

# **The Politics of Transnational Ties: Implications for Policy, Research, and Communities**

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## **Abstract**

The policy paper is based on a workshop organized by the York Centre for Asian Research and Centre for Research on Latin American and the Caribbean, both at York University. Scholars in North America have become more aware that some migrants (migrant workers, immigrants and to some extent refugees) are increasingly organizing their lives transnationally, enabled by the revolution in communications and transportation technologies. Transnationalism deserves particular attention in Canada, due to our high levels of immigration, active migrant work programmes, and the sheer diversity of our immigrant population. The transnational activities of migrants resident in Canada constitute an important though often overlooked informal dimension of Canadian external relations. Workshop participants pointed to the need to move away from nearly automatic suspicion of migrant transnationalism towards a more informed and nuanced understanding of its complexity and diversity, grounded in Canada-specific research. Many forms of migrant transnationalism support Canadian foreign policy goals, especially the promotion of human rights and human security. Acceptance of people's transnational identities, practices, and values can enhance the prosperity of Canadians at home and abroad, and human security to the extent that it brings enhanced rights for migrants in Canada. The workshop pointed to the need for more comprehensive understanding of transnationalism among Canadian migrants, the ways that transnationalism enhances or contradicts Canadian foreign policy objectives, and the factors that promote and shape lives that extend across borders. A final need identified was that of greater policy coherence between branches of DFAIT and other ministries dealing with immigrants (CIC, HRDC) and development issues (CIDA), as well as relevant provincial and federal departments and agencies.

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## **SUMMARY OF FOREIGN POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

1. Transnational activities are complex, contradictory, and highly diverse: scholars and policy-makers need to learn more about their costs and benefits for various actors at all levels and to avoid generalizations and blanket policy responses.
2. The sheer diversity, complexity, and extent of migrant transnational practices points to a need for more research and exchanges among scholars, and with policy-makers, as a foundation for more informed policy.
3. It should not be assumed that migrant transnationalism is dangerous or a security threat to Canadians. Nor is it necessarily a sign that immigrant communities are not committed to civic life in Canada. Transnational livelihood strategies are more often a response to human insecurity and can be crucial to its alleviation both in Canada and in home countries, revealing a need to broaden definitions of human security.
4. The transnational activities and communications of migrants and cross-border advocacy groups and networks often constitute a form of public diplomacy that shapes the image of Canada abroad and influences the ability of Canadian policy-makers to achieve their foreign policy objectives. Policy-makers should engage with relevant networks and groups, and encourage and support those whose activities enhance Canadian foreign policy objectives.
5. The Canadian government should exercise leadership by pushing to enhance human security and reduce risks through protecting the rights of migrants in Canada and other countries, regardless of nationality or citizenship and despite the transnationality of their lives.
6. The links between social inclusion/exclusion and transnationalism point to the need to ensure the coherence of foreign and domestic policies that affect the human security and rights of migrants and their families. The foreign policy community would benefit from attention to how Canadian federal overseas development policies and economic and political relations with particular countries can be undermined by municipal, provincial and federal policies towards migrants. Exclusionary policies can lead to negative portrayals of Canada and Canadian institutions abroad.

Section IV below expands upon these policy implications.

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Scholars in North America have become more aware that some migrants (migrant workers, immigrants and to some extent refugees) are increasingly organizing their lives transnationally. The revolution in communications and transportation technologies has enabled migrants to maintain strong connections with and to get involved in their homelands, and indeed with a variety of sites in different countries. Governments of the countries in which migrants originate are engaging with their migrant communities abroad, often through increasingly active consulates in receiving countries that facilitate dual citizenship, remittance and investment flows, and political involvement “back home.” There are various types of “transnational” practices, including social, economic, political, religious, and cultural. Even where the transnational activities of migrants do not have an explicit political dimension, they often have important political effects in their home countries, in Canada, and in transnational relationships.

The share of emigrants and associated co-ethnics or co-nationals who are active in multiple forms of transnationalism at any point in time is often minor. However, many people are active in a small number of activities or active sporadically. Moreover, the frequency, intensity, scope and durability of transnational activities change over time. While engagement in transnationalism is complex and variable, interventions by states, corporations, NGOs and migrant organizations are institutionalizing these linkages and networks. Institutionalization takes various forms, including hometown, regional, national or ethnic associations, remittance companies, dual citizenship legislation, extraterritorial migrant outreach programmes, reconfigured cross-border religious networks, and special worker programmes. Their presence heightens the significance of transnationalism, because these institutions are not dependent on the active participation of specific individuals, but rather, have an institutional life of their own.

