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## Research Note

# Political Implications of Diasporic Philanthropy

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## ABSTRACT

As part of a wider research project on diaspora and ethnic philanthropy, this report aims to examine the links between the philanthropic and political actions of diasporic communities. More specifically, we are interested in the relationship between the philanthropic and political engagement of members of these communities. The aim of this report is to classify the political effects of philanthropic actions to better understand how these links are articulated and the political meaning underlying philanthropic engagement. Using a comprehensive literature review on the links between philanthropic and political actions, we have been able to identify four areas of diasporic philanthropy where politics and giving intersect: (a) Diaspora for diaspora's sake: capacity building and support in the country of residence; (b) Diaspora for a cause: support for home communities in conflict and post-conflict zones; (c) Diaspora as ambassador: representation of the home country abroad and (d) Diaspora for change: advocacy for political change in home countries.

### Key words:

Diaspora, philanthropic engagement, state-migration relations, diaspora political action

## RÉSUMÉ

Dans le cadre d'un projet de recherche plus vaste sur la diaspora et la philanthropie ethnique, ce rapport vise à examiner les liens entre les actions philanthropiques et politiques des communautés diasporiques. Plus précisément, nous nous intéressons à la relation entre l'engagement philanthropique et politique des membres de ces communautés. L'objectif de ce rapport est de classer les effets politiques des actions philanthropiques afin de mieux comprendre comment ces liens sont articulés et la signification politique sous-jacente à l'engagement philanthropique. À l'aide d'une revue de la littérature exhaustive portant sur les liens entre actions philanthropiques et actions politiques, nous avons pu identifier quatre domaines de la philanthropie diasporique où la politique et le don se croisent : (a) La diaspora pour la diaspora : renforcement des capacités et soutien dans le pays de résidence; (b) La diaspora pour une cause : soutien aux communautés d'origine dans les zones de conflit et post-conflit; (c) La diaspora en tant qu'ambassadrice : représentation du pays d'origine à l'étranger et (d) La diaspora pour le changement : plaider en faveur du changement politique dans les pays d'origine.

### Mots-clefs:

Diaspora, engagement philanthropique, relations États-migration, actions politiques des diasporas

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## INTRODUCTION

Growing interests among researchers in diasporic philanthropy around the world in recent decades can be attributed to the emerging participation of new actors in development policymaking, including non-governmental actors, private sectors, philanthropists, and migrants (Newland et al., 2010). Broadening in their scope of studies, researchers examine the relationships between diasporic philanthropy and the political engagement that underpins the act of giving. These studies stem from the growing political interest attributed to the relationship between migration and development, particularly in the context of international relations, foreign and development practice and policymaking (Boyle et al., 2013; Espinosa, 2016; Opiniano, 2005; Shain and Barth, 2003). When looking more broadly at migration and development, the literature seems to have advanced further recently. This relationship is now referred to as: the migrant-development or diaspora-development nexus (Espinosa, 2016). Issues of power relations, equity and inequality are also included in the discourse on the migrant-development nexus, including global and societal political and economic relations (Espinosa, 2016; Mehta, 2016). These issues are moreover linked to the motivations, scope, and mechanisms of giving between countries (Brinkerhoff, 2011; Espinosa, 2016; Flanigan, 2017).

Nevertheless, understanding the relationship between diaspora, development and philanthropy in Canada is still in its infancy (Mehta and Johnston, 2011; Shridhar, 2011; Pinnock, 2013; Ramachandran, 2016; Ramachandran and Crush, 2021). Most studies focus on remittances, i.e., financial transfers and movements of resources between host and home countries (Faist, 2010; Mehta and Johnston, 2011; Wickramasekara, 2015). Diasporic philanthropy has received less attention in comparison to others forms of philanthropic actions due to "the difficulty of defining what constitutes philanthropy, the under-reporting of these initiatives and the anecdotal nature of philanthropic narratives" (Espinosa, 2016: 362).

This report aims to examine what the literature argues about the links between the philanthropic and political actions of diasporic communities. More specifically, we are interested in the relationship between philanthropic and political engagement of members from these communities. We aim to classify the political impacts of philanthropic actions in order to better understand how these links are articulated and the political significance underlying philanthropic engagement. To this end, we will first briefly describe what we mean by diaspora. Next, we will look more specifically at the link between philanthropic and political engagement (the interplay between philanthropy, the state and political action). Finally, we describe four areas of diaspora philanthropy where politics and giving intersect.

## METHODOLOGY

The methodology used for this report is based on a literature review carried out previously, during the winter and summer sessions of 2023. The research drew on existing literature and was carried out in two stages. First, we undertook a comprehensive literature review, examining books and scholarly articles on diasporic philanthropic engagement. We

selected sources using key terms searches, both in the context of case studies and in studies focusing on conceptual definitions.

In total, we used 201 sources from journal articles and book chapters, primarily published between 1990 and 2023. Initially, we employed Google Scholar search engines using the following keywords: diaspora, engagement, politics, philanthropy, migration, and development. Grey literature sources were also considered. Studies defining diaspora philanthropy, its mechanisms, and processes were initially included, then expanded internationally to gain a broader understanding of the concepts' evolution and comprehension. Subsequently, we refined our search criteria to focus on political actions. Our attention was directed towards research examining the relationships between the state, political actions, and the influences of globalization, political economy, micro and macro-level relations, as well as nuances related to history and location. Recent studies were prioritized to better represent the evolution of concepts, the state of the literature, and emerging themes, trends, patterns, and gaps in the current historical context.

