



Article

Endorsers, challengers or builders? Political parties' diaspora outreach in a post-conflict state

International Political Science Review
2018, Vol. 39(3) 384–399
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sagepub.co.uk/journalsPermissions.nav
DOI: 10.1177/0192512118761023
journals.sagepub.com/home/ips


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Abstract

How do parties in government and opposition in a contested post-conflict state reach out to their diasporas abroad? Do their policies overlap or differ, and if so why? Scholarly accounts of sending states' outreach towards diasporas have paid little attention to the variety of actors and processes *within* sending states, and have grouped states with contested sovereignty in the same cluster as states for which sovereignty is not a salient issue. This article focuses on one of these contested states, Kosovo, and on the party engagement with diasporas abroad that has emerged there. I conceptualize three types of extraterritorial party outreach – *state-endorsing*, *state-challenging*, and *party-building*. I argue that parties that emerge from secessionism and warfare are more likely to reach out to the diaspora through a *state-endorsing* or *party-building approach*, depending on whether they are in government or opposition. Parties that are newly institutionalized in the post-conflict polity seek to engage the diaspora through a *state-endorsing* or *state-challenging approach*.

Keywords

Sending state, diaspora, political parties, post-conflict reconstruction, Kosovo

Introduction

Scholarship on the engagement of sending states with diasporas abroad has grown during the past decade, reflecting an increased understanding that diasporas remain connected to their countries of origin, even if permanently relocating to host-societies. Some sending states are more likely than others to discern potential benefit from diasporas, beyond cherished remittances – up to 15% of gross domestic product in some weak states (World Bank, 2015). Scholars have started exploring such cross-country variations (Delano and Gamlen, 2014; Ragazzi, 2014). As the introduction to this special issue shows, they have paid less attention to varieties of actors and processes *within*

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sending states, which can converge and diverge under different conditions, in different states and regimes. Scholarly accounts have often grouped states with contested sovereignty, with weak control over domestic institutions and agents or contested borders, in the same cluster as states for which sovereignty is not a salient issue.

This article focuses specifically on states with contested sovereignty and asks: how do parties in government and opposition in a contested post-conflict state reach out to their diasporas? Do their policies overlap or differ, and if so why? These are important questions, as states with limited sovereignty have increased since the Cold War ended. An impressive number of de facto states have emerged across the globe: Kosovo, Palestine, Somaliland, Sahrawi Republic, Nagorno-Karabakh, South Ossetia, Abkhazia, Transnistria, Chechnya, and others. Other contested states with internationally delineated borders, such as Iraq, Lebanon, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Macedonia, are deeply divided on ethnonationalist or sectarian grounds. Diasporas have also been instrumental in developing secessionist movements, among them the Kurdish diaspora in the Middle East and the Tamil and Sikh diasporas in Asia. Many of these recently created states are a result of break-up of former empires or decolonization through resistance, revolutions or warfare.

The focus here is on one of these contested states, Kosovo, and on the party engagement that has emerged there with diasporas abroad. In response to the first question, I conceptualize three types of extraterritorial party outreach – *state-endorsing*, *state-challenging*, and *party-building* – pursued actively or passively. As to the second, I develop a typological theory showing causal pathways by which these types of diaspora engagement emerged in post-independence Kosovo. I argue that parties that emerge from political movements with credentials from secessionism and warfare behave like parties in fully sovereign states. They are more likely to seek the diaspora through a *state-endorsing* or *party-building approach*, depending on whether they are in government or opposition. Parties that are newly institutionalized in the post-conflict polity seek to engage the diaspora through an active *state-endorsing* or *state-challenging approach*.

The article engages two clusters of explanations, currently not in conversation but providing valuable insights to these central questions. I first discuss the scarce scholarship on governmental and party-political engagement with diasporas abroad; review literature specifically related to diasporas and conflict and post-conflict polities; and present my methodology and a brief overview of Kosovo's secessionism and the role of the diaspora in it. The three conceptual types are developed, followed by a typological theory argument, and venturing into the diaspora politics of four major parties in Kosovo in 2013, when the fieldwork was conducted. The conclusions explore extrapolating the findings to other polities experiencing contested sovereignty and their diaspora engagement.

Relationships of governments and parties with diasporas abroad

The emerging literature on extraterritorial diaspora engagement focuses primarily on the *sending state*. As the introductory article of this special issue discusses in more detail, sending states are driven by a *utilitarian* rationale, considering the diasporas' material power in the form of remittances, direct investment, diaspora bonds, philanthropy, and tourism (Gamlen, 2014); an *identity-based* rationale through symbolic connections to maintain the homeland culture abroad (Adamson and Demetriou, 2007); a *governance* rationale to exert influence on the diaspora through bilateral and multilateral treaties, with a 'light managerial approach' characteristic of a neoliberal global political order (Delano and Gamlen, 2014; Ragazzi, 2014; Waterbury, 2010); and a *sociopositional* rationale demonstrating how sending states factor positionality of diasporas in different sociospatial contexts across the globe (Koinova 2018, see also Tsourapas 2015).

The *state* is primarily analyzed through an institutional approach, where state institutions relating to diasporas develop, sustain, or resist extraterritorial linkages to domestic processes: allowing or restricting dual citizenship (Mirilovic, 2015), building diaspora ministries and agencies (Gamlen, 2014), external voting (Collyer, 2014; Lafleur, 2015; Paalberg, 2017), and others.

