

Diaspora Power: network contributions to peacebuilding and the transformation of war economies

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How economies of countries at war (war economies) transform in ‘peace’ is a critical new area of research in political economy and war and peace studies. The dynamics that affect the way war economies perpetuate or mutate after a peace agreement is signed is the context for this examination of non-state actor roles – normally attention is on state and international organisations – in the problems of peacebuilding. Here the focus is on diaspora networks, what might be described as national or transnational civil society groupings whose role is autonomous but carried considerable potential to assist reconstruction of the war-torn homeland.

In examining the contribution of diaspora networks to the building of a political economy of peace this paper will connect with several discourses, both established and incipient, including diaspora studies, political economy of war literature and social network analysis. The aim here is to understand how networks function, and to interrogate their relationship with home- and hostlands and the wider diaspora in order to attempt an assessment of their contribution or prospects for a contribution to the processes of peacebuilding and reconstruction of war-torn societies. This paper examines three diaspora networks linked to societies formerly at war: Afghanistan, Bosnia and Hercegovina (Bosnia) and Sierra Leone. The work forms part of a major ESRC-funded ongoing research project into the transformation of war economies into economies of peace which focuses on these three cases.

Defining Diasporas

The assumption that diaspora actors can promote or enhance aspects of the homeland’s economic development is underpinned by a number of studies. Mohan and Zack-Williams argue that ‘both politically and economically the diaspora has an important part to play in contemporary social processes’ (2002:211). The Chinese diaspora – somewhat unique - is thought to possess \$1.5-2 trillion in liquid assets and has been the main investment engine in the homeland’s massive growth over the last two decades. These contributions emanate from business networks and individual business people’s investments. Other diaspora contributions to homeland development in the literature include tourism, the purchase of homeland products (often nostalgia-related), individual remittance (discussed below) and hometown association development assistance.

The latter is of special relevance to this paper. Hometown associations (HAs) focus on a wide range of often infrastructure-building social service-related projects (Eckhoff defines four main areas: charity, infrastructure, human development, and fundraising (1997)). Infrastructural improvements are critical to future economic development. As Orozco found, HA donations often exceeded local budgetary allocations for public infrastructural works, particularly in towns with small populations (i.e., under 1000). HA participation has been documented across different diaspora groups: Mexicans in the U.S. may donate up to \$30m p.a. in this way (usually less than \$10,000 per association) and approaching 100,000 Guyanese immigrants in the U.S. donated to an association (Orozco, 2003).

The transfer of funds (and sometimes goods) to the homeland – remittances - are another way individual actors assist development (through family or friends) back home. Gundel (2002) noted how such transfers were far more important ‘for livelihood and survival in Somalia than development and humanitarian aid put together’. In Somaliland research reached similar conclusions regarding the importance of remittances (Ahmed, 2002). Transfers were highly skewed however, with large sums favouring only a small proportion of households. Jazayery proposes that the number of Afghan refugees (mainly in Iran and Pakistan) who benefit from remittances is ‘probably in the low hundreds of thousands, a relatively small proportion of the total number of Afghan refugees’ (2002:242). Gundel suggests that, in being critical to the civil war economy and in the post-war period, remittances, through the Hawilad system, have remained ‘the most important social safety net for most Somalis’, in effect that coping economies established during the war have perpetuated beyond the main period of conflict (2002:269-277). Such connections are relatively tangible and quantifiable including donations and remittances, capital investments and resources connected to other joint ventures either in homelands or in other states. In total, remittances may amount to over \$500bn per annum (Van Hear, 1998; Sheffer, 2002). It has been suggested that established diasporas – e.g., Indian, Italian, Chinese, Greek - remit greater amounts than members of incipient diasporas such as the case studies countries examined in this study: Afghan, Bosnian and Sierra Leonean networks (Sheffer: 190).

Re-examining the focus on diaspora support for recovery from war – the negative effects of diaspora, e.g., in promoting extreme nationalism and conflict notwithstanding – it is necessary at the theoretical level to distinguish clusters of migrants from diaspora communities. An essential feature of the latter is the existence of an ongoing relationship with the homeland. A level of consciousness of being a diaspora, that is, being away from ‘home’, being not entirely, or at all, at home in the hostland, is critical, too. Migrant clusters are not seen as having concern for the homeland, at least not beyond the level of lending assistance to individuals. Diaspora, not migrants as such, are the important focus therefore for political economy of peace research. Diaspora literature proposes many alternative definitions of what exactly a diaspora is. There is little agreement about whether a new migrant should be seen as a member of an existing diaspora or part of a new one or not part of one at all. As Safran notes, people of the same origin may or may not have diasporic identities (1991). This study, in a way similar to, though distinct from Van Hear (1998: 6) will propose a looser understanding of the term than many (e.g., Challiand and Rageau, 1995; Marienstras, 1989; Safran, 1991, see also Butler, 2001). As alluded to above it is proposed that *migrants dispersed to at least two locations with an ongoing relationship with the homeland and a degree ethnonational consciousness are diaspora members*. An explicit concern will be to eschew primordial or essentialist perspectives in favour of non-essentialist, more fluid understandings of ethno-nationality and therefore of diasporan identity. (See Winland, 1995; for a good example of such an approach see McKeown, 2000). Clearly attachment to home is critical for involvement of diaspora in post-conflict reconstruction – raising the bar too high on who should be included might prejudice that issue however (Zack-Williams and Mohan, 2002:205).

For the purposes of analysis this study examines the political and economic aspects of how diaspora *networks* contribute to the development of a political economy of peace. In network analysis the world is composed of networks, not groups. Rather than assume the existence of bounded groups empirically verified ‘crosscutting memberships in multiple social circles’ are seen as ‘weav[ing] together social systems’ (Wellman, 1988:37). Structured social relationships, it is argued, are a more powerful source of sociological explanation than personal attributes of system members. Thus in the

beginnings of revolution in France the artisans of the Vendee 'did not all rise up spontaneously as the aggregated indignation of thousands of individuals. Rather, ties between local communities and occupational groups structured political activity' (Tilly, 1967). In peacebuilding it may be found that ties between local diaspora networks and local homeland communities structure their politico-economic support for rebuilding peace in a sustainable way. In diaspora networks constraints apply and opportunities arise for individuals to engage with 'homeland' development from the structured systems of social relationships in which they operate.

