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Introduction

This book draws our attention to the concept of diaspora and investigates it both theoretically and empirically. It analyses how diasporas can translate, decolonise and pierce exclusive nationalisms. As such, it provides a discussion of what a theory of diaspora for our global age should prioritise, revealing its transformative and far-reaching potential. My thinking through of diaspora is unashamedly concerned with diaspora as an analyst category rather than being an examination of how actors deploy it strategically and discursively to gain political advantage. If diaspora is to have an analytical purchase, it should be employed when illuminating a particular and specific angle of migration or migrancy. It should valorise and inquire into a particular aspect of migration. The aspect I defend in this book is how diasporas do translation and decolonisation.

Since the first decade of twenty-first century, we have seen nativist movements and anti-immigration sentiments becoming more mainstream and alarmingly moving to centre-stage. There has been a major shift, especially in the Global North, including from certain sections of the left (Bloomfield 2020; Mondon and Winter 2019; Shilliam 2020). Nativists are reacting not only to economic globalisation, but also to racial, cultural and religious diversity, equality and multiculturalism at home. The reactions are related: they are both to do with feelings of loss of sovereignty and control. These two types of loss of sovereignty and control – one globally and one at home – are also brought together through 'diaspora'. Diaspora is deeply interlinked with sovereignty, belonging and transnationalism, and also ideologies and sentiments of 'imperialistic abroad and xenophobic at home' (Venuti 1995: 23).

Many nativist movements and anti-immigration sentiments, current and past, show a longing for the good old times when the Global North set the rules of the international order, held the upper hand in world trade and was able to migrate and settle in others' lands, often

through the use of brutal force. Longing is clear and visible in the slogans of many of the movements in the Global North: 'Make the Netherlands Great Again' (Wilder's slogan); 'Austria First' (the campaign message of Hofer's Freedom Party); 'Putting the "Great" Back into Great Britain' (the UKIP Manifesto slogan); 'Make America Great Again' (Trump's 2020 slogan); and 'Take Back Control' (the Leave campaign during Brexit). A sense of insecurity and anxiety about declining privileges and a feeling of victimhood, paradoxically combined with a sense of superiority and exceptionalism (Melville 2020) underwrite the recent nativist movements, but also those that preceded them. However, it would be a mistake to narrowly conceive such current, past and also future nativisms and movements in the Global North as being limited to the crisis on new migrations – notwithstanding their importance. Such sentiments are in fact often closely linked to resentments towards settled diasporas of colour in the Global North. Anxieties about loss of control and sovereignty are deeply intertwined with existing diasporas of colour in the Global North and the decolonisations and translations they bring – the central themes of this book.

Empires have governed various populations, myriad ethnic, religious and cultural groups. Through plantations, indenture, colonisation, expansion, settlements, slavery and other forms of domination and movements of peoples, empires have been instigators of diasporas. Many of today's diasporas were made in and by recent empires, including the collapse of them and/or the nationalist projects that followed them – the Ottoman Empire (e.g. Kurdish and Armenian diasporas); the Austro-Hungarian Empire (Slavic and Jewish diasporas); the British Empire (Afro-Caribbean and South-Asian diasporas); and the French Empire (Arab diaspora). Many of today's diasporas are thus an outcome of historic relationships arising out of subordination and colonisation, of expansion and retraction of empires. Much recent diaspora literature and the ever-expanding case studies of diaspora, however, examine diaspora within the confines of nation-states. Diaspora is understood as

emerging out of 'ethno-political' struggles within nation-states, and often told from a perspective of push factors. This has had consequences for diaspora research, as it has brought limitations to understandings of diaspora. The links between empire and diaspora are too often ignored, and the transnational dimensions of diaspora research are curtailed. As such, the temporal and spatial boundaries and imaginations of diaspora research are capped.

