



Stateless Diaspora Groups and their Repertoires of Nationalist Activism in Host Countries

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Diaspora and its Increasing Importance

In this globalized world, millions of people live outside their country of origin. Today, almost every country has a diaspora and almost every ethnic/religious/cultural group has a diaspora somewhere in the world. Recently, diaspora's role in conflict and conflict resolution has become one of the major research interests. Especially after 9/11, which drew attention to the "home-grown terrorists" and accordingly to immigrants in the hostlands, understanding the behavior of diaspora communities gained significance. Diaspora activism in terms of political support to insurgent movements, sending remittances back home and participating in homeland affairs became highly significant. Consequently, it became particularly important for researchers to understand the dynamics of diaspora groups in today's conflicts.¹

When it comes to examining the attachments that the diaspora communities have towards their homeland, some of the most commonly mentioned concepts are long-distance nationalism² transnational loyalties, and diasporic-identity formation. These concepts pave the way to bringing about a better

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¹ Bahar Baser & Ashok Swain, "Diasporas as Peacemakers: Third Party Mediation in Homeland Conflicts." *International Journal on World Peace*, 7, 7 (2008), pp. 7-28.

² See B. Anderson, "The New World Disorder." *The New Left Review*, 193 (1992), p. 3-13. & B. Anderson, "Long Distance Nationalism." (pp. 58-74). In B. Anderson (Ed.), *The Spectre of Comparisons: Nationalism, Southeast Asia and the World*, 1998, (London: Verso).

understanding about the different levels of loyalty to the homeland and enables us to explain how these sentiments emerge, and reveal themselves. One also must look into the conditions that help the long-distance nationalist sentiments emerge among migrant communities. For instance, there are new trends in migrant integration to consider. Demmers argues: “as it has become increasingly hard to settle and assimilate in the hostland, diasporas are more likely to continue to focus on their erstwhile homeland.”³ Many states are moving away from the idea of assimilating their ethnic minorities towards integrating them. At the same time, minority diaspora groups no longer desire to abandon their pasts.⁴ Today what we have at hand is many different diaspora groups in many different host countries that are trying to influence policy making in both home and host countries.

In this context, one paradigmatic example for diasporas that do not desire to leave their past behind and carry on being concerned about the homeland politics are the so called “stateless diasporas.” The urge to keep their primordial roots and the recent history constant and vibrant in members’ minds is particularly important for this type of diaspora groups.⁵ Political activity is much higher within the stateless diaspora communities as compared to other types of diasporas, especially if they are united around an idea of secession and/or there is an on-going conflict in the homeland.

This paper explores the trends of long-distance nationalism within the stateless diaspora groups and provides a framework of actions committed by those groups in the context of homeland politics. Diaspora groups’ actions are analyzed through a social movements perspective, in particular by looking at the protest and propaganda repertoires of the two stateless diaspora groups. Both of these diaspora groups come from a conflicted homeland where there is or was an on-going armed conflict. Additionally, both groups are very politically active in Europe. The focus is to demonstrate how these diaspora groups use repertoires of actions to bring the attention of their host country to the contentious politics in their homeland.

Defining “Diaspora”

In the past, the concept of “diaspora” applied primarily to Jews, Greeks, Armenians and Africans. However, recently, at least thirty ethnic groups declare

³ Joell Demmers, “Diaspora and Conflict: Locality, Long Distance Nationalism and Delocalization of conflict Dynamics,” *The Public*, 9, 1 (2001), p. 88.

⁴ Robin Cohen, “Diasporas and the Nation State: From Victims to Challengers”, *International Affairs*, 72, 3 (1996), p. 507.

⁵ Gabriel Sheffer, “Diaspora Politics. At Home Abroad.” Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (2003), p.153.

themselves, or are described by others, as a diaspora.⁶ At present, in academic works, as well as journalistic, nearly every migrant group is referred to as a diaspora proving that the term is under threat of *concept stretching*. While almost all authors criticize the multiple meanings and try to avoid the vagueness of the term, they often give their own definition. For instance, Sheffer defines “diaspora” as ethnic minority groups of migrant origins residing and acting in host countries but maintaining strong sentimental and material links with their countries of origin-their homelands.⁷ Alternatively, Safran identifies diaspora as “...segment of people living outside the homeland.”⁸ As a matter of fact some definitions are too broad which makes them meaningless in analytical terms: and on the other hand some definitions are so detailed that they do not refer to the immigrant groups, which are accepted as diasporas by a large number of researchers and academics. It is obvious that a working definition of the concept of “diaspora” is highly necessary.

However, one should keep in mind that the main concern with the definitional ambiguity of the term is the extent to which diaspora is an essential or a constructed category.⁹ Such an argument links the diaspora debate to the constructivist explanations of understanding collective identities. One might argue that the emergence of diaspora groups could be explained by the essentialist point of view: a natural and an automatic result of migration, exile or dispersion.¹⁰ According to this viewpoint; “diaspora is a monolithic body, a group related to the people in the home country by affinity ties; kin and common descent.”¹¹ While some authors perceive diasporas as members of an ethnic community who live outside the homeland; others argue that diaspora is more than an essentialist form of ethnic group members. It is an elite mobilized political project, and diaspora identity is constructed, rather than a natural result of mass migration. At this point, an understanding of different approaches to the emergence of “diaspora identity” is useful. One might engage with the analysis of

⁶ Cohen., *Diasporas and the Nation State.*, p. 157.

⁷ Gabriel Sheffer, “Modern Diasporas in International Politics”, Croom Helm, Sydney. (1986), p.3.

⁸ William Safran, “Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return.” *Diaspora I-I* (1991).

⁹ Marina Koinova, "Diasporas and Conflict during the Post-Conflict Reconstruction of Divided Societies: Lebanese and Albanian Diasporas Compared" Paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Studies Association 48th Annual Convention, Hilton Chicago, CHICAGO, IL, USA, Feb 28, 2007.

¹⁰ Fiona Adamson, "Constructing the Diaspora: Diaspora Identity Politics and Transnational Social Movements." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the ISA's 49th Annual Convention, Bridging Multiple Divides, Hilton San Francisco, San Francisco, Ca, USA, Mar 26, 2008.

¹¹ Maria Koinova, "Diaspora Involvement in Ethno-National Violence: Causal Mechanisms and the Cases of Kosovo, Chechnya and Nagorno-Karabakh" Paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Studies Association, Town & Country Resort and Convention Center, San Diego, California, USA, Mar 22, 2006. p.3.

diaspora mobilization by taking it for granted that the “diaspora” is an outcome of the current transnational environment and it is created by a strategic identity-creation mechanism by certain elite groups.¹²

One should also place emphasis on the heterogeneity of diaspora groups. For instance, Smith has brought together various articles on diaspora groups and their role in international conflict. As a result of comparing various cases, has arrived at the conclusion that “diaspora groups are internally heterogeneous... and different parts of the same diaspora can and do have different interests, defined among other things by class, gender, generation, occupation and religion...”¹³ Therefore it is very important to avoid generalizations when we talk about a diaspora community in general.

