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Original citation:

Koinova, Maria. (2009) Diasporas and democratization in the post-communist world. *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, Volume 42 (Number 1). pp. 41-64. ISSN 0967-067X

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**Communist and
Post-Communist
Studies**

Communist and Post-Communist Studies 42 (2009) 41–64

www.elsevier.com/locate/postcomstud

Diasporas and democratization in the post-communist world

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Available online 19 March 2009

Abstract

If diaspora communities are socialized with democratic values in Western societies, they could be expected to be sympathetic to the democratization of their home countries. However, there is a high degree of variation in their behavior. Contrary to the predominant understanding in the literature that diasporas act in exclusively nationalist ways, this article argues that they do engage with the democratization of their home countries. Various challenges to the sovereignty of their homelands explain whether diasporas involve with procedural or liberal aspects of democratization. Drawing evidence from the activities of the Ukrainian, Serbian, Albanian and Armenian diasporas after the end of communism, I argue that unless diasporas are linked to home countries that enjoy both international legal and domestic sovereignty, they will involve only with procedural aspects of democratization. Diasporas filter international pressure to democratize post-communist societies by utilizing democratic procedures to advance unresolved nationalist goals.

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Keywords: Diaspora; Democratization; Sovereignty; Ukrainian; Serbian; Albanian; Armenian

Introduction

Scholarly interest in the impact of international actors on the democratization of autocratic or illiberal societies has resulted in valuable findings about the role of states,

international governmental and non-governmental organizations, and the mechanisms of leverage and linkage that facilitate democratization. However, little has been said about diaspora communities despite their growing international importance in a globalizing world; their spread in Western democratic countries renders them potential agents of democratization. This article aims to address this gap.

The puzzle involves causality: if diaspora communities are socialized with democratic values in Western societies, they could be expected to be sympathetic to the democratization of their home countries. However there is a high degree of variation in their behavior. Some diasporas are highly nationalist, others are sympathetic to illiberal regimes, some are vocal supporters of liberal democracy, while others express their tacit support for electoral pluralism but not for liberalism. Moreover, some diasporas act simultaneously in all four ways. How can we explain such behavioral diversity? This article focuses on explaining the variation of diaspora involvement with procedural vs. liberal aspects of democratization, which has received little attention by scholarship so far.

In this article I limit my inquiry to the post-communist world for two reasons. First, unlike diasporas originating from the Middle East, Africa and Asia, communities originating in communist countries had limited contact with their homeland during the Cold War. Some individuals still managed to travel. Nevertheless, threatened by the possibilities of émigré influence, the communist governments spent significant resources on infiltrating diaspora circles, jamming radio broadcasts, producing propaganda and counterpropaganda and enforcing strict border controls (Motyl, 1990:140). Few viable networks existed to transmit values, ideas and practices between diasporas and their homelands. With the end of communism in 1989 and the rise of the Internet in the mid-1990s political opportunities emerged for diasporas to develop sustained relationships with the homeland. Second, after 1989 there was a large-scale migration from this region into Western societies for political, economic or educational reasons. Most of the migrants were sympathetic to democratic values and market economies. Even forced migrants from the wars in the former Yugoslavia and the former Soviet Union were exposed to democratic values upon their arrival. Democratic values became crucial for their integration into the new societies, especially for those who wanted and managed to stay. One would expect that ideas and practices supportive of democracy would easily flow back to the homeland.

Nationalist behavior was common among diaspora groups linked to the post-communist world.¹ Yet contrary to major expectations that diasporas would act in outwardly nationalist ways (Anderson, 1998; Collier and Hoeffler, 2000; Byman et al., 2001; Fair, 2005). I argue that some diaspora communities did engage in democratization efforts after 1989, but that challenges to the sovereignty of their homelands accounted for the variations of their involvement. If diasporas were linked to homelands that

¹ I narrowly define the term “nationalist” to denote activities pursued to achieve linguistic, cultural, political, and territorial goals through hate speech, negation of the rights of others, and other extreme ideas and methods.

experienced no major challenge to their international legal and domestic sovereignty, they engaged with liberal aspects of democracy. In contrast, if diasporas were linked to states or territorial entities that faced challenges to either their international legal or domestic sovereignty, the diasporas supported only the procedural aspects of democracy.

This variation can be explained by the different ways in which diasporas filtered international pressure for democratization. In cases where neither international legal nor domestic sovereignty were challenged, diasporas viewed their engagement with liberal aspects of democracy as likely to enhance their homeland's international standing and to increase its prospects for receiving crucial aid for state-building. In cases where either international legal or domestic sovereignty were challenged, diasporas viewed their support for procedural elements of democracy as a coping mechanism to advance unresolved nationalist goals by means accepted by the international community.

This article begins with a brief discussion of the literature on diasporas *vis-à-vis* homeland politics and relevant arguments from the literature on international actors and democratization. I then present the selection of cases and study design, followed by an overview of the cases and the elimination of possible explanatory factors. The central discussion revolves around challenges to international legal and domestic sovereignty and how they relate to a diaspora's support for democratization of the homeland.

Major theoretical accounts

Two major trends of literature are relevant to this study. First, is the emerging scholarship on diasporas and homeland relations, which has little to say about diasporas and democratization. Much of it explores the impact of diaspora remittances on economic development in the developing world where remittances account for approximately 12–15 percent of GDP per capita (World Bank, 2006, 2007; Lindley, 2005; Kapur, 2003; Oestergaard-Nielsen, 2003; Eckstein, 2003; Levitt, 2001). In addition, the events of September 11, 2001 increased the scholarly focus on security and on the relationship between diasporas and homeland conflicts. This literature is predominantly case-based and lacks theoretical sophistication but reveals important insights concerning a pervasive relationship between diasporas and statehood, which I adapt for the purposes of this study.

Stateless diasporas—in contrast to state-linked ones—are more likely to remain involved with homeland politics for longer periods of time, particularly as long as a nationalist struggle continues (Sheffer, 2003:152–153).² A diaspora may remain engaged in politics even after the formation of a nation-state, because it may interpret the national interest differently than the local political elites and lobby the host states to pursue its alternate priorities. The Jewish and Armenian diasporas are

² Sheffer explains why stateless diasporas are particularly prone to remain involved with homeland politics. He argues that as long as struggle for independence continues the diaspora members “will be particularly torn between memories of their homeland and wishes to recapture the past, and the need to comply with the norms of their host country.”... “Tendencies to assimilate and integrate into the host society are counterbalanced by their strong sentiments for the homeland” (Sheffer, 2003: 153).

often cited as examples of this behavior (Shain, 2002: 120–123). “Conflict-generated” diasporas—formed on the basis of forced rather than voluntary migration—are particularly prone to participate in sustaining domestic conflict (Lyons, 2006; Collier and Hoeffler, 2000), due to a pervasive myth of return and attachment to territory. Some authors of particular case studies (for example, Irish, Tamil, Ethiopian, Albanian, and Croatian diasporas) have captured practices of engagement in internal conflicts. Communities provide humanitarian aid and arms, recruit fighters, lobby homeland governments and international organizations, disseminate propaganda, stage demonstrations, and tap into the resources of criminal networks (Adamson, 2005; Fair, 2005; Byman et al., 2001; Shain, 1991). They can also be crucial to providing the flow of resources upon which warring parties depend and sustain the markets for commodities extracted from war-torn regions (Gibney and Hansen, 2005: 139).

