Review Article

Understanding Transformative Roles of Diasporas in Context of Conflict and Peace Processes

Julara Damrongviteetham[1]

(Received: November 8, 2023; Revised: December 16, 2023; Accepted: December 28, 2023)

Abstract

This article argues that diaspora can influence the conflict and peace processes in their homeland in the positive or negative ways. It will review relevant literature to foster an understanding of conflict-generated diasporas namely, those who are able to contribute to conflict and/or peace in their home countries. It will also explore how the concept of diaspora has been developed in the literature and how this impacts the status of diaspora in the peace and conflict field.

Keywords: Diaspora, Conflict, Peace Process, Homeland

[1] Independent Scholar, E-mail: d.julara14@gmail.com

Introduction

The diaspora is a stakeholder group that plays an important role in conflicts and peace processes. Roger Brubaker (2005) pointed out that interest in diasporas has increased since the 1980s. It has become a key term and its meaning has spread in various fields. Brubaker speaks of *a "diaspora" diaspora'* to refer to "a dispersion of the meanings of the term in semantic, conceptual and disciplinary space" (p.1). He noted the rapid growth of diaspora studies from the 1970s, when "diaspora" appeared as a keyword only once or twice a year in dissertation abstracts. In the late 1980s, this had risen to about thirteen times a year and in 2001 alone, it appeared nearly 130 times (p.1). Although the concept of diaspora has developed in several areas of study, this article will focus mainly on understanding diasporas in the context of conflict and peace processes.

This paper will review relevant literature to foster an understanding of "conflict-generated diasporas" (Lyons, 2004, p. 1), namely, those who are able to contribute to conflict and/or peace in their home countries. The connection between diaspora with conflict and peace processes has been discussed in several studies. A 2009 literature review on the diaspora–conflict–peace – nexus gave an overview of how diasporas contribute to conflicts. It also explored the possibilities and opportunities for diasporas to contribute to peacebuilding (Abdile & Pirkkalainen, 2009). This review elaborates on the positive and negative influences of diasporas in the context of conflicts and peace processes. At the same time, this review will explore how the concept of diaspora has been developed in the literature and how this impact on the status of diaspora in the peace and conflict field.

1. Concept and key features of diaspora

In "Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies", diaspora is understood as a central historical fact of colonization. Diaspora means the voluntary or forcible movement of peoples from their homeland to new regions. Colonialism itself was a radically diasporic movement involving the temporary or permanent dispersion and settlement of millions of Europeans over the entire world and this migration continues on a global scale (Ashcroft et al., 1999, pp. 68–69). In post-colonial studies, *willingness and temporal aspects* are added to the concept. Shain and Barth (2003) also include the temporal aspect in their definition. They define diaspora as "a people with a common origin who reside, more or less on a permanent basis, outside the borders of their ethnic or religious homeland" (p.452).

Safran's concept (1991) explains that diasporas not only disperse from their country of origin but also must maintain its memory. They may feel alienated from the host country, desire to return home if possible, and may have a sense of solidarity and commitment to the homeland. This comprehensive definition makes the diaspora different from the general migrant.

However, academic disciplines' adoption of the concept has increasingly complicated it. Wahlbeck (2002) distinguished four different ways that the diaspora concept has been used in academia. In Cultural Studies, the concept has been used to describe the geographical displacement and/or de-territorialization of identities, to go beyond its earlier linkages with ethnicity and race. In Anthropology, the meaning of diaspora is considered a mode of cultural production, which arises from the articulation and use of cultural products. In other words, social and cultural transformation occurs as language

and meanings flow, mix, or hybridize. In Political Science and International Relations, the diaspora concept has been used to emphasize "the political dimension of contemporary diaspora." As detailed in the next paragraph, this dimension has become increasingly complex, especially the interplay between diaspora, homeland, and host. Finally, some scholars have used the term to refer to a specific form of social organization in the transnational community (p.229).

In line with Safran's argument, Sheffer (2003) sees diaspora as "a traveling term" and proposes that it needs to be more specific (p.10). Safran (1991) stated that although "through the ages, *the Diaspora* had a very specific meaning," "diaspora community" seems increasingly to be used as a metaphoric designation for several categories of people – expatriates, expellees, political refugees, alien residents, immigrants, and ethnic and racial minorities *tout court* (p.83) (see also Zunzer, 2004, p. 5). For Sheffer, however, several groups that dispersed for colonial or voluntarist reasons should still be included and he identified labor, culture, trade, and victim diaspora as sub-categorizations. Some scholars then proposed adding a diaspora prefix such as "ethno-national" with the intention of limiting it to a specific category of social and political formations. Thus, ethno-national diaspora is a social-political formation, which can be voluntarily or forcibly created, whose members regard themselves as of the same ethno-national origin, and who permanently reside as minorities in one or several host countries. They have contacts and maintain relationships with those living in their homeland and those living in other countries. They maintain a common identity and sometimes organize activities related to the society, culture, economics, and

politics of their countries of origin in their host country. Their relationships reflect complex networks connected to the homeland, host land, and international actors (Sheffer, 2003, pp. 9–11).

While the concept of diaspora is debatable, it is vital to identify the common features of diaspora, which can generally be accepted. However, this does not mean that all diasporas will display all the common features identified. The following are some key common features:

1) **Dispersal** is the first and most widely accepted feature among scholars. Diaspora can be voluntarily or forcibly dispersed from their origin or homeland to two or more places. More broadly, this could include any kind of dispersion, be it across borders or within a state. However, this broader concept is not universally accepted. Brubaker cited several academics that defined diasporas as 'ethnic communities divided by state frontiers' or as 'that segment of a people living outside the homeland'. He concluded that those who count as diasporas are the part of the population that live as a minority outside the ethnonational 'homeland' (Brubaker, 2005, p. 5).

2) However, Safran stated that "not all 'dispersed' minority populations can legitimately be considered diasporas. What we call diaspora should have a sense of attachment to their motherland, have struggled, or have a sense of belonging with their communities in their home countries. **"Homeland"** is often understood in specific territorial terms as a space from which a group has been forcefully detached and which, so, assumes a high symbolic value. (Lyons, 2004, p. 1) Brubaker, therefore, uses homeland as the second constitutive criteria. The homeland may be either real or

imagined but it must be an authoritative source of value, identity and loyalty (Brubaker, 2005, p. 5).

