Diaspora-Homeland Relations as a Framework to Examine Nation-Building Processes

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Abstract
This article examines diaparization practices – practices through which homeland and diaspora communities engage each other – as a prism through which to explore the process of nation-building and the formation of national belonging. Instead of treating ‘nation’ or ‘diaspora’ as bounded entities, it explores the various ways through which members of diaspora communities negotiate their position vis-à-vis national homeland movements on the one hand and host societies on the other. Specifically, it examines practices of fundraising, diasporic lobbying, the extension of citizenship to members of diaspora communities, and the consumption of images through communication technologies. Through these ongoing, negotiated encounters, ‘homeland’ as well as ‘diaspora’ are produced. Close examination of these practices may offer fresh insights regarding the process of nation-building in the diaspora that has a heuristic value beyond this particular setting.

The concept of ‘diaspora,’ which during the 1990 signaled the emergence of a post-national era, is no longer the darling of constructivist social scientists. In recent years, a slew of scholars suggested that counter to earlier suggestions, diaspora groups actually harbor essentialist tendencies (Anderson 1998; Mishra 1996). Furthermore, critics note that scholars of diaspora communities often fail to take account of the heterogeneity within diasporas and in effect reinforce essentialist perspectives (Anthias 1998; Brubaker 2005; Mitchell 1997; Soysal 2002; Weingrod and Levi 2006).

While these critiques are in place, this article suggests that abandoning the concept of diaspora is unwarranted. If handled properly, the encounter between homeland and diaspora communities offers a strategic research site for exploring the process of nation-building. The unique analytical value of these encounters stems from the ambiguous and distanced position of diaspora communities vis-à-vis the nation-state (both the country of origin and destination of settlement). The social and geographic distance that separates homeland and diaspora communities gives rise to controversies that center on the question of where they belong. In addition, this distanced position poses a practical challenge for national movements that seek to mobilize supporters abroad. These controversies and practical difficulties render the efforts to incorporate diaspora communities particularly visible. Close examination of the practices developed to streamline the relationship between homeland and diaspora communities, which are often marked by strong tensions and disagreement, can therefore serve as a prism through which one can better understand how belonging to a place or a group is manufactured.

Instead of positing that diaspora communities are a harbinger of a post-national era or that they play a role in advancing multiculturalism in the ‘host’ society, this article suggests exploring the various practices developed by diaspora communities and national move-
ments or nationalizing state to engage each other. Through these practices, notions of ‘homeland’ and ‘diaspora’ are produced, negotiated, and contested. (The terms ‘homeland,’ ‘diaspora,’ and ‘host society’ are deeply problematic. ‘Homeland’ and ‘diaspora’ imply natural association between emigrants and the place they chose to leave. ‘Host society,’ on the other hand, suggests that immigrants and their offspring do not really belong to the place they chose to live in. The challenge, therefore, is to treat these terms as social accomplishment rather than a state of nature and examine how these notions and experiences are manufactured). Specifically, this article centers on practices of fundraising, diasporic lobbying, the extension of political status to diaspora communities, and consumption of images through communication technologies. Each of these practices raises substantively important questions and may throw fresh light on existing conceptions.

Examination of fundraising efforts and the difficulties involved in streamlining a flow of resources from diaspora communities to the homeland illustrates the negotiated nature of diasporic national membership. It highlights the delicate give and take between national movements and diaspora organizations that constitute diaspora subjectivities. Instead of treating the willingness to give as a sign of already existing national sentiments, importing insights from the rich literature on gifting in sociology and anthropology can help scholars understand how practices of giving to the nation constitute a sense of belonging to a nation. Diaspora lobbying and the extension of legal status to diaspora communities are practices that bring to the fore the dynamic interplay between ‘host’ state, ‘homeland,’ and the diaspora communities themselves. Close examination of how diaspora communities navigate and handle the potentially conflicting interests within this triad allows better understanding of the rights and obligations each of these entities ascribe to national membership and allows a better appreciation of issues of dual-loyalty. Examination of this interplay clarifies that diaspora groups not merely react to existing notions of citizenship and loyalty but also sometimes take part in fleshing out what these concepts mean. Lastly, close look on practices of diasporic cultural consumption raises important questions regarding the realism of the national experience. Like every act of cultural consumption, diasporic consumption of movies, images, music, etc. from the homeland is highly selective (on both the sending and receiving sides). This selection process shapes how diasporas imagine and project the nation. Therefore, an examination of these consumption practices highlights the creative and selective nature of diasporic engagement with the nation.