Much less has been said about diasporic practices in the context of democratization. Shain is among the few scholars arguing that diasporas are not just careless nationalists, but can aid their homeland’s pursuit of democracy. Having explored Greek, Haitian, Cuban and Mexican cases in the US, among others, Shain argues that the struggle of diasporas to unseat authoritarian regimes is often led by political exiles who, prior to departure were engaged in political activities. Foreign students often engage in demonstrations against non-democratic practices (1999:51–91, 1994–1995:823–830). Diasporas can transfer funds to civil society organizations and become critical factors in running democratic political campaigns inside their homelands (1999/2000). They can challenge the home regime’s attempts to suppress or co-opt the opposition, contest the regime’s international legitimacy, expose human rights violations, combat the home regime’s foreign propaganda, obstruct friendly relations with the US through effective lobbies, and assist and actively participate in the struggle of domestic opposition (1994–1995: 823–830, 1999:79). In addition, diasporas reframe conflict issues to redefine what is politically acceptable before and during election campaigns (Lyons, 2007). They participate in elections from abroad or try to change restrictive electoral laws prohibiting their participation (Brand, 2006). They forge links with civic organizations in the homeland and seek to promote democratic and liberal values in the homeland (Biswas, 2007; Shain, 2007).

Since scholarly attempts to capture the dynamics of diasporas and democratization are still sporadic and case-based, I have consulted accounts from a secondary body of literature on international actors and democratization, focusing on their impact on changes from “competitive authoritarianisms” or “hybrid regimes.” Such regimes explicate both democratic and authoritarian elements (Levitsky and Way, 2002; Diamond, 2002; Collier and Levitsky, 1997; Karl, 1995). This body of work is informative because my study focuses on homelands in the post-communist world which host such regimes, and for which diaspora engagement with democratization has the potential to make a political difference.

The impact of policies of conditionality, used by international institutions and particularly by the European Union, have been deemed crucial for the liberalization and democratic change of the 12 new East European members (Vachudova, 2005,

2006; Grabbe, 2006; Zielonka and Pravda, 2001). However, EU leverage has not been the single factor for change, as several states that underwent electoral revolutions in the early 2000s—Serbia (2000), Georgia (2003), Ukraine (2004) and Kyrgyzstan (2005)—were not subjected to such leverage and had no prospects for EU membership. Conditionality has co-existed with the mechanisms of control, consent and contagion (Schmitter, 2001: 28–29). The role of mass mobilization and large-scale non-violent protests with a focal point on fraudulent elections are the main characteristics in these cases (Bunce and Wolchik, 2006; Kuzio, 2005; York, 2002). The long-term impact of international democracy promotion programs, especially generous in the post-communist arena compared to other regions, the diffusion of knowledge and strategies from “graduates” of previous electoral revolutions to protesters in new places are considered to explain electoral revolutions (Bunce and Wolchik, 2006:7–11). In addition, the economic, political, social, organizational and communication linkages between citizens of a democratizing polity and the Western democratic world prevent elites in competitive authoritarian regimes from consolidating their hold on power (Levitsky and Way, 2006).

The arguments about the democratization of illiberal polities relate to my discussion of diasporas by increasing understanding about practices that diasporas could use to promote democratization in the homeland. Do they lobby their host countries to influence foreign policy and obtain aid packages for the home country? Do they participate in the dispersal of aid? Do they aid electoral revolutions?

The contribution of this article to the literature on diasporas and democratization is threefold. First, it moves the discussion beyond consideration of diasporic practices only, and accounts for the variation in diasporic support for liberalism and procedural aspects of democracy. Second, it provides a comparative explanatory framework for under-researched empirical material on the Ukrainian, Serbian, Albanian and Armenian diasporas, linked to the post-communist world. Third, it theorizes about diasporic activism with respect to non-violent periods in the homeland.

Without trying to resolve the conceptual debate about the term “diaspora,” in this article I adopt a definition that Adamson and Demetriou use to address the contours of a “diaspora” in the global space, containing both positivist and constructivist elements:

A diaspora can be identified as a social collectivity that exists across state borders and that has succeeded over time to: 1) sustain a collective national, cultural or religious identity through a sense of internal cohesion and sustained ties with a real or imagined homeland and 2) display an ability to address the collective interests of members of the social collectivity through a developed internal organizational framework and transnational links (2007:497).

I limit the scope of the term to include only ethno-national groups that reside outside territories adjacent to the homeland. Anderson (1998) calls such diasporas

“long-distance nationalists,” who can often act “irresponsibly” towards their homeland since they do not bear the consequences of their actions.

Size of the diasporas in the United States, 1980–2000.

Census Year/Diaspora	1980 ^a	1990 ^b	2000 ^c
<i>Albanian</i>	38,658	47,710	113,661
<i>Armenian</i>	212,621	308,096	385,488
<i>Serbian</i>	100,941	117,000	140,337
<i>Ukrainian</i>	730,056	740,000	892,922

^a US Census (1980), Groups Who Reported at Least One Ancestry.

^b US Census (1992), *Detailed Ancestry Groups for States*.

^c US Census (2004), *Ancestry*.

Study design and methodology

I selected four diaspora cases —Ukrainian, Serbian, Albanian and Armenian—on a control variable—“competitive authoritarianism”—and an explanatory variable —“challenges to sovereignty of the homeland.”³ All four diasporas have been linked to polities in the post-communist world that have demonstrated characteristics of a “competitive authoritarian regime”—semi-authoritarian leaders and illiberal political practices. While there is a large universe of cases of such polities in the post-communist world, I narrow the scope to four cases that have experienced different degrees of challenges to sovereignty. Ukraine is a new state that became independent in 1991. Serbia was a collapsing state during the wars of disintegration of Serbian-dominated former Yugoslavia after 1989. Kosovo and Nagorno-Karabakh have been secessionist regions since 1991, with Albania and Armenia as kin-states related to different degrees to their secessionist movements. Such polities constitute “hard tests” for diasporas to engage with promoting democratization, because of a highly contentious national issue at stake, and diasporas could be expected to behave in exclusively nationalist ways. For example, the four cases of this study differ from the case of the Polish diaspora, which was traditionally anti-communist but linked to a state that is internally ethnically homogeneous and enjoys international legal sovereignty. If and when the four diasporas engage in democratization efforts alongside their nationalist practices, it must be for other reasons than nationalism.

