Ethnic Diasporas and U.S. Foreign Policy

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The American polity is unique in its insistence on political rather than ethnic criteria for inclusion and loyalty. American patriotism is defined as the devotion to liberal-democratic and humane principles and not to an ethnically-based, cultural community. In fact, ethnic pluralism in the United States is by now part of the American creed of "Celebrated Diversity," to use Lawrence Fuchs's phrase. While at the turn of the twentieth century many citizens regarded the "hyphenated American" with contempt and distrust, now hyphenation is prized. The U.S. lack of emphasis on the organic community and the growing legitimation of ethnicity in public life allow members of American ethnic groups to identify with their county of origin. Indeed, many U.S. diasporas — mainly migrants and their descendants who are linked by ties of origin, ethnic association, or nationality — feel a sense of kinship with the land of their ancestors and share an abiding interest in the politics of their ancestral country or symbolic homeland. Political actors abroad have increasingly appreciated and even encouraged the political activity of their compatriots on their behalf. The ties to the homeland are also reinforced by modern transportation and communication. The growing number of Americans who keep close contact

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In the era of multiculturalism, when official America no longer imposes cultural assimilation upon its members, diasporic elites are less and less inhibited by charges of disloyalty when promoting ancestral identities among their constituencies. Moreover, the openness of the American political system to ethnic politics has allowed many newly organized diasporas to acquire a meaningful voice in U.S. foreign policy, especially on issues concerning countries of origin or symbolic homelands. Alongside the more established groups of Greek, Armenian, Irish, or Jewish descent, the more recently empowered diasporas of African, Arab, Cuban, Filipino, Haitian, Korean, and Mexican origin have discovered that by focusing on political causes in their countries of origin they are often better positioned to mobilize their political communities for empowerment inside the United States.

Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan have observed as early as 1975 that ethnic influences have become, “the single most important determinant of American foreign policy.”\footnote{See Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan, eds., *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975), 23–24.} Yet, the ability of U.S. diasporas to affect American foreign policy toward their homeland has grown (and is likely to expand) because of the greater complexity in distinguishing between America's friends and foes after the collapse of communism. Moreover, the clout of ethnicity in U.S. foreign affairs is likely to expand with the declining influence of traditional professional elites, who dominated U.S. foreign affairs throughout the cold war. Indeed, the global surge of national independence and the third wave of democratic transitions have awakened older diasporas in the United States and energized the more recently organized ethnic groups. Both these groups now play an increasingly important role in providing support for democratization and self-determination abroad.

This article examines how this role has changed over time; how diasporas attempted to restructure the politics of their homeland, and with what effect. The article also explores the repercussions of ethnic
foreign politics on the American domestic scene, emphasizing the dilemma of divided loyalties so inherent in diaspora's external politics. A diaspora's ability to play a serious foreign policy role is a consequence of the U.S. liberal-democratic ethos, which enfranchises the individual citizen regardless of origin of birth, as well as the expanded recognition of ethnic diversity; the institutional reality of a fragmented U.S. foreign policy establishment which empowers individual members of Congress; and the impact of a powerful media. The fact that Congress, and therefore constituency politics, has an important voice in U.S. foreign policy, compounded with the ready access of ethnic groups to American and thus global media, provides a fertile base for an organized and a strongly committed diaspora that may transform itself into a powerful political player with transnational implications. Yet in engaging in the politics of the country of origin (home-country), diaspora activists and organizations may become entangled in conflicting allegiances. They must justify their actions in terms of American national interests and values, answer to their U.S. ethnic compatriots, and prove their loyalty to their home country.

Part one provides a political definition of a diaspora and offers provisional typologies to assess diasporic politics. Part two discusses American diasporas' involvement in the struggles for self-determination in their country of origin. Special attention will be given to recent diasporic responses to the breakaway republics in East Europe and the former Soviet Union at a time when Washington has displayed a lack of decisiveness in responding to the renewed proliferation of nation-states. Part three examines diasporas' contribution to the creation and consolidation of new democracies. Part four, by way of conclusion, analyzes the bearing of U.S. diasporas on the movement for self-determination and/or democratic regime change through the prism of African-Americans' contribution to the black struggle in South Africa and to the democratic transformation of black African tyrannies. The African-Americans, who lack a single homeland, treat Africa as a whole as their ancestral home. Their mobilization against apartheid has demonstrated the powerful force of a diaspora in altering U.S. foreign policy and has highlighted the political responsibility that comes with such successes. Finally, the activity of African-Americans underscores how diasporic involvement in U.S. foreign affairs affects the evolution of American identity and mitigates the centrifugal tendencies that have encroached on American civic culture.
Diaspora—A Political Definition

I have defined a political diaspora as a people with common national origin who reside outside a claimed or an independent home territory. They regard themselves or are regarded by others as members or potential members of their country of origin (claimed or already existing), a status held regardless of their geographical location and citizen status outside their home country. Members of a political diaspora are called upon periodically by ethnonational elements inside or outside the home-country's territory to subscribe to a particular cause or group as an expression of their ethnonational loyalty.³

Historically, diasporas in the United States have been highly dedicated to political causes in their country of origin, often seeing themselves as representatives of their old country abroad. Some older diasporas, like Jews, Greeks, and Italians, often live vicariously through their ancestral home countries, rather than actively trying to change their governments. Politics in the home country is important for their political identity in America, and they are more likely to support (or actively oppose) existing regimes whose policies coincide with (or contest) American liberalism and/or U.S. foreign objectives. They tend to embrace their homeland in a way that is not threatening to their identity within the parameters of American pluralism, and they must always defend themselves against the charge of divided loyalties. For example, Greek-Americans have been highly successful in projecting their American loyalty and ethnic identity "within the agora of American multiculturalism."⁴ Yet their success in moving Congress to impose sanctions on Turkey after its invasion of Cyprus in 1974 backfired when the perception that "Congress acted irresponsibly," by capitulating to the pressure of an ethnic group, prevailed in public.⁵ Similarly, the Jewish lobby in the United States has always portrayed its devotion to Israel (the symbolic homeland) as an extension of its allegiance to

³ See Yossi Shain, The Frontier of Loyalty: Political Exiles in the Age of the Nation-State (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1989), 51-52. The traditional definition of diaspora applied to Jews who after the Babylonian captivity were scattered among the heathen. Today, many scholars use "diaspora" in a broader sense as a term that "shares meaning with a larger semantic domain that includes words like immigrant, expatriate, refugee, guest-workers, exile community, overseas community, ethnic community." See Khachig Tölölyan, "The Nation-State and Its Others: In Lieu of a Preface," Diaspora 1 (Spring 1991): 4-5. Also see Gabriel Sheffer, ed., Modern Diasporas in International Politics (New York: St. Martin's 1986).

⁴ Gregory Jusdanis, "Greek Americans and the Diaspora," Diaspora 1 (Fall 1991): 218.

American democratic values and strategic interests. Yet it has increasingly found itself entangled between its obligation to the old and the new country. Indeed, the vulnerability of diasporas to the charge of dual loyalty is a lever that either home or host country can use to motivate or stymie diaspora political activity. Thus, diasporas may function as pawns used to send messages between the United States and their native countries.