The political effects of the transnational activities of migrants and related cross-border advocacy groups and networks deserve particular attention in Canada. This is due to our high levels of immigration, active migrant work programmes, and the sheer diversity of our immigrant population, unmatched anywhere in the world. In effect the transnational political activities of migrants resident in Canada constitute an important though often overlooked informal dimension of Canadian external relations, one with multiple effects on Canadian foreign policy that challenge its state-to-state emphasis. Migrant transnationalism also highlights the way that Canadian foreign policy goals and priorities are influenced by other largely “domestic” policies, including those guiding immigration, employment, and social services. Thus, migrant transnationalism points to the need for foreign policy to take into consideration diverse Canadian policy-making processes.

In an effort to reflect the realities of transnationalism and its implications, academic disciplines are developing new subfields that examine relevant changes in areas such as the conceptualization and practice of citizenship, of the state and the limits of its regulatory activities, of state-to-state international relations, and of state-emigrant relations. “Transnational studies” and “diaspora studies” are examples of new subfields from anthropology and sociology. In political science, jobs are now advertised for people with expertise in “the politics of diasporas” or “transnational politics.” Immigration studies are shifting from their past emphasis on the incorporation of immigrants into Canadian society to also assessing the importance of the transnational relationships of migrants for their livelihoods, human security, and civic involvement. Area-studies scholars, meanwhile, are finding that their research can no longer be bound by old geographic boundaries such as “Asia” or “Latin America.” They are “following” migrants and their transnational activities across borders to engage with Asian and Latin American communities in Canada and other countries around the world.

Despite the importance of migrant transnationalism for Canada, academics here have only recently begun to study this phenomenon—Canadians are in this respect behind scholarship in the United States and Europe. The Canadian government, moreover, seems less aware of the importance of these activities than governments abroad, especially governments of sending countries such as Mexico or the Philippines, who have explicitly made transnationalism a part of their foreign policy concerns. In part to help address this lack of knowledge in Canada, the York Centre for Asian Research (YCAR) and the Centre for Research on Latin America and the Caribbean (CERLAC), both at York University, held a joint workshop on March 7 and 8, 2003. The workshop brought together scholars of Asia and Latin America, academics who study immigration, NGO and immigrant organization representatives, and policy-makers. The goals were to begin to map out the transnational political involvements of migrants in Canada and to identify their implications for Canadian foreign policy as well as for future research and organizing.

The workshop documented many examples of transnational connections or homeland ties maintained by various groups from countries in Asia and Latin America, including Indonesia, Hong Kong, India, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Cambodia, the Philippines, Peru, El Salvador, Colombia, Brazil, Chile and Mexico. Many of these states have policies that encourage nationals and their descendants to maintain social and economic ties to their homelands. However, some have or have had conflictual relations with at least some overseas or diaspora groups (e.g. Tamils, Guatemalans, Chileans). Presenters also discussed the activities of various kinds of NGOs active in cross-border advocacy networks and/or lobbying the Canadian government around specific issues (e.g. the FTAA and migrant workers rights).

This report summarizes the key policy findings of the workshop. It also aims to address what several speakers identified as a lack of policy coherence between the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) and other federal, provincial, and municipal ministries, departments, and agencies. The report (1) outlines

some of the key concepts used by scholars who study transnationalism, and provides a summary of the key research findings in Canada and elsewhere; (2) elaborates on the implications for foreign policy; and (3) suggests some directions for future policy and policy-relevant research. A summary of foreign policy implications is provided above.

## II. CONCEPTS, RESEARCH AND KEY QUESTIONS

This section introduces the key concepts which have emerged from the study of transnationalism and diaporas and summarizes their key policy relevant findings and current research questions. It draws from both the academic literature and examples discussed in the workshop.

*Migrant transnationalism* refers to the process whereby social actors who have migrated maintain active ties with their homelands, or across national borders through participation in religious, social, cultural, economic, and political networks and processes. “Transnational social spaces,” “social formations,” “social fields,” and “communities” are phrases used to describe various scales of transnational practices, institutions and identities created through these activities. Some scholars refer to the social actors whose lives stretch across borders as *transmigrants*.