This study focuses on non-violent periods during the post-communist transitions after 1989. I limit my inquiry to such periods because during war involving the homeland the diaspora offers unequivocal support for the homeland unless the war is between the homeland and the host-land when strong loyalty dilemmas ensue (Shain, 1999: 68). External violence trumps diasporic concerns for democratization that exist prior to it or in its aftermath. I focus on Serbia in the periods 1989–1992 (before the

³ For a discussion on how to avoid selection bias, see King et al. (1994), and Brady and Collier (2004).

war in Bosnia-Herzegovina), 1995–1998 (between the Dayton-Accords and the violent warfare in Kosovo in 1998–1999), and after NATO’s military intervention in Kosovo in 1999 until 2007. For Kosovo the discussion is limited to the period after NATO’s military intervention (1999–2007), since earlier the Kosovars were engaged in and violent warfare. For Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh I focus on the non-violent period after the cease-fire (1994–2007). There has been no violent warfare in Ukraine since 1991.

I limit my inquiry to diasporas residing in the United States, although I am aware that diaspora networks are fluid and transnational.⁴ Nevertheless, diasporas in the US were some of the most vocal and participatory in homeland affairs during the 1990s, and were empowered by a domestic structure of interest politics, allowing the formation of lobby groups that could directly aspire to influence foreign policy.

I combine Mill’s methods of agreement and difference. I use the method of agreement to identify causes that were present in cases where diasporas supported procedural aspects of democracy only (Serbian, Albanian, Armenian), and the method of difference to identify a cause that was absent in a case where a diaspora was supportive of liberal ideas as well (Ukrainian).

This study operates with one dependent and one independent variable. The dependent variable is “*diaspora involvement in homeland democratization*.” Diasporas make claims and engage in activities related to democratization on two levels. First, they engage only with procedural elements of democracy—free and fair elections, turnover of power and support for various political actors that aspire to regime change—so that support for political contestation remains more important than the content of the issues involved. Second, they support liberal elements of democracy—such as freedom of speech, free media, civic rights and initiatives cutting across the ethnic divide—which demands a guiding liberal creed.

The independent variable is “*challenges to the sovereignty of the homeland*.” I base my understanding on Krasner’s (2004) conceptualization of international legal and domestic sovereignty existing alongside Westphalian sovereignty.⁵ Since the dimensions of challenges to international legal and domestic sovereignty are relevant to all of my cases, I use them as the two nominal categories of this variable. International legal sovereignty designates the judicial recognition of an international legal entity. Domestic sovereignty denotes the abilities of domestic authority structures to control activities within their territorial borders.

⁴ In contrast to the three other cases, the Ukrainian diaspora has a significant presence in Canada (around 1 million, Pawliczko, 1994:328) and is highly networked with the US. The Ukrainian diaspora in Russia is the largest (around 4.4 million, Wilson, 1998:107).

⁵ Westphalian sovereignty refers to states’ ability to enjoy non-interference from other states in decision-making within their own borders. This dimension is problematic in the cases of Kosovo and Nagorno-Karabakh. Kosovo has been ruled by United Nations Administration since 1999, and Nagorno-Karabakh has experienced strong political and economic influences from Armenia since 1994.

Overview of the cases

Age

The Armenian diaspora is the oldest among the four. Sheffer (2003:75–77) classifies it as “classic,” since it existed before the era of nation-states’ formation. It dates back to Mongol conquests of the Armenian heartland in the 13th century when refugees fled to neighboring Eastern European regions and the Middle East (Tölölyan, 2000:116). The defining event for the Armenian diasporic identity is the 1915 genocide, carried out by the collapsing Ottoman Empire and followed by the expulsion of approximately 1.5 million Armenians to the Middle East and the Balkans (Panossian, 1998:84). The other three diasporas stem from the period of nation-state formation, and could be classified as “modern” (Sheffer, 2003: 75–77). The slowly disintegrating Habsburg and Ottoman empires gave rise to the formation of an independent Serbian state in 1878 and Albania in 1912, which were accompanied by a first wave of primarily economic migration to Europe and the US. In the 1880s, Albanian migration was existent but minimal, unlike the Serbian. Most notably, Serbian migrants did not stem from Serbia proper, but from Montenegro and lands along the Dalmatian coast, controlled at that time by Austria–Hungary, including present-day Bosnian and Croatian territories (Hockenos, 2003:114; Vuic, 2002:4). The Ukrainians started migrating to the US in the late 1870s in a wave that extended to other peoples of Eastern Europe including Czechs, Poles, Jews, and Hungarians (Ciment, 2001:1238). Ukrainians originated predominantly from Galicia and western parts of present-day Ukraine (Kuropas, 1991). Those who migrated from the Carpathian lands often called themselves Rusyns (Magocsi, 2008). The Ukrainian and Armenian diasporas are similar in that they came primarily from one region (respectively from Western Ukraine and present-day Turkey), which colored their relationship to the homeland.

Waves

The first migration wave to the US consisted of peasants who found jobs in factories in the Northeast and Midwest. These populations, living far from industrial centers in their homelands, chose to migrate to the US in search of higher wages (Ciment, 2001: 1239). This explains why migration from the Ottoman lands—including Albanians and Armenians—was not as significant as that of Ukrainians and Serbs living in rapidly industrializing regions. While the “Ellis Island” economic migration incorporated all ethnic communities, subsequent waves were determined primarily by political developments. A large wave of Armenian migration followed the 1915 genocide. Another followed the outbreak of the civil war in Lebanon (1975–1990) and the Iranian revolution (1978). Prior to the end of communism, the Armenian community in the US was largely composed of first or second generations remembering the genocide who did not trace their origin to Eastern Armenia (present-day Armenia), but to the former Ottoman lands (Bakalian, 1993:23–25). A large migration of Ukrainians, Serbs and Albanians

followed the end of World War II. The post-war anti-communist exiles numbered around 85,000 Ukrainians (Fink, 1993:37), tens of thousands of Serbs (Pajic, 2007) and between 30,000 and 50,000 Albanians (Hockenos, 2003:213). Severe travel restrictions by the Soviet Union decreased the ability of Armenians and Ukrainians to emigrate. The travel policy in Yugoslavia was more open, and more Albanians than Serbs took advantage of “guest worker” opportunities abroad. In the aftermath of the 1981 Kosovo riots, thousands of Kosovo Albanians resettled in the New York area (Hockenos, 2003:215). A final wave of emigration followed the end of communism. During this wave, the Albanian diaspora was estimated to have almost doubled in numbers compared to the previous period (see Table 1). For all communities, this wave incorporated the “brain-drain” generation, economic migrants, and some refugees from war-torn regions, among them people from Kosovo and Karabakh.

