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Cross-border Politics: Diasporic Mobilization and State Response

ABSTRACT

The global dimensions of diasporic politics and state response have generated a large, interdisciplinary literature. Yet, scholars struggle to find the most productive conceptual tools, as one literature at point of origin studies *emigration* and the other at point of destination studies *immigration*. The transnational turn in the social sciences four decades ago propelled scholars to study cross-border political mobilization by viewing immigration and emigration as two sides of the same coin. This article provides a guide to this scholarship. We show how the political nature of cross-border movements creates and circumscribes conditions for diasporic political mobilization. We then identify the different types of cross-border political activities and the modalities of corresponding home state policies. We conclude by reflecting how the world today has changed since the geopolitical moment in which the transnational turn was born and what these changes mean for studying immigrant and emigrant cross-border politics.

KEYWORDS

Transnationalism, diaspora, geopolitics, homeland, emigrant politics, nationalism

Cross-border Politics: Diasporic Mobilization and State Response

Mobilization by emigrants and their descendants abroad seeking to effect political change in their places of origin is a long-standing feature of the modern world. In the 1850s, mass migration to the United States gave Irish immigrants an opportunity to organize against British rule in ways impossible had they stayed in their homeland. In so doing, the Irish pointed the way for the many state-seeking, anti-colonial movements that subsequently emerged. Exile was also a perch for regime-changing revolutionaries, starting with the most famous, Marx and Engels, followed by many prominent Bolsheviks. Today, emigrants still strive to influence politics in the countries they left behind, in some cases participating or seeking to participate in the conventional activities of voting and political representation, in others attempting more profound political changes, whether by overturning a government or creating a new state.

Both states of emigration and immigration attend to these cross-border political engagements. For emigration states, motivations extend beyond the threats thumbnailed above to the resources to be gained by channeling the political activities of emigrants and their descendants. Similarly, immigration states may have reason to foment and fear emigrant politics, fomenting when activism abroad destabilizes a disliked regime, fearing when emigrant political actors may be correctly seen or instrumentally presented as internal agents of an enemy, foreign state.

Given its recurrent, global dimensions the twinned phenomena of diasporic politics and state response has generated a large, insightful, interdisciplinary literature. Nonetheless, scholars struggle to find the most productive conceptual tools. The source of both intellectual stimulation and straitjacket stems from the roughly four-decade old transnational turn in the social sciences,

a development that brought cross-border political mobilization to scholars' attention.

Convention has organized research on migration around a standard division of intellectual labor, with one literature situated at point of origin studying *emigration* and the other at point of destination studying *immigration*. With the transnational turn, immigration and emigration appear as two sides of the same coin, as actions on either side of the chain yield reciprocal effects.

This article provides a guide to this burgeoning scholarship, using the term "diasporic" as a descriptor for populations encompassing emigrants and their descendants. Beginning with a brief critical intellectual history, we build on prior work (Waldinger 2015; Waldinger and Green 2016; Shams 2020) to show how the political nature of population movements across state boundaries creates and circumscribes conditions for cross-border diasporic political mobilization. We then systematically identify the different types of cross-border political activities and the modalities of corresponding home state policies.

The transnational turn

Several overlapping yet distinct intellectual channels have shaped the study of cross-border political action. In the background lies sensitivity to the transnational, entailing phenomena extending beyond, across, and possibly against states. While transnationalism as concept originated in the mid-19th century, the relevant point of departure stems from the 1970s. Highlighting "transnational relations" – cross-state coalitions and interactions not controlled by central governments – political scientists Nye and Keohane (1971) pinpointed the growing role of non-state actors and their enhanced ability to penetrate state boundaries. That program quickly subsided: in a debate pitting "state-centered" versus "society-dominated" views of world

politics, the transnational perspective faltered before a demonstration that the state still mattered (Risse-Kappen 1995). As the Cold War ended and transnational non-governmental organizations proliferated, sensibilities changed. Underscoring the importance of “transnational advocacy networks”, Keck and Sikkink (1998) demonstrated how issue blockage in the global south – pertaining to human rights, minority protection, or sustainable development – triggered a boomerang pattern, shifting the political venue to international organizations and the global north and thereby mobilizing symbolic or material resources for pressuring states from the outside. In this form, transnationalism entailed a “global consciousness” embracing state-transcendent principled ideas and values, thus prompting the advent of a transnational civil society moderating globalization’s “neo-liberal dimension (Saunier 2013: 15).”

The study of migration provided the more proximate source of influence. Anthropologists contended that population movements across state boundaries produce “transnational social fields” durably linking places of origin and destination. Promising a transnational perspective, the anthropologists leapt to “transnationalism,” the view that “immigrants live their lives across national borders (Glick Schiller et al. 1995: 54),” “developing and elaborating transnational practices that allow them to remain incorporated in their country of origin while simultaneously becoming incorporated in the United States” (Basch et al. 1994: 260).” The idea flourished. Though cross-border processes—remittance sending; families stretched across state boundaries; long-distance political action—were well-known to migration scholars, the transnational frame conveniently grouped these phenomena under a single conceptual umbrella. Once sensitized to the salience of cross-border ties, migration scholars could find them everywhere.

The new approach generated instant controversy (Waldinger and FitzGerald 2004). Migrant transnationalism was not universal, conceded the anthropologists: neither immigrants – putting down roots – nor sojourners – shuttling between home and host societies -- qualified; only those maintaining strong home connections warranted the “transmigrant” label. These limitations – amplified by scholars emphasizing the phenomenon’s significance while noting that it attracted small fractions of the populations concerned (Portes 2003) -- failed to explain why some migrants maintained and others abandoned home society connections. Later work, emphasizing simultaneity, posited the migrant experience as a pivot “between a new land and a transnational incorporation”, without explaining how “migrants manage that pivot (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004: 1011).”

