

## Conceptualizing 'diaspora diplomacy': Territory and populations betwixt the domestic and foreign

Elaine L.E. Ho, National University of Singapore

Fiona McConnell, University of Oxford, UK

### Abstract

This article bridges diaspora studies and diplomacy studies by proposing the concept of 'diaspora diplomacy', which considers the components of diplomacy and the changing relationships that diasporas have with states and other diplomatic actors. First, we ask who are the key actors engaged in diaspora diplomacy? Second, how is diplomatic work enacted by and through diasporas? Third, what are the geographies of diaspora diplomacy? Diaspora diplomacy directs researchers to reconsider the distinction between domestic and foreign policy, and the territorial dimensions of both diaspora and diplomacy. We engage with assemblage theory, highlighting the polyilateral and multi-directional aspects of diaspora diplomacy.

Keywords: assemblages, diaspora, diplomacy, polyilateralism, state, territory

### I Introduction

In a geopolitical climate that seems to be perpetually battered by international crises, hope continues to be placed on the role of diplomacy in mediating competing interests. In a world where migration has reached levels unprecedented since the Second World War, diasporas are increasingly seen as influential actors on both domestic and international fronts. From Kurdish activists to Indian migrant entrepreneurs and Israeli emigrant lobbyists, diasporas are being sought out and engaged as potential diplomatic actors to fulfil diplomacy's core functions of communication, representation and negotiation. This article sits at the juncture of what has been hitherto considered two distinct sets of literature: diaspora studies and diplomacy studies (especially 'new diplomacy'). The article considers how their convergence points to a field of study we term 'diaspora diplomacy'.

Focusing on the connections between diaspora and diplomacy allows us to critically examine the components of diplomacy, the changing relationships that diasporas have with states and an array of diplomatic actors, and explore the spatial articulations of diaspora diplomacy. Geographers have put considerable effort into interrogating the mechanisms through which sovereignty is enacted and territory imagined, constructed and contested (Agnew, 1994; Elden, 2006; McConnell, 2009; Painter, 2010; Steinberg, 2009). Our conceptualization of diaspora diplomacy further advances debates central to political geography on the nature of state power and sovereignty (Agnew, 2005; Painter, 2006; Mountz, 2013; McConnell, 2016), and the political articulations of territory and territoriality (e.g. Agnew, 1994; Antonsich, 2009; Allen, 2011; Elden, 2013). We suggest that diaspora diplomacy contributes to debates around the shifting role of the state within international politics by highlighting the complex ways that diasporas are engaged by and themselves engage with state, non-state and international actors. Our article brings the spatial dimensions of diplomacy to the fore, a field of study which has thus far received little attention from geographers despite the considerable potential for spatial analyses to contribute to debates around the changing nature of diplomacy (for exceptions see McConnell et al., 2012; Kuus, 2014).

Focusing on how diasporas conduct diplomacy underlines how practices of territorialisation and deterritorialization manifest simultaneously, and how such diplomacy can invoke overlapping scalar territorial imaginations for securing greater legitimacy. We conceptualize these ideas through assemblage theory, highlighting the polyilateral and multi-directional aspects of diaspora diplomacy. In forging connections between geography, diaspora and diplomacy, our article addresses three key questions. First, we ask who are the key actors engaging in diaspora diplomacy? We map out the different social actors that participate in diaspora diplomacy. We consider not only the state actors

that engage with diasporas but also non-state and international actors who are targets or beneficiaries of diaspora diplomacy. In so doing, our article positions diasporas as diplomatic actors in their own right.

Second, we ask how is diplomatic work enacted by and through diasporas? Here we explore the nature of diplomatic work done by diasporas and the formal and informal aspects of what counts as diplomacy. Third, through the above analyses we ask what are the geographies of diaspora diplomacy? Our conceptualization of diaspora diplomacy contributes to scholarship in political geography and critical geopolitics by troubling spatial assumptions concerning the distinction between domestic and foreign policy agendas, and the territorial dimensions of diplomacy. Our focus on diaspora diplomacy also draws out how diasporas deploy diplomatic tactics to engage with and spatially connect multiple stakeholders and audiences as constituents of assemblages.

Addressing these questions and foregrounding the geographical dimensions of how diasporas engage with diplomatic practices also allow us to bridge new developments in both diplomacy studies and diaspora studies. Within the former, recent research has advocated a turn away from diplomacy solely as statecraft and towards the diversity of social actors that engage in diplomatic practices (e.g. Cornago, 2013; McConnell et al., 2012). However, key texts on diplomacy rarely mention diasporas at all (e.g. Bjola and Kornprobts, 2013). If they do, it is in passing, as one of a range of 'new' diplomatic actors (e.g. Riordan, 2003) or as a vehicle for public diplomacy (Melissen, 2005, 2013; Yun, 2012; Copeland, 2009). Our conceptualization of diaspora diplomacy follows critical scholarship that approaches diplomacy as 'humanist aspirations' that have the potential to bring about changes in 'how we live together and in relation to others' (Constantinou, 2013: 156; Constantinou and Der Derian, 2010). We examine what engaging diasporas in diplomacy means for the evolution of diplomatic practice, consider the way that diplomatic practice casts new light on how diasporas achieve their aspirations, and discuss how the spatial reconfigurations implicit in these developments speak to broader debates around the relationship between political representation and territory.

Research within diaspora studies has critically analysed the recent state-driven initiatives that engage diasporas for political and development purposes, known as diaspora strategies (Gamlen, 2008; Ho et al., 2015; Dickinson, 2014). Diasporas can be called on to conduct high-level diplomatic negotiations for their countries of origin, as well as more ordinary ways of flying the flag of their home countries through daily practices and interactions with host communities. Diasporas may also seek to influence domestic and foreign policy agendas in their countries of origin (see Newland, 2010), or lobby other state actors and international organizations for the right to create a new nation-state (e.g. on Kurds, see Berkowitz and Mugge, 2014; on Palestinians, see Mavroudi, 2008; on Tibetans, see McConnell, 2016). In such ways, diasporas play an increasingly important role in diplomatic negotiations by 'partaking in governing' (Sending et al., 2011). Diasporas can thus be brought into diplomacy as addressee or participant (Mwagiru, 2012) and, in the process, shape the conduct of diplomacy too.

