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Agents of Peace or Agents of War?

The Role of the African Diaspora in Conflict Processes

CONCEPT PAPER

The Role of the African Diaspora in Conflict Processes

Concept Paper
(abridged English version)

Of the Workshop

Agents of Peace or Agents of War?
The Role of the African Diaspora in Conflict Processes

organized by the

Ministry for Intergenerational Affairs, Family, Women and Integration
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in cooperation with the Bonn International Center for Conversion (BICC)

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1. INTRODUCTION

The issue of the Diaspora is currently experiencing a renaissance in the political debate. This is partly due to the discussion on improving integration opportunities for migrants and partly to the debate on the challenges resulting from the increasing number of immigrants from poor countries and crisis regions entering the bastions of prosperity in the North. Researchers have also turned their attention to the possible significance of the Diaspora for economic development in the countries of origin.

Questions are also being asked about the role which Diaspora communities can play in the conflict processes in their respective countries of origin. Generally speaking, one can identify two different positions on this question (cf. Zunzer, 2004; Mohamoud, 2005; Collier, 2000; Kaldor, 2001; Koser, 2003; Joerges, 2005; Shain, 1999): On the one hand, it is assumed that the influence of Diaspora groups on the situation in their native countries serves to exacerbate the conflict process through direct or indirect support for the conflict parties, particularly through the provision of financial or logistical resources (Collier, 2000; Collier, Hoeffler, 2001; World Bank, 2005). On the other hand, it is claimed that Diaspora groups have a potential for reducing conflict. For example, it is pointed out that they support processes of democratization or contribute to positive economic developments in their countries of origin through their remittances and through the transfer of knowledge (Zunzer, 2004; Mohamoud, 2005).

The Ministry for Intergenerational Affairs, Family, Women and Integration of the *Land* of North Rhine-Westphalia commissioned the Bonn International Center for Conversion (BICC) to draft this Concept Paper as a basis for a workshop on "The Role of the African Diaspora in Conflict Processes". The paper pursues three main objectives:

- first of all, to provide an overview of the Diaspora and the possible effects of the activities of members of the Diaspora on their countries of origin;

- second, to compile available information on the African Diaspora in North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW);

- third, to develop approaches and outline problems which would appear to be relevant for a more detailed follow-up study on these issues.

The paper focuses on the African Diaspora in Germany, in particular North Rhine-Westphalia. As the Ministry did not make any provision for empirical components, the paper is based largely on existing literature and available statistical data, as well as on the Internet portals of African Diaspora organizations.

Summary of the most important results:

- Research to date on the links between the Diaspora and conflict processes is inadequate. This applies all the more to the subject area of the 'African Diaspora' and Germany as a country of residence.

- Previous research on the Diaspora and conflicts has dealt with the Diaspora as a conflict factor. There are, however, signs that Diaspora groups may also act in such a way as to reduce conflict. Information to this effect, however, tends to be of an anecdotal nature.

- Despite indications of the Diaspora's potential to reduce conflict or promote peace, expectations should not be too high.
  - The individual's opportunities for political and societal action are often limited and involve a high risk.

- Individuals, organized groups and, even more so, political parties pursue their own interests. This does not always help to avoid conflict and does not always necessarily correspond to the interests of the countries of residence, e.g. Germany or the European Union (EU).

- According to research findings, the Diaspora does appear to be able to play a role in conflict processes, particularly in the final phases (e.g. in peace negotiations) as well as in the post-conflict and rebuilding phases:
  - Key figures in the Diaspora at the higher political level (particularly politicians, intellectuals, diplomats, etc.) have the potential to take part in the peace process. This often also involves external, international players.
  - Groups with a broader societal background appear to be more important for the (primarily economic) rebuilding process.
  - There are indications that the Diaspora is more likely to play a higher-level role in the peace process in conflicts which involve at least one state player[1].

- The African Diaspora in Germany cannot be regarded as a single player, but as a mixture of individuals and groups (such as non-governmental organizations, associations or parties) with heterogeneous thematic focuses and political and social agendas.

- Although there is great organizational potential, the work of the different Diaspora groups is barely coordinated and there appears to be only a very low level of cooperation. In particular, those organizations, associations or parties with a political program are usually not open to outsiders and there is little transparency in their activities and objectives.

- The issue of 'conflict' is very sensitive, like political issues in general. Information on this subject can only be obtained through personal contacts and talks, and even then this is not easy. It is therefore not possible at this point to say whether the African Diaspora in Germany has an influence on the development of conflicts in the respective countries of origin or not. A wider empirical component is essential for a more detailed study.

- In principle, there is no direct causal link (action A always leads to result Z) or general link (i.e. valid for all countries and situations) between certain activities and actions on the part of the Diaspora and its influence on conflict processes. In order to be able to say whether and what sort of influence exists, one must consider every action (option) of a Diaspora group against the background of the political and societal situation in the respective country of origin. This calls for individual analyses.

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[1] There could, however, be other reasons for this impression: It is possible that research tends to concentrate on this type of conflict or that external international players are more involved at a higher level in this type of conflict and try to employ members of the Diaspora as mediators.

2. THE TERMS 'CONFLICT PROCESS' AND 'DIASPORA'

To begin with, the terms 'conflict process' and 'Diaspora' should be explained. We are aware that there has been and still is a lot of controversial discussion about both terms. We do not want to participate in this discussion; instead we will restrict ourselves to working definitions which have emerged in agreement with the Ministry and which will have to be modified, if necessary, for a detailed follow-up study.