Spread and size

The following two tables offer an overview of the estimated size and spread of the diasporas globally and in the US. The first table represents a snapshot of the diasporas at present. The numbers in both tables are either estimates by scholars or activists who err on the side of exaggeration (global size data), or census data (US) which are more conservative. In both cases the numbers incorporate various generations of diaspora representation, but do not reflect the much smaller numbers of politically active community members who make claims about their descent.

Diaspora institutions after 1989

Two major groups in the Ukrainian diaspora had competing stances regarding homeland political affairs. On one side were the so-called “*derzhavnyky*” (statists), represented most vocally by some leaders of the Ukrainian World Congress (UWC), which supported Ukrainian statehood regardless of its domestic politics (Kuzio and Deychakiwsky, 2005). On the other side was the umbrella Action Ukraine Coalition (AUC) that took a pro-democratic stance. A 1970s split between the radical wing of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUNr) which took over the umbrella Ukrainian Congress Committee of America, and the democratic wing of the diaspora’s left which established the Ukrainian Coordinating Council, still remains.⁶ However, during the 1990s these divisions have become less prominent.

The Serbian diaspora was much more defensive of the nationalist project, with the exception of Milan Panic, an influential California-based businessman who differed with his pro-Yugoslav rather than pro-Serbian attitude. The dominant voice was represented by the Serbian Unity Congress (SUC) and organizations and individuals

⁶ OUN originated in 1929 to fight against occupation of Ukrainian-inhabited lands by Poland, Russia, and Germany. It developed branches in the Western hemisphere, including a strong US presence, where its various political wings dominated diasporic life during communism. The most extreme OUN wing (revolutionaries), led by Stepan Bandera, was the largest Ukrainian émigré organization.

Table 1
Size and spread.

Diaspora	Size (global)	Spread (global) Significant communities	Spread (US)
<i>Albanian</i>	More than 1 million ^a	US, Germany, Switzerland, England Italy, Greece, Turkey, England, Canada, Australia	New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Jersey area, Chicago, Detroit
<i>Armenian</i>	ca. 4 million ^b	US, Russia, France, Georgia, Lebanon, Syria, Iran, Ukraine, Turkey, Argentina, Canada, Australia	Los Angeles, Boston, New York, New Jersey, Mid-Atlantic area, Detroit, Chicago, Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin
<i>Serbian</i>	ca. 3.5 million ^c	US, Russia, France, Romania, Canada, Australia	New York, Mid-Atlantic, Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, Wisconsin
<i>Ukrainian</i>	20 million ^d	US, Russia, Canada, UK, Germany, France, Argentina, Brazil, Australia, Kazakhstan	New York, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Detroit, Chicago

^a Kosta (2004), Sheffer (2003).

^b Tölölyan (2000).

^c Republic of Serbia, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2007).

^d Ukrainian World Congress (2004).

sympathetic to it. SUC was built in the early 1990s to lobby for the Serbs against the backdrop of a more established and influential Croatian lobby (Hockenos, 2003:107). Over time SUC managed to overpower old “Chetnik” organizations, which continued to exist but exerted limited influence.

Two main groups have been influential in the Albanian diaspora. The older one—the New York-based Albanian–American Civic League (AACL)—evolved after the 1981 Kosovo Albanian riots, and was represented by Joe DioGuardi, a former Congressman of Albanian ancestry. Due to inter-personal disagreements among AACL members, the National Albanian–American Council (NAAC) was formed in 1996. It became the main lobby group based in Washington D.C. Although in competition with each other, these two groups are unanimous supporters of the self-determination of Kosovo, with more moderate stances taken by NAAC. The New York-based Pan-Albanian organization “Vatra” has existed since the early 1900s, and other groups were formed during communism to represent a generation of post-war exiles (Hockenos, 2003:208; Trix, 2001:4–5). No groups have been as influential as AACL or NAAC during the 1990s.

Finally, the dominant group in the Armenian diaspora stems from the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF), widely known as the “Dashnaks.” For more than half a century they have been the most vocal advocates for Turkey’s recognition of the Armenian genocide. Contrary to the dynamics in the three other cases where organizations dominating diaspora politics during communism lost influence in the 1990s, the Armenian Dashnaks remained quite powerful. Other groups—such as Liberal and Socialist Parties that exerted some impact during the Cold War—lost their influence to the ARF. Currently, two of the main Armenian lobby organizations—the Armenian Assembly of America and the Armenian National Committee of America—are Dashnak-based.

Alternative explanations

This study asks why some diasporas engaged in procedural or liberal aspects of democratization of their homelands against the backdrop of existing nationalist practices. Although highly plausible as a potential explanation, prior experience with anti-communism does not account for pro-democracy-oriented behavior in the transition phase. The Ukrainian, Serbian, and Albanian political migrants after World War II held strong anti-communist views, unlike the Armenians, but although the Ukrainians engaged with liberal aspects of democratization during the transition, the others did not. All four diasporas were part of the Captive Nations movement, and considered their homeland governments enemies of their nations and stooges of a foreign power (Shain, 1994–1995:834). The Ukrainian diaspora was particularly involved in this process, with a 1959 draft of the Captive Nations to be passed by the US Congress, developed by Lev Dobrianski, then-leader of the Ukrainian lobby (Fink, 1993:13). Moreover, political exiles staffed Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty, and with US government help often engaged in other projects spreading anti-communist propaganda. For example, the New York-based Prolog Corporation, established in 1953 by the Ukrainian Supreme Liberation Council and OUN, targeted Ukrainian intelligentsia with book translations and the journal *Suchasnist*. When *samizdat* groups developed in the 1960s, ideas were not simply imported from abroad, but were “boomeranged.”⁷ Works of dissidents were smuggled out of Ukraine, published in large quantities in the US, and then smuggled back to the homeland (Kupchinsky, 2008).⁸ The rest of the diasporas were less active, but the anti-communist practices of the Serbian diaspora were distinct outside of the Captive Nations process because the resolution ignored issues of territoriality that were important to the Serbs (Kesic, 2007). Serbian diaspora members were highly opposed to the US maintaining a relationship with communist but non-aligned Yugoslavia and boycotted the 1963 visit of Yugoslavia’s President Tito to the US (Hockenos, 2003:120–121).

If prior experience with anti-communism is not an explanation, is prior experience with violence a predictor for diaspora involvement with procedural aspects of democratization? Unlike the Ukrainians, the Albanian, Armenian, and Serbian diasporas had to cope with war in their homelands during some parts of the 1990s. As “conflict-generated diasporas” they are supposedly more prone to sustain conflicts in their homeland than other communities. Although this reasoning sounds plausible, it is not explanatory either. Indeed, all three diasporas had acted in nationalist ways during periods of warfare—drafting fighters and funding violent

⁷ Keck and Sikkink (1998:13) argue that human rights networks in authoritarian and illiberal societies engage in a “boomerang pattern” of domestic change. They create coalitions with external actors (states or international organizations) which in turn pressure their own governments to adopt human rights changes.