We argue that the link between diaspora and diplomacy remains to be fully and systematically explored in diaspora studies. Researchers have considered the political importance of diasporas from angles such as diaspora lobbying or diaspora advocacy (e.g. Gandhi, 2002; Newland, 2010). Our focus on diaspora diplomacy builds on but is also distinct from existing studies of diaspora politics and political transnationalism. The latter mainly considers state-diaspora relations and how diasporas participate in the political affairs of sending countries, for example through external voting, political remittances, and the political outcomes of 'circulating ideas, practices [and] know-how' (Bocagni et al., 2016: 447; see also Laguerre, 1999; Smith, 2003; McGregor, 2009; Collyer, 2014; Brand, 2014). In contrast, our conceptualization of diaspora diplomacy focuses on the role of

diasporas in shaping diplomacy's core functions of representation, communication and mediation. It is concerned with the multiple stakeholders and audiences that diasporas reach out to for communicating the cause they represent, the mechanisms through which such communication is done, the tensions ensuing when different stakeholders are brought into the picture, and how such tensions are mediated.

The following section reviews the interdisciplinary literature on diplomacy and diasporas that speaks to the field of study we term 'diaspora diplomacy'. This includes work on public diplomacy as a lever of soft power and the diversification of diplomatic actors, and scholarship on the intersection of diasporas with national agendas around development and foreign policy. We focus on the attention, or lack thereof, that existing literature has paid to the role of the state and territory vis-a-vis recent transformations in the practice of diplomacy and the political articulations of diasporas. The remainder of the article is structured around two modalities of diaspora diplomacy: diplomacy through diaspora and diplomacy by diaspora. The former establishes how diasporas function as diplomatic actors and the way they bring multiple diplomacy stakeholders and audiences into an assemblage of relations and interactions. This discussion signals how diaspora diplomacy troubles the territorial assumptions associated with diplomatic practices and steers attention to the polyilateral aspects of diplomacy (Wiseman, 2004). The latter section focuses on the diplomatic actions that diasporas take to advance alternative political visions. It traces three modalities of diaspora diplomacy: advocacy, mediation and representation. The discussion underlines the scalar aspects of diaspora diplomacy and shows how diaspora diplomacy engenders new articulations of territory and territoriality. We conclude by reiterating the analytical potential of diaspora diplomacy and its significance for advancing geographical debates on state power, sovereignty and territory. Focusing primarily on the contemporary period, our analysis draws on selected case studies to illustrate our arguments.

## **II Situating diaspora diplomacy as a field of study**

The practice of diplomacy is understood as the management of relations between groups, and how this is articulated through practices of communication and representation. With the acceleration of digital communications, the tools of diplomacy have expanded to include social media, such that instantaneous communication with a wide range of audiences at home and abroad has become commonplace (Bjola and Holmes, 2015). Alongside this, the increasing interconnectedness of humanitarian, environmental, trade and military issues, and the cross-cutting scales of foreign policy interaction, have multiplied the range of actors engaged in diplomatic practices (Kerr and Wiseman, 2013). These trends are reflected in two increasingly prominent bodies of academic work that mainly emerged from international relations (IR) but have important interdisciplinary dimensions. The first is a focus on public diplomacy as a lever of soft power and the second is scholarship coalescing around 'new diplomacy' (Riordan, 2003), which analyses the pluralization of diplomatic actors. In discussing key themes emerging from this scholarship, we note points of intersection with the role of diasporas but also the lack of sustained academic attention to how their aspirations and actions are reconfiguring the role of states and, of particular interest to geographers, the territorial dimension of diplomacy.

The notion of public diplomacy has gained considerable popular and scholarly attention in recent years. Essentially, public diplomacy is the communication of policy perspectives and the fostering of relationships between political entities (including but not restricted to states) and publics based in foreign countries in order to inform and influence these audiences. As a diplomatic practice, public diplomacy long precedes its scholarly framing, but it came to prominence in the post-9/11 era when international perceptions of the United States were linked to the welfare of the country's national security (Ross, 2002). Underpinning much public diplomacy literature and practice in the 2000s has been Nye's conceptualization of soft power, defined as 'the ability to get what you want through

attraction rather than coercion or payments [which] . . . arises from the attractiveness of a country's culture, political ideals, and policies' (2004: x). Public diplomacy is understood as one of the key instruments in this mode of power (Gilboa, 2008; Melissen, 2005) and has been embraced as an indispensable tool of statecraft. It goes beyond international reputation management to also include relationship building 'through dialogue and networking activities by actors above and below the state' (Huijgh, 2016: 444). The breadth of what comes under the remit of public diplomacy has, however, been a source of scholarly anxiety, with concerns that the term has lost its analytical purchase (Sharp and Wiseman, 2012; Huijgh, 2013: 63; Gilboa, 2008). We propose that paying attention to the dynamics of diaspora diplomacy can bring conceptual clarity to the notion of public diplomacy.

As Melissen (2013: 436) has noted, public diplomacy is 'in a sense a metaphor for the democratization of diplomacy, with multiple actors playing a role in what was once an area restricted to a few'. This shift from 'club' to 'network' diplomacy (Heine, 2006) is reflected in academic work where there has been a shift from the traditional assumption that diplomacy is the special preserve of the state (Nicolson, 1939; Satow, 1922; Watson, 1984), to a broader understanding of diplomacy (see Kerr and Wiseman, 2013; Sharp, 2009). This resonates with the critique of state-centrism that underpins work in critical geopolitics, despite a surprising lack of engagement by geographers with the field of diplomacy (for exceptions see Kuus, 2016; Jones and Clark, 2015; McConnell et al., 2012; Dittmer, 2015). Within critical diplomacy studies, a growing body of work loosely labelled 'new diplomacy' has attended specifically to the multiplication of non-state actors on the diplomatic stage (Cooper et al., 2002; Riordan, 2003). This includes research on the role of NGOs (Betsill and Corell, 2008), transnational corporations (Strange, 1992) and indigenous communities (Beier, 2010; Epp, 2001) in formal diplomatic negotiations. Meanwhile, new regional formations have given rise to supranational and subnational diplomatic services, from the European External Action Service (Kuus, 2014; Balfour et al., 2015) to the foreign policy capacity of subnational governments through 'paradiplomacy' (Aldecoa and Keating, 1999; Duchacek et al., 1988; Cornago, 2010) and city diplomacy (Acuto, 2013).