Accounts concerned with understanding specifically the role of governments or parties are much more limited. Governments have often been analyzed indiscriminately as stewards of institutional processes, and parties in terms of narrow electoral competition. Some accounts have shown that governments may change attitudes towards dual citizenship as part of domestic political reforms, especially related to democratization and international norm adoption (Lafleur, 2015). The Mexican government in the 1980s, interested in opening up to the global economy and joining the North American Free Trade Agreement, became eager to reconsider its distant relationship with the US-based diaspora, which was needed to lobby the US Congress (Lafleur, 2011). In another example, authorities in Turkey were largely reactive rather than proactive to diaspora politics in the early 2000s (Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003). Yet, with the Justice and Development Party of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the diaspora was quickly considered an enfranchised electoral block, sought after in electoral campaigns and the recent 2017 constitutional referendum.

Growing interest in diaspora voting has started highlighting the role of parties across borders. Some 115 democratic and nondemocratic states allow some form of diaspora voting from abroad (Collyer and Vathi, 2007). In 13 states diasporas can vote for their own representatives in national assemblies through special representation, ranging from one seat for the diaspora in Colombia to 12 in Italy to 18 in Tunisia (Collyer, 2014). Parties are more engaged with emigration issues when they have the strong electoral incentives provided by systems allowing diasporas' special representation (Østergaard-Nielsen and Ciorney, 2017). Yet the assumption that party politics abroad is a mere extension of domestic institutions and political affairs is incorrect (Paalberg, 2017). Diaspora party politics vary across parties, and can depend on linkages between parties and diaspora segments. Mexico's previously restrictive diaspora politics started changing in the 1980s with the advent of a new left-wing party, Partido de la Revolución Democrática, with strong links to US-based emigrant activists (Santamaría Gómez, 1994, quoted in Lafleur, 2011). Parties ideologically aligned with the majority in the diaspora, as in Mexico and the Dominican Republic, could be more interested in campaigning abroad (Lieber, 2010). Nationalist parties could have a stronghold in the diaspora compared to others, as with the Croatian Democratic Union (Brkanic, 2016) and the Macedonian VMRO-DPMNE (Koinova, 2013a). Minority parties can also foster voting from abroad, as with the ethnic Turkish Movement for Rights and Freedoms in Bulgaria, which engages ethnic Turks who emigrated from Bulgaria primarily since the end of communism (Koinova, 2013a). As Paalberg argues, diasporas are valuable constituencies, important as potential 'direct' voters and as agents of indirect influence over homeland-based families, or of financial help for political campaigns (Paalberg, 2017).

Discussion about governments and parties engaging with diasporas is in an early stage and does not encompass two aspects important for this study. First, besides acknowledging that refugees need to be considered stakeholders in external voting in post-conflict societies – such as Kosovo, East Timor, Eritrea, Rwanda, Liberia, Afghanistan, and Iraq – to avoid legitimization of displacement as a goal of war (Collyer, 2014), there is no explicit interest in considering post-conflict societies. In such societies parties often emerge from previous wartime formations, which have drawn support from the diaspora and participated in negotiated settlements during peace processes and demobilization of combatants. This process shapes political dynamics with the diaspora, and points to legacies of wartime periods. Second, even with ideological alignments between local agents and diasporas, little is known about how parties connect nationalism

and post-conflict statehood when engaging the diaspora. This article demonstrates that parties in government or opposition in a post-conflict state do not view the diaspora in a uniform way, when making claims about the relationship between nation and state.

This article also serves as a bridge between the literature on sending states and scholarship on the role of diasporas in conflict and post-conflict reconstruction, which evolved separately since the 2000s. The literature points out that diasporas began playing an important role in a world defined by intra- rather than interstate conflicts after the Cold War. Conflicts in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Lebanon, Rwanda, Kosovo, Croatia, Eritrea, Sudan, Sri Lanka, Somalia, and Palestine among others have drawn resources from their diasporas. An influential World Bank study showed that reconstruction polities with strong involvement with US-based diasporas are more likely to perpetuate domestic conflicts (Collier and Hoeffler, 2000). Conflict-generated diasporas are especially prone to maintain conflicts from abroad due to 'long-distance nationalism' (Anderson, 2006), and traumatic identities embedded in diaspora institutions (Shain, 2002) that could become entrenched in a relationship between diaspora, host-state, and home-state. Diasporas could become conflict entrepreneurs (Brinkerhoff, 2011), take up arms from abroad (Hockenos, 2003), and lobby for secessionism and contentious political causes (Koinova, 2013b). Some accounts also show diaspora engagement with transitional justice processes during post-conflict reconstruction.

The focus of this literature has been on diasporas as *non-state actors* affecting homelands experiencing conflicts, rather than on agents seeking out the diaspora from within the *sending state*. Some accounts have shown that secessionist movements were especially prone to reach out to the diaspora, as from Kosovo (Koinova, 2013b), Croatia (Brkanic, 2016), Ethiopia (Lyons, 2006), the secessionist Tamil movement in Sri Lanka (Orjuella, 2008), and others. Their focus has been primarily on whether diasporas are 'peace-makers or peace-wreckers' (Orjuella, 2008; Smith and Stares, 2007), with little attention on how secessionist movements engage them. In line with this special issue on diaspora engagement by agents *within* sending states, some of these accounts have demonstrated variations. Some secessionist groups pursued moderate or radical politics in diaspora circles, as in Kosovo (Hockenos, 2003). Some parties sought the diaspora primarily on a sectarian basis. Diaspora parties in exile could be barred from the home-state, but re-embedded in it during political transitions, as in Armenia, and Lebanon. Drawing theoretical insights from the literature on both sending states and diasporas as non-state actors, this article seeks to shift the current thinking about diaspora engagement and post-conflict polities.

