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Diasporas, home conflicts, and conflict transportation in countries of settlement

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In both academic and policy-related literature, numerous narratives link diasporas and conflicts: diasporas are for instance seen alternatively as peace wreckers or peace makers (see e.g. Collier and Hoeffler; Lyons, 2007; Smith and Stares, 2007; Østergaard-Nielsen, 2006), as products of forced migration related to conflicts (Van Hear, 2014), or as targets of securitization policies (Lucassen, 2005). Conflicts occurring within and between diasporas, in their respective countries of settlement, remain however relatively underexplored, tend to be misunderstood, and more often than not associated with "criminal" or "terrorist" activities (Sheffer, 1994). Although the overwhelming majority of people who flee a conflict occurring in their home country do not want to have anything to do with violence anymore, some might inadvertently bring it with them or reproduce it in the host country, for instance when members of opposing groups in the country of origin migrate to the same places.

In the existing literature, such configurations have been captured using the concepts of conflict importation (Baser, 2013), conflict transportation (Féron, 2017), conflict de-territorialisation (Rabinowitz, 2000), or conflict re-territorialisation (Carter, 2005). These various concepts largely overlap and tend to be used interchangeably, although they put the stress on diverging explanations, and on different actors, for conflicts occurring in diaspora settings. On the one hand, the concepts of conflict importation, namely the process through which a conflict is imported and spreads to host countries, and of conflict de-territorialisation, entailing the expansion of the space in which the home conflict is fought, are tightly connected. Conflict importation processes allow conflicts to become de-territorialised, that is to become partly disconnected from the core territory on which they are taking place. On the other hand, the concepts of conflict transportation and of conflict re-territorialisation pertain to processes whereby de-territorialised conflicts take root and occur in other territories and spaces, and in particular in diaspora settings. In other words, conflict transportation and conflict reterritorialisation are not simply about how home conflicts expand to diaspora settings, but also about how these transported conflicts rely on different actors, and how they develop dynamics of their own.

It is worth keeping in mind that these various concepts should be used with care, as they all tend to analyse the relations between diasporas and countries of origin, and more precisely between diasporas and home conflicts, as primarily monodirectional: politics in countries of origin are seen as influencing diaspora politics, and not the other way around. In fact, there is a lot of empirical evidence suggesting that much more complex processes of interaction can be at play, and research has shown that diasporas could be instrumental not just to the evolution of conflicts "back home", but also to their actual outbreak, and resolution (Smith and Stares, 2007). In other words, it is more accurate to say that actors, ideas, values, and narratives of conflict can circulate back and forth between home countries and diaspora settings, and even the broader transnational space. This caveat in mind, this contribution focuses on the concepts of conflict transportation and of conflict re-territorialisation, understood as embodying one of the potential configurations through which conflicts happening in home countries influence diaspora politics, and vice versa.

It is also important to note that conflict transportation is neither an automatic nor a linear process for conflict-generated diaspora groups. As already mentioned, many people originating from conflict areas prefer to leave home country divisions and struggles behind. This explains that conflicts can be "de-territorialised" without necessarily being "re-territorialised", in the sense that home conflicts can become objects of international politics and rivalries, without necessarily being reproduced in diaspora settings, or giving birth to divisions within other societies. Being aware of these nuances and diverging configurations is paramount for avoiding the essentialisation and securitisation of diaspora groups.

The chapter is divided in four main sections. The first reviews the main ways in which the relations between diasporas and conflicts, as well as diaspora politics, have so far been examined and studied, and how these understandings have veiled conflicts and tensions between and within diaspora groups. The second section analyses and unpacks the concept of conflict transportation, looking at processes through which conflicts can become deterritorialised and re-territorialised in diaspora settings. The main triggers and reasons for conflict transportation are subsequently reviewed. The chapter finally discusses the content of these transported conflicts take on a different nature, and involve different actors, themes, and issues, than in countries of origin.

