

The impact of overseas conflict on UK communities

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An exploration of the impact of overseas conflict on community formation, engagements and relationships with UK institutions.

Researchers and policy-makers have a limited understanding of the ways in which conflicts overseas are affecting communities in the UK, except when there are substantial flows of asylum seekers and migrants from conflict regions. Yet globalisation has intensified and changed the international connections of UK communities. This research studied the impact of conflict on communities in the UK from three areas: Afghanistan/Pakistan, the Great Lakes region (Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Uganda) and the western Balkans.

The report:

- looks at why some communities are affected more by overseas conflict than others;
- examines six detailed case studies of communities affected by overseas conflict;
- assesses how different communities challenge assumptions of mainstream society about particular conflicts; and
- considers the ways in which service providers at national and local level can support communities affected by overseas conflict.

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Executive summary

Although current patterns of globalisation may be traced back more than a century, two recent changes have affected the impact of overseas conflict on UK communities. First, changes in communication technologies now allow direct access to information from a tremendously wide variety of sources, in real time. This 'globalisation from below' contrasts with previous stages of globalisation where such tools were concentrated in the hands of state institutions or multinational companies. Second, geopolitical changes, particularly since 1990, have resulted in a growing diversity of migrant groups arriving in the UK, frequently providing direct links to parts of the world undergoing conflict.

Links between overseas conflict and UK communities have received very little attention in the social sciences. The limited literature is focused on the potential for ethno-national diaspora communities in the UK to affect the conditions of conflict elsewhere. This research has expanded and reversed this focus to consider how overseas conflict affects a broad array of communities in the UK.

The understanding of community is central to this research. Notions of 'community' were downplayed in public policy in the UK throughout the 1980s and 1990s, but the Cattle report of 2001 marked a return to a language of community in public policy discourse. Yet there is limited conceptual clarity in the ways in which 'community' is used. There is particular confusion between the widespread usage of 'community' to refer both to local places and to ethno-national groups.

This report has distinguished between these two understandings of community, since public institutions must engage in different ways with each of them. The report uses the term 'local communities' to refer to place-based social groups. Rather than the common term 'black and minority ethnic' (BME) communities, this report uses the broader term 'ethno-national communities'. This term also includes minority communities that do not self-identify as 'black' or 'ethnic', and the 'majority' 'white British' community. This report has also considered 'communities of choice', in this case used to describe civil society mobilisations around particular conflicts, and 'communities of practice', which refers to coalitions of professionals focused on an individual issue.

Research for this project has concentrated on the impact of three specific conflicts, selected to provide contrasting examples of UK involvement, geographical area and current intensity. These are: Afghanistan/Pakistan, the Great Lakes (Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo [DRC], Rwanda, Uganda) and the western Balkans. Following a mapping exercise to determine the extent of the links between these conflicts and the UK, six case studies were identified to cover a broad cross section of the four types of communities considered earlier. Each of the six case studies was the focus of a separate sub-project involving 15–20 interviews and several focus groups.

The research identified six important variables influencing the extent and nature of the impact of these conflicts on UK communities:

- nature of UK involvement;
- proximity of conflict to the UK;
- timing and duration of the conflict;
- size and date of the arrival of diaspora communities in the UK;

- transnational engagement of diaspora; and
- media coverage.

Local communities in London and Birmingham were involved in this research. Two important impacts on local communities were identified as a result of conflict. First, local communities evolve as a result of new entrants. Good practice examples of institutional responses involved the distribution of information to all those local services potentially involved in responding to new arrivals. Second, particular conflicts may alter the relationship between members of local communities and national institutions, such as the Birmingham neighbourhoods where the predominantly Pakistani population felt targeted by security responses to the conflict in Pakistan. This is most likely to be the case where the UK is directly involved in the conflict, either militarily or diplomatically.

Communities of choice identified in this research took the form of civil society organisations formed in response to conflict, often with the aim of challenging the public characterisation of conflict, as in the case of Help for Heroes, or as a way of challenging particular tendencies in UK national policy towards a conflict region.

Communities of practice can describe a wide range of activities, but in this case was used to describe networking of professionals responding to a particular impact of conflict, here the arrival of significant numbers of unaccompanied Afghan asylum-seeking children in two London boroughs, which had implications for health care, education, housing and foster care. The term 'community of practice' was coined in the early 1990s, but the idea did not really take off in the public sector in the UK until 2007. There seems to be considerable potential for developing such ad hoc professional coalitions in order to share information and develop policy approaches.

Ethno-national communities were also influenced by the conflicts considered. This research identified situations where interactions between different ethno-national communities from one particular conflict area arose in the UK. One such interaction was between Kosovar Albanians, Bosniacs and Serbians. Given the post-conflict changes in ethnic residential patterns in the former Yugoslavia, spaces for such exchanges have reduced there.

Religious organisations also have an important role to play. This research did not explicitly set out to examine the role of religious organisations. However, it found that, in some cases, they provide a relatively rare opportunity for individuals from a wide variety of other forms of community to come together.

The activities of the communities we considered focused most frequently on questions of perception and information. This includes challenging mainstream media representations of conflict, which tend towards simplified characterisations of conflict based in antipathy between opposing sides. The opening of the Serbian section in Fulham library is a good example of a proactive information campaign resulting from engagement of the local Serbian ethno-national community.

Alternative sources of media provide one possible remedy to the limited information available in mainstream media. In some cases, this involves turning to media sources from foreign countries, which are increasingly widely available through the Internet. An alternative strategy is for community groups to develop particularly focused alternative information sources, by establishing specialist websites. Both of these strategies have the disadvantage that communication with broader public opinion in the UK is limited.

Some community responses, particularly in the case of civil society-based communities of choice, involve direct challenges to public opinion through high-profile events, such as the Help for Heroes concerts.

Community activities do not only focus on information. Community engagement activities also form an important part of responses to conflict. These include:

- a broad understanding of members of affected ethno-national communities (noted in the case of the outreach activities of Congolese associations targeting a broader francophone African constituency); or

- explicit, information-sharing events (as in the case of the community of practice around unaccompanied Afghan asylum seekers).

In some cases, engagement with conflict, and the circulation of information on conflict, form part of the training for local service providers. This offers a valuable service but it could be enhanced, with limited effort, through increased publicity for existing sources of information (such as the regularly updated reports of the Country of Origin Information service of the UK Border Agency).

The example of the community of practice identified in this research is extremely positive and has brought together interested professionals, from a range of areas and relevant refugee community organisations, who would not necessarily have had the chance to meet otherwise. Currently, the professionals focused on a local community view the Afghan community organisations as being similarly grounded, although they often draw membership from a much wider field, based on political or ethnic affiliation to sub-national groups in Afghanistan. This provides a clear example of the conceptual confusion around issues of community.

It is not only policy and practice at the local level that is affected by the impact of overseas conflict. In many cases national government institutions are an important mediator of these impacts, particularly where the UK is directly involved in conflict, as in the case of Afghanistan/Pakistan. So, in some cases, particular ministries have adapted to adjust legislation. Several national-level campaigns considered in this research engaged directly with national institutions. When making decisions, it is important for these national institutions to factor in the nature of likely impacts on local and ethno-national UK communities. Currently, there is little indication that this is the case.

The link between national and local level policy-making is becoming increasingly important. Its importance is likely to grow even more in view of the coalition government's Big Society agenda. Responding sensitively to the impact of overseas conflict requires a degree of expertise in the complexities of a wide variety of conflicts around the world. Such expertise is unlikely to be found in many local authorities or civil society organisations. There are two possible responses to this:

- to draw on the expertise of individuals from areas facing conflict; and
- to diffuse expertise currently generated centrally, such as within the Foreign Office and UK Border Agency.

Understanding communities under global conditions

In September 2010, the influential Pakistani politician Imran Farooq was murdered in Edgware, his home for the last eleven years. Despite his exile in the UK, Farooq had remained a significant political figure in his home city of Karachi, and his murder was immediately linked to the repositioning of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement, the political party in which he was involved. Local police passed the matter on to the counter-terrorism command who, they admitted, had 'a much better knowledge of factional fighting in Pakistan' (*The Guardian*, 17 September 2010). None of the widespread news coverage of Farooq's death made particular note of the fact that political conflicts around the world could have such violent repercussions in a London suburb.

The UK – and particularly London, of course – has held a significant position in many political struggles around the world for decades, if not centuries. Yet the significant aspect of this event for wider society is the demand on local service providers, in this case the police, to have access to expertise about the complexities of Pakistani politics. Amongst the wide range of examples of transnational political impacts of overseas conflicts witnessed in the UK, Farooq's death was unusual only in its violence. Overseas conflicts rarely have such violent implications for life in the UK. However, as this research argues, attention to overseas conflicts makes us think differently about a whole range of their more mundane impacts, not only on the lives of people, such as Farooq, who have come directly from conflict affected areas but also on their families and the wider communities in which they live.

The idea of community is central to this research project. We are interested in how conflicts occurring around the world influence UK communities. One of the barriers to clarity in this research has been the variety of the sometimes conflicting meanings attached to the label 'community', which are further complicated by various related policy goals. It is widely recognised that globalisation has changed the way in which we should understand communities. New, often internationally dispersed, 'communities' are increasingly important for individual UK residents. This development is most strongly associated with intensified post-colonial migration to the UK since the 1950s and the further diversification of origins since the late 1990s, including the growth of migration from new European Union member states since 2004. This has produced a new 'super-diversity' (Vertovec, 2007) most apparent in urban areas but undeniably touching the lives of individuals throughout the UK.

Policy interventions have struggled to account adequately for the significance of these new forms of community. The official policy line of multi-culturalism was gradually abandoned by New Labour, in the face of persistent social injustice, economic inequality and exclusion, and the recognition that different ethno-nationally defined 'communities'¹ were living 'Parallel Lives' – the title of Ted Cantle's report (2001) – into the ethnically motivated violence in several northern towns in 2001. Multi-culturalism was replaced with policy objectives of 'community cohesion', allowing for a de-racialisation of the language of community engagement but heralding a return to ideas of integration (Worley, 2005). Sustained international links are now frequently viewed with suspicion, particularly when associated with regions of the world experiencing conflict. Policy interventions such as the Prevent Strategy, described by the *Daily Telegraph* as 'a text-book example of how to alienate just about everybody' (Murray, 2010), illustrate how easily policy in this area can appear clumsy and insensitive.

A contributing factor to such policy confusion is a lack of clarity about the various forms communities can take and how community relations develop in these different contexts. Referring to 'community' as a localised 'place' is commonly mixed with references to ethno-national communities – with no acknowledgement that this involves radically different understandings of the notion of 'community'. This includes relatively high-profile reports (e.g. CIC, 2007), and although much of this work reflects detailed empirical research and solid theoretical frameworks, there is no engagement with the fundamental ideas. The lack of analysis of differences between local place-based communities and extensively networked social groups leads to mistaken impressions, in particular, those that relate to the internal homogeneity of ethno-national or religious communities; the frequently contested nature of membership or belonging; and the significance of multiple affiliations.

These debates have a long history, often traced to the German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies' 1887 distinction between 'community' and 'society' or 'association' ([1887] 1963). Tönnies argued that 'community' and 'society' represent the two normal types of human socialisation:

1. 'Community' as a closely knit, often kinship-based group rooted in shared values with long-lasting ties; and
2. 'Society' as a more distant association, such as a business, based more on shared interests.

At the end of the nineteenth century, when Tönnies was writing, elements of what we refer to today as 'globalisation' were already established, though mostly in the form of economic exchange. Mass transport and communication technologies were in their infancy. Although communication was possible over great distances, it was not sufficiently rapid or democratised to support meaningful socialisation. Contacts associated with economic exchange (Tönnies' 'society') could be maintained at a distance, but 'community' maintenance and formation required physical proximity.

One of the effects of the intensification of globalisation processes since then has been to overcome this requirement, so that communities can be maintained – and even formed – over great distances. It is only since the late 1970s that international air travel has been within reach of large numbers of people and, even then, only in the wealthiest countries, a trend that intensified with the arrival of the new range of budget airlines in the 1990s. Relevant communication has become available even more recently, and it is only with the development of Web 2.0 and the spread of social networking sites such as Facebook (founded in 2004), that intense, regular socialising has become possible without face-to-face meeting. It is still unclear if this type of 'network sociality' (cf. Wittel, 2001) can generate the same kinds of emotional support and feelings of belonging that are typically associated with 'community'. This situation has created a vast array of research into the basic functions and constituent elements of 'community', often grounded in the notion of social capital.

