



Global Campus  
of Human Rights

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Volume 3 No 1  
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# Global Campus Human Rights Journal



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# Global Campus Human Rights Journal

Volume 3 No 1 2019

**Global Campus of Human Rights  
2019**

The *Global Campus Human Rights Journal* (GCHRJ) is a peer-reviewed scholarly journal, published under the auspices of the Global Campus of Human Rights as an open-access on-line journal.

**Aim:** The *Global Campus Human Rights Journal* aims to serve as a forum for rigorous scholarly analysis, critical commentaries, and reports on recent developments pertaining to human rights and democratisation globally, particularly by adopting multi- and inter-disciplinary perspectives, and using comparative approaches. It also aims to serve as a forum for fostering interdisciplinary dialogue and collaboration between stakeholders, including academics, activists in human rights and democratisation, NGOs and civil society.

**Publication details:** It is published under the auspices of the Global Campus of Regional Human Rights Masters (see <http://www.eiuc.org/education/global-campus-regional-masters.html>), and is supported financially by the European Union Commission. It appears twice annually, in July and in December.

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## The Global Campus of Human Rights

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The Global Campus of Human Rights is a unique network of one hundred participating universities around the world, seeking to advance human rights and democracy through regional and global cooperation for education and research. This global network is promoted through seven Regional Programmes:

- **European Master's in Human Rights and Democratisation (EMA)** <https://www.eiuc.org/education/ema.html>
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These Regional Programmes offer specialised post-graduate education and training in human rights and democracy from a regional perspective, with an interdisciplinary content as well as a multiplicity of research, publications, public events and outreach activities. The Global Campus integrates the educational activities of the Regional Programmes through the exchange of lecturers, researchers and students; the joint planning of curricula for attended and online courses; the promotion of global research projects and dissemination activities; the professional development of graduates through internships in inter-governmental organisations; and the strong focus of networking through the Global Campus Alumni Association, as well as support to the alumni associations of the Regional Programmes.

The wealth of human resources connected by global and regional alliances fostered by the Global Campus and its Regional Programmes, offer remarkable tools and opportunities to promote human rights and democracy worldwide.

The Global Campus of Human Rights develops its activities thanks to the significant support and co-funding of the European Union – through the *European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights 2014-2020* and its partner universities around the world. The Global Campus equally boasts many joint institutional agreements and strategic alliances with inter-governmental, governmental and non-governmental organisations at the local, national and international level.



**Global Campus  
of Human Rights**

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## Editorial

This is the fourth issue of the *Global Campus Human Rights Journal*. It consists of two parts. The first part provides a special focus on the phenomenon of 'the diaspora', and investigates its role and influence in various parts of the globe. While this phenomenon can be viewed from many vantage points, the prism through which the authors here view the issue is that of democracy building. This part comprises seven papers, presented at an event of the Global Campus of Human Rights at which students, lecturers and other scholars interrogated the topic 'The influence of diaspora on democracy-building processes: Behavioural diversity'. This event, the 'Global Classroom', took place at Yerevan State University, Yerevan, Armenia, from 23 to 27 April 2018. The Global Classroom gathers students and experts from the seven Master's programmes in human rights and democratisation, presented under a funding agreement with the European Union.

Dr Arusyak Aleksanyan of Yerevan State University, who co-edits this issue of the *Journal*, has largely taken responsibility for the review and editing of the articles in the special issue section.

The second part of this issue of the *Journal* contains a book review, drawing attention to the life and inestimable role of Raoul Wallenberg in saving lives during World War II.

**Editors**



# Editorial: The influence of diasporas on democracy-building processes: Behavioural diversity

*Arusyak Aleksanyan\**

## 1 Introduction

Diaspora and democracy: These two phenomena have always aroused the interest of scholars. Indeed, in academic literature various significant research contributions and discussions are focused separately on either diaspora issues or on democracy. This special focus is an attempt to combine these two categories by exploring democratisation through the prism of diasporas' activities and the other way round – to reveal the influence of democratic changes on diaspora issues. Something that has been less explored in literature is the role of the diaspora in democracy-building processes. In this context, articles presented in this issue of the *Global Campus Human Rights Journal* are unique and in various ways fill this gap in the academic literature.

The aim of the research in this special thematic focus is to explore the role and influences that diasporas can have on democracy-building processes by identifying diverse behavioural approaches applied in various regions. In this framework, the main research questions highlighted in the articles are the following: What are the factors and spheres of diasporas' influence on the democracy-building processes in the states and regions under study? Which frameworks are the main driving forces for diaspora policies? What challenges are there in state-diaspora cooperation on both ends? Are there any geopolitical and socio-economic constraints in terms of cooperation? To address these questions, case studies, comparative analyses, desktop research, interviews, fieldwork, observation, policy analyses, discourse analyses and regression analyses are the research methods revealing and explaining the complex configurations of state-diaspora cooperation for fostering democracy in the states and regions under study.

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## 2 Diaspora: Definition and concept

The rapid growth in migration streams and the institutionalisation of immigrant communities have changed our perception of the role and potential of diasporas. These processes are increasingly deepening, taking on new forms and intensifying the influence of diasporas in various spheres of social life which, in turn, have led to the discussions about 'diaspora' as a scientific category.

A significant contribution to the theoretical understanding of the phenomenon of diaspora was made by Armstrong, Brubaker, Clifford, Cohen, Connor, Dabag, Esman, Safran, Sheffer and others.

According to Brubaker (2005), the term 'diaspora' has recently become a definition that is not simply related to the concept of homeland and the model of Jewish dispersal, which has traditionally been associated with banishment and oppression. In his book *Diasporas*, Dufoix (2008) also states that at present this term carries a positive meaning and mainly refers to the population abroad, that has a symbolic link to the homeland. Thus, in contrast to most early studies of the twentieth century, when the term 'diaspora' mainly concerned the description of the Jewish case and other 'classical' diasporas such as the Greek and Armenian, this definition has increasingly undergone a series of transformations in meaning. One of the broadest definitions is suggested by Connor (1986: 16), who presents diasporas as 'a segment of a people living outside the homeland'. Sheffer (1986: 3; 2003: 9) defines diasporas as 'ethnic minority groups of migrant origins residing and acting in host countries but maintaining strong sentimental and material links with their countries of origin – their homelands'.

These discussions that have developed in the academic community indicate the polysemy of this phenomenon and the great differences in its understanding. Indeed, much research and many studies are devoted to the concept of diaspora, but there still is no unified and comprehensive definition and it is interpreted in different ways by scholars. This inevitability of various approaches to the understanding of this complex phenomenon is due to the fact that 'diaspora' is the subject of study in various disciplines. For this reason, an interdisciplinary approach was adopted for all articles in this special thematic issue, which implies a holistic and multidimensional framework of analysis which is not limited to explaining the phenomenon from the premise of a single discipline. In this context, the authors were free in the formulation of a diaspora definition when studying their cases.

## 3 Diaspora, democracy and behavioural diversity: Regional approaches

The formation processes of diasporas have become so widespread that it is impossible to find a country in the world that does not have an agenda on diaspora issues in its state policy. Indeed, much has been said and written about the significant role and influence of diasporas. However, is this influence positive or negative? Does it foster democratic processes or does it have a reverse impact on it? Remiddi and others discuss these approaches in their article by examining various cases in the region of

South East Europe. In particular, the article explores the dichotomies of diasporas' activities in three main spheres, namely, the political, economic and cultural. It further explores the discourse over its potential controversiality.

Another interesting approach can be found in the European article. Amorim and others study the issues of diasporas in European Union (EU) member states both as sending and receiving sides and also consider these issues at institutional and local levels. From this point of view, the case of EU is unique, since EU member states for a long time have faced the challenge arising from both emigration and immigration movements. By studying the cases of France and Bulgaria, the article reveals the relationship between EU member states and diasporas at local levels. In addition to studying diaspora issues at the institutional level, the article analyses the connections between the EU and diasporas within its policy framework. What should be emphasised is the authors' analysis of diasporas' link to democracy through the parameters of citizenship, voting, education and culture.

Through an expert interview and regression analysis, Aleksanyan and others reveal the factors and fields of diasporas' influence on democratisation in the six Eastern Partnership countries. The article explores the second research question based on the theoretical framework provided by Ragazzi (2014). In particular, three explanatory frameworks are applied to understand and explain diaspora policy and diaspora-homeland relations in the given cases. The authors conclude that diasporas from these countries impact differently on democracy. The further analysis shows that the democracy level, in turn, largely determines diaspora policies.

Sarsar and others explore the role of the Arab diasporas on democratisation processes in home countries before and after the 2011 uprisings. An important approach in this article is the fact that the authors not only discuss the opportunities of diasporas' participation in political life, but also reveal the limitations of and obstacles encountered in such participation. Direct and indirect forms of political participation, such as lobbying, campaigning online from abroad, voting in parliamentary elections, national dialogue initiatives, and so forth, are the tools for revealing the diasporas' role in democratisation processes and the main changes in the field, initiated since the Arab Spring.

Gumedze's article is devoted to the role of the African diaspora in democracy-building processes. The majority of academic literature on diaspora concentrates on diasporas' issues in their homelands, while the approach of this article is to discuss the influence of the diasporas on democracy in their countries of residence – in the African diaspora. The author concludes:

Racism, racial discrimination, Afrophobia, xenophobia and related intolerance remain antitheses for the full participation of people of African descent in democracy-building processes ... People of African descent remain invisible 'visible' minority groups whose destiny is always determined without their involvement.

Studying the diasporas' engagement issues in the cases of The Gambia, Ethiopia and Zimbabwe, Tutlam and others come to the conclusion that governments are more open to interaction with diasporas in spheres of

development and investment, and are less interested in allowing political participation. The article reveals circumstances affecting relations between diasporas and African governments and provides recommendations for effective cooperation in the development of democracy.

In her article, Iskandaryan presents the situation of the Armenian community in Iran both before the Islamic Revolution and after the Revolution and subsequent waves of emigration. The author categorises the range of problems that Armenians encountered in Iran after the Revolution by applying the approach of holding interviews with and circulating questionnaires among approximately 100 respondents in order to understand the main reasons for emigration. Today, the size of the Armenian community in Iran is shrinking, but they retain all the rights and privileges granted them by the state.

#### 4 Conclusion

The diasporas across the world are different and unique. They affect democratisation differently and in this process demonstrate behavioural diversity. This uniqueness of the diasporas determines the diversity of the authors' approaches when studying the diasporas.

Some of the points and findings can be highlighted in this special focus. Citizenship, voting, human rights, civil society, democratic governance, policy making, and so forth, are the spheres in which diasporas engaged as part of democracy-building processes. In turn, the level of democracy determines diasporas' activities both in their homeland and in their country of residence: The higher this level, the more intensive the activities of diasporas in various spheres of social life. Another finding that should be highlighted is the dichotomy between the positive and negative influence of diasporas. We used to perceive diasporas only as positive actors, but for a better understanding of the diaspora phenomenon, the antagonistic approaches should also be taken into account. It should also be noted that diasporas may affect not only democratisation in the homeland but also that in their countries of residence.

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# The influence of diaspora on democracy-building processes

*Manfred Nowak\**

## 1 Introduction

The Global Campus of Human Rights is a worldwide network of universities that jointly organise seven regional Master's programmes in Human Rights and Democracy. These Master's programmes are coordinated by universities in Buenos Aires (for Latin America and the Caribbean); Pretoria (for Africa); Bangkok (for Asia and the Pacific); Beirut (for the Arab world); Sarajevo (for South-East Europe); and Yerevan (for the Caucasus region). The organisational hub of the Global Campus is the European Inter-University Centre for Human Rights and Democratisation (EIUC), which coordinates the European Master's programme and which is based in an old monastery on the Lido of Venice. Whenever I travel from the Lido to Venice, I pass by the Island San Lazzaro Degli Armeni in the middle of the Venetian Lagoon, which has for some 300 years been occupied by Mechitarists, an Armenian Catholic congregation. The monastery has at its disposal a large collection of books, journals, artifacts, and the third-largest collection of Armenian manuscripts. Over the centuries numerous artists, writers and political and religious leaders have visited the island, the most notable being Lord Byron.

Although I have been based as Secretary-General of EIUC in Venice since 2016, I never visited San Lazzaro. However, when I left Venice two days ago to travel to Yerevan in order to discuss in our Global Classroom the influence of diaspora on democracy-building processes, I decided to soon pay a visit to this Venetian island, which is one of the best-known historic sites of the Armenian diaspora.

The word 'diaspora' originates from the Greek language and refers to dispersed peoples. For many centuries, the term diaspora was associated primarily with the Jewish diaspora, a people dispersed all over the world. The first Jewish ghetto was established in Venice, which underlines the

\* Secretary-General, European Inter-University Centre for Human and Rights and Democratisation. Opening address, Global Classroom, Yerevan State University, 23 April 2018.

special relationship between the phenomenon of diaspora and the seat of the Global Campus. Today, diaspora is usually defined as a community of people that live outside their shared country of origin or ancestry and who maintain active connections with it. There are different reasons why people live in diaspora, ranging from poverty and voluntary migration for economic, political, cultural, professional, social or other reasons, to armed conflicts, persecution, forced displacement, ethnic cleansing and even genocide. People living in diaspora are migrants, refugees, displaced people as well as their descendants. They may still have kept citizenship of their countries of origin or may have acquired another citizenship, thereby losing their original citizenship. However, they need to maintain active economic, social, cultural, political or personal connections with their countries of origin in order to be considered diaspora. Most importantly, they must identify with their country of origin. This subjective element often makes it difficult to provide precise statistical data about the diaspora of a given country.

At a time when global migration is on the increase and the number of refugees is higher than in any other year since the end of World War II, the number of people living in diaspora is also sharply on the rise. Over the last 45 years the total number of people living outside their country of origin has tripled from 76 million to roughly 232 million, which constitutes more than 3 per cent of the current world population. The phenomenon of diaspora, therefore, is closely linked to the concepts of transnationalism and transmigration.

The roughly 20 monks living on the Venetian island of San Lazzaro Degli Armeni only constitute a small part of the Armenian diaspora. Altogether, there are some 11 million Armenians, but only roughly 3 million actually live in the Republic of Armenia. This means that more than two-thirds of Armenians live in diaspora: more than one million in Russia, and large numbers in the United States (mainly in California), France, Iran, Georgia, Lebanon and Argentina. The reasons for the Armenian diaspora are manifold, but the genocide against the Armenians of 1915 definitely plays a crucial role. Tomorrow, on 24 April, we will visit the Genocide Memorial and Museum and thereby join the Armenian people in commemorating the first genocide of the twentieth century, which still plays a decisive role in the political lives and culture of Armenians.

In terms of size and diaspora, Armenia may be compared to two other countries, which host regional Master's programmes of the Global Campus of Human Rights. Bosnia and Herzegovina has some 3,5 million inhabitants and a diaspora of roughly 2 million people. Most of them live in the United States, in Germany, Sweden, Switzerland, Austria, Australia and New Zealand. While many Bosnians emigrated for economic reasons, the most important single event causing displacement were the armed conflicts, ethnic cleansing operations and the genocide against Bosnian Muslims between 1992 and 1995.

With some 4 million inhabitants, Lebanon is only slightly bigger than Armenia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, the Lebanese diaspora is estimated to range between 8 and 16 million people (two to four times the number of Lebanese living in their own country), of which up to 7 million live in Brazil. Even the current President of Brazil, Michel Temer, is the son of Lebanese immigrants. Other larger Lebanese communities live in

Argentina, Colombia, the United States, Venezuela, Australia, Mexico and Canada. While historically trade-related, the recent increase in the Lebanese diaspora has been caused primarily by the Lebanese civil war between 1975 and 1990. The majority of the Lebanese diaspora are Christians, others are Muslims, Druze and Jewish.

While these three countries clearly stand out in terms of scale of their respective diaspora communities, other countries hosting regional Master's programmes of the Global Campus can also reference – although much smaller in numbers – diasporas. Thailand has a population of more than 50 million and a diaspora of 2,7 million, 1,5 million of which are in Vietnam and the rest based in the United States, South Korea, Australia, Taiwan and Germany. South Africa with 55 million inhabitants has only 600 000 people living in diaspora (200 000 of whom are based in the United Kingdom, 145 000 in Australia, and the rest in the United States, New Zealand and Canada).

The economic impact of the diaspora has been well researched. In the three countries of the Global Campus with a comparatively large diaspora, the remittances by members of the diaspora to their relatives at home constitute a substantial proportion of the national economy: in Armenia and Bosnia and Herzegovina roughly 15 per cent of the countries' economies, in Lebanon as high as 18 per cent.

Less well researched is the influence of the diaspora on democracy-building processes. Many questions arise in this regard. Do members of the diaspora enjoy the right to vote and to be elected in their countries of origin? Do they have a right to form and join political parties? In most countries the right to vote is restricted to citizens, which means that members of the diaspora who have lost their citizenship also lost their right to vote. Even with respect to members of the diaspora who remain citizens, many countries restrict the right to vote to citizens who actually reside in their countries, thus excluding the diaspora. On the other hand, out-of-country voting is on the increase. Is it at all desirable if the diaspora is actively involved in the democratic decision making of their countries of origin? One may argue that countries with a large diaspora may have gone through difficult political transition processes in which they might be in need of democratic assistance by their compatriots abroad. However, diaspora also often are inherently conservative in their outlook and may have a restrictive influence on the political process. If the diaspora significantly contributes to the economic growth, wealth and stability of their countries of origin, then the diaspora might also wish to contribute to the political and democratic development and good governance. This may entail active participation in elections, in political parties, in the media and in government. Does this mean that election campaigning should reach out to the diaspora communities, as we have recently witnessed with respect to Turkish politicians campaigning in Germany and Austria? Let us imagine the huge Italian diaspora in the United States, in Argentina and other parts of the world getting actively involved in Italian politics. What are the limits of legitimate interests of the diaspora to get involved in democratic decision-making processes in their home country? Is it a good idea to set up a special Ministry dealing with the diaspora, as in Armenia? What is the proper function of such a ministry of diaspora?

These and many related questions will be discussed by students and professors of the Global Classroom during the coming days at Yerevan



State University. The Global Campus of Human Rights is a network of some 100 universities in all world regions. But even in the seven countries, where the coordinating universities of our Master's programmes are located, I identified three countries with a comparatively large diaspora population, which in Armenia and Lebanon even outnumber the inhabitants at home. Other countries in which our partner universities coordinate Master's programmes, such as Argentina, are classical immigration countries that host large diaspora populations from other countries, including from Armenia and Lebanon.

The fact that this Global Classroom takes place in Yerevan at a time when the Armenian people are in the middle of democratic changes which might soon result in something like a 'velvet revolution', makes this Global Classroom particularly interesting. To what extent is the widespread Armenian diaspora actively involved in these democratic movements and demonstrations, which we have all witnessed this morning and during previous days? If so, does it have a positive influence on the building of democracy in this tiny post-Soviet republic? Or should the influence of the diaspora be qualified as illegitimate interference in the domestic affairs of the Armenian people actually living in their home country?

No other academic network of students and professors would be better qualified to discuss these important and highly topical questions than the Global Classroom, one of the regular joint activities of our Global Campus of Human Rights. I very much look forward to our discussions in the coming days, which will address these issues from a global and comparative perspective.

# The ambivalent role of diaspora engagement for the homeland in the Balkans

Adriano Remiddi,\* Mubina Alibašić,\*\* Sabiha Kapetanović,\*\*\* Emilija Davidović\*\*\*\* and Edima Zejnilović\*\*\*\*\*

**Abstract:** *Diasporas have become significant role players in the democratic lives of their countries of origin. Such dynamic is particularly evident in the South East European context, a region characterised in contemporary history by massive movement, displacement and outflow of populations. This article aims at exploring the dichotomies that the diasporas' political, economic and cultural involvement in the homeland present, including the discourse over its positive and negative features, hence tackling the issue of its potential to give rise to controversy. In fact, in addition to exerting a pro-active role for the democratic and socio-economic development of their home countries, diaspora communities may also embrace antagonistic approaches, countering certain transformation processes, state-building agendas or favouring one elite rule over another. Through a set of cases from the South East European context, the research addresses the regional, therefore global, question of how diaspora groups transnationally participate in the life of their home states, what their objectives are and how they may hinder democratisation processes, acting as incubators or accelerators of – potentially violent – change.*

**Key words:** *diaspora; South East Europe; Balkans; democratisation*

## 1 Introduction

The word 'diaspora' has Greek roots: It derives from the verb *spiro* (to sow or to scatter) and the preposition *dia* (over). However, the origins of its contemporary use lie in the Jewish tradition and the idea of the 'Babylonian exile' connoted by expulsion, persecution and enslavement and implying the prospect of return. By definition, those in exile are to cultivate their native traditions and culture in preparation for a return to

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the 'promised land' (Hockenos 2003: 8). However, the Babylonian model presents the narrowest possible identity for diaspora groups. More recently a lively discourse that has arisen around the notion of global diaspora, the Babylonian 'victim typology', is deemed inadequate to make sense of today's heterogeneous transnational communities as it overlooks other kinds of migrations, such as economic emigration or voluntary expatriation. In this sense, diasporas if so strictly defined appear rather anachronistic in the age of globalisation (Hockenos 2003: 9). In this sense, a contemporary generic definition of diaspora should comprise all those members of a common ethnic-national group living outside the borders of their native home territory, hence primarily highlighting the two key criteria of 'ethnicity' and 'foreign residency'. Such a flexible definition includes immigrant families and their subsequent generations, as eventually a diaspora is made up of individuals who define themselves as such and are accepted as its members.

Global interest in the role of diasporas increased in the 1990s, when global remittances surpassed the total of the Western investments for aid cooperation. Consequently, with the increase of interest in the engagement of emigrants in the affairs of the homeland, diaspora studies became a growing field of research in Western academia in Europe, incorporating the disciplines of political science and international relations in a field that was predominantly centred on sociology and anthropology, but which suddenly became relevant for issues of securitisation and democratisation. In a somewhat domino effect, the rising relevance of diaspora as a political actor called for the rapid creation of manifold specialised institutions that were gathered for the first time by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) at the Diaspora Ministerial Conference in 2013, counting 548 high-level governmental representatives from over 140 states (Gamlen et al 2013: 4).

Today we know that diasporas' attitude towards the homeland differs greatly due to its transnational exposure: Diaspora communities can be either politically re-socialised in the host country, hence disengaging from the homeland's affairs, or conversely acquire a complementary dual loyalty, developing forms of long-distance nationalism. For those diaspora communities that wish to remain committed, political, economic and cultural participation are the main realms of their potential engagement, and can be used to pursue often contrasting and antithetical aims (Chaudhary 2016: 6).

By answering the question of how and why diasporas transnationally engage for the homeland through scholarly works on diaspora mobilisation (Hockenos 2003; Koinova 2017), post-territorial citizenship (Ragazzi & Balalovska 2011; Štiks 2010) and culture and transnationalism (Chih-Yun 2010; Kilduff & Corley 1999), but also resorting on primary data and examples from the South East European (SEE) region, the article questions the frequent attitude to glorify or deify the diaspora and its potential, shedding light on marginal aspects or even threats of diaspora engagement for or against the ongoing post-conflict normalisation and democratisation process in the Balkans.

## 2 Historical background

Due to the turbulent history of the region, migration has been a long-known phenomenon in South East Europe. The territories that formed part of Yugoslavia<sup>1</sup> have been countries of emigration, both permanent and temporary. A variety of reasons influenced people to leave their homeland, most notably political, social and economic factors. The countries of destination also varied and reflected the differences in motivation. In order to understand the behaviour of today's diasporas and current migration trends, an analysis of previous migration waves needs to be presented.

Four waves of Yugoslav citizens' migration can be outlined until the current twenty-first century migration flow. The earliest wave preceded the formation of the Kingdom of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs (Kingdom of SHS), which since its beginning can be traced back to the Balkan wars (1912-1913), but which has affected the territory that later became part of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. The main characteristic of this period is that migrants were mostly unskilled and uneducated people whose destination targets were mostly overseas (Kosinski 1978: 315). The emigration continued until World War II, but due to a high return, it did not contribute much to the creation of solid diaspora communities. During the war, more than half a million people were affected by forced resettlements. Citizens of the Socialist Federal Yugoslavia moved to different republics within it, while ethnic minorities such as Jews and Germans were later on expelled from the territory (Bade et al 2011: 172). The second wave is marked by emigrations driven by political-ideological motivations after the end of World War II, when two particularly significant groups fled the newly-established Communist regime: on the one hand, the group of political opponents, including Serbian royalists and individuals who did not support the regime, and, on the other, members of the fascist Ustasha regime who by and large found a safe place in Latin America (Kosinski 1978: 318). At the same time war-torn European countries needed a labour force in order to regenerate their economies, which posed a great opportunity for Yugoslav emigration. This influenced the third period, which started in the 1960s when the borders opened for temporary workers (Kosinski 1978: 322)<sup>2</sup> and the opportunity was given to economic migrants. According to the census of 1971, just under 600 000 Yugoslav immigrants were situated in Western Europe, while estimates from 1973 exceed one million (Baučić 1973). Many of these guest workers never returned to their homelands and today constitute a significant part of the Yugoslav diaspora. The main destination was Germany, where around 1,7 million South-Eastern Europeans were registered in 1999: 737 204 from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia; 213 945 Croats; 167 690 from Bosnia-Herzegovina; and 49 420 from the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (Bade 2011: 175). The fourth period followed the wars of the 1990s. The

1 The term 'Yugoslavia' (land of the Southern Slavs) here connotes the territories that are part of the Kingdom of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs (1918), later renamed the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (1929); its successor the Social Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (1945-1992) and the states that followed its breakup: Slovenia; Croatia; Bosnia and Herzegovina; the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (1991); the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro (1992); Montenegro (2006); Serbia (2016); and Kosovo – under UNSC Resolution 1244/99 (2008).

2 The Yugoslav government took this step influenced by rising unemployment rates, caused by the 1965 economic reforms.

number of refugees in this phase was even larger than previously, as over 4 million people overall were affected. Most people migrated and were forced to move to other federated republics of Yugoslavia and temporarily even further, when the main destination countries included Germany, Austria, Switzerland, but also Italy and Greece (Bonifazi 2006: 16).

The new century brought about changes to the migration processes, especially in the early years when forces generating international migrations experienced a peak, and human mobility became an essential aspect of global integration, making this century the 'age of mobility' (Castels 2014). South East European countries continued showing high emigration levels, despite them having been low during the early years (Ljuboja 2015). These states continue to suffer from the consequences of war and the challenging post-socialist economic environment (Thrändhardt (undated)). The main 'drivers' of the emigration process in these countries are social and economic inequalities, and labour demand and demographic changes, which encourage people to leave their homes in search of a better life (Castles 2013). The case of Serbia is illustrative, as 30 000 citizens decide to leave their homes annually. Serbs, Kosovars and Bosnians are mostly based in Central Europe, specifically Switzerland, Austria and Germany, whereas Albanians are mostly concentrated in neighbouring countries, such as Italy and Greece (Thrändhardt (undated)). The socio-economic effects of migration are most visible in Albania, as one in four Albanians is a migrant. On the one hand, Albania has one of the highest demographic growths in Europe. On the other, the structure of the population is changing, as emigration is gender and age selective, leading to a reduction in the number employable young people (Krasteva 2013). Among the countries of the region, apart from Albania, citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina are the most mobile, as they form the largest immigration group in Slovenia, the third largest in Austria and the fifth largest in Sweden. The number of emigrants reached a remarkable number of 1 350 000 people, which is also characterised by the tendency of a terminal decrease of returns, as 'sustainable return' in terms of the right housing, health care and employment is not guaranteed (Krasteva 2013). However, interest in migration towards the neighbouring Balkan countries escalated by more than six times. The attractiveness of the region could be seen as a symbolic reconciliation, but also as an increase in the opportunities for employment that it provides (Krasteva 2013). Nevertheless, the profile of the migrants in this region is very important, since they are young people with at least secondary education, motivated by unemployment and inadequate housing to look for better opportunities abroad. These people often are single, which grants them bigger mobility in search for better work and the possibility of a lengthier, perhaps permanent, stay in the destination country (Ljuboja 2015). The greatest loss of economic migration today is the creation of brain drain, as the countries in the region could take advantage of their own young academic cadre as their own intellectual potential, which is nowadays respected only if it creates more employment opportunities (Ljuboja 2015).

In terms of future projections, despite the need for cheap labour, the demand in Western Europe is gradually decreasing mainly because of the economic crisis and its consequences, while more than 20 years after the violent dissolution of Yugoslavia, the SEE region continues to experience significant social, economic and political tensions (Williams 2017) that

might reasonably act as continuous drawing factors for, especially, youth emigration (Ljuboja 2015).

### 3 Economic impact

After the wars of the 1990s, the economic development of the region has relied largely on international assistance and financial remittances by the diasporas. Nowadays, the remittances come mostly from the newly-emerged diasporas, that is, from people who migrated due to better economic opportunities abroad. The remittances by individuals living abroad play a substantial role in the economic development of the region, mainly because the wages in developed economies are nearly five times larger than those in developing SEE countries (Topxhiu & Krasniqi 2017). Remittances sent to the region generally reduce the level of poverty, leading to human capital accumulation, entrepreneurship, enhanced small business investments, better access to information and technologies, and improving access to formal financial sector services. The scale of remittances sent is more than three times larger than the official development assistance. The 2016 World Bank Report states that three Western Balkan countries, Albania (12,12 per cent), Bosnia and Herzegovina (12,87 per cent) and Kosovo (16,68 per cent), are among the top ten countries receiving the largest remittances in comparison to the percentage of their gross domestic product (GDP) (Topxhiu & Krasniqi 2017: 30):

**Table 1: Size of diaspora remittances to home country**

YEAR	Albania	Kosovo	Macedonia	Montenegro	Serbia	Bosnia and Herzegovina
2005	15,81	18,77	3,62	5,6	8,8	18,15
2006	15,12	18,9	3,88	5,9	8,7	16,7
2007	13,72	19,01	4,14	5,35	9,34	17,03
2008	14,49	18,66	4,1	6,6	7,2	14,23
2009	14,26	18,66	4,05	7,31	10,91	12,08
2010	13,34	17,27	4,12	8,1	10,43	10,62
2011	12,04	14,93	4,14	8,85	8,52	10,51
2012	11,53	14,61	4,04	9,73	8,71	10,73
2013	8,56	14,97	3,48	9,48	8,84	10,79
2014	8,64	14,87	3,23	9,4	8,36	11,38
2015	9,19	15,08	3,05	9,48	9,07	11,14
2016	8,81	14,82	2,67	9,49	8,47	11,06
COUNTRY AVERAGE (2005-2016)	12,12	16,68	3,71	7,94	8,91	12,87

Post-conflict economies often are disadvantageous and commonly characterised by weak regulations and property rights. This often hinders the economic engagement of the diasporas due to the lack of support or the frequent barriers to potential investments in their home country (Williams 2017). Therefore, a large amount of often informal remittances are directed to household consumption (Williams 2017). In Bosnia and Herzegovina (BIH) the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) creates and sponsors projects that seek to engage the diaspora based on support of investment, and matching grant schemes, usually funded by Western European countries (Williams 2017). This mostly occurs in light of a lack of active national policies with regard to diasporas, which are traditionally hard to achieve in highly-divided societies such as Bosnia and Herzegovina (Williams 2017). Publically available data on remittances in Bosnia and Herzegovina are based on official remittance flows, whereas unofficial remittances are not recorded (Efendic, Babic & Rebmann 2014: 15). Despite all these difficulties, diaspora is an important financial anchor for this country, which in 2012 received €1,75 billion in remittances (Efendic, Babic & Rebmann 2014: 15). According to a 2007 IOM report, the rate remittance inflow to Bosnia and Herzegovina grew the most over the period 1995-2004 in comparison to all other countries, which made BIH the sixth largest receiver of remittances, as a percentage of a country's GDP, in the world (Efendic, Babic & Rebmann 2014: 16). Considering that BIH has had a continuously high current account deficit, remittances are needed for sustainability, stability and functioning of the domestic economy, both current and potential (Efendic, Babic & Rebmann 2014: 16).

Compared to BIH, approximately 22 per cent of the population of Serbia is living abroad, and as at 2010 almost 22 per cent of these people sent more than €6 000 in remittances to their families, while 40 per cent spent between €600 and €6 000 (Baird & Klekowski von Koppenfels 2010: 38). The remittances are used mainly for consumption and daily needs such as clothing, utilities, rent, food, as well as housing improvements, but not for debt payments, education or investment. More than one-quarter of the remittances is used for savings for a house in the country or in the region, or buying land or travelling (Baird & Klekowski von Koppenfels 2010: 38). In addition, Serbia is also working on brain circulation and brain gain, mainly through intermediary organisations, with cultural and educational policies that promote international cultural dialogue and academic exchange (Stopic 2013).

As for Albania, remittances and remittance services are among the most important financial aspects of the diaspora. Financial incomes have had relevant political and economic effects in Albania. Because of the growing emigration, the 1997 remittance inflow induced a rapid recovery of the economy. Remittances usually enter through means other than banks, with diasporas directly bringing in money or sending it through relatives and friends. This is considered to stem from psychological, practical and historical reasons (Minister of State on Diaspora). The common behaviour of using remittances for personal consumption has a positive effect of reducing poverty and enhancing economic growth (Topxhiu & Krasniqi 2017: 32). World Bank research has revealed that financial remittances have an impact in reducing 3,5 per cent of the overall number of poor people in the SEE region (Topxhiu & Krasniqi 2017: 33).

Nevertheless, the phenomenon also has a negative impact. Tempestuous post-conflict and transitional dynamics present in South East Europe have led to a rapid increase in organised crime. Smuggling routes that were initially used as escape routes for migrants and to supply of arms to militant groups became the main avenues for trafficking illegal goods (Natarajan 2011) as the emergence of drug trafficking through Western Europe (Arsovska & Basha 2012). Alongside drug smuggling, financial remittances from diasporas were used for illegal migrations, the smuggling of alcohol and cigarettes, as well as to encourage activities such as plundering and looting and 'taxation of humanitarian assistance' (Siani-Davis 2003). In 2008 the US State Department estimated that drug-related crimes in BiH accounted for almost 2 per cent of the country's economy, accounting for more than 500 million BAM a year in earnings (CIN 2008). Furthermore, reports on drug smuggling reveal that not only do the diasporas provide financial support for this type of crime, but it also creates a safe haven for criminals, by allowing them to pursue business through their companies: Some cases illustrate Balkan-based transport companies being involved in drug trafficking from the region to Western Europe, especially Scandinavian countries (CIN 2008). In 2002 the OSCE estimated that around 200 000 women in the Balkans were victims of a smuggling network that extends to the EU (Institute for War and Peace Reporting). Trafficking in women was conducted mostly through Bulgaria and Romania, where many were sold to people from Serbia, Bosnia, Kosovo and Montenegro and subsequently transported to Italy and other EU countries.

Despite the negative aspects and the creation of a culture of dependency (Topxhiu & Krasniqi 2017: 34), remittance inflow has a great potential to improve the overall livelihood of recipients and create opportunities for investment. Nevertheless, the question of other positive aspects such as creditworthiness of recipients, economic stability, and designing policies that could adequately facilitate a productive use of remittances, still remains a challenge.

#### 4 Political impact

Over the last decades, diaspora communities have shown an increasing interest in the origin countries' affairs and their growing influence in the political arena has been evident. Reasons for this could be found in the globalisation process which has provided cheaper air travel and communication, while the internet has also allowed people to easily stay in touch, becoming a prime instrument for mobilisation. A product of these processes is a 'digital diaspora' that supports common national interests and identity.<sup>3</sup> Ragazzi argues that the re-configuration of the nation as global, combined with the inclusion of diasporas by the origin country, marks the emergence of post-territorial citizenship (Ragazzi & Balalovska 2011: 5-7). A conception of national belonging transcends the territory of the nation state, and citizenship is distributed within the diaspora, while governmental agencies and ministries make it possible for diasporas to be included in the voting system. In this way the diasporas can constitute a

3 All countries of the former Yugoslavia have official and semi-official websites for bringing together diasporas and providing them with relevant information.



vital political asset and the state's regulation of voting from abroad can tell a lot about how possible diaspora engagement is perceived.

A number of former Yugoslav countries have accepted an ethnically exclusive citizenship policy and then secured seats in parliament for diaspora representatives. By doing so, these countries displayed their belief in the positive impact of diasporas on their origin country. Prime examples are Macedonia and Croatia, which demonstrate that motives for including diasporas can also be found in the fact that diaspora members are staunch supporters of the ruling parties. In Croatia all diaspora seats used to go to the Croatian Democratic Union (CDU),<sup>4</sup> with major political consequences, as in 2000, when it prevented the opposition party from achieving an absolute majority<sup>5</sup> in parliament, or in 2007, when it provided the CDU with the necessary seats to form a government.

Contrary to these citizenship policies aimed at attracting all members of certain ethnic groups, Montenegro has since early 2008 forbidden dual citizenship. Given the size of the Serb minority (28 per cent according to the 2011 census), as well as many Montenegrins living in Serbia (Stiks 2010: 31), such a move of the Montenegrin government indicates the fear of Serbian influence on its politics, and hence diasporas' kinship is regarded as negative.<sup>6</sup> Another example of imposing boundaries on diasporas' engagement is evident in the regulation established by Serbia. Despite the fact that Serbia has facilitated a citizenship policy enabling ethnic Serbs and those considering Serbia as their nation to acquire citizenship, it has not facilitated the voting process to its diasporas, or secured seats for diasporas in parliament. This practice has been striking considering the size of the Serbian diaspora, but is explainable if diaspora preferences are analysed: While their engagement in the 1990s supported Milošević's illiberal and ultranationalist agenda,<sup>7</sup> in the last presidential elections the majority of diaspora votes went to the main opposition candidate with a more liberal political programme (Prelec 2017).

Diasporas can engage in politics in diverse manners, not only through voting and representation in parliament, but also by lobbying in host countries, giving financial support to political parties and civil society organisations, but also by sponsoring actors involved in violent conflicts in the homeland. Examples such as that of Kosovo demonstrate how different diaspora groups can lobby and act either in favour of nation building, considering their engagement for the creation of an independent successor state of Yugoslavia, but also be actively involved in fostering nation-wrecking processes.

There were two instances when diaspora engagement was the strongest, namely, during the Kosovo war (1998-1999) and during the period preceding the 2008 Declaration of Independence. Before the 1999 North

4 The party established by the country's first President and promoter of this policy, Franjo Tuđman.

5 The SDP-HSLS coalition obtained 47%, while it would have won 50,7% of the votes without diaspora seats; see Ragazzi & Balalovska 2011: 11.

6 It is seen as negative since diasporas would include a large number of Serbs.

7 Liberal civil society groups gained little or no support from the diasporas, and not even the Otpor (Resistance) movement, that later brought democratic change in Serbia, succeeded in changing this. Chicago-based diasporas, for example, supported both radical Milosevic opponents – Vuk Drašković and Vojislav Šešelj; see Koinova 2009: 55-56.

Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) intervention, diaspora activism was very strong outside the Kosovo territory, and even included informal taxation for the support of parallel institutions. Support for the radical Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) forces also escalated from 1997 to 1999 and was shown through financing and fund-raising activities (Koinova 2017a: 9), part of which was used for arms collection, aided by arms smuggling, thus violating the international arms embargo on Yugoslavia. Some countries, such as Switzerland, even froze certain bank accounts connected to individuals linked to the supply of arms to the KLA (Transnational Communities Programme). In addition, KLA was recruiting Kosovo Albanians from the diasporas to fight for their homeland (Naegele 1999).

