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Immigrant “Transnationalism” Reconsidered

by

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At the turn of the 21st century, the view that nation-state and society normally converge has waned. Instead, “globalization” is the order of the day, with international migration bringing the alien “other” from third world to first, and worldwide trade and communications amplifying and accelerating the feedbacks traveling in the opposite direction. Consequently, social scientists are looking for new ways to think about the connections between “here” and “there,” as evidenced by the interest in the many things called “transnational”. The excitement is particularly great among those studying international migration: observing that migration produces a plethora of connections spanning “home” and “host” societies, scholars detect the emergence of “transnational communities,” from which they conclude that the era of nation-state societies successfully keeping themselves distinct has now been eclipsed.

As implied by a concept whose suffix means “condition of being,” connectivity between source and destination points is an inherent aspect of the migration phenomenon – no surprise given the social networks that channel the process. However, those networks generate, not one, but a multiplicity of “imagined communities,” organized along different, often conflicting principles, whether related to the scale of aggregation (local v. national) or opposing visions of the “community” in question. On occasion, these “imagined communities” conform to the root meaning of *transnational* – extending *beyond* loyalties that connect to any specific place of origin or ethnic or national “group”. For the most part, however, what immigration scholars describe as “transnationalism” is in fact the opposite: highly particularistic attachments that stand in antithetical relationship to those by-products of globalization denoted by the concept of “transnational civil society” and its related manifestations (Florini, 2000; Price, 1998).

Moreover, the students of immigrant “transnationalism” have failed to demonstrate that cross-border migration is *transnational* – escaping control of the state system – as opposed to *international* – encompassed by the states and national societies between which migrants move. Indeed, they haven’t asked the question, even though it is the political dimension that distinguishes population movements across states from all other forms of long-distance migration.

Intellectual fashions notwithstanding, states and the politics conducted within their borders shape the options available for migrant and ethnic trans-state social action. First, states seek to control movement across territorial boundaries – exit as well as entry -- which is why defining “transnationalism” in terms of the “regular and sustained” cross-border activities of individuals, as do Portes and his associates (Portes, et. al, 1999), takes for granted what needs to be explained. Second, the control structures of states operate at internal as well as external levels, seeking to regulate movement across the territory as well as membership in the national collectivity. That both boundaries prove leaky is the rule, *not* the exception (Krasner, 1995); more relevant is the *variability* in the degree to which internal and external boundaries are institutionalized, and the means and intensity by which states police them. Together, these factors condition the ability of migrants living “here” to act in ways that yield leverage “there.” Third, civil society actors in both host and destination countries raise questions regarding the allegiance and political *bona fides* of persons whose social identities are largely framed by their connections to two states. As political culture varies from one nation-state society to another, so too do the terms of national belonging; moreover, they are almost *always* the subject of conflict, though, again, to varying degrees. Fourth, the relationship among

states affects the scope for multiple as opposed to exclusive national loyalties. The security/solidarity nexus waxes and wanes with the degree of inter-state tension at whatever the relevant geographic scale; the issue of “dual loyalty” becomes particularly intense when belligerency develops between host and sending countries. Thus, while international migrants and their descendants recurrently effect concerted action across state boundaries, the use, form, and mobilization of the connections linking “here” and “there” are contingent outcomes subject to multiple *political* constraints.

We develop this argument in the pages to follow. First, we engage the existing literature. Then, we outline an alternative approach emphasizing the *interactions* of migrants with other actors in the relational matrix in which they find themselves – governments and civil society actors in both sending and receiving countries. Next, we apply that approach to show how sustained comparisons across time and place can illuminate the sources of variation in migrant trans-state politics, a matter obscured by the current literature, which is preoccupied with the single case of the United States and a dehistoricized fixation on the “contemporary” period.

The perspective that informs this paper departs from the simplistic, conventional opposition of assimilation versus transnationalism that characterizes the literature – largely, because we reject the very terms of debate. On the one hand, we view the advent of international migration as a *normal* social outcome rather than the source of anomalous difference to be assimilated. Networks of information and people span the would-be bounded entities called nation-states, which is why the arrival of “foreigners” so persistently recurs. On the other hand, state and civil society actors respond to the boundary-spanning nature of international migration by building and realigning the

political and territorial borders of the state. State efforts to exclude outsiders – through control of external borders – and to distinguish between members and unacceptable residents of the territory – through regulation of the internal boundaries of citizenship – involve coercive and illiberal efforts to break interactional cleavages at the national boundary. It is the collision of these boundary-spanning and boundary-building processes that defines the phenomenon of interest to us here.

The Career of a Concept

The concept of transnationalism has an honorable career, though one that most scholars of immigrant transnationalism have curiously ignored. Credit goes to the early 20th century liberal intellectual, Randolph Bourne, whose 1916 essay on “Trans-national America” responded to the jingoism of the times. Calling for a cosmopolitan America that would accept immigrants’ dual loyalties and ongoing home country connections, Bourne argued that America could *transcend* nationalism by accepting the contributions of multiple nationalities: “In a world which has dreamed of internationalism, we find that we have all unawares been building up the first international nation (p.93).” Yet Bourne was not so much an internationalist as a proponent of a liberal American nationalism, advocating a multiculturalism *avant la lettre*, in which “American nationality [would] not entail the suppression of diversity nor of multiple identity (Hollinger, 1995: 95).”

The world wars made the speculations of a Bourne irrelevant, until in a manner consistent with the argument advanced in this paper, the gradual thawing of the cold war allowed for the re-emergence of the transnational idea. Raymond Aron (1966) first proposed the notion of a “transnational society” – the movement of ideas, people, goods,

and organizations across borders – in turn generating a “transnational” politics reducible neither to the relations between states nor within them. Scholars in the international relations field, most notably, Karl Kaiser (1971), Joseph Nye, and Robert Keohane (1971), quickly picked up Aron’s implied assault on political scientists’ traditionally state-centric view. They argued for a focus on “transnational relations” – “contacts, coalitions, and interactions across state boundaries that are not controlled by the central foreign policy organs of governments (Nye and Keohane, xi).” This early interest in matters transnational quickly stalled: in a debate that pitted “state-centered” versus “society-dominated” views of world politics, the transnational perspective proved vulnerable to a demonstration that the state *still* mattered (Risse-Kappen, 1995), a view that the persistence of international tensions through the close of the “short twentieth century” (Hobsbawm, 1994) made compelling until the Cold War ended (Josselin and Wallace, 2001).¹

In contrast to the political scientists, interested in forms of transnational concertation among societal actors independent of, or in spite of, differences in nationality, the scholars who first applied the transnational concept to migration did so to illuminate a phenomenon of a very different kind. Anthropologists, Nina Glick Schiller, Linda Basch, and Cristina Blanc-Szanton, provided the initial impetus. Stimulated by years of fieldwork in the Caribbean, a region with a long and varied history of back-and-forth migrations to different parts of the world, Glick Schiller and her colleagues argued that the emergence of “transnational” social fields linking *particular* sending and destination countries represented a break with the past. Contrary to historical patterns and received social science notions, neither settlement nor the severing of home countries ties

was inevitable. In the contemporary age of migration, rather, “transmigrants . . . maintain, build, and reinforce multiple linkages with their countries of origins (Glick Schiller, et al, 1995:52),” thereby expanding the range of “home” to encompass both “here” and “there.” With so fundamental a change, entirely new conceptualizations were needed. “Transnationalism” became the label used for identifying the social connections between receiving and sending countries and “transmigrants” denoted the people who forged those ties and kept them alive (Glick Schiller, et al. 1992).