Research on migrant transnationalism in various contexts outside Canada has produced a number of important findings, although more research is needed to assess their generalizability. These include the following:

- Migrants often maintain contact with people and institutions in their countries or regions of origin, and new communication and transportation technologies have increased the frequency and intensity of these contacts.
- Migrant transnationalism is not new. On the contrary, there have been many cases of political and other forms of transnationalism since at least the nineteenth century. What is new is the way scholars conceptualize and study the phenomena and, perhaps, their scope, intensity, and frequency.
- Transnational activities may take various forms, including:
  - *social* (regular contact with relatives and friends back home, travel for family occasions, etc.);
  - *cultural* (e.g. celebrating ethnic, religious or national holidays associated with the home country);
  - *religious* (e.g. maintaining religious identities and practices associated with specific leaders or institutions based in the home country or region, economic support for faith-based projects and organizations);
  - *economic* (family remittances, collective remittances, investment, owning a home or property “back home”);
  - *political* (voting, raising funds for parties or social movements, lobbying the host government regarding homeland issues).

- Individuals may engage in some or all of the above types of practices. The frequency, intensity, and scope of participation vary. There may be regular patterns or types of transnational engagement associated with particular national origin or ethnic groups.
- Evidence of widespread and strong transnational ties have led some scholars to question the empirical and theoretical relevance of nation-bound categories such as citizenship, immigrant, membership, allegiance, and even nation-state. They argue instead for re-framing these categories and related processes (e.g. nation-building, class, and identity) from a transnational perspective.
- Macro-level factors play an important role in shaping transnational practices. These include political opportunities and economic conditions “at home” and in the host country, immigrant selection policies, foreign exchange rates, and international trade agreements.
- Home state policies and conditions help to shape transnational activities. Although some states ignore or reject their emigrants, many more have policies and programs aimed at fostering a sense of national belonging on the part of emigrants and their descendents. These include dual citizenship and absentee voting laws, outreach programmes for emigrants, return migrant and emigrant protection programmes, rules governing money transfers, and programmes to attract emigrant or diaspora investment. Migrant-sending states can be categorized as follows depending on the policies aimed at their overseas populations: states that ignore or reject emigrants; policies that strengthen social ties and homeland national identity while trying to keep emigrants outside the home country; policies that encourage migrant return and re-settlement; and mixed policies with elements of both.
- The policies of the receiving state also matter: host-country immigration, refugee, citizenship, rights protection and labour market/employment policies are particularly important. State policies set parameters for migrant transnationalism and cross-border advocacy by shaping who comes to Canada and their economic and social opportunities while resident here. Settlement services shape the “warmth of the welcome” and the social inclusion or exclusion that results.
- Migrants and other non-state actors are increasingly important players in cross-border advocacy and public diplomacy. These include not only NGOs, but also immigrant groups and networks. For example, the workshop included representatives from a Canadian-Indonesian group, Canadians Concerned about Ethnic Violence in Indonesia (CCEVI), which is active in countering ethnic-based discrimination and violence in Indonesia and is working with both Chinese and indigenous people in Indonesia. Other examples abound.

- Research in North America and Europe suggests that negative racialization, racism, and discrimination sometimes contributes to transnationalism, as these experiences lead people to maintain a home country arena where they enjoy more prestige and social mobility.
- Migrant experiences of social exclusion or inclusion may have contradictory effects with respect to motivating transnational activities. Social inclusion refers to the ability of migrants fully to participate in the civic life of host countries, such as through employment rights, political participation, access to social services, rights to form associations, and freedom from discrimination. For example, the lack of recognition of the employment credentials of middle-class professional migrants pushes some of them to maintain residence in Canada while seeking employment abroad.
- The relationship between experiences of social exclusion/inclusion and transnationalism may be mediated by demographic patterns (e.g. the migration of families versus non-family individuals) as well as macro-level economic and political processes.
- Social and economic status shapes transnational activities. Wealthy migrants are more likely to engage in entrepreneurial and political transnationalism. Poorer and middle strata migrants are more likely to focus on family-level social transnationalism and remittance sending.
- Gender shapes migration and transnationalism. Men may be more active in political transnationalism. Women may be more active in remittance-sending and social transnationalism. Workshop presentations also suggested that the gendered nature of some Canadian temporary worker programmes influences patterns of migrant transnationalism. For instance, migrant workers involved in the sex trade in Canada, the majority of whom are women, experience particularly intense social exclusion and the weakest rights protections amongst migrant workers, which hampers their ability to organize locally or transnationally to alleviate their insecurity.
- Immigrant incorporation, which is not a linear or uniform process, can take place alongside transnational activity. Newcomers can settle and become involved in the social, cultural and political life of their countries of settlement while maintaining or in some cases renewing ties to their places of origin.
- Some transnational activity may contribute to incorporation. Research indicates that advocating and lobbying in favour of a homeland-oriented agenda may have the inadvertent effect of contributing to political incorporation in the host country.