Methods and data

This article uses the comparative case study method on transnational diaspora policies of several parties *within* a sending state. Kosovo as a de facto state, where local governance and institutions exist but the state is not fully recognized internationally, serves as a unit of analysis from within a universe of post-conflict polities. Four parties in positions of government and opposition serve as the actual cases. Gerring notes, 'a unit [of analysis] connotes a spatially bounded phenomenon – e.g., a nation-state, revolution, political party, election, or person – observed at a single point in time or over some delimited period of time... A country may function as a case, a unit, a population, or a case study... [since these terms] are nested within each other' (Gerring, 2007: 341). In this research design, transnational policies of different parties within the sending state are subject to structured focused comparison (George and Bennett, 2004).

A methodological challenge emerges when analyzing diaspora relations, since parties' activities are not spatially confined to a certain territory. Parties are usually defined as entities channeling electoral politics, with ideologically similar foundations, a body of notables or mass of supporters that command electoral loyalties (Katz and Crotty, 2006), and 'central intermediate structures

between government and civil society' (Sartori, 1976). Such definitions do not consider the parties' transnationalized nature, since parties can have headquarters in the sending state and viable branches abroad, exist in exile only, or be based both at home and abroad. Comparative studies of transnationalized parties must go beyond what Wimmer and Glick-Schiller (2002) call 'methodological nationalism.' The data collection in this study reflects such a transnational mind-frame, as research was conducted in a multi-sited manner, recently accepted in migration research, but still a novelty in political science.

This paper uses empirical data from more than 60 semistructured interviews, conducted in Kosovo in summer 2013, and the United Kingdom (UK), Netherlands, Germany, and Sweden in 2013–2016. I conducted interviews with representatives of Kosovo government agencies (15), parties (8), non-governmental organizations (12), international organizations (5), and diaspora entrepreneurs (20) who remain anonymous in accordance with requirements for ethical research. I also build on published research on mobilization of the Kosovo diaspora in the United States (US), and on secondary resources related to mobilization in an important country for the Kosovo diaspora, Switzerland. I conducted participant observation of events in Kosovo in 2013 related to the 'Diaspora Days,' diaspora women's business entrepreneurship, and others. Interviewees belong to the category 'diaspora entrepreneurs,' formal or informal activists who make claims for their homelands or engage diasporas in such claim-making. Interviewees were selected through snowball sampling, and public sources. The empirical material was analyzed through 'grounded coding,' inductively developing meaningful categories to analyze subsections of texts, clustering them within a larger data corpus (Saldana, 2012).

Evolution of Kosovo's contested statehood in relationship to the diaspora

Historically, Kosovo and other areas inhabited by Albanians in the Balkans – at present in Serbia, Macedonia, Montenegro, and others – were not included in the state of Albania formed in 1913 during the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, and this remains a source of contention (Pettifer and Vickers, 2009). After World War I, Kosovo was integrated into the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, and after World War II into the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY), acquiring autonomous status. The end of communism and SFRY's disintegration in the late 1980s opened space for Kosovo's secessionism. In 1991 the newly formed Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) declared independence from Serbia. Segregated from public institutions, schools, jobs, and medical care, many Kosovo Albanians were forced or chose to migrate. Pursuing non-violent resistance, the LDK built a network of party branches, including in Europe, US, Australia, Turkey, and others (Hockenos, 2003). Violence escalated in 1998, when large parts of the diaspora started being more supportive of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), advocating radical action to achieve state independence. The diaspora fundraised, sponsored warfare, and sent fighters to the Kosovo battlefields (Hockenos, 2003). Its importance subsided after the 1999 North Atlantic Treaty Organization military intervention, when diaspora members withdrew to take care of private concerns, or rebuild houses and infrastructure in war-torn Kosovo (Koinova, 2013b).

Currently, Kosovo is a *de facto* state with predominantly Albanian ethnicity, and Serb, Turkish, Bosnian, and Roma minorities living on its territory. In 2008 Kosovo elites declared independence, supported by the US, major European Union (EU) countries, but not Russia and China. To date, Kosovo has received 113 diplomatic recognitions, but not full international sovereignty or United Nations (UN) recognition. Nevertheless, domestic sovereignty has largely been present, with institutions and parties built under the UN Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) in collaboration with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and other international organizations.

Figure 1. Research focus on four parties.