We can also see how important a quality homeland is in Safran's definition. Four out of six of his diaspora characteristics are connected with homeland; for example, collective memory or myth of the original homeland, ancestral homeland as a real home, diaspora commitment to the homeland, and keeping contact and relationships with people in the homeland. Thus, the meaning of homeland for the diaspora is a special category of territory, which has symbolic value and significant meaning. Although they are not living in the homeland, this value creates attachment to their relatives, friends and others in the motherland

3) Brubaker used the term "**boundary-maintenance**" to refer to the preservation of a distinctive identity via-à-vis a host society (or societies). The diaspora's boundary makes the diaspora a distinctive community sharing a common solidarity and relatively close social relationships that cut across state boundaries and link members of the diaspora in different states into a single 'transnational community.' (Brubaker, 2005, p. 6) Alternatively, the term was used to refer to the collective memory, vision or myth of the original homeland and encompasses a commitment on the part of the diaspora to maintain and restore the homeland's safety and prosperity (Safran, 1991, pp. 83–84). The counterargument to boundary-maintenance emphasized hybridity or fluidity and this was addressed through the concept of boundary-erosion (Brubaker, 2005, p. 6). In an article on "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," Stuart Hall identified two ways of thinking about cultural identity. The first way defines 'cultural identity' in terms of a shared culture, history and

common ancestry. The 'oneness', underlying all these elements, is the essence. The second recognizes that there are also critical points of deep and significant *difference* which constitute 'what we really are' or 'what we have become'. In short, the second way recognizes that cultural identity is not fixed and can be changed and moved over time (S. Hall, 1990, pp. 223–229). This is important when considering Brubaker's boundary-maintenance because the diaspora identity is not fixed. Their identities can be diverse, fluid, and negotiated depending on context and position.

This article defines diaspora as a group or community network, which voluntarily or forcibly moves from their place of origin to other countries or regions. They maintain a collective (perhaps traumatic) memory of their homeland and maintain a shared culture and values but they are internally heterogeneous (Smith, 2007, p. 5). To return to the motherland or not is irrelevant as long as it is fully accepted that the country of origin is their real home. This article will now turn to the importance of the diaspora and review some, but not all, of the roles it may play in conflicts and peace processes.

2. Diaspora Relationships and Activities

Aside from attempts to address the term's definitional and conceptual ambivalence, the academic literature has also explored the concept from a variety of other dimensions.

Shuval (2000) emphasizes *three sets of actors* that he thinks are most relevant to diaspora theory – the diaspora group itself, the host society and the real and/or virtual homeland. He discusses these actors with reference to their triangular relationship. However, he

focuses on each set of two actors in terms of their relationship to the *third*.

- Diaspora and Homeland – The policy of the host towards the homeland can determine the diaspora's perspectives towards the host country. Whether or not they support politics in the host country will be expressed in the form of voting or other forms of political activities.

- Diaspora and Host – The attitudes of a diaspora group towards its homeland is often ambivalent – a combination of yearning and distancing. Shuval explains that when the diaspora have a choice, many of them do not choose to return to their homeland because it is often too disruptive or traumatic to do so. In some cases, a homeland does not actually exist or would not welcome them. Conflict in the home country may not allow them to return. The definition of homeland in this sense can only mean a virtual, utopian goal to be attained at an unspecified time in the future. Besides, the lack of apparent political support for the homeland would create concerns for the diaspora with regard to accusations of dual loyalty or fears of oppression and discrimination.

- Homeland and Host – The attitude of the homeland to the diaspora group may be a source of cultural and emotional support and security. However, the homeland may also make use of diaspora groups to gain political, material, or other support from the host country. Moreover, the host's attitude towards the diaspora group may reflect its prevailing norms of tolerance or intolerance. If the diaspora group is politically significant in terms of size or influence, the host may engage with the diaspora group in a manner that is congruent with its own political goals (Shuval, 2000, pp. 46–47).

These triangular relationships demonstrate the complex interrelationships between actors. We cannot consider one actor without reference to the other actors. Thus, a review of diaspora roles must inevitably think about the interconnections.

Shuval's attitudinal dimensions are important if we look into the *economic and political nuances.* Sheffer (2003) considered the attitudes of host and home countries and argues that there is no symmetry in the way home and host societies and governments treat several phenomena (Sheffer, 2003, p. 121). Several factors affect their attitudes.

Economic conditions. If the homeland economy is underdeveloped, people are very likely to voluntarily migrate to richer, freer, and more economically developed countries and they rarely return. This emigration would be received poorly by the home society, particularly those that have suffered the consequences of brain drain (Zunzer, 2004, p. 4) or the loss of human capital. By contrast, impoverished societies might encourage emigrants to gain a better life. The migrants' family, friends, and other relevant social groups, who are left behind might expect that the migrants send money back home and maintain ongoing contact with them (Sheffer, 2003, p. 122). Furthermore, the homeland government would be unlikely to restrict such individually-driven emigration.

Political influence. Sheffer (2003) points out that political actors generally prefer that their emigrants retain their original citizenship and accept only temporary status in the host country in the hope that they can still control the emigrants and easily manipulate them to serve their homelands' interests. However, a government's concern about its diaspora would revolve around the

diaspora's political influence, which could negatively impact the government. This could, for example, include diaspora support for the government opposition. Importantly, the homeland government might also be worried if the diaspora develops and adopt behavioral patterns and policies that benefitted the host countries' interests more than those of the homeland (Sheffer, 2003, pp. 123–125). Additionally, it is crucial to recognize the attitude of the diaspora itself. Diaspora attempts to keep their collective memories alive could lead to political involvement in their homeland to ensure those memories are protected. This also includes the emotional attachments of solidarity and kinship (Baser & Swain, 2008, p. 13).

Instead of looking at the diaspora from an external perspective, the diaspora may also be analyzed from an internal perspective that explore their agency (Baser & Swain, 2008, p. 13). Shain and Barth (2003) divide diasporas into two major types; *active and passive actors.* This distinction brings about three diaspora characterizations.