1. Capturing the relations between diasporas and conflicts

Various concepts have been used to understand and describe the links between diaspora groups and conflicts. For instance, the concept of ethno-national diasporas, developed by Sheffer (1994), focuses not so much on diasporas generated by conflicts, but on the potential for conflict that the very existence of diasporas may generate:

"Diasporas often create trans-state networks that permit and encourage exchanges of significant resources, such as money, manpower, political support and cultural influence, with their homelands as well as with other parts of the same diaspora. This creates a potential for conflict with both homelands and host countries, which, in turn, is linked with highly complex patterns of divided and dual authority and loyalty within diasporas" (Sheffer, 1994, p. 61).

While interesting for capturing some of the complex links between diasporas and conflicts, this concept misleadingly suggests that all diasporas have a potential for conflict, without discussing the configurations in which these conflicts may arise, either between host and home countries, or within host countries. Another notion, the concept of victim diasporas coined by Cohen (1996), centres around issues of repression, oppression, and forced migration as reasons for diaspora formation. In parallel, the concept of conflict-generated diasporas also puts the stress on the "networks of those forced across borders by conflict or repression" (Lyons, 2007, p. 530). It is worth noting that the concepts of victim diasporas and of conflict-generated diasporas are both based on the assumption that conflict, or repression, can explain diaspora formation, while the concept of ethno-national diasporas focuses on diasporas' cultural origins. In that sense, all these definitions tend to have an essentialising effect, and to analyse diasporas as *products* of processes that they do not control, and not as *producers* and participants in these processes. In addition, such essentialisation discourses tend to throw suspicion on entire groups of people, whose agency and attitude would be completely determined by the place they come from, regardless of their own opinions.

In fact, none of the existing concepts seems to be able to capture the complexity of the potential links between diasporas and conflicts: no diaspora is entirely conflict-generated, but some

sections of diasporas might be; also, diaspora groups involved in conflicts taking place far away from their countries of settlement do not necessarily originate from conflict zones themselves, and some diaspora members active vis-à-vis a conflict happening in their country of origin may have migrated long before it escalated. As Pnina Werbner (2002, p. 123) accurately wrote, diasporas are "chaordic", and cannot easily fit within pre-existing and neat categories. This inherent complexity is veiled by the concept of diaspora itself, which creates a semblance of unity between individuals who might hold quite diverging opinions, and display largely different attitudes, towards politics in general, and towards their home country in particular. Some diaspora members, even if they retain links with their country of origin, are not active at the political level, and prefer to invest in cultural or social activities. And when they originate, at least in part, from conflict areas, diasporas are even more likely to be deeply divided, with some of their sections highly politicised, while others absolutely not. This calls for being cautious when analysing diaspora mobilisation and politics. The problem is that diasporas are frequently studied through their most active and politicised sections, and especially through so-called "migrant organisations". As a consequence, research tends to overlook the fact that the great majority of diaspora members are not involved in political or other types of mobilisation, and to overstate radicalism among them. It is thus important not to let the migrant association "fetish" blind us to the different levels in diaspora activism, and draw our attention exclusively towards the most politicised (Shain, 2007, p. 130).

Another problem related to the study of diaspora politics is that it tends to focus primarily on diasporas' relations with their countries of origin, and in particular on how home country politics affect diaspora matters. Conversely, issues such as the influence of diaspora divisions on home country politics, or the impact of diaspora divisions on host countries' societies, are frequently glossed over. The concept of long-distance nationalism, first developed by Anderson (1992) illustrates this trend. According to Glick Schiller and Fouron (2001, p. 20), long-distance nationalism "resembles conventional localised nationalism as an ideology that links people to territory". It can be understood as "a set of identity claims and practices that connect people living in various geographical locations to a specific territory that they see as their ancestral home" (Glick Schiller, 2005). In addition to frequently associating diasporas with radicalism and romantic images of their "homeland", uses of the concept of long-distance nationalism tend to define diaspora politics primarily in relation to countries of origin, in a kind of essentialist and teleological reasoning. This has dramatically impeded the identification and understanding of conflicts that occur between and within diaspora groups, particularly when related to home conflicts.

