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DISMANTLING DIASPORAS

RETHINKING THE GEOGRAPHIES OF DIASPORIC IDENTITY, CONNECTION AND DEVELOPMENT

ASHGATE

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Dismantling Diasporas
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Chapter 9

KOMKAR: The Unheard Voice in the Kurdish Diaspora

Bahar Baser

Diaspora communities have the potential to play a significant role in homeland and hostland politics, as well as a role in the international arena as non-state actors thanks to their transnational networking capacities. In today's world, many diaspora groups have started acting similarly to interest or lobby groups and civil society organisations. They mobilise and try to influence policy makers both in the host- and in the homeland. They have an impact on their homeland's policies through their support for, or opposition to, governments, and by providing financial and/or political support to social movements, political parties and civil society organisations (Shuval, 2000; Vertovec 1999; Demmers, 2007; Baser and Swain, 2008).

The Kurdish diaspora is one of the most widely used examples for diasporas which try to affect policy-making mechanisms in home and host countries by mobilising and acting transnationally for their cause. Kurds constitute one of the largest stateless diasporas in the world (van Bruinessen, 2000; Khayati, 2008) and the Kurdish diaspora is one of the most visible and active diasporas in Europe. Whilst no reliable census of the Kurdish population in Europe has been undertaken, according to the most widely accepted estimates there are nearly 2 million Kurds dispersed throughout Western Europe and the majority of Kurdish migrants originate from Turkey (Baser, 2011: 8). Starting with the migration flows in the 1970s, Kurdish diaspora members set up associations in Europe that echoed the Kurdish political groups and organisations back in Turkey and tried to become the voice of the Kurds who remained in the homeland.

In the early 1980s, differently from the previous groups, the PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party) engaged in an armed struggle against the Turkish state. During the 1990s, it became the most visible Kurdish movement, both in Turkey[1] and in Europe, and it surpassed the earlier groups that carried out various activities related to the Kurdish cause. While the PKK was successful in mobilising the masses and becoming a social movement with mass appeal in the diaspora, the other Kurdish movements remained élite-initiatives, without any substantial support (Baser,

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1 For more information on the PKK and how it established hegemony over the Kurdish movement see Cengiz Gunes (2012), *The Kurdish Movement in Turkey: From Protest to Resistance*. London: Routledge.

2011; Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003). Amongst these organisations is KOMKAR
Association for Kurdish Workers for Kurdistan), which was the first federa
of Kurdish associations in Europe. It is affiliated transnationally with the PS
(Kurdish Socialist Party), and it distanced itself from the PKK line due it s
differing aims from the PKK's political agenda and its rejection of violence i
a means of reaching its aims for the Kurdish cause. It was the 'severest Kurd
critic of the PKK' and still has a 'loyal membership' (van Bruinessen, 2000) in
Europe. It is currently affiliated with the Kurdish political party HAK-PAR, va
founded in 2002 in Turkey. Gunter (2011: 189) argues that since the PKK is on
verge of adopting a non-violent strategy of its own, the role of KOMKAR and
the Kurdish movements in the diaspora has been becoming ever more marked

In this chapter, I discuss the activities of KOMKAR in Europe in order t
contribute to the empirical research on the Kurdish diaspora as well as t
offer a new appreciation of the complexity of the involvement of diaspora y
conflicts as well as in peace processes. Today, KOMKAR is neither a diaspor
organisation with a large member base nor does it play a major role in Turkis
Kurdish politics. Nevertheless, KOMKAR's activities are important for scholar
who conduct research on diasporas and homeland conflicts as it is a case stud
that helps us highlight the heterogeneity and multi-layered structure of diaspor
groups, different aspects of diaspora involvement in homeland politics as well a
the diversity of approaches to conflict resolution within a given diaspora group. b
using KOMKAR as a case study, I discuss how sectarian outbidding takes plac
among different actors in transnational space, how there are altered dynamic
at stake when it comes to the diffusion of a homeland conflict beyond its ow
borders and, finally, how different actors within the same diaspora group can pla
'contradictory roles' (Smith, 2007: 10) during a peace process. The main aim
of this contribution is not to provide in-depth knowledge about the current peac
process in Turkey; instead, by using the Kurdish diaspora as a case study I aim
to understand how various groups have divergent interests and purposes withi
a diaspora group and how this fragmentation within the diaspora might lead t
conflicting strategies by each group towards the conflict as well as a possibl
peace process.

