Bridging the Divide: Towards a comparative framework for understanding kin-state and migrant sending-state diaspora politics

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Whether by the coincidence or convergence of global events, in the past two decades there has been a significant increase in the number of states engaging members of the national community who reside outside the state’s borders and a concomitant explosion of academic interest in those transnational and transstate relationships. The post-Cold War decades have seen more and more states reclaiming and constructing ties to populations abroad, and more assertive claims by those populations for recognition of their unique status as members of cultural and political communities bridging more than one sovereign state. In the post-communist world, the liberalization of politics and the end of Soviet domination brought renewed attention to the relationship between potential “kin-states” and the transborder ethnic groups created either through territorial contraction (the dissolution of states and empires, such as the ethnic Hungarians, ethnic Germans, and ethnic Poles in East Central Europe and the Russians in the Near Abroad), or the creation of newly-independent states, such as Armenia, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine. And in other areas of the world, particularly in Asia, Latin America, and Southeast Asia, political and economic changes have encouraged states to rethink and revise their previously informal or even exclusionary stances towards migrant populations residing abroad.

Thanks to a flurry of fascinating case studies and theorizing about these phenomena, some progress has been made towards understanding how, when, and why states structure increasingly complex ties to populations abroad. Yet, as the debates in the literature over the nature and meaning of terms such as “diaspora”, “transnationalism”, “membership”, and “identity” continue, we see that important questions remain unanswered: How should we understand the role of the state in shaping transnational practices? What, if anything, is new about how states and populations abroad interact? What do these interactions mean for thinking about citizenship and other forms of membership that cross state borders? What are the risks and potential benefits of policies that seek to extend sovereignty and control to those outside the state? When and why are certain types of policies towards populations abroad employed and what is their impact? One potential barrier to further progress towards fully understanding these dynamics, this paper contends, is the prevalent analytical separation between studies of “kin-state” and “migrant sending-state” politics and policies towards external national populations. By maintaining this distinction – whether self-consciously or not - analysts of both sets of cases are losing out on potentially fruitful insights that may be gained from engaging across regions and

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historical specificities. This paper reconsiders the utility of this analytical separation and asks what may be gained by constructing a broader comparative framework in which to understand how and why states act on behalf of members of the national community who reside outside the borders of the state.

The paper will begin by laying out the definitional distinctions made in the literatures on how states relate to migrant diasporas and ethnic kin minorities. The first section will compare the analytical uses of diaspora terminology in the migration literature with the political analysts and practitioners concerned with kin-states and cross-border minorities, who generally do not use the term “diaspora” to describe that relationship. The second section of the paper demonstrates how the two sets of literature can learn from each other, providing additional analytical leverage in thinking through the empirical puzzles and theoretical debates that each face. The third section uses insights and examples from both sets of literature to construct a comparative framework for understanding the relationship between states and populations abroad, which seeks to answer four main questions: who the state targets, why and when states increase their level of transnational engagement, how states create and maintain ties with those abroad, and what the outcomes of that engagement look like. The final section of the paper will evaluate the limits and the prospects of looking at the actions and motivations of external kin and emigration states within a common framework.

The definitional divide: diaspora vs. kin-minority

In general, the literature on diaspora and transnationalism almost exclusively defines a diaspora by its migrant origins or the far-reaching dispersal of an ethnic community to multiple points, reflecting classical cases of diaspora such as the Jewish or Armenian ones. This type of definition tends to exclude cases of transborder ethnic groups created from the shifting of borders or the dissolution of states and empires, such as the ethnic Hungarians in East Central Europe or the Russians in the Near Abroad. In looking at who might be considered a part of a diaspora and why, for many authors the diaspora phenomena is unique to the situation of people moving across borders. A crucial marker of diaspora is understood to be the migratory – or traumatic and forced – dispersal of at least part of a national community from the territory on which the national claim is based. As Gabriel Sheffer defines the subject of his book on diaspora politics, “an ethno-national diaspora is a social-political formation, created as a result of either voluntary or forced migration”.2 That this dispersion – or disconnect between state and nation – is to be defined as primarily migratory in origin has become so ingrained in the diaspora and transnational literature that analysts specialize in a sub-genre around the specific politics and policies of “emigration” and “sending” states, and rarely, if ever, consider non-migrant cases.3

Beyond the question of origin, the self-identification as part of a community whose members “retain a collective memory, vision, or myth about their original homeland”4 is a

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crucial factor in distinguishing between diasporas and other expatriate communities. The identity of the diaspora must be “territorialized” in its connection to a given territorial homeland, or at least bounded by a “strong ethnic consciousness sustained over a long time.”\(^5\) The degree to which a migrant group is collectively organized and bounded by a sense of shared identity, therefore, matters a great deal for its classification as “diaspora”. Connected to this, the dependence on or concrete relationship with the homeland is another key factor in defining and understanding the diaspora phenomenon. Sheffer argues that diasporas maintain regular contacts with their homeland, organize themselves around this contact, and “establish trans-state networks”.

Other, broader definitions of diaspora can also be found from those working primarily on migrant cases, which focus less on the nature of the dispersal and more on the boundedness and self-consciousness of the minority group abroad and its connections to the homeland. For example, Shain and Barth define diaspora as “people with a common origin who reside, more or less on a permanent basis, outside the borders of their ethnic or religious homeland – whether that homeland is real or symbolic, independent or under foreign control.”\(^6\) Brubaker’s recent article on the “diaspora diaspora” makes clear the inclusion of the type of “kin-state” relations involving the shifting of borders within the diaspora framework.\(^7\) He argues that a constitutive element of diaspora is dispersion in space, regardless of how that dispersion occurred. Christian Joppke as well defines the category of “diaspora states” as those “in which perceived co-ethnics are lastingly stranded as precarious or oppressed minority groups in other states.”\(^8\) These broader definitions, however, are the exception rather than the rule. More common are those analysts who investigate policies of states towards migrants and expatriates, but do not use term “diaspora”. For these authors, diaspora may be a problematic term because of its assumption of group identity and boundedness, permanent dispersion, or some kind of bottom-up ties to the homeland. Examples include studies of policies towards “expatriates” or “citizens abroad”.\(^9\) However, these studies still largely assume a separate categorization involving states and populations of economic and political migrants, and rarely, if ever, use examples of kin-state – external minority situations in their analyses.\(^10\)

The dominant trend for those studying the relationships of neighboring states to “stranded minorities” across the border has also been to conceptualize them as a discrete set of cases with unique conditions. The assumptions of difference stem largely from the observation that migrant diasporas are created by people moving across borders, whereas external kin are the product of borders moving across populations after the break-up of empires or the territorial redistribution

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9. For example, Brand, in Citizens Abroad, rejects the term diaspora.
10. An important exception is Rainer Bauböck, who explicitly uses cases such as Hungary’s policies towards ethnic Hungarians in neighboring countries in his analysis of "extraterritorial citizenship". See Bauböck, “Stakeholder Citizenship and Transnational Political Participation: A Normative Evaluation of External Voting” Fordham Law Review, no. 5, vol. LXXV (April 2007), 2396; and “Towards a Political Theory of Migrant Transnationalism” International Migration Review (2003), 708.
of existing states. Because of this difference in origin, migrant diasporas form gradually and voluntarily, are territorially dispersed, and members often maintain the citizenship of their country of origin, at least through the first generation. “Accidental” diasporas or “stranded” minorities, on the other hand, happen suddenly and largely against the will of their members, tend to be more territorially concentrated, and often have the citizenship of only their new state of residence. Many “national” and “transborder” minorities do reside, at least in part, on territory that once made up part of the national homeland, but is now part of the state belonging to another ethnic or national majority. Therefore, their “territorialized” identities may include the area on which they reside, and not only the territory of an external national “homeland”. These populations may also be more bounded to their host state – and have less flexibility of membership and physical mobility - because the shifting of borders often coincides with the shifting of their prospects for citizenship from the homeland to the host state.