This paper takes a new approach by examining how *organised* diaspora networks contribute to their respective homelands. The network analysis literature suggests networks can be either social or organised. The organised criminal networks or the related forms of organised diaspora networks may assume forms and processes more akin to Ronfeldt and Aquilla's notion of netwar, which they identify as 'principally an organisational dynamic' (henceforth R&A, 2002, 4; see also Milward and Raab, 2002). The evidence for this paper derived from primary research including structured interviews with diaspora organisation network leaders suggests structures maybe more hybrid in formation.

The explosive expansion of the internet and other forms of communication since the late 1980s have increased 'the range and quality of diasporas' activities' (including the introduction and implementation of new technologies into the homeland) (Sheffer, 182; Anderson, 2000; Castells, 1996; Kazanjian and Kassabian, 1996). Many of the structured relationships examined in this research would hardly exist without these technological developments. This revolution in communicational technology and new attitudes to transnational activism have presaged new understandings of the politics of diaspora activity. It is theoretically possible now for organised diaspora networks linking millions of diasporans in real-time communication to establish themselves, interlinked, in numerous countries, to debate political issues amongst themselves, to form agendas of concern about the homeland and to draw up and implement plans of action across a range of issues affecting homeland peacebuilding and reconstruction. These networks can harness the talents, skills, education, imagination and resources of their members and channel outputs in a targeted manner to the war-torn homeland's areas of greatest need. Communication can take place between diaspora leaders at different levels of the organisation and with individual members, within or across national boundaries. Diaspora contact with homeland can be with government at the highest level or with local community or enterprise leaders or individuals. The importance of 'observing asymmetric ties between states, regions and multinational interest groups' to explain the nature of social structures within these states has been stressed in studies of political economic development of states (Wayne, 1975; Friedmann and Wayne, 1977). Funds can be directed towards priority projects determined and assessed by the diaspora network itself with or without external assistance. Mass communicational opportunities exist for communication in the diaspora and the homeland simultaneously.

A central issue therefore is whether collective, consciously motivated organisations can be more effective in assisting homeland peacebuilding and reconstruction than individual contributions or business enterprises. (A follow-on study will compare activities at the level of individuals, examining remittance, investment in housing, investment, tourism etc in the same case studies.) Below the organised networks of the three diasporas are compared both to each other and to the theoretical ideal sketched out above.

The three diaspora networks: comparing organisation

All three of the case study nationalities have diaspora organisations and thus have nascent or well-established formal social networks alongside the inevitable informal social links that exist in every diaspora. Below I examine briefly the critical defining characteristics of diaspora: the UK network, transnational links, links to homeland, and diaspora ethos and consciousness of homeland.

Brah rightly argues that diasporas have to be positioned in their own socio-economic, political and historical context (in Frost, 2002: 293). An issue of relevance here is the age of the diaspora. Van Hear notes that newer diasporas face issues distinct from earlier waves. The three diasporas examined in this paper are all relatively new migrations resulting from recent wars of varying duration. The Afghan diaspora is the oldest migration from the longest running of the wars. The Afghan conflict (or series of conflicts) dates from resistance to the Soviet invasion in 1979; the conflict in Sierra Leone commenced in 1991 with the first RUF attack on the country and the war in Bosnia began in early 1992 after the dissolution of the Yugoslav Federation in 1991. That said, it is not difficult to encounter diaspora members from each community who settled in Britain before conflict-inspired migration; often the leaders of diaspora organisations come from earlier migrations.

In terms of socio-economic situation, the majority of the migrants that make up the diaspora networks examined in this paper have come from poor rural backgrounds usually to metropolitan centres where they live in urban poverty relative to UK norms. From what might be perceived to be the most affluent of the war-torn societies examined here, Bosnian refugees (approaching 90 percent) came from rural parts of Bosnia. Many are also elderly and sometimes struggle to exist in a foreign society. Afghan leaders paint a similar picture with regard to the large majority of their organisations' membership – poor, often with little education, illiterate in their own language, and like older Bosnians, usually have not managed, so far, to learn the language of the hostland. Sierra Leoneans have the advantage of speaking the hostland language as first or second tongue. Younger Bosnians, especially young adults who received part of their education in the UK, are probably the most assimilated social group and together with most Sierra Leoneans encountered in interviews and at social events, seem the most at home in the host society. As will be shown, both groups, within their respective networks, retain a strong interest in the improvement of their homelands.

The tribal or ethnic divisions that play into the homeland politics of each of the case study countries inevitably will be mapped, in part at least, on to the diaspora networks at national and transnational levels. The nature of this mapping will be dependent to a significant degree upon the nature of the war or other factors that led to the migration of the diaspora population. For example, the overwhelming majority of refugees who fled afar from the war in Bosnia were Bosnians of Muslim or Bozniak ethnicity. They were the largest minority population, the most concentratedly-targeted group, and those Croats and Croat Bosnians, and Serbs and Serb Bosnians who were forcibly expelled during the war mostly fled to their respective homelands, Croatia and Serbia. There are of course significant Yugoslav diaspora populations (mainly Serbs and Croats) from an earlier era in the U.S., Canada, Australia and the U.K. The fact that most Bosnian diaspora populations are largely from Muslim/Bozniak backgrounds suggests the possibility of greater connectivity within the diaspora network than with the other case study countries. In the other two case study countries conflict was less focused, for a large proportion of the duration of the conflict at least, on a war against a particular tribal, ethnic, or national group.

UK network organisation

Key to inquiry into organised diaspora networks is the attempt to establish to what extent is there collective action by diasporas. Collective action uses the skills, talents and resources of the many to potentially much greater effect than the efforts of scattered groupings and individuals. A first question must be therefore, how have diasporas in the UK organised themselves?

