Non-state authoritarianism and diaspora politics

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Abstract *Diaspora politics has been celebrated as a form of transnationalism that can potentially challenge authoritarian regimes. Arguably, opposition groups and political activists can mobilize beyond the territorial limits of the state, thus bypassing some of the constraints to political organization found in authoritarian states. The literature on transnational and extraterritorial repression complicates this model, for it shows that states can use strategies of 'long-distance authoritarianism' to monitor, intimidate and harass diasporic populations abroad. Yet, non-state actors in the diaspora also sometimes use such repressive strategies to mobilize internally, gain hegemony within the diaspora, and marginalize or eliminate internal rivals. This raises the question of whether such activities can be understood as non-state forms of authoritarianism. Cases of diasporic politics pertaining to Turkey and Sri Lanka are briefly explored with a view to examining how state and non-state forms of trans-national repression can, under some conditions, result in the dynamics of competitive authoritarianism within a diaspora. In such cases, 'ordinary' members of the diaspora may become caught between multiple forms of transnational repression in addition to potentially experiencing marginalization and securitization in their new home.*

Keywords AUTHORITARIANISM, DIASPORA, EXTRATERRITORIAL REPRESSION, GOVERNANCE, TRANSNATIONALISM

Can diaspora politics be authoritarian? Some, like Betts and Jones (2016), see diaspora politics as a form of transnationalism that can potentially challenge authoritarian regimes. Especially in the wake of the Arab uprisings of 2011, increased attention has been paid to the roles that citizens abroad can play in fostering political change at home. Since they are able to operate beyond the territorial limits of the state, diasporic opposition groups can arguably take advantage of their position as actors both 'outside the nation-state' and 'inside the people' (Shain and Barth 2003: 461). By using political resources and opportunities available in their host countries, diasporic opposition groups often show a potential to contribute to processes of democratization in their homelands.

At first glance, then, diaspora politics appears to be anything but authoritarian. The 'diaspora' is regularly celebrated as a space of freedom from state control, in which grassroots organizing and bottom-up social movements can emerge to challenge repressive regimes in the home state. However, this view downplays the extent to which diaspora politics can become oppressive and contain elements of transnational repression.[1] Indeed, non-state groups may employ illiberal, anti-democratic or authoritarian practices as part of their overall political strategy. Sometimes this emerges from constraints imposed on the diasporic actors' structural positions. In other cases, it may be due to ideological reasons or to the preferences or leadership styles of diasporic and organizational elites. Just as different states have different regime types, so too does diaspora politics vary across the political spectrum. Diaspora politics is therefore not just a form of transnationalism that interacts with or contests state power; it also encompasses modalities of political control.

In this article, I examine the use of authoritarian strategies and transnational repression by non-state actors engaged in diaspora mobilization and compare it with strategies employed by the state. Non-state actors engaged in diaspora politics at times use the same authoritarian policies and transnational repressive measures as some states – including extreme ones such as assassinations, intimidation and threats. Moreover, everyday features of authoritarianism, such as pressures for internal ideological conformity, top-down forms of political control, demands for unwavering loyalty to political elites, lack of transparency and accountability, and personality cults have all at times been found in various diasporic non-state opposition movements. State and non-state actors alike can use authoritarian strategies to mobilize and consolidate power in the diaspora, discourage internal opposition, and weaken or eliminate political rivals. A focus on non-state authoritarianism can thus expand our understanding of the repertoires and strategies that political entrepreneurs use to mobilize the diaspora, as well as shed light on forms of authoritarianism beyond the territorial state. Ultimately, it also points to some of the spatial complexities of the liberal international order, in which liberal and illiberal spaces overlap and become intertwined in ways that create policy conundrums that transcend state boundaries.

The rest of the article proceeds as follows. First, I provide a brief review of the literature on diaspora politics and how it intersects with debates on authoritarianism. Second, I discuss the concept of non-state authoritarianism as a form of transnational repression. In so doing, I point to a range of authoritarian practices used by states and look at the extent to which they have also been used by transnational and non-state actors. Third, I provide examples of non-state organizations and movements that have used these practices and suggest that competing forms of state- and non-state authoritarianism characterize some political behaviour in the diaspora. I conclude by discussing the implications for research and policy.

Diaspora politics and authoritarianism

Political science, sociology and migration studies all have growing literatures on diaspora politics (Adamson 2016; Adamson and Demetriou 2007; Brinkerhoff 2009;

Cohen 2008; Koinova 2010, 2012; Østergaard-Nielsen 2001; Ragazzi 2009; Shain 2007; Shain and Barth 2003; Sheffer 2003, 2006). Until recently, however, this literature has had little to say about authoritarianism and transnational repression, aside from noting that diasporas often engage in political activities that can challenge certain aspects of authoritarian regimes. By drawing on existing national and transnational political opportunity structures, diasporic groups can use various forms of transnational mobilization to transform and reshape the homeland (Adamson 2002; Wayland 2004). This can include activities such as sending remittances (Brinkerhoff 2008; Kapur 2010; Levitt 1998; Levitt and Lamba-Nieves 2011; Nyberg-Sørensen et al. 2003), protesting or engaging in symbolic politics, lobbying for changes in foreign policy towards the homeland (Hägel and Peretz 2005; Saideman 2001), agitating for political reform, or, in extreme cases, pursuing change via armed conflict and violence (Adamson 2013; Kaldor 2013; Van Hear and Cohen 2017).

