

Introduction

The highly motivated Koreans and Vietnamese toiling hard to become prosperous in bustling Los Angeles, the haggard Palestinians living in dreary refugee camps near Beirut and Amman, the beleaguered Turks dwelling in cramped apartments in Berlin, and the frustrated Russians in Estonia all have much in common. All of them, along with Indians, Chinese, Japanese, Africans, African-Americans, Jews, Palestinians, Greeks, Gypsies, Romanians, Poles, Kurds, Armenians, and numerous other groups permanently residing outside of their countries of origin, but maintaining contacts with people back in their old homelands, are members of ethno-national diasporas.

Until the late twentieth century, wherever possible, and particularly when physical appearance, basic mores, innate habits, and linguistic proficiency permitted, many members of such groups tried hard to conceal their ethno-national origins. Furthermore, they were inclined to minimize the importance of their contacts with their countries of origin (usually, and hereafter, termed *homelands*), and they did not publicize their membership in organizations serving their groups and their homelands. Such patterns of behavior were related to a desire prevalent among members of such groups to assimilate, acculturate, or at least integrate into their countries of settlement (usually, and hereafter, referred to as *host countries*).

In tandem, whether deliberately or by default, both democratic and non-democratic host societies and governments largely ignored most of these ethno-national diaspora groups. In certain cases, such societies and governments questioned the endurance capability of diasporas in general, as well as that of the diaspora groups residing in the states that those

societies controlled in particular. Such societies and governments tended to minimize diasporas' cultural, social, political, and economic vitality and significance. Similarly, they ignored the diasporas' various roles in host societies and their contributions to those societies. The host societies, again consciously or unintentionally, overlooked the wider domestic, regional, and global political implications of the existence of such diasporas in their midst. Yet, although various host societies and governments viewed the presence of ethno-national diasporas as a marginal and temporary phenomenon, they often regarded them as actually and potentially menacing and therefore undesirable. Consequently, host societies and governments imposed social, political, and economic strictures and pressures on immigrants who were allowed to settle permanently in those countries. The purpose of such pressures was to compel the immigrants to assimilate, to accept all prevailing social, political, and economic norms, to fully integrate into the host societies, or else to leave.

It was not only host societies and governments that held such disparaging views about diasporas' endurance and demonstrated such rancorous attitudes toward them. Contrary to some widely held notions, and despite public statements to the contrary, homeland societies and governments also demonstrated either indifferent or ambiguous attitudes toward "their" diasporas. Some homelands, such as Turkey and Greece, regarded the members of their diaspora communities as their dedicated agents in the host countries where they resided. During certain periods, some homelands, such as Ireland and Israel, viewed their diasporans as defectors or even traitors. Consequently, such societies and governments often turned a deaf ear to any pleas for help from their diaspora communities.

Usually, social and political studies focus on "real-world" developments. Hence it is not entirely surprising that until the 1970s, except for some narrowly focused studies, mainly on specific diasporas' identities, diasporas' lobbying on behalf of their homelands, and diasporans' successful or failed attempts at assimilation and integration in host countries, many academics also paid little attention to the diaspora phenomenon or to specific diasporas. In fact, like many other issues pertaining to ethnicity and to ethnic groups, ethno-national diasporism was regarded as unworthy of serious consideration and in-depth study (Armstrong 1976, p. 393). Moreover, like the politicians and their followers who espoused a variety of philosophical and ideological approaches concerning such entities – mainly ideas on nationalism and neo-nationalism, Marxism and neo-Marxism, as well as liberalism and

neo-liberalism – scholars regarded those social-political formations as too anachronistic, transient, and marginal to merit serious analysis. Certain analyses of the phenomenon were predicated on normative assumptions based on those various ideologies. The result was that some observers not only predicted an unavoidable gradual disappearance of such groups but also went so far as to recommend either complete assimilation of their members or a return to their homelands. Basing their opinions on the results of purportedly sound theoretical and empirical analyses, other scholars considered the issue of ethno-national diasporism as uninteresting.

Such political positions, analyses, predictions, and recommendations notwithstanding, over the past two decades the total number of established diasporas and the numbers of their members have increased conspicuously. Moreover, individuals and families belonging to those ethno-national entities often have altered their previous assimilationist, integrationist, or acculturationist proclivities. Increasingly, Palestinians, Kurds, Turks, Moroccans, Croats, Poles, and many others who permanently reside outside their homelands do not conceal their ethno-national origins and affiliations. Moreover, because of their growing self-confidence and assertiveness, many diasporans proudly maintain their ethno-national identity, retain their homeland citizenship, openly identify as members of diaspora organizations, and are not reluctant to act publicly on behalf of their homelands and dispersed co-ethnics.