In terms of organisation, the UK Bosnia Network, established in Birmingham in 1996, and composed of about sixty organisations including local groups scattered across the U.K., organisations such as the Bosnian Institute and a Jewish Bosnian group, is the most formally structured of the UK diaspora networks under discussion here (I-04).¹ There are a few Bosnian organisations such as the Women of Srebrenica organisation which have not affiliated to the network. However, the network's leadership considers the organisation open to all Bosnians regardless of ethnic or religious identity and indeed has members from every group (Haber, Nov-Dec 2000:5; B-02). Members consider themselves Bosnians but at the lower identity level of ethnicity, the majority have a Muslim or Bozniak identity (B-02). Approximately 30 percent in London are from other backgrounds and lower percentages in other regions, according to diaspora leaders (B-02, B-03). Bosnian organisations celebrate Eid and Christmas.² (Sierra Leonean groups appear similarly open in their membership criteria as do their Afghani counterparts. Several respondents from the latter nationality, however, voiced some concern about tribal and religious divisions (and occasionally prejudices) among different Afghan groups.)

Some groups play a more active role in the Bosnian UK network than others. This is often related to a higher level of resources, for example the London Bosnian organisations in Victoria, Brent and Willesden and in Hertford, Birmingham and Dewsbury each have at least one professional employee charged with organising the group. Funding is derived from foundations and the Lottery Fund and is subject to re-application every 2-3 years and can only be awarded twice to the same organisation. The role of funding in shaping organisational networks is discussed further below.³

The distinct feature of the Bosnian network in the UK is the formality of its structure. Although there are clear social ties knitting certain parts of the Bosnian network it is a much more formal network than its Sierra Leonean counterpart which might best be understood as a set of discrete organised small networks of friends, family and associates, though occasionally memberships overlap or there is collaboration on projects. The Sierra Leonean network is typified therefore by (homeland) locality.

This diaspora community is distinct from the other communities in this study through the strong home-town association (HA) structure that many West African diaspora communities adopt in exile. The war-ravaged district of Kono boasts at least two UK-based organisations, including the Kono Development Union (KDU) and the Kono District Development Association (KDDA) which recently collaborated to promote the twinning and partnership of the London Borough of Southwark and their home district (see below). Within home-town associations, which themselves put on regular fund-raising events in aid of their home districts, there are sometimes a range of smaller organisations, such as 'old-boy' associations, for example the Yonibana Old Student Association (Yosa), the Harford ex-Pupils Association, and Koidu Secondary School Old

¹ Primary research for this paper is based on anonymous structured interviews with about 40 diaspora leaders and other prominent diaspora-related sources. They are numbered and indexed, i.e., S-15, indicates interview no. 15 with a Sierra Leonean leader.

² A methodological issue exists over whether to include Serbian groupings which historically have been associated with Serbia proper but may include a small number of Serbs from Bosnia who strongly identify as Serbs as a nationality. NB: few of the refugees that came to Britain in 1992-95 were of Serb ethnicity or nationality (I-05).

³ The wider Afghan diaspora (in particular in the Midlands) needs further attention in this research.

Boys Association which regularly provide considerable assistance to homeland schools. Consequently the Sierra Leone network lacks connectivity and is fragmented. It is less formally organised, links are mostly social and therefore it is much more difficult to delineate its limits.

While there is one Bosnian group focused on a particular area (the city of Banja Luka) the intention is mainly to bring together a dispersed and fragmented local community in the UK rather than direct energies to the redevelopment of the city. (Clearly the case of Banja Luka is somewhat exceptional having been the site of what was largely a bureaucratic, relatively bloodless, expulsion of Bosnians, which apart from certain religious sites, left the city intact. Consequently there is no extensive reconstruction work to do there. Also the city lies in the Serbian-dominated 'Republika Srpska' where return, for many years, has been very difficult if not impossible for those forcibly expelled. The group has recently dropped the city from its title but its composition remains largely the same). Afghans similarly are not organised on a regional or local basis.

In part parallel to this less formal Sierra Leonean structure, there exist issue-based diaspora organisations – often focused on particular interests - which have a dual aim of assisting Sierra Leone and the diaspora community. African Community Empowerment promotes development of youth talent in entertainment and the setting up of awards schemes, mainly focused on Sierra Leone. 'The Young Shall Grow' aims to relieve poverty caused by war and offer charitable support for educational initiatives while WEIN – Women Empowerment and International Networking for Sierra Leone – supports women through access to better educational training, health and social care. Inasla, the International Association of Sierra Leoneans Abroad, is an organisation with an ambition to connect the disparate network that currently exists. However there appears to be resistance within the Sierra Leonean diaspora in the UK to the leadership of this organisation (based apparently on claims of nepotism within its leadership). Thus there is no UK organised diaspora network for Sierra Leoneans.

Unlike the other diaspora organisations Afghan leaders claim that approximately 80 percent of the community here is connected in some way to the community organisations – indeed one west London organisation leader claims a network with links to 3,500 people. (Bosnian leaders claim a much lower 25 percent. Sierra Leonean leaders are less willing to estimate the degree of connectivity of individuals but some have suggested 20 percent). There are several Afghan associations or societies which connect with members (usually several hundred families) in their locality, e.g., the Afghan Community Organisation of London or the Society of Afghan Residents (Midlands). These local networks overlap to a degree in their connectivity to Afghans with social events often involving members from other areas (this can be the case with Bosnians and Sierra Leonean social events sometimes, too). There are also Afghan organisations which focus more on youth (e.g., the Afghan Youth and Family Association, the Afghan Youth Council), relations with the UK (the Anglo-Afghan Circle), or Afghan cultural issues (the Afghan Academy, Afghan Arts and Culture Association).

Although there is co-operation between the groups, largely initiatives are developed by single local networks. However in the matter of months during which interviews have been carried out for this research, Afghan organised networks have initiated meetings to establish a London-wide network of organisations. This initiative by a female leader of the UK's most-established Afghan women's network has received a mixed response and distinctly limited levels of commitment from other local Afghan networks. (Slightly less than 50 percent of groups' leaders or representatives turned up to the first network-building meeting last week) (A-09). Other leaders consider her not to have contributed enough to the London Afghan community or maintained sufficient contact with them to

merit the generosity of their presence. One referred to the fact that she derives from the same tribal grouping as President Karzai. A long standing west London organisation leader claimed 'there are people who make an issue of [tribal/ethnic identity] but as far as I'm concerned as long as you're from Afghanistan it doesn't matter which faction or which part of the country they're from' (A-06). This is a sentiment echoed by other leaders. But in practice there is resistance to network building in the form of ethnic rivalry or at least perceptions of prejudice that are then reinforced. Small-minded ambition prevents nexus-building, too. There is evidence of personal fiefdom-building, with leaders 'encroaching' on others' geographical territory or planning expansions into relatively distant territories, almost a 'community-grab' (e.g., a move from a south London leader to take over the currently locally unsupported substantial Afghan community of Hounslow, west of London). A leading Afghan figure in the UK admitted that, 'Afghans very often are perceived to be very unfriendly towards each other and not want to work with each other. I can't blame people for that, there's a lot of tension and issues. But amazingly there have been no major issues in the diaspora community'(A-03). The question arises: how major an issue is widespread non-attendance at a potentially critical network-building meeting?