Social capital is generally associated with the work of Robert Putnam (2000) who developed the concept to explain declining political participation in the USA. He considered that individuals forge and develop membership in networks and groups which, in turn, act as a resource for achieving social mobility. Such social networks are based on, and then generate, trust, civic engagement and reciprocity, and are based on shared values, creating potential for social cohesion. Perhaps for this reason Putnam's concept has been very influential in the formation of policy goals on social cohesion and community relations, certainly in the UK. Putnam's typology of how social capital is invested in, and shared within and across, networks has been particularly important in this context (Zetter, *et al.*, 2006), namely: *bonding* (intra-community), *bridging* (across communities) and *linking* (community–public agency). There is often a tendency to idealise social networks and community solidarity, and downplay real dynamics and relations of power, whether within the same 'communities' or across minority and majority groups (Bourdieu, 1997).

Social cohesion, often expressed through social capital in policy agendas, has often been associated with proximity, while plural affiliations – especially linked to migrants – are seen as problems

to 'be managed' (Zetter, *et al.*, 2006). The advent of 'community cohesion' in policy-making vocabulary in Britain takes this approach even further, implicitly attributing the difficulties of modern life to the failed assimilation of new and settled immigrant communities (Crowley and Hickman, 2008). Community cohesion conceptualised in this way sits uncomfortably with multiple affiliations and belonging. Such multiple affiliations have been central to investigations of the ways in which migration and globalisation interact to form communities across borders (Castles, 2002). Although such transnational ties and interactions are not new, their frequency and durability over time and scale have only been observed in recent years, due to technological progress in telecommunications and transport. These products of post-industrialism accelerate the speed and intensity with which global processes are translated at local level.

The constitution of ethno-national communities may be conceptualised in three different ways – each with implications for policy engagement:² First, a 'bottom up' approach describes those groups that develop through self-identification, such as highly localised home town associations or diaspora groups; second, a more 'top down' process is reflected by divisions in statistical presentations that rarely reflect genuine links between individuals, but affect policy development, such as the EU's engagement with the 69 African, Caribbean and Pacific states; third, a combination of these two is apparent in attempts by individuals to develop services around these statistical categories as a way of engaging funding opportunities – in this research the efforts of a Congolese association to reach out to a broader francophone African constituency fall into this category.

Some of these recent observations, highlighted by researchers, have begun to have an impact on policy discourse. For example, the final report of the Commission on Integration and Cohesion (CIC, 2007) highlights the recent development of 'super-diversity' in the UK and refers to multiple identities based on gender, age, ethnic affiliation, social class or lifestyle choices in addition to membership of local communities. Yet although the language of 'community' refers to both 'local communities' and 'ethnic communities' this is not always clarified. The focus seems to move back towards local communities, with the result that phrases such as 'community premises', 'community tensions', 'community spirit', 'internal community bonding' or 'community engagement' are, ultimately, ambiguous.

These developments have encouraged a renewed interest in the basis of notions of community in the social sciences. A substantial current of new research has focused on the nature of community and how communities form. It is increasingly common for individuals to have limited contacts in their immediate localities but to devote more time to 'communities of choice', which they actively select (Brint, 2001). Such communities contrast with the local communities based around particular localities of residence or work. The role of ethno-national communities in this simple division of communities, as in choice or place, is problematic. Any direct connection between ethno-nationally defined groups and particular places inevitably treats ethnicity as an unchangeable characteristic, whereas it is usually seen as constructed. For this reason the link has been criticised in particular approaches to diaspora (cf. Anthias, 1998). Rogers Brubaker (2005) considers membership of a diaspora as a choice which individuals make to emphasise the flexible, self-identification element of membership. Yet individuals are frequently classified in ethno-national or religious terms in ways they have no control over, so ethno-national communities are not entirely a matter of choice – we consider them as a third manifestation of community. A fourth notion of community which we draw on in this research is that of 'communities of practice', a form of community of particular relevance to institutional actors and service providers, though it may extend well beyond professional groups of individuals (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 2006). The development of new communities of practice in the public service sector has been actively promoted by LG Improvement and Development since 2007 (Local Government Group, 2010).

We understand globalisation as a multi-faceted series of processes affecting all aspects of economic, political, cultural and social life. These conditions mean that all areas of the world are at least potentially interconnected (Held, *et al.*, 1999). Some parts of the world have developed intense concentrations of global processes, particularly global cities, such as London, whereas elsewhere, including large parts of the UK outside of London, interconnections are not so well established. Political

economic studies of globalisation have linked these differential impacts with inequality and insecurity (Castles, 2003). Conflict and its accompanying aspects such as forced migration, humanitarian action, or outsider military intervention are closely linked to this political economy of global change (Duffield, 2001; Kaldor, 2001; Richmond, 2002). Globalisation has also had an impact on the relationship between foreign and domestic policies, as foreign policy now relates to all government departments and local authorities are developing international links of their own (Briggs, 2010).

This study considers the impact of conflict on communities. Conflict covers a broad range of political and military situations and while we focus on violent conflicts, violence is not always active or ongoing. Violent conflict may be within or between states, though it is rare for conflicts to remain completely within the borders of a single state; in all three of the examples we focus on conflict crossed borders, either from the outset or as the conflict developed. Conflict intersects the four forms of community considered earlier. There is a substantial literature on the transnational impact of conflict that has been facilitated by globalisation, but the bulk of this work investigates the role of diaspora groups in exacerbating or ameliorating conflict in their countries of origin (see Vertovec, 2006 for a summary), only very recently considering the impact of questions such as integration (Hall and Kostic, 2009). This investigation seeks to reverse this prevailing trend in the literature through an examination of the impacts of conflicts outside the UK on communities within the UK. We seek to combine the four ideas of community previously discussed: local communities, ethno-national communities, communities of choice and communities of practice, recognising that all individuals draw on important elements of all of these, yet all involve very different understandings of membership and communal interaction. The project approached this broader issue through the application of three key research questions:

1. How do communities in the UK form or change under conditions of overseas conflict?
2. What are the types and impacts of interventions taken by various UK residents that relate to the overseas conflict/politics?
3. What is the impact of overseas conflict/politics on relations between UK residents and UK institutions?

These questions structure the presentation of results in Chapters 3, 4 and 5.

1 Choice of case studies

Research focused on three conflicts as the ‘terrain’ of inquiry (Marcus, 1995). These case study conflicts were Afghanistan/Pakistan; the Great Lakes region, Africa; and the western Balkans, Europe.³ They were chosen to represent a range of geographical regions and levels of engagement by the UK government and society. The presence of ‘communities’ originating from these conflict regions living in the UK was also a consideration. The three conflicts were also chosen to represent conflicts at different stages of evolution, from active conflict to post-conflict. In addition, they are conflicts in regions in which the research team has existing expertise. Table 1 summarises some features of the case studies.

The conflict in Afghanistan (in which Pakistan is inextricably involved) has been ongoing for 30 years. The UK’s current active military involvement is highly politically sensitive and, along with the conflict in Iraq, has been integral to a wider questioning of relationships between Muslim and non-Muslim populations. Some British Muslims feel that they have been cast as an ‘enemy within’ and subjected to increased surveillance and control.

The Great Lakes region is an ongoing complex conflict zone, which is mirrored in the diverse make-up of its communities in the UK. These range from long-standing refugee communities, of 30 or more years, to more recent arrivals. This conflict has received significant but intermittent UK media coverage, with the common focus being violent political instability.

In the Balkans, the conflicts involving Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH), Serbia and Croatia (1992–95) and Kosovo and Serbia (1998–99) were part of the disintegration of Yugoslavia. Although they are not strictly ‘active conflicts’, there are still ongoing divisions and tensions. In contrast to the other two cases, these took place in Europe. Incoming refugees of various ethnicities formed significant communities where there had barely been any before.

Table 1: Case study characteristics

Conflict case study	Afghanistan/Pakistan South Asia	Great Lakes ^a Sub-Saharan Africa	The Balkans ^a / Former Yugoslavia Southeastern Europe
Countries included	Afghanistan Pakistan	Burundi Rwanda DRC ^c Uganda	Bosnia-Herzegovina Kosovo Serbia Croatia
Conflict status	Active (state and non-state)	Post-conflict but some ongoing state and non-state violence	Post-conflict
UK military involvement	Large – NATO, Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation HERRICK	None	Small – NATO
Foreign-born population in UK (2001)^b	Afghanistan – 15,300 Pakistan – 322,200	Burundi – 2,400 Rwanda – 3,000–10,000 DRC – 9,400 Uganda – 55,500	Bosniacs – 8,000–10,000 Kosovar Albanians – 50,000 Serbians – 70,000 Croats – 7,500
History of migration to the UK	Significant migration from Pakistan dates from early twentieth century and increased post-independence. Total community of Pakistani origin approximately 1 million. Migration from Afghanistan limited post-1979. More significant post-1990.	Only links with Uganda go back before 1990. Rwanda, Burundi and DRC all date from 1990s, and therefore 2nd generation very young.	Established Serbian community in UK dates from post-WWII. Sporadic Bosniac and Croat arrivals were between 1945–1990, but the bulk dates from early 1990s. Kosovar Albanians had almost no pre-1990 history of migration to UK – arrival in very small numbers in the early 1990s, with more significant arrivals post-1998.

Notes

^a The Great Lakes and the Balkans are regional terms open to interpretation. Our choice of countries should not be taken as definitive.

^b Data from Migration DRC (2007) and for the Balkans, also ethno-community estimates. The data included to indicate the relative size of populations originating in case study regions is likely to be an underestimate of actual population size.

^c DRC – Democratic Republic of Congo.

2 Methodology

The overarching approach of this research was qualitative. Doing qualitative research with a small group of research subjects allows researchers and methodologies to be open and involved with the subject(s) of study. Methods can be determined by the object of study and not the other way around (Flick, *et al.*, 2004). For each of the three conflicts a 'mapping exercise' was conducted. This produced a review of available literature on the links between these conflicts and communities in the UK. We then identified six case studies designed to fill gaps in research. The mapping exercise involved desk-based research. Reports, articles, websites and media reports about each case study provided information and helped us to approach interviews well informed.

Each of the case studies relied on key informant interviews. These were often with 'gatekeepers' to communities or networks of people. Key informants included local community workers, teachers, social workers, local authority representatives, police officers, voluntary organisation administrators, refugee community organisation directors, a director of an arts association, individuals working in the business sector, representatives of the Crown Prosecution Service and individuals from relevant embassies. In some cases, key informants were people known to the researchers from previous research. The majority of empirical data collected for the research came from interviews. In each case study 15–20 interviews were conducted, giving a total of just over 100 interviews. Interviews were semi-structured to allow discussion but also to keep a focus on the research questions. Interviews were conducted in English or in the interviewee's first language, where this was possible. All informants have been kept anonymous unless they have stated that they wish to be named in the research.

Most interviews were conducted by researchers in person, alone with informants. However, where this was difficult or impossible, interviews were conducted over the telephone or in groups. In the case study on the armed forces and social networking websites, many of the interviews were carried out through messages via the Internet. These were considered carefully for authenticity. Ethnographic methods such as participant observation of community events (meetings, community outreach activities, festivals) were used in several of the case studies. These helped us to gain insights into the locations, relations and personalities involved in different communities. 'Virtual ethnography' was also used for research on online social networks and communities (Hine, 2008; Boyd, 2008). These types of methods helped to gain rapid insights into the effects of conflicts on everyday lives. They also helped us to counter some of the challenges that we faced, which are described below.

Choice of sub-projects

The mapping exercises identified connections between the UK and the three selected conflict regions with the aim of focusing research on particular sub-projects. These were extremely wide-ranging, covering foreign-aid programmes, military intervention and commercial links, as well as transnational connections developed by migrants from the regions and their families now resident in the UK. We also sought to identify a variety of different types of community.

Table 2: The six case studies selected in relation to the three conflict areas

Conflict	Case study	Location	Principal community focus
Afghanistan/Pakistan	Armed forces communities: Help for Heroes	UK-wide	Community of choice (campaign)
	Pakistani youth groups in two Birmingham neighbourhoods	Birmingham	Local community
	Responses to Afghan refugee and asylum-seeking children in two London boroughs	London	Community of practice
Great Lakes	Congolese and social marginalisation in two London boroughs	London	Ethno-national community/local community
	The attempted extradition of Rwandese genocide suspects by UK authorities	UK-wide	Community of choice (campaign)
Western Balkans	Workplace socialisation of Balkan communities	London	Local community

Research was organised in six case study sub-projects (Table 2). Each of the three conflict regions received an equal share of project time and resources. Given the more obvious, wide-ranging impacts of the conflict in Afghanistan/Pakistan on the UK it was decided to broaden the investigation to include three separate sub-projects covering:

- two neighbourhoods in Birmingham with significant populations of Pakistani origin;
- a ‘community of practice’ linking social services, schools and refugee community organisations that respond to the arrival of Afghan unaccompanied refugee and asylum-seeking children in two London boroughs; and
- a ‘community of choice’ based around the organisation Help for Heroes and its online community HeroNet.

The Great Lakes conflict was followed through two case studies:

- one focused on responses to black young people, particularly of Congolese origin, in two London boroughs; and
- a ‘community of choice’, linking opposing sides in a campaign to change UK legal practice to allow the extradition of genocide suspects to Rwanda.

