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Book Review

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Michel S. Laguerre, **Parliament and Diaspora in Europe**, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, NY, 2013, xxv+182 pp., \$68.61, (e-book) ISBN: 978-1-137-28060-2

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All throughout the existence of humanity, there has been perpetual movement and displacement of people. Some leave their own countries for various reasons related to education, business, political, and climatic changes to become permanent residents in their host countries over time. These groups of people are defined as diaspora. The preservation of language, religion, and culture that these people inherit from their homeland is dependent upon the bond that the homeland can establish with its diaspora. These ties can disappear or they can be strengthened and continued with the policies implemented. One of the policies created to keep the bonds of the diaspora strong is a representation system for the diaspora in the parliament. This phenomenon is on the agenda of many countries in the world today and continues to spread. (Laguerre, 2016, 2017) In 2012, only about 13 countries offered the opportunity to represent their diaspora, today this number has increased to 18.

Michel S. Laguerre, in his book titled “*Parliament and Diaspora in Europe*,” conveys to the reader the issue of representation in the parliament, which is important for making the diaspora visible and protecting its connection with the homeland. In the book, the author discusses the transnational policy process of diaspora representation in the parliament in Croatia, France, and Italy, and how each of them works. The book was written in 2013 and consists of the following chapters; “Introduction: A Parliament Reflective of the Nation and Its Diaspora”, “Parliament and Diaspora”, “Italy: Diaspora Parliamentary Representation”, “France: Diaspora Parliamentary Representation”, “Croatia: Diaspora Parliamentary Representation”, “The Cosmonational Politics of Diaspora Parliamentary Representation,” and “Conclusion: Parliament of the Cosmonation.”

The main factors that have prevented the implementation of diaspora parliamentary representation are lack of rapid communication and transportation, ideological structure of the period, inability to be sure of the loyalty of the supranational representatives, and taxation. It is still not a common practice for many countries (p.19). Giving the diaspora the right to representation is a situation that can be associated with the countries’ migration and diaspora policies. For instance, despite about 7 million Turkish citizens living abroad, a party representing the interests of the diaspora that consists of representatives from the diaspora has not yet been established in Turkey's Parliament. For this reason, the author provides the reader

the opportunity to make a comparison with examples from three different countries. In these three examples the practice is relatively institutionalized and they have commonalities and differences in diaspora representation.

Among the countries considered, France offers the opportunity to make an analytical distinction between colonial and diaspora parliamentary representation due to its former colonial and overseas territories. The transformation of Italy from a country of emigration to a country of immigration and the fact that it was the first to implement representation of the diaspora in the Parliament, both in the House of Representatives and the Senate, highlight Italy in this regard. Croatia has a single-wing parliament and some diasporic practices that are the subject of discussion between political parties. These characteristics separate Croatia from France and Italy (p. xii).

According to Laguerre, state institutions turn into "cosmonational" structures in the process of diaspora representation in the parliament. A cosmonation is a cross-border and cultural collective structure that transcends territorial boundaries and is formed in cooperation with diaspora and homeland residents (p. xiii). The definition has an inclusive connotation in terms of expressing transnational ties that transcend the official borders of the state. Practical applications of the "cosmonationalism" concept, which Laguarre added to the literature, gains importance every day.

The diaspora's involvement in collective governance becomes evident with dual citizenship and voting, which are the building blocks of diaspora representation (p. 6). According to Laguerre, cosmonational dual citizenship is not a transnational extension of the classic form of citizenship. Cosmonational citizenship is a bundle of rights and obligations of the population in the homeland and in the diaspora (p. 8). There are still countries today that are reluctant to grant dual citizenship because of the idea that it reduces loyalty to the homeland. In this way, representation of the diaspora is blocked, and policies are made that do not meet the diaspora's expectations due to lack of representation. However, as stated by the author, citizenship is a must for representation of the diaspora.

Representation of the diaspora in the parliament began to be implemented in France in 1948, in Italy in 2006, and in Croatia in 1995 (p. xviii). One of the most important problems in diaspora representation in all three countries was the representation of the diaspora without being subject to taxes. While paying taxes represents loyalty to the homeland for opponents in the Italian Parliament (p. 18), those who advocate diaspora representation claim that remittances from the diaspora to the homeland can be a substitute for tax in terms of developing the country's economy (p. 33). It seems that although the author supports the cosmonational approach, he is unable to explicitly confront the opposing ideas to defend the diaspora. Another prominent view in the author's narrative gives the reader the chance to form their own opinion on the subject by including the thoughts of the supporters and opponents of the diaspora.


The author also mentions some of the difficulties experienced by representatives who represent the diaspora. Diaspora representatives often travel during the election campaign to learn the opinions of the voters and this is of great importance. However, election campaign rules are different in each country, and the representatives are responsible for obeying all those rules (p. 25). In diaspora election campaigns, the security of the candidates, the capacity of

the homeland to follow the elections, transparency, and criminal proceedings are among the issues that raise concerns in terms of legal limitations. In the case of Italy, the immunity of a representative is valid only on Italian territory (p. 37). These trips, which can be the homeland's lobbying activities, include the opportunity to develop foreign relations along with the representation of the diaspora. For this reason, travel arrangements should be organized in favor of both the visited state and the diaspora.

The transformation of the national structure into a cosmonational structure over time contributes to the strengthening of the ethnic identity of the diaspora, the development of inter-country relations, and the transition to a global dimension. In addition to representation, naming a certain date of the year as a diaspora day/week has an effect that glorifies the cosmonation. The author claims the goal of the day is to connect the diaspora to the homeland, make the diaspora visible to the public, and show respect for diaspora's contribution to the culture, economy, and the spread of its population abroad (p. 129). Also, devoting a special day to diaspora is an indication of the importance given to diaspora. Activities held in the homeland during diaspora days strengthen the bond between diaspora members and the homeland. Although not everyone agrees with diaspora representation, parliamentary representation is one of the most important policies that can be implemented to make the diaspora visible and protect their language, culture, and religion.

This book is an important resource for politicians as well as academics, as it is an issue that needs to be considered, along with discussions on citizenship and diaspora geopolitics. However, it needs to be updated. Students of diaspora studies may want to consider examining the author's more recent works on the subject. Laguerre, since 2013, has also published two more books on diaspora, namely *The Multisite Nation: Crossborder Organizations, Transfrontier Infrastructure* (2016), and *Global Digital Public Sphere and The Postdiaspora Condition: Crossborder Social Protection, Transnational Schooling, and Extraterritorial Human Security* (2017). Through Laguarre's trilogy on diaspora representation systems, students of the subject are able to orient themselves and know where to seek information for a conceptual beginning. Yet, the subfield still remains open to further examination and exploration in the concept of cosmonationalism, human geopolitics, and overseas electoral participation.

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