



Mains Practice Question

Case Study

You are a young Indian Foreign Service (IFS) officer posted in a country where a large Indian diaspora resides. Recently, a conflict broke out in one of the regions of the country, and several members of the Indian community, including women and children, are stranded and seeking urgent evacuation. Your embassy has limited resources and a small staff.

While coordinating the evacuation, a prominent local businessperson with significant political connections requests immediate priority evacuation for his family, bypassing the official protocol. He offers to donate a large sum to support the evacuation mission if you agree to his demand. However, prioritizing his request would mean delaying the evacuation of several families who are in more precarious situations.

Adding to the complexity, you are under pressure from the local government to minimize visible evacuation operations as they fear it might escalate tensions further. You must decide how to proceed in this crisis, balancing ethical considerations, resource constraints, and diplomatic pressures.

- What are the stakeholders involved in this situation?
- Under the given conditions, what are the options available to you as the officer in charge of the evacuation?
- What are the ethical dilemmas being faced by you?

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Introduction

A young Indian Foreign Service officer is tasked with **overseeing the evacuation of Indian citizens stranded in a conflict zone abroad**. The officer encounters several challenges, including limited resources, pressure from the local government to keep operations discreet, and a prominent business person seeking preferential treatment in exchange for a donation. The officer must navigate ethical dilemmas, diplomatic sensitivities, and logistical constraints, ensuring that all actions are fair and prioritize the safety of vulnerable groups.

Body

(a) Stakeholders Involved:

Stakeholder	Role/Interest
Stranded Indian Community Members	Their safety and evacuation are the embassy's primary responsibility. They expect impartiality.
Women and Children	Vulnerable groups with heightened need for immediate protection and evacuation.
Prominent Businessperson	Seeks priority evacuation for family in exchange for donation, creating ethical and operational dilemmas.

Local Government	Pressures embassy to minimize visibility to avoid escalation of tensions in the region.
Embassy Staff	Limited manpower/resources; burdened with coordination under immense pressure
Government of India (GOI)	Responsible for protecting the diaspora and ensuring diplomatic relations with the host country.
Local Population	Risk of backlash or resentment against visible and perceived preferential evacuation operations.

(b) Options Available

Option 1: Prioritize the Businessperson's Family

- **Action:** Grant priority evacuation to the businessperson's family in exchange for the promised donation.
- **Pros:**
 - **Secures additional resources for the evacuation mission**, potentially helping more people.
 - Strengthens relations with an influential local figure, which may aid future diplomatic efforts.
- **Cons:**
 - **Violates ethical principles of fairness** and equity by prioritizing a family not in immediate danger.
 - Damages trust among the Indian diaspora and may lead to accusations of favoritism.
 - Could demoralize embassy staff and volunteers.

Option 2: Follow Protocols and Evacuate Based on Urgency

- **Action:** Adhere to the **official evacuation protocol**, prioritizing families based on need and precariousness of their situation.
- **Pros:**
 - **Upholds fairness and ethical integrity**, ensuring those in critical danger are evacuated first.
 - **Maintains the credibility of the embassy** and reinforces trust within the diaspora.
 - Avoids setting a precedent of favoritism or accepting conditional offers.
- **Cons:**
 - Misses the opportunity to secure additional resources.
 - **Risks alienating an influential figure**, potentially impacting local operations and diplomacy.
 - Limited resources could slow down the evacuation process for others.

Option 3: Negotiate a Compromise with the Businessperson

- **Action:** Accept the **donation without granting priority evacuation to the businessperson's family** but assure them that their turn will come within the operational capacity.
- **Pros:**
 - Acquires additional resources for the evacuation mission without compromising fairness.
 - **Shows responsiveness to the businessperson's concerns** while maintaining ethical integrity.
 - Preserves relations with the influential figure for future cooperation.
- **Cons:**
 - Risks offending the businessperson if their family feels delayed.
 - Might raise suspicion among others about favoritism if the compromise is not transparent.

Option 4: Engage the Local Government for Support

- **Action:** Approach the local government for assistance to expand evacuation capacity while

adhering to the protocol.

- **Pros:**
 - **Strengthens diplomatic collaboration**, ensuring smooth operations in a sensitive environment.
 - Demonstrates adherence to local authorities' preferences, minimizing the risk of escalating tensions.
- **Cons:**
 - **May delay the evacuation process** further due to bureaucratic hurdles.
 - Risks revealing the embassy's limited capacity, potentially weakening its position in the host country.

Option 5: Conduct a Low-Key Evacuation of All Critical Cases

- **Action:** Evacuate the **most vulnerable individuals quietly and strategically**, minimizing visibility while ensuring fairness.
- **Pros:**
 - Aligns with the **local government's directive to avoid escalation**.
 - **Maintains equity and prioritization** of those in greatest need.
 - Prevents unnecessary political backlash or community dissatisfaction.
- **Cons:**
 - Logistical challenges due to limited resources and small staff.
 - May be perceived as slow or inadequate by some, including the businessperson.

Chosen Option: Combination of Options 2, 3, and 5

- **Adhere to Protocols (Option 2):** Prioritize evacuation based on urgency and need.
 - Adhering to protocols ensures fairness by prioritizing the most vulnerable while maintaining the embassy's credibility and trust with the diaspora.
- **Negotiate with the Businessperson (Option 3):** Accept the donation but explain the necessity of following established evacuation protocols.
 - Assure them that their family will be evacuated soon within the plan.
- **Conduct Low-Key Operations (Option 5):** Quietly execute the evacuation of the most vulnerable to comply with local government directives and avoid tension escalation.

(c) Ethical Dilemmas

- **Utilitarian vs Deontological Ethics:** The situation pits utilitarian ethics (maximizing benefit by accepting the donation) against deontological ethics (following duty and ensuring fairness).
 - **Accepting the donation might enhance the evacuation** effort overall but compromises the **principles of impartiality and justice**.
- **Fairness vs Favoritism:** Giving preferential treatment to the businessperson's family undermines fairness and the trust of the Indian community.
 - However, it **might lead to securing valuable resources** for the evacuation mission.
- **Protocol vs Humanitarian Need:** Strict adherence to protocol may delay support for the most vulnerable individuals, such as women and children.
 - Deviating from protocol could create a precedent that compromises ethical governance.
- **Diplomatic Pressure vs Operational Efficiency:** The local government's insistence on minimizing visible operations conflicts with the need for timely and large-scale evacuations.
 - Balancing their demands with operational goals is critical.

Conclusion

In this crisis, a balanced approach ensures the **safety of the most vulnerable while maintaining fairness and ethical integrity**. By leveraging additional resources without compromising principles and **conducting low-key operations**, the embassy can efficiently manage the evacuation. This approach upholds **diplomatic sensitivities, strengthens trust, and aligns with long-term responsibilities**.