For a long time the Albanian diasporas lobbied for Kosovo independence, investing the greatest efforts in the area of lobbying. Accordingly, two inter-related circumstances should be taken into consideration: the geographic position or location of diaspora entrepreneurs, and the strategic importance of the issue for global powers. If diaspora entrepreneurs are physically located in Europe, close to Brussels, it could be expected that they would be well positioned to lobby European institutions. However, this is not necessarily the case. Albanian diasporas in European countries – even if more geographically contiguous – remained embedded in contexts less empowering for the pursuit of statehood (Koinova 2017b). Furthermore, Albanian diasporas based in Europe invested more efforts and resources in lobbying outside the borders of Europe, particularly in the USA. An example was Swiss billionaire Behgjet Pacolli who contributed to Kosovo's independence by lobbying in Washington, where he established a group of professional lobbyists. By contrast, minimal lobbying activities followed in the UK (Koinova 2017b). One possible reason could be that EU states at the time were more conservative regarding Kosovo independence due to the lack of unanimous consensus on the issue of official recognition of the country. Even in the UK, highly supportive of NATO's intervention, interest in the Kosovo issue waned (Koinova 2017b). By contrast, the USA-based Albanian diaspora remained relatively strong and consistent in the pursuit of independence for Kosovo. The New York-based Albanian American Civil League (AACL) and Washington-based National Albanian American Council (NAAC) (Koinova 2017b) are among the important organisations that played a significant role in lobbying for Kosovo's independence throughout the 2000s.

Today the Kosovo-Albanian diaspora remains connected to the political parties that have a strong, non-negotiable standpoint on the status of Kosovo, among them *Lëvizja për Bashkim* (Movement for the Unification) which favours the unification of all Albanians into one state in its political programme. Although it has not gained significant popular support, its leader was appointed the Minister for Diaspora, interpreting the feelings of a large part of the expatriates (Yabanici 2015: 26).

On the one hand, it can be argued that Kosovo Albanian diasporas' actions played a constructive role in interpreting and supporting the claims for self-determination of Kosovo Albanians in the homeland. On the other hand, it bears mention that they dangerously partook in and enhanced controversial extra-territorial claims and plans for the creation of a 'great Albania' that with their implications hinder the ongoing internal

state democratisation, as well as regional stabilisation, with great threats to the peace and security of the whole region.

## 5 Cultural impact

One of the main ingredients that influence diaspora communities is culture. Culture itself is a complex combination of knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and 'any other capabilities and habits acquired by a man as a member of society' (Gsir & Mescoli 2015: 8). The meaning of culture, *cultura animi* (the cultivation of the soul), as authored by German philosophers and linguists, connected the concept to both the individual and the collective (the nation) (Gsir & Mescoli 2015: 8). Cultural identity was further defined as a shared culture, but not a fixed one, rather changeable under the influence of continuous transformations (Gsir & Mescoli 2015: 9).

Diaspora communities are a good example of culture transformation. Once they leave their country of origin, they on the one hand take with them an image of their own culture and embody it while, on the other hand, they are influenced by a host culture, resulting in a 'transnational flow of cultural capital'<sup>8</sup> (Chih-Yun 2010: 34), which then leads to the creation of a hybrid culture.<sup>9</sup> In this way, due to the struggle of living between different cultures, diaspora members might tend to be more self-conscious of their culture of origin (Kilduff & Corley 1999: 2). This type of behaviour may have positive and negative, progressive or reactionary outcomes in terms of engagement with their home countries. In this part we focus on language and education resorting to examples from the post-Yugoslav space.

### 5.1 Language and diaspora

Language is used as a means of attaining nationhood in post-Yugoslav countries. Since the nineteenth century the predominant language of the region was the so-called 'Serbo-Croatian', which entailed several dialects and the use of two alphabets, namely, Latin and Cyrillic. The other official languages of Socialist Yugoslavia were Slovenian and Macedonian. Following the dissolution of the former Yugoslavia, the need to assert language as a national identifier became ever more pronounced. Thus, today one can speak of Bosniak, Croatian, Montenegrin and Serbian languages; despite the fact that Bosniaks, Croats, Montenegrins and Serbs understand each other quite well.

The recognition of the new official languages was used to achieve political independence. Languages remain the source of conflict in disputed areas where different ethnic communities live together, such as the case of Croatian Krajina where there is an ongoing dispute over the

8 The cultural capital of diasporas is related to the globalisation of ideas, knowledge and, to some extent, social models. While establishing themselves in a country, transnational societies bring with them a rich cultural background which, while representing the visible features of their identity, also provides them with the means for their integration and acceptance into their new society (International Organization for Migration 2013: 3).

9 These hybrid cultures are not necessarily superior cultures, but simply differ from the existing cultures from which they borrow (Kilduff & Corley 1999: 6).

usage of both scripts, Cyrillic and Latin. Another example is Bosnia and Herzegovina, where all administrative and legislative matters have to be 'translated' into three official languages: Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian.<sup>10</sup> Despite evidence by many linguists that the differences between these languages are actually dialect differences,<sup>11</sup> the leadership of post-Yugoslav states disregards these facts and promotes the specificities of their national language. These varieties transcend to diaspora members, who are defined on the basis of their new nation states and ethnicity, rather than on the basis of the country they or their families left. Even before the dissolution of Yugoslavia, diaspora communities have often differentiated themselves and attempted to counter loss of identity, hybridisation and even forms of cultural repression. For instance, starting in the 1980s, Croat communities in Germany established national cultural communities and schools with their own language and curriculum (Milardović 1992: 172). These Schools of Supplementary Learning in Diaspora are still active against cultural assimilation of diaspora communities, due to the influence of both host countries and successor states. They are supported by central governments that give financial aid to schools to co-finance the projects that politically aim at hardening ethno-national cultural divisions.

Some diaspora groups reject these manipulations. The Declaration on Common Language<sup>12</sup> constitutes a bright outcome of the engagement of people with such credentials who embraced the idea to problematise the existence of four 'political' languages in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Croatia and Serbia.<sup>13</sup> Those that signed the Declaration declared:

Polycentric standardisation<sup>14</sup> is the democratic form of standardisation closest to the actual use of language;

Does not bring into question the individual right to express affiliation to different peoples, regions or states;

Each state, nation, ethno-national or regional community can freely and independently codify its variant of common language;

The fact that this is a common polycentric standard language leaves the user the ability to name it as s/he wishes.<sup>15</sup>

10 All cigarette packets destined for the Bosnian market must contain anti-smoking warnings written in all three languages, which leads to a situation where the message 'Smoking kills' is written the same in all languages, the only difference being that the Serbian warning is written in the Cyrillic script (Milekic 2017).

11 Their main argument is the understanding of all new languages by speakers of other language groups, including Serbian, Croatian, Bosnian and Montenegrin. See The Economist 'Is Serbo-Croatian a language?' (The Economist 2017).

12 Croatian academic and linguist Snježana Kordić's seminal work *Language and nationalism* (Durieux 2010) was the foundation for the text of the Declaration. The Declaration was drafted after four regional conferences, held in Podgorica, Split, Sarajevo and Belgrade during 2016.

13 Jezici i Nacionalizmi, <http://jezicinacionalizmi.com/o-projektu/>.

14 Polycentric language is a language with several interacting codified standard versions (as German, English, Arabic, French, Portuguese, Spanish, etc are defined).

15 *Deklaracija o zajedničkom jeziku, Jezici i nacionalizmi*, <http://jezicinacionalizmi.com/deklaracija/>.

By declaring this, they appealed for

[a]bolishing all forms of language segregation and language discrimination in educational and public institutions;

[a]voiding unnecessary, meaningless and expensive 'translation' in courts and administrative practices as well as public information media;

[t]he freedom of 'mixing', mutual openness, and the permeation of different forms and expressions of common language to the universal benefit of all its speakers.<sup>16</sup>

Since 2016 there have been more than 9 000 signatories. Diasporas/émigrés lent their strong support: 1 339 out of 9 093 signatories (14,7 per cent) are expatriate intellectuals who joined the cause from all over the world, boosting its legitimacy and outreach.<sup>17</sup> The future of the Declaration remains uncertain. However, the constant increase in the number of diaspora signatories is perceived as a positive outcome of the Declaration.

## 5.2 Education: Bosnia and Herzegovina

Snježana Kordić: In such a system the purpose of the education is purely political – to subjugate the will of the young people to the will of the nation. The schools are the tools of the state political agenda, just like the army, police or the budget (Ilic 2011).

Politics of language are closely connected to education politics and policies. The region's notorious example of this interrelation is Bosnia and Herzegovina. It has a deeply-divided educational system along ethnic lines, on the basis of the claim that there are three different languages in the country (Serbian, Croatian and Bosnian). Divisions persist in spite of the common standpoint of prominent linguists that the language essentially is one and the same. Today, there are three different curricula in use where the main subjects of distinction are the 'national group of subjects', namely, language, history, geography and religious education (Trkulja 2017: 7) as they are regarded as essential for preserving the national identities of the three constituent peoples in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The consequence of this are essentially mono-ethnic schools around the country and there are the so-called 'two schools under one roof' where pupils of different ethnic backgrounds are physically separated with different school entrances and are very often prohibited to mix (Trkulja 2017: 7). These schools were established in 1999 with the initial aim of assisting refugees' return by showing them that their rights and liberties will be fully protected, providing the education for children based on their national identities. One of the main obstacles in resolving this problem is the political structure of Bosnia and Herzegovina, where policy powers are delegated to different levels and where each level has its own policies and ways of implementing educational curricula, and the ethno-nationalist politics using education as a tool for nation building. These schools assisted in the development of segregation and division; where education serves as a separation instead of a uniting tool (Karabegović 2017: 6).

<sup>16</sup> As above.

<sup>17</sup> For the list of signatories, see <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/u/1/d/1XVG V5Z306SeDFzpdpUHHfK-voAFdaakS48LqXfGozA/pubhtml>.

With these discriminatory and segregationist policies, what is the role of the diaspora? With its capacities and experiences, the diaspora sees education as a field where it can contribute, be it through organisations that bring children from different ethnic groups together or by reinforcing ongoing divisions. The case of the city of Mostar is a good example of the diaspora's transnational influence to bring Bosniak and Croatian children together under one roof. A few diaspora organisations are operating in that direction.

One organisation is Our Kids,<sup>18</sup> a non-profit diaspora organisation with a focus on orphans and youths with disabilities, regardless of their ethnic background. The board of directors consists of individuals declaring themselves citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina, rather than placing themselves in one of the national groups (Karabegović 2017: 8). Another example is *Våra Bar* (our kids), a sister organisation of Our Kids, which is based in Stockholm, Sweden. Their focus group are young adults with special needs, who are provided with necessary services and employment opportunities, as well as a space in Mostar where they can meet (Karabegović 2017: 9). The third example is the Association of Bosnians in France,<sup>19</sup> which is in direct communication with particular schools, trying to mitigate the divided education system and to bring children together. One of their contributions was to furnish a computer laboratory, meant to be used by all students, without any divisions (Karabegović 2017: 10). With this they managed to bring all students together in one place, and schools into dialogue on how should they operate in these circumstances.

These kind of actions by diasporas are aimed against the ethnic subdivision of communities. However, along with examples of diasporas encouraging reconciliation, some diaspora groups reinforce ongoing divisions. An example is the case of Konjevic Polje.<sup>20</sup> Due to assimilation policies established in the Republika Srpska, the Bosniak minority group of Konjevic Polje did not have an opportunity to study their national group of subjects (Trkulja 2017: 10). Parents of those children decided to speak out and ask for education reforms. This battle was strongly supported by the diasporas. Diasporas from Switzerland and France raised awareness of the situation by taking diverse initiatives.

The Swiss Bosnian Solidarité Bosnie organisation made pressure on the Office of the High Representative in BiH throughout this period, as well as publicising their cause in a variety of media outlets. A letter and petition

- 18 The Our Kids Foundation was founded in London in 2008 and incorporated as a charity in 2009 by individuals living in the UK. Their goal was initially localised towards an orphanage in Mostar, Egiptasko Selo. Over the years, they have raised enough funds to rebuild the orphanage, employ a qualified team of professionals to create a safe environment for the children, ensure a quality level of care, and help orphans and children with special needs develop career readiness skills in trades such as hairdressing and IT (Karabegović 2017: 9).
- 19 Established in 1991, the Association has approximately 500 members, most of whom arrived as guest workers in France before the war of 1992-1995. Others arrived as refugees towards the beginning of the war. Nearly all have since become French citizens. Since the war their mission has shifted from humanitarian work to education (Karabegović 2017: 12).
- 20 Konjević Polje, a village near Srebrenica, is located in the Republika Srpska entity. The RS curriculum is skewed towards a view of history favouring Serb historical narratives about the war, negating genocide in Srebrenica, and with politicised language instruction, leaving minorities in these schools with little possibility to engage in meaningful ways.

were written with recommendations echoing the Konjević Polje parents' request to the Office of the High Representative, Ministry of Education, and other prominent governmental bodies (Karabegović 2017: 11).

Diaspora members also showed their support by coming to Sarajevo and taking part in organised protests. Apart from similar actions, diasporas from France organised a public discussion about the issue on the outskirts of Paris (Karabegović 2017: 11). After a long struggle the new, private school for Bosniak children teaching the Bosniak national curriculum was built (Karabegović 2017: 12). Konjevic Polje is an example of reinforcing the division: It is true that these people needed help and protection of their rights, but the diasporas could have advocated (as in other circumstances) community rights while considering the need for reconciliation and avoiding the outcome of dividing children without granting them an opportunity to interact.

These examples drive one to the conclusion that the diaspora has its potentials and limitations, a will to help the reconciliation process and a will to support segregation. It is willing to work and help local communities although it cannot change the political narratives present in the region. This brings us back to the Declaration on the Common Language because, as Snježana Kordić states, common language could be used as a tool for abolition of the system of 'two schools under one roof', since these schools are based on different national curricula (Milekić 2017).

## 6 Conclusion

The engagement of diasporas is an increasingly important issue at the global level that will inevitably acquire more and more relevance, as international migrations already constitute a pillar of contemporary politics and societies. Diaspora communities realise various socio-economic and political programmes through lobbying, remittances or personal participation, all of which have the potential of consistently impacting countries' decision-making processes.

In economic terms we discussed how the diasporas can have a significant impact on the relative wealth because of their remittances, topping 16,68 per cent of the GDP in the case of Kosovo. However, this practice, often informal, can be abused, fostering a system of social dependency, but also facilitating criminal enterprises and networks such as florid drugs trafficking in the region. Politically speaking, emigrants abroad play an increasingly active role, to the extent that many states have begun to recognise them as legitimate constituencies, granting them active and passive political rights. In this way the diaspora can activate itself to support parties or civil society organisations both financially and by lobbying for their causes. At the same time, we saw how it can successfully engage in antagonistic actions, for instance by contesting sovereignty, especially in weak states such as Kosovo. At the cultural level, the diaspora often disposes of tools for creating an impact on local communities back home and, in the case of highly-divided societies as in the Balkan region, where they can act to counter dynamics of discrimination and divisions, as seen in the example of the 1339 expatriated scholars and intellectuals who advocate the end of language segregation in the educational sector by supporting the Declaration of Common Language, while at the same time

it can also engage toward weakening ongoing reconciliation efforts, as in the case of Konjevic Polje.

The article shed light on the ambivalent role of diasporas, warning about the inherent controversy in the ongoing discussion in the policy area of the diasporas' engagement. The authors aimed at highlighting the potential threats coming from the diaspora's mobilisation for the homeland and the need for avoiding unnecessary reifications of this increasingly crucial social actor, while inviting a critical analysis of its dual impact. In fact, with its complex fluidity, diasporas' positionality is continuously exposed to historical developments, to shifts in narratives, to dynamics of boundary maintenance or erosion, with the result that its legitimacy and accountability might constantly vary. This is certainly not a claim for any form of diasporophobia: The purpose is rather to stress that, even with regard to its great potential for enhancing democracy, the diasporas' engagement always has to be carefully scrutinised, especially by the emerging non-state actors dealing with it.

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# Africa's democratic deficit: The role of the diaspora in bridging the gap between citizens and government

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**Abstract:** Africa's diaspora continues to play an indispensable role in shaping the continent's social and political landscape. This impact has been felt since the struggle against colonialism to the contemporary challenges of democratisation. Recent developments in technology and the impact of globalisation have further amplified the power of the diasporas to influence events in their home countries. The trend in response by African governments has ranged from exclusion and isolation to cooperation and collaboration. Many African governments have been open to engagement with diasporas to facilitate financial investments, but have been more circumspect in allowing political participation by the diasporas. Can the diasporas play a positive role in facilitating and aiding Africa's new impetus towards democratisation or will diasporas further fragment some of their already fragile home countries? This article discusses democracy in sub-Saharan Africa against the backdrop of the peoples' lived realities, and explores the role of the diasporas in addressing challenges peculiar to the African context. It is argued that diasporas play a significant role in forging the development of democracy in their homelands. The article engages four claims to interrogate this position. First, it contextualises democracy as a reality in Africa. Second, it closely considers the participation by the diasporas. The third aspect involves an evaluation of Africa's legal and political frameworks, followed by the proposal for a collaborative approach towards the diasporas, to improve democratisation in Africa. As such, the research question that the article seeks to answer is whether the diasporas play a role in forging the development of democracy in Africa. With the aid of a desktop approach that draws on experiences from selected countries, the article maps the way forward in fostering a better

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*relationship between the diasporas and African governments to improve democratic governance, advocating a collaborative approach that is also cognisant of the important role of civil society in reaching the grassroots. The key findings indicate that while governments are open to engagement with the diasporas in the areas of development and investment, this is not the same in the case of political participation. This is based on the disregard of the minority view as used in the Western model of elective democracy. It is hoped that if consensus is used where the majority considers the positions of the minority, the issue of political participation would be greatly harnessed beyond the current trend.*

**Key words:** democratisation; African diaspora; civil society; democratic deficit

## 1 Introduction

Prior to the 1960s the term 'diaspora' has had different meanings over different periods. The concept of diaspora can also be understood in light of its constitutive criterion. First, it is widely understood as dispersion. The term was predominantly used to describe the Jewish people and their dispersion (Akyeampong 2000). Central to this criterion is the need for dispersion in space where the persons cross countries, from one border to another, based on the use of force or any other reason that may turn out to be traumatic (Brubaker 2005). It should be noted, however, that this criterion is not universally accepted. This is because dispersion may take place without crossing borders. Some scholars suggest that ethnic groups in a given territory may use divisions of their frontiers as a form of diversion (Brubaker 2005).

In the second place, diaspora may also refer to homeland orientation. This context refers to an instance where a person or a group of people orient the place of habitation to become their actual or perceived place (Brubaker 2005). As such, one uses six steps to engage the use of homeland orientation (Safran 1991). These include maintaining a collective memory or myth about the homeland; maintaining the hope to return to the homeland; and a commitment to restore peace and prosperity in the homeland. Another step is a continuation of the relations with the homeland in a manner that shapes one's identity and solidarity (Safran 1991).

In the third place, diaspora is also contextualised as boundary maintenance, where a society in the diaspora preserves its distinct identity from the homeland (Brubaker 2005). The efficacy of this contextualisation is the need for it to develop organically over a period. In light of the three contexts of the diaspora, it is thus imperative to identify the criteria presented in a given setting in addition to a definition attached. In this regard, the reference to African diaspora as a group of people only emerged during the 1950s and 1960s (Zezeza 2005). During that period Pan-Africanism was the dominant discourse in Africa. The African diasporas have since played important roles in influencing Africa's socio-political conditions. The diasporas currently have an even greater platform for influence because of the interconnectedness of the world due to advances in technology and the effects of globalisation. Financially, the diasporas play a crucial role on the continent: African diasporas remitted US \$35,2 billion to the continent in 2015 (World Bank 2016).

It is challenging to define and confine the term 'African diaspora', but this exercise is important in providing a frame of reference for further meaningful discussion. At the continental level, the African Union (AU) defines the diasporas as persons of African origin who are living outside of the continent and 'who are willing to contribute to the development of the continent and the building of the African Union' (African Union 2017). This formulation asks more questions than it resolves: Who is of African origin and is a person considered not to be an African diaspora if he or she is unwilling to aid in Africa's development? The mitigating factor may be that the second aspect of the formulation is indicative of the AU's desire for collaboration rather than a constitutive part of the definition.

In defining the term 'diaspora', Palmer identifies certain elements that are common to the diasporas such as a shared sense of identity and an emotional attachment to their homelands. This sense of identity is transboundary and unites the diasporas, irrespective of where each individual or group may reside (Palmer 2008). This collective identity is what Zeleza refers to as 'group consciousness' (Zeleza 2005). This identity should not, however, be homogenised. One must be cognisant of the multiplicity of identities within the diaspora itself pronounced along national, cultural or religious lines, among other factors. Safran identifies six elements to describe the concept of the diaspora, which also has commonalities with Palmer's two basic elements (Safran 1991).<sup>1</sup>

Migration is at the root of the formation of diaspora communities even though it does not necessarily follow that every migration stream leads to the formation of diaspora communities. There are numerous and complex reasons for the dispersal of the African people that can be traced all the way back to the transatlantic slave trade (Gilroy 1993). However, the focus of the article will be on the modern dimensions of this phenomenon. Zeleza describes the contemporary African diaspora as those formed since the late twentieth century, mainly driven by the colonial period and its fall-outs (Zeleza 2005).<sup>2</sup> Recently, the humanitarian situation of African irregular migrants making their way across the Mediterranean Sea to

- 1 Safran describes six elements that can be used to define the diaspora, namely, (i) they, or their ancestors, have been dispersed from a specific original 'centre' to two or more 'peripheral', or foreign, regions; (ii) they retain a collective memory, vision, or myth about their original homeland – its physical location, history, and achievements; (iii) they believe that they are not – and perhaps cannot be – fully accepted by their host society and therefore feel partly alienated and insulated from it; (iv) they regard their ancestral homeland as their true, ideal home and as the place to which they or their descendants would (or should) eventually return; (v) they believe that they should, collectively, be committed to the maintenance or restoration of their original homeland and to its safety and prosperity; and (vi) they continue to relate, personally or vicariously, to that homeland in one way or another, and their ethno-communal consciousness and solidarity are importantly defined by the existence of such a relationship. Safran does not consider these six elements to be all cumulative; suffice it that a community shares several of these elements.
- 2 Zeleza distinguishes the contemporary African diaspora from the 'historic diasporas' which were formed prior to the establishment of African colonial states. He also identifies three waves within the contemporary diaspora: the diaspora of colonisation; the diaspora of decolonisation; and the diaspora of structural adjustments formed after the 1980s. In the first, he includes Africans that left to study or work in Europe or in the colonial power; the second are Africans that dispersed as a result of the struggle during decolonisation; and the third are Africans that left in the 1980s as a result of the socio-political and economic repercussions of the structural adjustment programmes instituted by African governments.

Europe represents the latest stream of African migration (UNHCR 2018).<sup>3</sup> In the article, the diaspora refers to persons not only outside of the African continent but also persons within the African continent but outside of their countries of origin.

The article adopts a desktop research methodology, whereby an analysis of existing literature on the various aspects of the argument is evaluated before informed positions are taken. To this end, the sources examined include journal articles, articles by experts, and statistical data. Thus, further, the researchers adopt purposive sampling as a mode of identifying the relevant literature, and data to use (Neuman 2011). This methodology does not engage a comparative analysis *per se*, but rather draws on experiences from selected countries to direct the argument and claims. The selected countries are The Gambia, Ethiopia and Zimbabwe. The justifications for the choice of these countries are the 'waves of democratisation' in the countries at the time; and the need to cover the different African sub-regions – east, west and south (researchers working on democratisation in the Middle East addressed North Africa).

The first part of the article explores Africa's relationship with democracy, discussing why democracy has by and large failed to take off on the continent. Second, the article looks into the diaspora's political engagement with their home countries, and to what extent this engagement has been effective. Conversely, the third part examines the reaction of African governments through the legal and political sphere to the engagement of the diaspora. Finally, the article discusses some factors that can help in building a relationship between the diasporas and their respective governments in order to better serve the democratic needs of the people.

## 2 Democracy in Africa – Our lived reality

Democracy, a word originating from the Greek word *demos*, is characterised as a form of government in which supreme power is vested in the people (Strum 2017). American President Abraham Lincoln identified democracy as a government 'of the people, by the people, and for the people' (Gettysburg 1863). In a democratic system, the people through the contestation of free and fair elections elect representatives. This further implies that elected officials are held accountable through the ballot box.

Generally, democracy is characterised by the joint participation of the members of society in selecting, usually through elections, one whom they wish to have as their representative in government. A state will therefore be deemed democratic if it displays the two elements of participation of the people as well as a decentralisation of the powers of the government, such that no one will have the opportunity to abuse power (Osabu-Kle 2000). Diamond (2004) defines democracy as characterised by four key elements: 'a political system for choosing and replacing the government through free and fair elections; the active participation of the people, as citizens, in politics and civic life; protection of the human rights of all

3 According to data from the UNHCR, as at 23 March 2018, 13 289 African migrants have arrived on European shores; 486 migrants have been declared dead or missing.

citizens; a rule of law, in which the laws and procedures apply equally to all citizens’.

The experience of democracy has been varied in many countries across the continent. While for some it has redeemed them from dictatorship, for others it has perpetuated dictatorial institutions and rule.

Contrary to the hope of democracy after the period of decolonisation, and its current transformative influence on other continents (Latin America and Asia), in Africa democracy has by and large failed to deliver its promises. For Africa, attempts at democracy and/or democratisation have been characterised by, amongst others, the rigging of elections, amendments to constitutions to enable ruling parties to remain in power indefinitely, and electoral violence (Adejumobi 2000). The use of violence to silence people from exercising their fundamental freedoms such as the right to free expression (Southern African Litigation Centre 2015) and association (International Service for Human Rights 2016) has become frequent occurrences across the continent.

A rhetoric question that demands answers is why democratisation has been failing. It is imperative to indicate why the reference is to ‘democratisation’ rather than ‘democracy’. Democratisation is largely referred to as the process through which a country transitions to the application of democracy. In light of the fact that the transition takes time, countries that are making steady progress may still fail to achieve democracy in the strict sense.

For instance, democracies are acknowledged as governments for the people, by the people (Canovan 2006). As such, the provision of its services requires that the governments are fully accountable to the masses, with regard to the provision of health services, education and infrastructure; being accountable to the masses; allowing the other arms of the government to function independently; and ensuring that there is a growth of institutions that are pro-democratic (Norris 1999). The failure of the government to be accountable presents a danger to the democratisation process.

The failure to engage the masses in the democratisation process may lead to a partial, low-intensity or a pseudo-democracy where the citizens of a given country are disengaged from the activities concerning those who exercise real power, despite the existence of a system that ensures the use of the ballot (Ndegwa 2001). To this end, while a constitution exists, its relevance is limited to the framework it offers for the election of a government in disregard of the attendant abuse of the rights of the masses. The key issue that arises out of this assertion is how it is related to persons or a society in the diaspora. It is argued that although the diaspora community may not have a role in making a government accountable through the vote, the degree of impunity that a government grants its own citizens is but a fraction of the nature of treatment that the diaspora community may receive. It is for this reason that Norglo, Goris, Lie & Ong’ayo (2016) advocate the need to engage the diaspora community in policy making and other matters of state. On this basis, it is prudent to interrogate whether the nature of a government where a diaspora community is situated is instructive in determining the latter’s attitude, and the subsequent development of the concepts of homeland orientation and boundary development.



Other issues have to be raised with regard to the discussion regarding the adoption of Western liberal democracy. It is perceived that the original wholesale adoption of Western liberal democracy does not take into cognisance issues particular to the African setting. Issues such as the poverty levels in the region (Joseph 1999) have been exacerbated by the mismanagement of resources by corrupt and self-serving 'democratic' governments (Callaghy 1985). As argued by Sen, democratic governance can lead to the end of poverty especially when people propose their priorities and elect leaders who work toward the achievement of social, economic and political transformation programmes (Sen 1999). In this regard, Africans have attempted to change the democratic regimes that are failing to deliver results.

Wiredu observed that the problem indeed began with the model of democracy, characterised by a multiparty system and a rule by the majority, which in one way or another led to the exclusion of some members of society (Wiredu 1996). Cultural diversity is another factor that the Western liberal version of democracy has failed to address in Africa (Bradley 2011). The many ethnic groups in respective African countries, sometimes each with their own interests, make governance more challenging. These challenges can be seen even in formal democracies such as Kenya and Nigeria, which struggle to contain ethnic and religious divisions and conflicts during elections.

Some African rulers have nevertheless held on to the model of Western democracy, as a result of the desire to maintain good relations with Western powers (the European Union and the United States), whose donor funds to some extent are conditional upon democratic governance. This, however, has simply been a face-saving exercise for the global front (Bradley 2011).

Traditional forms of governance may be argued to have worked well for Africans. For example, there was a central authority in the form of a king or principal chief who had delegates acting as guardians over different parts of the territory. These guardians governed individual regions within the territory, including by solving any disputes that arose within their area, and reporting to the king or principal chief on their guardianship.<sup>4</sup> The governance structure included the regular holding of public gatherings, where the chief would meet with all his people, discuss issues affecting them as a nation as well as hear the grievances of his people. These gatherings were known as *pitso* (Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Lesotho 1996). These traditional forms of governance and selection of leaders could also be considered part of the reason why Africa faces a problem of leaders that have difficulty letting go of the leadership reins. This is because in most African states pre-colonial leadership was inherited and one occupied such a position until death (Ray & Reddy 2003). Perhaps this 'leadership-till-death' mentality still lingers in some Africans, despite having moved to democracy, which is based upon leadership for an appointed time and on the will of the people.

There might be two possible ideas as to why democracy is not performing as strongly hoped for in Africa. These are mentioned below.

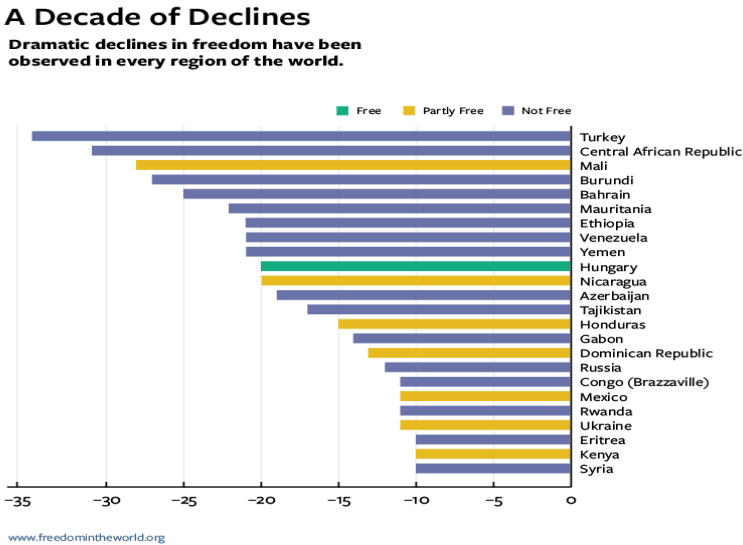
4 In kingdoms such as those of Lesotho, Zululand and Swaziland.

2.1 Lack of participation and inclusiveness

No political system has been found to be all-inclusive (Bradley 2011), but the fostering of stability and legitimacy within any system is highly likely to increase the citizens' identification with and sense of ownership of such a system, thereby increasing the success and smooth operation of the system (Bradley 2011). It is difficult to foster earnest and enthusiastic participation in a population that feels that the system is not legitimate. One may regard it as a foreign concept that overlooks and disregards the very fibre that makes them who they are as a people, including their history and traditions (Ake 1991). This lack of participation is exacerbated by the corruption among elected officials, leaving most people believing that democracy is a waste of their time and hope.

According to Freedom House (2018), several African countries do not reflect a good image of democracy. From a global perspective, only 45 per cent of countries have had a full democracy; 30 per cent have partial democracy while 25 per cent suffer a lack of democracy. At the core of these statistics is the steady decline, as indicated in the table below.

Table 1: Depiction of decline of freedoms from a global perspective



Source: freedomintheworld.org (2018)

An evaluation of the countries listed reveals that out of the 24 countries that project the downward trend in recognition of civil freedoms, nine are from Africa. This represents 37 per cent of these countries.

## 2.2 Was Western democracy 'forced' on Africa?

A cardinal principle that aids the understanding of democracy is to appreciate the basis of its construction. According to Ayithey (2010), there are two forms of democracy: democracy by majority and democracy by consensus. The former is understood as the 'Western form of democracy'. Wiredu (1996) contrasts this Western model of majoritarian democracy with the consensus-based model, which also embraces minority representatives/positions. This is an indication that the minorities have a space to have meaningful participation in the decision-making process in a political community. Democratic decisions by majority vote are known as being transparent, fast and efficient notwithstanding the fact that they ignore minority positions, whereas consensus-based democracy relates to decisions taken by consensus whereby minority positions are considered. However, it has the disadvantage that it takes a long time to arrive at a consensus on various issues (Ayithey 2010). According to Ayithey and other African scholars, this latter form of democracy is akin to what obtained in many traditional African societies (Ayithey 2010).

Ohachenu (1995) suggests that the idea and concept of each form of democracy is constructed from the 'historical knowledge, experience, values and capabilities' of the society within which it is to be enforced. Therefore, it seems ironic that the democratic model crafted in and for Western societies was adopted and applied extensively in Africa, a society so dissimilar to Western societies. This stemmed partly from the need to be seen or accepted by the West as 'democratic', largely 'as a condition for Western aid'. The result is the large-scale copying and adoption of the Western form of democracy rather than building 'upon our own democratic tradition' (Ayithey 2010).

Nonetheless, this is not to say that traditional institutions cannot adapt to and coexist with modern institutions of governance, but there would be a need for a clear and detailed fusion of the two. Mabogunje (1995) goes on to highlight that democracy in Africa would in fact benefit and flourish greatly if traditional methods and principles of governance were fused with modern governance structures, thus mitigating their seemingly antagonistic relationship. Perhaps a tempering of the Western democracy, characterised by the winner-take-all and majority rule set-up may be beneficial to Africa (Bradley 2011). At the least, as Ayithey (2010) notes, it would prevent a system that allows

an elected leader to use power and the state machinery to advance the economic interests of his ethnic group and exclude all others: Kenyatta of Kenya and the Gikuyu, Moi of Kenya and the Kalenjin, Biya of Cameroon and the Beti, Eyadema of Togo and the Kabyle, to name a few.

It is in this context and conceptualised version of democracy that the African diaspora needs to carve its contribution to democracy-building processes in the homeland.

## 3 Diasporas' participation

This section examines the current relationship between the diasporas and the homeland governments using the examples of three sub-Saharan

African countries (The Gambia, Ethiopia and Zimbabwe) with a focus on the democracy-building efforts by the diasporas.

Some research has been conducted on the political activism of the African diasporas (Matsilele 2013; Chivanga 2015; Jaw 2017) as well as on their contribution to the economic development of the homeland by way of financial remittances (Raga Lencho 2017; Ngulube 2013). Some of these examples speak to specific involvement of the diasporas in landmark transition periods in the homeland, for example, in The Gambia.<sup>5</sup> This section will draw inspiration from some of these examples, and use them as a basis to make recommendations for the formulation of sustainable policies that will capitalise on the experiences and knowledge that the diasporas have acquired. It will also encourage collaboration with grassroots civil society in the homeland in order to bridge the democracy deficit on the continent.

### 3.1 African diaspora

In the introduction to this article it was demonstrated that there are various definitions of the term 'diaspora'. However, what is clear are the common characteristics of diasporas. Two main characteristics of the diasporas are (a) that they are a population that is transnational or deterritorialised (Jaw 2017); and (b) that they have ties to the homeland through familial, economic and political interests (Cohen 2008).

It is important to indicate the heterogeneity of the diasporas, as this affects their engagement with the homeland, and is also important when formulating policies. Due to Africa's democratic challenges and deficit, as characterised by the repression of dissenting voices, a substantial sector of the African diaspora comprises political refugees and asylum seekers. This is a common feature in all the countries studied. It is reported that Zimbabweans are in the United Kingdom's top ten list of nationals that receive asylum (Chivanga 2015). The Gambian diaspora consists of a significant number of journalists, civil society actors and political activists who fled because of the shrinking democratic space under the dictatorship of Yahya Jammeh (Jaw 2017). Lyons describes the Ethiopian diasporas that fled in the late 1970s and early 1980s as conflict-generated, that is, people who experienced a 'forced, violent separation' from the homeland, which he differentiates from what he terms 'voluntary economic pursuits' (Lyons 2009).<sup>6</sup>

The persistently poor economic performance of many African countries has also resulted in the exodus of its nationals, who have left seeking the proverbial greener pastures. There are also migrants who leave for study purposes or career advancement as well as family reunification. While the needs and circumstances of the various types of diasporas differ, the majority organise themselves into communities in host countries. Some communities are initiated as support systems to facilitate assimilation in the host countries (Lyons 2009). It is also from this mobilisation of people with a common interest that political agendas and governance concerns are raised and used to influence politics in the homeland.

5 During the transition from Yahya Jammeh's dictatorship in 2016.

6 One could argue against the notion of voluntarism in the case of migration based on a debilitated economy in the country of origin.

### 3.2 Prodigal sons and daughters: Enemies of the state?

It is crucial to explore the extent of participation of the diasporas in homeland politics and its influence on democracy and good governance. During migration, some members of political parties in the homeland also migrate and sometimes form satellite branches of their parties in the host country. New political allegiances are formed, usually depending on whether or not their departure was hostile. For example, in the case of the conflict-generated diaspora described by Lyons, the framing of political issues is likely to be shaped around criticism and denouncing of the regime in the homeland that forced the migration. This uncompromising framing of issues often is enabled by the geographical distance that shields the diasporas from repercussions. They can exercise their freedom of expression through criticising a sitting government as they are outside the territory of the authoritarian rule they are criticising. One scholar describes them as 'long distance nationalists' who are unaccountable as they do not have to deal with the possible consequences of their actions (Demmers 2002). However, this viewpoint seems to imply that the exercise of freedom of expression must necessarily be accompanied by repercussions, although it is a universally-recognised human right. The exercise of this right can have both positive and negative consequences depending on the intensity of the activism by the diasporas. A positive consequence would be giving a voice to their fellow nationals in the homeland who are unable to freely speak out because of the repressive regimes that do not allow for constructive political debate. On the other hand, abrasive and overstated attacks on the regime might bolster and reinforce extremist actors in the homeland (Lyons 2009). In this instance, it may be argued that the activism of the diasporas may not always bring forth the desired change.

#### 3.2.1 *The Gambia*

In The Gambia, it is estimated that 4,5 per cent of the population (90 000) live outside its borders as of 2016 (Population 2018). The majority of Gambians migrated during the 22-year dictatorship of Yahya Jammeh to escape the increasingly authoritarian rule, as well as to explore better economic prospects. Jammeh perceived democracy as a Western construct, and as having no place in the African context (Jallow 2017). Freedom of expression was severely suppressed in The Gambia, resulting in over 110 journalists fleeing the country by the end of 2015. Most left to re-establish their careers abroad with media outlets that cover events in their homeland (Journalists 2015).

Gambians in the diaspora were active in mobilising a vibrant opposition against Jammeh throughout his rule. Activism by the Gambian diaspora started through an e-mail list called Gambia-L where information was shared to influence people both in the diaspora and in the homeland to rally against Jammeh. One of the key characteristics of this activism (which is also common to the other countries under study) is the external lobbying efforts. These are often targeted at the host government, as well as international and regional bodies, to exert pressure on the homeland government. In the case of the Gambian diaspora, lobbying efforts were targeted at regional bodies such as the European Union, African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). They also formed partnerships with international human rights

organisations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch in order to highlight human rights abuses taking place in the homeland (Jaw 2017).

Another key feature of the Gambian experience was the involvement in the politics of the homeland. In the run-up to the 2016 elections in The Gambia, the diasporas are alleged to have sponsored mass protests that pushed for electoral reforms. In addition, UKGambia sponsored the participation of the youth and women in the national assembly elections in 2017 under the banners of NotTooYoungToRun and GamWomenInParliament campaigns (Jaw 2017). The Gambian diasporas have what they call the Gambia Democracy Fund (GDF) in order to raise funds to support opposition political parties as well as to support families of victims of political persecution (GDF Press Release 2016).

