

Heated ties

Posted at: 18/10/2024

Heated ties: India - Canada Relations

Context:

- India escalated tensions with Canada by expelling six Canadian diplomats and recalling the Indian High Commissioner and other targeted diplomats, citing security concerns. This move came after Canada identified these officials as “persons of interest” in its investigation into the killing of Khalistan separatist Hardeep Singh Nijjar.

Background:

- A Reuters report, citing a Canadian government source, stated that **Canada had expelled six Indian diplomats**. India, however, clarified that the diplomats were being withdrawn due to security concerns and responded by expelling six Canadian diplomats in a tit-for-tat move.

Significance of India-Canada Relations:

- Bilateral trade in goods reached approximately **\$9.9 billion**, and services amounted to **\$6.5 billion** in 2022.
- Canada is home to one of the largest Indian diasporas, making up over 3% of its population.
- India and Canada have collaborated in space science since the 1990s, with **ISRO's commercial arm launching several Canadian nanosatellites**.
- The **2010 Civil Nuclear Agreement allowed Canada to provide uranium to India**.
- Canada's Indo-Pacific Policy recognizes India as a critical partner while viewing China as a disruptive power.

Challenges in India-Canada Relations:

- Canada's **Cold War alignment with NATO** contrasted with India's non-alignment policy.
- Canada supported a plebiscite in Kashmir, countering India's stance.
- Following India's **1998 nuclear tests**, Canada halted nuclear cooperation.
- Canada's immigration system has allowed individuals with contentious pasts to engage in activities hostile to other nations.
- Pro-Khalistan parties in the Canadian coalition government influence its stance.
- The Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), pending since 2010, could boost trade and GDP for both countries but remains unresolved.
- Canada's interference in India's domestic issues, like its support for the **2020 farmers' protests**, has strained relations.

Way Forward:

- Both nations should de-escalate the current tensions and resume diplomatic dialogue to address concerns without further disruption.
- Canada should ensure immigrant communities are not unduly empowered or used for political leverage.
- Individuals promoting violence or terrorism should face consequences for abusing freedom of expression.
- Both countries should collaborate under their existing 2018 Framework for Cooperation on Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism.

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