After examining the most cited or consulted works, we analyzed the bibliographic references of these documents and consulted them. Subsequently, we reviewed the bibliographies of new articles to find additional sources. We stopped when we reached saturation, meaning we could no longer find new references.

Then, once the reading was complete, we grouped authors who emphasized the political significance of philanthropic gestures. We then classified these authors according to the underlying explanatory factors linked to the political undertakings of giving, including citizenship, the role of the state, and the vision that diaspora groups have regarding the state. In other words, the aim of the second part of the methodology was to associate the philanthropic gesture with a political explanatory sub-field. It is possible to classify political action according to two main schools of thought: the role of the state and the role of individuals as agents and agencies of the political undertakings. These explanatory domains emerged during the second reading of the selected sources.

### **WHAT IS A DIASPORA?**

First and foremost, it's important to define what we mean by diaspora. Researchers note that diaspora has a multiplicity of meanings, and the formation of diasporic identity involves diverse practices and processes (Patterson and Kelley, 2000; Ramachandran, 2016; Espinosa, 2016). Diasporic identity is a key factor in giving, with some authors suggesting that it stems from a sense of responsibility towards the country of origin and the new diaspora community, driving diasporic philanthropy (Brinkerhoff, 2014; CAF America and CAF Canada, 2017). Initially, the term referred to forced migration and "dispersed political subjects" (Werbner, 2002) where a common identity was formed based on this traumatic experience and a desire to return to the homeland (CAF America and CAF Canada, 2017). However, the term has expanded to encompass any group of people sharing a common ancestry or country of origin, making efforts to engage with their history, language, culture, or heritage, thus forming the basis of the diaspora community (CAF America and CAF Canada, 2017).



We adopt this definition: a diasporic community refers to self-identification within a group of people sharing a common origin or country of origin, and who attempt to maintain connections with their history, language, culture, or heritage, thus forming a diasporic community. However, we also incorporate political identity as an additional factor in explaining the engagement of members from diaspora in philanthropic activities or giving by caring and sharing.

Thus, a diaspora is a transnational network of dispersed political subjects with co-responsibility ties beyond the borders of empires, political communities, countries or nations. It is not solidarity that explains belonging to a diaspora, but the sense of co-responsibility towards one's country of origin. In this context, diasporas are generally highly politicized social formations. This means that the diaspora's location is also a historical location, not just an abstract and metaphorical space (Werbner, 2002). Members of diasporic communities demonstrate their attachment to their country of origin and other diasporic causes by actively engaging locally (to deconstruct their invisibility). They do so through public acts of mobilization and hospitality, as well as through generous gestures that extend beyond their current communities. Their tangible contribution in terms of material or cultural goods beyond national borders is evident through their participation in political lobbying, fundraising activities, and artistic creation (Werbner, 2002: 121; Dunn, 2004: 3-4; Weina, 2010: 76).

In this regard, Adamson and Demetriou (2007) explain that the diaspora represents a social community that exists beyond the borders of the state and has succeeded over time in maintaining a collective national, cultural, or religious identity through a sense of internal cohesion and enduring links with a real or imaginary country of origin, while addressing the collective interests of community members through a developed internal organizational framework and transnational ties. The corollary of studying diasporas from the perspective of political engagement is that identity is political, and members of these diasporas are defined by their ability to unite members around a common cause. What sets them apart from ethnic communities is their organized action based on co-responsibility ties. Unlike ethnic communities, diasporas are more linked to a political space than a physical one.

By adding this dimension of co-responsibility, we can better understand the political impact of philanthropic commitments. Indeed, the term diaspora is linked to a political dimension, whether through formal and informal institutions in relation to the country of origin, in reaction to the policies and actions of the latter, or even in reaction to the policies of the host country. So, a political link is always present, even in acts of donations, as they correspond to a political reaction triggered by the country of origin or the host country, or by both.

### **UNDERSTANDING THE POLITICS BEHIND PHILANTHROPY**

In the following sections, we will define the links between politics and philanthropy. These links are often understood through the matrix of the migration-development nexus, which encompasses the interactions and reciprocal influences between population movements and economic, social and political development processes (Faist, 2010; Faist and Fauser, 2011; Espinosa, 2016). This migration-development and philanthropy nexus is influenced

by international organizations focused on the governance of people's mobility. This form of philanthropy differs from that of previous migrant philanthropists in that it now represents "the systematic appropriation of transnational giving as aid by development managers" (Espinosa, 2016: 365).

To understand these links, however, it is first necessary to understand the relationship between the state(s) and diasporic communities. Although this relationship is in fact self-constructed between individuals and state practices, the literature often distinguishes between two ways of theorizing this relationship, often wrongly perceived as one-dimensional.

On the one hand, there are approaches that primarily study the state, to understand how states respond to globalization and migration, as well as their efforts to extend their power beyond territorial borders. On the other hand, we find approaches that grant full agency to diasporic actors via transnational processes. Here, we study the processes by which immigrants form and maintain multi-level social relations that link their societies of origin and residence (Liu and van Dongen, 2016: 806). In all cases, political input remains important.

