

## Worksheet 16: Sociocultural exchanges

### The political importance of diasporas

- 1
  - a What is a diaspora?
  - b Briefly explain the origin of this term.

2

#### The Political Importance of Diasporas

Over the past 25 years, diasporas have increasingly become significant players in the international political arena. Examples of such politically active diaspora communities are the Jewish-, Greek-, Cuban- and Armenian-American associations that represent some of the strongest lobbies in Washington, DC. Diasporic Iraqi groups and individuals played crucial roles in encouraging American military intervention in Iraq in 2003. Many countries, such as Israel and Armenia, regard their diasporas as strategically vital political assets, while others, such as India, the Philippines, and other migrant-sending countries, have been recognizing the massive contributions their diasporas make through remittances.

There are many supporting reasons or conditions why, over the past few decades, such diasporas have become more prominent on the world stage. The development of new communication technologies have improved abilities to mobilize, and multiculturalism policies in receiving countries have revitalized ethnic pride and assertiveness. Also important are the growth of economic resources due to swelling migrant numbers, and the profound changes in the world political system itself as more democratic nation-states have emerged following the fall of communist regimes. In a range of policy areas today — including foreign affairs, economic development, and international migration — the place of diasporas increasingly needs to be taken into account.

**Figure 16.1** On 'The Political Importance of Diasporas'.

(Source: Steven Vertovec, 'The Political Importance of Diasporas', Centre on Migration, Policy and Society, Working Paper No.13, University of Oxford, 2005.)



- a** Comment on the political importance of the examples of diasporas given in Figure 16.1.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- b** Suggest why the political importance of many diasporas in the United States and elsewhere has increased in recent decades.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- c** Explain how diasporas can come to have considerable economic importance.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 3 a** List the main diasporas in the country in which you live.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- b** How do these diasporas organise themselves and how do they relate to mainstream culture?