Having singled out the main debate about the concept of diaspora and its constituencies, it is essential to underline that this paper does approach the diaspora debate from a constructivist point of view. This paper places emphasis on the *political orientation* of the group members and defines diaspora as a *political project*. Diaspora is not a natural result of mass migration and there is a difference between migrant communities and diaspora groups. Diasporas are composed of certain members of immigrant communities who maintain ties to the homeland with a strong sense of belonging, no matter whether the homeland are an existing country, an imaginary one, or one that is to be saved. They show this sense of belonging by actively participating in their hostland’s political or social spheres. They try to become involved in homeland politics, try to affect decision making in both home and host countries. They try to make things better in their terms for a country to which they may never return. Diasporas are multi-layered and those layers are open to mobility. Their aims are manifold and not static. Therefore, the repertoires of actions listed in the following pages cannot be attributed to the whole diaspora community, let alone representative. Nevertheless, the aim here is to understand the spectrum of actions within the stateless diaspora groups.

Long-Distance Nationalism and Stateless Diaspora Groups

More often than not the concept of long distance nationalism has a negative connotation and is usually used to describe the relationship between diasporas and conflict. Diasporas are considered marginal groups who do not give up easily on matters that are related to homelands and conflicts and they usually are reluctant to make concessions for peace. At this point it is worth quoting

¹² See Adamson., Constructing the Diaspora. & Anderson., The New World Disorder., & Anderson., Long-distance Nationalism.

¹³ Hazel Smith. “Diasporas in international conflict” In H. Smith & P. Stares (Eds.), Diasporas in Conflict: peace-makers or peace-wreckers? (pp. 3-16). Tokyo: United Nations University Press (2007). p.5.

Anderson's paragraph at length from his famous chapter on long-distance nationalism:

...today's long distance nationalism strikes one as a probably menacing portent for the future. First of all, it is the product of capitalism's remorseless, accelerating transformation of all human societies. Second, it creates a serious politics that is at the same time radically unaccountable. The participant rarely pays taxes in the country in which he does his politics; he is not answerable to its judicial system; he probably does not cast even an absentee ballot in its elections because he is a citizen in a different place; he need not fear prison, torture or death, nor need his immediate family. But, well and safely positioned in the First World, he can send money and guns, circulate propaganda, and build intercontinental computer circuits, all of which can have incalculable consequences in zones of their ultimate destinations¹⁴

It is argued that since diaspora groups no longer live in the homeland and consequently do not suffer from the absence of peace conditions, they keep their emotional attachments to the holy homeland and make the conflicts even more protracted by not sacrificing their cause on the way to a peaceful settlement. He further argues:

"Third, his politics unlike those of activists for global human rights or environmental causes are neither intermittent nor serendipitous. They are deeply rooted in a consciousness that his exile is self-chosen and that the nationalism he claims on e-mail is also on the ground on which, he embattled ethnic identity is to be fashioned in the ethnicized nation state that remains determined to inhabit. That same metropole that marginalizes and stigmatizes him simultaneously enables him to play, in a flash, on the other side of the planet, national hero."¹⁵

Anderson's arguments are supported by other research, including Paul Collier's work on diaspora contribution to civil war. However, differently from the previous arguments, Schiller argues that long-distance nationalism does not necessarily refer to malignant activities. The actions may include voting, demonstrating, lobbying, monetary contributions, and creating works of art besides fighting, killing and dying.¹⁶ What we also see is that diaspora communities tend to create a softer version of the conflict dynamics back home in the hostland and produce their own way of "struggle" such as protests, public demonstrations, theatre plays, lobby activities etc.

¹⁴ Anderson., Long-distance Nationalism, .p.74.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Nina Glick Schiller, "Long Distance Nationalism", Encyclopedia of diasporas, eds. Carol R. Ember, Melvin Ember, Ian A. Skoggard. Springer Publishing (2004). p. 570.

One of the most dynamic diaspora groups that are involved in the long distance activities in both ways mentioned above are the “stateless diaspora groups.” These groups are not linked to a state but have a collective identity based on mostly ethnicity if not religion. In Sheffer’s terms: “The stateless diasporas are those dispersed segments of nations that have been unable to establish their own independent states¹⁷” Stateless diasporas are considered to be more active in terms of involvement to homeland politics and to be more attached to their past. Especially if there is a struggle in their country of origin for secession, they are more likely to engage in political movements in the host countries. According to Sheffer, in such cases, the diaspora members will be torn between the memories of the homeland and wishing to recapture the past, and trying to reconcile with the new norms in the host countries.¹⁸ Yet, it is a fact that the arguments above do not hold true among all members of the diaspora group equally. There will be different segments which firstly perceive homeland politics from different points of view and secondly perform actions differently in a selective way from a large spectrum of forms of actions.

Diasporic Activism in the Social Movements

It is surprising that the scholars who work in social movement theory have not discovered what the generous research area of diaspora studies might offer to them or vice versa. At a first glance one might argue that there are significant differences between social movements and diaspora movements. However it is also hard not to see the commonalities. Diaspora movements share many characteristics with social movements and digging deeper in the social movements literature might actually help to analyze diaspora activism in a more systematic way.

There are a few authors, such as Sökefeld and Adamson, who made very important and successful attempts to combine the two fields together. Sökefeld approached diaspora groups as *transnational imagined communities*. Since we assume that diaspora organization has a lot to do with social mobilization, the study of diaspora should be inspired from the social movements analysis which is concerned with the main questions of how and why people mobilize for certain collective goals.¹⁹ Adamson as well, when discussing diasporic identity, made an attempt to bring the social movements and diaspora perspectives together in order to explain the nature of diaspora groups. According to her, the framework of social movements which is concerned with strategic social construction and transnational-identity formation may shed light on a better understanding of

¹⁷ Sheffer., *Diaspora Politics*, p. 73.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Martin Sökefeld, “Mobilizing in Transnational Space: A Social Movement Approach to the Formation of Diaspora.”, *Global Networks*, 6, 3 (2006): 265-284. p. 268.

diaspora mobilization.²⁰ The abundant literature on social movements studies cannot be discussed here, but some important aspects, will be briefly singled out below.

If one looks into the definitions in the social movements research, it is not hard to find useful mechanisms and analytical tools, which can also be used for studying the diaspora movements. For instance, an old but a commonly cited definition is that of Wilson: “A social movement is a conscious, collective, organized attempt to bring about or resist large-scale change in the social order by non-institutionalized means.”²¹ An alternative definition would be: “...any sentiment or activity shared by two or more people oriented toward changes in social relations or in the social system.”²² In another study, social movements are also defined as movements that occur as a result of an interactional process which centers around the articulation of a collective identity and occurs within the boundaries of a particular society.²³ In diaspora research, the focus is also on the interactional processes and the collective identity but in a transnational context. Yet, there is also a growing literature on Transnational Social Movements (TSMs) that has been boosted by the globalization discussions.