### **Institutionalized Policies: The Role of the State**

The past decade has seen an unprecedented proliferation of formal state offices dedicated to emigrants and their descendants around the world (Gamlen, 2019). States are increasingly collaborating with diasporas as actors in migration policymaking (Weina, 2010: 73). Recent decades have seen a proliferation of state-registered formal diaspora institutions, meaning that states are establishing policies emanating from specialized state diaspora institutions: ministries, departments, directorates, and other formal origin-state offices in the executive and legislative branches of governments dedicated to emigrants and their descendants (McIntyre and Gamlen, 2019). Up until 1980, some fifteen countries maintained such non-profit institutions; by 1990, twenty-two had done so. By 2000, this figure had risen to over forty countries, and by 2015, 118 UN member states had some form of diaspora institution (Gamlen, 2019: 30).

For example, in the study by Hercog and Kuschminder (2011), the authors explore the politics of diaspora engagement, taking India and Ethiopia as case studies, and investigating the government mechanisms that foster such engagement. The authors argue that government resources and capacities to design and implement policies, as well as the composition of migrant communities, play a key role in determining the approach taken by governments towards their diaspora (Hercog and Kuschminder, 2011: 2). It is therefore the strength of the state that can vary the success of diasporic engagement (Hercog and Kuschminder, 2011: 4). A strong state will be more likely to leverage its diaspora community, while weak states – i.e., a state that struggles to fulfill the fundamental security, political, economic and social functions now associated with state sovereignty (Stewart, 2011) – will not necessarily have the resources to set up effective structures.

Government agencies in the home state can play an important role in galvanizing groups to see themselves as a loyal diaspora (Délano and Gamlen, 2014: 44). In this regard,



Délano and Gamlen mention several examples: some heads of state have presented themselves as the rulers of the people living abroad, organizing grandiose celebrations for diaspora elites whom they see as national heroes rather than deserters. Some states have expanded their consular activities and created new bureaucratic structures to manage relations with diaspora groups. Others have sought to capitalize on the remittances, investments and expertise of emigrants and their descendants, while responding to the diaspora's growing demands for political and social rights (Délano and Gamlen, 2014: 44).

This is leading to a redefinition of notions of citizenship and states (Délano and Gamlen, 2014). In this regard, Nanji (2011) provides examples that, during the 2000s, 89 countries allowed dual citizenship and used innovative approaches to involve their diaspora overseas. Mexico, for example, granted seats to elected diaspora representatives in the state parliament. In the case of Eritrea, the majority of expatriates voluntarily contribute 2% of their annual income to their country, generating "almost universal support and minimal resentment" in exchange for their participation in political processes, such as the drafting and ratification of the new constitution (Nanji, 2011, online). As an example, Shah (2020), in his study of Jain diasporic giving in the UK, the US and Singapore, explains that the transnational engagement observed is an indicator of citizenship and multiple belongings, where diasporic Jains see themselves as British, American or Singaporean in differentiated ways. Currently, 75% of countries allow dual or multiple citizenship (Vink et al., 2019).

Koinova (2018) characterizes some approaches that emphasize the role of the state as sometimes "utilitarian". In a utilitarian approach, home states engage with diasporas as potential resources for material power and social capital:

"Remittances constitute 13–20 percent of the GDP of Armenia, Haiti, Moldova, and Nepal (World Bank 2011). Direct investment in small, medium, and large enterprises (Smart and Hsu 2004), diaspora bonds (Leblang 2010), philanthropic contributions (Sidel 2004; Brinkerhoff 2008), tourism (Coles and Timothy 2004), lobbying foreign governments (Shain and Barth 2003), and the transfer of expertise (Lucas 2001) are very important. Sending states engage hometown associations to foster low-scale development (Brinkerhoff 2011a). They develop programs to attract returnees (Welch and Hao 2013) but may foster migrants to "achieve a secure status" in host-states for "sustained economic and political contributions" (Portes 1999, 467). Sending states adopt multitiered policies depending on migrants' perceived utility abroad versus home (Tsourapas 2015) and, thereby, "tap into the development potential of migration" to "share the success" (Délano and Gamlen 2014: 44)" (Koinova, 2018: 191).

Identity-based approaches are also used to study the structures put in place by the state. States cultivate diaspora identities to maintain links with the culture of origin through cultural markers such as commemorations of important holidays, education in the mother tongue and national school curricula, teachers disseminating national discourses, support for religious institutions, visits to the country of origin, and the media or even laws benefiting compatriots (Koinova, 2018: 192).

Finally, we also find approaches that rely on aspects of governance to explain the role of state (Koinova, 2018). This may refer to relations between home and host countries, and

be characterized by bilateral treaties (e.g., tax treaties), or even cooperation programs with international organizations (Koinova, 2018: 192).

### **Institutionalized Policies: The Role of Individuals as Agents**

If back in the 1990s, authors were already talking about "long-distance nationalism" (Anderson, 1998), — the way in which diasporas exert their influence from abroad without bearing the consequences of their intervention in the country of origin — this phenomenon has become even more important.

Dufoix (2003) explains that the institutionalization of links between the diaspora and the country of origin can be explained by a desire to reduce the distance between individuals or groups and their homeland. Three means are identified to build proximity despite space based on whether natal or that of the ancestors. These are "objective and legal proximity when it is or can be inscribed in the formal bonds of nationality and representation within the state; political proximity when actions are carried out from abroad in the name of the nation, against an occupying state or against a regime deemed illegitimate; temporal proximity when today's means of communication make it possible to experience the link and intimacy with the country across distance" (Dufoix, 2003: 94, *suggested translation*).