Mirroring these distinctions, for most analysts and political actors involved with kin-state situations, the term “diaspora” is considered a problematic term. Diaspora in Hungary, Poland and other kin-states is most commonly invoked when discussing political and economic migrants who settled in the United States, Western Europe, and elsewhere outside of the region – and historic territory - of the mother country. As Hungarian legal scholar Judit Tóth has written: “the formation of the Hungarian population in the Hungarian basin is not (characteristically) related to the migration of people but to the ‘migration’ of state borders in the twentieth century” and is therefore not a diaspora”.

This distinction is considered necessary by Hungarian analysts in particular, because the diaspora condition is equated with weakened bonds of ethnic and linguistic affinity and the triumph of assimilationist pressures on the national community. Hungarian scholars and political actors have focused on the issue of dispersal when considering diaspora, seeing it as a permanent condition of physical and cultural separation from the national homeland; an important difference from the way diaspora is seen in the migration literature. Diaspora as dispersion (szőrvány) is used to refer to ethnic Hungarians residing in the territory of historical Hungary, though not in ethnic blocks, but dispersed in scattered settlements.” Hungarian living as diaspora in this sense are those in a “state of abandonment” not tied to migration, but to the disintegration of ethnic blocs in areas of historic Hungary. In contrast, those more concentrated national communities “beyond the border” are reachable and critical components of the national project. Calling them diaspora would somehow indicate that they were “lost” to the nation and to those in the Hungarian state who would see them as a crucial source of cultural pride and reproduction. By this logic, even those ethnic Hungarians who leave their ethnic kin communities and emigrate to Hungary become part of the “intensification of diasporization due to assimilation and out-migration”.

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14 Zoltán Ilyés, “Researching and Interpreting Diaspora: Remarks on Social Science Research into the Diaspora Communities of the Carpathian Basin” in ibid., 46.
Instead of “diaspora”, many analysts now use the terms “kin-state” and “kin-minority” to refer to the situation of cross-border minorities and states that can be considered potential national homelands. These terms first came into wide usage after they were included in the Council of Europe’s Venice Commission report on the extent to which Hungary’s legislative attempt to further institutionalize its relationship with ethnic Hungarians in neighboring states (the “Status Law”) conformed to European norms and expectations.\textsuperscript{16} Kin-states are understood as having a historical and usually ethnically-based affinity with a “kin-minority”, or “people who share the majority ethnicity of one state but are resident in another”.\textsuperscript{17} Hungarian political actors, however, have yet to widely adopt this language, relying instead on more symbolically-powerful and historically-specific language such as “mother country”, and framing policies around the extra-territorial integration of Hungarian “minority communities” as a part of the Hungarian “nation” (\textit{nézet}) or concerns for “Hungarian-dom” (\textit{magyarság}), usually referring to the Hungarians of the Carpathian basin; those within the borders of historic Hungary.\textsuperscript{18} Other potential kin-states, such as Poland, Russia and Germany, have used similar language to describe themselves and their ethnic kin in other states.\textsuperscript{19}

There are, however, a relatively small, but increasing, number of internal and external analysts who have found the term diaspora as it is more widely understood to be a useful category for thinking about the situation of “kin-minorities” and their relationship to potential kin-states.\textsuperscript{20} Charles King and Neil Melvin’s work in an article and edited volume have gone perhaps the farthest in self-consciously using the diaspora terminology to discuss a range of cases that could be included under the “kin-state” rubric. In the introduction to their volume, King and Melvin argue that “whether the diaspora label is serviceable should be determined primarily by the degree to which given states and ethnic populations act as if a diasporic relationship exists, not by the extent to which the ethno-cultural community possesses a prescribed list of static cultural traits.”\textsuperscript{21} They focus primarily on the action of states engaging in diaspora politics. Similar to Joppke and Brubaker, they see a “diasporic state” as “a kin-state whose identity in some sense rests of its self-conception as the homeland of a territorially dispersed ethnic group, and which to some extent sees itself as the defender of the interests of “its” co-ethnic population abroad.”\textsuperscript{22} Perhaps signaling a shift towards this understanding, at least two books in English have come out of post-communist Europe in recent years that have


\textsuperscript{17} Osamu Ieda, introduction, no. 4, page 8


\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 12.
used the diaspora framework to discuss cases such as Hungary, Russia and Ukraine and their relationship to kin-minorities in other states, as well as a number of articles.

Learning from each other

The prevalent separation of migrant-sending and kin-state cases based largely on assumptions of definitional difference has led to distinct terminologies, theoretical concerns, and analytical debates. However, bringing the two sets of literature into dialogue with each other highlights weaknesses in each and can provide analytical leverage for thinking through the major empirical puzzles that each identify as central concerns. Specifically, the kin-state literature can help those focused on emigration policies to understand the nature of transnational practices between states and diasporas. In turn, an engagement with migrant-sending cases helps kin-state analysts find a framework for understanding action on behalf of co-ethnics that goes beyond irredentism and assumptions of ethnic affiliation as deterministic — and conflict-producing - causal factors.

Understanding Transnationalism

A major debate in the migration-centered literature is the question of what transnationalism is and to what degree it accurately captures the interaction between states and diasporas. Initially, those studying migrant and diaspora populations employed the term to describe what they saw as the increasing agency of those residing abroad as non-state actors who could influence policies and events in the homeland state as well as in their state of residence through their capacity to act as ethnic lobbyists and political actors. Transnationalism was defined as “various forms of direct cross border participation in the politics of their country of origin by both migrants and refugees, as well as their direct participation via the political institutions of the host country”. More recently, however, the conception of transnationalism as existing in a realm above – or below - the state has been challenged, bringing a more nuanced understanding of the increasingly formalized relationships between states and populations abroad. A number of authors have “brought the state back in” to studies of transnationalism, arguing that it is the “institutionalized responses” of homeland states to populations abroad and their “key role in creating transnational life” that is the most unique, and overlooked, aspect of transnationalism. Connected to this “discovery” of the state as a transnational actor is the argument that the state-driven creation of new forms of citizenship and membership that can

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encompass those abroad is a new development to be investigated. As Peter Spiro writes in his article on “Perfecting Political Diaspora”, what is new is that “[o]ne’s physical location is no longer so likely to coincide with national membership”, pushing states to redefine citizenship in order to maintain transnational ties.28

Rejecting the idea that the increased attention on transnational phenomenon signals the “dissolving” of the nation-state, analysts of policies instituted by many emigration states now focus on how the homeland state plays a crucial role in constructing diasporas and in shaping the membership of those abroad in social, economic and political spheres between homeland and host states.29 Some have even begun to question the use of the term transnationalism to characterize the targeting of specific migrant groups by offering them expanded forms of membership and citizenship. Waldinger and Fitzgerald have made the argument most directly that much of the transnationalism literature errs in “depicting transnationalism as subversive and transnationalists as grassroots actors challenging the hegemony of states.”30 What they and others have uncovered are instead “long-distance, trans-state affiliations of a particularist sort”, such as institutions that seek to tie those abroad to the state in specific, bounded ways or associations that connect diaspora members to specific communities of origin.31

