

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Abstract: *In the 21st century, globalization has reshaped not only economic and political relations but also social and cultural dynamics. One of the most visible outcomes of this transformation is the growing influence of diasporas — communities of people living outside their historical homeland. Modern diasporas have evolved from being passive outcomes of migration to becoming active participants in international relations, contributing to diplomacy, economy, and cultural exchange. This paper examines the role of diasporas in international cooperation and soft power politics, analyzing their mechanisms of influence, their contribution to state image-building, and their function as transnational actors in global governance.*

Keywords: *diaspora, globalization, soft power, international cooperation, transnational identity, diplomacy.*

The phenomenon of diaspora has become an integral part of the modern global order. With over 300 million people currently living outside their country of origin (according to the International Organization for Migration, 2024), diasporas represent one of the largest and most influential transnational groups in the world. They serve as bridges between nations, fostering international cooperation and shaping global cultural flows.

While early research perceived diasporas primarily through the lens of migration and displacement, contemporary studies emphasize their active political and economic roles. Scholars such as Robin Cohen (1997), William Safran (1991), and Rogers Brubaker (2005) describe diasporas as transnational communities characterized by a shared identity, emotional attachment to the homeland, and active engagement with both their host and origin countries.

The concept of soft power, introduced by Joseph Nye (1990), refers to the ability of a country to influence others through attraction rather than coercion — by means of culture, values, and diplomacy. Diasporas serve as one of the most effective soft power resources in the modern era.

Unlike traditional diplomacy, which is conducted by state institutions, diaspora diplomacy operates informally through social, economic, and cultural networks. It strengthens a nation's visibility abroad and enhances intercultural dialogue. In this context, diasporas act as non-state diplomatic actors, capable of promoting the homeland's interests while simultaneously contributing to the development of their host societies.

Diasporas play a multifaceted role in international cooperation. They contribute to global development through remittances, investment, and knowledge transfer. According to the





World Bank (2023), global remittance flows reached over USD 600 billion, surpassing foreign direct investment in several developing countries.

- **Economic Dimension:** Indian and Chinese diasporas have significantly influenced economic relations between their home and host countries, facilitating technology transfer, innovation, and entrepreneurship.
- **Political Dimension:** Diaspora organizations often participate in lobbying efforts, promoting the homeland's interests in foreign parliaments — as observed with Armenian, Israeli, and Irish diasporas in the United States.
- **Cultural Dimension:** Through cultural centers, education programs, and community initiatives, diasporas contribute to enhancing the soft image of their homelands.

Furthermore, diasporas serve as agents of intercultural communication, helping to prevent misunderstandings between nations and to promote tolerance and mutual understanding.

The mechanisms through which diasporas exercise influence in international politics can be categorized as follows:

Mechanism Type	Description
Lobbying and Political Participation	Influencing host country policies and advocating for homeland interests.
Cultural and Information Diplomacy	Promoting national culture, education, and values abroad through media and cultural institutions.
Economic Investments and Remittances	Channeling financial and intellectual capital into the homeland economy.
Human Capital Exchange	Facilitating mobility of skilled professionals and academic collaboration.
Transnational Networking	Building global communities that strengthen state-to-state and people-to-people ties.

These mechanisms demonstrate that diasporas are no longer passive migrants but strategic actors within the global power system, reinforcing soft power diplomacy.

Several states have institutionalized diaspora policies as part of their foreign strategies:

- India has created the “Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs” to strengthen ties with its 30-million-strong diaspora, promoting investments and cultural diplomacy.
- China’s “Huaren” diaspora supports economic growth in East Asia through business networks and remittances.
- Turkey established the “Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities (YTB)” to coordinate cultural diplomacy and political engagement among its diaspora.

These examples reveal how states integrate diasporas into their foreign policy architecture, using them as soft power assets and instruments of international cooperation.



In conclusion, diasporas have emerged as powerful non-state actors in international relations. They function as channels of cultural exchange, sources of investment, and instruments of diplomacy. Their transnational networks contribute to the diffusion of national values and foster mutual understanding among nations.

However, the growing influence of diasporas also presents challenges — such as dual loyalty, political fragmentation, and competition among diaspora groups. Therefore, successful diaspora engagement requires a balanced approach that promotes cooperation, transparency, and inclusivity.

In the future, the role of diasporas in global politics will expand further through digital platforms, virtual diplomacy, and transnational governance mechanisms. States that effectively utilize their diaspora potential will strengthen their soft power and enhance their international standing.

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