Finally, the Balkans case study was a particular example of a 'community of proximity' and focused on a variety of workplaces in which individuals of Bosniac, Serbian or Kosovar Albanian origin came together in a diverse employment situation.

Challenges and caveats

These six case studies make no claim to be representative of the impact of the three conflicts on UK communities. They offer a broad cross-section, with the aim of identifying likely relationships between each conflict and communities in the UK. The most significant challenges of our research proved to be the sensitivity of much of the subject matter and the limited research time available. In some cases, one way in which we overcame these problems was to work through trusted, long-term contacts who knew and trusted the researchers. Using these contacts as key informants and gatekeepers we were able, in some cases, to gain access to informants. We also attempted to maximise contact and openness with research participants, through ethnographic methods and 'reciprocal exposure' (Bolognani, 2007). Other ways in which we overcame these issues were through sensitivity, guaranteed anonymity, respect and acceptance of the limits set by research participants, whilst maintaining an ethical approach.

We sampled interviewees to represent a range of positions and viewpoints. For example, the case study on Rwanda interviewees included genocide survivors, survivors of other violence, Hutu and Tutsi, pro- and anti-government, men and women, in addition to those interviewed beyond the immediate Rwandese ethno-national community. We tried to verify or triangulate data from interviews with written materials or other research participants. However, research in such hotly contested areas is likely to reveal contradictory data. The 'truth' was not always obvious, but contradictory accounts were often revealing. We set out these results in the following three chapters.

3 Community formation, community development and conflict

Introduction

This chapter, along with the following two, discusses the research results. The three chapters follow the three initial questions raised in the Introduction: ways in which overseas conflict influences community formation, the activities in which communities engage, and the relationship between communities and institutions of various kinds in the UK. Globalisation results in more immediate and direct influence of overseas conflict on the social, cultural and political life of UK-based communities. We consider four forms of community, outlined in the Introduction (also refer back to Table 2):

- place-based communities based around locations of residence or work that we will refer to as ‘local communities’;
- ethno-nationally defined communities;
- communities of choice, which in this study refers to the online community of ‘Help for Heroes’ and the campaign around the extradition of Rwandese genocide suspects; and
- ‘communities of practice’, which refers to professional engagement around a particular concern.

Most individuals belong to all of these types of community. In some cases they overlap quite closely, as in cases where particular neighbourhoods are strongly associated with particular ethno-national communities. In other cases they may be quite separate but in most there will be a complex, intersecting pattern of memberships. One of the most significant overall findings of this research was that the impact of conflict on these different types of community co-varied with certain key characteristics. We identified six important areas of influence.

- **The nature of UK involvement in the conflict** – where this is direct and significant, as in the case of military involvement in Afghanistan/Pakistan, few areas of the UK will not be touched in some way, though the impacts on different communities varies. Different types of linkage, such as diplomatic support for the independence of Kosovo, or humanitarian relief in the ongoing disturbances in the Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, will produce more limited impacts. These will only be felt amongst those directly associated with the conflict, typically specialist aid or human rights organisations and individuals from or with family links to those areas.
- **The proximity of the conflict to the UK** – this reflects how much it is felt the conflict has something to do with the UK. The conflict in the Balkans has a greater impact than that in the Great Lakes as it is geographically closer. Though physical proximity is only one issue, cultural proximity is also relevant and means that post-colonial links increase the significance of conflict in certain areas.

- **The timing and duration of the conflict** – even conflicts in which UK involvement was significant, such as the NATO bombing of Serbia and Kosovo in 1999 or the UK intervention in Sierra Leone in 2000 recede fairly rapidly in significance. Duration may also be important; it is one factor raising the profile of conflict in Palestine though, in other cases, conflicts may continue for decades and still have little impact beyond the ethno-national community concerned, such as the dispute between North and South Sudan or between Eritrea and Ethiopia.
- **The size and date of arrival of the diaspora community in the UK** – conflict clearly has an impact on UK communities. Yet this research found that, without the mediation of ethno-nationally defined communities from one of the conflict areas, the presence of such communities was the most consistent factor influencing the nature of such impacts. Where there are large numbers of primary migrants or their descendants, as in the case of the estimated 1 million UK residents with family links to Pakistan, the impact of conflict in those areas will inevitably be felt more strongly. Conflict may also result in the development of new ethno-national communities, through refugee movements. In this research Bosniacs, Burundians, Congolese, Kosovar Albanians and Rwandese are amongst groups with a small but significant presence in the UK in 2010, though there was virtually no resident ethno-national community in 1990. Simply by their arrival they have contributed to the growing ‘super-diversity’ of the UK.
- **Transnational engagement of ethno-national communities to the conflict region** – where particular ethno-national groups are actively involved politically, socially or culturally in developing links with a region of conflict there is greater potential for those impacts to be felt beyond the immediate ethno-national community. In this research, the substantial resident Serbian community in the UK was particularly active at key times in the conflict, such as in opposition to the NATO bombing campaign in 1999. The much smaller Congolese community is also extremely active in promoting arts events and informing public opinion.
- **Media coverage** – media coverage both reflects and informs public opinion. The ways in which overseas conflicts have been simplified for public consumption has reflected public perceptions and responses to conflict more generally. Inevitably, this has informed the attitudes of service providers. Although we made no direct attempt to evaluate media coverage, interviewees frequently referred to it.

The different types of communities identified for the study experience the effects of conflict in different ways, as discussed below.

Local communities

Local communities are those defined by localities of residence or work. Overseas conflict can force changes in or reassessments of such established communities. In the borough of Hounslow, the focus of workplace research, a social worker described the wide range of local services that were affected by evolutions in local communities and the challenges of meeting this new demand. An impressively resourceful response to the local demographic implications of the changing dynamics of conflict was also given:

We had a dedicated line of policy for those coming from Bosnia or who were coming from [Kosovo]. So there was an issue in the first instance, in the first or second wave of migrants arriving and newly emerging communities. There was that sort of overview that we need to step up to help this particular community because they are struggling from strife and conflict. [...] So from the housing perspective, I understand, yes, there was a dedicated team that dealt with those coming from the conflict. Like the

primary care trust and health needs, again, very much awareness because we were sending out notices [...] which said: as you are aware this is the conflict that is currently taking place, you will actually be more aware of an influx of FY [former Yugoslavia] residents coming to Hounslow. We would send out a paper that said these are the cultural differences you have to be aware of. [...] So, it was like a state of heightened alert. And we would do that on any conflicts, whether it was Congo, Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan. [...] But that's always said against the backdrop of our current local residents. [...] we will step up a notch to help those who are coming in from the war-torn areas. [...] We want to embrace them into becoming Hounslow community, and then help them to prosper and move on.

Hounslow community worker

We see here the direct association of conflict with those individuals arriving from areas of conflict, defined initially in ethno-national 'community' terms. Yet there is also a very positive progression, with the ultimate objective being to integrate individuals who arrived 'struggling from strife and conflict', and these 'newly emerging communities' into 'Hounslow community'. This not only enables the Council to concentrate resources on others but, ultimately, it also enables the newly arrived individuals to 'reciprocate' by helping the next group of individuals to arrive. This presents an extremely positive impression of the evolution of both local and ethno-national communities under situations of conflict. Conflict results in the arrival of new (ethno-national) communities who, if provided with effective support on arrival, gradually become part of the local community. At first sight this appears rather idealistic but in significant measure it is what has happened with the various communities who arrived from the Balkans from the early 1990s onwards.

How would you describe the community you belong to?

My newsagents, number one. My barber... But I would say that my community primarily consists of a close circle of friends – who don't necessarily live in the same area where I live – obviously my family members who are here, and I would also say the people I work with. Bearing in mind that we, including myself, spend a lot of time working in the city... [as for the ethnic community] My mother is a Bosnian Serb, my father is Bosnian Croat. So I would sometimes go to the Serbian church with my mother, so I would meet people coming from that sort of background. Yes, through my family background I would be associated with them. But, there are so many different facets to my personality that would not be the only thing that would be important... so I can say that I have multi-cultural and multi-ethnic views.

Man, 47

Workplaces were a particularly important element of local community. These led to encounters, on a more neutral basis, between individuals associated with different sides of overseas conflicts. Many who arrived in Hounslow just before or during the Balkan conflicts in the 1990s had juggled more than one job, whilst trying to re-train to fit the UK labour market or find better work opportunities. Besides being a place of refuge from the conflict, London provided ample opportunities for mostly casual work, and for study and career progression. The workplaces (e.g. restaurants, barber shops, construction sites, offices) where people were interviewed for this research were spaces of interaction amongst ethnicities and cultures; dialogue was inevitable and stereotypes were challenged.

I am a barber... There are six of us who work in our shop, mainly Greek Cypriots and North Africans... My clients are from all communities you can imagine living in London, including regular Serbian clients... There, I have an obligation to accept and respect everyone... Conflict affects relations at work, of course... You are at work physically, but mentally you are over there [Kosovo]... I remember hearing on the radio when some of my friends were killed and I would go in the bathroom and cry...

But work was a place where I could also inform people about Kosovo and Albanians there, and challenge stereotypes... The Balkans is a very complex place.

Kosovar Albanian man, 50s

Such spaces of interaction have become a common, even mundane, fact of life in local UK communities, particularly in London. Yet they were being rapidly lost in the FY, where conflict had turned ethnically mixed areas in 'ethnically clean' regions, especially in BiH, whose ethnic map before the war resembled a leopard skin (the metaphor has been attributed to Serbian politician Vuk Draskovic; for more on these 'ethnically cleansed' spaces, see Tuathail and O'Loughlin, 2009).

In the Birmingham neighbourhoods that formed the focus of the third case study, UK-born children and grandchildren of Pakistani migrants see themselves as members of a broader Muslim community. They were concerned about a range of issues, such as local religious observance and the situation in Palestine, as well as the severity of the crisis in Pakistan (which many of them had only visited rarely, if at all). The conflict in Pakistan has highlighted, and perhaps contributed to, this development of religious identification. The understanding of local communities is also significantly overlain with ethno-national communities, though rather than fading with time, the recent conflict in Pakistan and Afghanistan has exacerbated these differences. For example, the young people interviewed for this research frequently referred to their own neighbourhoods as 'Asian' neighbourhoods – safe spaces where they felt respected. This contrasted with the increasing levels of racism they reported experiencing outside of their home areas. Young people from these areas are re-interpreting the localities in which they live, in the light of a variety of additional forms of belonging to broader national and global communities. However, the ways in which they do so remain profoundly influenced by these localities and the relationships they form there.

The informants were also affected by the labelling of Pakistani Muslims as a 'suspect community' (Hickman, *et al.*, 2010), due to the pervasive parliamentary and media discourse. Links were made between political opposition to the war in Afghanistan, the disaffection and radicalisation of Pakistani Muslims, security threats and training camps in Pakistan, and home-grown terrorism. So the Afghanistan/Pakistan conflict became associated with a broader anti-terrorist security discourse that is widely seen as being anti-Muslim. The informants unanimously felt that the war in Afghanistan and the related war on terror had given Pakistani Muslims a negative profile, not only in Britain but also worldwide.

In school that was another issue. People were talking about Islam a lot more, you could hear people talking about Islam and discussing Islam but probably not from the right perspective. And the word jihad was everywhere and it was just Islam equals jihad. People formed opinions very quickly based on what they saw on the news.

Woman, 21

Even before 9/11, studies were showing that British Pakistanis were turning towards Islamic self-understandings (Jacobson, 1998; Al-Ali, *et al.*, 2001). Informants in this research noted the heightened security context as a further stimulus towards the development of religious communal identities, which some felt developed further divisions:

The more religious everyone becomes the more she [mother] looks at me and says 'oh no you're not religious at all now' and it's like a vicious circle. And I don't understand how it's been brought about, like even cousins here they've become a lot more religious it's just sprung out of the blue over the last couple of years it might have had something to do with the terrorist attacks and the harsh racism of the media.

Woman, 23

The deepest investment in Muslim identity was among young working-class Pakistani men – who have also born the brunt of the demonisation of Pakistani Muslims and the material consequences. Islam was a boundary defining ‘us and them’ that they policed authoritatively – controlling their sisters’ behaviour, asserting their power to define ‘their’ women and control the boundaries of ethnic identity, part of a wider reconfiguring of the racialised masculine hierarchy by projecting a hyper-masculinity (see Archer, 2001).

Communities of choice

In addition to provoking an evolution in established local communities, overseas conflict may also result in the formation of entirely new communities, which set out to contest understandings of the conflict from a particular perspective. The recently developed organisation Help for Heroes is one such example. It was formed to highlight the situation of families of service personnel and to publicly contest negative perceptions of the armed forces formed by association with an unpopular war. The armed forces are divided by the same differences that divide British society – class, gender, age and race – but also by rivalries between the different services and strict hierarchies. They are united by the common experiences of a military life and, at times of war, of conflict. Interviewees spoke about the armed forces as a family, a community and a way of life, and even many years after leaving the armed forces retained a sense of a military identity.