A comparison with the kin-state set of cases forces us to rethink the novelty of these discoveries, or at the very least to rethink what in fact is new about them. The incongruity between state and nation is a situation that many European countries in particular have faced since the beginning of the twentieth century. The idea of the state of origin as a major player in structuring cross-border ties is not “new”, but obvious for scholars of kin-states in Europe, where homeland states are often the politically and economically strongest actor in the triadic relationship between host state, homeland, and transborder minority.32 The actions of Hungary, or Germany, in the interwar period, for example, demonstrate a range of engagement with “stranded minorities”, from diplomatic efforts to guarantee their security, to the creation of government ministries for information gathering and cultural funding, to direct political and economic ties and support.33 Of course, many of these actions were taken in the hopes of eventually regaining the populations and territory lost after World War I. Yet, the role of the

29 Smith, "Migrant Membership as an Instituted Process."
31 Ibid., 1182. Gabriel Sheffer also argues for the use of “trans-state” rather than “transnational” to describe the “involvement of peoples of the same national origin, but living in various states or countries”. Diaspora Politics, 9–10.
32 The idea of the “triadic nexus” was formulated most famously in Rogers Brubaker, Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 67-76.
homeland state in creating and maintaining the institutional structure of cross-border ties has been a constant feature of diaspora politics in Central and Eastern Europe. Seen in this larger comparative – and historical – framework, a state-based understanding of transnationalism and the institutionalization of state-diaspora relations is not as unique as some might assume.\footnote{In fact, some scholars of Mexican transnationalism and extraterritorial behavior have explicitly argued for a more nuanced, historical view of state-diaspora relations. See in particular Sherman, “From State Introversion to State Extension in Mexico”; Fitzgerald, “State and Emigration”; Robert C. Smith, "Diasporic Membership in Historical Perspective: Comparative Insights from the Mexican, Italian and Polish Cases,” \textit{International Migration Review} 37, no. 4 (2003).}

The kin-state literature’s focus on nation- and state-building also reinforces the work of some migration-centered scholars who have attempted to problematize and analyze the “dark side” of trans-state activity. Analyses of kin-state politics are consistently faced with the dangers of state-led transnationalism: the instrumental use of ties to those abroad to justify irredentist ambitions and exclusionary, nationalist politics; the security dilemma created by cross-border violations of sovereignty when a homeland state claims residents of neighboring states as their national members; and the potential negative effects on inter-ethnic relations created by fears of minority 5th-columnism or disloyalty to their state of residence. The dark side of transnationalism is an aspect that should be grappled with more broadly by migration-focused analysts as well. As Zolberg and others have pointed out, states attempt to control both physical and symbolic boundary maintenance, and all efforts to construct states and nations involve some kind of exclusion.\footnote{On the connection between state-making and exclusion, see Aristide R. Zolberg, "The Formation of New States as a Refugee-Generating Process," \textit{Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science} 467 (1983). Also, David Fitzgerald, “Nationality and Migration in Modern Mexico” \textit{Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies} 31, 1 (January 2005), 171-191.} The extension of the national community beyond the borders through extraterritorial citizenship, symbolic and cultural membership, and other tools entails the invocation of “transborder nationalism”\footnote{Fitzgerald, “Rethinking Emigrant Citizenship”, 99.}, whereby the homeland government promotes a specific definition of the national community for its own purposes.

\textit{Beyond Irredentism}

While the kin-state literature clearly has to account for the dangers of engagement with populations abroad, many analyses are overly-constrained by their focus on security threats and ties of ethnic and national affiliation as enduring, and often pathological, factors in domestic politics and foreign policy.\footnote{For example, Ivanka Nedeva Atanasova, “Transborder Ethnic Minorities and Their Impact on the Security of Southeastern Europe” \textit{Nationalities Papers}, 32, 2 (June 2004).} In the early 1990s, it was common to ask why Hungary – or Russia – was the “dog that didn’t bite”, i.e. why it didn’t start an irredentist conflict with neighboring countries over the situation of its ethnic kin, as Serbia had.\footnote{See, for example, Thomas Ambrosio, \textit{Irredentism: Ethnic Conflict and International Politics} (Westport, London: Praeger, 2001).} Analysts of transnational ethnic conflict assumed in their models that state actors would almost automatically respond to the plight of co-ethnics and act accordingly in order to satisfy domestic actors and the demands of ethnic affiliation.\footnote{David R. Davis and Will H. Moore, "Transnational Ethnic Ties and Foreign Policy,” in Lake and Rothchild, eds., \textit{The International Spread of Ethnic Conflict}.} What has been overlooked is the reality, as the case of Hungary shows,\footnote{38} that
while myths of homeland, national tragedy, and the eventual return of long-suffering kin in neighboring countries still resonate, irredentism is no longer a viable policy for most kin states. Contemporary state policies concerning populations across the border are increasingly framed more by the language of legal and political rights and the institutionalization – and often politicization - of transnational cultural and economic connections than by active policies to change borders or reclaim populations. The security-focused approach can not sufficiently explain this change or its significance.

The findings of those looking closely at the politics of migrant sending-state engagement with diaspora populations usefully problematizes these underlying assumptions of the kin-state literature in a number of important ways. First, in the migrant sending-state literature, the empirical puzzle is reversed: Instead of asking why states that have long histories of engagement with co-ethnics abroad didn’t take stronger actions on their behalf, analysts seek to understand why states that have a history of ignoring or downplaying their relationship with migrant populations have begun to actively engage their diasporas in attempts to construct a “global nation.” By tracing the processes by which state actors change their perceptions of the diaspora and the state’s institutionalized relationship to those abroad, those on the cutting edge of the transnationalism literature clearly demonstrate the contingent, constructed, and often instrumental nature of the state-diaspora relationship. If state actors in migrant sending states are shown to respond to a changing political and economic environment by transforming how they relate to diaspora populations, why should this not hold true for kin-state actors as well? My work on Hungary, in fact, has shown that state policies and stances towards ethnic Hungarians in other countries have waxed and waned over time, reflecting the shifting interactions of elite politics and regional power relations within different institutional structures rather than a reactive stance based solely on ethnic affiliation.  

Second, by problematizing the state-diaspora relationship, the sending-state transnationalism literature clearly demonstrates the “dual” quality of diasporas and external kin as representing both threat and opportunity. On one hand, it seems obvious that states should “care” about or feel responsible for ethnic kin in other – and particularly neighboring - states. Yet, diasporas represent a host of negative aspects as well, which often manifest in representations of the diaspora as “traitors” who have abandoned the homeland, exiles who have left behind ongoing political or economic struggles at home, or as painful blights on the national psyche. When those abroad come home, they are often perceived as tainted by their unique experiences, and therefore as too different to be reintegrated successfully into the homeland state. Diaspora members also become competitors with those who stayed behind for government subsidies, for jobs, and even for political influence. For example, in Mexico in the 1920s, the “bleeding of Mexico to gringo advantage” was a direct challenge to the process of nationalization there.  

For state elites, the “extensive outmigration and enfranchisement abroad of a large number of citizens of a particular country” can demonstrate state weakness and be a

42 Fitzgerald, “State and Emigration.”
threat to legitimacy. For states like Hungary, which lost their population along with large amounts of territory and prestige, the existence of the diaspora constituted a “trauma” that strongly impacts conceptions of national identity.