Studying diasporic practices suggests a way to engage the concepts of ‘homeland’ and ‘diaspora’ without reifying either of them and without treating the association between them as natural. It further highlights the contested and negotiated nature of diaspora identification. While there are many important difference between diaspora identification and identification within the nation-state, insights from the examination of homeland-diaspora relations have a heuristic value beyond that particular setting. Scholarly literature concerning diasporic practices spans across many disciplines. Sociologists, anthropologists, cultural studies scholars, political scientists, and international relations scholars have all studied one or another aspect of diasporic existence. Instead of limiting the review to particular disciplines, this review groups together these diverse orientations. The result is necessarily incomplete and at times fragmented. Furthermore, this review does not attempt to provide a comprehensive examination of all of diasporic practices out there. Rather, it centers on a few practices that help understanding some key processes at work.

The article is divided into four sections. Section One briefly reviews early writings on the concept of diaspora. Section Two examines the criticism leveled against the concept
of diaspora. Section Three suggests treating diasporas as a strategic research site to examine key issues in nation-building. Section Four then examines the various practices through which diaspora communities and homeland national movements engage each other. The discussion explores the heuristic value of using diasporization practices to understand national membership in general.

Diaspora as a harbinger of a post-national era

During the 1990s, the concept of ‘diaspora’ became a popular buzzword. Immigrant groups increasingly appropriated the title and, in academic circles, the concept was marshaled as a sign of a new post-national era. Khachig Töloyan, the editor of the new journal Diaspora, exclaimed that ‘just as the nation-state has begun to encounter limits to its supremacy and perhaps even lose some of its sovereignty, diasporas have emerged in scholarly and intellectual discourse as ‘the exemplary communities if the transnational moment’…” (Töloyan 1996: 4; Cohen 1996).

The concept of diaspora promised to tackle and unpack a number of pernicious political and analytical problems. In the country of settlement, diasporas carry the promise of multiculturalism. Clifford (1997: 255), for example, suggested that the continuing association between diaspora groups and their countries of origin ‘gives added weight to claims against oppressive national hegemony.’ Homi Bhabha, further argued that the radical otherness of certain diaspora communities acts as a challenge on host societies, forcing them to revise assimilationist expectations and policies (Bhabha 1990; see also Hall 1990). For Gilroy (1991, 1993), centering on the cultural production of black communities across the Atlantic, the promise of diaspora lies in the subversion it affects on essentialist categorization of race and nation.

The subversive effect of diaspora is not restricted to the country of settlement. Allegedly, the existence of subjects who voluntarily choose to live outside the nation-state undermines autochthonous myths of origin and shared destiny, which lie at the heart of the national narrative. Boyarin and Boyarin (1993), for example, mobilize the concept of diaspora to critique the Zionist ideology of the negation of exile. Diaspora, in their treatment, offers a normative model for Jewish existence, outside the putative ‘homeland’ and beyond the evils associated with political sovereignty. Thus, on a political and analytical level, the concept of diaspora seemed to promise an emancipation from the ills of essentialism.

In these various works, the subversive effects of diasporas are related to a tension between objective position and subjective orientations. Regardless of their objective location, diaspora communities maintain ongoing ties with a far away place. Regardless of their subjective orientation toward the homeland, by living away, they demonstrate the viability of life outside one’s ‘homeland.’ Clifford and his associates know that diasporic subjects do not always share their constructivist sensitivities. Nevertheless, however, they believe that the objective diasporic situation predisposes them to act as a challenge to essentialist perspectives. The peculiar position of being in one place while maintaining allegiance to another disrupts prevailing assumptions about locality and identity and about how proximity and distance mediate and condition social relations.

Critique of the discourse of diaspora

The celebration surrounding the concept of diaspora, however, did not last long. Since the late 1990s, a slew of scholars developed a detailed critique of the concept of diaspora
and the properties attributed to it. Floya Anthias called attention to a ‘disjunction between what the terms ‘diaspora’ purports to do and what in fact it often fails to do.’ (Anthias 1998: 558; see also Mitchell 1997). Scholars of diaspora communities often fail to incorporate class and gender to their analysis. By failing to appreciate the complex and fragmented nature of these social forms, they inadvertently reproduce rather than challenge essentialist notions of ethnicity.

Yasemin Soysal further argues that by focusing on the tension between host and home countries, diaspora scholars necessarily fail to explore the emergence of genuinely post-national conceptions of citizenship, rights, and identities (Soysal 2002; see also Weingrod and Levi 2006; Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002). Furthermore, as Brubaker (2005) noticed, in the course of popularization, the term lost precision. Today, he argues, almost anything and everything is treated as diaspora, and, as a result, the analytical purchase of the term is lost. (For a late attempt to capture and limit the use of the term diaspora, see Töloöyan (2007)).