These points outline areas of agreement among scholars of transnationalism. However, there is less consensus on other issues. These include: (1) what shapes who will and who will not maintain these ties within a particular ethno-national origin group (what

determines who is more likely to be a transmigrant, as opposed to an immigrant); (2) the extent to which migrant transnationalism enhances migrant political autonomy, social justice goals, or the bargaining position of migrant groups vis-à-vis their homeland government; (3) the long-term impacts of transnationalism on homeland political transformation, democratization, and the social well-being of migrants and non-migrants; (4) the relationship between various forms of transnationalism and the mode of immigrant incorporation; and (5) questions about the durability of transnational practices and institutions over time and across generations. In spite of these and other questions, scholars agree that the study of immigrant incorporation should also consider the nature and scope of homeland ties.

Although the field of diaspora studies is older, interest in the area has surged at the same time that transnational studies emerged as a field of study. There is still disagreement whether the term diaspora should be applied narrowly to individuals and communities that have experienced forced migration and to exile communities, or more broadly to any overseas populations. The relationship between diaspora and transnationalism is often muddy, but some scholars argue convincingly that diasporas represent one form of transnational community or social formation.

### **III. MAPPING PRACTICES AND POLICIES OF KEY ACTORS IN CANADIAN TRANSNATIONALISM.**

Various collectivities, organizations and institutional actors mediate transnational activities. This section discusses policy based on four categories of actors or institutions that mediate transnationalism.

#### **1. Canadian state-led transnationalism**

The Canadian government, through various programmes that recruit temporary workers in specific sectors (agriculture, domestic workers, nurses), lays the basis for some transnational social fields and ongoing ties. Workers from several countries, including the Philippines, Jamaica and other Caribbean countries, as well as Mexico, come to Canada through these programmes. The duration of their stay varies, as does their access to social services and coverage by labour legislation. While the programmes that bring them are highly regulated, there are loopholes and contradictions that contribute to workers' social exclusion. For example, agricultural workers from Mexico and the Caribbean are vulnerable because of their dependency on their employers for future participation in these programmes, and policies that prevent or hinder employment-based associations. This does not mean that all employers are abusive; it does mean that these workers lack the protection of labour and other laws enjoyed by other Canadian residents. These and other cases point to the importance of implementing commitments to protecting the social and employment rights of all migrants (including those agreed to through the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) Agreement process, discussed later). This in turn points to the need for greater articulation of foreign and trade policy on one hand, and domestic policies on the other.



Canadian immigration policy and federal and provincial employment regulations and institutions contain contradictory elements that shape and sometimes encourage transnationalism. For example, highly educated professional workers from Hong Kong (and other countries) enter Canada as landed immigrants, but are often unable to find adequate employment. They may leave family members here while returning home for employment. This form of instrumental labour market transnationalism might be reduced if policy coherence in the area of credential recognition could be promoted.

## **2. “Home” state-led transnationalism**

Not all states have the capacity to or interest in encouraging their emigrants to maintain ties. However, a number of “sending” states with emigrant populations in Canada are actively engaged in reaching out to their overseas populations, raising questions about the response of Canadian authorities. Participants mentioned a number of countries (including the Philippines, India, Peru, Mexico, Jamaica, El Salvador) and provinces (Kerala and Gujarat in India) that have ministries or offices for migrants. These government offices work to maintain remittance flows, encourage investment, and maintain emigrants’ sense of homeland belonging. Some of these states allow and/or encourage double nationality and citizenship, while others do not. Whether or not they support political citizenship on the part of their migrants, they strive to maintain the homeland ties of the latter.

In the process of reaching out to their emigrants and their descendants, sending states and their political authorities are extra-territorializing the scope of their consular activity and redefining sovereignty. Consular staff and foreign-service bureaucrats are taking an increasingly proactive stance, increasing the scope of “protection” and encouraging migrant organizing. At the same time, political candidates, party representatives, religious leaders, and others are traveling to meet with their “constituents” abroad.

## **3. Migrant led transnationalism**

Migrant-led transnationalism has widely divergent forms, objectives, and political implications, as indicated by the cases discussed. On the one hand are cases where transnationalism might contradict Canadian foreign policy objectives. For example, some Indians in Canada support religious movements associated with communal violence in India. Others invest in development projects that lead to population displacement and human rights violations in India. Transmigrants provide funding for projects like the Narmada dam, substituting for funds from the World Bank and other agencies that have withdrawn from these projects due their impact on population displacement and on the environment. On the other hand, there are many cases in which transmigrant activities reinforce foreign policy objectives. For example, CCEVI has expanded beyond its original focus on helping ethnic Chinese victims of ethnic violence in Indonesia to also lobby the Canadian government regarding ethnic violence aimed at Indonesians who are not ethnically Chinese. They have also become involved in development projects which assist such groups. Group leaders are professionals who volunteer their time. This case

seems to mirror that of Greek North Americans, who became increasingly incorporated into Canadian and American institutions as they lobbied these governments in relation to homeland politics.