Scholars of diplomacy have started to ask how the multiplication of actors in world politics might change the nature and quality of diplomacy (Cooper and Hocking, 2000; McConnell et al., 2012; Constantinou et al., 2017). This includes investigating which diplomatic practices these actors engage with, how these practices condition actors' strategies, and the broader question of who is a legitimate actor in international relations (see Beier, 2010: 10; Cornago, 2013; Sending et al., 2011: 10). In seeking to avoid a dualistic framework of "old diplomacy", as exemplified by state actors [ . . . ] being threatened and reconfigured by "new diplomacy", which is heralded by non-state actors' (McConnell, 2017: 140), scholars have proposed the idea of 'a new "global heteropolarity", in which a wide range of new actors are producing profound global effects through interconnectivity' (Constantinou and Der Derian, 2010: 18), the 'diplomatisation' of social life (Neumann, 2012) and polyilateralism (Wiseman, 2004, 2010). The sections that follow demonstrate that the idea of a polyilateral world of multiple state, non-state and international actors that develop diplomatic relations without 'mutual recognition as sovereign, equivalent entities' being necessary (Wiseman, 2010: 27) is one that resonates closely with the articulation of diaspora diplomacy. We also use diaspora diplomacy to highlight the thus far overlooked geographical dimensions of how unconventional diplomatic actors shift the nature of diplomacy. We tease out the flattening of hierarchies of diplomatic relations and how, through diaspora engagement, the relationship between diplomacy and territory is rearticulated.

Just as diplomacy studies have increasingly questioned what is meant by 'diplomacy', so the core concept of diaspora has been subject to critical debate within the field of diaspora studies. We adopt Brubaker's (2005: 13) understanding of diaspora 'as a category of practice, project, claim and stance,

rather than as a bounded group'. Critical diaspora studies research peaked during the late 1990s as researchers interrogated the characteristics of diasporas as social formations, and questioned the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion from diaspora membership. Such research evolved to examine how diasporas engage homeland states through political mobilization or cultural ambassadorship (e.g. Smith, 2003; Tomiczek, 2011; Dickinson, 2014). The Irish, Armenian and Jewish diasporas are classic examples of how diasporas have represented and lobbied for the interests of their respective homelands to the US government, acting as diplomatic actors in bilateral relations. Today new research directions are emerging in diaspora research as a result of growing academic interest in policies known as diaspora strategies, understood as the initiatives that migrant-sending states implement to mobilize their diasporas for national agendas (e.g. Larner, 2007; Ragazzi, 2009; Ho, 2011; Mullings, 2012; Delano and Gamlen, 2014; Cohen, 2017). Research on diaspora strategies has advanced earlier work in transnationalism studies that heralded the 'end of the state', or at least its diminished role. This research agenda includes ideas of the 'emigration state' (Gamlen, 2008) and 'emigrant infrastructure' (Raj, 2015), the extraterritorial extension of state power (Ho, 2011; Collyer and King, 2014), and diaspora governmentalities (Larner, 2007; Mullings, 2012; Dickinson, 2014). Nonetheless, we note that the current scholarship on diasporas focuses mainly on (sending) state-diaspora relations whereas our conceptualization of diaspora diplomacy brings into view the multiple stakeholders and audiences that diasporas engage for diplomatic purposes.

To that end we engage with a small but growing body of work that is turning attention to how migrant-receiving countries and supranational organizations, such as the World Bank and the European Union, leverage the symbolic ties that foreign-born populations retain to their countries of origin (e.g. Sinatti and Horst, 2014; Boyle and Ho, 2017). These powerful actors also sponsor the diaspora strategies of low income countries to support the transfer of skills, knowledge and capital that are conducive to development in those countries (Sinatti and Horst, 2014). Such collaborations entail not only economic but also political and foreign policy intentions. For example, the US-based non-profit organization International Diaspora Engagement Alliance (IdEA) operates under the auspices of the Secretary of State's Office of Global Partnerships, thus tying funding for diaspora-centred development abroad to US foreign policy (Boyle and Ho, 2017). One of its initiatives is a web-chat series that enables diaspora groups, such as those from Armenia, Greece and Ukraine, to pose questions to former US diplomats on the topic of US government engagement with diaspora communities (IdEA, 20 September 2016). The multi-directionality of diplomatic tactics evinced in these examples signals overlapping soft power agendas in which multiple state actors engage another country's diasporas as diplomatic actors, thus complicating the territorial premises of state power and diplomacy.

The discussion above points to the explicit and implicit political functions of diasporas. The multiple ways in which diasporas can be called upon by both migrant-sending and migrant-receiving countries, as well as at an international level, lead to questions such as who are the targeted subjects of diaspora engagement and why? In what ways do state-directed diaspora strategies engender the relation between nation and state, and how might this be challenged? With these questions in mind, we use the idea of diaspora diplomacy to contribute to three sets of debates in diaspora studies: the relationship between diasporas and territory, the role of the state vis-a-vis diasporas, and the interactions between diasporas and other social actors. We suggest that diaspora diplomacy extends arguments on the extraterritorial reach of the state to analyses of the multi-actor assemblages that both states and diasporas enter into through diplomacy.

First, early diaspora studies scholarship (e.g. Tölölyan, 1991; Clifford, 1994; Ma Mung, 2004) has argued that diasporas complicate territorial assumptions of nation and statehood as a dispersed population that resides outside of national homelands but which claims strong attachments to the place they left. With more migrants embarking on re-migration journeys from country to country

today, the sojourning patterns of diaspora members further confound the territorial underpinnings of not only nation and state but also diaspora (e.g. Ho and Ley, 2014). Whose diaspora do these individuals belong to? Through what mechanisms are they mobilized for diplomatic purposes and towards what ends? Our conceptualization of diaspora diplomacy directs attention to the new complexities that characterize definitions of diasporas, homeland and the territorial attachments on which these are premised.