A final contribution from the migration and transnationalism literature is a broader understanding of range of policies that states may employ in shaping and creating ties to populations abroad. As states like Hungary seek to define a relationship with ethnic kin abroad, they are turning not only to the tools of foreign policy pressure or advocacy, but are operating in a “post-irredentist” context in which they develop a combination of policies similar to those used by engaged sending states: specially-tailored forms of cultural, political, and economic membership in the kin-state community; the creation of official institutional bodies as vehicles for diaspora representation, consultation, and policy-formation in the homeland government; and transborder cultural subsidies and exchanges. Taken together, the focus on domestic politics, the dual nature of populations abroad, and the dynamics of transnational practices should make kin-state analysts rethink assumptions and lead to a new set of questions: why and under what conditions do states increase or decrease their engagement with populations abroad and what factors help or hamper policy implementation?

States and populations abroad: understanding who, what, and why

Bringing together the insights from kin-state and migration-centered cases, we can begin to answer these questions. The following comparative framework demonstrates the emerging – but too often overlooked – consensus emerging around understanding a wide variety of state-diaspora relationships. By focusing on the actions that states take to engage populations abroad rather than on the origin of that population, I have identified and developed four sets of arguments that can be used to answer the who, what and why of state-led transnationalism. First, while diasporic states utilize a rhetoric of engaging the “global nation”, their policies are often targeted to specific populations abroad, depending more on what these populations can offer the homeland state than on their reasons for separation from the homeland. Second, states increase their engagement with specific external populations because they serve a specific political and strategic purpose. Diasporas represent a set of unique cultural, material, and political resources for homeland state elites. Homeland state elites come to understand and promote those abroad as a source of strength, rather than a symbol of weakness for the homeland state and for their own political agendas. Third, states use the extension of their sovereignty through the expansion of the boundaries of citizenship and cultural membership in order to co-opt and control access to diaspora resources. Yet, because this new engagement involves the expansion of the political community, the development of policies is often a contested process, which results in incomplete policies and policy reversals.

Global discourse, targeted policies

In order to understand which populations abroad a state targets and why, we must first look at the potential candidates for engagement. By including the entire universe of potential targeted diaspora members, we see that many states cannot so easily be classified as either

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43 Brand, Citizens Abroad, 33-34.
“ethnic kin-state” or “migrant sending state”. Many states have current or historical relationships with populations in other countries for various reasons, including territorial contraction, the independence of new states, sporadic and voluntary dispersal, and state-sponsored emigration. Chart 1 shows that even many states that are usually thought of primarily as migrant sending states have had the potential to act as a kin-state to members of the ethnic or national community who reside on territory that was once part of the national homeland. And many kin-states also have substantial economic and political migrant populations. Some states have policies that extend to both cross-border minorities and migrant communities, but most have chosen to target only one or the other.

Many homeland state elites utilize a discourse of a “global” or “transborder” nation, which extends beyond the state to encompass the diaspora populations politically, socially, economically and culturally. The construction of this discourse was at the heart of József Antall’s (Hungary’s first post-communist prime minister) claim to be the “Prime Minister of 15 million Hungarians”, Viktor Orbán’s (head of the Hungarian Young Democrats Party – Fidesz) references to “national reunification without borders”, Vicente Fox’s hopes to represent “118 million Mexicans”, and the Indian government’s hailing of the “global Indian family.” By the numbers, however, Antall’s 15 million Hungarians would have included those in the Western diaspora as well as those in neighboring Romania, Slovakia, Ukraine and Serbia. Similarly, Hungary’s Status Law was valid only for those ethnic Hungarians of the poorer, regional diaspora and not for members of the Western diaspora. India’s changed policies targeted mostly the struggling diaspora working in the Middle East, and became even more open for the privileged professional-class diaspora working in high-tech jobs in the US and Western Europe. India’s more recent laws regarding “People of Indian Origin” also specifically excludes citizens of neighboring Pakistan and Bangladesh. And Mexico’s government no longer talks about its populations abroad as part of an irredentist claim on parts of the Southwestern United States, but targets them as migrant populations.

45 As Varadajaran has written: “…the production of the domestic abroad rests on the inclusion of the diaspora as members of an extended, global nation – a process that is striking, especially given that the diaspora was often dismissed within dominant state discourses as “traitors” to the national cause (as in the case of the Chinese diaspora) or becoming “de-nationalized” (as in the case of the Mexican diaspora).” Varadarajan, "Producing the Domestic Abroad", 19.
46 Marie Lall, “Mother India’s Forgotten Children” in Ostergaard-Nielsen, ed. International Migration and Sending States, 122.
Motives and triggers for diaspora engagement

This targeting forces us to not only question the assumed separation between cases, but to look for explanations as to why and how states make policies towards different populations abroad. In order to answer this question, we need to know why and under what conditions states increase their engagement with populations abroad, often towards more active positions giving populations abroad increased stature and access to political and symbolic membership in the homeland state. From both the migrant-sending and kin-state literatures, we see that homeland state elites are not passive actors stirred only by feelings of national affiliation or by demands made on them by those abroad. Instead, shifts towards increased diaspora engagement are driven in large part by the interests and perceptions of homeland state political elites. These motives can be grouped into three main sets of interests and “resources” represented by populations abroad: the extraction of material resources for economic gain, the creation or maintenance of domestic and international political legitimacy, and the utilization of those abroad as a culturo-linguistic resource to be used in defining and redefining the boundaries of national identity.

Because populations abroad also have negative connotations for the homeland/motherland and can be sources of risk and political uncertainty, the barriers to elites perceiving certain diaspora communities as positive resources can be quite high. Therefore, it is not enough to simply see diasporas and other populations abroad as resources, but we must also explain what causes a shift in perception: a moment in which the diaspora goes from being seen as a liability or a population that can be ignored, to an important resource that should be cultivated, and even exploited.48 Moments of “redefinition” are often triggered by large structural changes, such as

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48 For example, Robert Smith, in his discussion of the “extra-territorial conduct of Mexican politics” regarding Mexicans living in the United States, points to moments of “reassessment” or “redefinition” regarding “migrant membership in the home country’s political community” as a turning point for the state’s policy stance toward the
dramatic shifts in the regime or the political system, often occurring simultaneously with important changes in regional or geo-political relations or by economic restructuring. These changes allow space for a redefinition of the boundaries political community and a rethinking of the state’s relationship to the diaspora. Together, finding from the migrant sending and kin-state literatures provide a useful picture of these motives and the processes of perception shift that trigger increased engagement.

As the migration literature clearly demonstrates, diaspora communities are often sources of important material resources through remittances they send back to the homeland state, diaspora-led investment, or by offering the homeland state expanding markets for its exports, cultural output, and even a temporary labor pool. In fact, Barry and others have argued that states’ interest in emigrants is driven primarily by economic considerations.49 Most migrant sending countries, like the Philippines, Turkey, and many Latin American, Middle Eastern and Southeastern European countries, rely heavily on the emigrant diaspora working in richer economies to contribute to the country’s GDP.50 Economic interests play less of a role in non-migrant diaspora situations, particularly when the homeland state is more economically developed than the diaspora. However, even the promise of possible future economic gains can be used as a justification for activist diaspora policies in these states. For example, in Hungary, the ethnic Hungarians in neighboring states have been described as a potential resource for businesses in need of labor as a selling point for Hungarian policies towards co-ethnics.51

In terms of change leading to a perception shift around the desirability of economic resource, various authors have identified the state’s integration into regional and global economic and trade organizations as a process that compelled or deepened neo-liberal restructuring of the state’s economy, leading to a rethinking of the role of diaspora remittances and investment and how the state could stabilize that stream of revenue.52 Growing economic opportunities as a result of regional integration and increased foreign investment can also lead to a search for easily-assimilatable labor migration, which may make the diaspora an attractive prospect. In fact, it could be argued that Spain has invented such a diaspora for this purpose by offering return opportunities to the descendants of Spanish migrants in Latin America.53 Japan has also used second and third-generation Brazilians of Japanese descent to fill out its labor

