Engaging from abroad: The sociology of emigrant politics

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Abstract

This article seeks to understand the politics of emigrants' home country engagements, with a particular focus on experiences in the USA. Long-distance emigrant politics, I argue, reflects the paradox of migration, which while inherently entailing mobility, is impelled by the unequal, territorial containment of resources, a feature of social life that both gives the migrants new found leverage over states and peoples left behind *and* constrains their capacity to maintain cross-border connections. As I will show, the processes by which international migrations extend political ties across states collide with those that progressively bring migrants into the polities of the states on which they have converged; consequently, over the long term, the pursuit of emigrant politics turns into immigrant politics, embedding the former foreigners in the political life of the country where they actually reside.

Keywords: transnationalism, diaspora, emigrant politics, immigrant politics

Though international migration is an inherently political phenomenon, the study of migrants' political behavior is only now moving from the field's periphery to its center. This scholarship mainly focuses on receiving societies and hence *immigrant* politics. Its key questions concern the means and mechanisms by which aliens engage in political activity and possibly acquire citizenship; foreigners learn the rules of a new national political situation; and foreign-born, naturalized citizens gain political incorporation and acceptance. Echoing the long-standing interest in the retention of cultural beliefs or practices imported from the society of origin, students of *immigrant* politics have sought to understand the impact of political experiences and conditions in the society of origin *on* political behavior in the society of destination.

However, scholars' preoccupation with *immigrant* politics ignores the duality at the heart of the migrant phenomenon. The people opting for life in another state are not just immigrants, but also *emigrants*, retaining ties to the people and places left behind. More likely to comprise the 'connected' than the 'uprooted' or possibly even the 'transplanted', the migrants find themselves among their fellow foreigners, a co-presence that produces a familiar, rather than alien, environment and also facilitates the maintenance of cross-border activities. While for many, cross-border involvements are strictly social and

highly particularistic, all migrations also include at least some migrants who keep up political as well as social connections. Homeland-oriented migrant political engagement takes myriad forms. In some cases, as with the Irish, Tamils, or Croats, migrants engage in state-seeking nationalism, seeking to build a new state out of an existing, multi-ethnic polity. In other cases, they try to replace the old regime, whether from left to right, as with the anti-communist, Cuban exiles in Miami, or from right to left, as with Salvadorans who flocked to the USA in the 1970s and 1980s. Others have more specific goals, most notably re-gaining home country membership, as evidenced by the many campaigns for expatriate voting rights. With the vote in hand, many expatriates then engage in campaigning, encouraging visits by homeland leaders and contributing funds to homeland parties.

This article seeks to understand the politics of emigrants' home country engagements, with a particular focus on experiences in the USA. Long-distance emigrant politics, I argue, reflects the paradox of migration, which while inherently entailing mobility, is impelled by the unequal, territorial containment of resources, a feature of social life that both gives the migrants new found leverage over states and peoples left behind *and* constrains their capacity to maintain cross-border connections. Cross-border migrations moving populations into developed, democratic states give the migrants capacities never previously possessed. Once in the receiving state, migrants obtain new-found leverage, benefiting from both the wealth of the economic environment and the freedom of a polity no longer controlled by the home government. Insofar as private actions undertaken abroad have public consequences at home—as demonstrated by the $351 billion flow of migrant worker remittances during the 2011 (Mohapatra et al. 2011)—even cross-border involvements that are strictly particularistic yield political effects. While home country politics is rarely salient among the migrant rank and file—who often had little pre-migration political experience and whose lives in the country of destination unfold independently of political matters at home—things take a different turn among the politically oriented, as the new political environment recurrently gives rise to social movements built in the place where the migrants *live*, but designed to effect change in the place that they have *left*. While keeping *in* wealth, the receiving state's borders also keep *out* the tentacles of the sending state, providing the migrants with political protection against home state interests that might seek to control them.

Hence, population movements across borders inevitably produce migrant homeland political activism. Yet the international dimension is also a source of constraint, as the relevant political interactions extend beyond the migrants and their homelands to encompass hostland states and national peoples. Migrants' foreign entanglements run the risk of reminding nationals of the foreign, often unwanted, often suspected, alien presence in their midst. While hostland states may tolerate, even support, migrant engagement with homelands abroad, acceptance is contingent on the degree of stability and tranquility of the broader international order. When international troubles arise—as they inevitably do—hostland states are apt to act in ways that restrain and possibly punish migrants insisting on maintaining a cross-border political connection.

External influences can thus limit homeland engagement; in contrast, *internal* influences, most notably the receiving state's political opportunity structure, work in the opposite direction. Pursuing *emigrant* politics, homeland activists frequently take the path of

immigrant politics, as mobilizing resources in the destination country is best done with the political skills required by that environment. Moreover, as migrants *all* begin without citizenship, influence is only exercised via contacts and interaction with mainstream political figures; since entry into the receiving state polity is the key to greater influence, activists initially motivated by homeland concerns often move deeper into hostland politics, whose rewards are also hard to ignore. In the USA, immigrant politics is all the more attractive, as the political culture validates the pursuit of homeland politics and the political system makes it possible.

The movement from emigrant to immigrant politics shifts the territorial focus from homeland to hostland. However, it does *not* entail assimilation, understood as a decline in the significance of an ethnic difference. Because 'conflict and disagreement are defining features of political life', as noted by Pearson and Citrin (2002: 220), engagement with hostland politics cannot generate diffusion into some undifferentiated political main-stream, as the latter does not exist. Rather, political involvement, whether in its emigrant or immigrant form, yields alignment along the lines of host country political cleavages. And as the issues raised by both emigrant *and* immigrant politics often generate negative reactions from segments of the ethnic majority, those responses paradoxically reinforce ethnic political identities or attachments, whether imported from the home country or germinated in the migration context.

