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Élise Féron & Bahar Baser

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INTRODUCTION

Diasporas and Transportation of Homeland Conflicts: Inter-group Dynamics and Host Country Responses

ÉLISE FÉRON * & BAHAR BASER **

*Faculty of Social Sciences, Tampere Peace Research Institute (TAPRI), Tampere University, Tampere, Finland, **School of Government and International Affairs (SGIA), Durham University, Durham, UK

In 2022, violent clashes occurred between groups of Hindu and Muslim men in Leicester. This was not a one off incident as similar riots have happened in the past in other British cities such as Bradford. Dozens of participants were arrested as a result of these violent altercations and police investigations continue up to this day (Allen, 2022). It has been reported that there were violent assaults as well as attacks on religious symbols by the two groups which included burning flags or damaging mosques and temples as they symbolise each community's sacred places (Murray et al., 2022). Another recent altercation between two diaspora groups occurred in Paris when an allegedly far-right extremist attacked a mostly Kurdish-populated area and killed three Kurdish diaspora members who were actively engaged in the Kurdish movement. The diaspora protests turned violent when the demonstration was interrupted by Turkish ultranationalist men who provoked the crowd by showing Grey Wolf signs, which represent a specific nationalist group in Turkey (Broomfield, 2022). Grey Wolves had been banned in France in the previous year, again with allegations of perpetrating violence against Armenian diaspora members during the events that unfolded in the course of the Nagorno-Karabakh war (MacDonald, 2020). These incidents are just a few examples that testify how political developments in the homeland still continue to have an impact on inter-group relations among diaspora communities, who live far from their country of origin and who are socialised and politicised in a different environment compared to their peers who are still in the homeland. These incidents happened in countries that have democratic institutions and provide opportunity structures to diaspora groups for mobilisation and action. Yet, their

Corresponding Address: Élise Féron, Faculty of Social Sciences, Tampere Peace Research Institute (TAPRI), Tampere University, 33014 Tampere, Finland. Email: elise.feron@tuni.fi

citizenship regimes and migrant incorporation strategies are strikingly different. Although these are important factors that shape diasporas' repertoires of action and agenda, we see an increasing number of inter-diaspora tensions occurring around the globe, in different shapes and forms. Any conflict situation, whether active or dormant, whether low or high scale, has an impact on how transnational communities develop diasporic identities and interact with each other in different settings.

In academic and policy-related literatures, numerous narratives link diasporas and conflicts (Féron & Lefort, 2019): diasporas are for instance seen alternatively as peace wreckers or peace makers (see e.g. Collier & Hoeffler, 2000; Lyons, 2007; Østergaard-Nielsen, 2006; Smith & Stares, 2007), as products of forced migration related to conflicts (Van Hear, 2014), or as targets of securitisation policies (Lucassen, 2005). Conflicts occurring within and between diasporas in their respective countries of residence, however, remain 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 country of residence, such as when members of opposing groups in the country of origin migrate to the same places.

In the few studies that focus on these issues, such configurations have been captured using the concepts of conflict importation (Baser, 2013, 2015), conflict transportation (Féron, 2013, 2017), conflict de-territorialisation (Rabinowitz, 2000), or conflict re-territorialisation (Carter, 2005). 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 re-territorialisation are not simply about how home conflicts expand to diaspora settings, but also about how these transported conflicts rely on different actors and discourses, and how they develop dynamics of their own.

According to the existing literature, conflicts can be transported in diaspora settings in multiple ways, in everyday life but also at the political and institutional levels. Physical and social distancing between diaspora groups is extremely common, entailing high levels of endogamy, living in separate neighbourhoods, and generally avoiding social contact with individuals belonging to the 'other' diaspora group (Féron, 2017). Conflicts can also be transported at the cultural level thanks to the maintenance of cultural, linguistic or religious practices that can be divisive, or through the organisation of political and cultural events where the 'others' are not welcome, and where divisive symbols are displayed (Gayer, 2007). More rarely, conflicts are transported at the physical level, with episodes of physical violence that tend to occur primarily during rival street demonstrations, or during interethnic or interreligious clashes (Féron, 2013). Therefore, many cases of conflict transportation can be equated with situations of 'negative peace' (Toivanen & Baser, 2020), where the perpetration of physical violence is relatively rare, but where structural, cultural and symbolic violence is omnipresent.

However, what empirical studies have also shown 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 residence, and in the transnational space. Thus, 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. This process has been called conflict autonomisation in diaspora settings (Féron, 2013; 2017).