51 According to Attila Melegh, “In the law itself and also in the public debates there is a clear intention to balance the “charity” of allowing ethnic Hungarians to work in Hungary, the economic benefit of having cheap and well-qualified laborers, the protection of non-Hungarian citizen laborers and the need to get taxes from this employment.” Attila Melegh, "Globalization, Nationalism, and Petite Imperialism," Romanian Journal of Society and Politics 2, no. 1 (2003).
52 Smith, "Migrant Membership as an Instituted Process." in regard to Mexico’s membership in NAFTA; Varadarajan, “Producing the Domestic Abroad”. Varadarajan argues that neo-liberal reforms in India “marked an important turning point in the discursive articulation of the Indian nation-state’s link to the Indian diaspora.”, 6.
needs without challenging its exclusive, ethnically-based definitions of migration and citizenship.\textsuperscript{54}

In addition, a perception shift can occur in response to changing policies of the state in which the diasporas reside. In particular, if homeland state elites see that new integrationist or assimilationist policies are being put into place, they may respond by introducing their own policies to “pull” the diaspora back to the homeland through transnational connections and feelings of loyalty. As Brand argues in regard to the Tunisian and Moroccan diaspora in Western Europe: “as European states successively changed laws governing immigrant integration, the Maghrebi states faced the prospect of declining loyalty among their nationals. In response, new institutions and policies were put into place or existing ones were redefined.”\textsuperscript{55}

Besides the focus on states’ interest in their emigrants due to economic considerations, diaspora engagement also plays perhaps an equally important role in political legitimation, both domestically and geo-politically. Reaching out to those abroad and establishing cross-border ties can be a way for governments and political parties to renew and redefine the bases of their legitimacy at times of economic or political crisis, or when the sovereignty of the state is being weakened by external forces. Rachel Sherman, in describing the history of Mexico’s changing policies, argues that states extend their hand to those abroad during “moments in which political legitimacy was being questioned, and the state was trying to consolidate a particular institutional order.”\textsuperscript{56} Maintaining the loyalty of emigrants to their home country, and thereby securing access to those communities and their resources, can be a vital “part of the process of nation-building and maintaining elite dominance at home.”

Populations abroad are also strategically important and useful for political legitimacy because of their culturo-symbolic function, particularly their role in state-building, national identity construction, and cultural reproduction. The diaspora can serve prominently in the construction of national myths, which are used to legitimize nationalist political agendas, and the modes of inclusion and exclusion that designate who will have access to political power and the resources of the state.\textsuperscript{57} External populations are often incorporated into myths identifying forces threatening the survival of or impeding the rightful flourishing of the cultural or linguistic nation, broadly defined as extending beyond existing state borders. The continued existence of a group beyond the border that maintains its cultural identity and connections to the homeland by resisting assimilationist pressures offers a defense against fears of cultural extinction or dilution and a source of national pride. For example, in the case of Mexico, “The new Mexican ideology holds that by creating and maintaining a distinct ethnic identity within the United States, albeit different from Mexico’s indigenous culture, Mexican Americans are preserving their national heritage and proving that Latino roots and much deeper than Anglo-American influences.”\textsuperscript{58}

Other analysts of Mexico argue that the government’s involvement in Mexican communities

\textsuperscript{54} Fitzgerald, “Rethinking Emigrant Citizenship”, 102.

\textsuperscript{55} Brand, \textit{Citizens Abroad}, 216-217.

\textsuperscript{56} Sherman, “From State Introversion to State Extension in Mexico”, 847.

\textsuperscript{57} "Diasporas help nationalizing elites “construct a legitimate locus of political power: the national homeland and its duties toward the historical nation of which it is a representative”. King and Melvin, "Diaspora Politics: Ethnic Linkages, Foreign Policy, and Security in Eurasia.", 12.

\textsuperscript{58} Shain, "The Mexican-American Diaspora's Impact on Mexico."
“was part of the state’s effort to ‘Mexicanize’ Mexico.” Also, such populations keep the influence of the homeland language and culture alive in territories that were once part of the homeland’s empire or colonial holdings, recalling the diaspora’s ties to historically-significant moments of past greatness and tragedy. Threats to these groups, therefore, are framed as threats to the unity, status, and survival of the nation embodied by the homeland. This type of resource has been particularly important for Hungary, a small, linguistically-isolated country with a history of empire.

One main trigger for utilizing the diaspora to bolster state legitimacy is political liberalization through institutional or regime change, which subjects control over the state-diaspora relationship to more intense political contestation. The diaspora resources become prizes to be captured within the context of domestic political competition. The opening up of political competition after decades of dictatorial or authoritarian rule triggers the search for new sources of political support and legitimacy by the new political actors on the scene. Often these actors have little governing experience, and may also have few organizational resources or a track record of ideological positioning. Reframing a discourse of the nation and national identity that invokes those beyond the border can provide a unique source of legitimacy for these new political actors. They can position themselves as “nationalizing elites” or as saviors of the nation who can now right the wrongs of the past. As Brand argues, “reaching out to those who left may be way of rehabilitating the state image both domestically and abroad, and of laying the bases for a new state-society relationship in the future.” In addition, emerging elites can utilize diaspora populations as virtual or potential constituents, who can affect domestic political outcomes through transborder media connections, through more informal channels connecting co-nationals across the border, or eventually through gaining the right to vote or have special representation within the government. At times of political transformation, the diaspora “may come to be considered by a new regime as the key population for domestic transformation.”

For example, in Hungary, the Young Democrats Party (Fidesz) revitalized the Hungarian right and consciously utilized the ethnic kin issue as part of its party-building strategy. The ethnic Hungarian issue represented a solution to the ideological and organizational barriers that the party faced in challenging more entrenched political forces. Fidesz policymakers constructed and shaped the diaspora issue as primary to their party ideology and to Hungary’s future prosperity and cultural survival. This gave the party the historically-grounded ideological content that it had previously lacked, and provided it with a way to win control over the boundaries of national inclusion and exclusion during election campaigns in 1998 and 2002. As an opposition party, Fidesz used the issue to discredit the left-wing social democratic government, faulting the government for diminishing the interests of the ethnic Hungarians in neighboring countries to the goals of European Union integration. The party campaigned actively in the ethnic Hungarian communities in Slovakia and Romania, not for votes, but to win the battle of public opinion there.

59 Sherman, “From State Introversion to State Extension in Mexico”, 860.
61 As Charles King has noted: “Political transitions offer a clear opportunity for diaspora politics to come to the fore.” King, "Introduction: Nationalism, Transnationalism and Postcommunism.", in King and Melvin. Nations Abroad, 13.
62 Brand, Citizens Abroad, 34.
that would be reflected in Hungarian state media.\textsuperscript{64} Once in power after 1998, the party offered a new discursive framing of the ethnic Hungarians in neighboring countries, characterizing them not merely as a “responsibility” or as a necessary burden of Hungary’s tragic history, but instead as an important source of legitimacy, pride, and survival for Hungary. Domestic political strategies involving the diaspora have also been seen in a number of other cases, including Mexico, El Salvador, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic.\textsuperscript{65} All these countries have seen electoral campaigns spill over into diaspora communities, with party elites hoping to capture the endorsement of diaspora leaders and their formal and informal organizational networks, and to control the discourse of national interests and priorities by embracing the diaspora.