The interventions of external diasporic organizations have also been shown, in some cases, to improve the quality of governance in home states. Brinkerhoff (2005), for example, argued that, by using the internet to foster greater transparency, Coptic organizations in the United States helped to support more democratic forms of governance in Egypt. Other studies suggest that diasporic remittances can place pressure on authoritarian regimes by making populations less dependent on the state (Escribà-Folch et al. 2015). More generally, diasporas have been viewed as actors that can, under certain conditions, promote democratization through the diffusion of liberal and democratic norms (Koinova 2009; Shain 1999). Betts and Jones (2016) have perhaps taken the argument the furthest. Drawing on examples from Rwanda and Zimbabwe, they suggest that diasporas in general, and refugee diasporas in particular, should be understood as key players in targeting and challenging authoritarian regimes at home.

Such arguments often hold to the view that diasporic groups can influence authoritarian states from the outside inwards. Yet, a growing literature is focusing more on the opposite dynamic – how homeland states influence and shape diaspora politics from the inside outwards. This literature challenges the notion that diasporas are autonomous actors operating in transnational spaces removed from the interests and policies of their states of origin. Rather, states are increasingly reaching out to and shaping politics in the diaspora through their so-called 'diaspora management policies' (Adamson 2019; Collyer 2013; Délano and Gamlen 2014; Fitzgerald 2006a; Gamlen 2008; Levitt and de la Dehesa 2003; Naujoks 2013; Varadarajan 2010). These include diaspora engagement, diaspora integration and diaspora-building policies which can vary depending on where the diasporas are located and the political interests of the sending state (Gamlen 2014; Mylonas 2013; Tsourapas 2015). These policies can range from giving members of the diaspora VIP status, encouraging remittances and investment, promoting dual citizenship and overseas voting, to using diasporic groups as a tool of public diplomacy to promote state interests abroad (Adamson and Demetriou 2007; Bauböck 2005; Collyer 2014; Fitzgerald 2006b; Lafleur 2011).

Some scholars regard state programmes for the diaspora as a benign form of 'migration governance' in which states respond to norms promoted by international organizations and design diasporic engagement policies for the purposes of facilitating

more efficient and stable migration management and economic development (Gamlen 2014). Yet others note that states engage with 'their' diasporas for different reasons, and thus produce different types of engagement policies ranging from a focus on harnessing remittances, building 'global nations', enhancing a state's soft power and ability to engage in public diplomacy, to a focus on surveillance (Ragazzi 2014). For example, a state's interest in promoting a particular form of national identity abroad (Mügge 2012) may shape its 'nation-building' approaches to diaspora engagement. Transnational nation-building policies may rely on essentialized notions of who constitutes the nation, thus activating the dynamics of transnational 're-ethnicization' (Joppke 2003) in which states seek to enhance their power by extending their transnational constituencies through diaspora-building processes (Abramson 2017).

Indeed, a state's regime type is important for understanding variations in types of state–diaspora relations. Apart from structuring diaspora political engagement vis-à-vis the homeland (Østergaard-Nielsen 2003; Shain and Barth 2003), the regime type determines the nature of the diaspora's role in a state's bilateral relations. In fact, diasporas are likely to play a positive part in forging bilateral relations in democratic dyads, that is when the country of origin and the country of residence are both democratic, but are sidelined in other dyadic formations, as in authoritarian–authoritarian or democratic–authoritarian dyads (Mirilovic 2016). Semi-authoritarian states may also use their emigrants to achieve foreign policy goals or national prestige, or as a way of projecting state power and gaining regional advantage (Tsourapas 2016). Moreover, different regime types may promote similar policies, albeit for different reasons. For example, whereas stable democracies may promote voting abroad as a way of expanding democratic participation, authoritarian states may promote it for reasons that have more to do with controlling emigrants, using the process to register and monitor its overseas citizens (Brand 2010).

Transnational repression and non-state authoritarianism

That some forms of state diaspora engagement policies are geared toward the surveillance and monitoring of their citizens abroad suggests that the relationship between diaspora politics and authoritarianism is more complex than some of the literature suggests. The location of diasporic spaces outside the physical boundaries of the state does not necessarily remove them from the pressures and effects of state authoritarianism. Rather, state repressive power can extend into the spaces of other states and take the form of 'transnational' or 'extraterritorial' repression, acting as a 'long-distance' deterrent to political organizing and posing a threat to populations living abroad (Cooley and Heathershaw 2017: 187–219; Lewis 2015; Moss 2016).

