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Hybridising diasporic resistance to homeland peacebuilding: a case study of UK Sudanese activists and Sudanese peace

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses what motivates diasporas to resist homeland peacebuilding using the case of the UK-based Sudanese diaspora. It identifies the need to analyse diasporic resistance against a framework of hybrid peacebuilding and local resistance. In hybrid frameworks, resistance is not necessarily motivated by 'anti-peace' intentions but can be part of attempts to secure peace. This investigation examines the two key peacebuilding strategies in Sudan during 2014; the National Dialogue and internationally-led civil society building, both of which were subject to considerable resistance at the local level in Sudan. Applying an analytical framework of hybridity and using empirical material from interviews with UK-based Sudanese activists, the article asks why these processes were resisted by the diaspora and to what extent these motivations build on, resonate with, or subvert local resistance(s). The findings show that motivations behind diasporic resistance to homeland peacebuilding matches with local resistance in relation to the National Dialogue. However, in relation to international peacebuilding, the diasporic resistance diverged from the local in several key ways. Through contextualising diasporic resistance against hybrid peace and local resistance, the paper contributes to a hybrid understanding of diasporic resistance during homeland peacebuilding.

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1. Introduction

In an increasingly connected global system, politics within nation states are 'significantly impacted by the migrant communities and diasporas of those polities' (Lyons and Mandaville 2010a, 124). Overall, research on diaspora activism suggests that 'diasporas clearly matter for homeland peacebuilding' (Shain and Barth 2003, 45) but that they are a 'double-edged sword' (Orjuela 2008, 436) who participate either sequentially or simultaneously in supporting and resisting homeland peace (Beyene 2015; Smith and Stares 2007; Van Hear and Cohen 2017, 171). This article engages with the question 'what motivates diaspora communities to resist homeland peacebuilding?' through a case study of UK Sudanese diaspora. It focuses on the period 2014–2015 which, in many ways, laid the ground for the 2018 uprising and the overthrowing of President Bashir in April 2019.

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Diasporic resistance to peacebuilding was, until recently, identified as having peace-wrecking motivations (Collier, Hoeffler, and Soderbom 2008; Lyons 2007). However, such studies have been criticised for uncritically conflating peace processes with 'peace' itself (Baser 2015; Laffey and Nadarajah 2012) and for their insufficient contextualisation of conflict and peace (Koinova 2018, 1262). This article builds on these dual critiques by utilising a hybrid analysis of the Sudanese peacebuilding space and by situating diasporic resistance within the context of local resistance.

First, in sections 2 and 3, the article engages with the literature which has addressed the motivations behind diasporic resistance to homeland peacebuilding. Following this, in sections 4 and 5, an outline of hybrid peacebuilding demonstrates that motivations behind local resistance to peace processes have a variety of principled, pragmatic and/or power-seeking bases. After discussions of methods (section 5) and the Sudanese conflict (section 6), this framework informs the presentation of two key Sudanese peacebuilding processes: The National Dialogue and internationally-led civil-society building. Each process is analysed separately, first by demonstrating the motivations behind local resistance and second by analysing resistance from the UK diaspora in their light. Using the framework of hybridity, the analysis is driven by the question 'what motivates UK Sudanese diaspora groups to resist peacebuilding processes and how do these motivations, build upon, resonate with, or subvert, the resistances of local groups in Sudan?' Through bringing the conceptual innovations made in relation to local resistance to bear on diasporic resistance, this paper contributes to the overall question 'what motivates diasporic resistance to homeland peacebuilding?'.

2. Diasporic resistance to homeland peacebuilding

Diasporic resistance to peacebuilding processes in homelands has been consistently analysed as having 'peace-wrecking' intentions (Beyene 2015; Cochrane 2015; Lyons 2007; Rajasingham-Senanayake 2009). Those asking why diasporic groups are more combative than homeland groups have pointed to the ways in which diasporas are distinguishable from those who have not moved away from the conflict. According to Salehyan and Gleditsch (2006), during conflicts, it is generally those who oppose homeland governments who migrate. As such, they argue, combative sentiments tend to be overrepresented among the diaspora (see also Beyene 2015, 156).

In addition, it has been controversially claimed that diasporas are incentivised to maintain a 'victim' identity to protect themselves from discriminatory practices in their places of residence. Demmers (2007, 15) argues 'diaspora communities are sustained by narratives of trauma and violence' and for such groups, 'the conflict in the homeland becomes a yardstick of their identity which helps them mobilise their community members, raise funds, build institutions, and engage in political activism in the host-state' (Pande 2017, 52). In this way, argues Shain (2002, 128–130), peace can threaten diasporas because homeland conflict fulfils an identity-need in places of residence.

It is clear that diasporas have a different relationship to homeland peace than locals (those affected by conflict and peace who are living within the national borders) and a wealth of evidence shows that resistance from diasporas has been, at best, irresponsible and, at worst, malicious. It is not my intention to reconceptualise resistance so as to defend such activities. However, the designation of resistant diasporas as 'anti-peace'

has been unduly simplistic. As Baser (2015, 37) has argued, debates on diaspora and peacebuilding 'contribute to a pattern' of 'not questioning the basic definitions of *conflict* and *peace*'. Too often, argue Laffey and Nadarajah (2012, 412), analysis of diasporic activism proceeds from 'taken-for-granted conceptions of conflict and peace inherent in the global liberal project'. Resistance to peacebuilding processes is designated as 'peace-wrecking' yet the definition of 'peace' itself is not sufficiently questioned or unpacked (Baser 2015; Laffey and Nadarajah 2012). The motivations behind resistance to peace processes are assumed to be either self-selecting or self-serving despite the understanding that 'peace' is not a singular or stable state of affairs.