Here, explanations based on the concept of transnationalism, which assumes that economics, politics, and culture transcend the borders of nation-states, take center stage. For instance, by employing transnationalism, researchers intend to shed light on interactions and activities that transcend national borders, focusing on how individuals and communities maintain ties with their home country while engaging in activities in their host country (Rajan, Shibu, and Irudayarajan, 2023: 5).

All these activities can occur at both individual (through family networks) and institutional levels (via international organizations) and involve a multitude of actors (Carment and Sadjed, 2017). According to this perspective, it is the actors themselves who engage in philanthropy, without the assistance of the state, and for two reasons. The first is that philanthropic engagement is supported due to the transnational connections of individuals with their families, friends, neighborhood associations, and professional organizations, still established in their countries of origin. The second is that transnational structures - facilitated by globalization - enable the circulation of various resources, including financial capital, human resources, and social capital, across borders.

Diaspora philanthropy goes beyond financial contributions. It encompasses a variety of practices, including advocacy, capacity building, knowledge transfer, and cultural preservation (Rajan, Shibu, and Irudayarajan, 2023). This latter point (the diversity of means of action) is corroborated by Carment and Sadjed (2017). They define means of diaspora engagement as dynamic links with the home country that span from political lobbying and economic development, including remittances and investments, to social tasks, including the promotion of human and cultural ties through, for instance, support for diaspora newspapers.

### **Interactions and Influences of the State and Individuals: A Key**

While these studies examine diasporic philanthropic practices from two different perspectives, we argue that to gain a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of this type of philanthropy, it is necessary not to limit ourselves to examining only state perspectives or actors' actions, but rather to link them together. It may be a key in understanding politics and philanthropy in diasporic communities. Indeed, "the organizational form of the 'diaspora' is adopted by both non-state political entrepreneurs and state elites who take advantage of new technologies to use transnational practices of diaspora mobilization as a means of generating material resources and political support in an increasingly integrated global economy" (Adamson and Demetriou, 2007: 491).

It is therefore by studying both the state and non-state dimensions of diaspora philanthropy that we can fully appreciate its dynamics and effects. Thus, the particularities of social, political, and economic structures, linked to the history of nation-state-building in the country of origin as well as in the host countries, play a crucial role in diaspora engagement.

For example, as Skulte-Ouais and Tabar (2014: 146) point out, in the case of Lebanese diaspora engagement, divided and sectarian politics in Lebanon are often reproduced abroad, with some diaspora organizations supporting more radical political practices in Lebanon, which can lead to "circular dynamics" with both positive and negative effects. This example highlights the importance of examining both the state structures and individual motivations behind this commitment.

Another example is demonstrated by Kamaras (2022), who argues that crises influence the relations between the diaspora and the homeland, particularly through the philanthropic channel. Investigating whether the economic crisis has led to an increase in policy experimentation and/or norm diffusion through diaspora and transnational philanthropy, within the state and civil society, Kamaras (2022) concludes positively. The author also adds that the effects of the philanthropic diaspora on Greece have also been influenced by the location of its diaspora:

"The Greek diaspora is well-represented in affluent countries, namely the USA, the UK, Canada and Australia, where philanthropy, including cross-border, diaspora-to-homeland philanthropy, is a dominant mode of action among the wealthy. Such philanthropy is supported by favourable fiscal regimes, well-established networking and socialisation strategies of the wealthy and the compelling normative expectations of 'giving back'" (Kamaras, 2022, *online*).

Here, the role of states is once again important in explaining the success or failure of diaspora philanthropy. In fact, the authors indicate that both home and host states will explain - in part - the success or failure of diaspora philanthropy.

However, it's not just the role of states that will explain behavior and success; the positionality of individual diaspora members within both the host and origin state will also have an effect. To illustrate this, Patterson (2006: 1894) gives as an example of the fact that racial-ethnic groups in the U.S. South, who have "honorary white" status, tend to

possess greater human, social and economic capital, meaning they may have a greater means of helping the country of origin. In other words, American immigrants are both assimilated into their racial-ethnic group and accorded the group's general status, which will have an effect on their ability to contribute to their home state (Patterson, 2006: 1894).

Other studies focus on the policies of host states. This is the case of Nanji (2011), who examines Canada's immigration policies and the extent to which they promote or hinder diasporic capacity and connection for development. According to the author, the impact of a diaspora on its country of origin depends on how successful immigrants are in their host country, particularly in terms of integration, education, and employment. A second necessary condition, according to Nanji (2011), is that immigrants be allowed to express their culture if it is important to their identity as a community.

Here, Canadian policies are mixed due to multicultural policies which, while allowing room for individual freedom, do so on condition that it is expressed within the confines of Canadian society, thus failing to recognize the equal value of different groups (Nanji, 2011). Canadian multiculturalism, which values cultural diversity as part of a shared sense of belonging (Rodríguez-García, 2010), does have its limitations. For example, one of the main criticisms of Canadian multiculturalism lies in the creation of a homogenous and essentializing categorization of groups as “immigrants”, “ethnic/racial” and “visible minorities”, which creates artificial and homogeneous groups that do not always reflect the multiple and complex identities of individuals (Veronis, 2007).

It's also important to note that degrees of multiculturalism are not uniform across Canadian provinces. Due to provincial jurisdictions, approaches to diversity management vary across Canada. Ethnic philanthropy outcomes are also likely to differ, requiring further study.

