



Literature Review:

The role of civil society in managing memories of disputed territories

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– Syed Shah

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DIASPORA, MEMORY AND THE NATION STATE - Syed Shah

In this section Syed Shah (PhD candidate, University of Bath) continues to discuss the role of memory for diaspora communities and connects this with examples across different nation states. Syed argues that alongside the economic, political and social ties that continue to be encouraged between the 'homeland' and diaspora, memory is central to this process.

The analysis of the past is crucial for our understanding of events affecting the relationship between nation-states and civil society. Memories shapes cultures and cultures shape human behaviour. As states are composed of individuals, they depict the very character of the inhabitants. One such group of inhabitants are diaspora, who cross the physical boundaries of the nation state but remain firmly rooted through memories. Memories can therefore construct a strong unseen bridge that emotionally connects the diasporas to their 'homeland'.

The Diasporas according to Lehneman is 'a group that recognizes its separateness based on common ethnicity/nationality, lives in a host country, and maintains some kind of attachment to the home country' (Lahneman 2005, p. 7). Diasporas include migrants, refugees, exiles, ethnic and minority groups (Safran 1991, p. 83). Traditionally the term 'Diaspora' has been used predominantly for Jewish migrants across the globe. However, the term has been broadened to include groups living outside their homeland. Brubaker disagrees with the broadening of the term as it blur the meaning and even diffuses the term (Brubaker 2005). Despite this lack of consensus the subject matter of analysis remains an individual uprooted by certain circumstances. This literature review, explores the literature concerning diaspora communities and their relationships to the two states, the state they left behind (the 'homeland) and the state they reside in (the 'host states').

Social, political and economic connections

Our understanding starts with observing the incorporation of diasporas into host states. These incorporations can be social, economic and political. The social incorporation of diasporas into the state takes different forms. States may claim diaspora descent, or linguistic and cultural affinity (McIntyre and Gamlen 2019, p. 38). Whatever form or shape it takes, the fact remains that the social impact of migration on diaspora and states remains considerable. Levitt (1998) termed these social and cultural imprints as 'social remittances'. He defined these transactions as 'the ideas, behaviours, identities, and social capital that flow from receiving to sending countries' (Levitt 1998, p. 927). These influences can range from cultural habits to political ideas and practices. For example, the South American migrants in the USA influence culture in their origin countries in subtle ways. The gifts and pictures sent back transform the culture of the 'homeland' as 'nonmigrants observed these styles when migrants also received clothing as gifts. Because young women, emulate these patterns, they combined elements of items from the United States and created a new hybrid style' (Levitt 1998, p. 932). The flow of culture is never one sided as the sending country also impact the receiving country in many ways. Sometimes these influences are unintentional while at other times sending states actively pursue cultural influences (McIntyre and Gamlen 2019, p. 38).

The political incorporation of diaspora into states is multidimensional. The first factor to consider is the body politic of the host state itself. In 'civic' or liberal countries the diasporas are assimilated on the condition that they abide by the laws of the state. However, countries with nationalistic or closed outlook tends to discourage diaspora assimilation (McIntyre and Gamlen 2019, p. 38). Secondly, the political landscape of the sending nation also shapes diaspora politics. For example, states with closed political systems tends to demonise diasporas that have left the 'homeland'. This was evident in the case of the Ceausescu regime (1965-1989) who declared all Romanian diasporas as enemies (McIntyre and Gamlen 2019, p. 39). These

assimilations produce outcomes affecting the host states, origin states and the diasporas.

Firstly, the host state influences the sending state politically in indirect ways. For example, experiences concerning different democratic processes in a host-nation makes the possibilities of individual freedoms and ease of access to resources/services becomes a realisable possibility. These stirrings may create momentum and demand for reformed political processes and rights at home (Levitt 1998, p. 942). Secondly, the host states also utilize diaspora to influence events in the 'home-land'. The use of diaspora for political ends can be observed in the case of Turkey using its diaspora in Europe to build a softer image post 2001. Adamson (2019, p. 224) argues these measures were initiated in order to increase Turkey's chances of advancing the process of EU membership. Diasporas often carry powerful memories and emotional attachments to their 'homeland'. Two events in recent Turkish history demonstrate the strong influence of diaspora on the politics of the 'homeland'. The Turkish constitutional referendum of 2017 and the parliamentary elections of 2015 observed high levels of political participation by the Turkish diasporas (Adamson 2019, p. 211), who are described as having responded emotionally to the memories of old conflicts and 'pressure their home governments to adopt more nationalist and assertive policies towards neighbouring countries' (Ibid, p. 39).

For host-states, diaspora communities can provide a source of financial investment and 'form diaspora policies that attempt to realize the actual (or potential) financial, strategic, political, or security value of the diaspora' (McIntyre and Gamlen 2019, p. 37). The receiving states have traditionally used diasporas for economic benefits due to their 'special skills' which has been encouraged historically through economic migration.