Despite the sometimes rapidly changing terrain of diaspora networks encountered in this research, the Afghan network in the UK remains the least developed of the three case study communities in this study. Bosnians have established a functioning, active, formal UK network; Sierra Leoneans are attempting to form a similar organisation, so far with only limited success (S-04). Some Afghans have realised the importance of widening existing networks but there is clearly resistance to these well-intentioned efforts. (A-03; A-04; A-06, A-09).

At the organisational level multiple-cross links exist within the Bosnian community in the UK for example between individual groups – no doubt facilitated by the formal overarching network (B-03; B-11). Sierra Leonean and Afghan local or issue-based networks are often aware of other networks and sometimes collaborate, but without an overarching structure, there is a far from complete understanding of the wider community, the embryonic national network, to which they belong (A-02).

Apart from occasional accusations of nepotism (against Inasla) or corruption (against certain Afghan leaders in London) there seems to be little overt conflict between or within networks (S-15; A-04). Generally there is an apparently strong sense of co-operative activity and friendly relations.

What binds these networks? They provide members with advice on the difficulties of living in the UK, entertainment and social events, a sense of camaraderie and sometimes meaningful projects of assistance for the homeland (see below). Media forms have assisted the establishment of ties: The Bosnian network in the UK produces 'Haber', a magazine of news and information useful to the community. Most individual local Afghan networks produce newsletters for their memberships. There are also enterprises and proposals which form connections between wider, transnational diaspora and between them and homeland which are discussed below.

Transnational links

Diaspora networks have become important 'facilitators of internal, inter-state, and worldwide political, cultural and economic connections' and according to Sheffer, may be seen as 'precursors of post-modern trans-state social and political systems' (Sheffer, 245). All three communities considered in this paper exhibit some transnational linkages to homeland, though they vary considerably in the extent, formality, and intensity of

such links and it would be difficult to attach the label 'system' to any of the organised networks studied.

The Bosnian diaspora is unique in having established since 2001, a formalised *international* network. The internet has allowed the Bosnian diaspora to establish an organised network (The BiH World Diaspora Network) stretching to most of the countries where Bosnians now reside (14). Through email, a dynamic, updated website, and a bi-annual world network conference, communication is rapid, simple and effective. Smaller groups of national leaders meet with more regularity and there are communications between individual local groups at the transnational level, for example, the BH Community UK (Victoria) group has been in contact with local Scandinavian groups (B-03). Arguably without the Net the network would function in a very different manner, without the sense of a continuous, evolving relationship within the global diaspora and between it and the homeland. Perhaps no functioning network would have even got off the ground without such ease of communication.

Robin Cohen hints at the idea that transnational communities may be another form of transnational social movements (1998). The switch, identified by Giddens (1991, ch.7) from emancipatory to identity politics, 'the shared experiences of seeking more meaningful forms of political participation, and the evolution of an increasingly globalized repertoire uniting outlooks and actions' (1998:9) suggests a sense of community in the politics of existing social movements that operate on the transnational level. In the establishment of the Bosnian diaspora network, in particular, are we witnessing the development of a proto – transnational social movement? This diaspora, in operating on a truly transnational level, with hundreds of thousands of 'members' and hundreds of core organisers spread across over ten countries campaigning for specific rights for themselves and other Bosnians and against the current structural arrangements underpinning government and administration in their country. I explore this notion in greater detail in a forthcoming paper.

Despite not having a formal UK network the Sierra Leonean organisation Inasla, set up in 2002, has commenced development of a wider international network. But there appears to be a similar lack of national level network organisations in other countries, only a fairly small number of individuals from other countries e.g., Germany, the USA, Australia, Denmark, Sweden, Italy, Netherlands, Canada, Nigeria and The Gambia, have linked to Inasla (*Inasla Newsletter*, No.6, Jan-Feb 2003). Thus it has yet to establish an international network at the organisational level.

The Afghan community in the UK has made initial steps towards establishing a European organised network, initiated by a leader of the Afghan Association of London (Harrow). Europe-based partners, after initial caution, have shown enthusiasm about the project but nothing is yet formalised (A03). As previously noted there is a sense that the Afghan community is less cohesive, perhaps more divided than the other groupings. That said there was a clear and explicit interest voiced by some leaders in developing links to the homeland (NGOs or businesses or government) that would assist peacebuilding and reconstruction (A-03; A-04; A-08; see 'Links to homeland' section below).

There are a number of disparate media initiatives which different diaspora networks have undertaken or are proposing which can be seen as enhancing transnational connectivity and binding the global network together. Inasla and BiH World Network both have UK-based websites from which they reach out to a wider international membership and audience. Both sites enable dispersed potential network members to connect in a way that traditional media and personal contacts do not. The BiH Studenti.com website, an initiative indirectly connected to the formal network (and linked on both websites), is

another significant Net-based enterprise which connects hundreds of students and young Bosnians throughout the world. The concept, established by a UK-based Banja Lukan former student and run by a virtual team scattered across the world, was established in 2003 and has a website that has received over two million hits. It samples Bosnian diaspora opinion, provides discussion fora for diaspora youth, a news service and assists in fund raising for humanitarian projects for the homeland (B-11; www.bihstudenti.com).