Though the new idea quickly caught on, conceptual disagreements soon emerged. One view emphasized *transnationalism*, identifying it as a complex but fundamentally closed set of relationships, so encompassing as to virtually erase the distinction between “here” and “there.” In this light, “transmigrants” and “immigrants” each represents a species of a different type (Guarnizo et al. 2003). Exemplifying this point of view is the influential formulation developed by Portes and his associates, who insisted that the “concept of transnationalism” be delimited “to occupations and activities that require regular and sustained social contact over time across national borders for their implementation (Portes et al, 1999).”

A different approach emphasizes transnational *practices*, as opposed to a transnational condition of being. From this standpoint, the fine lines associated with “transnationalism” get replaced with a continuum, in which the regular, sustained trans-state practices emphasized by Portes and his associates shade off into something more erratic and less intense (Levitt, 2001b). On the one hand, the transnationality of practices fluctuates and becomes more or less focused on the home society over an indeterminate period. On the other hand, those same practices take a multi-dimensional form –

involving economic, social, political, and cultural activities – in which alignment is contingent and occasional. Hence, the degree of transnationality is at once selective and variable, with *transnationalism* encompassing both the pure (“core” or “narrow”) and diluted (“expanded”, “wide”) forms (Itzigsohn et al, 1999). That cross -border social action frequently fluctuates “between a small core and a larger softer rim of transnational activists,” as found by Guarnizo et al. (2003: 29), suggests there is a good deal less *transnationalism* than there are practices of a transnational sort.

Scholars have observed that migrants’ transnational activities affect, and are affected by, other cross-border processes. One line of argument picks up a thread from the earlier formulations of the transnational concept in international relations studies, linking international migration to the spread of transnational corporations – a contention often repeated but rarely established empirically. Researchers have generally been more concerned with the ways in which the cross-border activities of migrants elicit a variety of responses from their “home” states, which attempt to extend their reach into the receiving societies through the provision of services to migrants, police activities, and symbolic gestures of inclusion, while also seeking to harness the economic resources that migrants bring or send home.

Conceptualizing these related processes has been an awkward matter. One formulation contrasts the “transnationalism from above” of corporations and states with the “transnationalism from below” of international migrants. While the severing of enterprise from its original, national base exemplifies the core of the transnational concept, describing the actions of states as “transnational” is a contradiction in terms. The analytic leverage of the “transnational” concept comes from distinguishing cross-border,

non-state actors from states, precisely in order to show how the two constrain and shape one another. Yet another possibility involves relabeling the “embassies, consulates, and diplomatic activities of national governments” as “international” (Portes, 2001: 185), but this leaves one wondering how to think about the relations *among* states – the usual meaning of the term “international” – and their possible bearing on the cross-border activities of migrants. A further alternative identifies the linkages between sending states and their members on foreign soil as instances of the “deterritorialized nation-state.” The latter concept would seem to stretch the definition of the state beyond meaning: states only legitimately possess the power of coercion within their own borders, carrying out consular activities with the acquiescence of the host government.

Though further conceptual permutations will surely arise as the literature develops, no similar disagreement exists regarding the relationship between “immigrant transnationalism” and receiving states, largely because the matter has not been raised.² Well aware that immigrant dual loyalties may produce allergic reactions among their “hosts,” scholars have exclusively attended to the politicized aspect of the debate, providing reassurance that home country allegiances only occasionally persist to the second generation, in which event “transnational activities” are to be allowed as they “can actually facilitate successful adaptation (Portes, 1999: 472).” While the advice may well be sensible, the absence of any concerted effort to *analyze* the relationship between “immigrant transnationalism” and receiving states and civil society actors is telling.

The politics of “here” and “there”:

Beyond nationalism – or particularism in long-distance form?

With sympathizers, if not adherents, of the transnationalist view at the helm of three scholarly journals (*Diaspora*, *Social Identities*, and *Global Networks*); an international center on “transnational *communities*” based at Oxford University; and a legion of supportive books, articles, and dissertations pouring out across the social sciences, the transnationalist moment would seem to be now.³ One hesitates to be left standing in the station when the train is so obviously departing. Still, perhaps there is time for a spirited warning before everyone gets on board.

We agree that this new literature has drawn scholars’ attention to a salient aspect of international migration; alas, it has not delivered on its promise. To begin with, no one can quite agree on what the transnational concept actually means – which is why every paper on the topic starts at the beginning. Social scientists hardly need another neologism, and this one seems to suffer from a bad case of promiscuity. Transnationalism has spawned a long list of new terms, of which “transmigrant,” “transmigration”, “transterritorialization”, “transnational social field,” “transnational social formation,” and “transnational life” are but a sampler. Such a profusion of concepts and welter of definitions is always grounds for suspicion, suggesting that a field like this – which has largely escaped critical review in print – is overdue for close scrutiny.⁴

If the lexicon of international migration studies needs a new concept, one should first make sure that something has been gained by substituting a prefix meaning “beyond” for one that means “between.” Of course, *international* phenomena *can* be distinguished from those that are *transnational*, as correctly pointed out by the international relations scholars who first employed the distinction to differentiate between

aspects of the relations between states and those institutions extending beyond and even encompassing states argued. But one simply has to invoke any one of the many transnational phenomena – whether the market, or the Catholic Church, or the institutions of scientific production, or the more recent networks of human rights activists – to see that that the distinction has at best variable relevance to the cases at hand. Few of the migrations called “transnational” actually deserve the appellation, though ironically, the “transnational” label would have been very appropriate were we talking about the *last* great age of migration. At the turn of the 20th century, no small proportion of the international movers understood themselves to be “workers of the world.” So they were also accepted – as shown by the role of migrants in transmitting laborist, socialist, or anarchist ideas from one national setting from another, not to speak of their simultaneous or successive participation in several national movements (Hobsbawm, 1988).⁵ As the solidarities generated by the migration process often provided the underpinning for labor movements of various kinds, labor internationalism and home-country allegiances continued to prove compatible well through the first part of the 20th century (Mormino and Pozzetta, 1987; Buhle and Georgakas, 1996).

But at the turn of the 21st century, the only approximation of transnationalism of this sort is to be found among Islamic internationalists (Dalacoura, 2001) – evidence of the ubiquitous triumph of nationalist ideals. Whereas the “transnational capitalist class” (Sklair, 2001) is still bound to its country of origin, but oriented toward the elimination of economic nationalism, the political behavior described by scholars of contemporary *immigrant* “transnationalism” is altogether different, involving long-distance, trans-*state*

affiliations of a *particularist* sort – a form of social action entirely distinguishable from *trans-nationalism* in any of its incarnations.