The use of authoritarian strategies to target political exiles and activists in the diaspora can extend into the space of liberal democratic states (Garvey 1980). Diasporic populations who live in liberal democracies face fewer restrictions on their political activities than those living in authoritarian states, where they may lack the basic rights to organize, assemble or protest. Moreover, authoritarian states often manage dissent by collaborating and sharing information with other such states (Cooley and

Heathershaw 2017: 194). This suggests that 'separate institutions, especially those with a security function, are more likely to be established among communities from authoritarian states but resident in more politically open systems' (Brand 2006: 218).

Authoritarian and quasi-authoritarian regimes employ a range of tools to penetrate liberal democratic states. They may use consulates, embassies and other government actors to gather intelligence on citizens abroad; they can apply diplomatic pressure to encourage states to ban or close organizations or media outlets, label certain organizations as terrorist, and have individuals deported (Miller 1981: 30ff). They can also instruct bodies like Interpol to pursue dissidents and opposition figures in the diaspora by accusing them of economic or other crimes (Cooley and Heathershaw 2017: 194).

Transnational or extraterritorial repression can also take more direct forms. Moss (2016: 485) presents a typology of strategies of transnational repression that states use to intimidate and deter opposition groups in the diaspora. These include lethal retribution (actual or attempted assassinations); threats (verbal or written warnings); surveillance (gathering and sending information to central authorities); exile (banishment from the country/polity); withdrawing scholarships or other forms of financial assistance; and proxy punishment (harassment of or harm to relatives in the home country). Indeed, a wide range of authoritarian and quasi-authoritarian states regularly use these strategies.[2]

Yet, such strategies are not necessarily limited to states. *Non-state* actors may also use them in some cases to intimidate members of the diaspora as part of their strategies of political mobilization. Indeed, there is evidence to suggest that diaspora mobilization by non-state actors can potentially contain a wide range of authoritarian elements. In addition to the strategies of transnational repression listed above, these include the use of personalistic forms of authority and personality cults; centralized power combined with political exclusion and internal repression; the use of propaganda and coercion to enforce loyalty and ideological hegemony; militarism; mass mobilization; forcible extraction of resources; hierarchical and secretive organizational networks; patronage and patrimonialism; and hegemonic single party apparatuses that penetrate society and civic life. These strategies are not meant to constitute an exhaustive list, but they are indicative of aspects of authoritarianism that are found in a number of non-state organizations that have a strong diasporic presence.

In many respects, one would expect certain subsets of non-state actors to have authoritarian proclivities that extend into their relations with the diasporic populations they seek to mobilize. National liberation movements, separatist organizations, rebel groups or other bodies that have used violence in the homeland and have a political presence in the diaspora are prime candidates for the use of techniques of political mobilization that, at least in part, rely on authoritarian ideologies, strategies and tactics. Some non-state organizations involved in diaspora mobilization resemble de-territorialized quasi states as much as they do social movements; they seek to emulate states and ultimately achieve statehood, so have their own governments-in-exile, diplomatic strategies, welfare organizations and armed wings.[3] Furthermore, such organizations need constantly to mobilize a constituency because they face competition from other political actors; the loyalty of their constituency cannot necessarily

be guaranteed via formal forms of membership, such as citizenship, and this may also provide incentives to turn to more authoritarian forms of securing and maintaining political support.

Diaspora politics are often analysed as forms of transnationalism that operate according to a logic that differs from that used by state governments. Their study is heavily influenced by writings on transnationalism and social movements, with a focus on mechanisms such as framing, resource mobilization, coalition-building and brokerage (Adamson 2002; Wayland 2004). Situating diaspora politics within the broader literature on transnationalism and transnational politics has created a bias in much of the field towards understanding it in terms of progressive, liberal or cosmopolitan forces operating as part of a broader global civil society, and ignoring the extent to which it can also encompass illiberal and repressive forms of transnationalism (Adamson 2005b; Bob 2005, 2012).[4]

The extent to which any particular instance of diaspora politics operates according to liberal or other logics should be an empirical question open to investigation rather than a theoretical starting point. Just as different regime types approach diaspora politics in different ways, so too is there a variation in how different non-state actors approach diaspora mobilization and engagement. The idea that diaspora politics is antithetical to authoritarianism relies heavily on a statist paradigm that primarily locates authoritarianism within states and their regimes (Glasius 2018a, 2018b). Some forms of diaspora politics may simultaneously be about contesting an authoritarian regime abroad *and* exercising internal control and hegemony within the diaspora. The globalization of authoritarianism can carry over into the diaspora and potentially also include the tactics of opposition groups, resulting in the emergence of competing authoritarianisms in the diaspora. Ordinary people living in the diaspora may therefore in some cases be subject to intimidation, threats and forms of transnational repression from *both* state and non-state actors – in addition to possibly being marginalized as migrants, minorities or refugees in their states of residence.