Overlooking internal conflicts happening in diaspora settings has important consequences, as they are often misunderstood by policy makers and medias alike, and interpreted and managed either through the frame of home country politics, or of criminality and/or terrorism. This results in the securitisation of diaspora groups, regardless of their actual involvement in, or attitude towards these conflicts. It also assumes that diasporas are the "weaker" actor when dealing with their home country governments and actors, and that their politics are entirely determined by what is happening, or what has happened, in their countries of origin. While it is true that diaspora mobilisation can be determined and dominated by home country politics, there is now large and detailed empirical evidence indicating that diaspora politics and attitudes towards conflicts happening in their home countries can also develop independently, in interaction with host countries' politics, and with other diaspora groups. Brian Axel (2001) has for instance shown how it is the formation of the Sikh diaspora itself that created the imagination of a Sikh homeland, and not the other way around. By studying diaspora mobilisation without assuming its dependency on home country politics, case study research has therefore opened avenues for studying imported or transported conflicts in diaspora settings.

2. Patterns of conflict transportation

Deciding whether divisions and conflicts occurring in diaspora settings are primarily imported from countries of origin or mostly related to conditions in countries of settlement, is one of the most pressing questions explored by the existing literature on diaspora politics. What empirical evidence indicates is that conflicts occurring within and between diaspora groups can relate to several configurations, putting more or less stress on the role played by home and host countries. Most commonly, groups from opposing camps in the country of origin migrate to the same country or region, creating a configuration in which the "home" conflict can be re-enacted or pursued in the country of settlement. The example of conflicts between Kurdish and Turkish diasporas, in particular in Europe, is well known (see e.g. Baser, 2015), as are the cases of conflicts occurring between diasporas from the Great Lakes region of Africa (see e.g. Turner, 2008), from South Asia (see e.g. Werbner, 2004), or from the Balkans (see e.g. Skrbiš, 1999). Conflict importation can also be triggered by the political activities of one diaspora group, which, by trying to mobilise and lobby in the country of settlement, might lead to frictions between home and host countries. The tensions generated between the US and Turkey by the presence of Fethullah Gülen in the US illustrate this configuration. Conflicts can also escalate between diaspora groups that had peaceful relations until then, for instance because of an event occurring in their respective countries or regions of origin. Among other recent examples, the case of the rising tensions between Ukrainian and Russian diasporas since the escalation of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine comes to mind (see e.g. Voytiv, 2019).

These various conflicts and tensions materialise in multiple ways, most notably at the verbal and discursive level, through cultural activities and symbols, but also in the everyday life in mundane social interactions, and also of course in the political and institutional realms. Processes of physical and social distancing are the most common, entailing high levels of social endogamy that materialise in a tendency to marry within one's own group, to inhabit certain specific neighbourhoods and to stay away from "others", and more generally to avoid all kinds of social contact with individuals belonging to the "other" diaspora group. For instance, the Rwandan diaspora in Belgium still tends to be spatially segregated, the Hutu more likely to live in the Matongé neighbourhood in Brussels, or in Flemish towns like Termonde, Verviers, or Dendermonde, and the Tutsi in Brussels' city centre (Féron, 2017). Social distancing practices sometimes evolve into covert or overt discrimination attitudes towards the "other" group, a phenomenon which can be perceived by the concerned groups as a continuation of the discrimination experienced back home (Röing, 2019a, p. 2).

In parallel, conflict can be (re-)enacted at the cultural level through the maintenance of linguistic or religious barriers, through the celebration of different dates which can be very divisive and lead to tensions, and through the organisation of various cultural events, demonstrations, and festivals where the "others" are not welcome. Religious and sports events seem particularly likely to generate frictions, as illustrated by the example of the clashes between London-based South Asian groups during religious festivals and cricket matches (Gayer, 2007, §19). These events, but also everyday interactions, can give birth to verbal and symbolic conflicts, including threats and verbal confrontations, the use of graffiti and of divisive symbols, and so on. Tim Röing (2019b), studying the transported conflicts among Turkish diaspora groups in Germany, notes for instance the hostility and insults exchanged between refugees who arrived recently from Turkey, suspected of being "Gülenists", and people with a Turkey-related migration background. While some of these clashes happen on the streets, over the past decade they have increasingly taken place on the Internet, on dedicated forums, on social networks, but also in readers' comments sections of newspapers. In addition,

conflict transportation is often characterised by the existence of parallel civil society and NGO scenes, with community organizations focusing on defending the interests, and preserving the cultural heritage, of different groups.