3. The contexts of diasporic resistance: who, when and where?

In light of the above critiques, scholarship has worked around the problem of peace by moving towards the use of more descriptive and less moralising concepts. For example, Koinova has asked why diasporic mobilisations make use of moderate or radical tactics (2011a), why they might pursue state-based or secessionist ends (Koinova 2011b) and Horst has asked why diasporas might be 'ethnically or civically-minded' (Horst 2018). Questions of *why* diasporas resist peacebuilding have given way to questions of *who especially, when* and *where* (i.e. under which contextual conditions) diasporas deploy 'contentious', 'radical' or 'moderate' politics.

To this end, Baser (2015) has shown in relation to the Kurdish diaspora how varied forms of activism are performed within the same diasporic group. In this case, only an elite group who are previously associated with political parties are motivated to make radical claims, whereas a majority engage in moderate activism. According to Hall and Kostić (2009) 'uncompromising' forms of activism among the Yugoslav diaspora in Sweden tends to come from recently arrived members whereas reconciliatory attitudes are more prevalent among what they term 'structurally and socio-economically integrated' members of the diaspora. Lyons and Mandaville (2010b) has argued it is the 'conflict-generated' elements of the Ethiopian diaspora – those migrating during the civil war from peripheral areas – who are most likely to take up 'uncompromising positions'.

In exploring *when* diasporas enact resistance, Koinova (2011b) has shown that diasporas tend to promote radical politics when (a) human rights violations occur in the homeland and (b) when local elites begin to lose credibility. Furthermore, through this work, it is clear that the use of moderate or radical claim-making is dependent upon the extent to which diaspora activists perceive their own positionality as empowered or disempowered (Godwin 2018; Koinova 2017).

Van Hear and Cohen (2017) have extended the use context to analyse *where* exactly diaspora resistance occurs within the tripartite structure of diasporic spheres of engagement: the family, the known community, and the wider 'imagined community'. Contentious politics is likely to occur in the 'imagined community' sphere of engagement and may be simultaneous to moderate actions in the family and known community spheres. As well as the above factors of residence contexts and diasporic positionalities, contexts such as homeland state type (Mavroudi 2018), and levels of state fragility (Carment and Calleja 2018) can also shape the tactics used in diaspora mobilisations.

It is clear from this nuancing of diasporic resistance that diasporas are not homogeneous and do not necessarily take up radical or contentious stances. Rather they have

high levels of internal variety, fluidity and reactivity. These studies have deepened our understanding of *why* diasporas resist peacebuilding through cognate discussions of *who especially within* diasporas are resistant, *when* and *where* diasporic resistance occurs and using *what* forms of activism. This article returns to the question of *what motivates* diasporas to enact resistance, and seeks to find variety and nuance within the resistant population, rather than between the resistant and non-resistant populations within diasporas. To do this, it is important to bring back the context of 'peacebuilding' into discussions of diaspora mobilisations. Peacebuilding is a complex web of international interventions and national agendas, all of which are mediated through local experiences. It is important that varieties of resistance from diasporas are recognised in direct relation to this context. Rather than returning to the problematic anti/pro-peace designation which has been earlier critiqued, this article instead adopts a hybrid lens for peacebuilding.

4. Peacebuilding and hybridity

'The hybrid turn' (Mac Ginty and Richmond 2016) has formalised the descriptive and analytical inclusion of multiple actors, ideas and processes in peacebuilding spaces. Peace processes which are top-down, elite-led and internationally-planned co-exist with national, state-led forms of peacebuilding. In turn, these peace processes combine with locally-led initiatives and everyday experiences (Mitchell 2011).

All of these efforts to build peace have different conceptualisations of what peace is. The practice of international peacebuilding has arisen from political theories which identify the root causes of conflict with the 'illiberal' nature of conflicting societies (Paris 1997). While international peacebuilding practices are highly heterogeneous, critics argue that 'liberal values clearly guide their activities' (Barnett 2006, 88). The vision of peace objectivised in international peacebuilding is identified by critical scholars as synonymous with Westphalian liberal market democracy (Chandler 2012). On the other hand, many national peace programmes pursue a 'peace as security' agenda where simply the absence of violence is the aim of peacebuilding operations.

Other peacebuilding approaches aim for 'human security' where it is not only the absence of violence which is objectivised, but also the absence of poverty, discrimination or indignity (Boyd 2014). These holistic approaches to peacebuilding attempt to address root causes of conflict and create sustainable solutions for 'positive peace'. Since visions of positive peace are context-dependent, plural and contested, attempts to build positive peace are made through the pursuit of highly disputed methods: for example, state-led security and reconciliation in Rwanda, authoritarianism in Eritrea, or joint sovereignty and power-sharing in Northern Ireland (Goldie and Murphy 2010; Lewis 2017; Wielenga and Harris 2011).

