# From 'Durable Solutions' to 'Transnational Relations': Home and Exile Among Refugee Diasporas

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## Introduction

In many if not most situations of mass flight from conflict, widespread persecution or distress, a common pattern is for most people to seek safety in other parts of their country, for a substantial number to look for refuge in a neighbouring country or countries, and for a smaller number to seek asylum in countries further afield, perhaps in other continents. Some of those in neighbouring countries of first asylum may later be resettled further afield, joining those who have gone there directly. As time goes on, individuals and households, at home and abroad, examine their prospects to see what they can make of their situation, given the resources they can muster. Decisions need to be made about whether to go home; whether to keep someone at home to look after the family house, farm or business; or whether to uproot the family members left at home and reunite the family in the host country. Whichever option is chosen, what began as forced migration may transmute into other forms of movement as individuals and households decide to go or to send members abroad to earn money, seek education or other forms of betterment. These new or mutated flows may merge with prior migratory streams of labour or trade. If exile persists and people consolidate themselves in their territories of refuge, complex relations will develop among these different domains of what we may call

the refugee diaspora: that is, among those at home, those in neighbouring territories, and those spread further afield.

Each of these domains corresponds to some extent to one of the locations or sites associated with the three 'durable solutions' that UNHCR is charged with pursuing for refugees: integration in the country of first asylum, resettlement in a third country, or return to the homeland (UNHCR 1995). Conventionally, these domains have been seen as distinct, or as stages in a refugee 'cycle'. Taking its cue from the burgeoning literature on diasporas and transnationalism, and drawing on material on the Afghan, Palestinian and Sri Lankan diasporas, this paper will show that this categorisation is to some extent illusory: for example, it is conceivable that, either simultaneously or over time, a given household or family may have members at home, in a neighbouring country, in a country further afield, or moving between these locations. This must have implications for policy and practice in relation to integration, resettlement, repatriation, and efforts to resolve conflicts at home.

The paper first looks at some of the shortcomings of the notion of 'durable solutions' and offers a simple schema for considering diaspora and transnational relations. The Afghan, Palestinian and Sri Lankan diasporas are then considered in the light of this schema; transnational connections among some displaced households in Sri Lanka are highlighted. The paper concludes by exploring how transnationalism might be considered in itself as an 'enduring' if not a 'durable' solution to displacement.

# Durable Solutions or Transnational Relations?

According to UNHCR's Statute, the organisation is mandated to 'assume the function of providing international protection...and of seeking permanent solutions for the problem of refugees' by facilitating 'the voluntary repatriation of such refugees, or their assimilation within new national communities' (UN General Assembly 1950). Solutions of the refugee problem were conceived in terms of refugees re-gaining their nationality (or the exercise of it), or acquiring a new nationality – that of the country of refuge (Kibreab 1999 389). In the latter case there are two possibilities, usually termed integration into the country of first asylum, or resettlement in a third country. Once nationality is acquired, or re-gained, refugee status comes to an end. The feasibility and attractiveness of these three 'durable solutions', as they were called, have varied over time, partly determined by geo-political considerations: as many commentators have observed, during the Cold War, resettlement or integration were more the norm, because this suited the purposes of the west, while since the end of the Cold War, new imperatives have prevailed and

repatriation has become the most desirable durable solution (Chimni 1999).

Conventionally displacement is represented as a temporary phenomenon. Asylum may be manifested in the form of residence in refugee camps, often in neighbouring countries, or in the form of temporary residence, perhaps in territories further afield. Only if asylum becomes permanent may we speak of local integration or resettlement: the refugee may become an established resident, and eventually a citizen of the country of asylum. Temporary status should not last long: either the conditions that forced flight are resolved and the displaced should go home, or the displaced should be incorporated permanently into their place of refuge. These three statuses or 'solutions' are linked to distinct physical locations, and they were conceived, originally at least, as applying to individuals.

Needless to say, the real world is messier than in this ideal scheme. First, as is well known, 'resolution' of displacement often takes a long time, which the original architects of the refugee regime did not anticipate. The displaced often find themselves in a state of protracted limbo. Nationality or citizenship may not be easily acquired or re-acquired, and are often disputed or problematic. People in such circumstances develop ambiguous relationships towards the places in which they find themselves. In various ways, such has been the experience of the Afghans, Palestinians and Sri Lankans considered later in this paper.

Second, compartmentalising these different categories and statuses risks obscuring connections between them. These categories tend to be regarded in conception, policy and practice as discrete and even as part of a sequence or cycle comprising: displacement > first asylum > integration/resettlement/return (Black and Koser: 1999). But there are links across time and space among these places and statuses. As scholars of 'transnationalism' have shown, people at home and in exile may operate in a single social field, or at least in linked social fields (Gupta and Ferguson 1997; Olwig and Hastrup 1997). A single household may have members at 'home' in the country of origin; in neighbouring countries of first asylum; and in the wider diaspora, in countries of asylum or resettlement: we might term this a transnational household. Among wider, extended families, those at home may find financial or other support for those who go abroad to seek asylum, and those already abroad may help newcomers. Once established, those abroad may support those at home through remittances and other transfers. Refugees returning may get help from people at home, or from those in neighbouring countries while they are in transit: such people may facilitate the 'return' of those from further afield, either on visits, or on a more permanent basis. These links obviously straddle the domains outlined above.