Diversity is also evident within specific ethnic or national communities. For example, some Tamil organizations in Canada have been important players in the Tamil nationalist movement in Sri Lanka, and Canadian media has focused on the spillover of crime and violence into Canada from that country. Meanwhile, most Tamils, particularly those with children in Canada, are incorporating into Canadian labour markets and institutions. Some Indian migrant organizations active in Canada are working to counter the influence of transnational religious-based movements associated with communal violence, and to publicize the experiences of Islamic communities in India who have been targets of violence. One speaker representing a community organization argued that South Asians in Canada engage in homeland politics because they experience racism and other forms of social and economic exclusion here. In contrast, she argued that immigrant politics are the domain of youth and the second generation, people who do not have active ties to their homeland.

These examples point to considerable variation in the activities of transmigrants and the ways that they might enhance or undermine Canadian foreign policy. Activities that are contradictory to the values underlying Canadian foreign policy range well beyond the 'visible' security threats of migrants with links to cross-border terrorism or crime. They extend, for example, to the kinds of transnational investments made by Canadian residents. At the same time, the CCEVI case is representative of many groups and activities making a direct and positive impact on government efforts to promote Canadian values centred on human rights and human security abroad. The cases of CCEVI, Tamils, and even non-resident Indians (NRIs) suggest that foreign-born Canadian immigrants and citizens may engage in both incorporative and transnational activities at the same time. They also suggest that the relationship between racialization and exclusion on one hand, and transnationalism on the other, deserves further investigation.

#### **4. Cross-border advocacy and NGOs**

There are many cases of faith-based, labour, and other NGOs lobbying various government agencies (CIC, DFAIT, HRDC) on issues that affect the lives of transmigrants, such as the FTAA, human rights, and immigration, refugee, and asylum policies. Cross-border and transnational coalitions such as these have been important to the work and success of these organizations. The increasingly transnational and coalition-based aspects of social justice campaigns are consistent with the Canadian government's publicly stated commitment to democratically accountable multilateralism, new multilateralism, and public diplomacy. Such networks and coalitions deserve financial and other support, for they play an important role in the (re)negotiation of Canadian foreign and other policies and in promoting Canadian values and interests abroad.

### **IV. ELABORATION OF FOREIGN POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

## **1. Complexity**

Homeland ties, cross-border advocacy, state outreach toward emigrant populations, and other examples of political transnational activity are complex processes that defy simple classification or generalization. Workshop presentations pointed to diverse and at times contradictory objectives and motivations behind transnational activity, making it difficult to evaluate the costs and benefits for different actors. This in itself is a useful conclusion, one that suggests a need for careful investigation of political and other forms of transnationalism at various levels, among a range of groups, in order to analyze how specific activities may be advantageous to some foreign policy aims and not others, and whether and how this might change over time. These investigations may allow Canadian policy-makers and the public to view transnational networks and activities with diminishing suspicion, and to move away from classifying them as either good or bad. Policy makers should refrain from any single approach to these practices, as some are consistent with and enhance foreign policy goals such as democratization, improved human security, and international development, while others may contradict them. Foreign policy could go further to identify and, if appropriate, support those activities which support foreign policy goals, while being careful about inadvertently supporting activities which are not.

The case of NRIs investing in a dam that the World Bank had rejected as environmentally unsound is a useful example. These investors may gain status and political leverage in relation to the Indian government. However, their efforts undermine the goals of local (Indian) environmental and indigenous NGOs, as well as the World Bank. This case underscores the complexity of the issue, particularly when compared to CCEVI's efforts to advocate on behalf of victims of ethnic violence in Indonesia.