Simultaneously with recent recurring incidents of racist and xenophobic outbursts in some societies directed at foreigners and “others” in general, and at members of ethno-national diasporas in particular, there are greater numbers of host societies in which previously held negative or skeptical views are being modified or are waning. In such host countries there have emerged new, mutually reinforcing forces and processes. As a result of the reinvigoration and new assertiveness of ethnic minorities and of ethno-national diasporas, increasing numbers of host societies are altering their previous attitudes of rejection and indifference toward the others in their midst.

Again not surprisingly, in view of such developments, intellectuals, writers, journalists, and politicians also are increasingly becoming aware of the phenomenon and are acknowledging the permanence of diasporas. Some observers have even recognized diasporas’ positive cultural and economic contributions to host societies. Gradually and cautiously, more host societies and their governments are accepting diaspora members’

affiliations as legitimate, or at least as tolerable. In turn, these new, more favorable attitudes are further enhancing diasporans' self-confidence and assertiveness. Moreover, in some host countries, such as the United States, Canada, Britain, and Sweden, and in certain liberal circles in other Western societies, membership in such entities has even been regarded as exciting, intriguing, and advantageous. In those countries, membership and participation in diaspora activities are no longer deemed to be major obstacles on the way to integration, affluence, and influence. Again as noted, such trends notwithstanding, in the same host countries there is still racism directed at these groups.

These new dispositions and attitudes further reinforce the processes whereby wider social segments in democratic host societies are becoming more receptive to ethnic pluralism, albeit not always multiculturalism, and to diasporas. In short, increasingly diasporas are being included in the pluralist or multicultural conceptual frameworks and in the practical arrangements that are emerging in some Western democracies for the purpose of dealing with this phenomenon and its various implications. It is important to note that to some extent the diaspora members are contributing to these new trends. In fact, the very presence of such ethno-national diasporas and the cultural, social, political, and economic issues they raise are increasingly moving toward center stage in societal and political arenas. Yet, as has been noted, just as with their attitudes toward non-immigrant indigenous ethnic minorities, dominant ethnic groups still have difficulties in actually altering their basic hostile attitudes and behavior toward ethno-national diasporas. This probably is connected to the dominant groups' adamant determination to avoid losing control over what they regard as their sovereignty in their homelands and nation-states.

The newly found confidence and assertiveness among members of diasporas, on the one hand, and the greater tolerance shown by host governments and societies toward diaspora members, on the other, have generated animated discussions among politicians, academics, and laypeople. These debates usually have been conducted either in the context of general deliberations about trans-statism (in this context, meaning involvement of peoples of the same national origin, but living in various states or countries), trans-nationalism (here meaning involvement of peoples of different national origins), nationalism, and ethnicity or specifically in the context of diasporism and diasporas. Until the late 1980s, few analytical and theoretical publications had focused on the diaspora phenomenon, but since the mid-1990s the study of ethnic

diasporism and diasporas has proliferated spectacularly. Furthermore, whereas previously the four notable exceptions to the dearth of theoretical publications on this issue were the influential article by Armstrong (1976), the books by Seton-Watson (1977) and Bertelsen (1980), and our edited volume, which probably was the first systematic analytical and theoretical collection on the subject (Sheffer 1986a), today books, articles, and studies on this and related issues are abundant. The numerous references to “diasporism” and “diasporas” in recent publications on ethnography, anthropology, ethnicity, sociology, political theory, comparative politics, international relations, globalization, and transnationalism, as well as the numerous seminars, conferences, study groups, and grants offered by governments, municipalities, universities, and research institutes, all attest to the fact that interest in these groups will only continue to increase.

Nevertheless, despite the current increase in attention to ethno-national diasporas, the study of these groups is still in its early stages. In this vein, as I have argued since the mid-1980s, the dramatic growth of diasporas and the intensification of their activities in the context of the current chaotic world order – which has been attributed in part to ethnic unrest and diasporas’ militancy (Nye 1993; Posen 1993; Brown 1993; Gurr and Harff 1994) – warrant additional theoretical and comparative investigations in the effort to provide clarification and explanation of this increasingly important phenomenon.