The literature on diasporas (Dufoix 2016) presented a competing influence. That journey started when thinkers concerned with the experience of the peoples dispersed from Africa took up the analogy with the history of the Jews. Though yielding many conflicting interpretations, scholarship on “the African diaspora” put the question of a connection to a distant place of origin at the center of debate (Cohen 2008). Influential writings in the journal *Diaspora*, first published in 1991, sought to identify salient characteristics of diasporas, as well as traits distinguishing them from seemingly similar, but different phenomena (Safran 1991; Tölölyan 1996; Vertovec 1997; Butler 2001). Unsurprisingly, scholars failed to agree (Grossman 2019). Attempts to define diasporas led to static, ahistorical approaches assuming the existence of diasporic “communities” as opposed to dispersed populations. They also failed to explain why, how, and when the experience of dispersion might generate a sense of connectedness and linked fate with others of a common origin scattered around the globe. Efforts to define diasporas *ex ante* also contended with the self-conscious diasporic discourses and projects of states and emigres, who

sought to develop collectivities that they called diasporas, regardless of whether those collectivities met the scholars' criteria.

Distinguishing the transnational from the diasporic has been an enduring dilemma (Deutschmann 2022). As concept, transnational travels further. Referring to any phenomena that can stretch across or beyond states -- as indicated by scholarship on "transnational anti-fascism" *and* "transnational fascism" -- it has a polysemic quality (Tedeschi, Vorobeva, and Jauhiainen 2022), applying beyond the sphere of dispersed populations, a referent beyond which the diaspora concept has *not* journeyed. As exemplified by the way in which international migration stretches families across boundaries, producing such cross-border strategies of social support as remittances, phenomena labeled "transnational" have micro-sociological grounding. Consequently, many relevant "transnational" linkages occur at the ego-centric level, unlike those that might connect to the broader pattern of dispersion, which is also why they have a realist foundation, unlike activists' claims to speak for diasporas whose members may not know that they exist. Conversely, diaspora, not transnationalism, dispersed into the policy world, becoming "ubiquitous in development and policy discourse (van Hear,2012:16);" that standing made it the term of choice for states wanting to mobilize citizens abroad and expatriate activists seeking to gain leverage at home. Conceding that "diasporas" are a social construction, scholars are nonetheless unwilling to "give it up wholesale (Faist 2010: 18)."

Though applying the "transnational" concept to the domain of emigrant or diaspora politics can obscure more than it can illuminate, persons engaged in the politics of long-distance particularism can probably best be conceptualized as diaspora activists, simply for lack of a better term that includes both emigrants and their descendants and that in principle extends to the *n*th generation, though in practice the fraction attracted by a long-distance cause drops

precipitously after the first generation. The label of “incipient diaspora” (Weiner 1986) could be applied to the population to which the activists seek to appeal, perhaps by invoking a Marxist-inspired view that a latent, “diaspora-in-itself” can be transformed into a self-conscious “diaspora-for-itself.” However, as that possibility depends on the strategies chosen by the activists and the mix of conditions – permissive or constraining – the key question concerns the circumstances under which successful mobilization can occur, an issue that the definitional debate over what constitutes a diaspora cannot answer.

Ultimately, diaspora and transnationalism comprise “essentially contested concepts,” inextricably intertwined and triggering “endless dispute about their proper uses on the part of their users” (Gallie 1956; Grossman 2019). Postulating simultaneous incorporation in host and home societies, the literature associated with “transnationalism” arbitrarily bounds the phenomenon to populations with ongoing cross-border exchanges, excluding those for which departure takes the more definitive breach associated with the idea of “exile.” It further assumes what needs to be explained: incorporation. The migrant condition entails an inherent duality: emigrants are also immigrants. Hence foreign presence can sap emigrants’ legitimacy as homeland-oriented actors while foreign origins can undermine immigrants’ hostland acceptability. From sending sides, moreover, denationalization is a time-honored technique for destabilizing expatriate opponents; on receiving sides, territorial presence co-exists with precarious legal statuses, falling short of substantive and formal citizenship. Precisely because the expatriate targets of homeland repression may lack hostland legal status, invocation of “incorporation” entails conceptual overstretch. Since both states of emigration and immigration may have reasons to tolerate, encourage, or repress emigrant political action or acquiesce to its

repression, analysis must examine how policy on both sides affects the capacity for cross-border politics.

Moreover, the key concepts and their intellectual trajectories reflect the environment in which they were first mooted: the high noon of globalization. Diasporic identity was cast “as a celebration of multiplicity and mobility (Tololyan 1996: 28)”; scholars of transnationalism worked with the unspoken assumption that the world was trending towards greater open-ness, allowing immigrants and their descendants to enjoy the territorial mobility needed for long-term homeland/hostland ties. Those optimistic views may have seemed reasonable in a context in which the Berlin Wall had just tumbled and where the polarities that had frozen the globe in place suddenly dissolved.

Those perspectives are no longer tenable in the world that has since emerged, currently marked by a global pandemic that has stifled migration for over two years and the unending conflicts in Afghanistan, Syria, and now eastern Europe, producing not simply millions of refugees, but mass and enduring homelessness – the very antithesis of the “lives lived across borders” that the scholarly transnationalists had imagined in the early 1990s. Nonetheless, today’s circumstances have not killed the topic, but simply historicized it. Nor is reversion to the standard division of labor, separating the study of immigration and emigration, advisable. Rather, without postulating a world in which multi-stranded social relations link together societies of origin and settlement, possibly generating “transnational communities”, “transnational villages”, or “diasporas”, this essay harnesses the lessons learned from the broader transnational turn in the social sciences to understand how connections inherently produced by international migration yield long-distance, cross-border efforts to generate, shape, or stifle political change.