Second, studies of diaspora engagement have hitherto focused on state-led initiatives, diaspora and state interactions, or international organizations that work with recognized interstate actors. Schiller (2005) argued that diaspora studies have been typically concerned with nation-centric identities; the population scrutinized is understood to be a nation that has dispersed from its homeland or desires its own homeland. We propose that it is also useful to take apart the conflation of nation and state in analyses of the conjoined relationship between diaspora and diplomacy. This opens space to consider instances where the diaspora takes the lead to lobby for its own interests even if these are in opposition to sovereign states, or the means by which stateless polities enlist their diasporas to advance their cause. Disentangling diaspora from the state also allows us to examine the nature of diplomacy that diasporas carry out without the diplomatic recognition afforded under the inter-state system, and it broadens the focus from questions of how diasporas participate in politics to the multiple stakeholders and audiences that diasporas engage through diplomacy's strategies of representation, communication and mediation.

Second, just as new diplomacy studies have started to recognize the multiple stakeholders and polyilateral operations of diplomacy, the rise of diaspora strategies within critical diaspora studies has led to research that adopts governmentality as a theoretical perspective for understanding how diasporas are governed and govern from afar, and the interactions between migrant-sending and migrant-receiving states as well as a range of social actors (e.g. Larner, 2007; Ragazzi, 2009; Sinatti and Horst, 2014; Boyle and Ho, 2017). For instance, Mullings (2012) deploys governmentality to assess how diaspora strategies function as assemblages which enable states to govern from afar. She refers to such social formations as diaspora assemblages (also see Dickinson, 2017, on the material and affective aspects of state-diaspora relations). In assemblage theory, the state would be one of several component parts of a whole and the capacities of those component parts are the result of interaction with 'an infinite set of other components' (see Dittmer, 2014: 387). In the following section, we build on this intersection between diaspora, governmentality and assemblages to develop our discussion of diaspora diplomacy.

In sum, apart from a handful of case studies, which we discuss below, there is limited literature that explicitly focuses on the connection between diasporas and diplomacy. Where the term 'diaspora diplomacy' has specifically been used it appears as a descriptor for a form of public diplomacy (Tomiczek, 2011), a mode of soft power (Gonzalez, 2012) and a strategy used by states to promote their external interests (Rana, 2009).<sup>1</sup> In each case 'diaspora diplomacy' is applied to a single case study and few efforts are made to analyse the characteristics of diaspora's engagement with diplomacy or its implications for state power, territory and territoriality. What is missing, and what this article develops, is a conceptual understanding of the dynamics of diaspora diplomacy. The next section establishes how diasporas function as diplomatic actors that can be mobilized by states and how their diplomatic tactics create assemblages comprising intergovernmental or supranational organizations, national governments, provincial or local governments, diaspora associations and the market, *inter alia*.

### **III Conducting diplomacy through diaspora: In the service of states**

In the literature on both diaspora and diplomacy, the focus has been on how sending states enrol their diasporas to lobby for the national interest, facilitate bilateral mediation, or as a resource for

information gathering by intelligence agencies (e.g. Cochrane et al., 2009, Rana, 2009; Liu, 2011). Diasporas are also seen as key to cultural and public diplomacy, such as by fostering cross-community relations and understanding that goes beyond the formal initiatives of the state (e.g. the British Council, Alliance Francaise, Goethe Institute). This section on how diplomacy is conducted through diaspora first discusses how migrant-sending states enrol diasporas to promote their image abroad, albeit recognizing the contested aspects of such partnerships. Thereafter, we turn to how migrant-receiving states in the Global North enlist the diasporas of other countries to extend their influence in those migrant-sending countries. We use these examples to argue that being of both domestic and foreign worlds, diasporas can be analysed as populations embodying liminal political subjectivities. We also underline the multiple stakeholders engaged in diaspora diplomacy and the multi-directional aspects of diaspora diplomacy that challenge conventional approaches tying diplomacy purely to state power and territory. This leads us to suggest that diaspora diplomacy can be analysed using assemblage theory. Diaspora diplomacy thus directs attention to a mode of diplomacy that challenges the distinction of insider and outsider, and entails processes of both territorialisation and deterritorialization.

Formalized diaspora strategies represent systematic approaches through which states engage diasporas in order to enact soft power. Soft power is enacted through cooperation rather than coercion (Nye, 2004), such as by influencing the opinions and therefore the foreign policy decisions of bilateral partners or international organizations. Leading global actors that have capitalized upon their diasporas as diplomatic tools to enhance their soft power include Armenia, Israel and Ireland (Arthur, 1991; Sandler, 2004; Zarifian, 2014). Recent scholarly attention has also focused on China and India because of the ambitious initiatives they have launched to institutionalize relationships with their diasporas so as to reap the potential benefits that diasporas can bring to bilateral relations (especially economic) in their role as bridge-builders (Rana, 2009: 367). These initiatives include establishing ministries and government agencies for diaspora engagement, thus designating a portion of the state apparatus to emigration affairs. In both China and India, engagement for diaspora affairs filters down to sub-national levels involving provincial and local governments (e.g. Varadarajan, 2010; Leung, 2015; Ho, 2016). Their diasporafocused ministries and agencies host diaspora conferences within their respective countries and send missions abroad to engage with their diasporas. Diasporas are perceived as a ready catchment for embassies and diaspora-focused ministries/agencies to solicit advice and for mobilization.

Both China and India have longstanding diasporas, making outreach to diasporic descendants a component of diaspora diplomacy. For example, China's claims over the Chinese diaspora encompass those considered Chinese diasporic descendants (i.e. their ancestors left China during the 19th or early 20th century) and those known as the *xinyimin* (new Chinese migrants who left China after 1978) (see Ho, 2016). India's relationship to its historical diaspora is fractious but has been partially recuperated through diaspora strategizing (see Dickinson, 2014). Both China and India's diaspora strategies include engaging with organizations abroad that bring together members of the diaspora. Known as diaspora associations, such organizations have diverse characteristics, but those that have strong ties with the ancestral land play a crucial role in promoting bilateral relations. They deploy cultural diplomacy tactics to promote the national image of the ancestral land to the country where the diaspora has settled (see Liu, 2011). Cultural performances and festivals not only maintain homeland culture for diasporic descendants, but are also meant to convince wider publics in the host country of the benefits of closer bilateral cooperation (Dickinson, 2014: 1). Nonetheless, academic writing on diaspora associational life recognizes that diaspora associations reproduce state or elite power, and particular representations of politics and culture (e.g. Dickinson, 2014). There are also cases where diasporas and their homeland states have agendas that are out of sync. For example, in the case of Armenia, diaspora efforts to seek international recognition of the Armenian genocide have complicated the homeland government's bilateral peace efforts with Turkey and

Azerbaijan (Shain, 2008; see also Joseph, 2012, on the Mexican diaspora in the US developing an agenda separate from the Mexican government). Apart from migrant-sending states, migrant-receiving states in the Global North are also enrolling diasporas as diplomatic actors.

