

**INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION AND TRANSNATIONAL POLITICS:  
RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE CARIBBEAN AND MEXICAN CASES**

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*La nación mexicana rebasa el territorio que contienen sus fronteras. Por eso, un elemento esencial del programa Nación Mexicana será promover las reformas constitucionales y legales para que los mexicanos preserven su nacionalidad, independientemente de la ciudadanía o la residencia que hayan adoptado.<sup>1</sup>*

*La gran población de dominicanos residentes en el exterior amerita que un gobierno tome en consideración su problemática. Nuestros emigrantes tienen la característica de que mantienen su ligazón afectiva con la patria y ayudan en forma importantísima con el desarrollo económico. El gobierno del PLD tomará en cuenta las necesidades de los dominicanos residentes en el exterior y facilitará su regreso al país, de forma que puedan incorporarse a los procesos sociales, políticos y económicos.<sup>2</sup>*

*I hereby declare, on oath, that I absolutely and entirely renounce and abjure all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state, or sovereignty, of whom or which I have heretofore been a subject or citizen.<sup>3</sup>*

## **I. Introduction**

States in the Caribbean region and Mexico have always known that many members of their populations have crossed borders and lived at least part of their lives in other countries. The traditional position of most states has been to pay little or no attention to the exit of nationals from the country. Indeed, in times of high unemployment and limited economic opportunity, emigration has been viewed very positively by sending states, sometimes called an economic or political escape valve.

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<sup>1</sup>Estados Unidos Mexicanos, *Plan Nacional de Desarrollo 1995-2000* (Mexico City: Secretaría de Hacienda y Crédito Público, 1995), p. 15.

<sup>2</sup>PLD, *Programa del Gobierno, 1996-2000*, electronic version, <http://server1.codetel.net.do/Leonel/extranjero.html>.

<sup>3</sup>Oath used in naturalization to U.S. citizenship. Larry M. Eig, *Basic Questions on U.S. Citizenship and Naturalization*, Congressional Research Service Report for Congress. (Washington, D.C., 3 December 1992), pp.3-4.

However, many Caribbean states and Mexico have become to take note of their extensive populations living overseas, and a variety of responses have been crafted to address issues generated by these migration processes. In other words, states have begun to take a more expansive view of the composition of the “nation.” Sending country governments have begun to shift from a *laissez-faire* approach to emigration to a more activist consideration of the benefits and consequences of the ongoing migration and settlement of nationals into other countries.

Alongside this heightened interest in emigrant populations (or perhaps the cause of it) has been a growing anti-immigrant climate within the United States, (and other receiving countries). While admissions policies remain fairly liberal, (mostly due to the continued importance of family reunification preferences in U.S. immigration law) *immigrant* policies are moving in an increasingly exclusivist direction. In other words, the policies affecting how migrants are treated within the U.S. are becoming increasingly focused on excluding such persons from participation in the social welfare system and has promoted citizenship status as the criteria for membership in the social arena.

Most research on immigrant incorporation and on legal and political rights of migrants focuses on the receiving country and its laws and norms. This tendency has been reinforced by migration studies paradigms that view movements as unidirectional and permanent, and employ a concept of assimilation that focuses on acceptance in the host society as an endpoint. I argue, however, that it is becoming increasingly essential to include the interests and actions of sending countries into this analysis, so that one may consider the whole array of possible interests, identities, and legal political affiliations that migrants encounter.

Sending country states are important actors for many reasons. First, sending country governments often retain powers to regulate the flows of people and goods from abroad into their national territories. In an age where migration

processes are often dynamic, involving return migration and/or remittances of money and goods to the origin country, the regulatory powers of the former continue to be important. Second, migration processes are often important components of more general processes of economic, social, and political development in the origin countries. Sending country states may seek various types of returns from the large-scale export of workers to other economies. Sending state policies towards migrants may seek to encourage remittances from abroad, investment in the origin country by migrants, and the return of skilled workers.