Nevertheless, the Canadian multicultural model allows some members of diasporic communities to identify with both the country and society as a whole, without forsaking other ethno-cultural identity affiliations. These ties must, however, be established within the framework of recognitions granted by Canada, while reflecting processes of ethnicization, racialization and social discrimination rather than free choices within a supposedly horizontal social structure (Rodríguez-García, 2010: 254). This approach allows some diasporas to be recognized and supported in their philanthropic and political actions, but limits others.

Thus, conditions in the country of origin and those in the host country, as well as the profile of the diasporas involved, can influence how philanthropic commitments will be transmitted (Nkongolo-Bakenda and Chrysostome, 2013: 34; Chikezie, 2007: 4-6). While diaspora members have a certain agency to carry out diasporic engagements, this will only be possible if certain conditions in host and home countries are met and appropriate strategies are implemented (Nkongolo-Bakenda and Chrysostome, 2013: 46).

According to Nkongolo-Bakenda and Chrysostome (2013: 46), four factors explain diaspora success: entrepreneurship (of the individual), the environment (host country and country of origin), the political window of opportunity (know someone, natural disaster, the country recruits them, etc.) and strategy and organizational capacity (to make it

effective). Brinkerhoff (2006) also uses the term "structures and contexts of opportunity" to explain how states frame relations with diasporas. According to the author:

"These opportunities may be present, or not, in the hostland, homeland, and/or internationally. These may include: availability of economic opportunities; at least neutral regulation of diaspora activities generally and with respect to specific agendas; access to necessary infrastructure (political, technical, informational/ communication); host country government proactive support of the diaspora, through targeted service provision for integration and potential reliance on the diaspora for input and action in support of its foreign policy vis-à-vis the homeland; a home country government that is neutral or actively solicits diaspora participation and contributions (e.g., through policies and programs as noted above); and private sector actors who recognize the market that diasporas represent for both home and host country business opportunities. Opportunity structures are highly dependent on diasporas' access to power resources" (Brinkerhoff, 2006: 12-13).

Access to power is relative to six factors: economic, social, political, informational, moral, and physical (Brinkerhoff, 2006: 13).

On the other hand, if diasporas do not have windows of opportunity, this can lead them to encounter challenges when implementing their projects. For example, Thandi (2013) explains that although the Punjabi diaspora is mainly located in economically advanced countries, which in theory should increase its potential to help in its country of origin, this is not the case in practice. Indeed, the diaspora continues to have a difficult relationship with the state of Punjab. This is reflected in the absence of constructive engagement between them, with diasporic communities and state governments (Thandi, 2013). The relationship with states is therefore of crucial importance to the success of the diaspora.

### **CRITICAL JUNCTURE AND RELATIONS BETWEEN DIASPORAS AND STATES**

The literature identifies four approaches to studying diasporic political and philanthropic engagement: (a) Diaspora for diaspora's sake: capacity building and support in the country of residence (b) Diaspora for a cause: support for home communities in conflict and post-conflict zones (c) Diaspora as ambassadors: representation of the home country abroad (d) Diaspora for change: advocacy for political change in home countries.

However, before we turn to these areas of study, it is important to emphasize that they have their origins in a common phenomenon: critical junctures. A critical conjuncture can be defined as events and developments in the distant past, usually concentrated over a relatively short period, which have a crucial impact on subsequent outcomes (Collier and Collier, 1991; Mahoney, 2002; Pierson, 2004).

Thus, a common link in the literature is the increase in diaspora involvement in philanthropic acts during critical moments. For example, Rajan, Shibinu and Irudayarajan (2023) demonstrate that when there are crises or special events, there is an increase in diaspora philanthropy. In their studies, they show that the importance of diaspora philanthropy was particularly evident during the Kerala floods in 2018, as well as during the COVID-19 pandemic, when the diaspora supported migrants stranded in different parts of the world (Rajan, Shibinu and Irudayarajan, 2023).



The concept of critical conjuncture therefore cuts across all the studies, providing a clearer picture of philanthropic actions and their political impact in the four areas mentioned above, which we will now detail.

### **Diaspora for Diaspora's Sake**

The literature shows that historical relations, social, religious, cultural and political pressures, interests and norms all influence the process of giving (Brinkerhoff, 2014; Ramachandran, 2016; Shridhar, 2011), which could lead to one or a combination of the motivations being about the cause, the giving norms, or about particular 'ethnic' or 'religious' identities and affiliations. As explored earlier, a primary driver and defining feature of diaspora identity and community is the affective and/or intellectual connection to a symbolic or physical homeland, in other words, the "love of the homeland" or contributing to "back home" (Mehta and Johnston, 2011). It is not just simply identifying with a particular cultural or ethnic group that creates the bonds and thus an impetus for philanthropic giving, the motivations and interests in diaspora philanthropy from the perspective of diaspora individuals, groups or communities may be viewed in a spectrum with different levels of intensity and with various "push and pulls" of giving, for example, stemming from a homeland and from natural altruistic tendencies (Johnson, 2007).

As studies on South African diaspora philanthropy in Canada demonstrates, the relations with a nation-state can be historically and presently fraught, with a possible hostile view of the sending State toward the diaspora and tenuous relations to the history of nation-state building around regimes of apartheid (Ramachandran, 2016). However, being engaged in this diaspora community through development to the country-of-origin has been associated to strong self-identifications with the country of origin, other people from the origin country, and the importance of South Africa to their identity (Crush et al., 2013). Through these philanthropic activities, disposition toward altruistic activities and continuing association through social ties with the country of origin can be reinforced (Ramachandran, 2016).