- Diasporas can *be a passive actor* when they need assistance to enable them to migrate to a host country. Also, when the homeland wants them to act as their representative to strengthen the relationship with kin at home and abroad, or to gain leverage over the internal or external affairs of weak neighbors. Finally, when diasporas are not able to control their status as members of a remote homeland, they may become implicated in the homeland's international affairs.

- Diasporas can be an *active actor* and influence the foreign policies of their *host countries* vis-à-vis their homeland. This

can happen, especially, in liberal democratic societies where there is freedom to organize political activities. Even though there may be requests from the home state to prohibit diaspora activities, it would be difficult to do so because as a democratic country, the host country is obliged to maintain freedom and promote the interests of its people. Diasporas can be an active actor in *their homeland*. Those that achieve economic and political power can influence homeland politics. They can be a source of recruits, funding, or arms for violent activities, and can play a crucial role in continuing conflict or seeking compromise, which they implement through their proxies at home. (Shain & Barth, 2003, pp. 453–454)

We can see that there are different ways to explain and categorize the diaspora activities. Identifying sets of actors and their relations is a reminder to think about diaspora in a relational way. A diaspora is not an isolated actor, and it is necessary to consider the homeland, host country, and other actors too. The diaspora can play an important role in the politics, society and economy of the home country, the host country, and the international community. With globalization, diaspora is much closer to the homeland, and they can be active and/or passive actors in various contexts and depending on a variety of conditions.

3. Diaspora in conflict and peace processes

This section will concentrate on diaspora roles and their influence on conflict and peace processes. However, their involvement raises the following questions: Why are they so important to a conflict and why do they involve themselves in

conflicts in their home countries? How can they influence a conflict, both negatively and positively?

3.1 Diaspora and conflict

Several arguments about *diaspora motivations* for involvement in conflict are addressed. Jonathan Hall (2015) argues that engaging in conflict can be a source of pride and empowerment of personal identity. In the host country, they might be treated as second-class citizens, so feelings of alienation and marginalization may be their motivation. It may be difficult for them to assimilate in the host country. He emphasizes that "most research argues that homeland-oriented identities and transnational activities result from their lack of host land social integration." The second argument is about diaspora experience of war. Grievances arising from wartime experiences or past struggles remain strong, even though their home countries may have already established peace (J. Hall, 2015, pp. 7–8).

In brief, diaspora motivation for engaging in the homeland's internal conflicts are driven by external and internal factors. External factors include changes in conflict types and changes in conflict trends after the Cold War, which have increased the importance of diasporas as an extraterritorial actor. With globalization, diasporas can more easily engage in conflict, which in turn leads to new war and conflict trends. Moreover, the more prevalent political goal, mode of warfare and funding sources that constitute the "New Wars" strengthen diaspora connections to a conflict. However, external factors are not influential alone. Internal factors must also be considered. Motivations, emotional attachment, and identity consciousness also spur their involvement.

The literature on diasporas' roles in conflict and/or peace can be divided into three main camps; the first operates on the assumption that diaspora influences can prolong conflict, renew violence, or renew their involvement in civil war, the so-called negative role (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004, p. 575). The second argues that the diaspora can play a positive role in conflict by facilitating a peace process or by mitigating or preventing conflict resurgence(Baser & Swain, 2008; Bercovitch, 2007; Cheran & Vimalarajah, 2010; Zunzer, 2004). The third camps highlights their capacity to both positively and negatively contribute to a conflict by exploring diaspora groups that once supported violence before transforming themselves into a positive force for peace (Lyons, 2004; Missbach, 2009; Orjuela, 2008; Ostergaard-Nielsen, 2005; Turner, 2011).

3.2 Negative contributions of diaspora to conflicts

Much of the diaspora and conflict studies literature highlights "the dark side of diaspora politics" (Ostergaard-Nielsen, 2005, p. 1). Diasporas can disrupt nations when violent conflict in the motherland emerges due to their long-distance political involvement absent of any accountability (Anderson, 1992, p. 12; Vertovec, 2005, p. 5). Several studies highlight hardline diaspora groups or those involved in insurgencies (Baser & Swain, 2008, p. 10). Breaker of peace, distant warrior, problem maker or peace wrecker are terms employed to name hardline diasporas (Democratic Progress Institute, 2014; Orjuela, 2008; Ostergaard-Nielsen, 2005). After 11 September 2001, research on diaspora has largely focused on the diaspora as a spoiler of peace negotiations in homeland conflicts. To serve US counter-insurgency policy, the RAND Corporation has thoroughly studied

Muslim diasporas and Islamic networks based on the assumption that their networks play a crucial role in terrorism (Karasik & Benard, 2004). It is believed that diasporas "substantially increase the risk of conflict renewal"(Collier & Hoeffler, 2004, p. 588). Hardline diasporas that are often mentioned are Sri Lankan Tamils, Kurds, Albanians, Irish, Lebanese, Kashmiri, and Eritrean (Baser & Swain, 2008, pp. 10–11; Vertovec, 2005, p. 5) Several areas need to be considered with respect to their negative contribution to homeland conflicts. What follows is an exploration of the diaspora roles in economic, military, political and social affairs.

3.2.1 Economic Contributions

Examining the financial support, a diaspora group provides to homeland conflicts is the most popular topic in the literature. A Collier and Hoeffler study indicated that the risk of conflict increases when diasporas give financial support to rebel organizations (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004, p. 575). Horst states that "the financial contributions of diasporas raise tens of millions of dollars annually for opposition groups around the world. This contribution can prolong civil wars by several years" (Horst, 2007, p. 3).