Transported conflicts can also entail episodes of destruction of private property, of vandalism, and of physical violence that tend to occur for instance during rival street demonstrations, or during interethnic or interreligious clashes. Often interpreted as criminal or gang-related violence by national media and policy makers, these episodes of violence can cause injuries or even deaths. In 2011 for example, riots between members of the Turkish and Kurdish diaspora groups in the Netherlands caused dozens of injuries. In 1999 in Berlin, following the arrest of Abdullah Öcalan, members of the Kurdish diaspora attempted to occupy the Embassy of Israel, which they suspected had been involved in the arrest. The Embassy's security personnel killed three protesters, and wounded many more (Féron, 2017, p. 375). But such episodes of physical violence are comparatively rare. This can be explained by different factors, for instance by the above-mentioned practices of social avoidance which decrease the risk of confrontation, by the usually high level of surveillance, monitoring, and securitisation that diaspora communities are submitted to, but also by the fact that many of those who have fled violence in their countries of origin have been deeply traumatised by their experience, and do not want to be associated to violent behaviour in any way. In that sense, many configurations of conflict transportation can be best described as situations of "negative peace" (Toivanen and Baser, 2020), characterised by an absence or rarity of physical violence, and by strong patterns of structural and symbolic violence. Conflicts between and within diaspora groups are thus more likely to be observed in everyday and relatively mundane processes of interaction or of avoidance, than in major outbursts of physical violence, although these can happen too.

It is also worth underscoring the fact that the reason why many diaspora groups originating from conflict areas favour endogamy and social avoidance is to preserve their culture. They organise events, commemorations, festivals, and demonstrations primarily for expressing and celebrating their identities and cultural heritage. In other words, many of these activities and practices do not aim at reproducing the conflict, but might end up doing so, as they allow the maintenance of group boundaries and of divisions. Observing London South Asian gangs, Bhatt (1997, p. 269) notes for instance how violence perpetrated by these groups should not be seen as necessarily directed against the "other" groups, but rather as a reaffirmation of the groups' boundaries and identities. In that sense, conflict transportation is not necessarily the direct product of an hostility towards the "other" group, as it often derives from a wish to reaffirm and strengthen the group's identity and boundaries, in a context where they are seen as being under threat. In addition, there is also some empirical evidence suggesting that practices of endogamy and of social avoidance tend to decrease among second and third generations, thus opening the door for more interactions and exchanges between diaspora groups (see e.g. Cesari, 2007, p. 56).

3. Why does conflict transportation occur?

Another question lying at the core of the literature on diasporas and conflicts is that of the factors and processes driving transported conflicts. Monahan, Berns-McGown, and Morden (2014, pp. 26-27) distinguish two main competing explanations for conflicts occurring in diaspora settings. On the one hand, according to *instrumental explanations*, conflict transportation can be understood as the result of a rational calculation by political and ethnic entrepreneurs, who wish to defend their interests and positions, both in host and home countries. Political entrepreneurs might also wish to drive and instrumentalise diaspora mobilisation against the material conditions that diaspora members encounter in countries of settlement,

where they sometimes face discrimination, racism, and rejection, potentially pushing them towards radicalism. On the other hand, *normative explanations* focus on values, feelings, and emotions that might trigger conflict transportation, including for instance cultural attachment to countries of origin and to their religious, linguistic, or ethnic specificities, but also anger and resentment at conditions experienced in countries of settlement.

In fact, empirical evidence partly validates both types of explanations, by demonstrating the importance of a great diversity of factors in conflict transportation, including the role of political entrepreneurs, and of values and emotions. The role played by emotions is particularly important when related to the process of migration itself, and to racism and discrimination that can be experienced upon arrival, and sometimes much later, in countries of settlement. This can entail a wish to rediscover "one's" origins and traditions, or at least a wish to reassess one's relation to "home" (Papastergiadis, 1997). Feeling rejected by the host society can lead to an investment in identities and cleavages that are perceived to be meaningful in the home country, and generate feelings of solidarity across borders, for instance solidarity with co-religionaries living in conflict areas (Humphrey, 2007, p. 114). In all these processes, complex interactions between diaspora groups and host societies are at play, as the occurrence of conflicts in countries of origin sometimes leads to the perception of the concerned diaspora groups as potential troublemakers and as not fully integrated in host societies. These individual and collective representations can be used to justify ostracism and discrimination against them. This, in turn, has been shown to foster processes of (re-)identification with divisions in countries of origin (Röing, 2019b, p. 8), especially among second and third generation migrants.