Such links are even found in quite unpromising circumstances. For example, refugee camps are often rightly represented as sites of immobility or restricted mobility. But

this confinement does not mean that links with the outside world are absent. Perhaps strangely, 'compartmentalised' thinking is sometimes reproduced among some 'post-structuralist' scholars, as a recent analysis of refugees and camps appears to suggest:

> As people, organizations and countries become increasingly integrated into transnational networks of power, it becomes even more important that those rousted out of these circuits not simply be left in exclusion and isolation. Refugee camps do just that: they remove evidence of human displacement from view and contain 'the problem' without resolution, as noncommunities of the excluded (Hyndman 2000: 189-90).

Up to a point this portrayal rings true. But camps may also be sites of connection and link. People in camps, or at least some people in some camps, are plugged into transnational networks. Telecommunication centres near or sometimes within camps are concrete manifestations of this. The inhabitants of camps use them to maintain contact with household members or kin at home or in the wider diaspora, and to arrange visits, transfers of money and other transactions. Somali refugees in camps in Kenya provide evidence of this; as de Montclos and Kagwanja (2000 216) show, one indication is the great volume of international telephone traffic between Dadaab and Kakuma camps and the outside world.

Having indicated some of the possible transnational connections, let me specify more systematically, if somewhat mechanically, the links among the three domains outlined in the opening paragraph of this paper – the homeland, or place of origin; the neighbouring country or countries of first asylum; and countries of asylum further afield, perhaps in other continents. Very crudely, the set-up may be depicted as in figure 1, which shows the flow of people, resources, information and ideas among three locations or domains of the diaspora. At least three sets of relations may emerge among these domains: between the 'homeland' or territory of origin and the neighbouring country of first asylum; between the neighbouring country of first asylum and the wider diaspora; and between the 'homeland' and the wider diaspora. In addition there will of course be relations within each of these domains. Each set of relations consists of movements or exchanges of people, money and information. Relations may be strong or weak and vary over time, and by type: they might be political, military, social, economic or cultural. Moreover, these relations may be ambiguous: for example, transfers from abroad may at different times and in different ways both assist those at home and help to perpetuate conflict.

Research has elucidated how some of these sets of relations work, but others much less so. For example, the movement of people from the inner to the outer domains as refugees or migrants has been well studied; so has the return of such refugees and migrants. Movements of money and information have been studied rather less; this is also true of movements and exchanges within each of the three domains. Such

research as has been done therefore presents a partial picture; few have elaborated the whole or offered an integrated approach. In what follows I try to indicate the importance of considering the 'whole', both to understand the societies concerned, and to help devise appropriate policy interventions.