⁸ During communism the US government preferred to work with individual exiles rather than with diaspora organizations often marred by internal disagreements (Kupchinsky, 2008). For example, when Soviet Ukrainian cultural groups traveled to the US, members of the diaspora’s democratic wing would meet with them, while radicals would call them “Soviet puppets” and boycott the activity.

factions to various degrees. They did not need to promote democratization of their homeland in the aftermath of violence, since they continued to maintain their outwardly nationalist practices. Yet they engaged with procedural aspects of democratization parallel to their nationalist activities.

Another possible explanation could be derived from a classic theoretical understanding that middle class and higher levels of education are conducive to democratic behavior. I argue that this is not an explanation either. With the exception of a relatively new Albanian diaspora, which has been seeking its way into the middle class, all other diasporas are already of middle class status, measured on incomes and acquired education (see [Table 2](#)).

A final possible explanation relates to [Shain's \(1999:78\)](#) understanding that the propensity of diasporas to participate in campaigns to overthrow non-democratic regimes is affected by the official US posture towards the home government. I argue that this is not the case with respect to regime change in the post-Cold War period, since the US has been highly supportive of the democratization of all countries in the post-communist world, unlike during the Cold War, on which Shain based his analysis. At that time the US was anti-communist with respect to Eastern Europe, but supporting “friendly dictators” in some countries in Latin America. Even if we understand Shain's meaning of the word “posture” not in terms of regime, but in terms of favorable US foreign policy treatment of the homeland, it is not clear how this could account for the variation of diaspora behavior towards democratization. Among the four cases, only Albania and Kosovo enjoyed a clearly favorable treatment by Washington, which opposed the collective infringement on the Kosovar human rights by the Milosevic regime in the 1990s. Ukraine and Armenia/Nagorno-Karabakh enjoyed limited support. Support for Ukraine was secondary to a strong US–Russia relationship, which, however problematic, continues to be of vital US interest. Armenia's importance was secondary to strong US interest in Azerbaijani oil and its geopolitical significance, although the Armenian political lobby remained powerful in the US Congress.⁹ The most disadvantaged of all was Serbia, since through much of the 1990s Milosevic was considered the troublemaker of the Balkans. The US attitude changed in 1998 when Milosevic increased pressure on the Kosovars; this culminated in NATO's 1999 military intervention and follow-up policies to unseat his illiberal regime.

Moreover, two pieces of interview-based evidence suggest that diasporas could be interested in engaging in democratization even in periods when US foreign policy is more tolerant towards illiberal rulers in the homeland. The first one relates to the period 1995–1998, when the US considered Milosevic “the peace-maker of Dayton,” and gave its controversial support for him. At that time several diaspora individuals, well-placed in the Washington D.C. circles, were hired to work on

⁹ The Armenian lobby was instrumental in influencing the US Congress to pass two acts in 1992—the Humanitarian Aid Corridor Act and Section 907 from the Freedom Support Act—aimed at preventing the US from giving financial assistance to Azerbaijan due to its blockade on Armenia and Karabakh ([ACNIS, 1997](#)). This is considered a strong achievement of the lobby against the backdrop of US interests in Azerbaijani oil.

Table 2
Diasporas: class and education status.^a

Diaspora	Per capita income	Individuals below poverty level and percentage of total	Bachelor's degree and higher and percentage of total
Albanian	17,287	22,208 (19 %)	17,077 (15 %)
Armenian	25,847	45,477 (11 %)	93,184 (24 %)
Serbian	27,340	9,845 (7%)	33,658 (24%)
Ukrainian	28,422	79,993 (9%)	252,771 (28%)

^a Data from US Census (2004) at <http://factfinder.census.gov>.

a \$3 million project sponsored by Milan Panic related to building links with the opposition movement in Serbia. An informant argued that until 1998, when Milošević started to be considered the “problem for Kosovo,” key figures in the US administration were uninterested in hearing from him about the unification of the Serbian opposition or in meeting with opposition leaders. The second piece of evidence relates to Ukraine. The practicality of US foreign policy towards Ukraine and its respect for electoral democracy have not been conducive to liberal voices for change. Close to the 2004 elections which turned into the liberal Orange Revolution, the US administration focused on the electoral procedure and was prepared to work with whatever leader won those elections in a free and fair manner, despite mounting voices in diaspora circles that the pre-election campaign had been manipulated.

Challenges to the sovereignty of the homeland

Prior diasporic experience with anti-communism, violence, middle class status, and US foreign policy stance towards the homeland cannot explain the variation of diaspora involvement with the homeland democratization. In contrast, I argue that the explanatory power lies in challenges to the sovereignty of their homelands. Unless diasporas are linked to states that enjoy both international legal and domestic sovereignty, they will engage only with the procedural aspects of democracy. Table 3 demonstrates visually this argument.

Only the Ukrainian diaspora became involved with liberal elements of democratization. In this case neither the international nor the domestic sovereignty of the homeland was seriously challenged. Having become independent in 1991, Ukraine needed to assert itself against Russia externally, and to internally govern an

Table 3
Challenges to sovereignty and diaspora involvement with democratization.

Homelands	Challenges to Domestic Sovereignty	Challenges to International Legal Sovereignty	Diaspora Involvement with Democratization
Ukraine	No	No	Liberal
Serbia	Yes	No	Procedural
Kosovo	No	Yes	Procedural
Karabakh	No	Yes	Procedural

ethnically diverse population, including a large Russian-speaking minority. Nevertheless, it maintained control over its entire territory and over its domestic institutions.

Ukraine's independence was a subject of strong diaspora activism. It started with lobbying US President Woodrow Wilson at the end of World War I, continued moderately with the Captive Nations process, and resurfaced vigorously with pressure on George Bush Sr. to recognize Ukraine, despite his speech delivered in Kiev almost at the eve of independence, vehemently opposing aspirations for statehood (McConnell, 1990; Fink, 1993; Magocsi, 2005:173–175). The diaspora stood overwhelmingly behind the local Rukh movement which advocated both state independence and democratization (Hadzewycz, 2008). Issues of sovereignty and democratization were highly intertwined for the Ukrainian diaspora until 1991. Once the state became independent, the two issues gradually separated with the growing understanding that democratization was a necessary ingredient for obtaining external support for state-building (McConnell, 2007). State-building was of paramount importance, since the long-cherished independence needed to be preserved under any circumstances.

Pro-democratic elements in the diaspora realized that Ukraine needed support from the US and the international community in order to assert itself as an independent state against Russia in particular, Ukraine's democratization was closely linked to a debate on how to join NATO in order to withstand Russia, and to make a "civilizational choice." Since the US was Ukraine's main Western lobbyist on NATO, the diaspora filtered pressures for democratization by considering that its own pro-democratic behavior could raise the country's international standing. For this reason, pro-democratic elements in diaspora circles did not rule out a positive consideration of the Russian-speaking minority, to the extent that it served state-building purposes.