Migrant-receiving states may turn to foreign-born populations settled in their countries (i.e. diasporas of another country) to enhance their national soft power abroad. This can happen in two ways. First, migrant-receiving states seek an economic advantage in emerging economies in the Global South by encouraging their foreign-born populations who have returned or continue to maintain influence in their countries of origin to bridge the interests of the migrant-receiving and migrant-sending countries. Canada, for example, uses cultural and professional networking activities to reach out to Chinese immigrants who have returned to China after securing permanent residency or citizenship status in Canada (i.e. they become considered Canadians abroad; see Guo, 2014; Ho and Ley, 2014). Such migrants serve as a potential resource through which the economic goals of immigration countries can be advanced through the diaspora's cultural knowledge and social networks (see Zhang, 2010; Bitran and Tan, 2013; Ho and Ley, 2014).

Second, for migrant-receiving countries, their foreign-born populations who belong to the diaspora of another country represent a means to introduce and entrench Western-centric models of government and economy in migrant-sending states (Sinatti and Horst, 2014). Boyle and Ho (2017: 591) argue that diaspora-centred development agendas such as those promoted by the World Bank, the European Commission, the United Nations Development Programme, and the US State Department mobilize diasporas to 'serve as effective bearers of Western recipes for success because they seem culturally proximate, cognitively accessible, less vested in securing Western interests, and more concerned with the wellbeing of their homelands and caring for intimate kin'. Diasporas thus function as harbingers of soft power for western nation-states that have strong stakes and representation in international organizations. Such diaspora-centred development projects can also serve to mitigate the security concerns of migrant-receiving states faced with irregular migration, such as by requiring countries receiving funding to implement frameworks for managing undocumented migration (also see Boyle and Ho, 2017).

Drawing on the analyses above, we argue that diplomacy through diaspora extends reconceptualization of state power and territory in three ways. First, the multi-directional aspects of diaspora diplomacy prompt reconsideration of the geographies of political subjectivity vis-à-vis the state. In particular, diasporas disrupt the distinction between what is considered domestic or foreign, aptly captured in Varadarajan's (2010) term, 'the domestic abroad'. As illustrated by the examples discussed above, states engaging with diasporas articulate a mode of diplomacy that blurs the boundary between domestic and foreign audiences. The artificial distinction between inside and outside or domestic and foreign has been discussed in critical IR scholarship (e.g. Walker, 1993), including on public diplomacy (Melissen, 2013). For example, Huijgh (2013: 65, 74) argues that 'public diplomacy's domestic and international dimensions are . . . two sides of the same coin, bolstering one another'. Attending to the diplomatic role of diaspora communities augments this argument, and shines a spotlight on what happens 'in-between' the domestic and the foreign. The role of diasporas as neither fully domestic nor fully foreign not only challenges the very distinction of internal and external, it also points us to the importance of liminal political subjectivities: an ambiguous sense of actorhood that is 'betwixt and between' that of insider and outsider (Turner, 1969; McConnell, 2017). Invoking the notion of liminality is not to imply that diasporas are peripheral or second-order actors, but rather to highlight the potential leverage of their in-between subjectivity. With liminality being underpinned by ambivalence (Turner, 1967; McConnell, 2017), being of both domestic and foreign worlds brings with it the potential for creativity and innovation in the field of diplomacy, but also unease and disruption.

Second, territorial assumptions that underpin diplomacy are troubled through diaspora diplomacy. When considering non-state diplomacy, a spectrum of relationships between territory and diaspora can be traced. At one end are examples such as NGOs, transnational corporations and de facto religious communities that 'represent constituencies that are not bounded by territory but by common values, knowledge, and/or interests related to a specific issue' (Betsill and Corell, 2008: 2). In representing issues that transcend inter-state boundaries these diplomatic actors can claim to represent globe-spanning constituencies based on gender, ethnicity and particular value systems, and thus articulate a virtual and symbolic rather than territorially bounded form of authority (Sending et al., 2011). For other non-state actors, however, territory is of heightened importance to their articulation of diplomacy. Here we can think of indigenous communities and many stateless nations for whom strong connections to land underpin their political identity and agendas (e.g. Beier, 2010). Diaspora communities lie somewhere between these differing configurations of diplomacy and territory. We suggest that it is productive to think of diplomacy through diaspora as a mode of diplomacy that entails practices of both territorialization and deterritorialization, and which holds the symbolic and practical roles of territory vis-a-vis diplomacy in tension.

Third, the literature on diaspora and diplomacy presents diaspora communities primarily as tools of diplomacy that are at the service of states. The state thereby emerges as the major actor in diplomacy. Our article acknowledges the role of the state but sees it as one of many actors involved in diplomacy; such an approach is attentive to the plural actors and manifold power negotiations entailed in diplomacy. We find it useful to think of this in terms of 'polylateralism' (Wiseman, 2004, 2010), incorporating thus a third dimension to diplomacy, in addition to bilateralism and multilateralism. 'Polylateral diplomacy' involves the conduct of relations between official entities – such as a state or intergovernmental organization – and at least one unofficial non-state entity. Diasporas lobby international organizations, the media, the private sector, NGOs and other actors to reach out to migrant-sending states, migrant-receiving states and other states deemed supportive to a 'cause' (Brinkenhoff, 2009; Newland, 2010). The action of diasporas brings the different components of diplomacy into a diaspora assemblage where diasporas forge relations with an array of social actors such as the state, intergovernmental or supranational organizations, civic organizations, the market, and other diaspora actors (see Raj, 2015, and Cohen, 2017, for examples). Each of those individual components can have material (and immaterial) properties and capacities of their own, but also through interaction with one another exhibit properties and capacities as a whole (see Dittmer, 2014). The individual components of an assemblage, and the assemblage as a whole exhibit both territorializing and deterritorializing tendencies, through the constant negotiating of power where 'proximity and reach play across one another in particular ways' (Allen and Cochrane, 2010: 1087; Collier, 2006; Sassen, 2006).