Engaging those abroad can also expand the international legitimacy of a state if they are utilized as a resource that can be called upon to influence the policies of host governments or to bolster the position of the homeland states vis à vis the host state.\textsuperscript{66} The diaspora as ethnic lobbyist for homeland state interests is a fairly well-cited and researched phenomenon, one which can bolster nativist concerns about the loyalty of diaspora members and bring out fears that some ethnic lobbies have undue influence over foreign policy in multicultural states such as the US. Diasporas and their treatment by other states can also serve as justifications for homeland state foreign and domestic policies which may otherwise be unpopular. One example was Hungarian policymakers framing the widely unpopular signing of Basic Treaties with neighboring Romania and Slovakia in the mid-1990s – two states with the highest concentrations of ethnic Hungarians - as a necessary step towards Hungary’s bid for European Union membership, which was framed as the last, best hope for Hungary to help its diaspora economically and diplomatically. Another example was Mexico’s strategy in securing support for NAFTA in the Mexican diaspora communities and using that support to sell NAFTA both domestically and within the U.S.\textsuperscript{67} Shifts in geo-political power relations, particularly between the homeland state and the state or states containing the diaspora communities, shape and constrain the availability and opportunity for elites to engage those abroad. The degree of access to and availability of diaspora resources determines why and when a homeland state becomes more activist towards its diaspora.

The tools of engagement

We now turn to how the engaged homeland state creates and maintains access to these diaspora resources. Taking examples from both the kin and migrant-sending state cases, we see that homeland states have better access to these resources when they are able to craft and, to the extent possible, control homeland ties to the those abroad and their organizations. State elites who can benefit from diaspora resources seek to co-opt and control transnational connections between the state and those abroad. In order to shape these relations, states extend their sovereignty and redefine the boundaries of citizenship and membership in order to include targeted members of populations abroad through institutionalized packages of “engagement” policies. In a tricky, and often unsuccessful, balancing act, state elites attempt to push these policies while keeping in mind the demands of the diaspora communities, who may or may not

\textsuperscript{64} Waterbury, “Ideology, Organization, Opposition”.
\textsuperscript{65} See Mary Beth Sheridan, “Salvadoran Leader Embraces Diaspora,” Washington Post (October 9, 2004), B01; Itzigsohn, “Immigration and the Boundaries of Citizenship” on Haiti and the Dominican Republic.
\textsuperscript{66} Safran, “Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return.”
\textsuperscript{67} Smith, “Migrant Membership as an Instituted Process”.
respond in kind to these overtures. Elites must then overcome the ensuing domestic political backlash and debate generated by the expansion of the political community, as well as the possible tensions caused by the extension of their sovereignty into the borders of another state.

In both the kin-state and sending state literature, institutionalized engagement with populations abroad is recognized as a tool of co-option and a way of building clientelistic relationships that go beyond the borders of the state. In the case of Hungary, the attempt by Hungarian state elites to co-opt diaspora leaders and their organizations has been a continuous feature of the post-communist political scene, as elites vie to control the discourse of the transborder nation to their benefit and to create clientelistic relationships that extend across the border. Fidesz used the tools of patronage and clientelism and co-opted existing political and administrative bodies to develop its power base and establish its structure of alliances and institutions. Beginning with its campaign promises made in front of kin communities before the 1998 election, Fidesz supported and encouraged the more radical wing of ethnic Hungarian political parties, particularly within the Romanian Hungarian Democratic Alliance (RMDSZ), as a way of controlling the discourse and political development of the largest and most well-organized ethnic Hungarian party. This assured that a significant portion of the ethnic Hungarians would look to Fidesz as their “patron”, depending on Budapest for their own continued political futures and guaranteeing Fidesz a stream of positive media and organization at election time. Similarly, many analysts have written extensively about the Fox administration’s (and earlier government’s as well) bids to co-opt and shape the message and the loyalties of organized Mexican migrant communities in the US. As Goldring has written, state-led programs in the 1980s “signaled the state’s attempt to construct transmigrants and their organizations as one more in a series of corporate groups that the Mexican state could co-opt by engaging them in corporatist and clientelist relations.”

Middle Eastern states, such as Tunisia and Morocco, also utilized counsels and expatriate affairs office as instruments of coercion and control in order to satisfy their own security objectives.

Homeland states create trans-state systems of patronage and control by “reasserting sovereignty” over those beyond their territorial boundaries. They do so by creating policies that “(re)produce citizen-sovereign relationships with expatriates, thus transnationalizing governmentality.” All states have available a similar toolkit of policies from which they can choose in shaping relations with populations abroad. Homeland states can: 1. seek to change host-state policies through diplomatic advocacy, treaty protections, and the funding diaspora of

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72 Brand, Citizens Abroad
73 Ibid., 26.
community organizations; 2. offer full or limited forms of political citizenship, such as voting rights, special forms of representation, dual citizenship or dual nationality; 3. offer full or limited forms of social citizenship through welfare state and labor market access and direct subsidies to diaspora members; or 4. extend the benefits of cultural and symbolic membership through rhetorical inclusion, ethnic identity cards, and transborder cultural subsidies and exchanges.

The most powerful – and controversial – of these policies is the expansion of citizenship through dual nationality legislation giving those abroad preferential access to entry and the state’s political community. Both types of states utilize citizenship options, with some variation in the purpose of the flexible membership. Kin-states may use “ethnizenship”, which Bauböck defines as “external quasi-citizenship” for those who don’t reside in the country granting the status, as a form of symbolic membership and nation-building that may or may not translate into real benefits and mobility. Or these states may allow for multiple citizenship or preferential naturalization for ethnic kin as a form of minority protection, providing an “exit option” for national minorities facing discrimination and assimilation. In Hungary, the failed attempt in 2004 to provide extraterritorial dual citizenship reflected the “ethnizenship” model, whereby ethnic Hungarians in some neighboring countries would have the option of “citizenship without resettlement”. In 2005, the left-wing social democratic government, which had rejected the ethnizenship model, simplified naturalization requirements for ethnic Hungarians, creating a stronger framework of preferential naturalization. In January 2006, the same government also introduced a type of “national visa”, which allows ethnic Hungarians in neighboring states (who possess a letter of invitation and proof of residence and financial support in Hungary) to apply for a visa with which they can spend unlimited time in Hungary within a 5-year period.

In migrant sending states, “transnationalized” or “external” citizenship is meant to create a relationship of rights and obligations with emigrant non-residents to tie potentially reluctant or increasingly distant (in time and space) populations abroad to the state or origin. States thus use citizenship – a “hallmark of state sovereignty” – as a “substitute for physical presence in the home state, and grounds emigrants’ ability and even need to engage with it from afar.” Allowing for multiple nationality and and even external voting rights, therefore, is a way for states to extend their sovereignty “in the absence of coercive home-state power” in order to ensure continued access to diaspora resources.

The policymaking process for diaspora engagement, particularly when it involves the expansion of citizenship, takes place in a context fraught with contention and debate. The context of citizenship policies may differ between kin and migrant states, but the policies trigger similar

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75 Bauböck, “Stakeholder Citizenship”, 2396.
77 Ethnic Hungarians in Serbia have requested this option of “citizenship without migrating” (in Hungarian: állampolgárság áttelepítés nélkül) as recently as 2007. See “Schengenről tárgyalt a VMSZ vezetőivel Gémesi Ferenc Szabadkán” (Gémesi discussed Schengen with VMSZ leaders in Szabadka), September 9, 2007. Available at: www.nemzetpolitika.gov.hu.
78 For details about the “Homeland package,” see http://www.szulofold.hu.
levels of debate and contestation over changing the boundaries of the political community. Policies must go far enough to provide populations abroad – both migrant and ethnic kin – realistic incentives for maintaining loyalties that correspond to what those populations most likely seek from the homeland state: some combination of increased economic opportunity (either investment, tax-free remittances, property ownership or access to improved labor markets and subsidies), symbolic and cultural membership (ethnic ID cards, support for minority language education, cultural exchanges and events, or rhetorical inclusion as positive national members), and protection and advocacy (consular and diplomatic services, pressure on host states regarding migrant or minority rights). Yet, as I will demonstrate below, they risk going too far, thereby provoking internal and external backlash.