Kosovo's 2008 independence reinvigorated the diaspora in new ways, as officially-sanctioned state institutions and parties, not secessionist formations, reached out. Three years after independence, in 2011, a Ministry of Diaspora emerged from the Agency for the Diaspora, and a National Strategy and Action Plan on Migration were developed (World Bank, 2011). With support from the International Organization of Migration, Finland, and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), intense consultation took place among 900 Kosovar diaspora members in 13 countries, aiding development of a Diaspora Strategy (Diaspora Strategy, 2013; R1, 2013).¹

Four transnationalized Kosovo parties in government and opposition

Kosovo parties have no real experience with functioning in a stable party system. They are part of what Mainwaring and Scully (1995) call an 'inchoate party system' with few institutionalized party platforms or consolidated ideologies, predominantly driven by personalities. At the time of my 2013 fieldwork all parties had parliamentary representatives, but had different experiences governing Kosovo, primarily in coalition governments, after the first postwar parliamentary elections in 2001. Between 2001 and 2013: (1) the *Democratic Party of Kosovo* (PDK) was in government 2001–2004, in opposition between 2004 and 2007, and again in government since 2007; (2) The LDK was part of all coalition governments until 2010, then in opposition until 2014; (3) The *New Kosovo Alliance* (AKR) was in opposition 2007–2010 and in government at the time of fieldwork, until 2014; and (4) *Vetevendosje* (Self-determination) participated for the first time in parliamentary elections in 2010, and remained in opposition.² The constellation of parties studied during the 2013 fieldwork is summarized in Figure 1.

The leading *coalition partner in government* was the PDK, the largest party after the war. Emerging after the demilitarization of KLA, it was continuously headed by former KLA commander Hashim Thaçi, currently president, and has roots in Marxist-Leninist circles of the People's

Movement of Kosovo, whose membership since the 1980s and support came from the diaspora, especially Switzerland. The PDK, currently a center-right party (Koha, 2013), was in government between 2010 and 2014, in coalition with the more recent AKR, a liberal political party of wealthy Kosovan–Swiss businessman Behgjet Pacolli, alongside several smaller parties. Pacolli acted as First Deputy Prime Minister. He was elected president by the Parliamentary Assembly in 2011, but demoted by a Constitutional Court decision over electoral irregularities (Balkan Insight, 2011). Pacolli's earlier generous support for lobbyists in Washington DC (Koinova, 2013b) made him important to the lobbying for further recognition of Kosovo's independence.

Currently more than 30 parties operate in Kosovo, among them ethnic minority parties. I chose to study two influential parties *in opposition*, the LDK and the Self-determination Party *Vetevendosje*. The LDK is the second-biggest party, successor of the eponymous movement that in the 1990s was at the helm of Kosovo's shadow state. It started as a nationalist movement, moved to the political center in the 2000s, and is currently considered social conservative. *Vetevendosje* emerged from a student movement under the leadership of Albin Kurti, which in the mid-1990s considered LDK's rule 'a movement of sitting' (quoted in Koinova, 2013a), and mobilized students in support of then-rising KLA. Unlike the LDK or PDK, *Vetevendosje* was not actively engaged in building institutions during the 2000s. It presented the most critical opposition to UNMIK and respective governments during the 2000s, supported Kosovo's unconditional self-determination targeting resistance against both Serbia and international organizations, and used boycotts and other transgressive means to pursue its goals. Currently *Vetevendosje* is the most outspoken party on the nationalist spectrum; it challenges government negotiations with Serbia, openly supports 'greater Albania,' and campaigns for turning Kosovo into a developmental state with welfare state characteristics, to be governed by meritocracy, not nepotism.

Even if physically registered in Kosovo, these parties have been highly transnationalized from their inception and over time. This is a result of political actors pursuing Kosovo's independence and the networks and structures they built domestically and abroad. Thaci (PDK) launched his nationalist activities from Switzerland and moved to Kosovo only after the war. Pacolli (AKR) could be considered a high caliber circular migrant, as he currently shuttles between Switzerland and Kosovo. Minister of Foreign Affairs Enver Hoxhaj lived in Austria, as did Deputy Minister of Energy and Mining Blerim Rexha. High-ranking employees of the Diaspora Ministry have also lived abroad. Rugova (LDK) did not live outside Kosovo, but current LDK party leader Isa Mustafa was a Finance Minister in the 1990s parallel government in Bonn. Kurti (*Vetevendosje*) did not live abroad, but the majority of his current team are returnees from the UK and Switzerland. Many regular party and parliament members are also diaspora returnees (R2, 2013; R3, 2013).³

Explaining different types of diaspora outreach

This article brings two new ways of theorizing about sending-state outreach to diasporas: developing *conceptual types of outreach* of agents *within* the sending state; and *explaining* their emergence through typological theorizing. There are three types of diaspora outreach by parties in government and opposition in a post-conflict polity: *state-endorsing*; *state-challenging*; and *party-building*. A *state-endorsing* approach engages the diaspora to support the existing political order and institutions, seeking financial contributions, lobbying, promoting cultural identity, public diplomacy, and considering return in support of these institutions, among others. A *state-challenging* approach engages the diaspora in supporting reconfiguration of state fundamentals, territorial borders, or economic and social order. This approach challenges the domestic or international sovereignty of the post-conflict polity. A *party-building* approach is mostly agnostic about statehood, but seeks the diaspora for party-building purposes and leverage in its electoral competition. These approaches can be pursued actively or passively.

Figure 2. Typological theory argument.

		Government	Opposition
Credentials from warfare + Pre-independence institution-building	yes	State-endorsing (passive) (PDK)	Party-endorsing (LDK)
	no	State-endorsing (active) (AKR)	State-challenging (Vetevendosje)

Second, specifically regarding the Kosovo case, the causal pathways that led to these types of extraterritorial party engagement can be explained by factoring in the position of a party in government or opposition and two conjunctural variables: the party’s *credentials from warfare* and the secessionist period; and *prior participation in the building of state institutions* during post-conflict reconstruction. Typological theorizing, by contrast to simple conceptual development of types, explicates the causal pathways by which certain types of phenomena emerge (George and Bennett, 2004). Figure 2 demonstrates the typological argument; the text further discusses the empirics in depth.