State power and the politics of immigration and emigration

As population movements across state boundaries transfer persons from one state's jurisdiction to another's they comprise a fundamentally political phenomenon (Zolberg 1999). Ethno-cultural incorporation and citizenship acquisition in receiving societies can be protracted, multi-generational processes; emigrant citizenship can be similarly extended to or reactivated by the immigrants' grandchildren. Consequently, the broader politics of immigration and emigration have a temporal scope extending beyond that of the migrants themselves, thereby encompassing the inherently multigenerational phenomenon labeled as "diaspora" politics and policy.

The politics of *immigration* – involving receiving state policies regarding movement across the boundaries of the territory and citizenship as well as political activities undertaken by immigrants in response to the new environment – are paralleled and entwined with the politics of *emigration* – emigrants' efforts to engage the homeland and sending state policies oriented towards expatriates. Michael Mann's conceptualization of states and state power (1986) provides a framework for understanding that entwinement. Mann distinguishes between two kinds of state power, both understood as territorial and confined to a single place: "despotic power", the actions that the state elite can make without consulting with civil society groups; and infrastructural power, the state's capacity to "penetrate civil society and implement its action across its territories (2008: 355)."

These dimensions capture important, underexplored aspects of migration from lower to higher income countries, both during the high point of trans-Atlantic migration as well as the era

of mass migration of the past several decades. Whether departing from multi-ethnic empires of the 1900s or contemporary post-colonial states, a large fraction of migrants have shifted from states low in infrastructural power to those that are high. Hence, while formally possessing state membership, prior to arrival many of the newcomers have not internalized identification with the broader nation of which they were putatively a member, instead retaining sub-national attachments -- local, ethnic, religious, linguistic. Contrastingly, by virtue of their higher infrastructural power, destination states in the developed world radiate more deeply, gaining the capacity to create nationals out of the foreigners whom they receive.

Because state power is territorially rooted, migrants crossing state boundaries acquire protection from the tentacles of the origin state, possessing limited capacity to extend its infrastructural power extraterritorially. When taking movers from less to more democratic states, migration also transfers them from states with more to those with less despotic power, a pattern applying to persons deliberately escaping authoritarian environments and those principally motivated by economic concerns. Consequently, beyond insulation from homeland repression, migrants gain political freedoms not previously enjoyed, possibly to be used for promoting change at home. That capacity threatens authoritarian regimes wanting “a world safe for their own dictatorship (Dukalskis 2021: 18)” as exiles can both question regime legitimacy and convince host states to amplify those critiques.

Diasporic-potential for trouble-making gets enhanced when entering a territory where the interpenetration of the state by civil society groups seeking to influence state policy furnishes potential allies; the latter can provide partners, useful for gaining a more secure foothold in the new home and deepening pressures on the old home. Not all civil society groups in destination states accept the migrants and their descendants, whose foreign attachments may accentuate

perceptions of undesirability. Nonetheless, where despotic power is low, all persons enjoy a baseline of rights, the boundary to citizenship is permeable, and domestic allies are to be found, facilitating homeland-oriented political action.

The concepts of infrastructural and despotic power concern the internal dimensions of states. But states, as Mann (1993) emphasizes, live in a world of states, leaving domestic and geopolitics interwoven. Emigration and immigration can be activated as political instruments of inter-state conflict: sending states trigger refugee outflows, seeking to undermine cohesion in the states that receive them; receiving states encourage refugee inflows, wanting to demonstrate the inferiority of a sending state (Arar and FitzGerald 2022). Furthermore, national identity contains a relational and a spatial component -- “we” are “here”, “they” are “there” (Painter and Philo, 1995). International migration disturbs both components: for the receiving country “they” are now “here;” for the sending country “we” are instead “there”. Hence, the “dual loyalty” shadow hangs over the expression of politicized homeland attachments (Harrington1980): are the migrants behaving like the good citizens they claim to be? Or are they instead agents acting on behalf of some state, whether home or host, and hence, foreign? Given their political leanings, migration scholars hesitate to accept the possibility that homeland activists may be agents of home, rather than host, states. Yet the nature of the expatriate situation – in which residence abroad gives emigrant or diasporic citizens a ready-made platform to promote home state interests – motivates home states to capture or control those same activists.

The general state of international relations and the nature of the ties and the power differential between home and host states impinge on the potential for the legitimate mobilization of homeland loyalties. International instability and inter-state conflict serve as constraining factors, possibly activating the perception that anyone with a real or imagined tie to a foreign

source of threat comprises an internal enemy. Once generated, the security frame can trigger hostland repression – as experienced by Arab-American political organizations for the past half century (Pennock 2017) -- while also stigmatizing entirely innocuous homeland-oriented activities (Chaudhury 2021). Furthermore, loyalties attached to or mobilized on behalf of global rivals – whether Japan or Germany in the first part of the 20th century or China in the third decade of the 21st -- are likely to be perceived differently than those connected to such less powerful states as Armenia, Albania, Cyprus, Haiti, Kosovo, and even Mexico. Scholars, however, have mainly trained their eyes on this latter category, many ensconced in the western sphere of influence, suggesting that by design research has neglected an important source of variance.

