



MAGYC
Migration Governance and Asylum Crises

Migration Governance in Civil War: The Case of the Kurdish Conflict

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MAGYC: The MAGYC (**Migr**Ation **G**overnance and **AsYlum C**risis) project seeks to assess how migration governance has responded to the recent “refugee crises” and has since been influenced by it, and how crises at large shape policy responses to migration. This four-year research project (2018–2023) brings together twelve international partners: the Hugo Observatory from the University of Liège (Coordinator), Sciences Po, the University of Economics in Bratislava, the GIGA institute of Global and Area Studies, Lund University, the IDMC, SOAS University of London, the University of Milan, the Lebanese American University, the University of Macedonia, Sabanci University, IfPO/CNRS.

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Abstract

This article examines the management and instrumentalisation of migration and mobility as an area of contested governance in civil wars. Building on work in migration studies and 'rebel governance' it shows how migration and mobility regimes form part of the structure of violent armed conflicts, as both states and non-state actors seek to control mobility and migration to their advantage. The framework is then applied to the case of the Kurdish conflict in Turkey – a case in which internal displacement; diaspora politics; and regional cross-border mobility have all played significant roles. The analysis provides a challenge to dominant state-centric, securitization and humanitarian approaches to migration and security, pointing to the political and spatial complexity of migration governance in situations of protracted conflict.

Introduction

Migration governance is usually associated with states and international organisations, but the control of mobility is also a key priority for non-state armed organisations involved in conflict.¹ Whereas much of the policy literature on migration governance has focused on formal structures of governance and state policies, in many regions aspects of migration management – such as border control, refugee governance, citizenship, and diaspora politics – are carried out informally by non-state and clandestine actors and form part of the overall dynamic of protracted violent conflicts. Armed organisations can seek to secure control over people, territory and resources as part of an overall strategy of “rebel governance.” Within this context the control of mobility and migration emerges as an arena of contestation and competition between state authorities and non-state challengers.

In this article I examine these dynamics, analysing the ways in which the management of migration and mobility becomes a central strategy in civil wars, and how this complicates our understanding of “migration governance.” Drawing on examples from the Kurdish conflict in Turkey, I show how the control of diaspora populations, refugee governance, citizenship and the management of cross-border movement and mobility can all become areas of contestation between states and non-state rebel organisations, thus playing a central role in protracted conflicts. An understanding of how mobility governance operates in violent conflict challenges dominant approaches in

¹ Christiane Fröhlich and Lea Müller-Funk, “Mobility Control as State-Making in Civil War: Forcing Exit, Selective Return and Strategic Laissez-Faire,” April 11, 2022 https://www.scipost.org/preprints/scipost_202204_00014/.

the policy-relevant literature on migration and security, which often takes a state-centric perspective and ignores the agency and informal governance structures of non-state actors.

In the rest of this piece, I make this argument in the following manner. First, I examine how the existing literature on migration governance has treated the relationship between migration, conflict and security, before discussing how notions of “rebel governance” can help to shed light on the significance of migration- and mobility-management to rebel organisations and other non-state actors. I then apply this lens to the case of the Kurdish conflict in Turkey by discussing three areas of contested migration governance in the conflict: the role of displacement and refugee governance; borders and citizenship; and the governance of diaspora populations. I conclude with a discussion of the broader implications of the argument.

Migration Governance and Civil War

Existing literature on civil wars has understudied the central role that migration governance plays in conflict.² Whereas there is a substantial literature on migration as both a cause and consequence of conflict, the question of how conflict actors strategically instrumentalise mobility as a tool in conflict has received less attention. Violent conflicts are clearly one of the most significant causes of forced displacement and refugee flows in the world, as populations attempt to escape from ongoing violence.³ Moreover, there is an established literature that examines how migration and refugee movements can lead to the spread of violence by transnationalizing conflict dynamics, changing local power balances, or creating increased competition for scarce resources in receiving states.⁴ For example, an exodus of refugees to neighboring countries

² For example, migration management is rarely mentioned in field surveys such as Paul Collier and Nicholas Sambanis, “Understanding Civil War: A New Agenda,” *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 46, No. 1 (February 2002), pp. 3–12; In contrast, see Fröhlich and Müller-Funk, “Mobility Control as State-Making in Civil War: Forcing Exit, Selective Return and Strategic Laissez-Faire.”

³ Prakash Adhikari, “Conflict-Induced Displacement, Understanding the Causes of Flight,” *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 57, No. 1 (January 2013), pp. 82–89.

⁴ Idean Salehyan and Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, “Refugees and the Spread of Civil War,” *International Organization*, Vol. 60, No. 2 (April 2006), pp. 335–366; Idean Salehyan, “The Externalities of Civil Strife: Refugees as a Source of International Conflict,” *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 52, No. 4 (October 2008), pp. 787–801; Seraina Rüegger, “Refugees, Ethnic Power Relations, and Civil Conflict in the Country of Asylum,” *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 56, No. 1 (January 2019), pp. 42–57; Alex Braithwaite, Idean Salehyan, and Burcu Savun, “Refugees, Forced Migration, and Conflict: Introduction to the Special Issue,” *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 56, No. 1 (January 2019), pp. 5–11.

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following the 1994 Rwandan genocide is widely seen as contributing to the destabilization of the entire Great Lakes region of Central Africa.⁵

Yet, analysing migration merely as a cause or consequence of conflict misses the significant ways in which migration and conflict are more deeply intertwined. For example, migration flows are not always simply externalities or byproducts of conflict, but can also be part of actors' conflict strategies. Similarly, the spread of conflict via migration is not always unintentional; conflict actors can have active interests in spreading or reshaping conflict via the strategic use of migration flows. Thus, migration flows are not simply factors that states respond to and manage in conflict situations, but are often part of a "cat and mouse game" and form of strategic interaction that emerges between state authorities and rebel groups as part and parcel of ongoing violent conflicts. In such situations, the control of mobility and migration – including the control of refugee, migrant and diaspora populations – becomes a central aspect of conflict dynamics and strategy.

Both states and rebel groups can instrumentalise mobility and migration in various ways. For example, forced population displacement has figured as a strategy in both insurgency and counterinsurgency campaigns.⁶ In some cases, rebel groups may operate within or take control of refugee camps or use them as a base for the recruitment of refugees into armed conflict.⁷ The term "refugee warrior" has been used to describe highly politicised refugee groups who are both victims of violence, but also contribute to its perpetuation by taking up arms or supporting conflict.⁸ Indeed, violent conflicts are often characterised by repeated cycles of violence and displacement – forcibly displaced populations may well hold political grievances against the governments that have displaced them. These grievances can in turn be drawn upon by actors engaged in "long-distance" forms of political mobilisation, thus further fueling a cycle of conflict and violence.⁹

⁵ Kurt Mills and Richard J. Norton, "Refugees and Security in the Great Lakes Region of Africa," *Civil Wars*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (March 2002), pp. 1–26.