2.1. Conflict process

There are a number of competing definitions of conflict which reflect the debate on defining, delimiting and analyzing the terms conflict, crisis and war[2]. This Concept Paper is based on the assumption that:

1. *Conflicts are the clashing of interests on national values of some duration and magnitude between at least two parties (organized groups, states, groups of states, organizations of states) that are determined to pursue their interests and win their case[3].*

As we do not set out to deal solely with a particular stage of a concrete form of conflict (e.g. an acute war situation), but with conflict developments in their entirety, this Concept Paper does not focus on the conflict itself, but on the *conflict process.* An important factor here is

2. that the *conflictive behavior involves different levels of intensity.* The use of violence is not a precondition for classifying a situation as a conflict. Another factor is

3. that it takes into account *phases before and after the conflict* arose. Finally there should be

4. *no restrictions regarding different types of conflicts[4].*

2.2. Diaspora

The term Diaspora (Gr. *Diasporá*: "dispersion", "scatter") traditionally describes both an area in which members of a religion or a national or ethnic group are in a minority with regard to another group or, quite generally, a religious or national minority. It was first used in ancient Greece to describe the exile of the Aegean population. Since Roman times, it has been used primarily to describe the exile of the Jews throughout the world as a result of their defeat by the Roman Empire. Since the nineteenth century, the term is no longer used exclusively for the Jewish Diaspora but to apply in general to groups of

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[2] One can distinguish between quantitative and qualitative approaches to defining these terms. In the case of *quantitative* approaches, the number of victims killed in an armed conflict is the decisive criterion for whether one speaks of a conflict, crisis or war. Accordingly, various stages can be determined which also take into account armed disputes which would not come under the heading of "war", such as a sub-division into small and medium-sized armed conflicts (cf. e.g. Gleditsch, 2002).
Qualitative approaches are based on internal characteristics in order to distinguish wars from other conflicts. These include a certain level of organization behind the disputes, the continuity of the violent clashes and the nature of the armed forces involved (cf. the discussion on the qualitative definition criteria of the AKUF in Gantzel/Schwinghammer, 1995, p. 31–48).

[3] This definition is based on the *Konfliktbarometer* 2005 published by the Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research (HIIK).

[4] Based on the parties involved one can distinguish between 4 main types of conflicts. These are inter-state (i.e. between sovereign states), inner-state (between state and non-state players within existing state borders), extra-state (between state and non-state players, outside existing borders) and sub-state (between non-state players) (cf. Chojnacki, 2006, p. 56).

migrants who have had to flee as a result of religious or political persecution or economic need, or who have been expelled by force.

These definitions all have negative connotations in the sense of banishment, expulsion or flight. However, in recent times, the term Diaspora has gained a new meaning, particularly in the field of cultural and social scientific theory and in the so-called "Diaspora Studies" in the United States and Great Britain[5]. It has gradually lost its original meaning of a joint experience of flight or expulsion, and Diaspora communities are seen in the sense of Benedict Anderson as "imagined communities", i.e. in the positive sense, as flexible and transcultural or transnational communities of "expatriates" (Mayer, 2005, p. 8).

In his much quoted definition, William Safran (1991, p. 83-84) developed the following new criteria for defining Diaspora communities. These are groups: 1) that are dispersed from an original center to at least two peripheral places; (2) that maintain a memory, vision, or myth about their original homeland; (3) that believe they are not fully accepted by their host country; (4) that see the ancestral home as a place of eventual return, when the time is right; (5) that are committed to the maintenance and restoration of this homeland, and (6) of which the group's consciousness and solidarity are importantly defined by this continuing relationship with the homeland.

The exclusivity of this definition means that it has often been criticized and revised in the meantime. The objections raised by James Clifford in particular would appear interesting with regard to the African Diaspora. Clifford claims that, in many cases, there is no such thing as the idea of returning home or recollections of a mythologized home country. On the contrary, the African Diaspora in particular is a strongly fragmented and divided 'community'. He therefore proposes that these aspects should be regarded as additional, if not decisive, criteria for a definition[6].

In how far this alleged lack of memories of a mythologized national homeland actually corresponds to the situation of the African Diaspora in Germany will have to be examined by analyzing organized Diaspora communities in particular. In recent years, there have been signs of a tendency to establish pan-African as well as national umbrella organizations. On the other hand, Clifford's objection regarding the idea of returning to their native country is justified, especially as the majority of the organized Diaspora communities see themselves as bridge-builders who support a new African self-awareness and whose goal is not therefore their own return, but quite generally the empowerment of the African national and democracy movements.

All in all, the definition proposed by Safran, but without the fourth criterion, would appear to be a useful working definition. Under this, the term 'African Diaspora communities' covers groups that have formed as a result of being dispersed through expulsion or (economically, politically, etc. motivated) emigration from an original center to at least two peripheral places, that devote themselves to strengthening or restoring their home country, and that cultivate their relationship with their country of origin by maintaining their group identity (Mayer, 2005, P. 14-16). The double (cultural) involvement with the country of origin and the receiving country required for the definition and for the self-awareness as 'bridge-builders' excludes those Africans from

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[5]   Braziel, Jana Evans and Anita Mannur, 2003, p. 1-22 provide an overview of recent developments in Diaspora Studies:

[6]   Cf. Mayer 1991, p. 11ff. This view also corresponds to the prevailing definition in the most important theories on the African Diaspora of Kobena Mercer, Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy, who share the emphasis on the relationship to the home or homeland.

the category 'Diaspora' who are only living outside their home country on a temporary basis: For example, visiting students or embassy staff are not members of a dispersed, religious or national community.