Moreover, the literature fails to discriminate between those aspects of the phenomenon *intrinsically* related to migration across nation-states and similar manifestations associated with internal migration. Though professedly concerned with *trans-national* processes, the literature instead largely focuses on trans-state connections of a distinctively *localistic* sort. Many of the most influential studies – such as those of Rouse (1992, 1995), R. Smith (1998), Levitt (2001a), and Kyle (1999) – examine the linkages between particular places at the sub-national level. Yet these sorts of localistic ties reappear in similar form just about everywhere that long-distance migration occurs, resulting from the stranger-native interaction, and *not* the foreigner-national encounter, which alone would be particular to transnational phenomena. As Massey, Durand, and their collaborators have shown (1987), “strangeness” provides the impetus to new forms of migrant affiliation which draw on a place-based identity discovered only *after* dispersion *from* that place.⁶ Consequently, *bi-localism* becomes an enduring source of identity and organization, reappearing in similar, if not identical, form among “internal” and “transnational” migrants alike. Taking the international dimension of migration seriously almost certainly implies that transborder bi-localism in the contemporary era of the nation-state will differ from intra-state bi-localism. Though that distinction was surely of smaller dimensions during the last great age of migration – before the nationalization of societies had attenuated regional differences and weakened local attachments -- internal migration in modern, nation-state societies can be sufficiently displacing as to generate new connections around the place left behind. Thus, discovering connections

between “villages” or “communities” here and there hardly qualifies as transnational, as the same relationship reoccurs within almost any migratory context, whether within or across state boundaries.⁷

To the extent that migrant *bi-localism* is a product of the migration experience, it represents a break with the experience of the stay-at-homes. For that reason, it also serves as a vehicle for innovation in the interaction between those who have left and those who have stayed behind, making the use of holistic metaphors – like transnational *community* or *village* – inappropriate.⁸ While bi-localism *can* serve as a stage in the development of a broader set of identities, it often works in the opposite direction, as the hometown association is a competitor with other forms of organization that emphasize politics or ideology over affective ties. To survive, the hometown associations have to bring together right and left, believers and secularists, proletarians and entrepreneurs – which is precisely why their *anti*-political bias is often so strong (Soyer, 1997; Gabaccia, 2000). The literature’s conceptualization of “transnationalism” obscures the history of consistent intra-immigrant contention over the precise nature of the homeland “community” to which loyalty is owed.

In the United States, moreover, the homeland loyalties on which the scholars of *immigrant* transnationalism have focused are not the exclusive property of the foreign-born, but are rather shared by native-born nationals. Best described as “long-distance nationalism” (Anderson, 1998), these homeland loyalties have been a particularly important part of the American ethnic scene. Indeed, homeland ties have such extraordinary appeal that they have been created when none previously existed: witness the earlier “black Zionism” of the Garveyites (Lewis, 1984), the more recent

efflorescence of Afro-centrism among African-Americans, and the lobbying efforts on behalf of a variety of African issues by African-American organizations (Shain, 1999). Contrary to the argument that contemporary transnationalism is a novel event, a longer view shows that precedent provides legitimacy for each new set of arrivals. In early 20th century America, Zionists and Polish nationalists pointed out that they were acting no differently than other, much longer established American ethnic groups (Mendelsohn, 1993). Similar claims are heard today. Put somewhat differently, the activities that the scholars of contemporary transnationalism describe as distinctive are instead another example of the powerful pressures toward institutional isomorphism: the examples of previous groups, as well as the systemic adaptations to their activities, provide the template by which contemporary ethnic, trans-state social action is fashioned.

In the United States, homeland ties provide a focal point for several reasons. First, stigmatized outsiders find that the potential for successful integration as an *American* is enhanced by “association with the existence, somewhere, of a national base in whose political and cultural achievements one might take legitimate pride (Mendelsohn, 1993: 133).” Second, the nature of the U.S. political system, with its high level of fragmentation and susceptibility to interest group influence, motivates immigrant and ethnic long-distance nationalists to learn how to behave like a successful interest group. Third, in a world where the United States remains the unquestioned hegemon, anything that will increase influence in Washington needs to be pursued – which is why the home country governments of today’s immigrants eagerly ask their expatriates to transform themselves into the next “Jewish lobby” (Shain, 1999; Guarnizo, 2001: 244). Beyond these incentives to operate on native grounds are the unintended results of the quest to

exercise influence on “homeland” issues: as the transnational card can only be played effectively if one gets oriented to the national game, doing so also fosters incorporation into host country politics.

Trans-state migrant social action: conditions, constraints, consequences

If the concept of transnationalism cannot possibly cover the welter of discrete and often opposing phenomena to which its scholarly advocates would have it refer, the proliferation of ties extending beyond the territory that states seek to enclose *does* merit close attention. Connections of this sort only violate those tenets of nationalist ideology that define normality as the conditions under which a nation is separate and distinct from the world that is found on its edges (Wimmer and Schiller, 2002). While nationalist ideology and social science “theory” on the topic overlap – as unintentionally implied by Guarnizo et al. (2003: 6), who position themselves against a “theoretical perspective” that “expects immigrants to have a single identity, national allegiance, and representation in one national polity” - the analyst’s job is to take critical distance from the native theory of the world rather than take it as the point of departure.

Rejecting the native point of view, we see it a different way. Networks of information, goods, and services *regularly* extend beyond the limits of state institutions, which is why international migration recurs. The verb “to immigrate,” as the dictionary defines it and sociologists too often agree, means to move to another country for the purposes of settlement; international migration, however, is a phenomenon of a different, more encompassing sort. In addition to migration for settlement, the mass migrations of the turn of the 20th or 21st centuries have entailed any number of variants, from one-time

return migration, to repeat migration, to circular migration. Population flows across borders leave large numbers of persons moving back and forth in a state of transition, not yet certain where to settle, let alone how much importance to place on the connections “here” as opposed to “there”. Over the long term, the networks that breach the nation-state society also pull the migrants away from home environments, yielding new diversity in the field of contacts. The short- to medium-term horizons, however, may look quite different. As long as migration rises, so too does the density of persons for whom home is not “here,” a factor affecting the predispositions of veteran migrants as well as the opportunities they confront. More migration tends to cause more cross-border ties.

But as our interests lie in the constitutive aspects of movement across borders, we need remember that it is the actions of states – through bounding territories and defining the nations they seek to enfold — that make migrations international. It is precisely because international migration involves *inherently* political processes, as Zolberg (1999) has argued, that the social organization of migration matters. The embedding of transborder migration networks threatens to sever the alignment of territory, political institutions, and society that states try so hard to create. From the standpoint of the receiving states, international migrants are not just strangers, but also *aliens*, whose arrival makes the relationship between *nationals* and *foreigners* a matter of domestic as well as foreign policy. The situation is not all that different on the sending side, as international migration represents a two-fold threat to the sending state’s power. Beyond the immediate consequences of exit for the “home” state’s ability to penetrate and cage its population lies the leverage gained by migrant long-distance nationalists with access

to another territory and the possibly greater economic and ideological resources that residence there affords.