Della Porta and Diani offer four characteristic aspects of social movements by taking into account the work of various scholars from various theoretical and territorial backgrounds: *Informal interaction networks, shared beliefs and solidarity, collective action focusing on conflicts and use of protest.*²⁴ Informal networks of groups and individuals meant that as an activist you are part of a network and you participate in the actions of those networks. Sharing beliefs and solidarity means sharing a collective identity maybe not in a totally unified manner but still sharing similar symbols and over time framing them differently then as in the case of ethnicity or religion and finally giving those ideas a voice through protest. According to Della Porta and Diani, this kind of a categorization may allow them to better distinguish social movements from other types of collective action such as interest groups or political parties. However, with this explanation, diaspora movements still fall into the category of social movements by their peculiar nature of lacking opportunities of access differently

²⁰ Adamson., Constructing the Diaspora., p.11-12.

²¹ Wilson, 1971: 8 cited in Robin Cohen, “Transnational Social Movements: An Assessment.”, WPTC 1998 10, Department of Sociology, University of Warwick. <http://www.transcomm.ox.ac.uk/working%20papers/cohen.pdf>. p. 4.

²² Ash Garner and Zald, 1987: 293 cited in Robert Hackett & William K Carrol, “Remaking media. The Struggle to Democratize Public Communication”, London, Routledge. 2006, Chap. 3. p. 41.

²³ Ron Eyerman & Andrew Jamison, “Social Movements, A cognitive Approach”, Pennsylvania State University Pres(1991). p.4.

²⁴ Donatella della Porta & Mario Diani, “Social Movements: An Introduction”, Blackwell Publishers (2004), p. 15-16.

from interest groups and political parties; Or, being essentially made up of networks rather than working as an organizational body. As Della Porta and Diani state, social movements are: "...networks of interaction between different actors which may either include formal organizations or not, depending on shifting circumstances." This definition fits the diaspora groups as well.²⁵

Moreover, social movements are usually perceived as movements that are oppositional and most of the time a challenge to the nation state.²⁶ Most of the diasporic movements are also oppositional and a challenge to a nation state but they are organized in another host country to be able to act in such a manner. In addition, diaspora studies have a lot to gain from the social movements literature perspectives on network organization, political opportunities, collective identity and resource mobilization. It is evident that in today's world, due to the improvements in technology, ways of communication and globalization, the old repertoires of contention are challenged by new transnational organizations, and diaspora groups contribute a lot to this new evolution.

Another similarity between these two strands of literatures is that quite a number of diaspora groups are referred to as transnational advocacy groups regarding their mobilization and repertoires of action. It is, without doubt, questionable that all diasporas act like transnational advocacy networks, but there are certain similarities. Those networks are defined as vehicles for transnational activity around rights and social justice issues.²⁷ Diasporas form policy networks that operate across state borders to influence policies both in the homeland and in the hostland, and, more importantly, their members have a common identity that transcends state borders.²⁸ Moreover, transnational advocacy network activists, similar to the social movements activists, tend to have an agenda of claims-making, to seek to make demands and also to pursue the rights of the less powerful win over the interests of the alleged interests of the more powerful.²⁹ Transnational advocacy networks by and large influence politics on issues such as environment, women's rights etc. whereas diaspora groups usually try to influence politics on issues related to their homelands. Both groups might use the same repertoires of protest, the same patterns of organization, the same strategies for member mobilization yet they have fundamental differences.

Adamson refers to the distinguished categories of transnational networks, following the definitions given by Kerk and Sikkink in their article *Activists*

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Swain, 2010

²⁷ Margaret E. Keck & Kathryn Sikkink. "Activists Beyond Borders", Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press (1998). p. 217.

²⁸ Sarah Wayland, "Ethnonationalist networks and transnational opportunities: the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora." *Review of International Studies*, 30-3 (2004): 405-426. p. 410.

²⁹ Keck & Sikkink., *Activists Beyond Borders.*, p. 217.

Beyond Borders, and suggests that transnational advocacy networks are motivated primarily by shared principled ideas besides the other transnational networks that are motivated by shared causal ideas and instrumental goals, yet there is a missing link in this categorization. She argues that an additional category of transnational identity networks, which are primarily motivated by shared collective identity (such as ethnicity, nationality or religion), should be added to the categorization on transnational networks. According to her; “transnational identity networks are analytically distinct from transnational economic networks, transnational epistemic communities, or transnational advocacy networks.”³⁰ Having accepted the idea that diaspora groups might act like transnational networks, there are certain differences in terms of identity which distinguishes them from transnational advocacy networks. As Adamson puts it: “Diasporas seek particularism rather than universalism, even if their basis may be a universal ideology such as nationalism.”³¹

Furthermore, literature on both diaspora groups and social movements deals with the issues of social mobilization. How do social movements mobilize members and become prominent on affecting policy making? How do diaspora groups enlarge their networks and increase their influence on politics? According to Sökefeld, the diaspora literature may benefit from the social movements field with regards to those types of questions. He argues “those central dimensions of social movements are also important dimensions for the formation of diasporas as transnational imagined communities.” There are a number of labels under which those groups can be analyzed, such as: political opportunities, mobilizing structures and practices and framing.³²

Tarrow’s definition of political opportunity structure (POS) for the social movements literature is: “...consistent dimensions of the political environment that provide incentives for people to undertake collective action by affecting their expectations for success or failure.”³³ This approach has been developed and interpreted for the field of citizenship and migrant incorporation by several authors and aimed at including both institutional and discursive dimensions of a political system. For example if, and then how, the migrants are able to organize around certain ideas and to participate in decision making mechanisms of the receiving country. According to Wayland: “...they [political opportunity structures] are factors external to a movement that influence the movement’s emergence and chance of success. POS help explain why a challenger’s chances of

³⁰ Adamson., *Constructing the Diaspora*.p. 12.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Sökefeld, *Mobilizing in Transnational Space*., p. 270.

³³ Sidney Tarrow. *Power in Movement: Social Movements, Collective Action and Politics*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). p. 82-85.

engaging in successful collective action vary over time and why similar challenges may meet with very different results in different places.”³⁴ Therefore, POS in the host country may explain the dissimilar types of diasporic actions taken by various groups from the same homeland but follow different paths in different countries.

It can be said that the openness of POS in a host country may enable the transnational migrant communities to form diasporic organizations more easily. Since mobilization is the key factor for these kinds of organizations, the openness of the system may facilitate recruiting members by using the political spheres to bring attention to the diaspora’s cause from both the members of the same ethnic/religious/ cultural group as well as policy makers in the host country. They may easily distribute flyers, organize seminars, give speeches, organize protests, use diaspora associations for propaganda etc. As mentioned in sections above, the openness of the structure might give them the chance to act like lobby or interest groups. On the other hand, if the system is closed for political opportunity structures, it might not facilitate the organizational procedure of diaspora formation. However, it might give more incentives to members of immigrant communities to get together and mobilize since they are suppressed in the host country. Giugni and Passy argue that closed POS tend to provoke more disruptive forms of action since the challengers need to raise the stakes in order to make their voices heard. However, in a closed system it becomes more costly to try to mobilize the masses.³⁵

The relation between the literatures on social movements and diaspora activism can be examined through many different perspectives such as the impact of host country political opportunity structures, framing, diasporic claims-making, the impact of the state controls (home and host country) on the emergence of those movements etc. However, this study particularly focuses on the repertoires of protests and nationalist actions. Having stated the main commonalities between these two literatures, the following section will try to single out the use of protest among diaspora members.