The Concept Paper is thus based on a relatively broad definition of 'Diaspora'. The term is used to refer in general to people with a migrant background. These include the following groups of people[7]:

1. Foreigners[8], i.e. people without German nationality, irrespective of whether they have emigrated to or were born in Germany.

2. Germans with a migrant background[9]. These include:

   - naturalized migrants

   - naturalized foreigners born in Germany

   - Germans where at least one parent has migration experience, i.e. is a foreigner or a naturalized German.

Because of the focus of the MFGGI, this study is dealing with the *African* Diaspora, i.e. with people of an African migrant background. In addition, it is limited to people and groups whose country of origin is in sub-Saharan Africa, including the Horn of Africa.

Two further criteria have been added:

1. Germany is the current main place of residence of the persons or groups studied.

2. There is a relationship to the home country. This means that there is a concrete link with the country of origin, i.e. that origin plays a role in the person's identity. These links may be direct contacts, such as visits, telephone calls or written contact with persons in the country of origin, as well as close emotional links without direct contacts.

3. THE AFRICAN DIASPORA IN GERMANY (FOCUS NORTH RHINE-WESTPHALIA)

According to the latest statistics of the NRW Office for Data Processing and Statistics (LDS NRW), which were published in 2005, there were 1,803,355 foreigners living in North Rhine-Westphalia as of 31 December 2004; 92,157 of whom were Africans. The breakdown according to countries of origin showed that by far the largest group of migrants originated from Morocco (38,410) with Tunisia in second place (6,825). Ghanaians formed the largest group of migrants from sub-Saharan Africa (4,500), followed by Nigerians (4,362) and South Africans (865) (LDS NRW, *Zuwanderungsstatistik 2005*). However, these figures only include migrants from Africa *without* German nationality and do not take into account German citizens with (an African) migration experience or a migration background. According to information from the NRW Office for Data Processing and Statistics (LDS NRW), this data was collected separately in NRW for the first time in 2005 but it is considered unreliable and unsound due to the limited

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[7] These groups are based on the criteria used by the Federal Statistical Office for the aspect "Population with Migrant Background" in the 2005 microcensus. However, they are not identical.

[8] A "foreigner" under the Residence Law is anyone who is not German in the sense of Article 116, Para 1 of the Basic Law.

[9] The Federal Statistical Office's 2005 microcensus provides a precise definition of the terms "own migration experience" and "migration background". Whereas the first group only includes foreigners and migrants with a personal experience of migration, the second category also covers people who were born in Germany and have thus not migrated to Germany, but who have a migration background due to their parents. Cf. Statistisches Bundesamt, 2006., p. 73–75.

sampling size. Apart from the migration statistics, the current paper can only make use of the naturalization figures for North Rhine-Westphalia, whereby it must be noted that none of these statistics take into account the children of naturalized migrants or shifts in statistics due to internal migration between German *Länder*.

3,986 persons from Africa were naturalized in North Rhine-Westphalia in 2005. Broken down according to country of origin, the largest groups were migrants from the Democratic Republic of Congo (273 persons), Nigeria (222) and Cameroon (191), followed by Togo (98), Kenya (77) and Angola (65)[10]. In contrast to the period 1993–1998, when the naturalization statistics were largely headed by Ethiopian, Eritrean, Ghanaian and then increasingly Nigerian migrants (whereby the numbers varied between 50–100 naturalizations per country), the number of Congolese (DRC), Nigerian (despite a temporary drop in 2003) and Togolese migrants who were naturalized rose considerably in relative as well as absolute terms between 2000 and 2005[11], whereas the number of naturalized Ghanaians remained relatively constant.

Most African migrants (i.e. foreigners) in North Rhine-Westphalia live in the Aachen, Bonn, Dortmund, Düsseldorf, Essen, Cologne, Leverkusen, Mettmann, Rhein-Erft District, Solingen and Wuppertal regions[12].

3.1. Heterogeneity and networking

In order to be able to analyze the behavior of a group, one must study how this group defines itself and whether there is a group consciousness.

In the case of the 'African Diaspora', national affiliation and social common interests in the widest sense (including political orientation) would appear to be more relevant for the individual's self definition and self identification than supraregional origin, that is to say his or her specific relationship to Africa. When describing themselves, people tend to speak of the "Congolese", "Togolese", or "Ethiopian" Diaspora rather than the "African Diaspora" (Humboldt, 2005, p. 99–112, 233ff).

But in many cases, interests also seem to differ within the national Diaspora communities themselves and the sense of togetherness and solidarity appears to be rather limited. This can be demonstrated by the examples of Eritrea and Sudan: Although one frequently speaks of a strong Eritrean Diaspora which pursues largely the same interests and is linked by a strong sense of belonging together with respect to Eritrea, one can nevertheless establish an internal heterogeneity. It is divided between advocates and opponents of the current regime (Weisskoeppel, 2005).

There are therefore divisions based on differing common interests and affiliations as well as topics or fields of interest. This heterogeneity on the part of the African Diaspora in Germany is also evident when one considers the large number of Diaspora groups in NRW alone (cf. Section 3.2).

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[10] Information from the NRW Office for Data Processing and Statistics (LDS NRW), Düsseldorf, on the nationalization statistics for 2006, as of 2005.