**Figure 1: Refugee diasporas: sites and flows**
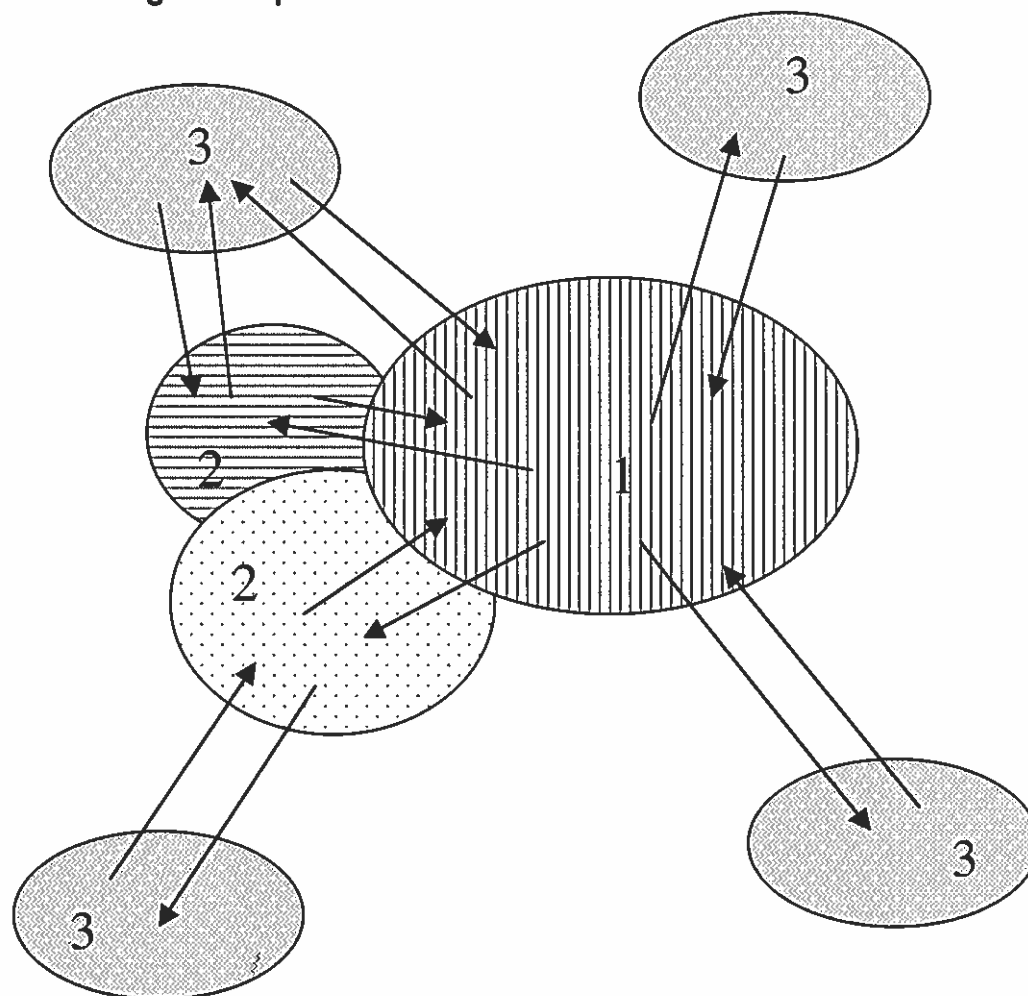


1. Homeland or country of origin.
2. First asylum or neighbouring country.
3. Countries of resettlement/wider diaspora.

⟶ Flows of people, money, information and ideas

# Three Refugee Diasporas

The following attempts to illustrate what I have outlined above with reference to three refugee diasporas: Afghans, Palestinians and Sri Lankans. Each of them can be characterised in terms of the domains and relations introduced above. The presentation of the Afghan and Palestinian cases draws mainly on secondary sources, while the Sri Lankan case draws on interviews and other primary material gathered in 1998-2000.

## Afghans

Like the upheavals in Palestine and Sri Lanka discussed below, the conflict in Afghanistan since the late 1970s has generated a huge diaspora of refugees (Maley 1998, Rashid 2000, Rubin 2000). The largest outflow was during the fighting between the Muslim resistance or mujahedin and the Soviet-backed Kabul regime, but the exodus continued subsequently as fighting among the mujahedin groups ebbed and flowed. At first movement was largely to the neighbouring countries of Pakistan and Iran, the former becoming the centre of gravity for political and military resistance. Initially this was in the shape of the various mujahideen groups, which took over in Afghanistan after the departure of the Soviet forces in 1989 and the fall of the Soviet-backed regime in 1992. Later the Taliban emerged from the Afghan refugee population in Pakistan, swept away the fractious mujahideen parties, and held sway in Afghanistan from 1996 until late in 2001. From a peak of six million refugees in the 1980s, perhaps four million returned in the 1990s during lulls in the conflict; but some left again as a result of renewed fighting, so that perhaps 2.5 million Afghans remained in Pakistan and Iran until the overthrow of the Taliban. As of early 2002 another large scale return was under way: by April 2002, about 400,000 Afghan refugees had returned. In addition to the refugees, very large numbers of people – probably more than a million at any one time - have also been displaced within Afghanistan (US Committee for Refugees 2001).

Afghan refugee camps in Pakistan were throughout the 1980s and early 1990s the political centre of gravity of the Afghan diaspora, spawning first the Mujahideen and then the Taliban. Pakistan has also been the economic centre of gravity, both in the sense of generating economic support for those inside Afghanistan, and as an entry point for such support from the wider diaspora in the Gulf and the West. For while the centre of gravity of the diaspora was in the countries of first asylum - Pakistan and to a lesser extent Iran - other segments of the diaspora accumulated in India, in Afghanistan's central Asia neighbours, and in Russia (where there are said to be 100,000 Afghans, mainly illegal (BBC Online 2 December 2001)), as well as further afield in Europe and North America. More recently the Gulf states have become an important destination for Afghans, as labour migration has taken off as a survival

strategy, partly in response to dwindling international assistance to Afghan refugees since the end of the Cold War; much of this migration is probably subsumed within the wider flow of Pakistanis to the Middle East.

Remittances from Afghans have become an integral part of the livelihoods of substantial numbers of households in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and to a lesser extent Iran, the more so as international assistance to Afghan refugees has declined. There are several flows of funds incorporating the wider and near segments of the diaspora (Mousavi and Jazarery 1999). Money moves from Afghans working or living the Gulf and further afield in Europe and North America to families in Pakistan (and a lesser extent Iran); then some of this money moves on further to families inside Afghanistan. Afghans working in Pakistan and Iran also transfer some of their earnings to their relatives inside Afghanistan. Money from the diaspora to Afghan refugees in Pakistan is transferred through personal contacts, businessmen, money changers, and to a much lesser degree, the banking system. In the absence of an effective banking system in Afghanistan itself, and because of rapid changes in transport routes as the conflict ebbs and flows, money destined for families inside the country has to be transferred in two main ways. One method is through money changers or businessmen with interests abroad, who for a fee reportedly can transfer money quite quickly, at least to cities; however transfers through this means declined as fighting grew more widespread in the 1990s. Otherwise money has to be physically carried by relatives, trusted friends or other contacts; usually these are in the near diaspora in Pakistan, who are thus quite explicitly mediators in this transnational process. The largest volume of transfers is probably from Afghans in the wider diaspora to those in Pakistan, and through Pakistan to Afghanistan.