Analysing non-state authoritarianism: data, methods and approach

Authoritarian states receive a great deal of attention in both the scholarly and policy literature, with datasets that provide indicators and that attempt to codify and classify states according to regime type.[5] Furthermore, human rights organizations have long focused on human rights abuses and restrictions of civil and political rights in authoritarian states. Several scholars have noted, however, that most of the literature on authoritarianism adopts a rather circumscribed, territorial understanding of the state; it tends to focus on authoritarianism as it is manifested within the boundaries of states and leaves an '"extraterritorial gap": an inability to perceive and analyse extraterritorial state power in general, and extraterritorial authoritarian power in particular' (Dalmasso et al. 2018: 95). Yet, by conceptualizing authoritarianism not simply as a regime 'type', but rather 'as a mode of *governing people* through a distinct set of *practices*', we are able to gain insight into the transnational dimensions of authoritarianism. The transnational practices of authoritarian states beyond their territorial

borders 'resembles but differs from authoritarian governance within territorial borders, constraining certain traditional ways of controlling populations (i.e. imprisonment or censorship) but enabling functional equivalents as well as new modes of control' (Dalmasso et al. 2018: 97; Glasius 2018b: 519, 523).

Conducting research in authoritarian settings presents numerous challenges (Glasius et al. 2018), as does researching transnational dynamics and collecting data on clandestine and illicit non-state actors. Nevertheless, there are sufficient data available from a range of sources to provide examples of the dynamics of competitive authoritarianism in particular cases. Existing sources include secondary scholarship, as well as a mixture of primary sources such as human rights reports, journalistic accounts, press reports, government documents and grey literature. In the following section, I draw on these sources to provide examples of transnational repression in the diasporic politics associated with the states of Turkey and Sri Lanka. The two cases share a number of similarities. Both countries have large, politically engaged diasporas abroad, and both have had brutal civil wars in which armed separatist non-state actors have relied on policies of 'diaspora engagement'. The two cases are exploratory and use existing data in a theory-building inductive approach; the aim is not to document every instance of transnational repression but rather to engage in an exercise of grounded theory to flesh out our understanding of how, why and which actors use transnational repression.[6] In these two cases, there is significant evidence that *both* state and non-state actors use forms of long-distance repression vis-à-vis 'their' diaspora populations, resulting in a form of long-distance 'competitive authoritarianism' (Levitsky and Way 2010).

State and non-state transnational repression: the Turkish case

The political mobilization of Turks and Kurds living in Europe provides illustrative evidence of the various forms of transnational repression that both state and non-state actors use. In the case of Turkey, a variety of political actors, including the Turkish state, far-right nationalist organizations, Kurdish groups, religiously-defined groups such as Alevi, Yazidi and dissident Islamist movements all compete for support. Østergaard-Nielsen (2003: 107) noted that the political activities of emigrants 'may be perceived as a threat when dissidence unfolds on the political stage of their receiving countries, outside the reach of the homeland state. The relationship between the Turkish State (and government) and its citizens and former citizens amply illustrates this ambiguity.' The Turkish state has a history of using various forms of state control to monitor, shape and deter the political activities of Turks and Kurds in Europe and has for many years engaged in the surveillance and 'long-distance policing' of political activists in Germany, France and elsewhere. Turks and Kurds in some instances have returned to Turkey only to find themselves held for questioning or, in some cases, arrested. Another technique the Turkish state has used is to cancel or refuse to renew the passports of Turkish and Kurdish political activists living abroad, thus compelling them either to return to Turkey, live abroad illegally, or apply for asylum. The Turkish state has also historically used this technique – called 'passport

harassment' – on union leaders and individuals who refuse to complete their obligatory military service. In addition, as Ostergaard-Nielsen (2003: 118–19) pointed out, Turkish embassies and consulates have tried to influence activities sponsored by Turkish and Kurdish organizations in Germany and to use teachers to gather information on local community organizations.

The Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which has been involved in armed conflict with the Turkish state since 1984, has been the main target of Turkish state activities, though the state has also targeted other leftist organizations, dissident Islamist groups and, more recently, members of the broader *Hizmet* ('Service') movement linked to Fethullah Gülen. Germany banned the PKK in 1993 and, under pressure from the Turkish state, other PKK-related organizations and media groups operating abroad were also banned during the 1990s, including MED-TV, *Firat* News Agency in the Netherlands; ROJ-Groupa and *Denge Mezopotamya* Radio in Belgium; ROJ TV and MMC TV in Denmark; *Newroz* TV in Norway; the House of Kurdish People in Marseille, France; and the newspaper *Yeni Özgur Politika* in Germany (Baser 2015: 77; Eccarius-Kelly 2008; Hassanpour 1998; Karagoz 2017: 89; Romano 2006: 153–9).