Membership is an object of contestation, in which not only migrants, but also states and civil society actors on both ends of the chain take part. In the contemporary world, receiving as well as sending states are membership organizations, whose formal rules for citizenship condition the potential for participation in “host” as well as “home” contexts (Brubaker, 1992). While ethnic or migrant cross-border social action is therefore a “matter of state,” societal influences invariably come into play, especially since the spheres of ethnocultural and formal membership only rarely coincide. National identity is relational, defined in contrast to alien *and* external states and people. However, international migrations take aliens from outside the state’s territory and bring them inside, either directly, as in the receiving states, or indirectly, via the networks that link persons in the home territory to associates in foreign places, as in the sending states. The presence of persons with connections to foreign people and places push questions of belonging on to the political agenda, which is why the legitimacy of migrant or ethnic trans-state social action easily comes under threat.

Though the related identity issues take a variety of forms, the matter of persons owing allegiance to more than one state has historically elicited a public reaction of an intense, and frequently negative, sort. In receiving countries, foreign origins or attachments generate persistent perceptions of disloyalty. Even in the United States, where a civic conception of nationhood prevails, members of the dominant group view African-, Asian-, and Hispanic-Americans, as well as Jews, as “open to divided loyalties and therefore less patriotic than ‘unhyphenated’ Americans” (Smith, 1994:9). To be sure,

suspicion does not so much prevent as circumscribe homeland-oriented activities. Still, the importance of ethnocultural views should remind us that cross-state migrant or ethnic membership is not an individual attribute, but rather an accomplishment effected through interaction with a myriad of actors.

While the social organization of international migration variably sustains involvements both “here” and “there,” neither membership nor the means of maintaining ties on both sides are matters for the migrants to decide on their own. International migrants may indeed “see themselves as transnational, as persons with two homelands,” as noted approvingly by Glick Schiller and Fouron (1990: 341). That view, however, is hardly binding on anyone else. States have a significant capacity to determine who enters and leaves. In totalitarian states, where emigration is tantamount to betrayal, the “regular and sustained” contacts between source and destination societies that supposedly distinguish “transnationals” from immigrants are not just out of the question; they imperil sending country residents whom the “transnationals” try to contact or help. Even liberal states insist on controlling the travel of those over whom they have authority. Hence, immigrants from home countries with hostile relations to the host country find the options for back and forth travel limited (Kerber, 1997; Dowty, 1987).

The relationship *among* states also affects the conditions under which international migrants and their descendants can pursue their “homeland” interests. In general, a peaceful world encourages states to relax the security/solidarity nexus. International tension, let alone belligerence, provides the motivation to tighten up on those whose loyalties extend abroad (Armstrong, 1976). The specifics of the relationship between particular sending and receiving states matter even more. Homeland loyalties

extending to allies or neutrals can be easily tolerated, but those that link to less friendly, possibly hostile states are more likely to be suspect. Likewise, power differentials between sending and receiving states count. While migration from poor, weak countries is a means for escaping the penalties of dependency, post-migration cross-border social action then turns that dependency to advantage. The wealth of the receiving country generates material resources that increase migrant influence back home, and receiving country power makes the home state eager to use their nationals abroad for intermediation as a lobby. All of this can occur without creating excessive anxiety among hosts, whose concern for conditions on the periphery focuses on the maintenance of quiet and the openness of markets, otherwise shading off into indifference. By contrast, migrant origins in a more powerful source raises questions about *bona fides* on both sides, as receiving *and* sending states have an interest in transforming migrant trans-state social actors into agents of their own.

While states have *often* wrongly suspected international migrants of “dual loyalty,” they have not *always* been wrong. The seemingly benign activities of international migrants have been used for more noxious ends, which is why immigrants have, on occasion, turned out to be instruments of some other authority “here” or “there”.⁹ Admittedly, migrant cross-border social actors are more likely to be opponents than servants of the home state, but not necessarily to the satisfaction of receiving states concerned with international stability, the undermining of which is precisely what migrant long-distance nationalism can sometimes entail (Weiner, 1993). The migratory and ethnic connections that cross state borders also provide the vehicle for diffusing conflicts from home country to host or adding international tensions to social

antagonisms of mainly domestic origin. Thus, disputes based on home country polarities yield internecine conflicts that belie claims of a transnational “community” – as in “the war of the little Italies” earlier in the century (Diggins, 1972) or clashes between nationalists and Communists in contemporary U.S. Chinatowns (Liang, 2001).

Alternatively, opposing home country loyalties can create adoptive country cleavages, as illustrated by contemporary disputes among Arab-American and Jewish Americans (Shain, 1999) and the earlier frictions between African-Americans and Italian-Americans, spurred by Italy’s invasion of Ethiopia during the 1930s, or the discord between Japanese- and Chinese-Americans, provoked by Japan’s invasion of China (Stack, 1979; Chen, 2000; Kurashige, 2000).

Too fond of the phenomenon they study to notice its unpleasant aspects, the scholars of immigrant transnationalism have succumbed to the “romance of non-state actors (Halliday, 2001).” However politically appealing some of them may be, long-distance nationalists – as among Kurds, Croats, Irish, Sri Lankan Tamils, Sikhs, and Albanians, to name but a few – have also shown a predilection for the most unsavory means. Exiles and migrants have used the United States as a base for long-distance nationalist projects employing violence for over 150 years (Gerson 1964). As authorities and civil society actors perceive that “foreign” attachments can aggravate, rather than alleviate, host country divisions, they find reason to look askance at the very connections admired by the scholars of immigrant transnationalism, and also the motivation to react antagonistically.

Receiving state responses, however, drop out of the literature on “immigrant transnationalism.” Instead, migrants’ *claims* to membership, whether conceptualized in

formal or ethnocultural terms, are taken at face value. For example, the literature labels as “transnational” migrant populations whose stigmatized *and* often unauthorized status jointly impede host society membership, when not altogether prohibiting it. Similarly, presence gets conflated with membership, distorting the analysis on both receiving and sending society ends. On the one hand, the literature restricts “transnationalism” to those cases where sending states accept some degree of migrant home country involvement, making for a categorical distinction between immigrant “transnationalism” and exile nationalism, with the latter falling entirely out of view. However, this seems hardly appropriate, as “exiles” are just like “transnationals” in that they also claim membership in the home nation. They only differ in that the former’s claim is rejected by the home state – the effects of which we surely want to know, especially since regime change is all that is needed to turn “exiles” into “transnationals”. On the other hand, the conditions of migrants’ membership in the destination societies are assumed, not analyzed. As case in point, Portes and his associates describe “transnationals” as “leading dual lives, participating in two polities” (Portes et al, 2002: 279), but then analyze transnational political ties without considering the conditions of host country political participation – let alone, the legal status of the populations under study (Guarnizo, et al, 2003). By confusing cross-border social connections with membership, the literature excludes from the analysis all those aspects of the situation that directly impinge on migrants’ ability to lead “dual lives”.