Essentially, existing studies focusing on these issues show that even if they can be transformed by conflict autonomisation processes, the inner cleavages of diaspora groups originating from conflict areas can run very deep, actually prohibiting their analysis as a single group (Féron & Lefort, 2019). Moreover, some diaspora groups commonly labelled as ‘conflict-generated’ actually include members who have migrated before the core conflict erupted, thus implying yet other layers of differentiation in terms of direct experience of violence. The presence of these communities raises questions in host societies as the maintenance of ethnic, religious, linguistic or political divisions even generations after migration can lead to conflict transportation and conflict autonomisation processes. But there are also cases where conflict-generated diaspora groups coexist in peace with other groups that were considered as ‘enemies’ in their home countries. In that sense, the politics of conflict-generated diaspora groups display a fascinating complexity which often challenges commonly held views on diasporas.

In this perspective, and notably building on the work conducted within the frame of the DIASCON project¹, this collection contributes to a revised, more complex understanding of the diaspora-conflict nexus and of diaspora politics, and thus provides avenues for research and policy making towards de-securitised, fluidified visions of diasporas. The contributions that are presented as part of this collection aim to fully embrace the complexities of the relationships between diasporas and conflicts, such as the fact that conflicts can structure diasporas which themselves might not be conflict-generated, that some—and indeed, many—populations originating from conflict-countries do not display any interest in, or relation to, those conflicts, or that conflicts might shape diasporas long after they have migrated. Indeed, as captured by Demmers (2007, p. 8) with the concept of ‘diasporic turn’, specific events or developments happening in home countries can trigger diasporas’ identification and mobilisation, sometimes generations after the migration has taken place. Diasporas’ mobilisation is neither automatic nor necessarily triggered by events in home or host countries. Accordingly, the contributions in this collection propose to move away from a narrow view focusing on the causal relation [conflicts ⇒ conflict-generated diasporas ⇒ conflicts] to shift the focus on the relations between diasporas and conflicts as *configurations* in which actors such as diasporas themselves, institutions or individuals in host and home countries, as well as transnational actors, can all play a decisive role (Baser & Féron, 2021). Solving this puzzle supposes to incorporate a multiplicity of spatial and temporal arrangements that are instrumental in the recomposition of antagonisms in host societies (Baser, 2015; Féron, 2013). To do so, this collection explores what configurations activate conflicts in diaspora settings, in order to understand which kinds of events or situations can explain the participation of diasporas in conflicts, or on the contrary can prevent it.

Understanding the complexity of conflict transportation became a highly important issue in the recent decades due to a variety of factors. First of all, scholars have been stressing that home states are now actively engaging with their diasporas and there is a growing trend among them to govern and manage diasporas for their own benefits. Home states form special units to deal with diaspora matters (ranging from subunits to ministries) and they tailor specific policies to harness their potential (see, e.g. Arkilic, 2022; Burgess, 2020; Déllano Alonso & Mylonas, 2019; Gamlen, 2019). Although in most cases the strategies are mostly focusing on economic benefits, recent examples clearly show that diasporas are either treated as tools for soft power or transnational repression by home states (see, e.g. Baser & Ozturk, 2020; McIntyre & Gamlen, 2019). Countries of origin are intervening in transnational communities' local agendas, empower certain groups among the diaspora for their own benefits and use them as agents for lobbying for home state interests. In the past, in case of transported conflicts, home states intervened by using diplomatic or covert channels; monitoring and surveillance of diaspora groups is not a new phenomenon. However, with the rise of diaspora governance policies and institutions, state-sponsored diaspora groups became all the more visible in the transnational space, altering the power relations between (adversary) diaspora groups that have diverse ethnic, religious or ideological agendas. Therefore, home states' actorness has also increased in the (re)creation process of transported conflicts.

Second, countries of residence also started paying more attention to conflict transportation by diaspora groups. In the past, most host states treated such tensions as 'domestic' tensions that belong far away from their territory and thus advised diasporas to leave their conflicts where they belong (e.g. Baser, 2017). Recently, we saw a shift in this attitude. Countries of residence also started formulating policies either by securitising such debates or linking such issues to long-term integration problems (Baser & Féron, 2021). Although there is no consensus in terms of dealing with conflict transportation in policy-making circles, scholars can still detect an attitude which suggests that inter-diaspora interactions are now a matter of domestic concern for the host-country policy makers as well.