We thus propose that diasporas function as diplomatic actors in their own right, at times acting in the interest of the state and at other times realizing alternative political projects through their interactions with the other social actors found in diaspora assemblages. In the following section we detail the diplomatic tactics undertaken by diasporas to achieve agendas that challenge prevailing power structures either in their countries of origin or countries of settlement.

#### **IV Diplomacy by diasporas: Advocacy, mediation and representation**

Diasporas can function as independent political actors at different times for different reasons, and diplomacy by diasporas can take a variety of forms. As diplomatic actors, diasporas exercise 'diplomatic subjectivity'. According to Constantinou (2013: 142), this 'elevate[s] one into an interlocutor whose separate will, interests, and ways of being deserve to be recognized as constituting "external" affairs'. In this section we draw out three modes of engagement through which diasporas realize their aspirations: advocacy, mediation and representation. Diaspora diplomacy cannot be reduced to any one of these engagement modes, and indeed they are not

compartmentalized from one another, but analytically differentiating between them helps draw out the different configurations of the relationship between diaspora and diplomacy. In discussing the three engagement modes, we highlight the ways in which diasporas mobilize resources to advance their cause or perform bridging functions, but we also acknowledge that diasporas can accentuate divisions or exacerbate conflict. This section draws attention to how diasporas deploy diplomatic tactics that engage local, national, supranational and global levels of power, and galvanize flows of resources from site to site within the diaspora assemblages in which they are situated. In so doing, diaspora diplomacy enacts action that traverses scales and mobilizes resources within diaspora assemblages, engendering both territorializing and deterritorializing formations of power.

Turning first to advocacy as a mode of diaspora diplomacy, even though states mobilize their diasporas to advocate on their behalf, diasporas can also advocate against powerful home and host states to realize their own vision of what constitutes good governance and state-society relations. Diaspora advocacy refers to actions taken by diasporas to champion causes and impact domestic and foreign policies that affect their status in their countries of origin or countries of immigration. For instance, the Kurdish diaspora in Europe utilized Kurdish language resources and satellite television programmes as public diplomacy tools to mobilize dispersed Kurdish diaspora populations into lobbying for recognition and rights in Turkey (see Adamson and Demetriou, 2007). A coalition of Kurdish organizations demanded that minority rights be made a condition for Turkey's entry into the European Union. They invoked EU sanctioned democratic and human rights norms, and partnered with international human rights organizations to lobby the European Parliament, the European Commission and standing committees such as the EU–Turkey Joint Parliamentary Committee and the Committee of Women's Rights and Gender Equality (see Berkowitz and Mugge, 2014). The Kurdish case also illustrates how diasporas have been leading the way in the field of digital diplomacy, reflecting the importance of advocacy in the cyber-sphere. For example, Watts (2004: 122) notes how the Kurdish diaspora 'constructed a transnational advocacy community, a kind of "Virtual Kurdistan West" that could not be located on any political map but had become a persistent presence in international affairs'. As another example, the Falun Gong movement consists of members of the Chinese diaspora who use lobbying and cultural diplomacy techniques to protest the suppression of the group's activities in China.<sup>2</sup> Together with Western Falun Gong practitioners, the Chinese emigrants – many of whom are well-educated professionals or investor migrants – capitalize upon traditional and new media, and partner pro-democracy international organizations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch to gain public attention and lobby political officials in Washington, Ottawa, Paris, London, and Canberra so as to seek legitimacy for the Falun Gong movement (see Ownby, 2008).

Diasporas also advocate for rights in their host states, deploying diplomatic tactics to influence decisions affecting their legal status and rights. An illustrative case is that of the Gurkhas. Since colonial times Nepalese soldiers have been recruited by the British Army to be dispatched internationally, but only in recent years have issues of unequal treatment surfaced. Campaigners seeking recognition and rights for the Gurkhas leveraged legal tools made available when the European Convention on Human Rights was incorporated into British domestic law by way of the Human Rights Act in 1998 (Low, 2016). The activists utilized diplomatic and legal actions, and met with British parliamentarians and government ministers to reinforce the demands of retired Gurkhas for equal pensions and welfare schemes (Laksamba et al., 2013). Gurkha activists also pressed Nepali political leaders to assist them through the Nepalese embassy in London and by instructing the Nepalese Ministry of Foreign Affairs to expedite diplomatic dialogues (BBC, 28 November 2007). The examples above exemplify transnational action by diasporas, focusing on both migrant-sending and migrant-receiving states, as well as non-state and international actors, thus expanding 'claim-making from the local to national, supranational, and global levels of engagement' (Koinova and

Karabegovic, 2017: 212). Their polyilateral diplomacy appeals to scalar levels of power and draws on flows of resources within diaspora assemblages to advance their cause.

Other than advocating for their own rights, diasporas can play a mediating role during political crises. The proliferation of intrastate wars and secessionist movements since the latter decades of the 20th century directs policy and academic attention to the role of diasporas. The dominant narrative that has emerged portrays diasporas as peace-breakers that fuel and prolong conflicts from afar. For example, Collier and Hoeffler (2004: 575) argue that 'a large diaspora considerably increases the risk of repeat conflict' during civil wars. Diasporas have been depicted as 'long distance nationalists' (Anderson, 1992) that promote extremism and radical agendas in the homeland without having to face the realities of violent conflict themselves. An oft-cited example is the role of the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora in fuelling conflict in the homeland through financing the LTTE (Cochrane et al., 2009; Chalk, 2008).

Whilst it remains important to acknowledge the potential for diasporas to act in regressive and destructive ways in situations of political crisis, a growing body of work is also documenting how diasporas act as peace mediators 'at different stages in a conflict and during efforts to negotiate and implement a political settlement' (Cochrane et al., 2009: 682; also see Baser and Swain, 2008; Shain, 2002, 2008). This role of diasporas as catalysts for peacebuilding can manifest in different forms since they are a 'key constituency of concern' (Shain, 2008) for both sides in the homeland conflict as well as host states and the international community. On a practical level, 'while remittances sent to rebel groups may perpetuate conflict, money sent from diaspora members to their families in the homeland can also have an invaluable stabilising influence' (Democratic Progress Institute, 2014: 16; also see Fagen and Bump, 2006) and can assist with post-conflict reconstruction.

