1 States and their citizens abroad

While scholars remain divided as to whether population movement in the post 1945 period in fact surpasses the magnitudes of earlier periods, the issues of who, why, when, how, and to what effect people move from farm to city, town to town, or country to country have received increasing scholarly and policy attention in recent years. Researchers across disciplines have sought to answer these and related questions, focusing on a variety of levels and units of analysis, and drawing upon myriad theoretical frameworks and empirical tools. While some have looked at the micro-level questions of individual decisions to migrate and their impact, often emphasizing economic cost–benefit calculations or push-pull factors, others have posed community or societal-level questions, as they have sought to understand the cultural impact of immigration, various historical aspects of the immigrant experience, or the possibilities for integration or assimilation in the new host country. In the fields of political science and international relations, explanations have often been sought for governmental response to immigration, with some analysts locating their explanations at the level of the state, others in the international political economy, and still others in changes in international norms.¹

If migration or immigration studies have been remarkable in terms of the diversity of treatment and disciplinary interest noted above, they have, conversely, been, in their majority, surprisingly limited geographically: most of the work that has been done on the question of the permeability of borders, border controls, citizenship and migration or immigration (as opposed to work solely on citizenship) has dealt with Western Europe and the United States. The focus has therefore been on issues related to security or sovereignty understood in terms of border control; the impetus behind immigration (often with the goal of suggesting policy remedies to encourage people to stay in place); how the immigrants are received; in what sorts of jobs they work; how they organize their social, political and

economic lives; and their possibilities/desire for socio-cultural integration. This focus on Western Europe and the United States is even more striking given that the vast majority of international or transnational population movement is in fact South–South, not South–North migration.

Thus, not only are receiving states of the global South understudied in this context, but even more strikingly, although immigration obviously requires a prior *emigration*, little work has in fact focused on the state/country of origin. There are exceptions in the anthropological literature, in which we find studies of the impact of emigration on the families and communities left behind. Furthermore, with the dramatic increase in writing on transnationalism and globalization, attention has focused on a variety of networks – social, cultural, economic and, increasingly, political – that link sending and receiving countries. There are also economic or political economy studies that discuss the importance of remittances, as well as a few international relations or political science works that discuss questions of border control from both the sending and receiving sides. Nevertheless, even with the attention that a handful of scholars has devoted to various aspects of the sending country’s economy, social structure or culture, one cannot really talk about a developed literature on sending-state *emigration* policy or practices in the way one can cite myriad works on receiving-state *immigration* policy. Thus, as Hollifield, who has done a great deal of work on immigration and the question of borders (and sovereignty) from the point of view of European states,² has noted, “Very little has been written about the politics of control from the standpoint of the sending countries.”³

This paucity of detailed treatment of the home state in the literature is particularly striking given the increasing interest sending states have manifested since the 1980s in their nationals (and in some cases their descend- ants) abroad. To cite just a few examples, from various parts of the world: in 1982, the Office of Overseas Chinese Affairs began sponsoring a youth festival for young people of Chinese descent who are citizens of foreign countries. In 1995, the Russian Duma established a Council of Compatriots, an analytical–consultative body charged with representing the interests of Russians (and their descendants) residing abroad. In 2000, the newly elected Mexican president, Vicente Fox, created a cabinet-level

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³ Hollifield in Brettell and Hollifield, p. 143. Rainer Bauböck notes a “growing empirical literature” on sending-state involvement with emigrant groups (although he provides no direct citations), but also states that there have been few theoretical attempts to explain sending-country behavior, in “Towards a Political Theory of Migrant Transnationalism,” *International Migration Review* 37 (2) Fall 2003: p. 703.
office, the Office of the President for Mexicans Abroad, charged with promoting closer ties between Mexican emigrants and both the USA and Mexico. In 2002, Syria established its first Ministry of Expatriate Affairs. These examples are but four of what is, upon broader examination, a growing phenomenon: the establishment of state institutions charged with responsibility for some aspect of expatriate community affairs. While embassies and consulates, with their mission of serving the needs of their citizens abroad, have long been a feature of international politics (if not a common focus of study), other institutions, with such charges as language training, investment advice and parliamentary representation of emigrants, have proliferated only in recent years. Clearly international migration and, more specifically, state emigration policy are key frameworks within which to begin to evaluate such developments. It is precisely with issues in this realm, the goals and the implications of policies of the sending states toward their nationals who depart for extended periods abroad, that this work is concerned.