Were it otherwise, much of the transnationalism literature would surely not have veered so far toward celebrating the phenomenon it purports to analyze, depicting “transnationalism” as “subversive” and “transnationals” as grassroots actors challenging

the hegemony of states and global capitalism “from below” (Rogers et al, 2001). Alas, reality bites back, since not all readers will conclude that multiple, national loyalties are such a good thing. For those inclined to think that the national community is under threat, the scholars’ views of the importance and prevalence of transnationalism provides additional reason to both worry and insist that the bounds of the national community get rolled back (Huntington, 1997; Tony Smith, 2001; Renshon, 2001). Understandably, advocates of ethnic trans-state social action and their sociological students may find such allergic responses to be displeasing; they nonetheless comprise an integral component of the phenomenon itself, and one that need be central to its analysis.

Beyond the “here” and “now:” the case for comparison

To reprise, we are not rejecting “transnationalism” in order to revert to the so-called orthodox “theories” with which this literature is actually twinned. On the contrary, we are convinced the phenomenon is worthy of serious scholarly attention – though we would define it differently, as the collision of the social organization of migration, and its state-spanning results, with those processes undertaken by states and civil society actors to produce state-society alignment. As noted above, these interactions involve a multiplicity of actors coming together in a broad range of combinations and variety of circumstances. But assessing the range of possibilities is constrained by the very limited sample of cases that has thus far been considered. In our view, the problem is *not* related to the nature of the data collected. *In theory*, the fact that much of the literature is based on case studies is irrelevant. The investigator can draw on such strategies as the negative, deviant, or critical case study to build in information from a much larger sample and

thereby draw reliable inferences based on intensive study of just one case. By the same token, results from sample surveys are generalizable to the populations from which the surveys are drawn, but no further, unless the unstudied populations are instances of the same, or at least, a similar case. The paper by Guarnizo et al. (2003) surely represents an advance in its systematic comparison of a set of cross-border political activities among three immigrant populations. Yet contemporary international migrations to the United States from small, weak countries on the U.S. periphery capture but a limited portion of the phenomenon in question. To illuminate its full range and gain purchase on the broader set of variables in play, one needs to extend the range of cases. This is the task that we will now pursue, though in purely illustrative fashion, given this paper's limited scope.

Temporal comparisons:

Understanding migrant and ethnic cross-border politics would greatly benefit from serious historical comparison. The literature on "immigrant transnationalism" emerged in 1992, with the conviction that the experience of contemporary migrants living both "here" and "there" represented a decisive break with the past. Historians dissented right from the very start (Goldberg, 1992), but the argument for discontinuity proved hard to abandon. Portes and his associates first argued that the case for studying transnationalism rested on the very novelty of the phenomenon itself (1999). Shortly thereafter, these same authors made due note of the historical precedents, but sought to rescue the concept by invoking the "fallacy of adumbration." Conceding that the phenomenon was not new, the authors found that transnationalism illuminated previously

unnoticed parallels linking “contemporary events with similar ones in the past (Portes, 2002: 184),” and therefore concluded that the concept yielded significant added value.

All the while contending that the transnational phenomenon can be old hat, even as the transnational concept does “new analytical work (Smith, forthcoming: 1),” scholars of immigrant transnationalism (Levitt, 2001a; Guarnizo, 2001; Robert Smith, 2001; Foner, 2000; Glick Schiller, 1999) have nonetheless insisted that the present significantly diverges from the past. The sources of distinction, they argue, lie in a complex of factors:

- the effects of technological change – reducing the costs and time entailed in communication and travel;
- the shift from the melting pot to multiculturalism– legitimating the expression of and organization around home country loyalties;
- the nationalization of home country societies – increasing the salience of the national identities with which immigrants arrived;
- the advent of a new international human rights regime (labeled “post-nationalism”) – diminishing the difference between “nationals” and “foreigners” by circumscribing the power of receiving states.

Only a few have taken issue with these conclusions, most notably Morawska, who while noting sensibly that nothing is ever quite the same, argued that the “lifeworlds and diaspora politics of turn-of-the-century immigrants share many of the supposedly novel features of present-day transnationalism (2001: 178).”

While Morawska’s criticisms are well-taken, the difficulties are more fundamental. If sociologists (and anthropologists) have until recently been unable to

detect the persistence of migrants' trans-state ties or appreciate their significance, historians have suffered from no such problem. As noted by the manifesto of modern immigration historiography – Frank Thistlethwaite's celebrated 1960 address – the migrations of the turn of the *last* century entailed trans-oceanic, back and forth traffic of such amplitude, that only some portion of the phenomenon fell into the standard categories of settlement and acculturation (Thistlethwaite, 1964). Thus, by the time that Glick Schiller and her colleagues “discovered” transnationalism, the historians were documenting – in copious detail – that all was *not* new under the sun: their accounts of return migration, long-distance nationalism, and immigrant associational life at the turn of the 20th century underlined the many commonalities between “now” and “then” (Ramirez, 1991; Cinel, 1991; Wyman, 1992).

Insufficient attention to sister disciplines is a minor, if common sin; the insistence on a qualitative distinction between some ill-defined and unperiodized “now” and “then” is a more troubling predilection. Claiming discontinuity, the students of immigrant transnationalism have effectively dehistoricized the present. They have also reproduced the familiar antinomies of social science, most notably that of a “closed” past and “open” present (Amselle, 2002), which is why the students of globalization, immigrant “transnationalism,” and “transnational relations” *all* end up with the same “discovery” – that it happened before and in surprisingly similar ways.¹⁰

Putting the present back into the flow of history tells us that the current state of affairs is not an inevitability, but rather a contingent outcome, subject to unpredictable pressures that could burst today's era of global interconnection asunder, as occurred in the past. The technological determinism asserted by the proponents of immigrant

“transnationalism” surely deserves second thought: after all, the simple letter did a remarkably effective job of knitting together trans-oceanic migration networks, as the reader of *The Polish Peasant* will surely recall (see also Gabaccia, 2000, chapter 4). As the historians of globalization point out, moreover, the impact of the telegram was almost as fundamental as that of the internet; yet neither the telegram nor any other, contemporaneous advances in communications and transportation technology prevented the slide into autarchy experienced for much of the twentieth century. On the other hand, a political environment supportive of immigrant and ethnic long-distance nationalism should hardly be taken for granted. The evidence for the influence of international norms or of an international human rights regime, is far from compelling. If instead, as argued by Joppke (1998) and Guiraudon (1998), among others, domestic political actors have been responsible for relaxing the distinction between nationals and foreigners, movement in the other direction is no less possible. Likewise, the greater legitimacy accorded expression of homeland loyalties is better understood as a product of the moment, not a permanent feature of advanced democracies. And not only is the legitimate scope of immigrant and ethnic trans-state social action chronically a subject of contestation, as we have argued throughout this paper. Its particularistic nature increases the likelihood of conflict with the liberal universalism of just those social and political groups supportive of immigrant rights, not to speak of the objections voiced by parties committed to more restrictive conceptions of the national community.

Consequently, the analytic task can proceed neither through the construction of categorical oppositions, nor the search for parallels between “now” and “then”. Rather, one needs to focus on temporal *variation* in both the political constellations shaping the

environment for trans-state ethnic and migration social action, as well as the forces that produce change, whether of a more constraining or facilitating nature. In the remainder of this section, we identify two axes of variation around which structured historical comparisons can be pursued, one relating to a characteristic of the migrants, the second to characteristics of the inter-state system.

