

A Foreign Policy Actor of Importance? The Role of the Somali Diaspora in Shaping Norwegian Foreign Policy

Abstract

In this article we explore the role of the Somali diaspora in Norwegian foreign policy towards Somalia from a perspective that aims to bridge the gap between literature on transnational migration and on the foreign policy impact of ethnic lobby groups. The attempts of migrant groups to influence their country of settlement's foreign policy towards the country of origin have received extensive scholarly attention among political scientists in the US for several decades. To find examples of studies conducted in Europe, we must turn to a growing research field on the transnational political engagements of migrants. We argue that theoretical advancements on transnationalism add to the political science perspective by enabling us to analyze the heterogeneous nature and the transnational dimension of diaspora activities, as well as the interactive relationship between diaspora groups and states. At the same time, work on the foreign policy impact of ethnic lobby groups provides us with effective theoretical tools to evaluate the enabling factors for diaspora influence. Drawing on both literatures allows us to efficiently identify and evaluate the conditions that facilitated the lobbying success of members of the Somali diaspora in Norway, while incorporating the transnational nature of Somali political engagement and their multi-dimensional relationship to Norwegian decision makers.

Introduction

When migrants leave their country of origin, they do not necessarily cut all ties. It is well-established that migrants maintain transnational connections that can for example take the shape of phone calls, remittances, long-distance voting, or investments. What do these connections mean for international relations? While there has been considerable interest in how particular types of transnational connections influence larger societal processes like development, migration or integration, far less attention has been paid to the question of to what extent the transnational political ties and interests of migrants impact the relationship between states.¹ In this article we wish to explore this question by focusing on the concrete case of the Somali diaspora and their role in shaping Norwegian foreign policy. We define ‘diaspora’ as “a group whose members experience dispersion from their home country but remain connected to it through various transnational activities, and whose home country remains an important part of their identity” (Brubaker 2005, 5–7).

In our exploration, we draw on two strands of literature: the political science literature on the foreign policy impact of ethnic lobby groups,² which mainly focuses on the United States, and the interdisciplinary work on the transnational political ties of migrants, which builds most heavily on examples from Europe. We observe that these two strands of literature represent fundamentally different approaches. The first applies a state-centric approach and understands migrant communities as ‘ethnic lobby groups’ comparative to other types of lobby groups, whereas the second largely has a bottom-up approach that explores how connections across borders – whether economic, social or political – shape the lives of migrants and the wider societies they live in. We also observe that these two strands by and large do not refer to each other, and argue that much is lost when debates about the same topic are held in parallel. In this article, we aim to bridge this gap.

As argued elsewhere, transnational political engagements are particularly pertinent among refugee diasporas, consisting of people who had to leave their country of origin because of violent conflict or a politically oppressive climate (Horst 2013). Thus, we focus here on refugees, in a northern European country where there has been relatively little research on political transnationalism and its impact on foreign policy: Norway. Our case study, then,

¹ For exceptions within the classical International Relations realm, see Shain and Barth 2003 and Adamson and Demetriou 2007. For exception within transnational social movements, see e.g. Hägel and Peretz 2005. Most exceptions focus on the state of origin. For a literature review within migration research on diaspora relations to the state of origin, see Délano and Gamlen 2014.

² Which will be referred to as ‘ethnic lobby literature’ in this paper.

concerns the largest refugee group in Norway: the Norwegian-Somali community. Norwegian-Somalis are concentrated in urban centers like Oslo, where they are the fourth largest immigrant group and the largest refugee population. While they are typically discussed as a migrant group that scores low on integration indicators in Norway, they also stand out with a relatively high level of political engagement, both locally and transnationally (Horst 2008, Horst et al. 2013).

This article draws extensively on data collected in 2015, encompassing interviews with Norwegian politicians and civil servants, as well as key political actors in the Norwegian-Somali community.³ 34 semi-structured interviews and 9 in-depth conversations were held between February and April 2015 in Oslo, Nairobi and Mogadishu. All informants were asked for their perceptions of and experiences with the foreign policy impact of the Norwegian-Somali diaspora, and concrete examples were discussed extensively. Two of these examples are presented here: Norway's stance on the Ethiopian intervention in Somalia and Norway's involvement in the multi-donor Trust Fund. We also build on research conducted on political transnationalism among the Norwegian-Somali diaspora since 2007, for which interviews were conducted both with Norwegian-Somalis and Norwegian civil society and civil servants.

The article starts by providing an overview of the two strands of literature in order to suggest an integrated theoretical model that draws on both. Then, the context of the case is discussed, highlighting Norwegian foreign policy and the position of the Somali diaspora in Norway. After an in-depth discussion of the two examples of potential foreign policy influence, we will analyze these cases in light of our theoretical model. Finally, we move beyond the case of the Somali diaspora in Norway and argue that our theoretical model provides added value for the analysis of a range of other cases.

Theoretical perspectives on diaspora and foreign policy: bridging the gap

Under what conditions do diaspora groups influence foreign policy in their country of settlement? As argued above, there are two different strands of literature that speak to this question: the political science literature on ethnic groups and the interdisciplinary work on transnationalism. The political science literature on the foreign policy impact of ethnic groups in the US applies a top-down perspective, where the emphasis is on policy makers in Washington and the elites of matured ethnic groups, such as the Israeli, Cuban and Armenian

³ Most of the data collection took place between February 2015 and May 2015.

(e.g. Ahrari 1987, Uslander 1998, Smith 2000, Ambrosio 2002, Paul and Paul 2009, Rubenzer and Redd 2010, 2012). The ethnic groups are considered as similar types of interests groups to for example business lobbies or human rights groups. Even though the literature acknowledges interest groups as sources of foreign policy making, it does not exclude the role of other factors. As Sasley and Jacoby (2007) argue, “there are multiple factors and considerations that determine a state’s foreign policy, including global developments, geo-strategic location, individual leaders and their cognitive frameworks, public opinion, and the interests and efforts of domestic political actors”.