While key relationships are triangular, involving home, host states and relevant population of origin, the ricochet effect of international conflict can extend further. Hostility provoked by the dual loyalty shadow can miss the target, hitting persons with a perceived but no real tie to an apparently threatening foreign place, as with the killing of South Asian immigrants by inflamed white Americans reacting to events in the Middle East. Opposing home country loyalties can create adoptive country cleavages, as illustrated by contemporary disputes among Arab-Americans and Jewish Americans (Shain 1999) or the discord between African-Americans and Italian-Americans, spurred by Italy's invasion of Ethiopia during the 1930s (Stack 1979). The latter points to another variant, namely, a form of transnational solidarity connecting to a particular place, but not the immediate country of origin, as currently exemplified by the ways in which the Palestinian cause strikes a chord among many Muslims of immigrant background in the west.

A multi-centered relational framework (Shams,2020) provides tools for transcending the triangular approach: more than conflict between home and host states can throw the loyalty of an immigrant origin population into question. Rather, unexpected and unwanted events emanating from the international arena can project responsibility onto a broader category of persons with no inherent relationship to the source of disturbance. The ways in which, throughout western Europe and North America, the attack of 9/11/2001 threw the bona fides of Muslims into question provides the classic example. Among the consequences, beyond intensified securitization of migration, was greater scrutiny of all sorts of cross-border engagements with world regions that suddenly became questionable, including informal financial transfers (suspected of channeling funds to terrorists; American Civil Liberties Union 2009) and associations seeking to funnel development aid back home (Chaudhary 2021). In another permutation, the shock stems from “elsewhere” – neither home- nor host-land, but rather a place of geopolitical importance to the hostland. Thus, Muslims in the west were held collectively accountable for Islamist terrorist actions in Europe whereas similar incidents in the Middle East yielded no such reaction.

Emigrant and diasporic politics

The literature on ethnic groups and American foreign policy provides a well-established path of entry into the study of diasporic politics, illustrating how groups that initially entered as outsiders enter the corridors of power to support or oppose a regime in the real or putative homeland (see Smith 2000). This scholarship seeks to understand how groups attempt to affect policy, whether they do so successfully and, if so, why some groups generate greater impact than others (Paul and Paul 2007; DeWind and Segura 2014). Though insightful, this literature

commits the fallacy of “groupism” (Brubaker 2002). While the need for studying the transnational in conjunction with the local is duly noted (Englert 2018), identities in place of origin and destination will not always converge, at least not at the moment of entry into the new state. Insofar as migrants come from multi-ethnic polities they are unlikely to have experienced nationhood, especially if the origin state was incompletely present throughout its territory. Not only are upon-arrival identities and understandings localistic; so too are the social attachments which undergird and are sustained by the migration process, which is why “trans-localism”, as opposed to “transnationalism”, often characterizes migrants’ initial organized efforts to engage with communities left-behind (Hoerder 2010).

Nonetheless, history repeatedly demonstrates that international migration can transform localistic, rural migrants into homeland nationalists. The literature offers two accounts of this process, one realist, the other constructivist. The former emphasizes the ways in which entry into the new environment leads to boundary expansion, as local level attachments lose ground to homeland loyalties organized at a higher level of aggregation (Wimmer 2008). Exemplifying the process is the experience of turn-of-the-20th century emigrants from Italy: prior to departure the migrants often spoke mutually incomprehensible dialects, maintaining attachments limited to the small places where they lived; arrival in the New World turned them into Italians, a trajectory later followed by numerous populations (Gabaccia 2000).

The constructivist account emphasizes the role of identity entrepreneurs (Adamson and Demetriou 2007; Betts and Jones 2016). The displacements associated with migration can change mindsets, providing fertile soil for mobilizing compatriots who may have been quiescent back home. As proposed by Edward Said (1993: 122-2), exile produces a sort of DuBoisian “double consciousness”: “the exile sees things both in terms of what has been left behind and

what is actual here and now,” making ideas and experiences “appear in a ... new and unpredictable light .” Moreover, migration yields conditions for transforming a population into something approximating a people and it is here that realist and constructivist accounts merge. Normative expectations of mutual support, reinforcing migrant social capital, motivate contributions to co-ethnic political entrepreneurs. A network driven process, migration channels newcomers into an environment where the density of like persons creates a population base for myriad organizations serving the newcomers’ needs – both imported and emergent (Massey et al 1987). The resulting institutional completeness provides activists with an economic base to activate as well as bounded contexts in which to mobilize the rank and file. When the outside world is viewed as a hostile force more inclined towards repression than protection, political activists can also use coercive measures to build support, with limited fear that the authorities will intervene (Adamson 2008).

These accounts assume that long-distance loyalties need take a national form; religion can provide an alternative structuring principle. In particular, Muslims in the west possess both *homelands* – defined as place of origin – and *heartlands* – shared places whose peoples, histories, and conflicts inform their collective identities as Muslims (Shams 2021). Conditions, both before and after migration, may give the latter greater salience, especially if newcomers stem from a multi-ethnic polity yet to have transformed its population into a people and arrive in a context where established groups around them instead foreground the Muslim identity category. Thus, despite their heterogeneity, the hypervisibility, suspicion, and stigma collectively experienced by Muslim populations in the west can generate an orientation towards and possibly solidarity with places and people – Palestine, Syria, Chechnya, Bosnia, Afghanistan – beyond the country of origin. Insofar as for some portion of the Muslim population religion

defines the boundary of the community, the processes described above suffice to trigger long-distance political mobilization.