Movements of people, money and information among different domains of the Afghan diaspora remain under-researched. Still less is known about the deployment of transfers by those inside Afghanistan, particularly the extent to which internally displaced people are able to make use of them: the evidence is sketchy and anecdotal. Nevertheless, on the basis of limited knowledge available on transfers, the Afghans show rather clearly the three-way relationship among the 'domains' of the diaspora outlined above: this three-way relationship manifests itself among those remaining in Afghanistan, those in the 'near diaspora' or first asylum countries of Pakistan and Iran, and those in the wider diaspora in the Middle East, Central Asia, Russia, Europe and North America.

Some of these different elements of the Afghan diaspora were highlighted in 2001 at the talks in Bonn over a transitional government for the beleaguered country. Four factions or groupings were represented - although these did not exhaust the fissiparous Afghan diaspora. These were the Northern Alliance, or United Front, which controlled Kabul and much of the rest of the country with the exception of the

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south; the Rome-based delegation of the former king, Zaher Shah; the Cyprus grouping of exiled intellectuals, supported by Iran, who have been meeting on the Mediterranean island for some four years to discuss ways out of Afghanistan's impasse; and the Peshawar grouping, with its constituency mainly among Peshawar's Pashtun refugees (Guardian Nov 28 2001; BBC News online, 27 Nov 2001). The diaspora was strongly represented in the interim administration formed late in 2001 (the head of the interim administration, Hamid Karzai, lived in Pakistan and the US at various times), and a substantial return of refugees got underway as conditions and prospects improved with the end of the bombing campaign early in 2002. However tensions between the returnees and those who stayed may well form yet another fault line in Afghanistan's fractious society.

## Palestinians

As is well known, the conflicts of 1948, 1967 and subsequent upheavals have led to a wide dispersal of the Arab population from what was Palestine in the late 1940s (Kharmi and Cotran 1999, Weighill 1999, Morris 1990). Through a complicated series of migrations involving varying degrees of force, Palestinians have been scattered in the West Bank and Gaza; in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and Egypt; in Kuwait, other Gulf states and north Africa; and more widely in Europe, North America and elsewhere. A substantial number of Palestinians also remain within Israel's borders. Sometimes members of a single Palestinian household or an extended family may be dispersed, by circumstance or design, among these very diverse locations.

As among other diasporas, including those considered in this paper, refugee migration has sometimes transmuted into migration for betterment or opportunity, and this has in turn become integrated into the livelihoods of those displaced in what was Palestine in the shape of remittances or investment in housing. This was particularly the case with those Palestinians who made for Kuwait and other Gulf states in the wake of successive upheavals since 1948; many households in the West Bank and Gaza, in Jordan and Lebanon have been heavily dependent on transfers from Palestinians in the Gulf states.

Cleavages across the Palestinian diaspora as well as within particular segments of it are complex, due largely to the tortuous history of the Palestinian case. The initial response of neighbouring host states to the *Nakba* or catastrophe of 1948 was to offer Palestinian refugees protection and assistance, without prejudicing their claim to return home. Two ultimately incompatible policies were adopted by these states: giving Palestinians residency rights, while at the same time opposing full integration as being inimical to return to Palestine (Weighill 1999). Commitment to residency rights among host states has waned over time, partly as a result of the threat that

Palestinians were held to pose for host states (ibid; Shiblak 1996). Israeli occupation and settlement and periodic violent upheavals and displacement have further contributed to generating great variation in status and living conditions among Palestinians in various parts of the diaspora.

In Jordan, for example, there are marked differences in status between the '1948 refugees' who came to what was then Transjordan (or the East Bank) after the creation of Israel, the '1967 refugees' who fled into Jordan as a result of the Six Day War, and those who came from Egyptian-administered Gaza. The '1948 refugees' were housed in camps on the edge of major cities and were granted full Jordanian citizenship. Many of the '1967 refugees' were placed in rural areas, and do not hold full citizenship, but have renewable residency status. Those who came from Gaza generally hold Egyptian travel documents, and have the least secure status of those displaced to Jordan. These divisions are compounded by variation in residence, principally between those who live in camps and those who live outside them in village and towns. Similar divisions of status and residence feature in the other territories in which Palestinians have found themselves as a result of successive upheavals (Shiblak 1996).

As well as the history of displacement and subsequent residence, a powerful sentiment of localism has had both unifying and divisive effects in Palestinian society. As Bisharat (1997) and others have shown, attachment to places of origin is very strong, marked by distinct patterns of speech, dress, occupational specialisms and supposed folk characteristics. Bisharat shows how local attachments were perpetuated in the diaspora in various ways. Those who fled in 1948 often tended to settle in quarters of camps based on former village residence, and organised committees composed of notables of their former villages. Sometimes cultural or sports clubs were set up based on the former place of residence. Streets, shops and markets were named after villages and towns from which people came (Bisharat 1997). This localism was to some extent reproduced in the wider diaspora: 'the oldest Arab organisation in the United States – and one of the liveliest - is the Ramallah Federation, linking immigrants and their offspring from the West Bank town of that name' (213). The Palestinian case highlights then the coexistence of extensive transnational links with powerful attachment to place, even though the nature of that attachment has changed over time.