I have always been fond of a saying ‘I’m not a civilian, I’m ex-military’ and therefore I will always be more a part of the armed forces community.

Man, 36

Casualties, injuries and mental health problems among members of the armed forces who have served in Afghanistan have destroyed families. Bryn Parry, the founder of Help for Heroes, gives some indication of his motivations for starting the organisation:

The burden of this war falls on a small and shrinking community of service personnel and their families. While the rest of the population carries on with their normal lives, our men and women fight and their loved ones wait.

This understanding of conflict as impacting primarily on those directly involved in the conflict itself also extended to refugees. Part of the work of Help for Heroes involves a ‘publicity war’ to change the perception of the armed forces and the wounded. The very name ‘Help for Heroes’ signals a change in tone from long-standing service charities such as the British Legion, Combat Stress, and Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association. This is a more technically and publicity-savvy organisation that has tapped into a sense of abandonment, anger and patriotism felt by many within the ‘armed forces community’. It has created a heightened sense of togetherness among this community and drawn in sympathisers.

Representing a group of people determined not to be cut off and ignored, Help for Heroes has waged an effective publicity campaign about wounded soldiers and raised a huge amount of money – between October 2007, when they were founded, and December 2009, when they had their last annual review, the organisation raised over £40 million, more than £47,000 a day. This sum has certainly increased due to continued high-profile activities in 2010. While the organisation’s public activities have been high-profile, the private spaces on their online social network, HeroNet (among other websites) have a different role to play in this publicity campaign. The distinction between public and private spaces is central to the study of online social networks (Boyd, 2008). HeroNet has created a new community of sympathisers and sufferers, and represents a private ‘backstage’ where the public face and activities of Help for Heroes can be discussed and rehearsed. HeroNet is a source of companionship and support for those who are lonely

and upset, and information for those who are confused and worried. Families, friends and supporters are drawn into these online communities.

I visit this site occasionally, again it just makes me feel a little closer to what is going on... I do think of it as a community and it is important to me... it does help me actually being part of this network.

Woman, 53

Communities of choice, in this sense, function to provide individuals who feel affected by a particular conflict, yet are physically isolated, with a greater sense of community solidarity.

Our Rwanda case study illustrates a similar set of relationships, where a community has formed around a particular campaign linked to the conflict. In this case, the principal mobilisation was by the Rwandese, around the attempted extradition of four Rwandese accused of genocide. This community is not exclusively defined around a common cause or agreement on a certain issue, but on an understanding of its principal elements, such as a grasp of the relevant information necessary to follow events associated with a conflict that few people in the UK follow in any real detail. In this sense it also serves as an antidote to isolation, which is felt by many Rwandese, physically separated around the UK.

As a community, we felt targeted by those cases. We came together to try to decide what to do and set up a small group Action for Peace and Justice for Rwanda to try to mobilise the whole community... we felt that this was an issue that affected any educated Rwandese, anyone who had responsibilities back home, whether or not he or she was involved in the genocide. We agreed to have a common strategy and wrote to UK authorities, organised protests and attended the trials... I am not against justice. It is fine for anyone to be arrested and tried, but not fine for them to be brought to justice in Rwanda. We want trials in the UK or a third country.

Man, early 50s

This quote highlights the ethno-national focus of this campaign, though there was a limited involvement of non-Rwandese. Most non-Rwandese got involved in a professional capacity because they represented a human rights organisation. A number of organisations such as African Rights, Redress (which works against torture), Aegis Trust and Human Rights Watch monitored the extradition process and lobbied on a number of issues including a campaign for a change in UK law so the suspects could be tried in the UK and against the extradition on human rights grounds since they felt that the men would not get a fair trial in Rwanda. Beyond the involvement of professionals, a limited number of non-Rwandese family members and friends were involved in the campaign and attended the trial. The majority of the small numbers of non-Rwandese who attend the hearings at Westminster Magistrates Court were from church congregations that some of the men attended:

In court, those Rwandese who were there, were mostly the family of the accused and people from their church congregations who were there for moral support. For example, many members of the [town] Pentecostal Church and Catholic Church came along including quite a few elderly ladies.

Crown Prosecution Service representative

This introduces the significant role played by religious organisations in responding to conflict. Although this was not a specific focus of this research, interviewees frequently highlighted the role of churches and mosques in local communities, though these must ultimately be seen as communities of choice. In some cases, such as the national campaign A Prayer for Congo in churches of all denominations, religious institutions actively engaged with the identification of conflict-related concerns.

Communities of practice

A third example of community formation is a community of practice. Within the case study of the Afghanistan/Pakistan conflict one of the topics we explored was the situation of Afghan unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) in two neighbouring boroughs of London. The community in question is made up of individuals and organisations that support Afghan UASC: teachers; social workers; refugee support organisations; and Afghan refugee community organisations (RCOs). This community could also include others such as youth workers, Islamic clergy, healthcare providers, but these were not accessed during the project period.

This particular community of practice has emerged in response to a wish and/or need to assist and understand the challenges faced by Afghan UASC and those who support them. In this case, individuals associated with UK institutions (social workers, teachers, refugee support workers) were concerned about how to support Afghan UASC in their professional work and were aware that they had a lack of knowledge about this small but rapidly growing group, particularly in comparison with other larger, or more established, ethnic minority and migrant groups. Meanwhile, Afghan RCOs were concerned about the future faced by UASC and how they could help them to settle in to the UK, whilst not ‘forgetting their culture’ or ‘being led astray by [other non-Afghan migrants]’ (informant interview). Both Afghan and non-Afghan organisations shared a concern for the needs and future of Afghan UASC but that was not necessarily the catalyst for their interaction. For example, an Afghan RCO approached a local school when it needed space for weekend supplementary classes (in Afghan languages, English, science and maths). Thus, a connection between the school and the RCO was established, which then meant the school turned to the RCO for help in understanding the backgrounds of their growing numbers of Afghan UASC. This kind of back-and-forth communication, and reciprocity, is an important element in the formation of communities of practice.

Ethno-national communities

Ethno-national communities intersect with most of the other elements of community in our case studies. Local communities change with the arrival of individuals moving directly from conflict zones, to which they have to respond or evolve in response to conflict affecting ethno-national communities which are concentrated in particular areas. Yet ethno-national communities also evolve themselves as a result of conflict. An interesting, and perhaps unexpected outcome, of the Rwandese extradition cases that was mentioned by two interviewees has been a rapprochement between some members of the Congolese and Rwandese diasporas:

I used to have terrible problems with some people in the Congolese diaspora. Once I attended one of the meetings on the Great Lakes in the Parliament and when some of the Congolese there learned I was Rwandese, they started being abusive. I had to be escorted by security guards to the underground station... But suddenly because of the trials, they [Congolese] realised that not all Rwandese like the current Rwandese government, which they blame for creating problems in Congo, and that some of us also have problems because of the Government.

Woman, late 20s

These kind of inter-communal exchanges were a more widespread characteristic of conflict. The presence of Afghan asylum seekers in neighbourhoods of Birmingham associated with Pakistani Muslim communities was also a direct way in which the conflict impacted on those areas. The Afghans were mostly young men: some ‘freshies’ working in ‘£2 an hour jobs’ in Asian businesses in their neighbourhood, others studying with them at school and college. One male informant described the Afghans as ‘hard as nails’ because they’d gone through a lot to get to the UK and, as a consequence, had formed their own group called the AMK [Afghan Muslim Krew]. Many Afghans in the area had spent more of their lives in

refugee camps in Pakistan than in Afghanistan itself and were attracted to these neighbourhoods through a combination of the economics of cheaper housing and cultural affinities.

Those who have experienced conflict first hand obviously feel its greatest impact. This category is restricted to soldiers who have experienced active service and refugees. In 2010 this includes a relatively small number of people in the UK. Second, however, are those who have experienced conflict indirectly, through a close contact with individuals who have had first-hand experience. An important consequence of globalisation is that more and more people in the UK fall into the second category, most obviously comprised of the families of those who have experienced direct impacts. For refugees these relationships automatically describe ethno-national communities and, given the dominant white working-class origins of many in the armed forces, this is also largely true for soldiers' families.

Religious institutions play an important role in providing support and generating awareness. Although religious communities were not included in the initial research design they were involved in some way in all six of the communities studied. This may reinforce particular ethno-national links, such as the strong associations of the Orthodox Church with the Serbian community. Alternatively, it may also foster powerful community ties that cut across ethno-nationally defined groups, such as the prominent presence of church members at the trial of one of the Rwandese facing extradition. Communities of practice provide a further institutionalised response to heightening local service provision. Although most of these impacts are felt through ethno-nationally defined communities, conflict may also result in an evolution in rigid understandings of community from this basis, as experienced by migrants from the Balkans in their workplace encounters, through political engagement in the Great Lakes and through casual, local community-based exchanges in Birmingham. Having considered the ways in which conflict contributes to changes in the way communities evolve or form, we now turn to the activities in which these communities engage, often challenging the impact of conflict.

4 UK community responses to overseas conflict

The communities that have emerged from our case studies position themselves in various ways in relation to the three conflicts that formed our initial area of enquiry. Their significance, and the role of conflict in their formation and development, only really becomes clear when we examine how they have attempted to engage or challenge the engagement of others in response to the conflicts that continue to define them. Information is central to this engagement. Interviewees, whether they were soldiers or social workers, were aware of how public opinion perceived them more broadly. This, typically, resulted in a rejection of the over-simplification of mainstream media representations of complex conflicts. In some cases support was found in alternative media sources but in some cases even these were considered confusing, inaccurate or inward-looking and particularly the campaigning communities of choice developed direct public awareness-raising campaigns. Others, particularly communities of practice, focused on direct engagement for policy change. This range of engagements is considered below.

Dissatisfaction with mainstream media representations of conflict

Overseas conflict is inevitably complex and many individuals felt that broader British public opinion misrepresented or was completely ignorant of ongoing conflicts around which the engagements of the various communities studied here had developed. One of the most common engagements in response to conflict was therefore the attempt to question or publicly challenge understandings of the conflict. This was most common amongst groups with limited history of settlement in the UK. Migrants from FY and the Balkans more widely are part of the 'new migration' (Markova and Black, 2007) in the UK. With the exception of the Serbian community, which had a strong post-WWII diaspora settled in the UK, other communities had almost no history of settlement in Britain until the regional conflicts of the 1990s. Some Bosnian interviewees, in particular, were very upset with the way Bosnia was introduced to the British public, as a 'primitive' people.

The way that the war in Bosnia was portrayed by the media was very humiliating. I really, really felt humiliated. What most of media picked up was pictures of desperate people leaving villages with bundles, old women, toothless men, sitting on the ground, eating. So it just disfigured Bosnia as a country and I was annoyed. You could barely see something, I don't know what would the word be, civilised, something that would show that Bosnia is a normal country where life goes as anywhere else. ... So for an average Briton watching BBC news and reports and seeing that, they probably felt sorry for poor women who came out of nowhere, and she must be over the moon for being here. A lot of anger. A lot of anger. Just trying to explain... I know what the phone is, I know what the TV is, you don't need to show me how to use it. I had computer in my house as well, you know, I use that. ... I mean the media that we had back home played a significant role in spreading hatred and fear, and animosity, and... firing up emotions... There is more democracy here than there, but unfortunately... even here the way that media portrays the refugees is beyond belief.

Woman, 47

Despite this criticism, Bosniac and Kosovar Albanian interviewees felt that the media had played an important role in raising awareness about the conflict. For instance, another Bosniac woman recounted how her father had been in a concentration camp for almost a year – with hundreds of other Bosniac men; the Red Cross and other humanitarian organisations were on the ground, but the situation was deteriorating. Her father was later air-lifted from the camp to the UK, where his family joined him. She is of the opinion that:

... if it wasn't for the journalists who broadcast the stories, the international community wouldn't react. So we are very thankful for that... I think that they raised awareness... of what was happening in Bosnia, and certain actions were then taken.

Woman, 37

Similarly, Kosovar Albanians were seen very favourably, an image that supported the generous welcome they received from British civil society and public opinion in general. The Serbs, however, generally felt that the British media had stereotyped them as perpetrators of war crimes in the region. For many Serbians this led to their public retreat from a Serbian identity, presenting themselves as Bosnian or Russian. However, a small group, some of whom were interviewed for this research, attempted to resist this characterisation, focusing on positive messages of the strong ties between the UK and Serbia. A notable achievement of this core group, in their goal of portraying themselves in a fairer, more differentiated way, was the opening of the Serbian section in Fulham library, which aims to inform the wider British public about Serbian history, culture and society.