⁶ Kelly M. Greenhill, "Strategic Engineered Migration as a Weapon of War," *Civil Wars*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (March 2008), pp. 6–21; Alexander Downes and Kelly Greenhill, "Coercion by Proxy: Population Relocation in Counterinsurgency Operations" Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, San Francisco, CA, September 2015; Adam G. Lichtenheld, "Explaining Population Displacement Strategies in Civil Wars: A Cross-National Analysis," *International Organization*, Vol. 74, No. 2 (2020), pp. 253–294.

⁷ Sarah Kenyon Lischer, *Dangerous Sanctuaries: Refugee Camps, Civil War, and the Dilemmas of Humanitarian Aid* (Cornell University Press, 2005).

⁸ Aristide R. Zolberg, Astri Suhrke, and Sergio Aguayo, *Escape from Violence: Conflict and the Refugee Crisis in the Developing World* (Oxford University Press, 1992).

⁹ Fiona B. Adamson, "Displacement, Diaspora Mobilization, and Transnational Cycles of Political Violence," in John Tirman, ed., *Maze of Fear: Security and Migration After September 11th* (New York: New Press, 2004), pp. 45–58.

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The dynamics of many violent conflicts around the world have also been shaped by some involvement or mobilisation of transnational diaspora populations.¹⁰ In places as diverse as Northern Ireland, Kosovo, Sri Lanka and Eritrea, the combination of large-scale emigration and transnational mobilisation by political entrepreneurs has meant that many “local” conflicts have a “global” dimension, with diaspora communities viewed by conflict actors as sources of external funding and political support.¹¹ In the United States in the 1970s and 1980s, for example, organisations close to the Provisional Irish Republican Army (IRA) maintained fundraising networks in Irish-American communities across the United States.¹²

While such trends have been noticed in the literature, however, they have not been systematically theorised as forms of “migration governance.” As others have noted, there is a disconnect between the migration governance and civil war literature such that scholars of migration governance have focused largely on the roles and activities of states and international organisations, whereas scholars of civil war have rarely conceptualised the above activities as forms of “migration governance.”¹³ In fact, both states and non-state actors can engage in similar types of “mobility governance” activities, including exercising control over diaspora and refugee populations, imposing and controlling borders, or cooperating with third party actors in forms of mobility management.

Such activities are not new. In the 1950s, for example, the anti-colonial rebel group Algerian National Liberation Front (FLN) worked directly with the newly formed United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to protect Algerian refugees in Tunisia during the Algerian War (1954-1962). Recognition by the UNHCR was a boost to the legitimacy of the organisation’s government-

¹⁰ Bahar Baser, *Diasporas and Homeland Conflicts: A Comparative Perspective* (Routledge, 2016); Feargal Cochrane, *Migration and Security in the Global Age: Diaspora Communities and Conflict* (Routledge, 2015); C. Christine Fair, “Diaspora Involvement in Insurgencies: Insights from the Khalistan and Tamil Eelam Movements,” *Nationalism & Ethnic Politics*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (2005), pp. 125–156; Maria Koinova, “Diaspora Mobilisation for Conflict and Post-Conflict Reconstruction: Contextual and Comparative Dimensions,” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, Vol. 44, No. 8 (June 2018), pp. 1251–1269; Terrence Lyons, “Diasporas and Homeland Conflict”; Élise Féron and Bruno Lefort, “Diasporas and Conflicts – Understanding the Nexus,” *Diaspora Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (November 2019), pp. 34–51.

¹¹ Daniel Byman et al., *Trends in Outside Support for Insurgent Movements* (Rand Corporation, 2001).

¹² Danielle A. Zach, “‘It Was Networking, All Networking’: The Irish Republican Movement’s Survival in Cold War America,” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, pp. 1–19.

¹³ Fröhlich and Müller-Funk, “Mobility Control as State-Making in Civil War: Forcing Exit, Selective Return and Strategic Laissez-Faire.”

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in-exile in its conflict with the French colonial state.¹⁴ Additional examples of non-state rebel groups controlling and governing refugee camps include Sahrawi refugee camps in Algeria, which are formally run by the non-state Polisario Front or examples of informal governance, such as the central role that the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) historically played in providing services in refugee camps in Lebanon.¹⁵ Moreover, non-state armed organisations can be involved in the running of detention centres, as occurs in parts of Libya, where the European Union has come under fire for its collaboration with non-state rebel organisations in its migration control externalisation policies.¹⁶

The same reasons that states seek to control and assert sovereignty over migration and mobility apply to non-state challengers to the state. The power to control migration is viewed as a key aspect of “stateness” which governments jealously guard.¹⁷ Control over national borders; mobility documentation, such as the power to issue passports and visas;¹⁸ the power to engage in ‘migration diplomacy’ or bargain with other actors over mobility

¹⁴ Malika Rahal and Benjamin Thomas White, “UNHCR and the Algerian War of Independence: Postcolonial Sovereignty and the Globalization of the International Refugee Regime, 1954–63,” *Journal of Global History*, pp. 1–22.

¹⁵ Randa Farah, “Refugee Camps in the Palestinian and Sahrawi National Liberation Movements: A Comparative Perspective,” *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 38, No. 2 (2009), pp. 76–93; Sari Hanafi and Taylor Long, “Governance, Governmentalities, and the State of Exception in the Palestinian Refugee Camps of Lebanon,” *Journal of Refugee Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (May 2010), pp. 134–159.

¹⁶ Michael Flynn, “Kidnapped, Trafficked, Detained? The Implications of Non-State Actor Involvement in Immigration Detention,” *Journal on Migration and Human Security*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (September 2017), pp. 593–613; Patrick Müller and Peter Slominski, “Breaking the Legal Link but Not the Law? The Externalization of EU Migration Control through Orchestration in the Central Mediterranean,” *Journal of European Public Policy*, Vol. 28, No. 6 (June 2021), pp. 801–820; Agnese Pacciardi and Joakim Berndtsson, “EU Border Externalisation and Security Outsourcing: Exploring the Migration Industry in Libya,” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, pp. 1–19 (online first April 2022).

¹⁷ John Torpey, “Coming and Going: On the State Monopolization of the Legitimate ‘Means of Movement,’” *Sociological Theory*, Vol. 16, No. 3 (November 1998), pp. 239–259; Fiona B. Adamson, “Crossing Borders: International Migration and National Security,” *International Security*, Vol. 31, No. 1 (July 2006), pp. 165–199; J. F. Hollifield, “The Emerging Migration State,” *The International Migration Review*, Vol. 38, No. 3 (2004), pp. 885–912.