The influence of the different domains of the Palestinian diaspora, and the relations among them, have varied over time. Until the Gulf crisis of 1990, the economic centre of gravity was arguably located among Palestinians in Kuwait and other Gulf states, on whom many in territories closer to historic Palestine (such as the Occupied Territories, Jordan and Lebanon) depended heavily. That relationship was ruptured in the wake of the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq in 1990: several hundred thousand

Palestinians were forced to leave Kuwait and other Gulf states in 1990-92, the great majority of them ending up in Jordan. While Jordan and to a lesser extent the West Bank received a one time influx of capital as a result, the remittances that helped to sustain families in less prosperous parts of the diaspora over many years were suddenly curtailed (Van Hear 1995).

In terms of political leadership or initiative, at times the 'intermediate' diaspora (in Jordan, Lebanon and Tunisia, for example) has predominated, in the shape of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation. At other times the 'closer' diaspora in the West Bank and Gaza has seized the initiative, as during the intifada from the late 1980s. In recent years there has been a convergence of the two, with the return of PLO cadres from the 'intermediate' diaspora to the Palestine entity in Gaza and the West Bank (see Bisharat 1997 for a more detailed and nuanced account). The wider diaspora also exerts strong influence, as shown in the recent mobilisation in protest at the deaths during the current upheaval since late in 2000: a mobilisation via email and other media in protest at the globally televised killing of Mohammed Al Dura in the arms of his father called for more than 50 demonstrations in major cities in north America, Europe and Australia in October 2000.

The convoluted history of the Palestinian case has made relations among the various domains of the Palestinian diaspora particularly complex and volatile. However, the disruption of dispersal has been accompanied by the development of transnational connections which have been skilfully deployed by individuals and households (or at least those in a position to do so), and by the protagonists of the Palestinian cause more widely. At the same time, the potential of transnational links has periodically been undermined by threats to Palestinian residence in their places of refuge, indicating that such potential is predicated upon secure attachment to place, a point which will be returned to below.

## Sri Lankans

Sri Lanka has experienced similarly complex forms of migration within and outside the country over the last two decades or more (McDowell 1996, Fuglerud 1999, Rotberg 1999). At first this was largely economic migration, mainly to the Middle East and usually for contracts of about two years; by the 1990s about 200,000 Sri Lankans went each year to work in the Middle East, as well as in south-east and east Asia. Out-migration also included a brain-drain of professionals and of people seeking educational advancement abroad. Since the civil war between the Sri Lankan armed forces and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) took off in 1983, continuing intermittently ever since, a large scale outflow of asylum-seekers, mainly Tamils, has taken place. While much of this movement was initially to Tamil Nadu in southern India, many Sri Lankan Tamils have sought asylum further afield, so that

a far-flung diaspora has reinvigorated the prior dispersal of Sri Lankan migrants who left for the purposes of education or to take up professional positions abroad. There are now large numbers of Sri Lankan households with members abroad, on whom they rely for a large part of their livelihoods. By the 1990s, there were some 100,000 Sri Lankan refugees in southern India, and 200-300,000 in Europe and North America who joined earlier professional migrants. In addition to those abroad, there has been large scale displacement within the country. Depending on the intensity of the conflict, between 500,000 and one million people have been displaced within Sri Lanka at any one time in recent years (US Committee for Refugees 2001). Some individuals and households have been displaced many times, and members of a single household are commonly dispersed in different parts of the country or in different countries abroad.

As with the Palestinians, the politico-military centre of gravity of the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora has shifted over time. Early on the LTTE drew its support from refugees in Tamil Nadu, and indeed from the Tamil Nadu government in the form of tolerance of guerrilla training within the state, as well as other support. In more recent times the catchment from which the LTTE has extracted support has spread much more widely in the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora (Gunaratna 1999). A clamp-down on the organisation in western countries, intensified in the wake of the events 11 September 2001, will lead to further shifts in diaspora influence. Meanwhile, if the cease-fire signed early in 2002 holds, the diaspora will have an important part to play in the reconstruction of the north of the country.

Consideration of livelihood strategy at the household level provides some further insights into the connections between different domains of the Sri Lankan diaspora. Two cases are considered here.

The experience of one extended family of Sri Lankan Tamils interviewed in 1998 is not unusual. They had some members scattered in displaced persons' camps in various parts of the country, some who lived in camps in Tamil Nadu, South India, some who were repatriates from India, and some who had sought asylum in Europe. One household in this extended family had fled shelling in the late 1980s. After displacement within the Jaffna peninsula, they had fled to Tamil Nadu, from where they returned in 1992, ending up in a camp near the northern town of Vavuniya. The husband left from the camp for Germany in 1995, where he spent just over two years, but could not find employment and his claim for asylum appears to have been rejected. He then went to Norway in January 1997. His brother, who had citizenship in Norway, having fled in the early 1980s, funded both his move to Germany and Norway: it cost 80,000 rupees (about USD12,000). Although the husband was not working (at least not regularly) he managed to send some money from Germany and a little from Norway. The wife hoped that she and their three children would be able

to join her husband in Norway, but was (rightly) not optimistic about this outcome. While the best outcome for the family would be relocation of the whole household to Europe, a lesser, but still welcome outcome would be a flow of remittances from Europe to support the family back home.