Setting policy regarding the exit (and re-entry) of nationals – a subset of border control – has long been understood to be a basic part of the definition of sovereignty as exercised by the territorially bounded entities we call states, and hence properly falls within the realm of international politics. Perhaps it is because the majority of sending countries are in the global South that the field of international relations, long preoccupied with great powers, which in this case are the receiving states, has largely ignored questions related to home state policy toward emigrants, except insofar as border policing is concerned. Whatever the reason, the contours and role of sending-state policy form the other side of the emigration–immigration nexus, and raise many critical questions, a number of which are simply the reverse of questions that have been posed by those studying the receiving states: what are the elements that drive or shape states’ policies toward various forms of emigration? To what extent have sending states been proactive or simply reactive in the realm of emigration? Whichever stance has been most characteristic, what sorts of institutional forms have characterized state responses? Finally, what may such responses tell us about how sovereignty, understood not only as border control, but also as defining the boundaries of the “national community” or the nation, is practiced in the context of a world system in which growing numbers of people live outside the country of their birth or citizenship?

The literature on Emigration

Myron Weiner, one of the few political scientists to address emigration seriously, argued for a synthesis of international political economy
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explanations of migration – which focus on global inequities, economic ties between labor-exporting and importing states, and changes in the international division of labor – and international security explanations. He contended that while traditional economic explanations – push-pull and cost–benefit analyses – explain a great deal, they neglect two critical political factors: “that international population movements are often impelled, encouraged or prevented by governments or political forces for reasons that may have little to do with economic conditions”; and that “even when economic conditions create inducements for people to leave one country for another, it is governments that decide whether their citizens should be allowed to leave and governments that decide whether immigrants should be allowed to enter, and their decisions are frequently based on non-economic considerations” (emphasis added);4 “An examination of both historical and contemporary population movements . . . demonstrates that countries of emigration have more control over international population flows than is usually accounted for by political analysts, and that what often appear to be spontaneous emigration and refugee movements may represent deliberate emigration policies on the part of sending countries.”5

The various non-economic considerations he cites – internal political disorder, global networks of communication and transportation, political constraints on the admission of migrants and refugees – suggest the need for what he terms a “security/stability framework” for the study of international migration. Both this framework and the international political economy approach focus on the larger social, political and economic context within which individuals act, rather than on individual decision-making. Both also pay close attention to the behavior of states and to the importance of borders, but the security/stability framework places greater emphasis on the role of state decision-making than does a political economy approach, which often regards the state as a weak or less significant actor.6

Weiner’s focus on the importance of the state and state decision-making is a welcome corrective to some political economy and other studies that downplay or underestimate the role of the state in international migration. However, even Weiner’s approach does not go far enough, for two reasons. First, his primary concern remains the receiving states of the North and their response to cases of expulsion / forced emigration, and he therefore does not engage in a deeper consideration of the motives

5 Ibid., p. 103. 6 Ibid., p. 95.
or strategies of sending governments that resort to such policies. Second, expulsion suggests (and often is) a final break in the state–citizen relationship. At this point, we begin talking about refugees, asylum, statelessness, etc. However important in increasing our understanding of conflict and security, such a focus obscures or ignores the much more common case of continuing state involvement in the lives of its expatriates. A consideration of emigration policy should not be limited to those cases in which the state–citizen (or state–subject, in the case of authoritarian states) bond is completely severed. Indeed, as much of the recent migration/immigration literature now shows and the surge in diaspora studies indicates, the more common relationship today is one of continuing, if reconstructed, ties between the emigrant and the homeland.\(^7\)

Most of the diaspora literature deals only in passing with the home state and its role, preferring instead to focus on the family, community, village or immigrant association level. Yet, the perpetuation or reconfiguration of ties between the expatriate and his/her homeland must be understood to take place in the context, not only of unequal North–South political economy relations or new forms of mobility and contact that facilitate the maintenance of a range of ties with the home society, but also in the context of a state that at its most basic level continues to control citizenship and to allow entry and exit as part of its exercise of sovereignty. Hence, given the current foci of the literature, the challenge is two-fold: to think more systematically about state policies and institutions (as opposed to focusing on developments in the international political economy), and to think about such policies in terms of the sending, as opposed to just the receiving, state.