The nature and range of diasporic involvement in the home country's affairs depend largely upon the size and diversity of the overseas community and are highly affected by the ability of diasporic institutions to generate and sustain a sense of communal identity. Yet it is often difficult to assess the size of the diaspora, its composition, distribution, and especially its propensity to engage in home country's politics. To gauge diasporic make-up and political tendencies, one must take into account different waves of migration and degrees of assimilation and identity in the host country, as well as the migration politics of the home country. As a scholar of the overseas Chinese has recently observed, diasporic identities are constantly undergoing transformation, influenced by factors such as race relations in the United States, American relations with the home country, and the home country's policies toward its overseas constituencies. Moreover, the durability of diasporic institutions and their success in appropriating and activating old identities (ethnic, cultural, religious, or national) is greatly influenced by the host government's view of the home regime (friend/foe) as well as the host society's changing perception of ethnic diversity. For example, despite their rapid Americanization, by 1914 German-Americans still remained "by far the best organized of all foreign elements" in the United States. However, war frenzy and growing suspicion of American-Germans' alliance with the pan-German movement in Berlin prompted American demands for total assimilation and unqualified renunciation of past loyalties. By 1940, the little remnants of German identity and institutions that survived the anti-German phobia of World War I were completely suppressed, never to be revived.

Older diasporas in the United States are composed mostly of naturalized and American-born citizens who are by now an integral part of the American ethnic mosaic. More recent diasporas, however, may consist of large segments of non-American citizens, including illegal and resident aliens, refugees, and political exiles. The latter group's involvement in the home country's politics is often more intense, though it is restricted legally and politically and has distinct implications vis-à-vis the homeland. Yet even this broad dichotomy between diasporas whose host state is their country of citizenship and diasporas whose home state is the state of nationality is far from precise. In fact, the status of a temporary resident, an immigrant, a refugee, a U.S. citizen or an exile, is always in flux, changing according to the individual's self-identification in the United States, the home government's legal and ideological denotation of overseas nationals — primarily issues concerning dual citizenship and naturalization rules among states, that is, *ius soli* (birthplace) or *ius sanguinis* (blood) — as well as the political and social developments in the home country.

For analytical purposes, one can identify, following Alicja Iwańska, three ideal groups involved in diasporic politics: “core members” or organizing elites who are intensively active in diasporic affairs; “rear guard members” or past diaspora activists who have drifted away; all other “silent” members whom diaspora elites, host governments, or home governments consider as potential recruits for diasporic politics.\(^{10}\) While core and rear guard members are more accessible to empirical scrutiny, members of the third group are mostly part of an “imagined community,” to use Benedict Anderson’s expression, often existing only in the mind of diasporic political activists, as well as home or host governments. Some members of the imagined community “can identify with their perception of the old country or homeland, transforming it into a symbol which leaves out its domestic or foreign problems”;\(^ {11}\) others may reject any attempt to identify them as diaspora constituents. Some diasporic elites are made up of political exiles who are contestants for power in the homeland, while other diaspora leaders do not seek power in the homeland and their commitment is not to a particular political program. Rather, they see themselves as supporters of the home country’s national interest as a whole.

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Diaspora and National Independence

Diasporic communities of stateless nations have historically played an integral part and often led in the struggle for political independence in their claimed homelands. The current trend toward self-determination has revived similar involvement. In the 1860s, Irish-American nationalists who were veterans of the American Civil War worked to draw the United States into a war with the British Empire. The climax of their activity was the Fenian Brotherhood’s ill-fated attempt to liberate an Irish zone in Canada.12 Prior to World War II the campaign of Irish-Americans for home rule had been highly effective in setting up an antagonistic relationship between the United States and Great Britain. Thereafter it has been steadily in decline, though from time to time it reemerges as a source of tension between the two countries.13

With the outbreak of World War I, ethnic Americans became increasingly preoccupied with their native countries. Woodrow Wilson’s proclamation of the principle of self-determination further ignited the political commitment of Poles, Slovaks, Ukrainians, Lithuanians, Armenians, Albanians, and Croats. They all lobbied vigorously for American recognition of and support for postwar independence, carefully blending into their campaigns the homeland’s agenda and the interests of the United States and always stressing their own impeccable record as American loyalists.14 More recent manifestations of a diaspora’s effort on behalf of an independent homeland include North American Sikhs’ campaign for an independent Sikh country, Khalistan,15 and the crusade of Palestinian and Arab-Americans for Palestinian self-determination. For many years the Arab-Americans’ efforts have been undermined by the perception in the United States that they are “more anti-Israel than pro-Arab.”16 Still, with an increasing media display of Palestinian suffering under Israeli rule, a growing U.S.

15 On the diplomatic efforts and the terrorist activities of the Sikh diaspora, see Ian Mulgrew, Unholy Terror: The Sikhs and International Terrorism (Toronto: Key Porter Books, 1988).
receptiveness to the idea of Palestinian statehood, and an improved apparatus, the diaspora made some headway in penetrating U.S. electoral politics and public opinion. Arab-Americans have portrayed their commitment to a Palestinian "democratic homeland" as an extension of "America's most cherished ideals—Wilsonian self-determination, human rights [and] freedom."17 With peace negotiations between Israel and its Arab neighbors underway, the increasing presence of organized Arab-American lobbies may eventually translate into an important transnational role for the Arab-American diaspora. In November 1991, President George Bush hosted a group of Arab-American leaders in the White House and asked them to assume the role of peace promoters in the Arab world.18

One of the most serious diasporic contributions to a homeland's independence in this century was made by both Czech and Slovak Americans who played a pivotal role in the dissolution of the Hapsburg Empire and the creation of modern Czechoslovakia in 1918. From the beginning of the war, Czech and Slovak groups provided much of the anti-Hapsburg agitation, furnished material assistance for domestic agitation, and lobbied forcefully both the president and Congress on behalf of Czechs' and Slovaks' liberation. These efforts were particularly effective following the American entry into the war. The Slovak League of America and other emigre Slovak Associations in the United States were vital in reaching an agreement on the nature of independent Czechoslovakia with Tomas G. Masaryk—the Czech exiled nationalist leader who at that time traveled to the United States to mobilize his compatriots and Woodrow Wilson's support. The so-called Pittsburgh Agreement, signed on 30 May 1918, represented Slovak retreat from an early Slovak-Czech document (the Cleveland Agreement) that advocated the federal union of the Slovak and Czech nations in an independent state. In the Pittsburgh Agreement, the American Slovaks yielded to the Czechoslovakian orientation by accepting autonomy for "Slovakia" while avoiding any reference to the "Slovak nation."19