5. Motivations behind local resistance

Diverse local actors – with their own ideas about what peace is and how to build it – participate in the peacebuilding space. Their ideas and activities are often compatible with national or international peacebuilding goals but, on many occasions, locals have fundamentally rejected the objectives and methods of national and/or international peace processes (Höglund and Orjuela 2012). These resistances have been shown to have principled, pragmatic and power-seeking motivations.

There have been numerous cases where local resistance has been motivated by an principled ideological rejection of the liberalising reforms of internationally-led peacebuilding (Chandler 2013; Iñiguez de Heredia 2014; Mac Ginty 2011). The deep-seated Cambodian political elite, argue Öjendal and Ou (2013, 367), 'impeded the smooth transition to full liberal democracy' and tried to create new arrangements for more 'indigenous power-induced, negotiation-based, consensus politics' (374). This resistance, as found by Öjendal and Ou (2013), was not motivated by a desire to prolong conflict but rather by an ideological rejection of liberalism. Ideological opposition has also been enacted by locals against the state. For example, against state centralisation in Indonesia by regional authorities in East Timor (Smith 2014, 1513).

Relatedly, resistance to peacebuilding processes can be motivated by pragmatism. Lee (2015, 1485) argues that resistance can occur when 'local actors do not have a specific antagonism towards the international peacebuilding programmes *per se*; rather, they reject the programme's agenda because they believe that it is not relevant to their particular situation' (1443). In explaining resistance to security sector reform during peacebuilding in Afghanistan, Jarstad and Olsson (2012) argue that many locals objected on the basis that they did not see how it would work in their situation.

As well as these principled and pragmatic rejections of peace processes, resistance can also be power-seeking. Peace politics is not separate to, but arises from, conflict politics. As such, when local groups, such as rebel-affiliated groups, recognise that their power will diminish in peace agreements, they may seek to modify peace agreements through resistance in order to protect their power and influence (Lee 2015).

Importantly, principled, pragmatic and power-seeking motivations for resistance are inextricably linked. This is especially true in contexts where one of the conflicting parties has retained or gained control of the state and become the leading national peacebuilding actor. Rebel factions or supporters may disagree with the form of peace which centralises the incumbent government, because they would prefer to hold this power themselves. However, the reason that they oppose their government in the first place may be because of historical injustices arising from abuses of governmental power. In short, rebels may believe that a government-led peace is fundamentally unjust and seek to implement their own peace through gaining power.

Through their resistance to official national and international peacebuilding, locals have been shown to temper the liberalism of the international and the statism of the national to produce a peace which is necessarily 'agonistic' and 'hybrid' (Mac Ginty and Richmond 2013). Although not always the case, many analyses of peacebuilding have found that local resistance has been a 'vital determining factor' in producing a more positive and 'socially just' peace than would have unfolded had the international and national peace actors been left to implement their plans unchecked (Chandler 2013, 30). Therefore, a hybrid analysis asks not whether an action supports or resists peace, but asks *whose peace* and *what kinds of peace* does this action support or resist and on what grounds.

6. Methodology

In light of the above arguments, this article will contribute to the debate around why diasporas are motivated to resist homeland peacebuilding by bringing together two separate bodies of work which (a) contextualise diasporic resistance and (b) hybridise local

resistance. Following Koinova, Horst, and Van Hear, the article will take into account *who especially* among diasporas preform what kinds of resistance, to what kinds of peacebuilding and on what grounds. To gage variety within the resistant population, the whole sample population engages in some kind of resistance. Instead of side-stepping the problematic issue of 'peace', these questions are asked specifically in relation to the hybrid context of peacebuilding and local resistance.

First, using secondary sources, two key processes are analysed (one national: the National Dialogue and one international: civil-society interventions). A hybrid analysis of the Sudanese peacebuilding space demonstrates what kinds of principled, pragmatic and/or power-seeking motivations lie behind local resistance to peacebuilding in Sudan. Against this context, this hybrid framework will be applied to an analysis of diasporic resistance among UK-based Sudanese. This part of the paper uses primary data collected through participant observation – including 70 informal interviews (7 female and 63 male)- and 41 in-depth semi-structured interviews with 27 Sudan-born residents of the UK (4 female, 23 male). Specifically, the paper asks, what motivates various UK Sudanese diaspora groups to resist homeland peacebuilding processes and to what extent do these resistances build upon, resonate with, or subvert the resistances enacted by groups at the local level.

Being the largest European destination for Sudanese migrants (IOM 2015), and also a very active diaspora, the case of UK based Sudanese diaspora gives a good indication of diasporic resistance to homeland peace. Participants were drawn from a smaller, politically active group within the broader Sudanese population of the UK, estimated to be around 22,000 (IOM 2015; ONS 2011). Due to the nature of Sudan to UK migration over the last half century, the broader Sudanese population has a higher than average proportion of refugee-status and exile-identifying people than other migrant groups. There are around 3000 Sudanese refugees in the UK most of whom arrived in the late 90s and early 2000s when the Darfur region was particularly unstable (CARIM 2015). In addition, due to the distribution of political power in Sudan over the last 50 years, migration from Sudan to UK correlates with anti-government, oppositional and/or marginalised identities (Abusharaf 1997; Di Bartolomeo, Jaulin, and Perrin 2012). Participants for this research were selected based on their participation in diaspora mobilisations and were recruited at demonstrations and advocacy events.