The migrants:

The trans-state particularism that the literature describes as “immigrant *transnationalism*” presumes the nationalization of the societies from which the migrants come: the development of a national identity defined in terms of a contrast to alien peoples and lands. However, the presence of trans-state social connections hardly implies “long-distance nationalism.” Coming from a set of folk societies not yet nationalized, the peasant migrants of the turn of the 20th century lacked the common traits and corporate sense that nation-building projects and processes impart. Like “transnational migrants” today, yesterday’s peasant migrants also engaged in circular or recurrent migration and clustered in jobs and neighborhoods alongside their fellow hometowners, whom they joined in more formal associations. But it seems anachronistic to insist, as does the literature (e.g., Foner, 2000: 173), that persons not yet knowing that they were Italians or Poles, but intensely loyal to *this* hometown and *not* its neighbor, were nonetheless the “quintessential transnational(s).”

Rather than engage in the game of determining who is *really* what, one gains analytic leverage by emphasizing the relationship between the *prior* experience of

nationalization and the forms of trans-state social action that migrants pursue in the new setting. In general, the migrants of the turn of the 21st century are more likely, than those of the turn of the 20th, to come from nationalized societies in which internal ethnic differences have been diminished. Consequently, they arrive with loyalties that extend considerably beyond the local level, making the national the more likely basis for mobilization and aggregation rather than the sub-national attachments that prevailed earlier.

However, some contemporary migrants come from weakly or only partially nationalized societies, making for greater similarity to the newcomers of the last era of mass migration than is usually acknowledged. The closest parallel involves the migratory trade diasporas from Africa, now implanted throughout Europe and North America (Stoller 2002). They fully comply with Portes' strictures that transnationalism entail regular and recurrent trans-state contacts, with exchanges occurring among receiving points, not just source and destination. Yet, they are also the groupings among whom regional or religious attachments are central, overriding those of nationality, and among whom the national impulse has yet to take root.¹¹

On the other hand, because many post-colonial states are often arbitrarily assembled, loose collections of multi-ethnic peoples, the state-seeking nationalisms that so powerfully affected the migrants of the turn of the 20th century remain an important, if somewhat less common, aspect of the contemporary scene. The Sikh diaspora provides an ideal case in point: polarizing events at home and ethnicizing experiences in destination countries pushed the émigrés toward state-seeking nationalism as well as its correlate of de-Indianization (Tatla, 1999). As in the past, state-seeking nationalism in

the diaspora is conditioned by the stateness of the *receiving* environment: it is precisely because the tentacles of the home state cannot fully reach past the borders of the destination states that migration produces new degrees of political freedom. In the contemporary world, however, the emergence of transnational *political structures* – such as free trade or human rights regimes – furnishes leverage points on home country authorities not available before. But applying leverage through trans-state migrant or ethnic social action involves a difficult, hard to manage, dialectic. Advantage flows to state-seeking nationalists in the diaspora when their goals overlap with those of *host country* social actors or authorities oriented toward human rights matters in both home and host settings (Ostergaard-Nielson, 2001b). As noted earlier, strain is as likely as convergence. The particularism of state-seeking nationalists puts them at odds with the liberalism of their erstwhile allies. The bounds of acceptable, trans-state social action are also easily crossed, which is why one recent analyst concludes that state-seeking Kurdish nationalists in Germany “experience widespread ostracism by German mainstream parties,” finding little support even among the far left (Eccarius-Kelly, 2002: 108). Furthermore, as diaspora-induced conflict between host and home country authorities is not necessarily welcomed, it can also yield a less accepting, host country environment. While the outcome is unpredictable, varying from one situation to the next, the experience of state-seeking Kurds in Europe is instructive: French and German authorities have severely curtailed homeland-oriented, political activities among migrant Kurds, thus demonstrating the continuing potential for restrictive host country responses, as well as the relational nature of the matrix in which trans-state migrant and ethnic social action takes place (Lyon and Ucarer, 2001).

Inter-state relations:

As noted earlier, the condition of *inter*-state relations affects the ability to maintain national loyalties of a dualistic type. While national identity is relational, so that who we are is defined by contrast to those whom we are not, identity need not always be so restrictive in practice. Immigrants and their descendants can often maintain identities that might seem mutually exclusive. The advent of war breaks that co-existence. One can *try* to profess allegiance to two mutually belligerent states, but only with difficulty, as no one is more threatening than the detested and feared Other who happens to be located within the boundaries of one's own state. Moreover, the popular nature of modern wars threatens to transform immigrants from enemy countries into potential enemies. In the United States, war provided the occasion for destroying German-America and interning the Japanese. The same set of considerations led the United States, and all the other western democracies, to intern "enemy aliens" in both World Wars (Panayi, 1993; Saunders and Daniels, 2000).

Consideration of the experience in the United States shows that that war does not yield a single, deterministic effect. The total war of the 1941-5 era demanded the mobilization of the entire population. As its ideological goals conflicted with the reality of ethnic discrimination, war accelerated the integration of the southern and eastern European origin groups (Gerstle, 2000). In somewhat similar, though paradoxical fashion, the same international constellation that spelled disaster for the Japanese Americans worked to the benefit of Chinese Americans, who not only saw the (admittedly symbolic) lifting of the Chinese Exclusion Act, but were given *carte blanche*

to mobilize on behalf of precisely the homeland that America had previously despised (Chen, 2000).¹² Nonetheless, solidarity with co-ethnics abroad was a cause of constant suspicion in official circles (Gerson, 1964; Lees, 1987). Only among Italians on the west coast did doubts over the loyalties of the European ethnics produce concrete pressures for internment, and then only briefly (Fox, 1990). When push came to shove, the demands for U.S. *national* solidarity over-rode concerns for *ethnic* solidarity, as indicated by the behavior of American Jews, whose beleaguered co-ethnics in Europe begged that their American cousins shake “the earth...to its foundations [so that]...the world be aroused,” but to no avail.¹³ On the other hand, the Irish government’s neutral, if not pro-Axis tilt, during World War II effectively stilled Irish-American nationalism for almost a quarter century, though without ever putting the loyalties of Irish Americans in serious doubt (Wilson, 1995).

The ideological nature of international relations rendered immigrants vulnerable on grounds not just of their alien origins, but also their alien, “un-American” ideas. Beginning in the Cold War, adherence to communism became enough to bar one from naturalization, and deportation was effectively employed to help destroy the left.¹⁴ Though virtually no one’s loyalty was beyond suspicion at the time, groups with a vouchsafed status as the enemies of the United States’ enemies had a green light to openly express their old world ties and allegiances, as in the case of the so-called “captive nations” behind the Iron Curtain. By the same token, a lessening of international enmity bode danger. Where an early *détente* renewed old-country ties, as among Polish Americans in the late 1950s, charges of dual loyalty immediately arose (Blejwas, 1996). One also had to be careful about one's choice of enemies, since former foes sometimes

became friends. While American Jews were unhappy about American aid to Germany, not to speak of its rearming and the return of countless ex-Nazis to positions of prominence, they knew enough to keep quiet (Novick, 1999). It was not until the late 1960s that American Jews felt sufficiently emboldened to undertake a no-holds barred campaign in favor of their co-ethnics in other lands, notwithstanding opposition from the highest political level (Friedman and Chernin, 1999). In campaigning to bring Soviet Jews to the United States, however, American Jews were acting as the enemies of their country's enemy – which is why they ran little risk of raising the dual loyalty flag.