## **2. A Need for Research That Can Inform Policy**

The sheer diversity and extent of transnational practices points to a need for more research and exchanges among scholars and with policy-makers so as to enable a more informed foreign policy. Relatively little is known about migrant transnationalism and cross-border networks in Canada, while research on these phenomena in the United States and Europe has a longer history. Fortunately, several efforts are underway to document and analyze patterns of migrant transnationalism in this country (Kobayashi et al., n.d.; Lanphier et al. 2001; Wayland 2001; Goldring and Landolt 2002; Winland 1998; Nolin and Kobayashi 1998). Workshop participants from the United States, Malaysia, and Canada outlined some of the kinds of data and research questions that could be pursued in Canada, and which could inform the making of foreign as well as development and immigration policy. Some specific research needs include:

*(a) Prevalence, use, and political impacts of remittances.* Remittances constitute one of the most common forms of transnational activity. Although they involve monetary flows, remittances are based on family and other socially defined commitments. They may also have important political dimensions, particularly when they account for large shares of

the foreign exchange earnings of particular countries and contribute to the survival of significant numbers of households and communities. Many state-diaspora outreach programmes are directly or indirectly aimed at maintaining the flow of remittances and improving the image and legitimacy of the home country among the emigrant population. One of the presenters described the Peruvian government's efforts to develop consultative bodies of emigrants to evaluate consular services. The presenter suggested that the underlying agenda includes increasing the legitimacy of the Peruvian government among emigrants (who can vote in Peruvian elections) and maintaining remittance flows. The Peruvian government was modeling these consultative bodies on the Mexican model. Last year Mexico initiated a new process involving a body of delegates selected by the government to provide consultation on a number of issues, including political rights in Mexico, among Mexicans in the United States. Although this model is new and, as yet, unproven, it is already being copied by other remittance-dependent governments in the region. The government of Taiwan has recently moved to make its consulates and embassies more accountable to overseas Taiwan citizens, reflecting both democratization in Taiwan and the political and economic influence of emigrants, who have long had reserved seats in the Legislative Yuan.

Canada lacks a comprehensive or systematic database on Canadian-based remittance flows. The IMF publishes data on remittances, but there is no information on the sources, only totals received by country. While there are significant methodological challenges involved in any effort to measure remittance flows, and deepen our understanding of various forms of remittances, Canadian policy would benefit from having better data.

In addition to supporting data collection, Canadian policy-makers and the public need in-depth analyses of the uses, meanings and politics surrounding remittances. After all, most family remittances fund household and medical expenses. If there is money left over, it goes to education, housing, and major life-cycle events. Collective remittances often pay for local development projects (including roads, schools, and clinics) and disaster relief. Only in a minority of cases are they used for less desirable ends. Understanding the variety of uses to which they are put and the institutions that mediate their transfer and use could reduce suspicion regarding fundraising for overseas projects and foreign investment by Canadians with homeland ties.

*(b) How the Canadian context shapes transnationalism.* Research on migrant transnational activities and cross-border networks based in Canada can illuminate the role of the context of reception in shaping the form and implications of transnationalism. At this point there are a number of case studies of the influence of context of reception in the United States, Britain, Europe. However, the Canadian government's immigrant and refugee selection and multiculturalism policies create a somewhat different context of reception. As noted below, we need to learn more about the extent to which racism and other rights-limiting practices contribute to transnationalism, and whether national-origin or ethnic groups present in Canada and elsewhere engage in different forms of transnationalism *because* of the Canadian context.

(c) *Complexity and variation.* Over and over again workshop discussions demonstrated that there are many types of migrant transnational practices, and many kinds of related transnational associations, organizations, and networks. There is a need both for mapping this complexity, and for more specialized workshops and research around specific forms of transnationalism and of transnationalism among particular groups. To this end, future workshops are being planned on transnational religious networks (at York University) and transnationalism among Chinese immigrants (at the University of Toronto with York University support).

(d) *Racism, social exclusion and transnationalism:* Research on transnationalism elsewhere indicates that racism and social exclusion can contribute to transnationalism. However, the evidence is inconclusive. Work on this question in the Canadian context would contribute to Canadian policy as well as academic discussions. However, it is important to emphasize that the findings of such research should not be used to challenge the legitimacy of migrant transnationalism.

### **3. Security**

It is important not to assume that migrant transnationalism is dangerous or a security threat to Canadians, or a sign that immigrant communities are not committed to civic life in Canada. Rather, migrant transnationalism often goes hand-in-hand with civic involvement in Canadian society and support for democracy, human rights, and social justice both in Canada and in home countries. Moreover, transnational livelihood strategies are crucial to improving human security in both sending and receiving countries. Remittances are particularly central to development in low-income regions and to the security of individuals and families. Therefore, in many cases, transnationalism is a direct response to insecurity and can be understood as a migrant-led way of improving human security.

(a) *Broadening the scope of human security.* The Canadian government's current approach to human security emphasizes the security of people abroad, especially in conflict zones (DFAIT 2003). Workshop presentations pointed to the need for policy-makers to expand the scope of human security to include livelihood security, security regardless of geographic location (in Canada and abroad), and the reduction of a broad spectrum of risks, including disease, safety, shelter, civil rights protection, as well as protection from both systemic and physical violence. This would help further to link security and rights, based on the logic that the better one's access to a bundle of rights, and the greater the quality and array of rights in the bundle, the greater the security one will experience (also see *Citizenship, Rights and Marginalization below*).