One of the main questions asked in this literature is which factors facilitate or hinder the lobbying success of ethnic groups.⁴ One set of factors relate to the political context in the country of settlement. Amongst such factors external to ethnic lobby groups, four that are commonly referred to are: first, a *permeable political structure*, which provides access points for ethnic groups to get closer to the locus of decision making; second, *congruence between the ethnic groups’ and the state’s strategic interest*; third, *a weak or divided opposition*; and fourth, *a supportive or indifferent wider public*. Another set of factors relate to attributes of the groups themselves. In this category of internal factors, five that are widely used are: first, the group’s *organizational strength*, including its professional lobbying capacity and human as well as financial resources; second, *partial assimilation*, i.e. the group has to be integrated enough to be accepted, while still maintaining a strong ethnic identity that connects them to their country of origin; third, *the size of the group and their level of political activity*; fourth, *geographical concentration*, as this heightens the electoral implications of their voting behavior and makes it easier to coordinate their political activities; and fifth, *political unity and absence of strong in-group divisions*. On their own, none of these criteria are sufficient for lobbying success, but a combination of these factors can create what Rubenzer (2008, 183) calls a “path to influence”.

Studies on transnationalism in migration research – frequently conducted by social anthropologists, sociologists and geographers – have their roots in the so-called ‘transnational turn’, when researchers introduced transnationalism as a theoretical framework in the early 1990s to allow them to better capture the nature of immigrants’ political, social and economic cross-bordered lives (Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton 1992, Basch, Glick Schiller,

⁴ The following criteria are based on literature reviews by Rubenzer 2008 and Rubenzer and Redd 2010 where the most commonly cited factors are listed.

and Blanc 1994).⁵ The introduction of the transnational analytical space challenges conventional state-centric perspectives, which have been criticized for methodological nationalism (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002, 302). This criticism can be summed up by the argument that, because the nation-state is assumed to be the natural social and political form of the modern world, and this assumption determines dominant trends in social science thinking, what happens across the national space has not received sufficient attention. Studies in transnationalism have aimed at addressing this gap, and have largely done so from the perspective of the migrant and of migrant communities at large. These studies have a bottom-up and actor-oriented perspective, where the point of departure is the complex life of migrant communities – often with a focus on less well-established diaspora groups in Europe and the US.

Bauböck and Faist (2010, 13–14) argue that the focus on complex and multi-sited networks at a grassroots level make transnationalism in migration research distinct from its predecessor ‘transnational relations’, a term coined by International Relations (IR) scholars in the early 1970s, where the emphasis is on the importance of large scale non-state actors in world politics, such as multinational corporations, trade unions and scientific networks (Keohane and Nye 1972). The transnational perspective within IR has been applied in later years to advocacy networks and social movements, but the focus has mainly been on non-state actors with universal aims, values and practices, including environmental groups and human rights activists (Keck and Sikkink 1999, della Porta et al. 2006).⁶ In contrast, transnationalism in migration research relates to all kinds of beliefs and values, with a particular focus on multiple identities, and thereby incorporates two parallel and seemingly opposing forces: ‘universalization’ and ‘particularization’ (Bauböck and Faist 2010, 15). Surprisingly, studies within the IR literature of ‘transnational relations’ seldom focus on diaspora groups. The key exceptions mainly analyze diaspora relations to the state of origin rather than the state of residence (e.g. Shain and Barth 2003, Hägel and Peretz 2005, Adamson and Demetriou 2007).

The transnational literature challenges the ethnic lobby literature in three main ways. First, the ethnic lobby literature applies a state-centric approach that pays little attention to the

⁵ In this article, transnationalism is defined as a process that links the country of origin to the country of settlement through immigrants’ multi-stranded activities (Basch, Glick Schiller, and Blanc 1994: 7).

transnational nature of diaspora activities that take place simultaneously in country of origin and countries of settlement.⁷ Because ethnic identities are analyzed as in opposition to the ‘natural order’ of a nation state, the existence of multi-sited identities and practices is denied.⁸ Second, in the ethnic lobby literature ethno-national groups are used as units of analysis, implying actual communities. Research has demonstrated that diaspora communities often contain widely opposing political views and members differ in education level, class, age, gender and level of engagement in homeland politics (e.g. Tölölyan 1996, 9, Al-Ali, Black, and Koser 2001, Brubaker 2005, 12, Orjuela 2008, Turner and Kleist 2013, Orjuela 2016).

A third perspective from the literature on transnationalism that challenges standard research on foreign policy impact is the focus on the interactive nature of the relationship between state institutions and diaspora groups. While most studies focus on the relationship between the diaspora and the state of origin, some studies also include other actors, such as the state of settlement. This is especially evident in research on the migration and development-nexus, where diaspora communities are regarded as development actors that country of origin, country of settlement and supranational institutions – as well as international organizations and NGOs – can mobilize and/or collaborate with in order to ‘tap into their resources’, both in terms of their financial capital and their country-specific knowledge and networks (e.g de Haas 2006, Horst et al. 2010, Mezzetti et al. , Turner 2013, Délano and Gamlen 2014, Sinatti and Horst 2015). The relationships between the diaspora community, the country of origin and the country of settlement are seen to exist in a ‘triadic model’, based on “a three-way interaction that produces a variety of feedback and interaction effects” (Adamson 2002, 158).

In the political science literature on ethnic lobbies, the influence only flows in one direction, from the ethnic group to the state.⁹ We argue that it will improve our understanding if we include feedback loops between the *external criteria* and the *internal criteria*. To take the *partial assimilation* criterion as an example, it could very well be argued that whether the state and the public accept ethnic groups as standard political players is to a larger degree dependent on whether the state in question promotes an inclusive policy towards ethnic and religious diversity, and hence does not only hinge on attributes of the groups themselves. Likewise, when countries of settlement attempt to mobilize, support and influence diaspora

⁷ As argued by Koinova 2013, but not developed.