KOMKAR and its associated party HAK-PAR cannot be/are not the prima
actors in the resolution process in Turkey; however, they can play a secondary rol
Over the last five years, KOMKAR has become more perceptible both in Turkis
and European political spheres as/because they declared that they are open t
dialogue with the Turkish government for the so-called 'Kurdish Opening', whic
corresponds to the AKP (Justice and Development Party) government's reform
packages related to Kurdish rights in Turkey. KOMKAR organised seminars an
meetings about the new political challenge in Turkey and sought to show that the
wished to play a role in the negotiations and efforts to resolve the Kurdish issu
in Turkey. The return of Kemal Burkay to Turkey (their political leader who wa
in exile in Sweden) in order to participate in politics also carried some symboli
value. While they lost a considerable part of their member base in the diaspor

the gravity of their activities is now carried back to Turkey and the diaspora is refashioning itself and trying to adapt to changes (Baser, 2011).

This chapter is the result of different periods of fieldwork conducted in different European countries between 2009 and 2013[2] and data collection for this chapter also draws on secondary resources including the websites of Kurdish organisations. In total, 20 in-depth face-to-face interviews were conducted with the leaders of KOMKAR branches in the Netherlands (The Hague), France (Paris), Germany (Berlin), UK (London) and Sweden (Stockholm). In order to capture a bigger picture, there were also several interviews with the members of KOMKAR who were first and second generation diaspora members.

Diasporas, Homeland Conflicts and Peace Processes

Early academic research on diasporas and conflict has focused primarily on examining the role of diasporas as spoilers of peace negotiations in homeland conflicts or on how they contribute to the prolongation of conflicts back in the homeland (Lyons, 2004; Demmers, 2007). Diasporas were described as long-distance nationalist communities pursuing radical agendas, while taking advantage of the freedom and economic benefits that the host land provides them (Anderson, 1983). The view has been that by sending remittances, and channelling large funds through welfare organisations close to insurgent groups, members of the diaspora have contributed to the escalation of conflicts rather than supporting constructive conflict resolution (Zunzer, 2005). For example, one of the mostly cited cases is the Tamil Diaspora. Large numbers of Tamil organisations and individuals, through the substantial transfer of remittances, supported the Tamil population living in the North-Eastern part of Sri Lanka, as well as the organisations affiliated with the separatist movement (Zunzer, 2005).

In a more balanced manner, emerging research also finds diasporas to be the critical agents of social, political and cultural change in more constructive and less confrontational ways (Horst, 2007). It is argued that diasporas have been highly or partially effective in assisting conflict transformation processes and actively engaged in post-conflict reconstruction activities. There is an increasing belief that by lobbying governments, particularly in host nations, and international organisations and by aiding the process of transition and reconstruction, diasporas are playing an increasingly important role in achieving political compromise and peaceful conflict resolution in their homelands (Hall and Swain, 2007). They can have a positive political impact on peace-making through human rights advocacy,

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2 The interviews were conducted in Sweden and Germany as part of my PhD research at the European University Institute in Florence, Italy, between 2008 and 2012. Other interviews in the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and France were conducted in 2012–13 while a postdoc for the ERC project, 'Diasporas and Contested Sovereignty', University of Warwick.

by raising awareness among the hostland public and decision-makers. In addition, they can potentially provide direct political support to pro-peace actors in the homeland, as well as participating in homeland peace-making initiatives as advisors (Baser and Swain, 2008). For example, the case of Somalia is noteworthy, as remittances are of very high economic importance domestically and much of the expertise and resources for sustaining the ongoing peace process come from the diaspora communities in the West (Koser and Van Hear, 2003: 9).