Brinkerhoff's (2014) study of having minority status in the country-of-origin, as with the Coptic diaspora in New York, found that, contrary to assumed beliefs, discrimination and persecution in the country-of-origin did not lessen their philanthropic participation. Their findings somewhat support that with time in the country-of-residence, higher education, and income, interest in philanthropy to country-of-origin increases, except for those living the greatest number of years in the country-of-residence compared to the least number of years who were less likely to engage. Subsequent generations continue to be interested in philanthropy to the country-of-origin. More opportunities to give contributes to more volunteerism regardless of integration. Over time, giving focused less on informal mechanisms and faith-based organizations and more on strategic philanthropy such as organizational effectiveness. Overall, socialization, cultural transmission mechanisms, such as the Coptic church, and diaspora cohesiveness influence preferences for giving, intermediaries and expectations of results (Brinkerhoff, 2014).

Similarly, we observe that diaspora cohesion is a key issue addressed in Lebanese diaspora engagement and philanthropy, as the political structure and history of nation-



state building has been built around particular sects, with less formation of a national identity, reducing the effectiveness and capacity of the state to engage with philanthropic and welfare issues on a transnational and national scale (Skulte-Ouaiss and Tabar, 2015).

Faith-based institutions and practices are more studied and is a consistent driver and contextual factor for giving (Brinkerhoff, 2014; Shridhar, 2011). Faith-based institutions are an ongoing mechanism for mobilization while they also provide an environment to influence giving priorities and avenues through their affiliations with certain intermediaries and causes (Ramachandram, 2016) as well as being an avenue for socialization on their norms and belief systems in philanthropy (Brinkerhoff, 2014).

The trust and legitimacy accorded to the individual has also been highlighted as a factor. Already having trust with potential donors and intermediaries for collaboration can ease some of the barriers to gathering and administering donations, such as drawing from alumni networks (Chen, 2019). The social clout of individual diaspora actors that are driving donations or mobilizing groups are found to influence the scale, visibility and success of their philanthropic initiatives surrounding their social-professional standing and reputation which can influence giving over and above the wider groups (Ramachandran, 2016). Pinnock (2013) found that amongst case studies of Jamaican Canadian youth diaspora philanthropy, a major challenge in effectively engaging young people is the perception of a lack of legitimacy and authenticity due to generational status (first generations possibly having more legitimacy than later generations) and age (the older viewing the young as lacking legitimacy).

So, in conclusion, one of the first clues to understanding why diasporic communities help and give can be understood in terms of emotional and intellectual attachment to the homeland, as well as strained or strong relations with the country of origin. Both factors play an important role in determining the philanthropic behavior of diasporas towards their home countries. The studies reviewed also reveal that religious institutions and faith-based practices are important, as is the role of trust and legitimacy in the giving process, via secure channels. In this way, the scope of solidarity intersects with historical factors, social, religious, cultural and political pressures, all of which contribute to a climate conducive to giving. The political scope is implied, as the donation emanates both from a link to the homeland of origin, and a reaction to conditions in the host country.

### **Diaspora for a Cause: Support for Home Communities in Conflict Zone**

One way of understanding how the philanthropic gesture takes on a political character is to study philanthropic mobilization in times of crisis. Thus, a key catalyst for diaspora philanthropic mobilization is the occurrence of a specific event that can even spark the start-up or rapid growth of an organization, such as a natural disaster (Chen, 2019; Johnson, 2007). Present or post-conflict societies is another important area of study in influencing the mechanisms, motivations and processes of giving (Brinkerhoff, 2008; Brinkerhoff, 2011; CAF American and CAF Canada, 2017; Nielson and Riddle, 2008; Skulte-Ouaiss and Tabar, 2015).

In Brinkerhoff's (2011) review of the state of knowledge of diaspora engagement in conflict societies, they state that negative stereotypes of diaspora engagement in conflict/post-conflict societies persist, and this area is largely excluded from policy making processes and considerations. However, while their contributions can be complex and contradictory there is a plethora of positive ways in which they engage in peacebuilding and reconstruction. Regarding philanthropy, Brinkerhoff maps out the motivations which can span from positive philanthropic interest or being a cover up for other political and conflict aims, with increased challenging conditions in the place of origin potentially supporting more philanthropic interest. A crisis in the country of origin may particularly enhance interest among those in later generations. Mechanisms can include smaller scale and informal efforts, such as providing in-kind remittances for humanitarian causes, fund microenterprises, or support rebuilding and development projects, which can help decrease dependencies. Diaspora organizations can also be useful in acting as intermediaries in these contexts. In a negative sense, conflicts may take advantage of diaspora engagement for political aims, such as pursuing philanthropy for political power, or "conflict entrepreneurs" who draw from violent and non-violent tactics to gain resources in transnational networks that ultimately support violence. In some cases, unintended consequences can include making conflict worse by being discriminatory and selective in its implementation and furthering polarization, yet their contributions are also interpreted depending on the beliefs any individual around peacebuilders and conflict actors.

Of course, commitment and giving are not without their problems. Equity issues can arise when it comes to identifying priorities, specifying locations, needs and the scale of problems, as there may be gaps or duplication in services or communities. Particularism towards one's own ethnic, religious or social group can contribute to others facing significant barriers or needs not being reached (Brinkerhoff, 2008). Access to these foreign currencies and development resources can also reduce dependence on the state for investment in social protection and its own development (Sidel, 2008), and potentially weaken the state's interest and ability to remain accountable for these investments (Brinkerhoff, 2011; Metcalf-Little, 2010). There is also evidence that diaspora members living in conflict zones may support warring parties in their home countries around the world (Brinkerhoff, 2011; Newland and Patrick, 2004) and may be less inclined to compromise because they are more protected from everyday violence (Newland and Patrick, 2004).