Rwandese informants felt similarly. The UK has relatively few links with Rwanda and most UK residents have limited knowledge about the Great Lakes region, beyond the fact that genocide occurred in Rwanda and that there has been ongoing violent conflict in the Congo. This often acted as a barrier to the formation of relationships between individuals from the region and other UK residents:

Most of my friends here are Rwandese. The problem is that other people always ask me where I am from. As soon as I say 'Rwanda', they say 'oh, wasn't that where the genocide happened? So are you Hutu or Tutsi?' Straight away, they start to categorise us... So I only have a few English friends, a couple of schoolmates and my managers, but then I have to explain everything all the time... Had I known this, I would not have claimed asylum in the UK as a Rwandese. People here have such a simple understanding of Rwanda... I would like to stay alone and not have to explain all the time. It makes me focus on the past and my mind has to go back to that previous time.

Rwandese woman, mid-30s

The common complaint was that media representations of conflict are simplistic and usually polarised, reflecting easily understandable views of conflict based in divisions between two groups. In turn, there are consequences for institutional actors. Awareness of the complexity of such divisions, the blurred boundaries and the multiple, shifting identities requires a more finely detailed knowledge of any particular conflict situation. Specialised knowledge is rare, but detailed policy responses should clearly be based on understandings of conflict that reflect its complexity as much as possible.

Successes and failures of alternative media

The growth of the Internet and associated new media, particularly the social networking sites of Web 2.0, has been a key element of technological development since about 2004. In some cases, this has provided a solution to the frustrations of mainstream information sources. Members of the armed forces community also reported the attentiveness of mainstream media to news of wars involving British soldiers, and how it was presented. Several people reported that they followed the news and any information about the war

closely, though this was not universally the case. One informant, a former soldier, reported disappointment at the inaccuracy and over-simplification in coverage of the war in a similar way to Rwandese or Serbians discussing other conflicts.

I find the coverage upsetting because it reminds me of my time in Iraq... a time I do not wish to revisit in my mind. Some of the coverage I have seen in the past has been accurate as far as the media goes – but no one can understand it until they have seen it first hand. It is definitely a personal choice not to watch, listen, read or talk about Afghanistan or Iraq with anyone other than other soldiers who have been there.

Man, 29

The desire, not only to be better informed about these issues but also to be able to discuss them with others who had direct conflict experience, could be fulfilled by sites such as the specialised discussion forums of HeroNet. This did little to address the broader issues of public information but it provided a community where dispersed individuals could at least discuss things amongst themselves.

Internet and, particularly, satellite-based communications provided an opportunity for individuals to receive news from beyond the UK. This was most widely used by first-generation migrants who welcomed the possibility of watching familiar television stations in their own language. However, this enthusiasm was rarely shared with subsequent generations. In the case of the Birmingham neighbourhoods, although most people had family currently living or who had previously lived in Pakistan, the young informants were at pains to point out that their interest in Afghanistan and Pakistan was not due to the particularity of their familial or ancestral connections. Rather, their knowledge of Pakistan was patchy and they found it difficult to make sense of the news from Pakistan as it concerned politicians and places they didn't know much about. They were sceptical about the truth of any media reports from there. What drew them to the war in Afghanistan was a sense that innocent Muslims were dying there.

With the news from Pakistan it's difficult to relate to it or make sense of it because I never actually lived there myself, I only once went to Pakistan and that was when I was eleven so it's hard to know the places that they're talking about. I just feel like there are constantly so many problems in Pakistan and you can never understand how things fit together or what the true story is. I think the news isn't reliable, a lot of news channels tell different stories there's no certain, nobody's identifying who's doing these bombings so it's a bit abstract.

Woman, 20

The suspicion of the information she was receiving from the media in the UK was common to most informants for this research, though in this case she was equally suspicious of information from Pakistani sources. So, alternative media provides one solution, enabling individuals to identify specialised media and discuss it with like-minded individuals, but it cannot be a complete picture since it also severely limits the opportunity to engage with broader public opinion. Some organisations find that the only way to do that is directly.

Direct challenge to public opinion

Help for Heroes was established to challenge the portrayal of soldiers engaged in an unpopular war and to provide support for families of those wounded or killed in action. Fundraising activities were the main type of action taken by members of the social networking site, HeroNet in response to the war. They also participated in online activities, social networking, chats and discussions. Through the activities of its supporters, as well as through high-profile events such as the concert at Twickenham Rugby Stadium on 12 September 2010, Help for Heroes has raised an enormous amount of money. In 2008, they raised and donated 13 million pounds to military charities. Users of HeroNet were very positive about the work of Help

for Heroes, arguing that it had raised the profile of the plight of wounded members of the armed forces and their families. HeroNet seems to be a response to the sense that there are many small groups and families who are either suffering from the effects of having loved ones away serving in the military, or have dead or injured friends or relatives due to the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Challenging the negative impressions of soldiers fighting an unpopular war fosters support for their fundraising exercises.

Major public demonstrations were a key strategy for other responses to the war, most famously Stop the War. The war in Afghanistan/Pakistan had a significant impact and politicised many of the young people of Pakistani origin interviewed in Birmingham for this research, some of whom had travelled to London for Stop the War rallies. The campaign became part of a peer dynamic where everybody was doing it, so they would go along to demonstrations with siblings and friends. As it involved trips to other cities without parents, it could also be a form of social empowerment. For some, engagement in mainstream anti-war activities was moderated by the characteristics of the predominantly working-class Birmingham neighbourhoods in which they lived. They were inevitably brought into contact with soldiers going off to fight. Their response was no more supportive, but tinged with a level of empathy that suggested a degree of understanding:

I don't see why they need to send little kids, why they need to send 18–19 year olds over to other countries and then teach them how to shoot? 'Cos I think that teenagers that are going over [to Afghanistan]. What are their parents thinking? 'Cos like I know 'cos there are a lot of white people around where I live, and their sons are going off to Afghanistan, and I'm thinking what if he never comes back? You're sending them there to get killed, I don't understand what they're thinking.

Man, 18

Two significant organisations have arisen around the 50th anniversary of Congolese independence. In June 2010, they were both followed for this research, during the independence period. The first was a high-profile series of events at the Southbank Centre, in London, that showcased Congolese artistic production and was established in conjunction with a range of large, British non-government organisations (NGOs). The second was a smaller commemoration called Congo 50, which was mostly organised by Congolese students. It provided a more grassroots commemoration that sought to directly challenge the image of the DRC as poor and resourceless. Along with nationwide initiatives, such as the Prayer for Congo (see page 22), these organisations set out to publicise the links between the UK and the DRC, particularly issues such as the significant export of coltan from DRC, which is an essential element of mobile phone construction and, some argue, is a driving force behind conflict in the DRC (Vesperini, 2001).

This promotion of positive messages may be undermined by the legacy of overseas conflict. We found it was extremely rare for violent overseas conflicts to result in violent impacts in the UK, but this does unarguably occur in certain contexts. One such example is the Congolese group *Combattants de Londres*, a self-styled 'resistance group' to the current administration of the DRC. They formed around a strident Congolese nationalism, and maintain a significant web presence targeted at a non-UK based audience and organise regular, vocal demonstrations outside the embassy of the DRC in London. These activities are reinforced by occasional criminal activities that guarantee a high profile, such as burning the cars of political opponents and setting fire to the embassy of the DRC in 2007 (Taylor, 2007). The Combattants are able to exert a disproportionately significant influence over the Congolese community (Allen, 2008).⁴ The Combattants have rejected the notion of independence, maintaining that Congo remains colonised, and they have therefore not only boycotted, but some say actively tried to sabotage independence commemorations. Just as the public response to the Afghanistan/Pakistan war is publicly contested by Help for Heroes and Stop the War, at a smaller scale, the public image of Congo is contested.

Community engagement in response to conflict

The influence of events outside the UK in determining even relatively mundane events of community organisation in the UK was also a characteristic of Congolese community activities. Just as the conflict in the Great Lakes region has drawn in neighbouring countries, community activities in the UK often crossed national boundaries and relationships between Congolese, those of Congolese descent and others from the Great Lakes region. This has occasionally resulted in tensions between individuals from the region in the UK. Partly in response to this tension, many community organisations emphasise the benefits of instituting best practice in the way they organise. Interventions that ensure a non-sectarian political space are important; for example, offering services to all members of a 'French speaking African community' without discriminating on ethnicity. The director of a community association emphasised this idea of inclusiveness as an ideological principle, but also as a demonstration of unity directed at broader 'British' society:

We need to welcome anyone coming in, but when we do that sometimes we are not understood by the wider [Congolese] community... for my staff I always tell them that the door is open to everybody, Rwandese, Congolese, Hutu, Tutsi because we all came over here to seek asylum for reasons of persecution. We need to set an example, we need to teach them that once we are in England you need to learn to live with each other... It is very important for the leaders to understand that we need to be one. If we are not one here not only the British society will not accept us, but we are not going to be able to rebuild our own country when we go back home.

Director of a community association

One of the ways in which other UK residents get involved in issues about conflict regions is through their support for anti-deportation campaigns. In recent years, anti-deportation campaigns have assembled family, friends, neighbours and other local residents from the communities where failed asylum seekers live. These campaigns have become increasingly well-organised and networked in the UK, through bodies such as the National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns. Anti-deportation groups have organised demonstrations, written to ministers, MPs and local councillors, and offered support to the individual asylum seekers and their families. In some cases, high-profile UK residents have become involved, such as the actor Colin Firth. Alongside five UK bishops, Firth campaigned against the deportation of Congolese asylum seekers in early 2007 – in particular, for nurse 'Pierre', who later obtained a last-minute reprieve and was able to stay in the UK (Refugee Council, 2007).

In the case of DRC, in August 2007, the Home Secretary, Jacqui Smith, was ordered by a high court judge to suspend deportations of unsuccessful asylum seekers to the DRC, after evidence of rape and torture of deportees by Congolese officials emerged. However, in March 2010 the UK Home Office tried to resume deportations. This has led to a range of protests and anti-deportation campaigns. For example, at the time of writing, several residents in Cardiff, Wales, mobilised in a campaign to stop the deportation of Wanda Tete, who fled to the UK from the DRC in January 2005 and claimed asylum. Wanda Tete was a member of the Union for Democracy and Social Progress opposition party in DRC and claimed she was a target of the Kabila government because of her political activities. Her asylum claim was rejected and on 21 September 2010 after more than five years in the UK, she was arrested and taken to Yarl's Wood Removal Centre. Local residents – both Congolese and non-Congolese – mobilised in a demonstration outside the UK Border Agency office in Cardiff on 24 September 2010.

In the two London boroughs studied, the interventions by UK residents supporting Afghan UASC were also linked to questions of publicity and information. However, in this case, there were concerns about a specialist, professional application of information to be shared amongst the established community of practice. Afghan RCOs provided information about the Afghan cultural context; and social workers, teachers and others provided information about opportunities available to Afghan UASC in the UK. For example, an Afghan RCO ran a workshop for teachers, social workers and other interested individuals.

It educated local service providers and offered alternatives to other information sources. The RCO felt that mainstream media sources were too focused on extreme interpretations of Islam and the current conflict situation in Afghanistan, rather than providing information about Afghan history and culture. Workshop participants were invited because they were locally based, and the event was not explicitly about UASC. However, most participants said they were there mainly because they wanted to learn more about the background of the growing numbers of Afghan UASC with whom they were working.

Some teachers said they were attending because they were worried about some of the behaviour they had seen, for example in the classroom. They were hoping that more information on their students' background would help them to manage their behaviour more effectively. According to the RCO, a key impact of the workshop was the networking aspect, and the opportunity to make personal connections between different people and institutions supporting Afghan UASC. One outcome of this workshop (and other similar events) was that the RCO was able to put schools in touch with a group of university students of Afghan descent. These students offer mentoring services to Afghan pupils and give talks, encouraging them to consider the opportunities that university might offer. Some of the mentors arrived in the UK as UASC themselves. Another example of an intervention – this time initiated by a borough council children and family services team, in co-operation with an Afghan RCO – are information evenings about fostering Afghan UASC. Both social workers and RCOs are keen for more Afghan families to consider fostering Afghan UASC and to do so formally, with the support of the borough. This is apparently a difficult area due to some mistrust of local authorities by Afghan families. Only a very small number of Afghan foster parents remain in the two boroughs.

This chapter has focused on how the communities under consideration actively responded to overseas conflict. The most common activity involved various ways of contesting the nature of the information in circulation about the conflict of concern to them. For some ethno-national communities this initially took the form of an individual dissatisfaction with how they were portrayed in mainstream media, which was only really countered on an individual basis. In some cases however, such as the development of the Serbian collection at Fulham library, this took on a more collective approach. In other cases, such as Help for Heroes, the community arose from and developed its own links through online discussion forums, which allowed a rejection of mainstream media. In others, alternative media sources, or the ability to access foreign media through satellite, provided an alternative to UK news sources. Yet it was one which many of the second- and third-generation Pakistanis said they found unhelpful and did not trust any more so than the UK media. A third strategy, open to large and better resourced community groups (e.g. Help for Heroes), is a direct challenge to public perceptions through high-profile concerts, with internationally famous artists. To a lesser extent, both Congo Now and Congo 50 attempted a similar approach. Finally, the community of practice was motivated by a concern about the usefulness of available information on Afghan UASC. We now turn to the forms of engagement with UK institutions taken by these various communities, and their relationship with the initial conflict.

