Mobilizing Ethnic Conflict:
Kurdish Separatism in Germany and the PKK

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Ethnic nationalism can and often does have consequences for countries other than traditional homelands. A prime example of this is the Kurdish separatist movement that continues to be a potentially volatile case of transnational ethnic nationalism. The recent hunger strikes, protest marches and terrorist bombings in Germany are testimony to the increasingly transnationalized Kurdish separatist movement. Germany is now faced with the challenge of developing policies towards their Kurdish residents as well as towards Turkey. Germany’s dilemma lies in ensuring that these policies are consistent with the principles of liberal democracy.

This paper identifies the conditions under which Kurdish separatism took root in Germany and explores the consequences of mobilization for the host and home countries against the broad backdrop of transnational separatist movements. The paper concludes that political opportunity structures, identity, and resources were key factors that enabled mobilization in this case.