### Emigration policy

Emigration policy is not a term that is widely used – again an indication of the overwhelming focus by scholars and policymakers on the receiving states of the global North which, as wealthy democracies, have not to date viewed as necessary or politically appropriate careful control or encouraging the exit of citizens.

As noted above, border control has long been understood to be a prerogative of the sovereign state. The most basic elements of such a policy are the means and possibility for exit (and re-entry). Here, of course, the

availability of travel documents, usually passports, is the most common element, and states may be classified according to regulations regarding how nationals obtain and renew passports, as well as how they deal with nationals who have left and/or entered another country illegally and are repatriated. In addition, while most travelers are familiar with the need to obtain visas to enter some foreign countries, the policy of requiring exit visas is a related matter. For example, pre-revolutionary Russia had never had a tradition of freedom of movement because of serfdom. With the revolution in 1917 and the foreign intervention against it, the regime feared that those who left would join the enemy ranks. Anyone who wanted to leave was seen as an enemy, and hence permission to travel, through the requirement of exit visas, was imposed. In addition to other communist regimes, a similar policy subsequently emerged under a number of authoritarian regimes, such as fascist Italy and Nazi Germany: generally, prohibition of emigration arises as a concomitant of state-directed economic autarky, particularly in the case of states that seek to catch up by imposing great sacrifices on the current generation. But the prohibition also serves more purely political objectives; since exit is tantamount to ‘voting with one’s feet,’ an alternative to protest, authoritarian regimes which claim to rest on democratic consent cannot afford such concrete evidence of deep alienation.

A related practice is that of confiscating passports, a more targeted policy than an across-the-board denial of exit. Accordingly, individuals who have engaged in political activities deemed threatening by the state are stopped at points of exit or have their passports impounded upon their return to the country from abroad. In both cases the outcome is the same: the individual is prevented from leaving the country legally until such time as the state decides that the menace s/he poses has receded.

Whatever the system of exit regulations put in place, a second element of emigration policy involves states’ decisions to enter into contractual relations with other states to provide labor power. In this case, special recruiting bureaus and, in some countries, training centers are established to locate and prepare workers to go abroad. This may be in addition to, or in place of, free outmovement of nationals seeking employment abroad, something which the state may also implicitly or explicitly encourage through a variety of training/educational policies and employment

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9 For example, following the war, Vietnam had what was called the ODP: orderly departure program.
services. The state’s involvement may be that of a more or less active facilitator: it may leave the oversight of contractual elements in the hands of the foreign recruiter; or it may play a more interventionist role by overseeing the placement of its nationals abroad.

This is not the end of the story, however, for the sending state’s role continues beyond the window of passport control. Indeed, this study argues that the understanding of emigration policy should be much broader and include the entire range of sending-state policies and institutions that may play a role in the national’s life while s/he is abroad. The underlying assumption is that while one aspect of state sovereignty is in play in the control of borders (exit and entry of nationals and others), another aspect of sovereignty – the implicit contract between sovereign state and citizen – continues to be active when the citizen is outside the territorial boundaries of the state. Thus, emigration policy should be understood to include not only the state’s approach to exit, but also its policies toward those who have exited.