This argument is developed through an effort in historical interpretation, drawing on a wide array of studies by historians, political scientists, and sociologists. The article takes a broad sweep, extending in time from the mass migrations of the turn of the 20th century on through those of the early 21st. Though some scholars have argued that homeland politics, now and then, take a dramatically different form, this article accents continuities, all the while noting the historically contingent, though recurrent, international events capable of disrupting ongoing forms of cross-border engagement. These continuities result from the enduring features of international migration *and* of the American polity, as the first inherently generates resources for cross-border political action and the second both facili-tates and legitimates migrant homeland involvement.

I note that the article is designed to apply to only a subset of international migrations, namely those taking migrants from poorer, developing states to richer democracies. As such, the overall framework remains encompassing, both temporally and spatially; it extends from the trans-Atlantic migrations of the mid-19th century to the contemporary south to north migrations converging on the Americas, Europe, and the antipodes. In contrast, other migrations—whether those of European Union citizens moving within the EU, for example, or those leading to the Persian Gulf—fall outside the article's purview.

1. The transnational approach: contributions and shortcomings

Though taking a different path, this article builds on the intellectual legacy of the scholar-ship on transnationalism. This field has generated a vast, sprawling literature (Levitt and Jaworsky 2007; Martiniello and Lafleur 2008 on political transnationalism), deriving from various sources, internally fractured, and yielding no single approach to the

interactions between emigrants and states and peoples left behind. Nonetheless, a review of key studies highlights recurring themes and arguments.

The literature began by contending that migrants experienced *simultaneous* incorporation in both sending and receiving states (Glick-Schiller et al. 1992: 2; Basch, Glick-Schiller, and Szanton Blanc 1994), making today's migrants not the uprooted but rather the connected. While the scholars of transnationalism agree that these 'immigrants do still assimilate to their host nations' (Smith 2003: 327) they also maintain that migrants keep up, perhaps even deepen, home country ties. Facilitating that capacity to 'live lives across borders' is a more accommodating reception context, enhanced personhood rights, and new permutations in citizenship laws—most notably, the greater acceptance of dual citizenship—all providing the means for migrants to institutionalize their goals of keeping a foot in both worlds.

Scholars have highlighted the myriad of connections—cultural, social, and economic—linking migrants, stay-at-homes, and sending communities. While cross-border flows involving remittances, travel, and communications may create a 'transnational social field' linking migrants with their egocentric networks back home (Levitt and Glick-Schiller 2004), the question of whether political activities and engagements can span two polities is altogether different. Both the source of migrant influence *and* the triggers to sending state strategies derive from the political boundaries cutting *across* that social field. Residence in a foreign country lets migrants escape the coercive power of the home state; there they find degrees of freedom, economic resources, and political options not available on home grounds (Adamson 2004); in turn, the emigrants' ability to reap economic and political benefits from residence in a rich country compels sending states to find ways of shaping migrant political, cross-border activities in ways compatible with their own preferences and priorities (Ostergaard-Nielsen 2003a).

Thus, rather than 'transnational communities . . . suspended . . . between two countries' (Portes and Rumbaut, 2006: 131), immigrant populations instead comprise 'contested communities' (Adamson 2004), for whose resources and loyalties sending states compete with migrant, nonstate actors, themselves often divided over both means and ends. Moreover, the migrant political activists are 'few and far between and many choose to work on other issues than those related to [the homeland] (Ostergaard-Nielsen 2001: 267)'; while the hard core can connect with a large constituency that variably resonates to the homeland call, the common pattern involves the mobilization of migrant organizations and institutions, speaking in the name of a population they present as 'the' diaspora.

Most importantly, the scholarship on political transnationalism assumes what cannot be taken for granted: namely, receiving state incorporation. As noted by Ostergaard-Nielsen, the destination state 'plays a central role by setting the boundaries of inclusion, exclusion, and citizenship, allowing or prohibiting various forms of political mobilization within their boundaries' (2003b: 771). Consequently, concepts like 'transnational citizenship' or 'trans-border citizen' (Fouron and Glick-Schiller 2001) seem inappropriate for people who as *aliens* lack formal citizenship in the place where they reside. Indeed, contrary to scholars who often assert that 'immigrants do not forsake political incorporation into [the receiving] society when they engage in transnational political practices' (Guarnizo 2001: 214), the common receiving society political experience is often one of '*non*-incorporation'

(Hochschild and Mollenkopf 2009), a feature well demonstrated by the contemporary USA, where only one-third of the 38 million foreign-born persons has obtained US citizenship. As shown by such widely cited ethnographic studies as Levitt's *The Transnational Villagers* (2001) or Smith's *Mexican New York* (2006), residence in a rich country gives migrants the capacity to intervene back home, but *not* the resources for gaining influence in, or even entering, the hostland political system. While noncitizens residing in democratic states enjoy a protected space for political expression and mobilization, 'acting like a citizen is not the same as being a citizen' (Fox 2005: 176), a point particularly relevant to immigrant aliens, who remain vulnerable to measures that would curb their rights, let alone remove them from residence.

Moreover the membership as well as the status dimensions of citizenship impinges on the capacity to engage in cross-border politics. Hence, the tug-of-war between sending states and emigrants, to which the transnationalist scholarship has attended, is accompanied by a second tug-of-war, neglected by that same literature, in which receiving and sending states compete for immigrant loyalty (Brand 2006).