There have also been several assassinations of PKK supporters in Europe, with the Turkish Intelligence Service (MİT) or organizations close to the state widely suspected of carrying them out. The most notable of these was in 2013, when Sakine Cansiz, one of the co-founders of the PKK, was executed in the Kurdistan Information Centre in Paris along with two other women, Fidan Doğan and Leyla Söylemez. More recently, in 2016, an assassination plot was uncovered that allegedly involved the Turkish Intelligence Service targeting the leaders of two Kurdish organizations. German police detained a suspected MİT agent in Hamburg in connection with this in December 2016 (Yaş 2017).

However, the Turkish state has used less obvious sources of control, some of which emerged historically out of agreements between Turkey and Western European states over migration recruitment in the 1960s–80s. These included expanding the role of the Turkish Ministry of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet*) in the diaspora; sending Turkish schoolteachers and other officials to Germany and other European states; increasing the activities of embassies, consulates and the MİT; and using diplomatic pressure (Østergaard-Nielsen 2003: 107). In the 1990s, for example, there were at least 470 Turkish teachers in Germany sent by the Turkish Ministry of Education to teach the Turkish language and history, as well as *Diyanet* imams who serviced approximately 775 mosques throughout Germany. The situation has changed little since then, with accusations made in April 2017 that Turkey was using imams in the *Diyanet*-linked Türkisch-Islamischen Union (DİTİB) to spy on Turkish communities abroad.[7]

Since the attempted military coup of 15 July 2016, the Turkish government has accelerated its attempts to pursue activists in the diaspora. Kurdish individuals and organizations are still a main target, but a second one now includes individuals and organizations connected with the *Hizmet* movement associated with Fethullah Gülen, a cleric residing in Pennsylvania, USA, whom Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has accused of being behind the coup attempt. In addition to asking the United States government to extradite Gülen, Turkey has tried to persuade numerous states to

close Gülen schools and organizations, and its intelligence agencies have been involved in keeping track of activists abroad and putting pressure on governments to pursue members of *Hizmet* within their own borders (Schenkkan 2018).

Kurdish and German media outlets also reported that the Turkish government had given the German authorities lists of people under surveillance in February and March 2017 and that these included members of Gülen-related organizations and Kurdish activists and leftists, such as members of the Revolutionary People's Liberation Party/Front (DHKP-C) and the Marxist-Leninist Communist Party of Turkey (TKPM-L). One list, under the heading of 'the Fethullah Gülen Terrorist Organization/Parallel State Organization (FETÖ/PDY) in the Federal Republic of Germany', apparently included approximately 300 names of people who were close to the Gülen-inspired *Hizmet* movement. The German police immediately notified everyone on the list and advised them not to travel to Turkey or to visit any Turkish consulates.[8]

The PKK – both target and perpetuator of transnational repression

The Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) has undoubtedly been a target of transnational repression by the Turkish state, and the violent conflict between the two entities has extended into the diaspora. The PKK has also at various points in its history resorted to authoritarian strategies and exercised transnational repression in the diaspora. This has changed over time, especially in relation to levels of repression in Turkey; for example, during the 2013–15 peace process, the PKK shifted its strategy in the diaspora in an attempt to 'normalize' and reach out to public officials. Furthermore, since 2011, the conflict in Syria, the fight between PKK-linked factions and ISIL, and the extension of the PKK into northern Syria, including the setting up of the quasi-state of Rojava, have also changed the dynamics in the diaspora and given more legitimacy to Syrian-based organizations affiliated with the PKK. There has also been a shift in ideological orientation in the PKK towards principles of 'democratic consociationalism'.[9]

Nevertheless, at some points the PKK, like the Turkish state, has used violence and intimidation against rival organizations in the diaspora, including against the more moderate social democratic KOMKAR group, which it saw as a competitor. In fact, it assassinated Kurdish members of KOMKAR in Sweden in the 1980s and in Germany in the 1990s (Adamson 2013: 80; Baser 2015: 136). In the diaspora, the PKK sought to dominate large areas of civic life and to assert hegemony over local and cultural institutions. For example, in London it managed to dominate several local Kurdish institutions, which more apolitical Kurds had previously run. The PKK periodically used intimidation and threats to secure the support of the community. For example, Sözer and Yilmaz (2016: 8) recounted one restaurant owner saying that,

> They [the PKK] wanted to take my son to the Iraqi mountains. I strongly opposed the idea. As a result, one day the PKK raided my restaurants and beat both my employees and me … my sister was not as lucky as I was. The PKK took her son to the mountains, and he was killed in an armed conflict.

There are also reports of the PKK setting fire to restaurants in London. One individual related that, after refusing to pay money to the PKK, 'they beat me right in front of my employees. They broke four of my bones. After all that, I did not give a dime and instead I moved my factory to another European country' (Sözer and Yilmaz 2016: 8). Many in the community were especially vulnerable because they had refugee or questionable status or were working illegally in the UK, and thus were hesitant to go to the authorities with their concerns. In Germany, it has been estimated that almost 70 per cent of all incidents of extortion that took place in the 1990s were connected with the PKK. In the Netherlands, extortion was used regularly against Kurdish-owned pizza parlours (Adamson 2013). There are also reports of the PKK using the legal system in Britain to exercise control over the local community, by finding ways to sue local businesses for legal infractions if they failed to give enough money to the organization (Sözer and Yilmaz 2016).