Historically, in The Gambia (as with the other African countries) the relationship between the state and the diasporas has been hostile. The estranged relationship has been due mainly to the continued authoritarian rule in the homeland, prompting the diasporas to be critical of the homeland government. As a response to the mobilisation by the diasporas, Jammeh periodically banned diaspora websites, arbitrarily arrested any members of the diaspora who travelled to the homeland and used smear campaign tactics against prominent activists in the state's newspapers (Jaw 2017).

Motivated by the desire to benefit economically from the diaspora, Jammeh's government started to superficially soften the stance against the diasporas. One scholar states that African states have started looking towards the diasporas in order to bridge the fiscal gap created by donor fatigue and not necessarily out of concern for the welfare of their citizens (Iheduru 2011). An example of this is how, in 2012, Jammeh's administration renamed a government department the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Gambians Abroad. However, this inclusion is merely on paper as the government has not made any concrete efforts to adequately staff the division to deal with Gambians abroad, citing financial and technical limitations. After Jammeh, the focus now is on drawing the diasporas into rebuilding the country's economy. Through the Migration and Sustainable Development in The Gambia project, recommendations are being made to encourage diasporas to invest in the homeland (Courtright 2018).

### 3.2.2 *Ethiopia*

The Ethiopian diaspora is among one of the largest from the African continent, although for the purposes of this section particular emphasis will be placed on the Ethiopian diaspora in the United States of America. It is estimated that there are as many as 500 000 Ethiopian nationals living in the United States (Lyons 2009). A substantial portion of the diasporas comprise Ethiopians that left in the 1970s and 1980s because of the repressive Marxist military regime under Mengistu Hailemariam (Lyons 2009). As is typical of diaspora communities, there are diverse identities within the Ethiopian diaspora with a wide range of organisations, newspapers, blogs, websites, radio and television shows. They have been extremely vocal in their quest to influence the strategies of political actors in the homeland.

One such example of the measure of power that the Ethiopian diasporas wield is their ability to exert pressure on events in the homeland. In 1995 the opposition party Southern Coalition, which had the financial backing of the diasporas, engaged in deliberations to run for elections together with the ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Party (EPRDP). The diasporas delivered sharp criticism to this move and labelled the leader of the coalition, Beyene Petros, a traitor. Bowing to this pressure, the Southern Coalition eventually boycotted the elections (Indian Ocean Newsletter 1995). Another form of involvement by the Ethiopian diasporas relates to the 2005 elections. The main opposition coalitions were deeply rooted in the diaspora. The United Ethiopian Democratic Forces (UEDF) was formed in 2003 in the United States where the majority of the executive committee remained. It included some persons in the homeland in addition to its diaspora-based members. Similarly, the Coalition for Unity and Government (CUD) had strong links to fund-raising efforts in the diaspora and had the backing of prominent political actors based in the United States (Lyons 2009). In the aftermath of the contested election and ensuing political crisis, the UEDF's executive committee dismissed its Chairperson and first Vice-Chairperson for having taken up their seats in parliament rather than boycotting the political process (Indian Ocean Newsletter 2006).

There has been much debate around the question whether the political activities of the Ethiopian diaspora have a positive or negative influence. It is reported that the Ethiopian diasporas for the most part were influential in the violence that erupted in 2017, which resulted in the declaration of a state of emergency and an internet blackout (Jeffrey 2016). The diaspora media had been calling for 'five days of rage' as a response to a stampede in Oromo that had occurred when the police and protesters clashed. When the state of emergency was lifted in December 2017, there was a cabinet reshuffle, which saw new appointees that are technocrats without a party affiliation (Jeffrey 2016). In a way it could be argued that the agitation by the diasporas produced both negative and positive results. It caused the government to tighten its repression, but at the same time prompted the consideration of reforms.

Turning to the policies of the government regarding the diasporas, the Ethiopian government has been making strides to incorporate the diasporas into its policies and strategies. What is of note is that Ethiopian political leaders, including those in government, often send representatives to North America to canvass for financial and political support. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Ethiopian government has a State Minister for Business and Diaspora Affairs. From the title of the department, one may conclude that the policy of the government towards the diaspora is geared towards pecuniary matters.

### 3.2.3 *Zimbabwe*

Zimbabwe has over the years undergone multiple economic and political crises. Each episode was marked by the exodus of nationals, either fleeing the authoritarian regime or because of the deteriorating economic climate. It is estimated that more than 4 million Zimbabweans have left its territory, constituting the diaspora (IOM 2010). As in the case of the other African diasporas discussed, their identity is diverse, as is their location,

although the majority find themselves in the United Kingdom and South Africa.

The political views of the diasporas are not always aligned, one reason being that there are political party surrogates that appear in the diaspora. However, even among the seemingly-aligned political movements motives are not always aligned, owing to the heterogeneous nature of the diaspora. The Zimbabwean diasporas in the United Kingdom have mobilised a grouping called Zimbabwe Vigil which organises protests on various issues every Saturday at Zimbabwe House (the Zimbabwean embassy in London). The group comprises asylum seekers, refugees, opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) party supporters as well as white Zimbabweans whose political interests include the redistribution of land in Zimbabwe. Some have questioned whether the activism of asylum seekers in the group is borne out of genuine concern for policy reform and democracy in the homeland, or whether their emphasis on the brutality in the homeland is a means to buttress their claims in the host country (Chivanga 2015). In analysing the effects of their activism, it is irrelevant what motivates it, only that they are able to influence democratic processes in their homeland.

It has been suggested that the nature of Zimbabwean diasporas' engagement has vacillated between combatant political issues and humanitarian and economic development (Musoro, Madziva & Magaisa 2006). An illustration is the Zimbabwe Diaspora Development Interface (ZDDI) created in 2008. This highly-organised platform is divided into thematic sections: agriculture and environment; education; finance and economic development; health and social care; industry and technology; justice and governance; and media. It makes use of the skills and experiences of the diverse group members to devise strategies for development and business opportunities, in response to the needs in the homeland.

The Zimbabwean government under former President Robert Mugabe adopted a hostile attitude to its diasporas and, in one instance, Mugabe labelled them 'stupid for looking for jobs in America' (News 24 2017). The relationship to some extent has started evolving, in light of the diasporas remitting close to US \$1 billion per year back to the homeland. In 2017 the Zimbabwean government of adopted a five-year National Diaspora Policy Implementation Action Plan with the aim of tackling policies and legislation, the intra-governmental-diaspora relationship, institutional engagement, diaspora investment, remittances, national socio-economic development, and knowing the diaspora and diaspora's rights. When Emmerson Mnangagwa came into power as the President of Zimbabwe in November 2017, one of his first missions was to travel to South Africa to meet with Zimbabweans living there. The meeting was to encourage investment in the homeland and explore ways of economic collaboration (*The Herald Zimbabwe* 2017).

The Zimbabwean diasporas have for years been engaged in a battle to assert their right to vote. It has been said that giving the diasporas the right to vote bridges the psychological gap between the citizens and the homeland, making them more interested and involved in democracy building in the homeland (Laloupo 2015). At least 30 African countries extend a chance to vote to their non-resident citizens. In Zimbabwe, section 67(3) of the Constitution recognises the right of every citizen



above the age of 18 to vote in elections and referendums. However, provisions in the Electoral Act make it technically impossible for the diasporas to vote. In 2017, three diaspora citizens launched an application to the Constitutional Court challenging the Electoral Act in as far as it does not allow them to vote in accordance with the Constitution. As at 14 March 2018 the Court had heard the matter on the merits and reserved judgment.

Unlike in The Gambia, fundraising for political parties by the Zimbabwean diasporas has been fraught with challenges. The MDC in the UK was obstructed by the Political Parties Finances Act, which requires that all financing for political parties should come from within Zimbabwe. Furthermore, there were challenges regarding trust among the diasporas with some claiming that the leadership in the UK were opportunists seeking to benefit personally from the finances raised (Pasura 2009).

The current activities of the diasporas can be performed only within a defined legal framework for them to be effective. For this purpose, it is important to examine in detail the legal and political framework.

#### 4 Africa's legal and political frameworks

On the continental level, Africa is more welcoming to the diasporas in its legal and policy frameworks as compared to the domestic level, where governments have enacted restrictive laws and policies. The African diaspora has always championed positive change and inspired African revolutionary dreams of independence, good governance and rule of law (AUC Agenda 2063) the people of Africa and her Diaspora, united in diversity, young and old, men and women, girls and boys from all walks of life, deeply conscious of history, express our deep appreciation to all generations of Pan-Africanists. In particular, to the founders of the Organisation of African Unity for having bequeathed us an Africa with exemplary successes in the fight against slavery, colonialism and apartheid. Agenda 2063, rooted in Pan Africanism and African Renaissance, provides a robust framework for addressing past injustices and the realisation of the 21st Century as the African Century. 2. We echo the Pan-African call that Africa must unite in order to realize its Renaissance. Present generations are confident that the destiny of Africa is in their hands, and that they must act now to shape the future they want. Fifty years after the first thirty-three (33. The Pan-African Movement (PAM) which was initially dominated by African diasporas was successful in their quest for decolonisation of Africa because of profound diaspora interest, support and leadership. In 2012 AUC Executive Council stated (African Union 2012):

Member States of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) and thereafter the African Union (AU) have long regarded the diaspora as a key element in the continent's development and integration process and in the renewal and renaissance of the Global African Family.

It should be noted that the AU has a Citizens and Diaspora Directorate (CIDO) housed within the AU Commission mandated to pursue, among others, enhancing participation of the African diaspora (African Union 2017). One of the key AU institutions that is mandated to coordinate with diasporas and civil society organisations is the Economic, Social and

Cultural Council (ECOSOCC), whose mandate include fostering and consolidating partnership between the AU and civil society organisations.

Article 3(q) of the Protocol on Amendments to the Constitutive Act of the African Union (2003) expands the objectives of the AU by adding 'invite and encourage the full participation of the African diaspora as an important part of the continent, in the building of the African Union'.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, sub-articles 21(d) to (f) of the African Youth Charter mandate state parties to '[e]stablish structures that encourage and assist the youth in diaspora to return to and fully re-integrate into social and economic life in Africa'; to '[p]romote and protect the rights of young people living in diaspora'; and to '[e]ncourage young people in diaspora to engage themselves in development activities in their country of origin'.

In contrast to the framework of the AUC, member states are enacting laws to restrict channels of engagement with the diasporas. To illustrate this state of affairs, the article will examine the nature of the legal and political framework in selected African countries. The perception of African political elites about the potential role of the diasporas in democracy building is sometimes characterised by suspicion, accusation and antagonism. The diasporas' engagement comes in many forms, ranging from financial contributions for governance projects to lending their expertise in supporting grassroots movements, to organising and mobilising for effective engagement in democratic processes. It is the latter part that troubles most African governments, leading them to enact strict laws to limit such activities.

As indicated above, the diasporas' engagement in domestic affairs is not viewed as completely negative, at least at the continental level, and their contribution to the economic development of the homeland is generally welcomed. To that end, their remittances support different projects including civic activities mainly run by civil society organisations. Foreign donors from countries where most African diasporas are located often fund civil society organisations. In the 1990s civil society organisations mushroomed in an unprecedented manner but suffered significant limitations in 2011 when 'security measures and other legal and policy restrictions were introduced as a response, and means, to overcome threats (perceived and actual) towards national security' (Save the Children 2012). The article demonstrates, with examples, countries that have enacted restrictive legislation to curtail civic engagement by the diasporas through civil society and other grassroots movements.

#### 4.1 Nature of legal and political framework

Many factors influence policy choices of the government to enact laws and policies. On the African continent the dominant factor is the 'fear' of regime change through actions of non-governmental actors (civil society organisations, grassroots civic movements and diasporas). The tools that the diasporas and grassroots movements have in the past used include cyber space (social media); funding of local networks or movements; the organisation of political activities abroad; and lobbying for sanctions and

7 This Protocol, adopted in 2013, is not yet in force. Its entry into force requires ratification by two-thirds of AU member states (37 states). As at April 2019, 28 states have ratified the Protocol.

regime change with the help of international and regional political actors. The analysis is focused on legislation as a popular response strategy by states to direct the engagement of diasporas in democratic spaces in their homelands.

Many African countries are actively pursuing restrictive policy frameworks on civic programmes aimed at ensuring popular participation in critical governance aspects of African societies.<sup>8</sup> The pan-African legal regime is robustly laid out in the continental legal frameworks. The Constitutive Act of the AU provides for the promotion of political participation in governance. The protection of civil society organisations is articulated under the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (African Democracy Charter), which encourages states to ensure the existence of an environment conducive to the operation of civil society organisations within the confines of the law. The Democracy Charter also encourages states to engage civil society organisations in order to advance political, economic, and social governance. Furthermore, the Democracy Charter calls on the AU Commission and regional economic communities to promote engagement with civil society.

Civic spaces are narrowing despite the AU's position of encouraging diaspora participation and engagement in the civic activities of their homelands. This is due, in part, to the restrictive political environment being created by governments. Politics in Africa is characterised by poor governance, corruption and relentless repression of dissenting voices. The Horn of Africa Civil Society Forum<sup>9</sup> characterised the relationship between African states and civil society as distrustful mainly because of governments' repressive legal regimes and politics (Maru 2017) met with civil society leaders inside the university. At least one protester was killed and several wounded during clashes with the security forces. By UN -West Darfur, Zaleingi, Sudan -01 December 2010. About PAX PAX means peace. Together with people in conflict areas and concerned citizens worldwide, PAX works to build just and peaceful societies across the globe. PAX brings together people who have the courage to stand for peace. Everyone who believes in peace can contribute. We believe that all these steps, whether small or large, inevitably lead to the greater sum of peace. See also [www.paxforpeace.nl](http://www.paxforpeace.nl) About the Al Khatim Adlan Center for Enlightenment and Human Development (KACE). The report concludes that such mutual distrust is premised on the political perceptions that organisations receiving foreign funding are advancing neo-imperialist goals that threaten the sovereignty of their government (Maru 2017). To that end, countries in the Horn of Africa have similar regulations restricting civil society movements, their formation, registration, operations and funding.<sup>10</sup>

## 4.2 Under threat: Closing civic space

Grassroots movements are an important aspect of democracy building. These movements organise and mobilise more effectively and are catalysts

8 These countries include Ethiopia, Eritrea, Sudan and South Sudan that have some of the most restrictive legislations on the continent.

9 The Horn of Africa Civil Society Forum (HoACS Forum) is a regional network of civil society organisations that work together to monitor and expand civic space in the countries in which the Forum operates.

10 Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Somalia, Somaliland, South Sudan, Sudan and Uganda.

for change. The organisations often cause confrontation with local authorities leading to arrests and, at worst, the killing of civil society leaders. Diasporas' expertise, knowledge and robust networks can buttress civic movements to agitate for democratic change in their communities. The political elites in Africa are cognisant of this fact, hence the near universal restrictive legislation on the continent aimed at limiting interface between diasporas and civil society movements.

Governments are bound by international law to ensure citizens' participation in the democratic processes of their country. This includes 'institutional, legal, political and administrative conditions that enable the existence and effectiveness of civil society' (Maru 2017). The right to form associations, freedom of expression and the right to participate in political governance is guaranteed under the African Democracy Charter and African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (African Charter). Specifically, article 28 of the African Democracy Charter obliges state parties to 'ensure and promote strong partnerships and dialogue between government, civil society and the private sector'. The diasporas' engagement with democratic processes in the homeland can also be curtailed if they are not able to mobilise through civil society organisations at home. A look at the legislative regime in Ethiopia demonstrates the challenges that can be met in agitating for democracy by both the diasporas and civil society organisations in the homeland.

Due to an overly restrictive space, civil society organisations face a particular challenge when implementing their programmes, in particular, restrictions on registration procedures, bureaucratic and unreasonable administrative processes and endless interference by government security forces in the internal affairs of civil society movements. The civil society organisation law in Ethiopia, for example, the Charities and Societies Proclamation Act (Proclamation 621/2009), forced the Ethiopian Women Lawyers' Association to retrench more than 70 per cent of its staff (Amnesty International 2012). The Charities and Societies law requires organisations to register in one of three categories, namely, (i) Ethiopian charities or societies; (ii) Ethiopian resident charities or societies; or (iii) foreign charities. The Proclamation defines any NGO that receives more than 10 per cent of its funding from foreign sources as a 'foreign charity', thereby prohibiting it from working on issues of governance or human rights. The law bars NGOs and those receiving more than 10 per cent of their funding from foreign sources from working on human rights issues. Article 2 of the Charities and Societies Proclamation 621/2009 states:<sup>11</sup>

'Ethiopian Charities' or 'Ethiopian Societies' shall mean those Charities or Societies that are formed under the laws of Ethiopia, all of whose members are Ethiopians, generate income from Ethiopia and wholly controlled by Ethiopians. However, they may be deemed as Ethiopian Charities or Ethiopian Societies if they use not *more than ten percent* of their funds which is received from foreign sources.

In conclusion, many African countries seem to be attuned to tightening civil spaces for citizens, socio-political organisations and diasporas to engage in. The advent of populist governments around the world has left the door open for some already repressive African governments to enact

11 Our emphasis.

tougher laws restricting engagement on democracy, the rule of law and good governance.

To prevent grassroots movements from interfacing with diasporas and from receiving donor funding, African states enact laws to restrict funding for governance and human rights advocacy programmes.<sup>12</sup> The main arguments by their repressive regimes often are the preservation of sovereignty and national security. These assertions were faulted by the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Freedom of Assembly and Association, who stated that such claims were 'not only spurious and distorted', but also 'in contradiction with international human rights law' (Human Rights Council 2013). Africa's democracy deficit, therefore, is a sad reality that has now been entrenched by way of policy and legislative frameworks. With Africa's young population actively engaged in social media, governments are moving fast to close down these spaces, as seen in Southern Cameroon, Egypt, Uganda, Kenya and Ethiopia during mass civil actions and times of election.

## 5 Way forward: A collaborative approach to democratisation

If any partnership between the diasporas and their respective governments is to have a positive bearing on the democratic processes of their countries, the starting point must be to build a relationship on shared values and not to lose sight of the African people as the ultimate beneficiaries. This relationship too often is abortive due to a lack of trust on the part of both parties, or because the relevant government may treat the diasporas as a security risk or a proxy for foreign interest groups, while the diasporas may view the government as an illegitimate regime forcefully holding onto power. For example, this was the case in Zimbabwe under former President Mugabe, whose mistrust of the diasporas and perceptions about their motives are well publicised. The diasporas are often charged with being out of touch with the realities of their homeland, while the government is seldom willing to cede any power in order to build an equal partnership or at least ensure a healthy level of collaboration. Governments are willing to encourage financial investment in their countries but are more guarded when it comes to political participation.

Shain and Barth identify three factors that determine the level and efficacy of the diasporas' political engagement with their homelands, namely, the degree of the diasporas' motivation to participate; the socio-political environment of their host and home countries; and the balance of power in relations between the diasporas and the governments of their homeland (Shain & Barth 2003). The interests of the people in their homelands and their own interests in their host countries affect the degree of motivation of the diasporas. When there is a correlation or an overlap between these two sets of interests, the diasporas become motivated to engage. 'If engagement in a homeland's foreign policy is perceived by the diaspora as identity-reinforcing and by the homeland as legitimate, then the diaspora will be motivated to exert influence on the issue' (Shain & Barth 2003). The host country's relationship with the diaspora's homeland

12 This is factually the case in Ethiopia, Eritrea and Uganda (2009 Charities and Societies Proclamation Act, Eritrea's NGO proclamation and Uganda's legal regime that restricts funding that political parties can receive for its programmes).

and the host country's willingness to allow a diaspora community to influence its foreign policy is at the heart of Shain and Barth's second element. For example, an Ethiopian diaspora community in the United States may have greater influence in their homeland because of the US's impactful foreign policy and the willingness to allow communities to influence policy through votes or lobbying. In contrast to this are the Ethiopian diasporas in Australia, whose influence may not be as substantial as Australia's foreign policy is less impactful than that of the United States. The situation in the homeland refers mainly to the receptiveness of the government towards diaspora influence, whether the government views it positively or otherwise. The balance of power between the diasporas and the homeland depends upon which has the greater leverage, whether financial or political, or, in other words, who needs the other more.

Below are recommendations to ensure that the diasporas have a positive impact on democracy.

### 5.1 Removing legal impediments

Homeland governments must remove the legal impediments that restrict the engagement of the diasporas. A prime example of such an impediment is the Ethiopian CSO Proclamation, which prohibits civil societies that raise more than 10 per cent of their financial resources from outside Ethiopia from engaging in governance or human rights issues (see part 3.2.2). This proclamation severely limits the motivation of the diasporas to participate in the affairs of their homeland, and attempts to undercut civil society, which plays an important role in reaching the grassroots (see part 3.2.2).

The state of dual nationality is also an important issue for the direct participation of the diaspora through either voting in elections or competing for public office. Ethiopia does not allow dual nationality but provides identity cards to persons of Ethiopian origin, allowing them rights which would otherwise be prohibited for non-citizens (Ethiopian Legal Brief 2011).<sup>13</sup> Some of these rights include the right to enter Ethiopia without a visa, to own immovable property and to seek employment. Although these are positive developments and initiatives for the Ethiopian diasporas, it does not mean that they are fully endowed with rights to directly participate in the democratic processes of their homeland. According to its Constitution, the right to vote or be elected into public office is given to 'Ethiopian nationals' as opposed to the terminology of 'Ethiopian citizens' which is used for the right to own property. During Ethiopia's 2005 election, Andargachew Tsige, who at that time was one of the leaders of the opposition group (Coalition for Unity and Democracy), was a citizen of the United Kingdom. Tsige was arrested in Yemen and extradited to Ethiopia in 2014, charged with terrorism due to the political fallout after the 2005 elections (Aljazeera 2014). The

13 'An Ethiopian who acquires another nationality by virtue of being born to a parent having a foreign nationality or by being born abroad shall be deemed to have voluntarily renounced his Ethiopian nationality unless he has declared to the Authority his option to retain it by renouncing his other nationality within one year after attaining the age of majority, or unless there has been an earlier express renunciation of his Ethiopian nationality pursuant to article 19(3) of this Proclamation' (Ethiopian Nationality Proclamation 378/2003).

question of who can directly participate in the democratic processes of Ethiopia, a national or a citizen, remains an unsettled issue.

## 5.2 Tackling factionalism

In many instances the diaspora community can mirror the divisions and fragmentation of their homeland. The Ethiopian diasporas in the United States are known to be ethnically divided, reflecting the division in its homeland between the Amhara, Oromo and the Tigray (BBC World News 2016). In the face of such divisions, the diasporas become weaker and are unable to engage under a consolidated and common goal. Each group may have its agenda based on favouring their ethnic brethren in the homeland. These divisions also weaken the diasporas' leverage, tilting the balance of power in favour of the homeland's government. Factionalism is also a factor in the activism by Zimbabwean diasporas in the United Kingdom, which is fuelled by differing political opinions (Chivanga 2015). This is also the case with diasporas originating from many African countries, including Cameroon, Kenya and Nigeria.

## 5.3 Adherence to the 'African democracy'

It has been demonstrated in the article that the application of democracy on the African continent should take cognisance of the contextual framework within which it operates and the intersectionality of issues such as poverty and ethnic diversity. For the diasporas to effectively contribute to the democratisation of the homeland, one should not lose sight of the application of democracy in this context. The wholesale import of host country best practices should also be avoided as this might contribute to resistance by both the homeland governments and civil society organisations on the ground. The diasporas may need to temper the wholesale application of liberal values such as a heightened focus on individualism, which contrasts to the African organising principle of the community.

## 6 Conclusion

The tension between the diasporas and their respective homeland governments remains a stumbling block in the area of the political participation by diasporas. Although governments have been more open to engagement with diasporas in the areas of development and investment, they remain reticent in allowing for political participation. The government's willingness to engage in the financial sector is in recognition of the leverage that the African diasporas hold where this sector is concerned, by remitting more than US \$35 billion to the continent.

A tool that the diasporas need in supporting their engagement with the governments of their homelands is in itself the mode of governance in the countries in which they reside. This may inform the degree of action or collaboration that the diasporas offer to their respective countries. In other words, diasporas residing in countries that allow for public participation, uphold accountability and promote civic spaces are better equipped to engage with their home governments, based on those examples and their experiences therein. Thus, the political participation of the diasporas

encompasses activities such as lobbying, raising funds and, more controversially, the right to vote.

These tensions have played out in The Gambia, Ethiopia and Zimbabwe. In The Gambia, the diasporas played a crucial role in ousting former President Yaya Jammeh, while diasporas were also involved in the ousting of former President Mugabe in Zimbabwe. In Ethiopia the diasporas continue their efforts to mobilise the youth in protests against the government, such as calling for 'five days of rage'. Recent protests led to the resignation of the Prime Minister, Hailemariam Desalegn, in February 2018, but reforms to the political system are still further away. However, the appointment of a new Prime Minister, Abiy Ahmed, in April 2018, has already started to spark some changes and reforms, the outcomes of which Ethiopians at home and abroad and the rest of the world are keenly observing. It is also worth noting that 'Abiy ... is the first prime minister to come from Ethiopia's largest ethnic group, the Oromo, who spearheaded more than two years of unprecedented protests against the country's one-party government' (Aljazeera 2018; CNN 2018; News 24 2018; Reuters 2018).

If the diasporas and the respective governments are to work in partnership to allow for an environment in which democracy can succeed, both sides must compromise. On the one hand, governments must remove legal impediments targeted at civil society, which is a key partner for the engagement of the diasporas. On the other hand, the diasporas must also be cognisant of the social differences between their host country and their homeland, and thus tailor their messages accordingly.

The article has analysed the failure of democracy in Africa, and has attempted to map the circumstances that affect the relationship between the diasporas and African governments. By mapping this relationship, it has attempted to give some guidance on a successful partnership between African governments and African diasporas that will be able to aid democratisation in Africa.

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# The political participation of the diaspora of the Middle East and North Africa before and after the Arab uprisings

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**Abstract:** *The role of the Arab diasporas in the political processes of their home countries has changed significantly since the 2011 uprisings. The article aims to analyse these changes and assess the impact that diasporas have had on the democratisation processes of the post-2011 transitions. It does so by looking at examples of both direct and indirect diasporas' participation in the politics of their home countries during and after the uprisings through mechanisms such as lobbying, campaigning, national dialogue initiatives, and voting in the parliamentary elections. The background to the social, economic and political contributions of the Arab diasporas before 2011 highlights the multiple identities of the diaspora communities abroad as well as the changes to their inclusion from disputed members of the regimes' opposition to a more active civil society. With the shifting social and political environment of the last decade, the examples demonstrate the important political role that diasporas could play in cooperation and bridge building, both locally and internationally. However, they also demonstrate the obstacles and severe limitations they face in their inclusion in the governments' transition to democratic governance. Transnational repression and a negative reception context are limiting factors affecting the ability of diasporas to fully participate as active citizens in both their host and home countries. As an important index for democratisation in the region, the conclusions drawn in the article could offer new perspectives on shaping and constructing regional politics and local regimes. These constitute pressing issues for the future and the evolution of democracy in the region, especially within the post-war reconstruction of countries such as Syria, Libya and Yemen, and the democratic transitions in Tunisia and Egypt.*

**Key words:** *democratisation; uprisings; Arab diaspora; elections; negotiations; political participation; inclusion; civil and political rights; human rights; Middle East and North Africa*

## 1 Introduction

Since the beginning of the twentieth century diasporas have become important political players for their home countries. Their roles in democracy-building processes have recently attracted the attention of researchers (Cohen 2001; Vertovec 2005; Dahre 2007; Rigoni 2013). The participation of diasporas from the Middle East and North Africa before

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the Arab uprisings of 2011, sometimes referred to as the 'Arab Spring', was essentially disputed. A significant number of emigrants were political exiles, whose actions took the form of opposition through demonstrations, the denunciation of the regime's crimes or legal action against the regime. The article seeks to establish the extent to which diaspora communities have influenced the Arab uprisings, and how the 2011 revolts in turn have changed the political participation of the diasporas in their home countries.

In order to do so, it is important to analyse not only the diasporas' influence in the political arena of their home country (and *vice versa*), but to also scrutinise the practices and tools through which they contest and reframe the very idea of sovereignty as well as their own identities. In order to formulate an answer to the main objective of the article, it is important to equally consider other questions. First: What are the opportunities for participation of the diasporas in political life? Second: What are the mechanisms and limitations of their participation? Third: What are the main interests of governments and the diasporas themselves for their inclusion and participation? In search for an answer to these questions, the article first covers the sociological, political and economic foundations of the political participation of the diasporas from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. The second part of this research places earlier findings in a critical perspective by examining some factors that restrict the political participation of diaspora communities. Finally, the third part builds on these foundations in order to analyse the different ways in which they participate. These include both indirect and direct participation in political affairs.

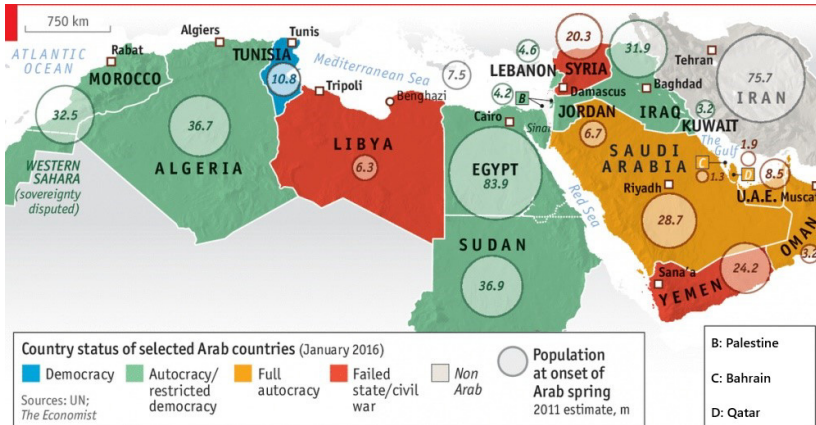
Before delving into these questions, two preliminary remarks need to be addressed. A first remark concerns the terminology used. One could say that the meaning of the word 'diaspora' has dispersed itself, as the term is being used in many contexts. The article has opted for Dumont's definition of diaspora as 'a community of individuals living together on the same territory and having in common the conviction or belief or belonging, themselves or their families to another territory with which they maintain regular relations' (Rigoni 2013: 5). This definition encapsulates the multi-faceted character of the phenomenon 'diaspora' and hence leads to a second remark regarding the scope of this research. The focus of the article is on the political participation of diaspora communities and their contribution to processes of democracy building in their home country. Although the study of diasporas raises important questions in relation to identity, integration and political participation in the host country, and even to the old Westphalian notion of sovereignty itself, these questions are beyond the scope of this research.

## 2 Foundations of the political participation of the diasporas

The United Nations (UN) estimates the diaspora population from MENA countries to be around 20 million individuals, 5 per cent of the total population in the region (World Bank 2016). This constitutes 10 per cent of the total migrant population in the world. As Middle Eastern countries go through new processes of transition from authoritarian regimes after the Arab uprisings, the question arises as to what role this growing number of citizens abroad play in influencing the political processes in the

region. Examining the composition and origins of these communities will shed light on the social, political and economic foundations of the mutations of the participation of the diasporas in transitional processes in the MENA region after the Arab uprisings.

Figure 1: Governance status of selected Arab countries

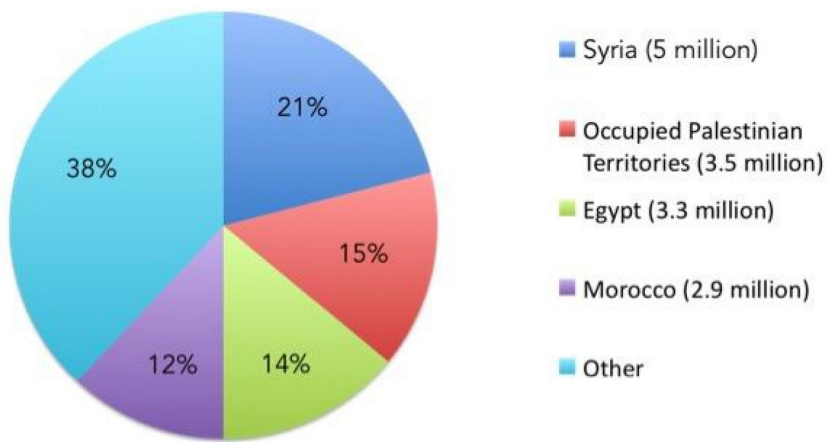


## 2.1 Social background to migration and political participation in the MENA region

Just over half of these migrants (53 per cent) remain in the region, especially in Gulf countries (IOM 2016), which are some of the wealthiest economies in the MENA region. The primary destinations of the other half of the migrant population from the MENA region are European countries (mainly for migrants from North Africa), Turkey and North America. The migrants' destinations, both in the Arab world and abroad, suggest that whether forced by conflicts or unemployment, migrants seek to settle in countries with social, political and economic stability. The numbers vary: The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) (2016) estimates that most migrants from the region come from Syria (21 per cent or 5 million); Egypt (14 per cent or 3.3 million); and Morocco (12 per cent or 2.9 million). These figures (see Figure 2) on the one hand show that it is not only conflict that has driven people to migrate but that it is a mix of political and economic factors. Furthermore, they draw a picture of a political and economic situation which is volatile throughout the MENA region, even in countries such as Morocco which are comparatively more stable and resilient on a political level. The variety of backgrounds, the reasons for emigration and migration routes pose a challenge to any research seeking to capture the uniqueness and specificity of the political role played by the diaspora in the Arab world (Dalacoura et al 2017). Therefore, the article focuses on overall trends as supported by existing case studies on specific diasporas. However, a further inquiry should be conducted into how diasporas are shaping the political transition of each country, especially in the post-war reconstruction of countries such as Syria, Libya and Yemen, and the democratic transitions in Tunisia and Egypt, among others. As their participation has long been disputed, the

changes occurring with the Arab uprisings constitute a potential major shift in the way in which diasporas not only are included in the political systems, but are also perceived within the contributions they provide.

Figure 2: Origins of migrants from the MENA Region (IOM 2016)



There have been several attempts at categorising and describing different types of diasporas according to their origins, the reasons for emigrating, or organisation (Sheffer 1993; Bruneau 1995; Cohen 1997). In the recent history of the MENA region, two main types of diasporas may be identified, namely, refugees and labour migrants, according to the economic and political factors surrounding their departure from their home countries.

On the one hand, since decolonisation many countries in the Arab world have undergone a history of conflicts which has created large diaspora communities settling all over the world. IOM figures show that at the end of 2015, 6 million refugees worldwide originated from MENA countries. Of these, refugees from Syria alone make up 30 per cent of the total number (IOM 2016), giving Syria a crucial space in the future of Middle Eastern politics. In Lebanon, the civil war (1975-1990) provoked new waves of emigration as some estimated 900 000 to 1 million Lebanese fled the country (Tabar 2011). These conflicts, therefore, created a community of expatriates who were forced to flee because of war or government repression. Moreover, the legal and social challenges faced by refugees in their host countries, including discrimination and stereotyping, often meant that they invested their energies in integrating in the new country while losing connections with their homelands.

On the other hand, economic imperatives created a different migrant community seeking employment abroad. Especially since the 1970s, the boom of oil production in the Gulf countries drove many people in neighbouring MENA countries to look for employment in the area. This trend found a parallel in new government policies in North African countries, such as Tunisia and Morocco, which forced people to look for

employment abroad and send remittances home in order to support the often-receding economies (Baldwin-Edwards 2005). In the case of Tunisia, bilateral agreements with European countries such as France (1963), Germany (1965), Belgium (1969) and The Netherlands (1971) regulated the flow of migrants to Europe and, with it, the inward flow of capital from remittances and relief from the local unemployment rates. The Fourth Plan of Bourguiba in the 1970s envisioned an annual planned emigration of around 60 000 labourers (Natter 2015). These migrants were closely monitored by the government to ensure the maintenance of economic – but not political – ties. The Office for Tunisians Abroad (OTE), launched in 1988, was an example of a government tool to encourage the diasporas' economic investment in the country by facilitating them. Similarly, initiatives by the European Union (EU), such as the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), have in recent years been developed to promote democratic governance and regional and international cooperation through economic and political reforms aimed at strengthening regional institutions.

While migrants from North West Africa (Algeria, Libya, Tunisia and Morocco) have traditionally settled in European countries, both because of their proximity and because of their colonial histories and ties, Egyptians have largely moved to oil-producing countries such as Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries or Iraq. These so-called 'labour diasporas', therefore, have a role in strengthening both the economic and social foundations of their position and involvement in their home countries and in the wider region. Cohen (1997: xii), for example, describes the position of Lebanese in West Africa and the Americas as 'prototypical cases of ethnic entrepreneurship that has been invigorated by the formation of diasporas'. On a social level, the IOM hints at the role they play in improving education (2018), including training as highly-skilled labour.

## 2.2 Going beyond the economic contributions of the diasporas

On an economic level, the communities maintaining links with their countries of origin have been the sources of significant remittances. In the case of Lebanon, remittances constitute 14,10 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP), making it one of the top 20 countries in the world receiving these remittances (Credit Libanais 2017). In the Maghreb, Morocco receives remittances equalling 6,8 per cent of the GDP (World Bank 2016b). Interestingly, Egypt has since 2010 appeared in the top 10 countries receiving remittances with a rising US \$12 (now \$16) million (IOM 2018: 31). In some cases such remittances are a significant source of income for families at home and of financial stability for the country, as they are considered more stable than other financial flows. Such economic contributions provided by the diaspora community help to legitimise their requests for participation in the political processes in order to express their vision, difficulties and needs.

This has led to more positive views on the importance of and contribution brought by diaspora communities. A recent World Bank report highlighted how the diasporas in the Middle East can be 'critical to fostering regional integration, entrepreneurship and economic growth'. The World Bank further suggested that 'governments and international development organisations must do more to strengthen their connections and partnership with the diaspora' (World Bank 2016a). However, these



views only pay attention to the economic role of the diasporas and, as such, miss an important element of their identity and involvement. Therefore, it is important that such recommendations always add political inclusion and civil rights. On the other hand, the influence of Gulf countries in post-uprising politics takes on a new light if contrasted with their economic role in the region. In fact, Saudi Arabia lists as one of the top three remittance-sending countries, with an amount of US \$38,79 billion. Kuwait and Qatar follow on the list of the top 10 (IOM 2018: 32). In this context, governments' inclusion (or exclusion) of citizens abroad in the political processes, such as by giving them voting rights in elections, becomes key in shaping how the transitional process will evolve.

### 2.3 Political significance of diaspora communities before and after the Arab Spring

On a political level, the Arab diaspora before the uprisings was partly composed of political opponents to the existing, authoritarian regimes. Even though they faced significant challenges, as will be explained by the next part, some political opponents continued their campaigns against the regimes from abroad and partly contributed to the democratic transitions stimulated by the Arab uprisings. In the case of Egypt, the uprising informed members of the diaspora with new tools of re-engagement in the political process. However, it also brought the new right to vote from abroad and the right to engage in the first elections in 2012 (Pages-El Karoui 2015; part 4.4.3 below).

Beaugrand and Geisser (2016: 2) highlight three major ways in which the diaspora communities played a relevant role in the uprising, by engaging in what they called 'distance politics' and mobilisation. First, they created a new space of activism from a distance, which meant the engagement of citizens abroad. Second, while governments' authoritarian rule had forced politically-active individuals to flee, regime falls encouraged many to return. Finally, the involvement and participation of diaspora communities helped to trigger the public debate on their civil and political rights to free speech and participation which, in some cases, resulted in legal changes.