But the contemporary of era mass migration belongs to a different world, or so it appeared until just recently. With the winding down of the Cold War, the factors facilitating trans-state ties have been embedded in a more pacific world order, in which national allegiances have been allowed to overlap, as opposed to the mutual exclusivity expected for most of the short 20th century. Not all groups are equally lucky in this respect. Immigrants who come from countries with unfriendly relationships to the United States run the risk of falling into the “enemy alien” trap. That long-distance nationalism in all of its forms (including that of the time-honored ethnic lobby) does not come so easily to Arab Americans shows that the exception proves the rule: when loyalty is in question, long-distance nationalism is a hazardous game.

Just how the sudden inflection of international tension in the early 21st century will affect the pursuit of immigrant and ethnic homeland loyalties is anyone's guess. But the lessons of history do indicate that the perception of external threat builds support for a more restrictive view of the national community. Past experience also shows that the American state has the *capacity* to monitor, control, and restrict the trans-state social

action of international migrants and their descendants; whether and to what extent that capacity will be activated is a matter to which scholars of immigrant “transnationalism” will now surely want to attend.

International comparisons:

The international dimension of migration is relatively under-appreciated by U.S. scholars, in large measure because they have allowed national borders to define the field of study. In doing so, they have obscured the nation-building/maintaining aspect of responses to international migration. With a sample of one, all of the interest focuses on the variation within. Just a modest expansion of the sample highlights dynamics one would otherwise not see.

Extending the focus cross-nationally provides the opportunity to examine the possible effects of variations in political culture – in this case, national membership rules – and assess whether and how they affect the options for maintaining allegiances “here” as well as “there.” The best vehicle for analysis entails *within* group comparisons across different national incorporation systems. We illustrate the potential fruits of such an analysis by focusing on the options for maintaining dual loyalties among migrants and their descendants under two sets of ethnocultural systems – namely, the Jews who moved to the pluralistic system of the United States as opposed to those who settled in the unitary system of France.

While cross-border social action was a salient aspect of the ethnic experience on both sides of the Atlantic, it took very different forms. Among Jews, the strong form of assimilation *à la française* made Zionism taboo in official, organized circles up through

World War II. However, the unitary system proved perfectly compatible with that a less politicized form of Jewish cross border ethnic action – the Alliance Israélite Universelle – which transmitted French cultural ideals as well as schools and related services under strictly Jewish auspices to a strictly Jewish clientele (Hyman, 1998). In contrast, both organized American Jewry as well as rank and file Jews proved highly responsive to Zionism’s appeal, before as well as after the establishment of the state of Israel.¹⁵

American Jews have since come to comprise the classic ethnic lobby. Because of the perception that the ethnic lobby is a foreign import from the United States, similar activities by their French cousins have been far more constrained (Birnbaum, 1990).

Further insight can be gained by assessing the implications of differences in political structure, while loosely controlling for political culture. Focusing on the *ethnoculturally* plural systems of the United States, Canada, and Australia highlights the relevance of the political fragmentation of the United States. On the one hand, due to the loose coupling of U.S. politics at federal, state, and local levels, the politics of long-distance nationalism can be contained at the local or state levels without ramifying nationally. Consequently, fragmentation averts precisely the outcome most likely to increase the possibility of a negative ethnocultural reaction based on the premise that “politics stops at the water’s edge.” On the other hand, the relatively fragmented nature of U.S. federal politics motivates ethnic lobbying, as it does all other forms of interest group politics, none of which would be as potent were the national polity organized as a unitary regime. Thus, even within similarly pluralistic ethnocultural systems, the greater pluralism of the United States’ political structure facilitates the legitimate mobilization of immigrant and ethnic trans-state social action (Connor, 1993; Conostas and Platias, 1993).

Conclusion

International migrants usually have good reason to leave home, but once abroad, they often find motivation to sustain a continuing connection to the town, village, region, or “nation” left behind. For members of the nation-state societies to which the migrants have moved, however, these displays of concern and affection prove disconcerting. It is not simply that the migrants are failing to detach themselves from their old worlds— as social science wisdom and popular belief prescribe. In a world of mutually exclusive nation-states, rather, persons with foreign attachments are open to question, and all the more so when the relevant nation-states co-exist on less than friendly terms.

Historically-oriented scholars will remind us that there is no news here, though no one, of course, wants to fall into the trap of saying *plus ça change, plus c’est la même chose*. The problem is that the professional students of international migration and ethnicity have not broken with the everyday assumptions of the world in which they live, agreeing that the bounds of “society” and the “nation-state” normally converge. Conceptualizing the process as “immigration” – one in which people move for the purposes of settlement – they contend that attachments to the home left behind are imports that inevitably fade, as immigrants and their descendants gradually assimilate into a “mainstream” whose social ties are bounded at the water’s edge.

To the students of immigrant transnationalism goes the great credit of seeing that connections between “here” and “there” are an inherent and enduring component of the long-distance migrations of the modern world. While implicitly rejecting the view that social relations are normally contained within the boundaries of a state, the students of

immigrant transnationalism have unfortunately forgotten about the processes that produce a container society – whether driven by states’ efforts to bound the societies they enclose, or more informal, ethnocultural membership practices that aspire to the same goal. It is only the attachments deriving from those long-distance migrations that cross state boundaries that define the specific phenomenon in play. Beyond the simplistic dichotomy of assimilation versus transnationalism lies a different view, one that sees them as inextricably intertwined. It is just such a perspective, emphasizing the *regularity* of international migration and its inevitable collision with the mechanisms by which nation-states attempt to keep themselves apart from the world, that we have tried to develop in these pages.

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¹ This first generation of “transnational” studies did generate some research on ethnicity and transnational relations, most notably, Stack’s (1979) study of “ethnic conflict in an international city,” as well as a related anthology (1981), which the current generation of scholarly transnationalists has ignored. Taking aim at the state-centrism of the international relations literature, Stack argues that the cross-state networks of migrants help transfer international conflicts (and cross-state loyalties) into the domestic political system. As noted later in the paper, this emphasis on the conflict-producing consequences of international migration provides an important corrective to the views of the current generation of scholarly transnationalists. On the other hand, Stack confused the long-distance modes of *nationalism* that cross state boundaries with those forms of trans-state activity and association that go *beyond* nationalism – thus exactly foreshadowing the pitfalls on which the next generation of scholarly transnationalists would stumble.

² Smith and Guarnizo provide the exception that proves the rule. While noting that “agents of ‘receiving states’ remain relevant actors (1998:9),” they only devote a paragraph to the matter. We have found only one other such reference to the issue in the literature (Ostergaard-Nielsen, 2001) and none that focuses on the United States, otherwise the main topic of attention.