The woman and her eldest daughter had spent eight years in displaced persons camps in Sri Lanka; her other daughter and son were born in camps. Also living with them was her sister's teenage son from the home area. He had joined her partly to pursue his schooling, but also for her protection since there was general insecurity for lone women in the camp. Other relatives were still in various refugee camps in Tamil Nadu. Still other parts of the family were still in the home district: her mother, three sisters and two brothers. They were farmers, with paddy land, but had been forced to move to a displaced persons' camp. Money sent from abroad had to be spread among the scattered parts of this extended family.

Another household were displaced from a Muslim village in eastern Sri Lanka after an LTTE attack in 1990. They had been small farmers before displacement. When I first encountered them in 1998 they were living in a displaced persons camp in Eastern Sri Lanka; two years later they had been relocated to an arid, roadside site not far from their home village. Unlike the previous case, this household pursued labour migration as part of their coping or livelihood strategy; asylum migration was not a possibility. The wife first went to work as a housemaid in Kuwait in 1989 before their displacement, but her stay was cut short by the Gulf crisis and she had to return empty handed late in 1990, shortly after which they were displaced by the LTTE attack. The household thus experienced two serious crises in 1990. They borrowed R18,000 (about USD2,500) from a labour recruiting agent to send her to Kuwait, with their house deeds as security. Her limited earnings – seven months at R4,900 - were used for the household's daily needs, to pay off some of the debt to the agent, and to buy bullocks and a cart; however, when her earnings were discontinued because of the Gulf crisis, payments for the bullock cart could not be kept up, and it was repossessed. The woman went to the Middle East again in 1991- 93, by which time the family was living in the camp; this time the agent charged R12,000. During this two-year contract, she managed to remit her monthly salary of R6,900. More than half of the money she earned was used to mark the circumcision of their son; some was spent on the purchase of some livestock; and the remainder on jewellery which could later be sold in case of need. In the settlement as a whole, about 50 women had been to the Middle East as housemaids. Most had gone since being displaced and coming to the camp; few had gone before.

These two cases show how, as elsewhere, migration and remittances have contributed to the survival and reconstruction of households both directly and indirectly affected by the conflict in Sri Lanka. Perhaps tens of thousands of

displaced households are supported by remittances in this way. Remittances from asylum and labour migrants have helped to sustain displaced and war-affected households in and outside camps, and assisted some in the long haul to reconstruction after displacement or return. Beyond just survival, investment of remittances in housing and particularly schooling are encouraging trends among displaced and war-affected households, as among those outside the zones of conflict.

At the same time, the cases illustrate the great difference in costs between asylum and labour migration, and the importance of diaspora connections in securing refuge abroad. All migration requires substantial outlays, but vary large fees are now charged by agents who arrange travel and documents for those seeking entry into affluent countries. Asylum migration to the west has therefore largely become the preserve of those with substantial resources, although they might be impoverished in the process of sending household members abroad. Raising the necessary funds requires the disposal of substantial assets, and often the support of those already abroad: there is, of course, a strong class basis to migration. The returns from such outlays might be substantial relative to standards of living in Sri Lanka; but those at home might still languish in displaced persons' camps, as the first case above shows. Efforts at family reunion might be stymied, and remittances often have to be spread among extended family members dispersed in different parts of Sri Lanka. Many other displaced households were not so fortunate in terms of returns from asylum migration, even after the substantial outlays that it entailed. Until the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi by the LTTE and the consequent hardening of Indian attitudes towards Sri Lankan Tamils in the early 1990s, poorer households had the exit option of south India, and some made it to refuge in the West; however, the cost of asylum migration and the fading of the south India option have meant more recently that these routes are now rarely open to poorer households. Some might be able to raise enough to invest in labour migration. Remittances from temporary labour migrants to the Middle East and Southeast Asia have helped to sustain displaced households who have few if any members abroad in the diaspora; but as the second case shows, labour migration may be highly vulnerable to external contingencies.

While remittances have helped to sustain households in distress in Sri Lanka, transfers have also helped to perpetuate the conflict in Sri Lanka. Most obviously, exactions from migrants and their families by the LTTE have been a lucrative source of income for the organisation (Davis 1996; McDowell 1996, Gunaratna 1999), and can be seen as another form of transnational transfer. The LTTE regulates movement out of the areas they control. Exit taxes are levied on people leaving, and appropriations are made from households with members abroad. The LTTE is also said to be involved in the migration business itself. Exactions continue once the migrant is abroad: taxation of incomes from paid work and businesses, and other exactions all bring in money for the organisation. The LTTE is also said to be

directly involved in the remittance transfer business, from which it takes a cut --
another form of transnational transfer (McDowell 1996).

Migration and remittances may also help to perpetuate the conflict in less direct
ways. Resources which ultimately derive from conflict conditions may become
integrated into people's lives, giving them an implicit interest in such conditions
continuing. This may be the case, for example, for some of those in Sri Lanka who
receive money sent by refugee or asylum seeker relatives abroad. Similarly, for some
of those abroad, particularly those whose status is uncertain, the attitude to the
conflict is to say the least ambiguous, for it is the continuation of the war that
justifies their asylum claim and therefore their stay - and hence makes possible the
sending of remittances.