5 Engagement with UK institutions

If service providers are to assess the impact of overseas conflict effectively they require a detailed knowledge, not only of conditions in the UK, but also of the complexities of any conflict situation with which they are faced. An understanding of the internal complexities of the many different overseas conflicts may be important when providing services to populations of diverse origins. Yet it is obviously unrealistic to expect service providers, particularly at a local level, to have a thorough knowledge of such issues. There are, however, some key examples of good practice to highlight, which allowed service providers to overcome this challenge.

In some cases this type of specialised knowledge, or at least the framework for evaluating the ever-changing contexts of overseas conflict, already form part of the response of the service providers interviewed for this research. For example, this was the case for the community cohesion worker in Hounslow: in Hounslow council, conflict-related briefings are prepared regularly and circulated widely to inform social workers, housing officers, teachers and NHS staff of the details of particular conflicts that might affect their work. This appears to mostly involve the preparation of services for the arrival of certain refugee groups. It could usefully be extended to provide information on how individuals of different backgrounds, already resident in the UK, may respond to particular overseas conflict, so that staff are prepared and attuned to the potential complexities. Despite the impressive array of services already offered to support individuals in Hounslow, there was still a lot to be done in terms of developing tailored services, according to one community support worker in Hounslow.

I don't honestly think, in the same way that people who come from Pakistan or Afghanistan, and the wars they have been through and the traumas they have been through. And this is a personal view. I don't think as a service provider per se, as a council, that while we have an understanding of it, just how much we embed that in the services that we deliver, I don't think we do.

Hounslow community support worker

The community of practice around Afghan UASC has experimented with different ways of understanding and responding to psychological trauma caused by conflict. Where personal connections (or networks) exist, relations between the different individuals and institutions supporting Afghan UASC have led to positive activities and the sharing of information. This is one of the few examples of service providers drawing on the expertise of the migrants or refugees who have come from particular regions of conflict, in the form of the Afghan RCO. However, there are some issues, or challenges, that should be taken into account. Previous research has questioned the role of RCOs, and whether they are representative of the 'community' they claim to serve (e.g. see Griffiths, *et al.*, 2005). It is positive that local service providers are supporting, and being supported by, Afghan RCOs to learn more about the specific needs of Afghan RCOs. However, the same service providers are not always attentive to the fact that Afghanistan is a mosaic of different ethnic, linguistic, political and social groups. For example, a Hazara child from central Afghanistan might have a very different background from a Pashtun child from eastern Afghanistan.

There is an additional risk to be considered, regarding communities of practice. Although research participants suggested that these are successful because of the personal connections involved, Afghan UASC living in areas where such communities do not exist risk 'falling through the gaps', increasing their vulnerability further (see also Mougne, 2010). There is an interesting juxtaposition

between the borough employees and teachers, and the clients of Afghan NGOs that speaks directly to the issue of how communities are formed and understood. Whilst social services and schools operate with a place-based perspective (a catchment area or a borough), Afghan RCOs' clients may operate with a different perspective, based more on solidarity networks; there are multiple Afghan RCOs in London with different reputations for being co-ordinated by particular ethnic or political personalities. There are many Afghan RCOs in London and, though none of them present themselves as representing any particular Afghan ethnic group, Afghans will usually interpret their affiliations as being directed by the ethnic group of their coordination team. This means they develop reputations for being sectarian, even if this is not their explicit intention. Previous work suggests Afghan clients may cross London to visit an RCO with which they feel an affinity, rather than pick a local one (Oeppen, 2008). The approach of the community of practice, focused on an individual borough. Working in conjunction with that borough's RCO tends to assume that ethno-national communities are divisible in the same way as local communities. Our research indicated that, through the relevant RCOs, a community of practice is more likely to be engaging with all Afghans of a specific ethnic group, across a much wider area, than with all Afghans within its borough.

In Birmingham, young people reported that awareness of the conflict in Afghanistan and Pakistan amongst service providers had affected their interactions with statutory services, particularly via education, youth services, and policing. Officials in these three areas were certainly aware of the potential impact of the Afghanistan/Pakistan conflict. In some cases, young people of Pakistani origin reported that they were treated more sensitively, for example, by schoolteachers who made it clear that they should not be stereotyped in any way and asked them to report any racist behaviour or abuse they faced. However, several young people reported that they believed an awareness of the impact of the conflict had resulted in racist stereotyping by other officials, in particular, police officers, who detained them for reasons that did not seem to relate to normal crime prevention.

Several of our case studies focused on national level campaigns and, therefore, directly engaged with national institutions. The role of the military is the most obvious example of this. For members of the armed forces communities, the Afghanistan/Pakistan conflict has resulted in a serious re-examination of relationships with UK government institutions. Serving members of the armed forces, and some ex-armed forces, had a positive outlook on relations with British government institutions, the nation and the royal family. However, the war in Afghanistan has led to a breakdown in trust between members of the armed forces, their friends and families, and the Ministry of Defence and UK government. Help for Heroes is always very careful not to be seen defending the cause of the war itself, but focuses on its impact on those who have fought. Individuals interviewed on HeroNet, including those who had fought in the war or whose family was involved in the armed forces, commonly shared the perspective of broader UK public opinion against the war (BBC, 2009). Yet this only boosted their concern that the soldiers, who had sacrificed so much for what they felt was a good cause, should not be seen as scapegoats. They did not want them to suffer for the unpopularity of the decision to go to war.

The UK's foreign relations can also have a direct impact on particular ethno-national communities and local communities (Briggs, 2010). This was the case for Rwandese groups. All of the Rwandese interviewed said that the arrests by the UK authorities and subsequent extradition hearings of the four Rwanda men living in the UK, and accused of genocide, had significantly affected them. Some Rwandese informants said that the arrests and extradition process had increased community tensions in the UK. Others spoke directly about the UK government's apparent unquestioning support of the current Rwandan government and the knock-on effects for Rwandese living in the UK.

The distinction between local service providers, and national and foreign policy is likely to remain blurred. This is an established feature of devolved administrations in Scotland and Wales. The Big Society agenda is likely to further blur established distinctions in control of service provision, as local groups are increasingly able to manage services, such as free schools. This means that expertise on issues such as sensitivity to conflict, which is currently centralised, will have to be found in different contexts.

We started this report with the example of the death of Imran Farooq, where the local police response was to turn the matter over to national authorities with expertise in the factional politics of Pakistan. Where similar expertise is required in sectors that are subject to greater devolution (education, housing, health, social services) alternatives will have to be found. In some cases there is well-established civil society input, such as the Refugee Council's study packs for schools. In other cases expertise may be found locally, through inter-agency working arrangements that are slowly expanding in the form of communities of practice. These will be particularly effective if they can also include relevant expertise from concerned ethno-national communities.

Yet in some cases this combination of existing practices and expertise will simply not be sufficient. It is unlikely that resources will be available to respond to these additional needs in the immediate future. The answer will be twofold. First, individuals facing the impacts of conflict must hold local services to account if they are not receiving the services they require. Second, service providers must develop the kind of links to local, national and international sources of expertise to enable them to access the necessary information they require to respond to local super-diversity. This may be found through developing imaginative links with other groups locally, such as RCOs or academics in local universities or through greater awareness of the sources of information that already exist in the form of specialist Internet sources. This kind of 'information entrepreneur' approach must become a key element of delivering local services in a transnational context.

6 Conclusions

Definitions of community

Community is an extremely flexible term that is used in different ways by different people for different reasons. In classical sociology it originally referred to the tightest-knit, often kinship-based social groups, typically tied to a particular place. More recent attention to evolving relationships between globalisation and communities has produced a variety of other terms relating to network forms of sociality, though place-based local communities remain fundamental. We have considered four forms of community in this research: local communities, ethno-national communities, communities of practice and communities of choice. Most individuals in the UK belong to all four of these types of community and they frequently overlap, though they rarely coincide exactly.

Policy approaches have rarely been specific about the nature of the community, which is the target of any particular policy objective. In some cases, such as 'community cohesion', approaches encompass both local communities and ethno-national communities. In this report we have sought to use consistent terminology and identify to which of these community types we have referred.

Clarity is especially important in the context of our study, as conflict impacts differently on each of these four types of community. Conflict may cause local communities to evolve through the arrival of new groups from conflict areas, as in the case of the Hounslow example. Alternatively, local communities with well-established links to conflict areas, such as the Birmingham neighbourhoods, may evolve in different ways – for example, as second- or third-generation migrants from Pakistan develop closer affinities with a more universal Muslim self-understanding, rather than direct associations with Pakistan.

The two communities of choice considered in this research were both national level campaigns provoked by conflict: the first, to encourage more positive public perceptions of serving soldiers in the UK armed forces; and the second to mobilise around the extradition of four men accused of genocide to Rwanda. We also examined the evolution of a community of practice in two London boroughs. These had developed from links between professionals concerned about the impact of significant numbers of UASC from Afghanistan.

We identified ethno-national communities as having the most significant overlap with these other communities. They represent the most significant source of direct and indirect experience of conflict in most of the other communities considered. Yet ethno-national communities also evolve themselves, in response to conflict. Particular examples considered in this research involved contact between second- and third- generation Pakistanis and newly arrived Afghan refugees, but also with working-class white army recruits, who all live in the same neighbourhoods in Birmingham. Research identified different groups from the Balkans in workplaces in London, where they experience a level of inter-ethnic contact that is now much less common in the Balkans.

Finally, we considered the contact between Rwandese and Congolese activists encouraged by campaigns. Such exchanges can result in the recognition of broader regional identities than those based on a more limited ethno-national understanding, and may contribute to the flexibility produced by multiple identities.

Importance of information quality for policy effectiveness

All communities were concerned about the quality of information on particular conflicts, and this formed a second, substantial research finding. Conflicts are commonly characterised in the mainstream media in overly simplistic terms, based around polarised understandings of conflict, such as right and wrong, abusers and victims, and so forth. Failure to account for the complexity of particular conflicts reduces the effectiveness of policy interventions. Such policies may well be resisted by individuals who object to classification as part of a victimised community. Where individual communities have a limited history of migration to the UK, such as most Balkan ethno-national communities, they may resent the fact that limited information about their origins can lead to stereotyping. For example:

- either they are characterised as victims, and therefore welcomed to the UK, as in the case of the Kosovar Albanians; or
- they are seen as perpetrators of violence and forced to be careful about revealing their ethno-national origins, as in the case of the Serbs.

Sources of information were also challenged by communities of choice. These included the focus of Help for Heroes on changing what was perceived as the unfavourable public image of soldiers serving in the unpopular wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Findings on information also have implications for service providers. Services must be tailored for the needs of individuals arriving from conflict regions but, as the Hounslow community worker describes, this must also be balanced by the needs of the resident local community. The Hounslow solution of circulating detailed information on current conflicts to all local service providers is a clear example of good practice in this field. The community of practice developed around the arrival of Afghan UASC provides a similar example of efforts to ensure that locally significant arrivals do not impact negatively on children's services in the area.

National policy and responses to overseas conflict

The final group of findings concerns how the impact of national policy on certain individuals and families is changed in contexts of overseas conflict. Local responses are inevitably framed by national level policy decisions. This is likely to be increasingly significant as the Big Society agenda of the current coalition Government is implemented, with increased local service provision by civil society organisations. Two of our case studies concerned national level campaigns that engaged directly with UK foreign policy and defence policy. Yet at local level, national policy decisions mediated the impact of overseas conflict. In Birmingham, for many of the interviewees, the involvement of the UK military in the war in Afghanistan/Pakistan directly concerned family projects, such as visits to Pakistan. The resulting changes in security orientation of local police forces made many young people feel that they were being unfairly targeted. In Hounslow, the impact of conflict discussed by local community workers occurred more through the arrival of refugees and changes in immigration, and asylum policy at the national level inevitably had an impact.

The impact of overseas conflict provides a focus for analysis of communities that avoids an immediate ethno-national or religious framing of community. It highlights aspects of these communities that may otherwise go unnoticed, leading to confusion about the nature of communities on which a particular policy may be focused. The conflict focus also results in concerns about the nature of circulated information, particularly where it is required to inform policy. Finally, conflict highlights links between national and local level policy institutions that are likely to become more important in the future. The final section of this report turns to implications for policy and research.

7 Policy implications

There is a lack of conceptual clarity around the use of the term ‘community’ in many policy documents. The two most common understandings are local communities and ethno-national communities. Given that questions of membership are very different for these two understandings of community, the confusion of the two can result in mistakes in targeting particular policies. The recent example of ‘community cohesion’ is a case in point. This research has identified the example of local council representatives engaging with Afghan migrant community associations as if they were linked to defined areas of London, whereas such Afghan organisations typically draw on a constituency based on sub-national ethnic groups. Such mistaken identifications may result in the exclusion of a significant number of Afghans. A clearer focus on the differences between different types of community would help to avoid such problems.