The current nationalist tension that threatens to tear Czechoslovakia apart has reawakened the Czech- and Slovak-Americans, who have greeted with jubilation the Velvet Revolution. Truly, Czechs and Slovaks in the United States (mostly third or fourth generation) are more preoccupied with personal matters stemming from the collapse of communism than with the question of secession. Many of their groups were recently united under The Free Czechoslovakia Fund in protest against the decision by the Czechoslovak Federal Parliament to exclude American citizens and other Czechoslovak nationals abroad from entitlement for restitution of private property confiscated and expropriated under communist rule. Thousands of diaspora members have recently petitioned the U.S. authorities to "protest the arbitrary discrimination against American citizens and promote a respect of private property rights in Czechoslovakia." Yet, Slovak nationalists in the United States and Canada have also played an important role in encouraging the separatist drive inside Slovakia. As early as December 1990, The Slovak League of America, the leading Slovak diaspora organization, expressed support for Slovak sovereignty. The League's leaders charged that the Pittsburgh Agreement was violated by Masaryk when he failed to grant autonomy to the Slovaks, and they blamed the Czechs for refusing to correct the omission of the hyphen during the April 1990 round table. Their resolution on Sovereignty of the Slovak Republic was submitted to the Slovak National Council and the Slovak government. When in October 1991, President Václav Havel visited the United States, he was scheduled to receive the original copy of the Pittsburgh Agreement, to later present it to Slovaks at home as a framework for hauling the country out of its nationalist division. But, the original document remained in the hands of the Slovak League of America, and Havel returned home empty handed. Prior to the Czechoslovak June 1992 elections, leaders of the Slovak League traveled to Bratislava to declare their backing of all Slovak proponents of self-determination.

The revival of secessionist claims in East Europe and the former Soviet Union, which reawakened dormant diasporas, had initially re-

20 A copy of the petition is available upon request.
23 Here I am drawing on conversations and documents provided by M. Mark Stolarik and Igor Uhrik of the executive committee of the Slovak League of America and on a lecture by Rudolf Battek, one of the founders of Civic Forum, Middlebury College, Vermont, 8 October 1992.
ceived a cool reception at the White House. During 1990–1991 the Bush administration viewed quests for self-determination with doubt and apprehension and only belatedly came to recognize their powerful force. On his visit to Yugoslavia in June 1991, Secretary of State James Baker said that the United States would not recognize the then would-be breakaway republics “under any circumstances.”24 During a speech in Kiev in August 1991, President George Bush portrayed the secessionist movement in the Soviet Union as “suicidal nationalism.”25 However, when in November 1991, Ukraine had moved decisively toward independence, the United States was forced to admit its underestimating the separatist drive and acknowledged the inevitability of the Soviet Union’s demise. The decision to shift U.S. diplomacy away from Mikhail Gorbachev’s effort to preserve the Soviet Union, just days before Ukraine’s independence referendum, was partially motivated by President Bush’s desire to score domestic points among the 1.5 million Ukrainian-Americans and other Eastern European diasporas. The president disclosed his decision to recognize Ukraine to diaspora leaders in the hope of winning the hearts of a sizable voting bloc that was traditionally Democratic.26

Indeed, until the end of 1991, the United States withheld recognition from the self-proclaimed independent breakaway republic, even though they elected democratic governments. The United States saw the disintegration of states as a source of global instability and favored loose federal arrangements and accommodation. The early recognition granted to independent Baltic states was an exception, because the United States and other countries never recognized the Baltics’ incorporation into the Soviet Union in 1940. In the case of the Baltics, the consistent nonrecognition posture of the United States in the postwar era may be attributed, at least in part, to the strong diasporic lobby, especially of Lithuanian-Americans, who were behind the institution of an annual vigil of congressional and presidential reaffirmation on the national holidays of the three states. These symbolic gestures were difficult to ignore when the Baltics declared independence.27 To the extent that the White House had contacts with diaspora communities before

the American decision in December 1991 to establish relations with the splintering parts of the Soviet Union, it tended to encourage their leaders to uphold the U.S. cautionary posture, or at least to remain dormant on the issue of secession. Yet, by adopting Washington’s early posture or by taking a wait and see attitude, diaspora’s activists, particularly those interested in returning home, have risked compromising their credibility inside their homelands.

For example, Armenian-Americans’ initial support of Washington’s admonition has resulted in their leaders’ loss of their anticipated political role as the navigators of Armenian national life in the former Soviet Armenia. This leadership role inside Armenia was expected because of the laborious involvement of leading Armenian organizations in the United States, which had raised and channeled support and money to needy Armenians throughout the seventy years of communist rule. In 1989, when the diaspora’s leaders called on the home nation to reach an agreement with Gorbachev without secession, they were perceived at home as reinforcing the communists’ line. When leading diaspora members of the Dashnag party— which ruled the independent Armenian Republic (1918–1920) and since Armenia’s reoccupation served as a government-of-exiles abroad— belatedly responded to Armenia’s declaration of independence and returned home to compete for the presidential elections (October 1991), they suffered a humiliating defeat. It is now clear that a new diaspora/home division of labor has been drawn. The U.S. Armenian diaspora is asked by the Armenian authorities to take the back seat on political issues inside the homeland, though it is still expected to extend its technocratic expertise and economic services as an expression of its national commitment. Indeed, in recent years Armenian-Americans have been critical supporters of Armenian demands for independence in Nogorno-Karabakh. The Armenian lobby in Washington was instrumental in the U.S. Congress’s 1992 Freedom Support Act that blocked aid to Azerbaijan. 28

How far are diaspora organizations and leaders willing to push the cause of their homeland’s independence against the U.S. official position? Certainly, when appealing to an unsympathetic administration, diasporas must work hard, usually through Congress and the media, at persuading decision makers to shift their position. They must feign

interest in what preoccupies the U.S. government and redefine their case to relate to those preoccupations. When the United States still repudiated secession moves (1990–1991), East European diasporas lowered their rhetoric of self-determination while accentuating the U.S. moral commitment to support those who chose freedom, democracy, and market economy.

How to address the American indifference to self-determination has been at the center of the debate among Croatian-Americans, who since the summer of 1991 have witnessed with horror the destruction of their homeland by the former Yugoslav federal army. The struggle between the Serbs and the Croats has long penetrated the American scene and has become a source of contention between members of the two overseas communities. In fact, the two diasporas do not promote a sense of unity and accommodation and to some extent even encourage the home rivalries. During World War II, when the Yugoslav government-in-exile in London was trying to keep its own unity intact in the face of reports of Croat atrocities against Serbs in Croatia, it turned to its diaspora in the United States as a source of moderation. But the diaspora soon mirrored the schism at home. A pro-Serbian Pittsburgh newspaper, American Srobojran, accused the Croats of betrayal and was portrayed by Miloš Trefunonvić, then minister of education in the exiled government, as the organ that “set out on the road of national separatism.”\(^{29}\) As the acrimony among the various national groups and publications escalated, the U.S. Office of War Information intervened, unsuccessfully trying to solicit all groups’ commitment to unity.