Diaspora research has often ended up being too tightly hemmed into the history, sources and understandings of the nation-state. Yet today's diasporas are products of empires as much as of nation-states. Much of the literature on the case studies of diaspora and diaspora theorising at times ends up producing methodologically nationalist discourses and examinations. They often focus on case studies, as identified by Faist (2010: 25), without necessarily informing how the case study can expand or challenge the way we have conceptualised diaspora. Ironically, this occurs despite the close affinity diaspora has with the literature on transnationalism. As the links between empire and diaspora are ignored, the consequences of expansions and retractions are erased. Nation-state centric approaches to diaspora multiply. Diaspora should instead be understood as inscribed and entangled in a series of historical and political processes associated with empire and expansion – including, of course, nationalist and ethno-political responses to these. Ethno-political struggles and diasporisation – that is, their spilling over into other places – are a postcolonial phenomenon. Even if we take an example like the Kurds, which typically is constructed within nation-centric discourses, it is not possible to understand Kurds and the Kurdish diaspora without an awareness of the role of the Ottoman, French and British empires, and their reorganisation of the borders and consolidation of populations and religious and ethnic allegiances in the Middle East. Nor can a perspective that ignores empire place Kurdish diaspora and its activities within a Global South perspective, or identify and unpack Kurdish indigenous and decolonial discourses arising in diaspora – approaches I have been able to utilise. Instead

region-centric, nation-state and security-dominated perspectives continue to dominate the field. Such a turn to empire is also needed to uncover the imperialist origins of the field of Kurdish studies, which were forged by imperialist projects – amongst others, the 'Russian, British and French consuls and intelligence officers' (Bruinessen 2013: 1).

Confining discussions of diaspora to the politics of 'their' nation-state also places boundaries on diaspora's citizenship in the new home, leaving a question mark over the extent to which they can belong. It continues to reproduce the assumption that the real home of diasporas remains elsewhere – that is, their nation-state – with the consequence that their citizenship in the new home is regarded as contingent and revokable, even when there are centuries of linkages and lineages that were created through empire, as expressed in the well-known phrase 'we are here because you were there'. We can think of how those from the Windrush generation in Britain were regarded as 'immigrants' despite the fact that they were coming to the 'mother country'. Or that the French army in World War II was two-thirds or more African, yet not only was their significant role in the liberation of France and the defeat of Nazism denied, but they were also refused French army pensions.[i] Leaving the relationship between empire and diaspora unacknowledged and unexplored can mean that even those diasporas that have extremely close historical and cultural links with the metropole can continue to be construed as an 'other' and their presence questioned. They can even be turned from 'citizens into migrants' through citizenship legislation (Karatani 2003), as we saw in the case of Windrush.

Additionally, an understanding that breaks the link between empire and diaspora overlooks how diasporas can become agents of decolonisation. For it is not only that diasporas have their roots in recent empires: they increasingly throw up multicultural problems for the metropole as they seek to undo unequal and hierarchical relationships entrenched in empire, a central focus of this book. Diaspora is therefore the nemesis of

collective amnesia, questioning the spatial and temporal limitations imposed on it. Asymmetric colonial systems come to be challenged and reconfigured through the decolonisations carried out by diasporas. Through a conceptualisation of diaspora as translation and decolonisation, this book resists the confinement and reduction of diaspora theorisation to the nation-state. It spatially and temporally seeks to expand diasporic imaginary and shows much can be gained if we weave translation and decolonisation into understandings of diaspora.

The literature on diasporas spans various disciplines and fields. Diaspora is a concept that has been housed, examined and applied in many disciplines – politics, international relations, literature, sociology, geography, language, history, media and others. Moreover, some diaspora research is interdisciplinary. It is therefore a challenging task to group and engage with it with precision. It is well known that the concept itself has 'diasporised' (Brubaker 2005). In this book, I develop a critical engagement with two dominant forms of diaspora theorising. One is what I call the 'ideal type' approach led by Cohen, Safran and others devoted to identifying the key characteristics of diaspora (e.g. Cohen 1996; Safran 1991). The second is what I call the 'hybridity' approach (e.g. Bhabha 1994; Brah 1996; Clifford 1994; Gilroy 1993; Hall 1990). Both approaches have indeed helped to clarify our understandings of diaspora. The clarity, rigour and insights of Cohen's elaborations have been extremely important, and Hall, Gilroy and Brah have opened up other new ways of thinking about diaspora. The second group's focus on fluidity, subjectivity and hybridity attempted to undo and readjust the first group's definitional focus, which was accused of being too locked into the gardening tropes of roots, origin and soil. Despite the important links it developed between empire and diaspora, the latter approach to diaspora is not fully satisfactory either: if all cultures are basically hybrid, fluid and shaped by subjectivity, little can be gained from identifying that diasporas are too. Moreover, the focus of these two

approaches – one on 'being' and the other on 'becoming' – has at times too narrowly confined diaspora theorising to ontological concerns.