Social Movements and Protest

“In order to obtain voice, social movements employ methods of persuasion and coercion which are, more often than not, novel, unorthodox, dramatic and of questionable legitimacy.”³⁶ Consequently, one the method often used by the

³⁴ Wayland, *Ethnonationalist Networks.*, p. 415.

³⁵ Marco Giugni & Florence Passy. “Migrant mobilization between political institutions and citizenship regimes: A comparison of France and Switzerland”, April 2002. <http://www.unil.ch/webdav/site/icpi/users/epibiri1/public/passy2.pdf>. p. 3-4.

³⁶ Wilson, 1973: 227 cited in Donatella della Porta, “Eventful Protest, Global Conflicts.”, European University Institute Prepared for presentation at the plenary session of the Conference of

activists is protesting. As Della Porta puts it: “Protest has been in fact considered as the main repertoire of action—or even, the *modus operandi*—of social movements.”³⁷ Therefore, the use of protest is one of the fundamental characteristics of social movements, although social movements do not have a monopoly on protest.³⁸ Protests occur as an opposition to a particular government agency or just to a parliamentary process.³⁹ In the diaspora context, their activities usually target state and its institutions.

The state, by nature of its existence, is the institution responsible for formulating and carrying out policies for a society; yet sometimes it might lack the resources to function sufficiently in order to meet the expectations of various societal groups⁴⁰ Therefore protests arise due to disagreement or dissatisfaction with the state policies. In this globalized world, protests may take different forms. They can not only be affected by transnational developments, they can even become transnational themselves. Today, in the context of diaspora activism, what is seen is the emergence of transnational repertoires of protest. Diaspora groups protest against their own state or its institutions in another host state since it will put their “cause” in an international context and will enable the outcome to be more effective, than if the protests were held in the home country. Especially if the host country is a more democratic one compared to the home country, then the chances of having the aimed attention and reaction from the host government and the public becomes much higher. As it can be argued; “Democracies provide no immediate obstacles in mobilizing or organizing people on certain issues as liberty do, so it is supposed to be guaranteed by law and tradition.”⁴¹

As della Porta and Diani point out: “Protest has been considered as a form of action typical of social movements because, unlike political parties and pressure groups, they have fewer channels through which to access decision makers.”⁴² For this very reason, protests are essential tools used by diaspora movements to influence politics. Since they are groups of dispersed people, with lacking a formal organization that may have a direct impact on policy making, their only chance is to make their voice heard through protests and lobby activities. The use of protest is even more essential for the stateless diaspora groups who do not

the Nordic Sociological Association, Aarhus, August 2008.
<http://www.bc.edu/schools/cas/sociology/meta-elements/pdf/EventfulProtest.pdf>. p. 28.

³⁷ Ibid. p.1.

³⁸ Della Porta & Diani., *Social Movements.*, p.170.

³⁹ Ashok Swain, *Social Network & Social Movement: Are Northern Tools Useful to Evaluate Southern Protests?*, Uppsala Peace Research Paper No. 4, Department of Peace and Conflict Research, Uppsala University, 2002, 33 pages. p. 4.

⁴⁰ Ibid. p.3.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Della Porta & Diani., *Social Movements.*, p.170.

have a homeland government to address. Stateless diaspora groups, which come from a conflictual homeland and want to attract the attention of hostland governments and the international community, see protest as way of influencing the public opinion and the policy makers towards their concerns. That is why most of the time they are confused with transnational advocacy networks. Protest, due to its characteristic, might sustain a certain level of support and attention to the diasporic cause to some extent. Firstly, it is perceived as an unconventional method of intervening in a government's decision making. Secondly, it uses indirect channels to influence decision makers.⁴³

Like social movement activists, diaspora activists also invent new strategies especially when they need to open new channels of access to the institutions both in the home and host country to express their voice. In many cases, they adopt non-traditional ways and forms of protests in order to capture the attention of the media. Those various forms may include a large number of people or a small number of individuals, or even a sole individual. They might be violent depending on the group and the circumstances since violence can be applied as a way of challenging an institution or showing one group's anger to the public and policy makers.⁴⁴

The following section explores the most common protest mechanisms used by stateless diaspora groups by using Sri Lankan Tamils and Kurds from Turkey as case studies. The aim is to explore whether there is a common pattern of protest used by those groups since it is essential for them to use protest as a way of communicating with the public as well as with the policy makers of the host country and the international community.

Conflict in Sri Lanka and the Sri Lankan Tamil Diaspora

The conflict in Sri Lanka involves two main ethnic groups - the Sinhalese, who are the majority population and live mostly in the south and the Tamils, who reside mostly in the north and east of this small island country. The violent conflict between the majority Sinhalese-dominated Sri Lankan government and the Tamil minority has a history dating back to several decades. Starting in the beginning of 1980's, the on-and-off civil war raged until recently when the Sri Lankan leader Mahinda Rajapaksa declared the country "liberated" from Tamil Tiger rebels after a 26-year, resulting in the death of Velupillai Prabhakaran in 2009.

Although there was a formal ceasefire that was signed between the two warring parties in 2002, Sri Lanka had frequently found itself in the middle of military conflict between the government and the separatist Tamil group called the

⁴³ Ibid. p. 168.

⁴⁴ (Swain 2010).

Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). The Diaspora has played an important role in the various twists and turns taken by the Tamil insurgency in Sri Lanka and also it has been highly instrumental in shaping the Sri Lankan political landscape, particularly through its support for and sponsorship of the Tamil nationalist project, in other words, the struggle to carve out an independent Tamil homeland from northern Sri Lanka.⁴⁵

The contemporary transnational Sri Lankan Tamil (SLT) Diaspora was formed when hundreds of thousands of Sri Lankan Tamils fled to Europe, Asia and North America to escape the civil war. (Fair, 2005). It is estimated that the Diaspora accounts for 23-30 per cent of the global SLT population of approximately 2.7 million.⁴⁶ The Diaspora is mostly concentrated in Canada (approx. 300,000), Switzerland (approx. 40,000), Norway (approx. 10,000), France (approx. 40,000), UK (approx. 110,000), US and Australia (approx. 30,000 each). This is why the SLT Diaspora is considered to have a strategic, political and economic value. Some research claims that more than 700,000 Sri Lankan Tamils have fled from Sri Lanka over this period, while an equal number of displaced persons and former Tamil immigrants migrated to Europe, North America or Australia for work or study before 1983. Gunaratna claims that the pre- and post-1983 Sri Lankan Tamil émigrés are hardly distinguishable and that both groupings could be referred as the Tamil diaspora.⁴⁷ However the members of the diaspora can be differentiated according to when they migrated, the means by which they gained residence in the host countries and by the extent to which they integrated into the host country. The diaspora community is by no means homogeneous considering the fact that there are pre-migratory cleavages along the lines of caste, class, gender and religion. This point of view also holds true concerning the variation of political views within the diaspora. Moreover notwithstanding the LTTE's dominant position even after the death of its leader, long-distance Tamil nationalism contains tension over the LTTE's claim to be the sole representative of all Tamils.⁴⁸ However, in spite of these

⁴⁵ Christine Fair, "Diaspora Involvement in Insurgencies: Insights from the Khalistan and Tamil Eelam Movements," *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 11(1) (Spring 2005); Dhananjayan Sriskandarajah, "Tamil Diaspora Politics," in *The Encyclopedia of Diasporas*, eds. Melvin Ember, Carol Ember, and Ian Skoggard (New Haven, CT: Yale/Kluwer, 2004), pp. 493–501.