This paper seeks to outline important questions regarding the study of relationships between sending states and nationals who are living abroad. Thus, I leave the issue of migrant-host country political relationships aside. I focus on Caribbean countries and Mexico and their governments' relationships with nationals who have migrated to the United States. I seek to identify a number of specific policies which have emerged as the subject of state-migrant interactions across borders. Such policies include access to dual nationality and/or citizenship, investment in the sending country by nationals living abroad, and attraction and facilitation of the return migration of skilled workers.

At this stage of my project, I focus on identifying key questions rather than producing answers. An initial comparative survey of the Mexico and Caribbean region indicates that there is variation in the extent of cross-border political engagement taking place. The timing, and nature of these sending state-migrant relations have not been consistent across different sending countries. And the consequences of these types of relationships differ.

The next section of the essay lays out the problems I am explore, defining the scope and nature of transnational political relationships and policies. Next, I provide some background information on the types of policies and relationships that have been emerging in recent years within the Caribbean and Mexico. The

last section discusses questions and issues warranting continued study, and offers some suggestions for a framework for examining these issues.

## II. Transnational Politics: Definitions, Concepts, Problems

The term “transnational” has enjoyed extensive usage in the last several years, especially with respect to the study of international migration. Prior to this relatively recent revival of “transnationalism,” political scientists used the term to describe relations among non-state actors, taking place through channels other than those established for state-to-state relations.<sup>a</sup> Most studies focused on the question of how transnational actors threatened or were in conflict with the power of the nation-state and did not pursue a deeper understanding of transnational actors aside from this issue. Much of this work was also restricted to considering transnational actors controlling “substantial” resources, omitting the emergence of transnational relations operating on a smaller scale within the international system.<sup>4</sup>

In the last 10-15 years, students of international migration, primarily based in the disciplines of anthropology and sociology, began to develop a concept of transnationalism, largely apart from that used by political scientists in earlier decades.<sup>5</sup> The term, “transnational” has been used to describe processes and situations where goods, information, capital, people, and culture flow and become situated across localities in ways that do not correspond to any fixed

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<sup>4</sup> Keohane and Nye, 1972.

<sup>5</sup> Nina Glick Schiller, Linda Basch, and Cristina Szanton Blanc, “From Immigrant to Transmigrant: Theorizing Transnational Migration,” *Anthropological Quarterly* (January 1994a): 48-63. Other examples and discussion of the transnational approach include Glick Schiller, Basch and Blanc-Szanton, eds. *Towards a Transnational Perspective on Migration: Race, Class, Ethnicity, and Nationalism Reconsidered*, *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences, Volume 645*, (New York: New York Academy of Sciences, 1992); Basch, Glick Schiller, and Szanton Blanc, *Nations Unbound: Transnational Projects, Postcolonial Predicaments and Deterritorialized Nation-States*, (Langhorne, PA: Gordon and Breach, 1994b); Roger Rouse, “Mexican Migration and the Social Space of Postmodernism,” *Diaspora* 1 (Spring 1991):8-21; and Robert C. Smith, *Los Ausentes Siempre Presentes*, (Ph.D. Dissertation, Columbia University, 1995).

political or legal boundary. Labor force participation may take place in more than one country on a regular basis. Families can be divided across countries, and individuals may own businesses and make investments in more than one country. High rates of remittance of income back to the origin country serves as a means of channeling capital from one country to another. The demands of capital that drive labor migrations influence how people will arrange their lives, and these arrangements will not be contained neatly within the established legal and political jurisdictions of states. Of course, there have been significant differences in how scholars have used and defined the term “transnational”; some focus on causes and patterns in the emergence of transnational relations at the group, community, or societal level, while others study how and why individuals become transnational and develop multiple identities.