A survey conducted by the World Bank (2016a: 16) investigated the effects the Arab Spring had on the willingness of diasporas to return to their home countries. The results reported that only one quarter of respondents believed that the uprisings stimulated an interest in the diasporas to return. Moreover, those willing to return, just under half of the respondents, stated that it would be for the purpose of opening their own businesses or for direct investments (World Bank 2016a). Although no questions about politics were asked, the answers suggest that those who did in fact return were persons who had been engaged in politics even before the uprisings and therefore were members of the opposition groups to the former regimes. Their new inclusion in the official democratic process, however, does not answer the question of inclusion of the less active sections of the population abroad. As Syria and Egypt appear in the top 20 migrant-producing countries in the world (IOM 2018: 19), the question as to their role in politics becomes critical, on the one hand, for the post-war reconstruction and transitional justice and, on the other, the post-revolution transition. In Syria, 65 per cent of the population is considered displaced (UNHCR 2018), which further adds complexity and

urgency to the question of their inclusion in transition. Recent studies on Syrians' engagement in Europe have shown, for example, that the diaspora is both being shaped by developments in the conflict in Syria, while at the same time providing an opportunity for peace, mediation and reconstruction (Ragab & Katbeh 2017). Similarly, the study on Tunisians in Germany sees their role in cooperation as 'bridge-builders' (Ragab et al 2013: 23) because of their proximity and understanding of both contexts.

Democratic participation is based on universal suffrage and, hence, the participation of all citizens in the management of public affairs. On a theoretical level, being abroad should not exclude citizens. The question of who is included, and simultaneously excluded, from participation in the political process is essential to understanding the type of democratic system being created. Doubts over the legitimacy of the participation of diasporas are pushed by the question of allegiance, which is the basis of the perceptions and trust in citizens living in a foreign country. The concept of diasporas having multiple allegiances to more than one nation is complemented by questions as to the motivation for their desire to be included in the system, especially in cases of economic investments and financial or political interests. In the case of post-Saddam Iraq, Shain and Ahram (2003: 661) discuss how diasporas had to 'withstand a withering test of loyalty' because of their links to America's 'harbouring imperial intentions'. Both democracy and political participation are eluding when it comes to defining these terms. Academic answers to the questions of 'what is democracy' and 'what constitutes political participation' are manifold (Van Deth 2016; Van Reybrouck 2013). However, this article does not aim to provide an answer to these questions, their fundamental character notwithstanding. Rather, it uses a classical notion of political participation, that is, the participation of state citizens in the management of public affairs through universal suffrage. Nevertheless, the social, economic and political bases of how diasporas are perceived and included or excluded from the political process are an important departure point for the reconceptualisation of their role and significance. The article will further trace their participation in transition as well as through the successes of the electoral processes or other avenues of engagement, such as lobbying and national dialogue.

### **3 Limits and perspectives of diasporas' political participation**

The uprisings of 2011 and the ripples that reverberated through the Arab world in the subsequent years changed the political role of several diaspora communities. Revolutionary voices from abroad, ongoing financial remittances to the home state and the inclusion of the migrant population in the electoral process could mean a positive contribution to democracy building of the diaspora population. On the other hand, there are also limits to the abilities of diasporas to drive the process of democratisation. This part sheds light on these limits.

#### **3.1 Transnational repression**

The observation that diaspora populations enjoy more civil rights, such as freedom of speech, than their compatriots at home, requires some nuance. Beaugrand and Geisser (2016) argue appropriately that diaspora populations can speak out more easily against repressive regimes. At the

same time, however, authoritarian regimes can manage to keep their nationals abroad in check. The case of Syria demonstrates that diaspora communities can be silenced through 'transnational repression' (Moss 2016). Transnational repression can either manifest itself in an indirect way or directly target expatriates.

First, authoritarian regimes might target dissident voices abroad indirectly by collectively punishing friends and family members at home (Alexopoulos 2008; Heckathorn, 1988; Khawaja 1993; Moore 1978). Amnesty International has documented personal stories from all over the world in which family members of Syrian expatriates suffered harm. Mamoun Jandali, a doctor living in Homs, and his wife, Linah Doubri, were beaten and maltreated after their son had participated in a protest in the United States (Amnesty International 2011). Sondos Suleiman, a Syrian woman living in Germany, saw all her family connections severed as her family in Syria was threatened due to her online activism (Amnesty International 2011).

Second, emigrants opposing the regime can equally be targeted in a direct way (Moss 2016). Embassy officials can survey protests and threaten those who speak out against the regime. According to the Association to Support the Syrian People (*Asociacion de Apoyo al Pueblo Sirio*), staff members of the Syrian embassy in Madrid took photographs of Syrians participating in peaceful protests in front of the embassy (Amnesty International 2011). Ahed al Hindi, a former political prisoner residing in the United States, even stated that during a protest in front of the Syrian embassy in Washington on 15 March 2011 an embassy official left the embassy building and walked straight up to him, saying: 'Ahed, let me take your picture'. The identification by embassy staff renders a return home impossible, as it was likely to lead to the arrest and punishment of blacklisted dissidents. However, this is not the only way in which embassy staff can take part in transnational repression. They can also complicate the lives of expatriates by hindering necessary administrative procedures. Imad Mouhalhel, for example, declared that the Syrian embassy in Spain refused to assist him with his visa application.

Finally, regime informers might very well be part of the diaspora community. Syrian community organisations abroad might have ties with the regime. A Syrian woman living in Ottawa, Canada, testified about a local Syrian organisation that went from door to door. The organisation encouraged fellow-Syrians to attend pro-Assad assemblies and intimidated those who participated in anti-regime protests (Amnesty International 2011). This spreads mistrust among the emigrants, as speaking out against the wrong national might result in endangering oneself or one's relatives.

The events of 2011 weakened the regime apparatus of 'transnational repression'. The protests across the Arab world have led to what Khan (2012) has described as a 'Diaspora Spring'. From the beginning of 2011 onwards, expatriate communities started to mobilise and became rapidly involved in home-state politics (Jörum 2015; Moss 2016). In other words, the uprisings were not always organised from abroad. Sometimes diaspora communities only decided to step in after protests at home had become widespread. The reason for this decision is clear-cut: The fear of pacing relatives at home in jeopardy could no longer act as a deterrent for expatriates, as their loved ones put themselves at risk by taking to the streets (Moss 2016).

In spite of these changes, some forms of transnational repression continued after the outbreak of the popular revolts across the MENA region. The stories mentioned previously exemplify that the repressive arm of Bashar al Assad's regime stretches well beyond Syrian borders. Both in the Americas and Europe, embassy officials played a role in surveilling diaspora communities. On numerous occasions embassy personnel filmed, intimidated and harassed Syrian activists. Because of the actions of their relatives abroad, people in Syria are being questioned and threatened by security forces. This indicates that, even though expatriates may enjoy civil rights in the receiving state, they might be hindered to exercise them by the home-state regime.

### 3.2 Negative reception context

In the second place, not only the home-state regime can determine whether expatriates speak out about injustice. Another factor, which Beaugrand and Geisser (2016) refer to as the 'negative reception context', equally plays a role in silencing the voice of diaspora populations. The attacks of 9/11 have had profound repercussions for Arab communities in the occident (Khan 2012; Moss 2016). Slama and Heiss (2011) write that '[a]n examination of Arab diasporas in the post-9/11 world almost inevitably directs one's attention to the global war on terror that has targeted Arab migrants and their offspring in particular'. This once more becomes clear in the controversial attempt of United States President Trump to impose a so-called 'Muslim ban'.

In this 'context of negative reception', Arab expatriates might rather focus on the integration process, rather than profiling themselves as critical citizens (Beaugrand and Geisser 2016). Expatriates might even opt for complete assimilation. In the hypothesis of assimilation, one could even question whether the term 'diaspora' remains appropriate, as assimilation implies a complete rupture with the former identity. Yet, it is precisely a common identity that constitutes one of the key characteristics of a diaspora community. Cohen (2001) states that 'a strong ethnic group consciousness sustained over a long time and based on a sense of distinctiveness, a common history and the belief in a common fate' is one of the common features of diasporas. It is not surprising that the integration policies of the host state also plays a role in this regard, since some states, such as France, have adopted a policy of assimilation whereas others might favour plurality (Müller-Funk 2016).

Furthermore, authorities of the host state might facilitate transnational repression (Moss 2016). The home-state regime might depict any criticism as stemming from Islamic extremists or terrorists (Khan 2012). For example, after the Casablanca bombings of 2003, the Moroccan monarchy used the terrorist attacks as an opportunity to frame the Islamic opposition party *Hizb Al-Adala Wa At-Tanmia* (Justice and Development Party) as a threat (Wegner 2011). Turkish President Erdogan has made a similar move by vowing 'to continue pursuing terrorists abroad' when talking about opposition members within the Gülen movement. He also declared that France is 'abetting terrorists' by receiving the *quwwat suriya ad-dimuqratiya* (Syrian Democratic Forces), a military coalition opposing the Assad regime, in the Élysée. Portraying any dissenting voices as a security threat can open up cooperation between concerned Western authorities and home-state security forces. Consequently, not only the integration

policies of the host state, but also the relationship between the host and home state come into play.

### 3.3 Regime type and the right to vote

Instead of repressing its diaspora population, a regime may decide to extend the right to vote to expatriates. Yet, the inclusion in the electoral process does not necessarily indicate a positive contribution to democracy building by the diaspora population. Even though the participation in the electoral process might hint at an expansion of rights and democracy, the rationale of the regime to extend the voting right to expatriates must be scrutinised critically. In this examination, Brand (2014a) has correctly argued that the regime type plays a key role. In spite of the events of 2011, no Arab country initiated a genuine process of transition, Tunisia arguably being the sole exception. Most regimes, with Lebanon and Tunisia being the contentious exceptions, are characterised as authoritarian. The motive for an authoritarian regime to extend the right to vote to expatriates may not be inspired by democratic aspirations. The concession of the right to vote to expatriates may be explained as a move to legitimise the regime (Brand 2014a). Additionally, by including them in the voting process, the regime can extend its control over the diaspora community.

In addition, the inclusion of the diaspora community in the electoral process does not necessarily foster political change. Inspired by the 2011 movements, Tunisia changed its electoral law. As explained in part 4.4.1 below, expatriates have received the right to vote, and 18 out of 217 seats of the constituent assembly and parliament were allocated to Tunisians abroad. In the 2011 election of the constituent assembly, the diaspora vote proved to be even more conservative than the vote of their compatriots at home. While in total the Ennahdha Party won 37,04 per cent of the total number of votes, Ennahdha received 8 out of 18 of the 'diaspora parliamentary seats'. Thus, roughly 44,4 per cent of the diaspora voters favoured the conservative Ennahdha. Thus, it becomes clear that the inclusion of the diaspora community in the electoral process does not imply a process of democratisation. In spite of their inclusion in the electoral process, expatriates remain 'more subjects than citizens' (Brand 2013), 'subjects' that might be less progressive than their compatriots at home.

Another determining obstacle to democratisation efforts of the diaspora are the characteristics of the diaspora group itself (Müller-Funk 2016). How are diaspora communities organised among themselves in host states and what are their ties to the home state politics? Internal division within diaspora communities might reflect political rifts in the home country. Internal strife and differing political allegiances hinder the diasporas to speak out with one voice. The peace talks concerning the ongoing civil war in Syria exemplify this. For instance, on 20 November 2017, a mere two days before the planned meeting of the High Negotiations Committee in Riyadh to form representatives for the upcoming Geneva Peace Talks, the General Coordinator of the High Negotiations Committee (HNC) resigned along with ten other members. Baeza and Pinto (2016) argue that 'the political mobilisation of diasporic groups unleashes a kaleidoscopic reconfiguration of their internal differences and divisions into new tracings of their boundaries'. In addition, it should be noted that regimes might reinforce divisions within diaspora communities to hinder the formation

of a unified, critical voice abroad. The next part will analyse the electoral processes and other ways through which diasporas have participated in the political processes of their home countries since the start of the uprisings.

#### 4 Forms of diaspora participation

The 2011 uprisings erupted in countries that had witnessed years of oppressive rule, in which governments often tried to build a facade of democratic governance to conceal the severe restrictions on civil and political rights. Tunisia, which sparked the wave of uprisings across the region, had been ruled by Zine El-Abidine Ben Ali for 22 years (1989-2011). Similarly, Egypt had been under the rule of Mohammed Husni Mubarak for 30 years (1981-2011); Libya under the regime of Muammar Al-Qaddafi for 42 years (1969-2011); while Yemen was ruled by Ali Abdullah Saleh for 33 years (1978-2011). Syria remains under the control of the Al-Assad family, with Bashar Al-Assad, who in 2000 succeeded his father's 29-year rule. By the end of 2010 the dissatisfaction about the ruling elites linked to economic and social factors led a large section of citizens to support the uprisings against these regimes. This part analyses how the diasporas of these countries contributed to this enormous change through both direct and indirect means, such as lobbying for inclusion in the electoral system, leading negotiations and campaigning online from abroad. In this way, diasporas played a significant role in the democratisation processes initiated since 2011.

##### 4.1 Indirect diaspora participation

Indirect forms of diaspora participation in the uprisings against repressive regimes consisted of social media activism; protests in the diasporas' host countries; lobbying to influence the policies of foreign countries to support the revolutions; and participating in national dialogue and political negotiations. A significant role the diasporas adopted was to advocate from their host countries. As part 2 elaborated, many members of the diaspora were not able to criticise the regimes of their home countries before the upheavals of 2011. Transnational repression was carried out by intelligence agents, who 'conducted surveillance through informant networks, threatened dissidents, forced them into exile, held their relatives hostage at home, and in some cases harmed dissidents directly' (Moss 2016: 493). Therefore, diasporas were not able to advocate or support any revolt actions against these regimes out of fear of what impact this would have on family members.

The uprisings of 2011 were exceptional as they allowed some diaspora members to break their silence. It became easier for diasporas to support the uprisings as their relatives in their home countries put themselves at risk by clamouring the slogan 'The people want to overthrow the regime'. Diasporas organised protests in many host countries, advocating a revolution and showing the world that they sought to build democratic states with equal citizenship rights and freedom for all. It should be noted that this was one way in which to influence the host countries' policies in accepting and supporting the revolutionary waves against existing Arab regimes. A major method used by diasporas to break the silence was through cyber activism.

## 4.2 Diasporas' cyber activism

Social media helped protesters to organise meetings and exchange information about gathering locations in order to quickly and easily move from one place to another as they were targeted by the regimes. However, during the first days of the revolts, some regimes blocked social media outlets, such as Facebook and Twitter, in addition to imposing heavy censorship on the internet. 'On March 3 almost all internet service throughout Libya went down. Many phone systems suffered disruptions, and communication from Tripoli to East Libya was cut off entirely' (Eriksson et al 2013: 28). Also, governments hacked some blogs and Facebook pages and changed activists' passwords.

The diasporas contributed to supporting the Arab uprisings from abroad by drawing the world's attention to the movements in their home countries through their cyber activism. Those living abroad stayed active on social media to lead the movements and ensure mobilisation on the ground in their home country. Malik (2014: 197) concluded in her research:

After a thorough examination of scholarly research, individual narratives, news articles, videos, and social media users themselves, this paper finds that social networking played an integral role in the Arab Spring revolutions. It was utilised by both local citizens and people abroad to stay connected and learn information.

Active participation through social media allowed more efficient and faster dissemination of information. Diaspora communities had easier access to a more reliable internet connection, which assisted in continuing advocacy and spreading more information about the revolts, particularly during the absence of those in the home countries due to the regime's censorship.

## 4.3 Participation in national dialogue, political negotiations and lobbying

Apart from cyber activism, diasporas also found a way to participate politically through negotiations, lobbying and fora of national dialogue. As a result of the Arab uprisings, the diasporas had the opportunity to play an influential role as they found a more open sphere for political participation. Consequently, a section of the diasporas returned from exile to participate in national dialogue or to run for elections in their home countries, such as in the cases of Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen and Libya. Others continued the struggle to overturn the authoritarian regimes, including by lobbying for their case abroad and taking part in political negotiations with the regimes themselves, such as in the case of Syria. The cases of the most prominent countries to witness the uprisings will be examined, namely, Tunisia, Syria, Yemen and Egypt.

### 4.3.1 *Tunisia*

The diasporas that were active from abroad could safely participate in the political processes of their home countries from their countries of exile. Members of the Tunisian diaspora returned home after the start of the uprisings, including figures of the Islamist party, Ennahdha, which had been banned in 1989 during the rule of Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. As in the case of other opposition figures, the party had faced oppression, arrests,

military trials and exile by the previous authoritarian regime. After Ben Ali had been ousted, the leader of Ennahda, Rachid Ghannouchi, returned to Tunisia after 22 years in exile. Ennahda obtained official recognition and started operating on 1 March 2011.

The Tunisian diasporas participated in the national action that was aimed at organising and facilitating democratic transition in Tunisia through the Higher Authority for Realisation of the Objectives of the Revolution, Political Reform and Democratic Transition, which included different spectrums of the society: political parties; syndicates; associations; activists; and public figures. As will be outlined, diaspora members played pivotal roles in post-2011 Tunisia.

#### 4.3.2 Syria

Since the beginning of the uprisings in Syria, parts of the Syrian population experienced lethal oppression. In many countries the numbers of Syrians abroad have since then increased significantly, particularly in countries neighbouring Syria. As mentioned above, the IOM has found that most migrants from the region come from Syria. The Syrian diasporas struggled to contribute to political dialogue and negotiations as well as international lobbying and advocacy for the Syrian revolts against the regime. The revolutionary impulse, however, resulted in further efforts and aspirations to build a democratic government devoid of oppression. Syrians that more recently fled, along with those already in diaspora, attempted to enhance the opposition forces from abroad, and coordinate the movement in their homeland.

The Syrian opposition abroad formed different coalitions. Different meetings were convened in order to strengthen unity and improve organisation. In political dialogue and negotiations, coordination took place between different groups to delegate representatives and form an opposition. The National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces was formed shortly after the uprisings against Assad's regime started. This Coalition included a wide range of opposition factions and was founded in Doha, Qatar, in November 2012. This National Coalition was recognised by many countries as being representative of the Syrian people. In December 2015 the High Negotiations Committee was founded in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, which acted as an umbrella body to represent the Syrian opposition in the planned Geneva peace talks in 2016. The opposition coalition has worked on lobbying to influence foreign countries' policies on the Syrian Revolution and their stance towards Assad. Despite the attempts of these opposition groups to form a united coalition against the Syrian regime, internal divisions and factions proliferated among them due to differing points of view.

#### 4.3.3 Yemen

Shortly after the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative Agreement was reached in November 2011, some members of the Yemeni diaspora returned to the country in order to contribute to the democratic transition process. The agreement sought to ensure a peaceful transition by dividing power equally between the regime and the opposition. Furthermore, the agreement provided the resignation of President Ali Abdullah Saleh, who had ruled Yemen for 33 years. One form of this political involvement was



through the National Dialogue Conference (NDC) in 2013, which included all parties and lasted for about nine months in Sana'a, the capital of Yemen. For instance, the southern political figure, Ahmed Bin Fareed Al-Suraimah, who had been in exile since the Yemeni civil conflict between the northern and southern parts in 1994, returned to Yemen in 2013 and participated in the conference. He later withdrew due to contrasting points of view regarding the national dialogue process, in particular the 'Southern issue', as he believed the NDC did not meet the Southerners' demands. Similarly, the former Prime Minister of the Unification in 1990, Haider Abu Bakr Al-Attas, returned from exile after having fled the country in 1994 due to the conflict with Saleh's regime. He is currently politically active within the presidential advisory.

Another form of political participation of the Yemeni diaspora after the Arab uprisings is the formation of coalitions and the proposal of political negotiation initiatives in their host countries. Prominent political figures held meetings to discuss and initiate actions on critical national political issues. To some extent, this helped in converging views. For example, the former President of Southern Yemen during 1980-1986, Ali Nasser Mohammed, who is still in exile, regularly meets with Yemeni political figures. He has previously proposed political settlement initiatives to end the conflict in Yemen based on the shifting situation on the ground. At present, the majority of Yemeni political figures are in exile due to the ongoing conflict since March 2015, and many of these are not able to return home as there is no safe sphere for political participation. Even the President of the state, Abd Rabbu Mansour Hadi, is out of the country. Various political meetings and peace negotiations are taking place abroad between the conflicting parties to seek the establishment of a political settlement and conflict resolution. Generally, the Yemeni diaspora remains active despite their struggle to engage in political processes since the start of the revolution in 2011. Many of its members returned to Yemen after former President Saleh had been ousted in 2012, but since 2015 more people have been exiled and remain out of the country as the conflict persists.

#### 4.3.4 *Egypt*

During the Arab uprisings, and particularly during the revolt against Mubarak's regime in late 2010, the Egyptian diaspora supported the revolt through organised protests in host countries. Despite the regime's strategy of blocking social media outlets to repress dissent and any form of mobilising, the diaspora used social media to amplify the voice of the Egyptian people and to spread it worldwide. Some were inspired by the revolution to return to their home country and contribute to the democratic transition and the new social and political arena after the ousting of former President Mubarak. Wael Ghunim, the administrator of the 'We Are All Khaled Said' Facebook group, left his employment as regional marketing director for Google in Dubai in order to participate in the 25 January protest. Canadian-Egyptian writer and university professor, May Telmissany, tells a similar story, recounting how '[a]fter the revolution, I wanted to go back home and participate in the struggle against the dictatorship' (Pagès-El Karoui 2015). The Egyptian opposition leader, Mohammed El-Baradei, also returned to Egypt and joined the anti-government protests.

Both during and after the 2011 movements, the Egyptian diaspora worked on establishing associations and organisations in the political and economic development realm of their home countries. 'In France, numerous associations were created in the wake of the revolution (the Committee for Solidarity with the Struggle of the Egyptian People, the Association of the 25 January Youth, the Tahrir Square Movement, etc' (Nada 2013: 176). Similar occurrences also took place in the United States (Nada 2013: 176):

The Egyptian American Rule of Law Association (EARLA) invested itself in the promotion of the rule of law in Egypt; the American-Egyptian Strategic Alliance (AESAs) aimed to influence political relations between the United States and Egypt in order to encourage security, stability and mutual prosperity in both countries and promote democratic values; a group of entrepreneurs launched NEGMA (Networking, Entrepreneurship, Growth, Mobilisation and Action) at a conference in March 2012 at MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), with the goal of connecting Egyptian businessmen with their expatriate counterparts.

However, the political environment discouraged diasporas from returning to their country, and many decided to leave the country for the second time due to frustration and political oppression. In particular, supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood sought refuge abroad as many leaders and members of the group faced harassment, arrests and sentences shortly after the overthrow of the Muslim Brotherhood president, Mohammed Morsi, by the Egyptian Army under Abdelfattah El-Sisi, who is currently Egypt's President. In September 2013 the military regime banned the Muslim Brotherhood Organisation. Morsi, the Supreme Leader of the Muslim Brotherhood Organisation, Mohammed Badie and other party members are on trial.

#### 4.4 An overview of diasporas' direct political participation

Besides a certain behavioural change in indirect political participation, the 2011 uprisings also brought about changes to the types of direct engagement of the diasporas. Therefore, this section aims to revisit the forms of direct political participation among Arab emigrant communities and their effectiveness by examining the changes in MENA government policies towards diaspora inclusion in the political system in the aftermath of the 2011 uprisings. It will revisit government policies towards political participation of diaspora communities and how these policies were influenced as a result of the 'reform processes' that took place after 2011. As the examples show, the diasporas were not significant game changers, however powerful they may be, since their 'inclusion' was often constructed by the new regime as a façade in order to derive a seemingly broader, yet artificial legitimacy.

Emigrants' political participation can take different forms, manifested by financial support to political parties; lobbying and affecting public policies; conflict support; or sustaining post-conflict reconstruction (Vertovec 2005: 8-9). However, the most direct relation with the origin state remains participating in the electoral process, namely, by voting. Granting the right to vote to diasporas remains widely controversial, and can create complex political and legal implications. However, in the context of state building, or countries undergoing transitional periods, granting the right to vote to diasporas can stimulate a 'commitment to

democracy-building' (Francis 2015: 23). Thus, many countries around the world have been enacting laws allowing the inclusion of diasporas in the electoral process (Francis 2015: 23). Several electoral laws have been amended in order to create an opportunity for diasporas to vote.

#### 4.4.1 Tunisia

After the Jasmine Revolution in 2011 Tunisia granted the right to vote to expatriates in the parliamentary elections, and the new electoral law allocated 18 seats to Tunisians abroad (Jaulin 2016: 7). This inspired similar changes in other Arab countries. For the first time in Lebanon, the foreign ministry opened the door for external voters to participate in the 2018 parliamentary elections (*Daily Star* 2017). Syria held widely-controversial elections that were targeting expatriates. Lastly, Turkey has also campaigned over diasporas in previous elections (Koinova 2017). Ennahda won 89 out of 217 seats in the Constituent Assembly in Tunisia's first democratic elections. A member of the diaspora became Tunisia's first democratically-elected President. After Ben Ali had banned the Congress for the Republic Party in 2002, its founder and president, Moncef Marzouki, moved to France to continue his political struggle. Marzouki returned to Tunisia in 2011 and would remain the country's President until 2014. These actors from the diaspora contributed to the enhancement of democracy-building efforts in the country.

In the first instance, this step resembles a natural process of what the Arab uprisings aspired for: more inclusion and broader political participation. However, a deeper analysis is required in order to uncover hidden motives and to truly assess the legitimacy that is produced through elections. Brand (2014) discusses the symbolism behind reaching for the external votes of citizens abroad, by highlighting the surrounding circumstances of such a move. She first addresses how Tunisia turned to external voting in order to 'secure a plurality of seats in the constituent assembly' (Brand 2014b) in opposition to the Islamist Ennahdha party. However, this idea is debatable, as the Ennahdha party only won eight out of 18 seats in the parliamentary election of 2014 (National Democratic Institute 2015). Instead, the *troika* parties (Ennahda, CPR and Ettakatol) together won 15 of the 18 seats. In Libya, external voting was banned for people who live in Egypt or Tunisia under the pretence that 'these communities were close enough to return home to vote' (Brand 2014b). However, Brand explains the other possibility in which 'their proximity also made them most likely hosts of supporters of the toppled Gaddafi regime' (Brand 2014b). In both cases, diaspora voters became new targets of local and regional politics.

#### 4.4.2 Syria

The Syrian case is another example of how regimes – while re-inventing themselves – turn to external voices for their political agendas. The 2014 elections in Syria proceeded to give the world the impression that Syria is still politically functioning. However, external voting was not meant to legitimise the regime's position, but rather was 'inextricably linked to the ongoing regional and extra-regional power struggle' (Brand 2014b). These regional and extra-regional implications are also recognisable in the Turkish authoritarian model. Koinova (2017) explains that turning to

external voting is 'no longer [a] purely domestic political matter, but a part of Turkey's increasingly contentious foreign relations'.

#### 4.4.3 Egypt

In the Egyptian context, the right to vote for diasporas had been banned under Mubarak's rule, but was amended immediately after the uprisings in the elections of 2012, 2014 and 2018, eventually allowing diasporas to vote in presidential elections. In both the elections of 2012 and 2014, the Egyptian government encouraged diasporas to participate through targeted internet websites and media campaigns. In 2014 the turnout remained low, reaching 355 000 from an original 7 million Egyptians living abroad (Zohry 2012). Yet, Egypt

holds the record for the most OCV (out-of-country voting) votes since the revolution. Members of the Egyptian diaspora participated in the 2011 parliamentary elections, the 2012 Shura Council elections, the constitutional referenda in December 2012 and January 2014, and the presidential elections in 2012 and 2014 (Koinova 2017).

Müller-Funk (2016: 366) argues that Egypt has a history of restricting the political rights of expatriates as it 'extended external voting rights after a wave of massive campaigning in 2011'. This argument opposes the idea that the turn to external voting was initially incorporated in the politics of the new regimes. Nevertheless, the 'romantic' rhetoric that the Egyptian government used to collect external voices confirms that there has been a continuous role in the politicisation of diasporas. Brand (2014b) argues that 'authoritarian states in North Africa aim at cultivating emigrant loyalty through external voting rather than expanding meaningful political participation'. A response to the argument of Boccagni et al (2015: 3) is that there are moves through which states 'want to selectively and strategically manage what immigrants can and cannot do' by inventing new forms of relations.

#### 4.5 External voting as a method of legitimising new regimes

The escalating events in the MENA in 2011 added new layers of analysis regarding the institutionalisation of democracy in the region. Thereafter, the notion of 'democratisation process' and its functionality was contested in the public discourse. This has led to critical re-examinations of the political and institutional structures of Arab regimes. These dynamics have been studied and debated through multiple discourses, such as neo-institutionalisation, transitional studies, legal and political studies, and so forth. However, little attention has been given from a 'diasporic' perspective.

The political participation of diasporas that diffuses the traditional meaning of the state in its physical sense may be considered a significant method of assessment to the political and structural changes in modern politics, particularly in light of the need to do 'a rethinking of democracy as operation within and across borders' as suggested by Underhill (2016: 25). However, the incorporation of diaspora participation challenged the democratisation process and the reform initiatives proposed by the Arab regimes after the 2011 uprisings. Moreover, it portrayed new reflections to the understanding of democratisation in the absence of substantial procedures that are needed to promote equality, inclusion and broader

political participation. Additionally, it presents new political and power actors that could play a role in shaping the new political system and affecting social and political change. Seen from another perspective of evaluation, the inclusion of expatriates and emigrants in the electoral process may be used to assess attempts by the new regimes to exploit diaspora communities as new targets in order to present themselves in a 'democratic manner', thus creating a broader sense of legitimisation by allowing for broader political participation.

Interestingly, the Arab context is adhering to these remarks and questions, witnessing different elements that can make this discussion richer. For example, Arab emigrants are great in number, especially if one looks at the case of Egypt with 'one of the largest emigrants populations worldwide' (Müller-Funk 2016: 353). Their participation can lead to changes in turnout. In addition, social and political mobilisation towards the uprisings has been witnessed in different countries, where emigrants were included in the electoral process. This suggests that the diaspora should not be excluded in the assessment of the transitional and democratisation processes (Underhill 2016: 26, 30).

Dahre follows the engagement of diaspora communities to their 'origin' institutions by examining different phases of academic studies representing this relation. He suggests that studies in the 1920s and 1930s focused 'on how migrants adopted themselves to a new environment or were socially excluded' (Dahre 2007: 8). Later studies, particularly in the last decade, emphasised how emigrants maintained a continuous attachment to institutions that 'are not linked to the state in which they now are living' (Dahre 2007: 8). However, whether the first or the latter, diasporas continuously find themselves at a crossroads: to remain in the country of origin or in the host country. This duality, which leads to multiple interests and views, can 'shape their engagement and participation in social and political change' (Underhill 2016: 26). Additionally, diaspora communities, as Jonathan and Daniel Boyarin (2002) explain, 'exercise a distinct form of cultural power in order to maintain themselves'. The need for self-maintenance and their aspirations may be manifested in constructive political acts. Such acts can contribute to creating an aspired 'imagined community' (Anderson 1991). For example, Egyptian emigrants' engagement becomes a practice to concretise what the ideal Egypt would and should look like after years of dictatorship and authoritarianism.

In the historical run, diasporas played a 'significant part in the development of nation building in poor countries and in ones which have undergone major transformations' (Vertovec 2005: 7). They 'powerfully embody broader trends in the changing nature of nation-state' (Vertovec 2005: 10). It is therefore fair to acknowledge that diasporas are powerful actors and significant role players in the international political arena. Amin (2010: 12) suggests that their nature as a 'constructive, nonviolent force for democratic change should not be underestimated'. The importance of their political engagement is not only seen as an insurance for exercising their political and civil rights, but it gives a broader addition to the democratisation process in general. Rigone claims that this participation contributes to de-constructing any stereotypes, promoting peace and dialogue, and, most importantly, it makes people 'eager to promote in their countries of origin the values they consider positive in their country of

residence' (Rigoni 2013: 6). In this sense, diaspora communities could be regarded as 'bridges between their homes and residence which could help the "state-building processes"' (Amin 2010: 12).

Given this overview, is it correct to say that the means of direct political participation in Arab countries share similar characteristics? If this is true, then one has to question the governments' institutional structures that reproduce common behaviour. The change lies in amending the structure that leads to reproducing the same institutional behaviour. The change is not limited to the idea of demanding change and organising civil movements, but also entails follow-up procedures that include raising mass public awareness and address the roots of the problems that hinder liberties in a specific country. The argument is that voting as a form of direct political participation is not sufficient and does not guarantee achieving a public democratic choice. The idea of participation is to include all people in the election process, but the conduct of the voting process under controlled premises renders the idea of participation itself meaningless. Therefore, the participation by people itself is moulded into a tool to endorse the façade of legitimacy of undemocratic regimes.

## 5 Conclusion

Diasporas are entwined in the history of the MENA region. In fact, the very word 'diaspora' originally described events that took place in the region during the Classical Antiquity, such as the Assyrian captivity, the Babylonian exile and the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem by the Romans, which scattered the Jewish people. The return of one diaspora in the wake of World War II subsequently created another, namely, the Palestinian diaspora. Throughout the rest of the twentieth century, many more from the MENA region would leave their homes in order to settle abroad, due to either economic reasons, conflict or political repression. The multiplicity of reasons, routes and consequences of migration demonstrates that there is no single model for the diasporas' involvement in the political processes of a country. Yet, as Dalacoura et al (2017) highlight, it is important to analyse their role within the 'global identities' they shape and are shaped by in the attempt to clarify the extent of their political agency. This article has focused on overall trends as supported by existing case studies on specific diasporas. This allows some, albeit provisional, conclusions to be made.

The participation of diasporas is an important index of the evolution of the democratisation of the Arab world. However, the experiences following the Arab uprisings do not allow definitive conclusions to be drawn. First of all, starting from 2011, diasporas have shown an increased willingness and motivation to stand up against repressive regimes. They stood up against national or transnational oppression. The diasporic rallies and protests and the active social media participation presented a significant boost for these revolts. The Tunisian example seems to be exceptional compared to the other states that witnessed any form of uprising as it was the only one to go through all processes of elections, national dialogue inclusion, and the ongoing transitional justice process. Meanwhile, at least some part of the exiled diaspora had the opportunity to practise their political rights in their home country and even to participate in the process of transitional justice. Nevertheless, for other Arab countries experiencing uprisings,

efforts are still underway due to the ongoing civil war or the defiance of authoritarian regimes and the dire situation in countries such as Syria, Yemen, and Libya. Some diasporas of these countries are struggling to amplify the revolutionaries' voices and trying to come to terms with the events that took place in their home countries.

The Arab movements unleashed in 2011 aimed to change the political behaviour of MENA governments towards their people. The fall of some regimes threatened the existence of other regimes, which forced these regimes to initiate a process of democratisation in order to confront potential civil movements. One of these 'democratisation processes' is re-introducing external voting in elections, supposedly aimed at broader participation, and re-affirming sovereignty. In general, the inclusion of emigrant populations in the electoral processes in their home countries contributes to the democratisation of the elections process, as it means opening the door for dissenting voices in the diaspora to participate in democratic state practice. This is especially relevant when it comes at a time in which diaspora communities are aware of the power they exert in mobilising and influencing public discourse, for example by raising awareness of human rights violations and democratic deficits in their home countries.

Even though in a globalised world diasporas could play an important political role, they also face several obstacles. First, although at least a part of the diaspora broke the silence after the 2011 movements in the MENA region, transnational repression persists and silences people abroad. Second, emigrants from the MENA region often find themselves in a context of negative reception, which prevents them from becoming active citizens. Third, the inclusion of diaspora communities in the voting process does not necessarily foster political change. The inclusion might either be an attempt by the regime to create a democratic façade, as was the case in Syria, or to give expression to a more conservative voice, as in the case of Tunisia. Lastly, internal division within the diaspora impedes a firm, unified opposition from abroad. An objective evaluation of this participation will make it possible to draw the right lessons from the mutation of the diasporas' participation in order to perfect the modes of this participation. Diasporas could offer new perspectives on shaping and constructing domestic politics and local regimes. Further inquiry should be conducted on how diasporas are shaping the political transition of each country, especially within the post-war reconstruction of countries such as Syria, Libya and Yemen, and the democratic transitions in Tunisia and Egypt, among others. As their participation has long been disputed, the changes occurring during the Arab uprisings potentially constitute a major shift in the way in which diasporas not only are included in the political systems, but are also perceived by the contributions they provide. These constitute pressing issues for the future and the evolution of democracy in the region.

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# The European Union diaspora dilemma: To dodge or to dive in

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**Abstract:** *The European Union member states have long been confronted with the phenomenon of diaspora resulting from both emigration and immigration. For centuries European communities have settled outside of the EU, almost creating 'little homelands' in various corners of the world. The same has occurred and still occurs with diasporas originating from third countries and residing in EU territory. A further feature makes the EU context unique when it comes to diasporas, namely, the opportunity for EU citizens to freely move across the borders of member states due to free mobility policies. The possibilities presented by free mobility have led to the formation of many diaspora communities in EU member states coming from other EU member states. However, over the past years much more attention has been devoted to large 'immigrating' diasporas, given the increased influx of migrants from third countries. This article analyses the approaches of member states and the EU as an organisation towards diasporas and diaspora engagement, including the question of whether any clear policy frameworks to mobilise diaspora actors exist. The first part provides a brief mapping of the 'EU diasporas', while the second part focuses on the various diaspora policy strategies adopted by member states when dealing with their own diasporas and those within their territories. By then studying the cases of France and Bulgaria, the article answers the first research question: What is the relationship between EU member states and diasporas within their policy frameworks? The last part examines the diaspora issue at the institutional level of the EU, answering the second research question: What is the relationship between the EU and diaspora within its policy framework? This question is of particular interest since the diaspora topic has garnered increased attention in the context of several EU high priority issues and because the EU regularly provides guidance for its member states through policy making.*

**Key words:** European Union; diaspora; democracy; migration; policy

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## 1 Introduction: The peculiarity of diasporas in the European Union

For centuries the member states of the European Union (EU) have been confronted with the phenomenon of diaspora resulting from both emigration and immigration. While for years European communities have settled outside of the EU, almost creating 'little homelands' in various corners of the world, the same has occurred and still occurs with diasporas originating from third countries and residing in EU territory. In addition to this twofold situation, a further feature makes the EU context quite unique as far as diasporas are concerned, namely, the opportunity for EU citizens to freely move across the member states due to free mobility policies. This, in turn, has led to the formation of many diaspora communities within EU countries coming from other EU member states. However, putting aside internal movements, over the past years much more attention has been dedicated to large 'immigrating' diasporas, given the increased influx of migrants from third countries (Eurostat 2018).

Therefore, the aim of this article is to analyse the approaches of both member states and the EU, as an organisation, towards diasporas and diaspora engagement, including the question whether any clear policy frameworks to mobilise diaspora actors exist. In order to do so, the article adopts a comparative approach, including two case studies, which examines different migration flows and the diaspora policies of the EU in light of those of its member states. The article begins with a brief mapping of 'EU diasporas' to show the complexity of this reality in the EU context. This examination is necessary to further understand the unique situation of the EU within diaspora research. In order to provide such mapping, existing research on emigration and immigration movements, closely linked to diaspora, is examined. Although not every group of migrants falls within the definition of 'diaspora' as described below, statistics on migration movements can still provide a useful starting point for diaspora research.