Electoral politics: A fundamental source of variation among homeland nationalists concerns their stance towards the legitimacy of the home regime. Recognizing a regime's legitimacy removes the possibility that extraterritorial participation can threaten a home state's sovereignty, thus allowing for the formal, cross-border extension of routine politics, as shown by FitzGerald (2016) in his 150-year history of Mexican cross-border politics. Yet expatriate political participation does not entail blind support for the government in power; indeed, opposing political parties may campaign as avidly abroad as at home, even though, depending on the nature of the voting systems, the decisions by expatriate voters can determine an election. Expatriate voting rights of some sort are now recognized by more than 100 countries; extra-territorial expansion has also proven durable, with South Africa the only major case of retraction (Caramani and Grotz 2015).

The spread of expatriate voting has prompted scholarship focusing on the motivations among potential expatriate voters. Chaudhury (2018) characterized that research as generating two opposing views: the “resocialization perspective” – contending that settlement loosens homeland engagement – and the “complementary perspective” – maintaining that socio-economic incorporation instead generates the resources needed for expatriate political participation. Similarly focusing on contextual variables, Ciornei and Ostergaard-Nielsen (2020) demonstrated that the quality of democracy in the receiving country increases turnout in expatriate elections, yielding strongest effects on persons stemming from authoritarian contexts.

Though thriving, the research on expatriate voting faces two fundamental problems, one empirical, one theoretical. The former is an infrastructural consequence of international

migration: now in a different political jurisdiction, potential diasporic voters are hard to identify. Scholars have two basic options, neither fully satisfactory: persons registered with consulates -- a problematic source as only a fraction of the potentially eligible population enrolls; host country censuses – not clearly superior, as they may be overly inclusive – counting host country naturalized citizens who by choice or compulsion renounced home country citizenship – or overly exclusive – lacking information on parentage and thus concealing native-born persons who nonetheless retain ancestral home country citizenship and voting rights.

The theoretical problem is more fundamental: why would immigrants and their descendants bother to vote? Voting is a learned activity, but as migration selects on age, many migrants are likely to leave with little, if any, experience in or exposure to formal politics. While migration channels newcomers into areas of high co-ethnic density, those places are nonetheless likely to be characterized by considerable heterogeneity, especially if the current trend is towards “super-diversity” (Vertovec 2007). As co-nationals will not dominate the local social environment, local ties and networks will unlikely possess the capacity needed to make politics salient.

Challenging the home state: Entering a new political jurisdiction allows emigrant activists to openly oppose the home state. Opposition sometimes involves *state-seeking* nationalism: targeted at an existing multi-ethnic state, activists seek to a state for a “people” that does not yet have one. Alternatively, they may pursue *regime-changing* mobilization, leaving the territorial order unchanged while overturning the government of an existing state. Insofar as transnationalism entails “regular and sustained social contacts...across national borders (Portes et al 1999: 219)” it is unlikely to characterize principled opponents of the home regime as return may be foreclosed – for fear of paying with one’s life. Cross-border contact of any sort can itself

become an object of internal conflict: as the most ardent regime opponents may view contact as tantamount to betrayal, distinguishing between “transnationals” and “exiles” artificially bounds the field of vision.

The emergence of an antagonistic relationship pitting home states against migrants and diaspora activists inherently divides the expatriate population. Both home and host states may strive to exacerbate these fissures, with home states particularly eager to discredit opponents abroad (Shain, 1989). Even if opposition prevails in the expatriate context, persons supportive of, or at least, friendlier, to the home regime are rarely absent. Home country political cleavages also travel with the migrants: “conflict transmission” (Moss 2021) generates “transplanted factions” (Ögelman 2003) which can exploit destination state freedoms to pursue internecine warfare. Hence, “politicization tends to invade the entire community space, imposing a choice of a camp upon all (Dufoix 2003: 79).”

Challengers to the home state possess various tools, some more pacific – lobbying – others more violent – supporting armed groups at home. Scholars debate whether diaspora actors are peace-breakers or peace-makers (Feyissa 2012; Toivanen 2020). However, the thread connecting mid-19th century Irish Republicans to their long-distance nationalist counterparts of the 21st century highlights the linkage between the conditions of expatriate life and the capacity for supporting or transmitting violence back home (Whelehan 2014). Not only does migration generate a certain measure of protection; movement into the territory of a state significantly richer than the home gives expatriates access to resources that can be exported abroad. Host state authorities might seek to monitor expatriate oppositionists, but if the relevant population is alienated or distrustful of those same authorities, the task is significantly more difficult.

The same sociological features that insulate oppositionists from home and host state surveillance and repression can also generate a capacity to exercise control internally, especially if a population closed-in on itself means that host states no longer hold their monopoly on the use of violence. Hence, “non-state authoritarianism” (Adamson 2020), can be a feature of expatriate and diasporic life. Thus, when operating extraterritorially, organizations such as the Turkish Workers Party (PKK) or the Tamil Tigers (LTTE) have frequently resorted to intra-communal coercion, exercising violence directed against political competitors, intimidating migrants in vulnerable legal statuses, and surveilling co-ethnics.

Regime-changing mobilization: Strangely unnoticed by the literature on “transnationalism” in the Americas, long distance, regime-changing mobilization is a long-standing feature of Latin American political life. As explained by Sznajder and Roniger (2009), the institutionalization of both exile and asylum has colonial roots: translocation became the prevailing means of coping with juridical offenses, putting distance between offender and community of origin but providing needed labor to place of destination. With independence, that practice mutated into expatriation and exile, an outcome preferable to elites fearing a descent into factionalism and possible civil war. Thus, when conflict erupted, the victorious faction allowed defeated leaders to depart abroad, a viable option because hosting state leaders saw expatriates as a tool for exercising influence in the neighboring country and because conditions of exile foreclosed participation in host country affairs. The continent-wide recurrence of exile led to the early development of Latin American asylum law, which first emerged in the 1870s, decades before the 1951 convention on refugees institutionalized asylum internationally.