[11] NRW Office for Data Processing and Statistics (LDS NRW) (Ed.): *Einbürgerungsstatistik NRW*, Editions 1993-1998 and 2000-2005; the sets of data for the years 1993-1998 and 2000-2005 are not entirely comparable due to the amendment to the Naturalization Law in 1999 (i.a. the reduction in the minimum period of residence for naturalization from 12 to 8 years).

[12] NRW Office for Data Processing and Statistics (LDS NRW) (Ed.): *Zuwanderungsstatistik NRW*, *Zahlenspiegel* 2005, p. 73. A precise differentiation according to nationality was only made for Moroccan and Tunisian citizens.

As these observations already show, the Diaspora[13] groups are not isolated units, but engage in contacts and exchanges with various other players. Whilst Sheffer speaks of the tripolarity of the Diaspora, whose three poles—the country of origin, country of residence and the migrant society in the country of residence—are closely linked and determine the awareness of members of the Diaspora (Sheffer, 1986, p. 1, Humboldt, 2006, p. 22), it is becoming increasingly clear that exchanges also take place among Diaspora communities (Basch, Glick Schiller, Szanton-Blanc, 1994; Humboldt, 2005, p. 92f). This networking occurs, on the one hand, within the country of residence, but, on the other hand, also extends across national borders and thus links Diaspora groups throughout the world. The significance of networking and international exchanges has increased considerably in recent years as a result of globalization and the opportunities offered by the Internet (Conrad, 2006, p. 237; Ostergaard-Nielsen, 2006, p. 9f). This appears to be the case especially with communication among Diaspora groups. There are also efforts to influence developments in the country of origin beyond national borders[14]. The significance of interaction with the countries of origin depends on various factors, such as the access of the local population to the Internet, for example, as well as the granting of freedom of opinion and press by governments in the countries of origin. It would thus appear wise to extend the three poles—country of origin, country of residence and migrant society in the country of residence—by the factors networking in the country of residence and transnational networking. These poles could form the framework for a comprehensive analysis of the influence of the Diaspora on conflict processes in which various players interact.

3.2. Organizations of the African Diaspora in NRW

A study commissioned by the former NRW Ministry for Labor, Social Affairs and Town Development in 1999 and conducted by the Center for Studies on Turkey and the Institute for Political Science at the Westphalian Wilhelms University Münster found that there were approximately 2,400 migrant self-organizations (MSOs) in the *Land* of North Rhine-Westphalia, of which the majority were southern European, i.e. primarily Turkish (MASSKS, 2005).

The concept of an 'African Diaspora or community' manifests itself primarily in the numerous African associations, organizations and parties which were first set up in Germany in the 1980s and whose number increased with the beginning of the 1990s (Humboldt, 2006, p. 53–57; http://www.bpb.de/themen/WTLMYY,0,Schwarze_Organisierung_in_Deutschland.html).

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[13] Diaspora groups often use the term "community" as an alternative to "Diaspora" (cf. Humboldt, p. 88f). This term is used in different contexts and there is no standard definition of what a "community" is and who belongs to it. This is determined by the members themselves (cf. Cohen, 2003). Conrad points out that in recent years "Diaspora" seems to be replacing "community" as a self-description e.g. among educated Eritreans (cf. Conrad, 2006). However, the terms "community" and "Diaspora" cannot be equated. Communities are rather to be seen as sub-segments of the Diaspora which define themselves through common interests (e.g. sport, religion, political involvement, etc.) and are not only guided by national commonalities.

[14] In May 2005, the Togolese community in Canada organized a meeting with representatives of the Togolese Diaspora from other countries. The meeting aimed to establish itself as a joint representation of the Togolese Diaspora throughout the world in order i.a. to support the democratization of Togo (cf. Joerges, 2005, p. 66).

The present study uses as its databases the address lists of various MSO forums in NRW which have been set up in increasing numbers in recent years by numerous organizations to network Diaspora groups[15]. On the basis of these databases and additional online research, the number of African Diaspora groups in NRW can be estimated at at least 240 (not including individual initiatives or persons)[16]. However, a random examination of the contact data for individual organizations showed that in many cases this information was no longer correct so that it is often not possible to establish the existence or continued existence of these associations. This lack of transparency is presumably due to a low level of formal organization. It also applies to more detailed information, such as fields of activities, number of members and motivation. A follow-up study on the associations of the Sub-Saharan Diaspora in NRW will have to establish direct contacts with the individual organizations in order to obtain the data required.

Nevertheless, this paper sets out to provide an initial outline of the (organized) African Diaspora in NRW on the basis of the data already researched. Geographically, these groups are concentrated in the Cologne-Bonn region (50 organizations studied), Düsseldorf, Aachen (around 25 organizations each), Münster and the Ruhr region (particularly Essen). As regards countries of origin, the DR Congo and Cameroon are very strongly represented among the organized Diaspora communities (each with 20 MSOs), as are Togo (16 MSOs), Eritrea and Angola (each with approximately 10 MSOs)[17]. The following classification of MSOs according to their main activities provides information on the structure of the (organized) Diaspora communities:

- Party
- Political association[18]
- Association to promote civil societal development and peace work in the home country
- Association to promote integration, self-help and anti-racism in the receiving country
- Student organization
- Cultural organization
- Religious community.