The Afghanistan Culture and Arts Association is in the process of establishing a web-based TV station for refugees and the Afghan Academy is seeking funding for an Afghan diaspora satellite station that will be received in the homeland and by the diaspora (I-01). The aim of this project is, according to a leading member of the organisation is to give Afghans inside and outside 'an objective view of what is happening... so people won't be fooled by some warlords or some tribal leaders'. This leader lamented that 'so much money is pouring into Afghanistan unfortunately little of that money is spent on [communicating] politics' (A-05). Bosnian entrepreneurs interviewed for this study have purchased rights to certain Bosnian TV outputs which they plan to broadcast to the diaspora (B-07; B-08). Diaspora media initiatives include 'Starz' a new magazine 'by Sierra Leoneans for Sierra Leoneans' launched in the United Kingdom and Sierra Leone in 2003 simultaneously.

The relationship between ethno-national diaspora and wider regional diaspora networks, in our case, West African, West Asian and Balkan networks will have important implications for the study. The UK Bosnian Network has links to the Kosovan community in the UK which is organising in a similar way to the Bosnian Network. Incidentally, during the Kosova crisis, some Bosnian groups raised money for the refugees and displaced (Haber, July- Aug 1999:6). Luton, Dewsbury, Nottingham, Coventry and other groups raised significant sums for victims of an earthquake in Turkey (Haber, Jan-Feb 2000:8). Sierra Leonean groups are linked to West African and African organisations, too. The African Diaspora Voices for Africa's Development (ADVAD) has the overall aim of establishing 'a strong partnership of African development organisations in the UK' that will achieve certain objectives, among them, building networks with African networks in the UK to develop a united voice in order to advocate effectively with governments on behalf of the African diaspora and related organisations. Future research will examine the role wider regional linkages play in assisting or limiting diaspora involvement in homeland peacebuilding.

Links to Homeland

Much of diaspora studies literature focuses on the homeland relation. The relationship can sometimes be fraught. States are depicted often as taking cynical and authoritarian stances towards diaspora (Sheffer, 2002). Healthy diaspora-homeland relations, it can be assumed, might promote positive diaspora contributions to peacebuilding. But what is actually perceived by diaspora members to be 'homeland' is important. Is 'homeland' represented by one's locality, kin or family? Or is it mainly understood as the state or government? Sierra Leonean leaders interviewed for this study were often cynical about national politics and government, preferring connection with local organisations and non-officials. The author encountered more than one disaffected SLPP member, intolerant of the pace of reconstruction and perceived corruption within ruling party circles, but still loyal to the party's diaspora branch in the UK (S-05; S-06).

But it becomes clear when one spends just a short amount of time with members of the diaspora from any of the case study countries that most have a strong connection to homeland through family and friends. The issue under discussion in this paper is the connection between organised networks and home which is important for regeneration in

many ways (see Renfro and Deckro, 2001). The UK Bosnian Network's website has noted the decreasing numbers of Bosnians voting in elections (200,000 four years ago, down to 27,000 recently). Lilija Korac, the author of an article reproduced on the site (first published in *Oslobodjenje*) suggests responsibility lies with homeland politics – politicians having done little to court overseas voters (www.bihdiaspora.org). But perhaps one of the most significant indicators of long-term commitment to homeland is the effort an organised network expends on sustaining and promoting its language and culture to its new generation of diasporans. Both Bosnian and Afghan communities have made considerable efforts to establish supplementary schools (usually on Saturdays) precisely with this aim in mind. In tune with earlier comments, the Bosnian network shows a greater level of organisation, including the establishment of a festival drawing together experience of hundreds of teachers and pupils at an annual event (Haber, July-August 2001:30). Sierra Leonean networks do not engage in this kind of cultural preservation, perhaps because of funding issues and their higher degree of assimilation into hostland culture and society (see below).

Linkage to homeland networks and organisations, and government is present in each diaspora but this also varies considerably between Bosnian regular contact with embassy officials and occasional direct communication, correspondence and meeting with national politicians and officials (for example, a large contingent of UK network leaders met with the Higher Representative, Paddy Ashdown at an event organised by the Bosnian Embassy in London) to those Afghan organisations and individuals remaining in the UK with apparently virtually no communication with officialdom and minimal communication with NGOs and operative business linkages.

Some Sierra Leonean organised networks have had significant contact with government, members of the KDU and the KDDA assisted in establishing a partnership between the London Borough of Southwark and the district of Kono, eastern Sierra Leone. This led to an official delegation, including the Minister for Local Government and Community Development, the Rt.hon. Sidiqi Brima and the mayoress of Kono, Mrs Mary Musa, visiting Southwark in January 2005. There is a strong sense of commitment among the members of the KDU and KDDA to the home district of Kono. Members of the executive committees have visited Sierra Leone and there is a strong feeling of trust vested in Mrs Musa (e.g., S-01; S-11; S-16).

Many of the local and interest-based networks from each case study country demonstrated a commitment to their homelands through repeated small-scale charitable acts and the reporting of these back to their hostland members through newsletters or otherwise. The UK Bosnia Network for example, worked with Edinburgh Direct Aid to send four convoys of aid to Kluj and Bosanski Petrovic, while one local group raised four figure sums for medical treatment of individuals; sponsorship of orphans or support for orphanages has also been a common cause (Haber, Jan/Feb 2000:22). At a social event (in November 2004) the UK chapter of Christ's King College in Bo district, Sierra Leone, raised £2000 which will go towards developing an ICT room in the school (S-12).

The relationship with homeland government, however, is not always congenial. The Bosnian UK diaspora magazine, *Haber*, reproduced certain members' hostility towards individual government ministers, in particular, the SDP foreign minister of the time, Lagumdžija helping to exaggerate or compound minor differences. In another edition, the appointment of the Ambassadors was criticised because of her previous connection with the foreign minister (Haber Feb-Mar 2003:23,34). Thus the network which has the most regularised and sustained contact with 'official home' quite likely, and perhaps unsurprisingly, simultaneously may have had the most antagonistic. Sierra Leoneans, in local networks, have strong connections at the local level. Afghans who remain in the

diaspora appear to not have much contact with homeland organisations whether NGOs or officialdom, despite there being an Afghan ministry for the Diaspora (I-01).