¹⁸ John Torpey, *The Invention of the Passport: Surveillance, Citizenship and the State* (Cambridge University Press, 2000).

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management;¹⁹ control over emigrants and diaspora populations;²⁰ and the governance of refugee populations are all means of asserting state sovereignty over populations.

Thus, the ability of a rebel organisation or violent non-state actor to gain control over some aspects of migration control also boosts their legitimacy and capacity – as well as their access to material resources – in their ongoing conflict with state authorities. Rebel governance structures emerge when rebel groups construct institutions of governance that function either in competition with, parallel to, or in absence of formal state institutions.²¹ They can vary in their degree of control from minimal to hegemonic and exist in contexts as diverse as Colombia, Liberia, Greece, the Ivory Coast and Sri Lanka.²² As scholars of rebel governance have shown, non-state actors set up systems of taxation, local justice, security and other functions performed by states.²³ Migration systems and mobility thus can be viewed as part of the overall “toolbox” of strategies in violent conflict and as an additional means of asserting control via techniques of rebel governance. This informal management of migration can be understood as an active conflict strategy and part of a broader repertoire of “rebel governance” practices which emerge when armed organisations seek to gain legitimacy by replicating the

¹⁹ Helene Thiollet, “Migration as Diplomacy: Labor Migrants, Refugees, and Arab Regional Politics in the Oil-Rich Countries,” *International Labor and Working-Class History*, Vol. 79, No. 1 (2011), pp. 103–121; Fiona B. Adamson and Gerasimos Tsourapas, “Migration Diplomacy in World Politics,” *International Studies Perspectives* Vol 20. No. 2 (2019), pp. 113-128.

²⁰ David FitzGerald, *A Nation of Emigrants: How Mexico Manages Its Migration* (University of California Press, 2008); Alan Gamlen, *Human Geopolitics: States, Emigrants, and the Rise of Diaspora Institutions* (Oxford University Press, 2019).

²¹ Ana Arjona, “Civilian Resistance to Rebel Governance,” in Ana Arjona et al., ed., *Rebel Governance in Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 180–202; Ana Arjona, *Rebelocracy: Social Order in the Colombian Civil War* (Cambridge University Press, 2016).

²² Ana Arjona, Nelson Kasfir, and Zachariah Mampilly, *Rebel Governance in Civil War* (Cambridge University Press, 2015); Nicholai Hart Lidow, *Violent Order: Understanding Rebel Governance through Liberia's Civil War* (Cambridge University Press, 2016); Zachariah Cherian Mampilly, *Rebel Rulers: Insurgent Governance and Civilian Life during War* (Cornell University Press, 2011); Stathis N. Kalyvas, “Rebel Governance During the Greek Civil War, 1942–1949,” in Ana Arjona et al., ed., *Rebel Governance in Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 119–137; Till Förster, “Dialogue Direct: Rebel Governance and Civil Order in Northern Côte d'Ivoire,” *Rebel Governance in Civil War*, pp. 203–225; William Reno, “Predatory Rebellions and Governance: The National Patriotic Front of Liberia, 1989–1992,” in Ana Arjona et al., ed., *Rebel Governance in Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 265–285; Paul Staniland, *Networks of Rebellion: Explaining Insurgent Cohesion and Collapse* (Cornell University Press, 2014).

²³ Arjona, *Rebelocracy: Social Order in the Colombian Civil War*; Arjona, Kasfir, and Mampilly, *Rebel Governance in Civil War*; Mampilly, *Rebel Rulers: Insurgent Governance and Civilian Life during War*.

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functions of states as part of their attempts to exercise control over populations and territory.

In the rest of this article, I examine in more detail how this dynamic can operate in a particular conflict. The Kurdish conflict in Turkey provides a useful example of the role played by the governance of migration and mobility in civil wars, and how refugee governance, diaspora governance, border management and citizenship all become part of the overall conflict strategies of both state and non-state actors. In the case of the Kurdish conflict, which stretches over multiple decades and has grown substantially more complex since the outbreak of the Syrian war in 2011, non-state actors have engaged in forms of “rebel governance” of migration and mobility within Turkey, Syria and Iraq, as well as within the European diaspora. The interplay between formal and informal migration governance presents ongoing challenges for human security in the region, and also calls into question conventional state-centric understandings of “migration governance.”

Contested Migration Governance in the Kurdish Conflict

In the long conflict between Turkish state authorities and armed organisations associated with the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), the control of migration and mobility has played a central role. The Kurdish conflict in Turkey is a particularly complex conflict, which is defined by cross-border, regional and transnational dimensions in which the management of mobility and the control and mobilisation of geographically diverse populations has been a significant factor. The conflict has deeper historical roots in the marginalisation of the Kurdish population in the region, but in its current form can be traced back to the formation of the PKK in the 1970s, which was formed with the aim of Kurdish independence, and the subsequent start of armed conflict in Turkey in the 1980s. In Turkey, the conflict was at its most intense during the 1990s, and has since gone through various iterations, with a major shift in the dynamic occurring with the outbreak of the Syrian conflict in 2011. PKK-related actors were involved as one of the participants in the Syrian conflict, operating in Kurdish-populated regions, and played an active role in fighting the Islamic State (IS). In 2012, an autonomous region in north and northeast Syria, known as Rojava (the “West,” indicating the western portion of a broader Kurdistan) was established by the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) and has operated under conditions of “rebel governance” as a functioning, if unrecognised, quasi-state since then.

Forced Displacement and Refugee Governance

Forced displacement has played a key role in both the Kurdish conflict in Southeastern Turkey, as well as its extension into Northern Syria in the context of the Syrian war, and has been accompanied by “refugee governance” of displaced people by both state and non-state actors. State strategies of

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forced displacement of Kurdish populations go back to the late Ottoman Empire and the early Republican period. For example, there were forced cross-border displacements of minorities – including Kurdish minorities – from the newly formed Turkish Republic to Syria (under French mandate rule) in the 1920s and 1930s. Additionally, the 1934 Law of Resettlement was used to authorise the displacement and relocation of people internally within Turkey during the early Republican period, and was applied to Kurdish minority populations during the Dersim massacre of the 1930s.²⁴

Forced displacement was a central aspect of the conflict between Turkish authorities and the PKK during the 1980s and 1990s. At the height of the armed conflict in the 1990s in southeastern Turkey, it is estimated that more than 3,000 villages were destroyed, with figures of internally displaced over the course of the conflict ranging from several hundred thousand to 3 million.²⁵ Displacement was carried out largely by the Turkish state, operating via an auxiliary “village guard” system, and under the context of emergency rule, which allowed local governors to remove populations “for security reasons.” The programme of displacement became part of the military strategy of the Turkish armed forces in response to the successes the PKK had in the 1980s of dominating rural areas of southeastern Turkey via their control of networks of villages across the region. In the 1990s, the Turkish military countered this by establishing a village guard system, often destroying or evacuating villages that refused to participate or that were seen as sympathetic to the PKK.²⁶ Such tactics were reportedly also used by the PKK, which targeted villages participating in the village guard system, with civilians often caught in the middle of the conflict between the Turkish military and the PKK. Additionally, systematic displacement tied to large-scale economic development projects,

