

Catalysts of Conflict: How Refugee Crises Lead to the Spread of Civil War

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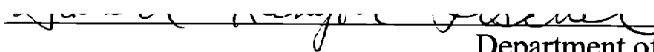
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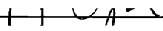
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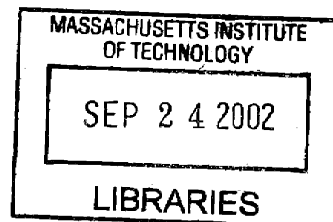
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ABSTRACT

The spread of civil war due to refugee crises has occurred repeatedly throughout history. In some refugee crises, the sending state pursues the refugees, subjecting them to military attack. In other cases, militant exiles use the refugee camps as rear bases in their attacks on the sending state. As the cross-border attacks escalate, the risk of international war grows. The refugee crisis spawned by the 1994 genocide in Rwanda provides the most extreme example of this phenomenon. The militant actions of the Rwandan Hutu refugees in Zaire eventually sparked two international wars that led to further massive population displacement in the region.

The recurring pattern of violent refugee crises, prompts the following three questions: 1) How widespread is the phenomenon of political violence involving refugees? 2) Under what conditions do refugee crises cause a civil war to spread across borders? 3) What role can international actors, such as the United Nations or the United States government, play in preventing the spread of violence? To answer the above questions, this dissertation presents new time series data on refugee-related political violence and also systematically compares violent and non-violent crises involving Rwandan, Bosnian, and Afghan refugees.

This dissertation advances a political explanation for the spread of civil war in refugee crises and tests it against the prevailing socioeconomic explanation. According to the political explanation, three factors combine to cause the spread of civil war. 1) Strong political cohesion among the group before exile determines initial refugee militancy. 2) A refugee hosting state that lacks the capability and/or willingness to secure borders and demilitarize refugees facilitates the spread of war. 3) Third party states and non-state actors that intentionally or inadvertently contribute resources to combatants expand the conflict. The humanitarian assistance literature and the policy community routinely offer socioeconomic explanations that ignore the political context of the crisis. According to those explanations, camps near the border, large populations in camps, the presence of bored young men, and poor living conditions cause cross-border violence. This dissertation finds that none of those four socioeconomic propositions satisfactorily explain the spread of civil war.

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Chapter 1

Introduction:

Refugees and Political Violence

I. Introduction

“Increasingly refugees are equated with threats to national and regional security...many refugee hosting countries have legitimate security concerns, including cross-border incursions, militarization of refugee camps, and the fear of conflicts spilling over from neighboring refugee-producing countries...”

--Human Rights Watch, December 2000¹

Every year, millions of people flee their homes in order to escape internal conflict. Often the resulting refugee crisis leads to an expansion of violence, rather than an escape. In some instances, the sending state pursues the refugees, subjecting them to military attack.² In other cases, militant exiles use the refugee camps as rear bases in their attacks on the sending state. As the cross-border attacks escalate, the risk of international war grows. Eventually, region-wide destabilization may result as more states are drawn in to

¹ Human Rights Watch, “UNHCR at 50: What Future for Refugee Protection?” Dec. 12, 2000, 6-7. Found at: <http://www.hrw.org/campaigns/refugees/>.

² The term *sending state* refers to the country from which the refugees fled. *Receiving state* describes the country that hosts the refugees.

the conflict. Since the early 1990s, refugee crises in Central Africa, West Africa, the Balkans, and Indonesia have led to the international spread of internal conflict.³

This recurring pattern of violent refugee crises, such as the recent outflows from Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Kosovo, and Timor, prompts the following three questions: 1) How widespread is the phenomenon of refugee-related violence? 2) Under what conditions do refugee crises cause a civil war to spread across borders? 3) What role can international actors, such as the United Nations or the United States government, play in preventing the spread of civil war? By answering those three questions, this dissertation offers new ideas about the causes of conflict and the protection of refugees.

The spread of civil war due to refugee crises has occurred, or threatened to occur, numerous times throughout history and around the globe. A recent United States government analysis reckons that “the recent military interventions in Fiji and Cote d’Ivoire; ethnic conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, the former Soviet Union, eastern Indonesia, and Democratic Republic of the Congo; and the Arab-Israeli dispute have resulted in part from large-scale migration and refugee flows.” This analysis also predicts that migration to less developed countries will continue to “upset ethnic balances and contribute to conflict or violent regime change.”⁴ At present, 14 million refugees have found shelter in about 120 states. Trends since 1987 suggest that 30 to 50 percent of these refugee populations will experience some form of political violence, affecting about 20 refugee-receiving states (see Chapter 2).

³ The Secretary General of the United Nations recently stated that “the potential for large population flows, mixed with armed elements, to destabilize entire regions and, eventually, to ignite an international conflict has been sadly demonstrated by events in West Africa and the Great Lakes region.” United Nations, Security Council, “Report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict,” S/2001/331. March 30, 2001, par. 34.

⁴ National Intelligence Estimate, “Growing Global Migration and Its Implications for the United States,” NIE 2001-02D, March 2001, 25, 4.

Despite the history of violence, however, scholars, policy makers and humanitarian aid workers have only recently expressed concern about so-called “refugee-warriors.” In the decades after the Second World War, attempts to prevent conflict caused by refugees were politically unpopular with the great powers:

Since refugees were often regarded as part of an armed struggle in the cold war the question of demilitarizing camps did not arise... It would not be too great an exaggeration to say that in many circumstances UNHCR and NGOs were instruments of the United States and its allies for coping with the humanitarian consequences of cold war conflicts.⁵

In the 1980s the United States supported and armed Afghan refugees in Pakistan as they fought the Soviet-backed regime in Kabul. In Africa, international agencies continued to supply aid to refugees who sought to topple white dominated governments in southern Africa. These refugees were seen as victims—rather than perpetrators—of violence and their struggles against communism and apartheid were viewed as legitimate.

The turning point in the perception of refugee involvement in violence occurred during the refugee crisis spawned by the genocide in Rwanda. In 1994, after organizing the mass killing of hundreds of thousands of Tutsi, the Rwandan Hutu leadership forced over a million Hutu into eastern Zaire and western Tanzania. From the sprawling refugee camps in Zaire, the genocidal Hutu leadership re-energized. Militant leaders extorted humanitarian aid from the refugees, recruited and trained new combatants, stockpiled weapons, and launched cross-border raids into Rwanda. The actions of the exiles eventually sparked two international wars that drew in over a dozen states and rebel groups. This conflict has killed up to three million people and led to further massive population displacement in the region.

⁵ Myron Weiner, “The Clash of Norms: Dilemmas in Refugee Policies,” *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 11, 4 (1998), 9.

The humanitarian fiasco in the Great Lakes region kindled an awareness of the military and political implications of refugee crises. Freed from Cold War politics, policy makers are now more receptive to the idea of reducing military activity affecting refugees. At the same time however, the great powers have also lost interest in many developing countries and are unwilling to commit resources to demilitarize refugee areas. Basically, the end of the East-West ideological conflict “deprived refugees of any political clout.”⁶ As the United States, Russia, and former colonial powers disengage from many conflicts in the developing world, humanitarian agencies often remain the only international presence during a refugee crisis. Thus, the increased attention to refugee-related violence has not resulted in a political and/or military commitment to ending such conflict, raising the risk that civil wars will continue to spread across borders.⁷

The remainder of this chapter lays the groundwork for the presentation of my large-n dataset and the case studies. Section II presents the central argument of the dissertation and its policy implications. The next section demonstrates that the current international relations and refugee studies literature has not explained the spread of civil war in refugee crises. Section IV clarifies the concepts essential to this study: refugee, militarized refugee populations, political violence involving refugees, and the spread of civil war. The final section describes the time series data and provides the rationale for the selection of cases.

⁶ Colleen Barry, “Escape from Political or Ethnic Unrest Often Puts Refugees in Further Danger,” The Associated Press, May 17, 1994.

⁷ The United Nations has warned, “...Unless refugee problems are managed in a consistent and predictable manner, then there is a considerable risk that the presence of refugees will have a destabilizing impact, both on countries of asylum and countries of origin.” OAU/UNHCR, *Regional Meeting on Refugee Issues in the Great Lakes*, Kampala, Uganda, May 8-9, 1998.

II. Refugees as Catalysts: The Central Argument

My research advances a political explanation for the spread of civil war in refugee crises and compares it to the prevailing socioeconomic explanation. Three attributes of the political context influence whether a refugee crisis will cause war to spread. These attributes are: the origin of the refugee crisis, the policy of the receiving state, and the influence of external state and non-state actors. The humanitarian assistance literature and the policy community routinely offer socioeconomic explanations that ignore the political context of the crisis. According to these explanations, camps near the border, large populations in camps, the presence of bored young men, and poor living conditions cause cross-border violence.⁸ In fact, none of those four socioeconomic propositions satisfactorily explain the spread of civil war.

The socioeconomic explanations mistakenly disregard the *origins* of the refugee crisis, focusing instead on the *characteristics* of the refugee situation. Yet the origin of the refugee crisis directly influences the refugees' level of political and military organization. Based on the cause of their flight, I categorize refugees into three groups: 1) situational refugees, 2) persecuted refugees, and 3) state-in-exile refugees. 1) Situational refugees flee their homes in order to escape the intolerable conditions and general destruction wrought by civil war, not due to specific persecution or any premeditated strategy. Such refugees are less likely than other groups to organize for political or military purposes. 2) A second type of refugee population flees due to direct persecution or oppression, rather than general chaos. These persecuted refugees escape ethnic

⁸ For enunciation of the conventional explanations, see United Nations Security Council, "Report of the Secretary-General on Protection for Humanitarian Assistance to Refugees and Others in Conflict Situations," S/1998/883, New York, Sept. 22, 1998, section E; and International Council of Voluntary Agencies, "Refugee Camps on the Border: A Recipe for Disaster in West Africa," Dec. 22, 2000.

cleansing, genocide, or other oppressive policies that target them on the basis of ethnic, religious, language, or political affiliations. The coalescing event of group persecution can facilitate political or military organization among the refugees and possible cross-border violence. 3) The third refugee group is actually a state-in-exile. This group contains political and military leaders who, in some cases, organized the refugee crisis as a strategy to avoid defeat in civil war. State-in-exile groups have the highest propensity for political violence.

Among violence-prone persecuted refugees or a state-in-exile, the role of the receiving state determines whether or not war will spread. The policy of the receiving state can be analyzed according to two factors—capability and will. A capable receiving state is able to secure its borders and demilitarize the refugees. The will of the receiving state refers to the state's desire to prevent violence. The spread of civil war is likely in situations where a capable receiving state is allied with militant refugees or where an incapable receiving state cannot control militarism. Conversely, a highly capable receiving state, with no sympathy for the refugees' militant aims, can forestall the spread of civil war.

The interference of external actors often tips the balance of capability to favor the refugees or the sending state, thus prompting one or the other to instigate violence. For example, a powerful donor state may pressure the receiving state to allow refugee militarization. Non-state actors, such as United Nations agencies and NGOs, also increase the capability of militant refugees by indiscriminately distributing humanitarian assistance. Militants then use the aid to feed combatants and procure weapons. External

parties can discourage the spread of war by strengthening the receiving state's capability to police its borders and demilitarize the refugee camps.

The findings from the case studies inform policy to prevent or manage the spread of conflict. By comparing violent and non-violent situations, the case studies pinpoint the attributes of refugee crises that affect the propensity for civil war to spread across borders. Currently, policy makers formulate reactions to refugee-related violence on an ad hoc basis, constrained by lack of resources and information. With better information on the causes and characteristics of political violence involving refugees, humanitarian agencies and governments can better target their efforts at prevention.

The findings also confront policy challenges and contradictions raised by refugee-related violence, especially those involving international humanitarian organizations. In many cases, aid agencies view as irrelevant military activity that does not directly impinge on their activities among the refugees. Because of this myopia, humanitarian agencies do not always condemn militarized refugee groups, enabling them to reap the benefits of international aid. In many cases, aid workers ignore the militarization as long as the weapons and military training occur out of their sight. During the Rwandan refugee crisis in 1994, the chief executive of the charity CARE, Charles Tapp, publicly resigned himself to the fact that "we are going to be feeding people who have been perpetrating genocide."⁹ Facing the reality of militarized camps may require the humanitarian aid community to decide between aiding both killers and refugees and aiding no one at all.¹⁰

⁹ African Rights, *Rwanda: Death, Despair, and Defiance*, (London: African Rights, 1995 revised edition), 1091.

¹⁰ Myron Weiner described this challenge: "If UNHCR closes the camps it fails to live up to its obligation to protect and assist needy refugees, but to keep the camps open is to provide assistance to human rights violators, place non-combatants at risk, and may prolong the war." Weiner, "The Clash of Norms," 5.

III. Literature on Refugees and the Spread of Civil War

Very little scholarship addresses refugees as a cause of conflict. The international relations literature has tended to ignore refugees and exiles as explanations for violence, whereas the more policy oriented or humanitarian literature focuses on refugees but usually portrays them as passive victims. The issue of the spread of conflict, especially the most extreme cases in which refugees cause an international war, clearly requires more attention.

International relations scholars usually rely on poorly specified theories to explain the spread of conflict across borders. The most well-known international relations theory on the spread of civil war is probably the domino theory, which, as Henry Kissinger argued, “was not so much wrong as it was undifferentiated.”¹¹ During the Indochina War, the domino theory posited that the victory of the communists in Vietnam would lead to the triumph of communism throughout Southeast Asia. The theory neglected to elaborate or test the mechanisms by which the spread of communism would occur.

Recent advances in the theory of civil war continue to highlight the implications of civil and ethnic wars that spill across borders, although civil war scholar Michael Brown admits that “no systemic study exists of the ways in which internal conflict engages and involves neighboring states.”¹² Most scholars agree that the international spread of internal

¹¹ Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, (New York: Touchstone, 1994), 641. On the domino theory, see Robert Jervis and Jack Snyder (eds.), *Dominoes and Bandwagons: Strategic Beliefs and Great Power Competition in the Eurasian Rimland*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); and Patrick O’Sullivan, “Dominoes or Dice: Geography and the Diffusion of Political Violence,” *The Journal of Conflict Studies*, (Fall 1996).

¹² Michael E. Brown, “Introduction,” in Brown (ed.) *The International Dimensions of Internal Conflict*, (Cambridge, MA: Center for Science and International Affairs, 1996), 25. On international relations and civil war see Barbara F. Walter and Jack Snyder (eds.), *Civil Wars, Insecurity, and Intervention*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999); Barry Posen, “The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict,” *Survival*, 35, 1 (Spring 1993), 27-47; Steven R. David, “Internal War: Causes and Cures,” *World Politics*, 49 (July 1997); Daniel Byman and Stephen Van Evera, “Why They Fight: Hypotheses on the Causes of Contemporary Deadly Conflict,” *Security Studies*, 7, 3, (Spring 1998), 1-50; Michael E. Brown, et. al.

war “is a legitimate and growing source of concern,” yet the international relations literature still rarely addresses the issue directly.¹³

In general, theories of the spread of civil war rely on vague discussions of so-called diffusion, contagion, and demonstration effects.¹⁴ Theory-building often degenerates into a laundry list of mechanisms that cause conflict. These mechanisms include ethnic ties, demonstration effects, guerillas, and refugees, among others. Commentators rarely examine and elaborate upon each mechanism, instead leaving the impression that the spread of conflict is a messy, haphazard and highly dangerous phenomenon.

In addition to vagueness about the ways in which war spreads, the concept of spread itself also lacks clarity. David Lake and Donald Rothchild provide one useful definition that distinguishes among types of spread. Most relevant to refugee flows is their concept of escalation, which occurs when foreign or external participants become involved in an internal conflict. Lake and Rothchild hypothesize that escalation can occur due to ethnic alliances across borders and from spillovers of violence that draw in neighboring states. Although they do not specifically mention refugees, one can conceive of refugees as a catalyst for escalation via ethnic ties or violent spillover.¹⁵

(eds.) *Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict*, (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1996-97); Sarah Kenyon Lischer, “Fear and Feasibility: Causes of Communal War,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 22, 4 (Nov. 1999), 331-356.

¹³ David A. Lake and Donald Rothchild, “Spreading Fear: The Genesis of Transnational Ethnic Conflict,” In Lake and Rothchild, (eds.) *The International Spread of Ethnic Conflict*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 24.

¹⁴ See for example, Timur Kuran, “Ethnic Dissimilation and Its International Diffusion,” In Lake and Rothchild (eds.), 35-60; John Vasquez, “Factors Related to the Contagion and Diffusion of International Violence,” In Manus I. Midlarsky (ed.), *The Internationalization of Communal Strife*, (London: Routledge, 1992), 149-172.

¹⁵ Lake and Rothchild, “Spreading Fear,” 30. Their analysis pinpoints information flows as the key mechanism that leads to the spread of conflict, but it fails to specify how that mechanism operates. For an empirical test of the hypothesis that ethnic kinship leads to the spread of ethnic conflict, see Will H. Moore and David R. Davis, “Transnational Ethnic Ties and Foreign Policy,” In Lake and Rothchild (eds.), 89-103.

A few international relations theories directly address refugees as a cause of conflict. For example, Michael Brown outlines five major effects that internal conflicts have on neighboring states: refugees, economics, military, instability, and war.¹⁶ On the subject of refugees as a cause of conflict, Brown refers to “swarms of refugees or fighters crashing across borders, bringing turmoil and violence with them.” This connotes a frightful image of chaotic and violent refugee camps, but does not specify the logic underlying the spread of conflict. Brown later suggests that the presence of rebels among refugees and shared ethnicity between refugees and their hosts may spark war.¹⁷

Other hypotheses more clearly focus on the role of the receiving state in causing violence. Michael McGinnis argues that the establishment of refugee camps leads to regional destabilization when the sending and receiving states allow rebel groups to operate in the refugee populated areas. Robert Mandel claims that refugees “exacerbate international anarchy” when the receiving state supports and encourages the refugees’ military aims. These general hypotheses do not delineate the conditions that lead to alliances between the receiving state and the refugees. They also do not address the motivation for the formation of a militant refugee group, taking as given the presence of such groups.¹⁸

The explosion of writing about humanitarian disasters and intervention has also prompted replies by international relations theorists.¹⁹ Responding to popular calls for

¹⁶ Brown, *International Dimensions*, 591.

¹⁷ Brown, *International Dimensions*, quote p. 579.

¹⁸ Michael D. McGinnis, “Reciprocal Destabilization: A Two-Level Security Dilemma Involving Rebellions, Refugees, and Regional Conflict,” Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the International Studies Association, Feb. 21-24, 2001, Chicago, Illinois; and Robert Mandel, “Perceived Security Threat and the Global Refugee Crisis,” *Armed Forces and Society*, 24, 1 (Fall 1997), 83.

¹⁹ Examples of recent humanitarian literature include Mary B. Anderson, *Do No Harm; How Aid Can Support Peace—or War*, (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 1999); Tony Waters, *Bureaucratizing the Good Samaritan, The Limitations to Humanitarian Relief Operation*, (Boulder, CO: Westview Press,

intervention and increased humanitarian assistance, Ben Barber makes a scathing attack on humanitarian aid to refugees as a cause of war. He argues “the packed camps, protected by international sympathy and international law, provide excellent cover for guerrillas and serve as bases from which they can launch attacks.”²⁰ In a similar vein, Barry Posen focuses on the potential military responses to refugee flows and warns against underestimating the difficulty of ameliorating humanitarian disasters. He predicts that the use of military force for humanitarian purposes runs a real risk of ending in international war.²¹

The refugee studies literature does not offer systematic study of the security implications of refugee populations either, although there is growing attention to the issues of security threats and military activity. Myron Weiner confirmed that refugee flows function “both as cause and consequence of international conflict.” Similarly, Gil Loescher finds that “the activities and ambitions of the refugees themselves, as well as those of the governments of asylum and of the guerrilla movements in both sending and receiving states, are additional significant factors in the prolongation and complexity of refugee problems.” Weiner suggested that “bad neighborhoods,” or negative regional influences, explain why some regions experience a proliferation of civil and international war. He hypothesized that regional destabilization occurs when “refugees themselves become the source of conflict within or between countries.” This dissertation builds on

2001); E. Wayne Nafziger, Frances Stewart, and Raimo Vayrynen (eds.), *War, Hunger, and Displacement: The Origins of Humanitarian Emergencies*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Eric A. Belgrad and Nitza Nachmias (eds.), *The Politics of International Humanitarian Aid Operations*, (Praeger, 1997); Tony Vaux, *The Selfish Altruist: Relief Work in Famine and War*, (Earthscan Publications, 2001).

²⁰ Ben Barber, “Feeding Refugees or War,” *Foreign Affairs*, 76, 4 (July/Aug 1997), 8.

²¹ Barry Posen, “Military Responses to Refugee Disasters,” *International Security*, 21, 1 (Summer 1996), 79.

Weiner's hypothesis by explaining the conditions under which refugees become a source of conflict.²²

Within the refugee studies literature, there are two competing explanations of refugee-related violence, neither of which adequately explains the spread of civil war. The first explanation is presented in an early work by Zolberg, Suhrke, and Aguayo in which they discuss militarized refugees—what they term a “refugee-warrior community.”²³ Zolberg, et. al. argue that one must study the original refugee-creating conflict in order to understand later outcomes in the refugee camps. Building on the concept of refugee-warriors, Howard Adelman theorizes that the phenomenon of militarized refugees occurs when the international community fails to provide a remedy to a refugee crisis. Adelman explicitly negates the thesis proposed by Zolberg, et. al. which states that refugee warriors are a product of the original conflict that created the refugee flow.²⁴ These two explanations make more sense if they are understood as complementary rather than competing. Zolberg et. al. best explain the initial militancy of a refugee group. Adelman's focus on the international response to the crisis over time better explains later stages of the conflict.

Overall, two serious flaws damage the current explanations for refugee involvement in political violence. First, for the most part, they derive only from the study

²² Myron Weiner, “Introduction: Security, Stability, and International Migration,” In Weiner (ed.), *International Migration and Security*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993), 3; Gil Loescher, *Refugee Movements and International Security*, (London: Brassey's for IISS, 1992), 41; Myron Weiner, “Bad Neighbors, Bad Neighborhoods, An Inquiry into the Causes of Refugee Flows,” *International Security*, 21, 1 (Summer 1996), 28.

²³ Aristide R. Zolberg, Astri Suhrke, Sergio Aguayo, *Escape from Violence*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 275-278.

²⁴ Howard Adelman, “Why Refugee Warriors Are Threats,” *The Journal of Conflict Studies*, (Spring 1998), 49-69. For another analysis of Adelman, see Peter Nyers, “Refugee Warriors and World Disorder,” Paper presented at the International Studies Association Annual International Convention, New Orleans, LA. March 26, 2002

of violence, yet they generalize about all refugee populations indiscriminately.²⁵ Additionally, most research does not differentiate among the types of refugee-related violence, lumping together theft, banditry, and international war, for example. By studying situations that avoided refugee-related violence, and by clarifying the types of violent outcomes, I am able to present a more generalizable explanation for the spread of civil war due to refugee crises.

IV. A Typology of Refugee-Related Violence

Before advancing any further, it is necessary to explain a number of essential concepts. These concepts are: refugee, militarization, political violence, and the spread of civil war.

The definition of a refugee leads to much dispute between various national governments, international agencies and NGOs.²⁶ I include in my study people who have achieved refugee status according to the criteria of either UNHCR or the US Committee for Refugees (USCR).²⁷ The 1951 UN Refugee Convention defines a refugee as:

[Any person who]...owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country.²⁸

²⁵ For exceptions to the tendency to over-generalize, see discussions on refugee-warriors in Zolberg, et. al., *Escape from Violence*, 275-278; and Adelman, "Why Refugee Warriors are Threats." Also see the discussion of "active" versus "passive" refugees in Matthews, "Refugees and Stability in Africa," 67-72.

²⁶ For a discussion of the definition of refugee, see Jennifer Hyndman, *Managing Displacement*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 6-14; Zolberg, et. al., *Escape From Violence*, Chapter 1, "Who Is a Refugee?" 3-33; and Susanne Schmeidl, "From Root Cause Assessment to Preventive Diplomacy: Possibilities and Limitations of the Early Warning of Forced Migration" (Ph.D. diss., Ohio State University, 1995), Ch. 2.

²⁷ It is necessary to use both organizations' definitions because there are a few areas in which they do not overlap. For example, USCR counts Palestinians as refugees, whereas UNHCR excludes them from its statistics. For the most part, both agencies use similar criteria. For a detailed discussion of the differences, see Schmeidl, "From Root Cause Assessment to Preventive Diplomacy," Appendix B.

²⁸ United Nations, "1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees," Article 1.

That definition, written in the context of the post-World War II European refugees, has been broadened by regional organizations, such as the Organization for African Unity (OAU). The OAU definition includes groups of people who are fleeing war or persecution.²⁹ Most refugees from civil wars fall under the broadened definition in which each individual does not have to prove persecution by the government. This dissertation does not include groups that have not received refugee status (e.g. rejected Vietnamese asylum-seekers in Hong Kong), groups who have had their refugee status revoked (e.g. Namibian exiles after Namibia achieved independence), or internally displaced persons.³⁰

Intrinsic to my concept of refugee, however, is the idea that non-refugees often live among the refugees and also depend on international humanitarian assistance.³¹ For example, military elements lived among the Rwandan refugees in Zaire and Tanzania, the Afghan refugees in Pakistan, and the Cambodian refugees in Thailand. The aid agencies and donors did not treat the refugees differently from the other exiles, enabling the non-civilians to benefit from the refugee crisis. Additionally, non-refugees, in the strict sense of the term, sometimes receive refugee status for political reasons.

Another essential concept is political violence involving refugees. Political violence, as distinguished from criminal violence, consists of organized violent activity for political goals. Although political *activity* occurs in many, if not most, refugee

²⁹ The OAU convention also distinguishes between “a refugee who seeks a peaceful and normal life and a person fleeing his country for the sole purpose of fomenting subversion from outside.” OAU, *Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa*, 1969.

³⁰ For more on the exclusion and cessation clauses that deny refugee status, see the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner’s Programme, “Note on the Exclusion Clauses,” and “Note on the Cessation Clauses,” May 30, 1997.

³¹ The UN Refugee Convention excludes from refugee status any person who “has committed a crime against peace, a war crime, or a crime against humanity,” or who “has been guilty of acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.” In reality, these provisions are difficult to enforce and rarely observed. See United Nations, “1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees,” Chapter 1, General Provisions, Article 1.

populated areas, political *violence* involving refugees occurs less often and can range from sporadic riots or beatings to full-fledged war. Incidents of political violence, also termed refugee-related violence, include cross-border raids by militias based in or near refugee camps, attacks on the refugee population by the sending state, and military activity by the receiving state targeted against the refugee populated area.

Political violence often occurs in the context of a militarized refugee population. Militarization describes non-civilian attributes of refugee populated areas, including inflows of weapons, military training and recruitment. Militarization also includes actions of refugees and/or exiles who engage in non-civilian activity outside the refugee camp, yet who depend on assistance from refugees or international organizations.³² Refugees or exiles who store arms and train outside the camp, yet return to the camp for food, medical assistance, and family visits, create a militarized refugee population. It follows that demilitarization entails the delinking of the refugee populated area from military actors and military activity and respect by all parties (i.e. refugees, receiving state government, and any external interveners) for international law relating to the protection of refugees.³³

Current studies of refugee-related violence rarely specify the type of violence that occurs.³⁴ The generalization about violent outcomes assumes similar causes of all violence and assigns the same importance to all refugee-related violence. Clearly,

³² The term exiles refers to people, including soldiers and war criminals, who left their country of origin but who do not qualify for refugee status. Exiles and refugees may live indistinguishably in camps, as they did in Zaire after the exodus from Rwanda. Addressing the difficulty of dealing with militarized populations, the UN Secretary General observes that “the existence of part-time combatants-farmer by day, fighter by night-and the provision by civilians of basic help and shelter to combatants further obscure the issue.” United Nations Security Council, “Report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict,” S/2001/331, March 30, 2001, par. 32.

³³ International law requires the protection of refugees and prohibits refugee participation in destabilizing activity. See the “1951 Convention,” Chapter I, General Provisions, Article 1 and the OAU Convention.

³⁴ For an exception, see Myron Weiner’s classification of refugee-related security threats in Weiner, “Security, Stability, and International Migration,” *International Security*, 17, 3 (Winter 1992/93), 103-120.

however, qualitative and quantitative differences exist between incidents of theft, banditry, rioting, and international war. Each type of violence is likely to have different causes and cures.

Political violence involving refugees manifests itself in five possible types (see Box 1.1). The first, and most common, outcome is a violent cross-border attack between the sending state and the refugees. Examples include the repeated bombing raids by South Africa against suspected African National Congress (ANC) refugees in Angola and Botswana during the 1980s and the Rwandan Hutu militia raids on Rwanda from their bases in the refugee camps of eastern Zaire.³⁵ The second type of violence arises due to conflict between the refugees and the receiving state. An example is the fighting between Palestinian refugees and the Jordanian government that nearly led to civil war in the early 1970s. Third, ethnic or factional violence that erupts among refugees can spread conflict to the receiving state. For example, fighting between rival Burundian Hutu groups in the camps in western Tanzania has repeatedly threatened Tanzania's security since the early 1990s. Fourth, the arrival of refugees may spark internal conflict in the receiving state by creating an unstable ethnic balance that encourages a previously oppressed minority to confront the state. During the NATO war in Kosovo, many observers predicted that the presence of thousands of ethnic Albanian refugees in Macedonia could lead to civil war by upsetting the delicate balance between Slavs and Albanians. The fifth type of violence occurs when refugees operate as catalysts for interstate war or unilateral intervention. For

³⁵ For more examples, see E.-E. Mtango, "Military and Armed Attacks on Refugee Camps," In Gil Loescher and Laila Monahan (eds.), *Refugees and International Relations*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 87-121.

example, the 1994 United States intervention in Haiti occurred, in part, to prevent the arrival of thousands of refugees on Florida's shores.³⁶

Box 1.1

Political Violence Involving Refugees

- Attacks between the sending state and the refugees
- Attacks between the receiving state and the refugees
- Ethnic or factional violence among the refugees
- Internal violence within the receiving state
- Interstate war or unilateral intervention

Although this dissertation offers analysis of all five types of political violence involving refugees, the case studies focus specifically on refugee-related violence that leads to the spread of civil war.³⁷ Attacks between the sending state and the refugees have the highest risk of escalating into international war between the sending and receiving state, as well as external powers. Additionally, sending state/refugee violence occurs with more frequency and intensity than any of the other types of violence (see Chapter 2).

The concept of the spread of civil war encompasses at least five possible scenarios (see Box 1.2). The first two scenarios deal with the initial stages of spread, before the violence pulls in other states. At this point, refugees attack the sending state or vice versa. In each case, the victim of the attacks may or may not respond in kind. If the attacks continue, growing in frequency and/or intensity, the conflict is likely to enlarge beyond the original adversaries.

³⁶ Transcript of President Clinton's Radio Address to the Nation, Sept. 17, 1994.

³⁷ However, I address other forms of violence when they are present in a case study; often more than one type occurs.

Box 1.2

The Spread of Civil War

I. Spread: Violence crosses national borders

- Refugees attack sending state
- Sending state attacks refugees

II. Escalation: Violence pulls in other states

- Receiving state attacks sending state
- Receiving state invades sending state
- Sending state invades receiving state

The second stage of spread, which I term escalation, occurs when the violence pulls in other states, usually the receiving state. At the lowest level of escalation, the receiving state responds to the cross-border violence with attacks against the sending state. The receiving state may attack the sending state openly or may channel resources to the refugees in order to facilitate attacks. In the 1980s, Pakistan allowed military aid to reach the Afghan camps because the Pakistani government supported the exiles against the Kabul government. The conflict escalates even further if the receiving state invades the sending state due to the refugee crisis. The receiving state may invade in order to expel the refugees or may invade in alliance with the refugees.³⁸ For example, Tanzania, allied with dissident Ugandan refugees, invaded Uganda in 1979 and toppled the brutal Idi Amin regime. The receiving state may also covertly or overtly back a refugee invasion of the sending state, without sending its own troops. Such a scenario occurred when Uganda supported the Rwandan Patriotic Front invasion of Rwanda in 1990.

³⁸ In the case of an invasion to expel the refugees, the refugees are often not really involved in the violence, although their presence has caused it.

The third escalation scenario happens when the sending state invades the receiving state. The sending state may invade if it perceives that the receiving state is allied with the refugees and threatens its security. If the receiving state is weak, the sending state may view the refugee crisis as an opportunity to achieve political or military goals. The invasion will eliminate the threat of the refugees, and may allow the sending state to manipulate its neighbor's government. The Rwandan invasion of Zaire stemmed from both of the above reasons.

V. Methods

I employ a variety of methods in order to answer the central questions framed earlier in this chapter. Unlike past studies of refugees and violence that focus exclusively on cases of extreme violence, this study examines in equal measure violent and non-violent situations. By allowing a variation in levels of violence, one can examine a wider range of factors that might contribute to the spread of civil war. With the creation of a large-n data set, the research addresses the question of the frequency and nature of refugee-related violence. A series of case studies consider the causes of such violence and the policy implications.

Large-n Analysis

Lack of information about the nature and extent of refugee-related violence has long hindered research on refugees and cross-border conflict. Conventional wisdom maintains that the post-Cold War period has led to an alarming surge in refugee violence. According to much of the humanitarian assistance literature, refugee camps have become

more violence prone during the last decade.³⁹ Beyond anecdotal evidence, however, very little scholarship exists to document the level or intensity of refugee involvement in political violence. Because of a few high profile events—like the refugee crisis and ensuing international wars in eastern Zaire—more attention has focused on the destabilizing effects of refugees. Despite the increased attention, observers do not know whether refugee violence is a growing or shrinking phenomenon and which groups and states are most affected.

In order to remedy this gap in knowledge, I created a new data set that determines the frequency, intensity, persistence, and type of refugee involvement in violence. The data set draws on internal and public documents from the UNHCR, country reports from the US Committee for Refugees (USCR), and New York Times articles that cover a twelve-year period from 1987 to 1998. The data consists of a series of tables that categorize levels of political violence, by year and by country. From the time series data, I can generalize more accurately about the nature of refugee involvement in political violence.

Surprisingly, my results indicate that current discussions of refugee-related violence have been taking place under false assumptions. My data corrects the common misperception that refugee-related violence is on the rise. Articulating the conventional view, the Secretary-General of the United Nations has lamented “the *ever more* violent and volatile environments in which refugees, displaced persons and other victims of conflicts find themselves.”⁴⁰ In fact, the last decade has not produced more refugee-

³⁹ See, for example, Jeff Crisp, “Africa’s Refugees: Patterns, Problems and Policy Challenges,” (Geneva: UNHCR) *New Issues in Refugee Research* Working paper series, no. 28, Aug. 2000.

⁴⁰ United Nations Security Council, “Report of the Secretary-General on Protection for Humanitarian Assistance,” par. 2. Italics added.

related violence; rather the nature of the violence and its location has changed. The new trend is smaller refugee groups becoming more involved in political violence, especially in Africa. The changing nature of violence has also put aid workers more at risk than in the past.

The time series data helps identify appropriate and interesting case studies by highlighting patterns in refugee-related violence—such as cases with counter-intuitive findings. Because the data includes both violent and non-violent situations, over space and time, I can pinpoint cases of unexpected variation. For example, the data set shows that the nearly two million Rwandan refugees who fled to Zaire, Tanzania, and Burundi in 1994 experienced wide variation in level and type of refugee-related violence. Further examination through in-depth case studies helps uncover the reasons behind that variation.

Case Studies

In addition to the large-n study, the dissertation includes analysis of a series of case studies that examine both violent and non-violent outcomes. Because of the remarkable constancy of background factors in my case studies, I am able to use John Stuart Mill's "Method of Difference."⁴¹ This method looks at situations with varying outcomes (violent and non-violent) and variation in the causal factors. In order to achieve constancy in all other factors, I pair cases of refugee groups from the same conflict, over time and/or space. The case studies also compare refugee groups from different conflicts in the same receiving state (see Chart 1.1). The technique of pairing controls

⁴¹ For more on this method, see Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 36.

for extraneous differences among the cases, while still allowing variation on the independent and dependent variables. Within and between the paired case studies, I evaluate the explanations for the causes of violence. Chapter 3 elaborates on those explanations.

Case studies include the following pairings:

- *Rwandan Hutu refugees in Tanzania and Zaire, 1994-1996; and Burundian Hutu Refugees in Tanzania, 1990s.*

Immediately following the 1994 genocide of up to 800,000 Tutsis, the leaders of the genocide urged nearly two million Rwandan Hutu to flee the country. Roughly 1.2 million refugees ended up in eastern Zaire and another 500,000 established camps in western Tanzania. From the camps in Zaire, militant leaders established a state-in-exile and trained soldiers and militia members for the overthrow of the new Rwandan regime. The threat posed by the militarized camps led to the Rwandan invasion of Zaire and forceful dismantling of the camps in late 1996. The international war first spawned by the refugee crisis continues to defy all attempts at political or military settlements. By contrast, the Tanzanian camps presented a much lower threat to regional stability. Refugee leaders were unable to militarize the camps to anywhere near the same degree as in Zaire. An essential question for this dissertation is why refugees from the same conflict produced such different outcomes.

The central Africa case studies also allow for a comparison of refugees from different conflicts within the same receiving state. In contrast to the Rwandan refugees in Tanzania, the presence of over 300,000 Burundian refugees has repeatedly led to cross-border violence between Burundi and Tanzania in which their

armies have mobilized along the border. The Burundian government accuses Tanzania of allowing militants to operate in the refugee camps and factions within Burundi threaten to cross the border to eradicate the threat from the camps. The comparison between Rwandan and Burundian refugees illuminates how differences in the sending state (and the conflicts therein) and the policy of the receiving state toward different groups of refugees can influence outcomes.

- *Afghan refugees in Pakistan and Iran, 1980s.*

During the Cold War, the United States actively supported military activity involving refugees opposed to communist regimes, such as the Afghan refugees in Pakistan. Like the African cases, the situations of Afghan refugees in Pakistan and Iran provide variation in levels of violence. With Pakistan's connivance, the United States spent billions of dollars supporting military activity among the three million Afghan refugees in Pakistan. The low level of military activity among the two million Afghan refugees in Iran provides a stark contrast to the violence in Pakistan. The Afghan comparisons allow for variation over time (comparing the Cold War past to the current crises) and space (comparing Pakistan and Iran).

- *Velika Kladusa Muslims in Bosnia, 1994 and 1995*

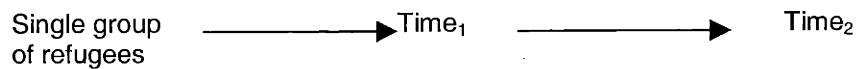
During the war in Bosnia, a renegade group of Bosnian Muslims, led by Fikret Abdic, challenged the Sarajevo government. During the course of the war, a group of 30,000 of Abdic's followers became refugees twice. The first time, they organized an army of about 10,000 fighters and retook their hometown, with military help from the Serbs. The second time the Bosnians were expelled, the Croatian Special Police disarmed them and the refugees peacefully returned home or resettled in third countries after

the signing of the Dayton Accords. This case study offers an examination of the same refugee group over time and controls for variables related to history and culture.

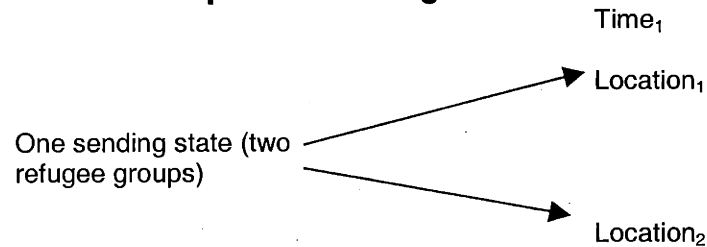
Chart 1.1

Paired Case Studies

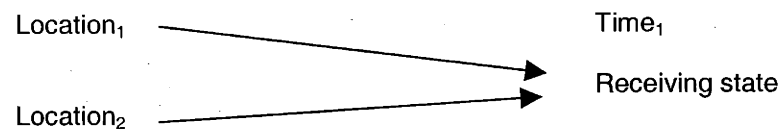
Compare Across Time—Refugee Group Constant



Compare Across Space—Sending State Constant



Compare Across Space—Receiving State Constant



Sources of information for the case studies include field observation, interviews, archival research, and secondary sources. Much of the data for the cases draws on interviews with UNHCR staff, NGOs (local and international), government officials and refugees. The research also relies on archival research of both internal and public documents at UNHCR headquarters in Geneva and the Refugee Studies Centre at Oxford University.

The rest of this dissertation is organized to answer the three questions presented at the beginning of this chapter. Chapter 2 addresses the question: how widespread is the phenomenon of refugee-related violence. In answering that question the chapter challenges the conventional wisdom and presents the results of the time series data. The following chapter compares the political and socioeconomic explanations for the spread of civil war due to refugees. That chapter categorizes refugee populations according to their propensity for violence and determines the factors that influence military activity. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 consist of the case studies described above. The case studies answer the questions: under what conditions do refugee flows cause a civil war to spread across borders. The final chapters offer a theoretical analysis of the findings and the policy implications for refugee protection and international security.

Chapter 2

Refugee-Related Violence: When? Where? How Much?

I. Challenging Popular Misconceptions

Since the mid-1990s, a few high-profile instances of refugee militarization have encouraged the common assumption of rampant and increasing political violence in most refugee camps. In discussing the Great Lakes refugee crisis, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees affirmed that “we are *increasingly* confronted, not just in this region but worldwide, with the problem of separating refugees from fighters, criminals, or even ‘genocidaires.’”¹ Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General of the United Nations concurred: “The safety of refugees has *increasingly* become a matter of international concern, as has the security of States hosting large refugee populations or having such populations near their borders.”² Like officials of international humanitarian agencies, scholars also assume that most refugees inevitably become involved in political violence. In his survey of international military interventions during the 1990s, William Shawcross

¹ Sadako Ogata, “Opening Statement” at the Regional Meeting on Refugee Issues in the Great Lakes. Sponsored by the Organization of African Unity and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Kampala, Uganda, May 8-9, 1998, emphasis added.

² Report of the Secretary-General, “The Causes of Conflict and the Promotion of Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in Africa,” UN Doc. No. A/52/87-S/1998/318, April 13, 1998, par. 53. See also, United Nations, Security Council. “Report of the Secretary-General on Protection for Humanitarian Assistance, par. 2, emphasis added.

claims that “in the eighties [the militarization of camps] had been the exception...In the nineties it became commonplace.”³

The dominant view of widespread refugee militarization is reinforced by journalists and scholars who generalize from a few notorious instances of violence: the presence of genocidal militias among the Rwandan Hutu refugees in eastern Zaire; the US backed Afghan guerillas in Pakistan; the attacks on Cambodian refugees along the Thai border; South African bombing raids against refugees and exiles in neighboring states; the massacres of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. Such violence has led to the supposition of “an apparent growth in the number of armed attacks on refugee camps and settlements.”⁴

The conventional wisdom expressed above is not based on empirical facts but on perceptions. These perceptions are wrong. Until now, there has been no systematic analysis of refugee-related violence that could determine if the phenomenon was rising or falling and how it changed over time. Studies of notorious cases of violence do not answer several essential questions concerning refugee involvement in political violence. Is the phenomenon confined to a few major cases, like Rwanda, Afghanistan, and Cambodia? Or is the problem of refugee-related violence more pervasive? How have the security threats arising from refugee situations changed over time? What regions of the world are most affected? What are the characteristics of sending and receiving states that become involved in conflict due, in part, to refugee flows? Without an understanding of those questions, theories of violence and policies for its remedy cannot advance.

³ William Shawcross, *Deliver Us From Evil: Peacekeepers, Warlords, and a World of Endless Conflict*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000), 378. See also Harto Hakovirta, “The Global Refugee Problem: A Model and Its Application,” *International Political Science Review*, 14, 1 (1993), 46-48.

⁴ Jeff Crisp, “UNHCR and Refugee Security: A Discussion Paper,” Distributed at the MIT/UNHCR Workshop on Security in Refugee Populated Areas, October 29-30, 1999, 1.

This chapter presents new time series data in order to analyze the frequency, persistence, intensity, and type of political violence involving refugees for the years 1987 to 1998. The analysis reveals a number of interesting, and surprising, trends that contradict the conventional wisdom about refugee militarization. Overall, while absolute numbers of refugees involved in political violence have decreased, the number of states affected remains constant. The difference results from smaller refugee populations becoming involved in political violence.⁵ Another significant finding contradicts the assumption that political violence affects most refugee areas. In fact, very few refugee situations experience political violence. In most years, over one hundred states host refugees, yet 95% of all refugee-related violence takes place, on average, in fewer than fifteen states.

These findings do not negate the concern expressed by policy makers and scholars about refugee-related violence, but the systematic analysis does redirect the focus of concern. The main difference between 1980s and the 1990s is that post-Cold War refugee-related violence was not condoned by a great power (i.e., the United States or Soviet Union.). This disengagement partly results from the increasing proportion of refugee-related violence in Africa—a region which the United States, in particular, does not view as a vital national security interest. Thus, post-Cold War refugee militants usually lack superpower patrons and are therefore less controllable. These changing patterns of violence over time have increased threats to regional stability, to aid workers' safety, and often to Western security interests.

⁵ The Cold War figures are so high due to a few large and violent populations, such as the 3 million Afghan refugees in Pakistan.

The following pages explain the construction of the dataset and present the results of the analysis. After defining essential terms, I explain the categories of violence captured by the dataset. The middle section of the chapter presents the results for the twelve years (1987 to 1998), comparing among the years and analyzing overall findings. The chapter concludes with the implications of the findings for understanding the causes of violence and predicting future conflict.

II. Measuring Refugee-Related Violence

This chapter presents information on refugee-related violence along four dimensions: frequency, persistence, intensity, and type. The frequency of refugee-related violence describes the number of refugees involved in political violence for a given year, in absolute terms and as a proportion of all refugees. Another measure of the frequency of violent activity is the number of receiving and sending states affected by the violence.⁶ Looking at sending and receiving states, in addition to the number of refugees, balances potentially skewed results due to a large, and very violent, refugee situation. A “refugee situation” refers to a refugee population from one sending state in one receiving state for a given year, e.g. Ethiopians in Sudan during 1989. All refugees in that situation (e.g. all Ethiopians in Sudan during 1989) are counted as involved in political violence if an incident is reported for that year. Frequency can also be analyzed in sub-categories to determine the regions or time periods most affected by violence.

In addition to frequency, the data sheds light on persistence and intensity of violence. I measure persistence as refugee situations that repeatedly experience political

⁶ The dataset counts a receiving state as affected if an incident of political violence is reported for that refugee situation. It counts a sending state as involved in refugee-related violence if an incident is reported that includes a refugee population from the sending state.

violence over time. The most persistent cases are those that have reported violence for more than half of the twelve years in the dataset. The term intensity refers to the level of the violence, measured by casualty figures and narrative descriptions of the violent incidents. This measure gives an idea of the seriousness of the violence. Unlike, persistence, the intensity of violence presents many measurement difficulties, as a result of poor reporting of casualty figures and inherent biases in the data.⁷ The data set includes all incidents of political violence, regardless of intensity—ranging from single cross-border raid on a camp to a full-scale invasion. For each year, however, it is possible to determine the cases with highest levels of violence by comparing rough casualty figures and the narrative descriptions of the violence.

In describing the type of refugee-related violence, I focus on the five outcomes described in Chapter 1: attacks between the sending state and the refugees, attacks between the receiving state and the refugees, factional conflict among refugees, internal violence within the receiving state, interstate war or unilateral intervention.⁸ Using the measures of frequency, persistence, intensity, and type, a picture of refugee-related violence emerges that alters the conventional wisdom and presents a more nuanced view of refugee involvement in political violence. Readers are invited to reclassify these measures as more data becomes available.

⁷ One likely bias is the under-reporting of refugee attacks against the sending state. Because violence is reported by humanitarian agencies in the refugee populated areas and by the receiving state, less information will be known about violence emanating from refugee populated areas that primarily impacts the sending state. I have tried to correct for that bias by using the *New York Times* as an additional source of information.

⁸ The dataset combines the phenomena of attacks by the refugees and attacks against the refugees (for both receiving and sending state categories). Reports of violence often are not specific enough to pinpoint whether attacks on refugees were provoked by military activity in the refugee populated area. If the dataset separated these types of attacks into two categories, the result would likely undercount violence perpetrated by refugees and/or exiles.

The data for this project comes primarily from three sources that cover the period 1987 to 1998: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Annual Protection Reports, the U.S. Committee for Refugees (USCR) *World Refugee Survey*, and *New York Times* abstracts. UNHCR's internal Annual Protection Reports, beginning in 1987, summarize the security and protection problems for each refugee receiving state. The reports consist of narrative answers to survey questions and include responses on security incidents, protection problems, and refugee law in the relevant countries. I supplement the UNHCR data with the US Committee for Refugees' annual publication, *World Refugee Survey*, which provides individual reports for each country. I have also analyzed *New York Times* abstracts from 1987 to 1998 for articles mentioning refugees and violence.

The resulting data tables categorize the universe of refugee populations by receiving state and by national origin of the refugees. This means that, for each year, there exists an observation for each receiving state and, within the receiving state, a separate observation for all refugee populations (of over 2,000 persons) by country of origin (e.g. Guatemalans in Mexico in 1989). Each observation notes (where available) the ethnicity of the refugees, the primary living situation (e.g. camps, urban, etc.), and any incidents of political violence. Where possible, the effects of the violence are quantified with casualty statistics. The type of violence is categorized according to one of the five outcomes listed earlier. The data does not encompass instances of criminal violence, such as assault, rape, or theft. It also does not address other forms of threat, for example environmental degradation caused by refugee camps. Since this data

encompasses both violent and non-violent populations, it does not suffer from the selection biases that occur if one focuses solely on high-profile conflict situations.

Any project that undertakes statistical analysis of refugees will encounter the well-known problems involved in enumerating refugee populations.⁹ Refugee experts agree that “all aggregate statistics on refugee flows should be interpreted with care” due to the difficulty of counting these mobile populations and the many incentives to distort the numbers for political reasons.¹⁰ My data uses the population figures provided by USCR in the *World Refugee Survey*. Although this volume is considered one of the most reliable sources of data, disparities continue to exist in the population statistics put forward by USCR, UNHCR, and refugee receiving states. Thus, this dataset cannot escape the more general difficulties that plague refugee statistics.

The methodological problems associated with survey data also affect the data analysis. I rely on documents from the UNHCR that have been collected over a twelve year period. One cannot claim that these Annual Protection Reports are free of all problems of validity and reliability.¹¹ Like all survey data, the responses may contain hidden flaws resulting from human error or institutional biases. I have attempted to correct for institutional bias by also analyzing published news reports (*New York Times* abstracts) and independently gathered data from the US Committee for Refugees (the *World Refugee Survey*). This allows for cross-checking and corroborating the data using a

⁹ Jeff Crisp, “Who Has Counted the Refugees? UNHCR and the Politics of Numbers,” (Geneva: UNHCR) *New Issues in Refugee Research*, Working paper no. 12, June 1999.

¹⁰ Weiner, “Bad Neighbors, Bad Neighborhoods,” 17.

¹¹ See Donald T. Campbell and Julian C. Stanley, *Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs for Research*, (Houghton Mifflin Co., 1990), 5-6 and passim; and Floyd J. Fowler, Jr., *Survey Research Methods*, (Newbury Park: SAGE Publications, 1993), 69-93.

variety of sources.¹² Despite imperfections in the available data, the results of the analysis provide information on hitherto unmeasured phenomena—the nature and extent of refugee involvement in political violence.

III. Trends in Refugee-Related Violence

The data presented here adds new dimensions to the discourse about refugees and security and contradicts current conceptions of refugee-related violence. One important addition to the discourse on refugee-related violence is the categorization of types of violence. Most current studies and policies treat refugee-related violence indiscriminately. Until now, there was no systematic information on which types of violence occurred more often and with what degree of lethality. The dataset confirms that violence between the sending state and the refugees occurs more often than the other types. More importantly, violence between the sending state and refugees tends to be more persistent, intense, and more likely to lead to international war.

In adding new dimensions to current debates, the findings correct common misperceptions that distort popular understanding of refugee-related violence. The first misconception is that the level of refugee-related violence has increased dramatically since the end of the Cold War. It has not. The number of refugees involved in political violence has declined by half over the twelve year period, from 8 million to 4 million refugees. This drop is not due to any overall improvement in refugee security, but mostly reflects the decline in violence among the Afghan and Palestinian situations.

¹² For example, if a violent incident were reported in the *New York Times*, but not by the USCR or the UNHCR, I would investigate further before including it in the dataset. In most such cases, the newspaper used the word refugee to describe internally displaced persons or migrants. Thus that case of violence would not be included in the dataset.

More significant than any numeric change after the Cold War is the alteration in the political context of the violence. The end of the superpower conflict has meant that major donors did not sanction the violence (for the most part), thus aid workers have faced increased security risks even though overall levels of violence have not risen. In particular, a greater proportion of refugee-related violence now occurs in Africa, which receives much less security assistance from the West than other regions (e.g. the Balkans).

A second misconception is that violence is rampant in most refugee situations. It is not. Nearly all refugee-related violence affects an average of only 15 refugee situations each year. Most refugee camps do not experience political violence, although other forms of violence and insecurity may exist. The essential puzzle raised by this finding is how scores of refugee situations manage to remain relatively peaceful.

Common and Dangerous Types of Refugee-Related Violence

The new data presented here captures information about the five types of refugee-related political violence.¹³ As discussed in Chapter 1, these are:

- Attacks between the sending state and the refugees
- Attacks between the receiving state and the refugees
- Ethnic or factional violence among the refugees
- Internal violence within the receiving state

¹³The dataset does not measure criminal violence, but does recognize that in some cases the motivations for violence are blurred. In categorizing the data, a violent event is included if there is some aspect of political motivation in evidence, even if other motivations are also present. For example, the dataset would not include an act of violence such as an assault or a murder that is described as originating from personal motivations or criminal activity (such as murder for personal gain or from jealousy). If a murder sparked ethnic riots in the camp, the riots would be classified as political violence.