Reactions from the homeland to the diaspora are part of such relations nonetheless. Companies based in Bosnia have helped Bosnians to return and have donated money for this purpose. Daut Basovic a catering businessman stumped up 100,000 km (£30,000) for this purpose. In total such donations have exceeded two million convertible marks. (Haber Jan-Feb 2000). The Afghan Government, along with the IOM and hostland governments have focused on getting back skilled and professional Afghans to help economic reconstruction. In an interview with a Minister of the Government of Sierra Leone it was very apparent that members of the administration are grateful for diaspora support and initiatives but that the official perception back home is that many Sierra Leoneans have forgotten their homeland (S-13).

In thinking about organised diaspora network-homeland relations it becomes apparent that connectivity is only one part of a formula that might enable a positive contribution from the diaspora. Another important element is the diaspora's understanding of its potential role and its concern for homeland. These elements can be described as diaspora self-consciousness and diaspora *ethos*. When Haber featured an article describing the global Bosnian diaspora's own development and purported success on an issue of importance, namely the postponement of a deadline on the citizenship issue, a new level of self-consciousness was reached which enables diaspora members to identify themselves as political actors in a process which allows new forms of politics to take place (Haber, Filipova, x :26). Other Bosnians, including the secretary of the UK network, observed themselves as 'a very young diaspora and not very strong. The Croatian [diaspora] is different; people left over 50 years ago, they have been investing and helping since' (B-09).

Diaspora ethos can be defined as the attitude prevalent toward homeland as represented by the values and beliefs held by diaspora members or perpetuated by diaspora groups and organisations. Attitudes of individuals can be alienated, distanced, co-operative, or committed. Organisational ethos is generally considerably more affirmatory being a collective expression of the individual energies that led to its formation, an organised network being unlikely to have been formed by a collection of individuals alienated from home. There are significant differences in forms of diaspora ethos in relation to homeland.

Sierra Leonean leaders and many individuals possess an apparent primary concern for homeland that was not present among the majority of Afghan and Bosnian interviewees. Apart from facilitating information and knowledge about the homeland, one of Inasla's main objectives is the 'Establishment of a Resource and Recreational Centre for Sierra Leoneans [and s]upporting efforts to reduce poverty in Sierra Leone'. The many Sierra Leonean diaspora issue/interest-focused groups, hometown organisations and 'old-pupil' associations are networks that certainly have a social entertainment element but the *raison d'être* is to support the selected cause.

The Bosnians and Afghans have exhibited commendable concern for the fate of their homeland, too. But there is a distinct difference of concern, and therefore of ethos, between these diaspora networks and their Sierra Leone counterpart. For example, a major and very legitimate concern of the Bosnians is the establishment of a ministry for the diaspora (something the Afghans, with their massive worldwide diaspora numbering several millions, have already). They argue that with 1.3m Bosnians still living abroad, they represent a substantial proportion of the total population of Bosnia (4m). This

network is particularly, and legitimately, concerned for the fate of the approximately 20 percent of the Bosnian community which it represents. Many of its political demands concern the diaspora (see below). Indeed the first priority of world network according to the current president was 'to make good links [between] us who are abroad [with the] aim...together to ask the Bosnian Government to address our problems (B-02). It is fair to state that the fate of the homeland, while a major and prominent concern to this organised network, is secondary to the Network's concern for its own diaspora members ('we are looking for ways to help our diaspora and then to find ways to help our country' echoed the UK network president. B-04.)

As already noted, the Afghan diaspora, less organised than the Bosnian, is closer in organisational level to that of Sierra Leone. But again, as previously recognised, local or interest-based groups in the Afghan diaspora do not have the level of connection with homeland as the other groups cited here. It can be said therefore that the Afghan organisations do not create many opportunities for their members to take action in relation to homeland peacebuilding. That said, change of leadership can be the catalyst for a significant change in the direction of an organised network's work. A large north London-based organised network recently appointed a new leader with considerable experience of reconstruction in post-Taliban Afghanistan. The co-ordinator of this group noted that 'government organisations working in Afghanistan have realised lately that quite a lot of their projects have not been successful as they thought they would be... not enough research went into the projects'. Contacts established during his work in the homeland led to the organisation being co-opted by Cambridge academics into the development of more effective reconstruction projects, being what the leader of this network described as 'a major contact' for the project. The organisation, previously concerned primarily with supporting local Afghans in north London is now in the process of shifting its work to providing expert advice on projects funded by the Japanese Government. The network co-ordinator believes his organisation 'has a lot of very skilled people involved with it: engineers, doctors, teachers who are really willing to participate but [have had] no means to do so.' He sees the Japan-Cambridge initiative as the beginning of long term deployment of this expertise (A-08).

The primary attention of these networks is focused on the needs of Afghan refugees (from various waves over the last decade and beyond) who often are unable to fend well for themselves in the foreignness of Britain. As noted above, many are old, uneducated and illiterate and are not competent in English. Put simply, the homeland could never be a primary concern when their funding (from the Home Office, local councils and bodies such as New Deal for Communities) is predicated on serving the needs of this refugee community. The other major concern of this nationality – that has not been experienced by the other groups to the same degree - is the effort to stave off pressures to repatriate members of their community. Many professional Afghans have been 'head-hunted' by the International Organisation for Migration as part of the 'Return of Qualified Afghans' scheme by encouraging orderly and supported return of key personnel for reconstruction. Unlike most Bosnians, many of the more recently-arrived Afghans fear the Home Office knock at the door. This and the matter of proximity affects network members' abilities to return home for holidays, to keep in touch, to do business etc. Unlike many Bosnians – now effectively with dual citizenship – they are unable to return home for the summer.

This may be an important fact for productive diaspora contribution to reconstruction and peacebuilding in the homeland. With the threat of forced return lifted or suspended, diaspora members are free to visit the homeland secure in the knowledge their UK base, livelihood etc., is not under imminent threat. This situation may well enable the possibility of thoughts of a more generous nature in relation to the home country and the

ability to plan business ventures, charitable initiatives or laying the foundations of return to assist regeneration in concert with home-based organisations, official or otherwise.