Fifty years later, the national rivalries that have torn Yugoslavia apart are again mirrored in the respective diaspora communities in the United States. The current dispute among American-Serbs and American-Croats is largely dominated by charges and countercharges over past and present wrongs. Croatian-Americans along with the authorities in Zagreb have made special efforts to lure Jewish-American groups to their cause. In numerous letters, publications, and pamphlets, they have emphasized their aversion to old anti-Semitism and stressed the new Jewish-Croatian alliance in the homeland.\(^{30}\) Since 25 June 1991, when Croatia and Slovenia proclaimed their independence and the Yugoslav civil war erupted, their overseas nationals have been mobilized


\(^{30}\) Documents are available upon request.
to enhance their causes abroad. Croatian-American groups helped establish the Office of the Republic of Croatia in Washington, DC, and formed a branch of President Franjo Tudjman’s Croatian Democratic Union party (HDZ) in Cleveland. The numerous Croatian organizations launched lobbying campaigns in the White House and Congress, organized large demonstrations in Washington and at the UN, and used the American media to focus public attention on their peoples’ suffering. In their initial campaign following Croatia’s independence proclamation, Croatian-Americans responded to Washington’s hostility toward the new trend of nation-states’ proliferation by downplaying the rhetoric of self-determination. Instead they stressed the symmetry between American cherished values and their homeland’s commitment to democracy, human rights, and a market economy. But toward the end of 1991, with the increased bloodshed at home and in light of Germany and other European Community’s (EC) members’ decision to proceed with diplomatic recognition of Croatia and Slovenia (rebuffing pleas of the United States and the United Nations to refrain from extending recognition to the breakaway republics), American-Croat organizations became more aggressive in their efforts to obtain U.S. recognition. 31 Croatian-Americans have also organized the shipping of medical supplies and clothing, which were brought into the republic via Italy, Austria and Hungary through the American Red Cross. In the summer of 1991, Croatian-American members of OTPOR, an organization affiliated with “The Croatian National Resistance,” were arrested in Miami and charged with violating the Arms Export Control Act for plotting to ship millions of dollars worth of weapons to the republic of Croatia. 32

**Diasporas and Democratic Regime Change**

By and large, matters concerning the integrity and sovereignty of the ancestral homeland or the safety of the scattered nation are likely to galvanize a more intense diaspora involvement than matters concerning the homeland’s domestic political struggles. In the first instance, the

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31 For the information on the activities of the Croatian diaspora, I am indebted to Nenad Bach (Irvington, NY) and to Paula Franklin Lytle. It has been argued that the strong German support of Croatia’s independence can be attributed in part to the fact that Germany has a built-in lobby consisting of the nearly 500,000 Croats living in the country. See *Time*, 30 December 1991, 29.

dichotomy between Us and Them is evident, and the question of where the national interest lies is rarely in contention. However, when the principal rivals in the interpretation of national loyalty are national contestants for power in the homeland, each vying to represent its own interpretation of the national interest, diaspora members may shy away from the home country's politics. Allegiance to an aspirant opposition under a nondemocratic rule, in particular, may prove to be too costly.

The fact that U.S.-assimilated diasporas are more likely to engage in home country affairs of a national friend/foe nature than in domestic politics concerning democratization is best demonstrated in the discrepancy between the Greek-Americans' vigorous campaign that moved Congress to impose an economic and military embargo on Turkey following its 1974 invasion of Cyprus, and their acquiescence and collaboration with the military junta at home. Greek political exiles operating from the United States and Europe to overthrow the dictatorship in Athens (1967–1974) had to face the fact that many Greek-Americans were fervent anticommunists and in many respects potential allies of the colonels' regime. Only a few were willing and able to devote their time and effort to the struggle for democracy.33

The pattern of unequivocal diaspora support for the home nation as a whole excludes the unusual circumstances when the home country and the host country are at conflict or war, a situation that brings the bewildering diaspora loyalty dilemma to its extreme. In wartime, when "a particular prefix . . . coincides with the name of an enemy nation [it tends to] . . . stigmatize rather than Americanize its bearer."34 Under such difficult tensions, diaspora members may be called upon to make the excruciating choice between their identities. During World War I, German-Americans "swatted the hyphen" and dropped the umlaut. During the Gulf crisis, Arab-Americans found themselves on the defensive when their home compatriots gave passionate support to Saddam Hussein.35 Today, when Serbs appear to be the villains in Bosnia, American-Serbs are lowering their profile, wavering between support for Serbs' "historical rights" and condemnation of President Slobodan Milošević. Within this context of international isolation, Belgrade's

34 Benjamin Barber, "To Be An American: Identity as Citizenship in the New World" (paper presented at a conference on Political Identity in American Thought, Yale University, April 1991), 8.
ruling Socialist party offered the post of prime minister of Yugoslavia to a Serbian-born naturalized American, Milan Panić, in an attempt to deflect U.S. pressure.36

At first, many Serbs regarded Panić as Milošević’s puppet, while others considered him an entrepreneurial hero for making a fortune in pharmaceuticals in the United States. Right-wing Serb nationalists labeled him a CIA agent, pointing to the fact that he had to get U.S. government clearance to serve in a foreign government. Soon after he assumed his post as prime minister, Panić became Milošević’s major opponent. He blamed the president and other militant Serb nationalists for the war and called for a compromise with the successor republics. When he decided to contest the presidential election against Milošević, Panić became a target of the state-controlled media which launched an unremitting assault on him as a Serbian traitor and an agent of the CIA. After his defeat in Milošević’s rigged elections in December 1992, communists and nationalists combined forces in the federal parliament to oust Panić from his post as prime minister. He was declared “a foreign agent who should be jailed for embezzlement and for acting against the interests of the Serbian people.”37 Panić and his entire Serbian-American staff were sent back to America.

It must be remembered that home governments usually enjoy the advantage over other contestants for power in the state in establishing standards for loyal and disloyal behavior. Their prescribed criteria for loyalty do not stop at the borders of the state. Nondemocratic regimes also tend to denigrate their political opponents as “nationally disloyal,” a designation which licenses the home regime to impose psychological and material penalties on constituencies at home and abroad who oppose the regime. The yardstick for “nationally loyal” conduct fluctuates with the regime’s changing definition of the national interest. Hence, governments may include or exclude interchangeably co-nationals abroad from the national community as a cost-benefit mechanism to ensure national loyalty. The fear of being branded disloyal is one of the reasons why people who flee their native country often refrain from attacking it while abroad. Moreover, despotic regimes—vulnerable to foreign criticism and pressure, and dependent on U.S. economic, or military support—which perceive a threat in


the diaspora's ability to foster and channel international animosity toward them may use a variety of means to discredit, deter, and silence overseas opponents, including retraction of citizenship, restriction on visitation, confiscation of property, withdrawal of academic awards, persecution of relatives in the homeland, and, in extreme cases, kidnaping and political assassination.38

In many instances, the struggle of overseas communities to unseat authoritarian regimes in the home country is led by political exiles who, prior to their departure, were engaged in antiregime activity at home or were regarded by the home regime as troublemakers. The more immediate pool from which this core elite may draw followers is that segment of the national diaspora forced to flee their country for political reasons. Another fertile source for overseas recruitment is foreign students. Organizing abroad along national lines, foreign students are prone to demonstrate against nondemocratic practices at home. Iranian students in the United States played a pivotal role in repudiating the shah's regime in the UN, in the U.S. Congress, and in the media. In the past few years, Chinese students are in the vanguard of the opposition to the communist authorities in Beijing.39

