



## Diaspora entrepreneurs and contested states

by Maria Koinova, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2021, 384 pp., £90.00 (hardback), ISBN: 9780198848622

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To cite this article: Idlir Lika (2022) Diaspora entrepreneurs and contested states, Ethnic and Racial Studies, 45:13, 2575-2577, DOI: [10.1080/01419870.2022.2045031](https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2022.2045031)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2022.2045031>



Published online: 01 Mar 2022.



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**Diaspora entrepreneurs and contested states**, by Maria Koinova,  
Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2021, 384 pp., £90.00 (hardback), ISBN:  
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In *Diaspora Entrepreneurs and Contested States*, Maria Koinova develops a two-level typological theory through which she explains the variation in mobilization trajectories of the conflict-generated (Kosovar) Albanian, Armenian and Palestinian diasporas in six different European countries (France, Germany, Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland, UK) towards states experiencing contested sovereignty in the Balkans, Caucasus and Middle East, respectively. Shifting the level of analysis from diasporas as “groups based in host-states and connected to home-states” to diaspora entrepreneurs as individuals operating and embedded in transnational social fields, Koinova argues that four types of diaspora entrepreneurs (Broker, Local, Distant and Reserved) interact with four major external variables – host-state foreign policy; homeland influences from governments, parties, non-state actors; critical events; and limited global influences – to generate mobilization trajectories that vary according to their level of contention (measured nominally as contentious, non-contentious or dual-pronged contention) and the method of channelling homeland-oriented goals (via host-state institutions, transnationally or supra-nationally) (pp. 2–4). Each of these agentic and structural variables is separately “necessary” and their combinations “jointly sufficient” to explain the outcome of interest (p. 23). The author does also a good job in showing that several alternative explanations, such as migration integration regimes, systems of interest representation and host-land environments in which diaspora entrepreneurs are socio-spatially positioned, shape but do *not* explain the level of contention in diaspora mobilizations (pp. 275–277).

Process tracing the *within-case* variation in the Albanian, Armenian and Palestinian diaspora mobilizations in Europe for Kosovo, Nagorno-Karabakh (and genocide recognition) and Palestinian statehood, respectively, Koinova finds that contentious mobilization forms (protests, boycotts, sit-ins, hunger strikes, arming to fight) are actually quite uncommon (only one out of the total of nine causal pathways Koinova identifies is characterized by contentious mobilization outcome) and they are more likely to occur when diaspora entrepreneurs of all types are exposed to critical events in home-states and when the host-state foreign policy is divergent from the diaspora goals (pp. 91–93). On the other hand, non-contentious mobilization forms (lobbying, petitioning, public diplomacy) are much more common (four of the nine causal pathways have a non-contentious outcome) and they are more likely to occur when host-land foreign policy converges with diaspora goals and when diaspora entrepreneurs (especially the Local and Reserved types) act autonomously under limited global influences (pp. 82–87). Lastly, dual-pronged contention that combines both contentious and non-contentious mobilization forms is also very common (four of the nine causal pathways have a dual-pronged outcome) and is more likely to occur when the host-state foreign policy is divergent from the diaspora goals and when diaspora entrepreneurs (especially the Broker and Distant types)

act under influence from homeland governments, parties or non-state actors (pp. 88–91).

Meticulously researched, methodologically innovative and overall convincing, the book is based on rich empirical data drawn from more than 300 interviews with diaspora entrepreneurs conducted in more than 40 locations in nine different European countries between 2012 and 2017 (p. 4). The author makes an original contribution to the scholarship on diaspora studies by developing a novel *typology* of diaspora entrepreneurs (Broker, Local, Distant and Reserved) based on the relative strength and weakness of their *socio-spatial* linkages to host-states, homelands and other global contexts (pp. 62–67). Another original contribution is the development of a two-level *typological theory* that *causally* explains the variation in mobilization trajectories of three known diaspora groups in the hitherto little-explored diaspora context of Europe (p. 10). Finally, integrating the scholarship on social movements and transnationalism with the study of contested/*de facto*/weak states, the author claims that this book is “the first to develop mid-range generalizations about diaspora politics in International Relations (IR) theory on such a large scale.” (p. 4)

Although some non-academic readers might not enjoy, one of the aspects of Koinova’s book I most liked is the repetition of the argument and of the configuration of the agentic and structural variables in the discussion of each and every period of causal significance in every case study. Indeed, I was amazed at how each of the empirical chapters (Chaps. 4–9) follows identically the same structure, allowing the reader to trace the congruence among periods of causal significance in every case.

Despite these strengths, Koinova’s theory is built mostly upon within-case variation and she surprisingly does not delve into across-case comparison (p. 284). As such, the analysis loses much nuances by not pointing out that among the three cases, the mobilization of Palestinian diaspora entrepreneurs in Europe has been comparatively the most contentious (three of the five observed causal pathways in the Palestinian case are characterized by dual-pronged contention and one by contention), whereas the Kosovar Albanian diaspora mobilization has been the least contentious (four of the observed seven pathways have a non-contentious outcome). At the middle stands the Armenian diaspora mobilization with two non-contentious and two dual-pronged contention outcomes (out of a total of five observed pathways). This across-case variation is causally important because it allows identifying the one variable that seems to mostly account for it: host-state foreign policy. Indeed, Palestinian diaspora mobilization has seemingly been the most contentious because the foreign policies of the five European host-states discussed here have *always* diverged from the diaspora goals of seeking an end to the Israeli occupation and solving the refugee return issue. On the other hand, the Kosovar Albanian diaspora mobilization has been the least contentious because, after the 1999 NATO military intervention against Serbia, the European host-states have *all* supported and eventually recognized Kosovo’s independence from Serbia. Armenian diaspora mobilization stands somewhere at the middle because, while none of the European host-states

recognize Nagorno-Karabakh, most of them have been much more accomodating towards the issue of genocide recognition (with France directly recognizing the genocide and also seeking to criminalize its denial).

Overall though, *Diaspora Entrepreneurs and Contested States* is a remarkable empirical, methodological and theoretical achievement. It will be of interest primarily to IR scholars and comparativists of ethnicity and diaspora studies and it is indispensable for understanding the growing influence of diasporas in world politics.

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<https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2022.2045031>



**Reckoning with slavery: gender, kinship, and capitalism in the early black Atlantic**, by Jennifer L. Morgan, Durham, Duke University Press, 2021, 312 pp., \$27.95, ISBN: 9781478014140-(paperback)

By every measure, this is an impressive book. Already an established scholar in the history of early slavery after the publication of *Laboring Women* (2004), with this book Morgan has strengthened the case to be seen as perhaps the pre-eminent figure working in this field today. Morgan makes numerous telling interventions in a subject that has received plenty of historical interest, and as we might expect puts gender at the forefront, but this book is about more than just gender. At its heart, *Reckoning with Slavery* intertwines gender and associated ideas of kinship with emergent capitalism to make a compelling case for rethinking the early history of slavery.

As the title makes clear, the book is about the early black Atlantic. This means that Africa is often centre-stage, as is the Caribbean, with North America less prominent here than in many other works by Anglophone historians. And when one considers the comparative insignificance, and late arrival, of North America in the slaveholding world, that seems entirely appropriate. Morgan knows that the data available on European encounters with Africans is patchy and incomplete but she observes, importantly, that much of that early data is actually economic – or at least numerate. It is about trade, or ship manifests, and numeracy was something that Europeans liked to pride themselves on as a distinguishing characteristic compared to Africans. Ideas about the value of things, and that Africans failed to appreciate “true” value, contributed to an ideology where European ideas of worth become paramount.