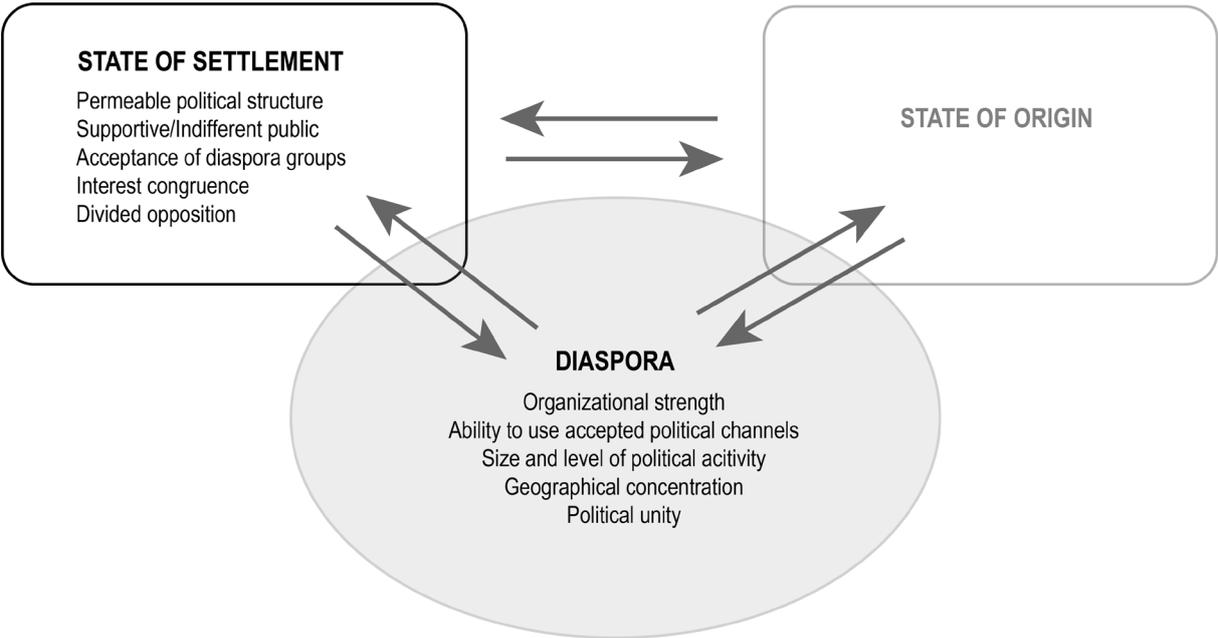
⁸ For a critique on zero-sum interpretations of immigrant assimilation processes, see Erdal and Oeppen 2013, Horst forthcoming.

⁹ Haney and Vanderbush (1999) have also called for more comprehensive theoretical perspectives that can help explain the active role of the US administration in both the establishment and life of ethnic lobbies in the US.

communities, they simultaneously increase diaspora groups' access to decision makers and may also enhance their *organizational strength*. Members of a diaspora can take on the role of bridge builders between country of origin and settlement, which can increase the possibility for mutually beneficial relationships and thereby alter already existing bilateral ties. Thus, rather than arguing that *strategic interests* of a diaspora group and the country of settlement need to correlate, we claim that it is more appropriate to acknowledge that these interests may be closely interrelated.

Research on transnationalism has just begun to develop theory on state-diaspora relations, especially regarding the diaspora group's role in the state of settlement's foreign policy, and can benefit from incorporating analytical tools from the ethnic lobby literature. The integrated analytical framework builds on insights from both strands of literature and can be summed up in the following model.

Figure 1. Framework of analysis: Integrated approach



The *partial assimilation* criterion has been dropped and instead we have included *acceptance of diaspora groups* and *ability to use accepted political channels*. It is important to note that this study is not attempting to prove causal relationships. Instead it is an investigation into the complex relationships and networks linking the diaspora to foreign policy, with a specific focus on identifying factors facilitating or hindering the diaspora from playing a powerful role.

The context: Norwegian foreign policy towards Somalia

Norwegian foreign policy changed with the collapse of the Soviet Union, from a strict focus on narrow security issues – on the basis of being a NATO member state with borders to Russia – to a broadening of its understanding of national security, including a larger emphasis on idealistic issues such as poverty reduction and peace and reconciliation (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1989, 2009). As part of this process, the importance of large Norwegian NGOs, and especially ‘the big five’¹⁰, grew. The five largest Norwegian NGOs receive most of their funding from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and are often the actors implementing Norwegian foreign policy. The ‘Norwegian model’ is based on close cooperation and interdependence between state and civil society (Tvedt 2003). It furthermore entails dense and institutionalized elite networks in the foreign policy realm, as it is common among leaders in government, NGOs and research environments to shift between top positions. The Norwegian model has been criticized for its undemocratic nature, with Tvedt arguing that the model lacks transparency and balance of power.

Norway’s policy towards Somalia matches its larger foreign policy developments and objectives. In the 1980s Norway started providing bilateral aid to Somalia, and in the 1990s the amount of aid increased considerably, to match the increased needs on the ground in Somalia since the start of the civil war in 1991.¹¹ In addition, as part of United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNISOM II) in the early 1990s, Norway sent about 140 military staff in administrative positions on a peacekeeping mission to Somalia (Aftenposten 1993, Norsk Telegrambyrå 1993). According to an MFA-informant, this decision was closely related to the increasing presence of Somali asylum seekers in Norway (Interview 21, March 2015).

Since 2000, Norway’s focus on Somalia has increased, and has developed from a purely humanitarian involvement to a more direct and political engagement. Norwegian aid – both emergency and development aid – increased, mainly channeled through multilateral organizations and Norwegian NGOs. When Norway became a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council in 2001–2002, it took a leadership role to address the conflict in Somalia and the situation in the Horn of Africa more generally. This was the first time in six years that the civil war in Somalia had been on the agenda of the Security Council (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2003, 8). Mostly, Norway contributed financially to peace and reconciliation efforts,

¹⁰ Those are the Norwegian Refugee Council, Norwegian People’s Aid, Save the Children – Norway, Norwegian Church Aid and Norwegian Red Cross.

¹¹ <https://www.norad.no/om-bistand/norsk-bistand-i-tall/?tab=geo>, retrieved 11 September 2015

but Norwegian diplomats were also observers at the negotiations in Kenya 2002–2004 and Hilde Frafjord Johnson, the Norwegian Minister of International Development at the time, traveled to Nairobi to meet the negotiating parties.¹² In 2005, Norway initiated the establishment of the International Contact Group for Somalia (ICG), which Norway co-chaired together with the US. The ICG's main aim was to achieve greater coordination between international donors involved in Somalia (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2007).

The growing Norwegian engagement in Somalia fitted well with Norway's ambition to build up a profile as a humanitarian power with a particular competence in peace and reconciliation processes. Norway's foreign policy was framed altruistically while at the same time being firmly rooted in Norwegian interests (Stokke 2012). For instance, Norway's competence in peace and reconciliation processes was seen to give it a strong trademark that would benefit Norwegian exports (Dagens Næringsliv 2001). By building up knowledge and networks on the Horn of Africa, Norway managed to remain relevant among larger powers like the US (Johansen interview, February 2015, Holmås interview, February 2015). In addition, as a seafaring nation Norway had a clear need to contribute to anti-piracy operations outside Somalia's coast and preventive measures on the ground in Somalia. Another factor in Norway's continued engagement in more recent years has been its concern with the potential radicalization of Norwegian-Somali individuals. Furthermore, ongoing good relations were crucial to Norway as they paved the way for an agreement between Norway and Somalia about the return of rejected asylum seekers, signed and first implemented in 2016.