The diaspora groups' main objective for financial *support* is to intentionally provide economic support to rebel groups or opposition parties to continue warfare with the hope that their funding will help people to achieve their political goals and to also bring "peace" and reforms to their homeland. (Abdile & Pirkkalainen, 2009, p. 12; Democratic Progress Institute, 2014, pp. 12–13; Orjuela, 2008, p. 438; Ostergaard-Nielsen, 2005, p. 5). Tamil diaspora networks are the most cited example. They provided financial support to the

Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE or Tamil Tigers) in their fight against the Sri Lankan government. The civil war in Sri Lanka can be traced back to the 1980s. It drove between 600,000 and 800,000 Tamils to flee worldwide (*Funding the "Final War" LTTE Intimidation and Extortion in the Tamil Diaspora*, n.d., p. 1). Most of them settled in Canada, the United Kingdom, India, France, Germany and Australia (Democratic Progress Institute, 2014, p. 12; *Funding the "Final War" LTTE Intimidation and Extortion in the Tamil Diaspora*, n.d., p. 1). Scholars and practitioners interested in the Sri Lanka conflict accept that the Tamil Tigers abroad played a significant role in sustaining the conflict and economy in Sri Lanka. The Tamil army was described as a strong and efficient freedom fighter group, particularly before it was defeated by the government in May 2009. The Democratic Progress Institute (DPI) (2014) estimated that during the 1990s, 80-90 percent of the military budget for the LTTE came from abroad. These funds consisted of LTTE-owned businesses, investments in legal or illegal business and direct donations from the diaspora (Democratic Progress Institute, 2014, p. 13). 80% of the LTTE's 82 million dollar income came from fundraising and were based on the belief that the LTTE's efforts were the only way to ensure the security of the Tamil diaspora and to attain Tamil self-determination from the Singhalese Government (Fair, 2005, p. 140). "A California-based physician gave as much as $100,000 a time and was considered a 'god' in the LTTE because he gave whatever they requested" (Fair, 2005, p. 141). However, LTTE funding did not always come from willing donors. Some were unwilling contributors that were forced to give money for fear their relatives in Sri Lanka could be threatened by the LTTE (Abdile & Pirkkalainen, 2009, p. 15; Baser & Swain, 2008, p. 11).

International Crisis Group reported (2010) that money raised in North America and Europe was mainly sent to Asia to obtain weapons or other war materials (International Crisis Group, 2010, p. 5). The Kurds are another example of a diaspora group that, for the most part, voluntarily provides economic support to rebel groups and carries out other activities in Turkey to sustain the organization's infrastructure (Baser & Swain, 2008, p. 11; Ostergaard-Nielsen, 2005, p. 5). Diaspora funding was also the main source of income for the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) in Aceh, Indonesia (Missbach, 2009, p. 27).

Apart from financial support directly sent to warring parties, *remittances* are another important means to prolong conflicts. Andrea (2018) defines remittances as "money sent by members of the diaspora through unofficial or official channels to their country of origin" (Graber, 2018, p. 4). Formal remittances refer to money sent via official channels including financial services companies such as Western Union, official banks, or national agencies. Informal remittances, by contrast, are transferred via courier through private or unrecorded channels. The latter is difficult to record. "Estimates of the size of informal remittances vary widely, ranging from 35 to 250% of formal remittances." Based on the results of an empirical study, informal remittances amount to between 35 and 75% of formal remittances to developing countries (*Topic 4 - Formal vs. Informal Remittances*, 2009). According to a World Bank report, about $427 billion of remittances were sent to developing countries in 2014 (Phillips, 2016, p. 2). However, Horst (2007) argues that there is a lack of reliable data on the issue as there is a general tendency to underreport remittances (Horst, 2007, p. 3). Although World Bank statistics are widely cited, its data only records formal remittances. It

is important to note that the data provides no indication as to the reason for the remittances. Although the figure is high, it is still an open question whether or how much of this money is used to support conflicts. It is likely that "money transferred to conflict areas does not pass through formal channels" (Horst, 2007, p. 3). If we accept Horst's criticism of the Social Science Research Council's data, then we must accept that it is highly likely that it is a sizeable portion of informal remittances that gets funneled to conflict areas. This contrasts with a UNDP report (2011) that suggests that remittances are primarily sent to families.

3.2.2 Military and Political Contributions

Having explored the concept of diaspora and recognizing their strong emotional attachment as well as sense of collective identity and ideology as long-distance nationalists, it is perhaps unsurprising that they adopt other mechanisms to support the struggles in their homeland. *Human resources development or recruitment* are additional ways in which the diaspora can contribute to homeland conflicts. During the 1980s, the Acehnese diaspora trained their freedom fighters. Thousands of individuals traveled from Aceh to Libya for military training before being deployed back in Aceh in the 1980s and again in 1998 when the conflict was renewed. The return of the Acehnese from Malaysia following the 1997 economic crisis in Southeast Asia was another factor that led to revitalized fighting in Aceh, which was seen "as a patriotic obligation" (Missbach, 2009, pp. 28–29). This *transnational mobilization* of fighters also occurred in other cases. Eritrean refugees, for example, were also mobilized for armed struggle (Horst, 2007, p. 5).

The *political activities* of diasporas also influence the continuation of violence. *Lobbying* seems to be a significant form of indirect engagement for diaspora groups. The lobbying efforts of diasporas mainly take place in the host countries and with the international community, where the conflict emerges and continues. The main justification for lobbying is to delegitimize the homeland government by highlighting issues of human rights violations, discrimination, or injustice. In Aceh, the GAM raised awareness of the human rights violations of the Indonesian military government (Missbach, 2009, p. 31). The LTTE was successful in lobbying and gaining political sympathy and support internationally during the 1980s and 1990s. They were, therefore, able to establish networks in several countries including Canada, USA, Norway, France, Switzerland, and the UK (Fair, 2005, p. 142). Furthermore, a diaspora may empower itself by *building transnational coalitions* with other insurgent groups. The LTTE built connections with Kashmiri separatists, Khalistani-oriented Sikhs, and other militant groups based in the Middle East (Fair, 2005, p. 144). Armenians established close relationships with Karabakh's leader in 1992. When the Armenian militarily intervened on Karabakh's behalf in the war with Azerbaijan, it reached out to the diaspora. However, these relationships depend on "the actors' intensity of involvement and their common identity developed through collective action." (Koinova, 2011, p. 344) *Propaganda and media campaigns* are another vital tool of the diaspora which can be disseminated easily online. Some diaspora groups are capable of controlling major media channels in both the host and home countries; Armenians in the US support a daily and weekly newspaper in Armenia that include newsletters, internet sites, and email-

distribution lists (Lyons, 2004, p. 11). Portraying charismatic leaders, revisiting traumatic memories, or intensifying ideologies can help to maintain collective identity and a shared ideology with people in their country of origin. Such preservation tends to reduce the likelihood for compromise (J. Hall, 2015, p. 8). Propagandizing in the form of videos, music, and photography nourishes protracted conflicts. In Aceh, the image of highly vaunted GAM leader Hasan Tiro was displayed on many mobile phone as photos of victims of violence or torture circulated regularly. These images were used as a reminder and to convince outsiders of the Acehnese's legitimate grievances against Indonesians (Missbach, 2009, pp. 30–31).