**Contested outcomes**

At the heart of the internal domestic tension over the diaspora is the fact that any time a state renegotiates its relationship with the diaspora, this process necessitates some kind of renegotiation and expansion of the homeland state political community. Not surprisingly, debates over diaspora policy increase in intensity as those abroad are given increased access to membership in the political community of the homeland state and the stakes in expanding the definition of membership and citizenship become higher for the society as a whole.  

A new policy towards the diaspora inherently involves some reconfiguring of the political community, often including the reordering foreign policy priorities, redistributing state funds, and restructuring government institutions to include agencies, commission, or ministries to administer the new policies. As Waldinger and Fitzgerald state: “The terms of national belonging are almost always the subject of conflict”. This conflict is more severe when the new terms of belonging may expand the boundaries of membership beyond the state borders, thereby jeopardizing the “coherence of the citizenry”.  

Even for kin-states like Hungary, the coherence of the national project erodes over time, making the boundaries between “us” and “them” more complicated, particularly as ethnic Hungarians become viable coalition partners in their own countries, almost all of which are now EU members as well.

Elite rhetoric of ethnic kinship or national belonging, therefore, does not always reflect the reality or acceptance of a particular national project. Such projects are often contested, and there may still be widespread resistance to accepting members of the ethnic diaspora as “real” members of the civic community, deserving of the full rights and benefits of citizenship. Therefore, even after diaspora resources have been identified and politicized and some policy changes implemented to maintain or create ties with the diaspora, efforts to provide co-ethnics abroad with further access to political membership often meet with resistance. This resistance emerges because, once deeper access to membership in the homeland political community is discussed, tensions are brought forward over the diaspora question and the duality issue again becomes central. Those legitimately opposed to expanding the reach of the state may ask: what is the cost to the state if diaspora members acquire a unique legal status, giving them increased political influence, and even economic influence? What if they are allowed to choose among

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81 See Itzigsohn, “Immigration and the Boundaries of Citizenship” for a good discussion of the duality issue and the reluctance to open up the political system to diaspora members.  
82 Waldinger and Fitzgerald, “Transnationalism in Question”, 1179  
identities and loyalties as they please? Are they trustworthy? Are they even one of us anymore? Are they or are we the authentic representatives of our culture and our nation? What may be lost in terms of our economic and political stability, even our foreign policy goals by extending membership beyond our borders?

For example, public opinion data in Hungary has consistently shown ambiguity at best about the Hungarians abroad in concrete terms and increasingly negative attitudes towards those that immigrated or came to perform temporary labor in Hungary.\(^{85}\) Despite the rhetoric of transborder nationalism and ethnic affiliation, poll research has indicated a “continued readiness to exclude ethnic Hungarians from the benefits of Hungarian citizenship.”\(^{86}\) Mirroring this ambiguity about the ethnic Hungarians from neighboring countries once they enter Hungarian political and economic space was the failed December 2004 referendum on whether Hungary should provide non-resident dual citizenship – essentially preferential naturalization without resettlement - for the ethnic Hungarians in neighboring countries. Only 37 percent of eligible voters turned out for the referendum, and of those, support for the dual citizenship agenda was only slightly more than 51 percent. The low turnout invalidated the results, which require by law that 25 percent of eligible voters support or reject the initiative.\(^{87}\) Some expressed surprise at this result. As one ethnic Hungarian from Romania, who had migrated to Hungary, explained to me, he was not surprised that the referendum had failed due to low turnout, but that so many people – the other 49 percent - who bothered to come out to vote actually voted against the initiative.\(^{88}\) Why would so many Hungarians look unfavorably on further solidifying the extra-territorial membership of co-ethnics in other states? Taken in the context of a broader comparative understanding of state-diaspora relations, the outcome of the referendum makes more sense and ceases to be so puzzling. The fear of a “wave” of ethnic Hungarian migration, and concerns about the political and economic “fairness” of such a move were arguments against granting co-ethnics citizenship in the run-up to the referendum, a concern that was politically-manipulated by the center-left parties. The willingness to vote against expanding citizenship in this way clearly shows the limits of cross-border ethnic attachments in Hungary when they compete with other instrumental concerns of the citizenry and, most importantly, political elites.

In Poland, 1999 brought into power a right-wing coalition of post-Solidarity parties, which introduced a host of measures designed to reframe immigration and citizenship policy in a more “internally exclusive, externally inclusive” way that would reach out to ethnic Poles across the border as an essential part of the Polish nation. These new policies included a new Act on Citizenship, which would have allowed for de jure multiple citizenship,\(^{89}\) and eventually, a bill intended to create a “Charter of the Poles” a.k.a., the Procedure of Recognition of the Membership in the Polish Nation or of Polish Origin Bill. Similar in some ways to the Hungarian Status law, the Polish Charter would have given ethnic Poles legal recognition of belonging to the Polish nation, in addition to a wide range of social rights when they come to Poland, such as


\(^{88}\) Private communication with Zoltán Kántor, research fellow at the Hungarian Institute of International Affairs.

\(^{89}\) For more on the debate over multiple citizenship, see Weinar, “Two Passports – One Nation?”.
unrestricted stay, and access to education and social services. This “semi-citizenship” included a Polish identity card to be issued by Consulates, which would function like a lifetime nationality visa.90

However, the resistance that these nationalist projects met could not be overcome. Neither the new Act on Citizenship for the Polish Charter bill ever got through the Polish Sejm. Although dual citizenship was seen as a way reinforcing the diaspora’s relationship with Poland to foster investments, tourism, and global visibility, fears of dual loyalties and creating uneven tiers of citizenship that would give those in the diaspora more flexibility than native Poles were more powerful.91 Not even appeals to the moral rightness of correcting past injustices – the argument that “…Poles who cultivated their Polishness (language, culture, ethnic identity), who were integral parts of the Polish nation due to their ethnicity and social bonds, had the right to hold Polish citizenship regardless of their other current citizenships” – could sway those who did not want to extend the boundaries of the political community. The Polish Charter debate was even more intense. Clearly following party and coalitional lines, those opposed sited the prohibitive cost of providing special benefits, the fears of worsening regional relations, the possible risk to Poland’s relations with the EU, and a discomfort with crafting legislation based on ethnic favoritism as their reasons for objection.92

In Mexico, the dual nationality issue spurred a public debate “about what it means to be Mexican, who is entitled to claim full membership rights, on what basis, and how to capture different tiers of membership in the laws governing citizenship.”93 As more integrative policies were discussed, it became clear that there was "no consensus in Mexico about the precise terms of the membership that should be offered to the people of Mexican descent".94 These debates first began in 1996 and 1997 as Mexico’s policy on dual citizenship and voting rights for Mexicans in the US were discussed. As far as dual citizenship, in 1997 the Mexican government introduced a constitutional amendment to allow Mexicans abroad to take on a second citizenship without being stripped of their Mexican one. This was seen as a crucial move to keep the diaspora in the US from assimilating completely and losing their ties with the mother country, and thereby to ensure a steady flow of remittances and investment. However, this constitutional change did not confer full citizenship rights: those with dual citizenship were barred from voting or running for office, entitling them mostly to only cultural and economic rights within the state of Mexico.95