A short-lived diaspora policy

Since the 1970s, the Norwegian population has become increasingly diverse, and the last decade especially has seen a considerable rise of immigration to Norway. In line with this, the former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Jonas Gahr Støre, launched the concept of 'a new and larger "we"', which has been stressed as being of great importance in a new Norway, where an increasing proportion of the population is of immigrant origin (Ezzati and Horst 2014).¹³ Several government documents in 2008–2009 recognized the importance of including diaspora groups in development cooperation and foreign policy, including White Paper 13 (2008–2009),¹⁴ and White Paper 15 (2008–2009)¹⁵. The documents acknowledge that the

¹² Confirmed in an e-mail conversation with Hilde Frafjord Johnson, 21 October 2015.

¹³ The concept of 'a new and larger we' was first introduced in a speech by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Jonas Gahr Støre, in 2006.

¹⁴ White Paper 13: *Climate, conflict and capital: Norwegian development policy adapting to change*.

resources of migrants have been utilized too little, and that this needs to change both for the benefit of Norway and the individuals involved:

Through migration, popular culture and new technologies, globalization is contributing to a multitude of individual and group identities. Internet and global media are channeling and reinforcing these impulses. Domestic policy and foreign policy melt together. Through this, globalization increases the room for maneuver in foreign policy; for example, through those resources that Norwegians with an immigrant background will add in terms of language, culture and competence (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2009, 88).

The White Paper launched several measures to better facilitate and incorporate the important role that migrants can play in the development of their countries of origin, such as improved possibilities for remittance services and the initiation of pilot projects involving collaboration between Norwegian development actors and diaspora organizations. Most initiatives were focused on development and humanitarianism rather than foreign policy. Furthermore, as Bivand Erdal and Ezzati (2013) argue, even though Norway has started to acknowledge the potential of a more diverse demography, there are still very few examples where these perspectives have been put into practice. There are no institutionalized practices of incorporating diaspora groups in decision making or implementation of Norwegian development or foreign policy, and from 2010 the topic disappeared from the agenda altogether. Furthermore, there are very few individuals with migrant backgrounds who have penetrated the institutionalized elite networks in the foreign policy realm. Thus, Norway is not only missing out on intercultural competency, language skills and local networks, but also on much-needed alternative perspectives on foreign policy.

The Somali diaspora in Norway

Somalis started coming to Norway as asylum seekers in the mid-1980s, with an increase after the collapse of the Somali state in 1991, and the numbers are slowly growing. Arrivals increased from 500 annually in the 1990s to 1,000–2,000 per year from 1999 onwards, with some spikes in exceptional years. According to the latest figures on the number of Somalis in Norway, there are 28,300 Somali immigrants, and 11,800 children of Somali immigrants.¹⁶ The Norwegian-Somali community has not been in Norway long: in 2016, 30 percent of

¹⁵ White Paper 15: *Interests, responsibilities and possibilities: Main contours of Norwegian foreign policy.*

¹⁶ <https://www.ssb.no/statistikkbanken>, figures for 2016, retrieved 20 June 2016.

Norwegian-Somalis had lived in Norway for five years or less, and only 15 percent had lived in Norway for 15 years or more.¹⁷

Norwegian-Somalis are a politically active group in Norway (Horst et al. 2013). In statistics relating to voting patterns, Norwegian-Somalis score high compared to other migrant groups in Norway – especially if one takes into account that they are a very recent and young group. In the local elections in 2011, 46.5 percent of eligible Norwegian-Somali male voters and 54.1 of female voters went to the ballots whereas the average of all immigrant groups is 42.7 percent.¹⁸ This relatively high level of participation in elections is not unique to Norway. In the Somali diaspora there is a strong awareness of the importance of political organization, which has a long history.¹⁹

Besides political participation locally, there is also evidence of transnational political ties amongst Somalis in Norway. This engagement largely takes place on the sub-national level through financial contributions in the political domain (Horst 2008).

Norway's stance on the Ethiopian intervention in Somalia

In 2006 and 2007, a number of events took place in Somalia that sparked a heightened degree of activism among members of the Somali diaspora. A movement consisting of local Sharia courts, called Islamic Court Union (Islamic Union), was on the rise in South-Central Somalia and took control over Mogadishu in 2006 (Menkhaus 2007, 368–69). The increasing expansion of the Islamic Union, consisting of both extremist and moderate Islamists, alarmed the internationally recognized Transitional Federal Government (the Transitional Government) as well as Ethiopia. The international community mainly regarded the Islamic Union as an extremist Islamist movement, while a considerable part of the Somali diaspora sympathized with the movement. The Islamic Union received local and transnational support for mobilizing on a religious rather than clan basis and for freeing Mogadishu from fighting warlords.

In July 2006, Ethiopian troops entered Somali territory, invited by the Transitional Federal Government and supported by the United States. Within six months, they had defeated the Islamic Union and enabled the relocation of the Transitional Government to Mogadishu.

¹⁷ <https://www.ssb.no/innvbef>, figures for 2016, retrieved 17 November 2016.

¹⁸ SSB <http://www.ssb.no/a/kortnavn/vundkinnv/tab-2012-03-01-01.html>

¹⁹ I. M. Lewis describes the many democratic features in Somali pastoral society in his monograph, 'A Pastoral Democracy' (1961).

Norway had supported the peace process leading to the establishment of the Transitional Government in 2004, and thus, Norway's position was in line with the wider international community. However, during the course of the intervention, Norway shifted position and publically criticized Ethiopia's military involvement in Somalia. We argue that the increased activism among members of the Somali diaspora in Norway is likely to have contributed to this policy shift.

The stances of the diaspora in Norway were divided between the major actors in Somalia. Those supporting the Islamic Union did not regard the Transitional Government as a legitimate state entity with the prerogative to invite foreign troops into Somalia. But there were also many who supported the internationally recognized government. In particular diaspora members from Puntland were largely in support of a federal model and had greater loyalty towards Abdullahi Yusuf as former President of Puntland and then-President of the Transitional Government. Yet at the same time, the foreign military presence inside Somalia awoke a nationalist mindset that went above regional and clan loyalties or political disagreements. Ethiopia and Somalia have a history characterized by animosity and wars, and seeing Ethiopian tanks by the Indian Ocean was unacceptable for most. Furthermore, diaspora members were troubled by the negative effects of the conflict on relatives and friends in Somalia. The Somaliland representative to Norway publically criticized the Transitional Government's use of the Ethiopian military and requested that Somalia's problems be left for Somalis to solve themselves (Dagbladet 2006).