- Interstate war or unilateral intervention

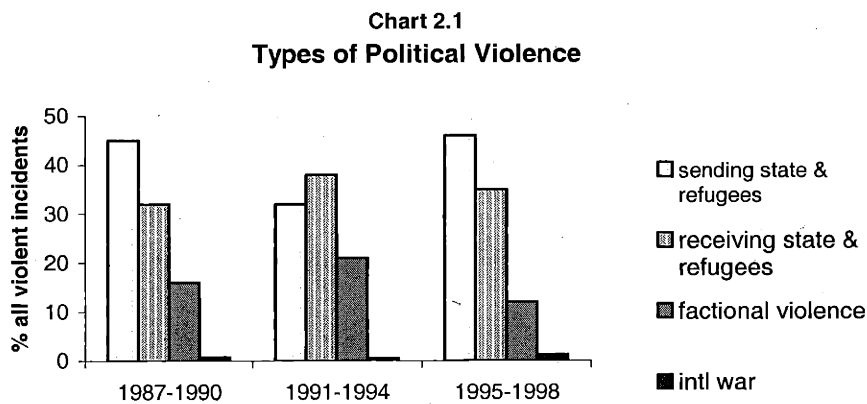
Each type of violence has its own dynamic; the different types are not necessarily comparable. Attacks between the sending state and refugees occur most often, closely followed by attacks between the receiving state and refugees (See Chart 2.1). In the later years of the dataset, attacks between refugees and the sending state increased as a proportion of all violence. Interstate war and unilateral intervention, although infrequent, also occurred more often in the last five years of the dataset than the first five years. The category of “internal violence within the receiving state” either occurs infrequently or is not easily captured by reports of refugee violence. A category of “Uncertain/Other” is used for the small number of incidents in which the reporter could not determine the identity of the attacker.¹⁴

In most cases, attacks between the sending state and the refugees entail the most intense violence, such as bombing and shelling of camps (see Appendix 3).¹⁵ This finding, while not surprising, was previously unknown due to the dearth of systematic study of refugee-related violence. Cross-border invasion, either by the sending state or refugees, is the most extreme form of violence between the refugees and the sending state, and is most likely to pull the receiving state into an international war. Unlike attacks involving only the receiving state and the refugees, attacks involving the sending state present a greater threat to the sovereignty of the receiving state and may be viewed as a national security threat by both the sending and receiving state. For example, attacks between refugees and the sending state escalated into international war in Central Africa,

¹⁴ In some cases, it was not possible to determine the identity of a rebel group that attacked the camps. Uncertainty existed as to whether the group originated in the sending or receiving state. This occurred in a few cases of attacks on Sudanese refugees in northern Uganda.

¹⁵ An exception is violence between Palestinian refugees and the Jordanian and Lebanese receiving states.

when Rwanda attacked Zaire and the Hutu refugees under the pretext of eliminating the security threat posed by the camps. The data shows that violence between the refugees and the sending state usually involves a greater number of casualties and a more sustained period of conflict than any other type of political violence except international war.



Violence between refugees and the receiving state often involves police actions or riots between locals and refugees. Examples of this include the continuing violence involving Burmese refugees in Bangladesh. The Bangladeshi police and/or military often use violence to encourage repatriation. Local villagers sometimes join in police attacks against refugees, leading to riots and even more severe police action. Another type of violence occurs when rebel groups in the receiving state (often supported by the sending state) attack refugees. This has occurred numerous times in northern Uganda, where Sudanese-funded groups attacked southern Sudanese refugees. Violence between refugees and the receiving state often erupts when refugees protest their conditions. For

example, Vietnamese refugees in Hong Kong rioted many times, resulting in scores of deaths, to protest forced return to Vietnam.¹⁶

Factional or ethnic violence among refugees is the third most common phenomenon. This often occurs when refugee groups include members of different ethnic groups or competing political parties. The ramifications of factional or ethnic violence include lawlessness in the refugee camps and endangerment of the staff of humanitarian aid groups. Factional violence is less likely to engulf the sending and receiving states. One exception would be cases in which a faction or ethnic group has supporters within the receiving state. In that case, violence could lead to a broader civil conflict in the receiving state. In many situations, factional or ethnic violence does not occur in isolation but accompanies one of the other manifestations of violence. Afghan refugees in Pakistan, for example, experienced conflicts with the sending state, the receiving state and among refugee factions.

International war or unilateral intervention because of refugees occurs rarely. The most recent occurrence was the 1996 invasion of Zaire by Rwanda, which combined civil war, international war, and attacks on refugee camps that killed thousands of Rwandan Hutu. Other refugee-related wars include the 1979 war between Tanzania and Uganda and the 1971-72 war between India and Bangladesh (formerly East Pakistan).¹⁷

The war involving Zaire and Rwanda presents a different pattern from that of earlier refugee-related wars. In this case, the cross-border attacks between the Hutu exiles and the Rwandan government escalated into international war when the sending state

¹⁶ On these instances of violence, see country reports for Burma, Uganda, and Hong Kong in U.S. Committee for Refugees, *World Refugee Survey*, (Washington, DC), various years.

¹⁷ On the Tanzania-Uganda war see, Anthony Clayton, *Frontiersmen: Warfare in Africa Since 1950*, (London: UCL Press, 1999), 104-108. On Bangladesh, see U.S. Committee for Refugees, *World Refugee Report, 1972*, (New York: USCR), 6-9.

invaded the receiving state. In the earlier cases, the receiving state invaded (or intervened in) the sending state in order to reduce a perceived threat. Those wars or interventions can be classified as defensive in nature. By contrast, in eastern Zaire, the sending state (Rwanda) invaded the receiving state because it perceived an opportunity to eliminate the security threat posed by the militant exiles. The war in Congo/Zaire should be seen more as an opportunistic invasion that was designed to take advantage of the weakness of President Mobutu's regime.¹⁸

Arguably, during the Cold War, patterns of conflict like the opportunistic interventions in the Great Lakes were contained (or at least controlled) by the interests of the great powers. In spite of American or Soviet support for militant exiles in Afghanistan, Thailand, and southern Africa, those conflicts did not escalate into regional wars. Observers fear that post-Cold War political dynamics could encourage more conflicts like the Congo war, given the passivity of the Cold War superpowers, as well as the disengagement of former colonial masters. If the Congo war in the Great Lakes represents a new trend in refugee-related violence, then the growth of violence between refugees and the sending state presents a greater risk of war than it did in the past.

Frequent Refugee-Related Violence

The results of the data analysis clearly demonstrate that—despite public rhetoric to the contrary—the post-Cold War period has not seen a dramatic upsurge in refugee-related violence. The proportion of refugees involved in violence declined from 60% in 1987 to

¹⁸ On the difference between opportunistic invasions and defensive interventions see, Michael E. Brown, "The Causes and Regional Dimensions of Internal Conflict." In Brown (ed.), *The International Dimensions of Internal Conflict*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), 596-598.

Chart 2.2
Proportion of Refugees Involved in Political Violence

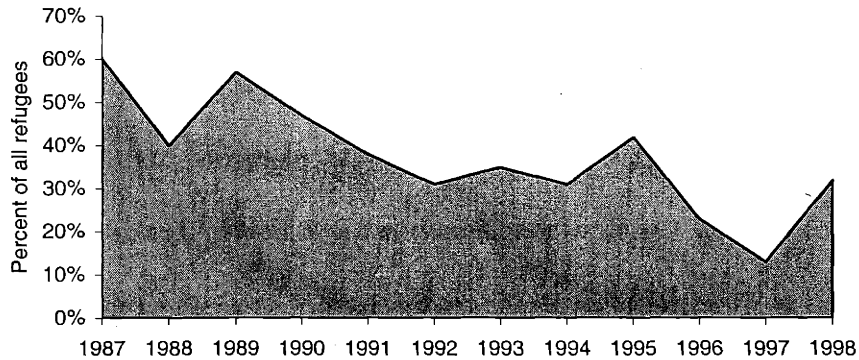
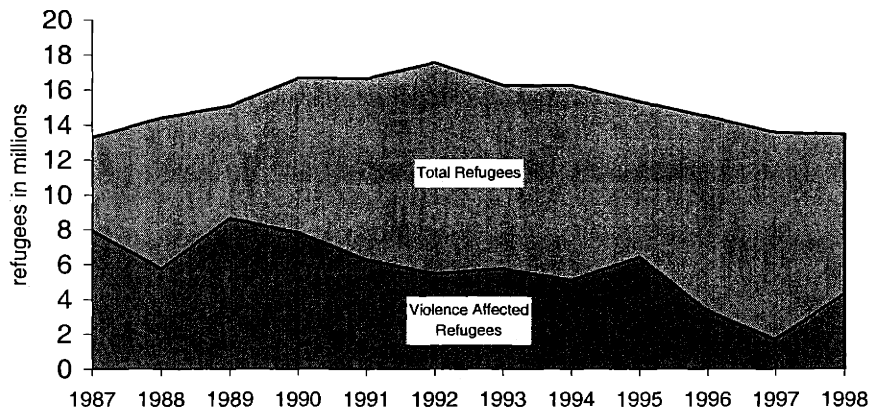


Chart 2.3
Refugees Involved in Political Violence (in Millions)



32% in 1998, with a sharp drop to 13% in 1997 (See Chart 2.2).¹⁹ Viewed in absolute terms, the data also shows a decline in involvement in violence (See Chart 2.3). The number of refugees involved in political violence dropped from nearly 8 million in 1987 to 4.3 million in 1998.²⁰

¹⁹ The rise from 13% in 1997 to 32% of refugees affected in 1998 is entirely accounted for by the rise in violence affecting Afghan refugees in Pakistan and Iran (2.6 million people). The violence in 1998 was less intense than that which affected Afghans during the Cold War period, however.

²⁰ This drop is not explained by a reduction in total refugees during the twelve years. The number of total refugees averaged 15.23 million during 1987 to 1991 and 14.2 million during the period 1995 to 1998.

Viewed in isolation, the drop in refugees affected by violence presents a misleading picture of overall trends. Surprisingly, the number of receiving and sending states involved in refugee-related violence did not decrease, and even experienced a slight increase on average in the last six years of the dataset (See Table 2.1). In the first half of the dataset (1987 to 1992), an average of 16 receiving states reported refugee-related violence each year, whereas the same statistic was 19 states in the second half of the dataset (1993 to 1998). The trend for sending states shows a similar constancy with the number of affected sending states fluctuating between 10 and 18 states. The average number of sending states involved per year in the first half of the dataset (1987 to 1992) was 13 states. The same statistic was 15 states between 1993 and 1998. However, since 1995, there has been a decline in the number of sending states affected from 18 to 13. These results indicate that the decline in the number of refugees involved in violence has not resulted in a significant reduction in the number of states affected.

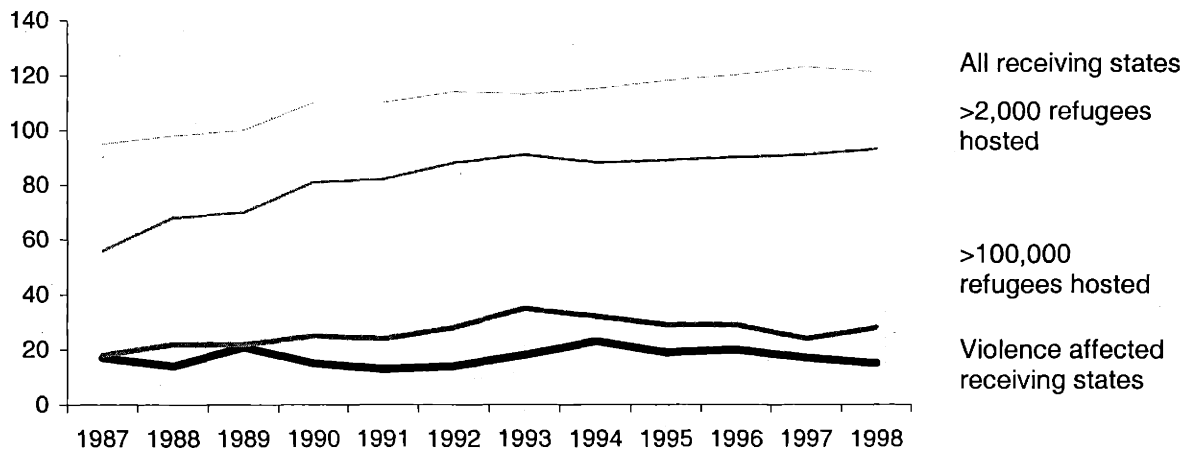
Table 2.1

Refugee Situations Involved in Political Violence

Year	# Receiving States Involved	# Sending States Involved
1987	17	15
1988	14	13
1989	21	15
1990	15	12
1991	13	10
1992	14	13
1993	18	14
1994	23	17
1995	19	18
1996	20	16
1997	17	14
1998	15	13

The most surprising fact to emerge from the analysis how few states actually experience refugee related-violence. Most refugee-related violence occurs in only a handful of states. Over the twelve year period, 11 receiving states, on average, hosted 97% of the refugees involved in political violence each year (see Chart 2.4).²¹ During that period an average of 82 states each year hosted 2,000 or more refugees. The findings are similar when analyzed according to sending states. For the same period, refugee groups from only 12 sending states accounted for 96% of refugees affected by political violence.²² An average of 40 states each year produced 2,000 refugees or more. These

Chart 2.4
Relatively Few Violence-Affected Receiving States



statistics demonstrate that a small proportion of sending and receiving states account for nearly all of the refugee-related violence.

²¹ The number of receiving states accounting for over 95% of affected refugees ranged between 9 and 15 for each year.

²² The number of affected sending states ranged from 8 to 16 states over the years.

The relative constancy of the number of states affected by refugee-related violence seems to clash with the dramatic reduction in the number of refugees involved in political violence. By looking more closely at the data, one finds that the precipitous decline in the total number of refugees involved in political violence derives, in large part, from two refugee situations: Afghans in Pakistan and Palestinians (see Chart 2.5). At their height, in 1987, Afghan and Palestinian refugees together comprised nearly 8 million refugees (over 60% of all refugees for that year). During the late 1980s and early 1990s, intense violence involving those refugees led to much higher statistics on refugee militarization. Removing those two situations shows a different pattern of violence, which peaked between 1994 and 1997 (see Chart 2.6).

Chart 2.5
Violence Involving Afghan and Palestinian Refugees

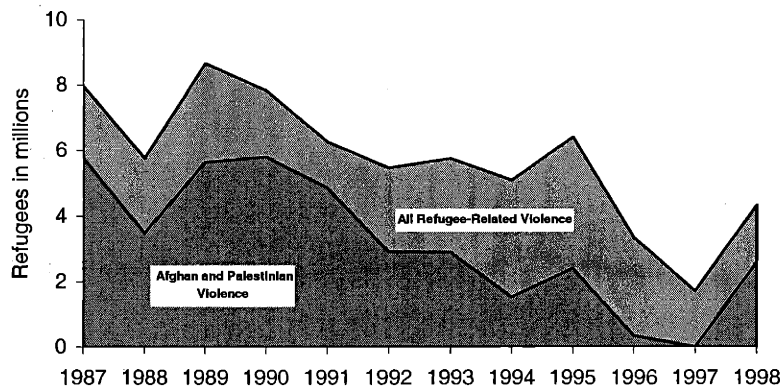
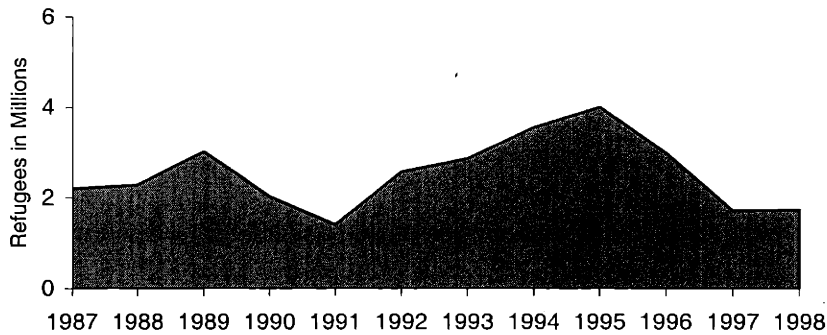


Chart 2.6
Refugee-Related Violence (minus Afghans & Palestinians)



Persistent Violence

Political violence involving refugees is not endemic, except in a handful of receiving and sending states. Although usually fewer than 20 receiving states report refugee-related violence each year, a total of 55 receiving states have reported such violence throughout the time span of the dataset. A few of those states report violence nearly every year, but the vast majority of receiving states report refugee-related violence for only one to four years (see Appendix 1). Only 8 of the 55 receiving states reported political violence for more than eight of the twelve years studied.²³

Over the twelve year period, 41 sending states have produced refugees affected by political violence, although for each year the number is usually less than 15 states. Like the receiving states, most sending states report intermittent violence. Of the 41 states, over half were affected by violence for only one to four of the years under study. Only

²³ See Appendix 2 for a list of receiving states and years affected.

nine of the 41 sending states were involved in refugee-related violence for more than six of the twelve years.²⁴

There are a number of explanations for this low level of persistence. In some cases, a violent refugee situation became less violent over time, such as in the case of the Palestinian refugees in Jordan. In other cases, low measures of persistence occurred because the refugee situations existed for fewer years. Examples of that phenomenon include the Liberian refugees in Ivory Coast, who suffered persistent violence, but who stayed in Ivory Coast for less than six years.

The patterns of persistent violence confirm other findings about the nature of refugee-related violence. The statistics on frequency showed that a small number of states (about 20% of the total) account for nearly all refugee-related violence. The data on persistence confirms that most states do not experience continuous violence over the years. Although 55 receiving states reported refugee-related violence for varying numbers of years, 100 receiving states reported no violence at all during the twelve year period. In persistence, as well as frequency, African states are over-represented; six of the ten most repeatedly violent receiving states are found in Africa, as well as six of the nine sending states. The Palestinian and Afghan refugee situations also figure prominently in the persistently affected list, especially during the late 1980s and early 1990s.²⁵

Intense Violence

In addition to the persistence of violence, it is useful to know which refugee situations experienced high level, or intense, violence. Some groups are not repeatedly involved in

²⁴ See Appendix 2 for a list of sending states and years affected.

²⁵ An exception is the two million Afghan refugees in Iran, who were much less involved in political violence than Afghans in Pakistan.

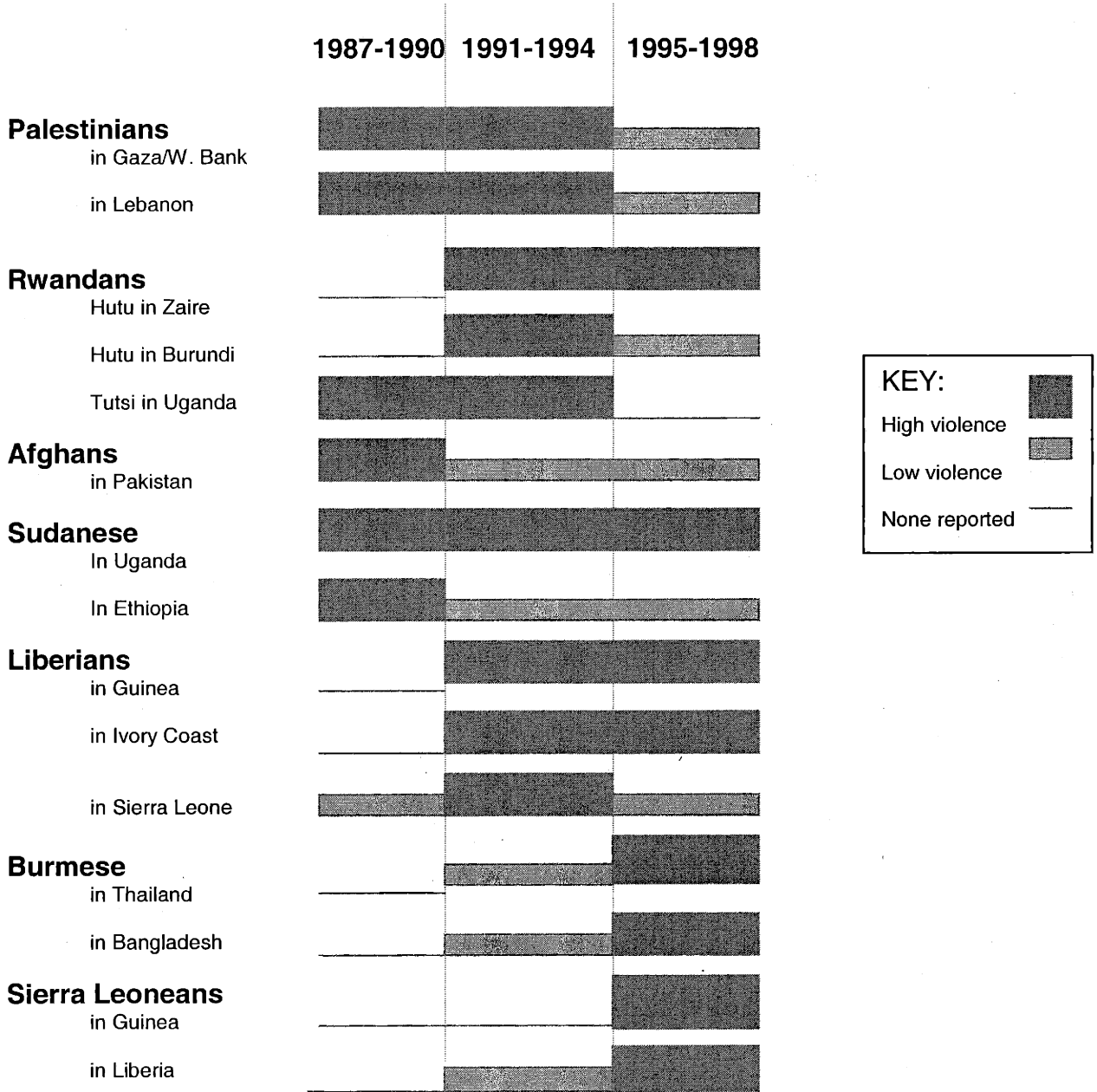
violence, yet when violence occurs it is extremely bloody. Other groups experience both persistent and intense violence. Still other groups appear more violent, due to ongoing conflict, yet closer examination reveals a relatively low level of intensity in which few deaths occur. Using this data set, it is possible to highlight the situations with the most intense violence (See Appendix 3).

Assessing statistics on intensity of violence is somewhat subjective, due to a lack of comparable casualty statistics. One can measure intense violence by the number of incidents within a year and the level of casualties (when given). The analysis here treats casualty figures relative to the population, not just as absolute numbers. Rough categorizations of intense violence and illustrative examples appear in Appendix 3.

Fifteen refugee situations have experienced both persistent and intense violence over the twelve year period (see Chart 2.7).²⁶ With the exception of Sudanese refugees in Uganda (who continually experience high levels of violence), most of the refugee situations show variation over time in levels of violence. The seven refugee groups most affected by political violence over the twelve years are: Palestinians, Rwandans, Afghans, Sudanese, Liberians, Burmese, and Sierra Leoneans. In many cases, populations from these countries have experienced violence in multiple receiving states. An additional level of variation—that of non-violent situations—is not included in Chart 2.7. For example, Rwandan refugees (both Hutu and Tutsi) living in Tanzania do not appear on

²⁶ Chart 2.7 represents the refugee situations which have experienced both persistent and intense refugee-related violence for at least one of the three time periods. Persistent violence is defined as the occurrence of refugee-related violence for more than six of the twelve years under study. The most intense violence is measured as the refugee situations in each time period that experience the highest and most sustained conflict (in terms of relative and absolute casualty figures and number of violent incidents per year). The chart groups the data into four-year blocks, thus eliminating some variation that may occur from year to year within each block.

Chart 2.7: Persistent and Intense Refugee-Related Violence



this chart because their levels of violence have been much lower. While the chart suggests that Rwandans have a high propensity for involvement in violence (in Zaire, Burundi, and Uganda), it helps to understand the causes of that violence, and possible solutions, by including study of the relatively non-violent situation in Tanzania.

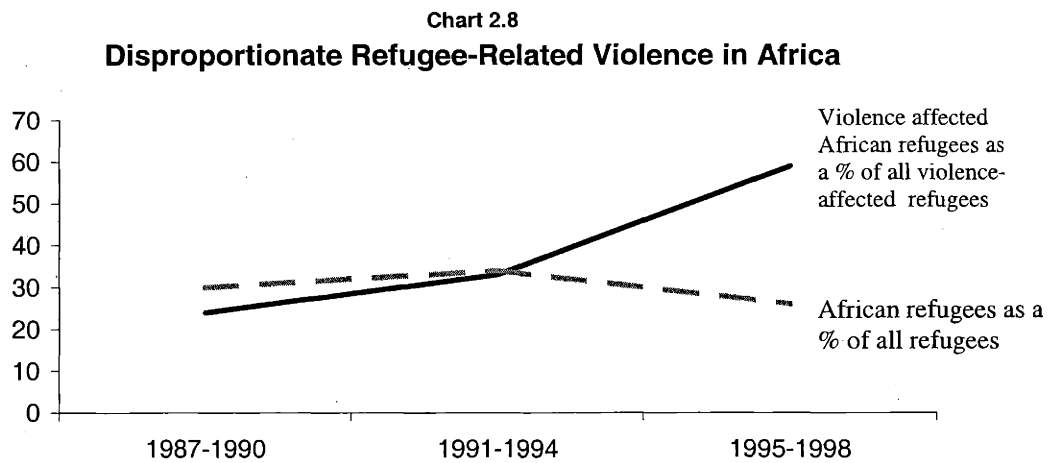
Africa's Disproportionate Violence

When examining the above chart (Chart 2.7), it is immediately noticeable that ten of the fifteen most persistent and intense situations occurred in Africa. A closer look at the regional distribution of violence reveals an increase in the proportion of African states reporting refugee-related violence between 1987 and 1998. In the first 8 years of the dataset (1987 to 1994), the proportion of receiving states in Africa (36%) nearly matched the proportion of violence-affected receiving states in Africa (40%). From 1994 to 1998, however, the percent of affected receiving states increased to 53% whereas the percent of all receiving states in Africa dropped to 31%. This has led to a disproportionate number of African receiving states that report refugee-related violence.

One might hypothesize that Africa's disproportionate violence arises because of the relatively greater number of refugees on the continent; if Africa has more refugees than other regions, one would expect more refugee-related violence in Africa. Surprisingly, however, as Africa's proportion of the world's refugees has decreased over time, Africa's proportion of the world's refugee-related violence has increased. The distribution of refugees and violence became markedly skewed between 1995 and 1998 (See Chart 2.8). In the last four years of the dataset, the proportion of African refugees in

the world dropped to 26% whereas the proportion of refugee-related violence involving African refugee populations rose to 59% for the same period.

The disproportionate violence in Africa raises puzzles for policy makers and



scholars. The phenomenon indicates that perhaps something about African refugee situations differs from other regions and makes African situations more violence-prone. An alternate explanation is that the increase in African violence merely reflects the decrease in the Afghan and Palestinian refugee-related violence. A third explanation argues that refugee-related violence occurs because Africa's refugee crises receive far less humanitarian aid, per capita, and less diplomatic and military attention than many European or Asian crises. Later chapters in this dissertation examine the effects of humanitarian assistance and international political and/or military intervention on refugee-related violence. The results of this analysis will shed light on the trend of increasing violence in African refugee situations.

IV. Implications

The new data presented here changes the terms of the discourse on refugees and political violence. Policy makers and scholars have no excuse to continue speaking in vague terms about the rising threat of armed refugees or the ubiquity of attacks against refugees. The scope of refugee-related violence is much clearer now. About 30% of refugee groups became involved in political violence, as of 1998. This represents a marked decrease since 1987, not an increase. Roughly 15 receiving states account for nearly all of the refugee-related violence that occurs in a given year. The vast majority of refugee sending and receiving states do not become involved in political violence. African states experienced a disproportionate level of refugee-related violence in the later years of the dataset. The most common, and lethal, type of violence is attacks between the sending state and refugees.

These findings answer many questions about the frequency, intensity, persistence, and type of refugee-related violence over a twelve year period. The data also raises many questions that it cannot answer satisfactorily: Under what conditions do some refugee groups become involved in political violence? What differentiates the few states that experience repeated, high level refugee-related violence from the mass of peaceful situations? Although the dataset does not answer questions about the causes of refugee-related violence, it provides a guide to choosing case studies.

First of all, the data confirms the need to focus on violence between the refugees and sending state. This type of violence has the greatest risk of causing international war between the sending and receiving state. In addition, attacks between the sending state and refugees account for the most persistent and intense instances of refugee-related

violence. These facts strongly indicate the need for a better understanding of the causes of cross-border violence between refugees and the sending state.

Close examination of the data reveals cases of violent and non-violent situations for comparative study. For example, the dataset captures three Rwandan Hutu refugee situations—in Zaire, Tanzania, and Burundi. According to the dataset, each situation experienced different levels and types of violence, ranging from low levels in Tanzania to full blown international war in Zaire. Comparison between the spread of civil war in Zaire and the relative peace in Tanzania helps explain the causes of violence. A similar pair of cases that occurs early in the dataset is the Afghan refugee situations in Pakistan and Iran. The three million Afghans in Pakistan account for much of the refugee-related violence in the Cold War and early post-Cold War period. By contrast, the two million Afghan refugees in Iran show a much lower involvement in political violence. Other comparative cases involve refugee situations that have changed over time, such as the Bosnian refugees that reported intense violence in 1994, but none in 1995. These case studies will explain the patterns of refugee-related violence highlighted in this chapter.

Although the findings from this dataset reveal current trends in refugee-related violence, they cannot predict the future. For now, a number of potential scenarios offer a mixture of hope and caution. One possibility is that the proportion of refugees involved in political violence will continue to decrease as the great powers lose interest in arming various exile groups. The reduction of great power support for militant refugees, combined with a new trend toward international humanitarian intervention, could vastly decrease refugee-related violence.

However, a paradoxical result of superpower disengagement is that neglect could lead to more situations like eastern Zaire, in which militant refugees engage in military activity unhindered while reaping the benefits of international humanitarian assistance. When it occurs in areas that have little strategic significance to the major powers, wealthy states will expend few resources to prevent refugee-related violence. In the mid-1990's, the United Nations Secretary General approached 40 member states for help in demilitarizing Rwandan refugees in eastern Zaire. Only one state volunteered troops.

It is also possible that the lull in great power support for militant refugee groups constitutes a temporary phenomenon. Considering past trends, in which a few large refugee groups (such as Afghans, Palestinians, Rwandans, and Cambodians) experienced persistent and intense violence, one could expect the emergence of similar groups in coming years, for example in conflict-ridden West Africa or the Balkans. In addition, recently dormant situations, such as the Palestinian and Afghan crises, are not fading away but have re-ignited. Since fall 2000, the Palestinian refugee situation has once again contributed to an alarming increase in refugee-related violence. Since September 2001, the Afghan situation in Pakistan also seems increasingly unstable and could spark renewed violence.

Whatever the future trends, the new information described in this chapter improves understanding of refugee-related violence, and serves as a building block for further research on the spread of civil war. The following chapters present case studies that explain the spread of civil war in refugee crises. The findings help more accurately predict coming conflict and devise policies to prevent violence.

Chapter 3

Political Incentives for the Spread Of Civil War in Refugee Crises

I. Introduction

Refugees and states both cause the spread of civil war. Militant refugees cause conflict when they use refugee camps as supply depots and recruitment centers. This facilitates refugee-instigated violence and provokes preventive attacks by the sending state. Sending states cause war to spread by conducting hot pursuit raids against the refugees or attacking the receiving state. The conflict escalates further when other states and groups become involved. In some cases, escalation leads to international war between the sending state and the receiving state, destabilizing entire regions. In recent years numerous refugee crises in the Balkans, West Africa, Indonesia, and Central Africa have caused, or threatened to cause, the spread of civil war.

This chapter advances a political explanation for the spread of civil war in refugee crises and compares it to the prevailing socioeconomic explanations. Three aspects of the political context determine whether war will spread. The first is the origin of the refugee crisis; refugees who flee targeted persecution or as a state-in-exile will have a higher level of political and military organization than refugees who escape general chaos or destruction. A high level of organization indicates a propensity for later cross-border

violence, instigated by either the refugees or the sending state. Second, given a high propensity for violence among the refugees, the response of the receiving state determines whether violence occurs. A refugee-receiving state that is unwilling or unable to secure its borders and demilitarize the refugees creates a political environment conducive to the spread of war. Lastly, third party states, international aid agencies, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) facilitate conflict when they intentionally or inadvertently provide resources to combatants. This political explanation sharply contrasts with the prevailing discussion about militarized refugee crises.

The humanitarian assistance literature and the policy community routinely offer socioeconomic explanations that ignore the political context of the crisis. These socioeconomic propositions do not explicitly address the spread of civil war, but lump all types of refugee-related violence together. According to these explanations, large refugee camps (e.g. more than 20,000 people) become a breeding ground for militant and criminal organization because they are harder to control. Camps located near the border of the sending state facilitate attacks by refugee militias or the sending state. Another explanation claims that larger numbers of young men means greater violence. Finally, poor living conditions are thought to encourage discontent and therefore militancy. In fact, none of the four socioeconomic explanations satisfactorily explain the spread of civil war.

The socioeconomic explanations mistakenly assume that the *origins* of the refugee crisis are irrelevant, focusing instead on the *characteristics* of the refugee situation. Yet the reason for the refugee flow actually determines the initial level of political and military organization among the refugees. I categorize refugees into three

groups according to the reason for their flight. These are 1) situational refugees, 2) persecuted refugees, and 3) state-in-exile refugees. 1) Situational refugees, who flee due to the general chaos and destruction of war, usually have weak or nonexistent political and/or military organization. These refugees have the least propensity to violence. 2) Persecuted refugees leave due to direct oppression based on ascriptive or political ties. The coalescing event of shared persecution provides a basis for political and military organization, which may lead to cross-border attacks. 3) State-in-exile refugees represent the opposite extreme from situational groups. They escape to avoid defeat in civil war and to regroup military forces for renewed attacks on the sending state. These groups have the highest level of political and military organization, and thus the highest likelihood of engaging in conflict. These different types of groups present varying risks of cross-border violence, based on the motivation for their flight. However, violent activity is not a foregone conclusion even for state-in-exile groups.

Among violence-prone persecuted refugees or a state-in-exile, the role of the receiving state is pivotal. Two factors determine how the policy of the receiving state affects the spread of civil war. The first factor is the *capability* of the receiving state to secure its borders and demilitarize the refugees. The second factor is the receiving state's *willingness* to prevent violence. In situations where the receiving state is allied with the refugees, it is usually unwilling to restrain their militant behavior. Conversely, a highly capable receiving state, with no sympathy for the refugees' militant aims, can forestall the spread of civil war.

External state and non-state actors also affect the likelihood of violence. States, often superpowers or regional hegemony, and non-state actors, such as United Nations

agencies or non-governmental organizations (NGOs), can significantly impact the resources and capability of the refugees, the sending state, and the receiving state. This interference can prompt one or the other to instigate violence. For example, in the 1980s, the United States encouraged Pakistan to assist the militarized Afghan refugees and directly channeled American military assistance to the anti-communist Afghans.

Non-state actors also affect the refugees' ability to fight. Humanitarian aid can be misused and manipulated to feed soldiers or procure weapons. In eastern Zaire, the outpouring of international aid, indiscriminately distributed, undoubtedly strengthened the genocidal state-in-exile. External actors can also act as a force for peace. When a receiving state is weak, states or even international agencies can increase the state's ability to police the borders and demilitarize the refugee camps. For example, the US-funded and UNHCR-administered "security package" in Tanzania equips police to maintain security in refugee areas.

The following pages elaborate the political explanation for the spread of civil war in refugee crises. The next section of the chapter explains how the origin of the refugee crisis determines the initial level of political and military organization among the refugees. Section III examines how the capability and attitude of the receiving state affect the spread of civil war. The fourth section proposes that external states and non-state actors have a strong influence on whether cross-border violence occurs. The final section presents the socioeconomic explanations and describes their weaknesses.

II. The Origin of the Crisis and Propensity for Violence

Not all refugee crises share the same propensity for cross-border violence. The best way to determine the initial propensity for violence is to examine the reason for the refugee flow. The origin of the crisis determines the political goals of the refugees and their initial level of political and military organization. I create three categories of refugee groups according to the origin of the crisis. These categories are: situational refugees, persecuted refugees, and state-in-exile refugees (See Table 3.1). These groups are differentiated by the impetus for their exile, their initial levels of political and military organization, and their requirements for return to the sending state. These differences indicate each group's propensity for violence. Before moving to the analysis of these groups, I echo the caveat offered by Myron Wiener in his classification of causes of refugee flows:

Though it is usually possible to determine the predominant reason for a refugee flow, it is often a judgment call as to whether to classify a particular conflict as ethnic or non-ethnic [for example]. The nature of the conflict also sometimes changes...[and] some of the conflicts are mixed.¹

Situational Refugees

Situational refugees have the least propensity for involvement in political violence. These people become refugees due to their unlucky situation in a war zone, rather than because of their political opinions or communal affiliations. In an unorganized outflow, situational refugees flee the intolerable conditions and general destruction created by civil war. Even though these refugees have usually fled chaos and the threat of death, the combatants have not targeted them due to any political or ascriptive characteristic.

¹ Myron Wiener characterized the causes of refugee flows as inter-state war, ethnic conflict, non-ethnic civil war, and revolutionary and authoritarian regimes. My analysis looks further at what type of violence occurred and which groups were specifically targeted. Wiener, "Bad Neighbors, Bad Neighborhoods," quote p. 18.

Typically, situational refugees report that they left their homes in a panic when the actions of combatants threatened to destroy their lives and belongings. For example, a report from the 1998 war in Congo noted that massive displacement occurred because “the pressure in the villages is so great that people can’t live their lives.”² Similarly, an observer of the 1996 war in Congo (then Zaire) reported that “fear and instability in the region [Eastern Zaire] are so great that many inhabitants have fled their villages even without being directly attacked.”³ Basically, situational refugees, such as the refugees from Congo, find themselves in the wrong place at the wrong time. Their villages often become the front lines in a civil war, although the local residents have little interest in the war.

Table 3.1

Types of Refugees and Propensity for Violence

	Reason for flight	Requirements for voluntary return	Political/military organization	Propensity for violence
Situational refugees	War, chaos, deprivation	Peace and stability	None or very loose	Unlikely
Persecuted refugees	Group-based persecution	Credible guarantees of protection	Weak, may grow in exile	Somewhat likely
State-in-exile refugees	Defeat in civil war	New government or military victory	Strong, often grows in exile	Very likely

Situational refugees usually do not exhibit a natural cohesion based on shared experience of injustice or political opinions. While the refugees may share the same

² Nigel Marsh of World Vision, quoted in “DRC: People running for their lives in the east” IRIN report, Nov. 16, 2000.

³ Sheldon Yett, “Masisi, Down the Road from Goma; Ethnic Cleansing and Displacement in Eastern Zaire,” (Washington DC: US Committee for Refugees Issue Brief, June 1996), 5.

ethnicity or religion, the shared characteristic did not directly cause their exile, and thus is less easily politicized. If these refugees become involved in violence, it is usually as victims of attacks or as pawns of militant leaders.

The willingness of situational refugees to return home depends on a cessation of the war rather than any specific political or military outcome. The goals of these refugees are to earn a livelihood and return to their previous way of life as much as possible. An essential difference between situational refugees and other groups is that situational refugees express a willingness to return to their country as soon as they can live in peace, regardless of the outcome of the conflict.

Part of the less politicized nature of the situational refugees stems from the type of conflict that they escaped. In many instances, these conflicts garner very low levels of popular support.⁴ Often one finds that all combatants have engaged in such high levels of brutality toward their own people that they have alienated any potential supporters. When combatants show general disregard for civilian lives, they are unlikely to gain loyal supporters from those groups.⁵ For situational refugees, the cause of flight and the nature of the conflict reduce the likelihood of their involvement in military activity that causes the spread of civil war.

One example where the origin of the crisis explains an unexpected non-violent outcome is the more than one million Mozambican refugees who fled to neighboring Malawi during the civil war in Mozambique in the 1980s. During the war, the Marxist/socialist government battled the South African supported RENAMO rebels in a

⁴ This is different from many ethnic conflicts in which every person must choose a side, either willingly or unwillingly.

⁵ The civil war in Angola created situational refugees who fled the wanton destruction of the civil war. Both sides laid millions of landmines that made life unbearable for all civilians.

brutal and incredibly destructive contest to rule the state. RENAMO attempted to make the country ungovernable. To that end, it terrorized the population and demolished much of the infrastructure, including schools, clinics, and roads. Unlike many African civil wars, the conflict lacked a strong ethnic or communal component. The main effect of the conflict was to destroy the peace and threaten the lives of any civilians caught in the crossfire. Refugees streamed out of the country to escape the horror and devastation. At their height, Mozambican refugees constituted ten percent of the population in Malawi and lived mostly in villages and camps less than ten miles from the border with Mozambique. A socioeconomic theory of refugee-related violence predicts that these refugees would have been very involved in political violence.

The surprisingly peaceful Mozambican refugee crisis demonstrates the importance of understanding the nature and causes of flight as determinants of later violence. Despite the large size of the refugee population, its location on the border, and the poor living conditions, remarkably little political violence involved the refugees. On rare occasions, RENAMO conducted cross-border raids into the refugee areas. The low level of violence is even more surprising considering that Malawi sympathized with South African-backed RENAMO during the 1980s.⁶

Neither the Mozambique government's nor RENAMO's war strategy included attacks on the refugees. Unlike many civil wars, RENAMO did not attempt to create a refugee population that shamed the government and provided resources and recruits. The

⁶ Prior to the massive influx of refugees, Malawi allowed RENAMO leaders to meet their South African advisors in the capital, Lilongwe. Even after muting its support for RENAMO, Malawi maintained full diplomatic relations with South Africa. Malawi ended support for RENAMO in 1986, under pressure from its neighbors. "How Malawi Is Coping," *The Southern African Economist*, February/March 1989, 9-12; UNHCR, *The State of the World's Refugees, Fifty Years of Humanitarian Action*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 112-113.

Mozambican rebels preferred to exploit the internally displaced and other vulnerable civilians, preventing their escape to the relative safety of neighboring countries.⁷

For the most part, the refugees engaged in little political or military activity in support of either side. Observers noted "RENAMO made no attempt to win over the support of the Mozambican people."⁸ RENAMO seemingly had no political goals and focused only on destroying the government, at whatever cost to Mozambicans. In a US State Department study, refugees expressed overwhelmingly negative attitudes toward RENAMO and neutral attitudes toward the Mozambican government.⁹ Refugees did not express strong loyalties to either party and did not organize politically or militarily while in exile. These situational refugees desired a return to peace and stability.¹⁰ One refugee asserted, "We can't possibly go [home] until we are absolutely certain that the hostilities have subsided."¹¹ Once a peace agreement was reached in 1992, hundreds of thousands of refugees began spontaneously returning to Mozambique.

Persecuted Refugees

A second type of refugee population flees due to direct persecution or oppression. These refugees have a greater propensity for involvement in political violence than do situational refugees. Persecuted refugees escape ethnic cleansing, genocide, or other

⁷ Robert Gersony, "Summary of Mozambican Refugee Accounts of Principally Conflict-Related Experience in Mozambique," Report submitted to Bureau of Refugee Programs, Department of State, April 1988, 11, 15.

⁸ Burton Bollag, "Destabilization: The Human Cost," *Refugees*, July-August, 1988, 20.

⁹ Interviews with 200 refugees revealed 96% with very or somewhat negative attitudes toward RENAMO and 1% with positive attitudes. 72% of refugees expressed "no complaint" about government forces (FRELIMO), but only 11% characterized their attitude as positive. Gersony, "Summary of Mozambican Refugee Accounts," April 1988.

¹⁰ In one study, 65 percent of respondents cited security as their main priority for return. The other 35 percent cited various economic and social factors necessary for return. Khalid Koser, "Information and Repatriation: The Case of Mozambican Refugees in Malawi," *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 10, 1 (1997), 11, 5.

¹¹ Sandy Kuwali, "Escape to Nsanje," *The Southern African Economist*, February/March 1989, 11.

violent policies that target them for ethnic, religious, language, or political affiliations. Typically, persecuted refugees leave their homes as a result of direct threats based on their ascriptive or political characteristics. The experience of persecution helps create politically cohesive refugee groups that are more easily organized for military activity. During the war in Bosnia, for example, combatants tried to expel all members from the opposing ethnic group in order to create ethnically homogenous areas. In repeated instances, Muslim residents fled in terror when Serb militias entered a town. Often an attack on a Muslim neighbor convinced other Muslims to flee before they too experienced a direct attack. One Bosnian Muslim refugee described the impetus to flight:

First [the Serbs] sent written notices saying that Muslims and Croats had to leave the area immediately. Our neighbors came and warned us to go, because they said that if they tried to help us they would also be killed.¹²

Thus the war created groups of refugees united by the experience of ethnically based persecution and determined not to return home until the risk of repeated persecution ended.

For persecuted refugees, the political outcome of the conflict bears directly on their willingness to return home. The goals of persecuted refugees often include political change, for example power sharing or other credible guarantees that their group will not be persecuted if it returns home. One displaced Bosnian Muslim reported that her family would return home “only if as Bosniacs they would be free and equal citizens in Republika Srpska.”¹³ Situational refugees, on the other hand, will likely return home as soon as conditions are peaceful, regardless of the political outcome of the conflict. These

¹² Amnesty International, “Bosnia-Herzegovina: All the Way Home—Safe ‘Minority Returns’ as a Just Remedy and for a Secure Future,” February 1998.

¹³ Amnesty International, “Bosnia-Herzegovina: All the Way Home.”

refugees do not expect targeted persecution and merely require a cessation of war in order to go home.

The coalescing event of group persecution increases refugees' receptivity to political or military activity. In many instances, refugee or rebel leaders draw on the experience of persecution (and often exaggerate it) in order to rally support for military activity. Due to the causes of their flight, persecuted refugees are more vulnerable to propaganda and manipulation than are situational refugees. Refugees who have experienced persecution also fear repeated attacks by the sending state. Therefore, they will be more willing to take measures perceived as defensive or preventive. These refugees may find that ambitious leaders manipulate a defensive desire for survival for offensive purposes.

In addition to violence perpetrated by the refugees, persecuted refugees face a higher probability of cross-border attacks by the sending state than do situational refugees. The cause of their flight demonstrates that the sending state views the refugees as a threat for reasons of ethnic, religious or political affiliation. Thus, even if the refugees do not organize politically or militarily while in exile, they remain vulnerable to continued attacks by the combatants.

In some cases, a group of persecuted refugees becomes more violence-prone over time, as political and military organization builds. This is especially likely for long-term refugees who see no hope of return until radical change occurs in their homeland. As the time passes, a leadership may emerge that unites the refugees behind a program of political and military action.¹⁴ For example, the Rwandan Tutsi refugees in Uganda fled

¹⁴ For more on the phenomenon of refugee groups which become militarized after their flight see Howard Adelman, "Why Refugee Warriors are Threats," *The Journal of Conflict Studies* (Spring 1998), 49-69.

ethnic persecution in 1959 and lived as exiles for thirty years. Over time, their military and political organization grew, culminating in the formation of the Rwandan Patriotic Front and invasion of Rwanda in 1990.

The Burundian Hutu population in Tanzania offers an example of persecuted refugees who became involved in political violence. Since 1993, a brutal ethnic civil war in Burundi has led to the deaths of hundreds of thousands and the displacement of many more civilians. The conflict pits the Tutsi-dominated government and army against an array of Hutu rebel forces. Both sides have targeted civilians based on their ethnicity. The government has rounded up Hutu villagers into “regroupment” camps in order to prevent the rebels from gaining their support. The Hutu rebels, conversely, have sought to create a vast population of Hutu refugees in order to undermine the legitimacy of the Tutsi government and provide cover for rebel activity. As of December 2000, over 300,000 Hutu refugees from Burundi lived in camps near the Tanzania/Burundi border.

The refugees resulting from the civil conflict have destabilized relations between Burundi and Tanzania due to Burundian government accusations that rebels freely operate in the refugee camps. Tanzania denies the accusations, but observers confirm that Burundian Hutu refugees engage in both political and military activity. Many extremist political parties, with military wings, have developed in the camps. Rebel groups recruit young men from the camps for military training and subsequent cross-border raids.¹⁵ The Burundian army has threatened to retaliate by attacking the camps, leading to a Tanzanian military build-up on the border.

¹⁵ Gerard Prunier, “Rwanda: Update to End of July 1995,” Writenet Country Papers, Refworld, UNHCR, Aug. 1995, Sect. 3.1.

The nature of the conflict and the cause of the refugees' flight have contributed to the high levels of political and military mobilization among the refugees. The refugees perceive a threat to their survival from the Tutsi government and extremist groups.¹⁶ The Burundian government also views the refugees as a potential invading force. The ethnic polarization that led to the refugee flows has allowed Hutu leaders to mobilize support in the camps, as has the tacit support of the Tanzanian government for the Hutu rebel activity.

Although the Burundian refugees have a high level of political and military organization, they did not flee as a state-in-exile. Refugees fled persecution and the threat of injury based on their ethnic group. The rebel leaders did not organize the exile in the face of defeat, but they have taken advantage of the refugee situation in order to pursue their ongoing conflict against the Burundian government. Unlike Afghan refugees in Pakistan and Rwandan refugees in Zaire, the Burundian refugees do not term themselves a state-in-exile and are not recognized as such by any external party. Any support from the Tanzanian government is covert and hotly denied.

State-in-exile Refugees

A third group includes both refugees and a highly organized political and military leadership. This type of population is a "state-in-exile" refugee group.¹⁷ In some instances, the leadership has organized the refugee crisis as part of the strategy in an

¹⁶ Real and perceived persecution fuels the refugees' fear. See, for example, IRIN Update 1,014 for the Great Lakes, "Burundi: Tutsi group threatens to attack refugee in camps in Tanzania," Sept. 19, 2000.

¹⁷ My concept of a state-in-exile population is similar to what Zolberg et. al. term a "refugee-warrior community." They describe these groups as "highly conscious refugee communities with a political leadership structure and armed sections engaged in warfare for a political objective..." See Zolberg et. al, 275-278. The term state-in-exile group is a more accurate description than "refugee-warriors" and does not carry the same possibly pejorative connotation.

internal conflict. Since the outflow includes many civilians, states and/or international agencies usually designate it as a refugee population. The leaders may also later graft themselves on to the refugee population in order to use the refugees as a political and military resource. The Rwandan Hutu refugees in eastern Zaire provide a recent example of the state-in-exile phenomenon. These refugees fled Rwanda in 1994 under pressure from the leaders of the genocide, who then established power bases among the refugee camps.

Of the three categories of refugee groups, state-in-exile refugees are the most likely to instigate an attack against the sending state. Indeed, the leaders often intend that the exile will facilitate offensive military action. Such leaders hold aggressive goals, which might include a radical change in the government of the sending state. State-in-exile refugees usually return home either in victory or due to forced repatriation, rejecting power-sharing or amnesty offers from the sending state. For example, the Rwandan Hutu refugees in Zaire refused all attempts by the Rwandan government to orchestrate their return, leading to the conclusion that “the extremists were not opposed to return as such, merely to a return that they did not control.”¹⁸

State-in-exile refugees present a greater threat to the sending state than other types of groups, thus increasing the chance of preventive cross-border attacks against the refugees. The existence of a political and military organization on the border challenges the legitimacy of the sending state government both among domestic critics and the international community. Large, politically active refugee populations serve as an indictment of the sending state regime and a constant threat to its security.

¹⁸ African Rights, *Rwanda: Death, Despair, and Defiance*, (London: African Rights, 1995 revised edition), 1098.

Although state-in-exile refugees exist within a strong and politicized leadership structure, many of the refugees may have little desire to become involved in violence. The nature of the exile group makes it more likely, however, that these refugees will serve as a political and military resource for their leaders. The militant leaders easily convince refugees of the threats to their safety, and the need to mobilize, by maintaining an iron grip on the information that reaches the refugees. Leaders emphasize real and imagined injustices to foster fear of return among the refugees. In the Rwandan Hutu camps, leaders successfully fostered a belief in Hutu victimhood, distorting or erasing the genocide that preceded the refugee crisis. Hutu leaders also played on fears created by real injustices in Rwanda, such as the Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA) massacre of unarmed displaced people at Kibeho camp.

An example of refugees who formed a state-in-exile is the more than three million Afghan refugees who fled to Pakistan after the Marxist military coup in 1978 and resulting Soviet invasion in 1979. The well-funded Afghan rebels who lived among the refugees eventually forced a Soviet retreat and took over the country.¹⁹ During their exile, the refugees lived in over 300 settlements along the border with Afghanistan. The seven main rebel groups recruited new refugee arrivals as members and fighters. The government of Pakistan (and its sponsor, the United States) condoned this arrangement and allowed the rebel leaders free reign among the refugees. Pakistan channeled military aid to the resistance parties which was “crucial to the parties’ growth and development.”²⁰ One observer noted, “The Afghan state-in-exile had a highly politicized

¹⁹ The United States alone provided more than \$2 billion in aid to the exiles between 1982 and 1991, including anti-aircraft guns and other heavy weapons. UNHCR, *The State of the World's Refugees, Fifty Years of Humanitarian Action*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 120.

²⁰ Anthony Hyman, “The Afghan Politics of Exile,” *Third World Quarterly*, 9, 1 (Jan 1987), 73.

population, which was consolidated into a formidable resistance to the Soviet occupation and subsequent Najibullah government.”²¹ Pressured by major donors, UNHCR did not protest the militarization of the refugee areas, to which the agency continued to deliver assistance.

Throughout the more than ten years that the refugees lived in Pakistan, cross-border military activity occurred frequently. The Afghan rebels organized attacks from Pakistan in order to destabilize and overthrow the Soviet-backed government of Afghanistan. The rebels even brought Soviet prisoners of war into Pakistan after their attacks.²² The Soviet-backed Afghan government responded with hundreds of bombing raids across the border that targeted the refugee villages.

The organization and goals of the refugees clearly indicate that this was a state-in-exile population. Many of the refugees fled due to attacks on their villages by the Soviets, and once they arrived in Pakistan they became card-carrying (literally) members of one of the resistance parties.²³ The party leaders in the refugee camps organized elections in the settlements in order to “reinforce the concept of a nation-in-exile.”²⁴ As the idea of a state-in-exile took hold among the population, observers noted a rise in openly expressed nationalism among the refugees.²⁵ The U.S. State Department reported that in 1984 that “opposition to the communist government grew quickly and spontaneously...virtually all

²¹ Tom Rogers, “Harbouring Instability: Pakistan and the Displacement of Afghans,” In K.M. de Silva and R.J. May (eds.), *Internationalization of Ethnic Conflict*, (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1991), 59.

²² Hyman, “Afghan Politics,” 75.

²³ One difference from other state-in-exile groups is that the Afghan resistance was fractured into many rival groups, all sharing the goal of toppling the Kabul regime. Under pressure from donors, the resistance attempted to present a united front internationally, but their unity crumbled after the Soviet withdrawal in 1989.

²⁴ Rogers, “Harbouring Instability,” 61.

²⁵ Rogers, “Harbouring Instability,” 73.

elements of the population were involved.”²⁶ The refugees did not return to Afghanistan until the withdrawal of the Soviet forces (in 1989) and the defeat of the Soviet-backed Najibullah regime in 1992.²⁷

III. The Receiving State Response

*“Nobody can deny the fact that having a war waged from one’s territory can jeopardize domestic security.”*²⁸

Among violence-prone persecuted or state-in-exile refugee groups, the spread of civil war is likely unless hindered by the receiving state. Two factors determine how the policy of the receiving state affects the spread of civil war. The first factor is the *capability* of the receiving state to secure its borders and demilitarize the refugees. The second factor is the receiving state’s *willingness* to prevent violence. Capability refers to the ability of the state to protect its borders and maintain peace and stability on its own territory.²⁹ Willingness describes the state’s attitude toward providing protection and enforcing security in refugee populated areas. Numerous domestic and international factors affect a state’s willingness and capability.