In addition, the existing literature on transported conflicts puts the stress on the role played by the host country context, in particular on the level of social and economic integration of diaspora members (Joppke and Morawska, 2003), as well as on political factors such as citizenship laws and political participation models (see Castles, 1995; Joppke, 2007; Just and Anderson, 2012). For instance, the recognition of specific cultural, ethnic, or religious groups at the political and institutional levels, as it happens in multiculturalist settings, has been said to favour diaspora activism (Mohammad-Arif and Moliner, 2007, §30). Some characteristics of diaspora groups themselves can also influence conflict transportation patterns, for example through factors such as their size, their degree of internal organisation, their homogeneity, whether their composition mirrors divisions within the country of origin or not, but also the time of, and the reason for, their departure from the home country (Féron, 2017). Bahar Baser (2013) has for instance shown how the size of the Kurdish diaspora in Sweden, larger than the Turkish one, had reversed the majority/minority relationship experienced in the homeland, and had a significant impact on their relations in the host country.

The motives and positionalities of conflict transportation actors have also been particularly scrutinised, in host and home countries, and in the transnational space: ethnic and political entrepreneurs such as leaders of migrant organisations, but also governments and political actors in home countries, as well as transnational organizations such as transnational federations and parties, can all be instrumental to the mobilisation of diaspora communities. Political parties in the home country can for instance develop outreach policies towards diaspora communities (Koinova, 2018), and establish local branches in the host country, such as in the cases of the Kashmiri diaspora in the UK (Sökefeld, 2006), or of the Hindu nationalist party Vishwa Hindu Parishad, which is present in 29 countries outside of India (Mukta, 2000). These actors can drive conflict de-territorialisation processes in host countries, by helping to reproduce political cleavages among diaspora groups. In parallel, political and ethnic entrepreneurs located in host countries can feed cleavages between and within diaspora groups in order to pursue their own political goals (see e.g. Nomme and Wedmann, 2013), and thus trigger conflict re-territorialisation processes. The most radical actors, and those closest to

home countries' politics, however rarely enjoy a broad support base among diaspora groups (see e.g. Canefe, 2002). In fact, it appears that many local diaspora organisations are much more likely to be interested in integration matters in countries of settlement, rather than in what is happening in countries of origin (Féron, 2013), thus nuancing one of the main tenets of the long-distance nationalism thesis.

Other factors play a fundamental role in conflict transportation processes, such as time sequences and events: a (re-)escalation process in the country of origin can for instance (re-)awaken a dormant or inactive diaspora, a phenomenon sometimes called the "diaspora turn" (Demmers, 2007, p. 8; Baser, 2014). In addition, conflict transportation seems more likely to happen in some spatial configurations than in some others, not only at the macro level (notably if the country of settlement is near the country of origin) but also at the meso (in certain neighbourhoods in diaspora settings, for instance) and the micro level, in particular in spaces where everyday interactions occur, such as in refugee shelters. Röing (2019a) has for instance explored how German refugee shelters have been a frequent location for conflicts between Christian, Yazidi, and Muslims refugees from Syria and Iraq.

The interplay of all of these factors explains not only what shapes processes of conflict transportation can take, but also that sometimes conflict transportation does not take place at all for some diaspora members or for whole diaspora groups. It can for instance be the case when the home conflict and the subsequent process of forced migration have been so traumatic that diaspora members prefer not to keep any political link with their countries of origin. On the whole however, empirical evidence suggests that the escalation of conflicts in diaspora settings is most often triggered by the context and actors in countries of settlement, rather than by long-distance nationalism, although it can of course play an important role too. In her excellent comparison of the Kurdish and Turkish diasporas in the contrasted contexts of Germany and Sweden, Bahar Baser (2015) has for instance shown that diaspora groups originating from the same country can organise and mobilise in very distinct ways, depending on where they live, thus at times leading to clashes, and at others to a relatively peaceful coexistence.