During informal interviews, verbal consent was gained from participants after an explanation about the research. These conversations took place during public demonstrations and advocacy events and were free-flowing in nature. Data from these conversations formed part of the participant observation component of this research. These data, recorded in fieldnotes, serve as a background to the semi-structured interviews and are used to establish patterns, and to 'interrogate' and 'contextualize' the semi-structured interviews (Sanchez-Ayala 2012, 125).

The semi-structured interviews asked participants about peacebuilding in Sudan. The average interview was two hours and allowed for elaboration and detailed responses. Written consent was gained from all semi-structured interviewees and 40 interviews were in English – a language in which these interviewees were highly competent. One interview was conducted in Arabic through a translator. All data were collected between January 2014 and November 2014.

Here, it is appropriate to include a note on the positionality of the researcher. I am a white British researcher and my connection with Sudan has been primarily academic. Therefore, I conducted this research as a visible outsider to the Sudanese conflict and its peacebuilding politics. Inevitably, this shaped the responses I elicited from participants because I was perceived as an interested outsider.

All semi-structured interviews and fieldnotes were recorded, transcribed, and entered into qualitative data analysis software. Participant responses were coded for (a) their motivations for resisting peace processes as principled, pragmatic and/or power-seeking and (b) to what extent their reasons for resistance built upon, resonated with, or subverted local resistance. The findings presented here are illustrated with extracts from semi-structured interviews which are representative of significant patterns found in semi-structured, informal interviews and observations. All participants have been anonymised.

7. Conflict and peace in Sudan: a hybrid context

Sudan exemplifies a hybrid peacebuilding space because it involves international, national and local actors who have antagonistic ideas about the causes of conflict, definitions of an ideal peace, and commitments to different peacebuilding methods. While a comprehensive exposition of Sudanese conflicts is not within the scope of this article, the following key points are necessary for an understanding of the roots of hybrid peacebuilding in Sudan.

The conflicts in Sudan are often described as the legacy of historical Arab-Islamic versus Negro-non-Islamic identity-based inequalities. It is true that elite Arab settlers enslaved Negro inhabitants during Turco-Egyptian Rule (1821–1885) and Mahdist rule (1885–1898) (Troutt Powell 2012). Against this background of Negro enslavement by Arab settlers, colonisation by the British in Sudan exacerbated the racial distinctions which further entrenched lines of material inequality between Northern Arabic and Southern Negro Sudanese (Oppong 2010). The British instituted the Southern Policy (1922–1947) which served to intensify the North-South divide by systematically isolating the South from economic, social and political development (Sharkey 2003, 81). Inheriting these oppressive structures in the post-independence period, successive governments pursued aggressive Islamisation as part of their strategies of National Unity. This included the imposition of Sharia law on non-Muslims which was forcefully resisted, especially by the main rebel party based in the traditionally non-Islamic South, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (Fluehr-Lobban 1990).

While certainly part of Sudan's history of conflict, the Arab oppression of Negro Sudanese co-exists with other equally pertinent divisions. The government of Sudan (GoS) and regional rebels of both Arab and Negro descent have been embroiled in conflict for decades. While Islamisation has come in and out of fashion with Sudanese governments, poverty has been enduring. This evident failure of the state to provide for its citizens is complicated by resistance to state control from traditional authorities in the peripheries. United against flagrant failures of governance, several Darfuri tribes of both traditionally Arab and Negro decent united against the centralised state in several uprisings in the early 2000s (Mamdani 2009, 86; Natsios 2012, 135). This resulted in thousands of civilian deaths which has been named a genocide by some commentators (Totten and Markusen 2013). Others prefer the insurgency/counter-insurgency designation (Mamdani 2007). Similar resistance against poor governance has arisen from all over Sudan over the past

decades. To complicate things even further, these rebel-government conflicts are also intertwined with land-based inter-tribal conflicts between nomadic and settled tribes (Craze 2013), as well as kleptocracy and warlordism of elites (Ayers 2010).

Sudan is an example of a conflict with severe identity-based inequalities where government/rebel conflicts and intertribal clashes are mutually reinforcing and analytically inseparable (Sørbø and Ahmed 2013). Key efforts to build peace in Sudan – the Comprehensive Peace Agreement 2005 and the movement for transitional justice by the International Criminal Court 2009 have favoured the Arab/Negro or Islamic/Christian narrative at the expense of both centre/periphery and inter-tribal dimensions. In 2014, this narrative shifted as will be shown below.

8. The National Dialogue and local resistance

The state-led National Dialogue was launched in January 2014 with support from the EU and mediators UK, USA and Norway as well as the African Union High Level Implementation panel (FCO 2014). It reflected the GoS position on the cause of conflicts in Sudan; that they are regional tribal disputes which require a 'peace as security' agenda in the first instance, before moving towards a state-led vision of national and Islamic unity. This placed the GoS at the centre of peacebuilding since it paints it as the linchpin of stability in an otherwise barbaric state. The Dialogue intended to address poverty, political reform and national identity in a series of elite negotiations between the Sudanese government, various opposition parties and agitating peripheral groups (Bereketeab 2015).