According to international law, the refugee-receiving state bears primary responsibility for ensuring the safety of refugees and maintaining the civilian nature of

²⁶Craig Karp, “Afghan Resistance and Soviet Occupation,” United States Department of State, Special Report No. 118, Dec. 1984.

²⁷ Continued civil war among the rival rebel groups in Afghanistan hindered the return of many refugees, although almost two million returned in 1992. U.S. Committee for Refugees, *World Refugee Survey, 1993*, (Washington, DC, 1993), 87, 95.

²⁸ Susanne Schmeidl, “(Human) Security Dilemmas: Long-term Implications of the Afghan Refugee Crisis,” *Third World Quarterly*, 23, 1 (Feb. 2002), 16.

²⁹ Signs of a lack of capability include one or more active rebel groups within the country. Strength of the military and police also measures capability. One can view the receiving state’s capability as an absolute measure, as well as relative to the capability of its neighbors.

the refugee populated area.³⁰ The duties of the receiving state include disarming and demobilizing any non-civilian exiles who wish to integrate into the refugee camp, preventing the flow of arms to refugee areas, and separating people who do not qualify for international protection (e.g. war criminals) from the refugees.³¹ The receiving state should also ensure that the refugee populated areas have adequate police protection from both criminal and political violence and that the refugee area does not become a staging ground for military activity.

There are four possible policy responses that describe the receiving state's willingness and capability in violence-prone refugee situations (see Table 3.2). War is likely to spread when the receiving state is highly capable, yet has a low willingness to prevent militarization. Most cases of cross-border attacks and international war fall into this category.³² A highly dangerous, but less frequent, situation occurs when the receiving state has little capability and little willingness to prevent violence.³³ If the receiving state has low capability to prevent violence, but high willingness, the outcome depends on external assistance to demilitarize the situation.³⁴ The outcome most conducive to

³⁰ The OAU Convention states that "Signatory States undertake to prohibit refugees residing in their respective territories from attacking any member state of the OAU..." OAU, "Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa," 1969, Article 3. The Organization of American States (OAS) also urges the institution "of appropriate measures in the receiving countries to prevent the participation of the refugees in activities directed against the country of origin..." OAS, "Cartegena Declaration on Refugees," 1984. In a more recent document, the Security Council reaffirmed "the primary responsibility of States to ensure [refugee] protection, in particular by maintaining the security and civilian character of refugee and internally displaced person camps." UN Security Council Resolution 1265, adopted Sept. 17, 1999, UN Doc. S/RES/1265 (1999).

³¹ UN Security Council Resolution 1265, par 6.

³² Examples of the spread of civil war where the receiving state had high capability and low willingness include the Afghan refugees in Pakistan (1980s), Burundian refugees in Tanzania (1990s), Liberian refugees in Ivory Coast (1990s), Ugandan refugees in Tanzania (1978), Cambodian refugees in Thailand (1980s), Nicaraguan refugees in Honduras (1980s), and the Rwandan refugees in Uganda (1990).

³³ The Rwandan refugees in Zaire (1990s) fall in this category.

³⁴ Examples include Sierra Leonean refugees in Guinea (2000).

stopping the spread of war is a highly capable receiving state that is willing to protect its borders and maintain the civilian character of refugee populated areas.³⁵

Table 3.2
Possible Receiving State Policies

		Capability to prevent violence	
		<i>High</i>	<i>Low</i>
Willingness to prevent violence	<i>High</i>	Cross-border violence unlikely	Cross-border violence not controllable but not supported
	<i>Low</i>	Active support of cross-border violence more likely	Active or tacit support of cross-border violence more likely

In the first scenario, a capable receiving state supports one of the parties to the conflict and is unwilling to maintain the civilian nature of the refugee camps. A receiving state that sympathizes with the refugees' goals may allow, or even abet, military activity by the refugees. Conversely, a capable receiving state that supports the sending state may allow cross-border, "hot pursuit," raids by the sending state or may forcibly eject the refugees. For example, in the mid-1990s the government of Ivory Coast supported the Liberian opposition (NPFL) and forced Liberian refugees to live in unprotected border villages subject to lethal cross-border attacks by the NPFL.³⁶

³⁵ Examples of violence-prone situations that did not lead to the spread of civil war include the Afghan refugees in Iran (1980s), Rwandan refugees in Tanzania (1990s), and Nicaraguan refugees in Costa Rica (1980s).

³⁶ Amnesty International, "In Search of Safety: The Forcibly Displaced and Human Rights in Africa," Report AFR 01/05/97, June 20, 1997, Section 4.

In the second scenario, the receiving state combines low capability with an unwillingness to act.³⁷ Most commonly, the receiving state is allied with or sympathetic to one of the combatants. This presents a great risk of cross-border military activity. In such a situation, the receiving state usually refuses international help that would improve security in the refugee areas. Both the sending state and the refugees can more easily engage in cross-border violence when the receiving state lacks firm control over its sovereign territory. Preventive attacks by the sending state are more likely if the refugees lack the protection of a capable and willing receiving state. In the Rwandan refugee crisis of 1994-1996, the Zairian government combined unwillingness with incapability. The government was allied with the Hutu extremists in the camps and was also unable to secure its border with Rwanda.

The third scenario is a receiving state with low capability but high willingness. In this case, the receiving state would like to prevent violence but is unable to do so. If an external donor or ally is willing to assist, violence becomes less likely. However, without external assistance the civil war may spread to the weak receiving state. Recent activities in Guinea provide an example. The government of Guinea, host to over 400,000 refugees, was unable to prevent repeated cross-border attacks from both Liberia and Sierra Leone. After suffering numerous attacks, the government consented to a relocation effort, funded by external donors, that has moved thousands of vulnerable refugees from the insecure border with Liberia and Sierra Leone.³⁸

³⁷ The extreme case is a "failed" state. The general attributes of a "failed" state include "a weak central authority, challenged by one or more armed groups in control of portions of the country, and where the government lacks the ability to protect its citizens." Weiner, "Bad Neighbors, Bad Neighborhoods," 22.

³⁸ International Council of Voluntary Agencies, "Refugee Camps on the Border: A Recipe for Disaster in West Africa," Dec. 22, 2000. For more on this situation, see Human Rights Watch, "Guinea, Refugees Still at Risk," 13, 5 (July 2001).

The lowest chance of violence results when the receiving state possesses a high capability and a high willingness to provide protection in refugee populated areas. In this scenario, attacks by both refugees and the sending state become less likely. Militant refugees and exiles will find it much more difficult to obtain arms, conduct training, and launch attacks when the sending state adequately polices the refugee area and the border with the sending state. Unlike Zaire, the willing and capable Tanzanian government managed to prevent the spread of war during the Rwandan refugee crisis. In addition to preventing refugee-instigated attacks, adequate security measures will reduce the sending state's perception of the refugees as an offensive threat. A capable receiving state is more able to provide a deterrent to opportunistic attacks by the sending state, especially if the sending state hopes to avoid international war with its neighbor.

In reality, receiving states often lack the capability and/or will to carry out their duties of refugee protection. The majority of receiving states are developing countries with extremely limited resources, even for their own citizens. In these states, institutions such as the police and judiciary have grossly inadequate funding and competence to deal with a large influx of refugees. A state's capability also depends on the existence of generous allies willing to fund improved border security and law enforcement measures.

International and domestic politics affect the receiving state's willingness to provide security. Ethnic ties between the refugees and groups in the receiving state can increase domestic pressure to overlook refugee-instigated violence. Ethnic alliances between the refugees and the receiving state could also pressure the government to prevent cross-border attacks instigated by the sending state. The type of government in the receiving state also influences policy. For example, Tanzanian leaders faced an

election year during the Rwandan crisis and sought to placate their constituents with harsh measures against the refugees. A non-democratic leader faces less domestic public pressure, but still must respond to international demands and avoid sparking a rebellion or coup. The receiving state's past experience with asylum seekers also influences its response to and expectations of the refugees.

IV. International Influences

The receiving state is not the only influence on whether violence occurs; international actors also provide an impetus for either war or peace by contributing resources to combatants (see Table 3.3). These actors include third party states, organizations of states (e.g. regional or international peacekeeping forces), international agencies (e.g. UNHCR), and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). States intentionally exacerbate the war when they provide military and political resources to the refugees or the sending state. Non-state actors inadvertently contribute to war when they indiscriminately distribute aid to refugees and rebels. These external parties discourage the spread of conflict when they assist the receiving state in securing its border and demilitarizing the refugee areas.

If a third party state is allied with the refugees, it may encourage or coerce the receiving state to support militant exiles. By providing resources to the refugees and their leaders, the external supporter increases the feasibility of cross-border attacks. During the Cold War, the United States persuaded UNHCR to provide aid to militant refugees, for example the liberation movements in southern Africa and the anti-Communist Afghan

rebels based in Pakistan. The United States, China, and Saudi Arabia also directly provided military aid to the Afghan rebels.

Conversely, an external power allied with the sending state may pressure the receiving state to expel the refugees or limit their opportunities for military activity. The external state may aid the sending state, providing tacit or material support for cross-border attacks. For example, the United States quietly supported the Tutsi-led Rwanda regime as it prepared for attacks on the Hutu refugee camps in 1996.

Table 3.3

International Influences on the Spread of Civil War

	State Actors	Non-state Actors
Encourage Spread	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Military/political aid to combatants • Pressure receiving state to allow militarization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feed rebels • Ignore militarization
Prevent Spread	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help secure borders • Help demilitarize camps • Restrain sending state 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Withhold assistance • Help secure borders • Help demilitarize

Third party states act as a force for peace in two ways. Wealthy donor states can assist the receiving state in securing the border and demilitarizing refugee areas. External states may also restrain the sending state from attacking the refugees. Tools for restraining the sending state include diplomatic and economic pressure and military force. Multilateral external actors, such as United Nations peacekeepers, can also help secure borders and demilitarize the refugees.

Non-state actors, such as international agencies and NGOs, also influence whether civil war spreads. These actors have a lower capability to prevent the spread of war,

because their mandates and resources are usually targeted to humanitarian activity. However, there are two ways that these groups can prevent violence: by providing their own security or by making assistance contingent on security.

Recently, NGOs and international agencies have been forced to become involved in security. One way to prevent the spread of violence is to assist the receiving state in implementing security measures and demilitarizing the refugee camps. UNHCR has provided funds to the Tanzanian government for improving the police presence in the refugee area.³⁹ In Zaire, UNHCR paid members of the army to guard the Rwandan camps. Ideally, however, the humanitarian agencies would prefer the receiving state or external states to provide security assistance.

A powerful, but rarely used, form of leverage is the humanitarian assistance itself. UN agencies and NGOs could coerce the receiving state and militant groups to enforce security and demilitarize by threatening to withdraw assistance. Based on past experience, militant exiles assume that humanitarian groups will feed and house the refugees, despite the presence of militants. The state-in-exile phenomenon might occur less frequently if the promise of generous international aid was less certain. This would necessitate a credible threat to withdraw humanitarian aid, or on the part of international financial institutions, to deny loans or grants.⁴⁰

A more common occurrence is the indiscriminate provision of assistance to both refugees and militants that inadvertently exacerbates the conflict. This aid fuels the conflict by feeding all exiles, regardless of their civilian status, and ignoring militarization in the refugee area. High levels of aid also allow militants to sell food and

³⁹ UNHCR's funding for the Tanzanian security package comes from the United States government.

⁴⁰ Chapter 8 discusses the options for non-state actors in greater detail.

buy weapons. The “don’t ask-don’t tell” policy of aid provision allows militarization to continue as long as it does not occur under the noses of the aid workers. In many cases, aid agencies view as irrelevant military activity that does not directly impinge on their activities among the refugees. Because of this myopia, humanitarian agencies do not always condemn militarized refugee groups, enabling them to reap the benefits of international aid.

V. Conventional Wisdom—Socioeconomic Explanations

“Conflicts are far more likely to be caused by economic opportunities than by grievance.”⁴¹

The explanations presented thus far emphasize the political reasons why refugee crises occurred and the sources of political and military support available to potentially militant refugees. The alternate explanations offered by humanitarian aid workers and policymakers focus on socioeconomic characteristics of the refugee crisis and generally ignore the political context of the crisis (See Box 3.1). Socioeconomic characteristics include the size and location of camps, the number of men in the population, and the living conditions. In practice, none of these socioeconomic characteristics satisfactorily explain cross-border violence involving refugees.

⁴¹ Paul Collier, “Doing Well Out of War,” In Mats Berdal and David M. Malone (eds.), *Greed and Grievance, Economic Agendas in Civil Wars*, (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2000), 91.

Box 3.1

Socioeconomic Explanations

- Large camps
- Border camps
- Bored young men
- Poor living conditions

Numerous policy pronouncements deplore large refugee camps as security threats. A recent UNHCR policy paper recommends “refugee camps should be located at a reasonable distance from the border...and should ideally not exceed 20,000 refugees.”⁴² One analyst’s recommendation to “scatter refugees to reduce militia control” implies that concentrated populations contribute to conflict.⁴³ This explanation argues that many small refugee camps, rather than one or two large ones, would reduce violence between the refugees and the sending state. It is generally thought that large camps are harder to manage and more prone to social problems.⁴⁴ A second, related question is whether large refugee populations in absolute terms are more involved in violence, regardless of the size of the camps.

Case studies reveal refugees in both large and small camps engaged in conflict with the sending state.⁴⁵ Apparently, refugee militants share the view of policy makers that small camps are easier to control and organize. In eastern Zaire, refugees in small

⁴² UNHCR Excom, “The Security, and Civilian and Humanitarian Character of Refugee Camps and Settlements,” Doc. No. EC/49/SC/INF.2, Jan. 14, 1999, par 11. On camp size and location, see UNHCR *Handbook for Emergencies*, Geneva, 1999, chapter 6.

⁴³ Ben Barber, “Feeding Refugees or War,” *Foreign Affairs*, 76, 4 (July/Aug 1997), 14.

⁴⁴ Bonaventure Rutinwa, “Refugee Protection and Security in East Africa,” RPN 22 (Sept. 1996), 11-13.

⁴⁵ There is no reliable data on the size of all refugee camps, thus it is not possible to correlate refugee-related violence with individual camps in a systematic, large-n test.

camps (i.e. fewer than 20,000 people) fell under even tighter control by the militants than the larger camps. Small groups of Nicaraguan and Salvadoran refugees in Honduras led to the spread of civil war from their sending states. In the Honduras crisis, the overall size of the refugee population and the size of the camps were both small.⁴⁶ The example of the Bosnian Muslim renegade refugees, presented in a later chapter, also illustrates the point. In that crisis, a group of 25,000 refugees formed an army and launched an attack on the Bosnian Army during the war. In these situations, the political context of the crisis, rather than the size of the camp, caused the spread of civil war.

The number of refugees, rather than the size of their camps, seems logically more relevant to the spread of war than the size of the camp. Parties to a conflict generally view larger populations as a greater potential threat (and strategic resource) than smaller populations. Both the sending state and the refugee leaders realize that a large population, in absolute terms, provides a greater resource for military mobilization and offensive activity.⁴⁷ A large population of refugees, relative to the size of the sending state, also offers a greater indictment of the legitimacy of the sending state government and its ability to govern its own population.

The time series data confirms that larger refugee populations are more often involved in political violence (of all types) than are small populations. However, the analysis does not confirm that large groups more often engage in cross-border attacks with the sending state. Using 1998 as an example, I compare large and small groups. In

⁴⁶ In 1983, there were only 19,000 Nicaraguan refugees in Honduras and 7,000-10,000 Salvadoran refugees. Both groups were perceived as threats by their sending states.

⁴⁷ Barry Posen argues that in ethnic conflicts, "offensive military capabilities are as much a function of the quantity and commitment of the soldiers [each side] can mobilize as the particular characteristics of the weapons they control." Posen, "The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict," *Survival*, 35, 1 (Spring 1993), 29.

1998, nine percent of refugee populations with fewer than 100,000 refugees were involved in political violence.⁴⁸ Twenty-nine percent of large populations (over 100,000 refugees) were involved in political violence. Thus one can conclude that larger populations are more often involved in political violence than smaller populations.

Moving from all types of political violence to the subset of attacks between the refugees and the sending state reveals different findings. The analysis of cross-border attacks between the refugees and the sending state during 1998 shows a rough parity between large and small groups. Of the eleven populations involved in cross-border attacks, six were small groups (under 100,000) and five were large groups. The popular focus on large groups, rather than the small, stems from the fact that their activities will more likely involve higher levels of violence (e.g. more casualties, more recruits, etc.). Small refugee groups are not any less likely to engage in cross-border attacks than large ones, however.

Observers frequently claim that refugee populations encamped near the border of the sending state are more likely to become involved in violence because the short distance makes it easier for both parties to launch attacks.⁴⁹ The Organization of African Unity (OAU) Convention states that, "for reasons of security, countries of asylum shall, as far as possible, settle refugees at a reasonable distance from the frontier of the country of origin."⁵⁰ Ideally, UNHCR would like to locate refugee camps more than 30 kilometers from the border of the sending state, for the security of both the refugees and

⁴⁸ I measure a refugee population as refugees from one sending state in one receiving state, e.g. Liberian refugees in Guinea, not all Liberian refugees or all refugees in Guinea. There were 117 populations of between 2,000 and 100,000 refugees in 1998.

⁴⁹ See Matthews, "Refugees and Stability in Africa," 68, 78.

⁵⁰ OAU, "Convention," Article 2(6). See also recommendations about camp location in Bonaventure Rutinwa, "The End of Asylum? The Changing Nature of Refugee Policies in Africa," (Geneva: UNHCR), *New Issues in Refugee Research* working paper series, May 1999.

the states involved. UNHCR directs its staff that “when in doubt always locate or move the [refugee] site away from the frontier.”⁵¹

There are two ways to evaluate the border camps explanation. First one can compare border camps with similar characteristics to see if there is variance in the level of cross-border violence. For example, the Rwandan Hutu refugees in both Zaire and Tanzania lived within walking distance of Rwanda, yet cross-border violence affected the Zairian camps to a much higher degree than those in Tanzania. That comparison suggests that an additional factor is responsible for levels of violence within border camps, but it cannot prove that camp location is irrelevant to violence.

A second way to evaluate the explanation requires comparing border camps to camps located far from the border, holding other characteristics constant, if possible. One then asks whether the border camps experience higher levels of violence. A systematic test of this proposition is difficult because the vast majority of camps are located near the sending state border. Despite the OAU condemnation of border camps, most refugee camps exist near the sending state border. The predominance of border camps stems from the preference of the receiving state and/or the simple fact that refugees on foot cannot move easily toward the interior of the receiving state. Refugees often prefer border camps so that they can return home more easily.⁵² State-in-exile refugee groups may intentionally settle on the border in order to more easily conduct cross-border attacks.

Some evidence emerges from individual case studies, but it does not provide generalizable findings. For example, variations in the cross-border violence affecting the

⁵¹ UNHCR, *Handbook for Emergencies*, 1999, section 6.3.

⁵² Some refugees return to their homes during the day to farm and then sleep in the refugee camps for safety.

Afghan refugees did not correlate with the distance of the camp from the border.⁵³ Without more comparisons, however, a conclusive finding is not possible.

In addition to the location and size of camps, humanitarian aid workers and scholars often suggest that the gender and age balance in the refugee population contributes to violence. This explanation argues that the mere presence of young men in camps—especially young men with few legitimate activities to occupy their time—encourages refugee-related violence. According to this argument, leaders easily recruit these bored young men for violent purposes or organize them into criminal bands.⁵⁴ The bored young men explanation has two strands. One is that refugee situations with an abnormally large number of young men are more likely to engage in war. This is a sociological explanation resting on the assumption that young men are the most likely perpetrators of aggression in a society. Tony Vaux, an experienced Oxfam worker and author, quotes Stephen Pinker to make the point: “Maleness is by far the biggest risk factor for violence.”⁵⁵

A second strand of the gender theory focuses more on the activities available to men, rather than the number of men, per se. This explanation asserts that refugee assistance must provide more activities, such as sports, vocational training, farming, etc., to occupy young men. Paul Collier has developed this theory for civil war in general. He argues that:

⁵³ Randolph Martin, International Rescue Committee, personal communication to the author. Cambridge, MA, Oct. 30, 1999.

⁵⁴ I thank Dr. Jennifer Leaning for suggesting this hypothesis to me at the Mellon-MIT Program on NGOs and Forced Migration Brownbag Seminar, March 2000. Also see Simon Turner, “Angry Young Men in Camps,” (Geneva: UNHCR), *New Issues in Refugee Research* working paper series, June 1999; Simon Turner, “Vindicating Masculinity: The Fate of Promoting Gender Equality,” *Forced Migration Review*, (Dec. 2000), 8-9.

⁵⁵ Tony Vaux, *The Selfish Altruist*, (London: Earthscan Publications, 2001), 193.

Other things being equal, we might expect that the *proportion of young men* in a society...would be a factor influencing the feasibility of rebellion...relatedly, the willingness of young men to join a rebellion might be influenced by their other income-earning opportunities.⁵⁶

This basically fits with the material incentives hypothesis and suggests that men can be distracted from political violence through recreational or income-generating activity.

The demographics of refugee populations make gender balance an unlikely explanation for the spread of civil war.⁵⁷ In the initial stages of a refugee crisis, the demographics of the refugee population resemble the structure of the population of the country of origin.⁵⁸ UNHCR finds that “generally speaking, the gender selectivity of mass refugee outflows is limited.” The age distribution also tends to mirror the general population.⁵⁹ Relying on demographic data, one would not expect more violence in refugee populations than among non-uprooted populations.⁶⁰

A disproportionate number of men could signify aggressive intentions or it could simply reflect the type of population that was expelled. For example, when the Rwandans fled to Zaire with their army and militia there were likely large numbers of men present. However, the cause of the ensuing violence was that the army was able to flee intact, not

⁵⁶ Collier, “Doing Well Out of War,” 94.

⁵⁷ Accurate measurement of the proportion of men in a camp is not always straightforward. In many cases, refugees resist attempts to take a census. In the eastern Zaire camps in 1996, the militants strongly opposed a census because they had been inflating camp numbers in order to skim extra aid off the top. The militants shot at aid workers who tried to implement the census. Ann-Sofie Nedlund, UNHCR official. Interview with the author, Geneva, July 13, 1999. Systematic data is also hard to obtain. For example, recent UNHCR figures are able to present demographic data on only 5.4 million out of about 13 million refugees.

UNHCR, *Refugees and Others of Concern to UNHCR, 1999 Statistical Overview*, Table III.1.

⁵⁸ Bela Hovy, UNHCR Statistics Bureau. Personal communication with the author, Aug. 30, 2001.

⁵⁹ In Africa, 16.3% of refugees are children under five, virtually the same as the non-refugee population. UNHCR, Excom, “Statistics and Registration: A Progress Report,” Doc. No. EC/50/SC/CRP.10, Feb. 7, 2000, pars 4 and 5.

⁶⁰ One exception to the demographic similarity between refugees and non-refugees is when a crisis has an acute emergency phase in which mortality rates rise. In emergencies, young children and the elderly are likely to die, leaving a greater proportion of teenagers (male and female). This pattern is not specific to types of refugee groups and thus is unrelated to the political context of the crisis. The tendency for a bulge of teenagers to emerge over time suggests the interesting hypothesis that violence (of many sorts) should be more prevalent in long-term refugee populations. I thank Charles Keely for this insight. Personal communication to the author, Aug. 28, 2001.

the number of men in the camps. The gender imbalance theory treats all men as similarly dangerous, even though there is clearly a difference between an “extra” 20,000 male militia members and 20,000 male farmers. During the civil war in Sudan thousands of boys became separated from their families and moved together to the refugee camps in Ethiopia and Kenya. The movement of these teenagers did not result from militant ambitions among the refugees, but rather from their banding together to survive the harsh conditions of exile.

A glaring problem in the gender balance theory is that it leaves out any political motivation for militarization. The explanation suggests that all bored young men, both in situational and state-in-exile groups, are equally susceptible to military recruitment. In fact, state-in-exile and persecuted refugees have a much greater basis for military organization than do situational refugees. State-in-exile groups may have even fewer than expected men because the men remain outside of the camp to fight.⁶¹

The fourth socioeconomic proposition suggests that poor living conditions and lack of activity increase refugees’ willingness to support militarist behavior.⁶² The humanitarian assistance literature often argues that increased material incentives, i.e. humanitarian assistance, farming land, freedom of movement, opportunity to engage in commerce, educational opportunity and recreational activity will forestall the spread of civil war. According to this explanation:

⁶¹ Susanne Schmeidl, “The Quest for Accuracy in the Estimation of Forced Migration,” In Stephen C. Lubkemann, et. al. (eds.) *Humanitarian Action: Social Science Connections*, (Providence, RI: Thomas J. Watson Jr. Institute for International Studies, Brown University, 2000), Occasional Paper no. 37, 150-151.

⁶² Logically, the material incentives proposition applies more to refugee-instigated violence than to attacks by the sending state, due to the different types of motivation required. Although the sending state government uses various methods to rally popular support behind its actions, it generally does not face the same hurdles in mobilizing forces as do the refugees. In evaluating the cases, the analysis of the material incentives explanation focuses on the refugees rather than the sending state.

Refugee camps (like other large, poor and densely-populated human settlements) have an inherent propensity to insecurity, especially when their inhabitants are deprived of educational, agricultural or income-generating opportunities and have little prospect of finding an early solution to their plight.⁶³

The basic idea assumes that refugees, especially young men, require distraction from the pull of aggressive leaders and the temptation to improve their standard of living through use of violence. For example, an OAU-sponsored conference stressed that aid agencies could reduce militarism and improve security in the Rwandan refugee camps by encouraging “educational, cultural and sporting activities...targeted particularly at those adolescent males who are most likely to become involved in destabilizing criminal, political or military activities.”⁶⁴ UNHCR recommends “providing structured activities and primary schools for children” in order to “reduce recruitment into the armed forces.”⁶⁵ This theory suggests that refugee camps with low levels of humanitarian aid and very restrictive conditions will become hotbeds of violence.

Flaws in this explanation stem, in part, from its overgeneralization to all refugee groups and its complete avoidance of the political context of the crisis. As currently enunciated by the humanitarian aid community, this explanation assumes little or no political motivation behind refugees’ willingness to support cross-border attacks. The material incentives explanation also fails to distinguish between types of refugee populations, implying that even situational refugees could become violent if their living conditions become too unsatisfactory. The theory would be improved if it disaggregated

⁶³ “Humanitarian Security and Protection in Refugee-Populated Areas: Operationalizing the ‘Ladder of Options,” Unpublished paper presented to UNHCR Excomm, June 2000. Liisa Malkki argues that rural, bored Burundian refugees became more politically activist and nationalist than urban refugees who had more options. Malkki, *Purity and Exile, Violence, Memory, and National Cosmology Among Hutu Refugees in Tanzania*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

⁶⁴ “Refugee Protection and Security in the Great Lakes Region,” OAU/UNHCR, *Regional Meeting on Refugee Issues in the Great Lakes*, Kampala, Uganda, May 8-9, 1998, 8.

⁶⁵ UNHCR, *Handbook for Emergencies, Second Edition*. 1999, Chapter 2, par. 48.

the types of violence that result, recognizing the possibility that material incentives might affect some types of violence (e.g. crime) more than others (e.g. international war).⁶⁶ As a corollary to this theory, it seems likely that the very lowest living conditions would not produce violence since some basic level of food, water, and shelter is required for people to mobilize.

The material incentives explanation, evaluated with the same refugee group over time and between different groups, fails to explain the actions of deprived refugees. For example, among Rwandan refugees variation in levels of assistance over time do not correlate with variations in violent activity. In addition, refugees who enjoyed relatively good conditions (compared to the average for developing countries and to other refugee situations) exhibited variation in levels of violence. These findings suggest that the level of military activity “depends on what it [the conflict] is all about,” rather than just material incentives.⁶⁷

In practice, the converse of the material incentives theory often holds true. Higher levels of aid actually fuel the conflict and enable the spread of civil war. In cases where aggressive leaders control the refugee population, the militants extract resources from the refugees in order to prosecute the war. The Rwandan refugee crisis prompted an unprecedented outpouring of humanitarian aid, which the militants easily diverted to their cause. This perverse outcome of humanitarian aid is discussed further in Chapter 8, “Policy Implications: The Risks of Humanitarian Responses to Militarized Crises.”

Humanitarian organizations usually focus on short-term solutions to poor living conditions in their attempts to forestall violence. The case studies show that this does not

⁶⁶ Testing the effect of living conditions on other types of violence falls beyond the scope of this project.

⁶⁷ Hiram Ruiz, US Committee for Refugees. Interview with the author, Washington DC, Nov. 13, 2000.

curtail the spread of civil war, and may even encourage it. Another socioeconomic approach that seems more promising (but also more difficult) is to focus on long-term improvements in the refugees' living conditions. This includes finding durable solutions to the crisis, for example resettlement abroad or local integration into the receiving state. In the few instances where such options have been available, it has limited refugees' militancy. During their second flight in 1995, many militant Bosnian Muslim refugees accepted resettlement abroad, breaking their ties with Abdic. The availability of that option made it much easier to weaken the hard-core militant elements and allow the peaceful return of the rest of the refugees. The case studies presented here explore the idea that better long-term options will blunt militarism.

In their focus on peripheral or irrelevant factors, the socioeconomic explanations enunciated above obscure the political context of the violence and thus hinder policy measures to prevent the spread of war. In the case of the humanitarian community, socioeconomic explanations are probably advanced because humanitarian agencies have little control over the political context. For policy-makers, hiding behind socioeconomic explanations allows them to foist the crisis onto the humanitarian agencies. However, viewing refugee crises purely as humanitarian emergencies often facilitates the spread of civil war.

Chapter 4

From Refugees to Regional War in Central Africa

I. Introduction

“Uniformed groups with weapons are being fed by the international community.”

--Paul Kagame, then Rwandan Vice President, December 1994¹

Since the early 1990s, internal conflicts have caused millions of deaths in the Democratic Republic of Congo (formerly Zaire), Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda, and Angola. In Congo alone, an estimated two and a half million people have died from the effects of war.² These many internal conflicts have not remained isolated from each other, but have spread across national borders. The internationalization of conflict has drawn in numerous states and rebel groups, and escalated the costs of war. This region-wide, even continent-wide, set of intractable conflicts has been called Africa's Great War.³ The presence and activities of nearly two million Rwandan refugees acted as a catalyst for the spread of conflict in Central Africa. At a lower level, militant Burundian refugees have also prolonged and expanded the regional conflict.

¹ Quoted in Victoria Brittain, “West Accused of Giving Aid to Defeated Rwandan Army,” *The Guardian*, Dec. 9, 1994.

² International Rescue Committee, “Preliminary Findings Indicate Some Two and a Half Million Deaths in Eastern Congo Conflict,” May 2001. Found at: <http://www.intrescom.org>.

³ David Shearer, “Africa's Great War,” *Survival*, 41, 2 (Summer 1999), 89-106.

The Rwandan genocide and ensuing defeat of the Hutu forces in 1994 spurred massive refugee outflows (see Map 4.1). The nearly two million Hutu refugees fled at the instigation of their leaders, who had masterminded the genocide.⁴ An estimated 20,000 Hutu soldiers and 50,000 militia members pressured the population to leave.⁵ The first outflow occurred on April 29, 1994, when up to 250,000 Hutu crossed the Rusumo bridge over the Kagera river into Tanzania. The refugees included many *Interahamwe* (Hutu militia) and local government officials implicated in the genocide.⁶ An even larger refugee movement occurred as the Tutsi-led Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) appeared poised to take over the entire country. At the urging of their leaders, over a million people fled to eastern Zaire, bringing with them most of the resources of the Rwandan government. The populations that arrived in Tanzania, Zaire, and Burundi constituted states-in-exile, and as such, exhibited high propensities for violence.

From the beginning of the crisis, the Rwandan Hutu refugees served a strategic role for the planners and executors of the genocide. The refugees provided international cover for the genocidaires and also served as an indictment of the new Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) regime. The militants extracted resources from the refugees and used the camps as recruitment pools. The well-funded camps quickly became the locus of violence directed against the new Rwandan government.

⁴ The actual number of refugees was a contentious issue throughout the crisis. While UNHCR talked of 1.9 million, General Paul Kagame, Rwandan vice president, referred to about a million refugees. As of Aug. 1994, UNHCR estimated 1.3 million in Zaire, 190,000 in Burundi, and 530,000 in Tanzania. The United States Committee for Refugees (USCR) estimated the total number at 20 percent less than official UN estimates. Dennis McNamara, Statement to House International Relations Committee, Sub-Committee on International Operations and Human Rights, hearing on "Rwanda: Genocide and the Continuing Cycle of Violence," May 5, 1998; Jeff Drumtra, "Site Visit to Rwanda, Zaire, and Burundi, Oct. 20 to Nov. 17, 1994," (Washington DC: US Committee for Refugees), Sect. 2A; See also Gerard Prunier, "Rwanda: Update to End of July 1995," Writenet Country Papers, Refworld, UNHCR, Aug. 1995, section 3.

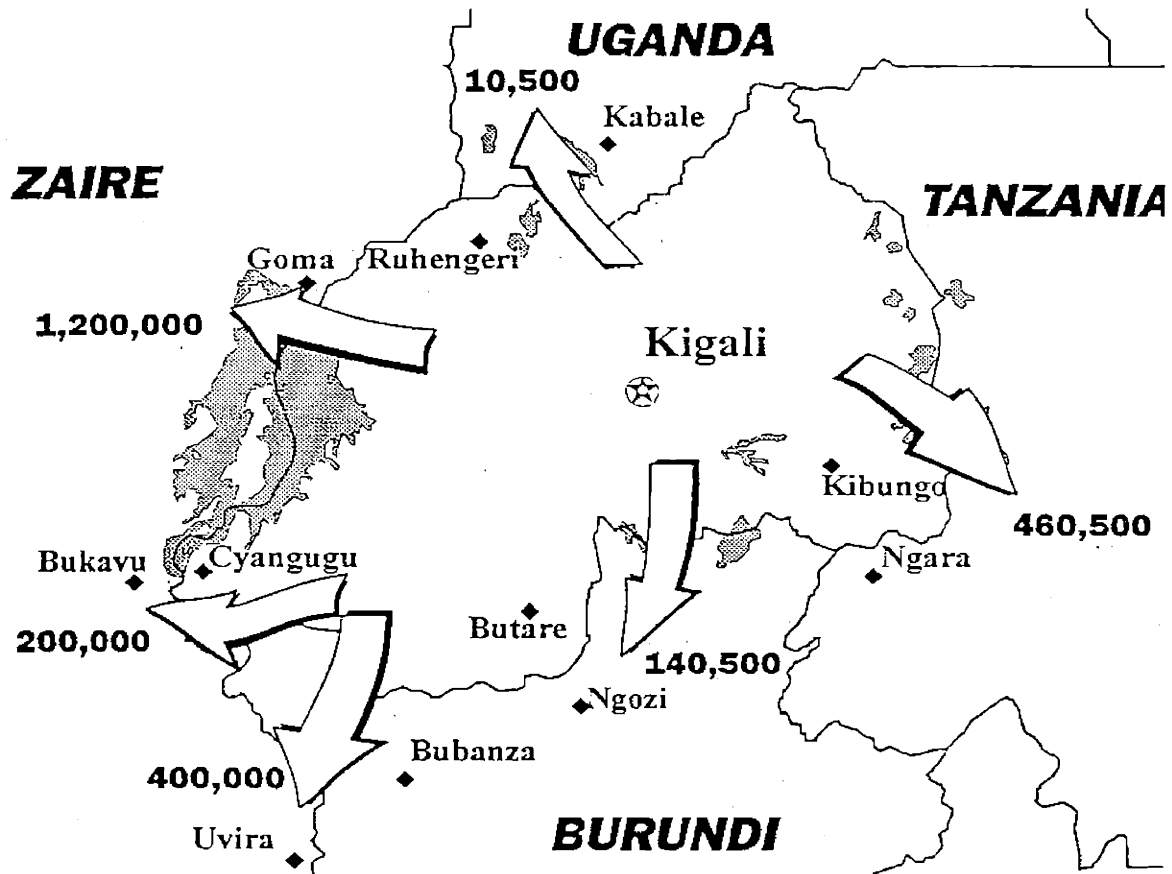
⁵ Médecins Sans Frontiers, "Deadlock in the Rwandan Refugee Crisis: Virtual Standstill on Repatriation," Amsterdam, July 1995, sect. I.1.

⁶ African Rights, *Rwanda: Death, Despair, and Defiance*, (London: African Rights, 1995 revised edition), 1088.

Although raids originated from Zaire, Tanzania, and Burundi against Rwandan targets, the vast majority of violence emanated from eastern Zaire. From the camps in Zaire, the refugees organized to overthrow the Rwandan government. Cross-border attacks against Rwanda occurred throughout 1995 and 1996, in which Hutu assailants targeted genocide survivors and abducted local men to participate in the militias across the border.⁷ The conflict escalated sharply in late 1996 when the Rwandan government, allied with Zairian rebels, attacked the refugee camps, dispersing nearly a million people. Since that time, international and civil war have continued, nearly unabated, in the region. In contrast, the refugee presence in Tanzania did not cause the spread of civil war. Despite their goals of attacking Rwanda, the militants in Tanzania were unable to act. Compared to Zaire, low levels of political violence affected the refugee populated areas.

⁷ Amnesty International, "Rwanda and Burundi, The Return Home: Rumours and Realities," Feb. 20, 1996, 21.

Map 4.1
Rwandan Refugee Flows, 1994



Source: UN Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal for Rwanda-Emergency Addendum, 1994. Population estimates as of July 21, 1994.

Popular explanations for the refugee-related violence in Zaire focus on socioeconomic characteristics of the camps. Aid workers and policy makers stress that the camps were too large and too near the Rwandan border, and thus were difficult to control. Common explanations also claim that miserable living conditions encouraged bored young men to embrace militancy. None of these explanations account for the political environment in which the refugee crisis occurred. Rwandan refugees in Tanzania and Zaire experienced very similar socioeconomic conditions, but radically different

political environments. In reality, the political context, not socioeconomic context, of the refugee crisis determined the levels of political and military organization among the refugees.

Three aspects of the political situation explain the spread of the Rwandan civil war. The first is the origin of the refugees' flight—to escape defeat in a civil war. The genocidal leaders created the refugee crisis in order to avoid surrendering to the Tutsi-led RPF. The refugee populations in Zaire and Tanzania contained thousands of unrepentant political and military leaders implicated in the genocide. Thus, the refugees began their exile with a high level of political and military organization and significant resources with which to continue the war.

Second, the policies of the receiving states, Zaire and Tanzania, determined whether the militant refugees were able to carry out their aims. Zaire was allied to the Rwandan Hutu and also had limited capability to control its eastern border. Thus, it did not prevent cross-border attacks between Rwanda and the refugees. Tanzania, on the other hand, was a stable democracy that wanted to avoid refugee-related violence. The government did not have a strong alliance with either the Rwandan Tutsi or Hutu. Even though the refugees in Tanzania included genocidaires, they were unable to amass sufficient resources to launch attacks on Rwanda.

Third, international influences, including states, international aid agencies, and NGOs, affected the capabilities of the militants. In Zaire, allies of the Rwandan Hutu provided military aid with the connivance of the Zairian government. In both receiving states, the massive humanitarian presence inadvertently filled the coffers of the militants, although to a greater extent in Zaire than in Tanzania. These three factors—the origin of

the crisis, the role of the receiving state, and international influences—explain why Zaire erupted into war and Tanzania remained stable.

The internationalization of conflict in Central Africa is also intertwined with the hundreds of thousands of Burundian refugees that fled to Tanzania. Ethnic civil war erupted in Burundi in 1993 after Tutsi soldiers assassinated the elected Hutu president. This conflict is ongoing and has cost the lives of at least 250,000 Burundians. The war has created nearly 500,000 Hutu refugees and many more displaced within their own country. Both sides in the conflict, the Tutsi-led government and Hutu rebel parties, terrorize civilians as a strategy of war. The Tutsi army rounds up Hutu peasants and forces them into squalid “regroupment” camps in order to depopulate potential rebel havens. The Hutu rebels encourage (often forcibly) the peasants to flee the country. The resulting refugee crisis, in which 400,000 refugees sought haven in Tanzania, serves as an indictment of the Burundian government and a valuable resource for the rebels. From the camps in Tanzania, rebel leaders amass and train recruits to launch cross-border attacks on Burundi. The government of Burundi has responded with hot pursuit raids into Tanzania, repeatedly leading the two states to the brink of war.

The situation of Burundian refugees in Tanzania confirms the importance of receiving state policy for the spread of civil war. The Burundian refugees entered Tanzania with a lower initial level of political and military organization than the Rwandans did, yet the Burundian rebels have been much more active than the Rwandans were. Their ability to recruit new fighters, train them, and launch cross-border attacks is due to Tanzania’s tacit approval of their activities. Tanzania strongly opposes the Burundian government and feels greater sympathy for the Hutu cause there. Despite its

vehement public denials, Tanzania clearly supports the militarization in the refugee populated areas. Government officials' claims of helplessness are not convincing, considering its past ability to control the Rwandan crisis.

This chapter explains the variations in the spread of war in Central Africa. The comparisons between and within the Rwandan and Burundian refugee crises demonstrate the importance of the political context of the crises. The next section of the chapter provides a brief background of events preceding the Rwandan refugee crises, including the invasion by a Uganda-based Tutsi refugee army into Rwanda and the genocide that followed. Section III analyzes the political context of the Rwandan state-in-exile in eastern Zaire. The next section compares the relatively peaceful situation in Tanzania to the war in Zaire. Section V offers an analysis of the Burundian refugees in Tanzania, focusing on Tanzania's different policies toward Burundian and Rwandan refugees. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the wider context and implications of the Central African refugee crises.

II. Rwanda's Recent History—Invasion and Genocide

The conflict in Rwanda, and the resulting region-wide destabilization, traces its roots to ethnic polarization and the resulting refugee flows that occurred at the end of the colonial period. As independence from Belgium approached in 1959, a revolution occurred in Rwanda, culminating in the suspicious death of the king, Mutara Rudahigwa. His death sparked violence between Hutu and Tutsi, spurring thousands of Tutsi to flee the country. After independence, the Hutu-dominated First Republic was established under the rule of Gregoire Kayibanda. Small groups of Tutsi refugees conducted raids across the border in

attempts to destabilize the new government, however these attacks usually led to crackdowns on local Tutsi civilians. After a Tutsi refugee incursion in December 1963 almost reached Kigali, between 10,000 and 14,000 Tutsi were massacred and even more fled the country. The 1972 genocide of the Hutu in Burundi also raised ethnic tensions in neighboring Rwanda, leading to a coup d'état in which Juvenal Habyarimana took power in 1973.⁸

Over the decades, hundreds of thousands of Tutsi established themselves in neighboring Uganda—200,000 of whom were classified as refugees.⁹ During this period, the Banyarwanda, as they were known, became highly integrated into Ugandan society, although they experienced a periods of persecution. In 1982 President Milton Obote expelled thousands of Rwandans from Uganda, including many who claimed Ugandan citizenship. The expellees languished in camps in Rwanda for three years before they returned to Uganda.

Many observers believe that “the harsh reality they encountered in Uganda in the early eighties was the psychological turning point for many Tutsis” that led to their later militancy.¹⁰ In reaction to Obote’s persecution, many Tutsi joined Yoweri Museveni’s resistance movement and formed their own political entity, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF).¹¹ As allies of Museveni, the refugees had access to military training and

⁸ Catharine Newbury and David Newbury, “A Catholic Mass in Kigali: Contested Views of the Genocide and Ethnicity in Rwanda,” *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 33, 2 & 3 (1999), 297-299, 303.

⁹ Mahmood Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 189.

¹⁰ African Rights, *Rwanda*, 26.

¹¹ The RPF was established in 1987, born of an earlier organization called Rwandese Alliance for National Unity that started in 1980. The RPF originally operated as an organization to push for refugee repatriation but later changed its goal to toppling the Habyarimana regime. Gaudens P. Mpangala, “Ethnic Conflicts in the Region of the Great Lakes,” Unpublished manuscript, (University of Dar es Salaam, Centre for the Study of Forced Migration archives, 2000), 143; See also, Mamdani, Chapter 6. Tanzanian scholar Bonaventure Rutinwa concurs that “the treatment of Rwandese refugees in Uganda around this period was one of the factors that gave impetus to the formation of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF).” Bonaventure

equipment. Museveni took power from Obote in 1986 with the help of 5,000 well-trained and armed Tutsi soldiers.¹² After his ascension to power, Museveni felt domestic pressure to disassociate from the Rwandan Tutsi, popularly perceived as foreigners. Ugandan attitudes toward the refugees hardened in the late 1980s and the refugees' positions of authority began to erode. As life became more difficult, "returning 'home' was beginning to seem an attractive choice to increasing numbers of the exiled leadership."¹³ These militant refugees believed that "the return home could only be armed"¹⁴

The army of the Rwandan Patriotic Front invaded Rwanda October 1, 1990, while both Museveni and Rwandan President Habyarimana were abroad. An estimated 4,000 Tutsi rebels participated. Immediately after the invasion, the Rwandan Hutu security forces killed hundreds of Tutsi and arrested thousands more. Between 1990 and 1993, around 2,000 Tutsi died in ethnically motivated violence around the country.¹⁵ The invasion actually played into the hands of the Hutu extremists by providing credibility to their ethnic propaganda. The invasion and ensuing civil war allowed Habyarimana's forces to manipulate the large mass of unemployed and disenchanted youth, recruiting them into extremist militias.¹⁶

Negotiations to end the stalemated civil war resulted in the Arusha Accords, a power-sharing agreement between the government and the RPF signed in 1993. The Accords did not reassure the fears of either party and provided an opportunity for hard-

Rutinwa, "The End of Asylum? The Changing Nature of Refugee Policies in Africa," *New Issues in Refugee Research* working paper series, (Geneva: UNHCR), May 1999.

¹² Charles David Smith, "The Geopolitics of Rwandan Resettlement: Uganda and Tanzania," *Issue: A Journal of Opinion*, 33, 2 (1995), 55.

¹³ OAU, "International Panel of Eminent Personalities to Investigate the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda and Its Surrounding Events," July 7, 2000, par. 6.6. Found at: <http://www.oau-oua.org/Document/ipep/ipep.htm>.

¹⁴ Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 175.

¹⁵ Newbury and Newbury, "A Catholic Mass", 305.

¹⁶ "Understanding the Great Lakes Crisis," Report of an international conference, Nairobi, Nov. 30-Dec. 2, 1996. Printed in *Journal of Humanitarian Assistance*, sect. 4.2.0.

liners on each side to regroup. “Both the international community and the African partners in [the Arusha process] grossly misjudged the former government of Rwanda...they underestimated the degree to which the power of the state had been mortgaged to an extremist clique from northwest Rwanda.”¹⁷ Observers miscalculated the government’s willingness to resolve the refugee problem and the strength of the forces amassing across the border in Uganda. Despite the presence of a United Nations peacekeeping contingent (UNAMIR), Hutu hardliners prepared for genocide.

Details of the genocide that occurred from April to July are now well recorded, although at the time most great powers claimed ignorance.¹⁸ Experts generally agree that between 500,000 and 800,000 Tutsi and some moderate Hutu perished at the hands of the killers, often referred to as “genocidaires.” The genocide ended when the RPF defeated the Rwandan government forces. The RPF captured Kigali airport on May 22, 1994 and on July 4th it took complete control of the city. By that time, millions of Hutu refugees had fled the country at the urging of their leaders, setting the stage for the international spread of the Rwandan conflict.

¹⁷ Smith, “The Geopolitics of Rwandan Resettlement,” 54.

¹⁸ On the Rwandan genocide see, Gerard Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995); African Rights, *Rwanda: Death, Despair, and Defiance*, (London: African Rights, 1995 revised edition); Philip Gourevitch, *We wish to inform you that tomorrow we will be killed with our families*, (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1998); Mahmood Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); and Alan J. Kuperman, *The Limits of Humanitarian Intervention: Genocide in Rwanda*, (Brookings Institute, May 2001).

III. Rwandan Refugees and the Spread of War in Zaire

A Violent State-In-Exile

“The refugee population, complete with its army, finances, and government, is like a second and smaller unofficial Rwanda outside the official one...The vast majority of the refugees have absolutely no intention of returning to Rwanda as long as the RPF government is in power.”

--Rwanda scholar, Gerard Prunier¹⁹

“We are in a state of virtual war in the camps.”

--UNHCR official, August 1994²⁰

Without doubt, the Rwandan refugees in Zaire constituted a state-in-exile from the early days of the crisis. The organization of the flight, the resources of the refugee leaders, and the strong initial political cohesion of the group confirms that. A report by the Organization for African Unity (OAU) described the camps as “a rump genocidal state.”²¹ In April 1995, the Hutu leaders issued a communiqué from Kinshasa announcing the formation of the Rwandan government-in-exile in Zaire.²² Officials in the Bukavu region reported that “a prime minister and defense minister had been elected, the latter’s mandate being to ‘liberate’ Rwanda.”²³

As the RPF victory appeared imminent in mid-July, 1994, the leaders of the genocide created a state-in-exile by moving over a million people into eastern Zaire. In less than a week, 850,000 Hutu walked to Goma in the Kivu district of Zaire, camping

¹⁹ Gerard Prunier, “Rwanda: Update to End of July 1995,” Writenet Country Papers, Refworld, UNHCR, Aug. 1995, sect. 3, 3.4.

²⁰ African Rights, *Rwanda*, 1093.

²¹ OAU, “International Panel of Eminent Personalities,” sect. 19.28.

²² “Exiled Rwandan Government Confirms Base,” Paris AFP, FBIS Daily Report, April 26, 1995.

²³ Save the Children, “Rwandan Refugees in Zaire,” Bukavu, Zaire, Report for Nov. 1, 1994-Dec. 12, 1994, sect. 1.

just across the Rwandan border on inhospitable volcanic terrain (see Map 4.2).²⁴ A second outflow occurred in August, when the closure of the French-protected zone in southwest Rwanda pushed over 300,000 Hutu toward Bukavu, Zaire. The exiles included much of the political and military leadership. Unlike most refugee movements, “the majority of the refugees were led into Zaire, not really forced out by the winning side.”²⁵ One refugee described the meetings that occurred in which the leaders told the people to move toward Zaire. This refugee testified, “People were given a deadline, by which time they must be in Zaire. We were told that whoever did not leave by the deadline, which I think was 30 June, would be swept away by the Interahamwe who would come from behind.”²⁶ Indeed, Hutu soldiers shot into the air in order to stampede people toward the border. One UNHCR official described the refugees as “a defeated, angry population” in which the leaders exercised tight social control through fear.²⁷

The fleeing refugees took with them to Zaire nearly everything of value in Rwanda, from the entire state treasury down to door handles and window frames. One UNHCR official recalled seeing ex-FAR (former Rwandan army) tanks and two or three warplanes parked at Bukavu airport.²⁸ Aid workers observed Rwandan public transport buses and gold Mercedes being driven around the camps.²⁹ Emissaries of the defeated Hutu regime in Kenya stole the assets of the Rwandan embassy there and sent them to the

²⁴ The RPF closed the Goma border on July 16, 1994.

²⁵ Joel Boutroue, “Missed Opportunities: The Role of the International Community in the Return of the Rwandan Refugees from Eastern Zaire,” *Rosemarie Rogers Working Paper Series*, (Cambridge, MA: Center for International Studies, MIT), 1998 4.

²⁶ African Rights, *Rwanda*, 1093. Gerard Prunier confirms that Hutu leaders forced out the refugees. Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, quote, p. 304

²⁷ UNHCR official, interview by the author, Geneva, July 20, 1999.

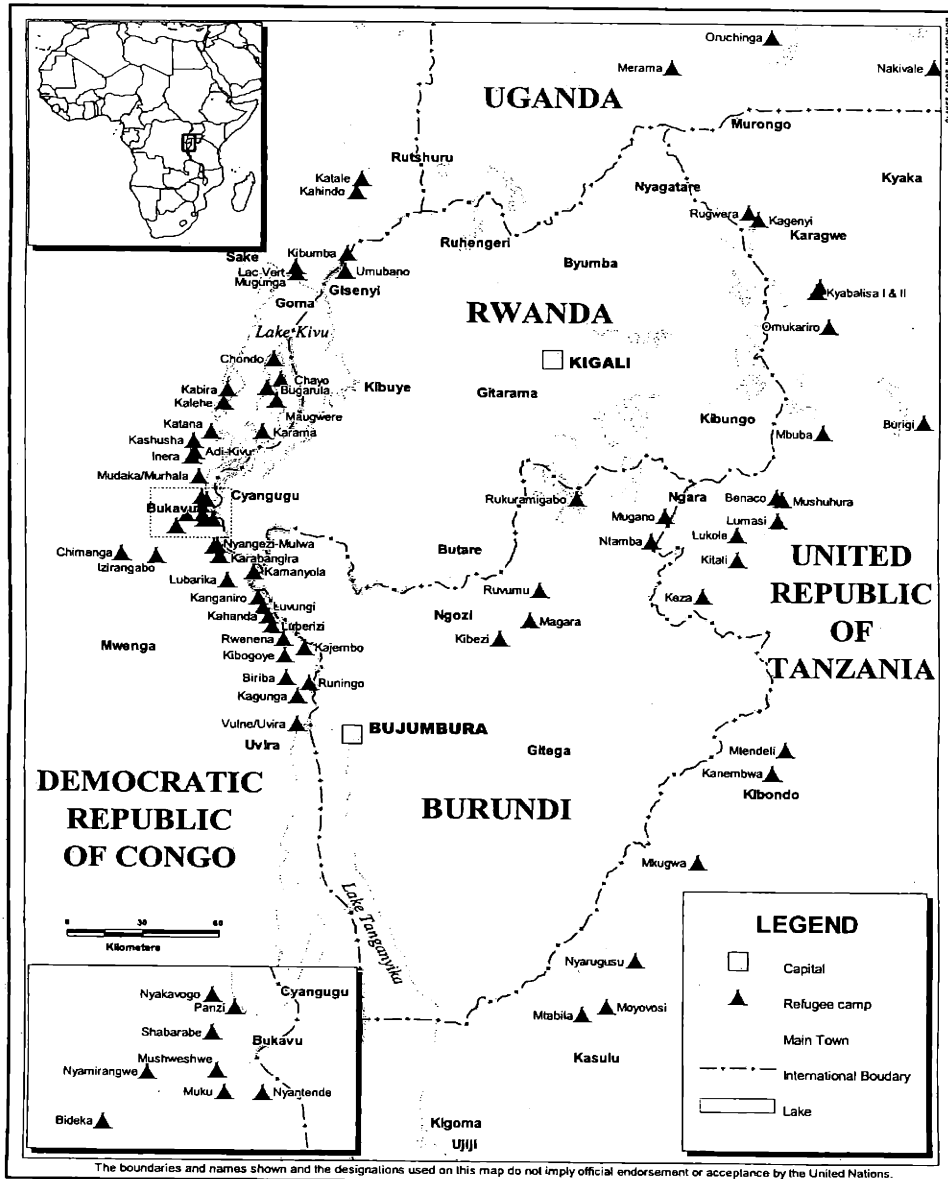
²⁸ UNHCR official, interview by the author, Geneva, July 15, 1998.