Independently of one another, African groups have made more than ten attempts to bring the very diverse organized Diaspora in NRW together under a central umbrella organization. Apart from a few smaller projects at local level (e.g. in Münster and Aachen), these umbrella organizations are in particular the *Afrikanischer Dachverband NRW e.V.*, which was founded in Bornheim in 2005, and the *All Afrika Forum*, which was set up in early 2001 as a supranational and pan-ethnic umbrella organization following

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[15]   www.callnrw.de/broschuerenservice/download/1320/Migration-in-NRW_Adressen.pdf;
http://www.eine-welt-netz-nrw.de/datenbank/index.php; www.mso-online.de;
http://www.new.heimat.de/culturebase/adressausgaben/aachen_de/inhalt_key.php;
http://www.vemission.org/migrationskirchen/gemeindeliste;   as   well   as   an   inter-*Länder*   project:
http://www.africa-alive.de/Deutsche_Version/Links-Afrikanische_Vereine.htm

[16]   This number was also confirmed by representatives of the *Afrikanischer Dachverband NRW e.V.* (Bornheim) in talks with the NRW Refugee Council.

[17]   Contrary to findings for the rest of the Federal Republic and in view of the relatively high number of Ghanaian migrants in NRW, it is surprising that only four Ghanaian MSOs were to be found in NRW.

[18]   It is difficult to distinguish between party and political associations due to the very limited information available concerning organizational structure. Parties are mostly German branches of African parties and not independent parties which have been newly founded in the Diaspora.

the conference "Citizens of African Origin in NRW", which was organized by the Central Office for Political Education and the Schools Ministry (1999). Like the projects to establish African networks and lists of addresses already mentioned above, these organizations too seem to suffer from a lack of supraregional networking and cooperation.

4. THE DIASPORA'S POTENTIAL FOR INFLUENCING CONFLICT PROCESSES

4.1. State of the art of research

Since the beginning of the decade, research has been dealing increasingly with the issue of the Diaspora and its influence on conflict processes. Views differ as to whether the role of Diaspora groups tends to aggravate or reduce conflicts.

Paul Collier in particular has determined the view of the Diaspora as an important conflict factor. According to the Collier-Hoeffler conflict model, the risk of a renewed outbreak of conflict within a five-year period is higher if there is a large Diaspora compared with the overall population (Collier, 2000; Collier, Hoeffler, 2001)[19]. In many cases, militant groups specifically instrumentalize the Diaspora (Kaldor et al., 2003, p. 7). Kaldor and Duffield put forward similar views. Kaldor points out that the Diaspora can provide both direct and indirect support to conflicts. Direct support is most obvious when it is provided in the form of financial, material or logistical assistance to the conflict parties. An indirect influence occurs when, for example, remittances intended for family members are passed on by the latter to conflict parties, either as a voluntary contribution or donation, or in the form of taxes or compulsory levies (Kaldor, 2001; Duffield, 2001).

Lyons identifies certain characteristics peculiar to the Diaspora which predestine it for specific views and behavioral patterns (Lyons, 2004). For example, according to Lyons, those Diaspora groups which have emerged as a result of (so-called) 'conflict-generated Diasporas'[20] have a high potential for shaping conflicts in their home countries. He states that due to their traumatic memories (which often lead to very strong emotions for their home country, but also to a restricted, simplified and static view of the (conflict) process and of the political and societal development in the country in general), they are frequently not willing to accept compromises and can thus contribute to a hardening of fronts and aggravate and prolong the conflict process. Collier too argues along these lines. He assumes that the Diaspora feels a need to support the respective country of origin and, for example, to preserve cultural achievements in order to form a strong identification pole. In other words, here too, the Diaspora is regarded as preserving and conservative. Also, in the event of an (internal or external) violation of the integrity of the country or culture of origin, members of the Diaspora would be more likely to encourage, from a safe distance, defensive or retaliatory measures (even involving violence) than the people in the country itself because they do not have to face the direct negative effects of such conflicts (Collier, 2000)[21].

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[19] According to Collier's model, the probability of a renewed outbreak of conflict is six-times higher when there is a large Diaspora than in the case of a relatively small Diaspora community (36 to 6 percent).

[20] Lyons thereby refers i.a. to the territorial aspects of conflicts.

[21] Collier speaks here i.a. of the danger of a renewed outbreak of conflict in post-conflict situations.

On the other hand, it has been repeatedly observed that Diaspora groups can also play a role in the peaceful resolution of conflicts. For example, Zunzer refers to the Diaspora's potential as a player in conflict transformation. The Diaspora can also support (societal and economic) development and democracy (Hear, Pieke *et al.*, 2004). Such support often does more than to simply ensure the economic survival of family members in times of crisis (Koser and Van Hear, 2003). Weiss Fagan and Koser (2003) put forward the view that financial support from the Diaspora provides an indispensable contribution towards consolidating peace and rebuilding. These contrary views are based primarily on two factors:

1. It is not possible to determine unambiguously which activities have the general effect of aggravating conflicts and which activities serve to reduce conflicts. For example, providing support for democratic processes can have positive as well as negative effects on the conflict process, in the same way as economic support for a country or individual groups or persons.

2. The Diaspora is not a static, homogeneous entity which thinks and acts as a single unity. Like other societies, it is characterized by a variety of different behavioral patterns. One cannot therefore assume that 'the Diaspora' will behave according to a standard pattern.

In addition, as Ostergaard-Nielsen (2006) rightly remarks, the evaluation of Diaspora activities always depends on the point of view of the observer: "Irresponsible long-distance nationalists for some are freedom fighters for others".

The study on the African Diaspora in the Netherlands entitled "Mobilising African Diaspora for the Promotion of Peace in Africa" (Mohamoud, 2005), identifies four possible ways to influence conflict processes:

1. through financial support, i.e. foreign remittances,

2. through political activities,

3. through exerting societal influence,

4. through lobbying activities in the country of residence.