Diaspora groups can also have positive impacts on peace-building through human rights advocacy by raising awareness among host state publics, and directly lobbying host state governments and international organizations (Zunzer, 2004). The distanced location of these communities might mean that they are often in a better position to assess the situation in the homeland and intervene in positive ways. Shain (2008: 102) has traced this role of diasporas in 'checking and countering the vicissitudes of the homeland's nationalism' through the examples of the Armenian-American and Jewish-American diasporic involvement in conflicts over Nagorno-Karabakh and the West Bank/Gaza respectively. In such cases diaspora 'are architects and initiators of policy' and 'host states and other third parties . . . try to influence them accordingly' (Shain, 2008: 125, 105; also see Sinatti, 2010).

It is this position of liminality – betwixt and between the domestic and the foreign, being outside the conflict zone but also having an intimate connection to it – that invests diasporas with 'specific abilities as third party actors in pre-negotiations or even in formal talks over a political settlement' (Cochrane, 2007: 21). These 'abilities' form core skills of mediation: they can bring parties to the negotiation table and, once there, function as a bridge between political constituencies in the homeland and international actors supporting conflict resolution, acting as both facilitators and communicators (Baser and Swain, 2008; Zunzer, 2004). If diplomacy is underpinned by mediating estrangement (Der Derian, 1987) while retaining separateness (Sharp, 2009; Constantinou, 2013), then this role of diasporas as peace-brokers can be understood as a fundamentally diplomatic one, even if the term diplomacy is mentioned in neither the academic nor policy literature on diaspora and peace-building.

Yet, as liminal actors, diasporas play an ambiguous role during conflict resolution: they may be perceived as peace-brokers by certain actors and as peace-breakers by others, and their roles vary over time as conflict situations change (Democratic Progress Institute, 2014: 6). Illustrative of this are the varying roles that Irish-Americans played during the peacebuilding process in Northern

Ireland. In the early years of the conflict the Irish diaspora in the US was an inhibitor to peace, assuming 'a militant stance and openly funding various Northern Ireland separatist groups' (Democratic Progress Institute, 2014: 24). But as the Irish- American diaspora established themselves financially and politically, their attitudes towards the conflict shifted. By pressurising separatists groups in Northern Ireland and lobbying US government officials, this diaspora has been credited with helping to create the conditions necessary for the peace talks that ultimately led to the Good Friday Agreement in 1998 (Cochrane, 2007; Guelke, 1998). Diasporas thus constitute a 'distinct third level between interstate and domestic peacemaking' (Shain, 2002: 115) but they are ultimately themselves stakeholders in conflict situations, with their own priorities and objectives. The involvement of diaspora representative in mediation efforts defies 'the traditional definition of the mediators as neutral, nonpartisan actors without an interest in the conflict' (Baser and Swain, 2008: 18). A key example of this ambiguous role is that of the Afghan diaspora in the peace process in Afghanistan. After the US military intervention in 2001–2, various groups within the Afghan diaspora assumed significant political roles during the formal peace talks, and 'as connectors between the international community, the national administrations, international civil society and the private sector' (Zunzer, 2004: 5–6). Yet the fragmented tribal factions in the diaspora also exacerbated ethnic and class divisions (Baser and Swain, 2008: 16).

The heterogeneity of diasporas, and the resultant contestations over legitimacy, have significant impacts on the nature and geographies of diplomacy that they enact. This speaks to the third mode of engagement through which diasporas do diplomacy, namely representation. Alongside communication, a key function of diplomacy is representation (Sharp, 2009). An example that highlights questions of legitimate representation is that of the collective 'Indian diaspora' (Raj, 2015) as compared to the competing claims of the Sikh diaspora (Tatla, 1999). The Punjab state government in India (a subnational branch of the Indian state) has sought to mobilize the Sikh diaspora to participate in India's development goals (Thandi, 2014), but the historically fraught relationship between Sikh separatists – within India and extended extraterritorially to the Sikh diaspora which has funded separatism – reflects the complex relationship between the political goals of the Sikh diaspora and the Indian government's own diaspora strategizing. This example also unsettles assumptions that diplomacy is associated with a single territory (as in state diplomacy); we can see that the competing diasporas in question invoke overlapping territorial imaginations at different levels of governance to secure greater legitimacy.

Where the role of representation takes on heightened importance is in the case of stateless diasporas. Here, diasporas use diplomatic tactics, conventions and missions not only to advance their cause through advocacy, but also as a mode of representation to gain political recognition on the international stage and advance sovereignty claims (McConnell et al., 2012). The modes of diplomatic representation such diasporas deploy vary in formality, from activist organizations such as the Ahwaz Human Rights Organization representing their communities (the Ahwazi Arabs in Iran) at the likes of the United Nations Forum on Minority Issues, to unofficial embassies run by governments-in-exile. For instance, from its diasporic base in India, the Tibetan government-in-exile runs 11 overseas missions across all continents. In addition to lobbying parliamentarians and foreign ministries in the host countries and providing consular services to Tibetans in their 'jurisdiction', the staff at these 'Offices of Tibet' are deemed by the diaspora to be the official representatives of the Central Tibetan Administration, the Dalai Lama and the territory of Tibet, as defined by the exile community (McConnell, 2016). As such, this mode of diplomacy is articulated both in the form of a physical territory in exile (where the diaspora is based) and the form of an imagined territory back in the homeland.

In other cases, diasporas represent the homeland by forming 'governments-in-waiting'. During the Arab Spring, the Libyan National Transitional Council before September 2011 and the Syrian interim

government from March 2013 were organizations largely based in their respective diasporas. They were established 'in the expectation that the institutions that have previously controlled their home territory are, or are in the process of, collapsing. They set themselves up pre-emptively to take over full political authority subsequent to that collapse' (Rangwala, 2015: 216). These governments-in-waiting are mediating modes of diaspora diplomacy. They act as a bridge between the well-established exile elites and residents and local military commanders on the ground. However, the impetus and formation of these organizations did not solely originate with their diasporas: 'processes of international brokerage played a significant role' (Rangwala, 2015: 215). In highlighting the complex power relations between diasporas, states and external actors, the examples we provide signal the overlap between diplomacy through diaspora and diplomacy by diaspora, and bolster the case that diaspora diplomacy exemplifies polyilateral diplomacy.