Emigrants' aspiration of belonging to both home *and* hostlands is often at variance with the preference of receiving society publics. The latter may be willing to tolerate foreign ways, but are less accepting of affiliation to foreign places. Hence, how to manage the competing claims of new and old lands is a persistent immigrant dilemma. As demonstrated by Samuel Huntington's tirade against the burgeoning of 'transnational ampersand identity' (2004: 205) among contemporary US immigrants, visible expression of home country loyalties gives those already thinking that the national community is under threat additional reason to worry and insist that boundaries get rolled back.

2. Emigrant and immigrant politics: the view from the USA

Thus, the transnational perspective has had the great virtue of directing attention to the cross-border dimension of migration and its ubiquity—matters ignored by traditional preoccupations with immigrant assimilation or integration, where everything of importance transpires *within* the boundaries of destination states. But in focusing on flows, it has also diminished the importance of place, eliding the ways in which territory affects identity, resources, and power.

2.1 Opportunities and constraints

The political boundaries separating 'here' from 'there' diminish constraints impinging on migrant activists and increase their resources. Residence in a democratic society entails at least some rights, even if those rights are contested and variable. Immigrants to the USA have consistently enjoyed a bedrock core of rights, as evidenced by Chinese immigrants at the turn of the last century, who effectively used the courts to protect their standing (Motomura 2006). Because the migrants' cause can be framed in terms that resonate broadly—whether appealing to beliefs in human rights or self-determination—they find domestic allies, whose intervention helps secure the space for autonomous social action.

Likewise, because social boundaries are relatively diffuse, migrants inevitably develop close social ties to citizens, generating another set of allies whose political entitlements are without question.

Over the long term, the material and the political combine. The same logic that propels a transnational family economy (Gabaccia 2000) supports trans-state political projects: because migrant activists collect funds in countries where wages are high in order to support political mobilization in countries where costs are low, small contributions from low-wage migrant workers give exile activists the resources needed to make a difference back home. Even among the most disadvantaged migrants, not all stay at the bottom; many experience upward movement, with some of the more successful putting their means, as well as their contacts, at the disposal of the trans-state activists. That the migrants mobilize in a more powerful country, with a capacity for acting in ways that could help or harm home country regimes, also adds to their impact. While opponents in exile may be blocked from exercising direct influence at home, their host society location—as well as host society allies—gives them the option of connecting to host society policy makers whose views home society actors are less likely to ignore.

2.2 Homeland disengagement

However, movement to a new political environment yields opposite effects. Homeland political involvement entails high costs and low benefits. While not the only reason to participate in politics, pursuit of material benefits—whether individual or collective—is one of the factors that lead people to spend time and effort on political matters. Home states, however, can do relatively little for the migrants in the territory where they actually live (Fitzgerald 2009), reducing motivations to purely symbolic or intrinsic rewards. Options for participation are also limited. Although home country political parties maintain foreign branches and candidates travel abroad to garner expatriate support and material assistance, campaigning on foreign soil costs considerably more than on native grounds, especially if the former is a developed and the latter a developing society. Where they exist, expatriate electoral systems might attract greater migrant attention, but none can reproduce the national voting infrastructure on the territory of another country (Calderon 2003).

Absent mobilization, pressures to detach from home country politics intensify. Political life is fundamentally social: participation responds to the level and intensity of political involvement in one's own social circles, which in turn generate political information (Rosenstone and Hanson 1993). However, the circumstances of settlement often lead to spiraling disengagement. Even areas of high-ethnic density rarely possess the ethnic institutional completeness and political infrastructure that would stimulate home country engagement. The migrants' status as immigrants orient them toward receiving state institutions and media practices—even if conveyed via a mother tongue—provides at best modest coverage of home country developments. Absent powerful inducements, clear signals, and the examples of significant others, the costs of participation may easily outweigh its benefits. Since, in contrast, immigrants often realize that they will settle in the places where they live and where political participation is also easier,

disconnection from home country politics is the typical pattern (Waldinger, Soehl, and Lim 2012).

Survey data on Mexican immigrants in the USA—who comprise a quarter of the US foreign-born population—highlight the limits of rank and file home country involvement. As emigration from Mexico has been mainly impelled by economic, not political, considerations, pre-migration political engagement is a minority experience. Thus, the National Latino Survey shows that a majority of immigrants (62 per cent) did *not* vote in Mexico, prior to emigrating to the USA; as noted above, an even larger proportion had no pre-migration involvement in a social or political organization (Fraga et al. 2008). Inattention to US politics parallels lack of interest in Mexican politics: thus, 72 per cent of the respondents polled by the 2006 Mexican Expatriate Survey reported that they paid no or little attention to that year's US congressional election, as did 74 per cent of those same respondents when asked about the Presidential campaign in Mexico. Compared with Mexicans in Mexico, this survey's results reveal that the immigrants were also far less likely to talk about or pay attention to Mexican politics (McCann et al. 2007). Almost two-thirds of the Mexican immigrants queried that same year by a nationally representative survey undertaken by the Pew Hispanic Center agreed with the statement 'I am insufficiently informed about Mexican politics to vote.' While only a minority agreed with the statement that 'I am in the U.S. and elections in Mexico are not important to me anymore', the proportion answering yes to so socially undesirable a response is impressive (Suro and Escobar 2006). That response proves consistent with the respondents' level of familiarity with Mexican politics, as only 45 per cent knew that it was then a Presidential election year—indeed, the first in which Mexicans were allowed to vote abroad. Similarly, when the 2006 Mexican Expatriate Survey asked respondents whether they could identify the slogans adopted by two of the Mexican presidential candidates, seventy-nine answered incorrectly and only 3 per cent could provide both right answers (McCann, Cornelius, and Leal 2009). In a pattern entirely consistent with these responses, only 4 per cent of Mexican immigrants queried by the Latino National Survey reported belonging to a hometown or civic association, even though the great majority engage in some form of regular, cross-border connection with relatives or friends in Mexico.

