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Distinct Shift

Diaspora now see as a valuable part of civil society contributing to development

Source: ADPC E-Learning course on Migration and Development
Three main discourse

1. Diaspora as development actors
   - Remittances, investment, knowledge transfer, community development

2. Negative security risk/Peace-breakers
   - Spoilers in both homeland and host country contexts

3. Potential partners in post-conflict peacebuilding
   - Knowledge of language, culture and historical context of conflict
   - Transnational actors: External and internal contributions
Diaspora as development actors

Shift in opinion reflected even in the language used

- Reference now to ‘diaspora’ and not ‘migrants’
- Diaspora seen as transitional actors with varied relationships in host and country of origin

Diaspora engage in homeland through ‘solidarity networks’ and ‘informal economic systems’

- **Economic:** Remittances and Investment
- **Politically:** Linking civil society, political engagement and elections
- **Social:** Transmission of ideas and values
- **Cultural:** Preserving and passing on language, art etc
‘diaspora represent a form of “globalisation from below” in which “small” players, as opposed to mega-corporations, make use of the opportunities afforded by globalisation’

(Mohan and Zack-Williams, 2002)

- Remittance far exceed ODA
- Diaspora entrepreneurship and investment
- Remittances are key lifelines for families and communities
  - Facilitate basic needs and serve as a social safety net
  - Support community development projects improving wellbeing
“Moral economy” of the diaspora can provide much needed assistance during and after conflict

- **Eritrean** diaspora: remittances provided to both local communities and government

- **Croatian** diaspora: Seen as peace-wreckers but supported humanitarian aid, medicine, clothing and food

- **Palestinian** diaspora: Investment and philanthropy supported West Bank and Gaza
“Diasporas—with their origins in conflict and their aspirations to return to the liberated homeland—often play critical roles in conflicts over territory and identity.

They provide resources for parties engaged in conflicts back home and frequently have a particularly important role in framing the conflict issues.

Diaspora groups tend to be less willing to compromise and therefore reinforce and exacerbate those dimensions that prevent constructive conflict resolution.

…it is easier to hate from a distance. You don’t have to live with the consequences - or the reprisals.”

Lyons (2004)
Diaspora as security risks contd.

Diaspora engagement seen as negative

- Argue diaspora have a negative or even destructive impact in both host and country of origin
- Particular focus on financial donations/remittances of diaspora feeding conflict
- Diaspora depicted as taking a hard-line/antagonistic stance due to distance
- Diaspora can negatively influence host country foreign policy as regards home country
- Treat diaspora as a homogenous group which in fact they are not
“diaspora are increasingly able to promote transnational ties, to act as bridges or as mediators between their home and host societies, and to transmit the values of pluralism and democracy”

Shain and Barth (2003)
Diaspora as peacebuilders contd.

External promoters of peacebuilding

- Economic: Diaspora investment and remittances
- Political: Campaigning for human rights and democracy
- Social: Diaspora driven community development initiatives

Internal

- Temporary return migration
- Grow/capacitate civil society
- Diaspora entrepreneurship
Conclusion

2 sides to every story

- Diaspora are a heterogeneous group
- Can be ‘peace-makers’ and ‘peace-breakers’
  - Reversal of diaspora agenda possible (Croatian ex.)
- Civil society role in peacebuilding recognised
- As members of CS, diaspora have equally important contributions

Understanding power

- Focus has been on Coercive power
- Neglect Soft Power of the diaspora
Thank You

Please visit our website at:  http://www.diaspora-centre.org

ADPC Publications on Diaspora and peacebuilding available at:

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