⁴⁶ Rajesh Venugopal, "The Global Dimensions of Conflict in Sri Lanka." Paper presented to the conference on "Globalization and Self-determination Movements," Pomona College (2003).

⁴⁷ Rohan Gunaratna. "Internationalisation of the Tamil Conflict and its Implications," *South Asia* 20 (Special Issue, 1997), pp. 119–151.

⁴⁸ See Sriskandarajah, Tamil Diaspora Politics.; Zunzer, "Diaspora Communities and Civil Conflict Transformation." Berghof Occasional Paper no. 26. Berlin: Berghof Research Centre for Constructive Conflict Management (2004); Camilla Orjuela, "Distant Warriors, Distant Peace Workers? Multiple Diaspora Roles in Sri Lanka's Violent Conflict", Background paper of the High Level Expert Forum on 'Capacity Building for Peace and Development: Roles of Diaspora' (Toronto: University for Peace, 19-20 October 2006); Feargal Cochrane, Bahar Baser & Ashok Swain, "Home Thoughts from Abroad: Diasporas and Peace-Building in Northern Ireland and Sri

differences, the Sri Lankan Tamil Diaspora tries to project itself as a united community and its members try to promote the community ties further. The Sri Lankan Tamil Diaspora and its characteristics should be studied in the context of the recently concluded civil war in Sri Lanka as sustaining a society under stress, strain and displacement, which has been the essential function of the Tamil Diaspora.⁴⁹ Since many of its members retain vivid memories of the traumatic events from their time in Sri Lanka, they tend to maintain their involvement with the political and military events in the island.⁵⁰

Kurdish Question in Turkey and the Kurdish Diaspora

Since the foundation of the Turkish Republic in 1923, the Kurdish Question has been a chronic source of instability and violence in Turkey.⁵¹ There were several cases where the Kurdish uprisings were suppressed. Although the question at hand stayed dormant for a couple of decades, it reached its most violent form at the end of the 1970's and early 1980's by Turkish governments constant refusal to accept Kurds as having a different ethnic identity and grant them political, cultural and linguistic rights. The Kurdish question became a nested ethnic conflict and especially with the formation of certain Kurdish groups such as PKK, the struggle turned into a low-intensity civil war between the Turkish Army and the guerilla forces. Since then, it has been festering like a wound that gets deeper everyday and spills over abroad, especially to Europe by constant migration flows.

The diffusion of conflict reveals itself by occasional protests, hunger strikes, violence among groups from both adversary groups etc. There is also the fact that it is not solely a problem for Turkey but because of the geo-strategic importance of the region and complexity of the political situation, it has effects in politics from the Middle East to Europe. The conflict itself is transnational as the Kurdish population is dispersed among several Middle Eastern countries. Furthermore, Turkey's approach to the Kurdish problem in Turkey has changed immensely by the enforcement of EU accession laws. In addition, the previous discourse of Turkey's total non-recognition of Kurds as a different ethnic group has been modified lately. For instance, the political, linguistic or cultural demands of the Kurdish minority became more visible during the last decade to

Lanka", *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* (Washington DC), vol. 32, Issue 8, 2009, pp. 681-704.

⁴⁹ R.Cheran, "Diaspora Circulation and Transnationalism Agents for Change in the Post Conflict Zones of Sri Lanka." Policy paper submitted to Berghof Foundation for Conflict Management, Berlin, Germany, 2004.

⁵⁰ Venugopal., *The Global Dimensions of Conflict in Sri Lanka*.

⁵¹ Hamit Bozarslan, 'The Kurdish Question in Turkey Following 2003 Iraqi War', in Mohammed, M. A. Ahmed; Gunter, Michael M. (eds.), *The Kurdish Question and the 2003 Iraq War*, Costa Mesa, Mazda Publishers (2005), pp.123-135.

Turkish politicians. The latest example of the improvements in Kurdish rights could be the launching of a new TV station which broadcasts in Kurdish. Still, there are so many things to be done in terms of resolving the conflict.

The first Kurdish migration also started with the bilateral agreements between Turkey and various European countries. At that time, most of the Kurds migrated for mainly economic reasons and were treated as “Turkish migrants” since they had Turkish nationality. Kurdish migration to Europe had political reasons as well, such as the repression and the guerilla war or the military regime after the coup d’etat in 1980. “The migration patterns followed paths blazed by family and political networks and gave rise to a concentration in certain countries mainly Sweden, France and Germany.”⁵² No precise and reliable census of the Kurdish diaspora in Europe has been recently carried out, but the most widely accepted estimates are about 850,000 distributed in Western Europe, 500,000-600,000 of who live in Germany. According to other sources, the number is approximately 1 million consisting of 85 per cent from Turkey. According to many authors such as Demmers, a large number of Kurds that fled Turkey only discovered their “Kurdishness” in Germany where they could express their culture, language and organize themselves without repression.⁵³ “Kurdish people cannot express their Kurdish heritage in traditional Kurdistan; however they have found opportunities to do so in liberal western states.”⁵⁴ Some of those identity-based movements paved the way to the formation of extreme groups or nourished the already existing ones back in the homeland. As Curtis puts it: “PKK began to organize within Germany...bringing a Kurdish separatist movement to Germany.”⁵⁵ However, one should note that Kurdish Diaspora is not homogenous. There are so many different layers and levels of affiliation with the homeland affairs. For instance: “The heightened sense of Kurdish nationalism in Turkey and its politicized offspring in Europe have failed to establish Kurdish ideological unity on a broader scale. Kurds in Europe have not articulated a common political agenda and Kurdish civil society actors appear unable or unwilling to agree on publicly identifiable positions or a representative voice.”⁵⁶

⁵² Valerie Amiraux. “Turkey and the European Union: From Immigration to Integration.” (ed) Olivier Roy, “Turkey Today: A European Country? Anthem Press, London, 2005. p. 72.

⁵³ Joell Demmers, “New Wars and Diasporas: Suggestions for Research and Policy,” *Journal of Peace, Conflict and Development*, 11 (2007). p.17.

⁵⁴ Andy Curtis, “Nationalism in the Diaspora: A Study of the Kurdish Movement.” *Nationalism, Ethnicity and Conflict*, University of Utrecht, 4 February 2005, <http://www.wekurd.com/AndyCurtisNationalismInTheDiaspora.pdf>. p.3.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* p.8.

⁵⁶ Vera Eccarius-Kelly, "Interpreting the PKK's Signals in Europe," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 2, no. 11(2008), pp. 10-14.

Why these two cases?