While researching ways of approaching/conceptualising diasporas, scholars acknowledge that diaspora groups are not homogenous entities, and therefore they should be discussed carefully by taking into account different aspects such as ideological cleavages, class relations, gender and religious differences among the diaspora (Cochrane, Baser and Swain, 2009; Kleist, 2007). As Galipo (2011: 8) argues 'there is always a plurality of voices within the diasporas, especially when different waves of displacement are taken into account. Fragmentation within diasporas often reflects the social and political division in the homeland'. Therefore, these divisions among different groups within the diaspora should also be embedded into any research that has to do with diasporas' role in conflict and peace processes (Horst, 2007: 8). As scholars such as Kleist (2007) and Østergaard-Nielsen (2003) argue, under certain circumstances divergent groups may form contingent alliances for a common goal but their political, social and economic structures may remain fragmented. At times, new fractions within the same group may occur while in exile (Horst, 2007). It should also be taken into account that diasporas may shift from one stance to another depending on changes in homeland politics. Different groups within a diaspora community might play moderate or marginal roles and sometimes may even want to stay aloof from politics. Diasporas might have plural positions vis-à-vis the homeland politics and depending on their political goals, they might pursue different visions for political change in different phases of the conflict (Smith, 2007).

When involving diaspora groups in conflict resolution efforts, experts draw attention to two criteria: the diaspora group's capacity and motivation to influence homeland conflict (Freitas, 2012: 5). Some groups may have higher motivations but lower capacities in terms of influencing peace outcomes, while some others might be hesitant to act although they have a considerable capacity to impact a peace process. There is usually no balance of power between the diaspora groups and their discursive or political spaces. The core of the matter comes to defining who represents the diaspora and if the presence of fragmented groups within a diaspora can be detected, how to approach them and involve them in policy mechanisms. Developing and organising processes is harder for politicians, as well as third parties without considering these facts. Among the scholars who have highlighted this point, there is Horst (2007), who discusses the fragmentations within a diaspora community and how such fragmentations make it hard for third parties to include diasporas in development projects.

Despite this abundance of research, the literature still has shortcomings when it comes to understanding diasporas and their involvement in homeland conflicts.

To my understanding, the biggest gap in the literature stems from the fact that many scholars tend to focus solely on the loudest voice in the diaspora although they acknowledge the fact that diaspora groups are heterogeneous. For instance, Østergaard-Nielsen (2006: 4) states: '[…] the Kurds are perceived as both peace wreckers and peacemakers. This is not least because they are heterogeneous in terms of political networks, an important feature of diaspora politics which is often glossed over as we tend to refer to the most powerful groups as *the* Kurdish, Croat or Sri Lankan diaspora'. There are not sufficient academic studies on the minor diaspora groups who are trying to find a window of opportunity to raise their voice and therefore, their voices within the diaspora become even less visible in academic research. What we need to acknowledge is that a diaspora is not a monolithic body with a shared approach to a certain issue, but instead it has many diverse approaches that need to be taken into account, clearly besides analysing which groups want 'peace' and on 'what terms' (Smith, 2007). Consequently diasporas' involvement in homeland conflicts should be approached carefully by taking into account various factors such as the ideological cleavages within the diaspora and how each group defines their ideal road map for potential resolution (Cochrane, Baser and Swain, 2009).

Transnational Mobilisation of KOMKAR in Europe

Early Mobilisation Efforts and Activities

Kurdish migration to Europe began with labour migration agreements between Turkey and various European states in the early 1960s. The composition of Kurdish migrants changed dramatically when the political situation in Turkey deteriorated (due to the oppression of the Kurdish identity or leftist movements, coup d'états, imprisonment and torture) and there were large numbers of asylum seekers and undocumented migrants from the mid 1970s onwards – with ethnic organisations being established on the heels of those incoming waves of Kurdish migrants (Khayati, 2008; Baser, 2011). My interview with one of the founders of KOMKAR in Germany reveals that by 1979 there were already 30 Kurdish associations and in order to combine their efforts these organisations decided to form a new federation which was to be called KOMKAR. Although it was not the original intention, KOMKAR members later decided to partner with Kemal Burkay's Kurdistan Socialist Party (PSK), which was formed in 1974. The PSK was a political party (illegal in Turkey) affiliated with the Özgürlük Yolu (Road to Freedom) movement and it distanced itself from the PKK line as it denounced the use of violence for political aims. The party had a two-strategy solution to the Kurdish Question in Turkey: first, an autonomous status that would lead to federalism and, second, a unified socialist Kurdistan in the future (Gunter, 2011: 189; van Bruinessen, 2000). KOMKAR usually attracted people who sympathised

with the PSK. However, it was also a home for many Kurdish migrants who arrived in Europe and needed a place to gather and find support.