For purposes of this essay, I use the term “transnational politics” to refer to political relationships and behaviors that take place across borders. I exclude the set of interactions involving contact, negotiation, and policy-making among representatives of states--the subject of much theory and research on *international relations*. Instead, I am interested in situations where states interact with social groups connected by virtue of their nationality yet located outside the boundaries of the states’ jurisdictions. Such situations arise most frequently in cases of international migrations, although the emergence of new states with new political borders can also generate situations where states interact with nationals no longer physically present within the state’s borders.<sup>6</sup>

There appears to be a considerable variation in how and when these types of political relationships emerge. When are states the initiators of these relations, and if so do they seek to incorporate migrant nationals into more general projects of nation-building? Such a situation counters arguments that

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<sup>6</sup> This has been an issue for Republics forming in the aftermath of the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Some work has been done on the position of ethnic Russians within the Ukraine and within the Baltic Republics. See Igor Zevlev, “Russia and the Russian Diasporas” *Post-Soviet Affairs* 12 (July-Sept 1996): 266-87.

see transnational phenomena as inherently threatening and debilitating to states. An alternative scenario involves situations where migrants initiate relations with the state of their country of origin. Presumably, migrants would present or control an agenda, and serve a more active role than when they are mobilized by the sending country state. In addition to these questions concerning the initiation of these types of relationships, there are more general theoretical issues associated with transnational politics. Is there any reason to think that state-society relations would be different when structured across borders? What are the factors that might make a difference in the power of the state or the power of social actors in such a scenario? What kinds of policies are likely to be of interest to states and to the social groups living outside their national territories? And, what are the consequences of these kinds of political relations for the host or receiving state and societies where migrants live?

As a starting point for analysis, I focus on identifying particular transnational political policies. Some of the most common policies involve the establishment of dual nationality or citizenship, the creation of agencies or bureaucratic organizations within sending states to formalize relations with overseas populations, and return migration policies. In the next section, I discuss the status of these kinds of policies among the Mexican and selected Caribbean cases. In future work, I hope to expand my inquiry to include more detailed analysis of the politics behind the emergence or non-emergence of transnational policies.

### **III. Some Observations from the Mexican and Caribbean Cases**

Mexico, and most of the Caribbean countries have had significant portions of their populations migrate to the United States. Table 1 provides some basic information on the recent levels of legal migration taking place

between the United States and Mexico and the selected Caribbean nations, along with the numbers of Mexican and Caribbean origin persons enumerated in the U.S. 1990 census.<sup>7</sup> There are, of course, other Caribbean countries which have sent significant numbers to the United States, Canada, or the United Kingdom and migration from South and Central American countries to the United States has increased in the last decade or so. These other cases will warrant similar study but have not been included in this discussion given limits of space and time.

### ***Dominican Republic:***

Transnational political relations and policymaking has been developing in recent years between the government of the Dominican Republic and its nationals abroad. As shown in Table 1, a sizable number of Dominicans have moved abroad, primarily in search of better economic opportunity, and primarily to the United States. However, there has always been a component of Dominican migrants who left their country of origin during the regimes of Trujillo (1930-1961), and Joaquín Balaguer (1966-1978; 1986-1996) for political reasons.

In recent years, the Dominican government has become more engaged with its overseas nationals, discussing with migrant groups, political parties, and other activists issues of dual nationality and citizenship, voting rights from abroad, and the establishment of administrative units to address the problems faced by Dominicans who live outside their country's political boundaries. The first significant policy concerning overseas Dominicans was the creation of dual

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<sup>7</sup>The data from the Immigration and Naturalization Service, (INS) and the U.S. Census are far from perfect sources of information about immigration patterns. Data on legal admissions does not capture undocumented entry, of course, and does not capture the dynamics of repeated migrations between countries within the course of a year. The Census enumerates everyone present within the United States, regardless of legal status so it will not really correspond to



nationality in 1994. Prior to this date, naturalization to another citizenship led to the loss of Dominican nationality and thus citizenship. Proposals introduced into the Dominican Congress to alter Dominican nationality laws date back to the early 1980s. However, this change required altering the constitution, and despite strong support throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, especially among opposition political parties, proponents of dual nationality were not successful. The greatest obstacle to such change was the requirement of constitutional change, as other more contentious reforms were sought by opposition parties and not supported by the incumbent Social Christian Reformist Party (PRSC).