Another way of putting pressure on the local community was via trade in illicit substances. In London, the PKK managed to gain hegemony over the local drugs trade and a symbiotic relationship formed between it and local gangs (Sözer and Yilmaz 2016). These dynamics meant that the Kurdish community in London was at times caught between the PKK and the local police and British intelligence services, whose activities were shaped in part by Britain's relationship with Turkey or wider forces such as the global war on terror. Similar situations were experienced in other European states. Kurds were told that they could engage with the local Kurdish community, but not the PKK. In effect, however, the PKK had gained a strong degree of hegemony over the community and it became difficult for people to disentangle themselves from some of its activities (Sentas 2016).

More broadly, despite its ideology having changed over time, the level of centralization in the PKK has at times resembled a form of transnational authoritarianism. It was at its most extreme in the 1980s and 1990s, but the PKK is still centrally organized and symbolically allied to its imprisoned leader, Abdullah Öcalan, who remains the primary figurehead for the PKK-centred Kurdish movement. Some have argued that the PKK 'consciously fosters a Stalin-like personality cult around its leader' (White 2000: 136). Indeed, Öcalan's role in the Kurdish movement is so great that some people speak of the *Apocular* diaspora (White 2015: 3).[10] While the PKK has changed its ideology over time – it has been Marxist-Leninist and separatist; it has focused on human rights and cultural autonomy; and it has espoused localism and democratic confederalism – the focus on Öcalan has remained constant.

State and non-state transnational repression: the Sri Lankan case

Sri Lanka offers another example of politics in the diaspora characterized by state and non-state transnational repression. Its government, like Turkey's, fought a civil war with an armed separatist organization, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). Although the conflict ended with the LTTE's military defeat in 2009, the relationship between Sri Lanka and 'its' diaspora continues to be heavily securitized, even in the post-conflict period.[11] As Guyot (2017: 4) notes, 'after its victory, the Sri Lankan

regime identified the diaspora as the new existential threat the country faced.' Indeed, the Sri Lankan defence minister vowed to seize international assets belonging to the Tamil Tigers and to 'eradicate the LTTE from the entire world' (Sentas 2012: 97).

According to reports, the Sri Lankan government has engaged in the direct surveillance of its diaspora abroad. Tamils in the United Kingdom and elsewhere have been subjected to the same kind of surveillance as those in the predominantly Tamil areas of Sri Lanka. People have been presented with photographs of themselves or of members of their family taken by the Sri Lankan security forces at Tamil protests or commemorative gatherings in the diaspora, and some UK Tamil organizations have reacted to this by banning cameras at events to ensure the safety of participants.[12] Others have noted that the Sri Lankan authorities 'take a strong interest in the activities of the Tamil diaspora in the UK and many returning to Sri Lanka … have been tortured and interrogated about their activities and contacts in the UK'.[13] Tamils abroad – even after 2009 – faced problems when they sought to return to Sri Lanka, which suggests that surveillance, intelligence gathering and intelligence sharing occurs in the diaspora.[14] Additional reports claim that abductions in Sri Lanka target the families of diaspora activists, and that intermediaries based in the diaspora assist the Sri Lankan government in gathering relevant intelligence (TamilNet 2015).

An additional means of exerting control over the diaspora has been through the use of proscription. Throughout the duration of the conflict, Sri Lanka put pressure on Western governments to ban the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). The UK designated it a terrorist organization in 2001 and forced it to shut down its London office; the European Union and Canada did so in 2006 (Nadarajah and Sriskandarajah 2005; Orjuela 2011). Even after the armed conflict ended, the Sri Lankan state continued to accuse diasporic organizations of being terrorist groups and used this to justify maintaining domestic anti-terror laws in Sri Lanka (Guyot 2017: 4). As Sentas (2012: 111) put it, the use of proscription 'facilitates a legal framework in which the counter-insurgency logic of the front is embedded in the criminal justice system transnationally'. Sri Lankan foreign-service officers and anti-LTTE civil-society organizations in the diaspora, such as Sinhala nationalist groups (Orjuela 2008: 443), were among those lobbying for proscription. Sri Lankan officials were outspoken in urging governments in Europe and elsewhere to ban the LTTE, noting that 'it is not something the Government of Sri Lanka can do on European soil, but must necessarily be initiated by the respective governments themselves' (Aryasinha 2008: 28). By lobbying to brand the LTTE a 'terrorist organization', the Sri Lankan state triggered the apparatuses of the global war on terror, including national and international legislation, thus demonstrating the power that rests in the ability to deploy the language of terrorism (Nadarajah and Sriskandarajah 2005).