Beyond the difficulties associated with the scholarly use of the concept, researchers also challenge assertions regarding the recent origin and putative political effects of diaspora. It is typically assumed that until recently, only the Jews and perhaps also the Armenian and Greek communities formed genuine diasporas (see Cohen 1996 for a particularly influential definition of diaspora). Challenging this claim, Mark Boyle convincingly argues that the Irish migrants to the United States formed a diaspora (2002; see also Stratton 1997). Boyle (2001) further shows that, at least in the Irish case, the Irish diaspora played a decisive role in making the Irish nation rather than the other way around. Instead of accepting the auxiliary role typically ascribed to diaspora, he places diaspora at the heart of nation-building processes.

Politically, Benedict Anderson and Vijay Mishra note that diaspora communities often thrive and propagate primordialist myths. Rather than functioning as a bastion against essentialism, Mishra (1996) argues that in the diaspora the idea of the homeland becomes something of a ‘fantasy structure…through which society perceives itself as a homogenous entity.’ Anderson (1998) further cautions that the practice of long-distance nationalism, which diaspora communities often engage in, lacks crucially important element of accountability – the results of one’s actions in the diaspora are felt elsewhere, in the putative ‘homeland.’ As a result, diaspora activists often support extremist violent struggles.

Like their predecessors, critics of diaspora position their arguments around the tension between objective social and geographic distance and subjective understanding of one’s place in the nation. But critics of diaspora reverse previous understandings of the relations between proximity and identity. Whereas previous researchers believed that the distanced and ambiguous position of diaspora communities predispose them to serve as harbingers of post-national era, Mishra and Anderson show how this very same distance is the condition of national conscious. In their account, it is precisely this distance from the homeland that motivates diasporic members to imagine the nation as homogeneous and recklessly support extremist national struggles.

**Diaspora as a strategic research site**

The celebration of diaspora as an emancipatory social form, consciousness, or mode of cultural production (see Vertovec 1997) is perhaps misplaced, but abandoning the concept altogether is akin to throwing out the baby with the bath water. Purged of the epochal and normative tones associated with it, the concept of diaspora still offers a unique tool with which one can approach a number of substantively important questions. Diaspora
communities may not be the harbinger of a new world order or a bastion of political resistance, but they are located at a unique juncture that turns them into a strategic research site (Merton 1987).

As Andreas Wimmer and Nina Glick Schiller recognize, methodological nationalism – the assumption that the nation/state/society is the natural social political form of the modern world – still permeates many discussions of nationalism (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002; see also Brubaker 2009). The concept of diaspora may open a conceptual space where the overlap between nation/state/society could be unpacked (Boyle 2001; Brah 1996; Kleist 2008; Lie 2001). Furthermore, diasporas are located in a space between nationalizing host state, a national homeland, and the diasporic community itself (Brubaker 1996; Laitin 1995). (Laitin (1995) study of the emerging Russian-speaking diasporas of the post-Soviet era clarifies that the movement associated with ‘diaspora’ is not necessarily of migration. In this case, the diaspora is constituted as a reaction (not automatic) to the contraction of the Soviet Empire, which left Russian-speaking population in new nationalizing states). This triadic space and the encounters that take place in this space give rise to questions of sovereignty, dual loyalty, and citizenship.

The crux of the matter is related to the ambivalent and ambiguous positioning of diaspora communities. The controversies surrounding the status of diasporas – the difficulties associated with determining whether diasporas ‘belong’ to this or that nation, to the national or post-national era – carry great analytical promise. Controversies force the actors involved in them, be they diasporic subjects, national leaders, or leaders in host societies, to flesh out their understandings in public and thereby render otherwise invisible associations visible. Controversies over the status of diasporas force the ‘black-box’ of the nation open and allow researchers to peer into the mechanics of its constitution. The point here is not metaphorical but empirical. Every time a diasporic subject proclaims to be a member in this or that national community, some other actors step forward and contest her claim. Following the strategies actors use to support their claims and refute others offers a unique vantage point.

Following controversies about diasporic belonging offers more than a detailed understanding of that particular predicament. The nation, as Partha Chatterjee (1993) explains, is a fragmented social entity. Even within the nation-state, membership in the nation is never unambiguous and clear. Therefore, controversies about national belonging are not limited to diasporas. But the intensity and explicitness of homeland-diaspora controversies render homeland-diaspora encounters into strategic research sites to study the making of national/diasporic belonging. (This approach is certainly not new. Kedourie (1966) and Gellner (1983) used the case of diaspora nationalism, especially the Jewish case, to refute each other’s general propositions. Smith too takes the Jewish diaspora as a prime example to illustrate the antiquity of nations (Smith 1995)). The point is not to ignore or confuse important differences between diaspora attachments and national attachments within the nation-state but to treat the encounter between homeland and diaspora communities as a heuristic model for understanding how national movements regulate their relations to the various groups that make up the nation. Some of the practices developed in diaspora context for that purpose may be highly relevant also within the nation-state, other are likely to be less relevant but nevertheless, the encounter provides a useful model for national belonging.