Whereas points 1 to 3 refer directly to the country of origin, point 4 refers to players in the respective country of residence, such as politicians and parties, non-governmental organizations and industry[22].

4.2. Financial support

The significance of financial support as a contribution to development in the countries of origin is becoming increasingly obvious. For example, it has been noted that foreign remittances have become an important factor for the national economy of many countries. The sums transferred from the Diaspora often exceed development aid and investments from abroad and, in some cases, are higher than a state's entire Gross Domestic Product (Weiss Fagan, 2006). According to information from the World Bank, last year alone migrants sent 'home' US $173 billion. This is twice the amount of official development aid. Since the World Bank's figures only cover registered payments via banks and not money transferred extra-institutionally, it can be assumed that the total

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[22] It is to be observed that individual areas partly overlap. For example, remittances can be used for political activities in the country of origin. The boundaries between societal and political activities can become blurred, particularly as hardly any organization is only involved in strictly one area.

figure is even larger and could amount to up to US $250 billion[23] (Weiss Fagan, 2006). According to information from the Deutsche Bank, an average of 131 million Euros per year was transferred to Africa in the years 1999 to 2005, 69.7 million Euros of which went to sub-Saharan Africa[24].

So far little is known about how foreign remittances are used. It is therefore difficult to make reliable statements regarding their possible effects on conflict processes. The information available only refers to individual cases.

Intervention in conflict processes is obvious in cases where parties to a conflict receive direct financial support from the Diaspora (Collier, 2000). Studies on Sri Lanka, Kosovo or Northern Ireland (Joerges, 2005, p. 29) demonstrate such cases and have led to the assumption that remittances from the Diaspora are among the most important conflict resources (Lyons, 2004; Collier, 2000).

4.3. Political activities

A study of political activities indicates a direct link with conflict processes. There are two forms of political engagement, aimed either at opposing or supporting a regime. For example, in Germany there is both a section of today's ruling Eritrean governing party PFDJ (formerly EPLF), as well as the opposition party ELF R.C., which is banned in Eritrea. One also sees the founding of new parties in the Diaspora (for example Togo, cf. Joerges, 2005, p. 65).

Depending on the situation in the country of origin, political support can at the same time also mean support for a party to the conflict. This applies, for example, to the Tamil LTTE and to the Eritrean opponents EPLF and ELF in the 1980s and 1990s. In both cases, the Diaspora played—and is still playing—a significant political role in conflict processes, *inter alia* by providing massive financial support and conducting lobbying activities.

Members of the Diaspora often play an especially important role during peace negotiations or during the peace consolidation and rebuilding phases, for example as sub-negotiators, participants in peace negotiations, or members of, or advisers to, a new government. They can exert considerable influence as key players if they have an institutional background or a large number of supporters. This applies, for example, to embassy staff, prominent opposition politicians, as well as to well-known intellectuals.

In some cases, one can observe an 'institutionalization' and 'professionalization' of Diaspora activities. In the mid-1980s, the EPLF (today's PDLF), one of the world's most efficiently-run liberation movements, commanded a global network of exile organizations. These were established as mass organizations along socialist lines (e.g. for workers, women and students) and supported the nationalist and socialist revolution, provided services and maintained links with home. These strongly formalized structures were maintained even after the EPLF assumed power.

Theoretically, Diaspora organizations working in the political or social fields provide an opportunity to conduct a discourse on critical issues. Depending on the type of regime and the situation prevailing, this is often not possible in the country of origin. Whether use is actually made of this opportunity for exchange, for example across party divisions, must be considered in more detail. It would then be possible to establish the

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[23] A large part of these funds are not transferred through banks but in cash or through other channels; cf. the article "*Die große Wanderung*" by Hans-Christian Rößler, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* 15.07.2006.

[24] These figures only include officially registered financial payments; the actual figure will be considerably higher.

wisdom of funding forums to launch a dialog between different political and societal organizations with a view to improving conflict transformation.

4.4. Societal engagement

It is difficult to draw a clear line between political and societal engagement. For example, activities in the fields of human rights, equality or participation frequently overlap. Furthermore, it is often not clear in how far 'civil society' groups should also be regarded as being close to a political party. For example, a large number of independent organizations in the Eritrean Diaspora would appear to have staff and structural connections with the EPLF/PDLF[25].

Societal engagement can help, for example, to support or launch projects which contribute to the development of civil society in the countries of origin. These projects are often initiated and conducted by associations and other organizations. Many activities relate to development, combating poverty and the provision of schools and medical care. So far no studies have been conducted on whether and in how far this engagement has an effect on conflict processes. It is presumed that this kind of support is most important in the rebuilding phase. A further option for societal engagement is to support and strengthen civil society stakeholders in the countries of origin so that they can then use their influence for the benefit of civil society in these countries.

Apart from material assistance, members of the Diaspora also transfer ideal values, so-called 'social remittances', to their countries of origin (Nyberg-Sorensen, 2005). This means social capital, behavioral patterns and ideas. There are different views about whether these 'remittances' actually transfer values, such as democracy or equality, which could then have an influence on the societal and political situation in the countries of origin (Levitt, 2001). One example is a case where the activities of the Diaspora enabled the establishment of educational institutions with a focus on providing training for girls. But on the other hand, there are also examples where the Diaspora has preserved 'traditional' and conservative values, whereas the country of origin has undergone a process of societal modernization. For example, parts of the Eritrean Diaspora maintain a more conservative perception of women than society in Eritrea itself (Conrad, 2004, 2006).