It is not only diaspora-created activities that can act as political tools to prolong civil war. Relationships in the diaspora network can become even more united when *transformative events* occur in their home countries. Hess and Martin (2006) defined "transformative events as the turning point for a social movement that dramatically increases or decreases the level of mobilization (p.249)." A transformative event during a conflict can boost the outrage of the diaspora. This, in turn, can strengthen collective identity leading to mass mobilization or to violent "backfire" (Hess & Martin, 2006, pp. 249–250).

3.2.3 Social Contributions

Diasporas do not only send financial support or undertake political activities that stir up or prolong conflicts in their homeland, they also influence communities back home with host country ideas, values, behaviors, social capital and beliefs. This is called "social remittance" (Graber, 2018, p. 5; Levitt, 1998, p. 927).

When a diaspora group settles in another society, there is a social impact. Levitt (1998) proposes three types of social remittances. First, "*normative structures* are ideas, values, and beliefs. They include norms of interpersonal behavior, notions of intra-family responsibility, standards relating to age and gender, principles of neighborliness and community participation, and aspirations for social mobility (Levitt, 1998, p. 933)." Second is the *system of practice,* which is shaped by normative structures. This includes practices at the individual level (religious practices, patterns of civil and political participation) or community level (leadership styles, modes of membership recruitment and socialization) (Levitt, 1998, p. 934). Lastly, *social capital* is the collective value of all social networks and what an individual gets from them (Graber, 2018, p. 5; Levitt, 1998, p. 935).

Social remittances can be transmitted when migrants return home or visit their country of origin. It can be transferred at the individual level or community level. Levitt (1998) argues that social remittances are passed on intentionally and systematically. They are transferred between individuals who know one another personally or through mutual ties. This transmission is a part of global cultural flows (Levitt, 1998, p. 936; Markley, 2011, p. 371).

The impact of social remittances might not be as concrete as economic remittances. Levitt and Lamba-Nieves (2011) state that social remittances can increase violence and may not always have a positive influence on their homeland. It greatly depends on where the diaspora has settled. In the case of Pakistanis or Yemenis that migrated to Afghanistan to fight and then returned – they are said to have brought back new ideas and skills that encouraged violence.

3.3 Positive Contributions of Diaspora to Conflict

The literature has argued that the diaspora can be a contributor to peace in their homeland.

3.3.1 Economic support

One of Collier and Hoeffler's (2004) main arguments is that rebels fight for economic benefits not grievances in a civil war. The causes of war may be several; poor public services, corruption or economic breakdown. They also cite diaspora remittances as a cause for conflict renewal (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004, pp. 567–568). By contrast, Hall (2015) argues that *economic remittances* "help to reduce grievances rather than promote greed (p.14)." Money sent by the diaspora to their homelands through formal or informal channels can improve the economic situation. It provides sufficient funds for consumption, education and other capital accumulation (Regan & Frank, 2014, p. 506). Also, it assists the government when economic decline means they cannot provide adequate basic services (J. Hall, 2015, p. 14). So, such remittances can reduce poverty and greed. Poverty reduction can *prevent war*, especially civil wars in underdeveloped countries (Bercovitch, 2007, p. 30). In Sri Lanka, resources and opportunities provided by the diaspora to marginalized groups (both Sinhalese and Tamils) compensated for imbalanced development, particularly in poor areas. This may partially reduce the sense of discrimination, which can be used to mobilize support for war (Orjuela, 2008, p. 447).

However, the question of whether economic remittances really lead to economic growth remains open. Turner (2011) cites the World Bank and suggests that remittances can increase

credit worthiness and raise long-term financing for countries (Turner, 2011, p. 177). Others argue that although remittances can drive economic growth in some sectors, it cannot sustain economic growth in the long run. In developing countries, there is a risk that recipients will have no incentive to work if they are tempted to wait for remittances regularly sent by relatives abroad (Turner, 2011, p. 176). In addition, it is difficult to assess the impact of financial support that is sent through informal channels.

The "moral economy of the diaspora" describes the intense obligation of the diaspora to help family and friends and this plays an *important role post-conflict* (Turner, 2011, p. 176). In this phase, there is need for economic reconstruction and social restoration. Diaspora, who live in rich countries, can provide financial support to avoid conflict renewal in their home country. They can also contribute to demobilization, disarmament, and development projects (Bercovitch, 2007, p. 34; Democratic Progress Institute, 2014, p. 16; Orjuela, 2008, p. 439). Diaspora business investment in post-conflict areas can revive business confidence, boost the economy and consolidate structures for peace (Bercovitch, 2007, p. 34). Liberia is an example where economic remittances influenced the post-conflict environment after the war ended in 2003. About 30% of Liberia's population had migrated and the country suffered high levels of poverty. The majority of the Liberian diaspora were well-educated and running businesses in their host countries, the USA in particular. The Liberian diaspora sent money to families and friends in Liberia, and remittances were used not only for personal consumption, but also for investment and small business. The diaspora also donated to NGOs, political organizations, women's groups, and faith-based groups

to support projects to rebuild clinics, healthcare units, schools, bridges or to provide support for small farmers. Their networks also encouraged the Liberian government to establish a Diaspora Investment Fund for small and medium enterprises (Pheiffer, 2013, pp. 80–82). In Sri Lanka, after the LTTE's defeat, pro-tiger diaspora groups continued to raise funds to support the new nonviolent struggle for independence (International Crisis Group, 2010, p. 7).

Bercovitch (2007) argues that "economic support during conflict emergence and escalation only creates more problems for all concerned (p.31)." He argues that economic support is more beneficial after conflict rather than during conflict (p.34-35). Yet, financial support can also be used to provide much-needed assistance during war as the diaspora can be a quick source of funding in humanitarian emergencies (Phillips, 2016; Turner, 2011, p. 178). The Croatian diaspora provided much humanitarian aid, medicine, clothing, and food during the conflict in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina (Turner, 2011, p. 178).