The Netherlands branch was founded in 1982 and aimed at helping the Kurdish immigrants in the Netherlands to integrate into the Dutch society whilst keeping their attachments to their homeland (Mügge, 2010: 115). Other KOMKAR branches in Sweden, the United Kingdom, Denmark, France, Switzerland and Austria followed and PSK/KOMKAR became a transnational political movement that acted with a 'dual agenda' (Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003) starting from the beginning of the 1980s.[3] KOMKAR decided to bring all its branches under a confederation in 2009 and founded KOMKAR-EU, which is the umbrella organisation for KOMKAR branches in Europe. They organised the Newroz festivities (the first in 1976[4]) attended by many Kurdish migrants (Emanuelsson, 2005: 112; Mügge, 2010: 119). They engaged in diasporic activism by mobilising mass protests throughout Europe. For instance, there was a 41-day hunger strike in 1981 organised by KOMKAR members in Frankfurt protesting against the coup d'états in Turkey. After the hunger strike a small committee went to Strasbourg to meet some representatives of the Council of Europe to make the Kurdish voice heard in Europe. After the brutality inflicted on the Kurds by Saddam Hussein's regime in the late 1980s, KOMKAR planned protest events in many European countries. The German branch of KOMKAR also promoted a one-day hunger strike after the Halabja massacre. KOMKAR Germany launched a mass protest and hunger strike in front of the UN in Bonn when Turkey closed its borders to Kurdish refugees fleeing Iraqi Kurdistan because of Saddam Hussein's regime's acts of genocide. At that time several campaigns to send financial help to the Kurdish refugees were organised.

KOMKAR offices worked on documenting the human rights abuses in Turkey and published pamphlets aimed at informing politicians as well as the general public. Many books were published under financial difficulties, magazines were also published and sent back to Turkey, and seminars and conferences were organised. In 1989, for example, KOMKAR Germany managed to bring different Kurdish activists and European politicians together for a conference called 'Human Rights in Kurdistan' in Bremen. In 1991, they opened a Kurdistan Human Rights Organisation Bureau headed by a KOMKAR member. They also gave priority to linguistic and cultural events (van Bruinessen, 2000). Several Kurdish book fairs took place in different German cities. In the mid 1980s KOMKAR started to campaign for the linguistic rights of Kurdish children born in Germany. In 1985 a campaign for the recognition of Kurdish as a separate identity to Turkish was launched (Emanuelsson, 2005: 113). The idea behind this campaign was to be officially recognised as Kurds, a stateless nation with a distinct language and ethnic identity. However, despite these transnational activities and strategies,

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3   Bekir Topgider, 2009 [online]. Available at: http://www.dengekurdistan.nu/arsiva bere/dk-yazilar/komkar_30yil.htm [Accessed 27 November 2013].

4   Ibid.

the KOMKAR élite could not prevent their organisation from losing ground in Kurdish politics both in the diaspora and in the homeland.

Sectarian and Ethnic Outbidding in the Diaspora

Adamson (2013: 70) defines the process of outbidding as involving: 'the use of violence, both as a means of demonstrating strength and resolve, and as a way of marginalising more moderate alternative groups' and argues that sectarian and ethnic outbidding can be included in the repertoires of many diaspora groups that are trying to disseminate their message to a larger constituency. According to Adamson (2013: 70), the PKK has won the outbidding competition with other Kurdish groups so as to establish its hegemony. The organisations that sympathise with the PKK line have managed to reach a broader segment of society, while KOMKAR's member base was perceived as consisting of 'intellectuals' (Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003: 63) but at the same time as incapable of devising a strategy that would make their agenda a mass movement. Although other Kurdish organisations, including KOMKAR, changed their discourse to adjust to the new conjecture after the mid 1980s, the PKK had already won over the diaspora Kurds and established its hegemony on the Kurdish movement which was sustained through 'a combination of successful mobilisation and propaganda, the creation or co-optation of an extensive organisational structure, as well as coercion' (Adamson, 2013: 80). As Burkay, currently HAK-PAR's leader, states:

> The PKK started to grow stronger. Then they started to use guns, the partisanship of the PKK in Europe started to grow slowly. It was an organisation with weapons and weapons made noise. On the contrary, the other organisations such as ours, started to lose out when the junta came to power. Their staff was arrested, imprisoned, and the democratic movement was crushed in a way.[5]

According to Burkay, the developments in the homeland played a significant role in weakening the other Kurdish movements rivalling the PKK. Representatives that I interviewed in France, Germany, Sweden, the Netherlands and Britain agreed with this statement. The representative of France also adds that one of the reasons why KOMKAR became weaker was that some members also lost faith in the PSK and joined the PKK instead. According to the KOMKAR representative in Berlin, the PKK used violence against other Kurdish movements and jeopardised the activities of KOMKAR in Europe. The two organisations were operating side-by-side in Germany and elsewhere, all the while competing against each other for the loyalties of the Kurdish diaspora. Seminars organised by KOMKAR were sabotaged and raided by PKK supporters. Their members were threatened or

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5 Interview with Mr Kemal Burkay, 2013, *Centre for Policy and Research on Turkey (ResearchTurkey)*, London [online]. Available at: http://researchturkey.org/?p=2984 [Accessed 27 November 2013].

beaten. The rivalry between the two groups was visible to the third parties and affected their image badly in Europe. For example, there was an attack during a Newroz celebration in Munich in 1987 and following this some PKK supporters burned KOMKAR offices and archives.[6]

The violent outbursts between the two groups also claimed/took the lives of several KOMKAR supporters, and left others injured (Lyon and Ucarer, 2001: 936). It is claimed that Ramazan Adiguzel, in Hanover, and Ali Akagunduz – the chairman of KOMKAR in France, were killed by the PKK.[7] Another tense episode was the Newroz celebration of 2003, when a concert organised by KOMKAR was sabotaged by PKK supporters who brought it to an abrupt end by chanting slogans. In the last decade, there have not been any major violent events noted between the two groups as KOMKAR's constituency is now small and it does not represent a great threat to the PKK and its domination on the Kurdish movement. Both diaspora groups organise separate protests, marches, and festivals and are not usually involved in joint projects. Although both groups aim at ameliorating the situation of Kurds in Turkey and Europe, there is no consensus on how to achieve that goal. They usually contradict each other when it comes to planning a road map for conflict resolution in Turkey and the lack of cooperation results in competition for a political space both in the homeland and in the diaspora.

New Outlooks and a New Centre of Gravity

Their activities clearly show that KOMKAR managed to organise itself as a mobilised diaspora group since the 1980s. However, due to the fact that their movement lost ground and was outbid by the PKK, there is a clear decay in their appeal to the larger constituency of the Kurds. The current member base of KOMKAR consists of its founding members who remain loyal to its political aims and strategies. The second-generation members are usually the family members of PSK supporters who were born in Europe. Recruitment from second-generation Kurds is overwhelmingly low compared to the PKK's appeal to the second-generation Kurds in Europe (Baser, 2011). My interviews with KOMKAR representatives revealed that the movement is still active and wants to adapt to the new developments both in Turkey and in the diaspora. The discourses of the KOMKAR members were very much synchronised not just with their compatriots from other countries but also with the HAK-PAR political party discourse in Turkey. They have frequent meetings about homeland politics since Kemal Burkay's return to Turkey and they are trying to make HAK-PAR a political player in the resolution process. The interviewees believed that HAK-PAR was a 'non-violent alternative' to the PKK and might as well represent the Kurds in peace negotiations as well as in the Parliament.

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6   Topgider, 2009.
7   Ibid.