Since September 1991, when a military coup deposed and exiled Haitian elected president Jean-Bertrand Aristide, the Haitian community in the United States has sought to restore Aristide to power. While the Bush administration was tinkering with the idea of reestablishing Haitian democracy without the return of Aristide, the diaspora remained firm in its support of the exile leader. Aristide, who established his government-in-exile in Washington DC, energized the diaspora through radio broadcasts and public appearances. He addressed the diaspora as Haiti's "tenth department" (Haiti is divided to nine regions). The campaign to restore Aristide has also become a rallying cry for organized African-Americans.40

Since large diasporas are often products of different migration vintages and of different political circumstances at home, the diaspora pool will rarely consist of a homogeneous population holding similar views, or retaining the same militancy toward the home government. Thus, even among Cubans who fled after Fidel Castro's revolution,

we must separate between the militancy of the earlier wave of refugees and the post-1964 emigres. Although both groups opposed the regime in Havana, the latter came to the United States principally for economic gain and was increasingly depoliticized. In the 1970s, many Cuban-Americans started to look for normalization of relations with Havana. This accommodating spirit, which was encouraged by the Carter administration, resulted in a dialogue with Castro on the reunification of families and led to Havana's changing its labeling of the diaspora from "traitors" to "members of the Cuban community abroad." But the *dialogo came* to a quick end with the disastrous 1980 Mariel boat lift, and with the help of the militant Cuban exile group Omega 7, which resorted to terrorism to deter conciliatory diaspora tendencies.

More recently, in light of the collapse of the Soviet bloc, Castro's increasing isolation, and the deterioration of the Cuban economy, Cuban-Americans have intensified their activity. Exile militants, members of paramilitary groups in South Florida who refuse to await Castro's own demise, urged President George Bush to grant them the right to use force to oust the regime in Havana. Their combative mood was heightened further when in January 1992, as part of Castro's unyielding posture, Cuba executed a Cuban exile of the shadowy Miami paramilitary group Alpha 66 who was captured with another two exiles after landing on the Cuban coast. Other Cuban-American leaders advocate more moderate tactics of tightening the economic squeeze, enhancing the diplomatic pressure in the United States and abroad, and continuing the campaign over Radio and TV Marti. In October 1992, Cuban-Americans scored a diplomatic coup as transnational actors when President Salinas de Gotari of Mexico acceded to U.S. pressure and met with two of their prominent leaders, including the controversial chairman of The Cuban American National Foundation and the would-be president of Cuba, Jorge Mas Cansosa. Salinas acknowledged the potential importance of Cuban-American support to the congressional passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement and departed from Mexico's traditional support for Cuba.


The efforts of the Cuban-American lobby to unseat Castro have generally concurred with U.S objectives. Yet the lobby's clout has demonstrated that even American presidents may be forced to compromise their position in the face of a well organized diaspora that poses an electoral threat. In the months leading to the 1992 presidential elections, with polls showing a close race in Florida between Democratic nominee Bill Clinton and Republican President George Bush, Mas Canosa pushed Congress to pass the controversial Cuban Democracy Act, which tightened the American economic embargo of Cuba. Despite Bush's concerns that the bill would alienate U.S. trade allies, the president yielded in the face of Bill Clinton's early endorsement of the measure. Consequently, The New York Times wrote that Mas Canosa has become "one of the most effective power brokers in Washington."\(^{44}\)

As noted earlier, the propensity of diasporas to take part in a campaign to overthrow and replace a nondemocratic regime are greatly affected by the official U.S. posture toward the home government. In the case of postwar East European diasporas, for example, though the United States shared their ultimate goal of freedom and independence for their captive nations, the U.S.-Soviet understanding on spheres of domination rendered diasporas' activities ineffective, with the exception of symbolic successes. In the 1960s, in the face of communist impermeability and their own impotency, East European exile institutions were largely transformed into American ethnic organizations.\(^{45}\) From the 1950s until the mid-1970s, support for human rights and democracy in other countries was secondary in American foreign policy to containing the power and influence of communism. The granting of asylum became a tool of foreign policy, as refugees and political exiles fleeing communist countries "became touching symbols around which to weave the legitimacy needed for foreign policy."\(^{46}\)

The cold war also affected Washington's posture toward diasporic political activity. Diaspora opponents of America's right-wing "friendly dictators" were discouraged and in some cases the CIA even collaborated with or acquiesced in the face of underground foreign agent


\(^{46}\) Pedraza-Bailey, Political and Economic Migrants in America, 154.
activity intended to silence dissident voices in the United States. Yet, even when the home regime was communist, diaspora’s opposition was not consistently appreciated; American backing varied along with changing strategic interests. Thus Richard Nixon’s opening to Communist China led to U.S. cultivation of the Chinese diaspora’s cooperation with Beijing, while discouraging overseas opposition. Beijing in turn sought to utilize the new relations with Washington to undermine Taiwan’s status in the United States by opening its borders to “our fellow countrymen abroad” to witness the achievements of communism. During the Carter era, American foreign policy placed the promotion of human rights on the top of its international agenda. Yet, even under President Jimmy Carter the overriding concern for strategic interests often rendered the issue of human rights subsidiary, and diasporic campaigns for democratization in the homeland that did not coincide with U.S. short-term goals were ignored or even obstructed.

In 1979, the U.S.-based opposition to Ferdinand Marcos, which sought to capitalize on Carter’s declared human rights policy, became dispirited when the president was quick to shelve criticism of Marcos after the United States secured a new agreement on the U.S. military bases in Manila.

In President Ronald Reagan’s first administration, the subject of human rights in authoritarian systems was relegated to a lower status. Carter’s human rights policy was labeled “naive” and damaging to U.S. security, and new emphasis was put on combating communist subversion. The administration’s new posture “elevate[d] ‘totalitarian’ violations to a higher plane than ‘authoritarian’ [human rights] violations.” While officially promoting gradual democratic regime change in communist and noncommunist countries, Reagan’s democratic rhetoric has often been invoked cynically. In August 1981, on his visit to Manila, then Vice President Bush went as far as praising President Ferdinand Marcos for his “adherence to democratic principle and to the democratic processes.” Consequently, when leaders of the Filipino U.S.-based democratic opposition were implicated in the 1981

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series of bombings in Manila, Marcos was able to convince the Reagan administration to crack down on his overseas opponents. Only towards the mid-1980s, after some years of "democratic ambiguity," did the Reagan administration became genuinely committed to democratic transformation around the globe.