The LTTE: both target and perpetrator of transnational repression

The Sri Lankan state targeted the LTTE globally but the organization itself also at times wielded transnational repression within the diaspora. Like the PKK, the LTTE had a centralized structure and, by managing to capture and politicize civic life and

institutions, it exerted a great deal of control in the diaspora (Fair 2005; Orjuela 2008: 441). It used authoritarian-like strategies to secure internal hegemony and to marginalize rival Tamil groups, such as the Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization (TELO), the People's Liberation Organization of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE) or the Eelam People's Democratic Party (EPDF) (Gazagne and Sanchez-Cacidedo 2015: 4; McDowell 2005). The LTTE's organizational structure placed the political wing of the organization below its military wing and there was a significant personality cult around its leader Velupillai Prabhakaran, who was killed in 2009. While many Tamils hailed him as a hero, Prabhakaran's critics described him as 'a street thug with a background specializing in extortion and smuggling who developed political ambitions in the early 1970s' (Thompson 2008, cited in Orjuela 2011: 123).

At the height of the conflict in Sri Lanka, the LTTE kept a computer database and used information from its supporters to keep track of and closely follow the movements of individuals in the diaspora (Becker 2006: 12). At the time, Human Rights Watch recorded that 'Tamils in the West have been subject to death threats, beatings, property damage, smear campaigns, fabricated criminal charges, and even murder as a consequence of dissent' (Becker 2006: 1). For example, in 2005 several German Tamils were threatened, attacked and severely beaten after organizing an event in honour of a Tamil whom the LTTE had allegedly assassinated in Sri Lanka. In another prominent case, assailants beat a Tamil journalist with baseball bats in Toronto for having written articles that were critical of the LTTE. There has also been at least one assassination in the diaspora; Sabaratnam Sabalingam, who was on the verge of publishing an anti-LTTE book, was killed in Paris in 1994. In addition, prominent Tamils in Australia and London received death threats in 2005. Although the number of overtly violent incidents has been relatively low, they nonetheless create a climate of uncertainty, intimidation and fear in the diaspora (Becker 2006: 14–20, 33) Thus, Tamils in the diaspora suffered from transnational repression not only from a state but also from a non-state entity with a global reach. As one Tamil community activist in Toronto explained (Becker 2006: 1).

> Ninety per cent of people, even if they don't support the LTTE, they are scared. The killing doesn't just happen back home in Sri Lanka. It happens in Paris, in Canada. They burned the library, they broke the legs of DBS Jeyaraj. They tried to stop the CTBC radio from organizing. A journalist was killed in Paris. The threat is not only in Sri Lanka. It's everywhere, all over the world.

According to Human Rights Watch (Becker 2006), the LTTE sometimes used threats to family members and relatives as a means of controlling the diaspora. Numerous cases have been documented of individuals speaking out in the diaspora, only to have their family in Sri Lanka suffer harassment and intimidation (Becker 2006: 19–20). Like the PKK, the LTTE attempted to exercise hegemony in the diaspora by controlling a range of civic organizations, including NGOs and Hindu temples. Its attempts to control religious institutions abroad bear some resemblance to the Turkish state's use of the *Diyanet* to control mosques in its diaspora – although the

LTTE's primary aim was to use temples as fundraising sites. As Orjuela (2011: 131) notes, 'it was an open secret that the LTTE was behind the greater part of Tamil organizations and activities in the diaspora, while political initiatives taken outside of the control of the LTTE were opposed or silenced.' In cities such as London, Toronto and Paris, 'the LTTE and its supporters [took over and monopolized] social structures, from refugee relief in the 1980s to newspapers, shops and temples' (Becker 2006: 14).

In addition, the LTTE at times used extortionist tactics to force people in the diaspora to pay up to $2000 and businesses between $10,000 and $100,000 (Becker 2006: 25ff). La (2004: 379) noted that it 'developed a system to extract remittances in Canada by exploiting transnational social ties. They threaten migrants about the security of relatives or property in Sri Lanka.' There are also accounts of the LTTE in Sri Lanka forcing returnees or visitors from the diaspora to pay according to how much time they had spent in the West (for example, a dollar or pound a day) and, in a non-state version of 'passport harassment', confiscating their passports and not allowing them to leave again until they had paid up (Becker 2006: 2).

Diasporic LTTE politics and Tamil gang violence were implicated in at least 12 deaths in London since 2000. A police operation in 2007 estimated that Tamil gangs engaging in extortionist practices against local businesses accounted for £70 million worth of credit card fraud. Similar patterns in Toronto, Paris and Oslo showed that there was an 'overlap between the techniques used by the Tigers in Sri Lanka and the gangs' (Orjuela 2011: 130). Because many people in the Tamil community are marginalized, or fear for their legal status, such activity often took place unnoticed and its effects were largely felt within the Tamil diaspora itself. Thus, the Tamil diaspora came under pressure from both the LTTE activities and the lobbying of the Sri Lankan state, which at times resulted in a criminalization of the entire Tamil community (Brun and Van Hear 2012; Nadarajah and Sriskandarajah 2005; Orjuela 2011; Sentas 2012).