In 1994, the Dominican Republic experienced “crisis-ridden” elections for the presidency (once-again), and the incumbent president, Balaguer, and his party (PRSC) agreed to significant political reform in exchange for being allowed to control the presidency for two more years. In the context of a general constitution reform, the nationality provisions were altered. In the past, Dominicans who became citizens of other countries would automatically lose their Dominican nationality. Loss of nationality implied loss of rights and obligations associated with citizenship. Under the 1994 reform, acquisition of another citizenship will not imply the loss of Dominican nationality.

Since 1994, migrants living in the United States and political actors in the Dominican Republic have sought to expand the role of migrants within the Dominican political system. Voting from abroad is a major goal; those living overseas possess enough strength in numbers to determine the outcome of elections where margins of victory have usually been very slim. In addition, political parties and migrant groups have promoted the idea of establishing representation of *dominicanos ausentes* (absent Dominicans) in the Congress, and the construction of an administrative agency within the Executive branch to assist Dominican migrants with problems and concerns they face overseas. All

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admissions data. However imperfect, these are some of the few available sources for tracking the migration process.

of these proposals, including the encouragement of return migration, have been integrated into the platform of the governing PLD. The proposal to reform electoral laws that is currently being considered by a Congressional committee includes a provision to extend the right to vote to Dominicans living overseas in presidential and vice-presidential elections.

The Dominican political parties, especially the Dominican Liberation Party (PLD) and Dominican Revolutionary Party (PRD) have been strong supporters of migrant rights. They are well established themselves in the United States with branches or *filiales* in most states. And the parties have become increasingly reliant on donations from those living overseas. The current Dominican president, Leonel Fernández grew up in New York and made frequent trips to the city to promote his party in the years preceding his election. This connection between the parties and fundraising has been at the crux of the politics of the legal re-incorporating Dominican migrants into the Dominican nation. Paradoxically, the same electoral law reform proposal that seeks to extend voting rights also hopes to introduce stricter regulation of campaign financing and accountability, and could serve to limit the usefulness of overseas migrant communities as sources of funding.

***Mexico:***

Developments in the Dominican case were scarcely noted in the United States--outside areas with concentrated populations of Dominicans. In contrast, Mexican proposals to create dual nationality have attracted extensive attention in the United States, and has been a source of much debate and discussion in Mexico. Throughout its post-independence history, Mexico has adhered to a principle of single nationality, codified in its constitution and in subsequent

nationality acts, and reinforced in multilateral treaties affirming the principle of single nationality.<sup>8</sup>

As early as the 1970s, Mexican origin persons in the United States began to appeal to the Mexican government for the construction of dual nationality or citizenship. Traditionally, the Mexican state has shown little interest in Mexican American and Mexican origin persons living in the United States, adopting a laissez-faire approach to the large scale emigrations taking place. During the 1970s and 1980s, Presidents Echevarria and de la Madrid sought to extend more recognition to Mexicans living outside the national territory. President Carlos Salinas de Gortari (1988-94) created a Program for Mexican Communities Abroad (Programa para las Comunidades Mexicanas en el Extranjero). The Mexican government sought to recognize and foster relations with Mexican and Mexican-American communities in the United States, including the promotion of pride in the history of Mexican-Americans, and a greater knowledge of Mexican history and culture. In addition to expanding the number of consulates in the United States, cultural institutes were formed to focus on outreach to Mexican-origin people in the country. A newsletter (*La Paloma*) has also been published and directed at the Mexican-origin population in the U.S.<sup>9</sup>