²⁴ Bilgin Ayata and Deniz Yükseser, “A Belated Awakening: National and International Responses to the Internal Displacement of Kurds in Turkey,” *New Perspectives on Turkey*, Vol. 32 (2005), pp. 5–42; Nicole Watts, “Relocating Dersim: Turkish State-Building and Kurdish Resistance, 1931–1938,” *New Perspectives on Turkey*, Vol. 23 (2000), pp. 5–30; Hans-Lukas Kieser, “Dersim Massacre, 1937–1938,” *Violence de masse et Résistance - Réseau de recherche*, <https://www.sciencespo.fr/mass-violence-war-massacre-resistance/en/document/dersim-massacre-1937-1938.html>; Tachijian Vahé, “The Expulsion of Non-Turkish Ethnic and Religious Groups from Turkey to Syria during the 1920s and Early 1930s,” *Violence de masse et Résistance - Réseau de recherche*, <https://www.sciencespo.fr/mass-violence-war-massacre-resistance/en/document/expulsion-non-turkish-ethnic-and-religious-groups-turkey-syria-during-1920s-and-early-1930s.html>; Dawn Chatty, “Refugees, Exiles, and Other Forced Migrants in the Late Ottoman Empire,” *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (February 2013), pp. 35–52.

²⁵ Global IDP Project, “Profile of Internal Displacement in Turkey” (Geneva, Switzerland.: Norwegian Refugee Council, April 5, 2004), <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/3bd98d600.pdf>. See pp. 8–9.

²⁶ See discussions in Joost Jongerden, *The Settlement Issue in Turkey and the Kurds: An Analysis of Spatial Policies, Modernity and War* (Brill, 2007); Joost Jongerden, “Village Evacuation and Reconstruction in Kurdistan (1993–2002),” *Etudes Rurales*, No. 186 (March 2010), pp. 77–100.

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such as the construction of networks of dams, was used by the government to further exercise control over the region and led to further displacement.²⁷

Displaced populations fled internally to urban areas in Turkey, but also across the border to refugee camps in Greece and Iraq, as well as to destinations in Europe. Following a military coup in 1980, Kurdish intellectuals, activists and militants had arrived in Western Europe as part of the approximately 60,000 political exiles who fled Turkey for political reasons at the time. Across all of Western Europe, almost 350,000 Turkish citizens applied for political asylum in various European countries between 1983 and 1994, with the number of foreigners seeking admittance to Germany under its asylum policies rose by almost 8000%. At the same time, the PKK largely moved its strategic operations to Syria and Iraq, with the leadership based in Damascus throughout the 1990s.²⁸

Within this context of displacement, the governance of the internally displaced populations (IDPs) and refugees came to be part and parcel of the conflict dynamics, with both the Turkish state and the PKK continuing to see displaced populations as potential sources of support. The Turkish state has arguably used policies of social welfare and economic development as a tool in the conflict, including specifically targeting displaced Kurds in urban centres in Turkey with welfare assistance, such as free health care, subsidised housing, education, food stamps, disability aid and other forms of social support.²⁹ At the same time, outside of Turkey, PKK-related groups were also involved in service delivery, with refugee camps in Greece and Northern Iraq becoming de-facto PKK-affiliated and self-governed camps where "strict allegiance to the PKK and resistance to the Turkish state, and the two – the camp's identity and its politics – cannot be separated."³⁰ Furthermore, refugee governance "from below" also takes place within communities of the displaced who have fled to Europe, sometimes in the form of self-help groups, and sometimes in conjunction with organisations sympathetic to or connected with the PKK.³¹

²⁷ Global IDP Project, "Profile of Internal Displacement in Turkey."

²⁸ Thomas Faist, *The Volume and Dynamics of International Migration and Transnational Social Spaces* (Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 93.

²⁹ Ayata and Yükseser, "A Belated Awakening: National and International Responses to the Internal Displacement of Kurds in Turkey", pp. 23-24; Erdem Yörük, "Welfare Provision as Political Containment: The Politics of Social Assistance and the Kurdish Conflict in Turkey," *Politics & Society*, Vol. 40, No. 4 (December 2012), pp. 517–547.

³⁰ See, for example, Par Will Horner, "PKK Flags and Öcalan's Face: Inside Greece's Self-Ruling Kurdish Enclave" *Middle East Eye* November 2, 2016: <https://www.middleeasteye.net/fr/news/inside-kurdish-refugee-camp-run-its-residents-1798704513>; Jenna Krajeski, "Between Turkey and Iraq: the Kurds of the Makhmour Refugee Camp" August 29, 2012: <https://pulitzercenter.org/stories/between-turkey-and-iraq-kurds-makhmour-refugee-camp>

³¹ I think Veysi Dag for this observation.

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Displacement and refugee governance have also been strategically utilised by both state and non-state actors in the latest phase of the conflict, which intersects with the dynamics of the Syrian War. When the conflict in Syria led to a massive outflow of refugees and displaced persons beginning in 2011, with Turkey hosting the largest number of refugees in the region by 2018, the situation was already intertwined with the dynamics of the Kurdish conflict in Turkey. Although much attention has been paid to the domestic political, humanitarian and migration diplomacy aspects of Turkey's role in the Syrian "refugee crisis," and its domestic policies towards refugees from Syria, Turkey's "refugee governance" policies need to also be understood in the context of this larger ongoing conflict – a dimension that is often missing in more state-centric approaches.³² In the Kurdish-dominated areas of Southeastern Turkey, for example, there was concern that the influx of Syrian Arabs was linked to government policies designed to change the ethnic balance in the region, thus undercutting bids for increased Kurdish regional autonomy.³³ At the same time, Turkey became directly involved in the conflict, in large part to prevent Kurdish groups affiliated with the PKK from establishing dominance on the Turkish-Syrian border and gaining direct access to the Mediterranean. Turkey's own activities in the conflict have also led to internal displacements of populations in the region, with significant numbers of the displaced having fled to the Kurdish-controlled regions of Rojava in Northern Syria.³⁴

Non-state refugee governance activities reached a new level in the Kurdish autonomous zone of Northern Syria, which has been estimated to host up to 200,000 refugees from elsewhere in Syria in a network of thirteen camps run by the Autonomous Administration of North and Northeast Syria (AANES), also

³² Zeynep Şahin Mencütek, *Refugee Governance, State and Politics in the Middle East* (Routledge, 2018); Kelsey P. Norman, *Reluctant Reception: Refugees, Migration and Governance in the Middle East and North Africa* (Cambridge University Press, 2020). For an exception, see Emel Parlar Dal, "Impact of the Transnationalization of the Syrian Civil War on Turkey: Conflict Spillover Cases of Isis and PYD-YPG/PKK." *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* Vol. 29 No. 4 (2017), pp. 1396-1420.