In this way, critical moments help us to understand the impulse of diasporas towards their communities of origin in times of crisis, underlining once again the political dimension underlying acts of giving.

### **Diaspora as Ambassadors: Representing the Home Country Abroad**

Sidel (2008) existing research on governmental support by receiving states points to varying degrees and sporadic encouragement, enabling, restricting, controlling or channeling diaspora giving through a variety of mechanisms. Local, regional and/or national governments influence giving processes and motivations through their various collaborations, priorities and push/pull factors (Cohen, 2017; Opiniano, 2005).

Local governments and civil society organizations in particular can pull in the philanthropic giving of the diaspora (Mehta and Johnston, 2011). However, how the country-of-origin government views the diaspora (and vice versa) as an important development partner is also a factor, whether as a hostile or supportive group (Brinkerhoff, 2012; Ramachandran and Crush, 2021). Brinkerhoff (2011a) suggests that there is a continuum of tolerance by sending states diaspora organizations, with smaller and less professionalized being less of a threat on one end, and larger more professionalized organizations and/or those that identify political advocacy priorities may be viewed as more of a competition and/or threatening in accumulating donor resources or protecting political interests of minorities.

As mentioned, the public engagement opportunities provided by the host and/or receiving State and their political structures and culture influences diaspora activities with a specific example being the politics of Lebanon wherein lobbying groups predominate in the U.S., while Australia and Canada have political groups across the spectrum of activities (Skulte-Ouaiss and Tabar, 2015). The authors state that a hybrid relationship exists in which the transnational organizations always include domestic actors in Lebanon. The historical development of the Lebanese political system, which did not achieve a national interest opened conditions for diaspora organizations to influence state-related responsibilities, is yet based on communal interests rather than central or unified rights, citizenship and equality.

While some scholars propose that an increase in skilled migrants with professionalized success, such as experts, entrepreneurs and athletes, is increasing and drastically changing philanthropic initiatives (Newland et al., 2010), others also consider that those in less skilled categorized positions still give back despite different challenges with migration and settlement (Opiniano, 2005). However, this growth in connection and mobilization amongst transnational communities in addition to their wealth seems to result in greater sums of money flowing from diaspora communities in host counties to their countries of origin (Newland et al., 2010). Indeed, private philanthropy to developing countries is surpassing foreign aid by governments (Brinkerhoff, 2014; Newland et al., 2010).

By exemple, Espinosa (2016) builds from research doing interviews and being a participant-observer of 200 organizations of diaspora philanthropists who are Philippines born in Germany, France and Luxembourg, as well as field work in Manila with government officials and workers from migrant-related NGOs. The author emphasizes that larger governance bodies have major power in the discourse around harnessing the wealth of migrants, securitizing refugee migration and regulating the traffic of labour migrants which impacts prioritization of giving and reveals power relations in how the main driver of 'love of homeland' in diaspora giving relates to displacement and international labour market schemes.

In all cases, individuals engaging in philanthropic acts can be described as political entrepreneurs. In the literature, they are defined as "individual and institutional agents who actively assert the rights of homelands" (Koinova, 2018: 191). They are both formal and informal leaders of diasporic networks, making public claims with a homeland-oriented focus (Koinova, Blanchard and Margulies, 2023: 3-4). It is these actors who create links and can bridge the gap between members of their communities, while

carrying messages. They can mobilize in more or less contentious ways through different channels, preferring state-based or transnational channels to organize their activities, and they can vary in intensity, ranging from weak, medium-strong, to strong (Koinova, Blanchard and Margulies, 2023: 3-4).

Of course, not all diasporic actors have the same levels of engagement, and the effects of these involvements vary considerably between diaspora members themselves, and between diasporas. Diasporic communities can, for example, influence the outcomes of policymaking in their "host countries", particularly in the field of foreign policy, or foster economic development or contribute to democratization and respect for human rights (Adamson, 2023). Care must therefore be taken not to consider diasporic actors as a unitary whole and to start from the premise that the activities of members of diasporic populations vary (Adamson, 2023).

In conclusion, diasporas play a crucial role as ambassadors representing their home countries abroad. Their philanthropic engagement is influenced by a multitude of factors, including government policies in both host and home countries, as well as political and social dynamics within the diasporas themselves. Acting as political entrepreneurs, diasporic actors shape the ties between members of their communities, convey ideas and have direct effects on state and development policies in their countries of origin.

### **Diaspora for Change: Advocating for Political Changes**

While local governments and civil society organizations in particular can attract philanthropic donations from the diaspora (Mehta and Johnston, 2011), how the home government perceives the diaspora (and vice versa) as an important development partner is also a factor, whether as a hostile or supportive group (Brinkerhoff, 2012; Ramachandran and Crush, 2021). Brinkerhoff (2011a) suggests that there is a continuum of tolerance by sending states towards diasporic organizations, with smaller, less professional ones seen as less of a threat on the one hand, and larger, more professional organizations and/or those identifying political advocacy priorities potentially seen as more competitive and/or threatening in accumulating donor resources or protecting minority political interests.

