

Diaspora and economic development in the post-socialist Eurasia

Call for papers for a special issue

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The history of human migrations across Eurasia stretches back into the millennia. Since the 1990s political and economic transformations in the post-socialist Central and Eastern Europe and former Soviet Union (CEE/FSU), those movements have acquired new forms and meaning. One specific feature of those forced and voluntary migration waves has been the rise of the new and, in some cases, strengthening of the existing diaspora networks in the post-socialist region and across the world. The complexity of the connections between an ethnic or cultural diaspora and its perceived ancestral lands makes a fascinating study in sociology and history.

But recently, much of the more applied policy-making focus has been on exploring the possibilities for a more fruitful engagement of these expatriate groups in economic development. The process has involved individual researchers, governments, and, most notably, practically all multilateral development organizations. In this latest addition to the economic development topics, the CEE/FSU region follows on tracks of similar initiatives across advanced and developing nations globally.

In fact, over the past couple of decades, if not earlier, the concept of diaspora has crossed over from its calm habitat of the humanities into more tumultuous fields of international business and economics (Gevorkyan, 2022a; Panibratov and Rysakova, 2021). No longer defined by the three classical diasporic communities—the Jewish, Greek, and Armenian (Brubaker, 2005)—under forces of globalization, the diaspora studies have been upending scholarly endeavors as well as established public policy in advanced and developing nations. Yet, despite the latest rise in supply of some intellectually brave case-studies-informed policy proposals, the discourse on diaspora seems to be unable to generate universal engagement models for broader sustainable socio-economic development. The latter is an urgent priority for the small developing economies—the ancestral nations to a variety of ethnic, religious, cultural, and other diasporas. Importantly, the traffic of ideas and capital goes in both directions: diaspora-to-homeland and homeland-to-diaspora. And all of this has become especially urgent across the post-socialist Eurasian region.

Given the above, this **special issue** aims to accomplish two specific goals. First, this initiative bridges the current diaspora-policy discourse with the wealth of existing research rooted in studies of historic identities, global networks, transnational formations, conceptualizations of homeland, host countries, and global human migration. Second, this **special issue** attempts to leverage that

rich research legacy for advancing an informed analysis (empirical or conceptual) on a range of engagement modalities between a diaspora and country's socio-economic development.

The **special issue** seeks to attract original contributions that through recognition of the multifaceted nuances associated with diaspora would deepen contemporary understanding of the concept in scholarly and applied contexts.

Three foundational points are relevant to this analysis. First, in conceptual terms attention should be drawn to the history of the human migration as the key factor in a diaspora formation. Importantly, while migration necessarily leads to a diaspora, not all migration, especially recent, constitutes a diaspora. Multilayering transnational identities, across expatriate communities, results in diverging predispositions to engage at individual or group levels. This nuance is little researched in the recent applied literature but is well-covered in a variety of historical and sociological studies of diaspora (e.g., Tölölyan, 1996).

Second, recent attempts to standardize individual case studies as best practice examples, omitting the complexity of the local historical, cultural, and geopolitical determinants, run into a brick-wall of policy ineffectiveness and macroeconomic underdevelopment. Related to this are the questions of migration flows, monetary transfers (remittances), knowledge and soft-skills transfers from the country's diaspora to the local entrepreneurs, cultural and educational engagements, search for innovative financial solutions funding development.

That leads to the third foundational point, which deals with the ancestral (home) country's engagement with its diaspora. However, not always an active diaspora may relate to (or even have) its ancestral country on today's world map. Moreover, even with diaspora's inclination to engage, the existing home country's attitudes towards its compatriots abroad may not be conducive to mutual rapprochement. In the end, the diaspora-for-development link becomes not so obvious in smaller and lower income economies. Simply "having" or, discovering (Kunz, 2012), a diaspora is not a sufficient condition for sustainable and all-inclusive economic development. A more nuanced approach is needed.

Overall, in terms of broad theoretical framework, motivating this **special issue**, the authors are invited to consider the trinity of identity (diaspora definition), trust (within and across the diaspora group, and engagement infrastructure (the ancestral homeland's proactive and transparent connection with its diaspora) categories (Gevorkyan, 2022b).

Finally, while discussions involving examples of advanced economies are relevant, this **special issue** strongly encourages papers with focus on small developing countries' realities, especially in the context of new global economy pressures, relevant to the post-socialist CEE/FSU group of countries. The target journal for this **special issue** is the journal of Eurasian Geography and Economics. Hence, the geographical focus on Eurasia (though other geographical areas could be included if they are explicitly brought into comparative focus with Eurasia, or the links made obvious), and engagement with appropriate geographical literature and theory is expected.

There is no guaranteed acceptance and all submissions will undergo a blind peer-review as per the journal's guidelines. Authors may be asked to serve as reviewers on other papers in this **special**

issue. In addition, submitting authors agree to actively participate in possible future conferences / workshops organization and presentations as part of the **special issue** publication.

Please submit all proposals to gevorkya@stjohns.edu Submissions should include either a complete paper OR an extended abstract (around 500 words) detailing the research topic and (expected) results; paper title; keywords; and authors' affiliation and contact information. Submission does not guarantee acceptance and will undergo peer-review.

The deadline for the initial submission is December 31, 2023.

About the editor: Aleksandr V. Gevorkyan, Ph.D. is Henry George Chair in Economics and Associate Professor of Economics at the Department of Economics and Finance of St. John's University's Peter J. Tobin College of Business. Dr. Gevorkyan is the author of *Transition Economies: Transformation, Development, and Society in Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union* (Routledge, 2018). **Full bio** <http://agevorkyan.com/> **Publications on diaspora** <http://agevorkyan.com/diaspora/>

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