By that date Mexico attracted exiles fleeing dictatorships across the Caribbean, including Fidel Castro, who used Mexico to find collaborators (most famously, Che Guevara), train for

insurrection, raise funds, and launch an invasion. Once victorious, the former exiles presided over a wave of expatriation, which mainly converged on the United States, where the dominant faction among the exiles and their descendants has maintained a near 65 year long quest for regime change back on the island. Thus far futile, that effort has molded U.S. policy towards the island, impeding family visits and remittances (Perez 2014), thereby demonstrating why cross-border flows are not defining characteristics of dispersed populations but rather outcomes to be explained. The Cuban-American experience also testifies to the fissiparous condition of diasporic opposition, as this population has simultaneously experienced intense internal conflict over the future of a post-communist Cuba and highly fractious relations with its ethnically variegated neighbors (Eckstein 2009).

In this case, the channel of influence entailed interest group politics, facilitated by the international politics of refugee resettlement, accelerating Cuban accession to US citizenship and thence votes. The Chilean experience, provoked by the violent overthrow of the Allende regime in 1973, highlights a different trajectory. The coup led to the emigration of approximately 500,000 to 2,000,000 Chileans (Wright and Oñate Zúniga 2007). Their arrival sparked a global solidarity movement, manifesting itself in a warm welcome of the refugees and the emergence of a transnational human rights arena, a development that, in the United States, was a reaction to the coup (Kelly 2018). Consequently, in producing mass exile, the junta created the conditions that would undermine its hold. The wave of opprobrium heaped on the Pinochet regime, from exiles, the broader, transnational arena of human rights activists, as well as legislators and political leaders whom the latter influenced, shifted the political and discursive balance against Pinochet, paving the way for the restoration of Chilean democracy and large-scale return migration. Thus, the Cuban and Chilean cases demonstrate how movement into states characterized by the

combination of high infrastructural and low despotic power gives regime-changing emigrants influence unavailable at home, while simultaneously showing how differences in the geopolitical context affect channels of leverage.

State-seeking nationalism: The hemispheric prevalence of long-distance regime-changing mobilization reflects the early collapse of Spain's empire and its replacement by a state system in which territorial units proved stable. Though the degree of nationhood differed greatly, with variability in the degree to which polities were multi-ethnic, conditions precluded the emergence of state-seeking, nationalist movements. By contrast, migrants moving within or beyond the boundaries of empires followed precisely that trajectory. Mid-19th century Irish immigrants to the United States may have blazed the path that others took (Hanagan 1999), but the relationship between emigration and decolonization is equally well-exemplified by an episode from the history of independence movements against the British Raj, which also illuminates the vulnerability of the succeeding post-colonial, multi-ethnic states.

When World War 1 struck, decolonization sentiments percolating among natives of the Indian Subcontinent mutated into an organized movement outside British territory. Sikh, Punjabi, and Bengali expatriates across the globe -- primarily California but also Hong Kong, Shanghai, Tokyo, Manila, and Vancouver -- organized the Ghadar movement, aiming at ousting the British from India. The Ghadarites had their fingers on the pulse of the grievances of a low-wage immigrant labor force suffering from discrimination, which the movement successfully linked to the colonized status of the home country. As emigrants, crucially, they also enjoyed protection from direct suppression by the British and the freedom to harness resources extraterritorially, including from Germany which recruited prominent Indian nationalists living in Europe to better

sap British power. But their moment proved brief, as collaboration with the Germans prompted the US government to repress the movement (Ramnath 2005; 2011).

Several decades later, similar conditions fomented state-seeking mobilization among the same population that had powered the Ghadar movement – emigrant Sikhs – but this time directed against the very state that had replaced the British raj. The Indian government’s 1984 siege of the Golden Temple, subsequent anti-Sikh riots following the assassination of Indira Gandhi by two of her Sikh guards, and the ensuing search for a separate Sikh state, Khalistan, swept aside the prevailing diasporic view – that Sikhs “considered themselves to be part of a larger Indian and Punjabi diaspora (Singh and Shani 2021: 197)” – catalyzing mobilization abroad. Separatist organizations abroad flourished: tapping the resources of a relatively successful population residing in wealthy hostlands they sent funds to compatriots in the much poorer homeland and exploited the freedoms available in those same places to bring pressure on India from outside, via ways deemed legitimate – ethnic lobbying, protests, the publicizing of human rights abuses – and illegitimate – terrorism, of which the most notable example was the 1985 bombing of an Air India flight between Toronto and Delhi. Pressures from abroad led India’s government to convince host countries to classify Khalistani associations as terrorist organizations, eviscerating their fund-raising capacity.

Thus, whether departing from empire or democratic state, minority migrants from a multi-ethnic polity found safety and opportunity abroad. However, temporal changes in both migratory systems – shifting from low skilled to more selective flows – as well as reception contexts – changing from hostile to more accepting – gave the later emigrants political and economic carrying capacity that their predecessors lacked. And while geopolitical pressures ultimately curbed the space for long-distance nationalist mobilization, presence in host states

characterized by low despotic power left diasporic mobilization in favor of a Sikh homeland protected and therefore continuing, albeit at a lower level of intensity (Shahed 2019).