Diaspora outreach of the coalition government

In 2013 Kosovo’s government pursued an entirely *state-endorsing approach*, to rebuild connections with the diaspora for state-endorsing purposes. A high-ranking Ministry of Diaspora official argued: ‘we encourage them to integrate... to be involved in the political, public, academic, cultural, sport life of the countries they live in. We also support them to maintain their identity through the full study of Albanian’ (R2, 2013). The Diaspora Strategy adopted in 2013 during the coalition government mandate, the most comprehensive document guiding the Ministry’s functions, outlined major lines of engagement such as: financial investment; education; and public diplomacy.

Regarding financial investment, the Diaspora Ministry identified 500 diaspora entrepreneurs interested in investing primarily in small businesses, with limited interest in larger entrepreneurs in the construction and agricultural sectors (R4, 2013).⁴ The US, Switzerland, and Germany were targeted as important destinations, not least because the diaspora is numerically significant there (Koinova, 2018). Of major interest was a diaspora business network, which took off in the second half of the government’s term. The Diaspora Ministry, international organizations, and active diaspora branches became part of a transnational Kosovo Albanian project, ‘Diaspora Engagement and Economic Development’ (DEED, 2016). The Diaspora Ministry also promoted a Women’s Business Network among Albanian women in distant countries and neighboring Albania, Macedonia, and Montenegro, and served as a broker between municipalities and potential investors, identifying land to be leased for investment purposes (R3, 2013). It developed a comprehensive network of diaspora support officers in municipalities, tasking them to aid diaspora with information and documentation, and build a register of diaspora representatives who migrated from each municipality (R2, 2013).

Kosovo's government took a leadership role in developing an education curriculum for mother-tongue education of Albanian students abroad, surpassing the usual leadership of kin-state Albania. While Kosovo diaspora members in Switzerland gave impetus to this initiative, expertise was also solicited from diaspora members in Sweden. Sweden, which has officially sponsored mother-tongue education of minority populations, encouraged the Kosovo diaspora to develop state-sponsored Albanian-language teaching expertise (Koinova, 2018). Some diaspora members considered the Kosovo government of little influence in diaspora affairs in Sweden (R5, 2014),⁵ but educational expertise has been important for that government (R6, 2013).⁶

The Kosovo government also launched a concerted effort to engage the diaspora in a twofold manner. One part was an official strategy of public diplomacy, advertised through the Foreign Ministry (2016). Public diplomacy has been necessary to show the good side of Kosovo Albanians, overshadowed by media reports on criminality, unemployment (Xharra and Waehlish, 2012), and renewed asylum seeking, and goes hand in hand with 'digital' diplomacy, to reinforce public engagement through social media and other online platforms (R7, 2013).⁷ It has often sought to emphasize the uniquely youthful population of Kosovars in an ageing Europe. The government connected with educated publics in the UK, and promoted UK pop star Rita Ora as an honorary ambassador as well as successful sport-related individuals in Switzerland and Germany (Koinova, 2018; Xharra and Waehlish, 2012). Public diplomacy efforts inspired diaspora activists abroad, directly or indirectly. For instance, a diaspora activist in Germany began actively raising public awareness of Mother Teresa's charitable work and Albanian heritage, emphasizing that Albanians could be Catholic, not only Muslim (R8, 2015).⁸

The government sought to project an image of a united democratic Kosovo, worthy of joining the European family. Building an Albanian space in the Balkans – Kosovo, Albania, Macedonia, and Montenegro – has been advertised as developing European regionalism through business cooperation. Albanians from the region and diaspora are encouraged to create business networks, as the examples of DEED and the women's network indicate. The government officially sought to advertise Kosovo through its new flag, with yellow stars on a blue background, resembling the EU flag. The new flag, though widely considered among Kosovars as imposed by international powers, is used to advertise further state recognition. In the words of a respondent, 'some successful celebrities publicize Kosovo by showing the flag, and perhaps ask countries which have not yet recognized Kosovo, to do so' (R9, 2013).⁹ This nevertheless contravenes the widespread practice at home and abroad of using the flag of Albania proper for identification. Diaspora members travel extensively to Kosovo to celebrate 'national flag day,' 28 November, when Albania declared independence from the Ottoman Empire in 1912, and 17 February, when Kosovo declared independence from Serbia in 2008 (R10, 2013).¹⁰

Public diplomacy has also been pursued through unofficial yet widely practiced staffing of embassies with former activists and diaspora elites from the country in which the new embassies and consulates are embedded. Countless examples in the UK, the Netherlands, France, Germany, Sweden, and Switzerland have been engaged in this way (R11, 2015).¹¹ The ambassador may not be hired from within the diaspora community, but councilors and advisors often are. An official argues: 'often the meetings [the Minister of Diaspora has] with politicians from different places in Europe are arranged through the diaspora. These could be mayors of municipalities or others' (R2, 2013). This approach has brought much-needed local expertise, but also reinforced wartime and clientelist networks. An opposition politician argues that such staffing reflects 'human nature', hiring people one knows. Diaspora individuals may also return to Kosovo to bring their expertise; they 'end up being part of the foreign service as ambassadors and staff', and eventually 'party militants' abroad (R10, 2013).