By 1995, discussion of a dual nationality status began again in earnest. President Zedillo announced his intention to pursue this reform while he was visiting Texas in April 1995. The proposals focused on changing several articles of the Mexican constitution. Mexican nationals who adopt another nationality would not automatically lose their Mexican nationality. While citizenship would not be preserved (and thus the right to vote and run for office in Mexico

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<sup>8</sup> A comprehensive summary of the historical and legal dimensions of the dual nationality proposal is provided by Jorge A. Vargas, "Dual Nationality for Mexicans? A Comparative Legal Analysis of the Dual Nationality Proposal and its Eventual Political and Socio-economic Implications." *Chicano-Latino Law Review* 18 (Fall 1996):1-58.

<sup>9</sup> This newsletter is distributed in paper and electronically through consular web sites. It appears in both English and Spanish. See for example, <http://www.quicklink.com/mexico>

would be lost), rights to own property and participate in the economy would not be jeopardized.<sup>10</sup> Zedillo's party, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) and the other major Mexican parties (PAN and PRD) all supported the reform of nationality laws.

Many observers connected the Mexican government's interest in this issue to the domestic politics of immigration within the United States. The relatively low naturalization rates of Mexican-origin persons to U.S. citizenship has been connected to the fear of losing Mexican nationality. The passage of Proposition 187 in California in 1994 and a more generalized anti-immigrant climate within the country has increased the practical value of naturalization, yet prompts difficult choices for those who don't want to lose their nationality of origin. Thus, the Mexican government may have decided to ease the legal difficulties migrants face for at least two reasons: first, out of the hope that Mexicans who naturalize can find a more secure status within the United States, and second, out of a desire to see Mexican-origin persons as a lobby group capable of promoting Mexican interests within the U.S. political system. The latter strategy has aroused a backlash of criticism from within the United States from those who fear such forms of influence on the political process.<sup>11</sup>

The proposals for dual citizenship were approved by the Mexican legislature in December of 1996. Mexicans living abroad who naturalize to another nationality can retain that of their origin country. In addition, children born abroad to Mexican nationals can maintain their Mexican nationality, regardless of whether they opt to be citizens of their country of birth. The proposal must be approved by a majority of Mexican states, and then will go

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/gob97mar/notcmi45.htm.

<sup>10</sup> Vargas makes some interesting arguments concerning the right to own property, indicating that the recent Mexican Foreign Investment laws of 1993 protect Mexican-born persons from losing their Mexican property if they naturalize to another nationality. Restrictions on property ownership apply to purchases of land in the area 100 kilometers from Mexico's borders, and within 50 kilometers of coastline. See Vargas, 1996.

<sup>11</sup>Georgie Anne Geyer, "Mexico's cynical push for adoption of dual nationality" *Chicago Tribune* (2 June 1995): p. 1, 19.

into effect in 1998. Doubtless, the relationship between these changes and future patterns of naturalization among Mexicans in the United States will be closely watched by observers on both sides of the border.

***Caribbean:***

My investigation of the Caribbean cases is just starting, so I offer information gathered thus far on these issues, with the caveat that the information is preliminary.

Haiti has had a lengthy experience with emigration--especially in reaction to political situations in the country. During the Duvalier dictatorships, political opponents often sought refuge abroad, but continued with avid attempts to bring about political change. After being overthrown, former President Jean Bertrand Aristide maintained his government from abroad, and the network of Haitian activists dispersed throughout the world continued to influence politics at "home." Haiti represents a paradoxical case when it comes to cross-border policies, however. On the one hand, the country has instituted formal representation of Haitians living abroad by creating a deterritorialized administrative district known as the 10th Department to represent migrants. A Minister without portfolio for Haitians Living Abroad serves in the Haitian government. However, Haiti does not permit dual nationality or citizenship. A Haitian-born person who acquires another nationality must formally renounce that nationality before being able to claim that of Haiti. This issue appears to have created tensions in the post-Aristide era, as many of his supporters were abroad during the Cedras regime and have now returned to participate in politics. Other Haitians whose emigration pre-dates Aristide's first election, and who have become citizens of other countries, have also returned with an interest in participating in politics. To legally do so, such individuals must still renounce their other citizenships. But many Haitians who return may still have economic

