

campaign would significantly undermine the foundations of a system of corruption, rather than solidify them? I hope that Dr Huss and others continue researching these important topics that are at the core of our goal of understanding how good, clean governance comes about.

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Reference

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Diaspora Entrepreneurs and Contested States, by Maria Koinova, Oxford University Press, 2021, ISBN-13: 9780198848622.

Groundbreaking for diaspora studies, this book is motivated by a question perennial to the field: why, how, and where do diasporas mobilize? And much of the academic scholarship to this question has been unfolding within purely state-centric frames. Diasporic activity – patterns, goals, and mechanisms of mobilization – has been analyzed predominantly relative to host or home states. Only limited attention has been provided to the global contours of diaspora mobilization, and even less so to explaining how political spaces between home and host states of diasporic communities interconnect.

Maria Koinova reshuffles the cards in complex and insightful ways. In her *Diaspora Entrepreneurs and Contested States*, published by Oxford University in 2021, Koinova offers a multi-layered and multipronged framework of analysis, in a way seeking to offer a metatheory to explain the behavior of diaspora as a political actor. Importantly, this comprehensive framework builds on several midrange theories, which serve as building blocks for the broader narrative. One could argue that perhaps there is too much covered in a single volume. Yet, at the same, the comprehensive nature of this work promises to stimulate and chart new directions in diaspora studies.

The theoretical approach that Koinova introduces is largely relational. She elevates the nature connectivity between diasporic entrepreneurs and transnational fields (as opposed to states only), and she examines the position of such diaspora entrepreneurs in their respective social contexts. In doing so, she offers a complex framework within which to analyze the way the local, global and the national politics intersect, focusing on the specific roles and mechanisms of engagement by diaspora entrepreneurs.

Specifically, she focuses on conflict-generated diasporas while explaining why they pursue contentious, non-contentious, or mixed forms of mobilization, relative to their home countries with contested sovereignty. Koinova challenges and transcends the state-centric frames of diaspora studies by showing how diaspora entrepreneurs work through “transnational social fields.” And she defines transnational fields as social networks of linkages and connections between host-states, home states, transnational networks, and international organizations. Significantly, Koinova maintains that it matters how diaspora entrepreneurs are positioned in their social contexts, the level of centrality they possess in their home communities, and the positions they occupy relative to their host governments and political institutions. Koinova offers a typology of diaspora entrepreneurs, distinguished in terms of their position and strength of their connectivity to home, host, or global centers of political power. Broker, Local, Distant, and Reserved are the four ideal types of diaspora entrepreneur who pursue their homeland related goals via contentious, noncontentious, or mixed forms. All in all, nine pathways of engagement by diaspora entrepreneurs are identified,

designed to understand their impact on home and host governments as well as on global institutions.

The methodological approach centers on developing typologies of diaspora entrepreneurs and the forms of engagement and contentious politics they pursue. Koinova is explicit that her typological theory is developed with an eye to explain outcomes. In this case, diaspora entrepreneurs are treated as carriers of linkages and associations to different local, national, and global contexts. Her case selection is built around the four types of diaspora entrepreneurs from three diaspora groups (Albanian, Armenian, Palestinian), tracing their work in the UK, Germany, Sweden, France, the Netherlands, and Switzerland. The case selection, in terms of the four types of diaspora entrepreneurs, is done by focusing on conflict-generated contexts, with a further focus on political entities with contested sovereignties – *de facto* states of Kosovo, Nagorno-Karabakh, and Palestine.

There is so much to celebrate in this book. This study offers theoretical and policy contributions in number of frontlines in IR scholarship. This includes our understanding of the international relations of *de facto* states and sovereignty contours of young states, with an emphasis on the phenomena of disaggregated statehood. This study also connects with the politics of transnational activism and peacebuilding. Its contribution to diaspora studies centers is significant. This study furthers knowledge on the autonomy of diaspora actors as political players in world politics. As such, it offers a framework to recognize and investigate the messy and multi-layered diaspora politics, one which transcends the conventional understandings of diasporas as pliant extensions of their home states. The autonomy of diasporic communities – and cases of concord and divergence with their home states – is a phenomenon that the framework developed here helps to uncover.


The study, however, is rather defensive when it comes to the institutional implications of the model it introduces. In particular, the social contexts of diaspora entrepreneurs are under-theorized. On the one hand, the study conceptualizes diaspora entrepreneurs as carriers of linkages and connections rather than in terms of their individual characteristics (e.g., education, gender, age, etc.). In doing so, it underlines the extent to which diaspora entrepreneurs are connected, politically and socially, to various levels of political power. On the other hand, the study shies away from advancing that approach fully to mapping the diaspora entrepreneurs within their respective social networks.

Fuller engagement of the social network analysis would have allowed this study to grapple with the broader institutional contexts by showing, for instance, how the diaspora entrepreneurs are embedded within the network structure determines outcomes of their political behavior. Indeed, linking network structure to policy outcomes remains the “holy grail” in the network analysis literature, and it holds an untapped potential for advancing this particular research further.

Typologies and concept development theories tend to deliver more when they are more explicit in their causality. Delineating the link between the social network in which diaspora entrepreneurs are embedded – and the mobilization outcomes they produce – would have been useful in furthering the discourse as to how diasporas mobilize. Such a research track also would have advanced the question of network boundary delineation. What are the institutional attributes of a particular socio-spatial field in which diaspora entrepreneurs are embedded? How do they matter in shaping the choices of diaspora entrepreneurs?

The study also explains how diaspora entrepreneurship is related to norm entrepreneurship but proceeds to qualify that diaspora entrepreneurs usually advance particularistic rather than universalistic or cosmopolitan identities and projects. This last argument is debatable. Diasporic communities partly mirror the weakness in minority protections within the contemporary nation-state system. Even when advancing seemingly particularistic claims, the value added of their activity on enhanced human rights in one or more regions are critical for improving the international human rights regimes. Indeed, it is the failures of minority protections in post-Communist spaces – Kosovar Albanians in Serbia and Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh in Azerbaijan – that have securitized Russia’s foreign policies in its vast post-Communist vicinities.

The book is a valuable resource for researchers in diaspora studies, but it can also be used in graduate courses on diaspora politics. The book provides broad overview of diaspora politics and lends itself easily to being a primary resource for such courses. Highly comprehensive, it can be supplemented with case-specific articles to make it more user-friendly in the classroom.

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