Diaspora remittances can help prevent civil war in some cases, particularly in poor countries where remittances can substitute a government's incapability to provide for basic needs. It also can be useful for post-conflict economic recovery and for the promotion of demobilization, disarmament, and rehabilitation. Financial support can alleviate a crisis during conflict in the homeland. However, it can be a double-edged sword. Good intentions without decent mechanisms to manage the money may have a negative impact. After the tsunami in Sri Lanka, the failure to establish a joint LTTE-government structure to manage funds for affected victims in the northeast led to accusations that the LTTE was monopolizing diaspora aid and blocking help that did not go through LTTE channels.

Rather than building sympathy between two ethnicities, the situation ended up intensifying nationalism (Orjuela, 2008, p. 448).

3.3.2 Political Contributions

The diaspora as political actor can be a support to the peace process. Although diasporas can act as spoilers, they can also be constructive political change-makers. Diasporas can prevent conflict in the homeland by establishing informal exchanges or forums for negotiation, by lobbying the government and/or international organizations to set up fact-finding mechanisms, by advocating for non-violence, or by building public support on key conflict prevention issues (Bercovitch, 2007, p. 28). They can raise awareness of the homeland conflict with the public or decision-makers in the host country (Baser & Swain, 2008, p. 15). When conflict has emerged, political actions may be harder. They may have to lobby the government or international agencies to take action against violence occurring in their state of origin. They may also seek an economic boycott in the hope that it reduces the opposition's capacity and support for making war (Bercovitch, 2007, p. 30). Although Ostergaard-Nielsen (2006) acknowledges the importance of lobbying to influence an ongoing conflict, s/he cautions that it is difficult to measure its achievements (p.10).

When warring parties decide to resolve their conflict through negotiations and a peace process, the diaspora can play a very important third-party role. Although there are debates around their impartiality because of close relationships or shared ethnic identity, some argue that this can be an advantage since they will have a good understanding of what conflicting parties want and

may even be able to influence or apply pressure on them. They can help the mediator to bring the parties to the negotiation table and strengthen communication between them (Baser & Swain, 2008, pp. 18–19). They may also support the negotiation process by acting as a connector. In the Aceh case, GAM members in Sweden made contact with the Finnish and EU President Marti Ahtisaari in November 1999 to explore mediation possibilities (Missbach, 2009, p. 34). In the Northern Ireland case, Irish diaspora in the US spoke out publicly, financially supported, and lobbied for the initiation of the peace process (Baser & Swain, 2008, p. 19; Bercovitch, 2007, p. 33). Lastly, they can provide direct political support as advisors to the peace process in the home country or exchange opinions with other actors through networks in their homeland.

In the post-conflict phase, the diaspora can continue to play a constructive role. They can use their knowledge and experience from the host country to improve political affairs in their homeland. This kind of transition period is a good opportunity to propose new ideas on issues such as, gender equality, democratic institutions, justice, or human rights to avoid a repetition of conflict (Bercovitch, 2007, p. 34). Post-war Sri Lanka is an interesting case. The Tamil diaspora network went to great efforts to change to a non-violent strategy and established several political entities: 1) They formed the provisional Transnational Government of Tamil Eelam (TGTE) within the diaspora, which had its first election across11 countries in 2010; 2) Tamil diaspora CSOs formed a Global Tamil Forum (GTF); 3) They conducted a referendum to ascertain the level of support for Tamil secession and; 4) Democratically-elected Tamil National Councils and Country Councils were set up in various settlement countries (Cheran & Vimalarajah, 2010, pp. 19–20).

Diasporas can use their political activities, connections, influence, and networks in a constructive manner. Looking at their contributions across different phases of conflict can help us to see how diasporas adapt in accordance with the situation in their homeland. With respect to negotiation, although conflicting parties may consider a conflict not yet ripe, the diaspora may hasten ripeness through the above-mentioned activities.

3.3.3 Social Contributions

An important aspect of diaspora work and effectiveness in the socio-cultural arena can be the way in which they promote post-conflict justice, truth, and reconciliation. Victims may be able to trust members of the diaspora enough to share their grievances and this may help them to come to terms with the past. The diaspora could contribute to the healing process. Moreover, the diaspora's host country-shaped social perspective could offer expertise, knowledge, and understanding of cultural norms and a deeper appreciation of the situation in their homeland (Bercovitch, 2007, p. 35).

On the one hand, diaspora support can negatively influence a conflict. On the other hand, the literature on diaspora and conflict has also demonstrated the ways in which a diaspora can constructively engage in a conflict across economic, political and social dimensions. Nevertheless, Horst (2007) identifies three issues that increase the risks of diaspora involvement in violent conflict. First, diasporas are likely to be more radical because they do not have to confront the physical violence occurring in their motherland and their motivation may be influenced by the cultural and material conditions

in the settlement country. Second, information from their homeland is second-hand, and thus may not always be accurate. Third, there are significant cleavages and political differences within the diaspora group (Horst, 2007, p. 8). These problems highlight the risks associated with diaspora involvement and need to be taken into consideration when studying their role in conflict.

Conclusion

The definition, concepts, and relational features of the term "diaspora" are indicative of its complexity, and this complexity can be observed in the different ways that diaspora can affect their homeland and the positive or negative ways they may influence conflict and peace processes. It is necessary to focus on specific diaspora groups rather than studying diaspora groups indistinguishably or basing analyses on stereotypes of diaspora groups. "This will enable a better understanding of the internal dynamics of diaspora politics and identify where, how, when, and with whom to work in order to support peacebuilding initiatives" (Bush, 2011, p. 197). The labels "peace-wrecker" and "peacemaker" fail to capture the nuanced and largely subjective nature of the roles played by diaspora groups before, during, or after conflict (Democratic Progress Institute, 2014, p. 27). It really depends on each case and the stage that a particular conflict is in. The timing can shape the way that the diaspora may act/react to the conflict, peace process, or peacebuilding. The political structure of a conflict also plays a role (Smith, 2007, p. 8).