# Transnationalism as a Durable Solution?

Some common observations may be drawn from these sketches of the three
diasporas. First, each features the tripartite scheme outlined in the first section of this
paper: there is a homeland or place of origin; neighbouring countries in which refuge
has been sought; and a wider set of territories into which people seek entry, either
directly from the homeland, or via the neighbouring countries. Over time complex
and enduring relations develop among these different domains of the diaspora
emerging from a combination of migration compelled by circumstance or pursued by
choice, as refugee migration transmutes into economic migration, or vice versa.

Second, these political, economic and other relations are highly volatile, as the
importance of particular domains of the diaspora shift over time. In all three cases,
for example, there has been substantial migration to the Gulf, but this has proved
vulnerable to historical contingency, most notably the Gulf crisis in the early 1990s.
These shifts over time occur both at the macro level of national and international
political economy, and at the micro level of the household and individual life and
livelihoods; needless to say, there is interaction between these levels. At times, the
near diaspora is an important conduit of resources – economic, political and other -
while at other times this domain may be by-passed.

Third, the three cases highlight the fact that there are significant cleavages within and
among different domains of the diaspora. Very broadly speaking, spatial distribution
also reflects class distribution, for it is largely (though not exclusively) the better off
who reach the more distant and more affluent destinations because so much is now
needed by way of economic resources, and increasingly social capital. The less well
resourced may have sufficient resources to find refuge in neighbouring countries or
to invest in labour migration; and the least well off stay within their country of

origin. For those remaining behind in the society in conflict, the scale of resource inflows from abroad obviously depends on the socio-economic standing and resources of those abroad.

Finally, the three cases show how transnational connections can help to fuel conflicts as well as ameliorating their effects: for good or ill, exile communities have been essential bases of support for those contesting power in the homeland. Whatever their effects, however, the deployment of transnational networks as a resource is predicated on reasonably secure attachment to the place of exile, for it is from such attachment that resources and entitlements come: it is hard to imagine how resources can be raised - whether for a household in distress at home, or to procure arms for a guerrilla group - from a footloose, transient population without such attachment to place. The version of transnationalism used here is thus different from the associated notion of 'deterritorialisation' deployed by some proponents of the transnational approach (Appadurai 1991, Gupta and Ferguson 1997).

If transnational activities across locations at home and in exile are as pervasive as these cases (and others, such as Somalia and Sudan) suggest, does the continued use of the categories home, country of first asylum, and resettlement country, which accompany the notion of 'durable solutions', make sense?

To be fair, this compartmentalism is not as pervasive as may have been implied above. There has long been criticism of the notions of 'durable solution', which UNCHR has gone some way to acknowledging. As long ago as the mid 1980s it was suggested that the notion of durable solutions was misleading and that it might be more helpful to think of durable solutions as options or choices (ICIHI 1986: 57). The term 'durable solutions' dropped out of prominent use, partly because of acknowledgment that 'solutions' implied a degree of finality that does not exist in real life. In a related shift, UNHCR's approach, at least in theory, has moved from being 'reactive, exile-oriented and refugee specific' to being 'proactive, homeland-oriented and holistic' (UNHCR 1995: 43):

> In contrast to the refugee-centric focus of earlier years, it has now been recognized that if UNHCR is to discharge its mandate of 'seeking permanent solutions for the problem of refugees', then the organization must address the situation of people who have been displaced within their own country, exiled populations who have returned to their homeland, and those communities which are at risk of being uprooted (UNHCR 1995: 49)

The organisation has undergone much criticism for this shift of emphasis. Critics suggested that it was a fig leaf for allowing repatriation to become the order of the day (Chimni 1999); but while repatriation came to dominate the scene in the 1990s

since the end of the Cold War, the two other 'solutions' are still at least nominally part of the repertoire.

Accompanying the shift to a 'holistic' approach, the relevance of transnationalism has also been recognised for some time by UNHCR: 'Refugee problems are by definition transnational problems, which cannot be resolved by means of uncoordinated activities in separate countries' (UNHCR 1995: 49). Transnational links connecting refugees and other migrants have since been further highlighted: '...many of the refugees in Western Europe inhabit a heterogeneous social universe, living alongside compatriots and co-ethnics who are part of a broader diaspora or transnational community, but who are not necessarily refugees' (Crisp 1999: 3). Such asylum seekers and refugees 'do not enter or establish an entirely new realm of social networks, either locally or globally' ( 4).

This recognition of the importance of transnational links is implicit in some recent policy interventions. For example, a number of countries (such as the Netherlands, France, Sweden and Denmark) have instituted 'look and see' schemes, under which refugees may go to look at the homeland without jeopardising their refugee status: Bosnian and Somali refugees are among those that have participated in such schemes. In some cases these initiatives have been government-organised; in other cases non-governmental organisations have set them in motion (Walsh, Black and Koser 1999: 123-4). While such schemes are not without problems (the sceptical view is that the host state is in effect paying for refugees' holidays), they partly overcome the compartmentalisation of locations, and recognise and acknowledge the inter-relations between exile and home.