In the early 1990s the Ukrainian diaspora was instrumental in providing continued humanitarian support for the victims of the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear disaster, reintroducing earlier banned nationalist historiographies, and marking the 60th anniversary of the 1932–33 famine.¹⁰ However, when it approached democratization, it acted in line with the "building of a new state" dynamic. It is not surprising that there was a large group of *derzhavnyki* (statists)—most vocally represented by leading personalities in the Ukrainian World Congress—who apologized for the undemocratic practices of the Leonid Kuchma regime and criticized American policies and legislative initiatives related to the homeland. This group was aware of Kuchma's semi-authoritarianism, but was afraid that criticism would backfire against Ukraine (Deychakiwsky, 2007). The "building of a new state" dynamics created dilemmas even in pro-liberal diaspora circles, who wanted to pursue

¹⁰ Eight hundred thousand copies of Orest Subtelny's nationalist historiography *Ukraine. A History* (University of Toronto Press, 1989) were published in Ukrainian and Russian. The Ukrainian famine, a result of Joseph Stalin's forced collectivization, was marked as an important traumatic event in the diaspora. Thus, one could claim that, like the Armenian diaspora, the Ukrainian diaspora stresses remembering a collective trauma, although it is not considered "genocide."

democratization without aiding adversaries of the newly independent state. Thus, pro-liberal organizations initially concentrated on organizing policy forums and mobilizing Ukrainian–Americans on the grassroots level to support Ukraine-related resolutions in Congress (Kuzio and Deychakiwsky, 2005). Vocal individuals working in key positions —such as the US Helsinki Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, the NGO “Freedom House,” and the two Ukrainian–American newspapers, *Ukrainian Weekly* and *Svoboda*—were among the first to raise criticism of the unsatisfactory advancement of democracy in Ukraine.¹¹ In 1990–1991 when US media knew little of developments in Ukraine, the *Ukrainian Weekly* informed every US congressional office, because it was the first foreign organization to receive accreditation in Ukraine (Hadzewycz, 2008). Soon thereafter the US-Ukraine foundation established local presence as well, and an institutional partnership with the “Pylyp Orlyk Institute” advancing a pro-liberal agenda (McConnell, 2007).¹² Initiatives cutting across the ethno-linguistic divide followed to address liberal aspects of democratization unlike in the other cases. The Ukrainian Congress Committee of America developed the “Get-Out-The-Vote-Project.” Initially in town-hall meetings and later in media forums debates were organized between representatives of parties from all parts of the political spectrum (Hadzewycz, 2008). The US–Ukraine foundation focused on the liberal education of parliamentarians, and paired cities from all parts of Ukraine and the US to transfer know-how between mayors at the grassroots level (Andrushkiw, 2007). American-born Toronto University professor Paul Magocsi added a minority rights aspect to the diaspora’s engagement with democratization. Through his involvement with the worldwide Rusyn movement, he exerted pressure on Ukraine to recognize Rusyns as a separate ethno-cultural group (Magocsi, 2008).¹³

In the competition between adversarial diasporic stances, the liberal agenda started gaining more ground during Kuchma’s most severe semi-authoritarian

¹¹ Orest Deychakiwsky has been a staff advisor at the Helsinki Commission for Security and Cooperation in Europe, one of the main US-governmental organizations interested in promoting democratic change and respect for human rights during communism, and has retained an important function in the field as well. Adrian Karatnycky is the founder of the Orange Circle, an international network of friends of Ukraine, and has served as Executive Director and President of Freedom House, a prominent NGO interested in measuring and promoting democracy. Roma Hadzewycz is a long-term editor-in-chief of *Ukrainian Weekly*, published by the Ukrainian National Association, and a staunch supporter of Ukraine’s democratization.

¹² Nadia McConnell explicitly noted during her interview that because the US-Ukraine Foundation is not a diaspora membership organization, she does not consider it a clear representative of the diaspora. Nevertheless she agreed with the author that if a definition of the term “diaspora” incorporates those who make political claims about the homeland, then her organization could still be considered diasporic.

¹³ After World War I and the growth of the Ukrainian nationalist movement both domestically and in the diaspora, the Rusyns who currently reside in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, and Ukraine started experiencing strong pressures to assimilate (Kuropas, 1991) Unlike the other East European countries, Ukraine did not officially recognize the Rusyns as a separate ethnicity throughout the 1990s, but an act of a local council recently did. While the Rusyn movement has supported local aspirations for cultural recognition, it stands against recently voiced demands for territorial autonomy and independence (Magocsi, 2008).

practices (2000–2004) and peaked during the 2004 Orange Revolution. The murder of the journalist Georgy Gongadze, the release of the Melnychenko tapes, and the disclosure of mounting corruption became a tipping point for resentment against the violations of freedom of speech and human rights (Karmazyn, 2007). The two Ukrainian–American newspapers were outspoken in this process, and over time witnessed a change of heart in the diaspora. While in 2000–2001 the editor of *Svoboda* received a significant number of letters from diaspora members discontented with its criticisms of Kuchma, in 2003–2004 such letters almost completely ceased (Deychakiwsky, 2007). Moreover, the diaspora raised an overwhelmingly positive response towards the Orange Revolution. Apart from alarming US institutions about pre-election campaign irregularities, the diaspora utilized a well-developed network of Ukrainian–American credit unions to gather at least \$1.0 million (Deychakiwsky, 2007). In Chicago alone USD 363,000 were raised (Wilson, 2005:184).¹⁴ A large number of diaspora members acted as election monitors, especially during the third round of presidential elections, and held demonstrations in numerous cities (Kuzio and Deychakiwsky, 2005). The local developments in Ukraine after 2004 brought disillusionment among Ukrainian–Americans. The diaspora is nowadays critical even of President Yushchenko because he did not deliver on promises to investigate the Gongadze murder and his own poisoning (Kupchinsky, 2008).

Unlike the Ukrainian diaspora, linked to a state that enjoyed both international legal and domestic sovereignty throughout the 1990s, the Serbian diaspora was linked to the collapsing state of Serbian-dominated Yugoslavia. Yugoslavia *de facto* enjoyed legal sovereignty externally, as did Serbia-Montenegro after the Dayton-Accords in 1995, yet Serbia proper has not had effective domestic sovereignty—especially over Kosovo—since 1989. The Kosovar parallel structures were a major challenge to its domestic sovereignty until the warfare ended in 1999. The United Nation's Administration rule in Kosovo posed the same challenge in its aftermath. Thus, even during non-violent periods, Serbia was not able to control the governance structures within its domestic territory.