Funding disparities

It may be the case that UK funding sources are having the perverse effect on diaspora networks of redirecting their focus and energy away from the homeland toward their own members in the UK. (UK funding also has the effect of influencing who leads a local network. Some of the 'leaders' are actually 'professional workers'. For example, Jasmin Bucic of BH Community based in Victoria, London, appears to be the leading figure in that organisation but would have been appointed by the UK-based funding body, the Lottery Fund – though undoubtedly approved by the Bosnian community.) Funding is certainly given for that purpose and explains why Bosnian and Afghan networks prioritise it. Sierra Leonean groups appear to not have received the same level of sustained funding that both Afghan and Bosnian organisations have achieved. The Bosnian network, for example, received their first grant of £67,000 from the National Lottery fund in the summer of 1999. Inasla, the Sierra Leonean aspiring international network, is supported by individual members, businesses and local government grants and is still struggling to obtain office space for its organisation. There are currently approximately 10,000 Sierra Leonean, 9,000 Bosnian and 40,000 Afghan refugees respectively (estimates S-01; I-01; I-05). So, if correct, numbers alone do not explain the distribution of funding. Public awareness of the plight of particular refugees might explain this disparity, Sierra Leone being significantly less prominent in the media representation of the three conflicts. The crisis over Bosnia, however, achieved (at the time) unparalleled media exposure, being described then as the most saturatedly covered, and most analysed and discussed, war in history (Gow, 1995). It is certain that the Afghan and Sierra Leonean cases did not achieve anything like the exposure maintained in the more proximate European war. The war has been said to have affected the European conscience like no other (Kaldor, 1998). The reasons for these differences in funding may not be significantly related to matters of political communication however. Also the fact of Sierra Leone's previous colonial status and the lack of language barrier means that even the weaker migrants from this war are better able to fend for themselves in the UK.

How then do these advantages, limitations and handicaps affect the efforts made with respect to homeland peace?

Diaspora peacebuilding initiatives

Organised diaspora networks influence peacebuilding through their impact on homeland politics and economic reconstruction. Skrbis shows how diaspora can play an important role homeland politics in promoting nationalism in there (1997; Winland, 1995). This can lead to support for extreme nationalism and war (Blitz, 1996). The recent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have enabled diaspora leaders to assume important positions in new administrations, possibly the ultimate form of political influence any diaspora can have. Jazayery notes that three-quarters of Hamid Karzai's 30-strong cabinet were (including the president) members of the Afghan diaspora (2002:244). Iraqi formal politics has been dominated similarly, with diasporans filling most Governing Council posts and many of the Interim Government cabinet posts, it being widely perceived that diaspora elements played critical roles in promoting the strategy of 'regime change' in the case of Iraq. These are clear examples of the impact of diaspora leaders when there is a coincidence of interest between them and powerful state-actors. When diaspora networks operate independently their influence is less obvious but as Sheffer suggests, there is a growing divergence in the interests of diaspora networks and homelands and it is thought

that their mutual reliance will decline further (p.248). This study has found signs of such divergence, as noted above.

In addition, the UK Bosnian Network set up a working group to examine political relations between Bosnia and the diaspora. They have established an extensive set of demands which include a ministry of the diaspora, dual citizenship rights, casting ballots in Bosnian embassies rather than via Sarajevo, assistance in the creation of supplementary schools, and ambassadorial posts for diaspora members. Most of these demands affect the diaspora directly whereas the desire to see laws of restitution of properly implemented and the growing disillusion with current constitutional arrangements which is transforming into a campaign to have the Dayton Accords renegotiated are diaspora network *intrusions* into Bosnian politics. The effects of such intrusions would be felt as strongly within the homeland, indeed more so than within the diaspora. The Bosnian organised network's existence has enabled such an agenda to be formulated. It means such demands have much greater weight.

Afghan networks in the UK might come into conflict with the Kabul government in opposition to its preference, in tune with hostland interests, for the return of Afghans. The existing security instability in much of Afghanistan sets a context for growing division between diaspora networks protecting members' interests and the state which appears to desire the return of most Afghans. A central issue in such a dilemma concerns whether or not Afghan refugees, at this moment in time, can best assist reconstruction of their country by remaining abroad or returning home. The level of remittance of resources into Afghanistan is key to resolving this issue. If Afghans are providing funds for relatives back home (rather than the diminishing numbers remaining in Pakistan and Iraq) and are relatively unskilled, they may be assisting the homeland in a more tangible way than if they were to return to a situation with limited work-opportunities, giving up a livelihood in the UK.

Among Sierra Leonean network leaders, some are concerned with the pace of reconstruction and the use or misuse of international funds by the Government but there is little organised debate about alternative political agendas for the homeland (S-01; S-05; S-06; S-15).

The politics of peacebuilding has also a hostland dimension. Despite the geographical and political closeness of diaspora networks to the 'centres of global decision-making in London, Paris, New York and Washington' this study found little evidence of utilisation of the potential to 'lobby for changes in development' and other policy issues in relation to war-torn homelands (Mohan and Zack-Williams, 2002). Issues that were campaigned on usually concerned the diaspora themselves, such as opposition to repatriation of Afghans or Bosnian attempts to secure dual citizenship rights. As noted above Sierra Leoneans from Kono helped to promote the establishment of a partnership and twinning between their district and the London Borough of Southwark and in the process connected Westminster politicians with Sierra Leone Government representatives but have not directly lobbied Whitehall. In all there has not been the kind of political lobbying and campaigning in the hostland the experience of Israeli, Palestinian and Armenian diaspora might have led us to expect. One reason is that the groups under study here are incipient diaspora, two of which have what I have described as at best 'embryonic' organised networks. They have yet to organise themselves politically in a way that would allow them to exert influence on decision-making processes in the hostland. The older diaspora networks are more established and therefore more secure about their place in the hostland, and are better-funded and more experienced.

Economic reconstruction

Transformations of war economies to economies of peace require substantial shifts in patterns of economic activity in the medium to long term. Diaspora networks are hardly likely to provide the large scale re-financing and support major international financial institutions are able to offer. One area they can assist in is in attracting and directing foreign investment from hostland contacts. Bolt argues that the home government's policy is key to attracting investments from a diaspora but that 'the strength and stability of the state is also important to the type and amount of resources that it can attract from its diaspora' (1996: 488). Two leading Bosnian entrepreneurs interviewed for this study Devovic and Ceric – who are leading diaspora organisers - argue that the diaspora itself – numbering 1.3m - could provide massive investment funds for credible business ventures. A critical issue they identify is the lack of trust diasporans have in such investment models and in homeland institutions (B-07; B-08).