or other interests in their countries of emigration and would be hesitant to give up other nationalities and political rights they have acquired. Thus, dual citizenship remains one of the most prominent demands of Haitians living abroad, along with the right to vote in Haitian elections.<sup>12</sup>

Jamaica has pursued a very activist policy with respect to its nationals living overseas. The country, formally independent since 1962, currently allows for dual nationality. Jamaicans who obtain other nationalities are able to return to the island and will be received as Jamaican nationals. The focus of government attention has been on the issue of return migration and/or investment by nationals. A Charter for Returning Residents has been implemented, and called for the creation of a Returning Residents Facilitation Unit within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade. The Unit, which is based in Jamaica, works with embassies, consulates, and high commissions overseas to coordinate services provided to returning Jamaicans. They will provide legal counsel and advice on customs and import procedures and will direct returning residents to the proper government agencies (Ministries of Industry, Investments and Commerce, Public Utilities and Transport, JAMPRO (which fosters investment and business start-ups), and the Ministry of National Security and Justice (which administers nationality, citizenship, and immigration laws)).<sup>13</sup>

In addition to forming these institutional structures and procedures, the Returning Residents program has also sought to liberalize tariffs on the goods brought back by Jamaican emigrants, and contains special provisions to encourage the return of Jamaicans who went abroad to study. Liberalized allowances for the importation of “tools of the trade” used in one’s business

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<sup>12</sup>“Haitians Living Overseas Meet with Aristide,” *FBIS Daily Report LAT-95-028* (9 Feb 1995).

<sup>13</sup>An information packet for potential returnees has been posted to the Jamaica On-Line Website by the Jamaican Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade. See <http://www.jol.com.jm/thelwelr/0retres1.html>.

and/or study program, and the standardizing of procedures for importing vehicles have all been promoted to encourage and facilitate the return of migrants.

At this time, voting in Jamaican elections from abroad is not permitted. Like the Dominican case, political parties from Jamaica have been active in the United States, using their Jamaican communities as a source of funds, and politicians frequently visit areas with significant populations of Jamaicans.

#### **IV. Toward a Framework for Studying Transnational Politics and Policies**

This overview of emerging transnational politics and policies reveals a diversity of experiences throughout the Caribbean region and Mexico. Although much more detailed analysis of these trends is needed, a comparative discussion can focus on the following issues: the types of transnational policies that have emerged, and the array of actors and interests that exist behind such policies.

The most common type of issues that have emerged are those dealing with questions of the legal and political status of migrants. Citizenship and nationality policies of the sending societies are central to the status of migrants. In the past such policies have been the subject of bilateral treaties negotiated among involved states, but this has not been the case in recent years in the Mexico/Caribbean region. The U.S. government neither encourages or disallows dual citizenship and it has not brought this issue into any formal foreign policy agendas with nations in this region. Instead, citizenship and nationality policies have been fully within the jurisdiction of the sending governments, and are most often constitutional matters. In some cases, such as the Dominican Republic, migrants have been active in lobbying for dual nationality and in others, sending states have taken charge of pursuing and

promoting constitutional change (Mexico). Thus, this issue ceases to be one of international affairs as traditionally understood, but is one that engages social groups with states albeit across borders.

Further, some of the most common arguments in favor of dual nationality or citizenship involve concerns for the political status and human rights of migrants, who may face barriers to acceptance in their receiving societies. In an environment where receiving country states are viewed as unwilling or unable to protect and extend rights to foreign-born residents, sending states have seen an expanded role for themselves in representing and guaranteeing respect for the human rights of their nationals, *wherever they may reside*. The condition of statelessness which migrants face is somewhat mediated by the willingness of sending states to become involved in issues concerning migrants' rights within their host societies.