Protesting groups in the Norwegian-Somali community became even more agitated when they realized the particularly close relationship between diplomats at the Norwegian Embassy in Nairobi and President Abdullahi Yusuf. As a Norwegian academic who had interviewed the Transitional President asserted, they "could just pick up the phone any time and call him" (Interview, March 2015). A diaspora informant explained: "We were so critical [...] 'They cannot support Abdullahi Yusuf with my tax money. He is not a democratically elected President'" (Interview 15, March 2015). The Norwegian policy towards Somalia was seen as a clear political stance in the midst of a violent conflict. This criticism was translated into intense activism, with demonstrations held outside the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the parliament in Oslo. As one Norwegian-Somali described the situation: "Here you have a decisive majority of the diaspora in Norway, fighting and screaming that you are supporting an enemy of Somalia" (Interview 1, April 2015). In addition, the political activism took shape transnationally as diaspora members coordinated their protests across national borders. For

example, diaspora members from several western countries organized a conference in Stockholm in early 2007 where they developed a common statement that strongly criticized the international community's "silence and inaction with respect to the Ethiopian blatant breach of Article 2(4) of United Nation's Charter" (Hiiraan Online).

At the same time, Norway was developing an inclusive diaspora policy. Politicians were aware of the fact that Norwegian-Somalis represent a large and important voter group, whose voting power is further increased by the fact that they live concentrated in cities. An MFA-informant made the following observation:

When Norway focuses on Somalia, it is not the least because of the 36, 37, 38 000 Somalis, or Norwegian-Somalis, where most of them live in the central parts of Norway [...] They are also an important pressure group and that is actually the reason for why there are more questions in parliament about Somalia. They put these issues on the agenda (Interview 27, April 2015).

Norwegian-Somali votes were especially important for local elections, and in Oslo one of the City Council members had a background from Somalia (in the period 2003–2007).²⁰ In immigrant dense parts of Oslo, local and foreign policy issues were present at election meetings where local politicians would get questions on Norway's foreign policy towards Somalia. The Secretary of State at the time, Raymond Johansen (Labor Party), asserted that "it is important to have a dialogue with the diaspora", since the "the Somali voters can determine who gets the power in Oslo" (Johansen Interview February 2015). The voting implications were especially important for the parties in government at the time, the Labor Party (*Arbeiderpartiet*), the Socialist Party (*Sosialistisk Venstreparti*) and the Center Party (*Senterpartiet*), since these were the most popular parties among Norwegian-Somalis. The local elections took place in September 2007 and party politicians needed to build good relationships with Norwegian-Somalis. The inclusive diaspora policy also entailed funding of diaspora development projects and an MFA strategy to encourage the Somali diaspora to join forces in one organization, both to make MFA-diaspora collaboration easier, but also with the aim that such an initiative would stimulate peace between fighting groups in Somalia. In addition, Norwegian politicians benefited from cooperating with the diaspora since they had, as Johansen put it: "tremendous influence on the leaders in Somalia". He further explained that:

²⁰ The number increased in later years. In 2007–2011, one member and one deputy member were Norwegian-Somalis. In 2011–2015, three members had a background from Somalia.

I am invited for breakfast and get to meet the Minister of Energy and Minister of Foreign Affairs [...] Someone who lives in Grønland (a neighborhood in Oslo) in a two room apartment is a friend of the President [...] The diaspora and the political leadership are very close. That is certainly my impression (Johansen Interview, February 2015).

Thus, the Secretary of State was keen to have a good relationship with the diaspora. Indeed, when Ethiopian troops reached Mogadishu towards the end of December 2006, Johansen summoned fifteen leaders from the Somali diaspora to hear their views on the latest developments (Dagbladet 2006). A group within the Somali diaspora in Norway called G10 was particularly active in protesting and lobbying. At meetings with Johansen, G10 members would remind him that as an elected representative he was also representing them. One group member recalls his arguments to Johansen:

When you sit here you are also my representative. We have Norwegian passports. You represent me. Remember that I have a duality in me: Somalia and Norway. When Norway is attacked I defend it, when Somalia is attacked I defend it [...] It is my tax money. You cannot do this (Interview 15, March 2015).

As active citizens of Norway, this group was holding Norwegian politicians accountable for Norway's policy towards Somalia. The group would also draw on their close contacts with leaders on the ground as a tool to put pressure on Norwegian politicians. The same group member continues to explain:

The MFA could see that we were a power factor. We played an important role. We had direct contact with different factions inside and outside Somalia. We had direct phone contact. We said to Raymond and the others: 'Who do you want to talk to? Do you want to talk to Sharif Sheikh (ICU Commander in Chief)? We will make it happen directly. But you have to stop negotiating [with Ethiopia]' (Interview 15, March 2015).

Considering Norway's ambition to play a role in peace and reconciliation processes, it is likely that Norwegian-Somalis' close contact with main actors on the ground was of interest to Norwegian politicians and diplomats. The few Norwegian-Somalis who had managed to get access to Norwegian foreign policy elite circles had an especially advantageous position to influence decision-making processes. Common entry points into these networks were senior positions in NGOs, political parties or research institutions. For example, Johansen previously led the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), one of the 'big five' NGOs, while the current Norwegian Special Envoy to Somalia has been the director of the international department there. Thus, Norwegian-Somalis who were senior staff members at NRC or other large NGOs had the possibility to influence elite positions on Norway's policy towards Somalia. In fact, some Norwegian-Somalis were offered positions at the Ministry, but due to the strict security

clearance policy it has not been possible to employ people with a background from Somalia. Our study suggests that many of those with best access originated from South-Central Somalia and were thus more likely to be particularly critical towards Ethiopian involvement in Somalia.²¹

Towards the end of 2006, Johansen chose to publically criticize the Ethiopian involvement in Somalia. In a press statement he declared that:

[T]o stand deep inside Somalia with large forces cannot be considered a defensive war. Ethiopia has to withdraw [...] We are very concerned about both the political and humanitarian consequences. Our clear demand to Ethiopia is that they withdraw and enter into a dialogue with the Islamic Courts (NTB 2006).

In addition, Johansen criticized Norway's close ally the US for their air bombardments on Somali territory. Johansen explained this by referring to the legal aspects of the occupation, similar to the arguments the G10 and others in the Somali diaspora had used in discussions with him. The Transitional Government was not an elected government, so the question was whether they had the authority to invite Ethiopia. Furthermore, as Johansen argued, the MFA was worried that the Ethiopian involvement would worsen the Somali situation and prevent efforts towards peace and reconciliation.