The challenge for students of diaspora is to find ways to study diaspora communities as a process of formation. As Rogers Brubaker suggests, the ‘groupness’ of putative diasporas like that of putative ‘nations,’ is precisely what is at stake in [political, social, and cultural] struggles.’ (Brubaker 2005: 13; see also Axel 2002; Kleist 2008). The point,
therefore, is to study diaspora not as a bounded entity but as a category of practice – something people claim, make sense of, and practice. Such study can potentially avoid the pitfalls Anthias, Soysal, and others so eloquently point too. Rather than treating diaspora or nation as bounded entities, the point is to study them as practical accomplishment. The following section explores some of these practices.

**Practices of diaspora belonging**

Studying diaspora as a practiced relationship to a homeland entails interrogating the myriad actions members of diaspora communities engage in with the aim of understanding how a particular perception of one’s sense of place in the world is being construed as well as the practices used by homelands and nationalizing host states to better position these groups (Werbner 2000). This overview will identify a few practices and issues that the diasporic lens highlights.

**Exchange and fundraising**

For diaspora communities, one of the key practices with which to engage their homeland is through the sending of resources. A number of national movements became highly dependent on this support. These resources can range from monetary contributions, to the sending of food, clothing, the purchase and smuggling of arms, and even direct enlisting to participation in armed conflict.

Diaspora contributions to their homeland come in a dazzling variety of forms. It may be useful to distinguish these flows along axes of destination and motivation. Members of diaspora communities can send remittances to their families back home, donate to hometown associations or other civil society organizations, support political parties, or lend their support to large scale campaign organized on a national or state level. Each of these destinations entails different relationship to the homeland. In quantitative terms, no doubt, the largest and most economically consequential flow is that of direct foreign investment and remittances between family members (World Bank 2006). In terms of social significance, contributions to hometown associations, political parties, and national campaigns may serve as a political leverage and sometimes provide unique opportunities for communal development (Shain and Sherman 2001).

A further distinction may be made according to the motivation of the diaspora members. Shain and Sherman (2001) further distinguish between for-profit motivation, as in the case of direct foreign investments, and those motivated by non-pecuniary or philanthropic interests. Sometimes, however, seemingly voluntary contributions from diaspora communities assume the nature of non-voluntary taxation. In the course of the long civil war in Sri Lanka, for example, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) used informal networks of activists to forcefully collect ‘contributions’ from their diasporas. Orjuela (2008) estimates that during the 1990s, the LTTE managed to raise $200–300 million a year using these methods. When the homeland under consideration is a sovereign state, the coercive means used to extract resources from the diaspora can be more diverse. For example, Redeker Hepner (2008) describes how the Eritrean state enforced a flat income tax of two percent on Eritreans living abroad. Those who refused to comply with the tax soon found out that the state refused to extend their passports and violated their basic property rights in the homeland. Thus, even outside the geographic boundaries of the state, the existence of other states, which require travel documents, provides nation-states with certain ability to sanction diasporas. During the 1970s, the renowned economist
Bhagwati (1976a,b) advocated the introduction of special ‘immigrant tax’ to be levied from diaspora communities. He justified the tax by noting that, in effect, countries in the developed world were effectively subsidized by investments in the education of the immigrants made by developing countries. While Bhagwati’s suggestion was never implemented, the idea that immigrants ‘owe’ something to their country of origin permeates discussion about diaspora contributions in general.

Understanding the constitutive role of flows of resources and of fundraising in particular requires a subtle change in our understanding of money and its social meanings. Typically people treat money as a resource, as something that allows doing certain things. From this utilitarian perspective, understanding diaspora–homeland capital flows may be important for economic reasons, but its relevance for identity formation is not clear. Allegedly, diasporic subjects give money only when they identify with the nation and, therefore, fundraising is secondary and dependent on prior identification. But, as Viviana Zelizer points out, money can also be understood in a different way, as a medium through which social ties are negotiated, stitched together, and dismantled (Zelizer 1994; Zelizer and Tilly 2006). From this perspective, monetary flows from the diaspora to the homeland may not be merely a sign of already existing attachments, but the very mechanism through which such attachments to a distant place are manufactured.