²⁹ Eleanor Bedford, USCR, interview by the author, Washington, DC, Nov. 2, 1999.

militants before Kenya officially recognized the new RPF government in December 1994.³⁰

Map 4.2³¹

REFUGEE CAMPS IN THE GREAT LAKES REGION
(As of 1995)



³⁰ Human Rights Watch Arms Project, *Rwanda/Zaire: Rearming with Impunity*, 7, 4, (May 1995), 4 fn13.

In the first few months of the refugee crisis, chaos and violence ruled the camps in eastern Zaire while the state-in-exile coalesced. From July 1994 until about October, a virulent cholera epidemic killed 50,000 refugees and added to the confusion.³² During that time, the militants battled openly for control of the refugee population and made no secret of their ambition to invade Rwanda and topple the RPF. Men walked around the camps in uniform “armed with every conceivable type of weapon” and engaged in training with the explicit goal of invading Rwanda.³³ A UNHCR official at the Goma camps reported that in August 1994, “gang battles were raging for control of lucrative aspects of camp life.”³⁴ That same month a group of machete-wielding *Interahamwe* dissuaded several hundred refugees from repatriating. Numerous refugees were killed for even obtaining information about repatriation.³⁵ Militants set up roadblocks within the camps and engaged in neighborhood security patrols to monitor refugee activity.

After the initial period of chaos, militant Hutu leaders established complete control over the camps in eastern Zaire, demonstrating a high level of political and military organization. Once the cholera epidemic subsided, aid workers found that

The old commune and village structures remained intact and senior officials and *Interahamwe* militias who had directed the original genocide, established control

³¹ UNHCR, 1999. Found at www://unhcr.ch, accessed on August 7, 2002.

³² Numerous sources concur that the cholera outbreak temporarily dislodged the power of the leaders. Between 100,000 and 200,000 people had voluntarily repatriated by mid-August, before the leaders consolidated their power. By fall 1994, the militant leaders forced UNHCR to cancel organized return after the convoys were attacked by mobs. Different sources report widely varying repatriation numbers. Eleanor Bedford, United States Committee for Refugees. Interview with the author, Nov. 2, 1999. See also McNamara, Statement to House International Relations Committee, May 5, 1998; Boutroue, “Missed Opportunities,” 1998; Kate Halvorsen, “Protection and Humanitarian Assistance in the Refugee Camps in Zaire: The Problem of Security.” In Howard Adelman and Astri Suhrke (eds.) *The Path of Genocide: The Rwanda Crisis from Uganda to Zaire*, (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Press, 1999), 313-314.

³³ African Rights, *Rwanda*, 1093.

³⁴ Boutroue, “Missed Opportunities,” 39.

³⁵ Jeff Drumtra, “Site Visit to Rwanda, Zaire, and Burundi, Oct. 20 to Nov.17, 1994,” (Washington DC: US Committee for Refugees), 23E.

in the camps. Soldiers of the defeated Rwandan army retained both their cohesion and pitched tent just outside civilian camps.³⁶

The same local authority structures that existed in Rwanda governed the camps in Zaire, enabling the genocidal leaders to maintain tight control. In December 1994, the refugee-run Commission Sociale restructured the Goma camps into quartiers (districts), sous-quartiers (sub-districts), cellules (neighborhoods), and nyumba kumi (groups of 10 houses). The Bukavu camps were also organized by quartier and sous-quartier, but unlike the Goma camps, the people did not live according to their location back in Rwanda. Still, in many Bukavu camps (especially Kishushu and Inera with a high proportion of former military and militia) the former authorities held "complete control" over the camps.³⁷

In addition to geographic based organization, the refugees organized themselves politically, forming a variety of groups. During 1994, the ex-FAR maintained aloof from camp politics but by 1995 the military elements firmly controlled the political organization of the camps. A World Bank mission reported

There was an underlying power structure based on a committee of fifteen or seventeen members, made up of former government, military and business leaders, and possibly directed from abroad which still controlled most of what went on in the camps. It appeared that elected leaders would not go against the decisions of this committee.³⁸

In April 1995, a group of refugees formed a political party in Mugunga camp called Rally for Democracy and the Return to Rwanda (RDR). The RDR claimed no link with the

³⁶ Ray Wilkinson, "The Heart of Darkness," *Refugees, Crisis in the Great Lakes*, (Geneva: UNHCR, No.110, Winter 1997), 9.

³⁷ World Bank, "Evaluation of Current Rwandan Refugee Camp Conditions and Structures in Goma and Bukavu-Zaire," Report from World Bank Mission, March-April 1995, quote par. 8.2. See also Amnesty International. "Rwanda and Burundi, The Return Home: Rumours and Realities," Feb. 20, 1996, 32; and Médecins Sans Frontiers, "Deadlock in the Rwandan Refugee Crisis: Virtual Standstill on Repatriation," Amsterdam, July 1995.

³⁸ World Bank, "Evaluation of Current Rwandan Refugee Camp Conditions," par. 12.2.

extremist Hutu government-in-exile, yet it circulated similar racist propaganda and asserted that the party would resort to “military action as a final option.” Thirteen senior officers in the ex-FAR pledged their support for the new party days after its founding.³⁹

The refugee crisis provided a good opportunity for the genocidaires to improve their military capability. The leaders and their recruits established openly military camps in close proximity to the refugees.⁴⁰ A United States Committee for Refugees (USCR) observer noted in 1996 that “it is an open secret in Goma that many of the commanders of FAR are now living and training recruits at Lac Vert Chiefs of Staff camp, several kilometers southwest of Mugunga camp.”⁴¹ In addition to the purely military camps, the militants infiltrated the “civilian” camps and used them as bases from which they launched cross border attacks against Rwanda. The military might of the former Rwandan army (ex-FAR) and militia groups actually grew while in exile. Before the 1990 invasion by the RPF, the FAR had a troop strength of 5,000. This number rose to 30,000 after the invasion. By 1995, Human Rights Watch reported that the ex-FAR in the Zairian camps boasted a strength of 50,000 people, due to new recruits and the absorption

³⁹ Médecins Sans Frontiers, “Deadlock,” II.1.4. The RDR later moved its headquarters to the Netherlands and also became active in Canada. IRIN-CEA Update 1,089 for the Great Lakes (Wednesday 10 January, 2001).

⁴⁰ The *Interhamwe*, by contrast, tended to integrate among the refugees and were more difficult to identify. Jeff Drumtra, “Site Visit to Rwanda, Zaire, and Burundi, Oct. 20 to Nov.17, 1994.” (Washington DC: US Committee for Refugees), 23E.

⁴¹ Sheldon Yett, “Masisi, Down the Road from Goma; Ethnic Cleansing and Displacement in Eastern Zaire,” (Washington DC: US Committee for Refugees Issue Brief, June 1996), 14. See also, William Cyrus Reed, “Refugees and Rebels: The Former Government of Rwanda and the ADFL Movement in Eastern Zaire,” (Washington DC: US Committee for Refugees Issue Brief, April 1997); Médecins Sans Frontiers, “Deadlock,” II.2.3; OAU, “International Panel of Eminent Personalities,” 20.6.

of former militia members.⁴² The OAU estimated that around 10 percent of the refugees (i.e. over 100,000 people) were actually militants and war criminals.⁴³

Aid workers confirmed that weapons shipments destined for the Hutu military leaders regularly arrived at Goma airport. Stewart Wallis of Oxfam reported midnight shipments brought in on twelve Russian-built Ilyushin aircraft. In an assessment mission in March 1995, Human Rights Watch observed military training by ex-FAR and militia in Bilongue camp and an arsenal of weapons in Panzi camp. Support by the Zairian government for arms transfers hindered any efforts to demilitarize the refugee camps. The weapons were jointly transported by the FAZ (Zairian army) and the ex-FAR and included "assault rifles, mortars, grenades, and landmines." Zaire confiscated heavy weapons (including armored cars, 120mm armored mortar carriers, rocket launchers, anti-aircraft guns, and military trucks), but stored them in Zairian warehouses that were maintained by the ex-FAR.⁴⁴

Following direction from their leaders, refugees refused to return home without a complete victory. As one refugee in Goma told reporters, "We came here with our orders and we now wait for our return orders."⁴⁵ Interviews with refugees in Mugunga camp, which housed 150,000 refugees, including a high concentration of former military, militia and political elite, revealed that refugees demanded many changes in order to return. Interestingly, the refugees seemed to view themselves as holding a strong bargaining

⁴²Human Rights Watch Arms Project, "Rwanda/Zaire: Rearming with Impunity," 3 fn7. Reed concurs with the estimate of 50,000 ex-FAR and militia in the spring of 1995. Reed, "Refugees and Rebels," 7. See also, Gerard Prunier, "The Rwandan Patriotic Front," In *African Guerrillas*, (Oxford: James Currey, 1998), 132.

⁴³ OAU, "International Panel of Eminent Personalities," Sect. 19.22.

⁴⁴ Human Rights Watch Arms Project, *Rwanda/Zaire: Rearming with Impunity*, 7, 4, (May 1995), 11-12; Médecins Sans Frontiers, "Deadlock," II.2.1; Julian Samboma, "Rwanda-Burundi: Hutu Extremists Rearming for Another Bloodbath?" Article circulated on Forced Migration email list, March 31, 1995.

⁴⁵ Gerard Prunier, "Rwanda: Update to End of July 1995," Writenet Country Papers, Refworld, UNHCR, Aug. 1995, sect. 3.4.

position. Their demands included: a new government in Rwanda, an international guarantee of safety, mass (not individual) repatriation, and land tenure rights.⁴⁶ At a UN/OAU sponsored workshop in the region, a refugee from Goma affirmed that the refugees were prepared to establish a government in exile rather than return to Rwanda.⁴⁷

After the cholera epidemic subsided in October 1994, the focus of militant activity shifted from control of the camps to destabilization of the new Rwandan regime. Early, small-scale incursions began in October 1994 but by a year later, the attacks had increased in intensity and frequency. By mid-1995, the former regime had strengthened its military and political power. Human Rights Watch found that the former Rwandan army (ex-FAR) had rebuilt its military structure and “maintained a direct link with the political establishment through the self-declared government-in-exile’s Ministry of Defense.”⁴⁸ By 1996, the refugee leaders had gained resources and military recruits, leading to an increase in the number and lethality of attacks. The early attacks focused on economic sabotage, but once the RPF could effectively counter those attacks, the refugee militants began targeting local civilian leaders and genocide survivors.⁴⁹

The Rwandan government responded to the security threat posed by the refugees by launching its own cross-border attacks.⁵⁰ Tensions rose between Rwanda and Zaire, as Zaire accused Rwanda of launching attacks onto its territory three times in the first half

⁴⁶ Refugees International, “Rwandan Repatriation: The Challenge for the Great Lakes Region,” Report No.1 (Nov. 8, 1995).

⁴⁷ *Summary Report from the International Workshop on the Refugee Crisis in the Great Lakes Region*, Arusha, Tanzania, August 16-19th 1995, 22.

⁴⁸ The HRW report is based on interviews with ex-FAR and militia members, corroborated by UNHCR and NGOs. Human Rights Watch Arms Project, *Rwanda/Zaire: Rearming with Impunity*, 7, 4, (May 1995), 15.

⁴⁹ For example, attackers killed 28 people in Gisenyi prefecture on June 27, 1996. Thirteen civilians died in an attack in Kibuye prefecture on June 18, 1996 by an estimated 40 assailants. Amnesty International, “Rwanda, Alarming Resurgence of the Killings,” AFR 47/013/1996, Aug. 12, 1996, sect. IV.

⁵⁰ One UNHCR official claimed that the UN knew about some Rwandan attacks on Hutu, but decided to stay quiet. UNHCR official, interview by the author, Geneva, July 13, 1999.

of 1995. On April 11, 1995, Rwandans crossed the border and killed 30 Hutu refugees at Birava camp. This was followed by a mortar attack in Kibumba camp that wounded two Zairian soldiers. Throughout 1995 and 1996, the RPF attacked suspected *Interahamwe* training bases, both within and outside Rwanda.⁵¹

The conflict between the Hutu refugees and the Rwandan government quickly escalated, drawing in participants from many neighboring states and rebel groups. The influx of Hutu refugees also led to increased violence against Zairian Tutsi, encouraged by the Zairian government. The persecution of Zairian Tutsi provided a perfect pretext for Rwandan intervention in Zaire. Rwanda initially offered covert support for anti-Mobutu exile groups and created the Alliance des Forces Democratiques pour la Liberation du Congo-Zaire (ADFL) under Laurent Kabila. The Tutsi in South Kivu (known as Banyamulenge) began to resist displacement in October 1996 in alliance with Zairian rebel leader Kabila. In late 1996, Rwanda's covert assistance escalated into a cross-border invasion meant to secure eastern Zaire and eliminate the threat of Hutu attacks.

As the invasion neared the refugee camps, the UN Security Council proposed a multilateral force to help the refugees return. As soon as the Rwandan-backed ADFL rebels realized the proposed force would not disarm the refugees or separate the militants, they targeted the camps for attack.⁵² As the ADFL advanced, Hutu extremists, unwilling to relinquish their most important asset, herded the refugees from camp to camp.

⁵¹ Amnesty International, "Rwanda and Burundi,"; Gerard Prunier, "Rwanda: Update to End of Nov. 1995." Writenet Country Papers, Refworld, UNHCR, Dec. 1995, 1.2.

⁵² After the fact, Paul Kagame admitted that the Security Council resolution in favor of the Multi-National Force strongly influenced the timing of the Rwandan action. Gordon Smith and John Hay, "Canada and the Crisis in Eastern Zaire," In Chester A. Crocker, et. al. (eds.), *Herding Cats, Multiparty Mediation in a Complex World*, (Washington DC: U.S. Institute of Peace, 1999), 99.

Although camp conditions were extremely poor, “among the skeletal figures roamed young Rwandan men in good condition, seemingly oblivious to children lying motionless at their feet.”⁵³

On November 15, 1996 an unprecedented mass reverse migration occurred. The estimated 600,000 refugees congregated in Mugunga camp fled toward Rwanda as a group. The unforeseen mass return prevented the separation of militants from refugees, thwarting the Rwandan government’s desire to punish the genocidaires. In the confusion, thousands of refugees also fled westward through the Zairean forest, including many leaders of the genocide.

To the satisfaction of most Zairians, and the rest of the world (except France), the corrupt and decaying Mobutu regime crumbled under Kabila’s onslaught. The ADFL forces successfully took Kinshasa, the capital of Zaire, in April 1997. One of the new government’s first acts renamed the country the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The government of Rwanda expected Kabila, as a protégé of the RPF, to improve security along the eastern border of the DRC.

Kabila soon began to disappoint his Rwandan benefactors, however. Much to the dismay of the RPF, cross-border violence continued in the aftermath of the refugee return and Mobutu’s overthrow. As President Museveni had discovered in Uganda, the new leader of Congo found his reliance on Tutsi forces unpopular with his domestic audience.⁵⁴ In July 1998, Kabila ended the military cooperation agreement between Rwanda and Congo. He increasingly scapegoated the Tutsi (both local and foreign) as a

⁵³ Eleanor Bedford, “Site Visit to Eastern Congo/Zaire: Analysis of Humanitarian and Political Issues, April 10 to May 10, 1997,” (Washington DC: US Committee for Refugees), sect. 4.7.

⁵⁴ For example, an aide to the Rwandan Defense Minister and Vice President became the Operational Chief of Staff for the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) army.

strategy to consolidate power. The new government, rather than enacting democratic reforms, encouraged attacks on Tutsi and allowed the *Interahamwe* and ex-FAR to continue their military activity in eastern Congo. The OAU reported that the *Interahamwe* and ex-FAR retained the aim of invading Rwanda and toppling the government.⁵⁵

In response to continuing cross-border attacks—against Rwandans and Congolese Tutsi refugees—Rwanda once again invaded the Congo and supported local opposition to Kabila's government.⁵⁶ The 1998 war resulted in international involvement on an even greater scale than in 1996. Observers have called this Africa's Great War, noting, "political rivalries and ethnic distinctions are becoming intertwined, with the result that an ugly new ethnic polarization threatens to engulf a huge swath of Africa."⁵⁷ Many of the warring parties signed the Lusaka peace accords in 1999. The peace agreement calls for a Chapter VII peacekeeping force with a mandate to disarm the militias and supervise the withdrawal of the many foreign troops in Congo. The United Nations has authorized 5,000 troops where an effective force would require anywhere from 100,000 to 500,000 soldiers.⁵⁸ Currently, the conflict remains intractable and closely intertwined with the internal conflicts in the neighboring states of Rwanda, Uganda, Burundi, and Angola.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ The Hutu militants resurrected a version of their infamous hate radio called the *Voix du Patriote* that spewed anti-Tutsi propaganda. OAU, "International Panel of Eminent Personalities."

⁵⁶ In 1997, Hutu insurgents crossed the border from DRC to attack Congolese Tutsi sheltering in a Rwandan camp, Mudende, killing over 130 refugees. Other attacks followed, including another massacre at Mudende in December 1997. The survivors fled to Nkamira transit center, which was also attacked, resulting in the death of 84 more Tutsi. Human Rights Watch. "Organizations Condemn Massacres of Refugees by Armed Forces," Aug. 26, 1997; Gerard Prunier, "Rwanda: Update to End of February 1998," Writenet Country Papers, Refworld, UNHCR, March 1998.

⁵⁷ OAU, "International Panel of Eminent Personalities," sect. 20.71.

⁵⁸ In Sierra Leone the UN authorized 16,000 troops for a country 1/32 the size of Congo. OAU, "International Panel of Eminent Personalities," sect. 20.65

⁵⁹ For more information on the current conflict, see ReliefWeb at <http://www.reliefweb.int>.

Mobutu's Zaire: Unwilling, Incapable

"A cleverly twitching corpse."

--Description of Mobutu's government during the refugee crisis.⁶⁰

The origin of the refugee group as a defeated state-in-exile made the spread of civil war likely. To prevent violence, the receiving state would have needed to secure its borders and police the refugee camps. However, Zairian authorities showed neither the will nor the capability to thwart the clearly militaristic ambitions of the refugees. Human Rights Watch determined that "Zairian forces close to president Mobutu Sese Seko have played a pivotal role in facilitating the re-emergence as a powerful military force of those directly implemented in the Rwandan genocide."⁶¹ The actions of the central government, embodied in President Mobutu, are explained by its conflicting policy goals and weak capability. Two international factors pulled Zairian policy in opposite directions—Zaire's alliance with the Hutu Power movement and Mobutu's concern about his international reputation. Domestically, Mobutu's power had begun to crumble amidst demands for democratization. Mobutu attempted to use the refugee crisis to regain his international standing and distract his domestic opponents. This strategy worked for a while, but in the end, Mobutu miscalculated his opponents' resolve and his own government's ability to withstand attack.

Mobutu's government had been allied with the Hutu regime in Rwanda and the history of friendly ties continued after the genocide. During the refugee crisis Mobutu regularly entertained visits from the Rwandan Army's former chief of staff, Augustin

⁶⁰ Participant in a United States Institute of Peace conference. Quoted in David Smock, "Zaire's Crises of War and Governance," Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace, 1997.

⁶¹ Human Rights Watch Arms Project, "Rwanda/Zaire: Rearming with Impunity," 7, 4, (May 1995), 5.

Bizimungu and other ex-FAR officers.⁶² Demonstrating its sympathy for the Hutu militants, the Zairian government made only a halfhearted attempt to disarm the refugees, even in the presence of the international press. At the highly publicized refugee crossing from Gisenyi to Goma, Zairian officials confiscated weapons at the border. UNHCR witnessed piles of weapons that accumulated as the refugees entered, but over time the refugees reclaimed those weapons.⁶³ The later crossing in August 1994 at Bukavu received much less press attention and the Zairian troops made no effort to disarm the exiles.⁶⁴ As the crisis dragged on, the local authorities repeatedly refused to secure the border with Rwanda or move the clearly militarized camps further away. Rwandan Vice President Paul Kagame deplored Mobutu's refusal to separate the militants from the refugees, rightly claiming "Zaire could do it if it had the will and the support of the international community."⁶⁵

Despite his alliance with the militant Hutu, Mobutu was highly sensitive to international perceptions of the refugee crisis. He hoped to rehabilitate his international standing by manipulating the refugee situation. To this end, Mobutu's government encouraged the perception that Zaire's stability, under Mobutu's leadership, was essential to resolving the crisis. This image temporarily distracted attention from the lack of democratization and increased other governments' willingness to deal with Mobutu.

Responding to international pressure to end the refugee crisis in August 1995, the Zairian government began a forced repatriation operation that expelled about 12,000

⁶² African Rights, *Rwanda*, 1099.

⁶³ UNHCR official, interview by the author, Geneva, July 14, 1998.

⁶⁴ Hutu extremists also followed similar precautions regarding public opinion. In areas with high exposure to international agencies and the press, fighters did not wear uniforms or carry weapons. In the southern camps near Uvira, which were more obscure, men freely carried weapons and wore uniforms in the camps. Human Rights Watch Arms Project, "Rwanda/Zaire: Rearming with Impunity," 11, 15.

⁶⁵ Richard, Dowden, "No Amnesty' for Rwanda's Mass Killers," *The Independent* (London), Dec. 9, 1994.

refugees from Kivu over a four-day period. Some relief officials hoped that this refoulement would trigger a mass return and break the power of the leaders. As the number of spontaneous returns increased, Mobutu abruptly changed tactics and announced that the refugees could stay as long as they liked.⁶⁶ Apparently Mobutu realized the refugees provided a shield against a possible revolt in the east. The refoulement was more a response to international criticism of his regime than a serious attempt to solve the refugee problem.

By the end of 1995, Mobutu had milked the maximum political capital out of the refugees. The rest of the world now realized that Mobutu's government could not or would not provide the solution to the crisis. As the political value of the refugees changed, so did Zaire's attitude towards repatriation. Mobutu had hoped to gain international support and recognition from the refugee crisis, as well as aid the regime of the late President Habyarimana. He found, however, that "as the mood in the international community became decidedly pro the new regime in Kigali, refugees increasingly became a potential liability to their hosts."⁶⁷

Although Mobutu supported the refugees' goals, the Zairian state had limited capability to support military activity. By the mid-1990s the power of the central government barely extended to the far-flung provinces in the east. "The central government evidently exercised little control over anyone, but seemed generally favorable to the militants in the camps; this was also evident on the level of local

⁶⁶ Later there appeared to be a government split between President Mobutu and his Prime Minister Kengo wa Dondo. The Prime Minister's continued calls for forced repatriation were eschewed by Mobutu. Amnesty International, "Rwanda and Burundi, The Return Home: Rumours and Realities," Feb. 20, 1996.

⁶⁷ Bonaventure Rutinwa, "The Political Context of the Mandated Repatriations of Rwandese Refugees from Tanzania and Zaire in 1996," Draft of paper presented at the Workshop on Physical Security and Protection of Refugee Populated Areas, MIT, Cambridge MA, Oct. 29-30, 1999, 6.

authorities.”⁶⁸ The Governor of South Kivu openly sided with the Hutu extremists and supported their government in exile. Mobutu’s assisted the refugees by refusing to demilitarize the refugees or allow any other party to do so.

Zaire’s lack of capability provided a permissive environment for cross-border attacks, both by the refugees and the Rwandan government. The threat of civil war in Zaire grew as Mobutu’s government and economy collapsed. In 1994 the economy shrank by 7.4 percent and inflation ran rampant at over 23,000 percent.⁶⁹ Law enforcement in Zaire could not provide security in the camps and in many cases it contributed to the insecurity.

The desperation of the central government stoked ethnic conflict in the refugee populated areas and led to a wider war. As his power waned, Mobutu relied on anti-Tutsi sentiment to bolster his position in eastern Zaire. This led to the persecution and expulsion of Zairian Tutsi. The attempt to use ethnicity as a divisive factor in Kivu backfired by bringing in Rwandan forces that eventually led to Mobutu’s downfall. The invasion from Rwanda and the emergence of the Zairian rebel force also strengthened the alliance between the Zairian army and the Hutu militias, creating a multinational anti-Tutsi alliance.

The combination of a militaristic state-in-exile and a sympathetic, albeit incapable, receiving state enabled the spread of the Rwandan civil war to Zaire. The alliance with Mobutu strengthened the refugees’ capabilities and also alarmed the

⁶⁸ Kate Halvorsen, “Protection and Humanitarian Assistance in the Refugee Camps in Zaire: The Problem of Security,” In Howard Adelman and Astri Suhrke (eds.) *The Path of Genocide: The Rwanda Crisis from Uganda to Zaire*, (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Press, 1999), 311.

⁶⁹ Peter Rosenblum, “Endgame in Zaire,” *Current History*, (May 1997). In 1993 the Nouveau Zaire started at NZ3 to the US dollar, by a year later it had soared to 4000NZ to the dollar. Mel McNulty, “The Collapse of Zaire: Implosion, Revolution or External Sabotage,” *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 37, 1 (1999), 67.

Rwandan government. Zaire's weakness encouraged the Rwandan invasion and the local anti-Mobutu rebellion. The capability and attitude of the receiving state also directly affected the international influences on the crisis.

International Support for Violence

"I know some of them have killed a lot of people. But I don't care about the past. My job is to feed everyone irrespective of the past."

--Humanitarian aid worker in eastern Zaire, 1994⁷⁰

In the case of eastern Zaire, virtually all international actors involved in the crisis contributed to the spread of civil war, whether intentionally or inadvertently. Many third party states and rebel groups directly supported the combatants. Sudan and the Angolan UNITA rebel movement actively supported Mobutu's government. France and China also supported the beleaguered dictator. The Zairian Alliance des Forces Democratiques pour la Liberation du Congo-Zaire (ADFL) rebels gained assistance and/or sympathy from the governments of Rwanda, Burundi, Angola, Uganda, the United States, and also from the Southern Sudanese rebels. No international force attempted to demilitarize the refugee areas or secure Zaire's borders.⁷¹ International humanitarian organizations also strengthened the militant Hutu. As a failing state, Zaire lacked the capability to prevent external interference in the crisis. As an ally of the Hutu militants, Zaire was willing to abet international involvement on their behalf.

External support, especially from France, allowed the militant refugees to continue the war and even strengthen their forces. France, as a long time ally of the

⁷⁰ Quoted in African Rights, *Rwanda*, 1092.

⁷¹ By late 1996, four civil wars raged in Zaire: the Rwandan government against the Rwandan genocidaires, the Burundian government against Burundian Hutu rebels, the Ugandan government against at least two rebel groups, and anti-Mobutu rebels against the Zairian government.

Habyarimana regime, sent military assistance to the government after the RPF invasion in 1990.⁷² The French helped supervise an expansion of the Rwandan army from 5,000 in 1990 to 30,000 in 1994 and continued to provide weapons to the Hutu force during the genocide.⁷³ Immediately after the imposition of the arms embargo on Rwanda in May 1994, France diverted its arms shipments to Goma airport. Human Rights Watch found evidence of five shipments that arrived between May and June 1994, which were then taken across the border to Gisenyi, Rwanda.⁷⁴

Under the guise of humanitarianism, France provided aid to the genocidal Hutu regime during and after the genocide. With its Operation Turquoise, France set up an ostensibly humanitarian zone in the southwest corner of Rwanda that also allowed the defeated Rwandan army (ex-FAR) to find safe haven. Within the zone, the ex-FAR continued to receive weapons and the Hutu leaders re-established propaganda hate radio. France further antagonized the Tutsi-led RPF forces by declaring that it would defend the zone by force, if necessary. In the most egregious example of the partisan stance of French forces, the French allowed former military and government officials to escape to Zaire after the RPF victory. The French forces disarmed the departing genocidaires, but handed the weapons to the Zairians rather than to the UN peacekeepers. Once the extremists had established themselves in the camps, the French reportedly facilitated meetings of key leaders, including Colonel Theoneste Bagasora and Jean-Baptiste Gatete. "In short, the French ensured that the [former government of Rwanda] possessed a large,

⁷² French troop presence reached 680 soldiers who helped train the Rwandan army to combat the RPF. Human Rights Watch Arms Project, "Rwanda/Zaire: Rearming with Impunity," 7, 4, (May 1995), 6.

⁷³ William Cyrus Reed, "Refugees and Rebels: The Former Government of Rwanda and the ADFL Movement in Eastern Zaire," (Washington DC: US Committee for Refugees Issue Brief, April 1997), 4.

⁷⁴ Sources for evidence include interviews with airport staff, local businessmen, air cargo company crews, and Zairian officials. Human Rights Watch Arms Project, "Rwanda/Zaire," 7.

well-equipped military and that it could escape to Zaire, with its command structure and key troops largely in place.”⁷⁵

The United States played a smaller role than France in the region, but lent at least tacit support to the 1996 Rwandan invasion of Zaire.⁷⁶ Rwanda’s alliance with the United States meant that the RPF could take military action against the refugees without fear of universal international condemnation. After failing to stop the 1994 genocide, the United States developed close ties with the Kigali government. In late 1996, the American government helped delay implementation of an international force to assist the refugees because it would have no mandate to disarm or separate the refugees from the militants. Although evidence suggested that Rwandan army officers were present at the massacres of Hutu refugees, the United States exerted no pressure regarding the killings. The Americans were also aware that the Rwandans were training Zairian Tutsi and intending to disperse the camps. The diplomatic and political assistance from the United States clearly hastened Mobutu’s downfall.⁷⁷

Regional states also played a major role in the expansion of the conflict. In alliance with Rwanda, Uganda participated in the attacks on the Hutu rebels in eastern Zaire.⁷⁸ Rwandan Vice President Kagame and Ugandan President Museveni had close personal ties and complementary security interests in the region. Two anti-Museveni rebel groups operated from bases in eastern Zaire, the West Bank Liberation Front and

⁷⁵Reed, “Refugees and Rebels,” 5. See also Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, Chapter 8; and Human Rights Watch Arms Project, “Rwanda/Zaire.”

⁷⁶Many in the French government saw the Rwanda crisis as part of a larger Anglo-French competition. Asteris C. Huliaras, “The ‘Anglosaxon Conspiracy’: French Perceptions of the Great Lakes Crisis,” *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 36, 4 (Dec. 1998), 593-610.

⁷⁷Peter Rosenblum, “Kabila’s Congo,” *Current History*, 97, 619 (May 1998), 198. See also, Abbas H. Gnamo, “The Rwandan Genocide and the Collapse of Mobutu’s Kleptocracy,” In Adelman and Suhrke (eds.), *The Path of Genocide*, 344.

⁷⁸Angola and Burundi also joined the alliance against Mobutu, but to a lesser degree than Rwanda and Uganda.

the Holy Spirit Movement. The Ugandan rebels were supported by the Sudanese government, which accused Museveni of aiding the Sudanese rebels in Uganda. Like Rwanda, Uganda hoped the invasion would eliminate the rebel threat on the Zaire border.⁷⁹

The Hutu refugees, and their patron Zaire, also received support from neighboring states and rebel groups. Kenya seemed generally sympathetic but offered little material support. Gerard Prunier notes that Kenya sheltered only a few thousand refugees but many of them were high ranking officials responsible for the genocide and enjoyed the tacit welcome of the government.⁸⁰ Zaire's main source of external support in the region came from a non-state actor, the UNITA rebel movement. Mobutu was a long-standing supporter of UNITA's war against the Angolan government and a close ally of Jonas Savimbi, the UNITA leader. As Angola sided with the Rwandan alliance for the purpose of rooting UNITA out of its Zairian sanctuary, UNITA joined Mobutu in the fight for his regime.

In addition to involvement by states and rebel groups, international humanitarian organizations abounded in eastern Zaire. Because of the weakness of the central government, there was little or no oversight of the many United Nations agencies and hundreds of NGOs. These organizations competed fiercely for the billions of dollars in

⁷⁹ The web of alliances created strange bedfellows and constantly shifting loyalties. At one point, Uganda found itself attacked by an alliance of Hutu rebels, an Islamic sect based in Sudan, and disaffected tribesmen from the Bakonjo and Baamba groups. Gerard Prunier, "The Geopolitical Situation in the Great Lakes Area in Light of the Kivu Crisis," Writenet Country Papers, Refworld, UNHCR, Feb. 1997, sect. 6. See also, Gnamo, "The Rwandan Genocide," 337-338.

⁸⁰ Gerard Prunier, "Rwanda: Update to End of July 1995," Writenet Country Papers, Refworld, UNHCR, Aug. 1995, sect. 3.3.

aid contracts and for public recognition of their charitable activities.⁸¹ Thus they were leery of exposing militant activity that might reduce donations and result in a termination of aid contracts.⁸²

The chaotic situation and abundant aid provided a windfall for the militants, who used it to support their planned invasion of Rwanda.⁸³ A UNHCR spokesperson admitted, “The involvement of the aid agencies in the camps makes accomplices of us, helping [the militias] consolidate power.”⁸⁴ Some UNHCR officials excused the passive response to militarization by claiming that such activity took place out of sight of the aid agencies.⁸⁵ Human Rights Watch reported in 1995 that the militarist elements benefited from the resources of the international aid effort through pilfering and through direct assistance from aid agencies. The charity Caritas Internationalis, for example, continued to supply aid to the military camps Panzi and Bilongue, refusing to distinguish between civilian and military recipients. Caritas only required that recipients present themselves for their rations without uniforms or weapons.⁸⁶ Another charity observed young refugee men selling food donated by the World Food Programme and the plastic sheeting provided by

⁸¹ UNHCR spent \$115 million in Goma alone between July and October 1994. Jeff Drumtra, “Site Visit to Rwanda, Zaire, and Burundi, Oct. 20 to Nov. 17, 1994,” (Washington DC: US Committee for Refugees), 22E.

⁸² There were over 200 international NGOs present in Goma by 1996. Alexander Cooley and James Ron. “The NGO Scramble: Organizational Insecurity and Transnational Action,” Paper presented at the International Studies Association Annual Meeting, March 24-27, 2002, New Orleans, LA, 8.

⁸³ After threats to pull out by a group of NGOs in November 1994, the Hutu leadership orchestrated an image improvement in order to sustain the flow of aid. As a result of these “cosmetic” changes, aid workers received fewer threats and rarely observed military activity taking place in the open. Despite the changes, the NGO Médecins Sans Frontiers pulled out of the camps in protest of the militarization. Eleanor Bedford, USCR, interview by the author, Washington DC, Nov. 2, 1999 and Médecins Sans Frontiers, “Deadlock,” sect.II.1.1.

⁸⁴ Rudolph Von Bernuth, “The Voluntary Agency Response and the Challenge of Coordination,” *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 9, 3 (1996), 287.

⁸⁵ This official noted that her driver warned her when to leave the militarized camps (2pm) so that she would not observe the military training there. UNHCR official, interview by the author, Geneva, July 13, 1999.

⁸⁶ Human Rights Watch Arms Project, “Rwanda/Zaire: Rearming with Impunity,” 7, 4, (May 1995), 16.

UNHCR.⁸⁷ The US Committee for Refugees (USCR) noted at the time “given the realities of the refugee camps in Goma, NGOs cannot easily claim that their relief programs there are nonpolitical.”⁸⁸

Due to passivity and lack of funding, the international agencies in the camps failed to implement security plans in the initial stages of the crisis.⁸⁹ This allowed the militants to consolidate power. Lacking the backing of major donors for anything except purely humanitarian activity, UNHCR found itself unable to enact adequate protection policies for the refugees or the aid staff. As of March 1995, UNHCR had only four protection officers in Goma for about 700,000 refugees.⁹⁰ After exhausting all other options, and failing to win the support of the UN security council for stronger measures, in January 1995, UNHCR signed a memorandum of understanding with Zaire to provide 1,500 elite troops to police the refugee camps. In the end, this poorly disciplined force caused more insecurity than it alleviated.⁹¹ Chapter 8 addresses, in detail, the policy implications of the Rwandan refugee crisis for future humanitarian interventions.

⁸⁷ Médecins Sans Frontiers, “Breaking the Cycle: MSF Calls for Action in the Rwandese Refugee Camps in Tanzania and Zaire,” Special Report, Nov. 10, 1994.

⁸⁸ Jeff Drumtra, “Site Visit to Rwanda, Zaire, and Burundi, Oct. 20 to Nov. 17, 1994,” (Washington DC: US Committee for Refugees), 25E.

⁸⁹ See Chapter 8 “Policy Implications: The Risks of Humanitarian Responses to Militarized Refugee Crises” for a more detailed discussion.

⁹⁰ World Bank, “Evaluation of Current Rwandan Refugee Camp Conditions and Structures in Goma and Bukavu-Zaire,” Report from World Bank Mission, March-April 1995, par. 11.3.

⁹¹ The Zairian troops did not have a mandate to disarm or apprehend the genocidaires. Troop discipline was poor and their sympathies lay with the Hutu; when Rwanda invaded in 1996, the Zairian soldiers fought alongside the Hutu refugees. See Chapter 8, “Policy Implications,” for more on this security plan.

Unconvincing Socioeconomic Explanations

“The camps were thriving and those that were thriving most were those most opposed to return as the wealthiest refugees were those who had generally emptied the coffers of Rwanda on their way out.”

--UNHCR official⁹²

At first glance, many characteristics of the Zaire camps confirm the socioeconomic explanations presented earlier. In Zaire, the huge camps were situated within walking distance of the Rwandan border. Aid workers claimed that the population included a disproportionate number of young men.⁹³ Media accounts of the crisis stressed the dire living conditions in the camps. According to the socioeconomic explanations, the size and location of the camps, the alleged disproportionate number of young men, and the supposedly poor living conditions should have caused violence.

Closer scrutiny reveals that these factors did not lead to the spread of the Rwandan civil war and, in some cases, reports about the socioeconomic conditions proved completely inaccurate. The size of the camps did not affect the level of militarism; both small and large camps were highly militarized. The location of the camps only facilitated cross-border attacks because Zaire was unable and unwilling to secure the border. In other similar situations, volatile border camps did not lead to the spread of civil war. The Zaire camps refute the idea that better living conditions reduce violence. The refugees experienced better than average conditions, due to the international spotlight on the crisis. However, humanitarian aid did not pacify the refugees. Instead militants used this aid to further their aggressive aims.

Advocates for refugee protection often argue that large camps are harder to control and protect, allowing militants to blend in and find recruits. Therefore, the

⁹² Boutroue, “Missed Opportunities,” 51.

⁹³ UNHCR official, interview by the author, Geneva, July 20, 1999.

militarization of the five huge camps around Goma, housing 717,000 refugees, was ascribed to the size of the camps. The camps spread out for miles in a chaotic pattern that stymied international efforts to impose order. Two comparisons demonstrate that the size of the Goma camps was not the main culprit for the violence. First of all, smaller camps also existed in eastern Zaire, primarily in the Bukavu area. The twenty-three camps around Bukavu housed 397,000 refugees. Surprisingly, the smallest camps fell under even tighter control by the militants.⁹⁴ Médecins Sans Frontiers (MSF) was one of the few NGOs to realize the irrelevance of camp size:

While some believed that in smaller camps the leaders would have less power over the refugee population, this proved to be a mistake. The leaders, some of whom have been identified by other refugees as well-known Interahamwe, wielded considerably more power over the small camp population of 15,000 than their counterparts in the larger camps.⁹⁵

A second comparison contrasts the Zaire camps to other large camps. The Rwandan Hutu in Tanzania also lived in massive camps of over 100,000 refugees, but these camps experienced a much lower level of violence. These comparisons reveal the irrelevance of camp size in the spread of civil war.

A second factor that observers often blame for cross-border violence is the location of camps near the border of the sending state.⁹⁶ Contravening UNHCR guidelines, the Rwandan camps in Zaire were located very close to the Rwandan border, often within walking distance (see Map 4.2).⁹⁷ UNHCR warned:

⁹⁴ Eleanor Bedford, USCR, interview by the author, Washington DC, Nov. 2, 1999.

⁹⁵ Médecins Sans Frontiers, "Deadlock," sect. II.2.4. This position contrasts with earlier MSF reports which recommended smaller camps "so as to reduce the influence of the leaders on the distribution of humanitarian aid." MSF, "Breaking the Cycle," Nov. 1994.

⁹⁶ Halvorsen, "Protection and Humanitarian Assistance," 310.

⁹⁷ Basically, the camps started wherever the refugees' leaders instructed the people to stop moving. Augustine Mahiga, a UNHCR official, admitted: "We practically had no choice in the location of the camps at the outset of the emergency. They were imposed on us by circumstances." UNHCR, "Information Bulletin, Burundi and Rwanda," June 1996, 6.

The location of camps containing hundreds of thousands of Hutus associated with a bloody genocide a few weeks earlier, virtually on the border of the country their leaders had destroyed, was a formula for inevitable conflict.⁹⁸

In a similar vein, Amnesty International reported “the presence of these refugee camps so close to the border continues to pose a significant security threat, both for residents living in Rwanda and for the refugees themselves.”⁹⁹

Comparison with other border camps helps determine that the location of the camps did not provide the primary spark for violence. The camps in Tanzania contained a similarly violence-prone population and were also located within walking distance of the border. However, those border camps remained much more peaceful than the Zairian camps, despite their similarities. The receiving state’s ability and willingness to control the border played a greater role in preventing violence than did the location of the camps.¹⁰⁰ Zaire was unable to secure its border and unwilling to allow an external party to provide security. In Tanzania, the tight border security meant that the location of the camps did not facilitate the spread of civil war.

A third component of the socioeconomic explanation blames bored young men for the violence. This predicts violence when there are a large number of young men in the camps. Evaluating this admittedly hazy explanation is complicated by the difficulty in obtaining reliable demographic data.¹⁰¹ Accurate data on the Rwandan refugees is even more elusive because the militants strongly resisted attempts to register and count the refugees. By presenting higher numbers, the refugees could obtain a greater amount of

⁹⁸ Dennis McNamara, “Everyone Is Found Wanting,” *Refugees, Crisis in the Great Lakes*, (Geneva: UNHCR, No.110, Winter 1997), 22.

⁹⁹ Amnesty International, “Rwanda, Alarming Resurgence of the Killings,” AFR 47/013/1996, Aug. 12, 1996, sect. II.

¹⁰⁰ The rapid advance of the Rwandan army into Zaire also demonstrates that camps further from the border would not have been safe from attack.

¹⁰¹ Even the UNHCR statistical bureau provides demographic information on less than half the refugees in Africa.

aid and also cause greater embarrassment to the Rwandan government. The available data suggests that the refugee population in Zaire did not have a greater than average number of men. In fact, the US Center for Disease Control estimated that children under five years old constituted 25 percent of the refugee population in 1994; a larger percentage than sub-Saharan Africa as a whole.¹⁰²

Another related explanation for refugee-related violence claims that refugees are more vulnerable to recruitment by militants if their living conditions are poor and not easily improved. For example, a World Bank mission to Zaire advocated the creation of refugee associations for technical and agricultural training, arguing that, in addition to the economic benefit of such skills, the training would affect the political climate of the camp: "It would mean the participants would have less time for exposure to extremist propaganda. They would also be mentally predisposed to going home."¹⁰³ Comparisons over time and with other refugee populations discredit that material incentives explanation.

Comparisons over time actually show an opposite effect than that predicted; the period of scarcity correlates with the lowest level of cross-border violence. The worst living conditions occurred in the early months of exile when the United Nations was caught unprepared and before the militant leaders consolidated their grip on the camps.¹⁰⁴

As of August 1994, NGOs considered that conditions in the camp were extremely poor.

¹⁰²In sub-Saharan Africa, the United Nations estimates 18 percent of the population is under five years old. Among the refugees, the high proportion of children probably declined following the cholera epidemic since young children are more vulnerable than adults. Center for Disease Control, "Morbidity and Mortality Surveillance in Rwandan Refugees—Burundi and Zaire, 1994," *MMWR Weekly*, 45, 5 (Feb. 9, 1996), 104-107. Population Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, *Sex and Age Distribution of the World Populations: The 1996 Revision*, (New York, 1997), 37.

¹⁰³ World Bank, "Evaluation of Current Rwandan Refugee Camp Conditions," par. 9.1.2.

¹⁰⁴ For example, as of June 1994, UNHCR had only 11,000 blankets and 10,600 plastic sheets positioned in Zaire for the coming influx of over a million people. UNHCR, "Rwanda Emergency Crisis," Memo, June 20, 1994.

One humanitarian assessment found only one latrine available for every 10,000 people.¹⁰⁵ During this time, between July and October 1994, few cross-border attacks occurred, as the militants were busy establishing their control over the camps.

Mortality rates from the camps demonstrate that conditions rapidly improved after the cholera epidemic ended in autumn 1994. Data collected on three camps in eastern Zaire and Goma town (using the UNHCR estimate of 600,000-800,000 refugees) revealed a crude mortality rate ranging from 34.1 to 54.5 deaths/10,000 people per day in August 1994. This is one of the highest documented crude mortality rates during refugee emergencies.¹⁰⁶ Between 6 and 10 percent of the July arrivals died within a month of arriving in Goma. By September the crude mortality rate had drastically dropped to 2.5 per 10,000 people per day and in November to .2 per 10,000 per day. In developing countries the usual crude mortality rate is between .5 and .6 per 10,000 per day. Thus, by November 1994, refugees actually had better mortality rates than average, even for non-refugees in developing countries.¹⁰⁷

Malnutrition was also low and measured at less than 10 percent of the population. A USCR observer noted, "any food shortages that occurred in the Zaire camps appear to be caused by improper or dishonest food distribution by camp leaders, rather than due to

¹⁰⁵ This situation emerged because no NGO took responsibility for the unglamorous task of latrine building. Van Nieuwenhuysse, "Nutritional Assessment Mission in Goma and Bukavu (Zaire) and South West Rwanda," 13-23 Aug. 1994.

¹⁰⁶ The threshold for defining a situation as an emergency is 1.0 deaths per 10,000 per day. Legros, "The Evolution of Mortality," 66.

¹⁰⁷ Center for Disease Control, "Morbidity and Mortality Surveillance in Rwandan Refugees," 104-107; Dominique Legros, et. al, "The Evolution of Mortality Among Rwandan Refugees in Zaire between 1994 and 1997," in Holly E. Reed and Charles B. Keely (eds.), *Forced Migration and Mortality*, (Washington DC: National Academy Press, 2001), 57. The Population Reference Bureau gives slightly different numbers; it cites .25 deaths per 10,000 per day as the median death rate for developing countries. Quoted in Charles B. Keely, et. al., "Mortality Patterns in Complex Humanitarian Emergencies," in Reed and Keely (eds.), *Forced Migration and Mortality*, 7.

a real shortage of food.”¹⁰⁸ Another observer commented, “markets in the refugee camps are so well stocked with vegetables, Western manufactured commodities, and beef from cattle rustled from Masisi that many Zairians head to the camps to do their own shopping.”¹⁰⁹

In addition to nutrition and mortality, the refugees’ other living conditions improved over time. Refugees found employment and managed to move relatively freely in the region. Locals viewed the refugees as a profitable source of cheap labor. “Refugee movements were relatively easy for those who could afford to pay the multiple ‘tolls’ at the check points set up by the Zairian armed forces.” Additionally, entrepreneurial refugees and Zairian army officers set up shuttle services that linked the North Kivu camps. Mobutu gave the former Rwandan government officials and soldiers no trouble when they decided to live outside the camp.¹¹⁰ The leaders used access to these resources to pursue their goal of toppling the Rwandan government.

After many months of fruitless attempts at repatriation, aid officials and Zairian government leaders concluded that the living conditions discouraged return to Rwanda.¹¹¹ In a desperate attempt to encourage repatriation, relief officials worsened living conditions in the camps. Officials closed down refugee businesses and limited movement in the hope that declining conditions would lead to a peaceful return. The attempt was halfhearted, however, and failed to break the power of the refugee leaders. Despite the

¹⁰⁸ Jeff Drumtra, “Site Visit to Rwanda, Zaire, and Burundi, Oct. 20 to Nov. 17, 1994,” (Washington DC: US Committee for Refugees), 22E.

¹⁰⁹ Sheldon Yett, “Masisi, Down the Road from Goma; Ethnic Cleansing and Displacement in Eastern Zaire,” (Washington DC: US Committee for Refugees Issue Brief, June 1996), 13.

¹¹⁰ For example, 20,000 refugees from Kibumba camp worked everyday on the local plantations. Boutroue, “Missed Opportunities,” 51. Also Ann-Sophie Nedlund, UNHCR official, interview by the author, July 15, 1999.

¹¹¹ Amnesty International, “Rwanda and Burundi, The Return Home: Rumours and Realities,” Feb. 20, 1996, 4.

fact that material conditions in the camps had worsened, the refugees refused to return home.¹¹²

The socioeconomic explanations do not stand up to scrutiny in the Zairian refugee crisis.¹¹³ A more plausible reason for the violence is the political motivations of the refugees and their ability to achieve a high level of political and military organization. The weakness of the socioeconomic explanation becomes even clearer when the refugees in Zaire are compared with those in Tanzania. In Tanzania, similar socioeconomic conditions also were unrelated to the low levels of violence.

Zaire in Context

The refugee crisis in Zaire is often regarded as an anomaly among humanitarian emergencies. Numerous aid workers strenuously argue that eastern Zaire was a unique and incomparable situation. Sadako Ogata, then UN High Commissioner for Refugees, claimed, “probably never before has my Office found its humanitarian concerns in the midst of such a lethal quagmire of political and security interests.”¹¹⁴ However, the Zaire crisis was not unique and can be fruitfully compared to other situations. Treating the Zaire situation as an aberration obscures the true causes of the violence there and distorts the decades-long history of refugee-related violence around the globe.

¹¹² According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the average consumption in Rwanda for 1995 to 1997 was 2050 calories. This is higher than consumption in the refugee camps, but the relative scarcity in Zaire did not lead to high levels of repatriation. During the same period, calorie consumption for Zaire/DRC as a whole was estimated at 1820 calories per day. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, *The State of Food Insecurity in the World*, (Rome, FAO, 1999), 32.

¹¹³ Later chapters will explore the idea that opportunities for permanent settlement (e.g. local integration or resettlement abroad) might provide a material incentive to abandon violence. This option was not available at any significant level to the Rwandans.

¹¹⁴ Quoted in Dennis McNamara, Statement to House International Relations Committee, Sub-Committee on International Operations and Human Rights, hearing on “Rwanda: Genocide and the Continuing Cycle of Violence.” May 5, 1998, 9.

Throughout the Cold War, UNHCR tolerated militarized refugee areas in Pakistan, Southern Africa, Central America, and the Thai/Cambodia border. In the case of the Afghans in Pakistan, the scale of the violence perpetrated by the refugees far surpassed the Zaire experience. Zaire was not the only or most extreme instance of a refugee crisis that caused the spread of civil war. It is merely the most extreme case that occurred outside the framework of Cold War politics. The history of violence means that it is possible to compare the Zairian situation with other refugee crises over time.

In addition to denying general comparisons, aid workers balk at the specific comparison of the crises in Zaire and Tanzania.¹¹⁵ In fact, such a comparison provides an ideal way to assess the impact of the political environment on the spread of civil war. Both refugee groups fled the same conflict as states-in-exile. Thus, they were both prone to violence. The Tanzanian and Zairian camps also shared similar geographic and demographic conditions, as well as similar living conditions. The ability to hold so many factors relatively constant allows for a clearer focus on the role of the receiving state and the international influences on the crisis.

IV. Chaos Contained: Rwandan Hutu Refugees in Tanzania

A Thwarted State-In Exile

“In most of the camps, the Rwandans came as a state...and as a state, started operating as a state, and managing things as a state, and the NGOs had to operate within this state within the camps.”

--Odhiambo Anacleti, OXFAM official¹¹⁶

“We will fight our way home if we have to.”

--Refugee Jean-Baptiste Uniragiye¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ UNHCR official, interview by the author, Geneva, July 20, 1999.

¹¹⁶ *Summary Report from the International Workshop on Refugee Crisis in the Great Lakes Region*. Arusha, Tanzania, August 16-19th 1995, 35.

In April 1994, at the height of the Rwandan genocide, nearly 200,000 Hutu swarmed across the narrow Rusumo bridge into Tanzania in about thirty hours.¹¹⁸ Fearing defeat in the civil war and retribution for the genocide, the extremist Hutu leaders encouraged a massive refugee crisis to camouflage their actions and provide resources for the ongoing struggle. As the refugees crossed the border, an overwhelmed Tanzanian guard instructed them to leave their machetes in an enormous pile.¹¹⁹ The size and speed of the refugees' unexpected arrival frustrated any additional attempts to prevent militarization. Once in Tanzania, the leaders re-established their rule and made no secret of their intention of destabilizing Rwanda. Even before the RPF victory and the massive refugee flows, the Hutu Power leaders publicly proclaimed their intent of using refugee camps as "a staging ground for future attacks."¹²⁰ By fleeing, the refugees and the genocidal killers among them had escaped the advancing Rwandan Patriotic Army and retribution for the massacres.

Many characteristics of this crisis suggested that it would lead to international conflict between Rwanda and Tanzania. Like Zaire, the massive border camps hosted thousands of unrepentant genocidaires who hoped for a victorious return to Rwanda. Yet, despite the similarities between the two situations, Tanzania did not become involved in an international war during the refugee crisis. The crisis resolved in 1996 when the Tanzanian army expelled the refugees. Although the Tanzanian situation was not

¹¹⁷ Sam Kiley, "Hutu Refugees Train to Invade Rwanda," *The Times*, April 10, 1995.

¹¹⁸ Confusion surrounds the exact number of refugees who crossed. Estimates range from 70,000 to 400,000. See Waters, *Bureaucratizing the Good Samaritan*, 276-280.

¹¹⁹ UNHCR official, interview by the author, Geneva, July 15, 1998.

¹²⁰ Smith, "The Geopolitics of Rwandan Resettlement," 56.

completely peaceful—the camps were militarized and the refugees were forcibly returned—it compares favorably to the chaotic bloodbath in Zaire.

The primary explanation for the relatively low level of violence is the attitude and capability of the Tanzanian state. The government (for the most part) did not sympathize with the refugees' military goals and it had the capability to enforce border control and maintain a semblance of order in the refugee populated areas. As a relatively stable, democratizing state, Tanzania hoped to avoid becoming embroiled in the regional conflict, especially in an election year. Tanzania also has a long history of generous offers of asylum to both Hutu and Tutsi refugees. The government's attempt to maintain stability limited the scope for external actors to aid the militants. Thus, a potentially explosive situation remained under control.

Many characteristics of the refugee movement from Rwanda to Tanzania identify the group as a state-in-exile. Although the Rwandan refugees appeared to have fled the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) advance, in actuality, the Hutu leaders orchestrated the refugee movement. Gerard Prunier reports that “[the refugees] were not fleeing massacres, as their leaders tried to pretend, but on the contrary they were the people who had just killed between 25,000 and 50,000 Tutsi.”¹²¹ As the RPF forces descended from the north, Hutus in internally displaced person (IDP) camps and local villages moved toward Tanzania in an orderly procession, headed by their communal leaders. One refugee testified that his family left their home due to pressure from Hutu thugs allied

¹²¹ Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 265.

with the government.¹²² The Hutu militias (*Interahamwe*) convinced civilians that any stragglers would be executed by the RPF.