Diasporas are not static and their behaviour can be shaped by internal or external stimulants. The centre of gravity of their activism might shift back and forth between the homeland and the hostland depending on the political developments in both spaces (Brun and Van Hear, 2012: 63). This was the case for KOMKAR; as the diaspora élite recognised the need to regain a capacity to compete for discursive opportunities, they started to shift the gravity of their activities towards mobilising members in the homeland. As a diaspora group, they are trying to revive an exile-movement back in the homeland with an updated agenda. There was a recent party congress in Turkey and of the 1,500 members that attended around 200 were from the diaspora. The organisations are now collecting financial contributions for HAK-PAR from supporters in the diaspora and they hope that their political party will once more gain significance in Turkey. Although it was founded in diaspora, it is now aiming at becoming an actor also in the homeland thanks to diasporic financial and political support.

KOMKAR and the Conflict Resolution Process in Turkey

The 'Kurdish opening' launched in 2009, paved the way for the discussion of several issues previously considered taboo in Turkey. However, it fell short of corresponding to the demands of the Kurdish movement in Turkey. At that time, KOMKAR made constant declarations of support to the process while PKK-related organisations were more cautious and less optimistic in their comments. Initially the AKP government did not want to engage in an official dialogue with the PKK or with its diaspora organisations. They aimed at reaching the Kurdish population at home and abroad by bypassing the PKK. As Galipo (2011: 19) argues sometimes divisions within the diaspora are counterproductive for positive outcomes due to lack of joint efforts and intra-group rivalries may act as a barrier in front of a more durable solution. In this process, neither was there any cooperation between the two Kurdish actors nor was there any initiative from the homeland actors to unite them.

In order to start cooperating with the Kurdish diaspora the AKP took several steps such as the opening of a dialogue with Kemal Burkay to secure his return to Turkey from exile. This was seen as surprising at that time as the demands of the PSK were even more marginal than the PKK – as the PSK wanted no less than a federal solution while the PKK maintained that they did not want a separate state and opted for democratic autonomy in Kurdish majority regions. Burkay was critical of the AKP but even more critical of the PKK. Therefore, his return roused suspicions about the real intentions of the AKP with the reform process. While the Turkish government tried to bypass the PKK and its affiliated organisations at the beginning of the 'Kurdish opening', KOMKAR affiliated organisations perceived it as a window of opportunity to put the HAK-PAR back on the political scene in Turkey. KOMKAR has organised several meetings in Europe with Turkish political actors in order to discuss the current state of events in Turkey. Their

approach to the new developments was almost always a mirror image of what the PKK was arguing. This dichotomy revealed itself in every single development. The following two examples give an idea about their different approaches to the process:

12 September 2010 Referendum: The referendum was proposing a series of constitutional amendments. It aimed at changing the legacy of the 1982 constitution, which was prepared in the aftermath of the coup d'état in 1980, but at the same time strengthening the AKP and its rule. The Kurdish political party close to the PKK line declared they would boycott the referendum because the amendments did not sufficiently improve the rights of the Kurdish population – as they do not change anything that the Kurds demanded such as mother tongue education in Kurdish. KOMKAR, however, organised a Europe-wide meeting in order to discuss the referendum process. According to several Kurdish websites, over 60 big names in Kurdish politics in exile in Europe participated in the meeting. At the end of the conference, a declaration was released stating that voting 'yes' to the referendum is to vote in favour of the Kurds and the boycott, and that voting 'no' can only bring hardship to the Kurds in the long run.[8] The PKK-related diaspora organisations boycotted the conference organised by KOMKAR and issued a press release stating their belief that this conference only serves the interests of the AKP.[9]

Peace Conference in Brussels in 2013: In the course of the peace process the Turkish side understood that there is a need for more concrete steps in order to reach a resolution on the Kurdish Question and the 'Oslo Process', a procedure involving talks between the PKK and the Turkish National Intelligence agency, was secretly launched. This was later leaked to the public in 2011 and brought no concrete results; however, it was a sign that the Turkish state was now addressing the primary actor of the Kurdish movement, the PKK. The current peace process (since 2012) has seen talks between Kurdish MPs and the imprisoned leader of the PKK, and there are continuous talks between the Turkish state/ intelligence and the PKK and its leader. With HAK-PAR feeling sidelined in Turkey throughout this new process, KOMKAR organised a conference in Duisburg, Germany, in April 2013 to discuss current developments and the possibility of a peaceful resolution. At the end of the conference, there was a declaration that stated that they are content with the end of violence between the PKK and the Turkish Army; however they have doubts concerning the transparency of this progression.[10] Moreover,

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8   Declaration by KOMKAR EU, 29 August 2010.