While the distinction between for-profit, philanthropic, and coerced contributions and those between the different destinations of the contributions is useful for analytical purpose, these ideal types should not be mistaken for a reality. More often than not, the extraction of payments from the diaspora combines diverse motivations and destinations in creative ways. The particular type or mix of payment and the particular destination are not just a matter of technicalities (Zelizer 1996). Money that is treated as an investment implies an equal exchange and a certain distance, contingency, and accountability among the parties. These types of monetary flows tend to dry up in times of political or economic crisis in the homeland. Money, given as a donation, implies unequal relationships between generous diasporas and needy homelands and is sometimes associated with moral degradation of the receiving side. For this reason, contacts between national movements aspiring for independence and their diasporic beneficiaries are often strained. Furthermore, donations are highly dependent on the availability of free income and tend to be deeply affected by economic fluctuations in the host country. Lastly, the extraction of money as an entitlement or tax implies power and autonomy by the recipient. The peculiar social and political position of diaspora communities, away from the coercive apparatus of the homeland nation-state, often render coercive, tax-like transaction impractical (although, as the previous examples indicate, a number of interesting exceptions exist).

For scholar of homeland diaspora encounter, the challenge lies in examining how national movements weave complex network of payments that allow diaspora communities to engage in the national project and handle tensions that arise in the encounter. Newly established states sometimes attempt to avoid charitable contributions both in order to put diasporic influence under check and to avoid the moral degradation associated with receiving charity. For example, during the 1920s and 1950s, respectively, the Irish Republicans and the Jewish nationalists in Israel attempted to float diaspora bonds instead of depending solely on donations. These bond projects were not simple financial instruments, using these bonds, the national leadership of the Irish and Zionists attempted to redefine the relationship between the homeland and the diaspora (Lainer-Vos 2009). Successful stabilization of these creditor–debtor relationships in the Israeli case resulted in increased emotional and financial investment of Jewish-Americans in Israel. In the Irish
case, in contrast, the failure to stabilize these relationships contributed to the disintegra-

tion and fragmentation of major Irish-American diaspora organizations.

The Irish and Jewish national movements wove together pecuniary and philanthropic

interests to generate increased flow of dollars to the homeland on convenient political and

moral terms (Lainer-Vos 2009). Even seemingly ‘pure’ transactions like charitable giving

for needy families in the homeland often include elements of coercion in the form of

shaming practices directed against ungenerous givers and an element of return in the form

of increased reputation for the givers. Careful attention to how homeland national move-

dments and diaspora communities negotiate the transfer of resources may provide important

insights regarding the processes that facilitate or retard diasporic national belonging.

Lobbying

Along with fundraising, lobbying is another key diaspora practice. Like fundraising, dias-

pora lobby activists often understand their practice as gifting the homeland, but they do so

indirectly, by influencing the policies of the host state. Diaspora lobbies influence foreign

policy by framing debates, providing information and policy analysis, and by exerting pol-

icy oversight, i.e., rewarding, financially and politically, policy makers that support its goals

while denying such support from others (Ambrosio 2002). Lobbying can be directed on

behalf or against particular foreign states or toward a third involved party. The activities of

the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, for example, are typically in line with the

goals of the Israeli government. The Cuban lobby, on the other hand, is deeply invested

in overthrowing the current Cuban regime. In both cases, however, these diaspora lobbies

also engage in policy debates regarding neighboring regimes (the Palestinian Authority and

other Arab states in the Israeli case, Central American states in the Cuban case). The prox-

imity of diaspora communities to key decision-making centers in the host state potentially

provides them with a unique clout in shaping foreign policy toward their homeland.

As in the case of fundraising, diaspora lobbying is typically understood as an expression

of pre-existing sentiments and political/cultural conditions in the host state and much of

the debate on the role of diaspora groups, at least among scholars of international rela-

tions, centers over the question of whether diaspora lobbies actually succeed in influenc-

ing foreign policy and whether this influence is welcome. As early as 1975, Glazer and

Moynihan, in their classic study immigrant assimilation, have argued that that diaspora

groups represent perhaps the most important factor shaping U.S. foreign policy. After the

end of the Cold War, the idea that diaspora groups have the right to exert influence on

US foreign policies received greater acceptance (Cohen 2005). This according to Thomas

Ambrosio has resulted in a proliferation of diaspora lobbies and rise in their influence

(Ambrosio 2002; see also Uslander 1995; Vidal 1996).

Despite general increase in acceptance, the legitimacy of diaspora lobbies is always in

question and even the most established lobbies cannot escape the controversy. Supporters

argue that diaspora lobbies help diversify decision-making on key issues and therefore

contribute to a more democratic and balanced decision-making. Critics of diaspora lob-

bies caution that diaspora groups sometime put the interests of their putative homeland

ahead of the national interest of the host state (Ambrosio 2002; Smith 2000). Debates

over particular diaspora lobbies attract enormous amount of attention. In a recent contri-

bution, Mearsheimer and Walt (2007) have argued that the Israel lobby exerts dispropor-

tional power that adversely affects American as well as Israeli interests in the Middle East.