As in Zaire, the refugees quickly reproduced the same political and social structures that existed in Rwanda. Immediately upon their arrival in Tanzania, the leaders approached overwhelmed UNHCR officials and offered to organize the camp.¹²³ One UNHCR staff person observed that “it seemed they were prepared to come... They came with food, jerrycans of water, blankets.”¹²⁴ Within 24 hours everyone had moved around and settled according to commune. Commune leaders supervised the layout of the camp and later the food distributions, which allowed them to present inflated population numbers to the aid agencies.¹²⁵ Due to the high level of organization, the refugees in Tanzania avoided large-scale outbreaks of epidemics or disease, such as the cholera that killed thousands in Zaire.

The organization of the camp also reflected a conscious choice by UNHCR to work with the refugee leaders rather than disrupt their mechanisms of control. One official admitted that “UNHCR was obliged from the first day to cooperate with the leaders” because the influx was too large to do otherwise. Initially, UNHCR even paid the leaders (about \$15 per month) to coordinate the camps.¹²⁶

¹²² Quote by John Muuyekure in Brian Murphy, “Refugee’s Life Weaves Through Food Lines and Idle Times,” *The Associated Press*, May 26, 1994.

¹²³ In response to the civil war in Rwanda UNHCR had prepared a contingency plan for 50,000 people. Jacques Franquin, UNHCR, interview by the author, Geneva, July 15, 1998.

¹²⁴ “Rwanda Rebels Shut Off Frantic Refugees’ Retreat,” *The Houston Chronicle*, May 1, 1994.

¹²⁵ During May 1994, leaders reported an increase of 100,000 people, but more neutral reports found an increase of only 10,000. Refugees were not formally registered until July 1994, bringing the population figures down to 230,000. Susanne Jaspars, *The Rwandan Refugee Crisis in Tanzania: Initial Successes and Failures in Food Assistance*, (London: Relief and Rehabilitation Network, 1994), 6-7.

¹²⁶ Once the camp managers realized that this was counterproductive and stopped payment, the leaders became difficult and uncooperative. UNHCR official, interview by the author, Geneva, July 15, 1998.

From the beginning, former political leaders and participants in the genocide controlled the refugee population. Much of this intimidation resulted from an abdication of responsibility by the Tanzanian government for restraining known militant elements. Although the Tanzanian authorities made a desultory effort to separate some of the intimidators in the camps, most of the extremist leaders remained among the refugees. The so-called "intimidators" mainly consisted of politicians and militia members. The bulk of the armed forces escaped to Goma, Zaire in July 1994. As they crossed the border, Tanzanian authorities arrested fourteen men as leaders of the genocide. However, the authorities decided they had nothing with which to charge the men, so they were released from the Ngara police station on June 15, 1994 and allowed to reside in the refugee camps.¹²⁷ Those and other militants were suspected to be responsible for a number of killings within the camps.¹²⁸

The fact that the bulk of the armed forces (ex-FAR as opposed to militias) fled to Zaire does not explain the difference levels of violence. The reasons the ex-FAR went to Zaire are probably a combination of military necessity and the Hutu leaders' rapport with the Zairian government. Due to the direction of the RPF advance, it was most expedient for the Rwandan army to flee westward to Zaire. Although fewer in number than in Zaire, Tanzania still hosted thousands of armed elements and hundreds of former political leaders. Hutu leaders in Tanzania repeatedly attempted military training and organization. Thus, both states faced a real threat of the spread of civil war.

¹²⁷ UNHCR official, interview by the author, Geneva, July 15, 1998.

¹²⁸ Keith B. Richburg, "Rwandan Refugees Riot, Threaten Aid Workers at Tanzanian Camp," *The Washington Post*, June 17, 1994. Due to clashes between the political factions, and an overall high level of crime, the Tanzanians later put about one hundred men in detention. Emile Segbor, UNHCR official, interview by the author, Geneva, July 15, 1998.

Startling proof of the militants' power occurred when a UNHCR protection officer asked Jean-Baptiste Gatete, one of the released genocidaires and the former bourgmestre of Murambi commune, to leave Benaco camp in June 1994. Later that afternoon, Gatete organized 5,000 refugees with machetes and pangas to surround the UNHCR compound.¹²⁹ The standoff lasted for several hours. The arrival of the Tanzanian police, shooting in the air, finally dispersed the crowd.¹³⁰ After the Gatete incident, UNHCR withdrew services from the camp for three days. The violent episode convinced UNHCR "that they had effectively lost control of the camp or that the reality was that control had always rested with some of the leaders."¹³¹ Rather than wresting control from the militants, the NGOs withdrew their headquarters to a militarily defensible hilltop, but continued to provide humanitarian aid.

The Gatete confrontation provided the most flagrant, but not the only, example of aggressive behavior among the refugees. Numerous incidents alerted UNHCR officials that military training occurred, although the militants made an effort to avoid detection following an initial period of open activity.¹³² According to Western security analysts and UN observers, 10,000 militiamen were training in Ngara in preparation for an invasion of Rwanda.¹³³ One observer noticed groups of men jogging in formation at dawn at Kagenyi

¹²⁹ African Rights, *Rwanda*, 1090.

¹³⁰ According to a UNHCR source present at the incident, the Tanzanian police negotiated the departure of Gatete from the camp but did not arrest him. When Gatete arrived in Dar Es Salaam, he was received by the French ambassador and sent to Paris to stay with the family of Habyarimana. UNHCR official, interview by the author, Geneva, July 15, 1998. Another source claims that Tanzania deported Gatete to Zaire in July 1994. Tony Waters, *Bureaucratizing the Good Samaritan, The Limitations to Humanitarian Relief Operations*, (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2001), 123.

¹³¹ Jaspars, *The Rwandan Refugee Crisis in Tanzania*, 20.

¹³² After finding a group of men marching around in the camp, a UN official threatened to pull out of the camp. The militant groups then refrained from training openly in the camps. UNHCR official, interview by the author, Geneva, July 15, 1998.

¹³³ Sam Kiley, "Hutu Refugees Train to Invade Rwanda," *The Times*, April 10, 1995. MSF claimed that the ex-FAR was active in Tanzania. Médecins Sans Frontiers, "Breaking the Cycle: MSF Calls for Action in the Rwandese Refugee Camps in Tanzania and Zaire," Special Report, Nov. 10, 1994.

camp.¹³⁴ In Kitali camp, refugee leaders told UNHCR that suspected militants were actually just training for football practice.¹³⁵ In similar situations at Benaco camp, a camp official noticed teams of young men that acted as lorry loaders or football teams. These groups of about twenty men worked with complete precision and were in excellent physical condition. UNHCR officials assumed the young men were training for the invasion that their leaders hoped would take place, although there were no guns in evidence.¹³⁶ The refugee leaders, when pressed, responded that they were helpless to halt the training and added that the military style training kept the young men occupied.¹³⁷

In addition to training, refugees had access to weapons, although the arms were fewer in number and more hidden than those in the Zaire camps. A Tanzanian official in the Ministry of Home Affairs suspected that “most of the refugees came with arms and ammunition,” but he admitted that due to the nature of the influx, border guards did not have time to search the refugees for weapons.¹³⁸ Unlike Zaire, Tanzanian authorities did not allow heavy weapons inside the camps.¹³⁹ Between April 1994 and June 1995, police confiscated weapons and ammunition from the refugees, including grenades, pistols,

¹³⁴ Smith, “The Geopolitics of Rwandan Resettlement,” 56.

¹³⁵ The suspicious UNHCR official offered to buy football uniforms and expressed interest in watching the games. The leaders then responded that the games occurred at night (after UNHCR workers had retired to their guarded compound). UNHCR official, interview by the author, Geneva, July 22, 1999.

¹³⁶ One observer reported that “the Tanzanian government distinguishes between military training and physical exercises by whether or not they use sticks or other dummies that resemble guns.” Simon Turner, “Angry Young Men in Camps,” *New Issues in Refugee Research*, working paper series (Geneva: UNHCR), June 1999, Fn 20.

¹³⁷ UNHCR official, interview by the author, Geneva, July 20, 1999.

¹³⁸ As the refugees crossed the border, guards required them to dump their machetes in an ever growing pile. Johnson P. Brahim, “Refugee Crisis in the Great Lakes Region: How Tanzania Was Affected and Her Responses,” Paper for the International Workshop on the Refugee Crisis in the Great Lakes Region, Arusha, Tanzania. 16-19 August 1995, 8. A UNHCR official notes that refugees started making new machetes right away since they were needed for farming. UNHCR official, interview by the author, Geneva, July 20, 1999.

¹³⁹ Smith, “The Geopolitics of Rwandan Resettlement,” 56.

machine guns and 1165 rounds of ammunition.¹⁴⁰ To avoid confiscation, exiles hid many small arms in the bush. One Tanzanian official claimed that Rwandan militia and soldiers had brought light and heavy weapons, hiding them outside the refugee camps.¹⁴¹

From their positions in the camps, the leaders created a climate of fear that discouraged return and increased support for military activity. The refugee masses believed that return meant certain death at the hands of the new Tutsi-led government. In addition to social pressure, militants used physical intimidation, including death threats, to prevent refugee return. In August 1994, militants killed 19 refugees in Benaco camp who were suspected of attempting to return home.¹⁴²

Real injustices occurred in Rwanda that deterred refugee return and gave credence to the horrible stories spread by the militants. One UN official confirmed that “the fear of intimidators is only part of why refugees do not return.”¹⁴³ For example, when the RPF captured Iwawa Island in Zaire and killed 300 ex-FAR camped there, the incident was so twisted by the time it reached Tanzania that refugees believed that the victims were defenseless Hutu refugees.¹⁴⁴ Enough retaliation occurred by the new Tutsi-dominated government to lend credibility to even the most outlandish propaganda spread by the Hutu militants in the camps. Refugees in the Ngara area camps could see bodies—

¹⁴⁰ Brahim, 1995, 8.

¹⁴¹ Paul Chintowa, “Rwanda-Politics: Tanzania Investigates Ethnic Killings,” *Inter Press Service*, Oct. 3, 1994.

¹⁴² Maureen Connelly, a UNHCR official at the Ngara camps, argued that the refugees were not hostages, rather they were brainwashed. According to Connelly, part of the willingness of the followers stemmed from the nature of Rwandan political culture, which emphasized organization and obedience to authority. Maureen Connelly, UNHCR official, interview by the author, July 20, 1999; and Médecins Sans Frontiers, “Breaking the Cycle: MSF Calls for Action in the Rwandese Refugee Camps in Tanzania and Zaire,” *Special Report*, Nov. 10, 1994.

¹⁴³ UNHCR official, interview by the author, Geneva, July 15, 1998.

¹⁴⁴ Refugees International, “Rwandan Repatriation: The Challenge for the Great Lakes Region,” Report No. 3 (Dec. 6, 1995).

apparently Hutu victims of the RPF—floating down the Kagera river.¹⁴⁵ One observer claimed that “most camp dwellers would be afraid to leave even if there were no para-military in the camps.”¹⁴⁶

Leaders also presented their own version of Rwandan history in order to stoke the fear of the refugees. In creating an aura of victimhood, the refugee leaders argued that the press unjustly focused only on the 1994 genocide. The militants claimed that Tutsi had perpetrated many injustices against the Hutu before the 1990s and that one needed to use a historical viewpoint to understand the current situation. The international press unwittingly helped legitimate the leaders by conflating the civil war and the genocide, painting the refugees as victims in need of aid. One eye-catching headline read: “Refugees Swim Past Corpses to Safety,” neglecting the fact that the corpses were victims of the genocide and not ill-fated Hutu refugees.¹⁴⁷ Despite UNHCR efforts, militants remained the main source of information in the camps.¹⁴⁸ Observers noted that: “Information available to refugees is partial, and tends to be slanted towards bad news...Even accurate news is subject to the worst interpretation in circumstances of fear and restricted information.”¹⁴⁹

As in Zaire, the refugees in Tanzania refused to repatriate to Rwanda despite extensive information and recruitment campaigns by international agencies and the

¹⁴⁵ Waters, *Bureaucratizing the Good Samaritan*, 138.

¹⁴⁶ Smith, “The Geopolitics of Rwandan Resettlement,” 56.

¹⁴⁷ “Refugees Swim Past Corpses to Safety,” The Press Association Limited, May 6, 1994. See also, Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 265-273.

¹⁴⁸ UNHCR established a mass information program that used radio, press releases, reports from NGOs in Rwanda, and addresses by public officials. In its camp bulletin UNHCR warned the refugees to “please take note and obey [Tanzanian] laws, because if you do not, you will be punished according to the laws of Tanzania, arrested, imprisoned and sent back home.” UNHCR also replied to a question in the bulletin, saying that “It is no secret that refugees who want to go home are intimidated.” Refugee Information Network, *News and Views, An Intercamp Bulletin for Ngara*, Issue no. 10 (May 1996), 1, 3.

¹⁴⁹ Adrian Keeling and Carolyn Makinson, “Cross-Border Communication Between the Camps for Rwandan Refugees in Tanzania and Programs in Rwanda,” Background Paper for the International Rescue Committee, Sept. 30, 1995, 17.

Rwandan and Tanzanian governments. By refusing to return, the refugees provided support for the militant leaders, who could then claim that they ruled a state-in-exile. Facing forcible return by the Tanzanian army, refugees declared “we would rather die in Tanzania than go back and be killed in Rwanda.”¹⁵⁰

Despite Tanzanian border security, the refugees in Tanzania and Zaire maintained contact with each other and many of the militia based in Zaire entered Tanzania via Burundi.¹⁵¹ In September 1994 a number of ex-FAR forces moved from Zaire to Tanzania, in order to “join their families.”¹⁵² Médecins Sans Frontiers (MSF) confirmed the occurrence of militant coordination across borders:

MSF believes that the leaders in the camps around Ngara meet and communicate with leaders in the Karagwe district and in Zaire...It is widely known that the Interahamwe has close ties with the Hutus in Burundi and that segments of these groups regularly cross over the border between Tanzania and Burundi.¹⁵³

In one incident, six hundred young men arrived suddenly from Zaire.¹⁵⁴ Some of the men claimed to be looking for their families but they wore decent quality clothes and had visas. UNHCR found it difficult to prevent the entry of such supposed refugees. There were so many entrances and screening points, the rejected people usually just came back later.¹⁵⁵ The infiltration from Zaire ended when the Tanzanian government closed the border with Burundi in March 1995 in order to stop the 80,000 Rwandan Hutu refugees who were attempting to cross.

In the end, however, the state-in-exile could not fulfill its hegemonic goals. Tanzanian border security managed to contain the sporadic incidents of cross-border

¹⁵⁰ Lutheran World Relief, “Tanzania, Aid Workers Face ‘We Would Rather Die’ Movement Among Rwandan Refugees,” Dec. 16, 1996. Found at www.reliefweb.int.

¹⁵¹ UNHCR official, interview by the author, Geneva, July 20, 1999.

¹⁵² Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 316.

¹⁵³ Médecins Sans Frontiers, “Deadlock in the Rwandan Refugee Crisis,” Section II, 4.

¹⁵⁴ “Refugees Staying Put after Reported Persecution of Returnees,” *The Associated Press*, Sept. 24, 1994.

¹⁵⁵ UNHCR official, interview by the author, Geneva, July 22, 1999.

violence that occurred throughout the crisis, preventing an escalation of violence.¹⁵⁶ The Tanzanian government responded to the cross-border incursions by closing the border and reinforcing camp security. In order to end the crisis, the Tanzanian army—a much stronger force than the militant refugees—forced the refugees back across the border to Rwanda. Thus, strict Tanzanian policy thwarted the Hutu Power plan for a two-front attack on Rwanda.

A Capable and Willing Receiving State

“Any continued presence of refugees in Tanzania is a serious cause of insecurity.”

--Tanzanian government official¹⁵⁷

“They [refugees] should surrender all arms or face the music.”

--Augustine Mrema, Tanzanian Deputy Premier and Minister for Home Affairs¹⁵⁸

The refugees in Tanzania shared the aggressive ambitions of those in Zaire, yet the Tanzanian situation did not result in the spread of civil war. From the beginning of the influx, the government attempted to enforce security at the camps and prevent the spread of violence—both to Rwanda and the local villages.¹⁵⁹ The Tanzanian government hotly

¹⁵⁶ Amnesty International reported a spate of attacks from Tanzania into southeastern Rwanda in the fall of 1995. The victims described the assailants as former inhabitants of the village who came back to kill Tutsi and demand resources for the Hutu extremists. Amnesty International, “Rwanda and Burundi, The Return Home,” 22; Christopher Mwakasege, “The Impact of Refugees on Host Communities, The Case of Kasulu, Ngara, and Karagwe Districts in Tanzania,” Study report presented at the International Workshop on the Refugee Crisis in the Great Lakes Region, Arusha, Tanzania. 16-19 August 1995, 14; Emile Segbor, UNHCR official, interview with the author, Geneva, July 15, 1998.

¹⁵⁷ Johnson P. Brahim, “Refugee Crisis in the Great Lakes Region: How Tanzania Was Affected and Her Responses,” Paper for the International Workshop on the Refugee Crisis in the Great Lakes Region, Arusha, Tanzania. 16-19 August 1995, 11.

¹⁵⁸ Paul Chintowa, “Rwanda-Refugees: Tanzania Sends Troops to Quell Unrest,” Inter Press Service, Oct. 4, 1994

¹⁵⁹ Paul Chintowa, “Rwanda-Refugees: Tanzania Confines Rwandans to Their Camps,” Inter Press Service, Oct. 11, 1994.

refuted Rwandan suggestions that it was encouraging Hutu rebels to invade Rwanda. Kassim Mwawado, an official in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, asserted "We have never supported the killers."¹⁶⁰ For the most part, the army maintained border control and regulated the refugees' entry. For example, in March 1995, 70,000 refugees from Rwanda who had fled to Burundi headed for Tanzania due to the civil war in Burundi. Tanzania refused to open the border and deployed the army, much to the distress of UNHCR.¹⁶¹ As discussed in the previous section, however, Tanzania did not completely demilitarize the refugee areas.

In 1994 the huge numbers of Rwandan refugees posed security, political, and economic problems for Tanzania. The government of Tanzania repeatedly expressed concern that the refugee presence, and known militant goals of some of the leaders, would lead to the spread of civil war.¹⁶² After the April influx, the Home Affairs Minister worried that "many Rwandans have crossed at places other than the official entry and are armed...This is very dangerous and may cause untold harm to our people."¹⁶³ In late 1994, Radio Tanzania reported that "the security situation of citizens of [northwestern Tanzania] remains worrying because of the entry of large numbers of armed Rwandan

¹⁶⁰ Paul Chintowa, "Rwanda-Politics: Kigali Claims Tanzania Supports Hutu Rebels," Inter Press Service, Sept. 9, 1994.

¹⁶¹ In November 1995 UNHCR publicly stated that the Tanzanian army was misbehaving. This increased tensions between the government and the international organizations. UNHCR official, interview by the author, Geneva, July 15, 1998.

¹⁶² Part of the Tanzanian wariness may have stemmed from past experience with the spread of civil war involving refugees. The 1978-1979 war with Uganda began when Ugandan president Idi Amin sent fighters across the border to attack refugees there who supported the ousted leader, Milton Obote. With support from Tanzania, the refugees waged a guerrilla war from Kagera region, western Tanzania. Tanzanian forces eventually assisted in the invasion of Uganda and the toppling of Idi Amin. Anthony Clayton, *Frontiersmen, Warfare in Africa since 1950*, (London: UCL Press, 1999), 104-108; Nicholas J. Wheeler, *Saving Strangers, Humanitarian Intervention in International Society*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), chapter 4; Christopher Mwakasege, "The Impact of Refugees on Host Communities, The Case of Kasulu, Ngara, and Karagwe Districts in Tanzania," Study report presented at the International Workshop on the Refugee Crisis in the Great Lakes Region, Arusha, Tanzania. 16-19 August 1995, 15.

¹⁶³ Paul Chintowa, "Rwanda-Refugees: Threat of War Spilling into Tanzania," Inter Press Service, May 16, 1994.

refugees.”¹⁶⁴ For many Tanzanian officials, the Rwandan refugees differed from the past influxes, which had been met with generosity. Jenerali Ulimwengu, a member of parliament in Tanzania, described the new attitude toward the refugees:

We’re not dealing with refugees, we’re dealing with a whole new phenomena of people who are committing crimes in their country of origin, and who, before they can be apprehended, way in advance of the war that was advancing on them...they had all the time to move from their place of origin and go and resettle in other areas and baptize themselves as refugees and we accept this!...We have people who are not refugees and who we treat as refugees.”¹⁶⁵

The Deputy Minister for Home Affairs, E. Mwambulukutu explained that “protecting and assisting refugees has brought new risks to national security, exacerbated tensions between states and caused extensive damage to the environment.” Despite the threat, he maintained that Tanzania would never let the situation deteriorate to the level of eastern Zaire.¹⁶⁶

The government made some attempt to separate the so-called “intimidators” from the rest of the refugees, but the efforts fell short due to lack of funding and lack of will among Tanzanian authorities. One policy involved constructing a separate camp, Mwiswa, in order to contain intimidators, but few militants were sent there.¹⁶⁷ The decision to build a camp, rather than prosecute the militants and genocidaires in the courts, reflects the ambivalence of the Tanzanian government toward the refugee leaders.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁴ “Radio Reports Influx of ‘Large Numbers’ of Armed Rwandan Refugees,” BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, Oct. 31, 1994. One official reported that the government was aware that fifty armed men, suspected Interahamwe, had crossed into Tanzania from Rwanda between August and October 1994. “Rwanda-Refugees: Tanzania Cracks Down on Rwandans,” Inter Press Service, Oct. 17, 1994. See also Paul Chintowa, “Rwanda-Refugees: Tanzania Confines Rwandans to Their Camps,” Inter Press Service, Oct. 11, 1994.

¹⁶⁵ *Summary Report from the International Workshop on Refugee Crisis in the Great Lakes Region*, Arusha, Tanzania, August 16-19th 1995, 29.

¹⁶⁶ Augustine Mahiga, “A Change of Direction for Tanzania,” *Refugees, Crisis in the Great Lakes*, (Geneva, UNHCR, No.110, Winter 1997), 15.

¹⁶⁷ Once there, most of the militants managed to escape. UNHCR official, interview by the author, Kigoma, Tanzania, February 1999.

¹⁶⁸ As of 1996, Tanzania had not arrested anyone responsible for the genocide.

In theory, Tanzanian refugee law grants the government wide powers in dealing with refugees. At the time of the Rwandan influx, the 1966 Refugee (Control) Act shaped refugee policy. Section 10 of this law allowed detention of any refugees who the authorities deemed were acting in “a manner prejudicial to peace and good order or were prejudicing the relations between the government of Tanzania and any other government.”¹⁶⁹ Though the judicial system did not have the capacity to enforce the law in a systematic way, at least a structure existed within which to make policy.

Tanzania relied on UNHCR to boost the government’s capability in the refugee populated areas. In western Tanzania, UNHCR funded the deployment of hundreds of police officers, providing incentives, equipment, and training. Even so, insufficient resources meant that the police were woefully overstretched. For example, in Benaco camp only thirty Tanzanian police officers were deployed among the 350,000 refugees.¹⁷⁰ UNHCR also set up a refugee security force called “guardians.” The unarmed guardians patrolled the camps and adjudicated conflicts among the refugees.

Three factors explain why Tanzania allowed the refugees to enter, but discouraged military activity. These were: 1) positive past experiences with asylum seekers, 2) relatively neutral relationships with the combatants (Hutu and Tutsi), and 3) domestic political pressure to contain the refugees’ activity. Tanzania’s history as a generous provider of asylum continued in the Rwanda crisis. Since its independence in 1961, Tanzania has welcomed waves of both Hutu and Tutsi refugees from Rwanda and Burundi. In many cases the state permitted refugees to engage in productive activity and

¹⁶⁹ Chris Maina Peter, “Rights and Duties of Refugees Under Municipal Law in Tanzania: Examining a Proposed New Legislation,” *Journal of African Law*, 41 (1997), 87.

¹⁷⁰ UNHCR official, interview by the author, Geneva, July 22, 1999.

to obtain citizenship. However, the combination of the Burundi refugee crisis of 1993 and the Rwandan influx strained Tanzania's hospitality to the breaking point.

At the time of the genocide, Tanzania did not have a strong alliance with either Hutu or Tutsi parties in Rwanda. Over the years both Hutu and Tutsi refugees had lived peacefully in Tanzania. Gerard Prunier noted:

Unlike...the Zairian government which was involved in a very complicated political game with the remnants of the old Rwandese regime, the Tanzanian government was probably the most neutral and fair of those who were forced to shelter thousands of refugees at the time of the genocide.¹⁷¹

It was no secret, however, that some Tanzanians, especially those in the western part of the state, felt more sympathy toward the Hutu.¹⁷² Many perceived an ethnic kinship between the Hutu and some Tanzanian groups. Anti-Tutsi sentiment hardened when thousands of Tutsi refugees returned to Rwanda after the RPF victory, taking with them their cattle and other wealth. Tanzanians viewed the Tutsi returnees as ungrateful for the support that had enabled the refugees to integrate into Tanzanian society. Although they strongly opposed the spread of civil war, Tanzanian authorities did not confiscate every weapon or imprison all suspected genocidaires, due in part to some level of sympathy for the Hutu.¹⁷³

On a national level, however, domestic politics provided an impetus for strict treatment of refugees. In the 1990s, Tanzania was in the process of democratization and

¹⁷¹ Gerard Prunier, "Rwanda: Update to End of July 1995," Writenet Country Papers, Refworld, UNHCR, Aug. 1995, Sect. 3.2. See also William Cyrus Reed, "Refugees and Rebels: The Former Government of Rwanda and the ADFL Movement in Eastern Zaire," (Washington DC: US Committee for Refugees Issue Brief, April 1997), 22 fn5. Mamdani also notes the contrast between Tanzania and Zaire. Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 254.

¹⁷² For example, former President Julius Nyerere harshly criticized the tepid Tanzanian government response to the genocide, whereas then president, Ali Hassan Mwinyi, steered clear of such public condemnation. See "Nyerere Blasts Tanzania Over Rwanda Massacres," Agence France Presse, July 6, 1994. Also UNHCR officials, interviews by the author, Geneva, July 14 and 15, 1998.

¹⁷³ As mentioned earlier, Tanzanian officials allowed the notorious genocidaire Gatete to leave the country rather than imprison or extradite him.

elections were approaching. Most voters did not support leniency toward the refugees. In many areas, the refugees far outnumbered the local population and contributed to increased crime, banditry, and environmental degradation. Local leaders resented the burden of the refugee crisis and demanded more resources from the central government. As democratization progressed, refugee policy became subject to political maneuvering and pressures.¹⁷⁴ The refugee issue provided a convenient scapegoat that campaigning politicians could use to explain Tanzania's problems.

The accumulation of political, economic, and security threats related to the crisis led to the forcible return of the refugees back to Rwanda. Once the refugees in Zaire returned to Rwanda in November 1996, Tanzania strongly encouraged its own refugees to leave. In early December, the government (in conjunction with UNHCR) issued an ultimatum that the refugees must depart by December 31, 1996. Camp leaders attempted to circumvent the ultimatum by leading the refugees further east into Tanzania, toward Kenya or Malawi. Leaders convinced the refugees that they would be executed immediately upon crossing the border to Rwanda.¹⁷⁵ On December 12, 1996, Tanzanian soldiers deployed around the camps to force the refugees home or prevent them from moving further east.¹⁷⁶ The soldiers then pushed the refugees out of the Ngara camps toward the border. From Benaco camp, a line of hundreds of thousands of refugees stretched on the twelve mile highway to the border. Despite the army cordon, aid workers reported that many of the hard-core militants apparently separated from the refugees and

¹⁷⁴ Augustine Mahiga, "A Change of Direction for Tanzania," *Refugees, Crisis in the Great Lakes*, (Geneva, UNHCR, No.110, Winter 1997), 14-15.

¹⁷⁵ James C. McKinley Jr., "Soldiers Force Refugees into Rwanda from Tanzania," *The New York Times*, Dec. 16, 1996.

¹⁷⁶ Chris McGreal, "Refugees on the Move: Fear Forces Out Hutus," *The Guardian* (London), Dec. 13, 1996.

continued to move east.¹⁷⁷ In a matter of days, hundreds of thousands of Rwandan refugees returned to their country, ending a perceived threat to regional and local security.

International Humanitarian Aid and Militant Organization

“There were no security problems. We were extremely well organized.”

--UNHCR official involved in the Tanzania operation.¹⁷⁸

The international NGOs and UN agencies in western Tanzania affected all aspects of society and enabled a low level of militarization among the refugees¹⁷⁹ At the beginning of the crisis, the Tanzanian government designated UNHCR to coordinate the humanitarian response. Thus, only a handful of NGOs approved by UNHCR worked in the camps. In Zaire, aid agencies provided food directly to blatantly militant elements. In Tanzania, humanitarian aid benefited the militants in a more subtle manner and to a lower extent. Militants in Tanzania kept a low profile and did not conduct any significant military activity. Nevertheless, the organization and structure of the refugee camps enabled the genocidaires to retain their power in exile.

During the initial stages of the refugee emergency, UNHCR and other agencies followed the path of least resistance and allowed the self-proclaimed refugee leaders to organize the camps. The smooth working of the camps had two effects—one intentional and the other inadvertent. First, the efficient organization of the camps helped the

¹⁷⁷ James C. McKinley Jr., “Soldiers Force Refugees into Rwanda from Tanzania,” *The New York Times*, Dec. 16, 1996.

¹⁷⁸ UNHCR official, interview by the author, Geneva, July 20, 1999.

¹⁷⁹ On this subject, see Beth Elise Whitaker, “Disjunctured Boundaries: Refugees, Hosts, and Politics in Western Tanzania,” (Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1999).

refugees avoid major epidemics, such as the cholera that killed thousands of refugees in Zaire. Second, the organization of the camps consolidated the power of the genocidal leaders and militia members. These leaders oversaw food distribution and controlled the information passed to the refugees. In some instances, UNHCR actually hired genocidaires to maintain security in the camps, further boosting their power.

Later, in order to counter the power of militant refugee leaders, UNHCR attempted an alternative method of organization in Kitali camp that opened in February 1995. Camp settlement was organized by date of arrival, rather than commune, which reduced the power of the traditional leaders. One NGO observer viewed this as a detriment to the “community spirit” of the camp, whereas the UNHCR official who organized Kitali viewed its unique structure as an asset. Even the NGO observer admitted that “ex-leaders/administrators in the camp do exist but according to several sources have lost their power since they do not actually have any power to act.” Because it did not rely on militant refugee leaders to coordinate the population, UNHCR never achieved the same level of organization in Kitali as it did in the earlier established camps.¹⁸⁰

In retrospect, international aid agencies view the refugee operation in Tanzania as a model operation.¹⁸¹ In making this judgment, aid workers focus on the efficient humanitarian response to the crisis, the avoidance of epidemics, and the absence of visible military elements in the camps. The international aid agencies ignore the political effects of the camp organization and the power ceded to genocidal refugee leaders. There is also an implicit assumption that hidden militarization poses less of a threat than overt

¹⁸⁰ Cathy Lennox-Cook, “Kitali Camp, Ngara, Tanzania: A Year in the Life of a Rwandese and Burundese Refugee Camp, February 1995-February 1996,” Unpublished draft, Feb. 11, 1996; UNHCR official, interview by the author, Geneva, July 22, 1999.

¹⁸¹ The provision of services is considered a model, but many NGOs denounce UNHCR’s complicity in the forced repatriation of December 1996.

military activity. This assumption is due to the fact that hidden militarization does pose less of a threat to aid distribution (the main concern of many relief workers), but not to regional instability and to the spread of civil war. Taking into account the negative impact of the camp organization, the refugee crisis in Tanzania was not a model operation. Indeed, the Tanzanian camps only appear in such a favorable light because they are compared to the bloody mayhem in Zaire.

Overall, the *genocidaires* and *Interahamwe* militias benefited greatly from the implicit “don’t ask-don’t tell” policy of the international agencies and NGOs. As long as the militants conducted their activities out of plain view, the humanitarian aid continued to flow. From the point of view of the aid agencies, the militarization presented few problems since it usually did not directly impinge on aid delivery. Thus, while serving a militarized state-in-exile, NGO observers—with a limited scope of concern—could claim that “security in the camps is generally good.”¹⁸²

Socioeconomic Similarities to Zaire

“It’s OK here. We’re not hungry.”

--Jean Bosco Sarambuye, refugee in Benaco camp¹⁸³

“The urban-style idleness so near the Rwandan border made credible, at least to some refugees, plans to violently retake Rwanda. This was why the militia groups were able to flourish in the camps, at least for a time.”

--NGO observer in Tanzania.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸² International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, “Rwandan Refugees in Burundi, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zaire,” Situation Report No. 5, March 31, 1995, Sect. 2.3.

¹⁸³ Christopher Burns, “Better-Run Camps in Tanzania Threatened by New Influx and Violence,” The Associated Press, Sept. 2, 1994.

¹⁸⁴ Waters, *Bureaucratizing the Good Samaritan*, 223.

Like the camps in Zaire, the Tanzanian camps contravened all the UNHCR recommendations regarding location and composition of the camps. From the sprawling camps, refugees could easily walk to border with Rwanda. Each camp housed many more than the recommended 20,000 inhabitants and was filled with idle young men. Despite their similar geographic and demographic characteristics, the Tanzanian camps experienced a much lower level of violence than those in Zaire. According to the socioeconomic explanations, one would expect much better living conditions in Tanzania since the refugee situation was much less violent. However, camps in both Zaire and Tanzania experienced relatively good conditions. In general, the camps had better nutrition and mortality figures than neighboring Tanzanian villages.

According to the socioeconomic explanation, the large number of refugees, housed in huge border camps, created a security threat in Tanzania. The massive camps presented an opportunity for offensive mobilization against the sending state, as well as provided a target for the avenging RPF. Indeed, the influx of Rwandans nearly overwhelmed western Tanzania. As of mid-June 1994, UNHCR estimated that 410,000 Rwandan refugees lived in Ngara and Karagwe districts, where they vastly outnumbered the local population.¹⁸⁵ During the initial influx in Ngara, 200,000 refugees descended on a village of 6,000 Tanzanians.¹⁸⁶ The size of the population did not translate into

¹⁸⁵ UNHCR, "Rwanda Emergency Crisis," Memo, June 20, 1994, 1.

¹⁸⁶Population growth among the refugees expanded at 4.5 percent annually, compared with 2.8 percent among Tanzanians and 3.1 percent for pre-genocide Rwanda. In April 1996 in Ngara camp, only 54 Rwandans returned home, whereas 2,000 babies were born. Christopher Mwakasege, "The Impact of Refugees on Host Communities, The Case of Kasulu, Ngara, and Karagwe Districts in Tanzania," Study report presented at the International Workshop on the Refugee Crisis in the Great Lakes Region, Arusha, Tanzania. 16-19 August 1995, 1, 4; UNHCR, "Information Bulletin, Burundi and Rwanda," June 1996; Tony Waters, "The Coming Rwandan Demographic Crisis, or Why Current Repatriation Policies Will Not Solve Tanzania's (or Zaire's) Refugee Problems," *Journal of Humanitarian Assistance*. Found at <http://www-jha.sps.cam.ac.uk/a/a021.htm>, reposted on July 4, 1997.

offensive military action, however. Tanzania managed to prevent this large population from becoming an offensive weapon in the hands of the genocidal leaders.

Like Zaire, the size of the camps varied widely. Ngara district hosted the largest camps, Benaco and Lumasi, which held between 100,000 and 200,000 refugees. Populations in the eleven smaller camps in Ngara and Karagwe districts numbered between a few hundred and 80,000 refugees.¹⁸⁷ Although the evidence is not conclusive, the size of the camps did not visibly affect the level of militarization.¹⁸⁸ All the camps fell under the control of the former leaders, regardless of size. But none of the camps served as rear bases for cross-border military activity.

Proponents of the socioeconomic explanations also cite the location of the camps so near the Rwandan border as dangerous. By 1995, 430,000 refugees resided in five camps all less than 30 kilometers from the Rwandan border (see Map 4.2). This occurred because UNHCR and Tanzania had designated Benaco as a potential refugee site for a Burundi influx—partly because it was considered a safe distance (over 50 kilometers) from the Burundi border. The officials did not consider the possibility of a Rwandan influx. Benaco filled quickly and by June a second site opened at Lumasi, five kilometers away. Kitali was located 75 kilometers from the border, whereas most of the larger camps were less than 30 kilometers from Rwanda. Fifty-eight percent of the camp residents in

¹⁸⁷ UNHCR's numbers for June 1996 are more reliable than earlier inflated statistics. UNHCR, "Information Bulletin, Burundi and Rwanda," June 1996. See also Waters, *Bureaucratizing the Good Samaritan*, 278.

¹⁸⁸ Because of the low levels of violence, cross camp comparisons are difficult within Tanzania. Since all the camps had lower levels of violence, one cannot reliably evaluate the impact of the size of the camp. Also, information about the military activity within each camp is harder to obtain since the militants took care to hide their activities.

Ngara came from Kibungo prefecture, directly across the border, making crossing even easier.¹⁸⁹

The ease of crossing did not lead to cross-border attacks by Rwanda or the refugees. Clearly, a factor other than camp location caused the violence in Zaire since Tanzania's border camps remained relatively peaceful. A more significant factor is that Tanzanian border guards were much more effective than their Zairian counterparts. Because of Zaire's weakness and connivance with the Hutu, the Hutu militants used the border camps as rear bases and the Rwandan government could easily attack the camps.

Information shortages make it difficult to determine the number and proportion of young men among the Rwandan refugees. The UNHCR statistical report covering 1995 omits demographic information on Rwandan refugees in Tanzania.¹⁹⁰ One source claims that the population was not typical of an African society in that the refugees had more teenagers than usual and fewer small children. (13 percent under five years old in one camp, compared to 20 percent in rural Tanzania and Rwanda).¹⁹¹ Without better data it is not possible to evaluate the men in camps explanation for Tanzania. There is no suggestion of a drastic shortage of men in the Tanzanian refugee population, however, which suggests that the gender balance did not cause the low levels of violence.

According to one socioeconomic explanation for the spread of civil war, material incentives encourage refugees to support military activity. Desperate refugees, especially young men, will become fighters in order to improve their living conditions. For aid

¹⁸⁹ Refugees International, "Rwandan Repatriation: The Challenge for the Great Lakes Region," Report No. 3 (Dec. 6, 1995).

¹⁹⁰ There is information on Rwandan refugees in Burundi (142,000) and Uganda (6,800). Burundi's refugee population was 53 percent female and Uganda's was 49 percent female. UNHCR, "Demographic Characteristics of Selected Populations Assisted by UNHCR as of 31 December 1995," In *Populations of Concern to UNHCR, A Statistical Overview* (Geneva: UNHCR, 1996), Table 10.

¹⁹¹ Waters, *Bureaucratizing the Good Samaritan*, 202, 260.

workers, this means that higher levels of assistance can forestall the spread of civil war, regardless of the political motivation of the refugees and potential fighters.

This material incentives explanation would assume that there were terrible living conditions in Zaire and good conditions in Tanzania, since Zaire experienced such high violence and Tanzania did not. Evidence from the camps flatly contradicts that explanation. Once the initial cholera crisis subsided in Zaire, camps in Zaire and Tanzania experienced similar levels of living conditions. In both regions, the refugee camps, for the most part, enjoyed adequate food, shelter, and health care, relatively speaking, due to massive international expenditures.¹⁹² In March 1995, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent societies reported, "the general health situation in the [Tanzanian] camps is excellent."¹⁹³ Mortality rates in the camps roughly equaled the average mortality rate of .5 per 10,000 people per day found in most developing countries.¹⁹⁴

Refugees generally enjoyed adequate nutrition, even though their rations did not always reach the recommended standards set by the international agencies. For example, the International Committee for the Red Cross recommends eleven liters of water per day per person.¹⁹⁵ Many camps did not achieve this level, but UNHCR reported that most camps did not dip below nine liters per person per day.¹⁹⁶ In 1994, at the height of

¹⁹² Between May and December 1994, the relief effort cost \$1.4 billion. Waters, *Bureaucratizing the Good Samaritan*, 9.

¹⁹³ International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, "Rwandan Refugees in Burundi, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zaire," Situation Report No. 5, March 31, 1995, 5.

¹⁹⁴ As early as June 1994, UNHCR reported a low mortality rate of .51 per 10,000 people per day with no signs of epidemics. Later, in 1995, the Red Cross found mortality rates below normal at .57 per 10,000 persons per day. UNHCR, "Rwanda Emergency Crisis," Memo, June 20, 1994, 3; Jaspars, "The Rwandan Refugee Crisis," 11; International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, "Rwandan Refugees in Burundi, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zaire," Situation Report No. 5, March 31, 1995, sect. 4.

¹⁹⁵ IFRC, "Rwandan Refugees," 4.

¹⁹⁶ UNHCR, "Information Bulletin, Burundi and Rwanda," June 1996.

international attention, refugees received an average food basket of 1800 calories a day.¹⁹⁷ A 1995 survey by one NGO found that 51 percent of the refugees received less than 1500 kcal/day, compared to the recommended level of 1900 kcal/day.¹⁹⁸ Despite fluctuations in rations, a nutritional survey in 1996 found malnutrition rates in one camp as low as 1.6 percent, compared with 8.8 and 6.5 percent in neighboring Tanzanian villages.¹⁹⁹

In theory, Tanzanian law restricted refugees' movement and right to employment, however the refugee populated area provided economic opportunity for both refugees and locals. Like the camps in Zaire, the Tanzanian camps actually resembled small towns with markets, shops, bars, and other businesses.²⁰⁰ One observer noted, "Tanzanian hosts established extensive social relations with refugees, particularly in areas close to the camps."²⁰¹ In Benaco camp alone, five markets operated, enabling the refugees to supplement the monotonous diet provided by international donors.²⁰² Refugees produced food, such as bananas and beans, for sale to other refugees and local residents. The charity CARE estimated over 10,000 hectares of land had been cultivated by refugees as of 1996.²⁰³ Rwandan refugees also provided cheap labor for the local peasants.²⁰⁴

¹⁹⁷ Waters, *Bureaucratizing the Good Samaritan*, 133.

¹⁹⁸ Médecins Sans Frontiers, "Deadlock in the Rwandan Refugee Crisis: Virtual Standstill on Repatriation." Amsterdam, July 1995. Commune leaders controlled the distribution at first, leading to misuse of aid. Some families received much more than others and vast quantities of maize appeared for sale in the refugee markets. Leaders may have coerced people to make do with less than their full ration in order to sell the food for their own purposes. Jaspars, *The Rwandan Refugee Crisis in Tanzania*, 29.

¹⁹⁹ Beth Elise Whitaker, "Changing Opportunities: Refugees and Host Communities in Western Tanzania," *New Issues in Refugee Research*, working paper series (Geneva: UNHCR), June 1999, 5.

²⁰⁰ Amnesty International, "Rwanda and Burundi, The Return Home."

²⁰¹ Whitaker, "Changing Opportunities," 12.

²⁰² Jaspars, *The Rwandan Refugee Crisis in Tanzania*, 25.

²⁰³ Tony Waters, "Emergency Assistance and Development, or What Has a Cash Bath Done for Western Tanzania's Wahangaza?" Unpublished paper, 11.

²⁰⁴ UNHCR official, interview by the author. Geneva, July 15, 1998.

In Tanzania, the relatively good living conditions did not blunt the political goals of refugees. Despite the existence of informal employment, markets, agricultural land, and social interaction, refugees continued to attempt military organization. Statements and actions of refugees and their leaders indicated a desire to engage in violence, regardless of the material opportunities in exile. The response of the Tanzanian government to the militants, rather than material incentives, explains the low levels of violence.

After two years of the refugees' stay, aid workers abandoned the idea that the better conditions would promote return and lessen violence. One UNHCR official even claimed that there was more resistance to repatriation in the Tanzanian camps because conditions there were "better and more secure."²⁰⁵ In 1996, the Tanzanian government and aid agencies curtailed social services, such as secondary education, in an attempt to encourage repatriation.²⁰⁶ UNHCR cut food rations from 2000 to 1500 calories/person/day. Some UNHCR officials claimed that "refugees were reluctant to leave the camps as they believed they were leading a more comfortable life there than they could in Rwanda or Burundi."²⁰⁷

Aid workers predicted that the lowering of rations would lead to widespread violence. For example, one NGO memo pleaded that "to avoid a possible outbreak of mass violence and uncontrollable instability urgent food supplies are needed now." The evidence does not support that claim. Despite several weeks with only half rations, refugees remained calm and relied on other sources of food within the local economy. Refugees' resistance to repatriation, especially that of the leaders, did not change with

²⁰⁵ UNHCR official, interview by the author. Geneva, July 14, 1998.

²⁰⁶ Waters, "The Coming Rwandan Demographic Crisis."

²⁰⁷ Amnesty International. "Rwanda and Burundi, The Return Home," 4.

fluctuations in rations. As their situation in Tanzania became less attractive, the resistance to repatriation remained unyielding. Later that year, the Tanzanian army, not economic incentives, finally effected the refugees' return to Rwanda.²⁰⁸

V. Border Battles: Tanzanian Support for Refugee Insurgency

"Geo-political considerations...explain the government of Tanzania's greater tolerance toward the Burundian refugee caseload, and possibly a more ambivalent attitude towards the involvement of this caseload in 'political' activities."

--Former UNHCR official in Tanzania²⁰⁹

The cases of the Rwandan refugees in Zaire and Tanzania compare similar refugee groups in different receiving states. This illustrates that Zairian capability and will played a decisive role in the militarization of the refugee population and ensuing wars. Another test of the receiving state role would examine the actions of the same receiving state vis à vis different refugee crises. A particularly strong test compares the Burundian and Rwandan refugees in Tanzania. The Burundian Hutu militant refugees have engaged in cross-border attacks against Burundi and brought the sending and receiving state to the brink of war. This outcome is surprising because one would have expected the Rwandan Hutu to have engaged in more violence than the Burundian Hutu since the Rwandans constituted a state-in-exile.

A brief comparison with the Burundian refugees in Tanzania emphasizes the importance of the receiving state policy in whether or not civil war spreads. Whereas Tanzania repressed militarization among the Rwandan refugees, the government tacitly

²⁰⁸ Waters, *Bureaucratizing the Good Samaritan*, 137, quote in fn3.

²⁰⁹ Jean-Francois Durieux, "Preserving the Civilian Character of Refugee Camps. Lessons from the Kigoma Refugee Programme in Tanzania," *Track Two*, 9, 3 (Nov. 2000), 32.

accepted the rebel activity based in and around the Burundian camps. Without Tanzanian sympathy, the Burundian rebels, with few resources or external sympathizers, would never have been able to operate so effectively. The different outcomes for the Rwandans and Burundians show that Tanzanian willingness to control the spread of war depended on the political context of the crisis. This section analyzes the Burundian refugee crisis in order to test the political explanation for the spread of civil war in refugee crises, with particular focus on the role of the receiving state.

Ever since the 1972 genocide that targeted educated Hutu, Tanzania has hosted waves of Burundian refugees fleeing ethnic violence. In the 1990s, two waves of Hutu refugees arrived. In October 1993, the elected president of Burundi, Melchior Ndadaye, a Hutu, was assassinated by Tutsi army officers. Massive ethnic violence followed in which 50,000 people died in reciprocal massacres between Hutu and Tutsi. In order to escape ethnic persecution by the Tutsi-led army, 700,000 Burundian Hutu crossed into Rwanda, Tanzania, and Zaire.²¹⁰ When the situation in Burundi stabilized in March 1994, most of the refugees left the camps to return home. Another large influx occurred in 1996 after Pierre Buyoya's coup displaced the elected Hutu government with Tutsi military rule. Over 200,000 Hutu refugees fled to western Tanzania following the July coup. Despite ongoing mediation, led by the late Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere and former South African President Nelson Mandela, the conflict has remained intractable. Some of the parties signed a peace accord in November 2001, which inaugurated a multi-party transitional government, however the two main armed rebel groups refused to sign.

The Burundian refugees in Tanzania constitute a persecuted refugee group, rather than a state-in-exile like the Rwandans. The origin of the 1993 and 1996 refugee flows

²¹⁰ UNHCR, "Information Bulletin, Burundi and Rwanda," June 1995, 2.

lies in the brutal ethnic conflict between Hutu and Tutsi in Burundi in which over 250,000 people have died. One refugee described the reason for his flight: "soldiers came to our village. We heard gunshots. We started running...We passed dead women and children on the way."²¹¹ As a strategy to deny the rebels a sympathetic population base, the Tutsi government has corralled Hutu into crowded, unsanitary 'regroupment' camps, causing many civilian deaths. The army also forcibly conscripted Hutu citizens and sent them to the front lines against the rebels. The refugees shared the coalescing experience of persecution and distrust of a Tutsi government: "newly arriving refugees were not only a bitter reminder of the continuing violence in Burundi, they were also rich material for anti-government, anti-Tutsi propaganda."²¹² Although the Hutu who left did not do so alongside a defeated army, like the Rwandans, it was clear that the Hutu rebel leaders encouraged (sometimes forcibly) the creation of a large population of refugees.²¹³

Statements by refugees make clear that they do not require a complete victory in order to return. Their goals of peace, security, and ethnic integration contrast sharply with the genocidal aims of the leaders of Rwanda's state-in-exile. The Burundian refugees express fear of the Tutsi-dominated army and a desire for stability. One refugee explained the preconditions for return: "If the rebels were integrated in the army, we believe that all of us would be able to repatriate."²¹⁴ In eastern Zaire, by contrast, a militant leader

²¹¹ Refugee quoted in Alphonso Van Marsh, "Refugees Describe Human Cost of Burundi's War," CNN, Dec. 11, 1999. Found at: <http://www.cnn.com>.

²¹² Durieux, "Preserving the Civilian Character," 27.

²¹³ The militancy of the refugees in Tanzania increased following the Rwandan invasion of Zaire in 1996. Rwanda expelled Burundian and Rwandan Hutu refugees from eastern Zaire and many of the Burundian militants found their way to Tanzania.

²¹⁴ Statement by a Burundian refugee in Tanzania. Quoted in "Tanzania: Burundi/Tanzania: IRIN Special Report on Returning Burundian Refugees," IRIN report, May 8, 2002.

warned “[the coming war] will be long and full of dead people until the minority Tutsi are finished and completely out of the country.”²¹⁵

Over time, militarized rebel groups and political parties developed within the Burundian refugee camps and enjoyed high levels of refugee support. As one analyst recognized, “this should come as no surprise, considering the traumatic experiences which caused their flight.”²¹⁶ Some of the groups even gained official recognition during the peace negotiations at Arusha, Tanzania. A number of Hutu parties, including Conseil National de Défense de la Démocratie (CNDD), Palipehutu, Frolina, and Frodebu, conducted illegal meetings in the camps.²¹⁷ Political leaders travel from Burundi to address the refugees and recruit fighters. The parties also enforce a war tax on refugees, either in food or cash.²¹⁸ The leaders manipulate information available about Burundi to discourage return, although the situation in Burundi is so dire that little propaganda was needed to discourage the refugees.²¹⁹

Despite Tanzania’s denials, it is generally accepted that Hutu rebel groups operate from Tanzanian soil. Privately, UNHCR officials and internal documents admit that refugees are involved in military activity. The most common activities are (mostly voluntary) military recruitment among the refugees and cross-border raids against the

²¹⁵ Colonel Theoneste Bagasora (ex-FAR) quoted in OAU, “International Panel of Eminent Personalities.”

²¹⁶ Durieux, “Preserving the Civilian Character,” 31.

²¹⁷ There have also been violent clashes between the various rebel groups in the camps. Differences of geography, family ties, and levels of extremism divide the parties. Within the Tanzanian refugee camps, supporters of FDD and PALIPEHUTU began to fight each other in Katale camp. During the fighting in January 1997, the army shot indiscriminately into the crowd. Gerard Prunier, “The Geopolitical Situation in the Great Lakes Area in Light of the Kivu Crisis,” Writenet Country Papers, Refworld, UNHCR, Feb. 1997, 58; and UN OCHA Integrated Regional Information Network for Central and Eastern Africa, “Burundi: IRIN Focus on Rebel Movements,” Oct. 13, 1999.

²¹⁸ Aid workers have noticed correlations between higher levels of malnutrition and increased rebel political activity in camps, due to greater taxation.

²¹⁹ UNHCR Burundi office, “Memo on Activities in Ngara Camps,” October 1999. Information based on interviews with returnees. As the prospects for repatriation improved there were more violent incidents of intimidation reported. During January 2002, rebels killed 24 people in attempts to discourage repatriation. IRIN, “Tanzania: Over 20 Burundi Refugees Said Killed Since Early January,” Feb. 1, 2002.

Burundian government.²²⁰ The rebels conduct their military activities in the forest and on the Burundi border, evading direct observation by international aid workers. Rebels also enter the camps to rest and recuperate after battle. The refugee camps themselves do not function as military bases but they are highly politicized. When a UNHCR team assessed the security situation it found a high level of political activity and meetings.²²¹ An official at the Tanzanian Ministry of Home Affairs admitted that fanatical and extremist parties met “secretly” on Tanzanian soil.²²²

Since 1993, Tanzania and Burundi have repeatedly moved toward war due to the activities of the refugees. The government of Pierre Buyoya has lodged numerous complaints that Tanzania allows militants to use the camps and launch cross-border raids. Tanzania consistently and repeatedly denies any involvement in the rebel activity.²²³ Following two armed raids into Burundi, a UNHCR International Security Liaison Officer in Tanzania surmised, “these raids indicate the existence of a well coordinated political/military organization operating in and around the camps.” He added, “it can also be safely assumed that there must be arms hidden around the camps, particularly within the adjoining forests.”²²⁴ In addition to rebel attacks on Burundi, the Tanzanian army has exchanged fire with the Burundian army across the border.²²⁵

²²⁰ UNHCR official, interview by the author, Kigoma, Tanzania, Feb. 13, 2000; Gerard Prunier, “Rwanda: Update to End of July 1995,” *Writenet Country Papers*, Refworld, UNHCR, Aug. 1995, Sect. 3.1.

²²¹ Emile Segbor, UNHCR official, interview by the author, Geneva, July 15, 1998.

²²² Johnson Brahim, Tanzanian Ministry for Home Affairs official, interview by the author, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, February 9, 2000. In September 1999, 200 refugees were caught in illegal night meetings. UNHCR Kigoma office, “Tanzania Situation Report,” September 1999.

²²³ A private Burundi news source quoted captured rebels who said they traded with Tanzanian soldiers to acquire ammunition. “Burundi Accuses Tanzania of Cross-Border Attack,” CNN, October 27, 1997. Found at: <http://www.cnn.com>; and IRIN-CEA Update 838 for the Great Lakes, “Tanzania: Commissioner Denies Supporting Burundi Rebels,” Jan. 13, 2000

²²⁴ Thuo Kimari, “ISLO Report, Kigoma and Kagera Regions,” UNHCR Kigoma office, March 11-16, 1999.

²²⁵ IRIN-CEA Update 1,004 for the Great Lakes, “Burundi: Exchange of Gunfire on Border with Tanzania,” September 5, 2000.