While this peacebuilding mechanism was cautiously supported by international actors, it was highly unpopular within Sudan except for the diminishing circle of elites who benefit from GoS rule (Radio Tamazuj 2014). After thirty months of failed talks it was abandoned in 2017. Resistance came from a diversity of local actors for a range of reasons. Civil society groups and trade unions unanimously refused to participate in the Dialogue (even though only a select few were invited anyway). While such groups have been agitating for the government to step down for decades, they did not officially object to the Dialogue based on its centralisation of the GoS. Rather, they resisted it because it was not sufficiently 'national or comprehensive' and was not leading towards 'democratic transformation' (Radio Dabanga 2014). The civil society sector therefore demonstrated both principled and pragmatic resistance: against the kind of peace being pursued (undemocratic) and the methods used to build it (exclusive of civil society).

In addition, resistance to the Dialogue also came from within the party-political and armed opposition. During the course of the Dialogue, the main Islamic opposition party, the National Umma party (NUP), joined the Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF) to protest against what it termed 'sham negotiations' (McCutchen 2014, 5). The Paris Agreement of 2014, signed by the diverse political opposition, set out the condition of compliance with the Dialogue as 'a comprehensive approach to conflict resolution' in which the lines of conflict are recognised as existing between the government and a united opposition comprising all regional representatives from different tribal, racial and religious backgrounds (Ismail and Kumar 2014, 5). As such, the SRF rejected the GoS narrative that Sudan's regional wars are based in tribal disputes and called for the GoS to be recognised as part of the cause of conflict and not its stabilising force (Alshaikh and Shinya 2015, 79).

As is the case with resistance in hybrid peacebuilding, this seemingly principled motivation for resisting the Dialogue among the political elite is intertwined with political opportunism. The entire political opposition, many of whom have been at some point part of the GoS, saw resistance to the Dialogue as a first step towards claiming power of the state. As such, among those who are part of the political machinery which is in a position to seize state power, the lines between political opportunism and the pursuit of a more comprehensive and peaceful Sudan are fundamentally blurred. Therefore, political parties resisted the Dialogue on both power-seeking and principled bases.

9. Resistance from party-political diaspora

Against this context of local resistance from both the civil society sector and the formal political opposition, what motivates the UK Sudanese diaspora to resist the National Dialogue? The UK-based activists interviewed for this research were almost unanimously resistant to the National Dialogue. None of the total 97 informants expressed their support for the Dialogue: 91 expressed their resistance to this peace process and 6 of those interviewed did not know enough about it to say whether they supported or resisted it. Local resistance to the Dialogue came from across the spectrum of political opposition and civil society organisations (including trade unions, NGOs and social movements).

Specifically, among those who were members of UK branches of Sudanese political parties (62/91), principled resistance was foregrounded in their own explanations of why they resisted the Dialogue. Their reasons for resistance followed the party-line of the united political opposition in Sudan and echoed the official statements of their affiliated organisations on the ground in Sudan. For example, Mohammed Azhar from the youth movements *Abena* and *Girifna* claimed he resisted the Dialogue on the basis that it could re-ignite national divisions within the opposition and thus contribute to the 'long-standing divide and conquer' strategy of the GoS. He claimed 'Bashir wants to show that the conflict is between the tribes in Darfur, but we want to recognise that it is a unified opposition against the government'. Thus, his explanation is an echo of the official party line of the Sudanese Revolutionary Forces which focuses on the resistance to the GoS's reading of the conflict as inter-tribal.

This evidence of a party-line stretching to party members outside of Sudan and is therefore indicative that the diaspora are an extension of the party-political strata of the local. This party-line, according to the diaspora activists, has been set collaboratively by those in diaspora and those inside Sudan. As Musa Alnour from the Umma Party UK argued, 'it is more of a negotiation – those inside have their perspective and we have our perspective in the diaspora'. At some point around 2011, according to Musa Alnour, the influence of the diaspora was deemed too strong within the Umma Party, and 'the people living there [in Sudan] said those coming from diaspora didn't face the same problem as [them] and they challenged it and they stopped it' but now, he deems there to be a good balance between the diaspora and those inside where diaspora activists 'consult' and 'work closely' with local activists. According to Dawud Medawi, we 'don't tell them [those in Sudan] they have to do this but [we] get their views and ask what do you want us to do?'. A prominent figure in one of the key opposition parties also claimed, 'we think of it as a division of labour'. In this way, resistance from party-political diaspora activists was motivated by a principled opposition to the ideological base of the Dialogue. This was not only by an

echo of the motivations behind local resistance but was also part of the process of informing it.

As explained above, political party activists in the local resistance had a detectable power-seeking agenda for resisting the National Dialogue. In the party-political diaspora, this power-seeking was tempered with pragmatism. While expressing their opposition to the GoS as a peacebuilding actor, they also recognised the need to keep the current government in power, for the time being, in order to maintain stability in Sudan. Gibreel Ahmad, advisor to the SPLM-N argued 'We still have a functioning state and there is something to be said for that. Bashir needs to go. He needs to go. But let's not do something crazy and make everything worse until the time is right'. In particular, diaspora activists from political parties recognised that over-radical resistance to the regime could be counter-productive for peacebuilding by further pushing the government into authoritarian rule. Therefore, resistance to the National Dialogue remained within moderate political spheres of action.

That notwithstanding, it was clear that principled and pragmatic motivations to resist the dialogue among the party-political activists in diaspora were part of a strategy for a power-grab at a later stage. It was recognised by activists that the Dialogue era was not the appropriate time for power-seizing tactics. Shahid Basri argued, 'The regime is blocking the way to peace but we have to take our time with the NCP'. Therefore, as with local resistance, power-seeking as a motivation for resistance was present – but deferred – among those mobilising from within political parties.