³³ See e.g. Ibrahim Dogus, "How Syrians in Turkey are Coping with a Polarized Political Climate," *New Statesman* 15 July 2017; Rüeegger, "Refugees, Ethnic Power Relations, and Civil Conflict in the Country of Asylum," 2019.

³⁴ There have been a number of book-length studies of the Kurdish autonomous zone of Rojava in Northern Syria. See, for example, Michael Knapp, Anja Flach and Ercan Ayboga. *Revolution in Rojava: Democratic Autonomy and Women's Liberation in Syrian Kurdistan*. London: Pluto Press, 2016; Harriet Allsopp and Wladimir Wan Wilgenburg. *The Kurds of Northern Syria: Governance, Diversity and Conflicts*. London: IB Tauris, 2019. Thomas Schmidinger, Andrej Grubacic and Michael Schiffmann (trans.). *Battle for the Mountain of the Kurds: Self-Determination and Ethnic Cleansing in Rojava* San Francisco: Kairos/PM Press, 2019. See also Rana Khalaf. *Governing Rojava: Layers of Legitimacy in Syria* (Chatham House, 2018) and Joost Jongerden, "Governing Kurdistan: Self-Administration in the Kurdistan Regional Government in Iraq and the Democratic Federation of Northern Syria." *Ethnopolitics* Vol. 18, No. 1 (2019), pp. 61-75.

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known as Rojava.³⁵ Additionally, there are long-standing networks that connect Kurdish communities in northern Syria with communities in southeastern Turkey. Displaced Kurdish populations in northern Syria are therefore often dependent on humanitarian assistance from networks across the border in Turkey, but such cross-border mobility between Kurdish communities in Syria and Turkey is also viewed as a security threat by the Turkish state, thus exacerbating the at times dire conditions in refugee camps in the Kurdish autonomous zone.³⁶ Within northeastern Syria, refugee camps in the region operate under control of the internal Rojava security and police forces, and camp residents include a mix of civilians and former Islamic State (IS) fighters and their families.³⁷ The relatively high presence of IS families has also periodically led to clashes and security operations in the camps. For example, 41 people were reported killed in the first three months of 2021 in the al-Hol Camp in the Al-Hasakah district of Northern Syria.³⁸ The unrecognised status of the camps raises broader issues of humanitarian access, and deliver of official aid from international organisations, as well as whether autonomous and unrecognised entities can be treated as legal entities capable of offering protection to those who reside within their borders – an issue that also applies to the neighbouring (but separate) Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) in Iraq.³⁹

Borders and Citizenship

The preceding discussion points to the significant role that borders and citizenship have played in the Kurdish conflict. Kurdish populations stretch across contemporary Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran (and beyond) and translocal interactions in the region pre-date the formation of contemporary nation-states. As discussed above, cross-border displacements in the late Ottoman and early Republican periods created further cross-border ties, as social groups and tribes were sometimes split across national borders. Thus, the social

³⁵ See, for example, “Refugee Camps in Rojava Abandoned to Their Fate with No International Aid,” *Medyanews* January 29, 2021.

³⁶ Hugh Pope, “Refugee-Hit Turkey’s New Syrian Kurdish Dilemmas” International Crisis Group, June 23, 2014.

³⁷ For more on the role of the Syrian Democratic Forces and the Asayish internal security forces, see European Asylum Support Office (EASO). 2020. *Country Guidance: Syria Common Analysis and Guidance Note* Luxembourg: Publication Office of the European Union: <https://euaa.europa.eu/country-guidance-syria>

³⁸ BBC News, “Kurdish-Led Campaign Underway to Rid Al-Hol Camp of IS.” March 28, 2021: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-56553797>

³⁹ See discussion in EASO 2020. Additionally, there are an estimated 35 IDP and refugee camps in the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) area of Iraq. Khazan Jangiz, “Kurdistan Region Has No Intention of Closing Down Its Refugee Camps,” *Rudaw* November 22, 2021. For a broader discussion on the KRG and protection, see Natasha Carver. 2002. “Is Iraq/Kurdistan a State Such That it Can be Said to Operate State Systems and Thus Offer Protection to Its ‘Citizens?’” *Journal of Refugee Law* 14 (1): 57-84.

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and identity basis of the Kurdish conflict often transcends the boundaries of existing states, bringing questions of borders and citizenship to the fore. The ability to cross a national border is key for a rebel group or other non-state actor to maintain links between translocal social networks and bases of support, but also plays a role in offering protection and sanctuary from state authorities. Thus, in the 1990s when the fighting was at its most intense in Turkey, the PKK largely operated from Syria and Iraq, but also extended its operations to the development of governance and mobilisation networks across migrant and diaspora communities in Europe, which provided additional an additional source of both material and political support.

In the early 2000s, following the capture and imprisonment of PKK-founder Abdullah Ocalan, the rise to power of the Justice and Development (AKP) party in Turkey, and a cease-fire in the active conflict in Turkey, there was a liberalisation of borders between Turkey, Syria and Northern Iraq in the context of Turkey's "zero problem with neighbours" foreign policy. Visa liberalisation facilitating free movement between Syria and Turkey, along with domestic political liberalisation, allowed for the building and strengthening of trans-local ties across the borders of Turkey, Syria and the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) a region which obtained increasing autonomy following the 2003-11 Iraq war.⁴⁰ This was utilised by PKK-related groups as an opportunity to build up translocal governance structures, under the umbrella of the Kurdish Communities Union (KCK). This translocal strategy included the establishment of a Syrian branch of the PKK, the Democratic Union Party (PYD), which later, with the onset of the Syrian conflict, established its own armed units, the People's Protection Units (YPG) and Women's Protection Units (YPJ), which are the primary components of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF).