The conflict escalates whenever Burundi conducts reprisal raids into Tanzania. Some of the Burundian army's hot pursuit raids have caused the deaths of Tanzanian citizens as well as Burundian refugees. This has led to a Tanzanian military buildup on the border, and threats of full-fledged war.²²⁶ In 1995 the Tanzanian minister of Foreign Affairs Joseph Rwegasira defended the closure of the border due to hot pursuit raids by the Burundian army against "Burundi freedom fighters who allegedly operated from Tanzania."²²⁷ Fringe extremist Tutsi groups have also threatened to bomb refugee camps in Tanzania.²²⁸ Burundian President Buyoya warned "the presence of Burundi refugees in neighboring countries contributes to the creation of social crisis."²²⁹

Following the 1996 military coup in Burundi, Tanzania followed a carefully ambiguous foreign policy toward Burundi. The Tanzanian government strongly condemned President Pierre Buyoya's coup, which sent waves of Hutu refugees across the border, and pressed successfully for regional economic sanctions against Buyoya's government. The Tanzanian government did not overtly support the Hutu rebels against Buyoya, but it was common knowledge that political parties operated in the camps and that various rebel groups based in western Tanzania conducted cross-border raids into Burundi. Tanzania, without providing overt support to the guerillas, "was happy to allow them to exert enough pressure on the Burundi regime so as to force political concessions

²²⁶ Gérard Prunier, "Burundi: Update to Early August 1995," and "Burundi: Update to Early February 1996," Writenet Country Papers, UNHCR Refworld. Found at: <http://www.unhcr.ch>.

²²⁷ Joseph Rwegasira, Speech delivered at the International Workshop on the Refugee Crisis in the Great Lakes Region, Arusha, Tanzania, August 16-19th 1995, 4.

²²⁸ IRIN-CEA Update 1,014 for the Great Lakes, "Burundi: Tutsi Group Threatens to Attack Refugee Camps in Tanzania," Sept. 19, 2000.

²²⁹ IRIN, "Burundi: Interview with President Pierre Buyoya," April 18, 2002.

out of the latter.”²³⁰ One high ranking UNHCR official confirmed that “Tanzania will go quite far to support an alternative to Buyoya.”²³¹

A competing foreign policy goal lies in tension with Tanzania’s distaste for Buyoya. That is a need for international legitimacy concerning its handling of the refugee crisis. This need is especially acute since Tanzania has been actively involved in the Burundian peace process convened in Arusha, Tanzania. The government desires to appear capable and neutral regarding both the refugee situation and the peace negotiations. Thus Tanzania does not overtly aid the rebels and ensures that the refugee camps themselves show no outward signs of militarization.

In order to control the security situation, Tanzania has entered into an agreement with UNHCR whereby UNHCR funds the deployment of nearly 300 police officers in the refugee populated areas. The security arrangement with UNHCR provides one visible way for the government to demonstrate its commitment to law and order, without requiring much change in the status quo. “In practice, the policemen lack time, resources and knowledge to do more than scratch the surface of ‘hard’ security issues such as military recruitment, subversive propaganda, power struggle between rebel factions or infiltration of combatants.”²³² In isolated instances, the Tanzanian authorities have seized arms caches in the camps or intercepted new refugee recruits on their way to fight in Burundi. Even when the Tanzanian police arrest suspected militants, there is no formal mechanism for dealing with them. In one instance, the police arrested 43 refugees who

²³⁰ Durieux, “Preserving the Character,” 27-28.

²³¹ UNHCR official, interview by the author. Geneva, July 13, 1998.

²³² Durieux, “Preserving the Character,” 30.

had volunteered to fight. Within days, 32 of them had escaped and the others were unlikely to face any charges.²³³

UNHCR generally ignores the militarization of the refugee populated area, focusing instead on the fact that the refugee camps themselves are not openly militarized. When UNHCR and the government of Tanzania conducted a joint mission to assess the security situation in 1997, they pronounced that there were no signs of militarization.²³⁴ The assessment mission did not examine the security situation around the camps and limited itself to looking for arms in the camps. The issues of military recruitment or rebel political activity (including 'food taxes') within the camps were not addressed. A UNHCR legal official later emphasized that the role of UNHCR is to maintain the civilian nature of the camps, not to stop the armed attacks on Burundi.²³⁵ Considering Tanzania's policy regarding the militarization, it is unlikely that UNHCR, acting alone, could prevent the spread of civil war.

VI. Comparing Refugee Crises in Central Africa

The three-way comparison between the Rwandans in Zaire and Tanzania and the Burundians in Tanzania provides a unique study of the conditions under which civil war spreads. In Zaire, the refugee crisis sparked international and civil wars that have consumed millions of lives. Among the Rwandans in Tanzania, similar dynamics between the refugees and the sending state did not result in the spread of civil war.

²³³ UNHCR assistant protection officer, interview by the author, Kigoma, Tanzania, Feb. 13, 2000.

²³⁴ UNHCR, "Progress Report on UNHCR's Response to the Great Lakes Emergency," Geneva, Oct. 1997, 2.

²³⁵ UNHCR official, interview by the author, Geneva, July 16, 1999.

However, Tanzania has discreetly supported the spread of civil war involving Burundian refugees.

The Rwandan refugee crises in Tanzania and Zaire do not confirm the socioeconomic explanations for refugee related violence. Notably, the Zairian and Tanzanian camps were both within walking distance of the Rwandan border. Both states housed camps much larger than the UNHCR recommended size; in some instances hundreds of thousands of refugees crowded in one camp. Additionally, in Zaire, the militants retained just as strong a hold, if not stronger, in the smaller camps. In both cases, fluctuations in living conditions in the camps showed no correlation with levels of violence. Both populations also had low mortality and malnutrition rates, suggesting that poor conditions did not spark the violence. In fact, militant leaders benefited greatly from the abundant humanitarian aid that flowed in at the beginning of the crises.

The origins of the refugee crises determined the initial levels of military and political organization. The Rwandan refugees fled in an organized group, led by genocidal leaders. The refugee population included a retreating army and all the trappings of a state-in-exile. In Tanzania and Zaire, the refugees held militaristic aims and hoped to overthrow or destabilize Rwanda. In comparison, the Burundian refugees fled their homes to escape persecution, not as part of an organized war strategy. Even the militants among them were less implicated in war crimes than the Rwandans. The coalescing event of persecution increased the Burundian refugees' receptivity to the rebel cause.

Given the violence-prone nature of the refugee groups, the policy of the receiving state determined whether or not war spread. The refugees in Zaire managed such a high level of political and military organization due to Zaire's permissiveness. Mobutu's

alliance with the Hutu genocidaires posed a greater threat to the Rwandan government than did the Tanzanian refugees. As Mobutu's government collapsed, the Rwandan forces easily crossed the border to attack the refugees. In the end, Mobutu's utter failure to reach his goals led to the spread of the Rwandan civil war and the installation of a new government in Zaire.

The case of the Rwandan refugees in Tanzania proves that violence is not a foregone conclusion when dealing with a state-in-exile. The Tanzanian government was willing and able to enforce border security and maintain domestic stability. Considering the high propensity for violence in this situation, Tanzania remained relatively peaceful.²³⁶ Three factors influenced the Tanzanian reaction: its past peaceful experiences with asylum seekers, its relatively neutral relationships with the combatants (Hutu and Tutsi), and domestic political pressure to minimize refugee-related violence.

Tanzania has not maintained the same level of demilitarization among the Burundian refugees on its soil. Due to sympathy for the rebel's goals, Tanzania provides tacit support for military activity targeting the Tutsi-led Burundian government. This support is not likely to become more overt due to Tanzania's desire for international legitimacy and economic assistance.

The responses of Zaire and Tanzania in turn affected the international influences on the situation. Zaire's alliances allowed external states to aid the Hutu movement. For example, Mobutu's ties with France and Kenya facilitated arms shipments to the refugees. In that way, Zaire's unwillingness to enforce security aided the spread of civil war. With an incapable central government, international aid agencies operated in a

²³⁶ Compared to situational refugee situations, and many persecuted groups, the Rwandan crisis in Tanzania had a high level of violence. Comparison with the Zaire situation provides a more accurate measure of what might have occurred in Tanzania, however.

chaotic environment in which they competed with each other for resources and visibility. This led to indiscriminate distribution of assistance to militants as well as refugees. Tanzania's stability discouraged interference from third party states, although there was a large non-state international humanitarian presence. Humanitarians in Tanzania were more organized, but that organization relied on the Hutu militants in the camps.

The political explanation for the spread of the civil war suggests radically different policy prescriptions than those currently championed by governments and aid workers. Ever since the Rwanda crisis, there have been calls for camp relocation away from borders, reducing camp size, and demilitarizing refugees. The proponents of these policy ideas imply that refugee-related violence is more a logistical problem than a political one. In reality, preventing the spread of civil war in refugee crises requires a political, and sometimes military, effort. Disarming refugees and separating soldiers and civilians will only occur with the agreement of the receiving state. Often that state requires significant assistance from international sources to demilitarize a refugee area. In some cases, coercion would be necessary.

When faced with a state-in-exile and an incapable and/or unwilling receiving state, the ideal solution is the rapid arrival of international peacekeepers that will disarm refugees and protect the border area. Obviously, such a force was not forthcoming in the Rwandan or Burundian crises. This left aid agencies and NGOs with the task of providing humanitarian aid in a highly politicized and militarized environment. In such a situation, international aid had great political significance and increased the military capability of the exiled combatants.

In the Rwandan refugee crisis, especially in Zaire, the political context of the crisis made a mockery of the humanitarian efforts on behalf of the refugees. The aid operations run by NGOs and international agencies merely served as pawns of Mobutu and the Hutu militants. One charity described the problem as providing humanitarian aid in a political vacuum. The blatant militarism of this state-in-exile, and its genocidal ambitions, shocked international organizations and governments sent to provide assistance. In fact, this state of shock seems to have prevented any introspection or evaluation regarding the aggressive goals of the refugee leaders. The prevailing attitude from states and humanitarian organizations was passivity and/or willful ignorance of the robust and menacing nature of the Rwandan Hutu state-in-exile ensconced in the refugee camps. Later chapters examine in greater detail the implications of humanitarian assistance for the spread of civil war.

Chapter 5

Afghan Refugees: Catalysts of Conflict for Three Decades

I. Civil War, Invasion, and Refugee Crises

Since 1978, millions of Afghan refugees have fled to neighboring states as seemingly unending conflict, including coups, invasion, and recurring civil war, afflicts Afghanistan. This chapter examines the refugee crises resulting from the 1978 coups and 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. By the early 1980s, nearly four million refugees had fled to Pakistan and Iran, rising to a peak of almost six million in the late 1980s. The refugee crisis occurred in the context of Cold War politics in which Afghanistan served as a proxy battleground for East and West. The political context of the crisis explains how refugees in Pakistan internationalized the civil war, whereas those in Iran did not.

Without the refugees, it is unlikely the Afghan resistance would have been able to mount a successful campaign against the Soviet invaders. In Pakistan, the refugees lived in camps controlled by the Afghan resistance parties. The Pakistan government (and American donors) accepted the role of the resistance parties and funneled humanitarian and military assistance through them. International aid organizations provided the infrastructure for the Afghan state-in-exile, relieving the resistance parties from fulfilling the major responsibilities of a state. The resistance parties launched cross-border attacks against Afghanistan and organized raids into the interior of the country. In response, the

Soviet-backed Afghan regime shelled and bombed the border areas of Pakistan. The refugee population provided cover for the resistance and a mechanism for funneling weapons to the anti-communist forces.

The refugees in Iran had a much different experience. Like the Pakistan groups, these refugees fled persecution by the Soviet-backed government. However, the Iranian government prevented the emergence of a state-in-exile. The refugees in Iran did not manage to translate their political goals into military action. Refugees in Iran lived in urban areas, not camps, and became economically self-sufficient. The government blocked interference by external states and aid organizations. Resistance parties engaged in limited political activity and chafed at Iranian restrictions against military activity.

The receiving states, Pakistan and Iran, determined whether the Afghan civil war spread across borders. Those states had fundamentally different foreign policy goals, domestic politics, and attitudes toward the refugees. President Zia of Pakistan relished the opportunity to increase his standing with the West via the refugee crisis. Iran deeply distrusted Western states and saw the United Nations as a tool of the West. Pakistan viewed a friendly, malleable Afghanistan as a vital national interest, whereas Iran was preoccupied with its war against Iraq.

The Afghan refugee crisis differs from the other groups studied in this dissertation—the Rwandans, Burundians, and Bosnians. In addition to occurring during the Cold War, the Afghan refugee crisis resulted, in large part, from external invasion rather than civil war. The coups in 1978 caused a few hundred thousand refugees to flee, but the massive flows only began after the Soviet invasion in 1979.¹ The combination of Afghan communist and Soviet forces led to widespread persecution and brutality, forcing

¹ When the Soviets invaded in December 1979, there were 300,000 Afghan refugees in Pakistan.

millions of people out of the country. Despite, or perhaps because of, the differences in time period and the nature of the conflict, it is useful to assess the political and socioeconomic explanations for the spread of the Afghan war.

Fundamental misunderstandings about the role of refugees in conflict have hindered analysis of the Afghan refugee crises. There has been little examination of the role of the refugees in the war, and no systematic comparison between the crises in Pakistan and Iran. Scholars of Afghanistan or of military history ignore the refugee issue, viewing it as purely humanitarian. Olivier Roy, a distinguished scholar of the region, writes in his study of the Afghan resistance that “refugees who have fled to Pakistan or Iran fall outside the scope of this study; a refugee ceases to be a member of a resistance movement.”² Clearly, in practice, this was not true of the Afghan refugees. The humanitarian literature also finds the military aspects of the refugee crisis irrelevant to its concerns. Thus, treatments of the war and of the refugees exclude analysis of the vital role of the refugees in internationalizing the conflict.

This chapter compares the Cold War era refugee crises in Pakistan and Iran. After a brief background of the conflict, the chapter explains the origins of the refugee crises. The refugees in Pakistan and Iran fled communist attacks and oppression and, as such, constituted persecuted refugee groups. Section II analyzes the political and socioeconomic factors in Pakistan that allowed the civil war to spread. The most significant factors were Pakistan’s capability and support for the rebels, combined with generous international assistance. The following section compares Pakistan with Iran and explains why the two million refugees in Iran did not cause the spread of civil war. The chapter concludes by asking whether militarized refugee crises differed in the Cold War

² Olivier Roy, *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 165.

from the present. I also briefly comment on the ongoing refugee crisis in Pakistan in light of American military involvement in the region.

Background of the Crises

The Cold War conflict in Afghanistan began with the 1973 coup that ousted King Zahir Shah, who had ruled for forty years. Muhammad Daoud, a secular nationalist from the dominant Pushtun ethnic group, replaced the king. The coup initiated a period of political instability in which communist, nationalist, and Islamist forces battled for supremacy. Perceiving a threat from Daoud's regime, Islamist resistance groups began to establish themselves in Peshawar, Pakistan during the 1970s. Although Afghan communists helped Daoud to power, he drew away from the USSR over the five years of his rule.

As Daoud's regime weakened, the Afghan communist factions saw an opportunity to grab power. The communists, led by Nur Muhammad Taraki, staged a coup in April 1978, called the Saur Revolution. The coup leaders deposed and killed Daoud and renamed the country the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan. At the time of the coup, neither of the two communist factions (Khalq and Parcham) had more than about five thousand supporters.³ The unpopular new government planned a complete social, economic, and political transformation but failed completely and nearly collapsed. The new measures aimed to change the system of land tenure, provide literacy training to women, and reform the bride price system. These reforms outraged most Afghans, who clung to their traditions. Even among the supposed beneficiaries of the reforms, the communists never established a base of popular support.

³ Edward Girardet, *Afghanistan The Soviet War*, (London: Croom Helm, 1985), 104.

Opposition to the communist government was widespread. "Resistance to the Kabul regime began within six months following the April 1978 coup, [and] encompassed virtually the whole of the country within twelve months."⁴ Uprisings began in the northeast (where the Islamic fundamentalist parties were strongest) and moved to the west. By the end 1979, three-fourths of the country was in rebellion.

In late 1979 the government changed hands again when Prime Minister Hafizullah Amin ousted and killed President Taraki. Amin's government was no more stable or successful than its predecessor. Amin's weakness alarmed the Soviets, who feared that the collapse of his government would allow American and Chinese influence to succeed in the region. The Soviet Union also worried that the fall of a communist government on its border would erode the USSR's credibility. As the communists teetered on the edge of collapse in December 1979, Soviet troops entered the country, killed President Amin, and installed Babrak Karmal as the new leader.

The conflict in Afghanistan pitted the Soviet Union and the communist Afghan government against an array of resistance parties, grouped together as the "Mujahideen."⁵ At the apex of the conflict in 1986-1987, the Soviets had around 150,000 troops in Afghanistan. The Afghan government troops were little help to the Soviets as a majority of them deserted or defected to the rebels. The Mujahideen were able to field between 150,000 and 200,000 fighters throughout the conflict.⁶ However, neither side could achieve a decisive victory. Until 1986, the Soviets controlled the air and about 20 percent

⁴ David Busby Edwards, "The Origins of the Anti-Soviet Jihad," In Grant M. Farr and John G. Merriman, (eds.) *Afghan Resistance*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1987), 44.

⁵ Numerous spellings exist for this word in the Western press, but they all refer to the same concept of Islamic holy warriors.

⁶ Olivier Roy, *The Lessons of the Soviet/Afghan War*, Adelphi Papers 259 (Brassey's for International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1991), 20.

of the land (mostly urban areas). The Mujahideen controlled 80 percent of the land (mostly rural). For Afghanistan, the war resulted in 1.25 million deaths and nearly 6 million refugees out of a pre-war population of 16 million.

The Soviets employed brutal, but ultimately unsuccessful, measures to stamp out the Mujahideen resistance. These methods included destroying entire Afghan villages with extensive bombing campaigns and imprisoning or executing anyone suspected of supporting the Mujahideen. The Afghan army also forcibly conscripted men to fight against the resistance. These conscripts obviously lacked loyalty to the government and would trade their weapons to the rebels in exchange for food or drugs. The invasion united its opponents in the causes of national liberation and protection of Islam. Hatred of the invaders and an unwillingness to fight alongside the communists led to massive defections from the army and huge refugee outflows.

In 1986, the conflict began to favor the Mujahideen. The United States increased its military aid, including surface-to-surface 120mm rockets, radio equipment, and most importantly, Stinger missiles. The Stingers enabled the Mujahideen to defend themselves against the Soviet helicopter gunships and bombers. President Karmal resigned in May 1986 and was replaced by Najibullah, a Soviet loyalist and former head of the secret police. Without a prospect for victory, and facing domestic discontent, the Soviets contemplated a withdrawal from Afghanistan. The Geneva agreements negotiated in March 1988 led to a complete Soviet withdrawal in February 1989.

Soviet withdrawal did not bring peace or massive refugee repatriation, however. The Najibullah government remained in power until 1992, when it was overthrown by a coalition of Mujahideen and army generals. Without the Soviet enemy, the Mujahideen

parties were unable to maintain even a minimal level of cooperation. Civil war among the factions raged until 1996 when the fundamentalist Taliban gained control of most of the country and established a strict Islamist state (according to its own interpretation of Islam). In 2001 the United States' war on terrorism in Afghanistan dislodged the Taliban and installed a transitional government. The tentative peace has encouraged many refugees to return, although hundreds of thousands remain in neighboring states.

Origins of the Refugee Crisis—Communist Persecution

“In general, all the Afghan refugees regard communism as inherently incompatible with Islam.”⁷

Unlike other militarized refugee groups, such as the Rwandan Hutu and renegade Bosnian Muslims, the Afghan refugees began as a persecuted group, not as a state-in-exile. Over a period of months, the refugee population in Pakistan improved its political and military organization to the extent that it transformed into a state-in-exile. The two million refugees in Iran, however, never coalesced into a state-in-exile, despite the hopes of resistance party leaders. The changes that occurred among the refugees in Pakistan demonstrate how time and external support contribute to the formation of a state-in-exile.

The refugees fled Afghanistan due to their anti-communism, their resentment of foreign rule, the widespread cruelty practiced by the regime, and their adherence to Islam.⁸ The Soviets and their Afghan allies conducted numerous massacres in villages as a warning against supporting the rebels.⁹ These massacres had demonstration effects that

⁷ Kerry M. Connor, “The Movement of Afghan Refugees to Peshawar,” in Grant M. Farr and John G. Merriman, *Afghan Resistance*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1987), 168.

⁸ Habibulla Tegey and Margery E. Tegey, “Foreword,” in Farr and Merriman, *Afghan Resistance*, ix.

⁹ For more on the Soviet counter-guerrilla strategy see Benjamin Valentino, “Final Solutions: The Causes of Mass Killing and Genocide,” (Ph.D. diss, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2001), 245-258.

caused thousands to flee. The Soviet forces also conducted massive aerial bombing campaigns.¹⁰ One refugee explained that his family left Afghanistan after Russian bombs killed 500 villagers.¹¹ An analyst concurred:

Given the severity of the fighting, the reluctance to take prisoners, the destruction of innocents through indiscriminate bombing and shelling, the families of the Afghan rebels, the mujahiddin, were put to flight.¹²

Islam provided an additional reason to flee the country. The Qur'an praises those "who leave their homes in the cause of Allah, after suffering oppression." Based on Mohammed's flight from Mecca to Medina in 622 A.D., the Islamic concept of *hijrah* encourages Muslims to leave territory that has been occupied by infidels.¹³

The refugees had strong political leanings against the communist regime. The war that followed the Soviet invasion "became a war in which the absolute majority of the Afghan people began to participate in one way or another."¹⁴ The communist People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) had a few hundred adherents in 1978 and was unrepresentative of the population (e.g. members were atheists). Observers reported widespread willingness among the population to help the resistance: "Throughout the country there is no shortage of willing guides, people who will lend out their horses,

¹⁰ Some charged that the Soviets deliberately attempted to depopulate the country, but this was not the case. American intelligence sources reported: "Charges that the Soviets are deliberately trying to empty the country of the civilian population do not seem to be well founded. The Babrak regime and the Soviets are trying to exploit the refugees as a potentially destabilizing element in Pakistan, but are aware that the enormous refugee population emphasizes the illegitimacy of the Babrak regime. They and the government are trying hard to entice the refugees to return." United States, Department of State, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, "The Afghan Resistance Movement in 1981: Progress, but a Long Way to Go," Secret report by Eliza Van Hollen, Jan. 19, 1982. Digital National Security Archive item number AF01310, 10.

¹¹ "Refugees in Pakistan Clamor for Arms," *New York Times*, July 20, 1980.

¹² Lawrence Ziring, "Buffer States on the Rim of Asia: Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran and the Superpowers," in Hafeez Malik (ed.), *Soviet-American Relations with Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987), 111.

¹³ Shahrani also notes that Mohammed's exile from oppression allowed the formation of a population of refugee-fighters who later reconquered their homeland of Mecca. Qur'an 16:41-42, quoted in Shahrani, "Afghanistan's Muhajirin," 187, 191.

¹⁴ Tegey and Tegey, "Foreword," in Farr and Merriman, *Afghan Resistance*, x.

provide shelter, education and finance, without any coercion.”¹⁵ This indicates that ordinary Afghans were not simply caught in the crossfire, like situational refugees, but had political goals that included the withdrawal of the Soviets. Once in Pakistan, shared anti-communism and adherence to Islam helped the resistance parties consolidate their power among the refugees. In Iran, however, the resistance leaders were not able to capitalize on these shared experiences.

A survey of refugees in Peshawar, Pakistan revealed common reasons for escaping Afghanistan. The reasons given by the refugees suggest a persecuted refugee group with strong political opinions about the conflict. Nearly a quarter of the 771 family heads interviewed left to avoid military conscription into the communist Army. Another twelve percent cited anti-communism as the impetus for flight. Eighteen percent left to avoid prison, harassment, and/or arrest. Nearly 25 percent cited Soviet bombing that threatened their lives and/or livelihood as a cause of flight. Fifteen percent of the respondents admitted being active in the resistance at the time they left Afghanistan.¹⁶

Despite their strong political opinions and goals, the arriving refugees did not constitute a state-in-exile group. The resistance parties were weakly organized at the outset and lacked military capability. As the refugee numbers grew and the international assistance increased, resistance parties amassed supporters and resources.

¹⁵ Roy, *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan*, 159. The reader should bear in mind that the strong sympathy for the resistance among many Western authors may have led to an exaggeration of the mass support for the resistance. For example, the US government enthused “The preeminent source of strength for the resistance movement is the support it receives from the Afghan people, regardless of ethnic group or tribal affiliation.” United States, Department of State, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, “The Afghan Resistance Movement in 1981: Progress, but a Long Way to Go,” Secret report by Eliza Van Hollen, Jan. 19, 1982. Digital National Security Archive item number AF01310, 7.

¹⁶ Kerry M. Connor, “The Movement of Afghan Refugees to Peshawar,” in Farr and Merriman, *Afghan Resistance*, 166-167.

Most of the literature focuses on the formation of the state-in-exile within Pakistan. The two million refugees in Iran receive much less attention for two reasons. The first is that Iran shunned overtures from the international community, refusing offers of international aid. Therefore, aid agencies and external governments knew very little about the situation of the refugees in the early years of the crisis (1979 to 1983). Secondly, the crisis attracted much less attention because it was not militarized. There were no cross-border raids or covert weapons shipments to catch the attention of the international media. Both refugee groups fled Afghanistan for similar reasons, to escape persecution, but once in exile the groups developed very differently.

III. The Superpower Effect: Afghans in Pakistan, 1979 to 1989

Building a State-in-Exile

“The atheist forces invaded our country, destroyed our mosques, killed our children and started teaching communism in the schools...for the sake of our religion we migrated. We now swear that we will fight until we eliminate the very germ of communism from our country.”

--Resistance leader to refugees, 1982¹⁷

At the time of the Soviet invasion in December 1979, around 300,000 Afghan refugees lived in Pakistan. A year later, Pakistan reported 1.5 million Afghan refugees and by 1981, the figure was nearly two million. The refugees fled to the Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP) and Baluchistan, poor regions bordering Afghanistan. These mostly Pushtun refugees shared ethnic ties with local Pakistanis.¹⁸ The early arrivals to Pakistan

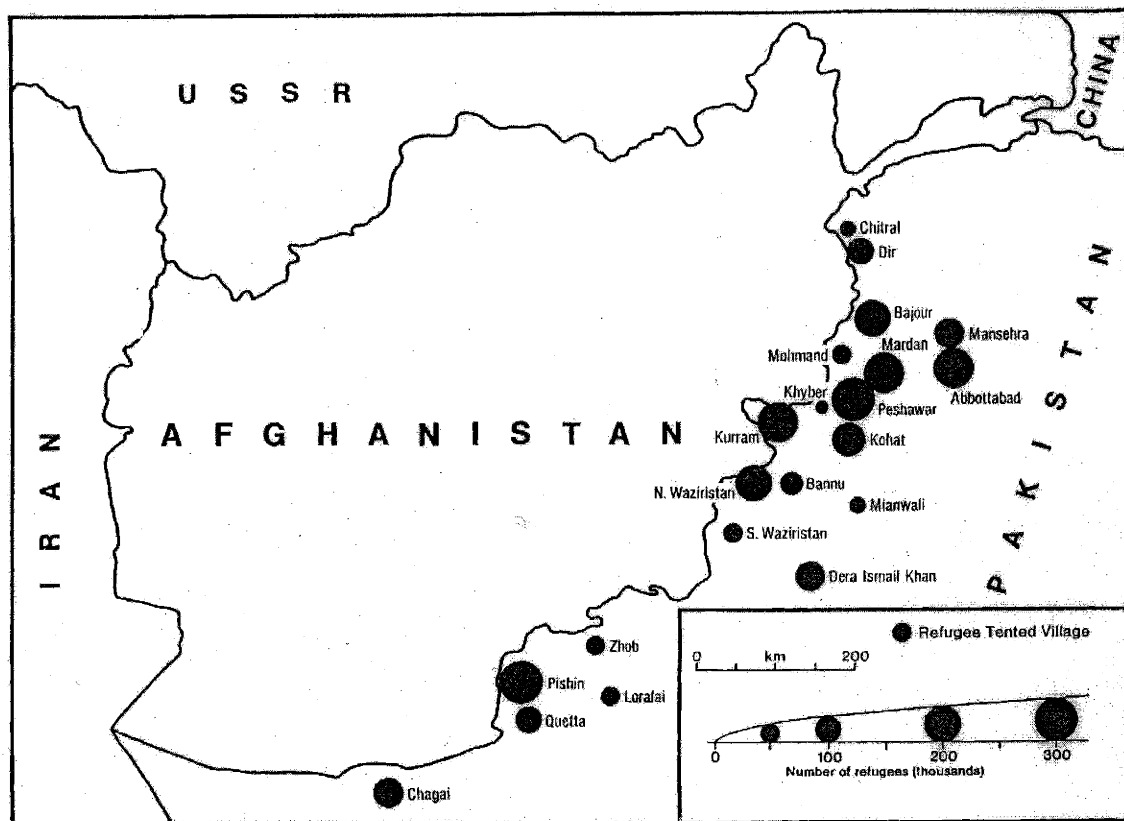
¹⁷ Mujahideen speech quoted in William K. Stevens, “Whose Side is Time on This Time?” *The New York Times*, Oct. 3, 1982.

¹⁸ Non-Pushtun refugees tended to go to Sind or Punjab provinces. The educated elite generally fled to Europe or the United States and did not become involved in the resistance movement.

lived in tent cities on the border, called “refugee tented villages.” Over time, these developed into mud brick structures of more permanence. As of 1987, there were 312 refugee tented villages (although most refugees no longer lived in tents) in Pakistan, the vast majority in the Northwest Frontier Province (See Map 5.1). At its peak in the mid to late 1980s, the refugee population in Pakistan was around three million.¹⁹

Map 5.1

Refugee Tented Villages in Pakistan²⁰



¹⁹ The size of the refugee population in Pakistan was the subject of much debate. Both refugees and the Pakistan government had incentives to exaggerate the size of the population in order to increase aid donations. An undetermined number of refugees exaggerated their family size or registered twice. A United States Embassy cable noted that “the reliability of data on registered refugees is open to some doubt” and concluded that the “bottom line is that nobody knows.” United States Embassy, Pakistan, “Afghan Refugee Situation in Pakistan’s Northwest Frontier Province,” (Apr. 23, 1981), confidential cable by Barrington King, Digital National Security Archive item number AF01170, pars. 5 and 7. See also, Nancy Hatch Dupree, “The Demography of Afghan Refugees in Pakistan,” In Hafeez Malik (ed.), *Soviet-American Relations with Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan*, (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1987), 366-394.

²⁰ Ewan W. Anderson, “Afghan Refugees: The Geopolitical Context.” Paper presented at the Fourth International Conference, Refugees in the Islamic World. Bellagio, Italy, Oct.11-16, 1987.

The Afghan resistance parties that existed in 1979 were too weak and disorganized to constitute a state-in-exile. The development of a state-in-exile out of the persecuted refugee group emerged over time, and with significant external support. When the Soviets invaded in December 1979, “the Mujaheddin commanders, who were to gain such prominence in the future, were still confined to remote mountain regions.”²¹ The refugee crisis provided a fertile ground for the Mujahideen parties to expand their influence in the relative security of Pakistan. When the refugees entered in 1979-1982, many had no previous contact with the political parties. As the refugees registered for assistance, party activists enlisted them as members. The parties stressed the idea of *jihad* (holy war), which “brought to the forefront feelings of identity of purpose and unity amongst members of the resistance.”²²

The refugee crisis provided the necessary opportunity to create a viable resistance movement: “One of the main advantages for Afghan opposition parties of a center in exile—not Peshawar alone but in Quetta, in Delhi, and in Iranian towns like Tehran, Meshed, Qum—is freedom to organize, instead of persecution (or worse) in Afghanistan.”²³ In 1978 and 1979 political parties started establishing headquarters in Peshawar. “The advent of political party control over the jihad essentially coincided with the Soviet decision to invade Afghanistan to bolster its disintegrating client regime.”²⁴ By 1980, over 20 parties were active in Peshawar and Quetta.²⁵ Pakistan recognized only 6 of these (7 by 1981). In 1979 the parties had low levels of external support and thus few

²¹Roy, *The Lessons of the Soviet/Afghan War*, 16.

²²Roy, *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan*, 110.

²³Anthony Hyman, *Afghanistan Under Soviet Domination, 1964-83*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982), 133-134.

²⁴David Busby Edwards, “The Origins of the Anti-Soviet Jihad,” In Farr and Merriman, 44.

²⁵Edward Girardet, *Afghanistan The Soviet War*, (London: Croom Helm, 1985), 167.

resources to provide to the guerrillas. This quickly changed after the Soviet invasion in December 1979.

The coalescing event of communist persecution made recruitment much easier for the Mujahideen parties. The resistance leaders openly enlisted members and sought popular support in the camps based on the unifying factors of Islam and anti-communism. Support for the Mujahideen struggle was reflected in many aspects of camp life. Refugee education included chants of anti-Russian slogans and weapons training for children as young as nine years old.²⁶ Over the first months of the crisis, the rebels developed more polished methods of raising political awareness among refugees as they attempted to “keep the feelings of the anti-communist Jihad (holy war) alive.”²⁷

The formation of the state-in-exile, i.e. the consolidation of the resistance parties and their control of resources, discouraged return to Afghanistan. That attitude separated the Afghan refugees from persecuted or situational refugee groups, which have a much lower threshold of demands for return. The Afghan refugee delegation to a 1987 conference on their plight “was adamant that the vast majority of refugees would return willingly to their homeland—but on their own terms, not on conditions imposed by others.”²⁸ At the same conference, a member of the Cultural Council of Afghanistan Resistance outlined the conditions for refugee return. The conditions included a complete Soviet withdrawal and the formation of a non-communist government in Kabul. The resistance representative claimed that virtually all the refugees would refuse to return

²⁶ Stevens, “Whose Side is Time on This Time?”

²⁷ Edward, Giradet, “Afghan Refugees: The Palestinians of Asia?” *The Christian Science Monitor*, July 9, 1982.

²⁸ *The Crisis of Migration from Afghanistan: Domestic and Foreign Implications*, Summary of proceedings of an international symposium, Report from the Afghan delegation, (Oxford: Oxford University Refugee Studies Programme and Department of Ethnology and Prehistory, 29 March- 2 April 1987), 12.

before a Soviet withdrawal.²⁹ Confirming the political motivation of the refugees, one commentator explained:

By and large market mechanism and monetary incentives are not the dominant factors determining the Afghan code of behavior...The decision to return or to continue to live in the refugee villages are collectively deliberated and factors such as security, the availability of food and the prevalent political situation are important determinants in decision making.³⁰

For the Afghan refugees, a cessation of hostilities or amnesty program would not induce them to return. The refugees demanded a complete victory over the communist government.

Pakistan recognized seven of the resistance parties and funneled resources to those deemed most useful to Pakistan's aims (See Appendix 1). Thus, the Islamic fundamentalist parties won more support than the traditionalists or westernized groups. The fundamentalist *Hizb-i-Islami* party, led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, received the most military assistance from Pakistan. Hekmatyar had a strong following among the refugees and was infamous for his attacks against competing resistance groups. Another strong fundamentalist party was *Jamiat-i-Islami*, led by Burhanuddin Rabbani. The resistance parties "played important roles in the RTV [refugee tented village] councils and administration of community affairs."³¹

²⁹ Sabahuddin Kushkaki, "The Afghan Refugees: Threats Against Their Physical and Spiritual Survival," Paper delivered at the international symposium on The Crisis of Migration from Afghanistan: Domestic and Foreign Implications. (Oxford: Oxford University Refugee Studies Programme and Department of Ethnology and Prehistory, 29 March- 2 April 1987).

³⁰ Gowher Rizvi, "The Afghan Refugees: Hostages in the Struggle for Power," *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 3, 3 (1990), 259.

³¹ Shahrani, M. Nazif, "Afghanistan's Muhajirin (Muslim "Refugee-Warriors"): Politics of Mistrust and Distrust of Politics," in E. Valentine Daniel and John Chr. Knudsen, *Mistrusting Refugees*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 198.

Like all of Afghan politics, the resistance movement was deeply divided. The parties split along differences in ethnicity, religion, and clan.³² A main split was along the lines of traditionalists versus Islamic fundamentalists. There were also rifts between the parties in exile and the guerrillas based within Afghanistan. The Peshawar parties tried to form an alliance but it immediately crumbled and was formally dissolved in 1981. One study noted “many of the political parties seem to be expending most of their energy bickering and fighting each other and are riven with corruption and nepotism.”³³ In May 1985, the seven main rebel groups in Peshawar formed an alliance, the Islamic Unity of Afghan Mujahideen, at the urging of Pakistan and other donors, especially the Saudis. The unity was extremely tenuous and did not merge the groups financially or militarily. However, the Soviets were unable to capitalize on the divisions within the resistance.

The Afghan refugees arrived in Pakistan with the motivation, but not the capability, to become a state-in-exile. Embryonic political parties were already present and the persecuted population was ripe for recruitment. The infusion of external support—political, military, and humanitarian—enabled the transformation of a persecuted refugee group into a state-in-exile. The Mujahideen then launched a guerrilla war, with widespread popular support, to oust the Soviets and install an Islamic government in Afghanistan.

³² The largest ethnic group is the Pushtun group, which has two major competing tribal sub-groups—the Durranis and the Ghilzays. Pushtun are mostly Sunni Muslims. Other major ethnic groups include Hazaras (mostly Shi’a), Uzbeks, and Tajiks. The many groups do not share a strong concept of unity or loyalty to the central state.

³³ Alexander Alexiev, “The War in Afghanistan: Soviet Strategy and the State of the Resistance,” *The Rand Paper Series*, (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, Nov. 1984), 6.

Waging War from the Refugee Camps

“[The refugee villages] are part supply bases and clearing stations for the Mujahedeen guerilla fighters, part forward registration point for the UN High Commissioner.”

--Red Cross/Red Crescent, 1987³⁴

“As a safe haven and source of at least minimal food, housing, and medical care for fighters’ families and survivors, camps... are a key-if indirect-underpinning for the Afghan resistance.”

--*Christian Science Monitor*, 1981³⁵

The refugee crisis in Pakistan led to the spread of civil war across the Afghan border. The spread took the form of cross-border attacks perpetrated by the refugees and the Afghan government. These attacks violated Pakistan’s sovereignty and killed its citizens. Despite the high level of violence, the conflict did not escalate to international war between Pakistan and the Soviet Union. Pakistan limited the spread of conflict in order to protect its own security interests and maintain a firm grip on the Afghan rebel parties.

The refugees were indispensable to the Mujahideen war strategy. Compared to the dangerous situation in Afghanistan, the refugee camps provided a safe haven for fighters and civilians: “By-and-large, the vast majority of Afghans in Pakistan face a security environment roughly on par with that of the indigenous population and in many ways vastly improved over the situation in Afghanistan.”³⁶ The refugee crisis enabled the development of a state-in-exile and expanded the conflict across the border as refugees and fighters freely mixed. In 1982, one journalist reported:

³⁴ George Reid, “The Afghan Refugees, Seven Years of Exile,” *Red Cross, Red Crescent*, (Jan 1987), 24.

³⁵ Carol Honsa, “Inside a Pakistani Camp for Afghan Refugees,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, Dec. 9, 1981.

³⁶ Randolph Martin, “Regional Dynamics and the Security of Afghan Refugees in Pakistan,” Paper prepared for a workshop on security in refugee populated areas, MIT, Cambridge, MA. Oct. 29-30, 1999, 6.

Similar to dozens of other camps and villages along Pakistan's 1,400-mile border with Afghanistan, Terimangal serves as both temporary haven for refugees fleeing the war-and launching point for Afghan resistance supply convoys.³⁷

The resistance parties presented a serious security threat to the Afghan regime. Mujahideen activities included commando raids into Afghanistan to strike government targets and resupply the local resistance fighters. Nearly all refugee men spent time with one or another of the resistance parties fighting in Afghanistan. Mujahideen activities prevented the Soviets from controlling the countryside. The Mujahideen brought "dozens" of Soviet prisoners of war into Pakistan, which made the Pakistan government fearful of Soviet reprisals.³⁸

The border between Afghanistan and Pakistan was ideal for guerilla warfare. The border is 1300 km and includes over 300 mountain passes. Called the Durand Line, it was drawn by the British in 1893. Physically, it is virtually impossible to police. In addition, the Pushtun ethnic group straddles the border and has traditionally ignored its existence.

Over the course of the war, the Soviet-backed Afghan regime conducted hundreds of cross-border attacks and violations of Pakistani airspace. Numerous sources report helicopter gunship attacks on UNHCR recognized refugee camps.³⁹ For example, in November 1980, the United States mission to the United Nations reported "the serious escalation of provocative actions from the Afghanistan side along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border." The report detailed three helicopter gunship attacks in two months,

³⁷ Giradet, "Afghan Refugees: The Palestinians of Asia?"

³⁸ Anthony Hyman, "The Afghan Politics of Exile," *Third World Quarterly*, 9, 1 (Jan 1987), 75.

³⁹ For reports on attacks not detailed here, see United States Embassy, Pakistan. "Helicopter Gunships Strafe Afghan Refugee Camp in Pakistan," (Oct. 25, 1980), confidential cable by Arthur W. Hummel, Jr. Digital National Security Archive item number AF01065; Department of State, United States Embassy, Pakistan, "Afghan Helicopters Attack Refugee Areas in Pakistan," (Nov. 18, 1981) cable by Ronald Spiers, Digital National Security Archive item number AF01294; Department of State, United States Embassy, Pakistan, "Report of New DRA Gunship Attacks on Afghan Refugees in Pakistan," (Dec. 21, 1981) cable by Ronald Spiers, Digital National Security Archive item number AF01303.

one of which occurred “well inside the Pakistan territory.”⁴⁰ In 1984, air attacks against frontier towns and refugee camps in Pakistan killed more than 100 people. There were 62 reported violations of Pakistan territory and 459 violation of airspace by Afghan/Soviet soldiers and aircraft, respectively.⁴¹ In 1986, a US National Security Council secret memo noted “The Soviets are increasing the frequency of their cross-border strikes into Pakistan, and occasionally Iran, while inciting a terror campaign in Pakistan.”⁴²

The Soviets also infiltrated the refugee areas as spies and terrorists. In one incident early in the conflict a mysterious bomb destroyed a house used by the fundamentalist group *Jamiat-e-Islam*.⁴³ In later instances, terrorist attacks in urban centers led to Pakistani crackdowns on Mujahideen activity.

Pakistan—A Complicit Receiving State

“The host governments of Pakistan and Iran have had considerable potential for leverage over the Afghan parties based in their countries.”⁴⁴

A complex web of humanitarian, political, and military goals influenced Pakistan’s response to the Afghan refugees.⁴⁵ Pakistan generously allowed millions of refugees into

⁴⁰ United States, Mission to the United Nations, “Pakistan Submits Formal Note to Secretary General on Raids,” (Nov. 8, 1980), cable by Donald McHenry. Digital National Security Archive item number AF01077, par. 2.

⁴¹ Hasan-Askari Razvi, “Afghan Refugees in Pakistan: Influx, Humanitarian Assistance and Implications,” *Pakistan Horizon*, 37, 1 (1984), 55.

⁴² United States, National Security Council “US-Iran Dialogue,” (May 26, 1986), memorandum of conversation by Howard J. Teicher, Digital National Security Archive item number AF01712.

⁴³ It is possible that this particular attack could have been the work of a rival resistance party, especially *Hizb-i-Islami*. Edward Giradet, “Afghan Violence Spilling Over into Neighboring Pakistan?” *The Christian Science Monitor*, May 7, 1980.

⁴⁴ Hyman, “The Afghan Politics of Exile,” 74.

⁴⁵ It is important to note that the government response was not monolithic. Opponents of President Zia’s regime resented how the refugee crisis boosted his international standing. They also felt the refugees introduced instability into Pakistani politics. See *The Crisis of Migration from Afghanistan: Domestic and Foreign Implications*, Summary of proceedings of an international symposium, Report from the Pakistani

the country and, with international assistance, provided adequate care for them. In addition to humanitarian aid, the government of Pakistan offered safe haven and military assistance to the anti-communist resistance groups. Ties of religion, ethnicity, and culture encouraged the Pakistan's sympathetic response toward the refugees. One Pakistani administrator explained, "We are all Pathans...Our customs, religion, and traditions are the same."⁴⁶ Those ties were tempered by the geopolitical realities of the situation, however. Throughout the crisis, Pakistan walked a fine line between aiding the Islamic rebels and preventing a large-scale Soviet counter-attack. Despite common ties between refugees and locals, the refugees also threatened Pakistan's domestic stability (even while they strengthened its influence abroad).

Pakistan's refugee policy allowed the Mujahideen parties to rule the refugees, as long as the resistance activities did not threaten Pakistani interests. As refugees entered the country, they registered in a UNHCR-run refugee tented village in order to receive assistance. In reality, this meant registering as a supporter of one of the seven dominant resistance parties, since they controlled the refugee villages. Pakistan took a stance of non-interference in internal Afghan refugee affairs and ignored the parties' squashing of any dissent. As one Pakistani official warned, however, "if [refugees] start introducing bloodshed into the bazaar, then let me assure you, we will crack down hard."⁴⁷

Even if it had wanted to, Pakistan did not have the capability to control the Afghan border, which included 320 mountain passes. As President Zia explained to the

delegation, (Oxford: Oxford University Refugee Studies Programme and Department of Ethnology and Prehistory, 29 March- 2 April 1987), 10.

⁴⁶Camp administrator quoted in Carol Honsa, "Inside a Pakistani Camp for Afghan Refugees," *The Christian Science Monitor*, Dec. 9, 1981. In Pakistan the term Pathan is analogous to the term Pushtun in Afghanistan.

⁴⁷ Edward Giradet, "Afghan Violence Spilling Over into Neighboring Pakistan?" *The Christian Science Monitor*, May 7, 1980.

Soviets, sealing the border was “physically impossible” for the Pakistan government. Rather than police the Afghan rebel activity, the government focused on preventing the infiltration of weapons intended for Pakistani dissident groups. Pakistan also would not have been able to fend off a full-scale Soviet assault, which is why President Zia ensured that rebel activity did not provoke the Soviets to invade Pakistan.⁴⁸

Regional politics greatly influenced Pakistan’s actions. Pakistan needed a friendly government in Afghanistan in order to strengthen its position in the region. By bolstering the Mujahideen, Pakistan wanted to increase its influence vis à vis India, more so than against Moscow. Pakistan focused support on the Sunni resistance parties rather the Shi’a parties, because a Shi’a dominated Afghanistan would lean toward Shi’a Iran. Pakistan’s ultimate goal was to establish a “Muslim belt south of the Soviet Union under Pakistani influence.”⁴⁹ Helping a Muslim nation in distress also bolstered Zia’s prestige in the Muslim world.

Despite its goals for creating a friendly (and pliable) Afghanistan, Pakistan limited the military activities of the Mujahideen resistance parties. Pakistan maintained an uneasy balance between supporting the resistance and avoiding significant Soviet retaliation. Pakistan feared direct confrontation with the Soviets and also the Soviets’ ability to support dissidents and ethnic quarrels within Pakistan. The Soviet strategy was to “intimidate Pakistan into curtailing support for the resistance and eventually denying it the sanctuaries on Pakistani territory that are vital for its operations.”⁵⁰

Soviet threats succeeded to the extent that Pakistan limited Mujahideen activity. Zia required arms flows to be covert and restricted the type and amount of weapons so as

⁴⁸ Giradet, “Afghan Refugees: The Palestinians of Asia?”

⁴⁹ Roy, *The Lessons of the Soviet/Afghan War*, 40.

⁵⁰ Alexiev, “The War in Afghanistan: Soviet Strategy and the State of the Resistance,” 4.

not to provoke the USSR. Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate (ISI) completely controlled the distribution of the arms. Pakistan also controlled the political activity of the resistance parties (e.g. press conferences, etc.). Soviet pressure, in the form of terrorist bombings in urban centers, caused Pakistan to order the resistance parties to move their headquarters out of Peshawar in 1984.

Domestically, the influx of hundreds of thousands of Afghan Pushtun refugees threatened to destabilize ethnic politics in Pakistan. Even before the refugee crisis, there had been tension between the Pushtun (usually called Pathans in Pakistan) in the western provinces and the central government, including talk of a separate Pushtunistan. The government needed to prevent the formation of a pan-Pushtun alliance that threatened its sovereignty. "The Pakistanis were obsessed with the fear that the resistance might develop in the same way as the Palestinian groups had done, enjoying the support of millions of refugees."⁵¹ Pushtun refugees also exacerbated ethnic tensions between local Pathans and Baluchis. Despite this, the government dared not alienate its Pushtun citizens by disregarding the plight of the Afghan Pushtun refugees. To avoid the emergence of a strong nationalistic Pushtun resistance movement, the Pakistan government found it useful to keep the resistance parties squabbling and divided.

In addition to the Pushtun issue, the refugee crisis threatened Zia's regime by stoking discontent among Pakistanis. Local residents in the refugee populated areas expressed resentment of the services provided to the refugees. The refugees were seen as economic burdens and as competition in commerce and employment. Because Afghans received UNHCR assistance, they could work for lower wages than local Pakistanis. Refugees were active in the transportation industry, the arms trade and in smuggling

⁵¹ Roy, *Islam and Resistance*, 122.

goods and drugs. Refugees also brought three million livestock with them into Pakistan. Locals observed not only the refugees' material benefits but also their ability to express themselves through political parties. The example set by the Mujahideen parties led to Pakistani protests against Zia's dictatorship and demands for the right to form political parties. After that, Zia pressured the refugee parties to keep a lower profile. Despite the tensions, however, there were remarkably few violent incidents between refugees and locals.⁵²

Humanitarian Infrastructure of the State-in-Exile

"WFP [World Food Programme] takes the lead from donor governments, and if the donors and the [government of Pakistan] aren't worried about the workings of the food distribution mechanism, including possible diversion, the WFP will not modify its own program."

--WFP official to Pakistani official, 1983⁵³

"Perhaps more clearly than in other refugee situations, the humanitarian and political dimensions of the Afghan refugee situation were mutually reinforcing."⁵⁴

The humanitarian organizations in Pakistan provided the infrastructure of the Mujahideen state-in-exile. This suited the purposes of the Pakistan government, the Mujahideen parties, and the anti-communist external donors. International assistance allowed the resistance parties to focus their resources on making war in Afghanistan, rather than

⁵² The US State Department reported "There have been several incidents between refugees and local population in the NWFP this year, but what is remarkable is how few there have been." United States Department of State, "Afghan Refugee Situation—An Overview," (Dec. 9, 1982), confidential cable, Digital National Security Archive item number AF01408, par. 16.

⁵³ Comment reported in Department of State, United States Embassy, Pakistan, "Visit of WFP Emergency Unit Director to Pakistan," (Sept. 2, 1983), cable by Barrington King, Digital National Security Archive item number AF01494, par. 7.

⁵⁴ Aristide Zolberg, et. al, *Escape from Violence*, 1989. Quoted in Susanne Schmeidl, "(Human) Security Dilemmas: Long-term Implications of the Afghan Refugee Crisis," *Third World Quarterly*, 23, 1 (Feb. 2002), 20.

providing goods and services for the refugee population. The assistance clearly benefited the anti-communist rebels and their supporters.

International humanitarian organizations were extremely active in providing assistance to the refugees. By 1983 seventeen registered private voluntary organizations worked with the refugees, spending millions of dollars on food, healthcare, shelter and other necessities.⁵⁵ This jumped to over sixty international NGOs by the late 1980s. Throughout the crisis, UNHCR played the lead role among the humanitarian organizations. In 1982, UNHCR spent \$77 million in Pakistan, supplying tents, health care, clothes, water, fuel, and supplementary food (tea and sugar).⁵⁶

The government of Pakistan directed the activities of the humanitarian organizations and the Mujahideen parties in order to make the most advantageous use of the aid. Refugees were required to register in refugee villages before receiving UNHCR and government assistance. Pakistan allowed the Mujahideen parties to distribute aid in many camps. This contributed to the misappropriation of aid and exaggeration of population numbers. When they distributed aid to new arrivals they also registered them with the party and recruited fighters for the resistance.

Aid organizations generally seemed unconcerned by the politicization and militarization of the crisis, which clearly contravened international law regarding the civilian and neutral character of refugee camps. Strong sympathy for the refugees as resisters of a communist, anti-Islamic regime prevailed among the donors, the Pakistani officials, and the humanitarian organizations. Contravening their own principles, “many

⁵⁵ Ralph H. Magnus, “Humanitarian Response to an Inhuman Strategy,” in Farr and Merriman, *Afghan Resistance*, 205.

⁵⁶ World Food Programme (WFP) played the primary role in coordinating food aid. For statistics, see Department of State, “Afghan Refugee Situation—An Overview,” par. 10.

of the aid agencies operated with little or no pretense of neutrality.”⁵⁷ One Western advocate for the refugees asserted that it was impossible to distinguish between a man’s dual role as refugee in Pakistan and rebel in Afghanistan because nearly all refugee men periodically crossed the border to fight in the *jihād*. Thus, she argued, “to strike such persons off the registration lists [for humanitarian aid] would, in my opinion, be unjust.”⁵⁸

Observers generally considered the Afghan refugee program a model operation and made no mention of the extensive militarization of the population. Edward Giradet rhapsodized “As one of the largest relief operations since the end of World War II, the Afghan refugee situation in Pakistan appears to be among the best managed...Considering its size, there have been surprisingly few major problems.”⁵⁹ A World Food Programme official noted, “there have been only minimal law and order problems among the refugees.”⁶⁰ Obviously, these observers did not classify the spread of the Afghan conflict as a problem.

The fact that humanitarian assistance poured resources into Pakistan, and basically ignored Afghans in Afghanistan, bears some responsibility for the size and duration of the refugee crisis. Logistically and politically it was more difficult to serve the needy within Afghanistan. One critic scathingly suggested:

It would perhaps not be unfair to suggest that some of these organizations [NGOs] have developed an institutional stake in the continuing presence of the Afghans in Pakistan and may not relish the prospect of Afghans leaving Pakistan...The continuation of NGO ‘services’ and ‘facilities’ inside Pakistan, albeit quite

⁵⁷ Martin, “Regional Dynamics and the Security of Afghan Refugees in Pakistan,” 4.

⁵⁸ Nancy Hatch Dupree, “The Demography of Afghan Refugees,” 371.

⁵⁹ Giradet, *Afghanistan The Soviet War*, 205.

⁶⁰ Department of State, United States Embassy, Pakistan, “Visit of WFP Emergency Unit Director to Pakistan,” (Sept. 2, 1983) cable by Barrington King, Digital National Security Archive item number AF01494, par. 4.

unintentionally, has the effect of rewarding those who opt to stay in Pakistan and, by implication, deprive such opportunities to those who return home.⁶¹

The incentives of the refugee assistance program encouraged large, long-term refugee flows that sustained the NGOs, as well as the refugees.

Superpower Politics

“Assistance to the refugees serves important US interests in the region—including stability in Pakistan, assurance of continuity for [Pakistan’s] role in giving haven to the refugees, and the viability of the resistance in Afghanistan.”