10. Resistance from civil society in diaspora

For those mobilising from outside of the party-political apparatus, and from within the civil society sector (trade unions, NGOs and social movements), principled resistance to the Dialogue was also expressed strongly. As Ali Hassan from the Sudanese Development Organization explained: 'The National Dialogue is something that we do not support at all. It is a total sham'. While the party-political actors echoed local resistance, these civil society diaspora activists offered different principled narratives to their local counterparts.

Civil society activists expressed motivations to resist the Dialogue based on its centralisation of President Bashir and the ruling party. For many, this principled resistance was expressed as justice-seeking in relation to war crimes in Darfur. Karim Hamid, from *Sudan For Change,* explained:

> We gave reasons for not participating in the National Dialogue. These people [the NCP] have committed crimes, they need to go to court. We rejected it outright. They invited us to come in and put our opinion but we said 'Who are we talking to? Someone who we know has systematically killed innocent people, who is draining the wealth of the country?' No!

Karim Hamid's resistance to the Dialogue was not based on the kind reforms it was tabling, nor the extent to which the dialogue was inclusive, as was stated by the local arm of this organisation. Rather, Karim and several others (25) framed their motivation to resist the Dialogue around President Bashir's lack of legitimacy as a peacebuilding actor.

While this justice-seeking narrative is present among some of the peripheral local resistance – especially from Darfuri victim associations – it was not the main expression of resistance by local civil society. However, the justice-seeking element of principled

resistance was present among diaspora activists from across the whole range of places of origin. It existed among those from Darfur (10/35 [total resisting from within civil society organisations]) and among diaspora from other parts of Sudan including the peripheries and the central regions (19). The diaspora civil society sector clearly demonstrates different principled reasons for opposing the National Dialogue than those in Sudan itself.

The above principled, justice-seeking motivations for resisting the Dialogue co-exist and overlap with pragmatic concerns that President Bashir and the GoS could not be trusted to implement the reforms tabled in the Dialogue. Douhiba Bukhari, from a UK Sudanese Women's movement argued 'Everybody knows he [Bashir] is just doing it [the National Dialogue] to buy time and he is not interested in listening to people at all. He cannot be trusted'. Dawud Hassan also stated 'The [National] dialogue is not right. They say they release the political prisoners [but they have not]. It's not right, he's [Al Bashir] lying. All the international community knows he's lying'. Therefore, the second common reason for resisting the Dialogue among diaspora civil activists was based on concerns that President Bashir would never carry it out. In this pragmatic sense, as well as the principled sense, diasporic resistance diverges somewhat from the official expressions of local resistance which focused mainly on the undemocratic nature of the dialogue and its exclusion of non-elite civil society.

Power-seeking motivations were present among civil society activists in diaspora but these tended to come from the trade union and social movement representatives, rather than the NGO activists within civil society. Those in the trade unions and social movements were more aligned with the party-political diaspora when it came to power-seeking resistance. They expressed their recognition that resistance to the Dialogue was paving the way for a future power-grab for which they were not yet ready. Mohammed Bahri of the Sudanese Doctors Union said 'We know that this Dialogue is a bad idea, and we have made our point about it. But we have to bide our time with the NCP. Otherwise it will be chaos'. On the one hand there is evidence of a similar line of argument to that seen among the diaspora political opposition activists. Whereas, on the other, those mobilising from NGO sectors of the diaspora civil society expressed desires to remove Bashir and the NCP immediately. Their pleas were desperate and urgent: 'We have to stop this! The Dialogue will not help the innocent people being killed in Darfur and all over Sudan. We have to get the killing to stop now' (Zeinab Yacoub, *Peace 4 Sudan*).

This difference could be explained through the different relationships with peace envisaged by the political party and professionalised civil society compared to the NGO activists. Political party and trade union activists saw themselves as playing a role in steering Sudan to peace, yet NGO activists saw peace as something to hope for but that they did not have agency in bringing about. In diaspora, another element emerges to explain this difference: the desire to return. Among those who were in the party political and trade union movements, the desire to return was strong. Many of the diaspora claimed as soon as the regime falls 'of course, we are going back to help rebuild Sudan' (Ayoub Haloud, *Beja Congress UK*) and they saw themselves as part of the apparatus which would engineer peace, when their opportunity for power arose. Protecting the power and influence of the political parties to which they are affiliated is therefore an important part of their own journey back to a powerful positionality within Sudan itself. The same motivation was not true of those mobilising from within the NGO sector of diaspora civil society, who

were less concerned with returning personally, but expressed desire for immediate peace and justice for the safety of their families and communities.

11. Civil-society building and local resistance

2014 represented in interesting turn in the dominant international stance towards Sudanese peacebuilding. Previously, the International Criminal Court had issued an arrest warrant for then-President Bashir (since ousted in a coup in April 2019) who stands accused of committing war crimes including genocide during the uprisings in Darfur in the early 2000s. This aggressive transitional justice approach to Sudanese peace, while supported by a few opposition groups and Darfuri victim associations, has been widely criticised in Sudan for undermining local agency and for disincentivising rebels to engage in peace talks (Natsios 2012, 161; Nouwen and Werner 2010). This indictment was formally suspended by the chief prosecutor in 2014.