³ For the Oxford program, see <http://www.transcomm.ox.ac.uk>, replete with a list of 62 working papers and a book series under the Routledge imprint, of which there are eleven titles, as of this writing.

⁴ Kivisto (2001) and Morawska (2001) are the major exceptions; the former is a relatively friendly critique; the latter is more negative, though, like Kivisto, mainly dissenting with the argument for contemporary distinctiveness. Less noticed, though worth noticing, are the wise words of the veteran anthropologist, Sidney Mintz, whose critical commentary points out that the new theory of transnationalism is not “respectful enough of history,” while also noting that “things aren’t what they used to be...[and] they never were (1998:131).”

⁵ Indeed, a recent article (Nimtz, 2002) calls Marx and Engels the “prototypical transnational actors,” a description that, while replacing the still-serviceable label of “internationalism” with one of more recent vintage, nonetheless underscores the fundamental incompatibility of the two notions of “transnationalism” that circulate in the academic literature.

⁶ In 19th century Paris, for example, the migrants from the Auvergne and the Limousin were perceived as foreigners; indeed, the provincials in Paris lived together in “ghettos”, with “eyes remained fixed on home society (Weber, 1976:192),” just as would the Poles, Italians, and Jews who succeeded them. For villagers not yet nationalized, like the shepherds or peasants from northwestern Italy at the turn of the last century who moved to either Turin or Marseilles, international differed little from internal migration, both connecting to satellite communities in otherwise equally alien environments (Milza, 1993). In the late 19th and early 20th century, internal migrants within China formed native-place associations that were organized and functioned in much the same way as those created by their countrymen who instead went overseas (McKeown, 2001). The examples can be multiplied almost endlessly.

⁷ In the 1920s, midwestern migrants to California created state-based associations that picnicked, through the 1960s, in the very same L.A. public parks where Salvadoran and Guatemalan associations gather today (Boskin, 1965). In the 1930s, the displaced southwestern farmers made into “Okies” and “Arkies” by fearful Californians not only held on to their local attachments, but kept shuttling back and forth between the golden state and their old homes, in fashion quite similar to the Mexican field hands who replaced them when times improved (Gregory, 1989). In the 1950s, second generation Jewish migrants to Los Angeles thought it necessary to form *landsmannschaften* to bring together, not ex-Bialystokers or ex-Pinskens, but rather the displaced New Yorkers from various parts of the Bronx or Brooklyn (Moore, 1994).

⁸ Guarnizo et al (2003) contend that “the rise of a new *class* of persons, economic entrepreneurs, or political activists, who conduct cross-border activities on a regular basis lies at the core of the phenomenon....” (3). While it’s not clear why the authors invoke “class” rather than the more commonly used “community”, the implication is the same: the phenomenon entails the identification of a distinctive set of people, as opposed to a propensity to behave in a particular way. However, this paper provides no evidence of class or community or of any degree of boundedness that would justify distinguishing “transmigrants” from “immigrants” of the pure and simply sort. Nor do the authors demonstrate that persons with a propensity to engage in cross-border activities are in any way “committed to transnational political action” (17), a finding of which would significantly buttress the paper’s claim.

⁹ The classic examples are the various “black” and, as we now know, “red” internationals of the 1920s and the 1930s. As the history of the fascist diaspora shows,

the effort to extend influence to the emigrants threatened to disturb inter-state relations, which is why emigrants inclined toward more militant tactics were pushed to the side, to be replaced by more subtle, and indirect means of controlling the Italian-born population living abroad (Gabaccia, 2000; Cannistraro, 1999). The more aggressive policy pursued by the Nazi Auslandorganisation led to disaster, as exemplified by the fate of the German-American Bund, a quintessential case of immigrant political transnationalism (see Diamond, 1974) – of which no mention can be found in the contemporary literature.

¹⁰ On globalization, see James, 2001; on transnational relations, see Keck and Sikkink, 1998, chapter 2 and Klotz, 2002. Indeed, right from the outset, Nye and Keohane (1971) asked themselves whether the transnational tendencies they detected three decades ago were actually new or represented a reprise of some earlier form.

¹¹ But as noted by Riccio (1991: 590), who studied the Senegalese in Italy, “transmigration” can only occur when the migrants have obtained the authorization needed to legally exit and enter the country.

¹² Though only for a brief while: the table turned with the advent of the Chinese revolution, after which Chinese nationals living in the United States were once again suspect. Officials at the highest levels of the U.S. government perceived the overseas Chinese as a “fifth column;” those responsible for immigration control were convinced that the new Communist government was using illegal migration as a technique for the infiltration of spies. Though plans for mass deportation were discussed but never implemented, the period saw greatly intensified scrutiny of Chinese immigration and applications for naturalization (Ngai, 1998; Harrington, 1982).

¹³ The quotation is from a Jewish Labor Bund leader in the Warsaw Ghetto sending a message to the diaspora, which the Polish Home Army courier, Jan Karski, reported in print in 1943, and more fully in 1944. As conflict between the Polish government-in-exile and the Soviet Union intensified during the war, Polish Americans experienced strains of a similar sort: worried about antagonizing an ally, U.S. officials carefully monitored Polonia's internal life; the demands of wartime solidarity left the Polish American leadership responding gingerly to grassroots pressures for a more militant anti-Soviet stance. (Pienkos, 1991; Lukas, 1978)

¹⁴ Thus, the left's earlier internationalism proved its undoing, with such foreign-born leaders as Harry Bridges – the Australian-born head of the longshoremen's union – and Boleslaw Gebert – the Polish-born leader of a left-wing fraternal order -- the targets of government efforts at deportation (Starobin, 1972). Perhaps more relevant for contemporary debates was the experience of the unions and civil rights groups tied to the Mexican American left. Having gained influence during the 1930s by emphasizing the commonalities between U.S. citizens of Mexican descent and Mexican resident aliens, the same factor made these organizations vulnerable in the 1950s, when sharpening the distinction between foreigners and nationals became the explicit policy aim. Once immigration policy was deployed as an instrument of the cold war, the foreign-born leadership was effectively decapitated as many key activists were either deported or fled to exile (Gutierrez, 1995; Ruiz, 1987; Garcilazo, 2001).

¹⁵ In keeping with the theme of this essay, one has to note that, prior to 1948, American Jews were split in contention over alternative conceptions of the appropriate "imagined community." On the one hand, the German Jewish elite, like their French counterparts,

disavowed Zionism on grounds of dual loyalty, opting instead to build up an extensive mutual aid organization – the Joint Distribution Committee -- oriented toward their less fortunate brethren abroad (Kolsky, 1990). On the other hand, the ethnic “transnationalists” of the day – namely, the then influential socialists and trade unionists - - thought that the solution to the “Jewish Question” would occur, not through the building of a Jewish state, but rather as a result of the creation of democratic, multi-ethnic societies in the countries where Jews actually lived, a point of view maintained up until the establishment of the state of Israel. (Lebowitz and Malmgreen, 1993).