Based on the different scenarios present in the EU, the second part of the article focuses on the identification of the various diaspora policy strategies adopted by member states when dealing with their own diasporas as well as those within their territories. Two case studies are provided in order to answer the first research question of this article, namely, what the relationship is between EU member states and diasporas within their policy frameworks. The countries examined provide two fundamentally different scenarios, which offer a good sample of the diversified approach of the member states towards diasporas. To this end, France and Bulgaria were selected. The former is a founding member of the EU, with a long history of immigration and with a large diasporic presence within its territory. The latter, which more recently joined the EU, has by contrast experienced substantial flows of emigration of national citizens instead. However, as this study shows, the assumption that the cases differ to a large extent in terms of policy frameworks can be neither confirmed nor refuted. Overall, differences in their approach exist, particularly with France employing more elaborated policies regarding diasporas within its territory due to immigration being the focus of its political agenda. However, notable similarities are also present, especially with respect to education-related policies.

The last part of the article examines the institutional level of the EU, answering the second research question, namely, what the relationship is between the EU and diasporas within its policy framework. This question is not only of interest since in general the EU regularly provides guidance to its member states through its policy making. What is more, the inclusion of the topic of diasporas in EU-level policies seems useful, given its close link to some of the Union's current high priority issues, such as security, development and migration. However, not only does an explicit diaspora policy not exist at the EU level but, as the article shows, the overall consideration of the role of diasporas in other EU policy areas is rather sparse.

For the purposes of this analysis it must be noted that there is not a unanimously agreed-upon definition of the term 'diaspora' (Taylor et al 2014: 3f). What will be used here, unless otherwise specified, is the definition given by French scholar Gérard-François Dumont, who defines diaspora as 'a community of individuals living together on the same territory and having in common the conviction or belief of belonging, themselves or their families to another territory with which they maintain regular, symbolic or mythological relations' (Dumont 2014).<sup>1</sup>

## 2 Mapping diasporic communities in the European Union

When engaging in a discussion on diasporas and related policies in the context of the EU, it is useful to understand how this phenomenon manifests itself throughout the region. It is necessary to recognise where the main diasporas are located as well as where they originated from, as these factors largely determine the nature and type of policy frameworks adopted both at the EU and national levels. This part will thus provide a general mapping of EU diasporas with the aim of highlighting the complexity of the situation.

Indeed, the EU holds a peculiar position compared to other regions of the world as it has a significant and long history of both emigration and immigration, thus creating a twofold situation in terms of diaspora presence: Some member states may be viewed as mostly receiving countries, while others may be viewed as mostly sending countries. Since recent research on the geography of diasporas in the EU (such as that of Taylor et al 2014) has focused mainly on non-European immigrant communities, less information is available with regard to EU nationals themselves as diasporic communities both inside and outside the EU. While studies on emigration statistics provide useful indicators, one must bear in mind that not all migrants fall within the definition of diaspora.

To better understand the composition of diasporas in the EU, a further distinction for the sake of clarity is needed. On the one hand, one may identify diasporas originating from EU member states as a consequence of emigration ('emigrated diasporas'), among which two sub-groups may be

1 Translated from the French by the authors. Original text cited by Dumont (2014) from one of his earlier works, 'Ensemble d'individus vivant sur un territoire et ayant en commun la certitude ou le sentiment d'être originaires, eux-mêmes ou leur famille, d'un autre territoire avec lequel ils entretiennent des relations régulières, symboliques ou mythologiques'.

identified, namely, (i) 'internal diasporas', formed as a consequence of internal migration movements from and to other member states; and (ii) 'external diasporas', meaning diaspora communities that emigrated outside of the EU. On the other hand, there are diasporas originating from outside the EU due to immigration ('immigrated diasporas').

As far as 'internal diasporas' are concerned, research focusing on emigration movements has observed that in the past decades, EU nationals have predominantly emigrated to other member states, particularly due to the free movement policies adopted at the EU level (Koikkalainen 2011), the wave of new accessions, as well as the more recent Euro-zone financial crisis (Weinar 2014: 7f). The collapse of the Soviet Union and the subsequent state accessions to the EU in the early 2000s coincided with a rise in EU internal migration, which in certain cases led to the formation of diasporic communities (Favell 2008). EU 'internal diasporas' thus mainly originate from eastern EU countries (such as Poland, Bulgaria and Romania), but also, more recently, because of the Euro-zone crisis, from southern EU member states (mainly Greece and Portugal) and Ireland. Their main destinations are 'richer' member states in the western and northern EU, with Germany, the United Kingdom (UK) and France most commonly selected (Weinar 2014: 7).<sup>2</sup>

With respect to 'external diasporas', data is available only with regard to emigration flows. It has been found that the longstanding main destination countries for EU nationals have been the United States (US), Canada and Australia, as well as Argentina, with the US being the top destination in 19 out of 28 member states (Weinar 2014: 7). However, it should be kept in mind that the most prominent cases of 'external diasporas' of EU citizens were more a phenomenon of past centuries. In most cases, such communities have largely been assimilated by the receiving country and maintain weak ties with the homeland (Fassmann & Münz 1994). Today, however, mostly due to the ongoing economic crisis affecting some EU member states, new emigrating waves outside of Europe towards the above-mentioned destinations may lead to the formation of new diasporic communities of EU citizens. Therefore, this phenomenon should not be ignored.

With regard to EU diasporas originating from third countries and settled in EU member states, the situation is equally diverse. Indeed, the migration flows of the past decades towards Europe have greatly increased diaspora levels across member states and, with it, the attention of policy makers. Research has found that the largest diaspora communities present in the EU are Turkish, Moroccan and Filipino diasporas, with the first group spread over 19 member states. However, other considerably large groups also originate from India, Pakistan, Algeria and Egypt. Not surprisingly, the receiving countries again are mostly western and northern EU member states, particularly Germany, the UK, France and The Netherlands. Significantly, large diaspora communities can also be found in Portugal, Spain and Italy. Eastern EU member states, on the other hand, do not host very large diaspora groups besides those coming from their neighbouring countries (Taylor et al 2014: 23f, 28).

2 The geographical classification of EU member states as 'northern', 'eastern', 'southern' and 'western' reflects that adopted in Taylor et al 2014: 20.

It may be concluded that the EU is a mix between receiving and sending states (with the former being predominantly western and northern member states and the latter mostly eastern and more recently southern member states), with a plethora of diaspora communities originating from both inside and outside of the EU. Such a diverse and complex context poses great challenges at the policy-making level. The next parts address this issue further by giving a brief overview of the different diaspora policy frameworks adopted by EU member states towards engaging their own diasporas abroad and those living within their territories. Two case studies are then presented to compare the approaches of a receiving and a sending member state towards their immigrated and emigrated diasporas. Finally, the article discusses the question of whether the EU has a harmonised policy framework for engaging with diasporas at the institutional level.

### **3 Diaspora policy frameworks among European Union member states: A multifaceted approach**

As the previous part illustrates, the EU offers a very diverse scenario in terms of diaspora geography. Consequently, substantial differences in the nature and the extent of diaspora policies and strategies exist. Governments engage to different degrees with their diasporas abroad and the communities in their countries, mainly based on what they choose to prioritise.

Diaspora scholar Agnieszka Weinara has usefully divided policies towards emigrated diasporas into two main categories: diaspora-building policies and diaspora-engagement policies. Diaspora-building policies aim to strengthen the cultural ties of diasporas with their home countries to help build a sense of 'community'. They usually include those governmental strategies of which the 'focus is on catering for the cultural needs of the communities of the same cultural background abroad, such as language schools, national curricula schools or active cultural programs for diaspora'. Almost all EU member states have such policies in place, with the exception of Austria, Denmark and Luxembourg, where the task is left to private institutions. In addition, but less commonly, states have also focused on identity building for certain professional groups (for example in the Czech Republic). Diaspora-engagement policies usually take the form of citizenship and direct-democracy policies (more a focus of the Baltic states or Poland), but also human capital policies and entrepreneurial outreach, as in the case of France and the UK (Weinara 2014: 11-13).

Similarly, with respect to policies aimed at immigrated diasporas, a uniform and harmonised practice remains lacking. Policies aimed at third country diasporas usually vary depending on the political agenda, although some similarities can be identified. In particular, member states have mostly engaged and mobilised diaspora groups in the field of development-cooperation and capacity building for diaspora organisations (Sinatti & Horst 2015). These policies take the form of national strategies, the establishment of forums and mechanisms to engage diasporas for development projects. Policies aimed at promoting peace in the country of origin have also been a widespread practice. Researchers have found that the countries engaging more actively with diasporas in their territory are mostly the UK and France, but also Belgium, Italy, Germany as well as



northern member states such as The Netherlands, Sweden, Finland and Denmark. These countries also tend to engage only with the larger diasporas, or with those with which they have historical ties, as in the case of Zimbabweans in the UK or Congolese in Belgium (Vorrath 2012: 26).

Having assessed the variety of member states' approaches and policies of engagement with their own diasporas or the diasporas within their territories, the next part will provide two case studies: one on France and one on Bulgaria. As mentioned previously, the rationale behind this choice is to illustrate the diversity of diaspora policies through two presumably very different situations. Three common parameters were used in the comparison, namely, citizenship, voting, and education and culture for the diaspora communities. These parameters were selected as indicators of the overall attitude towards diasporas and because of their strong link to democracy, which is a common value to both countries analysed. In this sense, it is important to acknowledge that this article understands both France and Bulgaria as well-established democracies within the terms of the 1993 Copenhagen Criteria for accession to the EU. Furthermore, the chosen parameters pay due regard to the ongoing discussion in diaspora scholarship on the relationship between diaspora and democracy (Mohamoud 2009; Koinova 2009; Kapur 2010; Ukraine Democracy Initiative 2017).

#### 4 France: Keeping diasporas close, and the French diaspora (even) closer

Much like the EU, France has a long history as a country of mixed emigration/immigration flows that influences and is reflected in its diaspora policies. The circumstance of being simultaneously a receiving and sending country of diasporas, as well as some of the specificities of the legislative and policy options adopted, render the study of the French case particularly challenging.

France's mixed migration flows, and in particular its tradition as a receiving country of diasporas, are closely related to its history, economy and secular society. The latter, strongly influenced by the French Revolution, has contributed to the understanding of France as a safe haven for otherwise prosecuted diasporas (Cohen 2008).<sup>3</sup> The values of the French Revolution – liberty, equality and fraternity – have also found acceptance in the legislation, as French law prohibits the collection of ethnic or racial indicators (Conseil Constitutionnel 2007). Similarly, questions regarding religious membership have not been present in the census since 1872 (Farkas 2017: 14). Another important historic factor is France's colonial past, which still influences the country's geopolitics. The French territory not only is composed of metropolitan France, but also of the *départements, régions, territoires et collectivités d'outre-mer* (DROM-TOM), or overseas France. The communities originating from these regions are composed of French (and EU) citizens, and the migratory movement towards metropolitan France is officially seen as internal. Finally, it is also worth mentioning that the French legal system allows for

3 Eg, the Jewish community is particularly significant, with France being home to the third-biggest Jewish community in the world.

several pathways to obtaining French nationality, including *ius soli*, albeit subject to conditions (Rouhette & Rouhette-Berton (undated): French Civil Code articles 17-21). It also allows for and recognises dual citizenship, which translates into a 'rather liberal polic[y]' (Howard 2005: 710).

The aforementioned particularities have been legally enshrined to grant equality before the law and tackle racial, religious or ethnic discrimination, and thus represent good examples of France's diaspora engagement policies, and of the country's effort to support the integration and the democratic participation of immigrated diaspora communities. It is a fact that the recognition of the French citizenship of these individuals grants them access to certain social and political rights that are otherwise denied to foreigners, such as the right to vote (Rigoni 2013).<sup>4</sup> Nonetheless, some of these legal safeguards may hinder the assessment of the actual situation, the cultural and social diversity and identity, and potentially the needs, of these communities. Moreover, as Cohen (2008: 129) states regarding the rights of DROM-TOM citizens, 'it is important not to confuse formal rights with substance'. The reliance on formal rights, not accompanied by integration measures adapted to the specificities of the different communities, is linked to the failure of some of these diaspora engagement policies, as is illustrated by cases of radicalisation of French citizen members of diasporas. As Sheffer points out, 'when considering the motivations of Muslim fundamentalist groups in Europe ... it is hard to determine whether their members are motivated by pure religious sentiments or whether they are mainly concerned with the political and cultural rights of their co-nationals in their homelands and host countries' (Sheffer 2006: 122).

Despite the flaws in the French legislation described above and the fact that direct democratic participation is not in all cases possible, diaspora communities in France are also 'extremely well organised and institutionalised' (Frankenhaeuser et al 2013: 89). These diaspora associations often fill the integration gap left by the law.<sup>5</sup> France has capitalised on this, engaging the diasporas in co-development initiatives, which consist of 'promoting knowledge transfer, assisting the foundation of small-scale businesses in the countries of origin, and supporting the activities of hometown associations, capacity building and network efforts' (Keusch & Schuster 2012: 9). In fact, the country is a 'pioneer in involving diaspora communities in its development actions' (Frankenhaeuser et al 2013: 87) and these diaspora engagement initiatives are included in several policy documents.

As far as the French emigrated diasporas are concerned, France has been referred to as 'a country which does not acknowledge emigration', rather understanding the citizens' absence from France as temporary (Weinar 2014: 12). Consequently, legal, political, cultural and economic

4 French electoral law does not recognise foreigners' right to vote, the only exception being EU citizens, who can vote in local elections. The country has neither signed nor ratified the Convention on the Participation of Foreigners in Public Life at Local Level (Council of Europe 1992).

5 Eg, Berthommière, Maurel & Richard (2015) find a positive correlation between associativism and the identification with France and its institutions. According to the authors, this identification, on the other hand, plays an important role in the social integration.

ties to the country are preserved. In fact, 'France has a long history of granting political rights to its citizens abroad' (Beck & Weinar 2017: 12, 92). France not only allows its citizens residing abroad to vote, but also reserves twelve seats in the National Assembly for the representatives of the diaspora, and expatriates can also vote in local elections (Bauböck 2007: 2429).<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, it allows temporary migrants to choose between 'register[ing] abroad or vot[ing] for candidates in their home districts through postal voting or e-voting' (Beck & Weinar 2017: 92). The right to vote is even more extensive considering that French law allows for dual citizenship.

Connections with the diaspora are also preserved through diaspora-building initiatives, namely, through policies implemented in the areas of culture and education. In fact, there are 143 French institutes and French cultural centres in the world that are governed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Beck & Weinar 2017: 96). They promote the French language and culture. Furthermore, through the *Agence pour l'enseignement français à l'étranger*, French expatriates have access to a network of almost 500 schools worldwide, which are approved by the French Ministry of Education and teach French curricula (AEFE (undated)). These *lycées français* constitute a unique network and are envisaged not only to disseminate French language and culture outside of the French territory, but also to provide for the education of the children of French families abroad. The fact that the students of these schools are allowed to transition to the French national school system without any examination confirms the notion that French emigration is seen as merely temporary. Through these initiatives, a wide area of Francophonie is created, in which French expatriates act as ambassadors of the country, its language and its culture.

The above-mentioned particularities make the French case an interesting one. On the one hand, the country has invested in a policy of integration of the immigrated diasporas through a multitude of initiatives, such as broad access to French citizenship, legal guarantees of non-discrimination, or engagement in co-development policies. The main criticism against these policies, however, is the mere reliance on formal rights which, in some cases, has led to non-satisfactory results. On the other hand, the French diaspora has not been forgotten. The diaspora-engagement and diaspora-building initiatives listed above, sponsored or developed by the French government, reveal the government's commitment to foster the ties of its expatriates with their home country, either through democratic participation or through culture and education, with the *lycées français* functioning as bridges for the return of younger generations to the country.

## 5 Bulgaria: Base and building blocks of the Bulgarian diaspora policies

The dynamic history of the Balkan region has contributed to a complex migratory situation, and Bulgaria is no exception. Although only a few people emigrated during the Soviet-backed political regime, its collapse in

6 Other than France, only Portugal, Croatia, Italy and Romania allow for the representation of the diasporas in national parliaments (Rigoni 2013).

1989 triggered a substantial wave of Bulgarians to permanently leave their country. Since the EU accession in 2007, emigration trends have been comparably lower but constant, possibly contributing to the increasingly severe aging of the population and its decline (Alexander 2017; Usheva 2011: 4f).<sup>7</sup> The large Bulgarian diaspora community is now estimated to have reached unprecedented levels, with a larger number of Bulgarians working abroad than in the country (Novinite 2015). Arguably, some of the most notable issues for the Bulgarian diaspora include citizenship, voting rights and education.

Regarding citizenship, interestingly, *de jure* someone who is of 'Bulgarian origin' is necessarily a 'Bulgarian citizen', since the Constitution provides for two separate terms: 'a person of Bulgarian origin' (ethnicity) and 'a Bulgarian citizen' (legal status). While the latter has the full legal rights and duties attached to citizenship, the former refers to someone of an ethnic Bulgarian origin and identity, who does not have to be a Bulgarian citizen and yet has the right to apply for naturalisation through a preferential regime, such as a reduced administrative fee requirement and an exemption from proof of language proficiency (Smilov & Jileva 2013: 6-13).<sup>8</sup> This may be viewed as part of the national policy to permanently attract people of Bulgarian origin from neighbouring non-EU countries, so as to decrease negative demographic trends (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy of the Republic of Bulgaria 2006: 40; Ivanova 2015: 128). However, according to some authors this is also a symbolic citizenship aimed at 'settling historical scores with neighbouring countries' (Smilov & Jileva 2013: 16), most of them currently non-EU member states. Nevertheless, granting citizenship rights on a national level automatically leads to EU citizenship and political participation rights at EU level. However, according to article 9 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU) and article 20 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), the acquisition of citizenship falls within the exclusive competences of the member states and, hence, regardless of the underlying motives behind national citizenship policies, the EU cannot influence them.

Compared to France, Bulgaria can be said to grant fewer political rights to Bulgarians abroad. Currently, only in-person voting is possible (Rigoni 2013: 7), requiring travel to a designated polling station in the country of permanent residence, which in some instances has been hindered by excessively long queues preventing people from voting (Novinite 2016b). Moreover, since 2016 Bulgaria substantially changed its voting procedures, including the introduction of mandatory voting. Proposals to decrease the number of polling stations worldwide, which would have limited the participation of the Bulgarian diaspora, were withdrawn following civil society opposition (Spirova (undated)).

In the 2016 presidential elections, voter turnout was the highest in Turkey, with 14 700 votes, followed by the UK (3 400), Spain (3 200) and Germany with 2 000 votes (*The Sofia Globe* 2016). Although the Bulgarian

7 Despite these trends, Bulgaria has substantially failed to meet its asylum seekers EU relocation quotas. This may be due to the non-ethnically Bulgarian origin of asylum seekers from Africa and the Middle East.

8 Yet, it is interesting to note that the concept of 'Bulgarian origin' has evolved significantly. In 1940, when the country was still a monarchy, the meaning was 'all persons born of Bulgarian parents'.

diaspora abroad is unevenly distributed, and this undoubtedly impacts the voter turnout, in the case of Turkey, a more intricate set of historic reasons may play a role. Before 1989, the Soviet-backed ruling party introduced its policies of 'coercive assimilation' which included mandatory name changing for ethnic Turks, with the propaganda-based claim that this was a group of ethnic Bulgarians which has been forcibly assimilated by the Ottoman Empire (Smilov & Jileva 2013: 8; Bauböck 2007: 2441). After the fall of the Berlin Wall, many were 'allowed' to flee to Turkey and to obtain Turkish citizenship while retaining Bulgarian citizenship (Smilov & Jileva 2013: 7, 10). Some authors believe that the traditionally strong electoral support for the ethnically Turkish party in Bulgaria from the electoral votes cast in Turkey is an example of a minority using 'its external voting rights to bolster the representation of the minority remaining in the country' (Bauböck 2007: 2441). However, this view is questionable as it assumes a unified stance of the Bulgarian Turks in Turkey and implies that historical motivations are still crucial for the present position of this external Bulgarian diaspora group.

Given the complex migratory situation and the substantial size of the Bulgarian emigrating diaspora, there is a State Agency for Bulgarians Abroad and a special law for Bulgarians living abroad. Yet, arguably, a self-organised media forum, dating back to 2005, which relies on the facilitative role of world meetings of the Bulgarian Language Media (BGLM) is *de facto* more influential. The latter actively maintains the link between diaspora communities and the nation state, promotes BGLM journalists' coverage of the problems of the Bulgarian diaspora and has also contributed to the promotion of Bulgarian language, history and culture worldwide (Raycheva 2012). On the other hand, the Bulgarian state does not seem to focus on immigrating diaspora policies, which may be explained by a lack of societal interest in the matter. Perhaps the explicit goal of the Soviet-controlled government to 'create a homogenous one-nation state' and 'cultural purity' instilled a general perception that 'the real Bulgarian society' is mostly homogeneous, which has survived until today despite the country increasingly adopting EU policies on minority rights (Eminov 1997: 95; Dimitrov 2000: 5, 20). While this may be one possibility, some indications of an acknowledgment of the non-homogeneous nature of the society can also be found. For example, evening news in the Turkish language has been broadcast on Bulgarian national television for more than 17 years (Bulgarian National Television 2015).

As far as education is concerned, it is worth noting that Bulgaria provides university scholarships for academically outstanding high school graduates from third countries with an ethnic Bulgarian population to study in Bulgaria (Novinite 2016a). This seems to be an extension of the policy to reduce negative demographic trends. Very often ethnic Bulgarian communities, both inside and outside the EU, which are larger and in close geographical proximity, may have their own full-time or Sunday schools. For the 2017/2018 academic year the number of schools partially or fully financed by the Bulgarian state was 190 (Ministry of Education and Sciences of the Republic of Bulgaria 2017a). The state has also developed a national strategy, namely, 'Native language abroad', through which €750 000 (1,5 million Leva) are allocated for, *inter alia*, the support for the 'national, cultural and spiritual identity' of Bulgarians abroad by providing access to Bulgarian folklore-related musical instruments and

costumes, and dance and theatre classes (Ministry of Education and Sciences of the Republic of Bulgaria 2017b). In these areas, the support for the Bulgarian diaspora abroad has been notable, albeit arguably insufficient (Mintchev 2016:17). In addition, Bulgaria's 2018 presidency of the EU Council has been a missed opportunity to support the Bulgarian diaspora worldwide and to place diaspora issues on the EU agenda.

It may be concluded that the Bulgarian approach to diasporas is marked by a stronger investment in diaspora-building initiatives than in diaspora-engagement policies. The legal privileges of 'persons of Bulgarian origin', and the investment in Bulgarian schools and the promotion of Bulgarian culture abroad are examples of the general attempt to strengthen the ties of the Bulgarian diasporas with the country, despite some proposals to limit the political rights of those living abroad. At the same time, the country seems to be encouraging the emigration of ethnic Bulgarians, and underperforms when it comes to meeting its EU relocation quotas for asylum seekers that need human rights protection and would have a positive impact on the negative demographic trends. Moreover, the criticism that in the Bulgarian context formal mechanisms for diaspora engagement are less effective than non-formal measures such as the BGLM forum meetings may be an indication that the state needs to sponsor or develop more flexible initiatives, such as BGML, and a more engagement-centred approach such that of as the French. If Bulgaria builds more bridges, as is the case in France, to make the return of its youth and working age population easier, that may in the future partially offset the negative demographic trends.

The differences between the Bulgarian and French cases are evident. These can in part be explained by the two countries' contrasting realities, not only in terms of the migratory flows experienced, but also the historical, economic and demographic situations, which impact the adopted policies. Nonetheless, despite these differences, it is possible to draw parallels between the two cases, particularly regarding the big investment in diaspora-building initiatives directed at the countries' diasporas abroad. In both cases, the connection to the country is fostered through culture and education, with a strong focus on the promotion of the language. Furthermore, in both cases there indeed is an active acknowledgment of diasporas in terms of policy options, especially in the field of development. While France actively promotes the engagement of diasporas in co-development projects, Bulgaria actively attempts to engage its diasporas in the development of the country, namely, by promoting access to Bulgarian citizenship. Were the Bulgarian state to initiate an active diaspora engagement campaign similar to that of France, it would be sensible to exercise caution regarding the potential for Bulgarian populist rhetoric to exploit historical injustices and create ethnic tensions to the detriment of the Bulgarian-Turkish diaspora.

The two cases outlined above also illustrate how challenging the creation of a common EU diaspora policy would be since it would, in some respects, have to accommodate diametrically-opposing realities. Furthermore, many of these diasporas *de facto* consist of EU citizens and originate from internal EU migratory movements, which brings into

question the true meaning of EU citizenship, and the need to capitalise on this to the benefit of the internal market.<sup>9</sup> Nonetheless, the harmonisation at EU level would have to overcome legal constraints that, as was mentioned above regarding the question of citizenship, may even be enshrined in the treaties, and which the member states may not be willing to alter. However, the EU has shown an interest in engaging diasporas in some of its policies, and the following section sheds light on the developments in this area.

## 6 European Union and diasporas: A difficult relationship

While there is a broad range of distinct diaspora policies among EU countries, as it has been examined above, a comprehensive homogeneous diaspora policy is all but absent at the EU level. In the EU's legal regime, neither the TEU nor the TFEU contains provisions explicitly referring to diasporas. In addition, as will be shown at the end of this part, there seemingly is much reluctance on the part of the EU towards a stronger involvement in diaspora policies. This reticence disregards the fact that there is an apparent need to take action by the EU, which might play the role of a catalyst for the various policy approaches of its member states. Indeed, the EU is able to provide guidance for national diaspora policies, paying due respect to the economic, political, social and cultural character of diasporas. Such guidance is imperative to make the current patchwork of the existing policies more consistent, while incentivising member states that do not yet engage with diasporas to do so. Currently, it is up to each member state to choose its approach towards immigrating as well as emigrating diasporas.

The lack of a clear and active engagement at the policy level by the EU towards diasporas comes as a surprise in view of the obvious link between these groups and some of the EU's current high priority issues, such as security, development and migration. The link between these significant points on the Union's agenda and diasporas emphasises the necessity to include diaspora issues on EU policy level, as they could play a crucial role in successfully tackling these high priority issues. This would benefit both the EU and its members.

In addition, from the perspective of immigration, the need for a clear diaspora policy provided by the EU is supported by the fact that a significant decrease in the number of immigrants is not foreseeable in the near future. This seems true also despite the emergence of questionable border management, which is hostile to incoming migrants. Given the apparent link between immigration and diasporas, it is probable that diasporas will increasingly play a relevant role within EU borders.

With this in mind, the question arises as to what the current relationship is between the EU and diasporas within its policy framework. To answer this question, it must be noted that when it comes to EU-level policies with regard to its member states' emigrated diasporas, the EU almost entirely neglects the topic of emigration. Accordingly, the issue of

9 For example, according to the 2014 census, the Portuguese immigrant community is the largest one in France, with over 600 000 people. For further information see (INED n.d.).

emigration is absent from both EU legislation and its policy framework. Weinar (2014: 1) gets to the heart of the matter by stating that ‘emigration is hardly an EU-level affair’ at all. Indeed, emigration is covered neither by today’s comprehensive migration policy nor by EU legislation. This seems problematic, given the fact that there is an emerging need for EU member states ‘to be more proactive on emigration and diaspora policies’, especially in view of the emigration movements as a consequence of the economic crisis affecting some EU member states in recent years (Weinar 2014: 1).

Furthermore, it must be acknowledged that in the last two decades there has been a change in the EU’s overall approach towards the phenomenon of diasporas. For a long time the term ‘diaspora’ in EU documents was used primarily in the context of economics (European Commission 2000: 17).<sup>10</sup> This seems plausible given the fact that diasporas generated considerable revenues, thereby contributing to ‘stabilising local and regional growth’ (Weinar 2008: 16f). Besides, it must be kept in mind that the EU was born as an economic union and only at the end of the last century became a political entity. This was reflected, for instance, in the outcome of the 1999 special European Council meeting in Tampere, where the need for ‘a comprehensive approach to migration addressing political, human rights and development issues in countries and regions of origin and transit’ was agreed upon (European Council 1999). Since then, also due to the apparent link to development, diasporas started to enter the EU comprehensive migration policy, though only in passing (Weinar 2008: 17).

This weak inclusion of diasporas into EU migration policies can already be seen in the European Commission’s Communication ‘Integrating Migration Issues in the European Union’s Relations with Third Countries’ of 2002, which underlines the potential of diaspora cooperation. Accordingly, the Commission states that ‘[i]n order to really make the step into outward migration one needs contacts for practical advice and support. Usually the practical aspects of migration are facilitated by family contacts or the wider network of the migrant diaspora’ (European Commission 2002: 11). Moreover, in its 2002 communication, the Commission refers to the potential benefits for both sending and receiving countries to consider cooperation with diasporas. Thereby, it underlines the positive inputs migrants can provide in the local development of their home countries. It further underlines that in some cases governments of migrant-sending countries implemented ‘active policies to intensify contacts with their diasporas and to involve them in the national development process, both in economic and political terms’ (European Commission 2002: 16). Besides, the Commission mentions migrant-receiving countries and international organisations, which ‘have experimented with “co-development” schemes aimed at involving the migrant diasporas in the development process of their country of origin’ (European Commission 2002: 16).

However, as the remittance framework of the EU concerning the support of African diaspora organisations shows, such co-development activities were not undertaken within the domain of democratic

10 For example, regarding Kosovo: ‘Some Kosovars consequently emigrated to Western Europe to form a *diaspora* of high economic potential’ (European Commission 2000: 17).



governance and political institutions, but rather within the economic realm. Since the goal of the EU was the reduction of poverty and the improvement of livelihoods in receiving communities, interest on the part of the EU beyond the aspect of remittances with regard to migration and development was almost entirely absent (Mohamoud 2009: 9).

As things developed, the focus on the link between diasporas and development in the context of migration remained, albeit rather superficially. Nevertheless, while the 2002 communication lacked a definition of what is meant by diaspora, in 2005 the Commission gave some concrete orientations regarding migration and development, including a broad definition of the term.

Diaspora from a given country, therefore, includes not only the nationals from that country living abroad, but also migrants who, living abroad, have acquired the citizenship of their country of residence (often losing their original citizenship in the process) and migrants' children born abroad, whatever their citizenship, as long as they retain some form of commitment to or interest in their country of origin or that of their parents. In some extreme cases, 'people may still feel part of a country's diaspora even though their family has been living in another country for several generations' (European Commission 2005: 23).

Today, however, the EU Directorate-General Migration and Home Affairs refers to the definition provided by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), namely, 'individuals and members of networks, associations and communities, who have left their country of origin, but maintain links with their homelands' (Perruchoud & Redpath-Cross 2011: 30; European Commission Migration and Home Affairs (undated)).

Furthermore, the 2005 communication establishes four characteristics regarding diasporas. First, the Commission sees diasporas as transnational communities, which might guarantee the success of development initiatives (Weinar 2008: 17). This transnational character is also emphasised with regard to EU funding. For instance, the Commission prefers 'projects in third countries involving diasporas in two or more member states' (European Commission 2005: 8, 30). In addition, the Commission encourages diaspora development organisations to set up mechanisms 'that could ensure appropriate representation of their interests at EU level' (European Commission 2005: 6, 24). Second, the communication seems to distinguish between diaspora members and the narrower group of migrants, who are said to be more inclined to return to their home countries. According to Weinar, this distinction is to some extent problematic, as the latter group should be included with the former in view of the broad definition given above. This creates a certain ambivalence in the Commission's position (Weinar 2008: 19).

The third characteristic concerns the legal status of diaspora members. In this regard, the Commission not only acknowledges the need for support regarding the mapping of developing countries' diasporas, but also places an emphasis on the implementation of 'databases where members of diasporas ... can register on a voluntary basis' (European Commission 2005: 24). This seems to refer mainly to those individuals legally staying and working. Thus, for the Commission the legal status is an indicator of being part of the diaspora. Finally, for the European Commission the fourth special characteristic of diasporas refers to its organisational side.

The regular use of the term 'member of diaspora' in EU documents suggests that some sort of organisational structure or at least some collective identity is expected by the EU. Additionally, in the eyes of the Commission, diaspora organisations must fulfil a certain degree of qualification to be able to become a partner in the development policy of their country. Hence, the organisation has to be trustworthy and well-established (Weinar 2008: 19). The parameters to measure these requirements, however, remain unclear.

With reference to more recent EU activities regarding diasporas, an increased focus with regard to the enhancement of diaspora engagement in the field of development must be noted. This is underlined by the summit declaration made in the context of the 2014 Africa-European Union Strategic Partnership, which explicitly includes the commitment 'to ensure that human rights of all migrants, including those of the diaspora ... are fully respected' (Council of the European Union 2014: para 56). Furthermore, an action plan for the period 2014-2017 was adopted, which includes diasporas as one of its main priorities and asks for action with regard to '[s]trengthen[ing] EU and Africa policy frameworks and institutional capacities for enhancing diaspora engagement' (Africa and Europe in Partnership 2014: 4). Despite these important steps, results in the form of a clear, homogeneous diaspora policy provided by the EU are so far absent with respect to development as well as any other of the above-mentioned high priority issues. Indeed, in the latest goal-setting document published by the European Commission, the 2016 'Action Plan on the Integration of Third Country Nationals', diaspora is barely mentioned (European Commission 2016). This is evidence of the EU's ongoing reluctance towards the effective mobilisation and active engagement of diasporas.

In this regard, three common concerns are frequently expressed by EU officials and experts, as outlined by Vorrath with respect to EU development engagement with African diasporas. One of these seems to be the suitability of diaspora organisations as potential partners. Diasporas are regularly fragmented into sub-groups with multiple and sometimes even (partly) contradictory interests. Therefore, the task to identify an organisation holding a sufficient degree of undisputed, or at least widely-accepted, legitimacy and representativeness for the whole diaspora in a country may be fraught with difficulties. Moreover, one must keep in mind that the EU, being a supranational organisation, mostly interacts with governmental bodies rather than with non-state actors such as diaspora organisations. Indeed, the usual relationship between diasporas, their homelands and the receiving countries becomes more complex as soon as the EU enters the diplomatic stage. For instance, cooperation activities between the EU and diasporas could very well affect certain member states' interests. This is true especially with respect to those member states in which diaspora groups reside. As a result, the EU prefers classic diplomatic means to engage with diasporas, rather than addressing the issue on a policy level (Vorrath 2012: 23-25). In this context, it must also be noted that ultimately it is up to the member states to decide with how much power they invest the EU regarding its engagement with both immigrated and emigrated diasporas (TFEU 2012: art 5). In fact, the question of competences is closely related with that of member states' sovereignty, which is indeed a highly sensitive issue at the political level.

## 7 Conclusion: A call for a comprehensive European Union policy framework

To summarise, it seems that in the absence of a sufficient EU framework to address diaspora communities within the EU, member states are moving towards diaspora engagement at various speeds and from different directions.

The two case studies provide examples of countries with significant historical differences and, therefore, two distinct approaches to the needs of the diasporas. The most notable distinction is that France provides rather extensive political participation rights to its citizens abroad, while Bulgaria has been close to restricting these rights *de facto*. There seems to be more structure and active involvement in France's approach to both its own and incoming diasporas. This need for structure aligns with the image of France as a predominantly 'receiving state'. However, France seems to be unable to implement the distinction between 'formal rights and substance'. Bulgaria, on the other hand, seems to be almost advertising its citizenship to those who would satisfy the criteria for ethnic Bulgarians, predominantly living in neighbouring countries, to decrease the population decline due in large part to ageing and emigration. If it were to extend its welcoming approach beyond ethnic Bulgarians to a modest number of asylum seekers and refugees, this would benefit both the country's demographics and the EU's more equitable distribution of asylum claims.

One common approach of the two countries is the emphasis on education for their diaspora communities. This may potentially preserve and strengthen the link between the home state and the diaspora community and, in the wider EU context, help preserve and promote the language diversity. This undoubtedly has an impact on the employability of individuals from the diaspora communities within the EU's internal market, the very foundation of the Union, which arguably remains the most powerful driver of EU policies.

In this sense, the EU should develop a comprehensive policy framework for member states to engage and mobilise diasporas as potentially important actors on multiple levels, including in areas of politics, culture and economics. This is particularly the case with regard to diaspora groups coming from third countries and residing in the member states. If rightly engaged, they could play a key role beyond merely the realm of development, but also in areas of democracy building in their countries of origin. However, it is likely that at the EU level the differences between member states would be too significant to allow for successful negotiations of a common strategy. Perhaps this is one reason why diaspora engagement has not made it onto the EU agenda. Another possibility is that the diaspora issue is too closely related to the citizenship domain of which, as mentioned above, the exclusive competence rests with the member states and, therefore, is beyond the EU's legislative mandate. Nevertheless, it may still be possible for the EU to initiate a discussion among the member states on this topic to tap into the potential for positive developments that diaspora communities could offer, on both the national and the EU level.

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# Diaspora and democratisation: Diversity of impact in Eastern Partnership countries

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**Abstract:** Around the world diasporas are important role players, and they make a significant contribution towards democracy-building processes in their homelands. The advantages of cooperation with diasporas in the sphere of democratisation are substantial. Diasporas display behavioural diversity and invest both financial and non-financial resources and values to enhance democratic governance and policy-making processes, to ensure social welfare and economic growth, to protect human rights and to establish civil society and the rule of law in their homelands. This article explores the influence of diasporas on democratisation in Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries from a comparative perspective. Diasporas originating from the six EaP countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine) differ in scope, factors of influence on the democracy-building processes, and impact opportunities on government policies in both their homelands and countries of residence. At the same time, there are many similarities between these countries. Until 1991 these countries had limited ties with diasporas as they were Republics of the Soviet Union. All these countries experienced territorial conflicts, except for Belarus. Having different levels of democracy, they are involved in the EaP initiative aimed at sharing democratic values. From this point of view, it is of great interest to explore the diversity of the diasporas' impact on the democracy-building processes in the mentioned countries. The article provides an understanding and comparative analysis of the variety in diasporas' engagement in democratisation of homelands in EaP countries. Based on the findings, the authors argue that the diasporas of these countries have different impact levels on democracy. Moreover, they conclude that the democracy level in turn influences the countries' diaspora policies.

**Key words:** diaspora; Eastern Partnership countries; democracy; comparative analysis; diaspora policy

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## 1 Introduction

The term 'diaspora' has been raised increasingly in academic circles. The continuous movement of people from their countries of origin to host countries due to economic, social, political and other reasons leads to significant changes and creates impacts in the country. This movement has national, regional and global dimensions. In this context, the collapse of the Soviet Union triggered new migration and mobility streams leading to a new dispersal of people both in the post-Soviet region and across the world. Six post-Soviet countries, namely, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, have been selected to be researched. These countries are members of the Eastern Partnership (EaP) (EU 2016), which is a joint initiative of the European Union (EU) aimed at building a common area of shared democratic values, such as the rule of law, good governance, the protection of human rights, market-economy principles, and closer cooperation. In this regard, it is of great interest to explore the diasporas' influence on the democratisation of the mentioned countries.

Numerous studies (Carment & Nikolko 2017; Ziemer & Sean 2013; Tololyan 2000; Ciment 2001) have been devoted to diaspora issues in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. Nevertheless, the influence of diasporas on democracy in the countries under research, particularly in its comparative aspect, remains underexplored. This research is an attempt to fill this gap.

In the article we explore the framework explaining diaspora policies and the fields diasporas mostly influence to understand their role in the democratisation processes in the countries studied. The research questions are the following:

- Which frameworks explain diasporas' policies in the homelands?
- What are the factors/fields of diasporas' influence on the democratisation in the states under study?

Three analytical frameworks have been selected to understand the diasporas' involvement in homeland politics in the context of democratisation in research cases. These are the structural-instrumental framework, the ethnic and the political-economy or governmentality framework (Ragazzi 2014). Each of these frameworks is used as a basis for identifying the factors that explain the character and form of diaspora-homeland relations.