Despite many obstacles, the experience of recent years shows that diasporas may contribute significantly to democratic change in their native countries. They do so by challenging the home regime's attempts to suppress or coopt its opposition, contesting the regime's international legitimacy, exposing human rights violations, combatting the home regime's foreign propaganda, obstructing friendly relations with the United States through effective lobbies, and finally assisting and actively participating in the struggle of the domestic opposition. In many instances political exiles and other diaspora members have returned home in the aftermath of regime transition to occupy top private and public posts. The anti-Marcos campaign of Filipinos abroad has been one of the most successful and multifaceted diasporic efforts to unseat a nondemocratic regime, and it became a model for Korean-American groups who organized to protest Chun Doo Hwan's authoritarian practices. Shortly before his death, in an attempt to clear his name Marcos published an essay in which he maintained that the chief reason for the shift in the U.S. friendly posture toward his regime was "the contrived image of the Philippine reality" cultivated "by the articulate and well-financed representatives of the anti-Marcos expatriates residing in North America." He further argued that, "the committee hearings in the U.S. Congress were given the widest circulation by the American press; [and that] the wildest charges [against him] were given credence."

A major reason for the success of diasporic communities in affecting U.S. diplomacy vis-à-vis the home government is the nature of American politics and especially the power of the individual Congressmember—which makes a unitary foreign policy unlikely. Today, even immigrants and refugees without citizenship status may find easy access to Congress and the media and build other networks that influence American foreign policy. Moreover, American party politics has been


increasingly dominated by ethnic groups that have pushed their domestic and homeland's concerns to the center of the parties' platforms.

For example, in 1988, just a few weeks before Mexico's 1988 presidential elections, an international controversy erupted when members of the California Democratic Party Chicano caucus recommended a condemnation of human rights violations in Mexico in the California Democratic platform for the Democratic national convention. While the Mexican opposition hailed the motion, associates of President Salinas strongly criticized the proposal "as interventionist and filled with stereotypical generalities and false assertions."54 This incident represented a growing involvement of Mexican-Americans in Mexico's domestic affairs in the last decade. Their impact became pronounced when in 1987, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, son of the legendary Mexican president, Lázaro Cárdenas, announced his candidacy as a contender against the old ruling Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI). Cárdenas broke with the traditional indifference of Mexican politicians toward the diaspora. He employed an effective transborder campaign that forced the Mexican ruling party to acknowledge the power of the Chicanos in future U.S.-Mexican relations. Consequently, in the last few years the government of President Carlos Salinas carried out a serious effort to improve relations with the Mexican-American diaspora. Mexico now recognizes "that Mexican Americans have created a distinct identity, and . . . praises their cultural production. [T]he Mexican government has taken a major step toward officially burying pocho" [a derogatory term universally used until recently to question the loyalty of diasporic Mexicans to their homeland and to ridicule their inferior culture].55 Hence, the Mexican government, which ventures to transform the large diaspora into a source of political support in the United States, displays greater sensitivity to criticism on human rights and democracy: "They've come to understand that we are Americans first of Mexican descent — that we care about democracy and that at times we're very critical of the lack of political openness there,"56 said Antonia Hernandez, president of the Mexican-American Legal

55 See Rodolfo O. de la Garza, "Mexico, Mexicans, and Mexican-Americans in U.S. Mexican Relations," Center for Mexican American Studies, University of Texas at Austin, Paper No. 89-02, 8.
Defense and Educational Fund, based in Los Angeles. Undoubtedly, the large _mexicano_ diaspora is now quickly emerging as a central player in light of the free trade agreement Mexico negotiated with the United States and Canada.

In the aftermath of the cold war, when the principles of democracy and human rights reign supreme, it has become more difficult for the United States to overlook dictatorial practices of friendly regimes. This development should enable diasporas to become more effective in pushing policy makers to adhere to America’s values of promoting democracy and an open society around the globe. Such pressures may be critical when ad hoc strategic interests seem to take precedence over the promotion of democracy. Certainly, in recent years the U.S. government is more disposed to hear concerns of ethnic Americans who endeavor to influence American diplomacy toward their country of origin if and when they promote democracy and human rights.

As Myron Weiner has pointed out in his study of the impact of Asian-Americans on U.S. foreign policy, “[b]ecause immigrants and human rights activists are likely to be vociferous when the [transgressing] . . . country is an ally of the United States, their demands will invariably create strains in U.S. relationships with [home] . . . governments. These demands will further generate conflicts within Washington over how we should weigh human rights against strategic considerations.”

Naturally, the ability of the United States to drive a government to improve its human rights practices and to democratize its political system increases in direct correlation to the home regime’s vulnerability to diplomatic and economic pressure. However, diasporas that play the card of economic sanctions imprudently risk being seen as insensitive to indigenous national concerns. When in 1983 the United States negotiated the renewal of its bases in the Philippines, the leaders of the U.S.-based opposition to Marcos faced a dilemma. As nationalists, they wanted the United States to pay rent for the bases without dictating how the money should be spent; as opponents of the regime they feared Marcos would misuse the funds to strengthen his rule. In testimony before Congress, diaspora leaders “grit their teeth and suggest[ed] that it be given in aid, rather than rent, and if possible all non-military

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aid.” Post-Tiananmen Chinese exiles who advocate U.S. sanctions are now vulnerable to the Chinese government exploiting their image as traitors “living off the fat of the land in exile.”

The “loyalty baggage” is particularly heavy for a political exile who is awaiting return. He is more susceptible to a home regime’s charges of disloyalty than the immigrant who works to establish himself abroad, and “must try to identify his cause with the national interest, to give himself the psychological support to survive the constant political and socioeconomic pressure pushing him to abdicate his exile status.”

The issue of loyalty from afar is also compounded by culture. Overseas Chinese, for example, have been traditionally inept in host and home politics and have preferred to concentrate on their internal affairs. Moreover, some post-Tiananmen Chinese intellectual exiles still retain communist ideological residues; and even more critical, they are culturally dedicated to the Confucian political heritage that commands their highest allegiance to their country and nation. These exiles’ fears of the “pluralist chaos” in the United States and their desire to escape the trap of “extreme individualism,” make them highly vulnerable to the home government’s depiction of them as traitors. Thus, they increasingly become hesitant in their opposition efforts and are more inclined to return home on Beijing’s terms. In light of these tensions, one scholar of Chinese politics has recently questioned the democratic commitment of some post-1989 exiles.

Finally, the impact of U.S. diasporic communities on the demise of communism in Eastern Europe has been accumulative rather than direct. Probably the most significant diasporic contribution to the erosion of communism was made by Jewish-American lobbies, which were pivotal in focusing the spotlight on the conditions and rights of Soviet Jewry. Jewish-Americans became personal emissaries of refuseniks. Against the Nixon administration’s official standing, they lobbied vigorously for the Jackson-Vanik amendment, which linked the USSR’s most-favored nation trade status to its willingness to allow freer emi-

60 Lewis J. Edinger, German Exile Politics: The Social Democratic Executive Committee in the Nazi Era (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1956), viii.
62 See Barmé, “Traveling Heavy,” 100.
igration. All in all, postwar East European emigres were mostly ineffective in their struggle to free their captive nations, with some exceptions such as the Polish-Americans' support of Solidarity since 1981. The relative weakness of the East European lobbies had little to do with questions of loyalty. The diasporas considered their home communist governments as enemies of their nations and stooges of a foreign regime, a position reinforced by America's aversion to communism. In fact, this mutual reinforcement eased the integration of East Europeans in the United States. The host country did not demand their abdication of home country's loyalty, but rather helped them in redefining their outward patriotism along the vision of freedom and democracy. This is also why so many diaspora members feel a swell of pride in the political and economic changes taking place in their native countries. On their visits to the United States, East European leaders like Lech Walesa, Václav Havel, Vytautas Landsbergis, and Sali Berisha of Albania have made direct patriotic appeals to their respective diasporas, offering them citizenship and encouraging their economic and political support. Diaspora members have responded with excitement. Many of them have assumed the role of cultural and political ambassadors between the United States and their native countries, others were offered key economic positions, and others even emerged as leaders and candidates of political parties (including a presidential candidate) in the old countries. In the homelands, diaspora members often enjoy added credibility and moral authority by virtue of being untainted by suspicion of collaboration and complicity with the former regime.