From here, the dominant international involvement in Sudanese peacebuilding is characterised as civil-society building. Two key aspects of internationally-led civil society building include supporting political participation and the facilitation of a free press. The UK Department for International Development's *Operational Plan for Sudan 2011–2015* focused on 'electoral monitoring, democratic education and the promotion of civil society' and is exemplified by the British Council's Active Citizens programme. In addition, the UNDP's programme 'Good Governance and Equity in Political Participation in Post Conflict Sudan' and several International NGOs such as Islamic World Relief and Free Press Unlimited, ran projects aiming towards stimulating effective political participation among the citizenry (Avdeenko and Gilligan 2015).

These programmes are based on the understanding that peace is defined by the legitimate and accountable relationship between the government and the citizenry, and that a failure in this relationship is at the heart of the conflict. It can be seen as embedded in a liberal ideology to the extent that it views the state as the centre of the political community against which autonomous individuals – not collective identity groups – engage in claim-making. This fundamentally challenges the narrative of conflict and peace set out by the GoS in the Dialogue which foregrounded the intertribal aspects of the conflict. It also demonstrates the inherent 'hybridity of the liberal peace' (Laffey and Nadarajah 2012) because it represents a shift away from the top-down liberalising force of the International Criminal Court and towards a programmatically 'hybrid' process which intentionally incorporates the existing civil society infrastructure at the Sudanese grassroots.

Despite the harmful colonial legacy of the British in Sudan, the local participation in civil society building was not outwardly resisted on the grounds of either principled anti-liberalism or pragmatic anti-interventionism. In fact, many local social movements demand the liberalisation of the political system because they see it as a secular democratic alternative to Islamic authoritarianism. That said, local participation in international initiatives was often confined to the educated urban middle class. International programmes struggled to get to the heart of political empowerment among those who are most disenfranchised (Alshaikh and Shinya 2015).

The non-participation of this key strata of the local can be partially explained through the restrictive space in which Sudanese civil-society building takes place. Since 2009, the

GoS has attempted to contain all forms of citizen activism through the creation and enforcement of several restrictive laws (Ali 2010, 445). Furthermore, following the civil uprisings in 2013, there was an 'extensive purge' of all those deemed hostile to the regime which was 'unprecedented in Sudanese history' (Berridge 2015, 206). The need to respect state sovereignty and work with the Sudanese government meant that international attempts to build a robust civil society were often only accessible to those already in possession of significant social capital, in some way aligned with, or at least tolerated by, the GoS.

While there are attempts to find 'work-arounds' within this non-ideal space, it is nevertheless difficult to achieve aims of civil-society building from within the international peacebuilding sector. As such, many sectors of local Sudanese, aside from those which openly support the Sudanese government, are 'not well integrated into the civil society sector' (Ati 2006, 71) and efforts to promote peace through political participation have had very limited success (Avdeenko and Gilligan 2015, 443). Resistance from both the political and civil society sectors therefore came from a pragmatic suspicion that the international was too close to the regime.

12. Resistance from a consolidated diaspora

The UK diaspora activists who participated in this research saw international actors as good allies for their campaigns for refugee rights and transitional justice and many successful collaborations between the UK Sudanese and the International-NGO community do exist. However, when it came to supporting internationally-led civil society development, there was evidence of considerable resistance among the diaspora with 85 of 97 participants expressing resistance. This resistance was motivated by anti-interventionism expressed equally by those who were members of political parties and those mobilising from with civil society organisations. The anti-interventionism can be seen having principled, pragmatic and power-seeking bases.

First, schemes led by UK-based NGOs to consolidate remittances into charitable funds which are channelled into 'civil society building' were forcefully resisted on pragmatic grounds by diaspora activists. As was the case with local resistance, this resistance did not stem from an abstract objection to 'liberalism' nor the ideology behind the international projects. Dawud Hassan argued '[this International peace organisation] does not know what it's doing'. He argued the diaspora were far more connected with the Sudanese people to be able to spend their remittances wisely; 'they don't know what they are doing, it is our families and communities, leave it up to us!'. In addition, there was a clear principled objection to externality – many diaspora activists viewed INGO attempts to consolidate civil society as an interference or an imposition. Abdul Aboud argued, 'they think they can lead the change but it should be our voice, and not theirs – we will drive the change'.

However, underlying these pragmatic concerns was the notion that they, as diaspora – also a kind of outsider – were more justified to intervene than international actors. Zakir Mahmoud, member of a diaspora civil society organisation, claimed 'we are doing things well, why do they have to get involved? We are the most important group who can help Sudan and our communities. It is our job and we can do it'. The activities of international NGOs which attempted to divert remittances was construed by the diaspora as an

imposition into their space. In this sense, the principled anti-interventionism expressed by diaspora activists also incorporates power-seeking; they doubt the competency of the international and they desire to protect their own space to act as the primary legitimate 'external' actors in Sudanese peace. The international clearly threatens the privileged positionality of diaspora activists and resistance to the international must be seen in light of this tension. While other forms of resistance reflect local agendas, this power-seeking resistance is specific to the diaspora. This must be acknowledged and not misidentified as reflective of, or representative of, anti-interventionism in local resistance.