Minister of Diaspora Ibrahim Makolli initiated a motion to open the political system for up to five seats for diaspora members in parliament, in line with growing trends for diaspora special representation. As Ministry of Diaspora official put it:

The diaspora helped a lot before the war and after the war. They have shared their bread with the people of Kosovo... We want to change the laws to get them seats in parliament... We have a lot of diaspora, but we do not have anyone responsible for it, only the Ministry of the Diaspora. But this is nothing. We as a Ministry have very little budget, and the diaspora needs more. (R3, 2013)

Despite wide circulation among diaspora members (R2, 2013) and an official proposition submitted to the Parliamentary Committee on Constitutional Changes, this initiative did not succeed. The parliamentary opposition criticized it because of a need ‘to have the diaspora represented in the government, rather than the government represented in the diaspora,’ and because voting procedures for diasporas from abroad need to be significantly improved (Albinfo, 2011). Even if external voting is legally possible for Kosovo citizens abroad, the process of obtaining ballots is onerous, involving an exchange of letters three times in one month. Of the considered 300,000–400,000 eligible external voters, only 3,500 were registered for the 2014 general elections (Freda 2014).

Divergence in stances on special representation between the coalition partners demonstrates how eager they were to engage the diaspora in a *state-endorsing approach*. Pacolli’s smaller AKR party with Makolli as Minister of Diaspora at the helm was much more active than the more established PDK. As a PDK official argues, his party, at the core of the 1990s struggle and helping build local institutions under UNMIK during the 2000s, maintains a sentiment that ‘Kosovars have to help themselves on their own’. If the diaspora wants to come to Kosovo, it is highly welcome. The PDK claim is that ‘we are not going there’ apart from showing diaspora members the potential opportunities to invest and connect to Kosovo: ‘you need to come here’. The official also argued there is no need to exhaust the diaspora, an important asset for the country, or divide it into supporters for ‘LDK, PDK or whoever else’, since ‘this is the Kosovo diaspora’ (R11, 2013).

The AKR party, a newcomer to post-conflict Kosovo political institutions, was more proactive in its diaspora orientation, seeking to engage it in statehood recognition during the research period, especially linking business with state recognition. A high AKR functionary commented:

All the activity of the President of our party [Pacolli] within the government has been focused on creating a positive image of Kosovo and the lobbying for recognizing Kosovo’s independence. Usually, he has made trips in countries whose governments have not recognized Kosovo, and where Kosovar citizens are not able to travel, because they do not have documents. This includes Asian states, African states. Of course, the [party] President has the ability to travel to these states, but also the authority because of doing business... Mr. Pacolli gets on more easily with the authorities of these countries because of his business credentials rather than as a minister of an unknown country. (R12, 2013)¹²

According to this respondent, the AKR also envisaged a law on public-private partnerships to coordinate business activities from Kosovo and abroad. Through a public-private institution, a diaspora businessman could potentially obtain information and contacts from one ministry, not many different sources. Despite no diaspora-related party infrastructure, the AKR developed a central branch in Zurich, which keeps in contact with Germany, Belgium, Canada, and US. A branch with around 20 businessmen gets to meet Pacolli, Makkoli, and others (R12, 2013).

Diaspora outreach of opposition parties

The LDK was one of the major parties in the postwar institution-building process. During the UNMIK period, the LDK had command of presidential, parliamentary, and local power, often in

competition with the other large party, PDK. LDK maintained a parallel state in the US, Europe, and Australia with support from the diaspora, and created cadres of good organizers, lobbyists, and network facilitators. Some diaspora members changed party allegiances over time, or returned to Kosovo after the war, but many first-generation activists continued living in their host-lands: integrated, but remaining passively or actively involved with the LDK. Some LDK-based networks, for example, the National Albanian American Council in Washington, DC, were active in lobbying for Kosovo's independence before 2008 (Koinova, 2013b).

Being in opposition made the party rethink priorities and focus on a *party-building approach* of diaspora engagement, to a certain degree agnostic of statehood, but focused on the party. A high-ranking LDK official observed:

This is the first time the LDK is not in power. We chose deliberately to be in opposition, because we needed time to reflect and reform ourselves.... Because, each time being in government means that we have less time for the party.... You can have everybody on board when you act on behalf of an institution. But being in opposition makes it a bit difficult to go abroad and offer something to the entire diaspora, because you are not in power. Being in opposition, we are concentrating more on our branches and on our people. This does not mean that next time when we lead the government, we will not use institutional channels to reach out to the diaspora. (R13, 2013)¹³

In line with its oppositional strategy, the LDK has focused on engaging diaspora members in different ways. In an official's words, one way is to involve branches in upcoming electoral competitions – primarily in Belgium, Austria, Switzerland, Germany, and the US – which ‘started reengaging because they see LDK is preparing to gain power again’. In the run-up to the 2013 local elections, for example, LDK functionaries traveled to Switzerland seeking to engage diaspora members to become local councilors in the Gjakova region. Diaspora members went to Gjakova during the summer to explore such opportunities. There are diaspora members in LDK's general council, convention, and professional committees. They are actively engaged, although not in front-line decision-making positions, ‘because of the distance’, and ‘because to be a head of council requires working at least eight hours a day’. Diaspora activists are usually employed in jobs that tie them to a place, so they can travel only irregularly or for longer periods during the summer (R13, 2013).