Nationalist practices predominated among the Serbian diaspora, as Hockenos (2003) describes very well. This paper does not examine nationalist practices alone but diaspora engagement with various aspects of democratization. I argue that engagement with procedural aspects of democracy took place in order to advance an unfulfilled nationalist project by mechanisms acceptable to the larger international community. When engaging with democratization, diaspora groups focused their efforts—however sporadic and uncoordinated—to support Milosevic's opposition rather than civil society groups with more liberal agendas. Opposition support did not mean support for liberalism, since the opposition was often no less nationalist

¹⁴ Chicago is home to a large Ukrainian–American community, and to Katherine Chumachenko, wife of current President Viktor Yushchenko (Wilson, 2005:184) Chumachenko could be considered a diaspora returnee engaged in transition reforms, since she resettled in Ukraine in the early 1990s after having worked in the Ronald Reagan and George H. Bush administrations. In Ukraine she was a director of the Pylyp Orlyk Institute.

than Milosevic. For example, Chicago-based groups stemming from old Chetnik organizations rendered limited support to both opposition leader Vuk Draskovic and his ultra-nationalist rival, Vojislav Seselj (Hockenos, 2003:127). The influential Serbian Unity Congress (SUC) initially supported Milosevic, but changed its attitude after Dayton in 1995, considering him an opportunist who jeopardized the interests of Serbs and the greater Serbia goal (Hockenos, 2003:109). SUC supported opposition groups that could oust him and sponsored leaders to travel and testify before the US Congress. SUC's President Michael Djjordjevic often acted as the official representative for Vuk Draskovic, Zoran Djindzic, and Vesna Pesic in the US. SUC co-organized with other diaspora groups a convention in Budapest in November 1999 in an attempt to unify the highly fragmented opposition (Hockenos, 2003:171–172).

Further evidence suggests that the Serbian diaspora's involvement with democratization had little to do with promoting liberalism. Prior to the 1990 elections in Serbia, Tomic's Democratic Party, which included liberal intellectuals, went virtually unnoticed in Serb diaspora circles (Hockenos, 2003:127). Serbian peace and human rights activists were branded "spies" and "traitors." Although promoting that Serbs were equally involved in the wars of disintegration of former Yugoslavia and should not be blamed as the main perpetrators of atrocities (Veric, 2007), there is a surprising absence in SUC's newsletter of the need to hand over war criminals to the Hague-based International Tribunal on Former Yugoslavia. The tribunal has never been considered legitimate (Veric, 2007; Kesic, 2007). Furthermore, prior to the 2000 elections Serbian diaspora organizations were reluctant to cooperate with US organizations on fostering regime change (Anon. 1, 2007). Most notably, there was little support among diaspora members for the student *Otpor* [Resistance] movement which was the driving force behind the 2000 electoral change (Pajic, 2007; Bakovic, 2007).¹⁵ Those who aided the process by helping buy leaflets and develop street campaigns were a few recent political migrants and students in Western academic institutions (Bakovic, 2007).

The lack of domestic sovereignty of Serbia in Kosovo continued to create obstacles to diasporic involvement with liberal aspects of democratization even after the 2000 electoral change. While SUC increased its activities in the realm of business networks, student exchanges, and leadership programs bringing Serbian officials to the US (Cerovic, 2007), it made the non-resolution of Kosovo's final status a centerpiece of its agenda. Its message was clear—Kosovo is an integral part of Serbia and should not become independent. Out of 29 issues of the *Bulletin of the Serbian Unity Congress* (16 issues from 1998 to 1999 and 13 issues from 2000 to 2007) 23 had at least one article dedicated to Kosovo. Coverage of the activities of the Serbian Orthodox Church increased after 2000, since the Church became instrumental in defending Serbian minority rights and historical monuments in

¹⁵ Out of the democratic revolutions aimed at unseating illiberal regimes (Serbia, Ukraine, Georgia, Slovakia, Kyrgyzstan) the US put the most financial effort to unseat Milosevic in Serbia. Thus, the Serbian student group "Otpor" received larger amounts of funds than its Ukrainian counterpart "Pora."

Kosovo. Other articles concentrated on SUC's lobbying against the activities of the slightly more influential Albanian lobby, emphasizing aspects of criminality of former Kosovo Liberation Army fighters, and rejecting Kosovo's favorable treatment by the US (SUC, 2005:2). SUC members were invited to participate in committees drafting the new Serbian constitution (SUC, 2003:3). Although expected to be more democratic than the previous one, this constitution again declared Kosovo an "integral part of Serbia" (CRS, 2006).

Both the Albanian and Armenian diasporas are linked to territorially based entities—Kosovo and Karabakh—which have aspired to statehood since 1991 and have already built institutions that perform various governance functions since the end of the secessionist warfare (for Kosovo after 1999, and for Karabakh after 1994). Yet, international legal sovereignty is missing in these cases. Contrary to expectations of the literature on diasporas and homeland conflicts, considering diasporic involvement with violence as the predominant means to achieve secessionist goals, I argue that diasporas engage with procedural aspects of democracy during non-violent periods. Such behavior constitutes a coping mechanism to filter international pressures to democratize the proto-states. For example, the Albanian diaspora resented but did not confront the United Nations Administration on Kosovo's policy of "standards before status." The Armenian diaspora countered criticism against semi-authoritarian practices in Armenia and Karabakh by providing monitors to ensure free and fair elections. They engaged with procedural aspects of democracy to demonstrate commitment to a democratic creed important for the international community without abandoning more narrow nationalist goals.

Keeping their eyes on Kosovo's future independence, the Albanian diaspora put aside its internal divisions. It adopted a pragmatic attitude with the understanding that if democracy is the "only game in town" conducive to achieving independence, then the Albanian diaspora will play it. Diaspora organizations regularly provided monitors for elections in Kosovo. The NAAC developed a special democratic institutions project co-sponsoring Balkans-related conferences in Washington (NAAC, 2004). Despite disagreements among their members, Albanian diaspora institutions officially disapproved of the mob violence in 2004 when Kosovo Albanians injured and killed a number of Serbs and destroyed Serbian cultural monuments. Diaspora organizations did not actively stand in the way of the International Tribunal indictment of former KLA commander and prime minister of post-war Kosovo, Ramush Haradinaj.¹⁶ Also, Albanian diasporic elites realized that they could not avoid the minority rights discussion in Washington and be taken seriously (Anon. 2, 2007). This has been especially true since 2004, when the final status of Kosovo returned to the US foreign policy agenda.

However, the diasporic unity did not involve liberal aspects for the democratization of Kosovo. Similarly to the Serbian diaspora, the Albanian diaspora viewed developments in the homeland in zero-sum game terms (Anon. 3, 2007). Albanian diaspora institutions had little concern for the mistreatment of the Serbian population after

¹⁶ Haradinaj was acquitted in July 2008.

1999. Serbian minority interests were defended by the Serbian, not the Albanian diaspora. Furthermore, although Albanian diaspora organizations disapproved of the violence in 2004, there was an implicit justification in diaspora circles that such events could be expected if negotiations were further delayed (Anon. 4, 2007).

