



DIASPORA AND FOREIGN POLICY: THE IMPORTANCE OF CREATING INBOUND LINKS WITH HOMELANDS

By J. HASIC

The United States and Europe have undergone major demographic shifts since the fall of the Iron Curtain. Many multicultural and pluralist societies have emerged on both sides of the Atlantic. While some Western countries have begun to engage in more systematic ways with developing and newly industrialized countries, this engagement has not been met with a similar push to engage systematically with domestic diaspora communities as constituencies and stakeholders, particularly in Europe. This is even more evident when diaspora communities come from non-European countries. The marginalization of diaspora communities remains relevant in public discourse, and nowhere is this clearer than in foreign policy making.



2013: Arrival day to Rome

My doctoral dissertation demonstrates that elite-driven inclusion of conflict-generated diaspora, as an agent of peacebuilding, contributes to more successful dynamics and management of this process, which as a result can advance local elites' share in 'owning' it. This research developed over numerous discussions with fellow GEM colleagues in Brussels and Rome. Their insights enriched my thinking, and I was inspired by their goals and projects. Throughout the program, a powerful community emerged, despite our many differences, whether these were our backgrounds or research interests. Further, our guest speakers repeatedly challenged our thinking and pushed us to critically observe the realities around us.

When I accepted the 2013 GEM PhD program, I honestly wasn't entirely sure what to expect. What would be my role and my contribution; how will I handle my academic duties; will I be able to make it on time; will it matter? Much of what I anticipated indeed came to fruition, but I never could have

guessed how intense the program would be, and how much I would learn from the other PhD students. Our Annual GEM Meetings only reinforced this through presentations and guest lectures. It was compelling for me to return as a GEM graduate at the most recent meeting and reflect on the observations I provided to the new generation of GEMs.

I served as a GEM PhD representative throughout the program and now I represent our Alumni community. Working with a variety of stakeholders in the international environment in Brussels, I started to think about foreign policy initiatives. This intrinsically led me to integrate my own research and consider the role of diasporas in shaping foreign policy discourses. After all, diaspora communities maintain strong cross-border relations with family and local actors in various forms like return trips, remittances, formal political participation, and advocacy. This transnational social capital has the



2014: GEM Conference

potential to inform Western policy making and to affect change by transmitting values and resources.

I began to wonder what makes certain diaspora communities more likely than others to have a strong influence on policy making, and what structures can governments use for better and stronger engagement? How can a country engage with domestic diaspora communities as it constructs its foreign policy amidst the challenges of the 21st century? This will be the main focus of my post-doctoral research. Thanks to GEM's emphasis on interdisciplinarity, I was better able to integrate these issues and the nuances of contemporary debates.

I am excited about further building the nascent GEM community as it continues to expand with each new generation. Moreover, while I will continue to be involved as an alumni representative, I will also aim to reproduce some of its defining features in my next academic environment.



2016: GEM reunion in Brussels

Title picture: Internal sources
Other pictures: Catherine Dy

Dr. Jasmin Hasic (GEM PhD School) holds a Ph.D. in Political Science from the Universite libre de Bruxelles and LUISS Guido Carli of Rome, and the title of his thesis is «Involvement of Diasporas in Peace-Building Processes. A Comparative Analysis of Views and Attitudes Towards the Bosnian Diaspora as an External Peacebuilding Factor in the Country».

Jasmin currently serves as the Executive Director of Humanity in Action BiH, an international non-profit focused on minority and human rights.



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www.gem-stones.eu

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pmo@gem-stones.eu

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