Challenges and open questions remain when it comes to understand diasporas 'transformative roles in the context of conflict and peace processes.

1. Diasporas are not always welcome in their home country and their authority is not always accepted when it comes to playing a role in mediation processes because they may be perceived as 'foreign' and too divorced from the hardships of conflict. People in the homeland may be suspicious and skeptical of diaspora goals, intentions and agendas. They may question diaspora loyalty since they do not live in the motherland anymore (A world of exiles, 2003, p. 7; Freitas, 2012, p. 4; Kleist, 2008, p. 1133). As such, it is not easy for diaspora to be recognized by the parties and they may find it difficult to involve themselves in the conflict if they have spent quite some time outside the homeland.

2. Due to the heterogeneity within diaspora groups, it may be necessary to have separate dialogues within and across diaspora groups (Ostergaard-Nielsen, 2005, p. 12).

3. It is well-known that peace processes consist of different non-linear phases. The challenge for diasporas then is to consider the what, when, how and with whom for each phase of a peace process. A final question to consider also is whether the diaspora must provide both negative and positive support at the same time. Would this enable them to achieve their goals and fulfill their expectations for their homeland?

References

Abdile, M., & Pirkkalainen, P. (2009). *The Diaspora - Conflict - Peace - Nexus: A literature Review* (Working papers). DIASPEACE.

Adamson, F. B. (2016). The Growing Importance of Diaspora Politics. *Current History*. Retrieved October 12, 2018 from https://www.academia.edu/29396297/The_Growing_Importance_of_Diaspora_Politics

Anderson, B. R. O. (1992). *Long-Distance Nationalism: World Capitalism and the Rise of Identity Politics*. Presented at the The Wertheim Lecture, Centre for Asian Studies Amsterdam.

Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G., & Tiffin, H. (1999). *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies*. London & New York: Routledge.

Baser, B., & Swain, A. (2008). Diasporas as Peacemakers: Third Party Mediation in Homeland Conflicts. *International Journal on World Peace*, *25*(3), 7–28.

Bercovitch, J. (2007). A neglected relationship: Diaspora and conflict resolution. In H. Smith & P. Stares (Eds.), *Diasporas in conflict: Peace-makers or peace wreckers?* (pp.17-38). United Nations University Press.

Berdal, M. (2005). Beyond Greed and Grievance - and not too soon. *Review of International Studies*, *31*, 687–698. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210505006698

Berghof Foundation. (2012). *Berghof Glossary on Conflict Transformation: 20 notions for theory and practice*. Berlin: Berghof Foundation Operations GmbH.

Brubaker, R. (2005). The “diaspora” diaspora. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, *28*(1), 1–19.

Bush, K. (2011). Diaspora Engagement in Peacebuilding: Empirical and Theoretical Challenges. In M. Pugh, N. Cooper, & M. Turner (Eds.), *Whose Peace? Critical Perspectives on the Political Economy of Peacebuilding* (pp. 193–207). New York: Palgrave McMillan.

Byman, D., Chalk, P., Hoffman, B., Rosenau, W., & Brannan, D. (2001). Diaspora Support for Insurgencies. In *Trends in Outside Support for Insurgent Movements* (pp. 41–60). RAND Cooperation.

Cederman, L.-E., Gleditsch, K. S., Salehyan, I., & Wucherpfennig, J. (2013). Transborder Ethnic Kin and Civil War. *International Organization*, *67*(2), 389–410.

Cheran, R., & Vimalarajah, L. (2010). *Empowering Diasporas: The Dynamics of Post-war Transnational Tamil Diaspora*.

Clifford, J. (1994). Diasporas. *Cultural Anthropology*, *9*(3), 302–338.

Cohen, R. (2008). *Global Diaspora: An Introduction* (second). London & New York: Routledge.

Collier, P., & Hoeffler, A. (2004). Greed and grievance in civil war. *Oxford Economic Papers*, *56*, 563–595. https://doi.org/10.1093/oep/gpf064

Crowther, J., Kavanagh, K., & Ashby, M. (Eds.). (1995). *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary of Current English* (Fifth). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Demmers, J. (2002). Diaspora and Conflict: Locality, Long-Distance, Nationalism, and Delocalisation of Conflict Dymamics. *The Public*, *9*(1), 85–96.

Democratic Progress Institute. (2014). *Makers or Breakers of Peace: The Role of Diasporas in Conflict Resolution*. Democratic Progress Institute.

Dupuy, K., & Rustad, S. A. (2018). *Trends in Armed Conflict, 1946-2017* (Conflict Trends) (p. 4). Oslo: Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO). Retrieved October 9, 2018 from https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Dupuy%2C%20Rustad-%20Trends%20in%20Armed%20Conflict%2C%201946%E2%80%932017%2C%20Conflict%20Trends%205-2018.pdf

Fair, C. C. (2005). Diaspora Involvement in Insurgencies: Insights from the Khalistan and Tamil Eelam Movements. *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, *11*(1), 125–156. https://doi.org/10.1080/13537110590927845

Freitas, A. (2012). *Diaspora Groups in Peace Processes: Lessons Learned and Potential for Engagement by the EU* (Africa Briefing Report). Brussel: Observatoire de l'Afrique.

Fullenkamp, C. (2015, February 10). Do remittances drive economic growth? World Economic Forum. Retrieved October 13, 2018 from https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2015/02/do-remittances-drive-economic-growth/

Graber, A. (2018, May). The Role of the Sri Lankan Tamil Diaspora in Post-War Sri Lanka.

Hall, J. (2015). Diasporas and Civil War. In T. G. Jakobsen (Ed.), *War: An Introduction to Theories and Research on Collective Violence* (2nd ed., pp. 3–23). New York: Nova Science Publishers.

Hall, S. (1990). Cultural Identity and Diaspora. In Jonathan Rutherford (Ed.), *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference* (pp. 222–237). London: Lawrence & Wishart.

Hess, D., & Martin, B. (2006). Repression, backfire, and the theory of transformative events. *Mobilization*, *11*(1), 249–267.

Horst, C. (2007). *The Role of Diaspora in Civil War*. Presented at the CSCW workshop on the Transnational Facts of Civil War, Oslo: PRIO.