African-Americans and the Global Context

One of the most effective diasporic efforts to alter world politics in recent years was conducted by African-Americans. Through their mobilization and protest action against apartheid, they have managed to generate a historic shift in the U.S. foreign policy toward Pretoria, forcing the latter to move toward a nonracial democratic polity. Largely due to the 1986 Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act (CAAA) that passed in Congress over President Reagan's veto, South Africa released Nelson Mandela and other prisoners, legalized anti-apartheid organizations, lifted the State of Emergency, enabled exile return, repealed key apartheid laws, and entered negotiations with black organizations on the

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transition to democratic rule. These reforms, in turn, led to the termination of most of the U.S. economic sanctions by President Bush, on 10 July 1991 to the consternation of African-American leaders who insist that the conditions set by the CAAA have yet to be complied with.64

The increasing involvement of African-Americans in Southern Africa is part and parcel of the evolution of their community and politics inside the United States. In this case the importance of diasporic politics is beyond the mere relevance of ethnic leverage over U.S. foreign policy; it rather represents a significant step into the long sought and yet unattained vision of African-American integration. The involvement in the South African struggle interjected African-Americans, perhaps for the first time, into American mainstream politics and values, as the diaspora lobby succeeded in establishing a symmetry between its own agenda and the American creed of freedom and democracy, thereby challenging the Reagan administration on its own rhetoric. By exploiting the growing legitimation of ethnic voice in U.S. foreign policy and by portraying their homeland’s cause as an all-American concern, African-Americans were able to move one step forward toward their own domestic inclusion.

Black Americans have historically felt a sense of kinship with the land of their ancestors and in congruence with their own civil rights struggle in the United States have empathized with the racial and political aspirations of black Southern Africans. At least since the turn of the twentieth century, calls for international solidarity among blacks were part of African-American elites’ effort to galvanize the black community for political action. In the 1920s and the 1930s, leaders like Marcus Garvey, W. E. B. Du Bois, and Paul Robeson endeavored to establish an international Pan-African movement to fight against colonial rule and white imperialism. After World War II, with the advent of the cold war, the campaign for black internationalism subsided as “black leaders felt obliged to confirm their loyalty to the United States and to demonstrate that their civil rights campaign was not communist inspired at a time when many conservative Americans were ready to believe that communist instigation lay behind black demands for civil equality.”65 During the next decade many black leaders


compromised much of their Pan-African agenda and concentrated their efforts on domestic improvements. In the late 1950s and 1960s, in light of the growing movement in Africa to terminate colonial rule, African-Americans demonstrated renewed interest in the homeland’s reawakening. Their rejuvenation coincided with the acceleration of the domestic civil rights struggle. Malcolm X, for example, drew a parallel between the treatment of blacks in the United States and white colonialism in Africa, while other black leaders went as far to advocate the mobilization of volunteer black American troops to fight in the Southern African liberation struggles. Indeed, the 1960s represented black America’s growing belief that “what happens to blacks in Africa has implications for blacks at home.” However, over the next few years, despite the success of the civil rights movement in breaking many social and economic barriers, black Americans were unable to translate their stake in Africa into an effective foreign policy lobby. This failure was the result of a schism between the emergent class of mainstream blacks, represented by the formation of the Black Congressional Caucus (BCC) in 1971, and the marginalized radical nationalists, Pan-Africanists, black Muslims, and Marxists, all of whom rejected the possibility and the desirability of integration into the larger polity.

In 1974, in an essay entitled, “Can the Blacks Do For Africa What the Jews did for Israel?” Martin Weil argued that though American blacks have had little impact on American policy toward Africa, “[s]ooner or later the United States will have to confront the emergence of powerful political pressure hostile to American policy in Africa.” He further argued:

To be successful, a black movement for reform of American policy toward Africa must be perceived as a vehicle for exporting American ideals. It must be an affirmation of black faith in the United States and demonstration of black ability to manipulate the fine structure of American politics within the astuteness and finesse of previous practitioners. Blacks as blacks may identify with Africa, but it is only as Americans that they can change United States policy in Africa. . . . To aid the revolution abroad, blacks must first join the establishment at home.68


68 Ibid., 127.
Weil's projection began to appear in the mid-1970s. First, the extremist movements were shunted to the periphery of black politics, while the mainstream discovered the "secrets" of influencing American foreign policy, "an electoral threat, . . . a lobbying apparatus, . . . and a successful appeal to the symbols of American nationhood." During the 1976 U.S. presidential election campaign, African-Americans made their mark on the Democratic party's platform by pushing the issues of independence for the white minority-ruled states of Southern Africa while African foreign policy in Washington was still centered around the East-West conflict. Most significant for the institutionalization of black political power in U.S foreign policy arena was the July 1977 establishment of TransAfrica, a black American foreign policy lobby focusing on African and Caribbean issues and led by lawyer Randall Robinson. Under him, the organization enlisted the support of many mainstream organizations like the NAACP and Africare and began a grassroots outreach program to mobilize African-American support for TransAfrica's foreign policy initiatives, especially with regard to South Africa. Dovetailing with the self-proclaimed pro-African interests of the Carter administration, TransAfrica's goals of mobilizing the African-American electorate enjoyed modest success.

The link between the civil rights movement and the anti-apartheid struggle was reinforced during the years of President Reagan, who was perceived by the black leadership to be insensitive to civil rights issues in general, and uncaring on apartheid in particular. Black leaders were initially divided on how to respond to Reagan's challenge, especially since the president's popularity in the early 1980s rendered him "unassailable." But with the unfolding of an extended crisis situation in South Africa and in response to Pretoria's imposition of a partial state of emergency, apartheid provided a focus and power to attack the administration from the back door. Apartheid became a rallying cry for rejuvenating the 1960s, though this time not in the form of a domestic battle. Here, black Americans organized as insiders to set the conscience of American values back on track. Though the American Committee on Africa, the first anti-apartheid organization in the United States was founded in 1953, it was only during the 1980s that "civil right activists discovered in the fight [against apartheid] an effort

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69 Ibid., 109.

they could throw themselves into with gusto—and little moral ambiguity.”71 In the mid-1980s, therefore, black leaders could no longer be labeled disloyal. But as long as the reality of Mikhail Gorbachev’s “new political thinking” was not seriously apprehended, there was a temptation to label those sympathetic to the African National Congress (ANC) as pro-communists.