Blatant efforts by the Diaspora to influence political, societal and economic processes in the countries of origin can lead to new conflicts. The situation is particularly dangerous if the impression arises that (former or current) members of the Diaspora are dominating important political and societal debates, especially on the political future or cultural values (perhaps in addition to the perceived influence of international stakeholders).

So far there is no adequate information available on the relevance of societal engagement for conflicts in general or on the indirect influence of Diaspora activities in particular. This research gap must be closed.

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[25] Increasingly strong control and coercive mechanisms were introduced in order to achieve this situation; cf. Conrad, 2006.

4.5 Lobbying

Diaspora groups repeatedly approach governments and civil society stakeholders in their countries of residence on matters affecting the situation in their countries of origin. They can also contribute to ensuring that a particular topic remains on the international political agenda by conducting lobbying activities within the Diaspora, within society, or in political parties and (international) organizations.

4.6 Focus on North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW)

Of the African groups represented in NRW, the Cameroonian Diaspora can be described as being particularly well-organized. Unlike the MSOs of the Togolese Diaspora, which are almost exclusively active in the political field (11 out of 16), the Cameroonian MSOs cover the whole spectrum of political, civil society and cultural engagement. Not only are the most important Cameroonian parties represented in NRW[26], but, in addition to student organizations and cultural associations, there are also several organizations involved in German-Cameroonian development cooperation. These distinguish themselves from the MSOs of other African Diaspora communities through their high level of organization and their close contacts with German organizations and sponsors, for example the *Deutsch-kamerunische Wirtschaftsforum Kamer Club Essen e.V., Deutsch-Kamerunische Gesellschaft e.V.* or the *New Tech/Verein zur Förderung der Informationstechnologien für Kamerun* (Aachen).

To a lesser extent, the Eritrean and Angolan MSOs also cover a similarly wide range of activities (with approximately 10 organizations each). However, the limited information available on these groups means that it is not possible to comment with any certainty on their level of organization and political engagement.

In contrast, the Congolese (DRC), the Togolese and the much smaller Nigerian Diaspora would appear to be highly politicized. In all three cases, the majority of the MSOs in NRW are (branches of) parties, political opposition and human rights groups. Special mention should be made here of the *Mouvement Congolais pour la Democratie et le Développement Integral* and the *Mouvement National Congolais-Lumumba* (MNCL) for the Congo (both in Cologne), and the Coalition of Nigerian Democrats in Germany (CoNDIG) and the Movement for a Democratic Nigeria (MODEN) in Aachen. There are several MSOs within the Togolese Diaspora, some of them also specifically ethnic (e.g. the *ARBALO Association des Kotokoli en Allemagne*), of which the majority are united under the umbrella organization *Alliance des Forces Alternatives pour la Démocratie* (*AFAD*).

Among the associations engaged in development policy, special mention must be made of *Beto e.V.* (Düsseldorf, target country Congo), *Ubuntu e.V.* (Duisburg, target country Gambia), the *African Youth Foundation* in Bonn, the *Deutsch-Kamerunische-Gesellschaft* and the *Kamer-Club Essen* and *Imbuto e.V.* (Bonn, target region the Great Lakes). These groups usually organize their work with a specific main focus, for example support for local companies or youth work[27], and provide financial assistance as well as

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[26] On the government side this is the *RDPC - Allemagne e.V - Rassemblement Democratique du Peuple Camerounais (RDPC-Allemagne e.V)* with a branch in Aachen, the most important opposition party is the Social Democratic Front/SDF, also in Aachen.

[27] The conflict sensitivity aspect of activities is to be taken into account. In the case of all these organizations, one must consider whether support in the field of development policy is linked to certain conditions or biased towards concrete groups.

conducting educational and lobbying activities. In addition, there is a large number of smaller associations whose names at least would suggest that they deal with topics which are relevant to conflicts, particularly within the Togolese, Nigerian and Congolese (DRC) Diaspora. Like the German sections of many African opposition parties (cf. below), they devote themselves primarily to lobbying and educational activities in connection with the human rights situation, democratization and equal opportunities in their countries of origin. In many cases, they also maintain contacts with anti-fascist or left-wing groups and initiatives and are involved in a large number of campaigns organized by such groups[28]:

5. THE NEED FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

5.1 Results

As explained above, there have been diverse interpretations of the role of the Diaspora in conflict processes in recent years. Some researchers regard the Diaspora as a factor which supports existing conflicts or even contributes to the outbreak of new conflicts. Others see the Diaspora as important stakeholders in conflict transformation and regard their involvement in the rebuilding process as a '*conditio sine qua non*'. These views are not contradictory but merely indicate different options for action.

Theoretically, the African Diaspora in Germany has the potential to promote activities which reduce conflicts in their countries of origin. First of all, it is sufficiently strong financially to engage in activities, as shown by the level of financial remittances. Secondly, the Diaspora groups have a well-developed infrastructure which is strong both with regard to the number of Diaspora organizations as well as to the large number of topics covered by these groups. Furthermore, the Diaspora is demonstrating an increasing willingness to network within Germany as well as between different groups, both in the Diaspora and in the countries of origin. However, the diversity of the Diaspora groups and the absence of a common direction—as reflected by the large number of umbrella organizations—also explains why they are unable to establish concerted and focused engagement. More detailed analysis is required. This will be conducted following the Workshop and will be based on the results of the Workshop.