Today states are tapping into the economic benefits of their diasporas to provide a source of revenue and investment. These revenue streams can be investments,

tourism and regular visits to the 'homeland' (Lowell and Gerova 2004, p. 3). The case of Indian policies to attract diasporas resulted in an amendment to the law in 2003 which allows the diaspora to travel, invest and operate business in India without restrictions (Dickinson and Bailey 2007, p. 771). South Asian countries in general are tapping into the vast number of diasporas. In India and Pakistan, financial instruments are created for the sole purpose of attracting diaspora's wealth. Interest rates on foreign currency accounts are kept lucrative and bonds of varying attractive denominations are offered to diaspora (Lowell and Gerova 2004, p. 14).

In the case of Pakistan, diaspora remittances have played a decisive role in boosting the country's fragile economy (Roger Ballard 2007, p. 44). Remittances makes 6% of Pakistan's GDP and reached US \$18.4 billion in 2015 (Erdal 2016, p. 5). Pakistan thus is making sure to benefits from uninterrupted flow of diaspora income. To meet this objective, Pakistan has established a dedicated ministry for the diaspora's affairs. Pakistan also has dual citizenship agreements with countries where there is significant diasporas concentration. Pakistan even offers special status to individuals with Pakistani ancestry to attract their investments (ibid.). Pakistan is not alone, as many diaspora populations support the 'homeland' by supplying 'expertise, military recruits, and on occasion political leadership to the homeland' (Adamson 2019, p. 39).

Diaspora, memory and the state

Our exploration of memory continues with the role of the nation state in diaspora recollections of the past. Nation states play an important role in the shaping and reshaping of memories. The role of different states has been contradictory in this respect. Some states, such as Vietnam, tried to reshape or erase memories of past atrocities committed by the state on its citizens. On the contrary, other nation states have established museums and other institutions to celebrate migrants and their histories (Lacroix and Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2013, p. 691). This section further explores

the literature that deals with the different memory modes used by nation states and goes on to discuss how diaspora frame their memory of the 'homeland'.

States have used antagonistic memories against diasporas in the past and continue to do so in the present; Pakistan provides one example of this. In state building narratives, the plight of religious minorities called 'Ahmadis' are often used to represent an 'other' to Pakistani identity. The 'Ahmadis' are a sub-sect within Islam. They challenge the concept of finality of prophethood, which remains the cornerstone of mainstream Islam. These ideological differences resulted in backlash from the hardline elements of society against 'Ahmadis'. Riots against Ahmadis (1953 and 1974) resulted in the murder of hundreds of Ahmadis Muslims. Finally, under pressure from the religious parties, the Ahmadi sect was declared un-Islamic. These discriminations led to the migration of millions of Ahmadis abroad. The official designations of being Un-Islamic in a conservative religious country had serious repercussions for the Ahmadis as they were now systematically discriminated (Qadir, 2015, p.165). The report published by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labour in 2002 pointed to discrimination by the state against the Ahmadi community through the application of harsh 'Blasphemy Laws' and severe restrictions on their religious beliefs and practices as well surveillance of the community by the state (BoD 2002).

From a different perspective, New Zealand's approach to addressing the past is an interesting example of agonistic memory practices. Historically, the approach of the New Zealand government towards its citizens migrating to Australia was to portray them as unpatriotic. However, in the last decade, Gamelan has described New Zealand's approach to its diaspora as a transnational resource; 'the government's later embracing attitude towards expatriates should be seen as part of a new process of 'roll out' neoliberal reforms, driven by a 'Third Way' philosophy of strategic partnering between states and markets. In this new environment, political and business leaders sought new ways to optimise the performance of markets through

state actions to suppress 'market failures' and support 'positive externalities. Engaging skilled expatriates' strategic locations was seized upon as a creative way of amplifying one of emigration's positive side effects - namely expatriates' transnational contributions - and using these to counteract the feared market failure of 'brain drain'.' (Gamlen 2013, p. 239)

Diaspora communities identify themselves with their cultures and countries of origins where emotional attachment often remains strong to the events unfolding in the 'homeland'; memory plays an important role in this process (Lahneman 2005, p. 7). The nature of association may vary but the emotional intensity of memories attached to the homeland remain strong (Armstrong 1976, p. 395). The following phrases cited by Safran, depict the emotional attachment of communities to their countries of origin,

Jeszcze Polska nie zginieła kiedy my żyjemy' (Poland Is Not Yet Lost *while we live*)—these are still the words of the Polish national anthem, which parallel those of 'Hatikva,' the Zionist and, later, Israeli national anthem: 'As long as there is a Jewish soul within us... our eyes turn to Zion. (Safran 1991, p. 97)

The Pakistani community living in United Kingdom maintains a strong emotional connection to the 'homeland'. One example of this memory attachment is the association of business names with the towns and cities they came from. For instance, the 'Kashmir' is frequently used for naming restaurants and stores etc. In the case of Pakistani Kashmiri community 'Memories of a homeland are also evoked with the sending of *Eid* cards bearing pictures of martyred Kashmiris, freedom slogans, well-respected freedom fighters like Maqbool Butt, or the Kashmir flag' (Ali 2003, p. 475).