This approach is also consistent with the Canadian government's commitment to act on the Summit Action Plans (of Santiago 1998 and Quebec 2000) on the protection of the human rights of migrants, including migrant workers and their families. The Canadian government should move ahead on the commitment in the Action Plans to establish an inter-American programme within the Organization of American States (OAS) for the promotion and protection of the rights of migrants. More broadly, it should demonstrate

its commitment to the rights of migrant workers by immediately signing and ratifying the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. Notably, this convention is one of several recent international agreements that recognizes a right to some forms of transnational association for migrants and other groups.

In the current context, the threat of terrorism has highlighted state security concerns, subordinating human security. One of the consequences has been to raise suspicion of the homeland ties of migrants, particularly ties with economic, political or religious dimensions. A broader approach to human security would recognize that maintaining contact with individuals and organizations in a real or putative homeland is a legitimate activity that frequently aims to enhance human security and human rights for those involved. The assumption of guilt based on links to violent or criminal activity should only be made after due analysis.

*(b) Security and Canadian values.* Identifying and working with transnational migrant organizations and cross-border advocacy networks whose work is consistent with Canadian foreign policy and values could contribute to promoting a good image of Canada and Canadians, both overseas and here in Canada. It is consistent with Canada's international leadership in promoting peacekeeping, people-to-people dialogue, and partnerships with NGOs and other non-state actors to foster sustainable development, prosperity, and social justice.

#### **4. Public Diplomacy**

The transnational activities and communications of migrants and related cross-border advocacy networks often constitute a form of public diplomacy that shapes the image of Canada abroad and influences the ability of Canadian policy-makers to promote Canadian values and interests abroad. Some transnational activities on specific issues constitute a kind of informal Canadian foreign policy. Policy-makers concerned with the kinds of information people abroad receive about Canada, or who are also involved with the same issues engaged in by Canadian immigrant organizations, should pay attention to how this public diplomacy affects their work. They should encourage and assist those groups whose activities enhance Canadian foreign policy objectives and that promote an expanded definition of human security (see *Security* above), including in multilateral fora. The goals of these actors may not always be consistent with Canadian policies. Nevertheless, Canadian policy needs to engage with these actors and networks, rather than ignoring them. For example, it remains an urgent priority to work with Muslim groups in Canada with overseas connections. Rather than branding them uniformly as terrorists or worthy of suspicion, the Canadian government should work with these groups to foster dialogue and build bridges that will reduce intolerance and promote peace, human security, and human rights. The Canadian government could do more to take advantage of the expertise, connections, and resources of transnational migrant and relevant cross-border advocacy networks in areas such as development and environmental advocacy and projects, human rights promotion, and faith-based organizing.

## **5. Citizenship, Rights and Marginalization**

The Canadian government should exercise leadership in the human security agenda at home and in multilateral fora by broadening the rights of migrants in Canada and other countries, regardless of nationality or citizenship and despite the transnationality of their lives. As noted above, an expanded approach to security can focus attention on the ways that migrant transnational practices and cross-border advocacy may enhance the security of individuals and families who directly experience risk or vulnerability with respect to human rights or other rights and freedoms, or who advocate to reduce such risks on behalf of others. Examples of the former would include people who cannot find adequate employment in Canada and who therefore maintain strong economic ties to their homeland (e.g. some temporary workers, some immigrants from Hong Kong); individuals with immediate family members abroad who cannot bring them to Canada for economic, immigration, or other reasons; or people who experience racism, blocked occupational mobility, or other forms of social exclusion in Canada and, therefore, seek support and security through transnational links. A wide range of examples of the latter were discussed at the workshop; they include cross-border advocacy around the FTAA (e.g. for human rights, labour protection, and environmental security), CCEVI's work on behalf of ethnic Chinese and indigenous groups in Indonesia, and Tamil organizations.