Challenges to the international legal sovereignty of Karabakh have been decisive in limiting Armenian diaspora involvement democratization. Unlike Kosovo, which declared independence in February 2008, the conflict over Karabakh is considered “frozen” despite a 1994 cease-fire. Thus, the Armenian diaspora has had no real incentives for democratic behavior and has engaged with democratic procedures in the most minimalist ways. It provided monitors for elections in recent years (Chouldjian, 2007). There is a disappointment with the international community’s lack of appreciation of democratic efforts. Chouldjian (2007) argues that “the fact that the people of Karabakh have been performing better on elections than their neighbors in Azerbaijan, has hardly been given a proper notice by the international community”. In addition, the “frozen” conflict triggers security dilemmas in the diaspora, exacerbating old traumas. Most pronounced is a fear of Turkey, which refuses to recognize the Armenian genocide in 1915, but is a major player in negotiations over the future of Karabakh. Because of anti-Turkish sentiment, the Dashnaks became instrumental in the 1998 ousting of Armenia’s President Ter Petrossian who aspired to a more cooperative foreign policy towards Turkey (Libaridian, 1999).¹⁷

The Armenian diaspora utilizes traditional lobby and other methods to advance statehood issues related to Karabakh. It lobbies to make sure that the US remains an honest broker in the negotiations over its future despite its strategic interests in oil-rich Azerbaijan (Chouldjian, 2007; Khazarian, 2007). The Armenian Assembly of America hosts on its premises in Washington D.C. a proto-embassy of Karabakh. The diaspora works to provide development aid by way of remittances and fund-raising for local projects. The downfall of Armenia’s President Petrossian was also linked to a diaspora judgement that he had mishandled the Karabakh issue. The diaspora stood firmly behind a new government comprised of a number of veterans from the war in Nagorno-Karabakh, including current Armenian president Robert Kocharian (Panossian, 1998; Libaridian, 1999; Shain, 2002). Thus, there is a consensus in diaspora circles that achieving a final solution for Karabakh could occur by peaceful means other than a critical diaspora pressure on the current government (Khazarian, 2007).

Conclusions

This article explored the variation of diaspora involvement with democratization of homelands in the post-communist world by discussing the Ukrainian, Serbian,

¹⁷ Due to the trauma of the genocide, throughout the 20th century the Armenian diaspora has considered Turkey a major security threat and Russia an ally. Thus, in the late 1980s the Dashnaks were reluctant to support the 1991 independence of Armenia and Karabakh, fearing that this would alienate Russia, leave Armenia unprotected, and possibly lead to a new genocide (Chorbajan, 2001, Papazian, 2001). Currently the diaspora’s major goal is to link Turkey’s European integration with recognition of the genocide (ICG, 2007). So far it has succeeded in convincing France and the United States.

Albanian, and Armenian diasporas. I argued that contrary to predominant expectations of the literature on diasporas and homeland politics that diasporas would act in exclusively nationalist ways, they were also involved with efforts for democratization. One diaspora (Ukrainian) linked to a state that enjoyed both international legal and domestic sovereignty, demonstrated some involvement with liberal aspects of democratization after 1989. Diasporas linked to homelands experiencing challenges either to their international legal (Kosovo, Karabakh) or domestic sovereignty (Serbia) involved with procedural aspects of democracy only. This variation can be explained by the ways in which communities filtered international pressures for democratization. The Ukrainian diaspora realized that support for liberal aspects of democracy could benefit the state-building of a newly independent homeland and its efforts to escape Russian influence. The three remaining diasporas utilized procedural aspects of democracy as coping mechanisms to advance unresolved nationalist goals by means accepted by the international community. In the Serbian case, the diaspora focused its support for Milosevic's opposition not because of similar ideological convictions with Western powers, but to unseat an opportunistic leader who betrayed "Greater Serbia" at Dayton. The Albanian and Armenian diasporas used procedural aspects of democracy to advance the cause of self-determination of the proto-states to which they were linked (Kosovo and Karabakh). In all three cases the diasporas did not advance liberal aspects of democracy, but continued to see ethno-national issues in the homeland in exclusively nationalist terms.

Apart from demonstrating that diasporas do engage with democratization alongside nationalist practices, this article contributes to the scarce literature on diasporas and democratization in three major ways. First, it adds nuance to scholarship on diaspora engagement with liberal vs. procedural aspects of democracy, thus moving the discussion away from practices only. Second, it adds a comparative dimension to a literature dominated by single case studies. Third, it theorizes about diaspora activism during non-violent periods of the post-communist transitions of 1989–1991, which, in contrast to violent periods, have received little attention by scholarship so far.

This paper speaks to the larger literature on international actors and democratization. Although diasporas are clearly more focused on nationalist approaches, they do not necessarily rule out democratic turnover and liberalism. Even the most conservative among the four diasporas, the Armenian, sent monitors to ensure free and fair elections in the homeland. Even leaders from a "conflict-generated" diaspora, the Albanian, usually dismissive about the rights of Serbs in Kosovo, have realized that they cannot avoid a discussion about minority rights if they want to be considered seriously in US foreign policy circles. Although established diasporic institutions are not the major forces behind the electoral changes of Serbia and Ukraine, recent political migrants, students, and individuals were nevertheless involved in various ways. This demonstrates that although diasporas are not the most likely agents of democratization in the post-communist world, they are not inherently incapable of acting as such.

This work adds to a larger discussion about the link between democratization and nationalism. [Bunce \(2003:176\)](#) argues that there is a positive linkage between

nationalist mobilization and successfully sustained democratization in the post-communist world, particularly when republics of former ethno-federal states—such as Slovenia, the Baltic Republics, Macedonia and Ukraine—were freed from economic and political environments that would make their further democratization unlikely. My analysis confirms that a positive linkage between democratization and nationalism exists, and relates to the relationship between diasporas and homelands. Diasporas can maintain their nationalist interests but still respond to international pressure for democratization, especially when viewing democratization as a means to nationalist ends.

Two final points could open a larger discussion about diasporas and democratization. If diasporas use procedural aspects of democracy to advance their nationalist goals against the backdrop of international pressure for democratization, how much does the concept of democracy become “stretched” in a world in which democratization has become a global norm, but is *de facto* utilized for particularistic purposes? In addition, if diasporas chose to utilize democratization for the advancement of their nationalist goals, rather than to engage exclusively with nationalism, will they be transformed by the process? Might they become more moderate non-state actors in international politics? The answers to these questions will constitute the topic of another research.

Acknowledgments

The author would like to express her gratitude to the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington D.C. and the Mellon-Sawyer Seminar Series for sponsoring this research. Helpful comments provided: Fiona Adamson, Valerie Bunce, Adrienne LeBas, Tsveta Petrova, Kenneth Roberts, Deborah West, participants in the Mellon-Sawyer seminar at Cornell University in 2007, and two anonymous reviewers of this journal.

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