Honey and Okafor note that such diaspora investment is assumed to contribute in more relevant and sustainable forms of development and Uduku (2002) has shown how Igbo diaspora networks have a unique relation to the development of their hometowns compared to other east African networks. The efforts of Sierra Leonean networks to provide funds often for local projects is instructive. The KDU, for example, raised substantial funds in a short period of time through social events and individual contributions to assist in healthcare projects in Kono district. This has led to a proposal from Kono district council for funds for the construction of a training centre for nurses – who are in short supply - for the district (the nearest alternative centre is 80 miles away). Diaspora members are attempting to support this latest initiative which will require almost £50,000 in funding. Within this diaspora network there does not appear to be a dependence on rich donors as reported by Sheffer (p.188) who suggests 'small numbers of rich people contribute most of the money' to diaspora organisations (about 6 percent of the donors contribute about 80 percent of such funds.) Trager (2001) noted that elite men often dominate, using remittances or other resource transfers as sources of self-aggrandisement, though Ahmed's study found that 40 percent of remitters were women. Flows can be too partisan or repeat erroneous investment decisions. Long-term observation of the Kono projects may reveal a similar pattern although diaspora leaders have been very cautious about how the money raised is spent.

The 'productive' project, which generates revenue and creates jobs in the hometown has not been in evidence in the research interviews conducted so far. This might be due to the non-business entrepreneurial culture of organised diaspora network leaders. Those with business-building capability seem rarely disposed to give up large amounts of time to diaspora organisations.

The Bosnian World Network is also active in attempting to direct foreign investment into the homeland. It has established a business section (called the 'Business Club') which provides information about investment in Bosnia, seeks out prospective investors in many of the hostlands where diaspora members are located and then lobbies government on behalf of prospective investors. There have also been efforts to support job creation projects, such as the 'Jobs for Youth' project organised by an Italy-based Bosnian network. The group is also establishing a database of diaspora businessmen and monitoring economic conditions in Bosnia. Although several businessmen have been accompanied by network leaders on fact finding trips to Bosnia, few if any deals have yet been signed, a fact some diasporans blame of the homeland government for dragging its feet on the issue and its poor marketing skills. According to the co-ordinator of the 'club' 'generally FDI is a new idea for Bosnians [there was] not much before the war, [we] don't know how to deal with investors' (B-09; I-06).

Another form of diaspora contribution, what has been termed 'reverse brain drain', is reported to be currently in progress. Afghan nationals are returning home 'in droves to assist in the rebuilding of Afghanistan' (Nassery, 2003), often with IOM (International Organisation for Migration) assistance as part of their 'Return of Qualified Afghans' program though there are many problems for returnees (Jazayery, 2002, 243-5). As Gundel notes, however, 'the linkages between aid and migration-related resource transfers are multidimensional and that development can lead to migration and vice versa' (2002:255). The existence of diaspora can assist and has historically assisted the expansion of 'brain drain communities'. (Reynolds, 2002).

The focus of a number of Bosnian diaspora homeland development projects has been the reconstruction or rebuilding of religious buildings. 'Fund Platani' was organised in 1999/2000 by refugees from Trebinje mainly living in Sweden and Denmark. They publish a monthly magazine, 'Izvori' where they request donations for the fund's work on three levels: i. to rebuild the Osman-Pasic mosque and other buildings in their home town; ii. to develop contact with the Bosnian community there and iii. assist refugees in their return [Haber, Jan-Feb 2000:23] Another transnational diaspora initiative was the campaign by various prominent diaspora members, led by among others Yale Professor, Ivo Banac to rebuild the mosque and old town of Stolac [Haber, Jan-Feb 2000]. Similarly the Coventry group assisted in organising a seminar on re-development in Banja Luka, especially focused on the rebuilding of religious buildings there.

Conclusion

Primary research interviews conducted with organisational leaders of the three diaspora networks support Sheffer's (2002) contention that networks are growing in self confidence and assertiveness. Overall there appears to be considerable goodwill towards the homeland in these UK-based diaspora organisations although much of their work is concerned with their UK-based members. Is the imperative of survival of a diaspora community in a foreign land the only reason why none of these networks cannot as yet be described as a significant player in homeland reconstruction? Clearly this imperative is felt more keenly among Afghans in the UK. Funding opportunities and concomitant demands have directed energies further towards this type of objective, which, in essence, is an assistance to the *hostland*. The exceptional ethos of the Sierra Leonean networks in relation to, in particular, local homeland organisations or causes has no correlate in the other diasporas. But being quintessentially local, in terms of targets for assistance and organisation of networks in the UK, means these well-meant, possibly well-directed, transfers of resources, remain small. Further detailed and long term study would be required to ascertain the exact aggregated extent and efficacy of such projects throughout Sierra Leone, but it seems improbable these, unlike informal transfers, would ever match IFI involvement. Another important factor, again in contradiction of Sheffer, is the lack of funds and assets among these diaspora leaders and their networks. There are no signs of rich businessmen or benefactors stepping in, if only occasionally, to provide a boost to the compatriot network. Many members fled their homelands and arrived in the UK with few assets to their name. These are thoroughly grassroot networks. In recent piloting of a survey questionnaire examining informal transfers to homeland to a small group of randomly-chosen Afghans in South London all were struggling with the basics of survival here and were palpably bemused by the notion of investing in Afghanistan.

Finally, a major limitation must be the organisational question that has been prominent throughout this paper. Sierra Leonean and Afghan networks need to establish strong national and international networks to enable them to represent as many diasporans as possible. In forming such organisations they would be able to campaign for existing objectives and develop broader political and economic agendas for homeland

peacebuilding and reconstruction. It may be that this is exactly the path these networks will take and that this study has alighted upon an early stage of development of organised diaspora networks. It takes time, energy and imagination to develop such organisations, qualities abundantly present in all of these diaspora communities. In the longer term, they may well contribute significantly to homeland peacebuilding. Developments over the few months duration of this research in terms of a growing awareness of the homeland plight in all organised networks as well as the stalled network building attempts of Afghans suggest a dynamic social terrain on which to conduct such enquiry and the likelihood that there will be significant, network-building developments in future.

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