## **V Conclusion**

Our article has bridged the scholarship on diplomacy and on diaspora by considering how states engage in diplomacy through diasporas so as to advance national agendas, and how diasporas themselves conduct diplomacy in order to achieve their own agendas (through advocacy, mediation and representation strategies). Indeed, in many ways diasporas are quintessential diplomats, mediating between homeland and host communities and playing key brokering roles. By discussing examples of diplomacy through diaspora and diplomacy by diaspora, we have addressed questions on who are the key actors engaged in diaspora diplomacy, how diplomatic work is engaged by and through diasporas, and what are the geographies of diaspora diplomacy. To conclude, we pull together these ideas to signal the wider relevance of our arguments.

Both 'diaspora' and 'diplomacy' are concepts that have undergone considerable expansion in recent years, marking a shift away from understanding diaspora as a descriptive category and diplomacy as the practice of state officials respectively. At the same time, scholars in both diplomacy studies (e.g. Brubaker, 2005) and diaspora studies (e.g. Sending et al., 2011) have cautioned against overextending those terms. There are also critiques of adding yet another prefix to diplomacy – alongside the likes of paradiplomacy, NGO diplomacy, celebrity diplomacy, etc. – which offers an analytically limited 'explanation by naming' (Sending et al., 2011: 529). Cognisant of this, our aim has not been to weigh up the relative significance of diasporas as diplomatic actors (*vis-a-vis* the state), but rather to examine how the institution and practice of diplomacy are being reconfigured by the engagement of diplomatic communities. We also delimit the notion of diaspora diplomacy through addressing the who, how and where questions noted above. Diaspora diplomacy is, we suggest, about the collective rather than the individual. Whilst diplomatic practices are often undertaken by members of the diaspora, either formally through the designation of honorary consuls (Leira and Neumann, 2013) or informally through the actions of citizen diplomats (Conley Tyler and Beyerinck, 2016), it is the actions of an identified or self-identified collective such as the Chinese or Indian diaspora, Kurdish or Ahwazi-Arab minorities, Tibetan or Sri Lankan Tamil nationalists, Irish-American peace-brokers, and Falun Gong or Gurkha activists based outside of their countries of origin that underpin the analytical purchase of diaspora diplomacy. In further delimiting the notion of diaspora diplomacy we have also argued that it is related to but should not be conflated with transnational political practices. Rather, diaspora diplomacy is a particular mode of diaspora politics that goes beyond participation in domestic politics, and which entails communication and mediation with multiple stakeholders and audiences.

Our discussion of diaspora diplomacy also leads us to re-examine the characteristics of diasporas as social formations: who counts or should be recognized as a diaspora, and what are the issues of representation and legitimacy raised when diasporas engage in diplomacy? Foregrounding the action that diasporas take to realize their own aspirations alerts us to those diasporas that do not fall neatly within the framings of a national or ethno-national vision, such as the competing aspirations

expressed by a religious diaspora like Falun Gong whose members can also be considered part of the Chinese diaspora, or the Sikh diaspora with entrenched historical memories of experiencing ethnic violence inflicted by the Indian government. These examples highlight the complex relationship that diasporas have with a government's own diaspora strategising. Diplomatic tactics by diasporas can impact governance and society in either or both the sending and receiving contexts. Diaspora diplomacy thus brings into sharp relief the nature of legitimate representation which underpins diplomacy as a practice: who has the right to speak for and represent a particular community? Do second and third generation migrants have the same claim of representation as first generation emigrants? What about re-migrants with double-diasporic identifications? Whose interests do they represent? We suggest that further research in these directions is needed to deepen understanding of the relationship between diasporas and the representative function of diplomacy.

Reflecting on the geographical dimensions of diaspora diplomacy, our discussion has considered the multiple stakeholders and audiences that diasporas engage (i.e. polyilateral diplomacy), thereby challenging conventional approaches that premise diplomacy on state power and bounded territory. We suggest that the transnational and scalar actions of diasporas point to the multi-directional aspects of diaspora diplomacy. This leads us to conceptualize diaspora diplomacy as diaspora assemblages composed of states, non-state and other international actors that function as constituent components of assemblages, connected through networks and flows of people, information and resources. Such diaspora assemblages may at times work to reinforce state power, thereby reterritorializing, or at other times, exhibit deterritorializing forms of power. Diaspora diplomacy produces 'new capabilities' (Dittmer, 2014: 388) as the components constituting acts of diaspora diplomacy within diaspora assemblages come together or become disaggregated. This understanding thereby opens productive avenues for future research around the dynamic spatial articulations of diaspora diplomacy.

Supporting this conceptualization of diaspora diplomacy is our argument that diasporas function as liminal actors betwixt and between the domestic and foreign. The study of diaspora diplomacy directs us towards reconsidering the artificiality of the distinction between domestic and foreign constituencies that has been so central to conventional IR theorizations and policy agendas (Walker, 1993). As liminal actors, diasporas can mobilize resources outside of the national territory, perform bridging functions or play peace-building roles in the service of the state. Equally, the liminality of diasporas means they can mobilize those same resources to realize alternative political visions, in opposition to the state, such as by influencing developments within the national territory to rally support, advocating their cause to powerful non-state or international actors, and invoking representations of multiple territories at overlapping scales or drawing on both physical territory and imagined territory to enhance the legitimacy of their claims. The liminal political subjectivity of diasporas positions them as diplomatic actors who can leverage being between the domestic and foreign to take ownership for how diplomacy develops in the interests of or against the state. In sum, diaspora diplomacy proffers insights into the changing nature of both diplomacy and diaspora formations, and what this means for studies of statehood, sovereignty and territory.

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### **Notes**

1. Gillespie and Webb's (2013) edited volume *Diaspora and Diplomacy* extends this analysis in interesting ways, but solely through the lens of diasporic broadcasters and audiences in relation to the diplomatic role of the BBC World Service.

2. The group combines qigong (a Chinese system of physical exercises and breathing techniques) with Buddhist meditation to promote physical and mental well-being, but political leaders in China accuse it of encouraging cult-like practices.

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