The outbreak of conflict in Syria and its links to the conflict in southeastern Turkey meant that the Turkish-Syrian border took on increased significance across multiple dimensions. On the one hand, the Turkish state had an interest in limiting the cross-border mobility of both Kurdish and Islamist fighters in the region. Southeastern Turkey became a gateway for foreign fighters entering the conflict in Syria – both for Islamist fighters supporting the Islamic State and anti-Islamist fighters fighting on the side of Kurdish groups. In addition, the spillover of the conflict in Syria included the spread of IS activities in Turkey. Between 2013-16 Turkey suffered numerous suicide bombings and terror attacks across the country, many of which were attributed to IS-linked groups. During this time there were also contradictory pressures coming from the international community with respect to the Turkish-Syrian border. Keeping the border open potentially facilitated the activities of the Islamic State and other armed groups in the region, allowing for IS to bring in new recruits and supplies,

⁴⁰ Paul J. White, *Primitive Rebels Or Revolutionary Modernizers?: The Kurdish National Movement in Turkey* (Zed Books, 2000); Cengiz Gunes, *The Kurdish National Movement in Turkey: From Protest to Resistance* (Routledge, 2013); Seevan Saeed, *Kurdish Politics in Turkey: From the PKK to the KCK* (Taylor & Francis, 2016).

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sell oil and other commodities, and to receive medical treatment and other assistance in the border regions of Turkey. Yet closing the border prevented refugees fleeing the conflict from crossing into Turkey. At the same time, actors connected with the PKK and KCK had a strong interest in maintaining an open border, and the ability to cross back and forth between Syria and Turkey.

In 2017 Turkey attempted to secure its control of the border when it completed a 700-kilometer wall along most of its 900-kilometer border with Syria at a cost of 400 million US dollars. A further wall on the Iranian border was started in August 2017 as part of an Integrated Border Security System, with both walls funded in large part by the European Union, including funds from the 2016 EU Turkey deal targeted at strengthening border controls in the region.⁴¹ The walls were designed to deter smugglers and irregular migration, as well as disrupting cross-border operations by Kurdish militants, but also had the effect of separating local villages and families, disrupting long-standing trading routes and making circular and seasonal migration more difficult.⁴²

The question of translocality, and the disjunction between feelings of social belonging and contemporary regimes of national citizenship and borders, points to how notions of citizenship also become part of the “battleground” on which civil wars are waged. From the perspective of many Kurdish political activists sympathetic to armed struggle in the region, national citizenship has been “weaponised” in states such as Syria and Turkey in ways that have led to the oppression of Kurdish populations. For example, Syria has both deprived Kurdish populations of citizenship and granted citizenship based on state interests in controlling the population. An example of the former is the regime’s revocation of citizenship of an estimated 120,000 Kurds living in the Jazeera province in the 1960s. An example of the latter is the Assad regime’s granting of citizenship to those previously disenfranchised Kurds in 2011 in a putative attempt to curb their participation in mass protests.⁴³ Thus, citizenship itself becomes “securitized” as part of a broader set of contestations around migration governance. PKK-related organisations have in turn attempted to develop a form of “stateless citizenship” based on Ocalan’s theorisation of “democratic confederalism.”⁴⁴ In fact, the development of a counter-hegemonic form of citizenship is a central feature of the PKK-related transnational structures associated with the Kurdish Communities Union (KCK),

⁴¹ See, for, example, Maximilian Popp, “EU Money Helped Fortify Turkey’s Border” *Der Spiegel* March 29, 2018: <https://www.spiegel.de/international/world/firing-at-refugees-eu-money-helped-fortify-turkey-s-border-a-1199667.html>

⁴² Burak Akinci, “Spotlight: After Syria, Turkey is Building Second Security Wall Along Border with Iran; Iraq May be Next” *Xinhua Net* 12 August 2017.

⁴³ Dilar Dirik, “Stateless Citizenship: ‘Radical Democracy as Consciousness-Raising’ in the Rojava Revolution,” *Identities* Vol 29, No 1 (2022), pp. 27-44.

⁴⁴ Ibid. See also Michiel Leezenberg, “The Ambiguities of Democratic Autonomy: The Kurdish Movement of Turkey and Rojava. *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* Vol 16 No 4 (2016), pp. 271-90 and Abdullah Ocalan, *Democratic Confederalism* (Transmedia Publishing, 2011).

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which confer a transnational form of membership and belonging on spatially-dispersed Kurdish populations across different states, including the diaspora in Europe and beyond.⁴⁵

Diaspora Governance: Mobilisation and Counter-Mobilisation

Diaspora governance is an additional area of migration-related competition in civil wars, and one that has been especially significant in the Kurdish conflict.⁴⁶ In this case, a Turkish state policy of promoting emigration to Europe in the 1960s as a form of economic development interacted with its policy of domestic repression of Kurdish political actors in ways that strongly affected the dynamics of the Kurdish conflict by transnationalising it.⁴⁷ As mentioned above, the 1980s and 1990s saw an exodus of exiles, refugees and asylum seekers from Turkey to Europe, many of whom settled in areas where there were already existing populations of economic migrants from Turkey. At the same time, when the PKK went into exile in Syria in the 1990s, it simultaneously developed a European strategy centred around the mobilisation of the Kurdish diaspora and the establishment of a PKK presence in Europe. Throughout the 1990s, the PKK established branches of its political wing, the National Liberation Front for Kurdistan (ERNK), in Europe which operated until it was dissolved in 1999 with the arrest and capture of Ocalan. It also established a Kurdish Parliament-in-Exile in 1995.

In effect, the PKK set up a formal “diaspora engagement” policy aimed at Kurds in Europe that was also coordinated with and designed to support the armed conflict in southeastern Turkey.⁴⁸ PKK members circulated back and forth between Europe and Syria, and engaged in significant political and cultural activities in Europe, ranging from fostering Kurdish language publications, culture, media, to engaging in fundraising, political lobbying, raising awareness about human rights abuses in Turkey, organising public demonstrations and festivals and even recruiting fighters and volunteers to support the armed conflict in Turkey.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Saeed, *Kurdish Politics in Turkey: From the PKK to the KCK*.

⁴⁶ Eva Østergaard-Nielsen, *Transnational Politics: The Case of Turks and Kurds in Germany* (Routledge, 2003); Baser, *Diasporas and Homeland Conflicts: A Comparative Perspective*.

⁴⁷ Fiona B. Adamson, “Mechanisms of Diaspora Mobilization and the Transnationalization of Civil War,” in Jeffrey T. Checkel, ed., *Transnational Dynamics of Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 63–88.

⁴⁸ On state policies of diaspora engagement, see for example Gamlen, *Human Geopolitics: States, Emigrants, and the Rise of Diaspora Institutions*; Alexandra Délano and Alan Gamlen, “Comparing and Theorizing State–diaspora Relations,” *Political Geography*, Vol. 41 (July 2014), pp. 43–53; FitzGerald, *A Nation of Emigrants: How Mexico Manages Its Migration*.