The memories of identity that most diaspora groups adhere to are described by Lacroix and Fiddian-Qasmiyeh as being 'intrinsically selective and exclude events deemed as inappropriate or potentially destabilizing. As such, they are often reprocessed into a more or less coherent and 'truthful' story that legitimates a socially tailored image of the community. In doing so, collective memories redraw

the boundaries between sameness and otherness, between the self and the other, by both including or excluding and by establishing hierarchies between social groups' (2013, p. 685). Once the differentiation is made, then these memories can be used by the diaspora to gain political advantage by identifying themselves as the victims or underdogs (Ibid).

Fair (2005) highlights the use of antagonistic memory by the Sikh community in supporting separatist movements in India. The 'Khalistan' movement was an independence movement for the establishment of a Sikh homeland in the 1990s. The Sikh religious temples across the world were used by the Sikh diaspora to reinvigorate antagonistic memories from Sikh history as well as collecting funds for the independence movement. Visible reminders of the memories were displayed in these temples which portrayed the 'martyrs' from the Punjab conflict. They were often 'placed alongside depictions of historical martyrs from the annals of Sikh history'. According to Fair, this visually established 'a seamless line of Sikh oppression stemming from the 17th century to the modern period' (Fair 2005, p. 132).

Bhimji's (2008) research on British women of South Asian origin highlights how feelings of attachment to the 'homeland' despite differences in culture can result in mixed emotional responses to the two societies they attached memories to. On the one hand, they had some connection to the 'homeland' and on the other they were strongly bonded with Britain. One of the individuals being interviewed by the author describes, 'I like having lots and lots of family. And it's really funny when I go to Pakistan, I feel like I've gone home. Even though I feel this is my home here. When I go to Pakistan, I feel a different feeling of home coming. I feel very relaxed there. I love the weather um. I don't know – I just – I know people go on and on about how many faults there are, and I don't pretend that there aren't faults. I love the one main thing about Pakistan is that no matter what part of Pakistan you go to family is

much important thing. It is still the building block of the world to them.’ (Bhimji 2008, p. 417).

Some researchers have identified a cosmopolitan frame used by diaspora groups in order to appeal to universalistic principles and dominant discourses of equality, emancipation and freedom of speech to have ethnic or religious education rights for their children in schools. Giving the example of Muslim diasporas in western countries Soysal (2000) argues that diaspora ‘forward demands about mother-tongue instruction, Islamic *foulard*, or *halal* food by asserting the ‘natural’ right of individuals to their own cultures, rather than drawing upon religious teachings and traditions’ (Soysal 2000, p. 7). Cohen is critical of this cosmopolitan framing by stating that ‘many diasporas want to have their cake and eat it.’ He goes on to argue ‘They want not only the security and opportunities available in their countries of settlement, but also a continuing relationship with their country of origin and co-ethnic members in other countries’ (Cohen 1996, p. 518). These debates highlight a disjuncture, or antagonism, that exists in what are framed as incompatibilities between different cultural and ethnic groups.

Pakistani Diaspora in the UK

Antagonistic representations of memory ‘privileges emotions in order to cement a strong sense of belonging to a particularistic community, focusing on the suffering inflicted by the ‘evil’ enemies upon this same community’. Cosmopolitan memories focus on a common humanity where atrocities committed are against the whole humanity by an evil that can be reformed through compassion. These responses do not resolve the underlying causes of tension or conflict (Bull and Hansen 2016, p. 398).

The case of Pakistani diaspora in Britain remains under explored in the context of memory attachment to the homeland and its impact on race relations. The words of one young British Pakistani describes this complex relationship when she states, ‘My

parents want to show me my roots and I want to see my roots... Britain is their country, not our country. This feeling is always at the back of our head and the tables can turn at any time... It's like even though we have British passports and nationalities but still we are just Pakistanis and hence can be kicked out any day.' (Bolognani 2014, p. 108). Such sentiments have become more prominent in the post 9/11 environment yet little attention in the literature is paid to these trends among British Pakistanis and how memory shapes these feelings of (de)attachment. DisTerrMem provides an opportunity to further explore the dynamics between memory and identity through a case study of the British Pakistani community. Crucial to this understanding is to also question how other identities of class, gender, caste etc interact with feelings towards the 'homeland' and 'host nation' across such diaspora community.

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