

Diasporas and Conflict Societies:

Conflict Entrepreneurs, Competing
Interests, or Contributors to
Stability and Development?

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Particularly in post-conflict scenarios, tapping the diaspora may at once be necessary and unavoidable, given the drive among some diasporans to insert themselves into the rebuilding process.



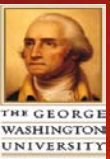
State of our Knowledge

- Diasporas as conflict promoters, sustainers, and entrepreneurs
 - Essentialize diasporas
 - Ignore varied composition and resulting motivations and activities
- Diasporas as peace and stability contributors, who will make it all better
 - Downplay variety
 - Ignore that diasporas are one of many competing interest groups



Outline

- Diasporas and Motivation to Engage
- Diaspora Contributions, pros and cons
- Implications & Conclusions



Diasporas and Motivation

- Immigrants who maintain a connection, psychological or material, to their country of origin
- Complex drivers from both home- and host-society
 - Not a linear integration model
 - Identity expression, hybridity
 - Guilt and grievance
 - Power
 - Self-interest to avert dependency



Diaspora Contributions

- Economic remittances
- Philanthropy
- Human capital
- Political influence, including in peace processes



Remittances

- Estimated in 2006 at \$167 billion (World Bank) and \$300 billion (IFAD)
- Subsistence during conflict, transitioning in post-conflict/peace to livelihood
- Important to DDR
- Informal financial systems
- Supporting insurgents & conflict
- Extortion



Philanthropy

- Altruism and peace...
- Versus cover for political and conflict objectives
- For some, represents progress along a learning curve, e.g., Salih Kaki from the Sudan Civil Society Forum:



Philanthropy, cont.

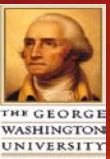
- Conflict and crisis may foster greater philanthropic interest within the diaspora
- Small-scale/informal & formal DOs
- Charitable fronts and diversion of \$
- Well meaning but possibly

reckless



Human Capital

- Staffing government and development posts
- Repatriation, temporary return, and philanthropic support
- Potential tension and conflict
 - New political elite
 - Reinforcing past stratification
 - Helping attitudes
- Insurgent recruitment



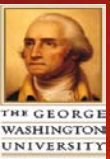
Political Influence

- One of the largest contributions diasporas make to insurgencies is through diplomatic pressures
- May enhance quality of life in the homeland
 - US foreign assistance
 - Human rights accountability
- Partisan interests may be at play under the guise of inclusive and democratic platforms
- Extremist or partisan views may be countered by unifying identities and actions
- Voting and campaign contributions



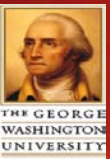
Peace and Peace Processes

- Peace Building
 - Support for cultural mechanisms specific to conflict resolution
 - In diaspora: caravans (e.g., Sudan), virtual *shir*
- Peace negotiations
 - Locate and pressure parties to participate
 - Lobby country of residence to engage
 - Explain/inform as interlocutors b/w mediators and parties to the conflict
 - Support peace agreement implementation



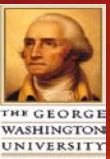
Caveats

- Diasporas are not monolithic with unwavering interests
- Possibility that linking diasporas and security may lead policymakers to overreact and forgo important advantages
- Interpretation is subjective, and not all consequences are intended
- Diasporans may overestimate their local knowledge
- Some contributions may require facilitating policies and programs (e.g., human capital)



Hopeful Signs From Literature and Practice?

- Collier, Hoeffler, & Söderbom (2008)
 - Presence of a large diaspora reduces the risk of conflict renewal from 40% to 32.8%
 - Possibly related to the positive correlation with per capita income at the end of conflict
- Policy
 - Diasporas mentioned willy-nilly or not at all, even in assessments of fragility and resilience



Implications

1. We ignore diasporas at our peril
2. A better understanding of diasporas' contributions will enable post-conflict governments and the international community to know when it may be appropriate to support extant diaspora efforts and when simply to get out of the way
3. Diasporas are a competing interest group, not often subject to the consequences of their actions, and should not be privileged in policymaking and programming.
4. Need to attend to quality of life of diasporans in the adopted homeland or **host society**



Conclusion

Diasporas are at once conflict entrepreneurs, competing interests, and contributors to peace and development.

They are neither exclusively saints nor sinners but their significance to these processes and outcomes can no longer be ignored.