Human Rights Watch. (n.d.). *Funding the "Final War" LTTE Intimidation and Extortion in the Tamil Diaspora* (No. Volume 18, No. 1(C)) (p. 50). Canada and United Kingdom. Retrieved October 12, 2018 from https://www.hrw.org/reports/2006/ltte0306/ltte0306webwcover.pdf

International Crisis Group. (2010). *The Sri Lankan Tamil Diaspora after the LTTE* (No. Asia Report No.186). International Crisis Group.

Kaldor, M. (2013). In Defence of New Wars. *Stability*, *2*(1), 16. Retrieved October 11, 2018 http://dx.doi.org/10.5334/sta.at

Karasik, T., & Benard, C. (2004). Muslim Diasporas and Networks. In *The Muslim World After 9/11*. RAND Cooperation.

Kleist, N. (2008). In the Name of Diaspora: Between Struggles for Recognition and Political Aspirations. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *34*(7), 1127–1143. https://doi.org/10.1080/13691830802230448

Koinova, M. (2011). Diaspora and Secessionist Conflicts: The Mobilization of the Armenian, Albanian and Chechen Diasporas. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, *34*(2), 333–356.

Levitt, P. (1998). Social Remittances: Migration Driven Local-Level Forms of Cultural Diffusion. *The International Migration Review*, *32*(4), 926–948.

Levitt, P., & Lamba-Nieves, D. (2011). Social Remittances Revisited. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *37*(1), 1–22. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2011.521361

Lyons, T. (2004, April). Engaging Diasporas to Promote Conflict Resolution: Transforming Hawks into Doves. Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution, George Mason University. Retrieved September 14, 2018 from http://www.tamilnation.co/conflictresolution/lyons.pdf

Markley, E. (2011). Social Remittances and Social Capital: Values and Practices of Transnational Social Space. *Quality of Life*, *22*, 365–378.

Miss Bach, A. (2009). The Acehnese Diaspora: Hawks and Doves? *Journal of Human Security*, *5*(3), 22–43. https://doi.org/10.3316/JHS0503022

Orjuela, C. (2008). Distant Warriors, Distant Peace Workers? Multiple Diaspora Role in Sri Lanka's Violent Conflict. *Global Networks*, *8*(4), 436–452.

Orjuela, C. (2018). Mobilising Diasporas for Justice. Opportunity Structures and the Presencing of a Violent Past. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *44*(8), 1357–1373. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2017.1354163

Ostergaard-Nielsen, E. (2005, December). *Diasporas and Conflict Resolution - Part of the Problem or Part of the Solution?* Presented at the Seminar on Diaspora and Conflict, Peace Builders or Peace Wreckers? Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS).

Pheiffer, C. F. (2013). The Role of Remittances in Post-Conflict Reconstruction: the case of Liberia. In D. Rodima-Taylor (Ed.), *Remittance Flows to Post-Conflict States: Perspectives on Human Security and Development* (pp. 71–87). Boston: The Frederick S. Pardee Center for the Study of the Longer-Range Future, Boston University. Retrieved October 13, 2018 from http://www.bu.edu/pardee/files/2013/10/Pardee-CFLP-Remittances-TF-Report.pdf

Phillips, M. (2016, September 12). Are refugee and migrant diasporas the missing piece of the development puzzle? *www.theconversation.com*. Retrieved September 4, 2018 from http://theconversation.com/are-refugee-and-migrant-diasporas-the-missing-piece-of-the-development-puzzle-63724

Public International Law & Policy Group. (2009). *Engaging Diaspora Communities in Peace Processes* (Assessment report and Program Strategy). Public International Law & Policy Group.

Regan, P. M., & Frank, R. W. (2014). Migrant Remittances and the Onset of Civil War. *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, *31*(5), 502–520.

Safran, W. (1991). Diaspora in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return. *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*, *1*(1), 83–99.

Shain, Y., & Barth, A. (2003). Diasporas and International Relations Theory. *International Organization*, *57*(3), 449–479.

Sheffer, G. (2003). *Diaspora Politics: At Home Abroad*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Shuval, J. T. (2000). Diaspora Migration: Definitional Ambiguities and a Theoretical Paradigm. *International Migration*, *38*(5), 41–57.

Smith, H. (2007). Diaspora in International Conflict. In H. Smith & P. Stares (Eds.), *Diasporas in Conflict: Peace-makers or Peace-wreckers?* (pp. 3–16). Tokyo, New York, Paris: United Nations University Press.

Social Science Research Council. (2009). *Topic 4 - Formal vs. Informal Remittances*. Brooklyn, New York. Retrieved October 12, 2018 from https://www.ssrc.org/publications/view/4297524A-B74F-DE11-AFAC-001CC477EC70/

The Economist. (2003). *A world of exiles.* (Special Report). Retrieved October 5, 2018, from https://www.economist.com/special-report/2003/01/02/a-world-of-exiles

The World Bank. (2018). *Migration and Remittances Data*. Retrieved October 12, 2018 from

http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/migrationremittancesdiasporaissues/brief/migration-remittances-data

Tololyan, K. (2012, April). *Diaspora Studies: Past, present and promise*. Working papers, paper 55 presented at the Oxford Diaspora Programme, The International Migration Institute (IMI), Oxford University. Retrieved September 10, 2018 from http://www.migration.ox.ac.uk/odp/pdfs/WP55%20Diaspora%20studies.pdf

Turner, M. (2011). Three Discourses on Diaspora and Peacebuilding. In M. Pugh, N. Cooper, & M. Turner (Eds.), *Whose Peace? Critical Perspectives on the Political Economy of Peacebuilding* (pp. 175–192). New York: Palgrave McMillan.

Vertovec, S. (2005). *The Political Importance of Diasporas* (Feature). migrationpolicy.org. Retrieved October 12, 2018 from https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/refugee-diasporas-remittances-development-and-conflict

Wahlbeck, O. (2002). The Concept of Diaspora as an Analytical Tool in the Study of Refugee Communities. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *28*(2), 221–238. https://doi.org/10.1080/13691830220124305

Zunzer, W. (2004). *Diaspora Communities and Civil Conflict Transformation*. Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management.