Their argument and the rebuttals that followed exemplify how delicate the subject of

diaspora lobbying is, especially when it becomes influential.
Exploring the conditions that make for an effective diaspora lobbying, Yossi Shain notes that diaspora communities are more likely to advocate for and find support for homeland policies that are in line with American ideals and the ideals of current administrations in particular (Shain 1994). Haney and Vanderbush (1999), on the other hand, treat diaspora lobbying as an organizational accomplishment. Lobbies that manage to organize large, unified politically active supporters are typically capable in exerting disproportional clout. In addition, diaspora lobby effectiveness varies in relation to the salience and resonance of the message, the degree to which it fits with the policies of particular administration.

At the heart of the matter is the question of the relative autonomy of diaspora lobbies. Exploring the establishment of the Cuban American National Foundation, Haney and Vanderbush (1999) argue that its effectiveness and even very creation can be largely attributed to the Regan Administration, which used it to steer public opinion toward a more hard-line interventionist policies in Central America. Peter Hägel and Pauline Peretz, on the other hand, explore the mobilization of the Jewish-American lobby on behalf of Russian Jewry in the 1970s. They persuasively argue that what looks like an independent lobbying of American Jews actually originated from the Prime Minister’s Office in Jerusalem. The Israeli government steered the Jewish-American lobbying efforts to its own ends (Hägel and Peretz 2005; see also Auten 2006). Positioned between sovereigns, diaspora lobbies seem from this perspective as merely peons in the grand game of international politics.

The debates about the desirability and effectiveness of diaspora lobbying, which always center on the rights and obligations citizens of different hew have toward different polities, are not reserved to political scientists and International Relations scholars. Members on diaspora communities can never escape these debates, and it is through participation in these debates that notions of membership take shape. In other words, diaspora lobbying is never just an expression of already existing sentiment but also a dynamic process through which positions are formed and established. For this reason, following diaspora lobbyists as they negotiate their position vis-à-vis homelands on the one hand, and host governments, on the other, may provide vital clues regarding the meaning of political loyalties to the nation and their dynamic transformation.

**Dual citizenship**

Along with diaspora fundraising and lobbying, one of the defining characteristics of the post-national moment, to borrow Töloýyan’s famous declaration, is the growing prevalence of dual citizenship (Cohen 1996; Sheffer 1995). Some treat the rise of dual citizenship as well as provisions allowing dual citizenship as a sign of the decline of the modern nation-state. But, as already noted, this may be an oversimplification. Instead, it may be more useful to treat these practices as part of the interplay between nationalizing states, and sometimes responsive sometimes subversive citizenry.

Itzigsohn (2000) examines the institutional structure of contemporary transnational politics in the cases of the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and El Salvador. Itzigsohn notes that different states adapt differently to the challenge of transnationalism. The Dominican Republic, for example, extends dual citizenship to migrants and place main consulates in the hands of immigrants. Haiti, on the other hand, refrains for extension of citizenship but established the Tenth Department, dedicated to cater the needs of its vast diaspora. Itzigsohn identifies three key player: homeland states, migrant organizations, and political parties in the country of origins. The interplay between these entities is determined by
the need of the states of origin to stabilize and foster the flow of remittances and other financial resources, the diaspora organizations search for respectability in the country of settlement, and the consolidation of competitive politics in democratic regimes that increase the competing parties’ dependence on flow of capital. Far from a passive victim to a process of globalization, dual citizenship emerges from Itzigsohn’s analysis as a process of legal incorporation of even those who chose to leave outside the reach of the nation-state (see also Ohanyan 2004).

Understanding dual citizenship, like citizenship within the nation-state, as a mechanism of governance and integration should orient one to the question of who, precisely, are being welcomed to the newly expanded citizenship status, who are excluded from this status, and what rights and obligations are associated with this new status. Dickinson and Bailey (2007) do exactly that in their study of the Indian Dual Citizenship Amendment bill of 2003. Perhaps surprisingly, the bill allows ‘persons of Indian origin’ from Europe and North America to get Indian citizenship, but excludes those from Africa, South East Asia, and the Middle East. Furthermore, the dual citizenship offered carries a number of important limitations. The bill specifically notes that dual citizens would not be allowed to run for political office or take government jobs. Paradoxically, the exclusion of these groups follows the historical path of migration from India. Pre-independence emigrants, who in many cases did not voluntarily choose to leave India, are conceived as temporally distant and are associated with British subjugation. In contrast, post-independence emigrants, who clearly chose to live outside of the homeland, are somehow seen as better able to assimilate into the new spirit of independent India. In an ironic twist of history, modern India denies citizenship from the victims of British colonialism while welcoming those who chose, after independence, to leave it.

