



ELSEVIER

Available online at [www.sciencedirect.com](http://www.sciencedirect.com)

 ScienceDirect

---

---

**Communist and  
Post-Communist  
Studies**

---

---

Communist and Post-Communist Studies 42 (2009) 41–64

[www.elsevier.com/locate/postcomstud](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/postcomstud)

# Diasporas and democratization in the post-communist world

Maria Koinova

*Dartmouth College, Dickey Center for International Understanding, 6048 Haldeman Center,  
Hanover, NH 03755, USA*

Available online 19 March 2009

---

## Abstract

If diaspora communities are socialized with democratic values in Western societies, they could be expected to be sympathetic to the democratization of their home countries. However, there is a high degree of variation in their behavior. Contrary to the predominant understanding in the literature that diasporas act in exclusively nationalist ways, this article argues that they do engage with the democratization of their home countries. Various challenges to the sovereignty of their homelands explain whether diasporas involve with procedural or liberal aspects of democratization. Drawing evidence from the activities of the Ukrainian, Serbian, Albanian and Armenian diasporas after the end of communism, I argue that unless diasporas are linked to home countries that enjoy both international legal and domestic sovereignty, they will involve only with procedural aspects of democratization. Diasporas filter international pressure to democratize post-communist societies by utilizing democratic procedures to advance unresolved nationalist goals.

© 2009 Published by Elsevier Ltd on behalf of The Regents of the University of California.

*Keywords:* Diaspora; Democratization; Sovereignty; Ukrainian; Serbian; Albanian; Armenian

---

## Introduction

Scholarly interest in the impact of international actors on the democratization of autocratic or illiberal societies has resulted in valuable findings about the role of states,

international governmental and non-governmental organizations, and the mechanisms of leverage and linkage that facilitate democratization. However, little has been said about diaspora communities despite their growing international importance in a globalizing world; their spread in Western democratic countries renders them potential agents of democratization. This article aims to address this gap.

The puzzle involves causality: if diaspora communities are socialized with democratic values in Western societies, they could be expected to be sympathetic to the democratization of their home countries. However there is a high degree of variation in their behavior. Some diasporas are highly nationalist, others are sympathetic to illiberal regimes, some are vocal supporters of liberal democracy, while others express their tacit support for electoral pluralism but not for liberalism. Moreover, some diasporas act simultaneously in all four ways. How can we explain such behavioral diversity? This article focuses on explaining the variation of diaspora involvement with procedural vs. liberal aspects of democratization, which has received little attention by scholarship so far.

In this article I limit my inquiry to the post-communist world for two reasons. First, unlike diasporas originating from the Middle East, Africa and Asia, communities originating in communist countries had limited contact with their homeland during the Cold War. Some individuals still managed to travel. Nevertheless, threatened by the possibilities of émigré influence, the communist governments spent significant resources on infiltrating diaspora circles, jamming radio broadcasts, producing propaganda and counterpropaganda and enforcing strict border controls (Motyl, 1990:140). Few viable networks existed to transmit values, ideas and practices between diasporas and their homelands. With the end of communism in 1989 and the rise of the Internet in the mid-1990s political opportunities emerged for diasporas to develop sustained relationships with the homeland. Second, after 1989 there was a large-scale migration from this region into Western societies for political, economic or educational reasons. Most of the migrants were sympathetic to democratic values and market economies. Even forced migrants from the wars in the former Yugoslavia and the former Soviet Union were exposed to democratic values upon their arrival. Democratic values became crucial for their integration into the new societies, especially for those who wanted and managed to stay. One would expect that ideas and practices supportive of democracy would easily flow back to the homeland.

Nationalist behavior was common among diaspora groups linked to the post-communist world.<sup>1</sup> Yet contrary to major expectations that diasporas would act in outwardly nationalist ways (Anderson, 1998; Collier and Hoeffler, 2000; Byman et al., 2001; Fair, 2005). I argue that some diaspora communities did engage in democratization efforts after 1989, but that challenges to the sovereignty of their homelands accounted for the variations of their involvement. If diasporas were linked to homelands that

---

<sup>1</sup> I narrowly define the term “nationalist” to denote activities pursued to achieve linguistic, cultural, political, and territorial goals through hate speech, negation of the rights of others, and other extreme ideas and methods.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/10501770>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/10501770>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)