During these earlier debates and those around extending political rights to Mexicans abroad in 2000 and 2005, opposition and suspicion of the change was brought to the fore, exposing the belief that “when migrants return home, they carry with them an assortment of

91 Ibid., 35
92 Ibid., 48.
95 Martinez-Saldana, “Los Olvidados Become Heroes”, 49.
questionable beliefs, values and habits acquired in the US.” 96 Extending political rights beyond the border was also seen as a possible form of indirect control by the United States. As one analyst described this fear: “Allowing them to participate in the national electoral process paves the way to the degradation of Mexico and the loss of independence. Mexico can conceivably become a territory under the control of the US. In other words, the formal political participation of Mexicans abroad in the affairs of their homeland represents a threat to Mexican society, national culture, the electoral process and national sovereignty.”97 Reluctance about granting voting rights was also expressed by entrenched political interests, most particularly the PRI, who (rightly as it turned out) feared that diaspora voting would shift the political balance against them. The PRI government, which had been long suspected of corrupting national votes in the pasts, also likely feared that they would be less able to manipulated the vote abroad.98

However, once diaspora resources were rediscovered and perception had shifted, the political loyalty of the Mexicans in the US became a political prize to be won, reordering the interests of various party elites. The PRI, once reluctant to incorporate the diaspora politically, now began to use its version of revolutionary nationalism to criticize the Fox government for not doing enough to help those beyond the border. Similar to Fidesz’s critiques of the social democrats in Hungary, the PRI criticized the Fox government as “being pro-American and willing to sacrifice national sovereignty in order to promote greater integration with the US. Fox’s migration policies are regarded as part of this process of yielding to the interests of a powerful neighbor that requires exploitable foreign labor and has a shameful history of interventionism in the domestic affairs of Mexico and other countries.”99 The use of nationalism in this way shows how the diaspora issue can flow both ways in the role it plays in political discourse within the homeland states. Sometimes, nationalism means excluding those beyond the border for not being “Mexican enough” and fighting their further integration into the political community; at other times, it can be used to target the government leadership for not doing enough to protect what Vicente Fox called “the cultural engine, the permanent ambassadors of Mexican culture.”100

These examples help to outline the tensions and dynamics behind why policies to engage populations abroad, particularly as they move closer to full integration of the diaspora members into the homeland political community, often trigger backlash and debate. This contention can lead to waxing and waning policies, politicization of diaspora membership, and often large gaps between rhetorical promises and the reality of policy implementation.

Conclusion: Towards a comparative framework

By looking at the similarities in structure and political dynamics of diaspora engagement by a variety of kin and migrant-sending states, this paper was able to generate a broadly comparative model of how and why states make policy towards their national populations

96 Ibid., 46.
97 Ibid.
100 Ibid., 34.
abroad. In summarizing this model, we see first that populations abroad represent a set of unique cultural, material, and political resources for homeland state elites. This model of “diaspora as resource” offers a useful framework for explaining the motives for and modes of engagement with those outside state borders. Within this framework, homeland state elites come to understand and promote the diaspora population as a source of strength, rather than a symbol of weakness for the homeland state and for their own political agendas. Once the diaspora resources have been identified and merged into political discourse and policy debates, potential threats to their access are met by an increase in activism by the homeland state. Changes in external conditions – such as realignments of power in interstate relations and shifting economic and geopolitical alliances – shape opportunities for states to establish and control their relationship with external communities. In responding to these challenges, states extend their sovereignty and redefine the boundaries of state citizenship and national membership in order to create, co-opt and maintain ties to populations abroad. However, policy consensus and implementation can be challenged and disrupted – leading to incomplete and contested engagement - by the over-extension of sovereignty, domestic political contestation, and a backlash against the redefinition of the political community to include those outside the state borders.

Clearly, there are important empirical and analytical nuances that are lost in the attempt to create generalizations out of such vast diversity. Instructive differences between cases may include the uses of nationalist rhetoric (for or against diaspora incorporation), the ethnic make-up of the homeland state (degree of homogeneity), whether a primarily emigration state has kin-state potential tied to a specific historical territory (e.g. India, Dominican Republic), and the relative economic and political strengths of the external population vis-à-vis the homeland state. Yet, at the very least, I hope that the case has been made for the potential utility – and even necessity - of looking beyond the prevalent type-specific distinction between “kin-states” and “migrant-sending states”. While some kin-state scholars are beginning to look more to the diaspora and transnationalism literature, that cross-pollination rarely goes the other way. This is not to say that there are not those on both sides who have recognized some of the dynamics identified by the other, and in fact, there is more convergence than ever, as I discussed above. However, by engaging both sets of cases, we are forced to question case and region-specific assumptions, which can lead to more nuanced understandings and more broadly-applicable theorizing.

There is much work still to be done towards a comparative framework. I would like to end with a few suggestions for potentially fruitful contributions to this endeavor. One way to talk about both sets of cases without diminishing or ignoring important differences would be to work towards a typology based on the targeting of specific types of populations abroad (e.g. diasporic economic migrants, diasporic exiles and political migrants, unorganized expatriates, cross-border co-ethnics after independence, cross-border co-ethnics after territorial contraction) and the types of policies the state uses to engage those populations. Such a typology could help us see possible patterns in matching motivation (what states elites want from certain populations) to action. Some comparative typologies have already been generated by those looking at one type of action (e.g. external voting), or at one type of population (e.g. migrant communities), but there are few, if any, that attempt to incorporate both aspects.101 The work that some analysts from both sets of

cases have done on the introduction of new types of citizenship and membership options is a particularly promising model for cross-regional and cross-type analysis.102

Finally, to what extent are the terms “diaspora” and “transnationalism” useful for this type of comparative framework? I would argue that while using the term “diaspora” for defining a population beyond the border may be problematic, adopting the phrase “diaspora politics” to describe state action and the contention around those policies may be useful. Whether a migrant or other external group can rightly be considered a diaspora bogs us down again in definitional arguments, which often lead analysts to look for an objective set of criteria to the detriment of understanding diaspora as a subjective construction. “Diaspora politics”, however, may represent a stance taken by a potential homeland or kin-state that focuses on the intentionality of treating an external group “as if” they were a bounded, distinct group with ties of loyalty and affiliation to the motherland. In this way, I believe that diaspora politics can be used as a useful catch-all to define an intentional set of policies employed to keep those abroad connected to the homeland, yet not necessarily to entice them to come home.103 On the other hand, “transnationalism” is a term that needs some definitional retooling and sharpening. As I’ve discussed above, there is a growing concern that what many refer to as “transnationalism” is really “trans-statism” when we are discussing relations between states and those beyond the borders. We may, therefore, need to rethink whether transnationalism has become too broad and too vague a term to be analytically useful. Either way, it has become increasingly clear that the analytical “ownership” of the theoretical concerns raised in the literature on diaspora and transnationalism by those looking only at migrant-sending states can no longer be justified. Not everyone may find a larger comparative framework to be useful, but there needs to at least be a recognition of what other state-diaspora relationships may add to an analysis and a self-conscious justification of type-specific exclusion, if that is the decision made in the end.

103 As King & Melvin argue, often the focus of these policies is “ensuring that the diaspora remains diasporic, rather than becoming returnees.” "Introduction: Nationalism, Transnationalism and Postcommunism.", 11.