In addition to dual nationality and citizenship policies, issues of rights and representation of migrants within the sending country political system have been important. Such issues may or may not follow the establishment of dual nationality or citizenship. The establishment of voting rights from abroad (pursued in the Dominican and Haitian cases) enables migrants to move from a symbolic or sentimental attachment to the sending country to a more active role in the country's political arena. And in many cases, an active use of voting rights could have important effects on elections given the high rates of emigration experienced by many countries in the Caribbean region and by Mexico. Representation of migrants, through appointed or elective office, is a related issue that touches on the role and rights of those living outside the country of origin. Interestingly, such representation can serve dual purposes; as an advocate for migrants with respect to the sending country system, and as a mechanism for representing or mobilizing migrants within the receiving society. The existence of a Minister without portfolio for Haitians Living Abroad is an



example of the former, while the case of the Mexican Cultural Institutes and Program for Mexican Communities Abroad is an example of the latter.

The creation of mechanisms for representation of migrants and for the exercise of migrant political rights involves adjustments of state structures and a certain transformation in the concept of the political community. The latter are not necessarily bounded by territorial borders, but can exist across nations. These transnational policies and practices also require adjustments in our concepts of migration and the dynamics and consequences of population movements. Assimilation of migrants into the receiving country system may not be the only or preferred goal; while there has always been an interest in the home country among migrants, the opportunities to have direct and legally sanctioned roles in the origin nation are expanding.

There are a complex set of actors involved in the processes of transnational policymaking and politics. Of course, the sending states have been central to these issues, largely because they still retain the power to control access to citizenship and political participation. Sending states can have multiple goals in becoming more engaged with emigrants living abroad. There are arguments about protecting the rights of those emigrants, (perhaps heightened in times of anti-immigrant policymaking in the host country). In addition, there is the “emigrants as lobby” strategy, which seeks to mobilize emigrants as promoters of the sending country within the receiving country political system. Another interest is in attracting the return migration and/or the remittance of capital and goods to the sending country from emigrants. Mexico has been seen as the prime example of “emigrants as lobby” case. This makes sense given the relatively longer history of migration, the large numbers of Mexicans and Mexican-Americans in the United States, and thus their potential power as voters. Conversely, Jamaica, the Dominican Republic, and Haiti (and the smaller Caribbean islands of Trinidad and Tobago, and Barbados) have focused more on issues of cultivating return migration and

capital flows from abroad. With the obvious exception of Haiti, these countries with smaller populations in the United States have not mobilized their emigrants as lobby groups in U.S. national politics. (Although there has been a growing presence of Caribbean origin candidates and officials in local level politics in the U.S.) The Haitian case has been somewhat unique, with emigrants coalescing with other groups within U.S. politics to promote resolution of political crises in the home country.

Of course, it is imprecise to talk about sending or receiving country states as unitary and coherent actors. Different segments of the sending states become involved in emigrant political relations to varying degrees. These issues have often been the preserve of foreign affairs ministries or of direct interest to executives. Because of the need to alter laws and constitutional provisions, legislative bodies have become involved in such politics. More detailed study of the Dominican case presented elsewhere showed how legislators from opposition political parties were advocates of dual nationality while the President's party (PRSC) was more hesitant to promote such a change.<sup>14</sup> It is important to employ a sufficiently complex notion of the state to analyzing transnational politics.

Another important set of actors are political parties and other interest groups, as they operate at home and abroad. It has become common to see political parties from the home countries operating within migrant communities abroad, and these groups can form effective channels for migrant participation, especially in the absence of official mechanisms for such participation.