It would be a mistake, however, to treat the issue of dual citizenship solely from the perspective of the granting state. The expansion or contraction of citizenship, as is now well recognized, is a dynamic process involving the state and various social groups demanding either inclusion of themselves or, sometimes, the exclusion of others (Shafir 1998). Rather than being passive recipients (or not), diaspora groups often take part in these struggles. Turner (2008), for example, shows how the Burundi diaspora, in itself constituted in a process of physical exclusion from the homeland, effectively contested its own exclusion, and wrestled political rights from the current Burundian regime. The ability to take part in the shaping of Burundi’s citizenship was not a constant, but Simon identifies key moments when this was possible.

As in the case of diaspora lobbying, the struggles surrounding the provision of dual citizenship and of other legal statuses to diaspora communities are not just a reflection of pre-existing sentiments. As in the case of citizenship provision within the nation-state, we have all the reasons to believe that the provision of dual citizenship to diaspora communities shape members perception of their relationship to the homeland in complex ways. Exploring the struggles provides unique opportunity to examine how governments and diaspora groups negotiate their relationships.

Consumption of images through communication technologies

Developments in communication technologies have been often mentioned as crucially important precursor for the emergence of diaspora consciousness. These new technologies, so the story goes, allowed geographically distant actors to remain closely connected. Using the video, television, internet, or long distance phone calls allows one, quite, literally to re-present far and away realities, here and now (Appadurai 1996; Chan 2005;
Vertovec 2004). This idea, with the technological determinism it implies, had come under attack. Yet, the importance of cultural representations in mediating between homeland and diaspora groups is undeniable. In recent years, researchers have developed a more nuanced framework to examine what precisely is being accomplished through new communication technologies.

Parham (2004) applies insights from theories of public sphere to the emerging ‘diasporic public sphere’, emerging in the internet. Parham critically examines the diasporic public sphere along three key axes: (a) the speaker’s access and dominance – who speaks to who and who is discouraged from speaking; (b) the degree of control over the agenda – to what extent participants are able to switch topic according to what matters to them most; and (c) identity and opinion formation – to what extent to participants use to medium to reshape their self-conception and worldviews. Examining chat rooms and forums of Haitian diaspora members, Parham notes that the online dominance of English effectively excludes non-English speaker. Nevertheless, for the participants, the internet serves as a particularly useful arena to flesh-out ones identity with a relatively high degree of control over the agenda.

Following a similar paths, Bernal (2008), examining internet usage by the Eritrean diaspora, suggests that the internet is not merely a tool for the conveyance of information but an emotion creative space that allows participants to formulate new forms of membership and develop new communal participatory practices. At the same time, however, Bernal notes that the fragmented nature of internet communication – the absence of centralized control, the diverse, and un-standardized forms of communication – can result in increasing fragmentation and incommensurability.

Helena Wulff and Brian Axel highlight different aspects of diasporic identity construction over the internet. Examining ads in Irish travel websites, Wulff (2007) notes how representations of pastoral landscapes, rural harmony, and dramatic cliffs generate markedly different reaction among browsers depending at least in part on their personal background. The images on the screen are indeterminable, acting as a kind of Rorschach blot, thereby allow and invite active participation in the shaping of the ‘homeland’ itself. Axel (2008), on the other hand, is intrigued by the ubiquity of images of mutilated corpses and tortured Sikh nationalists in websites of the Sikh nationalist movement. What is the source of this fascination with the dead? Invoking the Kantian category of the sublime, Axel argues that the image of the martyr’s corpse connects the world of lived experience and that which cannot be experienced or even imagined. Axel’s analysis suggests an intriguing twist to the way we typically understand what ‘imagined community’ is all about. It is not so much that the image allows diasporic subject to place themselves in the shoes of heroic martyrs. This, he argues, is quite explicitly impossible. Rather, the image of the corpse allows diaspora subjects to imagine others as the full members in the nation.

Analysis of diasporic cultural consumption and its effect provides a distinct analytical advantage. Unlike subjects within the nation-states who are often bombarded with multiplicity of cultural stimuli, in a way that renders the analysis of each problematic, cultural consumption in the diaspora is often less heterogeneous and therefore perhaps more amenable to empirical analysis. By examining patterns of identification along with this flow, one can get a better sense of the contours of the imagined communities that are conjured through these practices. Furthermore, the social and geographic distance of diaspora groups from the ‘real homeland’ brings to the fore issues of authenticity and representation that is often obscured in other contexts. Lainer-Vos (2009), for example, explores the creation of diasporic attachments in a Jewish-American summer camp called ‘Massad’. 
To inspire campers to Zionism, Massad leaders organized the camp as a simulation of Israel, or, in their own words, ‘mini Israel in the Pocono Mountains,’ Pennsylvania. Constructing this simulation forced the camp leaders to engage in a selective process of trying to import to the camp the very essence of Israel, rather than the inessential elements. This selection forced an ongoing engagement in the question of what precisely is the homeland and how it can be known. For the analyst, examination of these questioning provides unparalleled insights regarding the process that allows subject to feel connected to a homeland.