As well as anti-interventionism in relation to remittances, some diaspora activists also espoused pragmatic reasons for eschewing participation in internationally-led activities. It was recognised by the diaspora that their giving over of in-kind and practical support was only of value for supporting government-critical local groups when it was independent of INGOs. This valuing of independence was particularly evident when they actively resisted opportunities to collaborate with INGOs on political participation and free-press programmes, except in relationships where the international is acting as a background funder (e.g. Free Press Unlimited and Radio Dabanga).

In parallel to the international efforts to facilitate political engagement and media engagement, the UK-Sudanese activists were also facilitating communication networks among the government-critical local. Many of the communications networks between and among local government-critical groups require facilitation from outside of the borders. As Saeed Ibrahim explained, many of the news websites (e.g. *Alrakuba*) must be hosted outside of Sudan in order to guard against government shutdown. The diaspora members pay engineers to keep it secure such that '[t]he diaspora is key to helping *Alrakuba* stay operational'.

As well as providing financial support, there are also practical roles for diaspora which take advantage of their positionality outside of Sudanese borders. As Waleed Idris describes 'The guys in America run their [Youth-led Social Movement] website. The people in diaspora jumped in to help'. The diaspora facilitates the distribution of information to social movements and campaigners through the sending of Virtual Private Network codes. Once people have received the news information via VPN 'People often print out the articles and read it out and distribute it' (Adan Qadiri, journalist in diaspora). Government-critical news is therefore able to circulate through channels facilitated by diaspora.

Importantly, the Sudanese diaspora see the success of these activities as reliant upon their total independence from international peacebuilding actors. When asked whether they would work with internationals in order to consolidate efforts to build a government-critical civil society. Farid Elshablig explained:

> Any anti-government activity will not get funding. […] You can't use the money openly for politics. The [UK] government will get feedback from councils etc. and anything political will immediately be objected to

These forms of civil society development, according to the UK activists, must be kept separate from the international efforts because of the recognised need for internationals to work within the restrictive environment which the diaspora claim to be able to bypass. Nadim Amri explained:

> To avoid any confrontation with the government, they [international NGOs] have just concentrated on delivering services, very obviously: [they] provide water, education where nobody can ask why […] when they partner with the local organisations, sometimes they ask them also to work a little bit into rights-based issues but those rights-based issues are not human rights – not the big term that the government doesn't like.

As exemplified above, there was an understanding among diaspora activists that any processes gaining funding from international organisations were restricted to activities which are acceptable to the GoS. Avoiding 'taboo subjects' or 'big terms' such as 'human rights' was vital for the operation of the internationally-funded civil society community. Talib Abbas said 'the [International] NGOs are for humanitarian[ism]. Or they just give to the people who are not saying anything bad about the regime. If we go along with that, it's fine but it's not our objective'. He recognised that the INGO community were able to assist with some aspects of peacebuilding but, if they as diaspora wanted to assist with the development of civil society, collaborating with the INGO community was not a good strategy. They suggested that they needed to stay independent if they wanted to facilitate the types of civil society development that were more aligned with their 'objectives'; namely holding the government to account.

13. Conclusions

This article has contributed to the question 'what motivates diasporas to resist homeland peacebuilding?' by contextualising diasporic resistance against local resistance using a framework of hybridity in which resistance is not necessarily 'anti-peace'. The example of the UK Sudanese diaspora and their resistance to two key peacebudiling processes in Sudan has shown that resistance is motivated by a range of principled, pragmatic and power-seeking reasons. What is striking is that resistance from diaspora at once builds upon, resonates with and subverts local resistance. When standing in relation to the National Dialogue: a state-led peacebuilding process which centralised and empowered the GoS, the party-political diaspora and the trade union and social movement diaspora aligned themselves with their resistant colleagues at the local level. In relation to state-led peacebuilding, the diaspora functioned as a global arm of the local. However, when standing in relation to the internationally-led peace process: civil-society building, the party-political, trade union and NGO sectors all acted together as a diaspora whose resistance was clearly distinguishable from that expressed at the local level in Sudan. Therefore, in expanding the understanding of how context shapes diaspora mobilisations, this focus on hybrid peacebuilding and local resistance has demonstrated that it is important to consider the positionality of diaspora in relation to the context of each peacebuilding process. Diaspora activists occupy different subject positions and mobilise different alliances according to which peace process they are resisting. This context, and their place within it, fundamentally shapes the principled, pragmatic and power-seeking motivations held by diaspora communities.

Previous studies have asked who especially, when, where and using what tactics, do diasporas resist peace in their homelands. This comparison between non-resistant and resistant factions within diasporas has brought about policy drives to 'transform hawks into doves' (Lyons 2004). This study has focused on the nuances within the resistant population and has shown that there are a variety of principled, pragmatic and power-

seeking motivations for resistance, many of which resonate with and support local resistance. The hybrid framework demonstrates why not all of these resistances are motivated by the desire to prolong conflict and many of them are crucial for securing sustainable and long-term peace. This article shows, therefore, that efforts to 'transform hawks into doves' which attempt to stop any resistant activities in diaspora communities could be counterproductive. Not only do these policy interventions risk unnecessarily damaging relations between diaspora communities and host populations by wrongly painting principled or pragmatic resistance as 'anti-peace', but importantly, they also risk thwarting the complex path towards peace in the homelands to which diaspora communities remain connected.

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