In addition to local communities and ethno-national communities, this research has also considered ‘communities of choice’ and ‘communities of practice’, both of which may form in response to overseas conflict. These forms of community are likely to involve civil society responses to particular conflicts. Inter-agency co-operation is already strongly encouraged by LG Improvement and Development (formerly IDeA), and it may be possible for local service providers to learn from, and build on, these ongoing civil society initiatives.

Those who have experienced conflict feel its impact most directly. This includes members of the armed forces who have experienced active service in conflict regions and refugees who have come from such regions. Such experiences may generate specific needs resulting from psychological trauma or may simply complicate existing service delivery. Public service providers should be attentive to the possible impacts of these conflicts on the ways in which they deliver services. We have identified good practice examples where diffusion of information is already standard practice. Such information should also assist with the identification of indirect impacts, which are likely to be much more significant and much more variable. The identification of particular individuals as being more susceptible to the impact of conflict (i.e. those involved in direct conflict or in close connection with those who have been) allows local service providers to concentrate attention and resources on those most likely to require support.

Religious institutions fulfil an important function in dissipating the impact of overseas conflict. They provide a meeting place for individuals of diverse geographic, ethnic, professional and class origins. They also provide a valuable support service for individuals struggling with the direct effects of conflict, allowing them to develop valuable bonding social capital beyond the confines of their immediate social circles. Although religious institutions were not an initial focus of the research, both mosques and churches were found to be significant in the communities studied. These findings appear equally valid for institutions of other faiths, although involving religious organisations in the provision of services is potentially controversial (as the long-standing debates around the religious provision of education suggest).

Information is central to responding to effects of conflict sensitively and effectively. It is not usually sufficient for conflict responses to arise from standard mainstream media portrayals of the background to particular conflicts, though local and national media are an important influence on public perceptions of conflict. Therefore, there is a need to develop a database of expertise on conflict. This could draw significantly on existing sources of information, such as the Home Office’s Country of Origin Information reports (RDS, 2010) which provide detailed background and further sources to conflict for the purposes of assessing asylum claims. It would also build on existing local initiatives, such as the system that Hounslow council already has in place, circulating details of implications of the dynamic of conflict situations.

Communities of practice provide a much more engaged means of information sharing and delivery than agency specific ways of working. Although such communities of practice are well established in commercial and international fields, in local government they are a relatively new area, in which work could be developed further. They have been actively promoted by LG Improvement and Development since 2007, and the associated capacity skills training is a particularly cost-effective way of encouraging inter-agency working. The kinds of informal, regular, inter-agency contacts encouraged by such networking do not only improve the circulation of relevant information but also often lead to enhanced understanding of the variety of roles involved.

Finally, attention to the impacts of overseas conflict requires close connections between local service providers and national and foreign policies. As distinctions between local service provider and national and foreign policies become increasingly blurred, this research has identified a need to clarify the changing functions of policy-making at national and local level. Attention to overseas conflict inevitably involves a combination of national government and local authority decision-making. When the coalition government decentralises authority under its Big Society agenda, decision-making and direct participation at local authority or civil society level will increase. As this happens, it is vital that the necessary expertise be made available to implementing actors.

Notes

- 1 This term refers to groups defined according to ethnic or national origin. It is similar to the commonly used term 'black and minority ethnic' (BME) communities but differs in two ways: first, it includes national groups that are not commonly considered either 'black' or 'ethnic', such as Poles or Algerians; second, it also includes 'majority' communities, such as the census category 'white British'.
- 2 We are grateful to one of the anonymous reviewers of this research for highlighting this.
- 3 Referred to throughout this document simply as 'the Balkans'.
- 4 It is very difficult to estimate the number of people involved in the Combattants. Its leader (cited in Allen, 2008) claims it has 4,000 members but most of the individuals from Congolese civil society interviewed for this research did not think it was anywhere near so significant. The many videos posted online show no more than a few dozen people involved in their regular protests outside the DRC embassy. Nevertheless, they are influential and even accused of influencing Papa Wemba's decision not to perform at Nelson Mandela's 90th birthday concert.
- 5 Foreign Affairs Select Committee (2009) 'The UK's Mission in Afghanistan', House of Commons, <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200809/cmselect/cmfaff/302/30209.htm> (accessed 1 June 2010).
- 6 <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/Where-we-work/Asia-South/Pakistan/> (accessed 1 June 2010).
- 7 Calculated from Home Office asylum statistics, available from; <http://rds.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/immigration-asylum-stats.html> (accessed 1 June 2010).
- 8 <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/Where-we-work/Africa-Eastern-Southern/Uganda/> (accessed 1 June 2010).
- 9 <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/Where-we-work/Africa-West-Central/Rwanda/> (accessed 1 June 2010).
- 10 <http://ukinrwanda.fco.gov.uk/en/> (accessed 1 June 2010).
- 11 <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/Where-we-work/Africa-West-Central/Congo-Democratic-Republic/> (accessed 1 June 2010).
- 12 <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/Where-we-work/Africa-West-Central/Burundi/> (accessed 1 June 2010).
- 13 <http://www.appggreatlakes.org/> (accessed 1 June 2010).
- 14 See Global Witness reports (2009 and 2010) and 2009 UN Experts report on DRC.
- 15 PSC–Parliamentary Select Committee (2000) London: UK Parliamentary Select Committee on Foreign Affairs, fourth report, prepared 7 June 2000.
- 16 <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/Where-we-work/Europe/Bosnia-Herzegovina> (accessed 1 June 2010).

17 <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/where-we-work/europe/kosovo> (accessed 1 June 2010).

18 <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/Where-we-work/Europe/Serbia> (accessed 1 June 2010).

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Appendix

Three mapping exercises

To provide a basis for further analysis and selection of a particular area of focus, we mapped the various links between the conflicts and the UK, in terms of material and immaterial connections. Links were mapped for each conflict region across the following areas:

- UK foreign, aid and military policy towards the region;
- parliamentary links with the region;
- UK-based NGOs working on the region;
- UK-based research centres and academics working on the region;
- commercial interests and business linkages with the region;
- migration to the UK from the region;
- diaspora engagement in politics and development in the region; and
- diaspora involvement in community groups/projects with a UK focus.

The results of the mapping exercises are summarised below.

Afghanistan/Pakistan

The UK has had a long and significant role in the conflicts in Afghanistan and Pakistan dating back to the nineteenth century. This has included drawing up the contested borders in the region and supporting the Mujahadeen against the Soviet invasion and Soviet-supported government in the 1980s and 1990s. Following the 9/11 attacks, the UK engaged militarily in Afghanistan alongside coalition forces, led by the US in Operation Enduring Freedom. In March 2006, UK troops deployed to Helmand Province as part of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force and, since this date, have been part of a 16-nation counter-insurgency force in southern Afghanistan.

The UK's contribution to the international intervention in Afghanistan has been significant. It is the second biggest troop contributor in Afghanistan with nearly 9,000 troops and, as of 10 September 2010, some 335 British service personnel have lost their lives in Afghanistan since 2001. The UK's financial contribution has also been high: the cost of UK military operations in Afghanistan increased from £750 million in 2006–07 to £1.5 billion in 2007–08, and to £2.6 billion in 2008–09. At the same time, development and stabilisation spending increased from £154 million in 2006–07, to £166 million in 2007–08, and to £207 million in 2008–09, making the UK Afghanistan's third biggest donor, behind the US and the Asian Development Bank.⁵ The Department for International Development (DFID) recently committed £510 million in additional aid to Afghanistan for 2009–13 to support governance, economic growth, security and stability and alternatives to poppy growing.

The UK also has a long and significant diplomatic and aid relationship with its former colony Pakistan, announcing a doubling of aid to Pakistan to £480 million per year in 2011 through bilateral and

Table 1: Afghanistan and Pakistani refugee and migrant groups in the UK

Country	Main arrival dates	Estimated population	Main areas of residence
Afghanistan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small numbers in 1980s/early 1990s • 1994–2001 • 2001– 	15,000–40,000	Greater London: Especially west and north-west London Outside London: Birmingham, other major cities
Pakistan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1950s–1960s • 1970s (expulsion from East Africa) • Smaller numbers (10,000 pa) from 1970s 	750,000+ (2001 census figure)	Greater London: Especially west and north London Outside London: West and East Midlands, Yorkshire, Lancashire, but also increasingly disperse populations throughout the UK

multi-lateral channels (in 2008–09, bilateral aid was £120 million).⁶ UK parliamentary interest in the region remains high via the Associate Parliamentary Group for Afghanistan, the All Party Parliamentary Groups for Pakistan and Kashmir and the efforts of individual MPs and peers. There are a significant number of UK-based international NGOs working in Afghanistan and Pakistan, with work in Afghanistan coordinated by the British and Irish Agencies Afghanistan Group (BAAG) and the Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief. A number of British academics and research centres (e.g. Bradford) have become intensely involved in analysis of the conflict as well as (sometimes controversial) research into ‘radicalisation’ and ‘extremism’ among British Muslims. There are long-standing business links between Pakistan and the UK and, more recently, there has been a growth in engagement by British security and risk management firms in the region, securing contracts to protect commercial, diplomatic, aid and military personnel in Afghanistan – in some cases coming under criticism for violence and corruption.

The current Pakistani and Afghan governments are key partners in the US and UK international ‘War on Terror’. As a result of UK involvement in the international military interventions in Afghanistan (and Iraq), the UK has become a more significant target for Islamist terrorist groups, who attacked London in July 2005. It is estimated that three-quarters of terror plots against targets in the UK emanate from the porous border area between Afghanistan and Pakistan. As a result, new anti-terrorism legislation has been passed in the UK creating a significant clampdown of civil liberties.

In terms of communities in the UK, there is a long history of settlement of Pakistanis in Britain dating back to partition and encompassing the expulsion of East African Asians in the 1970s, many of whom were of Pakistani origin. From the 1970s, approximately 10,000 Pakistanis have gained entry into the UK as part of migration for marriage and family reunification provisions. Today, there are second- and third-generation individuals of Pakistani origin in the UK, so census figures (Table 1) do not accurately capture the numbers of people of Pakistani heritage in the UK. A few hundred Afghans are thought to have settled in the UK prior to the 1980s. Their number increased throughout the 1980s and 1990s as Afghans fled the Soviet occupation, subsequent civil war and rise of the Taliban. From the mid-1990s, the numbers of Afghan asylum seekers increased as a result of Taliban repression and then the war that followed the NATO invasion in 2001. A growing proportion of Afghan asylum seekers are children – Home Office figures suggest that in 2008, 50 per cent of Afghan asylum applicants were children,⁷ and there are an estimated 4,200 unaccompanied minors from Afghanistan in Britain (Kellaway, 2010), most being supported by local authority social services. In recent years, the UK government has tried to encourage returns to Afghanistan of both failed asylum seekers and refugees and the International Organisation of Migration (IOM) has helped repatriate around 2,000 Afghans.

In terms of diaspora activities linked to the conflict region, there are a large number of Afghan-run community organisations in London: active ones include the Afghan Association Paiwand, the Afghan Association of London, the Afghan and Central Asian Association, and the Afghan Students' Association in the UK. These organisations offer a range of educational, cultural and social services to refugees and migrants and opportunities for networking and information exchange. There are also a number of transnational NGOs that have focused specifically on development and peace-building in Afghanistan (e.g. SERVE Afghanistan, Afghan Action). There are also tens of well-established Pakistani-run organisations focused both on development activities in Pakistan, as well as support and services for the UK Pakistani community. In recent decades, the UK has served as an important base for the political opposition, with figures such as General Musharraf, Benazir Bhutto and Imran Khan based in the UK for periods.

Afghan and Pakistani communities in the UK have felt significant and sometimes contradictory effects of the conflicts in their region of origin. They have become prominent in the public eye and feel under intense surveillance by the British authorities. They are the subject of increased racist attacks and have often been portrayed as a security threat or suspect community. In some cases, this has prompted them to join up with other UK residents in organisations such as the Campaign against Criminalising Communities. More broadly, the Afghan conflict has led to significant engagement by other UK residents in a variety of campaigns to seek to stop the conflict (e.g. the Stop the War Coalition, formed in September 2001), secure the release of UK prisoners from Guantanamo Bay and seek justice for the victims or torture related to the conflict and breaches of civil liberties in the UK.

The fierce, ongoing fighting in Afghanistan has also had a dramatic impact on the British military, which is said to be overstretched and under-resourced. The rate of casualties has been high and the psychological and physical wounds borne by many veterans have been devastating for many UK individuals, families and communities. This has led to the establishment of a range of organisations working to support British armed forces, soldiers, veterans and bereaved families – for example, Afghan Heroes, Help for Heroes and Combat Stress – and the involvement of entire communities such as that in Wootton Bassett in Wiltshire, which turns out in large numbers each time hearses of soldiers killed in Afghanistan pass through the town.