In addition to sending states and political parties, migrants themselves are a central part of transnational politics and policymaking. Interests in participation in the sending country may be founded on a variety of objectives. There may be a nostalgic desire to remain and retain a national identity from the

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<sup>14</sup>See Pamela M. Graham, "Re-Imagining the Nation and Defining the District: Dominican Migration and Transnational Politics," in *Caribbean Circuits: Transnational Approaches to Migration*, ed. Patricia Pessar. (New York: Center for Migration Studies, 1997).

home country, or there may be more practical rights to be gained from access to the home country political system. Dual nationality and citizenship provides migrants with more flexibility as they negotiate a position between two states which have control over aspects of their lives. Retention of origin country political ties may be especially attractive if migrants are blocked from participating in the political arena of the receiving nation. The economic roles that migrants play are also important. The high levels of remittances and investment that take place in many cases forms the basis for an argument about the right to representation in the home country. If migration serves as an industry and means of channeling resources into the origin country, migrants may feel like their economic contributions warrant the preservation of their political rights and access to the country's political process.

A final set of actors are, of course, the receiving country state and social groups. Again, a complex notion of the state must be used to see the differences between nationally generated policies on immigrant admission and the local and state-level policies that address how immigrants are treated where they reside. Complex messages and interests have emerged from the U.S. state. Relatively high levels of immigration are still the norm, but there have been a growing number of efforts to reduce access to social welfare and services of those who are not citizens. Indeed, the emergence of transnational politics runs counter to many of these recent anti-immigrant trends. Maintenance of a dual nationality is treated with suspicion by those in favor of restricted immigrant rights. Loyalty to the home country goes against the myth of immigration--i.e. that immigrants move along a path of assimilation into the host country and thus must abandon ties to the home country, and that one should want to become as American as possible.<sup>15</sup> Possession of a second passport and of rights and protections from another government is a potentially threatening scenario for the gatekeepers of the American melting pot.

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<sup>15</sup>The oath of naturalization to U.S. citizenship requires a renouncing of all ties to other nations.

Ongoing study of this issue should focus on both individual country case studies, and broader comparative work across countries.<sup>16</sup> It is fascinating to see similar movements and policies emerging throughout the hemisphere and we now need to produce more detailed studies grounded in the historical experience of migration and politics in the respective countries. Comparative work should focus on explaining variations in the timing, content and consequences of transnational politics.

Creation of a typology of policies fitting the general rubric of “transnationalism” should be done, along with a categorization of the different strategies employed by sending states. The different actors and interests involved in these policy processes will also need to be outlined. With this information, we can move on to generate hypotheses about why and when these forms of political engagement emerge.

There are many interesting issues operating at broader theoretical levels as well. The existence of transnational politics questions more conventional concepts of political community and participation, and forces us to acknowledge less-studied dimensions of international relations. In one sense, the intensification of processes of globalization have made borders less relevant to participation; yet transnational politics are about the reclaiming of national status and the linking of distinct national political systems. States are not weakened or threatened by these politics; they are challenged to find new

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<sup>16</sup> Of course, the case of Cuba is important albeit omitted from this discussion. An extensive amount of transnational politics takes place, even if there is little *direct* involvement of the Cuban state with its emigrant communities. The Cuban government has been considering a citizenship bill and has invited emigrants to Havana to participate in discussions over issues regarding the acquisition, loss, and recovery of Cuban citizenship. While firmly in favor of single nationality, the willingness of Cuba to include emigrants in a discussion of citizenship is fascinating. See “ANPP Commissions Examine Citizenship Law,” *FBIS Daily Report-Latin America* (24 Sept 1994).

mechanisms and avenues for interacting with social groups still falling under their legal jurisdictions.

Despite the variation in the extent of sending country involvement with emigrant communities, it is becoming increasingly apparent that the days of laissez-faire approaches to emigration are ending. States will have to consider the true extent of their “nations” and, along with migrants, will have to make decisions about who belongs to the nation, regardless of place of residence.