Another way to engage constituencies abroad is through the LDK youth movement, maintained for over two decades as an important party structure. Another LDK official explains that they specifically target students in the 21–27 age range, because ‘Kosovo has a very young population’. They become engaged through offline forums, such as a congress conducted in Berlin in 2013, and meetings throughout Europe at least three times a year. Other ways to get involved include online activism and social media, whose biggest asset is ‘sharing information in real time’ (R14, 2013).¹⁴ The party clearly targets students, but there is no indication that it seeks nonstudent diaspora youth.

The LDK's *party-building* diaspora outreach has shown little concern with further promotion of state recognition. Party functionaries say Kosovo has been considered a state since 2008, and it is up to present institutions to lobby for further international recognition. Statehood can nevertheless be commemorated according to party principle, such as memorialization events on the date of President Rugova's death (R1, 2013), or visiting his grave when traveling to Kosovo, and meeting families of LDK activists who died during the war (R13, 2013). Using the party-building approach, the LDK lobbies with the European People's Party (EPP), in which it holds a monitoring status since 2012, and where the ‘diaspora has put a lot of work’, not least because the LDK is reportedly the ‘only party to be part of a European Parliament's group [the EPP], which makes a crucial difference for the state’ (R13, 2013).

By contrast to the LDK, in Kosovo's institutional development, the *Vetevendosje* (Self-determination) movement emerged out of systemic opposition. A leader of the 1996 student demonstrations, Alban Kurti, made a name for himself as a daring charismatic personality with the capacity to motivate and organize others. In contrast to the oscillating ideological messages of

other parties, his messages did not change much over time. He stood for self-determination from both Serbia (domestic sovereignty) and external governance (international sovereignty), a stance that continues, somewhat softened at present. Even after independence, his party activities still had one foot in the street, the other seeking institutional engagement. In 2010, *Vetevendosje* took part in elections for the first time (Balkan Insight, 2010).

In contrast to the KLA or LDK, *Vetevendosje* did not have established diaspora networks and organizations during the war or the immediate aftermath. Network building began in the mid-2000s, developing more momentum and followers. They fostered strong connections with the diaspora in Belgium and Switzerland, where the ‘diaspora is concentrated and easy to engage’, although Kurti travels regularly to Germany and the UK, among other destinations (R1, 2013). With its antisystemic, anticorruption message, *Vetevendosje* managed to attract high-profile individuals, such as former KLA fundraiser Florin Krasniqi from the US, or the sculptor of the Kosovo *Newborn* statue, Fisnik Ismaili from the UK (R15, 2013).¹⁵ At the time of my fieldwork, the party leadership included well-educated people who had returned from various European countries to seek change that they did not envisage as possible through existing parties. They did not blame the diaspora for being unwilling to invest in Kosovo, given ‘these corrupt elites’, or to become ‘part of this organized crime network’ (R1, 2013). A high-ranking party official claimed:

The lack of interest in investment is mainly because these people [the diaspora] are excluded entirely from decision-making in Kosovo. Our diaspora has not been given rights officially. A law gave them the right to vote, but it has been made impossible to do so in practice.... That is why *Vetevendosje* is seeking to get reserved seats [for special representation] for the diaspora in the legislature. Diaspora feels they have been used, before and during the war, as they made the war possible. When you speak with them today, they do not see themselves as part of [Kosovo’s] society, as they do not participate in decision-making. (R1, 2013)

As a party with anti-establishment characteristics, *Vetevendosje* advanced a *state-challenging approach*, including a vision of the state very different from those of other parties, even those in opposition. *Vetevendosje* openly advocated unification with Albania as a kin-state, challenging constitutional provisions and opening the way for further unification with Albanian populations in neighboring countries (R1, 2013). In the view of its leadership (R1, 2013; R16, 2013; R17, 2013),¹⁶ unification is desired by the population according to surveys and popular sentiments, and needs to take place before European integration. This view also challenges the current vision of the government to facilitate creation of a larger Albanian space, built on networks of business and cultural cooperation, to eventually become part of the European family. The diaspora needs to be engaged on the issue of unification, not least because it is in the diaspora that all Albanians from Balkan territories live together. This view demonstrates nationalist rather than civic engagement.

Vetevendosje’s anti-establishment message is also visible in how Kosovo’s relations with Serbia relate to the diaspora. Diaspora networks were ‘mobilized to protest outside the EU institutions in Brussels, when the agreement with Serbia was due, and dialogue was happening. The diaspora was instructed to send letters to their governments and the EU’ (R1, 2013). A diaspora businessman with links to *Vetevendosje*, who wanted to invest in Kosovo, complained that authorities were pre-occupied with negotiations with Serbia, with no time to create a conducive environment for diaspora investment (R18, 2013).¹⁷

Conclusion

There is a need to build theory about under-researched, important political phenomena: how agents *within* sending states engage their diasporas abroad, specifically how policies of parties differ within a post-conflict polity with contested statehood.

Numerous post-conflict polities challenged in their domestic or international sovereignty exist in the Balkans, Caucasus, Middle East, Africa, and Asia as result of disintegration of empires and post-colonialism. These polities, are themselves subject to international disagreements and conflicting claims with their neighbors, thus linking national and international struggles within and between territories. Yet, very little is known about how different parties *within* these sending states engage their diasporas abroad. This article offers a pioneering endeavor for future research in several ways.