Though no other single national origin group compares in size with the Mexican immigrant population, overall levels of homeland political engagement seem quite similar. Of the roughly 900 respondents born in East, Southeast, and South Asia, queried by the 2000–1 Pilot National Asian American Political Survey, only 8 per cent reported involvement in politics or political party membership *prior* to arrival in the USA and still fewer—only 6 per cent—claimed to have participated in any activity related to home country *after* migration.[1] Similarly, only 4 per cent of the foreign-born persons queried by the 2008 National Asian American Survey reported *post*-migration involvement in activities dealing with their country of origin (Wong et al. 2010: 77); barely 5 per cent reported having had pre-migration political experience. Ninety-four per cent of Colombian, Dominican, and Salvadoran immigrants surveyed randomly by the Comparative Immigrant Entrepreneurship Project said that they *never* participated in campaigns to support home country political candidates; 96 per cent also reported that they *never* contributed to home country electoral campaigns.[1] Similarly, only 1 per cent of Dominican immigrants voted in the 2004 election for President of the Dominican

Republic, even though the newly implemented system of expatriate voting made it easy to cast a ballot from abroad.

Consequently, the bounded nature of the new environment yields two contradictory effects. On the one hand, it generates resources and provides protection, furnishing homeland-oriented activists with significant leverage. On the other hand, it deactivates the migrant rank and file, though the extent of that effect varies with the circumstances of migration and the degree to which a politicized identity was imparted prior to or during migration. The typical labor migration, involving displaced peasants, with strong local, but weak national, identities and little involvement in national political structures, tends toward disengagement. In contrast, as refugee movement are impelled by politics, they tend to breed a more lasting political disposition, especially when the *émigrés* are of elite origin, arriving with political skills and other forms of cultural and social capital that can be put to political ends. The size of 'a supportive constituency available for mobilization' (Wald 2008: 275) therefore varies depending on migration type, so too do the resources that can be gathered through mobilization. However, almost all migrations include at least some persons who remained impelled by homeland matters; the hard core is rarely alone, as there is often a large constituency that resonates to the homeland call, at least occasionally. The denominator also matters: where the numbers are huge, as with Mexican immigrants in the USA, any cause that engages the energies of 1, 2, or 3 per cent of all migrants can impel significant numbers into action. Likewise, migrations may generate numbers that are absolutely small, but loom large relative to home country populations—as in the case of Caribbeans—can yield influence that home state leaders ignore at their peril.

2.3 The varieties of emigrant politics

Migrant political activism comes in various forms, ranging from the ideologically motivated undertakings of exile elites to the *ad hoc*, uncoordinated efforts of rank-and-file migrants seeking to help, and therefore also change, their home towns. If *emigration* is an *implicitly* political act, in which migrants register their distaste with the home government by voting with their feet, *immigration* provides the opportunity and resources to *explicitly* express those grievances and seek means of resolving them. The internationally oriented nature of these activities ensures that international events and tensions yield spillover effects on migrants' capacity to mobilize and organize in the destination country in order to affect the place of origin. The more those efforts are principally affective and symbolic, the greater is migrants' ability to ward off the negative boomerang from events abroad. In contrast, action that is explicitly political and concerted is less well buffered, both from receiving society conflicts that diaspora politics might trigger or exacerbate as well as from the potential blowback occurring when homeland politics is perceived as running counter to hostland interests.

Moving to a foreign country often yields a change in identity, teaching immigrants that they are not simply members of the hometown 'little country' but also members of the larger 'national' community. Prior socialization and the experience of being treated as a strange foreigner triggers long-distance patriotism, which provides the means and the vocabulary for activating solidarity with either compatriots or a state from which one is geographically removed. The most popular form of long-distance, national solidarity is one

that does not cost anything, namely 'symbolic ethnicity' (Gans 1979). Illustrating this phenomenon is the long history of recurring ethnic parades and festivals found in America's immigrant cities—providing a public space open to all, whether the occasion is St Patrick's Day or the Cinco de Mayo, celebrated by Mexican immigrants since the late 19th century. Here migrants and their descendants gain a one-day opportunity to express concern for the place left behind, in a context of good feeling, where the home country flag can be happily waved, without the risk that anyone will take offense. Migrant philanthropy—as when American Jews raised funds for distressed co-ethnics living in eastern Europe in the aftermath of World War I or Salvadorans came together in order to send money and supplies to relieve compatriots traumatized by the natural disasters of the current decade—also exemplifies this more benign form of migrant long-distance nationalism, albeit in a slightly more demanding, committed form. Home country loyalty can also turn migrants and their descendants into ethnic lobbyists, an outcome facilitated by precedent, as mobilized homeland loyalties have been an enduring aspect of the American ethnic scene (Smith 2000). Converting immigrants into lobbyists greatly interests the leaders of today's economically struggling sending states, who value gaining access to the resources of the American state over the donations produced by migrant philanthropists.