Embassies and consulates, whose grounds have legal status as extra-territorial extensions of the home state, have long been the most obvious manifestation of this sovereign concern with nationals abroad, whether as individuals or as larger groupings. The extent and type of services offered by such government offices abroad are important indicators of a state’s interest and involvement in its expatriate communities. Embassy/consular responsibilities generally include matters related to passports and civil status (registering marriages, births, deaths, etc.). Ideally, they also include assistance/advice on a range of legal problems back home, as well as a certain degree of advocacy for the rights and protection of nationals abroad. In practice, the provision and quality of such services has depended upon home country and host country forms of government, the size of community, its relationship to the home state (political, ethnic sensitivities, etc.), as well as the level of professionalism and resources of consular officials.11

In addition to these functions, with which most citizens of advanced industrial democracies are familiar, embassies/consulates have at times served to organize or host individuals or institutions whose primary function is to monitor the communities of nationals abroad. Expatriate or diaspora communities – especially, although not exclusively, students

11 As Weiner noted, “While some countries are prepared to take armed action in defense of their overseas citizens, others prefer not to antagonize a government that has enabled its citizens to find employment and a country that is a source of badly needed remittances”: “Security,” p. 104. Examples are legion in the Middle East and Persian Gulf region, for instance, of abused Sri Lankan and Filipina domestic workers whose embassies have refused or been hesitant to help them for precisely this reason.
and workers – have often provided support for political agitation back home. When the host state offers greater freedoms than the sending state, expatriates may also be in a position to attract media attention to pressure or embarrass the home regime. On the other hand, the embassy of the sending country may also seek to mobilize its supporters abroad. In either case, the expatriate groupings may become “a focal point of controversy between the home and the host countries, among contending groups within the diaspora, or between sections of the diaspora and the home government. Thus, struggles that might otherwise take place only within a country become internationalized if the country has a significant overseas population.”

Recent revelations regarding the 1965 Paris kidnappping and murder of Moroccan political opposition figure Mehdi Ben Barka, as well as examples of political assassinations of expatriate Iranians by the revolutionary regime or the assassinations of Southern Cone citizens abroad as part of Operation Condor, are extreme examples of this darker side of state policy toward emigrants.

In a more positive vein, embassies may offer or facilitate expatriate access to banking and remittance transfer services, with the goal of facilitating expatriate investment of funds back home. On the occasion of important national holidays, they often hold parties or celebrations which serve to bring members of the expatriate community together and reinforce a sense of identity and belonging. They may also play a role in the establishment and direction of schools for the children of their nationals abroad.

As the discussion above suggests, ministries of foreign affairs, of which embassies and consulates are an extension, have traditionally held the governmental portfolio on expatriate community affairs. Nevertheless, important and increasingly numerous examples of state institutions and initiatives in the emigration realm have appeared that do not fall completely within the realm of embassy or Ministry of Foreign Affairs responsibilities. Some of the best-known have been labor recruitment or coordination offices, but institutional manifestations of state interest have often played a role well beyond the realm of labor contracting. From Japan and India to Morocco and Mexico, new institutional forms of state interest in expatriates have proliferated in recent years.

The question is: why? What factors have led governments to develop new institutions (or restructure existing ones) designed to take an active role in the lives of nationals abroad? How may we explain these new or transformed expressions of state emigration policy? Finally, may they be

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12 Ibid., p. 108.
indicative of changes in the contours of the nation, in the practice of sovereignty, and perhaps even more broadly, in the world system?

The literature from transnationalism

The only literature to date that has discussed state institutions involved in expatriate communities or affairs is that of transnationalism. This field of scholarship traces its origins to the 1992 work of Basch, Glick Schiller and Szanton Blanc, who later defined transnationalism “as the processes by which immigrants forge and sustain social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement.” Transnationalism arose at least in part as a reaction to the inability of existing theoretical approaches to immigrant incorporation, namely the cultural assimilationist and the ethnic pluralistic models, to accommodate the multiplicity of trans-territorial affiliations that transnational migrants seem to possess.