At a first glance the conflicts in Sri Lanka and Turkey may just seem to lack any connection but upon closer inspection, it will be easy to see the abundance of similarities between them. Firstly, both countries have/had been in civil war for more or less two decades. Although there are significant differences between the historical evolutions of these conflicts, after the 1980's they followed a similar pattern.

Secondly, the distribution of ethnic groups is quite the same in both countries; approximately 20 per cent minority to 80 per cent majority. Both minority groups make claims in for their cultural and linguistic rights which were restricted by the state. Thirdly, both separatist groups who claim to represent the minority group grievances were formed around the beginning of 1970's, and around the beginning of the 1980's, started an armed struggle and declared a war on the state in order to achieve their goals. Furthermore, the conflicts have not just stayed in the country of origin but they acquired regional as well as international importance. Both minority groups had kin groups in surrounding countries. It is also important to remember that other states played a role in both conflicts such as India and Iraq.

So many people have been arrested, killed or died during these struggles but also many more had been compelled to migrate to other countries for survival or other reasons such as economic or political ones. In the end, they created diaspora groups or cultivated the already existing ones. Today, both Sri Lankan Tamils and Kurds from Turkey are dispersed around the world. In the Sri Lankan case, the diaspora support is considered to be a fundamental part of the Tamil struggle against the Sri Lankan government and it is argued by many that the financial and political diaspora support is one of the main components that enable the LTTE to organize operations worldwide. It is widely perceived that the LTTE uses its international support network, embedded within the SLT diaspora for fund raising, arms procurement and international advocacy.⁵⁷ The Kurdish diaspora also is used as a reference by many authors in order to illustrate diaspora links to the prolongation of conflicts in home countries. It should be taken into consideration that The Kurdish Diaspora in Europe substantially contributes to conflicts in the homeland by providing financial support to the rebel groups as well. It raises large sums of money in Europe to financially support the violent activities in Turkey and most of these contributions appear to be voluntary.⁵⁸ The PKK engaged in political and fundraising activities that blurred the lines between politics and ordinary civic activity. Hoffman claims

⁵⁷ Venugopal, *The Global Dimensions of Conflict in Sri Lanka*.

⁵⁸ Martin Van Bruinessen, "Shifting National and Ethnic Identities: the Kurds in Turkey and the European Diaspora", *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 18, 1, pp. 39-52(1998).

that one half of the PKK's budget during the 1990's came from the Kurdish Diaspora in Europe.⁵⁹

However, those examples do not reflect the whole spectrum of Sri Lankan Tamil and Kurdish diaspora activities. The diasporas do much more than supposedly sending money back home in order to contribute to the separatist movements. This kind of a generalization would definitely be an underestimation of diasporic activities. There is a whole repertoire of long-distance nationalist activities that diaspora members can do voluntarily or involuntarily, with or without the usage of violence, collectively or individually, effective or non-effective, transnationally or locally.

Stateless Diasporas and Forms of Nationalist Actions In Terms Of Protests

Signing Petitions & Organizing Campaigns

Signing Petitions and organizing campaigns are one of the most popular methods used by diaspora activists in the host countries. Petitions can be accepted as one of the democratic and non-violent ways which diaspora activists use in order to bring their cause to the public attention. Those petitions can be later used to lobby the hostland governments and the international community to intervene to the home country matters.

In the case of the Kurdish diaspora, the target can be the hostland governments as well as "the European Council, the Council of the European Union, the European Parliament, the European Commission, the European Court of Justice, the Council of Europe, and the European Court of Human Rights."⁶⁰ The petitions might be about any grievance that the diaspora has towards the homeland governments. For instance, there have been petitions organized to support Leyla Zana, a Kurdish politician jailed for her speeches against the Turkish government. Activists were asking the European community and member state governments to act against her arrest and wanted them to push Turkey to release her.⁶¹

Sri Lankan Tamils organized several petitions on various subjects as well. In May 2009, there was a petition organized by the diaspora members to stop the IMF loan to Sri Lanka.⁶² What was more efficient in the Tamil case was the so-called

⁵⁹ Bruce Hoffman, "Radicalisation, Terrorism and Diasporas." (2007) P.1-4. http://www.rand.org/pubs/conf_proceedings/2007/RAND_CF229.pdf

⁶⁰ Thomas Renard, "Kurdish Activism in Europe: Terrorism versus Europeanization", *Terrorism Monitor*, Volume 6, Issue 13 (June 26, 2008).

⁶¹ <http://kurde-moyen-orient.20minutes-blogs.fr/archive/2009/03/19/petition-pour-leyla-zana.html>

⁶² <http://www.gopetition.com/petitions/stop-imf-loan-to-sri-lanka-goverment.html>

“Key Campaign” organized by diaspora activists. The British Tamil Forum launched a campaign which brought the conditions in Sri Lanka to the eyes of the British public and received attention from UK Parliamentarians, human rights activists, councilors and members of the community organizations. The idea was to put stress on the diaspora’s demand to “unlock the Concentration camps in Sri Lanka.”⁶³ The campaign is accompanied by demonstrations, which included chanting slogans and holding banners.

Non-Violent Mass Demonstrations and Marches

Mass demonstration is a form of protest which is used frequently by social movement activists as well as by diaspora members who are trying to make their voice heard through non-institutional channels. Demonstrations are usually organized by one or more organizations, start with a march and then gets attention from the media and the public. It may include chanting slogans and may end with a declaration. As della Porta puts it: “Mass demonstrations are so accompanied by direct actions such as blocking roads or railway lines that, although excluding violence, represent a challenge to the state in terms of public order.”⁶⁴ Many diaspora activists utilized this type of non violent protest in order to influence public opinion and attract the attention of policy makers etc. At this point, we can divide the reasons for diaspora protest into two categories: a) demonstrating for policy change or justice in the homeland, b) demonstrating for policy change or justice in the host country.

In the Kurdish case, demonstrations are highly utilized, especially right after crucial periods in the course of the low-scale civil war in Turkey both against the homeland and the host country. A few examples may be given as follows: For the first category, there are too many examples in the Kurdish diaspora activism that one cannot count. Different groups from the Kurdish diaspora organized various demonstrations in Germany to protest against the political situation and attitude of the Turkish government towards the violation of minority rights in Turkey.⁶⁵

As Lyon & Ucarer state: “...in April 1990, 10,000 Kurds assembled in front of the Gothic Cologne Cathedral in a demonstration that was supported by the PKK. They protested against the military course pursued by Turkey against its Kurdish minority and called for Kurdish autonomy in Turkey. Likewise, the PKK’s thirteenth birthday was celebrated in a peaceful gathering by 8,000 in Bremen on 9 December 1991... In many of these cases, either large urban centers were selected as places to gather, helping visibility, or the protests were staged in front of the various Turkish consulates in the country, focusing attention on the

⁶³ http://www.tamilforum.com/BTF_Press_Release_28_Aug_09.pdf

⁶⁴ Della Porta., *Eventful Protest*, p.16.