9   Diaspora Kurt Konferansi toplaniyor [online]. Available at: http://www.nasname. com/a/diaspora-kurd-konferansi-toplaniyor [Accessed 27 November 2013].

10   Diaspora Toplantisi Sonuc Bildirisi [online]. Available at: http://www.kurdistan-aktuel.org/haberler/30-avrupa/12264-diaspora-toplants-sonuc-bildirisi.html [Accessed 27 November 2013].

during the peace talks, the PKK leader Ocalan, asked for a 'peace conference' organised by the Kurdish diaspora in Brussels, which was held in summer 2013. Many Kurdish diaspora organisations as well as Turkish leftist, Armenian, and Assyrian organisations participated in the conference which KOMKAR boycotted.

These two examples clearly show that the two main actors of the Kurdish diaspora had different motivations and strategies concerning their approach to the resolution of the homeland conflict. Both wanted to get involved in the peace process but they were not on equal terms. In this case, the PKK fulfilled the two criteria in terms of capacity and motivation (Freitas, 2012) while KOMKAR had the motivation but lacked the capacity to influence the course of events back in the homeland. The Turkish side, however, started negotiating with KOMKAR; as soon as they discovered their lack of capacity to influence a significant number of Kurds in Turkey, they had to target the PKK for potential peace talks. While trying to get diaspora groups engaged in homeland related issues from peace-building to development, scholars suggest that a common ground needs to be found to unify diaspora efforts (Horst, 2007). The inclusion of diaspora groups in this important process was conducted haphazardly and not in a systematic way. The Turkish government addressed the diaspora groups interchangeably and not simultaneously while playing them one against another and increasing its leverage throughout the negotiations. In addition to that, both the organisations supporting the PKK line and KOMKAR tried to sideline each other during this process rather than trying to cooperate on a common ground which they could use to push the Turkish government towards reform.

Conclusion

The growing literature on diasporas' involvement in homeland conflicts and peace processes shows that diasporas can influence both host and homelands and their transnational activism in their respective host countries might affect political, social and economic developments. Although this is an emerging field of research, there is still much to discover in relation to what role they play under which circumstances. This chapter sought to provide clarity on this topic by focusing on the heterogeneous structure of diaspora groups and how this fragmentation affects their engagement with homeland political actors. As shown, diasporas are multi-layered and include various actors with different aims and strategies.

The case of KOMKAR perfectly demonstrates the complexity of diaspora engagement in homeland conflicts and peace processes as well as the wide-range of actors and motives that should be considered. It shows that each diverse group within a diaspora group has different strategies and aims, which relate to conflict resolution in the homeland. There can be groups who play a leading role within a given diaspora and who are considered as the representative of a diaspora in general. However each group within a diaspora, despite the lack of its capacity, might have motivations and expectations and can act as an independent actor with

agency. As this case study has demonstrated, there is a considerable outbidding process among conflicting groups that ensues in transnational space which paves the way for shifts of power between different actors in the diaspora and a diaspora group might lose ground over time due to the changes in the homeland politics and actors. The efforts of revealing KOMKAR's influence over Kurdish politics through HAK-PAR also indicates that due to the political developments in the homeland the gravity of mobilisation can sometimes oscillate between the homeland and hostland.

What has emerged from this research also confirms that secondary actors might also play a role throughout the conflict cycle and one needs to have a broader approach to diaspora groups and their impact. The role that diasporas can play in conflict resolution will only be fully acknowledged when scholars also conduct research on the less visible and more silent groups within a given diaspora and when a more comprehensive range of actors is taken into account.

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