However, because the migrants have moved into a distinctive political environment gaining degrees of freedom never previously possessed, entry into a foreign political environment can also trigger more aggressive forms of long-distance nationalism. A common outcome is the *exo-polity* (Dufoix 2003) in which emigrants challenge the home state. In some cases, this involves *state-seeking* nationalism targeted at an existing multi-ethnic state, in which the goal is that of creating a state for 'people' that does not yet have one. Other cases entail *regime-changing* mobilization, undertaken with no thought of changing the territorial order but rather directed at changing the government of an existing state.

The long-distance state-seeking and regime-changing mobilizations of migrants differ in ends, but less so in means: as they both demand clear-cut opposition to the sending country regime, they both yield polarization among the migrants whom they seek to mobilize. Consequently, politicization 'tends to invade all community space, forcing everyone to take sides' (Dufoix 2003: 68). Since both require heightened in-group solidarity, they tend to sharpen conflict and competition with the various outgroups with whom the migrants interact. Hence, internally and externally focused aggressiveness may go hand in hand, as exemplified by the experience of Cuban Americans, who simultaneously experience intense internal strife over the future of a post-Castro Cuba and highly fractious relations with their Haitian, African American, and white American neighbors (Eckstein 2009). Moreover, the migratory and ethnic connections that cross state borders also provide the vehicle for diffusing conflicts from home country to host or adding international tensions to social antagonisms of mainly domestic origin. Thus, disputes based on home country polarities yield internecine conflicts that belie claims of a transnational 'community'—as in 'the war of the little Italies' earlier in the century (Diggins 1972) or clashes between nationalists and Communists in contemporary US Chinatowns (Liang 2001). Alternatively, opposing home country loyalties can create adoptive country cleavages, as illustrated by contemporary disputes among Arab American and Jewish Americans (Shain 1999) and the earlier frictions between African Americans and Italian Americans, spurred by Italy's invasion of Ethiopia

during the 1930s, or the discord between Japanese- and Chinese Americans, provoked by Japan's invasion of China (Stack 1979; Chen 2000).

2.4 Dual loyalty

Moving across borders into the territory of a rich, democratic state, migrants gain economic and political resources, giving them new-found opportunities to affect change back home. But the capacity to build and maintain here–there connections is not a matter for the migrants to decide on their own. The immigrants are also foreigners, whose lives involve ongoing connections to foreign people and foreign places. Even though popular cultures have become more cosmopolitan, and intellectuals often tend toward xenophilia, foreign ways and affiliations to foreign places leave immigrants open to question. As the scholarly transnationalists correctly note, some of the immigrants want membership in two social collectivities, not just one. But while the American public often tolerates, and indeed sometimes accepts, homeland loyalties, it expects that the claims of the immigrants' new social collectivity will come first. Not surprisingly, those who think of the nation as a version of the family writ large take umbrage at demonstrations in which immigrants wave the flags of the states of *emigration* (Huntington 2004).

Consequently, just how to manage the competing claims of new and old lands has been a persistent immigrant dilemma. Writing about 'Loyalties: Dual and Divided', an essay appearing in the landmark *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups*, published in 1980, Harrington argued that the US political culture facilitated the pursuit of home country ties: individual liberty was valued over loyalty to any collectivity, the nation included. Furthermore, the belief in American exceptionalism encouraged the idea that American ideals could be appropriately exported by immigrants still concerned with the country they left behind. On the other hand, Harrington (1980: 104) noted that:

> . . . the open expression of dual loyalties inevitably raises problems of conflicting loyalties with the potential for causing trouble both within the United States and between the United States and other countries. . . . The problem for Americans since World War I and since has been to try to define the point at which loyalty to the United States makes it unacceptable for ethnic groups to maintain attachments to the homeland or to promote its causes as one of the many types of privately formed interest that Americans are supposedly free to express and support.

That question remains far from resolved. In the early 1990s, well before the tensions generated by 9/11 cast new suspicion on immigrants' homeland loyalties, nationally representative public opinion polls showed that the public saw African-, Asian-, Hispanic- and Jewish- Americans to be 'open to divided loyalties and therefore less patriotic than "un-hyphenated" Americans' (Smith 1994: 9).

If there is a latent predisposition to view cross-state social action as disloyal, the relationship *among* states further affects the conditions under which international migrants and their descendants can pursue 'homeland' interests. A peaceful world encourages states to relax the security/solidarity nexus whereas international tension leads states to tighten up. The specifics of the relationship between particular sending and receiving states matter even more. Homeland loyalties extending to allies, neutrals or weak states can be tolerated

easily; those connecting to less friendly, possibly hostile states, and powerful states are more likely to be suspect.

While states have *often* wrongly suspected international migrants of 'dual loyalty', they have not *always* erred, as the more astute students of transnational phenomena knew from the start. Thus, Nye and Keohane noted that 'governments have often attempted to manipulate transnational interactions to achieve results that are explicitly political: the use of tourists as spies or the cultivation of sympathetic ethnic or religious groups in other states are examples of such "informal penetration" ' (1971: 340). That migrant cross-border social actors are more likely to be opponents than servants of the home state does not necessarily please receiving states concerned with international stability, the undermining of which is precisely what migrant long-distance nationalism can sometimes entail.

The last century of political cross-border activity provides ample demonstration of the ways in which international conflicts blow back on emigrant political engagement. In the USA, war first provided the occasion for destroying German-America and later for interning the Japanese. The same set of considerations led the USA, and all the other western democracies, to intern 'enemy aliens' in both World Wars (Panayi 1993).