The need for further in-depth studies of diasporism and diasporas is also emphasized by the recent attitudinal and practical changes toward diaspora politics, coupled with new perspectives on certain interrelated issues that substantially affect diasporas. Among other factors are the simultaneous processes of globalization and localization, regionalization, the waning of nationalism, the weakening of both the nation-state and the state, increasing international migration, migration cycles, and the roles of religion and religious fundamentalism in the survival and revival of ethnic minorities and diasporas (Smith 1999).

These new trends have resulted in a strong emphasis on study of the anthropological, cultural, social, and economic aspects of ethnicity and of ethno-national diasporas. However, as noted, there has been a noticeable lack of in-depth studies and comprehensive theoretical and comparative discussion of the political dimension of the diaspora phenomenon. Thus, the main purpose of this volume, which focuses on the general theoretical and analytical aspects of the politics of ethno-national diasporas, is to fill in that gap.

On the basis of empirical, analytical, and theoretical insights, this book proposes that despite some unique features of each diaspora, there are also profound similarities among those entities that warrant further discussion that will result in some generalizations. Therefore, it does not offer descriptions or analyses of specific cases. Various cases will be discussed briefly only as illustrations and to provide supportive evidence for the general analytical, comparative, and theoretical observations about diasporas. Similarly, this book does not offer normative or prescriptive solutions for problems created by the presence of ethno-national diasporas in host countries.

The fact that ethno-national diasporas exist and function in highly intricate environments raises multiple questions that this book will endeavor to answer. The following are very condensed formulations of the major questions and issues that will be examined in the chapters herein:

- Is the ethno-national diaspora a perennial phenomenon, or modern?
- Has the nature of ethno-national diasporas changed over the past two centuries?
- Is the identity of diaspora members of an essentialist, instrumental, or constructed nature?
- What are the roles of collectives, individuals, and environmental factors in diasporas' formation, persistence, and behavior?
- What are the main characteristics of contemporary ethno-national diasporas?
- Are all diasporas of the same type?
- Are these stable and homogeneous, or unsteady and hybrid formations?
- What are the organizational structures within diasporas, and what are the strategies and tactics they employ?
- What are the functions of these organizations and their contributions to homelands, host countries, and the emerging global society?
- Can diasporas inflict substantial damage on their hosts and homelands?
- And finally, are these groups precursors of post-modern, post-national, and trans-state social and political systems?

It is believed that the answers to this rather long list of questions will substantiate the main thesis of this book concerning these people who do their utmost to be “at home abroad.” Succinctly, the main thesis of this book is that

ethno-national diasporism and diasporas do not constitute a recent, modern phenomenon. Rather, this is a perennial phenomenon. Essential aspects of this phenomenon are the endless cultural, social, economic, and especially political struggles of those dispersed ethnic groups, permanently residing in host countries away from their homelands, to maintain their distinctive identities and connections with their homelands and other dispersed groups from the same nations. These are neither “imagined” nor “invented” communities. Their identities are intricate combinations of primordial, psychological/mythical, and instrumental elements. These identities may undergo certain adaptations to changing circumstances, yet they do not lose their core characteristics. The diasporans’ struggle for survival is waged while they do their utmost to feel at home in their host countries, which in many instances demonstrate hostility toward them. And they do survive, despite the fact that their homelands, too, have inherently ambiguous attitudes toward them.

I

Primary Questions and Hypotheses

Clarification of Terms

In view of the noticeable confusion concerning the positions of ethno-national diasporas in the current global, regional, and local cultural, economic, and political arenas, there is a need to clarify some terms, to elaborate the main questions briefly outlined in the Introduction, and to present some primary hypotheses concerning the diaspora phenomenon.

As a first step in our general analysis of the ethno-national diaspora phenomenon, a step that is intended to promote an understanding of its actual and theoretical meanings and that will put special emphasis on the nature of diaspora politics, three terms should be clarified – “diaspora,” “diasporism,” and “diasporic.” In passing, here it should be noted that, as the editor of the field’s journal, *Diaspora*, mentions in an article on the meaning and definition of the phenomenon (Tololyan 1996), the use of the plural form of “diaspora” – “diasporas” – is recent. It can be found in only a few dictionaries. In the same vein, most electronic spellers do not recognize that plural form.