In academic literature, studies on diaspora issues are based more frequently on qualitative research than on quantitative methods. We use a combined approach that includes *quantitative* as well as *qualitative* methods of research: qualitative content analysis; case studies; expert interviews; a regression analysis; a comparative analysis; scaling methods; and weighting schemes. Twelve experts were selected for expert interviews. During these interviews the experts not only discussed the issues of diaspora in respect of each country in the study, but were also asked to estimate and give weights to the fields we elaborated for a better understanding of the diaspora-homeland relations and ways in which they influence democratisation. For this purpose, the following 10 fields have been highlighted: democratic governance; human rights; the rule of law; civil society; policy making; financial remittances; integration into the world economy and culture; conflict; and national interest. Through a

regression analysis, the influence of these fields on the democracy is revealed in respect of each case under study.

## 2 Theoretical framework: Diaspora policy and democratisation

Numerous studies have been devoted to the phenomenon of the diaspora. However, there still is no exact general definition of the concept of 'diaspora' and it is construed by scholars in different ways. The reason for this is that diaspora is a subject of study in various sciences and disciplines, such as political science, history, anthropology, cultural studies, resulting in various approaches to understand this complex and diverse phenomenon.

Although the conceptual discussion of the term 'diaspora' is beyond the scope of this article, we proceed from the definition of Sheffer who defines diasporas as 'ethnic minority groups of migrant origins residing and acting in host countries but maintaining strong sentimental and material links with their countries of origin – their homelands' (Sheffer 1986: 3; 2003:9).

The academic literature about the linkage between diaspora and democratisation is less developed. However, there are studies (Shain 1999; Kapur 2010; Koinova 2009; Dahre 2007) that find that diasporas influence democracy-building processes in their homelands. Diasporas in fact influence democratisation. For example, diasporas can transfer funds, links and experience to civil society organisations, and thereby have an effect on political processes. They may cooperate with civic organisations promoting democratic values. Some representatives of diasporas oppose human rights violations in their homelands, in many cases because they themselves once experienced injustice. They may also be engaged in election campaigns and in monitoring processes, or actively participate in demonstrations and join opposition activities (Shain 1994-1995: 823-830; 1999; 2007; Biswas 2007; Lyons 2007; Koinova 2009).

The diasporas' impact on democratisation processes is not limited to the above-mentioned activities. Indeed, the spheres of diasporas' influence on democratisation are varied. This influence is also realised through financial remittances, including personal remittances and foreign direct investments. Diasporas may also affect democratic governance and policy making by means of close ties and cooperation with the government. Other examples include the promotion of the rule of law through the improvement of legislation and strengthening the justice system.

In the framework of this article, it is beneficial to understand and explain state policy in the context of democratisation. In this connection, three main explanatory frameworks, which were systematised and provided by Ragazzi (2014), serve as a theoretical basis to understand and explain diaspora policy and diaspora-homeland relations: the structural-instrumental, the ethnic, and the political-economic or governmentality frameworks.

The structural-institutional framework, which is based on utilitarian assumptions, explains the state-diaspora relationships in the context of economic interests. This approach holds that such state behaviour is more common in poor countries that are interested mainly in economic outcomes. In this regard, financial remittances are an important foothold,

and more so where the population abroad is considerable in numeric terms.

The second framework relates to an ethnic or ethno-national approach, which differs from the theories of cosmopolitanism and transnational nationalism. It argues that state behaviour is a consequence of globalisation and transnational processes. The behaviour of states in these cases is aimed at the regulation of issues and the unification of the nation's representatives abroad. It includes religious, cultural, language and citizenship policies.

Finally, there is the third political-economy framework, based on Foucault's (2004) governmentality conception, which departs from the insight that diaspora policies are not static and can be changed depending on the social, political, and economic situations in the nation states (Ragazzi 2014: 74, 82; Kovács: 93, 94). Three types of governmentality regarding state policy are possible: disciplinary, liberal and neo-liberal. Protectionism, wealth creation, cultural and other policies aimed at population growth and the promotion of those returning from abroad are common for disciplinary governmentality. By contrast, the liberal governmentality does not control the market (including the labour market) and the flow of goods and capital. Emigration is an acceptable way of solving some political and economic problems and threats of overpopulation. Neoliberalism considers the restructuring of politics and self-improvement not only in the economic sphere, but also in political institutions. Ragazzi (2014: 74, 87) argues that the political-economy or governmentality framework is the main driving force for diaspora policies and best explains diaspora policies, while the structural-instrumental and ethnic frameworks provide only a partial explanation.

In an attempt to look into frameworks of diaspora policy in the context of democratisation and taking into account the experience of diasporas' influence on the democratisation presented in literature, we summed up and elaborated 10 fields to evaluate diasporas' behavioural diversity in the states under study, as set out in part 1 above.

### 3 Armenian diaspora: At a crossroads of the new and old

The Armenian diaspora is unique and one of the oldest. Sheffer (2003: 75-77) states that it belongs to the classic type since its existence dates back to even before the formation of the nation state. The historical roots of the Armenian diaspora reach back to Mongolian times, in the thirteenth century, when as a result of Mongolian conquests many Armenians fled to neighbouring Eastern European regions and the Middle East (Tololyan 2000: 116). However, the decisive historical moment as far as the Armenian diaspora is concerned remains the events of 1915, the period of the collapse of the Ottoman empire with almost 1,5 million Armenians exposed to expulsion (Panossian 1998: 84).

Another prominent wave of Armenian migration is closely related to the civil war in Lebanon,<sup>1</sup> and the Iranian revolution.<sup>2</sup> With regard to the

1 The Lebanese Civil War lasting from 1975 to 1990 with 120 000 fatalities.

2 Iranian Revolution of 1978–1979, also referred to as the Islamic Revolution.

Soviet period, travel restrictions established by the Soviet Union suppressed the ability of Armenians to emigrate. Lastly, a final wave of emigration followed the demise of Communism. For Armenia, this wave embraced the 'brain-drain' generation, as well as economic migrants, and refugees from conflict zones such as people from Nagorno-Karabakh (BBC 2016).

During the current era, the proliferation of corruption, unfavourable economic conditions, social inequity, unfairness, and the lack of democratic values in the country resulted in gross migration (with an estimated net migration rate of -5,7 migrant(s)/1 000 population (2017)).<sup>3</sup>

As seen from the above, the reasons that prompt migration differ, but the outcome is simple, namely, diaspora.

Simply labelling diaspora communities as negligent nationalists is unfair. Diaspora really aids Armenia's pursuit of democracy. Inspired by the goal of strengthening the bonds between Armenia and its diaspora, the Ministry of Diaspora launched its activities in the Republic of Armenia. The activities of the Ministry of Diaspora are based on the mission to create one unified platform of information, which would bring together economic, political, educational, cultural and many other spheres.

The Armenian diaspora assists the development of the country's economy with vast amounts of financial remittances. Remittances, indeed, play an enormous role in the Armenian economy. Remittances have over the last five years been substantial, at 16 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP). Strikingly, Armenia is considered to be among the top 15 recipients of remittances in the world (Banaian & Bryan 2007).

Keeping in mind how crucial the role of civil society is in a country's democratisation process, it is worth mentioning that leading Armenian diaspora organisations forge links with civil society organisations, transfer finances and other resources through civil society, hence promoting democratic governance in Armenia.

The Armenian diaspora is inextricably bound to the conflict of Nagorno-Karabakh (BBC 2016). Taking into account the fact that during conflicts diasporas are involved in non-procedural aspects of democracy, the conflict of Nagorno-Karabakh played a crucial role in terms of limiting the involvement of the Armenian diaspora in democratisation. Hence, the Armenian diaspora was not motivated to pursue the deepening of democracy, and its involvement in the democratic procedures<sup>4</sup> was negligible. For instance, in order to fight electoral fraud in Armenia<sup>4</sup> and Nagorno-Karabakh, the diaspora sent monitors to ensure free and fair elections. Taken together, the Armenian diaspora was engaged in the democratic processes of the country to demonstrate their devotion to the democratic values that, in fact, is of utmost importance to the international community. Throughout this process they never abandoned intrinsic nationalist goals (Koinova 2009: 58).

3 Data source: IndexMundi, available at [https://www.indexmundi.com/armenia/net\\_migration\\_rate.html](https://www.indexmundi.com/armenia/net_migration_rate.html) (last visited 1 April 2018).

4 In April 2017, rock musician Serj Tankian and several other prominent diaspora Armenian artists monitored Armenia's parliamentary elections to help ensure that they meet democratic standards, to end widespread corruption and respect laws.

Diaspora is indeed one of the major resources to the Republic of Armenia. As far as the influence of diaspora on national interests is concerned, the Armenian diaspora, with the help of traditional lobbying and other methods, attempts to advance statehood issues concerning Nagorno-Karabakh. A good example is when the diaspora lobbies to ensure that the United States remains an honest broker in the negotiations despite having strategic interests in oil-rich Azerbaijan. Moreover, one of the leading diaspora organisations, the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF), for more than 50 years has been a vocal advocate for Turkey's recognition of the Armenian genocide (Koinova 2009: 50).

Interestingly, the resignation of the former Armenian President Levon Ter-Petrossian was to some extent linked to the diasporas' judgment that he had mishandled the Nagorno-Karabakh issue and wanted to establish a more cooperative foreign policy towards Turkey (Libaridian 1999). As Shain argues, 'the diaspora enthusiastically supported a new government comprised of a number of veterans from the war in Nagorno-Karabakh, including Robert Kocharian' (Shain 2002).

When speaking about leading diaspora organisations, it is important to mention the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU), the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA) and the Armenian Assembly of America (AAA) (Kopalyan 2018). These organisations aim to disseminate democratic values, to promote human rights, and to preserve what culturally and historically is labelled as Armenian and 'for the prosperity of Armenia'.

The fact that diaspora organisations played a significant role in implementing democratic values and exposing human rights violations is clearly demonstrated in their actions around and open criticism of the 1996 presidential elections. The Armenian Revolutionary Federation and its affiliated diaspora organisations made the government accountable for the mass irregularities in the country. However, there was unanimous silence and negligence on the part of the leading Armenian diaspora organisations in the 2008 post-election upheavals (Human Rights Watch 2009); the 2009 Armenian-Turkish Protocols (Phillips & Lemmon 2012); the 2015 Electric Yerevan Protests; and the 2016 Sari Tagh Protests (Avedissian 2015).

Interviews with experts and surveys revealed that the Armenian diaspora plays an important role in democracy-building processes. However, this influence is never absolute and considerable changes are dependent on government-diaspora relationships. Experts also emphasise the fact that the democratic motives of the Armenian diaspora sometimes are very nationalistic, which directly stands in the way of democratisation. They stated that the most influential areas and factors of diaspora influence on the democracy-building processes in Armenia are financial remittances, conflict, culture, civil society and to some extent democratic governance (Babalyan, personal communication, 1 April 2018; Martirosyan, personal communication, 5 April 2018). Moreover, the political-economic framework is revealed as the main driving force of diaspora policies. Hence, the cooperation between the Armenian government and the Armenian diaspora communities may be characterised in symbolic, diplomatic and economic terms.

Taken together, the Armenian diaspora has not yet fully advanced liberal aspects of democracy. Instead, it has been primarily focused on nationalist aspects of democracy, while not excluding attempts at democratic turnover.

#### 4 Azerbaijani diaspora and its lost potential

Plans regarding the Azerbaijani diaspora developed since 1993 when Heydar Aliyev came to power with a strong will to use the ethnic Azerbaijanis living in 'the west' and in post-Soviet countries as a political resource (Rumyantsev 2017). In 1995, in one of his speeches in the capital of Switzerland, Heydar Aliyev mentioned the example of Ireland's potato famine, which led to a strong Irish diaspora all over the world. He even called them 'a great source of joy for [the] nation ... such a small country ... has a big lobby overseas' (Lib.aliyevheritage.org 2018).

Nowadays, approximately 300 communities and organisations can be found all over the world (Azerbaijan.az 2018). Such a large number of organisations was probably established to overbalance the Armenian diaspora's lobbying power, and since the 2000s Azerbaijani authorities have invested a significant amount of money (Rumyantsev 2017). In 2008, the government of Azerbaijan established a special committee 'on Work with Diaspora of Azerbaijan Republic' in the Cabinet of Azerbaijan to promote the creation of new organisations and maintain contact with the formed ones (Diaspora.gov.az, 2018). Before that, there was another committee named 'on the affairs with Azerbaijanis living in foreign countries'. However, questions may be posed as to the effectiveness of these establishments.

Indeed, some successes may be identified around notable diaspora organisations. Among these is the significant role played by the US Azeris Network (Usazeris.org 2018), which held a campaign to raise awareness on the past of Azerbaijan, including anti-Armenian policies. The actions produced results, as several US Congressmen have made official remarks in the Congressional Record commemorating Khojaly's events, and 31 March was recognised as Azerbaijani Remembrance Day by Nevada Governor Jim Gibbons (Powley 2009). Another example is the fact that this organisation submitted a petition to the US White House in 2013 to acknowledge the events of Khojaly as a 'war crime' (Hirose 2016). According to the rules of the White House petition programme, the representatives engaged to answer any petition which has collected more 100 000 signatures (Petitions.whitehouse.gov 2018). This petition proved highly popular as it was signed by 120 000 people. Even though the White House's reply was not as expected, a level of awareness and mobilisation was achieved. To ensure the success of lobbying in 2015, Azerbaijani associations in New York organised a protest in front of the United Nations (UN) building, addressed to the Permanent Mission of Armenia to the UN.

Apart from the lobbying role, the Azerbaijani diaspora has a vital role in the democratisation of their homeland. As Murad Ismayilov, a research fellow at the Azerbaijan Diplomatic Academy, explains, diasporas are anxious about their image in their country of residence, making them more predisposed to motivate the democratic governments of their host

country and organisations such as the OSCE and EU to follow a 'more critical approach to the issue of Azerbaijan's democratisation'. In addition to this anxiety, members of the diaspora who consider returning to Azerbaijan are interested in returning to a democratic, prosperous and developed country (Ismayilov 2008).

The above examples clearly illustrate the motivations and activities of Azerbaijani diasporas, but how genuine are these actions and to what extent do the political elites of Azerbaijan control the diasporas? In the first place, as the organisations founded abroad are financed by the Azerbaijani state, this financial support may be interpreted as the government's power to dictate to some extent to those organisations. The researcher Sergey Rumyantsev writes in his article 'Long live the Azerbaijani diaspora!' that Baku uses the diaspora to tell the world 'the truth' about this country and especially about the 'great successes' of the Aliyev regime. He argues that state propaganda convinced diasporas to act solely in the interests of Azerbaijan, as in the example of the French elections, when Azerbaijanis were told to vote against Le Pen, due to her 'incorrect' positions on Karabakh (Rumyantsev 2017). The same author argues that the Azerbaijani diaspora cannot be classified as 'classical' as in the case of the Greek or Jewish, due to various reasons, such as that it did not emerge from historic agony (Rumyantsev 2017), or because it cannot be assigned to any type of diaspora identified by Cohen (2008), namely, labour, trade or imperial.

If the collaboration between diasporas and Azerbaijan continues in this way, a huge potential will most probably be lost. The government also has to pay attention to the needs and expectations of those abroad, rather than establishing as many organisations as possible and imposing orders on them. In this scenario, cohesion is not foreseen.

To sum up the results of interviews with experts, one may state that the Azerbaijani diaspora is not an independent unit. Receiving funding from the government of Azerbaijan, the representatives of the diaspora support the interests and values dictated from above, which differ from the wishes and will of the people of Azerbaijan. Accordingly, representatives of such a diaspora somehow cannot influence the processes taking place in the country. It is possible to make a division between representatives of the Congress of Azerbaijanis, supported by the government and a non-politicised diaspora, existing at its own expense. The diaspora could influence the population of Azerbaijan, the attitude towards values and the state, but the population as such has no opportunity to influence the government and the policy pursued. However, experts noted that over the past few years the attitude of Azerbaijanis to the situation has changed. More comments began to appear on the internet about what is happening in the country. People started to speak out more openly. This may be considered the beginning of some, albeit small, positive change in society (Makhmudzade, personal communication, 20 March 2018; Murselzade, personal communication, 30 March 2018).

## 5 Belarusian diaspora: Problem with self-perception

Due to globalisation and benefits of democratic regimes, many people from post-Soviet countries moved to the Western part of the continent in search

of a the better share (Yeliseyeu 2014; MTA CSFK Geographical Institute 2017). While keeping strong contacts with relatives in their country of origin, diaspora representatives become a so-called bridge between the countries. Thus, one should respect the international importance of diaspora as a potential mediator of democratisation.

Estimates are that between 2 and 2,5 million people of Belarusian descent reside outside Belarus (*BelarusDigest* 2016). Before independence, a section of the Belarusian population freely moved to different parts of the Soviet Union. After the collapse of the USSR, they remained in their places of residence and automatically became diasporas. Some part of it is represented by native Belarusians living in neighbouring countries. Another aspect of the diaspora emerged due to economic and political migration.

The competencies in Belarusian diaspora policy are shared between three state agencies: the Ministry of Foreign Affairs,<sup>5</sup> the Ministry of Culture,<sup>6</sup> and the Office of the Commissioner for Religions and Nationalities.<sup>7</sup> Structural units are assigned with the implementation of the Offices' task to 'assist Belarusians and descendants of Belarusians living abroad in satisfying their national and cultural needs and developing their connection with the Republic of Belarus'. The President of the Republic of Belarus defines general state policy about the government and diasporas' common activities. The government is responsible for the realisation of the state diaspora policy.

State cooperation with diaspora organisations is rather incoherent and intermittent. However, the diaspora law entitled the law 'On Belarusians living abroad' (2014) assigns the coordination task to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.<sup>8</sup>

Diaspora members (Belarusians living abroad) are defined as 'ethnic Belarusians, persons born in Belarus, and persons identifying themselves as Belarusians who are permanently living outside the Republic of Belarus'. In practical terms, the following categories of persons belong to Belarusians living abroad, according to the law: Belarusian citizens permanently living abroad; foreign citizens and stateless persons permanently living abroad who were themselves born or used to live (or have ancestors in an ascending line who were born or used to live) in the territory of the present-day Republic of Belarus and foreign citizens and stateless persons permanently living outside Belarus who identify themselves as Belarusians from the point of ethnic belonging either to the Belarusian people, language, culture, or historical ties, or by their knowledge and preservation of Belarusian traditions and customs.

The cooperation with the Belarusian diaspora is limited largely to national and cultural issues: the provision of Belarusian literature; organising lectures by Belarusian scientists and cultural events abroad; and

5 See the official site of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus, available at <http://mfa.gov.by/multilateral/diaspora/> (last visited 1 April 2018).

6 See the official site of the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Belarus, available at <http://www.kultura.by/en/> (last visited 1 April 2018).

7 See the official site of the Office of the Commissioner for Religions and Nationalities of the Republic of Belarus, available at <http://belarus21.by/> (last visited 1 April 2018).

8 The Law 'On Belarusians living abroad', available at <http://mfa.gov.by/upload/Law.pdf> (last visited 3 April 2018).



so forth. Economic outcomes of state emigration policies in Belarus are limited due to an economic environment that hinders private investment and limits political contacts with Western countries, where the Belarusian diaspora is most influential (Taras 2017).

Belarusian state agencies pursue policies on cultural ties; support education in the national language abroad; allow diaspora congresses in Belarus; and provide media services and assistance to the activities of national associations abroad (Taras 2017). However, state assistance is often given to diaspora organisations on the basis of the convergence of their political and ideological views with the official ones. The programmes directed at cooperation with the diaspora are usually adopted without diaspora organisations' recommendations and have limited effectiveness. The first state programme 'Belarusians in the world' was adopted in 1993, with ensuing programmes. Belarusian diaspora associations are still in the early stages of development and do not have many members. In 1993 the First World Congress of Belarusian diaspora took place. It was the first and only time the Belarusian government took part in funding the event. However, since President Lukashenko's rise to power in 1994, governmental policies towards the diaspora took a negative turn. 'Consequent world congresses of the Belarusian diaspora did not receive any meaningful financial state support' (*BelarusDigest* 2016). Furthermore, the Association *Bačkauščyna* (Fatherland),<sup>9</sup> the main organiser of the congresses, became the subject of public criticism expressed by the high-ranking Belarusian officials.

In the early 2000s the Belarusian authorities attempted to set up a fully-controlled diaspora association in parallel with *Bačkauščyna* and to gather a parallel congress of Belarusian diaspora. These intentions were not realised.

It is important to mention that the Belarusian authorities, if interested in the diaspora question, tend to support those with pro-elite views. In turn, part of the Belarusian diaspora considers Lukashenko as an illegal president and treat him as a threat to the Belarusian language and culture.

Belarusian autocephalous Orthodox and Greek Catholic (Uniate) churches play an important role in supporting the Belarusian identity abroad. There are up to 20 Belarusian autocephalous Orthodox Church

9 The World Association of Belarusians, *Bačkauščyna*, is an influential international organisation of which the objectives include the development of permanent cultural, economic, spiritual and organisational contacts between the Belarusian diaspora and Belarus; the provision of assistance to Belarusians who reside abroad; and the encouragement of scientific research in the field of Belarusian studies and in different aspects of the Belarusian diaspora. Under the auspices and organisational effort of *Bačkauščyna*, seven world congresses of Belarusians have taken place since the beginning of the 1990s. Congresses traditionally gather a few hundred Belarusian diaspora representatives from several countries (including many EU countries such as Poland, the Czech Republic, Sweden, Germany, Belgium, Great Britain, and so forth) who adopt resolutions and action plans that take into account the situation in the country, the state of play of the diaspora, and activities linked to the diaspora. In addition to the world Congresses of Belarusians, 'Bačkauščyna' organises other cultural and educational events with diaspora associations. Belarusian MFA and the diaspora: A complicated relationship (Gubarevich 2016).

communities across foreign countries, including the United States, Canada and Australia.<sup>10</sup> Thus, the organisations of the Belarusian diaspora worked on the practical implementation of social and cultural projects; the restoration of historical and cultural heritage and its return (for example, the Holy Cross of St Euphrosyne of Polotsk); and humanitarian and medical assistance to Belarusian children.

Summing up the results of experts' interviews, one we can state that, in general, the Belarusian diaspora is viewed not as part of Belarus, but as a foreign policy factor. The diaspora means citizens of other states with whom the policy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on spreading national interests is being implemented.

Basically in all spheres of life, the Belarusian diaspora has little influence. This is due to the small number of representatives of the diaspora, the blurring of self-identification, when representatives of the diaspora of the Soviet period can define themselves also as Ukrainians or Russians, and the lack of a developed institutional apparatus and instruments of influence restrains the possibilities.

The creation of a certain image of the country (positive or negative) is among the opportunities of the diaspora. The diaspora is a potential resource for carrying out national interests. This does not happen due to the fact that there are no clearly-formulated concepts on this issue and the 'Law on Belarussians of Abroad' has more of a framework character without specific requirements.

Because of the low level of conflict in the country, it is difficult to estimate the impact of the diaspora on development or in avoiding conflicts. The most logical is the conduct of ethno-cultural activities with the simultaneous gradual formation of a positive attitude of the diaspora and a strong will to participate in Belarusian policy, and to support the progress of the country to deal with the demands of the modern world (Bukonkin, personal communication, 2 April 2018; Laikov, personal communication, 4 April 2018).

## 6 Georgian diaspora: Positive outcomes of emigration

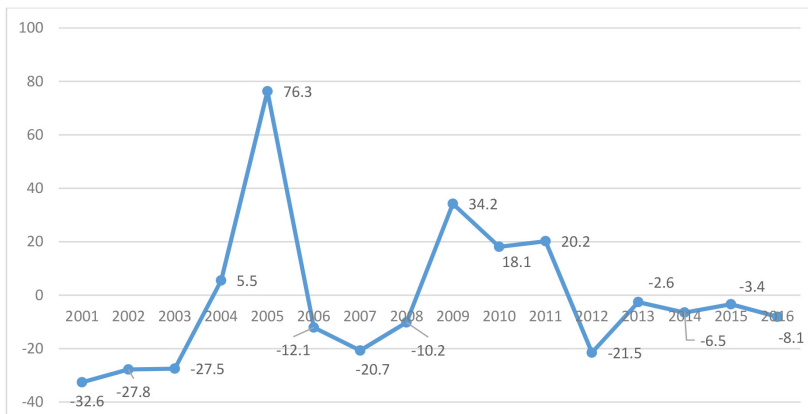
After the collapse of the Soviet Union, member states of the former Soviet Union started to develop independently. They framed their foreign and internal policies on their own. This process was not easy and smooth. Colour revolutions, struggles for self-determination and civil and international wars forced many people to move from one place to another. In some countries, it was expressed by emigration; in others, it was immigration. Unstable political and harsh socio-economic situations forced people to leave their home countries, with the result that people created diasporas in host countries. Georgia was one of those countries where emigration outweighed immigration. This explains why there are a vast number of diaspora communities all over the world, which has its influence on different processes of the homeland, Georgia.

10 See the official site of Belarusian Autocephalous Orthodox Church, BAOOC, available at <http://www.belapc.org/> (last visited 2 April 2018).

According to MFA Georgia, Mikhael Janelidze, there are approximately 272 diaspora unions or organisations all over the world. In one of his interviews, Janelidze mentioned that more than 1 million Georgians left Georgia before 1990, and around 1 500 000 Georgians left the country in the post-Soviet period (Sputnik-Georgia 2017). In fact, as in many post-Soviet countries, numerous Georgians stay abroad illegally. That is why it is impossible to give an exact number of Georgian diasporas. However, according to the Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI), there are 1 607 744 Georgians abroad.<sup>11</sup>

Meanwhile, the results of the General Population Census of 2014 revealed that there are 3 713 804 people living in Georgia, and the population decline was 15 per cent compared to the previous census held in 2002.<sup>12</sup>

**Figure 1: Net Migration, Georgia (thousands)<sup>13</sup>**



There were several reasons for emigration: wars at the beginning of the 1990s, unemployment and socio-economic issues. It is important to emphasise that most emigrants that later became Georgian diasporas left the country because of the poor economic and social conditions. They were determined to find better living conditions and develop themselves

11 Data source: Institute for development of Freedom of Information, available at <https://idfi.ge/ge/georgian-diaspora-combines> (last visited 1 April 2018).

12 The data source is the official site of the National Statistics Office of Georgia, available at [http://www.geostat.ge/cms/site\\_images/\\_files/english/population/According%20to%20preliminary%20results%20of%20the%202014%20population%20census%20Final.pdf](http://www.geostat.ge/cms/site_images/_files/english/population/According%20to%20preliminary%20results%20of%20the%202014%20population%20census%20Final.pdf) (last visited 5 April 2018).

13 The data source is the official site of National Statistics Office of Georgia, available at [http://www.geostat.ge/index.php?action=page&p\\_id=173&lang=eng](http://www.geostat.ge/index.php?action=page&p_id=173&lang=eng) (last visited 10 April 2018). Analysing the data, we should mention the fact of occupied territories, during the last census Georgian agency of statistics had no access to Abkhazia and Southern Ossetia. Thus, regions with population of 200 000 were not included in the census. It is also important to mention the multi-nationality of the country. However, according to the data released by the national statistical agency, emigration was not done only by one nation.

economically. Some of these people were fortunate in that respect. They became large-scale businessmen. In addition, it should be mentioned that they were willing to invest money in their homeland, Georgia. In fact, many successful businessmen have for decades been investing in Georgia.

Cooperation between Georgia and its diaspora communities is mainly economic and political in nature. The continuing financial investments by Georgians in different spheres present a significant contribution to the economic development of the country. In addition, they ensure a competitive market, which positively affects the quality improvement of the market.

It should be mentioned that with the resolution of the Georgian government,<sup>14</sup> the position of Minister of Diaspora was disbanded and issues regarding the diaspora became part of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Sputnik-Georgia 2017). The government declared that this change did not come about because of the lesser importance of that institution, but for the purposes of mobilisation of resources.

In official documents and announcement of the Georgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs it is mentioned that the diaspora contributes to its homeland in socio-economic development through the financial aid from diaspora representatives to the people of Georgia, charity, and business encouragement. This assistance is highly appreciated. There are many projects aimed at the encouragement of this contribution. One such project is called 'United, powerful diaspora with close ties to the homeland' initiated by MFA (MFA Georgia 2015).

A significant portion of foreign investments in Georgia is contributed by ethnic Georgians. To understand the significance and sphere of diaspora investments, some foreign investments made by diaspora representatives during 2015-2016 are mentioned below. The data was released by the ex-Ministry of Diaspora (Charaia 2016).

For the functioning of the multitask complex Gino Paradise, founded by Georgian businessman Nodar Giorgadze, around €28 000 000 was invested. Another project established by Gino Paradise, the Gino Green City Resort, was funded in an amount of more than €100 000 000. An investment made by a Georgian diaspora representative is the American hospital, which is situated in the centre of the capital. The hospital was established by a Georgian doctor who works in America. Diaspora representatives from Poland erected the Hilton Tbilisi Hotel. Some other hotels were erected during 2015-2016 with the help of ethnic Georgian investors. There is also a wine production factory in Georgia called Danieli which is a Georgian investment from America. Other investments were made by Georgians from Holland, Spain and other countries.

The fact is that economic development is directly connected to the quality of life of the state. Moreover, it promotes the development of democracy. However, the contribution of the diaspora to the homeland is not only related to the economy. It is important to emphasise that during the past 15 years there was one revolution and one power shift in Georgia aimed at building democracy. All the leaders of the movements were representatives of the diaspora at some stage of their lives. Suffice it to

14 Parliament of Georgia, Resolution 512 (17 November 2016).

mention the case of Bidzina Ivanishvili who lived in Russia and owned large businesses there. He came to Georgia to, in his own words, improve the democratic and economic situation of the country. According to many international organisations (Freedom House 2016; NDI 2013) Ivanishvili managed to record a progress in democracy development.

Summarising the experts' interviews, we can underline that the government in the country became more democratic after the last change of power. As far as the formation of a more democratic government and democratisation process in general is concerned, the influence of diaspora was vital. Here the role of the diaspora is discussed mainly from a positive perspective. The experts in particular state that Georgian diaspora representatives all over the world have a huge impact on almost every field of democracy: democratic government; human rights; the rule of law; civil society; culture promotion; conflict solving; the promotion of national interests; and science and education. Here the importance of the host country was highlighted. The impact of the diaspora representatives on their homeland depends mainly on the level of democracy development in the host country. If the host country is highly developed, a person adopts and shares democratic traditions and mentality in the home country. The role of Georgian diasporas is irreplaceable in promoting Georgian culture abroad, which is also reflected in the sphere of tourism. Hundreds of Georgian diaspora organisations set a mission for themselves to promote Georgian culture abroad in order to save their dignity and identity. An issue no less important emphasised during the interviews with the experts was the important role of financial remittances. After all, the vast majority of Georgian emigrants are working migrants who aim to earn money to send to their homeland. Ethnic Georgians from all over the world provide financial support through huge investments in the homeland. There is no doubt that the Georgian diaspora is expanding rapidly. However, to make it more supportive to the homeland's democracy they should be united and should show more interest in the situation in Georgia (Rusetski, personal communication, 20 March 2018; Gaspariani, personal communication, 27 March 2018).

## **7 Moldovan diaspora – A competition between the west and the east**

Today, more than ever, it has become increasingly possible for people to be mobile, and due to globalisation these trends are not decreasing. The Republic of Moldova is not an exception, due to its economic and social crisis since independence in 1991, when numerous people decided to migrate. It is difficult to approximate the number of migrants due to the Transnistrian conflict; central authorities do not have control over the eastern border; and there is no effective and lasting record-keeping of migrants. In 2016 the Moldovan government suggested that 520 000 Moldovan citizens were abroad in over 30 countries (Gov.md 2016). The Moldovan government might shrink the real number of Moldovan citizens abroad because the German Economic Team Moldova in 2015 published a paper titled 'Permanent Emigration from Moldova: Estimate and Implications for Diaspora Policy', offering different numbers, namely, in 2012 426 900 and in 2015 733 200 (Luecke, Ganta and Radeke 2015). The

trend of leaving the country persists, and it is difficult to accept that in three years 213 200 Moldovans returned.

Even though Moldovan elites understand the challenges of migration, such as brain-drain and separation from family, it also underlines the importance of migration, such as financial remittances, business ties, valuable skills, experiences and networks. The diasporas also face difficulties such as integration in host countries, but also keeping links with their native countries. It is clear that the cooperation between the state and diasporas would smooth many obstacles and both sides can benefit from it. Because of this, the Diaspora-2025 national strategy was approved together with an action plan for 2016-2018 for its enforcement (BDR 2016). It is worth mentioning that Moldova has the Bureau for Diaspora Relations (BDR) established by a government decision in 2012 (BDR 2018a). Being a consolidated state institution, the office is to ensure a coherent and comprehensive policy framework for the consolidation of the Moldovan diaspora, in order to actively involve all the country's citizens in the economic, social and cultural development of the country of origin and destination (BDR 2018a). The same BDR developed the Diaspora Engagement Hub – a grant programme in six spheres: educational centres; innovative projects; local programme of voluntary returning; the professional return; regional thematic partnerships; and women empowerment. The programme was designed to highlight the human capital of the diaspora (BDR 2018b).

Keeping in mind that until 2009 Moldova was under the rule of the Communist Party, which was pro-Russian, there was not much cooperation with EU diaspora, and from 2009 pro-European elected parties (which managed to win elections mainly because of EU diaspora) added diaspora to their political speeches (Rusu 2012), but not fully in their agenda.

Out-of-country voting is gaining more and more importance: In 1994 only 1 948 people voted; in 2009 17 484 citizens voted and in the last presidential elections in 2016 138 720 voted (Berlinschii 2016). Political parties currently seek electoral and financial support from the diaspora. A vivid example is Maia Sandu's party Action and Solidarity (PAS), that also created the PAS diaspora, so that members from the diaspora can have a political affiliation. Diasporas were also the main sponsors of presidential campaigns in 2016 (Partidul Acțiune și Solidaritate 2018), where Maia Sandu was the strongest candidate opposing Igor Dodon, the president of the Socialist Party of Moldova. Diasporas were very actively involved in those elections, promoting and advocating European values, but also creating initiatives such as 'Adopt a vote' of which the main goal was to offer the citizens of Moldova residing outside the country who wished to vote a place to stay overnight, if the voting station was not near them, and also food and some financial support. Another initiative called 'Adopt a troll' was aimed at curbing Russian propaganda and trolls (Indiegogo 2018). Through these actions, the willingness of the Moldova diaspora is shown to participate in the political processes and building democracy. In the interview, Vicol also underlined that the diaspora has an indirect influence on democratic governance in Moldova via its relatives (Vico, personal communication, 1 April 2018). Whenever some diaspora members return home for a holiday, they share their experiences in the

hosting countries, thereby revealing what is wrong or right regarding the democratic governance.

The diaspora plays a crucial role in Moldova, economically speaking, through remittances and investments, and politically and socially, through exercising their right to vote, through supporting political parties and founding non-governmental organisations (NGOs). In addition, a new trend is regarding diasporas as a lobbying and advocating resource in the host country. The Moldovan diaspora is monitoring the internal process of Moldova and can raise awareness in the international environment, especially when human rights are violated in the country of origin. An interesting example is the way in which diasporas from the United Kingdom, France and Spain pressured the Moldovan authorities to accept the anti-discrimination law imposed by the European Union (EU), justifying that the law is necessary for the visa liberalisation regime offered by the EU (Rusu 2012). The joint efforts of civil society from Moldova and activists from the diaspora to tackle some particular issues are the most efficient means of collaboration. The strength of civil society from Moldova is due largely to the diasporas' support and intellectual capacity.

It is understandable that diasporas become more and more active in their native countries, especially due to the new technology and communication, but also because politics itself has changed after the change of the Communist regime (Gigauri 2018). Individuals now have a clearer role in the political life, especially when the states call themselves democratic. In such instances, it is inevitable to give diasporas the opportunity to express themselves and be heard at all levels.

As a result of the experts' interviews and surveys, it was revealed that the government had failed to integrate diasporas' contribution in the policy-making process. One observed as follows:

The governmental institutions are eager to integrate diaspora's inputs only if these validate their policy. If diaspora's contributions are against their policies, then the political actors from Moldova are usually justifying the refusal by mentioning the lack of resources.

There appeared to be a unique opportunity for democratic governance through 'obtaining a parliamentary mandate for constituencies for the diaspora' which will be possible in the 2018 parliamentary elections. Another expert interviewee argued that the problem concerned the different values from the west to the east which the various diasporas have assimilated. Democratic values and the principles of good governance are perceived differently in Moscow and Brussels, leading to different visions of democracy and good governance. The same expert believes that diasporas, besides engaging in protests and speeches, have to be more creative in promoting the rule of law. Experts expressed the same concerns, that '[c]orrupted politicians are immune towards external pressure'.

It is worth mentioning that the interviewed experts pointed out the lack of clarity of 'national interest'. Because the Moldovan government did not precisely define its own national interests, no one can effectively contribute to their achievement. In addition, the diaspora cannot act as a single actor due to the divergence between the west and the east. Both experts indicated that the diaspora has the most positive impact in promoting culture, financial remittances and civil society. No negative

impact was identified, only the absence of any impact in fields such as human rights or conflict (Vicol, personal communication, 1 April 2018; Gramada, personal communication, 4 April 2018).

What Moldova lacks is a clear vision for the national interest that would fortify the diaspora, but not dissolve it. Otherwise, the competition between values and interests from the west to the east will lead to internal disputes. The Moldovan diaspora has recently become motivated and active, and it is important that its enthusiasm be accepted and maintained by the government and civil society, or the possibility of losing the interest of the diaspora in all fields exists, from democracy and human rights to financial remittances and investments.

## 8 Ukrainian diaspora: Fighter of the Ukrainian crisis

The Ukrainian diaspora is the community of ethnic Ukrainians who to some extent connect their origin and identity with Ukraine (Завьялов 2017). Starting from the late 1870s, the Ukrainians have already been migrating to the United States (Ciment 2001: 1238). It is believed that Ukrainians came from Galicia (the western parts of present-day Ukraine (Kuropas 1991).

A massive wave of migration of Ukrainians is inextricably bound to the end of World War II. According to Fink, 'the post-war anti-communist exiles numbered around 85 000 Ukrainians' (Fink 1993: 37). As far as the Soviet period is concerned, travel restrictions did not allow Ukrainians to emigrate.

Currently, between 8,2 million (according to the foreign countries' census) and 20 million (according to various estimates) people of Ukrainian origin are living abroad. The Ukrainian migration and diaspora formation process conditionally is divided into four waves (IOM Ukraine 2016).

The first wave of the Ukrainian emigration dates back to the late nineteenth to early twentieth century. Around 1,6 million Ukrainians (10 per cent of the population) from Western Ukraine left their homeland to move to eastern countries. The second wave of emigration emerged during World War I. Additional to the difficult economic situation were political reasons that apparently forced people to move to other countries. World War II and problems in its aftermath caused the third wave of emigration. The fourth wave of emigration, which was socio-economic in nature, took place at the end of the twentieth century. This time Ukrainians moved to the area where previously there were no Ukrainians, particularly to Southern Europe.

There currently are numerous NGOs composed of Ukrainian diaspora populations. These organisations are brought together by one authoritative international Ukrainian organisation named the Ukrainian World Congress (UWC). It includes more than 300 NGOs from over 30 countries (MFA Ukraine 2018).

Within the theoretical framework to explain diaspora-state cooperation in the case of Ukraine, it is most appropriate to use the ethnic and political-economic frameworks. With regard to the ethnic framework, the majority of diaspora organisations adopted the mission of defending the



qualities of Ukrainian national identity, assisting the development and dissemination of the Ukrainian cultural heritage.

As for the economic framework, substantial financial remittances are transferred to Ukraine by diasporas. During the conflict with Russia, Ukrainian diasporas from different countries and in particular from Estonia sent financial and material aid to soldiers (Euromaidan Press 2017). Moreover, due to the strong lobby of Ukrainians in Estonia, the Estonian government came up with an initiative to treat wounded Ukrainian soldiers.