Though Norway was still supporting the Transitional Government, Johansen's criticism towards Ethiopia was clear, and was regarded as a sudden shift in position by several actors including the President himself. Ethiopia also reacted to Norway's criticism, which partly contributed to the diplomatic crisis between Ethiopia and Norway in 2007. The shift in policy brought to light an existing disagreement between diplomatic staff working at the Embassy in Nairobi and politicians and civil servants in Oslo. One informant who worked at the Embassy at the time said: "Raymond condemned [Ethiopia] publically, which he should not have done. He did it without actually getting any signals from us" (Interview 29, April 2015). Hence, the decision does not seem to have originated from Norway's diplomatic staff in Nairobi who usually have an advisory role in these matters. Yet Johansen was popular among many Norwegian-Somalis for his clear stance, and several interpreted this as a case where they had successfully influenced Norway's foreign policy. One Somali informant said: "Watching TV, we saw Raymond Johansen forward our arguments. The arguments we were arguing all the way" (Interview 15, March 2015). Another Norwegian-Somali stated: "It is a clear example

²¹ In fact, highly positioned Norwegian-Somalis were predominantly male, had higher education, had lived in Norway for at least a decade and were likely to originate from central parts of Somalia.

of the fact that, when the majority of Somalis are united, they are better able to influence policies” (Interview 1, April 2015).

Norway’s involvement in state building: the multi-donor Trust Fund

We are also indebted to the kindness and generosity of countries like Turkey, Norway, the Arab League member states and other countries. Your assistance over the past few years has spread hope and belief among our people (Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, President of Somalia 2013) .

When the President of Somalia gave the opening speech at the London Conference on Somalia in 2013 he specifically thanked Norway for its support, together with Turkey and the Arab League countries. The fact that Norway was singled out reflects Norway’s increasing bilateral and political involvement in Somalia, illustratively exemplified by the appointment of a Norwegian Special Envoy to Somalia in 2012. Norway’s most remarkable contribution was the establishment of the temporary multi-donor Trust Fund, called the Special Financing Facility (Trust Fund). The Trust Fund was established in close collaboration with Somali authorities to allow donors to quickly respond to the financial needs of the government. The overall objective was to enable the government to provide services by paying regular salaries to its employees and financing development projects (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2013).²² At the London conference in 2013, Norwegian Minister of International Development Heikki Holmås announced that Norway would provide 175 million Norwegian kroner for the Trust Fund with the hope that more countries would follow. However, no other donor chose to transfer money through the Trust Fund, reflecting a persistent lack of confidence in Somali institutions. Several diaspora informants pointed to the bold and groundbreaking nature of this move by Norway.

Why did Norway choose to initiate and support such a risky project, when no other country would? We argue that the political lobbying of the Somali diaspora is likely to have facilitated the decision-making process. This initiative mirrors a view that is common among politically active Norwegian-Somalis, namely that Norway should engage in Somalia and it should do so bilaterally. While there are many disagreements among diaspora members, several informants confirmed there was widespread agreement that Norway should develop a bilateral engagement, with the aim of implementing visible and concrete measures on the ground. Diaspora informants argued that a more direct Norwegian involvement instead of aid channeled through multilateral organizations would increase transparency and counter

²² Today, the fund has been taken over by the World Bank.

corruptive practices. There was a widespread frustration regarding Somalia's dependency on international aid, and initiatives that would help Somalia up on its feet were sought after. The urgent need for functioning social services was evident to diaspora members as they learned about everyday challenges in Somalia from relatives and friends.²³ In addition, several Norwegian-Somalis argued that a more visible involvement would create good publicity for Norway and create a basis for future relations between the countries.

However, it is also important to note that there were strong disagreements among Norwegian-Somalis, especially regarding the geographical focus of Norwegian involvement. Many diaspora members were particularly critical towards Norway's focus on Mogadishu. These concerns are not merely about geography and a fair distribution of resources, but represent political divides. Norwegian-Somalis from Somaliland – who were the first to arrive as the conflict started in the North in the late 1980s – argue for recognition of Somaliland as an independent state and thus fundamentally disagree with Norway's support for a Federal Government.²⁴ In this context, a Norwegian focus on Mogadishu is understood to be a clear political stance that goes far beyond the mere location of aid.

Norway's focus on Somalia received an extra push when Norwegian-Somali Mohamed Osman Jawari was elected Speaker of the Federal Parliament in 2012. The MFA responded with the following statement: "That the parliament is now led by a Somali with a long experience in Norway opens a door for good cooperation" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2012). Furthermore, the Minister of International Development at the time, who was in charge of the Somalia policy, was personally committed to Somalia and paid close attention to the Somali diaspora (Bistandsaktuelt 2013). He met politically active Norwegian-Somalis in his own party (the Socialist Party) and at meetings with diaspora milieus across the country, arranged by the MFA. He explained his commitment as follows:

As an [elected] representative for a big population group, my view is that we have a special responsibility as a nation to engage in the positive development of that country because there are so many of our citizens who have family, friends, memories, [and] feelings attached to that country. So their focus, their satisfaction, their possibility for integration, [and] their possibility for having a good day is dependent on the development in another country. That is my point of departure as an elected representative (Holmås interview, February 2015).

²³ This has also been documented in previous studies on diaspora groups and development (e.g. Erdal 2015).

²⁴ The Somaliland diaspora in Norway is relatively well-established with an appointed Somaliland representative to Norway. Two out of three Norwegian-Somalis elected to the Oslo city council (2011 – 2014), have a background from Somaliland.

As mentioned, Norwegian foreign policy is characterized by the close connections between top politicians, NGO leaders and the research milieu. Noteworthy in this case is that the Norwegian Envoy to Somalia was one of the founders of the Nordic International Support Foundation (NIS Foundation), the organization that got the assignment to implement the Trust Fund and many other projects in Somalia. The foundation's advisory panel includes a Norwegian former Minister of International Development and one of its current leaders has previously held top positions at the Norwegian Refugee Council. Norwegian-Somalis who have, or have had, prominent positions at NIS Foundation, the Refugee Council or other established NGOs are well situated to influence foreign policy.