4. Processes of autonomisation of transported conflicts

One of the most interesting findings that can be drawn out of empirical case studies is that transported conflicts are almost never simple and straightforward extensions or reproductions of conflicts back home. As at least partly autonomous actors, diasporas are not just influenced by their countries of origin, but also by what is happening in their countries of settlement, and in the transnational space. Many diaspora members are what can be called "transmigrants" (Glick Schiller, Basch and Blanc-Szanton, 2004), who are simultaneously interested in, and influenced by debates in host and home countries, and in transnational arenas. Therefore, conflicts between and within diaspora groups become enacted anew in a different configuration, and not simply reproduced. These transported conflicts display some similarities with home conflicts in the myths, symbols, values, and identity categories they rely upon, but these elements tend to acquire a different meaning in the diasporic context than the one they have in countries of origin. The idea of re-territorialisation thus entails processes of reappropriation and reinterpretation of the home conflict by diaspora groups, from their own specific perspective. This process can be called conflict autonomisation in diaspora settings (Féron, 2013; 2017).

Assuming that conflicts within and between diaspora groups would be simple extensions of home conflicts overlooks the fact that most diaspora politics take place within the receiving

state's constituency (Ragazzi, 2009). Here again, the concerned diaspora's size, the economic and social status of its members, their level of integration in the country of settlement, their contacts with other diaspora groups in the same country or elsewhere, all explain that diaspora politics can be best understood as a combination of home and host countries', but also transnational factors. As a consequence, diaspora members who mobilise in host countries often have a different profile than those in the homeland, with for instance a higher involvement of women in diaspora organisations (Féron, 2017). In addition, generational factors play an important role in how conflicts are transformed in diaspora settings, for instance because the youngest generations tend to frame their engagement in different terms. As shown by Monahan, Berns-McGown and Morden (2014), younger generations seem inclined to link home conflicts to more general issues related to colonisation, human rights, or gender equality, whereas older ones are more likely to refer to political, religious, or ethnic divisions, or to the nature of the political regime in their home countries. Such generational shifts can be related to the values and frames used by the media in host societies when talking about home conflicts, usually referring to human rights, gender equality, or democracy building. Monahan, Berns-McGown, and Morden (2014, pp. 50-53), in their study on imported conflicts in Canada, show for instance how Canadian ways of accommodating societal diversity can explain the way members of diasporas reframe narratives related to their home conflict, by putting the emphasis on issues such as human rights or justice.

Focusing on partly distinct issues, autonomized conflicts are structured around different narratives, and can be triggered by specific events, not necessarily happening in the countries or regions of origin of the involved diaspora groups, as shows the example of the "globalised" Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Smith, 2008). Cases of horizontal conflict transportation, between different diaspora groups, without the direct involvement of either countries of origin or countries of residence, have also been observed. In September 2015 for example, confrontations between members of the Kurdish and the Turkish diasporas occurred in Hannover and in Bern, in turn leading to further clashes in other German and Swiss cities, such as Basel and Köln (Féron and Lefort, 2019). The autonomization of transported conflicts is also visible in their investment of spaces, such as internet forums, which do not necessarily play an important role back home, and in their expansion into the transnational sphere. These adaptations and adjustments can lead to processes of reorganisation and homogenisation across diasporas, for instance along religious or ethnic lines (see e.g. Monahan, Berns-McGown and Morden, 2014, p. 71; Mohammad-Arif and Moliner, 2007: §42), but also of fragmentation, for instance along generations.

Further research on the fact that diasporas can mobilise and clash around events happening in other settings than their countries or regions of origin is necessary, as it will help to better understand diaspora politics, and to disentangle them from essentialist assumptions making them entirely dependent on home country politics. Major geopolitical events like international wars can have deep consequences on diaspora politics, as demonstrated by the case of various post-Soviet diasporas mobilising in the war between Ukraine and Russia. Previous major international events, such as 9/11or the first Gulf War had similarly strong effects on identities and mobilisations, for instance by leading individuals to self-identify as Arabs, when they had not previously done so (Monahan, Berns-McGown and Morden, 2014, p. 61). In that perspective, studying transported and autonomized conflicts in diaspora settings offers stimulating avenues for exploring the changing patterns of transnational mobilisation and solidarity, in an era of increased connectivity.

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