⁴⁹ Nicole F. Watts, “Institutionalizing Virtual Kurdistan West: Transnational Networks and Ethnic Contention in International Affairs,” *Boundaries and Belonging: States and Societies in the Struggle to Shape Identities and Local Practices*, pp. 121–150;

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The PKK and related groups in Europe in the 1990s sought to exercise political hegemony and control over the diaspora, including using violence and intimidation against rival Kurdish organisations, as well as tactics of intimidation and threats to secure support from the community in the form of donations and recruits.⁵⁰ Since 2003, many organisations in Europe have become closely affiliated to the broader KCK, which treats the diaspora as an integral part of its organisational structure.⁵¹ Alongside an already-existing network of PKK-linked Kurdish organisations in Europe, new entities tied more closely to Rojava and the YPG have emerged. The largest umbrella organisation of Kurdish groups in Europe is KCD-E (European Kurdish Democratic Societies Congress), which has numerous national affiliates in different European states and is generally considered to be sympathetic to the PKK in its orientation.

Organisations in the diaspora connected with Rojava follow models of earlier forms of “rebel diplomacy” by the PKK in Europe in the 1990s.⁵² The declaration of autonomy by Rojava in 2013 was also accompanied by a strategy of internationalisation, with campaigns to gain support in Europe, Russia and North America. The PYD was able to effectively “utilise its access to global communications and advocacy networks to pursue a sophisticated program of public diplomacy.”⁵³ In 2016 Rojava offices were opened in Moscow, Paris, Prague, Stockholm, Berlin, The Hague and Copenhagen. The YPG has also sent delegations to various countries throughout Europe, where they have been received by public officials or addressed parliamentary bodies. The offices are used to gain legitimacy and status, and to secure financial and political resources from abroad.⁵⁴

The “diaspora strategy” plays a central role in the conflict – in effect challenging territorial forms of political belonging by bringing symbols of Kurdish nationalism therefore into multiple spaces and locales in Europe and beyond, with diaspora activists mobilising solidarity networks, engaging in campaigns and supporting educational training on Öcalan's principles of

Østergaard-Nielsen, *Transnational Politics: The Case of Turks and Kurds in Germany*; Adamson, “Mechanisms of Diaspora Mobilization and the Transnationalization of Civil War.”

⁵⁰ Mehmet Alper Sozer and Kamil Yilmaz, “The PKK and Its Evolution in Britain (1984–present),” *Terrorism and Political Violence*, pp. 1–19; Baser, *Diasporas and Homeland Conflicts: A Comparative Perspective*; Adamson, “Mechanisms of Diaspora Mobilization and the Transnationalization of Civil War.”

⁵¹ Saeed, *Kurdish Politics in Turkey: From the PKK to the KCK*, 66.

⁵² On rebel diplomacy, see Reyko Huang, “Rebel Diplomacy in Civil War,” *International Security* Vol 40 No 4 (2016), pp. 89-126; Bridget L. Coggins, “Rebel Diplomacy: Theorizing Violent Non-State Actors' Strategic Use of Talk,” in *Rebel Governance in Civil War* m(2015).

⁵³ Rana Khalaf, *Governing Rojava: Layers of Legitimacy in Syria* (Chatham House, 2016), p. 21.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

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democratic federalism confederalism. Such organisations relocate aspects of Kurdish nationalism and identity to spaces and places beyond the borders of Turkey, Syria or other states that directly form part of the Kurdistan region. They do so by both providing support to the local community of refugees and migrants and replicating and localising symbols of nationalism in the diaspora. They engage equally in everyday cultural practices that can be associated with what Billig refers to as banal nationalism, but also in a politicised and activist form of nationalism that results in localised episodes of contention via protests and demonstrations.⁵⁵

At the same time, however, the Turkish state has also long recognised the political significance of the diaspora and began to see the transnational diaspora as part and parcel of the ongoing Kurdish conflict, using various forms of state control to monitor and deter the political activities of Kurds in Europe. It has for many years engaged in the surveillance and “long-distance policing” of political activists in Germany, France and elsewhere and, similar to other states, it developed systems and strategies of “transnational repression” designed to suppress political opposition overseas.⁵⁶

For example, Kurds living in Europe returning to Turkey were often harassed or would find themselves held for questioning or, in some cases, arrested. Another technique of repression was to cancel or refuse to renew the passports of Kurdish political activists living abroad, thereby compelling them to either return to Turkey, live abroad illegally or apply for asylum.⁵⁷ In addition, the Turkish state placed pressure on European countries in the 1990s to ban the PKK and its associated organisations. The PKK was banned in Germany in 1993, and PKK-related organisations and media groups, including MED-TV in the 1990s, and organisations such as Firat News Agency in the Netherlands; ROJ-Groupa and Denge Mezopotamya Radio in Belgium; ROJ TV and MMC TV in Denmark; Newroz TV in Norway; the House of Kurdish People in Marseille, France; and the newspaper Yeni Ozgur Politika in Germany were all at times banned abroad under pressure from the Turkish state.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (SAGE, 1995). Zuhul Karagöz, “The Kurdish Diasporic Mobilization in France: From a Restricted Political National Frame to a Translocal Sphere of Contention? The Case of Kurds in Marseille, France.” *Journal of Mediterranean Knowledge* Vol 2, No. 1, pp. 79-100.

⁵⁶ Dana M. Moss, “Transnational Repression, Diaspora Mobilization, and the Case of The Arab Spring,” *Social Problems*, Vol. 63, No. 4 (November 2016), pp. 480–498; Dana M. Moss, *The Arab Uprisings Abroad* (Cambridge University Press, 2021); Dara Conduit, “Authoritarian Power in Space, Time and Exile,” *Political Geography*, Vol. 82 (October 2020), 102239; Gerasimos Tsourapas, “Global Autocracies: Strategies of Transnational Repression, Legitimation, and Co-Optation in World Politics,” *International Studies Review*, Vol. 23, No. 3 (August 2020), pp. 616–644.

⁵⁷ Ostergaard-Nielsen, *Transnational Politics: Turks and Kurds in Germany*, pp. 118-119.