Diasporas can also exert political and mobilizing power against the state of origin. According to Werbner (2002), despite their internal complexity and heterogeneity, diasporas can adopt similar policies. The author explains that diasporic communities established in democratic national states share a commitment to fighting for improved citizenship rights both for themselves and for diaspora members elsewhere, often lobbying Western governments to defend human rights in their home countries. If, according to Werbner (2002), this can be seen as a defining characteristic of postcolonial diasporas in the West, it can also be linked to the concepts of hybridization mentioned earlier in this report.

Diasporas can also have direct effects in crisis situations in their home countries: in some cases, they can actively promote or aggravate conflict through several causal mechanisms, including ethnic one-upmanship, strategic framing, lobbying and persuasion, as well as resource mobilization (Carment and Sadjed, 2017).

Adamson's (2023) study demonstrates, for example, the effect of diaspora members' involvement in violent conflicts:

The implication here is that members of diasporas can involve themselves as supporters of violent conflicts in their home countries, without paying the consequences of living in societies marked by political violence. These observations have recently been extended more broadly to the phenomenon of terrorism – Sageman (2004), for example, claims that 84 percent of those involved in al-Qaeda-inspired terrorism have been recruited in a diasporic context, with the majority of recruitment taking place in Western Europe. In addition, there is a growing body of empirical studies of particular conflicts (Biswas 2004; Danforth 1995; Fair 2005; Gunaratna 2001; Ho 2004; Hockenos 2003; Lyons 2006; Rapoport 2003; Shain 2002; Smith and Stares 2007) that have examined the extent to which members of diaspora groups have been active supporters of political violence (Adamson, 2023: 65).

Intermediary organizations are often used by smaller individuals or diaspora groups who may not have the technical or organizational capacity to manage donations, such as communication, matching donors with the project, identifying priorities for donations and administering funds, aggregating funds from other sources and monitoring the use of philanthropic resources as well as political campaigning (Newland et al., 2010).

Here, unlike political entrepreneurs, diaspora members actively militate against the home state, albeit with the aim of promoting an ideology that diverges from that of the government in power.

### CONCLUSION

The diaspora engagement model shows that the geographies of diaspora engagement include local and international development, as well as an element of advocacy, which mainstream definitions of diasporic philanthropy do not necessarily highlight as components. The political influence of diasporic communities on sending countries appears to be a less studied area, but one with important implications for the social and political structures of the homeland and the possibilities for diasporic engagement, or disengagement (Skulte-Ouaiss and Tabar, 2014).

In this report, we began by defining what we meant by "diaspora". By emphasizing the political significance of the philanthropic gesture, we have been able to demonstrate this link by highlighting the importance of the role of the state and the actors involved. It is the conditions in the country of origin and those in the host country, as well as the profile of the diasporas concerned, that can influence the way in which philanthropic commitments are passed on. While members of the diaspora have a certain capacity to carry out diasporic commitments, this will only be possible if certain conditions in the host and home countries are met, and appropriate strategies are implemented. So, sometimes implicitly, sometimes explicitly, there is a political agenda behind diaspora philanthropy.

The literature identifies four approaches to studying diasporic political and philanthropic engagement: (a) Diaspora for diaspora's sake: capacity-building and support in the country of residence (b) Diaspora for a cause: support for communities of origin in conflict



and post-conflict zones (c) Diaspora as ambassadors: representation of the country of origin abroad (d) Diaspora for change: advocacy for political change in countries of origin. Although others exist, these four examples highlight the implicit or explicit political position, as well as the importance of context in understanding outpourings of generosity.

Of course, a more comprehensive understanding of the position and effects of diasporic participation in international relations, foreign affairs, politics, and public affairs in their countries of origin is needed to capture all the nuances of this engagement. There is also a need for more case studies, aimed at understanding the phenomenon, to better grasp the reasons for and practices of diaspora philanthropic involvement. There is also a need to decompartmentalize fields of study and linking with other fields of research in a more intentional way could strengthen this exploration, such as diaspora and migration studies and citizenship studies. This would allow for the nuances, historical, social, economic, and political circumstances and changing nature of different diasporic communities, as well. Their heterogeneous ethnic, religious and social groups, affiliations and geographies, are important to this field of study. A challenge is to get away from a single or static narrative in assessing the relationships between diaspora, migration, development and philanthropy, while allowing for some typography of practices and dimensions relating to the act of giving.

In any case, the political effects of diasporic philanthropic engagement remain a subject of interest, yet little researched in the literature. While the focus on social justice and advocacy has been increasing for over a decade, and transnational giving is seen as a form of diasporic activism and resistance, it is unclear whether this trend has intensified, or what the influences and nature of social justice activities within diasporic communities are.

Regarding diasporic philanthropy, while it can be encouraged by tax incentives and public-private partnerships, as well as by efforts to improve diasporic participation, it is questionable whether increased investment in such philanthropy, with its different interpretations and measures of impact, could inadvertently reinforce systemic inequalities and poverty, especially if ties with home states guide forms of giving. This could encourage the emergence of a privileged donor class, the privatization of diasporic philanthropy or the introduction of other potentially problematic mechanisms, in line with state orientations.

On the other hand, the "anti-state" implications of diaspora members could also contribute to increasing undesirable effects in home countries and disrupt stability, while possibly enabling a form of activism. As there are few studies on this subject, it is difficult to measure and qualify these effects. While this report does not go far enough in answering these questions, it does underline the importance of such studies in the future.



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