The strategy of escalating the anti-apartheid campaign was devised by TransAfrica. The wave of protests, sit ins, and voluntary arrests caught like a wild fire across the nation. Apartheid became a principal political concern for local governments, towns, media, and universities pressured by black organizations to rid themselves of holdings that involved U.S. and foreign companies with interests in South Africa. The impact on elected representatives and the public at large was dramatic, and the political momentum paved the way for an unprecedented congressional coalition in the House and the Senate, which adopted the sanctions legislation. Then Senate majority leader, Bob Dole, acknowledged that the issue of sanctions “has now become a domestic civil rights issue.”72

It is not surprising that the mobilization of the black diaspora against apartheid coincided with a renewed search for black identity in the United States; for example, the move to change the group appellation from black to African-American. Such alterations in terms had been introduced in various junctures of the struggle for black liberation and equality in the United States even before the Emancipation Proclamation.73 Yet in the 1980s the lobby for “African-American” epitomized a strong perception that integration and political power at home have much to do with an alliance with a country and culture abroad. When in 1988 black leaders announced their preference for the term African-American, Jesse Jackson declared: “Every ethnic group in this country has a reference to some land base, some historical, cultural base, African-Americans have hit that level of maturity.”74

The link between African-Americans and South Africa was accentuated further in 1990 during Nelson Mandela’s first visit to the United States after his release from prison. Mandela enjoyed a hero’s welcome.

71 Time, 2 July 1990, 18.
74 Cited in Newsweek, 2 January 1989, 28.
One observer stated: “He fires the pride of African Americans and touches a deep desire in the psyche of Americans... For the sometimes dispirited American civil rights coalition, Mandela provides... a rallying point and common cause. For the many blacks who have begun to call themselves African-Americans, he is a flesh-and-blood exemplar of what an African can be.” Ultimately, the identification with black South Africa has now become one of the critical tests for political allegiance to domestic black causes. When New York Mayor David N. Dinkins landed on South African soil on 12 November 1991 and proclaimed himself “finally home,” an editorial in The New York Times stated that, “Mr. Dinkins seemed to be speaking as much to Brooklynites as to any listeners [in South Africa].”

The success of the African-American lobby is an additional testimony to the power and legitimation of hyphenated groups in the United States. But the leverage of ethnicity places new challenges on diasporas that wish to affect American foreign policy at a time when the U.S. government has been more disposed to concerns over human rights and democratization. The struggle for self-determination tends to galvanize diaspora’s unity — using the American rhetoric of democracy and freedom — against undisputed ethnontational foes. However, the attainment of the homeland’s independence, which is not in accordance with the democratic principles, forces diasporas to make agonizing choices. If the homeland is ruled undemocratically, the diaspora may be required to make a clean break with the home government, side with its democratic opposition, or even cut down its ties with its home compatriots, with all the actual and psychological ramification of such action. If the diaspora chooses to cooperate with a nondemocratic home regime, however, it risks undermining its U.S. domestic reputation and loyalty status, especially if the prevailing American mood toward the home government is hostile.

The African-Americans’ anti-apartheid struggle largely parallels the self-determination model of diasporic politics, as the white minority represents the obvious foe. Such is also the case for the majority of Arab-Americans who endorse Palestinian self-determination and consider Israel to be the adversary. But to sustain the democratic reputation a diaspora may have acquired in its campaign for a homeland’s independence, it must continuously demonstrate its hostility to non-

75 Time, 2 July 1990, 16–17.
democratic practices of a home native regime. During the cold war, Black American organizations, which were often criticized for accentuating the grievances of apartheid while overlooking abuses of black regimes, could vindicate their support of African governments that were ideologically hostile to democracy as a way of countering U.S. "imperialist intervention" via nondemocratic proxies. This was the case in Angola, where African-American organizations sided with the Angolan Marxist government against the United States sponsored UNITA rebels. However, in the aftermath of the cold war, when the prevailing perception in the United States is that the continuing support of dictatorships or military surrogates in regional conflicts is economically and politically imprudent, the rationale for siding with or acquiescing in the rule of black despots, or alternatively supporting one-party revolutionary regimes, is rapidly disappearing for the White House and for African-Americans alike. Accordingly, the U.S. State Department, seemingly motivated by TransAfrica's lobbying, is now pressing African countries to embrace democracy quickly or otherwise suffer economic penalties. Since 1991, African-American leaders have moved steadily to redefine their pro-Africa crusade along the democratic theme. They urge the administration and Congress to increase foreign assistance to democratically committed regimes and to cut off military and economic aid to regimes that resist democratic change and violate human rights.77

Without diminishing their contribution to the recent U.S. campaign to push African countries to embrace democracy, it must be remembered that for African-Americans the opposition to black dictatorial rule is relatively safe, as the homeland is symbolic and the consequences of a home government's retaliation are virtually nonexistent. This is not the case for diaspora communities directly tied to homelands whose regimes tend to hold insiders and outsiders hostages to their repressive rule. To become a meaningful and reliable voice for human rights, democracy, and self-determination, such diasporas need courageous leaders who are willing to take risks and make personal sacrifices.

Finally, the end of East-West tensions provides democracy with an opportunity and a challenge, since resurgent nationalism does not guarantee democracy. Newly emergent democratic regimes may not be able to meet the challenge of separatism, which the new nationalism possesses, and thus may fail to adhere to democratic liberal principles. While today diasporic calls for self-determination and democratic regime

change are more likely to be in line with American official policy, diasporas must also be aware of the tension between self-determination and democratic liberalism. Their political activity on behalf of their country of origin may strain American strategic interests; even more critically, it may have destructive consequences for their homeland compatriots. The acute danger posed by national awakening and secessionist drives is evident in former Yugoslavia, in the violent exchange in the former Soviet republics, in Czechoslovakia, in India, and even in Canada. In the ethnically divided poor countries of Africa, “winning or losing an election is [often] more of a life and death struggle than in well-off countries.”

Some have maintained that the perils of nationalism and the destructive impulse of ethnic separatism are increasingly penetrating the American republic. Though in the twentieth century the United States did not encounter any secessionist movement of serious proportion, many express their concern over the growing presence of multicultural ethnic zealots and Afrocentrics in American culture and education. In the words of Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., “they reject as hegemonic the notion of a shared commitment to common ideas,” and thus may undermine “the idea of an over-arching American nationality.” The involvement of American diasporic communities in the politics of their homelands has occasionally fueled and exacerbated ethnic friction inside the United States—between Serbs and Croats, blacks and Jews, Greeks and Turks, etc. However, the dedication of diasporas to liberal-democratic causes in their countries of origin may also be seen, perhaps paradoxically, as an important contribution to the reinforcement of these values inside America. In fact, the fear of U.S. domestic Balkanization should be mitigated by the realization that the peculiar openness of American government to the influence of ethnicity has not only guided diasporic groups to champion the creed of political democracy and human rights around the globe, but also has pushed them to defend the principles of democratic pluralism at home.*

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