Diaspora groups and, in particular, individual key figures appear to have the potential to involve themselves in the final phase of conflicts and the phase of peace consolidation and to promote peace. Nevertheless, one should not overestimate their role and their potential. These are limited in many cases by the very fact that the strongly heterogeneous Diaspora scene does not usually allow the Diaspora to act as a strong, united force. Hardly any organizations represent the entire 'national Diaspora'. Instead, the individual organizations and parties frequently seem to be occupied with power struggles and conflicts of interests among themselves. It is difficult to wield an influence at a higher level.

Moreover, it is hard to engage at individual level. Members of the Diaspora often have to pay a high price if their behavior is contrary to the interests of the majority or the government. Sometimes, they must fear difficulties and reprisals. In some cases, this can make it difficult, dangerous or even impossible for them to return to their native

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[28] This is the case, for example in the initiatives www.stop-schily.de, www.no-racism.net, www.gleicherechte.at etc., which support the reform of refugee and asylum legislation and call for an end to deportation to individual countries of origin.

countries. Also, they must also expect reprisals against their families at home or against their own persons in the country of residence. The protection afforded by the German authorities appears to be very limited. In some cases, the German authorities even provide 'administrative assistance' to authorities in the countries of origin. This can mean an additional danger for the persons concerned. Also, individuals are subject to pressure from their own Diaspora, which often represents an important basis for life abroad. Finally, there is often immense psychological pressure to be 'loyal' towards one's country and not to be considered a 'traitor'. The decision to perhaps become involved in opposition activities in the sense of conflict transformation is thus a very difficult one to take.

Successful efforts by Diaspora groups to end conflicts and consolidate peace are to be seen in particular in cases involving third parties, that is to say, other governments or the international community (for example in peace negotiations or as a target for lobbying activities). However, one must always remember which interests the respective stakeholders pursue, and how these can affect the situation. The interests and perceptions of the political stakeholders in the country of origin must therefore be taken into account: Do their ideas regarding the development and future of their country coincide with the ideas of the representatives of the Diaspora? Or is the Diaspora considered to be an 'external' stakeholder which pursues its own ideas, or those of international stakeholders, rather than the ideas of the majority of the population?

5.2 Follow-up study

The current state of the art of research does not permit an unambiguous and scientifically founded opinion on the role of the African Diaspora in conflict processes. This situation also prevents stakeholders in the countries of residence from taking measures which could encourage the involvement of Diaspora groups with a view to reducing conflicts or preventing behavior which aggravates conflicts. This is a serious omission when one considers the significance of civil society for conflict transformation.

BICC therefore proposes a follow-up study for Phase II which will gather information on the political and societal potential of the Diaspora to influence conflicts and formulate recommendations for action. This study should take into account both the situation in the countries of origin as well as in the countries of residence and should:

1. Study the societal and political objectives of African Diaspora organizations in Germany or Europe
2. Analyze the specific situation in selected countries of origin
3. Study the repercussions of Diaspora activities on the countries of origin
4. Draft recommendations for action.

We consider the following points to be particularly important for the effort to close the research gap:

1. Concentration on a selection of countries/nationalities. A detailed study of the issue based on a number of cases studies is preferable to a broad-based approach, particularly in view of the diversity of individual cases.
2. Inclusion of strong empirical components.
3. Inclusion of the situation in the countries of origin.
4. Identification of indicators which reveal influences which 'aggravate' or 'reduce' conflicts.

5. In view of the transnational dimension of the Diaspora phenomenon, it would perhaps be wise to replace the focus on Germany by a regional focus (e.g. EU).

6. Consideration of the fact that there are different 'segments' of the Diaspora which display different patterns of behavior.

7. Role of the countries of origin. Very often these exert influence or even pressure on their citizens in the Diaspora and this can have an effect on possible political activities.

8. Role of the receiving countries. Receiving countries influence Diaspora activities by determining the conditions under which groups are allowed to organize themselves and conduct activities, or not. They can also influence or even prevent Diaspora activities through their cooperation with the countries of origin.

Diasporas for Peace: Patterns, Trends and Potential of Long-distance Diaspora Involvement in Conflict Settings.
Case studies from the Horn of Africa

The project "Diaspora for Peace" will be funded by the Seventh Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development (FP7) of the European Union.

The participating organizations are the University of Jyväskylä (JYU) in Finland, Bonn International Center for Conversion (BICC) and the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology (MPG) in Germany, the Peace Research Institute of Oslo (PRIO) in Norway, the African Diaspora Policy Centre (ADPC) in the Netherlands, the *Centro Studii Politica Internazionale* (CeSPI) in Italy, the Forum for Social Studies (FSS) in Ethiopia and the Academy for Peace and Development (APD) in Somalia. The coordinating person is Prof. Liisa Laakso of the University of Jyväskylä.

Context

While some evidence on the various roles played by Diasporas in their host societies is available, their precise roles and impacts in transnational contexts and particularly with regard to conflicts in the countries of origin remain unclear. Little empirical study has been carried out on migrant political transnationalism in a conflict setting and the real or potential involvement of Diaspora in international conflict resolution interventions.

The project Diaspora for Peace (DIASPEACE) responds to the need for a systematic study generating evidence-based and policy-relevant knowledge on the potential and actual impact of Diaspora activities on conflicts by conducting case studies of Diaspora networks in Europe and following up their activities in the Horn of Africa. The project focuses its attention on 'conflict-generated diasporas' originating in the Horn of Africa (Somalia, Ethiopia and Eritrea) who reside in Europe and actively engage in their respective countries of origin.

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