Rather than seeing diaspora as an everlasting feature of a group, or as centred around a subjective fluid experience, I focus on the interventions diasporas make, namely how diasporas do translation and decolonisation in their new home and the home left behind. I thus seek to change the terms of discussion on diaspora. Such a conceptualisation affords heterogeneity and temporality to our applications of diaspora, instead of all members and actions of a group being stamped with 'diaspora', and for eternity. Such a temporal and heterogeneous calibration of the concept of diaspora and its employment questions the essentialism and primordialism often associated with the notion of diaspora. Yet it seeks to refrain from confining it to subjectivity, often associated with the hybridity approach. I aim to develop an understanding of diaspora that reveals its capacity as a critical concept, claiming its transformative and far-reaching potential.

A focus on the dynamics of diaspora as translation and diaspora as decolonisation, I argue, can expand thinking and understanding of diaspora within the current dynamics of our globalised world. Translation is not just a useful metaphor for understanding the movement and struggles of diasporas; more importantly, translation studies has much insight, from which we can learn, apply and extend our understandings in diaspora studies. I discuss 'diaspora as translation' (Chapter 2) together with 'diaspora as decolonisation' (Chapter 3). I propose a new and productive way of conceptualising diaspora, drawing from the insights of translation studies to inform understandings of authenticity, untranslatability and incommensurability. Diasporas are the archetypal translators, as they put new identities, languages and world-views in circulation. They can also erase, domesticate and rewrite. Anthropologists have also paid attention to translation when unpacking hierarchies arising from European expansion and colonisation. My focus on translation turns the tables on this. I

pay attention to how, this time, we can examine the flows of peoples and cultures going to the Global North, but more importantly, how they 'speak back' to the metropole and dislodge coloniality. This is because, in my conceptualisation, diasporas emerge as central agents for decolonisation of the Global North, but also of Northern regimes elsewhere too – although the former is the focus of this book. I thus see diaspora as a source of liberation of progress. Yet decolonisation and foreignisation – that is, strategies aimed at pushing the boundaries of the target rather than simply assimilating into it – are difficult. In Chapter 2, therefore, I examine the lure of translation for diaspora, unpacking 'diaspora as rewriting and transformation', 'diaspora as erasure and exclusion' and 'diaspora as a tension between foreignisation and domestication'.

Ricoeur (2006) sees linguistic hospitality as a model for other forms of hospitality. Diasporas translate their identity struggles and battles to the host. Such translations can take place in the form of foreignisation or domestication; they can be partial and at times opaque. They can smooth over differences, leave out sections and at other times help to achieve 'unlearning'. But, as I explore in the book, through foreignisation strategies, diasporas have been, and continue to remain, agents of decolonisation. Such a focus on diasporas and their translation of identity is tied inextricably to their battles in the new homes, transnationally but also back in the home left behind. It can thus help to expand diaspora research, which has tended to focus on methodologically nationalist understandings, examining single-case studies without much situating the case study in wider social, political and global debates of our times, or history or empire, or informing how the case study can expand or challenge how we have conceptualised diaspora so far through offering new heuristic and conceptual tools. Hence it is not that case studies of a particular diasporic group are used often, but *how* they are used that has become the problem. It is time we turn attention to how diasporas have intervened in and shaped the culture and debates globally.

It should be clear by now that in this book I am not focusing on textual translation of diasporas, nor am I examining literary works to do with diasporas. I am taking people, identity and power rather than text as my primary source for uncovering diasporic translations. The aim of the book is to provoke a new thinking of diaspora that is political, and engaged with the contemporary global order by using the insights of translation studies and research on migrancy, race and culture. Diasporas can unsettle and trouble North-centric visions and Northern epistemologies. This is why, in Chapter 3, I argue that we need to shift our focus to an exploration of how diasporas decolonise the Global North.