⁶⁵ <http://cache1.assetcache.net/xc/80662767.jpg?v=1&c=IWSAsset&k=2&d=17A4AD9FDB9CF193CE41B024AE96D64DFEBFEA806B4ABD47E30A760B0D811297>

country that they charged with causing the plight of Kurds.”⁶⁶ For the second category, one might give the examples of the ban on PKK in Germany in 1993 which ended up with large scale demonstrations by the diaspora members who support the policies of PKK.⁶⁷ Some of those demonstrations ended up with violence and will be mentioned in the next pages.

The Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora also utilizes mass demonstrations to bring the conflict in their home country to the attention of the public. There have been large-scale demonstrations too, after the ban on LTTE. For instance in Canada, many thousands of people protested against the ban on LTTE. However, since 2006 Canada has put a ban on the LTTE considering it as a terrorist organization and it does not grant asylum to the people who are affiliated with LTTE or crimes against humanity.⁶⁸ Since 2006, many EU member countries also banned on LTTE and started taking measures under the new terrorism framework, which caused reactions by diaspora members in various EU countries such as France⁶⁹. Another mass demonstration, for instance, took place in Canada, in March 2009 by forming a 7 kilometers human chain consisting of Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora members in order to protest at the Sri Lankan government's treatment of Tamils in Sri Lanka.⁷⁰ Especially in 2009, there had been many demonstrations organized by the Tamil Diaspora activists in order to bring attention to the concerns about the civilian plight in Sri Lanka right after the government's determination to end the LTTE presence in Sri Lanka. Diaspora groups organized many protests all around the world including Canada and Australia, calling for a ceasefire in Sri Lanka as LTTE was facing heavy military defeat.

Violent Demonstrations & Riots

Violent demonstrations also took place in both Sri Lankan Tamil and Kurdish cases. It is possible that a non-violent mass demonstration turned into a violent one by the intervention of the police or by coincidence; or the intention was applying violence since the beginning. Violence (on property or at an inter-personal level) also tends to occur if there is a counter protest in tandem with the protest of an adversary group.

⁶⁶ Alyna J. Lyon & Emek M. Uçarer. "Mobilizing Ethnic Conflict: Kurdish Separatism in Germany and the PKK." Paper prepared for presentation on the panel on "Stateless Ethnic Nations," at the March 1998 International Studies Association annual meeting, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

⁶⁷ Curtis., Nationalism in the Diaspora. p.8.

⁶⁸ <http://reports.fja.gc.ca/eng/1993/1994fca0318.html/1994fca0318.html.html>

⁷¹ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/281821.stm>

⁷⁰ <http://www.wsws.org/articles/2009/mar2009/toro-m18.shtml>

In the Kurdish case, the capture of Öcalan, the leader of PKK was a breaking point. Most of the violent conflicts happened right after Öcalan was arrested by Turkish forces. There had been various violent demonstrations and attacks to Turkish properties, embassies, consulates and shops in several European countries. For example, in Heilbronn in Germany, diaspora activists who supported the PKK threw Molotov cocktails to a Turkish cultural center and attacked some Turkish people with baseball bats. Similar incidents happened in different parts of Germany despite the risk of being deported.⁷¹ Violent demonstrations also occurred between Turkish and Kurdish diaspora groups in various European cities, such as Oslo, where a fight broke out between the Kurdish and Turkish protesters and only ended after Norwegian police intervention in November 2007 right after Iraq gave permission to Turkey to continue its war against the PKK militant bases in Northern Iraq.⁷²

There have been also incidents of “*occupations*.” Right after the capture of Öcalan, some Kurdish diaspora groups occupied Turkish and Greek Embassies and Consulates in various countries in order to protest his arrest. In many cases it became brutal such as in the riots in Ottawa on 8 November 2000 when Kurdish demonstrators threw a gasoline bomb at a police officer and set him on fire.⁷³ “In March 1996, thousands of Kurds throughout Germany used the Kurdish New Year celebrations to protest against the situation in Turkey. The outcome was especially violent in Dortmund, 40 police officers and 300 demonstrators were injured, 600 were arrested, and 1900 temporarily held. After this, the German government announced it would deport foreigners who take part in illegal demonstrations.”⁷⁴

Sri Lankan Tamils also committed violent demonstrations. For example, during a demonstration in London in April 2009, a group of LTTE supporters started using violence and smashed the windows of the Indian and Sri Lankan High Commission buildings which also led to various police officers getting injured by stone throwing by the diaspora members.⁷⁵ In Paris, some Tamil demonstrations turned violent as in the case of the mass demonstration of April 2009 when French police arrested 210 Tamils for the use of violence during the protest including throwing bottles at the police and damaging property by smashing cars and burning scooters.⁷⁶ Mass demonstrations among stateless diaspora groups are usually non-violent however if they happen after a critical development in the home country, they may well turn into violent protests as demonstrated above.

⁷¹ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/281821.stm>

⁷² <http://islamineurope.blogspot.com/2007/11/oslo-turkishkurdish-protest.html>

⁷³ <http://www.cbc.ca/world/story/1999/02/18/kurd990218.html>

⁷⁴ http://www.hamline.edu/cla/academics/international_studies/diaspora/kurds/paper.html

⁷⁵ <http://lankadailynews.com/2009/04/london-based-ltte-mobs-attack-indian-and-sri-lankan-high-commission-buildings/>

⁷⁶ <http://www.france24.com/en/20090421-tamil-tigers-ltte-paris-protests-sri-lanka>

Sit-in Strategy

The sit-in is a non-violent strategy which is also frequently used by diaspora activists in order to make their claims heard. Although in its nature it is considered to be non-violent, in some cases it might end with violence, especially right after an intervention by the police. While talking about the student movements Kreider defines “sit-in” as “any attempt by a group of people to occupy a space ... for a long period of time (days rather than hours).”⁷⁷

The Kurdish diaspora activists used the “sit-in” strategy right after Germany put a ban on PKK as a terrorist group in 1993. Protesters organized a sit-in right in front of the Turkish Consulate in Karlsruhe which then turned into attempts to break in to the Turkish consulate and clashes with the police.⁷⁸ As for the Sri Lankan Tamil case, the sit-in strategy is recently combined with hunger strikes. The example of April 2009 incidents in Australia demonstrates the decisiveness of the diaspora activists to raise their voice. Different groups organized hunger strikes and sit-ins in different places and then they merged in Canberra making a declaration about the course of the war back at home: *“The Australian Tamils have conducted and will continue to conduct peaceful protests. Yet the Australian government continues to ignore the Sri Lankan State genocide taking place against the Tamils. The UN has warned of a bloodbath for the 100 000 civilians living in the no-fire zone if the army move into it. This has already happened. Kevin Rudd must not continue to remain silent. ... Kevin Rudd as our prime minister, we urge you and plead with you to recognize and acknowledge our legitimate grievances.”*⁷⁹ There were these types of protests all around the world for the Kurdish and the Tamil causes yet their impact was not as effective as intended.

Hunger Strikes

Hunger strike is considered to be a non-violent form of protest, which is also used in order to attract the attention of the public, media or governments for a specific policy change. “Hunger strike is described as voluntary refusal of food and/or fluids. Prolonged starvation may produce many adverse events including even death in rare circumstances.”⁸⁰ It is a common form of protest which is used by groups who want to provoke feelings of guilt and responsibility in certain groups in order to achieve their purpose.