13 Early writings in the field of transnationalism suffered from problems of definition, scope and problematic. See David Fitzgerald, Negotiating Extra-Territorial Citizenship: Mexican Migration and the Transnational Politics of Community. CCIS Monograph 2 (La Jolla: University of California, San Diego, Center for Comparative Immigration Studies, 2000). First, it was not clear what in fact was new (aside from scholarly interest in it), although some scholars stressed the “high intensity of exchanges, the new modes of transacting and the multiplication of activities that require cross-border travel and contacts on a sustained basis.” See Alejandro Portes, Luis E. Guarnizo and Patricia Landolt, “The Study of Transnationalism: Pitfalls and Promise of an Emergent Research Field,” Ethnic and Racial Studies 22 (2) March 1999: p. 218.

Second, there were problems with the unit of analysis – the individual, the community, the network, etc. Moreover, how many communities can truly be said to live transnational lives in the sense Basch, Glick Schiller and Szanton Blanc meant – lives that seem to pass easily back and forth between two countries? See Linda Basch, Nina Glick Schiller and Cristina Szanton Blanc, Nations Unbound: Transnational Projects, Postcolonial Predicaments, and Deterritorialized Nation-States (Langhorne, PA: Gordon and Breach, 1994). There also seemed to be little consideration in the transnationalism literature – which looks almost exclusively at Western Hemisphere communities with a foot in the United States – of situations of marginalization or cultural and social displacement in these communities.

Third is the implicit normative evaluation of the various transnational institutions, that as members of civil society they are by definition representative and dynamic, and that by transgressing established structures of power they are by needs counter-hegemonic. As the work of Fitzgerald on Mexico shows, the success of transnational associations often owes to the relationships that they develop with the state of origin.

14 Basch et al., p. 7. It is interesting that none of the works in this field that I have encountered expresses an intellectual debt to the much earlier work of Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye on interdependence. This may well owe to the fact that those writing on transnationalism tend to be sociologists and anthropologists, not students of international relations.

The transnationalism literature criticizes traditional works on migration for their assumption of a clear dichotomy between sending and receiving states, arguing that such an approach does not offer the tools necessary to deal with the more fluid, transnational (although not *deterritorialized*)\(^{16}\) existence that characterizes many of today’s migrants.

The majority of the work in this area has been concerned with civil society and its myriad transnational extensions, whether through business, village associations, or other activities. A few of the early works give at least passing consideration to state institutions involved in expatriate affairs, although they are not the primary analytical focus. Basch *et al.*’s point that transmigrants “take actions, make decisions, and develop subjectivities and identities embedded in networks of relationships that connect them simultaneously to two or more *states*,” (emphasis added)\(^{17}\) is helpful in reminding us that the relationships are not just with networks of family or civil society institutions. Transmigrants are in fact located in a particular historical, political, social and economic context,\(^ {18}\) part of which is the “states in their lives.”

Nonetheless, in general, Basch *et al.* miss a number of key elements in the relationship between the migrants and states. For example, they contend that “migrants and political leaders in the country of origin are engaged in constructing an ideology that envisions migrants as loyal citizens of their ancestral state.” Such an ideology, they argue, “recognizes and encourages the continuing and multiple ties that immigrants maintain with their society of origin” but ignores “the ongoing incorporation of these immigrants into the society and polity of the country in which they have settled.”\(^ {19}\) The first problem with such a contention concerns what sort of “ideology” is in fact in the process of being developed. The authors assume that there is an intersection of state interest with that of the migrants on the point of constructing the migrants as loyal citizens. That, it would seem, is an hypothesis requiring empirical testing, rather than something to be assumed a priori. True citizenship (not just passport holding, but real rights and inclusion), rather than subjectness, has been quite limited in most developing countries over the years. Hence the whole notion of “loyal citizen” in the context of many sending countries, especially generally poorer, authoritarian states of the global South, needs to be interrogated.

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\(^{16}\) Smith and Guarnizo argue that in a context in which states continue to maintain the legitimate means of coercive force within their borders, “deterritorialization” of the state is a problematic concept. See Michael Peter Smith and Luis Eduardo Guarnizo (eds.), *Transnationalism from Below*. Comparative Urban and Community Research, 6 (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1998), p. 9.

\(^{17}\) Basch *et al.*, p. 7.

\(^{18}\) M. Smith and Guarnizo, p. 177.

\(^{19}\) Basch *et al.*, p. 3.