Conclusion

I have argued that diaspora engagement by both state and non-state actors can be characterized by long-distance authoritarianism and transnational repression. The brief case studies above suggest that non-state organizations are as capable as states of including transnational repression in their repertoires of diaspora engagement. Evidence from elsewhere (such as Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) mobilization in the diaspora during the Kosovo conflict), suggests that non-state actors can include long-distance authoritarianism among their 'diaspora engagement' strategies. This is especially likely among those involved in armed conflict in the homeland, which is hardly surprising given the propensity of such organizations to use violence and repression to achieve their aims. Nevertheless, it raises broader questions about the possibilities for other forms of 'diasporic authoritarianism' to emerge from non-state actors operating transnationally.

While the authoritarian practices of non-state organizations resemble the transnational authoritarian practices of states in some ways, they also differ in other respects. For example, non-state actors are unlikely to have the same resources and infrastructure as a state with which to monitor and repress populations. At the same

time, a number of non-state organizations with 'diaspora engagement' policies do mimic states in a number of respects. Armed groups that seek to establish a state of their own often have sophisticated structures of 'rebel governance' (Arjona 2016; Arjona et al. 2015; Mampilly 2011) that can be used to control populations at home and abroad. These include structures of diplomacy and welfare, as well as internal security apparatuses that can be utilized for the surveillance, repression and policing of 'their' diaspora populations.

At the very least, raising the issue of non-state authoritarianism opens up a space for examining the complexity of intra-diasporic dynamics and the multiple ways in which diaspora politics can create a 'globalization of domestic politics', including a globalization of authoritarianism (Cooley and Heathershaw 2017; Koslowski 2006; Lyons and Mandaville 2010). Such an approach also has important policy implications. It shows how global and local factors can become intertwined in particular contexts and the policy conundrums this creates at different levels – from the micro-level of local policing, to the national level of managing bilateral relations, where such processes connect with broader global narratives around terrorism, conflict and transitional justice. Finally, the analysis points to the multiple stresses to which many 'ordinary' members of diasporic populations may be subject, especially in cases where they are required to navigate their way through a complex combination of transnational repression from both state and non-state actors, as well as – in some cases – marginalization and securitization in their adopted home.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1. Moss (2016) introduced the concept of 'transnational repression'. In this article, I build on her seminal work, as well as on that of Cooley and Heathershaw (2017), Glasius (2018a, 2018b) and Lewis (2015). See also Garvey (1980) and Shain (1989).
2. Such strategies are not limited to authoritarian states. In 2011, the United States killed three of its citizens with an extraterritorial drone, including Anwar al-Awlaki, a Muslim cleric and senior operative in al-Qaeda in Yemen who had been born in New Mexico and retained his US citizenship (Mazetti et al. 2013). Moreover, as Moss (2018) reminds us, much of the surveillance equipment that authoritarian states use to spy on their citizens in the diaspora originates from Western governments.
3. See the literature on rebel governance (Arjona 2016; Arjona et al. 2015; Mampilly 2011; Staniland 2014), rebel diplomacy (Huang 2016) and governments-in-exile (Shain 1991, 2010).

4. Some of this literature focuses on how conflict actors deploy social-movement strategies (Adamson 2005a, 2013; Koinova 2013) and there is also a large body of work on diasporas as conflict-perpetuators and 'peace-wreckers' (Smith and Stares 2007).

5. See, for example, the Polity IV Project: http://www.systemicpeace.org/polityproject.html as well as the extensive literature on authoritarianism in political science (Cheibub et al. 2010; Gasiorowski 1996; Geddes et al. 2014; Linz 2000).

6. On grounded theory and inductive theory-building, see Glaser and Strauss (2017).

7. The figures come from the Turkish Ministry of Education and Turkish Parliament (TBMM) as cited in Østergaard-Nielson (2003: 108). A more recent count of mosques engaging *Diyanet* imams is 800 (Zeit Online 2017a).

8. See various *Die Zeit* articles, including (Zeit Online 2017a, 2017b, 2017c). See also Yaş (2017). Kurdish news sources claim that, unlike those on the Gülen-linked lists, the German authorities did not notify those on the Kurdish lists.

9. See Biehl (2012) and Leezenberg (2016).

10. Apo is Abdullah Öcalan's nickname; the term *Apocular* is a Turkish construction meaning 'those who follow Apo'.

11. The notion of who constitutes a 'diaspora' is always political and contested. Sinhalese and Tamils often do not consider themselves to be part of the same diaspora, just as Turks and Kurds may identify as being part of different diasporas. For a discussion on diasporas as social constructions, see Adamson (2012). For the role of sending state policies in generating multiple diasporas and shaping intra-diasporic politics, see Adamson (2019). I thank an anonymous reviewer for emphasizing this point.

12. Asylum Research Centre (2016: 5) citing ITJP Sri Lanka (2015: 13, 92).

13. Asylum Research Centre (2016: 6) citing Freedom from Torture (2015: 9).

14. Various corroborations of these allegations exist, see for example Miller (2013).

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