Great Lakes region

The UK's longest relationship with the Great Lakes region is with its former colony Uganda. Since 1986, when the current President Museveni's National Resistance Movement took power, the UK has given significant political support and development aid to Uganda (£71.1 million in 2008–09),⁸ which has been viewed as one of the more successful African countries. The UK's relationship with the other three (francophone) countries of the region developed in the aftermath of the 1994 Rwandan genocide, when the UK gave significant humanitarian aid to the Rwandan refugee camps in Eastern Zaïre (now DRC) and then established an aid programme in Rwanda, which has grown to one of its most significant in Africa (£70.1 million in 2008–09).⁹

Over the last decade, UK government policy has emphasised that the stability of the Great Lakes region is important to the security and development of Africa as a whole.¹⁰ It established a major bilateral aid programme in DRC in 2003 (£93.9 million in 2008–09)¹¹ and a smaller programme in Burundi (£10.4 million in 2008–09).¹² Today, the UK is one of the largest bilateral donors to Uganda, Rwanda and the DRC. It operates in the context of wider international efforts to reduce conflict and promote post-conflict transition in the region, which include the ongoing UN peacekeeping operation in DRC (MONUC), AFRICOM efforts to bring peace to Northern Uganda, International Criminal Court investigations and indictments in both Uganda and DRC and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR).

UK interest in the region is also demonstrated by the establishment of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on the Great Lakes Region of Africa, which produces reports on the region, lobbies ministers,

Table 2: Great Lakes refugee and migrant groups in the UK

Country	Main arrival dates	Estimated population	Main areas of residence
DRC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Late 1980s/early 1990s • Late 1990s–2003/04 • Smaller numbers ongoing 	20,000–40,000	Greater London: Haringey, Newham, Redbridge, Islington, Hackney, Barking and Croydon, Camden Outside London: Birmingham, Glasgow, Hull
Uganda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1966 • 1971–79 • 1985–86 • Late 1980s 	180,000–350,000	Greater London: Forest Gate, Mitcham (highest concentration), Lambeth, fairly well distributed around London Outside London: Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool, Surrey, Sheffield, Luton, Milton Keynes, Coventry, Leeds, Nottingham, Oxford
Rwanda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mid- to late 1990s • Smaller numbers ongoing since 2001 	3,000–10,000	Greater London: The Rwandese Community is fairly well dispersed throughout southern and eastern London and has no specific area of concentration Outside London: Coventry, Birmingham, Manchester, Oxford
Burundi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small numbers since late 1990s 	Fewer than 1,000	Greater London: The Burundian Community is fairly well dispersed throughout southern and eastern London and has no specific area of concentration

and provides a channel for NGOs and academics to submit their analysis.¹³ There has been a growth of engagement by UK-based INGOs in the region (e.g. Oxfam, Save the Children, Christian Aid, CARE) in a range of areas including humanitarian relief, education, health, gender equality, child protection, governance, human rights, conflict prevention and peace-building. There has also been a significant growth in UK-based academics working on the region and some increased interest from British media, although largely focused on Rwanda and Uganda. Over the last decade, many hundreds of UK citizens have also become involved in charitable and other work related to Rwanda, in addition to longer standing work by UK citizens related to Uganda.

In terms of UK commercial interests, the UK is a significant trading partner of Uganda, exporting £50 million of goods to Uganda in 2008 and being among Uganda’s top ten sources of imports. The UK is also a leading investor in Uganda. Other commercial interests in the region are mainly related to the role of UK companies in mineral extraction in the DRC, which have been controversial because a number of UK companies have been accused of breaching UN sanctions.¹⁴

In terms of communities in the UK, several waves of refugees have arrived in the UK from the region, many of which have been given asylum (see Table 2). The Ugandan community has been established the

longest with refugees (and some migrants) arriving since the 1960s. Thus, there are now first- and second-generation people of Ugandan heritage in the UK. The first and largest wave of refugees from Rwanda arrived as a result of the 1994 genocide, but several thousand Rwandans have come since then. The majority of Congolese refugees started to arrive in the UK from the late 1990s and there are still several hundred asylum applications every month. The Burundian community in the UK is smallest, with only an estimated few hundred Burundians arriving in the UK since the late 1990s. The majority of UK residents from the region live in London and the Midlands.

Migrants and refugees from the region living in the UK have set up a variety of civil society organisations including community organisations, survivor groups, women's groups, youth groups, business associations, advocacy groups and religious groups. Some organisations are focused on bringing about peace, development and/or political change in the region. For example, through supporting genocide education and commemoration projects (e.g. Aegis Trust Rwanda); funding community-level projects (e.g. Rwanda Youth Information Community Organisation, Hope 4 Children Uganda); supporting business linkages (e.g. Uganda Business and Professionals Association); or trying to lobby for political change in the region and a change in UK policy (e.g. Platform of Congolese Women in the UK).

Other organisations have focused their energies on supporting refugees in the UK, whether through providing opportunities for social networking and cultural events (e.g. Rwanda Community Association UK), providing news and information (e.g. *Londres Na Biso* weekly Congolese magazine), or assisting refugees and asylum seekers (e.g. CORECOG) or genocide survivors (e.g. Hope Survivors Foundation). Some organisations also focus on raising awareness amongst the wider British public about the region (e.g. Aegis Trust, Congo Now). Whilst refugees have set up the majority of the organisations in the UK, some organisations have been established by or with considerable support of other UK citizens (e.g. Rwanda United Kingdom Goodwill Organisation and Rwanda Aid).

In the cases of Rwanda, DRC, and to a lesser extent Uganda, there is significant political opposition based within the international diaspora – including in the UK. For example, London is often termed the headquarters of Congolese political opposition overseas. All the governments in the region – but most notably the Rwandese government – have made significant efforts to engage the diaspora in the UK in development activities in Rwanda, although this has been viewed as surveillance by some members of the Rwandan community in the UK. Another key linkage between the region and the UK has been the pursuit of genocide suspects and suspected war criminals in the UK. In 2000, the UK extradited one Rwandan genocide suspect to the ICTR in Tanzania and in 2006, arrested four Rwandan genocide suspects in the UK and attempted to extradite them to Rwanda. This caused an increase in fear and tension within an already divided Rwandan community in the UK.

The Balkans

Given the position of the Balkans on the edge of Europe, the UK has had a longstanding diplomatic relationship with the region, particularly with the FY. At the onset of the war in Bosnia in 1992, and largely in response to pressure from the Serbian lobby in the UK, the UK government took a 'neutral' stance towards the events, promising to deliver humanitarian aid, but not to intervene otherwise. On the other hand, many political leaders at the time, especially those in the UK, naively considered Milošević as the corner of stability in the Balkans. Despite UK resistance, EU and US allies continued to push for international intervention and in 1995, NATO intervened by bombing targets in Bosnia which eventually helped bring the conflict to an end. The UK engagement had been high throughout the conflict, albeit in an (arguably) obstructive way. Following the signing of the Dayton Peace Accord in December 1995, a new leaf was turned – the UK played a key role on the Peace Implementation Council and contributed British troops to the NATO-led international peace-keeping forces – the Implementation Force (IFOR) and the subsequent Stabilisation Force (SFOR) and European Union Military Force (EUFOR). Dame Pauline Neville-Jones was

Table 3: Balkans refugee and migrant groups in the UK

Country	Main arrival dates	Estimated population	Main areas of residence
BiH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1992–95 • Smaller numbers since 1995 	8,000–10,000	Greater London: Brent, Hounslow, Hammersmith Outside London: Birmingham, Derby, Coventry, Desbury
Kosovo (Kosovar Albanians)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small numbers through 1990s • 1999 • Small numbers since 2000 	50,000 (rough estimate)	Greater London: North-west (Kilburn/Swiss Cottage/West Hampstead and Finchley Road), west (Hounslow) and north-east (Haringey) Outside London: Birmingham, Manchester, Yorkshire
Serbia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1947–50 • 1980 • Mid- to late 1990s • Smaller numbers since late 1990s 	70,000	Greater London: West (Hammersmith and Fulham, Shepherd's Bush, Acton), Camden, Westminster Outside London: Midlands, Yorkshire, Lancashire, Bradford, Oxford
Croatia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very small numbers since 1970s 	7,500	Greater London: Mainly longer-settled and dispersed migrants rather than refugees
All (Roma)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smaller numbers throughout 1990s and 2000s 	Not known	Location also not known precisely but a number of them live in London

a key negotiator at Dayton, while the former Liberal Democrat leader Lord Paddy Ashdown served as High Representative for BiH during 2002–06. The presence of UK troops gradually reduced, and in 2007 the last British Battalion left Banja Luka.

Partly due to its guilt over its role in resisting early international intervention in Bosnia, the UK took a much more proactive stance as the Kosovo crisis deepened in 1998. The UK government led many of the diplomatic initiatives to negotiate peace and then actively supported and participated in the three-month NATO bombing campaign of Serbian and Kosovan targets in 1999, which brought the conflict to an end. In total, it is estimated that the UK contributed 960 million euros in response to the Kosovo crisis, including through its troop contributions to NATO- and UN-led peace-keeping and stabilisation forces, its diplomatic efforts and its contributions to humanitarian reconstruction in 1999–2000.¹⁵

In the aftermath of the Balkans conflicts, the UK established aid programmes in the region to contribute to reconstruction and development. Between 1992 and 2008, UK bilateral aid to BiH totalled £80 million,¹⁶ but UK development assistance has gradually reduced and DFID will close its aid programme in BiH in 2011. The UK established an aid programme in Kosovo in 1999 focused on emergency assistance and then governance. In 2008–09, the total UK bilateral aid to Kosovo was £17.7 million and, for the time being, the UK has committed to continue its aid programme in Kosovo.¹⁷ The UK has also given smaller amounts of aid to Serbia in the aftermath of the conflict, focused mainly in the area of governance, and amounting to £2.9 million in 2008–09.¹⁸

Increased UK engagement in the Balkans since the 1990s is also reflected through the engagement of British MPs, both via the All Party Parliamentary Bosnia Group, Friends of Kosovo Group, Group on Serbia and Group on Croatia and through individual links. A range of UK-based international NGOs have significant programme in the Balkans (e.g. Oxfam, Christian Aid, Save the Children, World Vision) and several universities have established research programmes on the region (e.g. London School of Economics, University College London and Bradford). Many other UK citizens have also engaged with the region, for example through student groups and charitable work. In terms of commercial connections, there were traditionally well-established business linkages between the UK and Serbia, which have been revived with a number of UK-based companies having offices in Serbia and a steady increase of UK exports to Serbia. The UK also exports to Croatia and BiH, but is not a main trading partner of any of the Balkans nations.

In terms of migrants and refugees from the Balkans in the UK, the Serbian community is the longest established in the UK, with steady numbers of Serbians arriving here from the end of 1945. This was due mainly to those fleeing the rise to power of the Communists, as well as to professionals coming to the UK to study and progress their careers – especially in the 1980s. The 1992–95 and 1998–99 wars in BiH and Kosovo triggered the arrival of Bosniacs, Kosovar Albanians, Roma (and some Serbs) in the UK, both as independent asylum seekers and through UNHCR’s Government 1000 programme, which brought survivors of concentration camps and those in refugee camps to the UK. Most were eventually granted exceptional or indefinite leave to remain (ELR, and ILR, respectively) or full refugee status, including through the Asylum Amnesty announced by the British Government in 2003. On the whole refugees from the region, especially Kosovar Albanians, have been met with sympathy by the British media and public, and their resettlement and integration in the UK is considered quite successful. Several thousand refugees from the Balkans have also returned to the region, with the assistance of the International Organization of Migration (IOM).

Migrants and refugees living in the UK have set up a variety of civil society organisations, including community organisations, business associations, and advocacy groups. Some organisations are focused on bringing about peace and development in the Balkans region through funding community projects, supporting business linkages and engaging in political advocacy (e.g. Bosnia Appeal). There have also been efforts by all these countries’ governments to engage their diaspora in development in the region. The BiH World Diaspora was formally set up in 2001 and has its headquarters in Birmingham. Other organisations have focused their energies on supporting refugees in the UK. For example, we identified around 30 BiH community organisations in the UK, over a dozen Kosovar Albanian/Albanian organisations and dozens of Serbian organisations. These organisations variously focus on providing welfare, educational and cultural services (e.g. Bosnia and Herzegovina Community Advice Centres, Albanian Youth Action) and opportunities for social networking (e.g. Croatian Students and Young Professionals Network) and information exchange (e.g. *Britic* – the British Serbian Magazine). Some of the bigger organisations have activities focused both in the UK and on the Balkans region (e.g. Serbian Society or Serbian City Club).

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