Thirdly, as mentioned above, the interventions of countries of origin in diaspora affairs changed the power relations among diaspora communities which are either loyal to the home state's ruling elites or are considered as dissidents. Home state-sponsored diaspora activism generated suspicion among policy makers in countries of residence and changed dynamics of interaction between them and diaspora groups. Can diaspora groups create autonomous agendas that are independent from homeland actors? Are they stuck within the home-host state nexus?

Fourthly, previously, debates on new generations in the diaspora focused on how forthcoming generations might lose interest in homeland matters after getting integrated in the host-country context. However, recent research shows that new generations of diasporas show interest in the politics of their countries of origin (see, e.g. Hess & Korf, 2014; Wessendorf, 2016). Their mobilisational patterns might be different than their ancestors; however, they are active and they can develop actorness in both home and host countries (see, e.g. Baser, 2014). They can still mobilise as a result of critical junctures in their ancestors' home countries and they might develop a sense of belonging despite not having lived experience, especially in conflict situations. This shows that conflict transportation is not a phenomenon that solely belongs to the first generation, and that cultural traumas, identity struggles and national/ethnic/religious/ideological causes can be transmitted to the next generation as the diaspora keeps producing its own narratives and priorities.

Finally, it can be argued that new technologies have an impact on how conflict transportation unfolds. In the cases mentioned above, social media played an important role in terms of mobilising masses but also creating and escalating tensions among diaspora communities. Rather than violent altercations, discursive wars on the web are becoming more and more common (Chernobrov, 2022). Social media interactions between adversary groups not only make contentious issues more visible, but also turn dormant members into active members of a variety of movements as a result of continuous engagement and exposure to contentious matters. These issues deserve more scrutiny, and more in-depth research is needed in order to understand the complexity of the diaspora-conflict nexus, notably paying attention to versatile actors that play a role throughout the process.

The Collection

The contributions in this collection are dedicated to comprehending how conflicts might affect diasporas, and even shape them. They explore the transformation and reinvention of conflict-generated diaspora groups' politics in countries of residence. In doing so, they fill a gap in contemporary literature and contribute to a wider array of ongoing studies, acknowledging the pluralistic essence of diasporas.

Élise Féron and Bahar Baser's contribution is an attempt to understand how homeland conflict dynamics are reshaped in diaspora settings. By taking the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict as a case study, the authors demonstrate how diverging narratives and positionalities in diasporic spaces can explain how transported conflicts autonomise. They specifically look at the discourses of Armenian diaspora activists during the Nagorno-Karabakh war and scrutinise how they differed from those of Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh's political actors. Their theoretical conceptualisation adds a different layer to the debates on conflict transportation where diasporic discourses are treated as an identical reflection of homeland's agendas and priorities. This contribution's main merit is that it unpacks conflict transportation not by focusing on inter-diaspora matters, but by analysing intra-group dynamics.

Cæcilie Svop Jensen's research focuses on conflict transportation in online spaces as she unpacks politicised diasporic activity among Turkish and Kurdish Diasporas in Denmark. Adopting online ethnography as her main methodology, she investigates these diasporas' organisations on Facebook. She finds that while conflict transportation occurs in online spaces, it is shaped and influenced by the country of residence, transnational networks and other diasporic communities and actors. She argues that this suggests a plurality of consciousness rather than the duality of 'homeland'-'host-country' attachments often attributed to diasporas. Jensen's contribution demonstrates that looking at conflict transportation in online spaces opens up new avenues for understanding the complex ways in which diasporas engage with conflicts in their countries of origin and residence alike.

Anna Quattrone's research takes Italy as a case study and specifically focuses on how Sinhalese and Tamil diasporas forge relationships in the context of the conflict in Sri Lanka. She examines the conflict dynamics that are transported to the Italian setting by paying attention to the altered power asymmetries among these two groups. Combining field research with secondary sources, Quattrone finds that both conflict autonomisation and neutralisation occur in Italy. Diasporas' mobilisation patterns are transformed in these new settings, and repertoires of action vary depending on generations as well as on opportunities that arise in their new places of residence.

In his contribution, Bruno Lefort scrutinises conflicted identities among diasporas by investigating sense of belonging (and the negotiations this process brings) among young people from the Lebanese diaspora in Canada. His research focuses specifically on Montreal where a sizeable Lebanese community lives. He argues that recent literature on conflict transportation usually focuses on societal and transnational contexts and neglects people's lived experiences. Rather than endorsing an approach that essentialises diasporic identities, Lefort adopts a critical lens and looks at the interplay between diasporas and conflict by pondering the shifting nature of existence. After a careful scrutiny of young diasporans' narratives in Montreal, he demonstrates how their identities are under constant transformation.