While war matters, it does so in multiple, complex, hard-to-predict ways. The total war of the 1941–5 era demanded the mobilization of the entire population. As its ideological goals conflicted with the reality of ethnic discrimination, it accelerated the integration of the southern and eastern European origin groups (Gerstle 2001). In somewhat similar, though paradoxical, fashion, the same international constellation that spelled disaster for the Japanese Americans worked to the benefit of Chinese Americans, who not only saw the lifting of the Chinese Exclusion Act but were given carte blanche to mobilize on behalf of precisely the homeland that America had previously despised (Chen 2000). Nonetheless, solidarity with co-ethnics abroad was a cause of constant suspicion in official circles. Only among Italians on the west coast did doubts over the loyalties of the European ethnics produce concrete pressures for internment, and then only briefly (Fox 1990). When push came to shove, the demands for US *national* solidarity overrode concerns for *ethnic* solidarity, as indicated by the behavior of American Jews, whose beleaguered co-ethnics in Europe begged that their American cousins shake 'the earth . . . to its foundations [so that] . . . the world be aroused', but to no avail. On the other hand, the Irish government's neutral, if not pro-Axis tilt, during World War II effectively stilled Irish-American nationalism for almost a quarter century, though without ever putting the loyalties of Irish Americans in serious doubt (Wilson 1995).

When Cold War succeeded World War, some immigrants found themselves vulnerable for reasons related not just to their alien origins but also having to do with their alien, 'un-American' ideas. Beginning in the Cold War, adherence to communism became enough to bar one from naturalization, and deportation was effectively employed to help destroy the left. Though virtually no one's loyalty was beyond suspicion at the time, groups with a vouchsafed status as the enemies of the USA had a green light to openly express their old world ties and allegiances, as in the case of the so-called 'captive nations' behind the Iron Curtain. By the same token, a lessening of international enmity bodes danger. Where an early détente renewed old-country ties, as among Polish Americans in the late 1950s, charges of dual loyalty immediately arose (Blejwas 1996).

One also had to be careful about one's choice of enemies, since former foes sometimes became friends. While American Jews were unhappy about American aid to Germany, not to speak of its rearming and the return of countless ex-Nazis to positions of prominence, they knew enough to keep quiet (Novick 1999). It was not until the late 1960s that American Jews felt sufficiently emboldened to undertake a no-holds barred campaign in favor of their co-ethnics in other lands, notwithstanding opposition from the highest political level (Friedman and Chernin 1999). In campaigning to bring Soviet Jews to the USA, however, American Jews were acting as the enemies of their country's enemy—which is why they ran little risk of raising the dual loyalty flag.

But the contemporary era of mass migration belongs to a different world, or so it appeared until just recently. With the winding down of the Cold War, the factors facilitating trans-state ties have been embedded in a more pacific world order, in which national allegiances have been allowed to overlap, as opposed to the mutual exclusivity expected for most of the short 20th century. Not all groups are equally lucky in this respect. Immigrants who come from countries with unfriendly relationships to the USA run the risk of falling into the 'enemy alien' trap, which is why long-distance nationalism in all of its forms (including that of the time-honored ethnic lobby) proves so hard for Arab Americans to pursue. But in an environment where foreigners and foreign entanglements are subject to suspicion, even long-standing forms of home country involvement undertaken by the most established of American ethnic groups encounter problems. Case in point, the Irish-American lobby, whose relationship to Irish Republicans in Northern Ireland turned around after 9 September 2001. While Irish-American politicians had long turned a blind eye to the violent tactics pursued by at least some Republican factions in Northern Ireland, that tolerance vanished along with the twin towers. The most ardent Irish Republicans found an increasingly chilly welcome, whether in the White House, the Congress, or among corporate chieftains of Irish descent. Nor were rank and file Irish immigrants exempt from the security-driven changes in migration control policies: noncitizen Irish immigrants—especially, but not only the undocumented—worried about their ability to remain in the USA; Irish-American organizations viewed the Patriot Act as 'potentially harmful to the interests of the Irish community across the United States' (Cochrane 2007: 227). On the other hand, assimilation blocked cross-border spillovers from the opposite side: although Protestant loyalists in Northern Ireland seized the opportunity provided by 9/11 to cast the Republicans as enemies akin to Al-Qaeda, the homeland no longer captivated the attention of the millions of Protestant Americans with roots in Northern Ireland, for whom genealogy remained the sole remaining Irish connection (O Dochartaigh 2009).

2.5 An apprenticeship in Americanization

If the condition of *inter*-state relations affects the ability to maintain national loyalties of a dualistic type, the political structure and political culture encountered in the USA make the pursuit of homeland loyalties one of the means by which the immigrants become Americans.

The country's pluralistic political structure facilitates the *legitimate* mobilization of immigrant and ethnic trans-state social action. Since politics at the different levels of

government—federal, state, and local—are loosely connected, immigrants can link up with readily accessible political actors, namely local or state officials, who see practical benefits in endorsing homeland cause and little reason to worry about how their positions might be perceived in Washington. New York's political figures, for example, long attended to the importance of the 'three I's' of Italy, Israel, and Ireland; conditioned by that background, they did not require prompts from social scientists to extend their political antennae to Santo Domingo or Port-au-Prince, once the city's demography changed (Foner 2000). While local leaders react to constituent preferences, federalism facilitates that response: having no responsibility for issues of war and peace, local politicians can engage in the symbolic politics of ethnicity. Not only are local politicians largely immune from pressure to conform to expectations for national unity, the politics of national disunity can produce its own benefits. In championing the cause of Cubans eager for a more hardline approach than adopted by the Clinton administration, or the very different cause of Salvadorans opposed to US military aid to El Salvador during the 1980s, local political leaders rallied their electoral base—whether directly, as in the case of Miami, or indirectly, as in Los Angeles, where the deeds done in the name of the undocumented and voteless Salvadorans nonetheless galvanized other Latino voters.