Both at public events and in informal discussions with Norwegian politicians and diplomats in Oslo, Nairobi and Mogadishu, Norwegian-Somalis forwarded their request for Norway to become more bilaterally involved in Somalia and to invest in concrete development projects on the ground. Diaspora members would also forward these messages through invited guests from Somalia and from the wider diaspora. In 2011, for example, Mogadishu Mayor Mohamud Ahmed Nur 'Tarzan' attended a conference in Norway where he gave a forthright speech requesting donors to support him with more concrete measures to improve his city, such as garbage collection, water purification and sewage systems, street lights and a center for the rehabilitation of al-Shabaab dropouts (Interview 15, March 2015; Interview 16, March 2015, Warah 2011).²⁵ The conference was organized by a group from the Somali diaspora in the Nordic countries and funded by the MFA. After the 2011 conference, Norway funded a project to set up solar-powered streetlights in Mogadishu and other places in Somalia, implemented by the Nordic Foundation. Together with other Nordic countries, Norway began to support a rehabilitation program in Mogadishu for radicalized youth: Serendi Youth Rehabilitation Center (Landinfo - Country of Origin Information Centre 2014).

The Trust Fund is a prime example of how Norway's involvement became more bilateral and direct. The Trust Fund was a topic of discussion among decision makers and certain diaspora members. Norwegian-Somali informants were supportive of the idea as it was "something that people can see and the government can claim credit for" (Interview 1, April 2015). The Norwegian government argued for the project in ways that were similar to how the Norwegian-Somali community argued for its relevance. Then Minister of International

²⁵ The conference was entitled the Second Conference on Peace, Dialogue and Combating Radicalization. Organized by the diaspora organization Nordic Union of Somali Peace and Development, with assistance from Nansen Center for Peace. Dialogue. The first conference was held in Stockholm.

Development Holmås explained his government's choice to initiate and support the Trust Fund:

We can go in and give them something that they need the most. That is, to support the legitimacy of the new Government by securing them the possibility to make their own projects [...] Our rationale was 'concrete results on the ground' and to build up a finance administration. A state that has no control over its money does not have control over anything (Holmås interview, February 2015).

A further rationale for the Norwegian venture was the impression that Somalia had reached a historical juncture in 2012. The transitional period that started in 2004 had finally ended and Hassan Sheikh, a university lecturer who had been engaged in the NGO sector, had been elected President. Holmås stated that:

The authorities in Somalia are at a critical stage to ensure democratic development and stable governance in the future. The possibilities are the best in over 20 years, but the challenges are also considerable. It is urgent to bring about an arrangement so that public services can get started and people get to experience a positive development of the society (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2013).

This argument was especially important considering ongoing discussions within the MFA of whether Somalia was 'ripe' for international assistance. Holmås explained in an interview (February 2015) that this perception of Somalia standing at a turning point was confirmed by the Somali diaspora. Thus, the diaspora enhanced the Norwegian decision makers' belief that it was crucial for the international community to give considerable aid to support this development. Holmås furthermore recalled that many Norwegian-Somalis had been supportive of the Trust Fund project, although many had also warned him to be aware of the danger of corruption when handing over big sums of money to the government. Many, though not all, diaspora members interviewed for this study argued that the Trust Fund was a step in the right direction, even though several had wished that similar projects could be instated in other parts of Somalia and in Somaliland.

Discussion

It is likely that politically engaged Norwegian-Somalis successfully facilitated and even altered Norwegian foreign policy in the two cases laid out above. In the first case, this can be seen through the Norwegian condemnation of Ethiopia's military involvement despite the close collaboration between the Norwegian Embassy and the Transitional Government, and despite the fact that the US, Norway's most important ally, was supporting Ethiopia. In the second case, this is indicated by Norway's decision to initiate the risky, costly and time-consuming Trust Fund project, in defiance of the general lack of trust that most other donors had towards Somali institutions as well as Somalia's reputation as a 'hopeless case', also

among some officials at the MFA. Thus, official Norwegian policy, including the rationale behind it, matched clearly communicated viewpoints within the diaspora and was implemented despite some unfavorable circumstances.

We will now identify and evaluate conditions that facilitated Norwegian-Somalis' lobbying attempts, in light of our integrated model (figure 1). First, the transnational analytical space allows us to incorporate the global nature of the Somali diaspora's political mobilization, which thereby allows us to fully appreciate its organizational strength, including its full palette of human and financial resources. Norwegian-Somalis often invite Somali politicians and academics to Norway from their networks in the diaspora and in Somalia, and the visits are often co-hosted by the MFA. For instance, when the former mayor of Mogadishu 'Tarzan' visited Oslo in 2011, he could vividly describe the urgent needs on the ground in Mogadishu to Norwegian decision makers. In our study, Norwegian decision makers openly declared their appreciation of the diaspora's contacts to the political elite in Somalia. Diaspora members took advantage of this to get access to decision makers, and there is an example where a group used their relations to the leader of the Islamic Union, Sheikh Sharif – one of the most influential men in Somalia at the time – to increase their negotiating power with Norwegian decision makers.

Second, our model also suggests that we have to look beyond the diaspora as a unitary actor. The Somali diaspora is fragmented, and stances reflect ever-shifting realities in Somalia where actors are fighting over the state itself. There is no umbrella organization representing the Somali diaspora (Horst 2013) and viewpoints are forwarded in a rather uncoordinated manner by a diverse set of groups, organizations and individuals. Divisions within the diaspora change with time, but are roughly divided along clan and sub-clan lines as well as region of origin. To simplify this, three main sub-groups are identifiable in our case: those originating from Puntland, those originating from Somaliland and those originating from South-Central Somalia. Thus, the criteria apply differently to various groups within the diaspora. For instance, the cases show that access to decision making processes is unequally distributed within the diaspora. Some Norwegian-Somalis, through their inclusion in foreign policy elite circles, forwarded viewpoints in particularly favorable settings. These diaspora members' positions were often in favor of a policy that criticized Ethiopian military involvement and supported development towards a more bilateral approach with a focus on Mogadishu.

Likewise, whether the diaspora interests were in congruence with Norway's larger strategic interests differed between groups within the diaspora. For instance, the Somaliland diaspora, who is well organized and has a relatively long duration of residence in Norway, lobbied for recognition of Somaliland as an independent state. But Norwegian politicians continued to support the federal system, partly out of concern that recognition would give a green light to secessionist movements around the world. In the case of the Ethiopian intervention, many Norwegian-Somalis had also expressed that Norway should publically support the Islamic Union, but to back a movement that included Islamist groups was far outside Norway's conventional policy. These examples illustrate that while the Somali diaspora could push an ajar door open, they were not able to open a door that was locked.²⁶ Furthermore, these were issues where there was a lower level of unity. For instance, whether Norway should recognize Somaliland or not is a matter of heated debate among Norwegian-Somalis, where many Norwegian-Somalis are arguing for a united Somalia.