Interestingly, Ukrainian public diplomacy is strongly centred on the topic of mass killing of Ukrainians by soviet authorities, in some countries called genocide. In promoting this topic, the biggest impact may be attributed to the Canadian diasporas.

Migration resulted in the dissemination of European values in Ukraine which, on the one hand, promotes the notion of cosmopolitanism and openness to global innovations, but, on the other, is also a direct threat to Ukrainian national identity. Migration, however, has positive sides. For example, labour migration in the case of Ukraine curtails tensions in the marketplace. Many Ukrainians find work opportunities abroad, and apparently, if there was no way to work abroad, unemployment would prevail in the country (Pozniak 2012). Numerous surveys reveal that the wages of migrant workers abroad in fact are three to four times higher than the average wage in Ukraine. Labour migrants earn money abroad, which naturally improves the quality of life of their families and, therefore, that of the Ukrainian population. Apparently, this curbs poverty and has an influence on economic development.

According to the International Organisation for Migration study on how migrants influence the development of the country, migrant remittances constituted nearly 50 per cent of the household budget in the case of long-term migrants. As for short-term migrants, it is 60 per cent (IOM Ukraine 2016).

As a result of an expert interview and surveys, it was revealed that the role of Ukrainian diaspora is influential in democracy-building processes. The experts outlined that diaspora is of considerable assistance to the economy of Ukraine. They also highlighted the importance of the influence of diaspora on the culture. According to the experts, diaspora representatives in the majority of cases maintain Ukrainian culture and their ethnic origin worldwide. However, diaspora does not have much influence on the formation of internal policy and the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. With regard to human rights, diasporas continually undertake some human rights reforms, but the outcomes are highly dependent on how the country implements them. On the whole, public and cultural diplomacy, lobbying Ukrainian national interest and financial remittances are the main means by which diasporas influence democratisation (Atamanenko, personal communication, 21 March 2018; Gerasymenko, personal communication, 4 April 2018).

## 9 Comparative analysis of diaspora and democratisation in EaP countries

This section is devoted to the comparative analysis of EaP countries in terms of diaspora policy, diaspora activity and diasporas' influence on democratisation. The diasporas originating from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine vary in scope of their activities: factors of influence on the democracy-building processes; impact opportunities on government policies; financial remittances; as well as by size and distribution. These countries also vary with respect to their diaspora policies and democracy level. The comparative analysis allows to define more explicitly the similarities, differences and peculiarities of the cases in the above-mentioned spheres.

Summing up the results of the experts' interviews, one may state that for Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine the field mostly influenced by the diaspora is financial remittances; for Azerbaijan it is civil society; and for Belarus it is culture (See Table 1). In the case of Azerbaijan, the influence magnitude is not high, composing 2,5 points on scale {-5}-{+5}, but it is the highest in comparison with other fields. Analysing the fields by weights, it becomes more evident that the diasporas of Azerbaijan and Belarus are the most passive among the countries under study. Meanwhile, the democracy levels of the last two are the lowest, allowing an inference that this inactivity is a result of state policy.

**Table 1: Mostly influenced fields by diasporas in democracy transformations<sup>15</sup>**

Fields ({-5}-{+5})	Armenia	Georgia	Moldova	Ukraine	Azerbaijan	Belarus
1.Financial remittances	4.5	4	4	3.5	1	0
2.Civil society	1.5	1	3	1.5	2.5	2
3.Culture	2.5	2.5	3.5	2.5	2	3.5
4.Democratic governance	1.5	1	1.5	1.5	0	-0.5
5.Human rights	1	1.5	0.5	1	0	0
6.Rule of law	0.5	1	1.5	2	0	-0.5
7.Policy making	0.5	1.5	1	1.5	0.5	0
8.Integration into the world economy	1	0	1	0	1	1
9.National interest	0.5	2	0	2.5	1	2.5
10.Conflict	2	0.5	-0.5	0	2	0

15 Fields are estimated by experts on a scale of '-5' to '5', where '-5' is extremely negative influence; '0' is an absence of any influence; 5 is extremely positive influence. Source: personal communications.

Now that we have identified the main fields where diasporas have the most influence in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, we will reveal diasporas' impact on democracy examining correlations between these fields and democracy. In order to measure diasporas' effect on democracy within the aim of the article and research questions, we used a regression analysis. For this purpose, we operationalised the highlighted fields into quantitative variables. Thus, our dependent variable is 'democracy' operationalised into the 'Index of Democracy Level'<sup>16</sup> (Aleksanyan 2017) for all cases. The independent variable for Armenia, Georgia, Ukraine and Moldova is financial remittances, operationalised into personal remittances (% of GDP).<sup>17</sup> For Azerbaijani, the independent variable is civil society, operationalised into civil society-nations in transit subindex,<sup>18</sup> and for Belarus, this is culture, operationalised into governments expenditure on culture or cultural events abroad.

**Table 2: Diasporas' influence on Democracy, regression analysis<sup>19</sup>**

Variable	Coefficient	R <sup>2</sup>	Sig	N
Armenia / Financial remittances		.677	.000	20
Constant	.329		.000	
Personal Remittances (%of GDP)	.009		.000	
Georgia / Financial remittances		.239	.034	20
Constant	.295		.002	
Personal Remittances (%of GDP)	.020		.034	
Moldova / Financial remittances		.571	.000	20
Constant	.417		.000	
Personal Remittances (%of GDP)	.006		.000	
Ukraine / Financial remittances		.621	.000	20
Constant	.427		.000	
Personal Remittances (%of GDP)	.023		.000	
Azerbaijan/Civil Society		.462	.003	16
Constant	.230		.000	
Civil Society (Nations in Transit subindex)	.032		.003	
Belarus / Culture				
Constant	--		--	
Government expenditures on culture				

16 Index of Democracy Level aggregates 5 subindexes: Political, Social, Economic, Educational and Health. The index has the 0-1 ranking scale where 0 point implies the lowest level of democracy and 1 point indicates the highest level of it.

17 Data source is the official site of the World Bank, available at <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/BX.TREFWKR.DT.GD.ZS?locations=UA-AM-MD-GE-AZ-BY/> (last visited 1 April 2018).

18 Data source: Freedom House 'Nations in Transit 2017: Azerbaijan Country Profile' (2017), available at <https://freedomhouse.org/report/nations-transit/2017/azerbaijan> (last visited 1 April 2018).

19 Source: calculations by the authors.

As presented in Table 2, the Indexes of Democracy Level of Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine are strongly affected by financial remittances. It is worth mentioning that Moldova has the highest rate of remittances (21,7 per cent of GDP), while the same variable in respect of Armenia, Georgia and Ukraine is 13,1 per cent, 10,6 per cent and 6,6 per cent of GDP, respectively.<sup>20</sup> The regression analysis indicates that a 1 per cent increase in remittances is associated with 0,009, 0,2, 0,06 and 0,023 units increase in democracy index, respectively. Particularly, the  $R^2$  for financial remittances of Armenia is the highest, with a value of 0,677, which explains 68 per cent of the variation in democracy.

The regression results also show that civil society in Azerbaijan has a statistically significant impact on democracy. One unit increase in civil society index leads to the increase in the Index of Democracy Level of Azerbaijan by 0,032 units.

The research has not detected any statistically significant linear dependence of Index of Democracy Level on the Culture in the case of Belarus (government expenditures on culture).

According to the Nations in Transit 2018 report of Freedom House (2018),<sup>21</sup> Ukraine (4,64), Georgia (4,68) and Moldova (4,93) have comparatively better results in the democracy index. Azerbaijan (6,93) has the worst value of democracy, followed by Belarus (6,61). Armenia has an average level among the six states. In this context, summing up the main results of the research and looking through the theoretical framework, we conclude that the diaspora policies of Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova and Armenia have a political-economic framework of diaspora policies including disciplinary and liberal governmentality elements, while the diaspora policies of Azerbaijan and Belarus are mostly disciplinary.

## 10 Conclusion

This article explores the influence of diasporas on democratisation in EaP countries in a comparative perspective. Within this framework, analysing diaspora policies and diaspora activities in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, we raise the question whether the diasporas' influence on democracy is typical in these countries and whether they have similar diaspora policies. Based on the findings, we argue that diasporas of these countries have different impact levels on democracy. Moreover, we conclude that democracy levels, in turn, influence the diaspora policies.

A descriptive and explorative analysis of the article shows that financial remittances are the main means by which diasporas have influence in Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine; in the case of Azerbaijan this

20 Data source is the official site of the World Bank, available at <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/BX.TREPWKR.DT.GD.ZS?locations=UA-AM-MD-GE-AZ-BY/> (last visited 1 April 2018).

21 'Nations in Transit' measured by Freedom House is estimated by 1 to 7 point scale where the states with 1 to 2,99 points have Consolidated Democracies, 3 to 3,99 points have Semi-Consolidated Democracies, 4 to 4,99 points -Transitional or Hybrid Regime, 5 to 5,99 points are Semi-Consolidated Authoritarian Regimes and 6 to 7 points are Consolidated Authoritarian Regimes. It estimates progress and fails in democratisation for 29 countries from Central Europe to Central Asia.

means is civil society, albeit with weak effect; and in Belarus it is culture. The regression analysis findings illustrate that the financial remittances variable is revealed as a significant predictor explaining the variation in levels of democracy. The civil society of Azerbaijan also has a statistically significant impact on democracy.

Another finding illustrates that the diasporas of Azerbaijan and Belarus are the most passive among the countries under study. Taking into account that the democracy levels of the two countries are also the lowest, we conclude that this passivity is a consequence of state policy, which limits and determines the diaspora activity agenda. Thus, in the case of Belarus and Azerbaijan, the diaspora policies are mostly disciplinary, while the political-economic diaspora policies of Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine include components that are more liberal.

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# The influence of the African diaspora on democracy-building processes in countries of residence

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**Abstract:** This article discusses the role of the African diaspora in democracy-building processes in the African diaspora. The contribution presents a general overview of the sources and causes of the present-day situation of people of African descent in the diaspora and how they impact on their participation in democracy-building processes in the diaspora. The article underscores the critical role which the African diaspora plays and notes the challenges it faces due to the continuing social ills of racism, racial discrimination, Afrophobia, xenophobia and related intolerance. These social ills prevent the African diaspora from effectively exercising their rights to take part in the conduct of public affairs; to vote and to be elected in genuine periodic elections, and to have access, on general term of equality, to public services in their country. A quick scan of what obtains in the African diaspora shows that political participation remains a challenge for people of African descent and there is a need for a concerted effort to address this challenge both at the international and state levels. The contribution also underscores the need for the implementation of the International Decade for People of African Descent as a tool for changing for the better the situation of the African diaspora, particularly in their participation in democracy-building processes. Owing to the historical facts and contemporary migration, the African diaspora is not homogeneous. This presupposes the need to contextualise any strategy aimed at addressing the challenges faced by the African diaspora in democracy building.

**Key words:** African diaspora; people of African descent; democracy; political participation; racism

## 1 Introduction

The African diasporas, just as any other human beings, have the right to influence democratic processes wherever they live. This right can take many forms and dimensions. The African diasporas, also referred to as people of African descent in the diaspora, are important political stakeholders for their countries of origin as well as for the countries in which they live. Depending on their circumstances, the African diasporas

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would at times have no links with their 'ancestral roots', but only with the countries in which they live. In this case, their right of participating in their country's politics remains equally important. It is for this reason that the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (DDPA), the outcome document of the World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance (2001), urged states to 'facilitate the participation of people of African descent in all political, economic, social and cultural aspects of society'.<sup>1</sup> The participation of people of African descent in the diaspora, which is the focus of this contribution, has a positive bearing on democracy-building processes. However, people of African descent in the diaspora continue to suffer racism, racial discrimination, Afrophobia,<sup>2</sup> xenophobia and related intolerance. This is despite global efforts to combat these undesirable acts. The lack of political participation no doubt has a negative bearing on democracy-building processes.

The role of African diasporas in democracy-building processes cannot be overemphasised. The influence of these diasporas on democracy-building processes cannot be discussed without context. First, the article presents an general overview of the sources and causes of the present-day situation of the African diaspora. Second, it discusses the way in which people of African descent effectively participate in politics and decision-making processes, if at all. To this end, it makes reference to what obtains in countries outside the African continent. Third, the contribution looks into the question of how people of African descent can effectively participate in politics, thus contributing towards democracy-building processes. Fourth, it discusses in brief the International Decade for People of African Descent and its importance in the discourse on the role of people of African descent in democracy building. Lastly, a conclusion is drawn.

## 2 The definitional conundrum

The definition of 'African diaspora' presents a double challenge in the sense that one must first define 'African' before defining 'diaspora'. Both terms require an intellectual exercise, which is likely to defeat the purpose of this contribution. For instance, the people in and from the African continent, as well as those who are of African ancestry, are quite diverse. The diaspora, which generally connotes migration or spreading, may be within the African continent as well as outside the African continent. It then boils down to a process of self-identification for one to be considered part of the African diaspora. Alpers argues that '[w]hen we speak of African diaspora, we must recognise that we are really speaking of multiple frequently overlapping diasporas' (Alpers 2001: 27). Alpers observes that we must further include in our definition 'a comparative dimension that looks both within that of the African experience and beyond to other global diasporic communities' (Alpers 2001: 27).

Kafle (2010: 136) observes that the concept of diaspora is associated with migration and dispersal. This is a term that signifies any people living

1 Para 4 of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, 2001.

2 This term describes the unique and specific form of racial discrimination affecting people of African descent and the African diaspora.

outside their homeland (Anand 2003: 212). In our context the 'homeland' would be the African continent. Descendants that are born away from their parents' or ancestors' 'homeland' are also regarded as the African diaspora. While, technically speaking, these would not be African diasporas since their 'homeland' becomes a 'homeland' outside Africa, they are nevertheless referred to as the African diaspora. It is for this reason that the term 'people of African descent' is used to encompass all people of African ancestry. The concept of people of African descent also presents another challenge as it does not differentiate between African residents and those in the diaspora. For this reason, the term 'people of African descent in the diaspora' is sometimes preferred.<sup>3</sup>

The term 'African diaspora' in this context is used in its broader sense as encompassing a multitude of people of African ancestry who find themselves living outside the African continent, to which they (and their ancestors) were historically 'rooted'. African diaspora, in this sense, is 'a term of self-identification among many varied groups who themselves or those of whose forbearers migrated [voluntary or involuntary] from one place to another or to several places' (Vertovec 2005: 2). Accordingly, the African diaspora was born out of the voluntary and involuntary movement of Africans to various areas of the world since ancient times, but involuntary migration through the trans-Saharan, transatlantic and Indian Ocean slave trades accounts for most black presence outside of Africa today (Jallow 1996: 3). The historical facts relating to Africans and people of African descent has a direct bearing on the contemporary situation of the African diasporas and their influence (or lack thereof) on democracy-building processes in the diaspora.

### 3 Sources and causes of the present situation of people of African descent

The sources and causes of the present situation of people of African descent are well documented. The Durban Declaration and Programme of Action is instructive in terms of shedding light on what befell Africans. This history is linked to the present situation of African descent in the African diaspora.

First, the enslavement of Africans and the slave trade, including the transatlantic slave trade, were appalling tragedies in the history of humanity, not only because of their abhorrent barbarism but also in terms of their magnitude, organised nature and especially their negation of the essence of the victims. The enslavement of Africans and the slave trade are crimes against humanity. The vestiges of the slave trade and enslavement of Africans manifested in laws that had a negative impact on people of African descent. For example, it can also not be denied that laws such as

3 Para 7 of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, 2001, eg, 'requests the Commission on Human Rights to consider establishing a working group or other mechanism of the United Nations to study the problems of racial discrimination faced by people of African descent in the African diaspora and make proposals for the elimination of racial discrimination against people of African descent'. The Working Group on People of African descent has a mandate, among other things, '[t]o study the problems of racial discrimination faced by people of African descent living in the diaspora'.

the Jim Crow laws of the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries in the United States placed a stigma on African Americans, which promoted the idea that blacks are second-class citizens. The Jim Crow laws practised during and after the slavery era fuelled racial segregation, which also affected the political participation of people of African descent and deprived them of being part of democracy-building processes. As a result of Jim Crow laws, African Americans were deprived of equal social and economic opportunities such as access to education, jobs, voting, travel and housing, as compared to white privileges. The remnants of Jim Crow laws are also reflected in the systemic exclusion of the African diaspora in democracy-building processes.

Second, colonialism just rubbed salt in African wounds. It intensified racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, Afrophobia and related intolerance. Africans and people of African descent were victims of colonialism and to this day continue to be victims of its consequences. Not only did colonialism impact the political and economic conditions of contemporary Africa, but it also affected the manner in which Africans were (to be) treated in the African diaspora. Colonialism perpetrated the stereotype that African people are incapable of having any influence on democracy-building processes. This stereotype is also reflected in the African diaspora, where the political participation of people of African descent generally remains minimal. The adverse effects of colonialism, particularly in the treatment of Africans, had long-lasting effects even on Africans in the diaspora.

Third, apartheid was an untold evil and caused immense suffering for Africans and people of African descent. Apartheid constitutes a crime against humanity and is a major source and manifestation of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. Apartheid created a divide between white and black people. Despite the fact that apartheid occurred in South Africa, it affected Africans and perpetrated a stereotype that Africans are incapable of being part of democracy building, not only on the African continent but also in the African diaspora. It should be noted that the entry into force of apartheid laws in 1948 in South Africa resulted in institutionalised racial discrimination. Although not directly linked to apartheid, the minimal participation of the African diaspora in democracy-building processes in the diaspora sometimes results from institutionalised racial discrimination. The effects of apartheid are the same as those of systemic anti-black racism.

Fourth, the recent migration of Africans to Europe also revealed another cruel side: the trade in enslaved Africans in Libya. The actions of African migrants as merchandise in Libya are 'reminiscent of one of the darkest chapters in human history, when millions of Africans were uprooted, enslaved, trafficked and auctioned to the highest bidder'.<sup>4</sup> With the recent migration (voluntary and involuntary) of Africans to Europe, for instance, there is 'a tendency to regard categories "foreigners", "immigrants", and "ethnic minorities" as roughly interchangeable' (Crowley 2001: 104). These categories could be making up the African diaspora with citizenship

4 Statement of Independent Experts of the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council, 'Libya must end outrageous auctions of enslaved people, UN experts insist', available at <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=22475&LangID=E> (last visited 18 April 2018).

(or even dual citizenship) and rights in African diaspora countries. However, for the careless categorisation, such African diasporas would generally not be 'accepted' as deserving all the rights to be exercised by the general citizenry.

The sources and causes of the present-day situation of African diasporas provide a perspective of what obtains in contemporary times, particularly in their contribution (or lack thereof) to democratic processes. This is backed up by the examples found in the enjoyment (or non-enjoyment) of political rights by people of African descent in the diaspora.

#### 4 Political participation of people of African descent

According to Steiner, the concept of political participation has been an 'indispensable building block' in the post-war construction of human rights law (Steiner 1998: 77). Political participation is a vital human right. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Universal Declaration) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) both recognise a right to political participation. Article 21 of the Universal Declaration states:

- (1) Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives.
- (2) Everyone has the right of equal access to public service in his country.
- (3) The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.

Article 25 of ICCPR states:

Every citizen shall have the right and the opportunity, without any of the distinctions mentioned in article 2 and without unreasonable restrictions:

- (a) to take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives;
- (b) to vote and to be elected at genuine periodic elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret ballot, guaranteeing the free expression of the will of the electors;
- (c) to have access, on general terms of equality, to public service in his country.

The right to political participation is but part of a democracy-building process, which the African diasporas should exercise in accordance with the law. It is also important to note that the right to political participation contains two parts, namely, an 'election clause' and a 'take part' clause (Steiner 1988: 86). What follows are examples of challenges faced by people of African descent in the diaspora in their exercise of the right to political participation (or lack thereof). This has a direct bearing on their influence on democracy-building processes.

##### 4.1 United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

During its country visit to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent (Working Group) found that people of African descent were

historically underrepresented in British politics both as political figures and as active participants in political processes.<sup>5</sup> The first people of African descent to be elected as Members of Parliament were Bernie Grant, Paul Boateng and Dianne Abbott, elected in 1987. In the 2010 elections there were 27 Members of Parliament of African and Asian descent elected.<sup>6</sup> While the situation was improving, the pace was very slow. It is clear that where there is an underrepresentation of people of African descent in politics, their influence in democracy-building processes is minimised. The right to effective political participation, therefore, is important in democracy-building processes.

## 4.2 Panama

During its country visit to Panama, the Working Group found that people of African descent were underrepresented in public service positions and only a few occupied important political positions.<sup>7</sup> During its visit to Panama in 2013, the Working Group found that the Minister of Education and certain other high-level politicians were people of African descent and were fully committed to the fight against racism in Panama. The reality, however, pointed to the fact that in Panama the number of people of African descent holding elective executive positions or belonging to political parties was substantially lower than it should be, based on their number in the general population.<sup>8</sup>

The Working Group established that in Colón, Panama, people of African descent remained invisible in public life, particularly in relation to political processes. People of African descent felt completely disenfranchised from decision-making processes. Panama presents another example where the influence of people of African descent on democracy-building processes is minimal.

## 4.3 Brazil

During its visit to Brazil, the Working Group found that Brazil had adopted several measures to increase Afro-Brazilian participation and representation in decision-making spaces. However, the Working Group noted that there was no law for quotas to ensure a minimum number of Afro-Brazilian parliamentary candidates. The Working Group also learned that under the initiative of the Nucleus of Black Parliamentarians of the Workers' Party and other members of the government, there were a number of legal projects under consideration in the National Congress to increase Afro-Brazilian parliamentary candidates. It was also comforting to note that under the initiative of the Nucleus of Black Parliamentarians of the Workers' Party and other members of the government, a number of legal projects were under consideration in the National Congress to increase Afro-Brazilian political participation. The Working Group also learned that the Constitutional Bill would add an item to the Transitional Constitutional Provisions Act determining the reservation of seats for

5 Report of the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent on its 12th session. Mission to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, 5 August 2013, A/HRC/24/52/Add.1 14.

6 As above.

7 Report of the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent on its 12th session Mission to Panama, 21 August 2013, A/HRC/24/52/Add.1 10.

8 Report of the Working Group (n 7) 10.

members of the black population in the House of Representatives and the Legislative Assembly.<sup>9</sup>

#### 4.4 The Netherlands

During its visit to The Netherlands, the Working Group expressed concern about the lack of participation of Curaçaoans in the political process involved in the development of legislation of The Netherlands. Curaçaoans expressed dissatisfaction that due to their limited political participation, their voice was not heard in the international arena, which would further cement their autonomous status. The Working Group recommended that the Dutch government needs to take additional steps to change the historic underrepresentation of people of African descent in politics in The Netherlands both as political figures, as institutional figures in Curaçao, and as active participants in political processes.<sup>10</sup>

#### 4.5 Sweden

During its visit to Sweden, the Working Group learned that the political discourse by far-right parties in Sweden, as in other countries, had contributed to the negative picture that immigration was a problem and a threat to Swedish culture and the welfare system.<sup>11</sup> This created a rise in Afrophobic attacks and fear amongst the communities concerned.<sup>12</sup> Such fear led to African diasporas being discouraged to participate in democracy-building processes, including participating in politics.

The role some politicians play in suppressing the participation of African diasporas or people of African descent in politics is also well document in Sweden. This sometimes is not direct but very subtle. A classic example involves a Sweden Culture Minister who in 2012 was invited to slice a cake which was designed like a naked African woman. While the Minister defended her action of cutting the cake by stating that she had only been invited to cut the cake and not to review art, the action was seen as a 'crude caricature which "makes mockery of racism"'.<sup>13</sup> This kind of action by a political figure not only demeans Africans but perpetuates dangerous stereotypes against people of African descent, and is an antithesis to the worldwide struggle against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, Afrophobia and related intolerance.

#### 4.6 Italy

During its visit to Italy, the Working Group expressed concern about the escalation in xenophobia across Europe by the political manipulation of people's fears about the increase in the number of migrants. In Italy the Working Group observed how people's fears had been manipulated to

9 Report of the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent on its 14th session Mission to Brazil, 23 September 2014, A/HRC/24/52/Add.2 10.

10 Report of the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent on its 16th session, Mission to The Netherlands, 20 July 2015, A/HRC/24/52/Add.2 10.

11 Report of the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent on its 16th session, Mission to Sweden, 25 August 2015, A/HRC/30/56/Add.2 5.

12 As above.

13 C Parsons 'A tasteless, racist spectacle: Swedish minister triggers race row after cutting cake in the shape of a naked, black, native African woman', available at <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2131365/Racist-cake-causes-outrage-Sweden-Lena-Adelsohn-Liljeroth-triggers-race-row.html> (last visited 23 March 2018).



promote a racist anti-immigration agenda, to disseminate false information and incite hatred against people of African descent and migrants. In Italy, the Working Group was appalled by a statement made by the Deputy President of Senate, Roberto Calderoli, in 2013, which described Ms Cécile Kyenge (an Italian of Congolese descent), then Minister for Integration, as a 'orangutan'. Ms Kyenge was elected as Member of the European Parliament (MEP) on 25 May 2014. The Working Group found that this statement had racist connotations and was in contravention with the absolute prohibition of racial and ethnic discrimination stipulated in international human rights law.<sup>14</sup>

The Working Group underscored the key role that political leaders and political parties can and ought to play in combating racism and encouraging political parties to ensure that their members refrain from public statements and actions that encourage or incite racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, Afrophobia and related intolerance. These public statements generally discourage African diasporas from influencing democracy-building processes. They further inhibit African diasporas from effectively exercising their right to political participation as they are impliedly silenced.

#### 4.7 Germany

In Germany, the Working Group found that the federal parliament had two members of African descent, and there were some elected officials of African descent at the state and community levels across Germany.<sup>15</sup> The Working Group observed that the lack of representation of people of African descent in government and politics meant that their issues were not taken up in national political dialogue. The Working Group recommended that people of African descent in Germany should be legally recognised by the government as a minority group that has made and continues to make profound economic, political, social and cultural contributions to Germany.<sup>16</sup>

### 5 Addressing the lack of political participation of people of African descent

The examples referred to above illustrate the point that in so far as the lack of political participation by people of African descent in the diaspora is concerned, more is required. Among the African diaspora, there are citizens who have the right to political participation. This right must not only be promoted but also protected. African diasporas maybe distinct from the general population, but this does not warrant any suppression of their right to political participation. Just like other citizens, the African diasporas must influence democracy-building processes. Disadvantaging the African diasporas in politics, particularly in political participation, has a negative bearing on any country's socio-economic development. Addressing the lack of political participation of people of African descent

14 Report of the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent on its mission to Italy, 12 August 2016, A/HRC/33/61/Add.1 9.

15 Report of the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent on its mission to Germany, 15 August 2017, A/HRC/36/60/Add.2 9.

16 Report of the Working Group (n 15) 14.

must include strengthening their influence on democracy-building processes, and this must be undertaken at all levels.

### 5.1 Role of states

In addressing the lack of effective political participation of people of African descent, various instruments must be implemented by states. The Universal Declaration provides for the principles of equality and non-discrimination. States, therefore, must encourage respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction of any kind such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.<sup>17</sup> States must further ensure the universal accession or ratification and full implementation of their obligations arising under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD), the principal international instrument to eliminate racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, Afrophobia and related intolerance.

In crafting the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, states recognised that 'equal participation of all individuals and peoples in the formation of just, equitable, democratic and inclusive societies can contribute to a world free from racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, Afrophobia and related intolerance'.<sup>18</sup> This equal participation, therefore, must include people of African descent in the diaspora. The Durban Declaration and Programme of Action highlights the need for states to ensure that political structures correspond to the multi-ethnic characteristics of the population. This in turn will ensure that the citizenry, including the African diaspora, has an effective influence on democracy-building processes for the betterment of society.

Despite the increasing racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, Afrophobia and related intolerance, people of African descent continue to contribute to the political life of the countries where they live. States must encourage such contributions. It should be noted, however, that inequitable political conditions can breed and foster racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, Afrophobia and related intolerance, which in turn exacerbate inequity. Special measures or positive actions aimed at achieving appropriate representation in political parties, parliament and other public institutions must be implemented by states. In some cases electoral reforms must be undertaken to ensure equal participation.

### 5.2 Role of the United Nations

At the United Nations (UN) level, the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent was established to study the problems of racial discrimination faced by people of African descent living in the African diaspora and to make proposals for the elimination of racial discrimination against people of African descent. Indeed, the Working Group has pronounced on the issue of political participation in its reports. For example, in the case of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the Working Group recommended that more should be done to empower people of African descent to be represented in political structures

17 Art 2 Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

18 DDPA 6.

such as parliament.<sup>19</sup> In particular, the Working Group stated that attention must be given to all political parties to improving the representation of people of African descent and to analyse their political representation at all levels.<sup>20</sup>

In Brazil, the Working Group underscored the implementation of affirmative action policies which have the potential of increasing Afro-Brazilian participation and inclusion in political processes which, in the long term, contribute to the reduction of racism and discrimination in society in general.<sup>21</sup> In the case of The Netherlands, the Working Group reaffirmed its firm belief that targeted policies and affirmative action policies should be adopted to promote the effective equality of people of African descent specifically to address the lack of sufficient political participation of people of African descent as well as the lack of appropriate representation of people of African descent in public sector employment.<sup>22</sup> In Italy, the Working Group recommended the importance of accountability for politicians that stigmatise and negatively stereotype people of African descent or use racist propaganda for political purposes.<sup>23</sup>

In Germany, the Working Group recommended that the government should ensure that people of African descent are actively recruited to state institutions in order to create a diverse workforce to represent the population of Germany and combat structural racism.<sup>24</sup> In the case of Panama, the Working Group noted that political participation was a key factor in the success of policies and measures designed to overcome discrimination and racism. For this reason, the full participation of people of African descent in politics was essential.<sup>25</sup>

## 6 International Decade for People of African Descent

People of African descent have made (and continue to make) significant contributions to the development of societies and nations the world over. They continue to shape the politics of the countries where they reside. Despite this, their influence on democracy-building processes remains minimal as a result of the challenges they face, which partly is the legacy of the enslavement of Africans, the slave trade and colonialism, among other things. These manifested in racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, Afrophobia and related intolerances. The systematic exclusion people of African descent in politics has become a serious cause for concern. It is for this reason that the International Decade for People of African Descent (2015-2024) was proclaimed by the United Nations. The International Decade is an important commitment to the fight against racism as it is aimed at strengthening action to dismantle the multifarious obstacles encountered by the millions of people of African descent in every region of the world. Presenting an historic opportunity, the International Decade must be viewed as a tool of change aimed at addressing the need for

19 Statement (n 5) 18.

20 As above.

21 Report (n 9) 12.

22 Report (n 10) 19.

23 Report (n 14) 16.

24 Report (n 15) 16.

25 Report (n 7) 19.

African diasporas to have an effective influence on democracy-building processes wherever they reside.

### 6.1 International human rights law

There is no doubt that the influence of the African diaspora on democracy can be greatly enhanced through the implementation of the International Decade for People of African Descent, of which the life span is from 2015 until 2024. The International Decade was proclaimed by the General Assembly in its Resolution 68/237, with the theme 'People of African Descent: Recognition, Justice and Development'. The International Decade is a timely and unique opportunity to underline the important contribution made by people of African descent to societies and to propose concrete measures to promote equality and to combat discrimination of any kind. Among other things, the main objective of the International Decade is to promote respect, protection and fulfilment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by people of African descent, as recognised in the Universal Declaration. This includes the right to political participation.

The International Decade focuses on the strengthening of national, regional and international action and cooperation in relation to the full enjoyment of economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights by people of African descent and their full and equal participation in all aspects of society. As part of its programme of activities, the International Decade urges states to 'adopt measures to enable the full, equal and effective participation of people of African descent in public and political affairs without discrimination, in accordance with international human rights law'.<sup>26</sup> In order for any influence on meaningful democracy-building processes to take place, people of African descent must be empowered.

### 6.2 Declaration on the Promotion and Full Respect of Human Rights of People of African Descent

As part of the programme of activities, the International Decade obligates the General Assembly to

request states to consider adopting measures to further promote and protect the human rights of people of African descent as enshrined in international human rights instruments, including through the elaboration of a draft United Nations Declaration on the Promotion and Full Respect of Human Rights of People of African Descent.<sup>27</sup>

From this request it is clear that a declaration aimed at strengthening the human rights of people of African descent is a *sine qua non* for addressing the many challenges faced by people of African descent, which includes the legacies of the most shameful practices they were subjected to and the contemporary remnants, which perpetuate their racial discrimination, which is sometimes institutional.

It is envisaged that this Declaration will address the role of people of African descent in democratic processes, particularly in ensuring their full participation in politics. The Declaration will be an expression of the

26 Programme of activities for the implementation of the International Decade for People of African Descent A/RES/69/16 7.

27 Programme of activities (n 26) 11-12.

fundamental values which must be shared by all members of the community in relation to people of African descent. As an aspirational and not legally-binding document, the Declaration will influence the development of international human rights law, as it applies to people of African descent.

It must be noted that the adoption of measures to further promote and protect the human rights of people of African descent as enshrined in human rights instruments does not suggest that states should 'reinvent the wheel'. However, the elaboration of a UN Declaration on the Promotion and Full Respect of Human Rights of People of African Descent suggests that states must push the boundaries further. The elaboration of the Declaration must, therefore, build upon the foundation that is already in existence in the form of the human rights enshrined in human rights instruments. States already have an obligation to promote and protect human rights, and elaborating on a declaration pursues this 'obligation' further, particularly with its specific focus on people of African descent. Elements of the Declaration must, therefore, augment the human rights instruments aimed at protecting and ensuring respect for human rights.

## 7 Conclusion

For the purpose of this contribution the term 'people of African descent in the diaspora' has been used to refer to the African diaspora. While these terms may be viewed as simple terms to define, navigating through their definitional conundrums is not simple. Nevertheless, a common ground was found for practical purposes. While most of the literature on diaspora studies focuses on the influence of diasporas on democracy-building processes in their 'homeland' or their historical 'roots', this contribution focused on their sphere of influence in their country of residence, in the African diaspora. The analysis found that the present situation of people of African descent in the diaspora can only be understood within the context of historical facts, which are sometimes overlooked, particularly when discussing the role that the African diaspora must play in democratic processes.

Racism, racial discrimination, Afrophobia, xenophobia and related intolerance remain antitheses for the full participation of people of African descent in democracy-building processes. The examples of what obtains in the African diaspora relating to the participation of people of African descent in political processes are just the tip of an iceberg. The degree of political participation at different levels of government of people of African descent remains low, both in so far as voting and the underrepresentation in political and institutional decision-making processes are concerned. This is directly linked to the forms of racial discrimination they are subjected to in many countries, including the multiple and aggravated forms of discrimination based on other related grounds such as age, sex, language, religion, political opinion, social origin, property, birth or other status. Most recently, the world witnessed public and political discourse, as well as the use of political platforms that promote or incite racial discrimination. These are fuelled by old and new prejudices that emanate from the treatment of people of African descent in the past and present. The constant portrayal of people of African descent as criminals and security threats makes the situation of people of African descent worse.

Racism, which constituted a huge threat to democracy, continues in many parts of the world and people of African descent are always on the receiving end.

While efforts have been made to address the challenges faced by people of African descent, this is only reflected on paper. Generally, the reality on the ground points to something completely opposite. People of African descent remain invisible 'visible' minority groups whose destiny is always determined without their involvement. The effects of the untold suffering experienced by people of African descent for many centuries remain a scar which require many efforts to reverse not only on paper. Article 1 of the Universal Declaration could not have put it any more clearly: 'All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.' People of African descent in the diaspora or African diaspora belong to the human race whose rights deserve respect. This will ensure that all human beings influence democratic processes in their societies.

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# The Armenian community in Iran: Issues and emigration

Gohar Iskandaryan\*

**Abstract:** *The Armenian-Iranian community has a history of around 400 years. According to official statistics, there were approximately 300 000 Armenians in Iran in 1960-1970. After the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1978-1979, a considerable number of Armenians fled from Iran. In addition, other reasons fuelling the emigration were the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war, the international sanctions against Iran and the harsh social-economic conditions in the country. Many Armenians remaining in Iran mostly live in the three communities of Tabriz, Tehran and Isfahan. Armenians are recognised by the state as a religious minority. The Constitution of Iran gives rights of domestic, cultural and religious autonomy to Armenians. At the same time, Islamic laws dictate certain limitations, notably in the spheres of equal employment opportunities, the court system and justice. Armenians in Iran adopt several approaches for retaining their Armenian identities, including the non-acceptance of mixed marriages. After the Islamic revolution, the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society started to organise and support the emigration of Jews and other non-Muslim groups, thus propelling the next wave of the Iranian-Armenians' exodus.*

**Key words:** Iran; Armenian community; Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society; Christians; religious minorities; emigration; rights; Islamic revolution

## 1 Introduction

Armenia, situated at the crossroads between the east and the west, has always been in the midst of conflicts. For centuries, Armenians tried to stay away from clashes and took refuge in more secure places. There were also cases in the history when Armenians were forcefully deported from their lands. These are the two main ways of formation of the Armenian diaspora. Interestingly, in the foreign territories Armenians prefer living alongside each other, thus creating space and opportunities for building Armenian Apostolic churches, establishing Armenian schools, and so forth, to resist assimilation. After the establishment of these communities, the next issue was their institutionalisation in order to create a self-sufficient system to solve potential problems.

This article undertakes to present the establishment and the subsequent movements of the Armenian community in Iran. During the history, Iranian-Armenians succeeded in forming diocese bodies that solved numerous issues in the community. All three Armenian dioceses in Iran

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had councils of delegates with the main mission of dealing with administrative, national, clerical, educational and territorial issues of the dioceses. The councils also provide certificates of baptism, marriage, death, and so forth, and handle wills and adoptions of children. In case of civil cases, the community deals with these domestically, while criminal cases are within the domain of the legislation of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Armenians participate in all elections in Iran. Armenians vote within the boundaries of their community, either in a church or other community building. Armenians can be elected during the election to the *Majlis* (Parliament).

The article aims to present the current situation and status of the Armenian community in Iran, their privileges and limitations. It also focuses on the present issues of the communities and the main reasons for the emigration of Armenians from Iran.

## 2 Methodology

In addition to extensive desk research, the author conducted both a field trip to Iran for qualitative in-depth interviews with key informants and organised a snap web-based quantitative survey as a secondary data source to validate the results.

The desk research made use of the available literature, Iranian-Armenian electronic resources and media outlets, and laid a solid base for the application of the historical comparative approach to the article.

The qualitative in-depth interviews were conducted in 2014, when the author visited the Islamic Republic of Iran and met with the following persons: the leaders of the Tehran, Isfahan and Tabriz dioceses; the deputies to the Iranian *Majlis* of Armenian origin; representatives of the council of delegates; and the editor-in-chief of the major Iranian-Armenian newspaper, *Aliq*. The standard question in-depth interviews focused on the Armenian community in Iran, their issues and the reasons for their emigration from the country.

The quantitative web-based survey was implemented during March to June 2018 and targeted those Iranian-Armenians that had emigrated from Iran. The topic of the survey was anchored on the reasons that forced them to leave the country, including aspects of their occupation in Iran before emigration, the issues they had to overcome in the new host country, and so forth. The survey was widely circulated on social networks, sent to the specific hubs of concentration of ex-Iranian citizens of Armenian origin (such as churches and community clubs) and also directly messaged to the targeted people through personal networks. Over 100 people responded to the survey in either the English or Armenian languages.

Remarkably, for centuries the main institution to bring them together and solve their issues has been the Apostolic Church. Another channel was the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (the Dashnak party), since a considerable section of Iranian-Armenians belonged to this party. Both these centres of gravity have a global spread, and even when Armenians fled Iran after the Islamic revolution, these two institutions were a source of support. This factor played a significant role to relieve the harsh situation of the migrants.