Diaspora Policy

States cannot penetrate a society without information on its residents' means and whereabouts, but citizens residing on foreign soil cannot be readily tracked.. Nonetheless, international migration does not bar the cross-territorial extension of home state institutions. While efforts at home state engagement with emigrants and their offspring represent nothing new (Green 2020), policies now labeled "diaspora engagement" have become more prevalent, encompassing emigration states in the global south and immigration states among which globalization has also generated a significant population living extra-territorially. In 2014, almost half of UN member states maintained "diaspora institutions": formal entities providing opportunities for expatriate and diaspora participation in home country political life or sustaining cultural and ideational connections among nationals and their descendants abroad (Gamlen et al. 2019). Researchers debate the sources of this trend: are states extending abroad so as to better tap the resources of nationals living in richer places (Iskander 2010)? Does cross-border extension instead reflect the influence of ideas and norms encouraging a de-territorialized understanding of nationhood, with states "embracing" nationals and their descendants wherever they live (Margheritis 2007)? Or, given a common tendency among otherwise heterogeneous states, do these efforts signal a trend towards global governance in migration (Ragazzi2009)?

The growth of entities that can be classified as diaspora institutions is uncontested; separating symbolism from substance is a different task. Many scholars have noted how Mexico's turn to diaspora engagement transformed emigrants from traitors to heroes (Durand

2004), finding similar examples around the globe. In reframing migration as an accomplishment rather than a badge of misery, origin states can thus honor expatriates without incurring any material costs. The cases of “diaspora engagement” mentioned by the literature (Gamlen 2019) include fragile states with limited resource-bearing capacity: Albania and Sierra Leone possessing diaspora departments; Armenia and Somalia boasting Diaspora Ministries; Haiti, long ago hailed for recognizing the “tenth department” of Haitians in exile. Hence, the possibility that the phenomenon entails a significant performative component is difficult to reject. That characterization could also be applied to expatriate voting systems: low participation reflects the conditions of emigrant life but is also a design feature. *De jure* expansion of the external franchise symbolically recognizes emigrants’ membership in the polity; *de facto* restrictions ensure that expatriate voting represents a “boutique’ form of engagement...open to only a select few (Leal et al. 2012: 548)” with limited electoral effects (Hutcheson and Arrighi 2015).

Under certain conditions, “diaspora engagement” can entail expenditure of significant resources and meaningful service provision. Mexico’s consular infrastructure in the United States – with over 50 consulates providing a panoply of services and mobile units connecting with emigrants in more far-flung locations -- is an example well-studied by scholars and sending states; the latter use this experience to design their own programs (Délano 2014). As argued by Alonso (2018), Mexico’s diaspora engagement paradoxically functions as an integration program, albeit one oriented towards resolving the migrants’ problems in the receiving state rather than reconnecting them to the origin state. Conversely, destination country policy is key: it creates the opportunity to connect with emigrants and accepts consular intervention without which, as Alonso notes, Mexico’s program and others like it would not be sustainable.

Long-distance repression: Though enjoying protection not found at home, dissident migrants remain vulnerable, even after entering a new jurisdiction. Sending states have repeatedly demonstrated their willingness to attack opponents living on foreign soil, a phenomenon with a long and bloody history, perhaps best exemplified by the fate of the Russian revolutionary, Leon Trotsky, assassinated in Mexico by Stalin's henchmen. A few decades later, the Pinochet dictatorship chased after Chilean exiles, murdering the country's former Foreign Minister in daylight in Washington, DC (Dinges 2004); not long thereafter, the Islamic Republic of Iran killed hundreds of exiles who had previously sought to overthrow the Shah (Iran Human Rights Documentation Center 2008). Given this background, no clear baseline allows scholars to determine whether long-distance repression against dissidents abroad is roughly a long-term constant or has recently ticked upwards. Nonetheless, current levels appear intense. The Authoritarian Actions Abroad Database records "nearly 1,200 individual cases in which an authoritarian state attempted to threaten, attack, abduct, arrest, detain or assassinate one or more of its citizens abroad (Dukalskis 2021: 56)," with Uzbekistan topping the list, followed by China.

Sending states need not rely on the fist to monitor and harass dissidents. Except for resettled refugees, immigrants enter destination states as aliens, hence retaining some dependency on the home state. Sending states keep their monopoly on the provision of official documents, requiring even naturalized citizens to turn to the state of origin for birth and death certificates or property titles or help in other important matters, such as repatriating the dead for burial at home. Regular visits to the consulate in turn compel a face-to-face encounter with a possibly hostile, threatening official while also putting emigrants at risk of disclosing protective information. Thus, states can treat emigrants "*as if* they were still under territorial jurisdiction, collapsing geographical distance (Glasius 2017: 96). "

In stretching families across state boundaries international migration fosters flows from emigrants to stay-behinds, making voice after exit possible (Duquette-Rury 2020). Yet that feature is also a source of vulnerability allowing home states to engage in “relational repression” (Deng and O’Brien 2013) and “coercion-by-proxy” (Adamson and Tsourapas 2020), effectively strongarming migrants without having to enter host state territory. Threats to family and friends at home can deter emigrants from public dissidence or compel them to front for the home regime (Moss, et al, 2022). If threats do not suffice, relatives can be punished, via harassment, confinement to the home, or bodily injury (Moss 2016). When pursued systematically, repression can yield a cowed population, too fearful to exploit the rights and opportunities enabled by life abroad.

Despite changes in communications technology – its growing speed, diminishing costs, and increasingly extensive reach – facilitating subversion of the state virtually, the capacity to communicate across borders is politically determined: states can restrict communication and internet access within their jurisdictions. Thus, in taking over of Kashmir – India’s only Muslim majority state -- the government, as it has recurringly (Nadaf 2020), imposed a blackout on all communications going to and from Kashmir, suppressing the potential for generating support from the Kashmiri diaspora.