--United States Department of State, 1982⁶²

For the United States, the Soviet offensive in Afghanistan threatened the policy of containment of communism, and also the free flow of oil to the West. American leaders feared the invasion signaled the global expansionist aims of the USSR. President Carter’s initial response included an Olympic boycott, suspension of SALT II arms control talks and some trade embargos. The Carter administration cancelled seventeen million tons of grain sales and reduced Soviet fishing quotas. The Reagan administration took a more activist stance regarding Afghanistan. President Reagan, unlike Carter, wanted to “roll-back” Soviet influence, not merely contain it. In India, Jeanne Kirkpatrick, American ambassador to the United Nations, explained the United States position:

What India calls rearming of Pakistan in a way that raised tensions, we call helping Pakistan as it confronts the problem of refugees and the Soviet presence on its border.⁶³

⁶¹ Rizvi, “The Afghan Refugees: Hostages in the Struggle for Power,” 255.

⁶² Department of State, “Afghan Refugee Situation—An Overview,” par. 18.

⁶³ Quoted in Michael T. Kaufman, “Mrs. Kirkpatrick Defends Arms for Pakistan,” *The New York Times*, Aug. 25, 1981.

The United States wanted to ensure that Pakistan was strong enough, economically and militarily, to withstand Soviet pressure.

American support for the Mujahideen greatly increased in 1984. Up until 1984 United States had given over \$350 million for Afghan refugee relief, much of it via UNHCR and WFP.⁶⁴ In 1985, the Reagan administration budgeted \$470 million in military aid for fiscal year 1986 and \$630 million for 1987.⁶⁵ This military assistance was channeled through Pakistan and the Pakistan Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate (ISI) distributed it to the resistance parties as it saw fit. In practice, this meant that the fundamentalist parties received the bulk of the aid, not pro-Western parties. The militarization was not seen as a problem relative to aiding the refugees. One State department official cabled back in an overview of refugee relief that “the refugee situation in Pakistan is being relatively well handled.”⁶⁶

Until 1985, America took great pains to hide its direct involvement in Afghanistan; this was the policy of “plausible deniability.” Pakistan and the US wanted to avoid triggering a massive Soviet retaliation against Pakistan for its support of the resistance. The weapons provided to the Mujahideen were Soviet-made or Soviet-designed (produced in Egypt, China and other countries). Despite the concealment, American involvement was something of an open secret. In Washington, the program was known as “covert overt” by the mid to late 1980s.⁶⁷ Plausible deniability was not an option after the provision of American-made Stinger missiles in 1986.

⁶⁴ Craig Karp, “Afghan Resistance and Soviet Occupation,” United States Department of State, Special Report No. 118, Dec. 1984.

⁶⁵ Roy, *The Lessons of the Soviet/Afghan War*, 35.

⁶⁶ Department of State, “Afghan Refugee Situation—An Overview,” par. 4.

⁶⁷ Selig Harrison, “US Policy Toward Afghanistan,” Transcription of paper delivered at the international symposium on The Crisis of Migration from Afghanistan: Domestic and Foreign Implications. (Oxford:

American opinion about its Afghanistan policy was not monolithic. One analyst noted in 1987 that "the institutional ideological differences among various departments of the government and the Congress are creating policy problems that will be difficult to undo in the long run."⁶⁸ One faction, anti-communist and anti-arms control, pushed for more assistance to the resistance. This was characterized as the "Bleeder" view because it would bleed the Soviets dry. Other factions wanted to limit the assistance both to cooperate with Pakistan's wishes and to further plausible deniability. In the end the "Bleeder" view dominated US policy decisions.

An odd aspect of Western support for the Mujahideen was the romanticization of Afghan, especially Pushtun, culture.⁶⁹ During the 1980s many Western authors idealized the Mujahideen, presenting glowing portraits of their purity and courage. During his travels among the Afghans in the 1980s, Robert Kaplan claimed:

More than any other single factor, it was [the Pushtuns] harsh and unforgiving tribal culture, free of subtleties and introspection and unaffected by the modern world that defeated the mines and other weapons of the Soviet invaders.⁷⁰

One author described a Pushtun "ethnic" characteristic as "bravery or zeal expressed in the pursuit of one's objectives of self-identity." He hypothesized that "this cultural

Oxford University Refugee Studies Programme and Department of Ethnology and Prehistory, 29 March- 2 April 1987).

⁶⁸ Sultan A. Aziz, "Leadership Dilemmas: Challenges and Responses," In Farr and Merriman, 69.

⁶⁹ The Pushtun code of conduct is called *Pushtunwali* and has three elements: hospitality, refuge, and revenge. *Pushtunwali* also stresses the preservation of women's honor through seclusion from non-family members.

⁷⁰ In another passage Kaplan further romanticizes the Pushtun Mujahideen: "There was a reassuring clarity about them. Sometimes while I was talking and sipping cups of green tea with the mujahidin, their eyes would appear so instantly recognizable to me that I thought they could have been those of my childhood friends." Robert Kaplan, *Soldiers of God: With Islamic Warriors in Afghanistan and Pakistan*, (New York: Vintage Books 2001, 3rd edition), quotes p. 22, 8.

characteristic that has imbued the Afghan resistance with the vigour which proved such a formidable obstacle to Soviet intervention.”⁷¹

Socioeconomic Explanations

“The most essential needs of most of the refugees have been satisfied, and starvation, epidemics, and large-scale public disorder have been avoided.”

--United States Department of State⁷²

“The money is not so important...What we need is anti-aircraft guns.”

--Refugee men, Jamrud camp, 1980⁷³

Socioeconomic explanations do not account for the high levels of support for the Mujahideen. These explanations for militarization of refugee populations hold that large camps and camps near the border will lead to political violence. Another explanation is that poor living conditions will predispose the refugees toward military activity. Refugees (especially young men) will be easily recruited by promises of food and other material incentives. Considering the high level of military activity in the Pakistan camps, the socioeconomic explanations would predict large border camps with an excess of young men and poor living conditions. However, the evidence from Pakistan contradicts most of the socioeconomic explanations. The camps were not large by UNHCR standards; there were fewer than normal young men, and the living conditions compared favorably with other refugee situations and the conditions in Afghanistan. In fact, political incentives better explain the activities of the resistance.

⁷¹Tom Rogers, “Harbouring Instability: Pakistan and the Displacement of Afghans,” In K.M. de Silva and R.J. May (eds.), *Internationalization of Ethnic Conflict*, (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1991), 63.

⁷²Department of State, “Afghan Refugee Situation—An Overview,” par. 3.

⁷³Quoted in “Refugees in Pakistan Clamor for Arms,” *New York Times*, July 20, 1980.

It is difficult to assess the role of camp location in Pakistan. Most of the camps were near the Pakistan/Afghanistan border, but not necessarily within walking distance. The locations varied from a few kilometers to well over 100 kilometers from the Afghan border. One expert claims that the levels of military activity did not correlate with the distance of the camp from the border since virtually all the camps were within striking distance of Soviet planes.⁷⁴ A counter argument is that the camp location favored the Mujahideen, which relied on ground transport to cross the border. Considering the pattern of fighting, in which rebels alternated between living in refugee camps and infiltrating Afghanistan, "the effect therefore of the position of the camps...and the activities which this facilitated was to effectively extend the zone of the war."⁷⁵

There was clearly a strategic element to the camp location in the border provinces. Pakistan did not want to move the camps because there was not enough public land available. The refugees also did not want to move further away from the border. One elderly refugee, wounded in battle and waiting for new weapons, explained, "we want to live here, as close as possible to our country."⁷⁶ In addition, refugees and rebels often crossed the border to tend their farms back in Afghanistan. For Pakistan to move the camps would have signaled unwillingness to aid the Mujahideen in their struggle. Thus, the location of the camps may have had a significant impact on the spread of violence, but the location was also intertwined in the political context of the crisis.

The size of the refugee tented villages (RTVs) varied widely, despite Pakistan's directive that they should not exceed 5,000 persons. The RTVs ranged in size from 5,000

⁷⁴ Randolph Martin, International Rescue Committee, personal communication to the author, Oct. 30, 1999.

⁷⁵ Ewan W. Anderson, "Afghan Refugees: The Geopolitical Context," Paper presented at the Fourth International Conference, Refugees in the Islamic World. Bellagio, Italy, Oct.11-16, 1987, 31.

⁷⁶ Quoted in William Branigin, "Afghan Refugees Stay Close to the Border," *The Washington Post*, Jan. 30, 1980.

people to over 120,000.⁷⁷ Most of the settlements clustered between 30,000 and 50,000 refugees.⁷⁸ Relative to the massive camps deployed by UNHCR (such as those in Goma, Zaire that housed hundreds of thousands), the RTVs' size should not have presented a problem. The camps did not approximate overcrowded, urban areas, although they were more cramped than traditional Afghan living conditions. In general, the size of the refugee settlements seems to have played no role in the militarization and cross-border attacks.

Poor living conditions in camps also cannot explain why so many men joined the resistance. In fact, refugees' living conditions were better relative to their past situation in Afghanistan and also were not worse than the local residents in Pakistan. "A large number amongst the poorest refugees are better-off in Pakistan as compared with their position in Afghanistan."⁷⁹ Another observer concurred: "However economically underdeveloped these areas [NWFP and Baluchistan] may be, they offer considerably more than the bordering provinces of Afghanistan, even before the war."⁸⁰ Refugees usually built mud/brick huts for their families after their initial stay in UNHCR-provided tents.⁸¹ The settlement pattern in the villages was open and similar to Pakistani villages.⁸² Thus, it does not seem likely that refugees supported the rebels out of desperation to improve their living conditions.

⁷⁷ U.S. Committee for Refugees, *World Refugee Survey-1987 in Review*, (Washington, DC: USCR, 1988), 18.

⁷⁸ Nancy Hatch Dupree, "The Demography of Afghan Refugees," 381-382.

⁷⁹ Hasan-Askari Razvi, "Afghan Refugees in Pakistan: Influx, Humanitarian Assistance and Implications," *Pakistan Horizon*, 37, 1 (1984), 57.

⁸⁰ Martin, "Regional Dynamics and the Security of Afghan Refugees in Pakistan," 2.

⁸¹ The camp population was mostly of rural, lower class origins. Wealthy refugees tended to migrate to urban areas or Western countries.

⁸² However, living quarters were much more cramped than before the war in Afghanistan. This mainly affected women, who were forced into seclusion by the proximity of so many non-relatives.

Rates of infant mortality and malnutrition among the refugees were better than those in Afghanistan both before and during the war.⁸³ Statistics compiled by a relief worker revealed the refugees' health conditions to be relatively good: "the physical health of women and children in the refugee camps in Pakistan is not only better than it was in Afghanistan, but also better than the surrounding Pakistani villages."⁸⁴ Despite unreliable rations, the refugees developed coping strategies and did not suffer malnutrition. The prescribed official food basket for the refugees included wheat, oil, sugar, tea and dried milk. These often arrived erratically and some (sugar, milk, and tea) were especially hard to come by. Nevertheless, donated food appeared for sale in local markets, apparently sold to generate revenue for the resistance movement.⁸⁵ In addition to donations, refugees found other sources of food. One observer found that "the active Mujahideen, who, like most soldiers, spend only a fraction of their time actually fighting, have taken to planting crops themselves in abandoned areas."⁸⁶ By 1989, surveys of refugees indicated that they were mostly self-sufficient.⁸⁷

Unlike many refugee populations, Afghans enjoyed freedom of movement and employment within the receiving state.⁸⁸ Refugee entrepreneurs competed successfully with the locals in running transport businesses, especially in Peshawar. One survey in

⁸³ *The Crisis of Migration from Afghanistan: Domestic and Foreign Implications*, Summary of proceedings, 5.

⁸⁴ She compared 30% malnutrition in children and 200 infant deaths per 1000 in Afghanistan, to 4% malnourished, and 119 deaths, in the refugee camps. The figures for Pakistan are about 20% malnourishment, and 200 infant deaths." Yameema Mitha, "Decision Makers for the Afghan Crisis," Unpublished report from the Symposium held at the Refugee Studies Programme, Oxford University, March 29-April 2, 1987.

⁸⁵ Kathleen Howard-Merriam, "Afghan Refugee Women and Their Struggle for Survival," in Farr and Merriman, 16.

⁸⁶ Ralph H. Magnus, "Humanitarian Response to an Inhuman Strategy," in Farr and Merriman, 195.

⁸⁷ Allan Findlay, "End of the Cold War: End of Afghan Relief Aid?" In Richard Black and Vaughan Robinson (eds.), *Geography and Refugees*, (London: Belhaven Press, 1993), 193.

⁸⁸ The one restriction on refugee activity was a prohibition on farming, the traditional occupation for most Afghans.

1988 reported that two-thirds of male refugees had employment.⁸⁹ An American diplomat reported: "The GOP [government of Pakistan] has put no legal restrictions on work by Afghans and has encouraged their employment on approved UNHCR projects as a way of keeping the refugees busy and out of trouble."⁹⁰

Contrary to the material incentives explanation for violence, poor living conditions did not induce refugees to support political violence. Compared to life in Afghanistan, local Pakistani villages, and other refugee situations, conditions in the refugee villages were adequate (if not superior). An additional refutation of the material incentives explanation is that life as a Mujahideen fighter was difficult and offered little opportunity for material gain. Fighters did not join in order to enrich themselves from plunder.

One incentive that can blunt violence is a durable solution, such as resettlement abroad. Most Afghan refugees in Pakistan did not have the option of exchanging their refugee status for a more durable solution (i.e. resettlement, peaceful return, or local integration). Neither Pakistan nor the resistance movement favored durable solutions. The rebels clearly understood that long-term solutions would dissipate the influence of the Mujahideen. A representative from the Cultural Council of the Afghanistan Resistance maintained

...As far as the Afghan refugees in Pakistan and Iran is concerned, it is important for them to remain as refugees: They are fighting for their independence and national survival...They are there to fight to return home and resume their lives in their country in dignity and peace.⁹¹

⁸⁹ Allan Findlay, "End of the Cold War," 190.

⁹⁰ United States Embassy, Pakistan, "Economic Impact of Afghan Refugees upon Pakistan," (Sept. 8, 1981), confidential airgram by Barrington King. Digital National Security Archive item number AF01260.

⁹¹ Sabahuddin Kushkaki, "The Afghan Refugees: Threats Against Their Physical and Spiritual Survival," Paper delivered at the international symposium on The Crisis of Migration from Afghanistan: Domestic and Foreign Implications, (Oxford: Oxford University Refugee Studies Programme and Department of Ethnology and Prehistory, 29 March- 2 April 1987), 3.

Thus, the maintenance of the population as refugees gave an advantage to the Mujahideen.

The number of men in the camps bore no relation to the level of militarization. Compared to a non-uprooted population, the camps had fewer young men than expected. Children were 48 percent, women were 28 percent, and men were 24 percent of the refugee population.⁹² Most of the able-bodied men did not stay in the refugee camps but returned to Afghanistan to fight or protect their property. As one man explained, "After I settle my family in Pakistan, I will go back to Afghanistan for jihad (holy war) against the Russian Army."⁹³ Often men rotated their presence in the camps; one brother stayed in Pakistan with the family while the other brother fought in Afghanistan. As early as mid-1980, refugees reported that nearly every family had at least one man fighting the Soviets.⁹⁴ Despite the dearth of men in the camps, the refugee population in Pakistan was highly militarized and provided extensive support to the Mujahideen state-in-exile. The "men in camps" explanation fails to account for situations in which men rely on the camps, but do not necessarily live in them.

IV. A Surprising Calm: Afghan Refugees in Iran, 1979 to 1989

A Non-Violent Persecuted Refugee Group

"The Afghan freedom fighters [in Iran] were not free to move and did not seem to be supported at all."

⁹² These statistics are not broken down into age categories. Allan Findlay, "End of the Cold War: End of Afghan Relief Aid?" 189; Shahrani, "Afghanistan's Muhajirin (Muslim "Refugee-Warriors"): Politics of Mistrust and Distrust of Politics," 194.

⁹³ Muhammad Daud quoted in Carol Honsa, "Inside a Pakistani Camp for Afghan Refugees," *The Christian Science Monitor*, Dec. 9, 1981.

⁹⁴ "Refugees in Pakistan Clamor for Arms," *New York Times*, July 20, 1980.

--Report from an American journalist⁹⁵

“Overall, the Iranian factor has remained a side issue in the Afghan equation, with Pakistan’s position as a ‘frontline’ state attracting far greater attention.”⁹⁶

The refugee crisis in Iran had a much different political context than that in Pakistan. First of all, the Afghan refugees in Iran never coalesced a state-in-exile. Like the refugees in Pakistan, they arrived as a persecuted refugee population, sharing the common experience of communist attacks. Would-be rebel leaders attempted to procure support from Iran and mobilize the population to no avail. Some small scale political activity—and even smaller scale military activity—occurred, but the Afghan resistance never established a firm base in Iran. The lack of political violence was due to Iran’s policy of withholding military and political support from the refugees. Iran had the capability and willingness to prevent the refugees from engaging in cross-border military activity. Because of Iran’s reluctance to support the Mujahideen and Iran’s own turbulent revolutionary politics, the government excluded international actors from intervening in the refugee crisis. Unlike Pakistan, the rebel movement was not sustained by huge infusions of foreign military and humanitarian assistance.

Iran has a long history of accepting Afghan migrants, especially those that share ethnic and religious affinities with locals. For decades, cultural ties and better economic conditions acted as a magnet to draw Afghan labor to Iran. Before the Soviet invasion,

⁹⁵ American journalist, Christian Demeyer quoted in John G. Merriam, “Arms Shipments to the Afghan Resistance,” In Farr and Merriman, 92.

⁹⁶ Girardet, *Afghanistan The Soviet War*, 201.

there were already up to 600,000 Afghan workers in Iran, mostly in urban areas.⁹⁷ Following the Soviet invasion in 1979, hundreds of thousands of Afghan refugees poured into Iran. The post-1979 refugees concentrated in border provinces (Sistan-Baluchestan and Khorasan) and urban centers. Nearly all the refugees spoke Iran's state language, Farsi (also called Dari in Afghanistan) and some, mainly the Hazara, shared the Shi'a Islam practiced in Iran.⁹⁸

The precise number of refugees in Iran was difficult to determine. The United States government reported "it difficult if not impossible to get a firm figure on the number of Afghans...The distinction between Afghan refugees and those who came earlier is increasingly blurred." In 1983, the Iranian government estimated that there were 1.5 million refugees. By 1987, Iran increased its estimate to 2.4 million Afghans. A registration carried out by the government estimated 2.2 million refugees in 1990. These estimates were likely inflated, but not dramatically so.⁹⁹

Like the Afghans in Pakistan, the refugees in Iran fled persecution by the Soviets and their Afghan allies. Many refugees demonstrated their aspirations to fight the communist-backed Afghan regime, but were thwarted from achieving these goals. Unlike a situational refugee group, the refugees did not desire only peace and stability in order to return. They required an end to their persecution and radical changes in the Afghan

⁹⁷These people (around 500,000 to 600,000 Afghans) were often included in the refugee statistics. Anthony Hyman, "Afghan Refugees in Iran," Draft of paper delivered at the international symposium on The Crisis of Migration from Afghanistan: Domestic and Foreign Implications. (Oxford: Oxford University Refugee Studies Programme and Department of Ethnology and Prehistory, 29 March- 2 April 1987).

⁹⁸ Islamic Republic of Iran, Ministry of Interior, Bureau for Aliens and Foreign Immigrants Affairs, *Statistical Survey on Afghan Refugee Population in the Islamic Republic of Iran*, 1992, 19.

⁹⁹ Population estimates in United States Embassy, Pakistan, "WFP Mission Studies Establishment of Food Aid Program in Iran," (March 31, 1983), confidential cable by Ronald Spiers. Digital National Security Archive item number AF01445, p. 3; Islamic Republic of Iran, Ministry of Interior, Bureau for Aliens and Foreign Immigrants Affairs, *Statistical Survey on Afghan Refugee Population in the Islamic Republic of Iran*, 1992.

government. Despite their goals, the refugees lacked the political and military organization to threaten the Afghan regime. The refugees' political organization consisted of a fractured group of Shi'a resistance parties, unable to mount a military campaign.

The level of political violence was low, especially compared with the highly militarized Pakistan camps. An unknown number of Mujahideen came to Iran to work for a few months and then returned to Afghanistan to fight, but they did not engage in military activity in Iran.¹⁰⁰ Early in the conflict, rebel leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar claimed that small rebel units based in Iran made "hit-and-run raids" on Afghanistan.¹⁰¹ Some refugees donated part of their income to the opposition parties.¹⁰² Afghan resistance groups would have liked more support and reportedly tried to bargain with Iran by offering to fight against Iraq in exchange for Iranian support of the Afghan rebels.¹⁰³ Generally, when the refugees attempted political action, they were prevented by the Iranian authorities. In one instance, Afghan refugees attempted to occupy the Soviet Embassy in Tehran, but were ejected by Iranian revolutionary guards.¹⁰⁴

The Soviet Union did not engage in much cross-border military activity against Iran, but it did clearly express its willingness to counter any perceived threat. In one

¹⁰⁰ One interview cites a group of 250 young men who worked in Iran and then returned to fight. Chris Kutschera, "Forgotten Refugees: Afghans in Iran," *The Middle East*, (Aug. 1986), 45.

¹⁰¹ Tim McGirk, "Iran No Help to Afghans," *The Christian Science Monitor*, March 14, 1980.

¹⁰² Anthony Hyman, "Afghan Refugees in Iran," Draft of paper delivered at the international symposium on The Crisis of Migration from Afghanistan: Domestic and Foreign Implications. (Oxford: Oxford University Refugee Studies Programme and Department of Ethnology and Prehistory, 29 March- 2 April 1987).

¹⁰³ Apparently some Afghans did fight against Iraq, but Iran never extended more than token support for the resistance parties. There were also reports of forced conscription of Afghans to fight Iraq. In one instance, resistance to forced conscription led to the deaths of ten refugees. See, *New York Times*, "10 Afghans Killed in Iran," April 7, 1985, 11; Ivan Zverina, "Iran Accused of Using Afghans in Gulf War," *United Press International*, March 28, 1984; "Soviets Accuse Iran of Arming Afghan Refugees, Using Them in Iraq War," *The Associated Press*, Aug. 2, 1983; "Afghan Rebels Offer to Fight for Iran," *United Press International*, October 15, 1980.

¹⁰⁴ Leslie Keith, "Iranians Go Out of Their Way to Avoid Provoking the Soviet Bear," *The Christian Science Monitor*, July 30, 1980.

cross-border incident in March 1980, Soviet MiG planes violated Iranian airspace.¹⁰⁵ Later, in April 1982, the Soviets destroyed two Iranian border posts and killed armed Afghan refugees.¹⁰⁶ The Soviets also based a large number of troops at Shindand as a buffer zone between Afghanistan and Iran. These actions seemed designed to prevent the emergence of rebel activity, rather than to counter existing organizations.¹⁰⁷

Although around two million Afghan refugees fled to Iran during the 1980s, much less information is available about this group than about the refugees in Pakistan. After the 1979 Iranian revolution, Iran's hostility toward the West drastically curtailed the amount of information available about the refugees within its borders. Until 1983, Iran rebuffed any foreign involvement in the crisis. For the most part, journalists, NGOs, and governments were shut out.¹⁰⁸ There is sufficient information available, however, to assess the political and socioeconomic contexts of the crisis in Iran.

Iran: A Different Political Agenda

"[The Afghan rebel representative] was asking for arms assistance, and the Ayatollah spoke instead of humanitarian assistance."

--US Embassy, Iran, 1979¹⁰⁹

"Any help to Afghan rebels is equal to damaging the Iranian Revolution and aiding U.S. imperialism."

--National Voice of Iran radio, 1980¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁵ Federal Broadcast Information Service (FBIS) Daily Report, Middle East and North Africa, Supplement-060, "Afghan MiGs, Helicopters Violate Border," Tehran Domestic Service in Persian, March 1, 1980

¹⁰⁶ "Soviet, Afghan Troops Raid Iran, Pakistanis Say," *The Associated Press*, April 7, 1982; "Iran Says Afghan War Is Close to Border," *The New York Times*, April 9, 1980.

¹⁰⁷ Roy, *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan*, 191.

¹⁰⁸ Scholars also ignored the massive refugee population in Iran. In a 250 page book on the Afghanistan conflict, Edward Giradet devotes less than a page to the millions of refugees in Iran. Girardet, *Afghanistan The Soviet War*, (London: Croom Helm, 1985), 209.

¹⁰⁹ United States Embassy, Iran, "Limited Iranian Response to Afghan Rebel Appeal," (May 21, 1979), cable by Charles W. Naas, Digital National Security Archive item number AF00554.

¹¹⁰ FBIS Daily Report, Middle East and North Africa, Supplement-055, "NVOI Discusses Purges, Aid to Afghan Counterrevolutionaries," National Voice of Iran, March 4, 1980.

Unlike Pakistan, Iran did not view a pliable Afghan government as a vital national interest. As the refugee crisis occurred, Iran was at war with Iraq, embroiled in the hostage crisis with the United States, and reeling domestically from the Islamic revolution. As an Islamic non-aligned state, Iran carefully tried to balance its actions to avoid provoking the Soviet Union, while also condemning its interference in an Islamic country. Publicly, Iran strongly denounced both Soviet and American involvement in the region and exhorted the Afghan people not to “depend on the solutions imposed by the West and East...[which] want to preserve their illegitimate interests in Afghanistan.”¹¹¹ Iran’s goals were served by agitating against superpower influence in the region, without committing itself to any further military actions.

Iranian government policy toward the refugees ensured that a state-in-exile could not coalesce. Iran restricted the political and military activity of the refugees and was capable of controlling its border:

The parties based at Peshawar were not allowed to transport weapons and ammunition into Afghanistan via Iran, a fact which posed insurmountable logistic problems for the Herat Jamiat [rebel party]. The refugees in Iran...were subject to much closer surveillance by the police than their brethren in Pakistan. No Iranian contingent went to fight in Afghanistan.¹¹²

The Iranian Revolutionary Guards (*Pasdaran*) monitored the borders and were known to confiscate arms from the guerrillas and prevent entry of refugees. Geographically, the 388 mile Iran/Afghanistan border was easier to control than the much longer Pakistan/Afghanistan border, especially since it was mainly lowland and not mountain passes.

¹¹¹ FBIS Daily Report, Middle East and North Africa, Supplement-052, “EEC Proposal on Afghanistan,” Tehran International Service in Arabic, Feb. 27, 1980.

¹¹² Roy, *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan*, 213.

The Deputy Minister of the Interior, Abbas Akhundi, announced that Iran would support refugees' political activity only "if the refugees do not adhere to any ideology inspired from east or west."¹¹³ Iran allowed resistance parties to open offices, but provided no further assistance, with the exception of a little aid to the pro-Khomeini Shi'a groups. Apparently Iran considered aiding the Sunni groups based in Peshawar between 1980 and early 1982; "land mines, shoulder-fired antitank rockets, heavy machine guns, uniforms and boots were supplied to at least the Hizb-e-Islami."¹¹⁴ These "negligible" contributions did not satisfy *Hizb-i-Islami*, especially when Iran refused to express support for the rebels publicly. The government maintained relations with the Soviet-backed Afghan government and kept secret its meetings with rebel leaders.¹¹⁵ Iran soon distanced itself from the Peshawar parties, considering them too dependent on the West.

After Iran cut its ties with *Hizb-i-Islami* in Peshawar, it restricted its support to Shi'a groups. These groups included *Harakat-Islami*, *Hazara Nasr*, and *Pasdaran*, a party controlled by the Iranian Revolutionary Guards.¹¹⁶ Some Iranian Revolutionary Guards also volunteered as advisors to ethnic Hazara resistance groups.¹¹⁷ Paradoxically, Iranian support of the Shi'a groups increased inter-group fighting among the resistance, rather than strengthening it against the Soviets.¹¹⁸

¹¹³ Quoted in United States Embassy, Pakistan, "WFP Mission Studies Establishment of Food Aid Program in Iran," (March 31, 1983), confidential cable by Ronald Spiers. Digital National Security Archive item number AF01445, p.6.

¹¹⁴ United States, Defense Intelligence Agency, "Iranian Support to the Afghan Resistance," Briefing paper, July 11, 1985. Digital National Security Archive item number AF01634.

¹¹⁵ Tim McGirk, "Iran No Help to Afghans," *The Christian Science Monitor*, March 14, 1980.

¹¹⁶ John G. Merriam, "Arms Shipments to the Afghan Resistance," In Farr and Merriman, 91; Girardet, *Afghanistan The Soviet War*, 187.

¹¹⁷ United States, Defense Intelligence Agency, "Iranian Support to the Afghan Resistance," Briefing paper, July 11, 1985. Digital National Security Archive item number AF01634.

¹¹⁸ Hyman, "The Afghan Politics of Exile," 81.

Iran's primary motive in restraining the resistance was its need to avoid active hostility with the Soviets. For both economic and military reasons, "Iranian leaders realized that having good-neighbourly relations with their northern neighbor was a geographical necessity."¹¹⁹ Although Iran was capable of regulating refugees' activities on the border, this capability did not extend to repulsing any potential Soviet cross-border attacks. Iran's oilfields were vulnerable to Soviet attack across the Afghan border and the long Soviet border. Economically, Soviet transit routes boosted Iran's trade and Iran hoped to use Soviet technical experts on industrial projects. The economic incentives were especially important as Iran suffered from an American and European trade embargo. The government also wanted the Soviets to reduce their arms sales to Iraq. A United States government analysis explained:

Although the Afghans in Iran have experienced harsh treatment, the measures undertaken against them have been aimed more at maintaining a balance in Iran's official relations with Kabul and Moscow and not for the sole purpose of extinguishing the resistance's presence in Iran. While Iran has made strong efforts to sanitize and clear its border with Afghanistan, it has done so to avoid provoking Soviet retaliation for Iran's selective support of the resistance.¹²⁰

Despite its sympathy for the Afghan resistance, and its condemnation of the Soviet invasion, Iran could not afford to risk Soviet reprisals by arming the Mujahideen.

Iran also had domestic security reasons for limiting the military activity of the refugees. Numerous separatist groups in Iran, representing Baluchis, Kurds, Azerbaijanis, Azeris, and others, pressed the central government for more autonomy. Considering the

¹¹⁹ Anthony Hyman, "Hands Across the Caspian," *The Middle East*, (August 1986), 48.

¹²⁰ United States, Defense Intelligence Agency, "Iranian Support to the Afghan Resistance," Briefing paper, July 11, 1985. Digital National Security Archive item number AF01634.

high concentration of refugees in Baluchi territory, Iran's central government feared the demonstration effects of a militant refugee group on Baluchi separatism.¹²¹

Local citizens met the refugees with a mixture of sympathy and resentment. Part of Iran's sympathy for the Afghans came from shared cultural, religious, and ethnic ties. This was especially true for Shi'a refugees, often part of the Hazara ethnic group. The Shi'a were a minority in Afghanistan, but a majority in Iran. One commentator predicted "the goal that Iran seems to be pursuing is to strengthen its control over the Shi'a minorities and to use them as pawns in its policy of regional expansion."¹²² Control of the Shi'a Hazaras would give Iran more leverage in Afghan affairs or a future Afghan regime. Iran reported in 1989 that about a third of the refugees were Pushtun, a fifth were Hazara, and a quarter were Tajik.¹²³

Despite historical and cultural ties, "Iranians feel traditional mistrust for the Afghans, an attitude which existed before Khomeini's time."¹²⁴ The refugees negatively affected the economy and environment. Refugees brought their livestock with them and the fodder and grazing needs depleted local resources. The Afghans reintroduced diseases that had been eradicated in Iran, such as malaria and cholera, which cost the government over \$150 million to combat. Poor Iranians resented the government's support for the Afghan refugees, especially since the war with Iraq had internally displaced two million Iranians. These resentments were behind attacks and anti-Afghan demonstrations that occurred in Tehran in late 1983.¹²⁵ Since the end of the Cold War, Iran has repeatedly

¹²¹ McGirk, "Iran No Help to Afghans."

¹²² Roy, *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan*, 213.

¹²³ Islamic Republic of Iran, Ministry of Interior, Bureau for Aliens and Foreign Immigrants Affairs, *Statistical Survey on Afghan Refugee Population in the Islamic Republic of Iran*, 1992, 19.

¹²⁴ Roy, *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan*, 213.

¹²⁵ United States, Central Intelligence Agency, "Iran: Attacks on Afghan Refugees," Cable, Dec. 9, 1983. Digital National Security Archive item number AF01518.

threatened to expel the refugees and curtailed their options regarding employment and free movement.

Isolation from International Influences

International humanitarian organizations played almost no role in the refugee crisis in Iran. There was no international presence until 1983, when Iran allowed UNHCR to enter. At first, UNHCR was the only relief agency allowed to operate within Iran. UNHCR's program was much more modest than in Pakistan. In 1984, UNHCR spent \$7.5 million in Iran. This rose to \$14 million by 1987. In Pakistan, UNHCR spent \$77 million during 1982 alone.¹²⁶ UNHCR's main responsibility in Iran was to procure relief items from abroad. The mandate evolved over time to include long-term development projects that benefited the refugees (income generation, health, schools, etc.). In 1987, the World Food Programme (WFP) opened its office in Iran. By the 1990s, an NGO mission reported "the Iranian Government's willingness to meet the basic needs of the Afghan refugee population over this long period, with the result that there is not a need for NGOs to play a major role in providing for the refugees within Iran."¹²⁷

Iran provides an example of how a capable state can prevent external influences during a refugee crisis. Iran distrusted western aid agencies and took full responsibility for assisting the refugees for the first three years of the crisis. Iran also prevented external states from supporting the Mujahideen or otherwise becoming involved in the crisis.

¹²⁶ Annick Billard, "Islamic Republic of Iran: Unnoticed Country of Asylum," *Refugees*, n.23 (Nov. 1985), 20; Anthony Hyman, "Afghan Refugees in Iran," Draft of paper delivered at the international symposium on The Crisis of Migration from Afghanistan: Domestic and Foreign Implications. (Oxford: Oxford University Refugee Studies Programme and Department of Ethnology and Prehistory, 29 March- 2 April 1987); US Dept of State, "Afghan Refugee Situation—An Overview," par. 10.

¹²⁷ "Report of the Technical Mission Undertaken to Iran and Western Afghanistan from 20th November to 16th December 1992," as delivered to the International Consortium for Refugees in Iran.

Unlike many receiving states, including Pakistan, Iran did not use the refugee presence as a way to gain international funding or legitimacy.

Inconclusive Socioeconomic Explanations

“Much about the conditions of these refugees remains murky.”
--U.S. Committee for Refugees¹²⁸

It is unclear how much socioeconomic conditions influenced the low level political violence among Afghan refugees in Iran. In this case, the political explanations and the socioeconomic explanation make similar predictions (except for the gender balance theory). Socioeconomic conditions for refugees in Iran differed greatly from those in Pakistan. However, the political context also differed significantly between the two states. In the Rwandan crises, socioeconomic factors were nearly constant between Tanzania and Zaire, allowing a focus on the political factors. The high level of variation in the Afghan crises makes it especially difficult to untangle the interactions between socioeconomic and political factors in the case of refugees in Iran. The one certain finding is that the number of men in the population does not predict whether violence will occur.

In Iran, refugees did not live in camps, crowded on the border. When refugees arrived they came through transit camps for registration and medical checks, but then moved on to urban areas. In the late 1980s only 75,000 refugees lived in government run camps. Most of the others were absorbed into the local economy and found employment as manual laborers. Because of the Iraq war, Iran experienced a shortage of workers and some refugees were able to open small businesses. However, once the Iraq war ended in

¹²⁸ U. S. Committee for Refugees, *World Refugee Survey-1988 in Review*, (Washington DC: USCR, 1989), 72.

the late 1980s, Iran's labor market tightened, causing the government to restrict the refugees to low-skill trades.¹²⁹

Even though the refugees did not live in crowded border camps (like those in Pakistan), they still remained relatively near the border and tended to cluster together within urban areas. Fifty percent of refugees lived in Khorasan and Sistan-Baluchistan provinces, which bordered Afghanistan. In the city of Mashad (capital of Khorasan province), 31 percent of the population was Afghan refugees. Many towns had an Afghan quarter. Recognizing that demographic pattern, the Iranian government established Afghan refugee councils in urban areas with heavy Afghan populations as forums to discuss refugee issues. Despite the concentrated settlement patterns of Afghans, little organized political activity occurred.

In both Iran and Pakistan refugees had adequate shelter, food, and medical care (relative to other refugee populations and to conditions in Afghanistan). The available evidence supports Iran's claims that refugee conditions were satisfactory.¹³⁰ Afghans were allowed to utilize the same health services as Iranians. For refugees in camps or other collectives, the Ministry of Health established a network of primary care centers, most staffed by refugees.¹³¹ Refugee children attended Iranian primary schools. A Western assessment mission found that "the refugees are provided with basic health, education, water and electricity services which are generally of a reasonable standard, together with food coupons." Health care in Khorasan province was "of a reasonably high

¹²⁹ By 1986, Iran did not permit refugees free movement but directed them to where there were labor shortages.

¹³⁰ Note that most statistical information about refugees' conditions is from the late 1980s and early 1990s, once there was an international presence. Iran was much more reticent about the refugees in the early 1980s, with the result that there is less information available about those years. The general conditions were similar, however.

¹³¹ Azmoudeh Mohammad, "Health Problems of Afghan Refugees Reported," (Islamic Republic of Iran, Ministry of Health and Medical Education, July 1992).

standard.”¹³² Despite the adequate conditions in Iran, rebels nevertheless expressed frustration at their lack of political support.

Unlike most refugee groups, the gender and age balance of the refugees in Iran did not correlate with a non-displaced population. The majority of the refugees were working age men. The Iranian government estimated eleven percent of refugees were between 10 and 19 years and 36 percent were between 20 and 29 years. Only 1.9 percent were under seven years old. According to Iranian statistics, 87 percent of the refugees were single or came without their families. In addition, surveys report that between 67 and 82 percent of the refugees were men.¹³³ This is a remarkable difference from most refugee populations, which generally mirror the gender ratios of non-displaced groups (i.e. roughly equal).¹³⁴

The gender hypothesis suggests that there would be a high level of violence associated with this refugee population. The single young men would make willing recruits for rebel forces. The disproportionate number of fighting age men in Iran did not translate into militant activity, however. This is due, for the most part, to the Iranian disinclination to support the Mujahideen. Without the support of the receiving state or external donors, the potential rebels could not act.

In order to determine the importance of socioeconomic factors (except for the demographic balance), one would need to prove a counter-factual. Namely, one would need to imagine that Iran maintained its opposition to militarization, but housed the

¹³² “Report of the Technical Mission Undertaken to Iran and Western Afghanistan from 20th November to 16th December 1992” as delivered to the International Consortium for Refugees in Iran.

¹³³ UNHCR, “Refugees in Iran, An NGO Seminar,” Tehran, July 1992, 4; and Islamic Republic of Iran, Ministry of Interior, Bureau for Aliens and Foreign Immigrants Affairs, *Statistical Survey on Afghan Refugee Population in the Islamic Republic of Iran*, 1992, 14-15, 17. UNHCR estimates the lower percentage of males.

¹³⁴ The proportion of working age men may be inflated since Iran often included 600,000 economic migrants in its count of 2.2 million refugees.

refugees in large, border camps. The refugees would not have been free to become self-sufficient and international assistance would have been required for their upkeep. The question is whether this change in living conditions would have increased militarization. Obviously, it is impossible to prove a counter-factual. But it seems likely that the refugees would have still faced great difficulties in achieving political and military organization—much as the thwarted Rwandan state-in-exile in Tanzania did.

V. Conclusion: Was the Cold War Different?

The Cold War era has both real and perceived differences from current refugee crises. The conventional wisdom is that refugee militarization increased markedly following the end of the Cold War. My large-n study (see Chapter 2) of all refugee-related political violence clearly contradicts that conventional wisdom. Refugees engaged in just as much, if not more, political violence in the 1980s as in the 1990s and beyond.

What has increased markedly is threats to staff security. Refugee relief often occurs in war zones; receiving states often are not the safe havens envisioned in international refugee law. This makes the political violence more visible to aid workers than it was in the past. The violence is also less controlled than in the past because of the withdrawal of superpower patrons. Now, armed factions among the refugees are rarely accountable to a restraining power. Refugee relief organizations may have to contend with multiple armed groups who all see aid as a political and military resource. Between 1992 and 2001, 196 United Nations workers were killed and nearly 250 were abducted.¹³⁵

¹³⁵ Andrew Harris and Peter Dombrowski, "Military Collaboration with Humanitarian Organizations," *Global Governance*, 8, 2 (Apr.-June 2002), 157.

During the 1990s the conventional wisdom was that the end of the Cold War lessened superpower interest in “peripheral” conflicts. Great powers no longer perceived these conflicts in developing countries, such as Angola and Afghanistan, as security threats.¹³⁶ In post-Cold War conflicts in central and western Africa, for example, only neighboring states have experienced a security threat from militarized refugee populations. Western states approached the problem as a humanitarian issue. Western disinterest left international humanitarian organizations to deal with these crises on their own, without the appropriate political and/or military skills. This disinterest on the part of states bolsters the perception of increased security threats for the refugee-relief regime. It is not clear that civilians in war torn countries are at greater risk than during the Cold War, but it is certainly clear that aid workers find themselves in more dangerous situations.

The end of the Cold War changed the Afghan conflict, but it did not resolve the war. Although the Soviet forces withdrew in 1989, the refugees did not return and the rebels continued to fight the Soviet-installed Najibullah government. Najibullah finally lost power in 1992. Still peace did not come. After the fall of the communist government, the rebel forces fractured even more and the conflict degenerated into chaotic civil war. Thus, many of the refugees remained in exile as the rival Mujahideen wreaked destruction on Afghanistan—shelling Kabul and laying landmines.

A generation of refugees came of age during this conflict in the 1990s. These teenagers did not remember their homes in Afghanistan and were educated in the Islamic run *madrassas* of Pakistan. Some of these refugee-scholars became radicalized and eventually formed the fundamentalist Taliban movement. The Taliban took power in

¹³⁶Schmeidl, “(Human) Security Dilemmas,” 27.

Afghanistan in 1996, imposing its own strict version of Islamic law on the country. These refugee-scholars-soldiers shunned their former benefactors (e.g. the United States), even as they benefited from past military assistance. Without the years in exile, under the tutelage of fundamentalists in Pakistan, it is unlikely the Taliban would have emerged. The role of refugees in the second decade of the civil war is a fascinating study, but beyond the scope of this chapter.¹³⁷

The third decade of the conflict in Afghanistan has shown that other national interests have arisen in the West to fill the vacuum left by the end of the Cold War. The United States is involved in Afghanistan more directly and to a greater extent than during the 1980s. It is commonly believed that many Taliban and al-Qaeda supporters escaped into Pakistan during the American attack on Afghanistan in 2001. These combatants may be mixed in with the 1.5 million Afghan refugees in Pakistan. Depending on the sympathy of the refugees and the locals, finding these enemy elements could prove nearly impossible. The border areas of North West Frontier Province have never been completely under the control of the central government. This refugee populated area may become a new locus of terrorist activity and once again a refugee crisis will pose a threat to American national security interests.

¹³⁷ For more on this period of the conflict, see Schmeidl, "(Human) Security Dilemmas."

Chapter 6

Demilitarizing a Refugee Army: Bosnian Muslim Renegade Refugees

I. Introduction

A particularly interesting, yet relatively unexamined, instance of the spread of conflict concerns the refugees created as a result of a breakaway Muslim faction during the war in former Yugoslavia. Under the leadership of charismatic businessman Fikret Abdic, a group of about 25,000 refugees fled their town, Velika Kladusa in the Bihac pocket, twice during the war in Bosnia. The first refugee crisis occurred in late 1994 when the Bosnian government army defeated Abdic's forces. That crisis ended in early 1995 when the refugees formed an army to retake their hometown from the Bosnian 5th Corps, which was deployed by the Muslim-led government. When the Bosnian Army pushed Abdic's supporters out of Bosnia a second time in August 1995, the refugees were unable to mobilize militarily. The refugees either returned peacefully or resettled to third countries.

The story of Fikret Abdic and his unsuccessful rebellion against the Sarajevo government is often considered as a footnote in the overall history of the war in former

Yugoslavia In the words of one journalist, a “bloody fratricidal sideshow.”¹ Although the intra-Muslim conflict defies conventional wisdom about ethnic conflict and ethnic affinity, it provides a uniquely helpful case for the study of the spread of civil war in refugee crises. By examining the same population twice within a single conflict, this comparison holds constant many variables associated with the refugee group, such as the origins of the conflict. The motivations and leadership of the refugees remain the same over time, but the capabilities of the refugees change drastically due to shifts in the political context. The comparison over time reinforces the finding that a state-in-exile refugee group does not always cause the spread of civil war.

The Abdic refugee crises support the political explanation for the spread of civil war and discredit the socioeconomic explanations. Given the presence of a state-in-exile, the deciding factor in the spread of war was the policy of the receiving state. In the first refugee crisis, the refugees allied militarily with their hosts, the Serbs, and attacked Bosnia. In the second crisis, Croatia refused to allow any militarization due to its alliance with the Bosnian government. Throughout both crises, socioeconomic conditions—camp size, camp location, living conditions, and number of men—remained virtually constant. The one difference was that the refugees had better long-term alternatives in the second crisis. Thus, many militants were resettled abroad or locally integrated into Croatian society. This suggests that receiving states and other resettlement countries hold one key to preventing the spread of conflict.

This chapter describes the Abdic refugee crises and explains the spread of civil war that occurred. The next section provides the background on how Abdic’s movement began and gained power in northwest Bosnia. Sections III and IV describe the two

¹ Charles Lane, “Picked Pocket,” *The New Republic*, Dec. 19, 1994, 14.

refugee crises that occurred during the war and compare the levels of political violence. The sections following contrast the actions of the receiving states, the Republic of Serb Krajina and Croatia, and analyze the impact of humanitarian aid on the crises. Section VII presents and refutes the socioeconomic explanations for the spread of civil war. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the refugees' motivation for attacking Bosnia and the practical and theoretical implications of the Abdic refugee crises.

II. Development of the Muslim Rebellion

"Alija Izetbegovic is the biggest Muslim fundamentalist. Fikret Abdic is the best economist and smartest man."

--Refugee and Abdic supporter, 1994²

The break up of the Soviet empire, and resulting insecurity, contributed to political upheaval and ethnic tension in Yugoslavia after 1989. In 1991, Slovenia and Croatia seceded from Yugoslavia, claiming fears of Serb domination of the federation. Their secession and the perceived mistreatment of the Serb minority in Croatia led to war between Serbs and Croats. In the multi-ethnic state of Bosnia, wedged between Serbia and Croatia, the majority Muslims felt threatened by the Serb-dominated Yugoslav federation. Against the wishes of Bosnian Serbs, the state government decided to secede from Yugoslavia in 1992. Over the course of the ensuing war, Croats and Muslims alternately fought each other and allied against the Serb forces. Within the Croat-Muslim-Serb hostility, a small intra-Muslim conflict emerged in northwest Bosnia. This chapter examines the refugees created by that rebellion against the Sarajevo government.

² Quoted in Jonathan S. Landay, "Bosnian Army Takes Control in Rebel Pocket," *Christian Science Monitor*, August 24, 1994.

The war created millions of refugees and internally displaced persons. At the height of the displacement crisis, “fully half of Bosnia’s pre-war population was dead or uprooted.”³ Most refugees did not live in camps but were either privately housed or accommodated in collective centers (schools, hotels, army barracks, etc.).⁴ The vast majority of refugees did not engage in political violence or military activity while receiving humanitarian assistance.⁵ An exception to that pattern was the group of refugees from Velika Kladusa who formed an army while benefiting from UNHCR support.

The town of Velika Kladusa, Fikret Abdic’s power base, nestles in the far northwest corner of Bosnia, in the Bihac region. After the Second World War, Bihac was one of the poorest areas in Yugoslavia.⁶ Abdic transformed the region into a highly profitable industrial center. Through his company, Agrokomerc, he controlled virtually every aspect of the economy. His empire included local television and radio stations (invaluable resources for the later war against the Sarajevo government).⁷ By providing lucrative employment and a high standard of living, the charismatic Abdic secured the undying loyalty of most of the inhabitants of Bihac, especially those in Velika Kladusa.⁸

³ In 1993 the number of refugees from the former Yugoslavia totaled 1.3 million, with an additional 1.6 million internally displaced. US Committee for Refugees, *World Refugee Survey*, (Washington DC: Immigration and Refugee Services of America, 1994), 130, 42.

⁴ For example, in 1993 Croatia hosted 800,000 refugees and displaced persons. Of those, 55,000 lived in collective centers, 89,000 lodged in hotels, and the rest stayed with host families. Department of Humanitarian Affairs, *United Nations Revised Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal for Former Yugoslavia, April-December 1993*, Geneva, March 1993, 29.

⁵ Some observers claim that *all* male refugees were militarized due to forced conscription into one or another state army. However, these fighters were not recognized as refugees. UNHCR officials, Geneva, July 1998 and NGO staff, Split, Croatia, June 1998, interviews by the author. On forced conscription in Croatia see Human Rights Watch, *Civil and Political Rights in Croatia*, (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1995).

⁶ For more information on the history of Velika Kladusa, see Misha Glenny, *The Fall of Yugoslavia*, (New York: Penguin Books, 1996) 152-154.

⁷ Igor Ivancic, UNHCR official, interview by the author, Split, Croatia, June 1998; Tanwir Shahzada, UNHCR official, interview by the author, Geneva, July 1998.

⁸ Anna Husarska, “Pocket Change,” *The New Republic*, July 19 and 26, 1993, 9.

In what had seemed a permanent defeat, Abdic spent two years in prison under investigation for commercial crime until his release in 1989.⁹ The temporary lack of resources slowed his rise to power, but not his popularity. A resilient politician and businessman, Abdic bounced back from prison and bankruptcy to become one of the ten members of the Bosnian presidency in 1991. He actually won more votes than any candidate in Bosnia in the 1991 regional elections.¹⁰ A still-unexplained intra-party deal gave the presidency to Alija Izetbegovic, however.¹¹

Observers agree that the residents of Velika Kladusa treated Abdic “like a god” and “were ready to do whatever he said.”¹² One vivid image captures the reverence his followers held for him. After his release from prison in 1989, Abdic desired a triumphal entry into Velika Kladusa. For his return from incarceration supporters lined the main road, chanting “*Babo, Babo,*” or “Daddy, Daddy.” As his white Mercedes car entered town, supporters slaughtered an ox in the road. Perhaps prophetically, Abdic’s convoy arrived home splashed in ceremonial blood.¹³

In order to understand the dynamics of the later violence, it is necessary to trace the political and military relationships built by Abdic before the war. When war broke out between Serbia and Croatia in 1991, Abdic’s political and economic fortunes were governed by the complex political connections he had forged with the belligerents.

The Abdic empire, built around Agrokomerc, depended on a dangerous and delicate web of trade links, involving Croatia (which gave Mr. Abdic a free port

⁹ The government accused his company, Agrokomerc, of issuing \$1 billion in unbacked promissory notes, which created havoc in the banking industry. Misha Glenn, “The Godfather of Bihac,” *New York Review of Books*, August 12, 1993.

¹⁰ Abdic received 1,010,618 votes to Izetbegovic’s 847,386. Silber and Little, *Yugoslavia*, 211.

¹¹ Many interpretations of this supposed secret deal have been offered. Abdic has claimed he was forced to give up the presidency but at other times has stated his desire to forgo national politics for his business interests. UNHCR officials, interviews by the author, Geneva, July 1998.

¹² Ivancic, UNHCR official, interview by the author, Split, Croatia, June 1998; and Gonzolo Vargaz Llosa, UNHCR official, interview by the author, Geneva, July 1998.

¹³ Ivancic interview.

in Rijeka), its Serbian enemies in Knin, the Bosnian Serb army besieging fellow Muslims in the Bihac pocket, and Belgrade.¹⁴

That history of dealmaking stood him in good stead during the siege of Bihac in 1993. Although other parts of the enclave starved, residents of Velika Kladusa survived on smuggled and black market food.¹⁵ As usual, “Babo” took care of his people.

By spring 1992, the Bihac pocket was surrounded on four sides by hostile forces—the breakaway Republic of Serb Krajina (carved out of Croatian territory) to the west and north, Bosnian Serbs to the south and east.¹⁶ (See Map 6.1) The poorly armed 5th Corps of the Bosnian army was stranded in the pocket, unable to defend Bihac in case of attack. A French battalion arrived as part of the UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR) in February 1993 but its mandate was limited.¹⁷

Two reasons explain the continued existence of Bihac under Muslim control, despite its vulnerable position. The large size of the enclave deterred the Serbs from attack, for fear of heavy losses. Secondly, “too many people were making too much money out of it to want it snuffed out.”¹⁸ Despite a Serb blockade, the Bosnian 5th Corps successfully fought its way out of the Bihac pocket for a brief period in 1994. The secret of the Bosnians’ strength was that “the Bosnian Serbs themselves...had sold the 5th Corps

¹⁴ Emma Daly, “Is Life Really Worth Living Under King Babo?” *The Independent*, July 30, 1994.

¹⁵ Husarska, “Pocket Change,” 9.

¹⁶ Serb-held Croatia included the Krajina area. The Serb-held areas hosted a United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) which renamed the area United Nations Protection Areas (UNPAs). UNPA South and North bordered the Bihac region.

¹⁷ *Information Notes on Former Yugoslavia* [hereafter *Information Notes*], UNHCR Office of the Special Envoy for Former Yugoslavia—External Relations Unit, February 1993. For more information on UNPROFOR see Lawyers Committee for Human Rights, Refugee Project. *Protection by Presence? The Limits of United Nations Safekeeping Activities in Croatia*, (New York, September 1993).

¹⁸ Tim Judah, *The Serbs*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 243.

a good part of its weaponry.” The Krajina Serbs even sent food into Abdic’s territory for processing by Agrokomerc.¹⁹

**Map 6.1
Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and UN Protected Areas**

Croatia. Showing UN Protected Areas, and Bosnia-Herzegovina



Source: Susan L. Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy*, (Washington DC: The Brookings Institution, 1995)

Abdic loyalists managed to profit from both UNHCR and the UNPROFOR battalion. When UNHCR ran short of vehicles it hired eleven trucks and local drivers

¹⁹ Judah explains that “so confident were those Serbs, however, of their good relations with their business partners in the 5th Corps that when it launched its attack only 20 per cent of Serbian troops who should have been at their positions along the Bihac front were actually there. Judah, *The Serbs*, 244-245.

from Abdic. In February 1993, that scheme ended in embarrassment when Serbs stopped the trucks at a checkpoint and found about 700,000 Deutsche marks hidden in the door of the trucks.²⁰ Some UNHCR officials suspected, but never confirmed, that Abdic used the humanitarian convoys to import contraband for a huge profit. Abdic also ran his own for-profit convoy by importing food from Zagreb using French military trucks. In an unorthodox bargain, Abdic traded storage space in Agrokomerc warehouses to the United Nations in exchange for UNPROFOR escorts of Abdic's imports.²¹

Some observers speculate that both Croatia and the Serbs tried to use Abdic to meet their own, conflicting, goals. "For the Serbs, Bihac was the missing link needed to join Serb-held land in Croatia and Bosnia to Serbia itself, which is what Croatia wanted to avoid at all costs."²² Abdic cooperated with both sides, safeguarding his position of power in Bihac. Unconfirmed stories that Abdic provided intelligence about the Serb positions to the Croatian government could explain Croatian tolerance for Abdic's behavior and his easy acquisition of Croatian citizenship.²³ Tactically, the Croatian government needed Bihac in "friendly" hands during the war.