In examining how transnationalism may be a response to insecurity and social and economic marginalization, violations of the following rights are particularly important:

- (i) Freedom from racism, sexism, and other forms of discrimination; freedom from oppression and persecution;
- (ii) Freedom of association and of participation;
- (iii) Social rights (including to health, education, and safety);
- (iv) Cultural rights (freedom of religious expression; the right to construct places of worship, to ethnic identity, and to cultural survival);
- (v) Civil rights (the right to equity, equality before the law and equal protection of the law, to organize unions and to other labour rights and protection);
- (vi) Political (the right to vote, to representation, and to hold public authorities accountable); and
- (vii) Local political rights (the right to a voice in municipal affairs regardless of citizenship or nationality)

Workshop presenters who discussed temporary workers, special worker programmes, and cross-border organizing from a variety of perspectives concurred that vulnerability associated with the denial of rights (whether of migrants or of their close relatives living at home) often leads workers to engage in transnational activities of various sorts. In some cases it may also prompt homeland states to lobby on behalf of overseas populations, although in others these people may be completely unprotected and lack advocates. Finally, in some cases the rights of migrants have been used by host countries as form of political leverage in their relations with sending countries. A recent example is the way that the situation of Mexican migrants in the United States was at issue in the

politics of the UN security council vote on using force in Iraq. Holding migrant rights hostage to international relations curtails human security.

## **6. Policy Coherence**

*(a) The relationship between social exclusion/inclusion and transnationalism:* As indicated above, migrant transnationalism does not preclude incorporation into Canadian society. Although further research is needed, Canadian cases discussed at the workshop confirm findings from other countries that the incorporation of immigrants into Canadian society and their engagement in transnational activities (whether political or economic, in these cases) should not be automatically seen in zero-sum terms. Migrant transnationalism also does not preclude a commitment to Canadian values, institutions, and society. For example, CCEVI's ability to lobby the Canadian government is enhanced by members' professional and settled resident status, just as the NRI's economic success in Canada allows them to invest, in Canada and "at home."

*(b) Other policy linkages:* We have also discussed above how transnationalism among migrant communities points to the need for efforts to ensure policy coherence over a wide range of policy areas, not only with domestic policies but also immigration and international development policies. The kinds of information about Canada conveyed abroad (e.g. by migrants to overseas relatives), and the way that transnational political practices take shape, are directly affected by what are often seen as "domestic" policies and experiences such as employment rights, access to social services such as education and health, freedom of association, and freedom from cultural or racialized discrimination. Thus, the foreign policy community would benefit from attention to how Canadian government overseas development policies and economic and political relations with particular countries may be undermined by municipal, provincial and federal policies that affect migrants, and vice versa. More research is needed on these complex linkages.

## **V. CONCLUSIONS**

The contemporary era is marked by globalization and the changing roles of and relations between capital, states, NGOs, and labour. It is one in which state policies often lag behind the lived experience of many people. In a world marked by the movement of people, goods, capital, ideas, and images, states sometimes treat "their" people on the basis of concepts—like territorially bounded notions of the nation-state and identity—that are fast becoming outmoded. Other states, particularly those dependent on migrant remittances, are changing the way they treat "their" people living abroad. "Host" states tend to react with greater suspicion, branding people who retain active ties to homelands as disloyal, un-patriotic (to their country of adoption), or worse—as terrorists or criminals.



The workshop pointed to the need to move away from nearly automatic suspicion of migrant transnationalism towards a more informed and nuanced understanding of its complexity and diversity, grounded in Canada-specific research. The workshop identified the ways in which many forms of migrant transnationalism support Canadian foreign policy goals, especially the promotion of human rights and human security. Canadian foreign policy and international development policy can be enhanced by (1) drawing on and supporting detailed comparative and case studies on transnational activities; (2) supporting the systematization of data collection and analyses of remittances; and (3) building bridges with organizations involved in activities that are consistent with Canadian policy goals and values.

Acceptance of people's transnational identities, practices, and values can enhance the prosperity of Canadians at home and abroad by valuing transnational ties. It can also enhance security at home and abroad by not requiring people to choose one allegiance, or a single loyalty. Acceptance of transnationality will also enhance human security to the extent that it brings enhanced rights for migrants in Canada, despite their transnationality. This rests on a modified conception of human security, one that links security to human rights and broader rights and freedoms.

The workshop pointed to the need for more comprehensive understanding of transnationalism among Canadian migrants, the ways that transnationalism enhances or contradicts Canadian foreign policy objectives, and the factors that promote and shape lives that extend across borders. Because government policies influence and sometimes encourage transnationalism, policy-relevant research can also point to ways in which policy could engage with transnationalism in ways that enhance foreign policy objectives. Another need identified was that of greater policy coherence between branches of DFAIT and other ministries dealing with immigrants (CIC, HRDC) and development issues (CIDA), as well as relevant provincial and federal departments and agencies. At the federal level, greater communication and inter-departmental planning would enhance key future steps advocated by participants, including remittance data collection and analysis, the reconceptualization of security, policy coherence, and better-informed foreign policy that takes into account transnational ties.

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