⁵⁸ David Romano, *The Kurdish Nationalist Movement: Opportunity, Mobilization and Identity* (Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 153–9; Amir Hassanpour, “Satellite Footprints as National Borders: Med-tv and the Extraterritoriality of State Sovereignty,”

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There have also been several instances of members and supporters of the PKK being targeted for assassination in Europe, with suspicion that such assassinations were carried out by the Turkish Intelligence Service (MIT) or organizations close to the state. The most reported incident was in 2013, when Sakine Cansiz, one of the co-founders of the PKK, was executed, along with two other women, Fidan Dogan and Leyla Söylemez, in the Kurdistan Information Center in Paris. It is widely assumed that those murders were carried out by the Turkish state. In 2016 an assassination plot was allegedly uncovered that involved the Turkish Intelligence Service targeting the leaders of two Kurdish organizations, Kongra-Gel co-chair Remzi Kartal and European Kurdish Democratic Societies Congress (KCD-E) co-chair Yüksel Koç. In response the German police in Hamburg detained a Turkish intelligence services agent in December 2016.⁵⁹

The management or courting of populations abroad can be seen as a type of migration governance that is common to labour-sending countries of emigration. Indeed, Turkey's policies towards its citizens abroad resemble the type of governance mechanisms that have been used in Europe by other emigration states in the 1960s and 70s, such as those of Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco in France.⁶⁰ During this period Turkey was involved in the governance and management of its citizens abroad via the provision of state religious, educational and consular services in Europe.⁶¹ Turkish citizens living in Germany and elsewhere in Europe also registered births, marriages and deaths with Turkish consulates, which included restrictions on the use of Kurdish names and language on official documents, such as birth certificates and identification cards.⁶² This meant that many Kurds in Europe had to continue to navigate between the Turkish state and the PKK, just as they had to within parts of southeastern Turkey during the military conflict – the diaspora was, in effect, a “contested constituency” in the ongoing conflict.

Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs, Vol. 18, No. 1 (April 1998), pp. 53–72; Baser, *Diasporas and Homeland Conflicts: A Comparative Perspective*, 77; V. Eccarius-Kelly, “Interpreting the PKK's Signals in Europe,” *Perspectives on Terrorism* Vol 2, No. 11 (2008), pp. 10-14; Karagöz, “The Kurdish Diasporic Mobilization in France: From a Restricted Political National Frame to a Translocal Sphere of Contention? The Case of Kurds in Marseille, France,” p. 89.

⁵⁹ Perwer Yaş, Germany Hides Turkish Intelligence MIT's Assassination List, ANF News, 12 May 2017. Available at: <https://anfenglish.com/features/germany-hides-turkish-intelligence-mit-s-assassination-list-19980>.

⁶⁰ Laurie A. Brand, *Citizens Abroad: Emigration and the State in the Middle East and North Africa* (Cambridge University Press, 2006); Gerasimos Tsourapas, “The Long Arm of the Arab State,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 43, No. 2 (January 2020), pp. 351–370.

⁶¹ Østergaard-Nielsen, *Transnational Politics: The Case of Turks and Kurds in Germany*.

⁶² Yasar Aydin, “The New Turkish Diaspora Policy: Its Aims, Their Limits and the Challenges for Associations of People of Turkish Origin and Decision-Makers in Germany,” <http://www.ssoar.info/ssoar/handle/document/41070>.

Conclusions

The analysis in this article suggests a number of implications. First, our understanding of the nature of migration and mobility governance in civil wars would benefit from a greater dialogue between scholars of migration governance (operating largely within a migration studies framework) and scholars of civil war and rebel governance (operating largely within a security studies framework). Understandings of “migration governance” in the migration studies and public policies literature focus overwhelmingly on states, local policy-makers and international organisations, thus often missing the complex interplay between state- and non-state actors, including dynamics of contestation and competition across multiple areas of migration governance.

Secondly, understandings of the relationship between migration and security remain somewhat limited due to a “methodological nationalist” bias in IR and security studies.⁶³ Dominant approaches to security in the field focus overwhelmingly on formal state migration policies and state national security interests, or treat migration as an area of global governance by state-dominated international organisations, thus under-theorising the role played by non-state actors and their effects on broader structures of migration governance.⁶⁴ Critical approaches to migration, which place greater emphasis on questions of human security, also have a blindspot in their focus largely on states and state borders in the Global North, ignoring the complex interplay between formal and informal migration governance in many parts of the Global South – and the impacts this also has on migration governance regimes in the Global North. For example, securitisation approaches that focus largely on discursive constructions of the migrant display a marked Global North bias and often miss how migration governance regimes are strategically utilised by multiple actors in ongoing conflicts.⁶⁵ The political economy of formal migration management is connected to broader conflicts that form

⁶³ Fiona B. Adamson, “Spaces of Global Security: Beyond Methodological Nationalism,” *Journal of Global Security Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (2016), pp. 19–35.

⁶⁴ See, eg Adamson, “Crossing Borders: International Migration and National Security”; Christopher Rudolph, *National Security and Immigration: Policy Development in the United States and Western Europe Since 1945* (Stanford University Press, 2006); Alexander Betts and Oxford University Press, *Global Migration Governance* (Oxford University Press, 2011).

⁶⁵ Jef Huysmans, “The European Union and the Securitization of Migration,” *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 38, No. 5 (December 2000), pp. 751–777; Claudia Aradau and Lucrezia Canzutti, “Asylum, Borders, and the Politics of Violence: From Suspicion to Cruelty,” *Global Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (January 2022), doi:10.1093/isagsq/ksab041; Polly Pallister-Wilkins, “The Humanitarian Politics of European Border Policing: Frontex and Border Police in Evros,” *International Political Sociology*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (March 2015), pp. 53–69.

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alternative subaltern and counterhegemonic regimes of “migration management.”

As such, policies of migration governance often have consequences that shift the balance of power in civil wars, exacerbate ongoing violent conflicts, or have other unintended side effects. For example, migration control policies in Europe reverberate across different contexts, often affecting the local balance of power in local conflicts and creating additional challenges for victims of conflicts. These dynamics have led some to argue that EU migration diplomacy in this area has in effect been akin to engaging in “proxy wars.”⁶⁶ For example, the EU funding of enhanced border control in Turkey via the 2016 EU-Turkey deal has supported the building of border fences that disrupt local Kurdish networks on the ground. Another illustration of the complex interlinkages between European asylum policy and EU-Turkey relations emerged when Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan suggested in May 2022 that Turkey would not support Finnish and Swedish membership in NATO due to them being “guesthouses for terrorist organisations” – a clear reference to Kurdish organisations operating in Sweden.⁶⁷

Thus, both scholars and policy-makers could benefit from examining the complex linkages that exist between migration governance and violent conflict. Migration governance is not simply a policy arena in which states and international organisations react to migration flows, migration governance is also used by armed rebel groups and other non-state actors in civil wars, and can be viewed as an area of strategic importance in “rebel governance” and rebel groups’ interactions with government authorities. These dynamics can be seen in the case of the Kurdish conflict, in which practices of displacement, refugee governance, border control, citizenship and diaspora governance have all played central roles in the ongoing protracted conflict between the Turkish state, PKK-related groups, and actors in Syria.

⁶⁶ Helen Hintjens and Ali Bilgic, “The EU’s Proxy War on Refugees,” *State Crime Journal*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (January 2019), p. 80.

⁶⁷ Ece Toksabay and Essi Lehto, “Erdogan Says Turkey not Supportive of Finland, Sweden joining NATO,” *Reuters* May 13, 2022: <https://www.reuters.com/world/erdogan-says-turkey-not-positive-finland-sweden-joining-nato-2022-05-13/>.