### 3 Deportation to Iran

The Armenian-Iranian community has a history of around 400 years. In 1604 Safavid Shah Abbas the First deported more than 500 000 Armenians to Iran. Of these, 20 000 to 30 000 Armenian families were placed in the northern regions of Iran, namely, Gilan and Mazandaran (Waterfield 1973: 63), and the rest were moved to the south. The first Armenian community in Iran was established near Isfahan. The place was named Nor Jugha (New Julfa, after the home town of some of the deportees). This evolved into a community with a strong institutional structure. Through the years the Armenian community grew and divided into three groups governed by three dioceses: Atrpatakan (residence in Tabriz), Tehran and Isfahan.

By means of a special decree, Abbas the First allocated lands in the southern part of Isfahan and Armenians constructed the town of New Julfa. Shah Abbas the First instituted a special policy for the deported Armenian population in order to give them the opportunity to take root in Iranian soil by presenting them with many privileges. Thanks to Armenians, the culture in the country developed, trade became more active given the foreign language knowledge of Armenians and their experience in the Silk Road trade, and artisanship and small production advanced substantially.

However, during the later reign of Iranian Shah Sultan Huseyin (1694-1722), the policy of Savafids changed and they not only imposed high taxes on Armenians, but also attempted to forcefully Islamise the Christian Armenians. These factors became the first major impetus for migration from Iran. In the eighteenth century, a considerable number of Armenians left for Constantinople, Smyrna, Aleppo, also further to European and Asian countries such as Italy, France, The Netherlands, Poland, Russia, India, Burma and Indonesia (Bayburtyan 1969). Since the middle of the eighteenth century the Iranian-Armenian community started to dwindle, promptly filling the ranks of the Armenian communities in the Europe.

At the end of the nineteenth century, Ottoman Sultan Abdul Hamid the Second organised mass ethnic cleanings of Armenians in Western Armenia, that is, the regions in the Ottoman empire neighbouring Iran. During these *pogroms*, the Iranian government permitted Armenian refugees to cross the Iranian border without hindrance to find shelter in Iran. The same scenario was repeated in the 1915 to 1923 genocide of Armenians in the Ottoman empire. Iran hosted the refugee Armenians and thus the Armenian community of Iran was replenished.

Some time later, in 1915 to 1916, the Persian-Armenian Council was established in Iran. It was considered the highest body of Iranian Armenians. Indeed, the Council played a major salutary role for the endangered Armenian population (Bayburtyan 2013: 25). With its petitions, the Persian Council reached a point where the Iranian government promised protection both to its citizens and to those Western Armenians that had crossed its border and taken refuge in the country.

The number of Iranian-Armenians significantly increased after the genocide due to the inflow of Western Armenians. Iran not only gave protection but also supported the Armenians by granting guarantees of life and property. Later, in 1935, the government of Iran adopted the

Assembly of Laws on Family and Heritage of Iranian Armenians to guide the community leadership in their domestic issues.

Although Armenians received the right of being represented in the Iranian *Majlis* after the 1905-1911 constitutional revolution, after 1915, given the increase rise in the Armenian community, they were entitled to two seats in parliament.

According to official statistics, in 1960-1970 there were approximately 300 000 Armenians in Iran. Armenians had their schools, sports and cultural clubs. Some of Tehran's most famous pieces of architecture – Hasanabad Square, the Foreign Ministry building, and the Golestan and Marmar palaces – were the work of Armenian architects. Before 1979, Armenian bars and cafes were very popular, and many famous personalities in the arts – music, dance, cinema, theatre and sculpture – came from the community (Stepanian 2010). According to the Armenian *Majlis* representative of Tehran and northern Armenian communities, Karen Khanlaryan, about 30 years ago 5 per cent of dentists and 3 per cent of all doctors in Tehran were of Armenian origin: 'As of now, we have a retreat in the area of medicine' (Interview with Khanlaryan).

Today Armenians have a reputation for quality work in business, food production and automobile repairs. Like other religious minorities, they cannot hold sensitive military or government positions, but some occupy senior positions as managers and engineers in state-run construction projects and industries.

Armenians also enjoy unofficial fame for producing homemade alcohol. Although strictly prohibited by Iranian law, the practice is tolerated as long as it is for consumption within the Armenian community. In Islamic Iran, the highest praise one can give to a glass of homemade wine, vodka or beer is 'Armenian' – even if it was made by someone else (Stepanian 2010).

However, after the Islamic revolution in Iran of 1978 to 1979, a considerable number of Armenians fled Iran as Christian Armenians feared that they would be accused of loyalty to the shah with subsequent expropriation and punishment.

Thus, although Khomeini gave verbal assurances that the rights of Iranian-Armenians would be respected (Hovhannisyan 2012: 72-73), almost half of the Armenian population left Iran. One thing was clear, and that is that a number of employment opportunities would not be available to non-Muslims. Armenians were regarded as a religious minority in Iran.

Despite efforts by the Islamic Republic of Iran to create conducive conditions for the non-Muslim population, Islamic laws dictate certain limitations. The most notorious of these are the following:

- (a) Employment: There are limitations on certain types of work. For example, a non-Muslim cannot become a judge, cannot achieve a high rank in the armed forces, and cannot become a Minister or work for the administration of the President.
- (b) Heritage: A non-Muslim cannot inherit from a Muslim, and if a person from a non-Muslim family adopts Islam, the other non-Muslim relatives are deprived of inheritance rights.
- (c) The Criminal Code distinguishes between a Muslim and a non-Muslim, for example, in the case of the *diya*, that is, financial compensation, the payment of

the blood money/ransom in case of manslaughter. However, the courts try to find ways of compensating based on equality and equity.

- (d) According to Islamic law, only a Muslim can be a witness. This law is reflected in procedural laws, hence it may be assumed that testimony by a non-Muslim can be disregarded during court hearings (Khaloyan 2013: 145-146).

According to Noel Minasyan, the Chairperson of the Council of Delegates of the diocese,

[t]here [were] more than 15 000 Armenian population in the 14 villages of Southern Iran before 1946. Unfortunately, today there is very small Armenian presence in Peria. One part migrated to Armenia, others to Isfahan and Tehran. After the Islamic revolution, many of them fled the country finding refuge in the West (Interview with Minasyan).

All these factors contributed to the emigration of Iranian-Armenians after the Islamic revolution. These settled mainly in the United States, France and other European countries with large Armenian communities.

In addition to the Islamic revolution, the Iran-Iraq war of 1980-1988 (during the war with Iraq, Armenians fought alongside other Iranians, and around 300 were killed, disabled or captured by Iraqi forces), the international sanctions against Iran and hence the harsh social-economic conditions in the country were among other reasons fuelling the emigration.

However, not the entire Armenian population left Iran after the revolution. There are many Armenians in Iran today that, as during the term of the shah, mostly live in the three communities. Article 13 of the Constitution of Iran gives rights of domestic cultural and religious autonomy to Iranian-Armenians (Pahlevanyan 1997: 19). Armenians marry and get divorced, inherit and adopt children according to the Armenian Apostolic Church laws and traditions within the community. According to article 14 of the Constitution, the government of Iran and Muslims are obliged to display kind, sympathetic and just behaviour towards non-Muslims and respect their human rights. This principle is applied with respect to those citizens that do not plot against Islam and the Islamic Republic Constitution.

Armenians mainly reside in cities and large towns, such as Tehran, Isfahan, Tabriz, Urmia and Arak. As mentioned, Armenians are regarded as a religious minority by the state. Religious minorities are entitled to five seats in the Iranian Parliament: two for Armenians; one to Jews; one to Zoroastrians; and one to Assyrian and Chaldean by rotation. This was one of the articles (article 64) in the shah Iran Constitution that was preserved after the Islamic revolution of 1978-1979 and moved to the Constitution of Iran (Pahlevanyan 1997: 20). One of the Armenian members of the *Majlis* is elected from the northern and one from the southern diocese. The representative of Atrpatakan and Tehran dioceses in the tenth *Majlis* is Karen Khanlaryan, and the representative of Isfahan Armenians is Zhorzhik Abrahamyan.

#### 4 Situation in three Iranian-Armenian dioceses and current problems

The Armenian Apostolic Church has three dioceses in Iran: the Tehran or Central diocese (the youngest and the most populous); the Isfahan and Southern Iran diocese; and the Atrpatakan diocese.

##### 4.1 Tehran or Central diocese

The Armenian community in Tehran was established in the 1940s. It has the largest number of members in Iran. The first paragraph of the Charter of the Tehran diocese presents their mission and process of activity implementation.

According to the main and civil laws of Iran, the Iranian-Armenians, adhering to the laws of the country and being recognised as religious community, has the freedom of religion, beliefs and ceremonies, the rights to teach its religion, language and traditional culture, as well as to have its special representatives to the parliament. In the personal issues, it adheres to the religious and confession laws and indisputable traditions that serve as basis to manage the clerical, religious and educational affairs through relevant councils and bodies (Prelacy website).

The council of diocese has its bodies to implement the functions. For example, there is an educational council to monitor the schools, and the property council and judiciary council to deal with family issues of the congregation, such as divorce and heritage (interview with Archbishop Sepuh). There are eight Armenian churches in Tehran.

There are approximately 25 Armenian schools in Tehran with about 7 000 students. A number of sporting-cultural unions operate in Tehran, and many periodicals are published. One of the most widely known is *Aliq Daily*.

However, there are several problems in the Tehran diocese, the largest one perhaps being emigration. Although the main reason is the socio-economic situation in Iran, Armenians in Tehran note that other issues present in the community fuel the emigration.

The main concern of Tehran Armenians is the lack of information and transparency in relation to the property of the Prelacy. Today many Iranian-Armenians demand from the council of delegates to present a list of properties owned by the Prelacy. In the case of some being sold, the community wants to be informed of the price and the aim for which the money will be spent. So far this issue has not been resolved, since the Prelacy finds that it is within its legal framework. However, Iranian-Armenians demand a more transparent method of operation.

##### 4.2 The diocese of Isfahan and Southern Iran (Irano-Indian diocese)

The Irano-Indian diocese was formed in 1606 through the direct initiative of Shah Abbas the First when establishing New Julfa. Today, the centre of the diocese is the St All Saviour Monastery of Isfahan, one of the famous and beautifully-erected monuments of Armenian cultural history. The diocese used to have more than 100 churches, but currently only 24 function, including 13 only in New Julfa.

There has been the chair of Armenian studies in the Isfahan University since 1961. It has been of great importance for the formation of the Iranian-Armenian academic elite. It was established with state sponsorship and the state continues to support it. It also play an important great role in the continuous training of Iranian-Armenian teachers.

The community faces other issues, such as the problem of retaining the Armenian identity. It is hoped that this will be overcome with support from Armenia. The community makes efforts in this area by organising classes of poetry, acting and dancing with invited teachers from Armenia. However, both locally and in Tehran these are self-funded projects, namely, the communities pay from their own budgets. The Isfahan diocese is perhaps the second most wealthy Armenian community in the whole region, with Antelias (Armenian Church Cathilicosate of Cilicia in Antelias-Lebanon) being the first.

#### 4.3 Northern or Tabriz diocese (Armenian diocese of Atrpatakan)

The Armenian diocese of Atrpatakan is the oldest Iranian-Armenian diocese and it unites Armenians residing in the northern provinces. Administratively, it includes the provinces of Eastern and Western Atrpatakan, and Ardebil. According to Garnik Badalyan, approximately 5 000 Armenians reside in this area, whereas in the beginning of the twentieth century the diocese had 30 000 members. After the repatriation movement to Soviet Armenia in 1946-1948, this number dropped to 17 000 (Badalyan 2011: 94-95). Therefore, although the Atrpatakan diocese used to be the most populous Armenian region, the situation has changed. This diocese has the highest emigration rate as compared to the other two dioceses. In addition to the issues present in the other dioceses, namely, harsh social-economic conditions and a lack of employment opportunities, there is another problem in Atrpatakan which is unique to the area. The number of Turkic-speaking Iranians is the highest in the population of Atrpatakan, and the local Armenians constantly face this issue. For example, local Armenians are not able to properly conduct their festive or mourning ceremonies.

The leader of the Atrpatakan diocese, Archimandrit Grigor Chiftchyan, openly mentions other issues in the diocese:

Absence of employment and economic hardships that were aggravated especially during the last two years create adverse situation for the youth for both staying in the area and marrying. We have got many students with bachelor and master's degrees that look for jobs and often apply to us. We hope to raise this issue at the special state committee on minorities to support this need (interview with Archimandrite Chiftchyan).

Thus, in sum, the diocese of Tabriz, while being one of the oldest Iranian-Armenian communities and hosting more than 100 churches and vast properties, today faces gradual devastation. The Armenians of Atrpatakan prefer to settle in Tehran or other cities, or opt for emigration, mostly to the west. Today the issue of the preservation of Armenian schools in Atrpatakan is acute since there are not enough students to justify their functioning.

In general, Iranian-Armenians today face serious challenges. Since the number of Iranian-Armenians has largely decreased, Armenian pre-schools and schools in Iran are being closed. Moreover, the Armenian schools

succumb in quality to Iranian schools, and as a result an Iranian-Armenian adolescent has less chance to enter a university if graduated from an Armenian school.

According to the leader of the Tabriz diocese, Archbishop Sepuh, the main issue of the Armenians in Iran is the educational life where we have difficulties; the state sometimes supports us, and sometimes – not. Sometimes the difficulties stay as such despite our numerous petitions. They show us outwardly friendliness but I would not claim that there is a special policy to ease our situation in spite the created impression (interview with Archbishop Sepuh).

These issues are present in all three dioceses. It is worth nothing that the Iranian-Armenian community, after having lived in Iran for so many years, has come up with a self-preservation and non-assimilation mechanism of non-intervention in the domestic cultural processes, as well as by strictly prohibiting a marriage between an Armenian and a foreigner, especially a non-Christian. This is perhaps the most important factor for self-preservation.

The last point has often been mentioned by Iranian-Armenian political and cultural actors interviewed for the article. Although the question may be simple and logical in both the European and US communities, there is a very harsh response to this issue in Iran. Notably, Armenians marry persons of other nationalities in Turkey and Arab countries, but not in Iran. Ninety-nine per cent of respondents were men above the age of 40 years, and 100 per cent answered in the negative to the following question: 'What is the attitude of the community towards a marriage of an Armenian and a non-Armenian, and if that person can stay as a member of the community?'

Individual conversations with community members revealed that such marriages do take place but the newly-weds are always expelled from the community. The problem is that not only that person but also their children are not accepted by the community. According to Karen Khanlaryan:

Muslims also do not welcome marriages with non-Muslims. Later, their children are not accepted by our community, and have issues with ethnic and religious identity, they get marry with difficulties. These marginalised families are often destined to decay. I think that especially the church should express special care towards this problem (interview with Khanlaryan).

Another interesting fact is that, in order to maintain its cultural front, Iranian-Armenians try not to become involved in Persian or Muslim culture. This hypothesis was tested during the field research and non-formal interviews with representatives of the Armenian community. These conversations revealed that most Iranian-Armenians did not watch Iranian films and were not aware of globally-famous films such as *Divorce Iranian style*, *Two women*, *My Tehran for sale*, *Children of heaven*, *About Elly*, *The Salesman* and others, and were not even interested in Iranian arts and culture as such. Thus, despite the fact that they reside in Iran, Iranian-Armenians try to limit their perceptions on cinema and theatre as another strategy to maintain their identity.

The Armenian parliamentarian at the IRI *Majlis*, Karen Khanlaryan, argues that Armenian 'community life is limited because it is based on

amateurism, ie non-professional system as a result of not sufficient funds'. He adds that Armenians try not to have any contact with Iranian art and culture, and do their best to study and engage with Armenian art and culture by cooperating with the Republic of Armenia. Hence, Iranian-Armenians try to evade assimilation by behaving as closed societies or ghettos.

## 5 Emigration of Armenians from the Islamic Republic of Iran

Emigration from Iran reached a large scale after the Islamic revolution. The revolution and the events that followed, including the establishment of an Islamic government following Shari'a law and the eight-year war between Iran and Iraq, served as catalysts for a mass exodus of much of Iran's established middle class. By 1988, the World Refugee Survey reported Iran to be tenth among countries with the highest source of refugees. Iranians who immigrated to the United States after the revolution were different from those who had done so in the preceding 25 years. The new immigrants no longer were principally individual students and professionals, but middle and upper-class families, most of whom were political refugees and exiles. They were diverse in their religious, political and ethnic background and their reasons for leaving Iran varied. They included families associated with the previous regime as members of the government and the military, and owners of large businesses. This second wave also included a disproportionately high number of ethnic and religious minorities such as Sunni Muslims, Christians, Jews, Baha'is and Zoroastrians, all of whom left in fear of religious persecution (Iranian Americans).

In the 1980s the Armenian population was estimated at around 200 000, but there are no reliable updated statistics on their numbers since the recent upsurge in emigration began (Stepanian 2010). The emigration of Armenians was not an exodus from motherland, as most Armenians generally view Iran as their birth place. Iranian-Armenians residing here consider themselves the descendants of those deported to Iran throughout history.

Unfortunately, Armenia was not always the destination of Armenian emigrants from Iran after the Islamic revolution and Iran-Iraq war. It is most probably related to the non-stable socio-economic situation in Armenia, a certain level of corruption, a lack of justice and the absence of a resolution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The influx of Iranian-Armenians into Armenia is much lower in comparison to their flow to the United States, Germany and France, which have a rich history of accommodating Armenian communities. During the first years of independence of the Republic of Armenia, a substantial section of Iranian-Armenians decided to view Armenia as their destination. However, after some time most of these emigrated from Armenia due to harsh social conditions.

As is the case with other citizens of Iran, before the Islamic revolution Armenians migrated from Iran for better education opportunities, whereas after the revolution there were a plethora of reasons to leave. At the same time it seemed that after the Iran-Iraq war the emigration wave dropped and those Armenians that stayed up to that point had already accustomed



themselves to the situation and would remain in the country. However, after the Islamic revolution the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS),<sup>1</sup> an organisation registered in the United States, started to organise and support the emigration of Jews from Iran. They later started facilitating the emigration of other non-Muslim groups, thus propelling the next wave of Iranian-Armenians' exodus. In general, they transfer non-Muslims to the west and later work on their family reunification. When discussing the reasons and the supporting factors of the Armenian emigration, the leader of Isfahan diocese, Bishop Babken Charyan, says the following:

The problem of Armenians' emigration is rather immense in all three dioceses. They leave mostly to the West. The Jewish HIAS organisation organises the logistical issues of moving Armenians to the West for little price and thus works towards de-Armenising Iran, as a way to accomplish their shadowy plans. Even the Iranian government is not able to stop the activities of this organisation (interview with Archbishop Charyan).

While not traditionally considered refugees, the US Congress created a special refugee status for religious minorities from the former Soviet Union, which now allows for the resettlement of Jews, Christians and Baha'is from Iran (HIAS: History). As a matter of fact, their official mission is to support and provide aid to the immigrants and refugees. According to the open information, the US government allocates around US \$3 million to HIAS in order to support the exodus of non-Muslim religious minorities from Iran. Thus, most of the Armenian and Assyrian emigrants of the mid-1990s up to 2015 have left Iran through this organisation.

When the application is approved, HIAS pays US \$3 000 for each family member, and then they all travel to Austria where they stay until all the legalities have been finalised and they can then leave for the United States (Stepanian 2010). Iranian hardliners naturally view HIAS with suspicion, but the country's government has turned a blind eye to this channel of emigration, since in principle ridding the country of non-Muslims without major repercussions is convenient to Iranese authorities. According to the representatives of the Iranian-Armenian community, approximately 6 000 Armenians have left Iran for the United States through HIAS (Jewish Support to Iranian-Armenians to migrate to the US 2008).

The HIAS has discontinued its programme of moving non-Muslims out of Iran. The reason is that US President Donald Trump announced during his election campaign that he would prohibit immigration from several countries to the United States. In September 2017 President Trump banned or restricted visas to travel to the United States from eight countries, the next step in what began as his travel ban from six Muslim nations, soon after taking office in January 2017.

The new presidential order retains restrictions on five of the six countries (Iran, Libya, Somalia, Syria and Yemen), lifts restrictions on visitors from the Sudan and adds new restrictions on visitors and immigrants from Chad, North Korea and Venezuela. In a Sunday night proclamation, Trump blocked the issuance of all visas from North Korea

1 Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, established in 1881 in order to support Jewish immigrants. Given the decrease in the number of Jewish immigrants, the organisation started supporting the emigration of Christians. In particular, HIAS spent substantial funds to organise the emigration of Christians from Iran in the 1990s.

and Syria, while blocking nearly all visas from Iran except those intended for students and exchange visitors. The issuance of all immigrant visas and business and tourist visas was suspended from Chad, Libya and Yemen (NBC News).

Before President Trump entered office, similar refugee cases under the Lautenberg Amendment had an approval rate of close to 100 per cent. Prior to arriving in Vienna, the refugees undergo an initial screening, after which Austria issues transit visas at the request of the State Department. Once in Austria, the refugees are interviewed by US authorities (Foreign Policy).

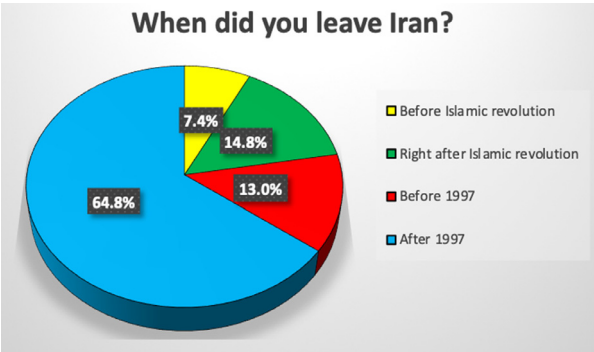
Thus, the United States changed the immigration policy, and because of this shift, hundreds of Christians from Iran, mostly Armenians, wait in Vienna in an uncertain status. They will most probably have to return to Iran, where they will not be welcomed.

A spokesperson for the State Department told Foreign Policy that the applications for resettlement had been rejected by the Department of Homeland Security but declined to provide a reason or other details. The Department of Homeland Security did not respond to requests for comment. 'These individuals were subject to the same rigorous process for resettlement as all refugees and, following input from all relevant departments and agencies, the applications for resettlement were denied' (Foreign Policy).

While Armenians in Iran manage to maintain their identity through restricting marriages with other ethnicities and preserving all the characteristics of Armenian traditional families, after moving to the United States or Europe they face this challenge in a more ambiguous situation. In Iran restrictions on marriages are relatively simple because of the Muslim environment, whereas in the United States or Europe the fact of being surrounded by Christians accelerates the assimilation process. This is not the only issue mentioned by ex-Iranian-Armenian respondents in the survey organised for the purposes of this article.

More than 100 subjects completed the questionnaire of the quantitative web-based survey implemented during March to June 2018, targeting those Iranian-Armenians that had emigrated from Iran.

Figure 1: When did you leave Iran?



Source: Author's survey and calculations.

In response to the question ‘When did you leave Iran?’ 7,4 per cent of those surveyed indicated that they had emigrated from Iran prior to the Islamic revolution; 14,8 per cent left Iran directly after the revolution; 13 per cent emigrated before 1997 (the launch of the activities of HIAS in Iran); and 64,8 per cent exited the country after 1997. These responses have both objective and subjective interpretations. Most of those that left Iran because of the Islamic revolution currently are seniors; most of them do not operate computers and do not make use of social networks. However, it is worth noting that most of the emigrants left Iran after 1997, indicating that it was as a result of the activities of HIAS.

In response to the question ‘What was the reason to leave Iran?’, most of the respondents (27,8 per cent) indicated a fear for the future in the Islamic Republic, which is confirmation of the hypothesis that during that period Christian Armenians had no idea how they would continue living in a theocratic country. Thirteen per cent of those surveyed mentioned higher education since their chosen specialisation was not developed in Iran. Interestingly, 9,3 per cent answered that the reason for migration was a pure wish to live in the west, that is, they had no anxiety about living in a state with an Islamic value system; they merely wanted to live in the west.

Naturally, each of those surveyed had to overcome certain challenges in the new host country, and in the case of 27,8 per cent these were living conditions; for 25,9 per cent cultural shock; for 16,6 per cent language skills; and 9,3 per cent had legal issues to solve.

Two-thirds of the respondents (64,8 per cent) claimed that they felt themselves completely integrated in the new host country. Incidentally, most of these responses came from those emigrants who permanently live in Armenia.

## 6 Conclusion

As expected, the research reveals that the Iranian-Armenian community today is relatively weakened, and the harsh socio-economic conditions often lead to emigration, in most cases the preferred destination being the United States and European countries.

Those who opt to stay in their country of birth, namely, Iran, apply several approaches for keeping their Armenian identities, namely:

- non-acceptance of mixed marriages, including those with non-Armenian Christians such as Assyrians from northern provinces of Iran; marrying a Muslim is more often disallowed by community norms;
- adherence to Iranian-Armenian cultural groups and artwork, and a disregard of Iranian cultural values; and
- cooperation with cultural and academic circles from Armenia that has the effect of ‘fresh oxygen’.

The article established that the greatest challenge for Iranian-Armenians was emigration that over the years had grown in magnitude. Unfortunately, neither the community, nor the prelacy, nor the state has strategised a mechanism to prevent this flow or to direct it towards Armenia.

The emigration of Iranian-Armenians consisted of two major waves. The first wave started directly after the Islamic revolution of 1978-1979, mainly occasioned by a fear of the new regime and uncertainty. The second wave was facilitated by the activities of the Jewish HIAS organisation that supported the emigration of non-Muslims from Iran.

A considerable number of Armenians faced serious language and cultural challenges in their new host countries. Naturally, the younger generation has overcome those issues much more seamlessly than the seniors. As many migrants and refugees worldwide, during the first period of their stay in the new country, most of the emigrants were not able to find employment according to their professions and contented themselves with whatever was available.

The research provided interesting data about another challenge that requires a specifically dedicated study, namely, issues around the Armenian schools. In reality, these are called such only because they offer one or two additional courses on Armenian studies. A significant number of interviewees stated that the graduates of those schools were not competitive with their peers in neither Iran nor Armenia. In the first case, the general courses in Farsi are being taught by mediocre teachers since the best teachers are not being directed to the Armenian schools. In the second case, students are equipped with knowledge in classical Eastern-Armenian orthography that is not readily applied in Armenia. As a result, graduates of those Armenian schools mostly fail to enter further higher educational institutions.

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## Ingrid Carlberg Raoul Wallenberg: *The Man Who Saved Thousands of Hungarian Jews from the Holocaust* (with an introduction by Kofi Annan) (original in Swedish)

Norstedts 2012; Editions Limited, translated hardcover edition (2016); MacLehose Press, translated paperback edition (2017) 640 pages

*Jan Mutton\**

In times of growing nationalism, arrogance and bullying in international relations, it is refreshing to read the biography of a man, the Swede Raoul Wallenberg, who, almost by coincidence and without any predestination, was faced with the horrors of genocide and human rights abuses and who seized the moment to save thousands of Jews from the Nazi Holocaust in Budapest, the capital of Hungary. To do so, he used imagination and determination, only to be trapped in the end and to disappear, at the age of 33 years, into the prison system of the Soviet Union after the liberation of Budapest by the Red Army in 1945.

In 2012 Ingrid Carlberg wrote an extensive, well-researched and well-documented biography of Wallenberg including a bibliography and lists of sources and interviews. It was translated in 2015 into English by Ebba Segerberg and published in paperback by MacLehose Press in London. The introduction to the English edition is by former United Nations (UN) Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, who died in 2018 and who was married to Wallenberg's niece.

The biography may be subdivided in three parts. In part 1, Carlberg gives one a full but concise picture of Wallenberg's family background, his education and training and his professional life in as much as it is necessary to understand the character of the man who jumped into action to save lives. Part 2 is, from a human rights point of view, the most interesting as it explains in detail Wallenberg's *modus operandi*, the procedures he developed and the imagination he displayed to work as effectively as possible. Part 3 covers the endless search for Wallenberg after his disappearance from Budapest into the Soviet prison system, mainly by his family as Swedish and international official channels were, within the context of the Cold War, hesitant to confront Moscow.

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Throughout the biography Carlberg reminds us of a number of interesting background issues which give us a better understanding of that dark period of World War II. First, there is the late reaction of the Allies, who were at war with Germany, such as the United States of America (US) and the United Kingdom (UK), to become involved with the Jewish question. Second, there is the issue of the role that Sweden played as 'neutral country' with respect to Nazi Germany seeing post-war Germany as a viable democratic alternative for the rising power of the Soviet Union. This explains, for example, why German companies were placed under temporary Swedish cover during the war, to protect them from reprisals by the Allies, or why German troop transports were allowed to cross through Sweden on their way to occupy Norway. Third, there is a good description of the special place Hungary occupied during the war as an ally of Germany. Fourth, this biography describes well how Sweden tried to remain neutral after the war and develop a constructive relationship with the Soviet Union at the expense of diplomatic initiatives to free Wallenberg from Soviet prisons.

Raoul Wallenberg was born in Stockholm on 4 August 1912. Although his parents were not very wealthy, he grew up in a well-educated and cultured upper-class family, the grandson of Sweden's envoy to Japan and a junior relative in the Swedish Wallenberg banking dynasty. It must be emphasised that these privileged relations did not play an important role in his professional life, nor in his diplomatic mission in Hungary or in the search for him in Soviet prisons. On the contrary, the ambiguous role which the Wallenberg dynasty and 'neutral' Sweden had played *vis-à-vis* Nazi Germany may have played against him when the Soviets decided to capture and imprison him. Wallenberg was very much his own man, which explains the determination and courage with which he operated in Budapest.

Carlberg describes well how nothing in Wallenberg's formative years, apart from a strong interest in international politics and a natural empathy for injustice, hinted at the heroism he was to display during his mission in Hungary. On the contrary, he was a rather average young man who had trained, not as a diplomat or as a lawyer, but as an architect. Following his studies, in the mid-1930s, he gained commercial experience in South Africa and Palestine. Both experiences broadened his thinking and made him sensitive to social injustice and inequality in the world, the racial segregation in South Africa and the tension between Jewish immigrants and the local populations in Palestine. Upon his return to Sweden, at a tense time of rising Nazi political power and German military build-up in Europe, Wallenberg entered into several business ventures, finally becoming a partner in the Mid-European Trading Company, which specialised in food imports from Hungary.

The author explains well how and why the Jewish question only became an urgent topic in the latter part of the war. This clarifies why Wallenberg only arrived in Budapest towards the end of the war, a few months before Soviet troops liberated Hungary. In this regard she points at the lack of general awareness because the horrors took place behind the curtain of Nazi secrecy. The first report on the extent of the Holocaust only appeared among the Allies in 1942. She also explains how the main focus of the Allies was on winning the war and having peace rather than be sidetracked by humanitarian rescue operations.

The rising awareness of the Jewish question in the second half of the war brought neutral Sweden more into the orbit of the Allied forces such as the US and the UK, and led, for example, to efforts to save the Norwegian Jews from the Holocaust. Later on, it would allow the Swedes to send Wallenberg as a diplomat to become involved in Jewish rescue operations in Hungary. In the US, internal pressure led President Roosevelt to establish the War Refugee Board (WRB), an independent authority, funded by US-based Jewish organisations, to lead Jewish rescue operations in Europe. However, the WRB went beyond rescue in Europe and was also interested in developing a post-war reconstruction programme for the continent. It is important that the author drew our attention to this dimension as it may have pushed the Soviets, who were weary of Western intervention in post-war Eastern Europe and their future sphere of influence, to capture Wallenberg after the liberation of Budapest.

Carlberg equally explains well the special role played by Hungary as an ally of Nazi Germany, fighting with the Germans against the Soviet Union but by and large maintaining an independent domestic policy which left the Hungarian Jews, unlike those in the rest of Nazi-occupied Europe, mostly untouched. This changed, however, when Germany, frustrated with the liberal Hungarian government and under pressure from mounting war losses, in March 1944 militarily occupied Hungary and installed a pro-German Hungarian government. The Holocaust was now suddenly also facing the Hungarian Jews. In a short period of time, more than 400 000 Jews were deported to the Nazi gas chambers.

Sweden, as were Switzerland, Portugal and Turkey, was neutral in the war. It had an embassy in Budapest and, consequently, was the indicated partner to be approached by the WRB for a rescue operation in Hungary. At that time Wallenberg was a young businessman involved in trade with Hungary. It did not take long for diplomatic, political and economic circles in Stockholm to identify him as the ideal man to take on the WRB work, given his enterprising character, his past international exposure and his command of the English and German languages. Sweden would offer the diplomatic cover and add him as a diplomat, as special humanitarian attaché, to their embassy in Budapest. Sweden paid for the administrative costs while the WRB gave him the mandate and paid for the operational costs. He arrived in Hungary in July 1944. He would disappear in January 1945.

When Wallenberg took up his post as humanitarian attaché in the Swedish embassy in Budapest, recent deportations of Jews had been enormous. Of the estimated 700 000 Jews, only about 250 000 were left in the country, 200 000 of which were supposed to live in Budapest. At the time of his arrival, deportations had temporarily ceased but internment camps had multiplied and Jews were still sent to labour camps. Their general situation was dire and the sword of extinction continuously hung over them. At that time, only a few hundred were under Swedish protection, and approximately 7 000 were awaiting transfer to Palestine on the basis of Swiss emigration certificates.

Carlberg describes how Wallenberg, in the face of the urgency and the magnitude of the situation, approached his mission not as a conventional diplomat but rather as a businessman, clear-sighted, intelligent, courageous, undeterred, determined, independent and driven, even with bluff, to obtain results. He always remained careful, though, never to



compromise the credibility of the Swedish diplomatic service. His office soon grew to a few hundred staffers, funded by Sweden. Fortunately, the political climate allowed him to move around, to make contacts and to set up his rescue operation. He built a network of contacts that covered all political tendencies in Budapest, ranging from the Jewish community and Jewish organisations to the government in place, the security institutions, the Nazi occupier as well as anti-Nazi political organisations and his colleagues in humanitarian work, especially the Red Cross and the Swiss embassy.

Wallenberg very soon realised that it would be impossible to find a solution for all Jews in Hungary, and decided to concentrate his efforts on the approximately 200 000 Jews in Budapest. He realised that the instrument of protection, so far used by the Swedes, namely, a protection certificate, delivered on the basis of connections with Sweden and stating that a person was on a collective passport, aroused the suspicion of the German occupier and was too cumbersome as a tool in the situation facing him.

Taking the Jews out of the country indeed seemed impossible. Therefore, they needed to be protected locally. Keeping them in Hungary was also less costly than transporting them to Sweden.

As a consequence Wallenberg developed a new document, namely, a 'protective passport' which would not be the official passport or a vague protection certificate, but which would appear very professional and would be printed on embassy paper, with photographs, Swedish emblems, signatures and embassy stamps, satisfying both the Hungarian and Swedish authorities and not provoking the wrath of the Nazi occupier. It was a letter of promise, stating that a person intended to depart for Sweden and would, until that time – highly unlikely given the disrupted transport systems – remain under Swedish protection. These letters were only valid for travel in combination with a collective passport. Such letters could be mass-produced. Wallenberg, however, ensured that the credibility of the document would not be jeopardised, that Swedish diplomacy remained respected, that no corruption took place and that each individual application was examined thoroughly. By being in possession of such a document, Jews could leave internment camps and be housed in Swedish protection buildings.

The second part of the plan, as Carlberg describes it, was to find accommodation for as many Jews as possible, even for those without a 'protective passport', in houses abandoned by their owners or in properties made available by the Hungarian authorities, and to place these people under Swedish diplomatic protection. By August 1944, approximately 40 houses in the international ghetto had been made available to house some 10 000 Jews under either Swedish diplomatic protection or Swedish Red Cross protection. Together with housing came the challenge of the distribution of food, clothes and medicine, not only for the Jews in Swedish protection houses but also for Jews in the international ghetto and for those in internment camps in Budapest or in labour camps elsewhere in the country.

By October 1944 Wallenberg had established a well-oiled protection mechanism. However, his life became more complicated when the Nazi occupier became frustrated by Hungary's signing of a ceasefire with the

Soviets, resumed the deportation of Jews and installed a brutal local government of their choice. Wallenberg's determination and enthusiasm drove him beyond the mere protection of Jews through a Swedish protection process and pushed him to intervene on their behalf in many respects, in the face of deportations, extra-judicial killings and internment in labour camps.

By the time the war ended, according to Carlberg's biography, roughly 70 000 Jews had survived in the main ghetto of Budapest, and approximately 35 000 in the Swedish protection houses. It could be said that even though hundreds of thousands of Hungarian Jews had perished, the efforts of one single man, supported by the Swedes and the WRB, in a few months had saved approximately 15 000 Jews.

While advancing to liberate Europe, the Soviet Union kept a very close watch on events taking place, as it wanted to bring large parts of Eastern Europe into the Soviet sphere of influence. The Soviets, and Stalin in particular, had always been concerned about Wallenberg and the operations of the American WRB, the Swedish connections with Germany early on in the war, Wallenberg's contacts and negotiations with Nazi authorities in Budapest over the Jewish question and his commitment to the Jewish plight in general. It should be recalled that the Soviet Union had known its own persecution of Jews.

When the Russians arrived in Budapest in mid-January 1945, Wallenberg wished to discuss with them the return of Jewish property to their rightful owners. He also wanted to discuss his proposal for a general reconstruction programme for the country. Wallenberg never returned from his meeting with the Russian military. He was taken prisoner and, as was discovered later, brought to Moscow upon direct instructions from Stalin.

In the third part of the book Ingrid Carlberg describes the relentless efforts, mainly by Wallenberg's parents, to establish his whereabouts. They never did, and never found closure. In January 1945 Wallenberg simply disappeared from Budapest and was never seen or heard of again outside the Soviet Union.

Initially, for some years the Soviets denied any knowledge about Wallenberg. They claimed that he had remained in Hungary, indirectly suggesting that he had been killed by the Nazis or by the pro-Nazi government installed towards the end of the war and in place at the time of the liberation by the Soviets. For a while it was not difficult for the Soviets to maintain this position as several people, for unknown reasons, claimed to have seen him around Budapest or in Hungary. Such statements gradually subsided, however, since they could not be corroborated by facts.

However, as the years passed it became more and more clear that Wallenberg was held prisoner in the Soviet Union. Several prisoners of war, who had been liberated from the Soviet Union in the years following the war, testified having seen or heard or having been in contact with Wallenberg in several Soviet prisons. When conflicting statements also surfaced by persons connected with the Soviet system, authorities could no longer remain in denial. They finally construed some evidence and

admitted that he had died in prison some years after the war. The family never accepted this explanation. They continued to fight, but in vain.

They were rather alone in this struggle. Their own Swedish government remained aloof throughout the ensuing decades. Generally speaking, Sweden wanted to build relations as strong as possible with the Soviet Union and wanted to be a bridge between the Soviet Union and the West during the Cold War. Wallenberg fell victim to global politics. In the second place, as a matter of ethical policy, Stockholm continued to refuse an exchange between Wallenberg and Soviet prisoners in Sweden, claiming that human beings could not be the object of barter.

For a long time, also internationally, the Wallenberg case did not arouse much emotion. It took the more ethical and human rights-based administration of President Jimmy Carter of the US at the end of the 1970s to increase international attention. It cannot be said that any clarification of Wallenberg's whereabouts ensued but, at least, he started receiving the international recognition he deserved. He slowly became recognised as one of history's heroes in the protection against genocide and crimes against humanity. Around the world streets and squares were named after him but, most importantly, he was made an 'honorary citizen' of countries such as Australia, Canada, Israel and the US, where he became only the second person to be so distinguished since Winston Churchill.

This biography should be read, especially by human rights students and practitioners, as it invigorates and shows that, even when circumstances work against you, there is always a way to fight for the defence of human rights and to save people from atrocities.