Conclusion

Critics have pointed to the lack of theoretical and definitional clarity of the concept of diaspora as well as to the scholarly failure to examine power dynamics and internal divisions within diasporas. In response, some scholars have sought to apply clearer and stricter definitions of diaspora or even abandon the concept altogether (see Brah 2008; Töloöyan 2007). The current review takes a different path. Instead of drawing boundaries around the concept of diaspora and excluding cases that do not fit particular definition, this article suggests orienting research toward the encounters between homeland communities, diaspora groups, and host governments. Specifically, it calls attention to the potential that lies in studying diasporization practices – practices used by homeland movements and diaspora communities to relate to each other. Studying concrete encounters between these groups unearths the tensions and conflicts between the different fragments of the putative nation and the putative diaspora. More importantly, focus on these encounters may allow researcher to identify those practices and conditions that allow members of these respective groups to relate to each other and actually form transnational ties, ‘homelands’ and ‘diasporas.’

Understanding the practices developed in the process of forming ties between homeland and diaspora communities has a heuristic value for scholars of nationalism beyond this particular context. As suggested before, ambiguity and ambivalence with regard to ones’ position in a nation are not predicament specific to diaspora communities alone. While the diasporic condition may be extreme, the position of many other groups in the nation too is characterized by ambiguity and ambivalence. For this reason, understanding how and on what terms diasporas are included in the nation may allow better understanding of processes of nation building in general.

Examination of diasporic fundraising practices, for example, highlights the negotiated nature of diasporic attachments to the nation. Far from being simply an indicator of already-existing attachments, the transfer of money entails delicate negotiation of the terms of membership in the nation. Within the nation-state, where the coercive power of the state can be fully exercised, the extraction of resources may follow a different dynamic, but even there, it is likely that such process will include a delicate negotiation of the terms of membership. Furthermore, it is likely that even within the homeland, resource mobilization for the nation is not merely a utilitarian matter but also a process through which national attachments are sometimes produced.

The practice of diaspora lobbying too raises interesting issues. While within the nation-state, subjects are rarely confronted with the accusation of dual-loyalty of the kind diaspora groups are sometimes exposed too, the loyalty of different groups within the nation-state too is often a matter of debate and questioning. Socialist groups, for example, are sometimes accused of putting class interests ahead of the national interest and other examples are not hard to find. (Social institutions like the family or the firm often pose...
demands that are hard to reconcile with the demands of the nation. It is a challenge for both national movements and individual subjects to reconcile these conflicting demands. Much of the political struggles within the nation-state revolve precisely around the question of how deeply loyal is this or other group. Here, again, the delicate paths diaspora communities pave, while advocating for their homeland may allow us to understand more general processes of negotiation of multiple loyalties.

Lastly, while the internet consumption practices of diaspora communities, as Wulff and Axel describe them, may be different from cultural consumption patterns within the homeland, their emphasis on the creative aspect of this process is surely not unique to diaspora communities. Furthermore, Axel’s analysis of the ‘diasporic sublime’ raises interesting questions regarding the experience of national membership in general. Even within the homeland, subjects have no direct access to the putative ‘essence of the nation’ (which is often located in the past). Even within the nation-state, subjects sometime experience distance between their own experience and the experience of the nation, as it described in the great national narratives. Understanding how members of the nation, in the diaspora or otherwise, relate to this distance is a key challenge for scholars interested in nation-building.

The point in highlighting potential similarities between the national experience of diaspora communities and the national experience of other groups within the nation-state is not to suggest that there are no differences between diasporic membership and other forms of membership nor is it to claim that diaspora communities somehow naturally ‘belong’ to the ‘nation.’ Rather, treating diasporas as strategic research site to examine processes of nation-building suggests taking the geographic and social location of diasporas as a unique predicament that may provide important clues regarding the national predicament in general.

Short Biography

Dan Lainer-Vos is an assistant professor in the Department of Sociology at the University of Southern California. His research interests include nationalism, diaspora, and historical comparative methods. Specifically, he studies encounters between homeland and diaspora communities to understand how diverse groups negotiate their position in the nation.

Note

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