First, it builds a bridge between two literatures that have not been in conversation: the growing scholarship on how *states* reach out to diasporas abroad, which gives little consideration to how agents *within* states do so; and scholarship on diasporas, conflicts, and post-conflict reconstruction, focused on diasporas as *non-state actors*, but not addressing the role of the sending state. Considering the post-conflict sending state as a separate category could provide more fine-tuning of current arguments than scholarship discussing such polities, on par with those enjoying full sovereignty and no recent history of violence.

Second, it demonstrates that even in a small de facto state, such as Kosovo, diaspora-oriented activities of different parties can be quite diverse in advancing visions of the relationship between nation and state. *State-endorsing*, *state-challenging*, and *party-building* approaches are pursued in active and passive ways. Such conceptualizations could easily ‘travel’ for use in analyzing diaspora engagement with other post-conflict polities, where state identity is volatile or institutions questioned. In Macedonia, for example, the nationalist VMRO-DPMNE party, actively involved in the 2001 internal warfare with factions of the Albanian minority, has governed from 2006 until 2017 and managed to effectively capture the state for over a decade. It has been strongly interconnected with a highly nationalist diaspora, especially in Australia (Koinova, 2013). Its state-endorsing outreach has been hostile to multiculturalism internally and reconciliation with neighbors externally. Social democrats in Macedonia are much less connected to the diaspora or such exclusivist views.

Third, this article puts on the scholarly map the need to consider how legacies of war in post-conflict societies play out in different parties’ engagement with the diaspora. Further empirical research may demonstrate whether the typological argument developed from Kosovo data can be directly extrapolated to other post-conflict polities. On the basis of this article, it is worth considering in further mid-range theorizing how parties with established credentials in secessionism and warfare may behave as parties in fully established states, seeking out the diaspora via government channels for state-building or electoral competition. Party newcomers on the political horizon, experiencing themselves as domestically weak, might seek to establish political credentials by engaging the diaspora to endorse or challenge the state. The article raises the question of whether more extreme forms of nationalism and radical activism should be expected from parties with legacies of war in a post-conflict polity or from parties that are newcomers seeking to ‘outbid’ established parties with their relationship to the diaspora.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to express gratitude to the funding institutions, and to scholars who have given helpful comments on earlier versions of this paper during presentations at an International Sociological Association–European Research Council workshop (2016) and American Political Science Association (2016), among other venues: Anderson Alison, Katrina Burgess, Anastasia Christou, Marlies Glasius, Justin Gest, Michael-Jones Correa, Dzeneta Karabegovic, Jean-Michel Lafleur, Ben Margulies, Nikola Mirilovic, Luicy Pedroza, Gerasimos Tsourapas, Myra Waterbury, and Aubrey Westfall.

Funding

Research for this article was sponsored by the European Research Council Starting Grant ‘Diasporas and Contested Sovereignty’ (grant number 294198). A venture grant from the International Studies Association (2015) facilitated the presentations of this article in a workshop format.

Notes

1. Respondent 1 (R1) (2013) Author's interview with an IOM officer, Pristina, Kosovo, 1 August.
2. In the 'snap' parliamentary elections of June 2017, *Vetevendosje* won 27.5% of the vote, rendering it the second-largest party to be in the Kosovo parliament, after a war-time Democratic Party of Kosovo-led coalition. At the time of finishing this article, it remains to be seen whether *Vetevendosje* will become part of a governing coalition or remain in opposition.
3. R2 (2013) Author's interviews with a high-ranking official in the Ministry of Diaspora, Pristina, Kosovo, 21 June, 1 August; R3 (2013). Author's interview with a Ministry of Diaspora official, Pristina, Kosovo, 19 June.
4. R4 (2013) Author's interview with a Ministry of Diaspora official, Pristina, Kosovo, 23 June.
5. R5 (2013) Author's interview with Kosovo Albanian community activists, Malmö, Sweden, 25 June.
6. R6 (2013) Author's interview with adviser to the Ministry of Diaspora, Skype, conducted from Uppsala, Sweden, 12 October.
7. R7 (2013) Author's interview with a source close to the Foreign Ministry, Pristina, Kosovo, 6 August.
8. R8 (2015) Author's interview with a journalist and diaspora activist, Berlin, Germany, 3 April.
9. R9 (2013) Author's interview with a Kosovo non-governmental organization representative, Pristina, Kosovo, 19 June.
10. R10 (2013) Author's interview with *Vetevendosje* political representative, Pristina, Kosovo, 17 June.
11. R11 (2013) Author's interview with Democratic Party of Kosovo political representative, Pristina, Kosovo, 19 June.
12. R12 (2013) Author's interview with New Kosovo Alliance political representative, Pristina, Kosovo, 29 July.
13. R13 (2013) Author's interview with a Democratic League of Kosovo high-ranking official, Pristina, Kosovo, August 7.
14. R14 (2013) Author's interview with a Democratic League of Kosovo youth movement activist, Pristina, Kosovo, 1 August.
15. R15 (2013) Author's interview with an artist and diaspora returnee, Pristina, Kosovo, 19 June.
16. R16 (2013) Author's interview with a member of parliament from *Vetevendosje*, Pristina, Kosovo, 18 June; R17 (2013) Author's interview with a *Vetevendosje* party leader, Pristina, Kosovo, 18 June.
17. R18 (2013) Author's interview with a Canadian–Kosovar businessman, Pristina, Kosovo, 17 June.

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