Diasporas bring various disruptions and destabilisations to the Global North. I see the provincialising and decolonising carried out by postcolonial diasporas as a form of 'talking back' to the metropole, and discuss them in detail in Chapter 3. I start with a discussion of how vertical fallacies were created by Victorian anthropologists in their translations of 'others'. The chapter argues that diasporas should not simply be seen as mediators but as agents who speak back and challenge the world-views in the Global North, aiding foreignisation and decolonisation of the new home. They also speak back and challenge world-views in the home left behind, aiding decolonisation of the homeland at a distance. I conceptualise how diasporas undo colonisation through two central processes – 'radical remembering' and 'radical inclusion' – which I posit against 'social inclusion' through a focus on the UK example. I thus make the case that diasporic decolonisations, such as the Bristol Bus Boycott (1963), Imperial Typewriters Strike (1974), the Grunwick Dispute (1976), the activism following New Cross Fire (1981), the mobilisations following the Grenfell Fire (2017), the Windrush Scandal (2018), the Black Lives Matter movement and many others, are examples of how diasporas challenge and expand understandings of freedom, equality and dignity in the metropole and globally. Thus, rather than repeat 'the tyranny of in-betweenness', the often-used and tired metaphors and imagery of diaspora as

being stuck between the home and the host, as peoples constantly straddling two cultures, falling through gaps, my focus is on how diasporas of colour do translation and decolonisation in the Global North, on how they intervene and shape. Even though many of my examples and most of my focus are based on diasporas in the Global North, especially in the United Kingdom, I provide plenty of conceptual tools and positive heuristic devices for investigating diasporas in general.

Having provided examples of the decolonisation demands of South Asian and Afro-Caribbean diasporas in the United Kingdom for 'radical inclusion' and 'radical remembering' in Chapter 3, I turn to an analysis of the translational activities, interventions and undoings of the Kurdish diaspora in Europe in Chapter 4. Using empirical data from my own research on the Kurdish diaspora in Europe I unpack how those in the Kurdish diaspora carry out ethno-political translations of their struggle and how such translations are central for the transnational battles of Kurds. I examine how they rewrite Kurdish politics, undo colonisation and carry out both foreignisations and domestication in their engagements with the Global North, exposing links between their predicament, Europe and colonialism. The chapter rethinks the Kurdish diaspora globally by examining it as 'transnational indigenous resistance', and thus entangled in a series of historical and political processes associated with empire, expansion, expulsion and appropriation, including nationalist and ethno-political responses to these. I explore how an indigenous identity is being anchored by translations and decolonisations of the Kurdish diaspora – that is, by those who initially had to dis-anchor themselves from their homeland. As such, I uproot indigeneity, yet embed transnationality and diasporicity. Although I am careful and refrain from making generalisations to other diasporas, some of the analytical points I develop are relevant and portable (Polit and Beck, 2010) to other settings and diasporas, where there is a close link between colonialism, indigeneity and a strong desire to translate ethno-political identity.

Diaspora considered as translation and decolonisation in this book does not valorise transnationalism or migrancy as transformative. It argues that diaspora is a special case of migration and transnationalism whereby politicised decolonial subjectivity is associated with mobility. Diaspora, then, is not just about migration or the movement of peoples in general. As I discuss, what transforms 'overseas' people who migrate into a diaspora is that they 'speak back' to the metropole or the homeland, and engage in the dislodging of coloniality. Instead of using the term 'diaspora' synonymously with 'ethnicity' or 'race', the conceptualisation I offer recognises that certain migrant groups can become diasporic over time (and vice versa) – for example, Kurds who were 'migrants' became a 'Kurdish diaspora' over time in Europe. We therefore need to recognise that diasporas are not only the products of globalisation and decolonisation (or movements to the 'motherland'); they are also the agents and makers of globalisation and of decolonisation. Their translations and decolonisations, their interventions, often make them unpopular not just in the home left behind but also in the new home. In Europe, they become what I conceive as 'the Global South in the Global North'. This is why, in Chapter 5, I turn to an examination of the backlash to diaspora in the Global North. Anti-immigration sentiments in the Global North are in fact closely bound up with, if not at times used as a proxy for, discomfort and resentment towards settled diasporas of colour in the Global North, and most importantly against their demands for equality. Worries about new migrations are closely entangled with anxieties about existing diasporas of colour in the Global North, tied to alienations and resentments associated with dominant hegemonic nationals' declining privileges and status.