More widely, it has become fashionable to question and challenge categories in the migration and refugee field. For example, it is now commonplace in academic and practitioner literature to observe that the categorisation of different kinds of forced migrants - refugees, asylum seekers, IDPs, returnees and so on - is in some ways illusory: so too is distinguishing those forcibly displaced from other kinds of migrants (Richmond 1994, Van Hear 1998, Crisp 1999). It has been recognised that individuals may experience the different kinds of movement over time, and that if we consider social fields rather than individuals, a single household or extended family may contain several categories simultaneously. At the same time, it can be shown that categorisations may take on substance in real life, because people make use of categories that are introduced into their worlds. For example, tracing the introduction and spread of the concept of internally displaced person in Peru from the 1980s, Stepputat and Sørensen (2001) show how embrace of the concept can have concrete real life consequences, positive and negative. People's embrace of the category may be positive for them in the access it may give them to resources; on the other hand, that embrace may be negative in that it may tend to 'fix' people and undermine

means of livelihood that depend on mobility. Similarly, the notions 'return', 'reconstruction' and 'reintegration', and the distinctions between 'conflict' and 'post-conflict' and between 'relief' and 'development' each carry with them a set of expectations of the people and territories involved, and have also been subjected to critical scrutiny (Black and Koser 1999; Moore 2000).

This questioning and interrogation of categories is healthy, but some caution is needed. There is nothing inherently wrong with categorisation, and there is obvious utility in making distinctions, so long as this process does not obscure the important links and connections between categories. The distinctions between repatriation, local integration and resettlement in a third country remain useful, so long as we do not lose sight of the links between the geographical locations and social statuses that each is associated with, both to understand how migrants/refugees and their networks function and the policy implications of that understanding. One real world manifestation of this is that interventions in one sphere will inevitably reverberate in other connected spheres: for example, curtailment of immigration or repatriation may lead to a decline in remittances, which may in turn lead to hardship and instability at home.

As indicated in this paper, UNHCR and other components of the 'refugee regime' have recognised the unavoidably transnational character of refugee issues, the need to reconsider conventional distinctions and categories, and the imperative to recognise the links among different domains, including those outlined schematically earlier in this paper. 'Look and see' schemes are one practical manifestation of this. Perhaps it is time to go one step further and acknowledge that transnationalism may in itself be a 'durable solution' for conditions of displacement – or at least an 'enduring' solution. This might mean considering the encouragement or promotion of transnationalism. The cases presented above suggest a number of arguments in support of such an approach. First 'transnationalism' is arguably a 'solution' favoured by the displaced, since it is the practice often pursued by them in everyday life (although of course, just because something is popular does not mean that it is right). Second, remittances and other flows tend to be an effective means of reaching people in need, since they are often one-to-one flows, rather than the more generalised distributions implemented through aid or welfare -- although there are obvious issues of equity here, not least between those households with migrants abroad and those without. As all three cases reviewed above show, diaspora connections may be vital in sustaining societies in upheaval or conflict, and have the potential for assisting such societies once conflict lessens. Building on such potential involves understanding that the return of some members of a household or community to a 'post-conflict' society may be predicated on others staying abroad. That way the viability or durability of the return would be enhanced: by sending money home for example, those abroad may help to set up or sustain livelihoods

established by returnees during start-up periods or during hard times. A sustainable livelihood may then be established as the basis for subsequent returns of the displaced. At the same time, as has been suggested above, the deployment of transnational connections in such ways is predicated on some elements of the diaspora attaining reasonably secure residence in the place of exile.

There are, of course, problems with such an approach. Not least of these are questions of equity, already referred to, for as was shown in the Sri Lankan case in particular, it tends to be those who are already better off who take prime positions in the transnational arena: encouragement of transnationalism may therefore reinforce inequalities. Another issue is commitment to place, also just referred to, for if people are really as footloose as some proponents of transnationalism imply, why should they look after or contribute to the places they find themselves in? This may indeed be problematic for host countries where migrants' or newcomers' loyalties lie elsewhere. A third issue is the ambiguity of transnational connections, since they can contribute to conflicts as well as ameliorating their effects, as is illustrated by the cases considered above. Can (or should) policies be devised which enhance the positive outcomes of transnational networks, while discouraging transnational activities which fuel or sustain conflicts?

These problematic areas notwithstanding, the implications of transnationalism deserve greater attention among policy makers and practitioners concerned with displacement and its resolution. There are signs that this is happening: for example, recent discussion within the World Bank and the Development Assistance Committee of the OECD on development cooperation in the context of conflict makes reference to encouraging diaspora to become engaged in positive development roles in their countries of origin (World Bank 2000, OECD/DAC 2001: 70). Transnational connections and practices can provide important means for sustaining people caught up in conflict. Moreover, 'reconstruction' after conflict will not only involve the homeland or the actual arena of conflict; transnational links and diaspora connections that develop to sustain societies in conflict are likely to be irrevocably integral parts of the 'post-conflict' society to be reconstructed. Taking advantage of transnational connections and practices requires taking account of the links among different domains of diaspora: this paper has offered the beginnings of a simple framework for considering the relations among these different domains.

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