Diasporic Politics

Why in news?

The recent clashes in Leicester in the United Kingdom, and the building polarisation in New Jersey are two recent instances of how diasporic politics is taking a new and deeper turn.

What is diaspora nationalism?

- Diaspora nationalism is the phenomenon in which people living in foreign countries advocate, finance, and often arm nationalist movements in the countries they have left, often out of a nostalgic longing for an idealized homeland they have been forced to abandon.
- **Khalistan issue**- The fringe movement for a Sikh state (Khalistan) in India was sustained entirely by financing from North American Sikhs.
- **Case of Sri Lankan Tamils**- The Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora in Europe (and particularly the UK) kept Tamil nationalism alive in the island-state for decades.

Communal tinges

- **Babri Masjid Issue**- The demolition of the Babri Masjid in India saw widespread violence in Britain with temples attacked and a petrol bomb thrown at a Mosque.
- **Islamic fundamentalism**- The idea of using Britain as a launch pad for jihadi ideology was present in some groups that in turn licensed full-blown Islamophobia amongst many non-Muslim communities.

> *The scholar Benedict Anderson has called 'long- distance nationalism' can kill people in faraway homelands.*

What is the Leicester clash about?

- Disturbances in Leicester first began on August 28 2022 when fans from Hindu and Muslim communities reportedly clashed after India secured a win against Pakistan in the Asia Cup T20 tournament.
- Trouble flared up after an unplanned protest was taken out in Leicester.
- The situation worsened as videos of clashes began to circulate on social media.
- There were also reports of temple vandalism.
- The Indian High Commission in London issued a strongly worded statement condemning the violence against the Indian community.

What about the New Jersey incident?

- **Bulldozer controversy**- On the occasion of Independence Day, bulldozers were

brought by specific groups to the parade.
- The move seemed to be open and provocative against a particular community as bulldozers are alleged to be a weapon in the hands of the government to destroy their homes and livelihoods.

Why are diaspora fractures more distinctive in the US and the UK?

- **Involving politicians**- In the Eighties, after clashes broke out, there were no attempts to draw politicians in the UK or US in accusations of partisanship in India's communal conflicts.
- But in the discourse, the narratives are even pointing fingers at the local state, as if it was partisan in failing to protect a particular community.
- In the US, Hindu-Muslim politics is spilling into the inner core of the Democratic Party.
- **Explicit involvement of Indian state**- The Indian government's statement that begins with violence perpetrated against the Indian community appears to be polarised.
- **Political benefits**- The global ideological patrons of conflict will have an investment in politically milking these incidents.

References

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