Chapter 5 examines this backlash to diaspora and thinks through the attempts to 'write out' diasporas of colour in the Global North through discourses of anti-multiculturalism and 'the left-behind'/'traditional' working class. While anti-multiculturalism discredits the equality demands of some, the discourse of 'the left-behind'/'traditional' working class

comes to define the working class, and those who need help and support, as White. Such discourses render diasporas of colour as classless while at the same time positing them as having 'too much culture and identity' and as a threat to the nation. Both discourses are expressions of exclusive nationalism as they signal and reproduce the idea that some ethnic groups belong to Britain, France, the Netherlands – or the West in general – more than others. They conflate national identity (e.g. American, French, British) with the hegemonic ethnic and racial group (e.g. European descent in America, White English in Britain). Understandings of the country and national identity thus become indistinguishable from this hegemonic ethnic and racial group. Such discourses not only erase diasporas of colour from the narrative of the working class and accounts of the nation, but also render their demands for equality and inclusion as divisive and a threat. Often applied together, such discourses reject diasporas of colour as legitimate and equal members of the nation while in the same breath accusing them of not integrating and creating 'parallel lives'.

It is perhaps no coincidence that anti-multiculturalism reached its peak at a time when minoritised groups were catching up and when social distance between groups in the United Kingdom was identified as decreasing (e.g. Heath and Demireva 2014), and that the discourse of 'the left-behind'/'traditional' working class as a codeword for the White working class has emerged as the working class in the Global North is increasingly made up of migrants and people of colour. Chapter 5 thinks through why these discourses have had such a purchase in wider political, media and academic debates, and how they reproduce exclusive nationalisms. It discusses the close relationship between 'getting high' on national identity and the decline in racial and ethnic privilege and status. It traces the salience of discourses of anti-multiculturalism and 'the left-behind'/'traditional' working class, and how they disarm and bypass racialised ways of talking, yet still exhibit a clear concern with hegemonic ethnic and racial identities (Whiteness in the Global North). It examines how they

are deployed when resisting loss of sovereignty at home via signalling the forgotten Whites. I argue that, together, they serve to maintain exclusive (White) nationalisms in the Global North.

This book seeks to shift the terms of the discussion of diaspora away from a focus on homeland, hybridity and subjectivity to explore the ways in which diasporas translate, intervene and decolonise. It critically engages with existing theories of diaspora, including perspectives that have tended to lock diaspora to homeland politics and nation-states, as well as perspectives that valorise diasporic subjectivity and hybridity, and trap it into discussions of in-betweenness. The book instead seeks to spatially and temporally expand the boundaries of diaspora thinking by providing examples of how diasporas dislodge coloniality, question hierarchical relationships and coloniality, and reconfigure new transnational formations – for example, indigenous transnationalism. Even though my case study (of Kurds) and examples focus on diasporas in Europe, as the 'Global South in the Global North', the conceptual interventions I make can be applied to other parts of the world, to other places and cases – for example, to the Chinese diaspora in Malaysia, the Irish diaspora in the United States or the Haitian diaspora in Brazil. By introducing concepts such as 'diaspora as rewriting and transformation', 'diaspora as erasure and exclusion', 'diaspora as a tension between foreignisation and domestication', 'radical remembering' and 'radical inclusion', the chapters that follow provide new tools for diaspora research and a framework for understanding diaspora as a specific angle of migration. The book seeks to go beyond a discussion of diaspora based on homeland ties, subjectivity and hybridity, and instead presents an enhanced case for the role of diaspora in the global age through a focus on how, through their translations and decolonisations, diasporas bring disruptions and destablisations to racialised hierarchies and global orders.

Note

[i] Non-White French colonial troops were also intentionally excluded from the liberation of Paris (and the famous liberation pictures), referred to as Blanchiment (Whitening).