Camilla Orjuela's research combines memory studies with diaspora studies and examines how memories of genocide make up an arena for contestation and conflict among different diaspora groups. Her contribution focuses on memory conflicts in relation to the genocide against Christian minorities in the Ottoman Empire in 1915, Seyfo, and that against Tutsis in Rwanda in 1994. In both contexts, genocide recognition has triggered reactions and created tensions among diaspora communities. Orjuela shows us that the context in the country of residence matters when it comes to opportunities for victimhood recognition as well as memorialisation. Based on extensive data collection in Sweden among both communities, she demonstrates that such transported conflicts are not free from foreign policy matters of host states as well as national and local party politics in these settings.

Cihan Dizdaroglu's research takes the Cyprus conflict as a case study and compares the perceptions of peace among the Cypriot youth in the diaspora in the United Kingdom and back in the island. The contribution is based on extensive field research in both contexts as well as semi-structured interviews with young people who felt neglected during the peace process in Cyprus. The contribution builds on the understanding that young people both at home and abroad can play a role in peace initiatives and positive change in Cyprus, and that youth's readiness for peace and willingness to co-exist have a direct impact on sustainable peace at the societal level. By bringing both Turkish and Greek Cypriot narratives to the forth, Dizdaroglu presents a comprehensive picture of how youth perceive the conflict and how divergences of opinions occur among diasporans and locals.

Overall, the contributions in the collection point out to three main conclusions highlighting the complexity of the links between diasporas and conflicts, and of conflict transportation processes.

First, the contributions show that most 'transported conflicts' are in fact the result of a series of entangled conflicts between and within diaspora groups, countries of origin and countries of residence. Conflicts *within* diaspora groups sometimes matter as much as conflicts *between* diaspora groups for explaining conflict transportation processes, and the context in countries of residence might weigh as much as what is happening in countries of origin for explaining diasporic mobilisation.

Second, understanding why and how conflicts are transported entails paying attention to various interconnected temporalities whose complex interactions expound the diversity of observed patterns: first, the *temps long* of diasporic mobilisation, which builds upon collective memories and chosen traumas, and which expresses itself through commemorations, memorialisations, and core diasporic narratives; second, the here and now of what is happening in both countries of origin and of residence, and which largely determines political mobilisation processes; and third, micro-temporalities and diasporans' life

trajectories, which explain differences in individual investment in diasporic activities. These various temporalities contribute to processes of conflict autonomisation, and sometimes help fostering peaceful interactions at the group and interpersonal levels.

Finally, patterns, shapes and even occurrence of conflict transportation vary according to scale and space. Just like focusing on high-level peace initiatives can be misleading, looking at highly politicised demonstrations or clashes happening between diaspora groups in a capital city gives a very partial picture of what interactions between these diaspora groups really are. For instance, conflicts might be transported in a region, but not in another within the same country. Conflicts might be transported in online spaces but not offline, and some issues discussed in online forums might be completely ignored 'in the streets'. Likewise, newspapers' headlines on violent clashes might hide peaceful everyday interactions and mundane forms of solidarity between members of 'rival' diaspora groups which are often securitised in their countries of residence.

All in all, the contributions included in this collection call for nuancing our approach of the links between diasporas and conflicts, in order to avoid falling into the essentialisation trap. They also open up avenues for future research, notably underscoring the so far mostly untapped potential of everyday peace or intersectional approaches in diaspora studies.

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Note

1. Coordinated by Dr. Élise Féron (Tampere Peace Research Institute, Tampere University, Finland).

Dr Élise Féron is a Docent and a Senior Research Fellow at the Tampere Peace Research Institute (Tampere University, Finland). She is also an invited professor at the University of Louvain (Belgium), Sciences Po Lille (France), the University of Coimbra (Portugal), and the University of Turin (Italy). Her main research interests include feminist peace research, conflict-generated diaspora politics, as well as the multiple entanglements between conflict, violence and peace.

Dr Bahar Baser is an Associate Professor in Middle East Politics at the School of Government and International Affairs, Durham University. She is also an associate research fellow at the Security Institute for Governance and Leadership in Africa (SIGLA), Stellenbosch University, South Africa and Tampere Peace Research Institute, Tampere University, Finland. She is an expert in the area of diaspora studies, peacebuilding and conflict transformation. She has published extensively on stateless diaspora activism and mobilisation in Europe with a specific focus on host states' counterterrorism policies, radicalization of diaspora members and transnationalization of homeland conflicts.

ORCID

Élise Féron  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-8012-3937>

Bahar Baser  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-8583-5909>

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