While acknowledging the diversity within the diaspora, the fact that some basic stances were supported across dividing lines did help facilitate the lobbying success. In addition, these stances were backed up by considerable political activism, in Norway and in other countries. The Ethiopian intervention ignited a particularly high level of engagement, which increased the intensity of the protests and their 'loudness'. The fact that the diaspora was considered an important voter group put further power behind their demands. Notably, both cases took place close to elections (local and national elections respectively). The diaspora members' voting implications, the intensity of their protests and their possibility to organize transnationally were further amplified by the fact that Norwegian-Somalis typically live in larger urban cities, and are particularly concentrated in Oslo.

A third dimension of the model is the reciprocal relationship between decision makers and the diaspora, connecting the external and the internal criteria. MFA politicians had their own agenda and interests in engaging with the diaspora, not least because of Norwegian-Somalis' voting implications and their contacts to the elite in Somalia. The MFA often initiated and funded meetings and conferences with diaspora representatives. This has been the case especially during Labor and Socialist governments, and when the MFA has been run by politicians with a personal commitment towards Norwegian-Somalis and Somalia. In this way, Norway's inclusive diaspora policy increased Norwegian-Somalis' resources, their

²⁶ To use a metaphor by Haney and Vanderbush (1999).

access to decision makers and their possibility to become accepted as standard political players.

In turn, Norwegian-Somalis also influence the external criteria, such as Norway's foreign policy interests. The cases illustrate that Norwegian-Somalis engage in politics as Norwegian citizens, voters and tax payers; facts they use to hold policy makers accountable for their decisions. Likewise, politicians indicated that they saw themselves as representatives of Norwegian-Somalis. As Minister Holmås argues, when the well-being of a large group of citizens is dependent on developments in another country, politicians have a specific responsibility to commit to that country. Thus, diaspora members use accepted political channels in their lobbying attempts, and Norwegian politicians – at least during the time period under study – seem to accept the diaspora as political stakeholders. Furthermore, Norwegian-Somalis' dual identities make them well positioned to identify and help develop possibilities for mutually beneficial relationships between Somalia and Norway. For instance, when Osman Jawari became Speaker of Parliament in Somalia in 2012, this gave Norway an additional incentive to support state building initiatives in Mogadishu. Jawari became a direct link between Norwegian and Somali politicians at the highest level; it is also highly likely that Jawari supported the idea of a multi-donor Trust Fund. Examples like these illustrate how diaspora members simultaneously play a multiple set of roles. If Jawari forwards arguments to Norwegian politicians, do we analyze this as influence from the Somali government, or as lobbying attempts by a member of the Somali diaspora with a long experience in Norway?

Thus, all factors mentioned above – whether internal, external or integrated – played a role in the Somali diaspora attempts to influence policy. Their attempts were further facilitated by the lack of an organized opposition outside of the diaspora as well as an disinterested public, which made it possible for Norwegian-Somalis to capture the agenda on these particular issues. It is clear that the integrated analytical framework (figure 1) allows us to incorporate several key features of the case, such as the transnational character of the diaspora engagement and the multi-dimensional relationships between diaspora groups and states.

Conclusion

Our case study demonstrates that under certain conditions – in certain constellations – diaspora influence is possible. It further supports our argument for employing an integrated analytical framework, consisting of both insights from the ethnic lobby literature and the transnational literature. The benefits of a simple state-centric model, where ethnic groups are

viewed as analytical units, do not outweigh the major drawback: that we miss central characteristics of the phenomenon under study. By supplementing the ethnic lobby criteria literature with a transnational analytical lens we are better able to capture the complex nature of diaspora political engagement and the factors that facilitate their lobbying attempts.

Indeed, the transnational dimension is at the heart of understanding the political practices and resources of Norwegian-Somalis and how Norwegian policy makers relate to the diaspora. Furthermore, as the Somali diaspora is not a unitary actor, the criteria have to be applied attentively. Who has access to decision makers and who does not? Which diaspora interest is in congruence with Norway's interest and which is not? Only a few diaspora members had the privilege of penetrating Norwegian foreign policy elite circles. A bottom-up approach that is in tune with the complex nature of immigrant communities is necessary to detangle the lobbying attempts accurately, including their internal contradictions and dysfunctions.

Our case study also shows the benefits of analyzing the relationships between states and diaspora groups as interrelated. Norwegian-Somalis are in a unique position to take both Somali *and* Norwegian interests into account and thereby facilitate international relations between Norway and Somalia. Their engagements open up possibilities for mutual exchange that would otherwise not have existed. Moreover, the success of Somali diaspora groups' lobbying attempts hinges on the willingness of decision makers to engage with and support the diaspora. Norwegian-Somalis have Norwegian citizenship and participate in society as civic activists, as part of an increasingly diverse Norwegian society (Horst 2013). Researchers should be careful not to presume that nation-states are static and homogenous, but should rather focus on investigating how a nation-state is evolving, and dealing with, an increasingly diverse demography.

The case of the Somali diaspora in Norway has several unique characteristics. Norway is a small country where access to high-level decision makers is relatively easy. The Somali diaspora is a recent immigrant group in Norway, while the ethnic lobby literature has almost exclusively focused on established groups and organizations that have existed in America for many decades, where it is clear that relationships between policy makers and ethnic lobbies are more institutionalized than they are in Norway. Indeed, diaspora foreign policy influence always needs to be analyzed both within the context of the political system of the country of settlement and taking into account the specific diaspora group.

Yet as we have tried to argue in this article, the integrated model we develop here is relevant beyond the case of members of the Somali diaspora in Norway. The transnational character of diaspora political engagement, including internal heterogeneity and divisions, is well-established empirically in the literature on transnationalism and diaspora. Likewise, the 'success criteria' that we built our model on have been developed from numerous comparative and single case studies. As we have shown, they are also relevant beyond the American setting which formed the context of much of this research. Future research could test the integrated model more systematically in a range of different national policy contexts and across different diaspora groups. The field could furthermore benefit from exploring the role of the state of origin further in order to explore the triangular interaction effects and feedback loops between the diaspora, the state of settlement and state of origin in even more depth. What we have aimed to contribute to such future explorations is the understanding that diaspora are lobby groups of a particular kind due to their unique position within this triangle. They can function as agenda setters and bridge builders across national interests, but their influence might also be minimized due to a host of internal conflicts, and a lack of interest congruence with or access to key foreign policy actors in their countries of settlement.

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