Motivating all forms of interest group politics, fragmentation also encourages ethnic lobbying. Politicians accustomed to accommodating the needs of special interests find nothing strange in similar sounding requests from immigrant or ethnic activists, as long as the frame is appropriate, as with appeals to furthering democracy, self-determination, or human rights. The same political structure that creates opportunities for the most narrow of economic interest groups also generates a political space that favors the pursuit of homeland causes. Because the US Congress is 'a decentralized entity, with many points at which legislation can be either initiated or blocked' (Smith, 2000: 88), groups with a small, even insignificant, electoral base can gain influence and effect alliances that produce tangible results.

Although American Jews represent the classic case, Armenians provide the better example. The group is small, with just over 400,000 people of Armenian ancestry living in the USA as of 2012. Not only is Armenia poor, lacking in resources, it is in conflict with both a more powerful neighbor, namely Turkey, and its resource-rich neighbor, Azerbaijan, alliances with which would seem to be in the interest of the USA. The diaspora, more impelled by ideological than material considerations than is the Armenian government, and mainly made up of persons originated in Turkey and the Middle East, but not the *current* Republic of Armenia, is also less inclined toward accommodation with the country's neighbors than is Armenia itself.

Nonetheless, US policy has proved remarkably responsive to the highly organized, though fractured, Armenian lobby (Paul 2000; Gregg 2002; King and Pomper 2004). Thus, a special addendum to the 1992 Freedom Support Act, designed to give aid to the former Soviet Republics, specifically prohibited Azerbaijan from receiving US aid as long as Azeri hostilities toward Armenians continued. Despite opposition from oil companies and pro-Israel lobbies, this policy remained in place until the events of September 11 made national security concerns the foremost foreign policy influence. While the US government now provides aid to Azerbaijan, the continuing material and military support it furnishes Armenia is far more generous.

The explanation for this seemingly surprising and paradoxical history stems from the factors already mentioned. Though few, the Armenians are concentrated in places which by accident turned out to be linked to politicians of primordial importance. One such concentration is located in the Massachusetts congressional district from which John F. Kennedy began his political career more than 65 years ago, only to be succeeded by Tip O'Neill, later Speaker of the House. Furthermore, the same institutional structures that facilitate the mobilization of all sorts of interests within Congress serve to advance the agenda of the Armenian diaspora activists as well. Following the good example of the automobile industry, diaspora activists have convinced Congressmen to form an Armenian caucus, which currently groups roughly 20 per cent of the House.

While the political structure facilitates the mobilization of homeland loyalties, the political culture encourages and legitimates it—even though pursuing that strategy runs the risks noted above. Identification with the place left behind has a strong reactive component: experiencing rejection, or sometimes just incomplete acceptance, rallying to the cause of the homeland, or simply commemorating the accomplishments of its culture and people, can compensate for the hurts endured in one's new land. Moreover, connecting with the homeland generates pride, thereby helps gain membership in the club. For that reason, as Ezra Mendelsohn has pointed out, throughout American history 'support for nationalism abroad and integration at home was not contradictory, but in fact perceived to be complementary (Mendelsohn 1993: 133)'.

Indeed, homeland ties have such extraordinary appeal that they have been created when none previously existed. One example is the 'black Zionism' of the nationalist, back-to-Africa movement spearheaded by Jamaican immigrant Marcus Garvey in the 1920s, who praised Zionism as well as Irish nationalism, upholding both as models for African Americans to follow (Lewis 1984). Though Garveyism is long dead, the idea of a connection to a homeland, no matter how far removed, continues to resonate among African Americans, as demonstrated by the efflorescence of Afro-centrism and the lobbying efforts on behalf of a variety of African issues by African-American organizations (Shain 1999). Similarly, long dormant homeland connections can be reactivated by homeland events and crises, even among the long-settled populations. Thus, in the late 1960s, when Northern Ireland's 'troubles' began, Irish Americans of many stripes—whether militant nationalists, prominent mainstream politicians, like the late Senator Edward Kennedy, or corporate leaders of Irish descent—turned their antennae back to the Emerald Isle, seeking to support the Irish Republicans and thereby generating friction in the US ties with its 'special ally', the UK (Hanagan 1999).

Not only are homeland loyalties repeatedly triggered, recurrence provides legitimacy for each successive group of homeland-oriented immigrants. In the early 1900s, Zionists and Polish nationalists pointed out that they were acting no differently than other, much longer established American ethnic groups (Mendelsohn 1993). Similar claims are heard today. In particular, today's homeland-oriented migrant activists—as well as their homeland supporters—are eager to learn from and imitate that most successful of diasporas, namely, American Jews. Writing about Dominicans, Levitt (2001: 134) reports that 'Several leaders mentioned the example of the Jewish American community as the model they wished to emulate. Just as the Jewish American lobby favorably influenced U.S.

policies toward Israel, so the Dominican migrant community could generate support for favorable sugar quotas, terms of trade, and development assistance.' Hindu nationalists trying to build a social movement in the USA had the same idea: indeed, the publisher of the newspaper *India Abroad* hired the director of a Jewish-American organization to head the India Abroad Center for Political Awareness in 1993 (Mathew and Prashad 2000: 520). According to Kurian, community leaders consistently maintain that:

> . . . Hindu Americans should emulate the model of Jewish Americans. As a highly successful group that is integrated into mainstream American society . . . while maintaining its religious and cultural distinctness, close community ties, and connections with the home country, American Jews are viewed as a group that has been able to 'fit in' *while remaining different.* This is the route to success that Hindu Americans also want to adopt in their quest to stake a position in American society (Kurien 2004: 372; emphasis added).