⁷⁷ <http://www.campusactivism.org/uploads/sit-in-tactical-analysis.pdf>

⁷⁸ See Lyon & Ucarer.

⁷⁹ <http://www.tamilnational.com/world-news/australia/64I-australian-tamils-hunger-strike-into-fourth-day.html>

⁸⁰ Gurcan Altun, Bulent Akansu, Betul Ugur Altun, Derya Azmak, Ahmet Yilmaz. “Deaths due to hunger strike: post-mortem findings” *Forensic Science International*, (2004) Volume 146, Issue 1, Pages 35-38.

In the Kurdish case, this method has been used widely in many phases of the historical process of the conflict varying from important breaking points such as the Turkish intervention in Iraq to the cases where Kurds in Europe wanted to protest at the capture of a leader or a member of their community. For instance, in June 2009, Kurds in Dublin organized a hunger strike in order to protest at the imprisonment of their leader Remzi Kartal and his handing over to Turkish authorities by preparing a camp in front of EU's Dublin headquarters.⁸¹ Hunger strike is also used as a form of protest during the contentious times right after the capture of Ocalan. A group of Kurdish activists organized a hunger strike and informed the public and the media that they will go on until their voices have been heard by the authorities.⁸²

The Sri Lankan Tamils also used hunger strikes as a form of protest. For instance; in April 2009, two young Tamils started a hunger strike in front of the Parliament Square, constantly giving press declarations and talking about the problems of Tamils in Sri Lanka, they tried to bring public attention to their cause.⁸³ They said they are willing to die unless the UK intervenes in the conflict in Sri Lanka and they asked permission for their representatives to arrange a meeting with the Prime Minister Gordon Brown and UN secretary general Ban Ki-moon."⁸⁴

There are many more hunger strike cases among these two diaspora groups. These types of protests are thought to be successful in that they often garner immense media attention. Despite this fact, it is unclear if they are truly effective in pushing authorities to react to the activists' demands.

The Cases of Self Immolation

Although it is not the most common protest form used by diaspora members, a few cases of self immolation exist, especially after traumatic developments in the homeland. As Biggs mentions, the use of self immolation as a protest form "is usually intended to appeal to bystander publics or to exhort others to greater efforts on behalf of the cause." He defines the action as "an individual intentionally kills herself or himself, or at least causes physical harm likely to be fatal". According to him, the act is not aimed to harm others but just one's self and it is committed to contribute to a collective cause rather than a personal one; and lastly it is performed in a public space, or accompanied by a written letter

⁸¹ <http://www.indymedia.ie/article/92558>

⁸² <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/kurd-protests-hostagetakers-start-hunger-strike-1071554.html>

⁸³ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/apr/11/srilanka-protest>

⁸⁴ http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/7994181.stm

addressed to political figures or to the general public about a collective issue.⁸⁵ At this point, one can give examples from Kurdish and Sri Lankan Tamil diasporas which very well fit this given criteria.

In the Kurdish case, a 14-year-old girl set herself on fire in London right after the capture of PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan in 1999 in order to protest at his capture and Turkish policies on Kurds in the eastern part of Turkey. Her aim was to attract attention from the British public and the media about the Kurdish cause in Turkey. As she explained afterwards, she wanted the British public to stop and think about the Kurdish population. This was not the only incident to protest at Ocalan's capture. At that day many Kurds declared that, "if necessary, they would kill themselves in trying to free their leader."⁸⁶ For instance there were such cases similar to the one in London, in Stuttgart a 17-year-old Kurdish girl was badly injured after dousing herself in petrol and in Copenhagen another woman has also committed self-immolation. It seems like those incidents were effective in their aim to some extent since it received significant attention from the global media and the people who committed those acts received support and encouragement from all around the world.

With regard to the Sri Lankan case, in January and February 2009, when the Sri Lankan government was advancing its war against the LTTE, there were 7 self-immolation incidents among the Sri Lankan Tamils in Europe and in India in order to protest the Sri Lankan government's treatment to Tamils in Sri Lanka. Especially one case got media interest. He was a 26-year-old Sri Lankan Tamil who burned himself to death in Genève in February 2009. As in the self-immolation definition given by Biggs, he has left a letter in Tamil and in English saying: *"We Tamils displaced and all over the world, loudly raised our problems and asked for help before [the] international community in your own language for three decades. But nothing happened ... So I decided to sacrifice my life ... The flames over my body will be a torch to guide you through the liberation path."*⁸⁷ Although self-immolation stands out among the other forms of protests, as can be seen from the examples, it is not unforeseeable.

Conclusion

Scarcity of resources, underdevelopment, economic necessity and finally and most importantly violent conflicts in the South force people to leave their homeland and to migrate. With the increasing number, diaspora groups' potential to act as non-state actors also keeps on growing. Thus, it is important

⁸⁵ Michael Biggs, "The Transnational Diffusion of Protest by Self-Immolation". http://www.wzb.eu/zkd/zcm/pdf/presentation/biggs06_berlin.pdf

⁸⁶ <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/hour-by-hour-a-new-kurd-attack-1071302.html>

⁸⁷ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/feb/19/tamil-suicide-protest-geneva>

and essential to study and analyze the process and potential of diaspora mobilization.

This paper has made an attempt to incorporate two strands of literature, social movements and diaspora studies, in order to better understand diaspora mobilization in this globalised world. By closely looking at two cases, Sri Lankan Tamils and Kurds from Turkey, it has attempted to gain a general understanding of stateless diaspora activism in the social movements context. As it has been discussed, diasporas are dependent on opportunity structures in their host countries. They mobilize resources, organize transnationally and act aggressively as they could in order to bring their cause to the attention of the public and the host country's policy makers. If one gives a serious thought to the situation of stateless diasporas in the world today, it would not be hard to see that being mobilized like social movement organizations is probably their best choice to make their voice heard. If the hostland decides to close this window, they might find a way to get through it and open another one. They have manifold attachments to their imaginary / actual homeland, to the country they were born and to the country they currently reside. They are sometimes various groups working together, sometimes groups that are in rivalry. Since their problems are usually with the state of origin, the usual conventional ways of affecting policy making are very much limited for them. What they are left with are forms of protest activities in hostland, such as demonstrations, hunger strikes, riots and campaigns.

This paper also argues that the literatures on social movements and diaspora activism go together and forms of diaspora mobilization could be analyzed as a subset of social movements. The literature, which perceives diaspora groups as irrational long-distance nationalist communities should be reconsidered in the light of resource mobilization approach. Moreover, the impact of political opportunity structure of the host country on diaspora activism is a very important subject that is mostly overlooked in the diaspora literature. It is important for the future research in this field to examine how the political opportunity structure affect specific strategies of diaspora mobilization and if there is a variation between the offered opportunity structures to different groups. The other area for future research interest could be to measure the impacts of diaspora mobilization on host country's policy making. The impacts of Kurdish and Tamil activism showed varied results in Europe in different countries. There is no doubt that the social movements literature opens up a wide range of theoretical tools to analyze diaspora mobilization.