Clarification of these three terms is needed especially because journalists and academics have indiscriminately applied them to a wide variety of social-political phenomena and institutions (Safran 1991; Cohen 1997). Such multiple usages of these terms have led to much confusion about their meanings. This confusion is due in part to a traditional and prevalent misunderstanding and misapplication of the term “diaspora” itself. Thus, until the late 1960s, the *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* did not mention the term “diaspora” at all (Tololyan 1996). Similarly, laypeople and experts alike have related, and still relate,

this term only to or mainly to the Jewish exile existence in closed, frequently ghetto-like communities that have persisted outside the Holy Land. Thus, for example, as late as 1975, *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary* defined the term "diaspora" as "the settling of scattered colonies of Jews outside Palestine after the Babylonian exile," as "the area outside Palestine settled by Jews," as "the Jews living outside Palestine or modern Israel," and as "Migration: the great black diaspora to the cities of the North and West in the 1940s and 1950s." Until its 1993 edition, the *New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, too, defined the term as "the dispersion of the Jews among the Gentile nations" and as "all those Jews who live outside the biblical land of Israel." Yet for the first time in its long history, in that edition the dictionary added that the term also refers to "the situation of people living outside their traditional homeland." That the term "diaspora" would be equated with the dispersed Jewish people is, of course, not entirely surprising. It is related to the Jewish diaspora's historical persistence despite extreme tribulations and to its continuous high visibility, at times even contrary to the interests and wishes of its members.

Actually, the term "diaspora" had had a wider meaning than merely the Jewish exile, a meaning that is less well known. Consider the Greek origin of the term "diaspora": *speiro* = to sow, *dia* = over. Among those who are aware of the origin of the term, it is widely believed that the term first appeared in the Greek translation of the book of Deuteronomy in the Old Testament, with reference to the situation of the Jewish people – "Thou shalt be a diaspora in all kingdoms of the earth" (Deut. 28, 25). Yet the term had also been used by Thucydides in his *History of the Peloponnesian War* (II, 27) to describe the dispersal of the Aeginetans. Thus, already at a very early period, the term had been applied to two of the oldest ethno-national diasporas – the Jewish and the Greek – that had been established outside of their homelands as a result of both voluntary and forced migrations.

Accordingly, to begin clarifying the current confusion about the term and to facilitate an in-depth discussion of the ethno-national diaspora phenomenon, at this point it is preliminarily posited that

an ethno-national diaspora is a social-political formation, created as a result of either voluntary or forced migration, whose members regard themselves as of the same ethno-national origin and who permanently reside as minorities in one or several host countries. Members of such entities maintain regular or occasional contacts with what they regard as their homelands and with individuals and groups

of the same background residing in other host countries. Based on aggregate decisions to settle permanently in host countries, but to maintain a common identity, diasporans identify as such, showing solidarity with their group and their entire nation, and they organize and are active in the cultural, social, economic, and political spheres. Among their various activities, members of such diasporas establish trans-state networks that reflect complex relationships among the diasporas, their host countries, their homelands, and international actors.

As will be shown in Chapter 4, at the beginning of this millennium, many millions of Greeks, Armenians, Gypsies, Jews, African-Americans, Chinese, Japanese, and Kurds, who have more recently been joined by Koreans, Palestinians, Russians, Pakistanis, Moroccans, Vietnamese, Slovaks, Mexicans, Colombians, and numerous other groups, fit this initial characterization of ethno-national diasporas. This profile will be elaborated and explained in greater detail in Chapter 3.

Meanwhile, for a number of reasons, throughout this book the terms “diaspora,” “diasporic,” and “diasporism” are often prefaced by the hyphenated term “ethno-national.” The first reason for this usage pertains to the intention to limit the discussion here to a relatively specific category of social and political formations. Such distinction is needed because “diaspora” has become a traveling term. Hence this hyphenated term is necessary in order to distinguish as clearly as possible ethno-national diasporas from various other groups that have been regarded as being very similar, even identical. Furthermore, this term is needed because the general public, journalists, anthropologists, sociologists, and political scientists have applied the term “diaspora” to various trans-national formations espousing what has been termed “deterritorialized identities” – that is, to groups whose hybrid identities, orientations, and loyalties are not connected to any given territory that is regarded as their exclusive homeland (Glick Schiller et al. 1992; Basch, Glick Schiller, and Szanton Blanc 1994; Kearney 1995, pp. 526–7; Guarnizo and Smith 1998).

In this vein, the term “diaspora” has been applied to a variety of formations: to members of trans-national groups adhering to the same ideology, such as communism; to members of “clashing civilizations” (Huntington 1993); to members of “pan-diasporas,” like the Muslims (Yadlin 1998), the Asian-Americans, the Arab-Americans, and the Latinos worldwide who dwell outside their homelands; and to members of trans-national religious denominations and universal churches, such