One could cite countless other examples—for instance, Jean-Baptiste Aristide, leading a popular revolt against Haiti's dictatorship in the early 1990s, 'called on Haitians in the North American diaspora to emulate American Jews', by supporting the homeland through pilgrimages and donations (Richman 1992: 196). Still one wonders whether every group can exercise the same influence enjoyed by the Jews. For the moment, however, that is the path that many take, in which case it makes sense to get lessons from the experts, as did Mexico's Institute for Mexicans Abroad when it engaged the American-Jewish Committee and the Jewish Anti-Defamation League to conduct training sessions with key members of the Mexican diaspora (Bayes and Gonzalez 2012).

3. Conclusion

The risk of the game is that of losing equilibrium, of pushing homeland mobilization so far that it awakens the suspicions of the Americans who are normally ready to accept long-distance loyalties, as long as the American flag is not abandoned. But experience, both historical and contemporary, indicates that the Americans should not be worried. Over the long term, those mobilizations produce effects that the emigrants could not have imagined at the beginning: agitation in favor of home country interests serves as an apprenticeship in US politics, attaching the cross-state activities to the American political system, giving them the contacts and competencies needed for successful engagement.

The history of the leftwing activists from El Salvador, who began arriving in the US in the late 1970s, as part of the refugee exodus from that country, provides an ideal case in point. From their arrival, these activists began reactivating their movement, simultaneously following two paths. One led them to their compatriots, an easy connection to establish as immigrant social networks funneled the refugees in the same neighborhoods where prior migrants—whose emigration had been impelled by economic reasons—had installed themselves. Here, the activists mounted demonstrations in front of the Salvadoran consulate and marches in the nearby streets and parks, while also concentrating on collecting monies for comrades fighting in El Salvador. Simultaneously, the activists tried to develop alliances with sympathetic Americans, some of whom shared the activists' specific political

convictions, many more of whom opposed US aid to El Salvador (Gosse 1996; Hamilton and Chinchilla 2001; Baker-Cristales 2004; Coutin 2007; Perla 2008).

Then, the activists had no thought of settling permanently in the USA; rather, residence on US soil was temporary, to end once the left had won the war. After a decade of bloody fighting, the civil war stopped in 1992, when both sides realized that neither could gain victory. Although a few activists returned to El Salvador, most realized that they had actually put down roots in a new home, an awareness fully shared by their less politicized compatriots.

Thus, although the activists retained linkages to relatives, friends, and comrades still at home, priorities quickly changed: from then on the needs of the *immigrants* dominated the agenda. Instead of mobilizing compatriots in order to transform the country of *emigration*, the organizations that had been established for that very goal now decided to provide services that would allow *immigrants* to settle down securely in the USA and move ahead in their new home. Although sudden, this reorientation was the inevitable consequence of everything that the activists had previously done. As Miller (2011) argues, in attaching themselves to Americans ready to act in solidarity with the Salvadoran left and the Salvadoran refugees, the activists developed connections with leaders who could help them pursue the strategy involved in this second phase: namely, integration. In much the same fashion, their earlier efforts, undertaken with the goal of influencing American politics toward the country of *emigration*, turned out to serve other goals—namely, that of providing an apprenticeship in the politics of the country of *immigration*. Without the contacts and skills acquired in the efforts to change El Salvador, the activists could never have pursued their new strategy of changing the conditions affecting Salvadorans in the USA, since that pursuit required help from government and from foundations. Each step along that road reinforced the orientation toward *immigrant* politics, deepening the skills needed to maneuver in the US political world and strengthening and multiplying contacts with US political figures.

Of course, the pursuit of *immigrant* integration does not imply abandonment of the country of *emigration*. Activists heading Salvadoran immigrant organizations retained close ties to kin and friends at home; to some extent, they remain engaged in home country politics. Both activists and rank and file immigrants also devoted time, energy, and resources to associations, oriented toward the place of origin. But these continuing connections notwithstanding, the course has been set, as illustrated by this concluding, personal anecdote.

In spring 2006, vast immigrant rights demonstrations swept the USA. Wanting to participate in one of these rallies, I went to the headquarters of a Salvadoran immigrant organization, at the invitation of one of my students, who had long been an important activist in the group. Arriving in front of their building, I saw several dozen people congregating on the sidewalk, all wearing the organization's T-shirts and each one equipped with an American flag. Knowing that the American flag was more likely to be flown by those who find themselves on the right, not the left, I asked myself whether I had not somehow gotten the address wrong. But after checking, I realized that the address was indeed right. Rather, what had changed in this organization located in the heart of Salvadoran Los Angeles were its goals and demands: although proud of their origins, these immigrants wanted to become Americans. The demand is completely reasonable; more difficult to

understand is the reaction of the Americans, who hesitate to accept a population that has put down very deep roots and will never go home. It is here that we find the heart of the phenomenon of interest: though international migration is a normal feature of the social world, it collides with states and people who insist on cutting themselves off from the foreign world around them, as well as the foreigners who are no longer willing to stay behind borders. That collision activates the emigrants turned immigrants, orienting them to the polity of the state of residence and its salient political divides.

Acknowledgements

Note

1. Tabulated from the Pilot National Asian American Political Survey Lien, Pei-te. Pilot National Asian American Political Survey (PNAAPS), 2000–2001. ICPSR03832-v1. Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social [distributor], 2004. doi:10.3886/ICPSR03832.v1

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