States can also use digital technology to monitor oppositionists abroad, intimidate them, and sow distrust among their networks in ways not previously possible. Though digital attacks (via the implantation of malware or spearfishing) or smear campaigns do not require sophisticated technology, engaging in transnational repression through online harassment is increasingly common and simple (Freedom House 2021). As it abounds in information, the online world provides home regimes access to intimate aspects of dissidents’ lives, facilitating

further harassment and exposure of homeland contacts, whose vulnerability to direct repression can then silence activists abroad (Michaelsen 2018).

States engaged in long-range repression can also enlist expatriate supporters of the home state to mark and control its dissidents abroad. For instance, in 2021, soon after U.S. based South Asian academics announced an online workshop to discuss the rise of Hindu nationalism in India, Hindu nationalist groups based in North America sent out a torrent of emails and threats condemning the event as Hinduphobic and an “intellectual cover for the Taliban” (Masih 2021).

The fateful triangle: dispersed populations in the maw of great power conflict

While immigrants and their descendants can often maintain identities that might seem mutually exclusive, international conflict threatens that co-existence (Shain 1990). One can try to profess allegiance to two mutually belligerent states, but only with difficulty, as exemplified by the experience of German- and Japanese-Americans during the two World Wars.

The re-emergence of great power conflict associated with the rise of China may now be forcing that same issue. Roughly 10 million Chinese-born persons live outside China, alongside approximately 35 million second or later generation descendants (Goodkind 2019). A minute fraction of China’s population, the globally dispersed Chinese represents a strategic challenge to, and a possible resource for, a state tending towards increasing levels of despotism and possessing exceptional infrastructural power. As most emigrants and many later generation descendants live in countries characterized by low despotic power, their residence abroad provides a platform for Chinese human rights activists and ethnic and religious minorities to “name and shame” homeland repression, as the literature on transnational advocacy networks would predict (Seidman 2016). Since beyond China’s boundaries, information about China circulates more freely than within China and a critical stance towards the Chinese Communist Party prevails,

social ties connecting Chinese abroad with Chinese at home also furnish a channel by which dissident ideas can circulate (Junker 2019).

In responding to this challenge, China has positioned overseas students as foot soldiers abroad to enhance its soft power abroad and increase its geopolitical influence (Liu 2022). However, it has also launched a campaign of transnational repression characterized as “the most sophisticated, global, and comprehensive” (Freedom House 2021: 15).” Those outside China’s borders wanting to connect with people inside China easily get sucked into China’s digital ecosystem, in turn getting captured by the country’s global campaign of repression. Internal repression becomes intertwined with long-distance nationalism, especially when kinship networks of repressed groups (such as religious minorities, outspoken intellectuals, and activists) extend across state boundaries. Simultaneously, Chinese emigrants and their descendants -- especially international students and scholars -- find themselves in the crossfire, stalked by their state of origin but under suspicion in their state of residence (Rotella 2021), as most visibly demonstrated in the targeting of researchers of Chinese origin by the U.S. Department of Justice. With repression stemming from both proximate and distal sources, the end result may be a “toxic environment”, in which persons of Chinese background hesitate to criticize China, for fear of retaliation while worrying that criticisms of their state of residence or citizenship will mark them as agents of foreign interference (Chubb 2022).

Conclusion

The world has changed since the social sciences took its transnational turn a little more than three decades ago, with the optimism characterizing that then new orientation difficult to reconcile with today’s brutal reality. Scholarship inspired by the transnational turn highlighted

an important dimension neglected by previous research: in departing one society and entering another, migrants knitted the two together, producing an ongoing flow of exchanges between migrants and their descendants, on the one hand, and people and places at home, on the other. Yet that same scholarship overlooked the inherently political nature of population movements across state boundaries: the shift in jurisdiction is the precondition of the type of cross-border political mobilizations examined in this article.

In entering a new state, migrants benefit from the infrastructural consequence of their move across territorial borders, gaining protection from the repressive power of the home state. Insofar as the new environment allows for greater freedom, they acquire newfound capacity to exercise influence on the polity left behind. However, activating that potential is not for the migrants and their descendants to decide on their own: the international nature of the projects that they pursue make them vulnerable to pressures emanating from the relationships among states. Given geopolitical circumstances when the social sciences took the transnational turn, expecting that migrants and their descendants could reconcile loyalties to home and host states appeared plausible. Yet that view also reflected the myopia of the mainly U.S.-based researchers, from whom the impetus for the transnational turn in migration studies derived, as the Cold War's end also provided the spark for bloody conflicts in the Balkans, fomented in no small measure by expatriate long-distance nationalists (Hockenos 2003). As the particular historical moment also involved the third wave of democratization, it seemed reasonable to posit the emergence of institutions of extra-territorial political participation as expressions of that tendency, with migrants' persisting ties to the people they left behind legitimating their political entitlements in a place where they no longer lived. But with authoritarianism, not democracy, on the upswing,

the very same cross-border connections that migrations generate provide home states with leverage needed to deactivate and control potential dissidents abroad.

Conversely, the grimmer global realities of the 21st century's third decade – exemplified by the trend towards long-distance repression -- reinforce the underlying logic behind the transnational turn: why else would home states be working so hard to extend their fist abroad, were it not for the fear that extra-territorial location generates political resources that only migration makes possible? Hence, without making the leap to ontological transnationalism, the research goal remains that of developing a perspective that encompasses emigration and immigration, showing how population movements across territorial borders generate long-distance efforts to alter the polity in places that migrants leave behind, albeit in ways shaped, controlled, or suppressed by the often-conflicting interests of states of origin and destination.

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