The war between the Croatians and the Bosnian Muslims in 1993 greatly advanced Abdic's own position and may have spurred him to declare the Autonomous Province of Western Bosnia in September of that year.²⁴ A few months after the declaration of autonomy, however, the Washington Framework Agreement of March 1994 enforced an alliance on the Bosnian Muslims and Bosnian Croats (and their allies,

²⁰ UNHCR officials, interviews by the author, Geneva, July 1998.

²¹ Husarska, "Pocket Change," 9-10.

²² Silber and Little, *Yugoslavia*, 359.

²³ UNHCR officials, interviews by the author, Geneva, July 1998.

²⁴ Judah, *The Serbs*, 244.

the Croatian government).²⁵ At least officially, the breakaway Muslim enclave lost Croatia as a source of support.

Several observers have asserted that Abdic made a fatal political error by declaring autonomy in September 1993. His declaration forced Sarajevo to consider him an enemy and a traitor. Before the declaration, Abdic held a referendum and obtained over 50 percent of the vote in favor of autonomy. He also met with the leader of the Bosnian Army's 5th Corps, Ramiz Drekovic, in an attempt to persuade the army to support secession. Drekovic requested time to consider the plan but Abdic rushed ahead and proclaimed the existence of the Autonomous Province of Western Bosnia without the consent of the commander of the 5th Corps. Two brigades of the 5th Corps defected with Abdic, but the rest of the Bosnian army now targeted Abdic as a dangerous enemy.²⁶

Prior to Abdic's secession, the area of Bihac contained about 200,000 people.²⁷ Roughly 50,000 lived in the northern part and were fiercely loyal to Abdic. Further south, loyalty to Sarajevo overcame support of Abdic.²⁸ Only the northern part of the pocket followed Abdic in the declaration of autonomy. The declaration divided neighbors, and even families. The stated reason for secession stressed the radicalization and Islamic fundamentalism of Sarajevo. Abdic claimed he just wanted to follow western capitalism free from ideological restrictions. Abdic declared that the enclave enjoyed a more natural linkage with Zagreb than with the rest of Bosnia. As an autonomous

²⁵ Susan L. Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy*, (Washington DC: The Brookings Institution, 1995), 214-215.

²⁶ Roger Cohen, "Besieged Bosnian Pocket Fights Sense of Betrayal," *New York Times*, June 26, 1994.

²⁷ The 1991 census counted 202,310 Muslims, 6,470 Croats, and 29,398 Serbs in pre-war Bihac. All but 1,000 of the Serbs left when the war began, leaving about 199,000 Muslims and 5,000 Croats. *Information Notes*, June 1995.

²⁸ Abdic's influence controlled Velika Kladusa but dissipated in the south. In the September 1997 elections, Abdic's party won 15 of 24 seats in Velika Kladusa, a third of the seats in Cazin to the south, and zero seats in Bihac town even further south. Stephane Jacquemet, UNHCR official, interview by the author, Geneva, July 1998.

territory, he planned to continue dealing with both Croats and Serbs. Abdic followers claimed they enjoyed better food and drink in his army. In addition to practical and self-interested reasons to support Abdic, “people had enormous trust in him.”²⁹

Abdic’s defection left the remainder of Bihac in dire straits. The 5th Corps fought on four fronts, with no hope of reinforcements. Starvation loomed because the agricultural industries required imported raw materials in order to produce. Until the 1993 declaration of autonomy, some aid had arrived by convoy to the southern part of Bihac. After August 1993, Abdic and the Serbs blocked all aid to the beleaguered south. UNHCR sources reported, “the Bihac pocket, where until recently activities ran very smoothly, has become another source of serious concern: local authorities in Velika Kladusa informed UNHCR and UNPROFOR that convoys would not be allowed into the area before 4 December [1993].”³⁰

The Bosnian Army launched an offensive against Abdic on June 10, 1994.³¹ UNHCR described, “Both sides reportedly impressed civilians into their armed forces, and detained others whose sympathies were suspect (many families have members on both sides of the conflict).”³² The southern part of Bihac was desperate to break the blockade. The Croatian government, pushed into an alliance with Bosnia, “regretfully sacrificed Mr. Abdic—and his cash.”³³ The 5th Corps overran Velika Kladusa after Abdic refused to recant his declaration of autonomy.³⁴

²⁹ UNHCR official, based on interviews with 250 Abdic refugees. Interview by the author, Split, Croatia, June 1998.

³⁰ *Information Notes*, Special Issue, November 29, 1993.

³¹ Daly, “Is Life Really Worth Living...”

³² *Information Notes*, July 1994.

³³ Daly, “Is Life Really Worth Living...”

³⁴ Davor Huic, “Bosnian Troops Take Rebel Stronghold,” *The Guardian*, August 22, 1994.

III. A Renegade State-in-Exile, 1994-1995

"When we left Velika Kladusa last August, we did not flee...We only tactically withdrew to avoid fighting and destruction."

--Refugee and Abdic supporter, 1994³⁵

"A sizeable portion of the Abdic exiles...fled in uniform with arms."

--*Los Angeles Times*, 1994³⁶

By August 21st, 1994 over 25,000 people had fled Velika Kladusa in front of the advancing Bosnian Army, creating a 30-mile long stream of refugees.³⁷ They traveled by cars, buses, and tractors, bringing along dozens of horses and herds of cattle. Individual motives for flight varied, but observers agree that political leaders orchestrated the refugee movement:

[Abdic's supporters] sought to pressure others to leave, and are pressuring them not to return. They exercise effective control over the camps. There are those who fled fearing for their lives as the [Bosnian] army advanced, often reacting to false rumors spread by the first group, a propaganda campaign that began well before the final advance. Others, as witnessed by UNHCR, did not want to flee but were pressured to do so. And there were those who had long intended to leave and saw this as an opportunity.³⁸

The receiving "state" for the refugees' first exile was the Republic of Serb Krajina, Croatian territory that had been seized by the Serbs. The Krajina was nominally under the protection of the United Nations and was known as a United Nations Protected Area (UNPA). A demilitarized no-man's-land divided the Serb-controlled territory from Croatia.

³⁵ Quoted in Julijana Mojsilovic, "Rebel Muslims: Fighting for Return," *The Associated Press*, Nov. 27, 1994.

³⁶ Carol J. Williams, "Muslim's Drive for Fiefdom Ends in Chaos," *Los Angeles Times*, August 10, 1994.

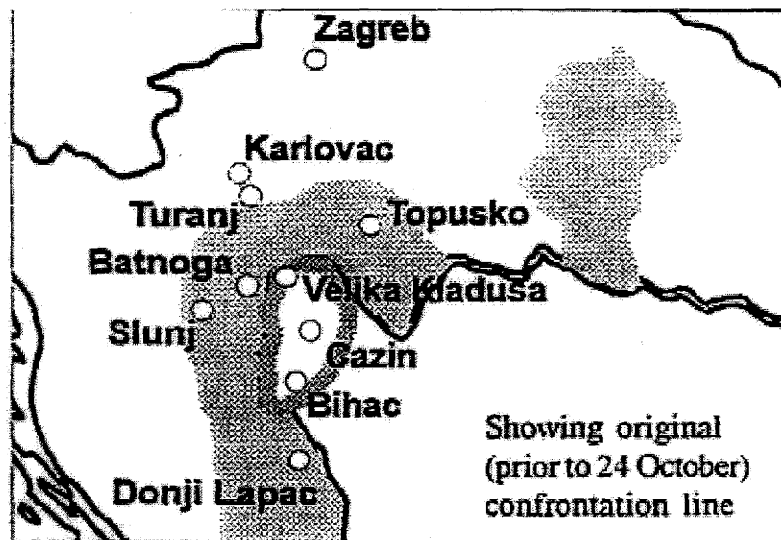
³⁷ "Bosnia Enclave Falls to Army Forces," *Star Tribune* (Minneapolis), August 22, 1994.

³⁸ *Information Notes*, September 1994.

The refugees ended up in two locations, both in Serb-held Krajina (see Map 6.2). To the west, about 16,000 people stopped at Batnoga, a disused chicken farm owned by Abdic, only a few kilometers from Velika Kladusa. To the east, 7,000 refugees went to Staro Selo, an area of open ground. After three or four days, “just as assistance was becoming organized, these refugees moved to Turanj at the instigation of the local authorities and Abdic followers, who were encouraging the refugees to force an entry into Croatia proper, and preventing some from returning home.” Twenty-five hundred refugees traveled directly to Turanj, bypassing Staro Selo.³⁹

Map 6.2

Velika Kladusa and surrounding towns, (Serb-held areas shaded)



Source: *Information Notes on Former Yugoslavia*, UNHCR Office of the Special Envoy for Former Yugoslavia—External Relations Unit, November 1994 (update).

As the refugees moved north, the Croatian government stopped them at Turanj, a destroyed, heavily mined, area between the front lines of Croatia and Serb-held Krajina.⁴⁰

³⁹ *Information Notes*, September 1994.

⁴⁰ *Information Notes*, September 1994.

Turanj was a depopulated strip of land a few kilometers wide that had been demilitarized when UNPROFOR negotiated a pull back between Serb and Croatian forces. The Serbs allowed the refugees into Turanj at their checkpoint. On their side, Croatian police blocked the border with armored personnel carriers and water cannon, trapping the refugees in no-man's-land and crushing Abdic's hopes of reaching Croatian territory.⁴¹

In addition to the political desire to gain international attention, pragmatic considerations governed the direction of the refugees' flight. Serb-held Krajina was not the refugees' first choice for an asylum area. As former migrant workers in Croatia, the refugees knew they would find better economic opportunities there. Serb-held Krajina, on the other hand, was practically without water or electricity, and suffered 90 percent unemployment. If they could not return in victory to their homes, the refugees' goal was resettlement in Germany or another European state.⁴²

Despite the refugees' intransigence, UNHCR pressured both the Bosnian government and the leaders of Serb-held Krajina to facilitate a return of the refugees. Sarajevo agreed to offer an amnesty to the refugees and a six-month respite from military service. UNHCR had difficulty communicating the Bosnian government's amnesty offer because "the climate of intimidation and the scope for the leadership to manipulate and interpret to the refugees both information and events required caution."⁴³

On October 1, 1994, the Krajina Serbs agreed to allow distribution in the Turanj camp of a UNHCR note explaining the amnesty offer. The letter, dated September 30, 1994 reminded refugees of their duties under international law: "We also need you to understand that refugees must not engage in any hostile acts against either the authorities

⁴¹ Adrian Brown, "Major Refugee Crisis Builds Up in Croatia," *The Daily Telegraph*, August 29, 1994.

⁴² Jacquemet interview.

⁴³ *Information Notes*, September 1994.

in their home country or those where they are refugees.”⁴⁴ UN workers were unprepared for the violent reaction to the note. “Distribution started peacefully with the refugees reading the note, but then the situation rapidly degenerated, as some refugees violently objected to the contents of the note, which they prevented others from reading.”⁴⁵ Abdic supporters objected to the note’s condemnation of the military preparations for return and the UN’s suggestion that a peaceful return to Bihac (i.e. surrender to the Bosnian government) was possible. Angry refugees flipped over cars of the UN Civilian Police and UNHCR workers had to hide in fear for their lives.⁴⁶

The refugees’ utter reliance on Abdic propaganda encouraged hard-line attitudes toward return. As one refugee explained, “We all would rather go home, but not without our Babo.”⁴⁷ Another refugee confirmed, “All the people want to go home—but only under Abdic... There is no other option whatsoever.”⁴⁸ Since Abdic was wanted for war crimes in Bosnia, a peaceful return with him was not a feasible option. UN negotiators, pressing Abdic and the Krajina Serbs for return, reported, “all talks on the political level with leaders of the refugees have been unsuccessful so far.”⁴⁹ Negotiators sensed that Abdic and his allies were willing to hold out for a long-term political solution, using humanitarian aid to support the refugees indefinitely.⁵⁰

Refugees had few alternatives other than to go along with Abdic’s plan: “The likely level of political manipulation against return was so high that a free and informed

⁴⁴ Entire letter is reprinted in the *Information Notes*, October 1994.

⁴⁵ *Information Notes*, October 1994.

⁴⁶ Steve Corliss, UNHCR official, interview by the author, Geneva, July 1998.

⁴⁷ Carol J. Williams, “Defying West, Bosnian Muslim Warlord Pushes Followers Toward Croatia,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 28, 1994.

⁴⁸ Refugee quoted in Tom Hundley, “Dispossessed Bosnian Muslims Remain Loyal to Their ‘Papa,”” *Chicago Tribune*, Dec. 5, 1994.

⁴⁹ Sergio Mello, UN Director for Civil Affairs, quoted in “UN Tries to Convince Bosnian Moslem Refugees to Return to Bihac,” *Deutsche Presse-Agentur*, August 29, 1994.

⁵⁰ “Bosnian Refugees; Head of EC Monitor Mission Meets Abdic and Mikelic,” *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, August 30, 1994.

choice on their future might be impossible in these circumstances.”⁵¹ A few refugees managed to escape to live with relatives in Croatia. UNHCR resettled nine families who did not want to fight with Abdic. In order to protect those refugees from retaliation, UNHCR had to sneak them out of the camp.⁵² Abdic’s strategy was to keep the refugees concentrated. He wanted to force entry into Croatia and used the international attention on the terrible conditions in Turanj to embarrass Croatia.

Throughout the crisis, refugee leaders refused a UN planned repatriation; instead they organized for a military comeback in their hometown. During the time that the refugees prepared for a military return, it was difficult to determine the extent of their access to weapons. The militants obviously wanted to hide any weapons from UN personnel. The refugees entered the camp with some small arms but stored heavy weapons, including six fifty-year-old Soviet built tanks (donated by the Serbs), outside the camp in Serb-held territory. “Serbian soldiers were seen standing over a huge pile of assault rifles and other military detritus turned over by Abdic’s fleeing troops.”⁵³ Later, the refugees were able to buy more weapons from the Serbs to facilitate the return to Velika Kladusa.⁵⁴ Observers commented that young men were recruited from the camp but trained in Serb-held territory. UNHCR was unable to disarm the refugees or control their movements between the camp and Serb-held Krajina.⁵⁵

In the second week of November 1994, the refugees and their Serb allies prepared to advance on Bihac and fight the Bosnian 5th Corps, led by General Atif Dudakovic. Abdic and the Serb police “began mobilizing draft age men in the camps to

⁵¹ *Information Notes*, September 1994.

⁵² UNHCR official, interview by the author, Geneva, July 1998.

⁵³ Landay, “Bosnian Army Takes Control.”

⁵⁴ Judah, *The Serbs*, 245-246.

⁵⁵ UNHCR officials, interviews by the author, Geneva, July 1998.

participate in the offensive.” Despite UN protests, between 5,000 and 10,000 refugee men were mobilized.⁵⁶ The Abdic/Serb offensive began in December 1994.⁵⁷ The refugees attacked Bihac using the camps as a rear base. With Serb support, the refugee army “hit the 5th Corps from behind, so forcing it to fight on two fronts.”⁵⁸ The besieged enclave was weakened by the continued blockade of aid convoys. By early 1995, the refugee army, with the help of Serb logistics, regained control of Velika Kladusa. As Abdic soldiers retook the town, “Croatian Serb artillery continued to fire towards the internal confrontation line separating the Abdic soldiers from the 5th Corps troops.”⁵⁹ With the invaluable Serb assistance, Abdic reestablished the front line at its July 1994 position. Over a period of five days, Batnoga and Turanj camps emptied of refugees as they returned to Velika Kladusa in the same buses that had carried them out.⁶⁰

IV. Demilitarizing a Refugee Army, 1995

In 1995, Abdic’s followers found themselves fleeing Velika Kladusa for a second time. This time, the Croatian army had totally defeated the Krajina Serbs, which changed the equation in favor of the refugees returning home peacefully. “As soon as the Krajina Serbs were attacked by the Croats, Abdic’s defenses collapsed.”⁶¹ The loss of their patron Serbs, combined with Croatian reliance on American support (which mandated an alliance with Sarajevo) left the Velika Kladusa refugees no opportunity to engage in political violence. The political shifts weakened Abdic’s influence in the region, although

⁵⁶ *Information Notes*, Update to No. 11/94.

⁵⁷ On the battle for Bihac during 1994, see Steven L. Burg and Paul S. Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1999), 154-159.

⁵⁸ Judah, *The Serbs*, 246.

⁵⁹ *Information Notes*, January 1995.

⁶⁰ 629 refugees decided not to return with Abdic and clustered on the Croatian side of Turanj. UNHCR convinced Croatia to accept those refugees. *Information Notes*, January 1995.

⁶¹ Glenny, *Death of Yugoslavia*, 284.

his people remained fiercely loyal. Eventually, most refugees returned home peacefully, while the remaining hard-line militants were resettled abroad.

Events leading up to the second refugee crisis initially suggested that Abdic might continue to reign in Bihac. Upon regaining power in Velika Kladusa in early 1995, Abdic and his Serb allies continued the Bihac blockade. Disputes over aid convoys sparked fighting between the 5th Corps and its enemies. As the only entrance for the convoys passed through Abdic-controlled territory, UNHCR depended completely on Abdic, even though he “was demanding a larger allocation of aid going into [Velika Kladusa] than UNHCR considered justified.” In March, UNHCR took the drastic step of suspending aid to Velika Kladusa and the Krajina in light of the obstruction of aid.⁶²

At the end of July 1995, Abdic and Krajina Serb troops launched an offensive on southern Bihac and made significant gains. The Croatian government, while sympathetic to Abdic, did not want Bihac to fall to his Serb allies. The Croatians and the Bosnians had agreed in the “Split Declaration” of July 1995 to repel jointly Serb aggression.⁶³ Once again, Croatian sympathy for Abdic (and the desire to do business with him) was overruled by larger political interests.⁶⁴

The Croatian Army began an offensive to retake Serb-held Krajina in the summer of 1995. (See Map 6.3) “Operation Storm” first attacked Serb forces in Krajina (UNPA

⁶² *Information Notes*, February 1995; March 1995.

⁶³ Charlotte Eager and Peter Beaumont, “Vengeance Drives Croats Forward,” *The Observer*, July 30, 1995.

⁶⁴ Silber and Little, 357, note that the Croatian military advantage “could only have been derived from their increasingly congenial relationship with the United States.” American support for Croatia played a significant role in the Croat/Muslim alliance. Senior retired US Army officers reorganized the Croatian military, indebting President Tudjman to follow American dictates. See Glenny, *Death of Yugoslavia*, 283. Also David Shearer, *Private Armies and Military Intervention*, Adelphi paper 316 (New York: Oxford University Press for The International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1998), 56-63.

North and South).⁶⁵ The offensive lasted two or three days in the South and a bit longer in the North. When Krajina collapsed, the Croatians crossed into Bosnia and, with the Bosnian 5th Corps, advanced on Abdic's position. In the face of certain defeat, Abdic quickly surrendered and his followers fled north out of their hometown.⁶⁶

The refugees crossed the border into the Krajina just after the Serbs fled and before the Croatians established border guards. Croatian Special Police stopped the 25,000 refugees on the road near the village of Kuplensko, only 18 kilometers from the Bihac border.⁶⁷ The Croatians established a checkpoint and fenced in the area as thousands of people set up camp on a four-kilometer stretch of roadside. The whole situation was very chaotic as the territory had just been liberated from the Serbs and 150,000 Serbs driven out of the Krajina (UNPA North and South).⁶⁸ Croatian police did not completely disarm the refugees but effectively prevented the group from entering any further into Croatia or engaging in military activity.

⁶⁵ Rumor has it that "a lot was negotiated before the fight" between the Serbs and the Croatians, explaining the lack of Serbian intervention on behalf of the Croatian Serbs. UNHCR officials, interviews by the author, Geneva, July 1998. See also, Glenny, *Death of Yugoslavia*, 283-284.

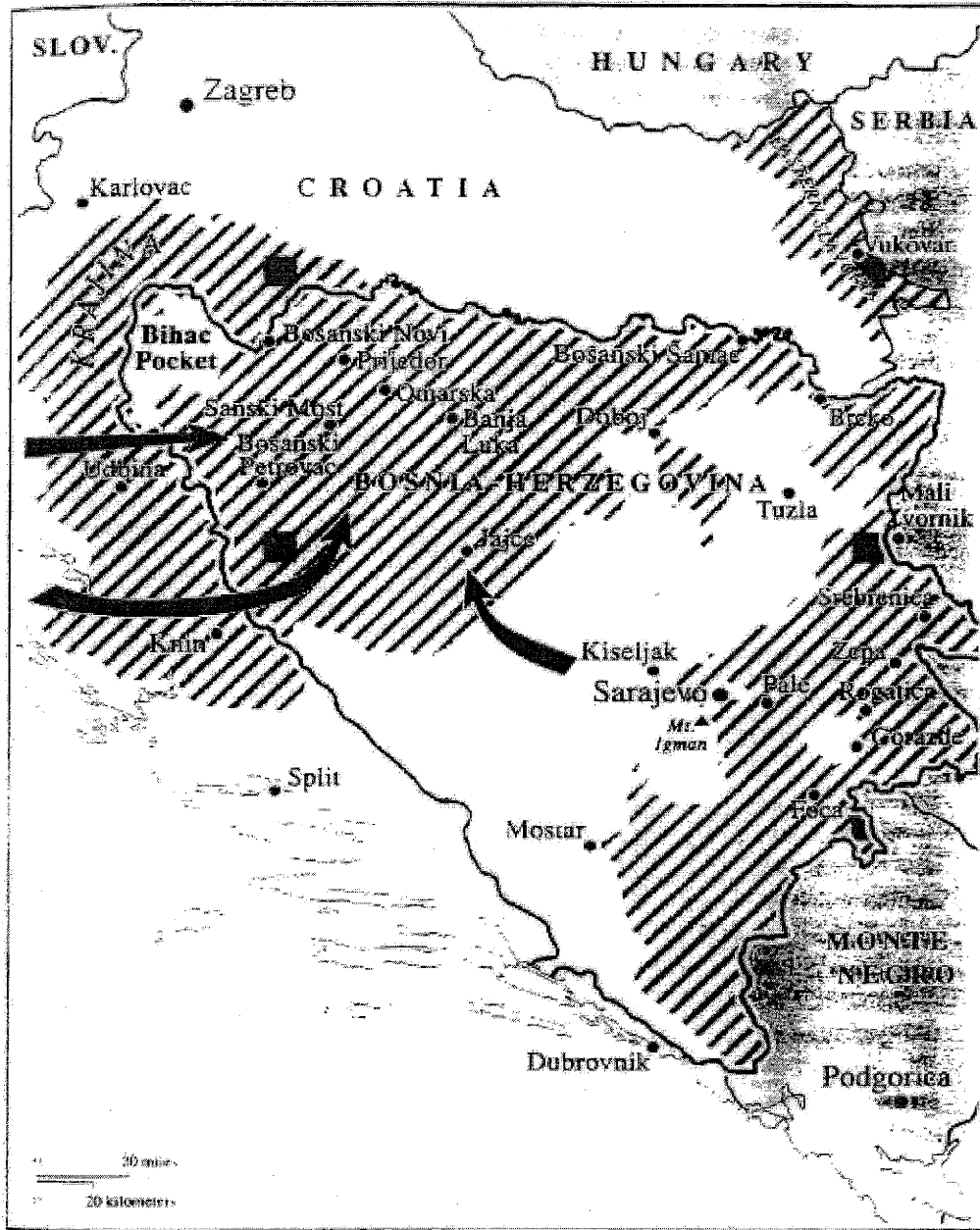
⁶⁶ *Information Notes*, August 1995.

⁶⁷ For general information, see Norman Erik, "Croatia's Special Police," *Jane's Intelligence Review*, 7, 7 (1995), 291-293.

⁶⁸ UNHCR officials, interviews by the author, Geneva, July 1998.

Map 6.3

The Croat-Muslim Western Offensive, 1995 The Western Offensive, August–September 1995



➔ Direction of Croat-Muslim Offensive

▨ Bosnian Serb-controlled area as of July 1995

▭ Croat-Muslim Federation-controlled area as of July 1995

Source: Richard Holbrooke, *To End a War*. (New York: Random House, 1998)

Despite the changed political circumstances, UNHCR still found it difficult to communicate with the refugees due to the strength of Abdic's propaganda. The refugee leaders accused the UN of bias when it tried to distribute accurate information. The "hard core" leaders, about 500 of them, controlled the camp and violently discouraged attempts to return or speak to outsiders. The refugees made decisions based on the incomplete and biased information provided by Abdic and his supporters.⁶⁹

The majority of the refugees stayed in Kuplensko from August to December 1995. As winter approached, UNHCR focused on repatriating people from the ill-equipped camp. Refugee militants stopped the first group of returnees by surrounding the bus and threatening to blow it up. Croatian police accompanied later buses with a five car convoy to deter intimidation.⁷⁰

Refugees began to return home when the influence of their leaders weakened. Once he lost Serb backing, Abdic's leadership was not strong enough to mobilize an army to retake Velika Kladusa. The signing of the Dayton Peace Accords in November 1995 by the warring parties (Bosnians, Serbs, and Croats) further weakened Abdic's position. Within Kuplensko, Abdic maintained the loyalty of the refugees but he was unable to capitalize on that loyalty as he had done in 1994. Without the assistance of the Krajina Serbs, who had armed the refugees and policed the camps, Abdic's henchmen could not compel unswerving obedience from the refugees for any extended period of time. Some of Abdic's leaders left the camps because they had connections in Croatia or Germany. Others were recruited into the Croatian army into "key positions." People

⁶⁹ UNHCR official, interview by the author, Geneva, July 1998.

⁷⁰ UNHCR official, interview by the author, Geneva, July 1998.

became discouraged and desired return. The presence of the Croatian police finally put an end to intimidation against return by Abdic supporters.⁷¹

By June 1996, about 10-15,000 refugees had repatriated peacefully to Velika Kladusa. Women, children, and the elderly usually returned first. Once they reported that the situation was safe, the former soldiers returned to their families. Few violent incidents were reported, although the returnees did face some harassment by political opponents and local police.⁷² Five thousand hard-core followers of Abdic remained at Kuplensko, refusing to return. Those refugees saw “the camp, which was very close to the border with [Bosnia]—as an effective base for recruiting DNZ (Abdic) party support.”⁷³ As one UNHCR official recalled, “they were a difficult bunch of people.”⁷⁴

In order to break the political organization of the refugees who were living perilously near the Bosnian border, Croatia relocated the remaining refugees. The refugee leaders, showing their clout, refused to relocate unless ensured of the refugees’ right to vote in the 1996 Bosnian elections.⁷⁵ Once the United Nations negotiated voting rights, many refugees went to Gasinci camp in eastern Croatia. They lived in a former army barracks while awaiting resettlement to third countries. About 1,200 of the refugees were transferred to Obonjan collective center on a rocky, desolate island.⁷⁶ Both locations allowed the government to limit the refugees’ movements and contacts with possible militants in Velika Kladusa.

Rather than forming an army, the 5,000 hard-line refugees resettled to third countries. The militants were denied that option in 1994 at Turanj and Batnoga camps.

⁷¹ Jacquemet interview.

⁷² *Information Notes*, November 1995, January 1996.

⁷³ *Information Notes*, June/July 1996.

⁷⁴ UNHCR official, interview by the author, Geneva, July 1998.

⁷⁵ Quang Bui, UNHCR official, interview by the author, Geneva, July 1998.

⁷⁶ Goran Andjelic, American Refugee Committee, interview by the author, Split, Croatia, June 1998.

By facilitating return of the compliant refugees, Croatia was able to separate out the troublemakers and remove them from the border of their homeland. Increasing international acceptance of resettling Bosnian refugees offered a non-violent option to refugees who refused to return home peacefully.⁷⁷

V. Same Territory—Two Receiving States

The territory that hosted the Abdic refugees changed hands between the first and second refugee crises. The first time the territory was controlled by Serbs, who had taken it from the Croats and called it the “Republic of Serb Krajina.” By second crisis, the Croatian government had retaken the Krajina. The different political contexts in the Krajina made a vital contribution to the refugees’ ability to militarize. The Krajina Serbs had the capability and the willingness to encourage the militarization of the refugees. The Serbs had a history of economic cooperation with the Abdic refugees and they shared the goal of defeating the Bosnian government. When the refugees came to the Krajina the second time, in 1995, the political context had changed radically. The Croats had routed the Serbs, the Bosnian army had expelled Abdic’s forces, and the Americans were pressing for a settlement along the new, more favorable, battle lines. The Abdic forces—now friendless—were no match for the Croatian Special Police. Although the refugees still clung to their militaristic goals, they had no way to achieve them.

In the first crisis, the Krajina Serbs exercised strict control over the camps. Unlike the Croatian government, however, the Serbs used their power to encourage political violence and shield the refugees from international interference. Abdic’s planned

⁷⁷ The United States eventually accepted about 1,000 of the Velika Kladusa refugees.

offensive against the Bosnian army required the active support of the Krajina Serbs. The Serbs also prevented UNHCR or any other external force from disarming the refugees. The Krajina Serbs ostensibly protected the refugees, but also restricted their movement and access to information. Serb and Abdic police guarded the camps in a joint effort to control the inhabitants.⁷⁸

The Serbs aided the militant refugees for a number of military, political, and economic reasons. Most importantly, the refugees provided a military advantage to the Krajina Serbs in the Serbs' war against the Bosnian Muslim government. The Serbs outgunned the Bosnian Muslims but faced a severe disadvantage in the infantry because Serb forces stretched across an impossibly long front-line through Bosnia and Croatia. The 5th Corps had about 14,000 soldiers in Bihac.⁷⁹ Abdic's ability to raise an army of 5,000 to 10,000 men complemented the needs of the Serb forces, which were more than willing to provide artillery support. The close economic ties between Abdic and the Serbs, before and during the war, also aided their cooperation.

By contrast, Croatia demonstrated a hard line against the refugees from the beginning of the first crisis in 1994. In the first refugee situation, Croatia refused to allow the refugees to move from the Krajina no-man's-land to Croatia proper. One observer explained why the Croatians, former allies of Abdic, refused to support the refugees. At the time of the refugee exodus, Croatia and Bosnia were trying to patch up their split. When Abdic was defeated in 1994, the United States and Germany pressured Croatia to remain loyal to Sarajevo. Despite Croatian sympathy for Abdic, he was still a relatively

⁷⁸ Ivancic interview.

⁷⁹ Cohen, "Besieged Bosnian Pocket."

minor player in the war. Politically, Croatia could not risk international support and the alliance with Sarajevo for the sake of Abdic's 25,000 refugees.⁸⁰

In the second crisis, Croatia possessed both the ability and the willingness to secure the camp. Croatian Special Police guarded the makeshift camp at Kuplensko and restricted the movement of the refugees, not hesitating to shoot at escapees. Although combatants lived among the refugees, they were too afraid of the Croatians to organize themselves. Former soldiers removed their uniforms and tried to blend in with the other refugees.⁸¹ The police also forcefully repatriated some of the men to Bihac. UNHCR efforts to winterize the Kuplensko camp were hampered by the "extremely strict control imposed by the Croatian Special Police."⁸²

VI. Helpless Humanitarians

The international actors involved in the Abdic refugee situations were mainly United Nations organizations and NGOs, particularly UNHCR. The UN refugee agency provided humanitarian assistance to the refugees during both refugee crises. UNHCR also cooperated with United Nations peacekeepers in the Krajina and United Nations Military Liaison Officers. Other than the receiving states, Serb-held Krajina and Croatia, there was little involvement by external states. The United States was indirectly involved in that it pressured Croatia to ally with the Bosnians and aided the Croatian army.

The Abdic refugee crises highlight two problems facing international humanitarian aid workers. The first problem is the lack of control that the aid agencies

⁸⁰ UNHCR official, interview by the author, Geneva, July 1998.

⁸¹ Only their combat boots gave away their military status. UNHCR official, interview by the author, Geneva, July 1998.

⁸² *Information Notes*, September 1995, October 1995, and November 1995.

have over whether or not militarization occurred. UNHCR and other United Nations actors had no power to disarm or coerce the refugees during the Abdic crises. In each situation, the receiving state controlled the level of military activity. The humanitarian organizations had to work within the constraints posed by the receiving state policy. The second problem is the narrow way in which humanitarian organizations viewed their responsibilities. UNHCR did not concern itself about militant activity that occurred outside of the camps and did not address the issue that humanitarian aid sustained Abdic's refugee army.

During the first exile, UN personnel helplessly observed uniformed Serbs and Abdic leaders drafting people in the camps. Serbs positioned their artillery very close to the Batnoga camp, near the Bihac border. UNHCR offered protests but could not compel a halt to the militarization.⁸³ When wounded refugee men entered Turanj, UN personnel could not ascertain how or where they had been wounded.⁸⁴ In vain, UNHCR appealed to the Serbs to ensure "the refugees receive objective information, have a free choice on return, are not subject to manipulation, and do not engage in acts incompatible with their status."⁸⁵ The only weapon in the UN arsenal was the withdrawal of humanitarian aid. Because that would have deprived dependent families of food, there was no long-term aid stoppage.

UNHCR could not credibly claim ignorance of the militant nature of the refugees. Their military activity during 1994 was overt. The refugees arrived at Turanj and Batnoga as a retreating fighting force. Since the receiving state, the Serbs, abetted the militarism, UNHCR faced the difficult decision of providing aid to the militants or depriving non-

⁸³ *Information Notes*, Update to No. 11/94.

⁸⁴ Benny Otim, UNHCR official, interview by the author, Geneva, July 1998.

⁸⁵ *Information Notes*, September 1994.

militant refugees of assistance. There is no evidence of debate over this issue within UNHCR, rather the agency immediately provided assistance to the refugees despite their status as a state-in-exile.

In many instances, UNHCR chose to ignore militarization, rather than admit the role of humanitarian aid in supporting the spread of civil war. The situation of Turanj camp highlights how narrowly the humanitarian agencies perceived their mandate. Based in Turanj, militant refugees stored mortars and artillery with the Serbs and then crossed to Turanj to sleep and eat with their families. UNHCR observers claimed that Turanj posed no security problem because there were no arms in the camps even as they admitted, “the Serb territory was the depot.”⁸⁶ From the point of view of the beleaguered Bosnian 5th Corps in Bihac, of course, the location of the arms in the camp or on the borders was a purely academic distinction. The end result—an internationally supported refugee army—was the same.

In the second exile in 1995, international humanitarian actors also had to follow the directives of the receiving state. Croatia prevented militarization, but ruled the refugee camps more strictly than the humanitarians would have wished. Initially, UNHCR could not even locate the refugees although they knew that thousands of people had left Velika Kladusa. The UN had to obtain permission from the Croatian government to enter the Krajina (UNPA North). UNHCR representatives found the refugees surrounded by drunken Croatian soldiers who were attempting to push the refugees back to Bihac. After heated negotiations, Croatia allowed UN food trucks through to the refugees.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ UNHCR official, interview by the author, Geneva, July 1998.

⁸⁷ UNHCR official, interview by the author, Geneva, July 1998.

As in Turanj and Batnoga, UNHCR lacked any means to disarm or control the refugees in Kuplensko during the second exile. The only military support extended to UNHCR was the United Nations Military Liaison Officer (UNMLO). The UNMLO acted purely in an advisory capacity. The Officer could explain to the civilian UNHCR about the capability of certain weapons or how, in theory, military maneuvers might be carried out. Any disarmament procedures relied on voluntary compliance and brought in few weapons.⁸⁸ Because of Croatian policy, however, the refugees did not engage in military activity in Kuplensko.

Like other state-in-exile groups, Abdic and his henchmen relied on propaganda and limited the refugees' sources of information in order to cement their support. The propaganda emphasized the impossibility of a peaceful return home. Refugees generally agreed with this reasoning since they knew that their beloved leader could not return to a Bosnian controlled Velika Kladusa.

Abdic managed to obscure the UN message in a number of ways. During the first exile when the UN set up a food distribution center for humanitarian aid, the refugee leaders hung a huge billboard of Abdic's face over the food tables.⁸⁹ The refugees were meant to assume that Abdic, not the UN, took care of their needs. With Serb support, Abdic broadcast to the refugees from a radio station in nearby Vojnic.⁹⁰ A UNHCR spokesman complained helplessly of an "orchestrated campaign to prevent refugees getting independent analyses of the situation in Kladusa."⁹¹ The relationship between Abdic and the refugees ensured that they trusted implicitly the information produced by

⁸⁸ UNHCR official, interview by the author, Geneva, July 1998.

⁸⁹ Steve Corliss, UNHCR official, interview by the author, Geneva, July 1998.

⁹⁰ Roger Cohen, "For Rebel Bosnian Muslims, Life in Chicken Coops," *The New York Times*, November 13, 1994.

⁹¹ Emma Daly, "Muslim Refugees Mass on Croatia's Border," *The Independent (London)*, August 31, 1994.

his radio station.⁹² International organizations could not develop such a high level of trust and refugees suspected outside information as biased.

VII. Minefields and Chicken Coops: Socioeconomic Explanations

“The situation for the Abdic refugees was much worse than for the average refugee in Croatia.”

--UNHCR official⁹³

None of the socioeconomic explanations—large camps, border camps, men in camps, and poor living conditions—explain the militarization and subsequent demilitarization of the Abdic refugees. For the most part, socioeconomic characteristics remained constant throughout both crises. The camps were small and located near the Bosnian border. There was an unusually large proportion of men in the refugee population. Living conditions in the camps were awful. The socioeconomic explanation would predict lower conflict based on the small camp size. However, it would also predict higher risks of violence from the other three factors. In fact, the socioeconomic predictions do not account for the different levels of violence that occurred in the two crises.

The Abdic refugee crises strongly affirm the prevailing conceptions about the size of refugee camps. UNHCR strongly recommends establishing small camps of about 20,000 to 30,000 refugees. That size is thought to be more manageable and to create fewer social problems than massive camps of a few hundred thousand people. The Abdic group, at 25,000 refugees, fit the ideal perfectly. Despite its small size, the refugee group was highly militarized and caused the spread of civil war.

⁹² Jonathan S. Landay, “Bosnian Army Takes Control in Rebel Pocket,” *Christian Science Monitor*, August 24, 1994.

⁹³ Tanvir Shahzada, UNHCR official, interview by the author, Geneva, July 1998.

The Abdic refugee crises also counter the idea that the location of the camp near the border is a cause of for the spread of civil war. In both crises, the camps were located within walking distance of the Bosnian border. Batnoga camp was practically on the border and Turanj was just a few miles away. Kuplensko camp was only 18 kilometers from the border. In the first crisis, the refugees invaded across the border. In the second crisis, the Croatian Special Police effectively controlled the border crossing.

The Abdic crises differed from most other Bosnian refugee populations in the relatively larger proportion of men among the refugees. The mass of Bosnian refugee populations consisted of women, children, and the elderly. For refugee men, militarization took the form of forced conscription into a state army and did not directly affect the provision of assistance to other refugees. For example, in late 1992 and 1993, Croatian officials forcibly repatriated draft-age Bosnian males to fight in the Bosnian army as part of a friendship agreement between the two states.⁹⁴ When the alliance between the Muslims and Croats collapsed in 1993, Croatia forcibly repatriated Bosnian Muslim men to Bosnian Croat prison camps rather than to the Bosnian Army.

In the Abdic crises, most of the male refugees had experience as soldiers; some even fled in uniform.⁹⁵ Unlike other Bosnian refugee populations, the fighting age men remained in the refugee camp. However, this factor does not explain the spread of civil war because the number of men remained constant from the first crisis to the second. The attitude of the receiving state determined whether or not the men were able to mobilize for military action.

⁹⁴ In summer 1993, after strong protests by UNHCR and the international community, the Croatian government stopped arresting and repatriating Bosnian refugees. Human Rights Watch, "Civil and Political Rights in Croatia."

⁹⁵ *Information Notes*, September 1995.

In the first crisis, living conditions in both Turanj and Batnoga camps were awful. Refugees lived in chicken coops in Batnoga and in a mined no-man's-land in Turanj. At Batnoga, the chicken coops had no electricity, little clean water, and insufficient shelter against the cold. In Turanj, sixty percent of the refugees lived in destroyed buildings, thirty percent lived in vehicles, and ten percent slept in UNHCR tents.⁹⁶ Although the effects of the oncoming winter posed "major health, fire, and security hazards," the refugee leaders still discouraged a peaceful return.⁹⁷ The harsh conditions, combined with the impossibility of crossing into Croatia proper, encouraged thoughts of return. However, "a quiet return was not acceptable...and people started to envisage a military solution."⁹⁸

Conditions in Kuplensko were also quite harsh, especially by the standards of other Balkan refugee settlements. The camp was not an organized settlement, but a motley collection of tents and vehicles along a four-kilometer stretch of road. In comparison, most other Bosnian refugees lived with host families or in public buildings, schools, and hotels that provided better shelter and amenities. Kuplensko was not winterized and the Croatian government refused to allow the construction of weather resistant structures.

The comparison between the two crises reveals a difference in the long-term options—i.e. resettlement, local integration, or return—available to the refugees in each crisis. Refugees' long-term options in 1994 were limited by their leaders refusal to countenance a peaceful return, the international community's resistance to resettlement abroad, and the condition of the host state as an impoverished, war-torn, renegade

⁹⁶ *Information Notes*, September 1994.

⁹⁷ *Information Notes*, November 1994.

⁹⁸ Jacquemet interview.

territory. The refugee leaders met with many European representatives and pleaded unsuccessfully for resettlement abroad. All the Europeans stressed the hopelessness of gaining asylum in Europe. Despite Abdic's alliance with the Serbs, there was no question of the Muslim refugees settling permanently in the Serb-held territory. From Kuplensko, dismal as it was, the refugees' choices were not as circumscribed. During the second crisis, the Abdic refugees eagerly accepted offers to resettle in the United States and other western countries. The militant refugees found these peaceful alternatives more attractive than continuing their military activity with Abdic.

In the Abdic refugee crises, poor living conditions in the camps, e.g. housing, food, medical care, and shelter, did not affect the motivation for political violence. Increased humanitarian aid to the state-in-exile, in the absence of any demilitarization efforts, actually strengthened the militants. However, long-term living conditions such as resettlement and local integration did reduce support for military activity by fracturing the militant leaders' base of support.

VIII. Implications

In the Abdic refugee crises, the same population became refugees twice in a two year period. The radically different outcomes of the crises suggest that factors other than the origin of the crisis explain why war spread. The Abdic refugees fled as a defeated state-in-exile in 1994 and again in 1995. The refugees' political goals did not change between the first and second crises. In both crises, the risk of refugee involvement in political violence was high based on the refugees' aggressive motivation. The different outcomes in the crises confirm the political explanation for the spread of civil war and discredit the socioeconomic explanation.

Given the presence of a state-in-exile, the most important factor in determining the spread of civil war was the attitude and capability of the receiving state. In the first crisis, the receiving “state,” the Republic of Serb Krajina, was hostile to the sending state and had the means to arm the refugees. In 1995, Abdic’s surrender to the Bosnian 5th Corps and the Croatian rout of the Serbs left Abdic with no strong external supporter. Although defeat did not dull the intense loyalty of the refugees to Abdic, the Croatian Special Police limited the extent of possible manipulation and mobilization.

The Croatian response to the Velika Kladusa refugees in 1995 demonstrates that participation in political violence is not a foregone conclusion, even among previously militarized groups. Strong security measures by the receiving state, in this case backed up by pressure from the United States, limited the threat posed by the hard-line refugee leaders. The loss of external support influenced the refugees to demilitarize and accept a peaceful return or resettlement to a third country.

The Abdic crises raise serious questions about the role of international humanitarian assistance to state-in-exile refugee groups. Even as the refugees recruited soldiers within the camps, UNHCR continued to provide assistance. Some aid workers even claimed that militarization was not a problem because the military activity did not impede the distribution of aid. The humanitarian agencies and NGOs also did not address the ethical dilemma of feeding a state-in-exile as it prepares for war. Clearly, however, the assistance benefited Abdic’s army and its Serb allies as they prepared for their offensive. When dealing with a state-in-exile group, humanitarian agencies cannot claim to operate in a neutral and civilian environment unless a capable receiving state demilitarizes the refugees and protects the camps.

The Abdic crises refute the idea that the socioeconomic conditions of the refugee areas cause the spread of civil war. The socioeconomic conditions remained nearly constant from the first crisis to the second. The small size of the camps should have prevented military activity but, during the first crisis, it did not. The location of the camps on the border should have led to violence but, during the second crisis, it did not. The relatively high proportion of men in the camps should have encouraged military mobilization but, during the second crisis, it did not. The poor living conditions should have increased violence among the refugees but, during the second crisis, they did not.

The one socioeconomic condition that affected the propensity for military activity was the presence of peaceful long-term alternatives to refugee status. During the second crisis, western countries offered to resettle thousands of refugees. A few militant leaders even joined the Croatian army. By luring the militants away from the camps, Croatia was able to repatriate peacefully the remaining refugees.

Although long-term alternatives have a significant effect on reducing militarism, the provision of such alternatives is generally out of the hands of humanitarian actors. Only receiving states and third party states can offer local integration (e.g. citizenship) or resettlement. Thus the efficacy of this condition depends on the willingness and capability of the receiving state, or a powerful third-party, to offer alternatives. In the absence of a capable and willing receiving state, international humanitarian actors face the challenge of providing assistance without fueling a war.

Chapter 7

Refugee Crises and Theories of Conflict

I. Theoretical Findings on Refugees and the Spread of War

This dissertation compares socioeconomic and political explanations for the spread of civil war in refugee crises. Policy makers and aid workers have long stressed the importance of the socioeconomic conditions of the refugee camps as causes of violence. Recently, economic theories of conflict have also gained popularity in the scholarly literature. In situations where refugee crises lead to the spread of civil war, however, socioeconomic conditions do not cause the military activity. Rather, the political context of the crisis determines whether refugees are motivated to engage in violence and whether their efforts gain the support of more powerful actors. This chapter summarizes the theoretical findings and the supporting evidence from the case studies. Section II proposes how my findings contribute to wider theories of conflict. The final section discusses the generalizability and the limitations of the findings.

Invalid Socioeconomic Explanations

The socioeconomic explanations include four main propositions:

1. Larger camps (i.e. over 30,000 refugees) are harder to control and therefore more prone to the spread of civil war.

2. Camps near the border of the sending state are more prone to the spread of civil war. Geographical proximity facilitates cross-border attacks by refugees and the sending state.
3. A large number of young men in the refugee population increases the chance that war will spread. Bored and desperate young men are easily recruited for violence.
4. Poor living conditions will induce refugees to support the spread of war as a means of improving their material circumstances.

The findings from this dissertation do not confirm these hypotheses. I find that reducing camp size, distracting the young men, and improving living conditions do not blunt the refugees' political and military goals.

The case studies clearly demonstrate the irrelevance of camp size to whether or not the population is militarized. In Zaire, small camps came under even tighter militant control than the more chaotic large camps. In contrast, the massive camps in Tanzania did not reach high levels of militarization. The Bosnian refugee group led by Fikret Abdic formed an army in 1994 and returned peacefully in 1995. In both crises, the refugee population consisted of about 25,000 people. The Afghan camps in Pakistan all supported the rebel Mujahideen parties, regardless of size. Obviously, more people mean more potential fighters. So in that sense, a large refugee camp is more dangerous than a small one. But, all things being equal, a large refugee group is not more motivated to militarism than a small one.

The impact of camp location is more difficult to assess, but available evidence indicates that camp location is not the decisive factor for whether a state-in-exile group

causes war. The Rwandan camps in both Tanzania and Zaire were located within walking distance of Rwanda, yet only the Zaire camps served as launching pads for cross-border attacks. Abdic's Bosnian camps were also within walking distance of the border during both crises. In only one crisis did the refugees cross the border as an army. In the Afghan case, the camps clustered along the border, although not all were within walking distance. In that case, the more advanced technology used by the combatants made the distance of the camps less important. Soviet helicopters could penetrate easily past the UNHCR recommended distance of 30 km from the border.

Evidentiary and methodological problems hinder a systematic test of the border camps explanation. One problem is the dearth of refugee camps at a distance from the sending state border. Future research could examine this issue by collecting large-n data on camp locations. An additional problem is that relocation of camps away from the border likely correlates with greater capability and will in the receiving state. Thus, a systematic test might show that it is not the camp location that is significant, but the willingness of the receiving state to protect the refugees, either by moving them or securing the border.

Numerous facts show that the number of men in the population does not affect the level of militarization. First of all, most refugee populations do not have a proportionately higher number of men than non-displaced populations. So it is not likely that demographic balance can explain why a refugee group would be more violent than a similar non-refugee population. Secondly, camps with similar proportions of men show varying levels of violence. The Abdic refugee population contained a defeated army during both crises, yet that army demilitarized peacefully in the second crisis.

Relying on gender and age statistics as indicators for political violence presents misleading results. Looking only at demographics, one would have expected Afghans in Iran to be more militarized than those in Pakistan. Afghan camps in Pakistan had very few men present because nearly all men took turns going to fight in Afghanistan. Yet, despite the lack of men, the camps were highly militarized and served as rear bases in the Mujahideen struggle. In contrast, the Afghan population in Iran had a much larger number of fighting-age men than a non-uprooted Afghan population. These men did not coalesce into military units or militias however; they mostly worked as manual laborers in Iranian cities.

Testing the demographic proposition systematically is hindered by a lack of demographic data on refugees. UNHCR is the best source of data, yet it has demographic information on less than half the refugees worldwide. Without better data, individual case studies provide the best way to assess the role of demographics in the spread of civil war.

The fourth socioeconomic explanation is the most complex. In its simplest version it posits that better living conditions, usually in the form of increased humanitarian assistance, will reduce incentives for political violence. The case studies show that this proposition is not only false, but that in some situations the reverse holds true. Better living conditions can actually increase the level of political violence by providing resources for the combatants. In the Rwandan camps, similar living conditions produced very different levels of violence between Zaire and Tanzania. Both groups had better than average conditions compared to other refugee crises and to the local inhabitants, measured in mortality and malnutrition levels. In Zaire, the abundance of international assistance funded the Hutu militant attacks against Rwanda. The Afghan refugees in

Pakistan also enjoyed a higher than average level of international assistance, but this did not impede the Mujahideen activities. In fact, in order to receive assistance, refugee families had to declare their support for one of the rebel parties. In the Afghan case, humanitarian aid and militarization were inextricably linked.

A wider understanding of living conditions that includes long-term options such as local integration is more useful in understanding violence. In the few cases where refugees were offered non-violent, durable solutions to their exile, a potentially violent crisis was averted. During their second flight in 1995, many Bosnian Muslim refugees gladly accepted resettlement abroad, breaking their ties with Abdic. The availability of that option made it much easier to weaken the hard-core militant elements and allow the peaceful return of the rest of the refugees. The Afghan refugees in Iran also had markedly different socioeconomic experiences than those in Pakistan. Rather than congregating in camps, refugees dispersed into Iranian cities and became self-sufficient. This normalized, to some extent, their living situation, even though most refugees existed at the bottom of the economic ladder in Iran.

The findings on socioeconomic conditions suggest additional propositions and avenues for research. First of all, this study does not examine other types of violence such as crime, domestic violence, and banditry. It is possible that socioeconomic conditions have a greater impact on these types of violence. Therefore, I cannot recommend that policy makers ignore socioeconomic conditions. I can only point out that reducing camp size, employing young men, and offering more humanitarian aid is not likely to reduce the spread of civil war. Other positive effects may ensue, but there may also be collateral damage that encourages the spread of conflict. Better organized and smaller camps may

entrench militant leaders. Additional humanitarian assistance may enrich combatants rather than civilians. The following chapter addresses the unintended and negative consequences that can spring from humanitarian assistance in a refugee crisis.

Political Explanations

“The neutrality of refugee camps should never be taken for granted...It would be naïve...to disregard the political and ideological motivations of most actors involved in the causation and/or resolution of refugee problems.”

--Former UNHCR official in Tanzania¹

A major flaw in the socioeconomic explanations is their disregard for the political context of refugee crises. The purported socioeconomic causes of violence—i.e. size and location of camps, gender balance, living conditions—become irrelevant or misleading once one understands the political context of the crisis. The political explanation for the spread of civil war in refugee crises has three findings:

1. The origin of the crisis determines the initial level of refugee militancy.
2. Lack of capability and/or willingness to secure borders and demilitarize refugees in the receiving state facilitates the spread of war.
3. State and non-state actors intentionally or inadvertently contribute resources to combatants and thereby facilitate the spread of civil war.

The initial propensity for military activity depends on why and how the refugees fled. Most studies of refugees lump all populations together without recognizing that some refugee groups, a priori, have a much lower propensity for violence than others:

Refugee literature has tended either to ignore altogether motives for leaving or to paint a picture of a mass exodus that is ‘forced, chaotic, generally terror-stricken.’ Viewing a refugee group this way often leads to misunderstandings of subsequent

¹ Durieux, “Preserving the Civilian Character,” 32.

behavior and thus has a negative impact on refugee programs and resettlement plans.²

The origins of the refugee crises differentiate types of groups. Because refugee crises have different causes, the resulting populations have different levels of organization and motivation.

I classify refugee groups into three categories based on the origin of their flight (see Table 7.1). Refugees who flee the general destruction of war usually have little organization or direction. They share fewer experiences around which opportunistic leaders can organize. These are situational refugees. Refugees who flee direct persecution based on ethnicity, religion or other shared characteristics have a greater propensity for political and military organization. These persecuted refugees are more vulnerable to propaganda and also have a greater desire for revenge and/or political change. The most highly organized refugees are state-in-exile groups who escape defeat in a civil war. Often the defeated leaders organize the crisis as a way to regroup for later battles.

Table 7.1
Type of Refugee Group and Spread of War

	State-in-exile group	Persecuted group	Situational group
War spread	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rwandans in Zaire • Bosnians in Krajina 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Afghans in Pakistan • Burundians in Tanzania 	
War did not spread	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rwandans in Tanzania • Bosnians in Croatia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Afghans in Iran 	

² Kerry M. Connor, "The Movement of Afghan Refugees to Peshawar," in Grant M. Farr and John G. Merriman (eds.), *Afghan Resistance*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1987), 152. Connor quotes Cheryl Benard, 1976.

The Rwandan refugees in Zaire and Tanzania were clearly state-in-exile groups. The leaders of the genocide created the refugee crises as part of the strategy of war. Once in the receiving state, the refugee leaders organized the refugees and reestablished the political and military authority structure that existed in Rwanda. The militant refugees gloated about their success in creating a refugee crisis that delegitimized the new Tutsi-led Rwandan government. The refugees provided recruits, war taxes, and legitimacy to the militant leaders.

The Burundian refugees in Tanzania fled ethnic persecution in Burundi's civil war. These hundreds of thousands of refugees did not have a high level of political and military organization upon their arrival in Tanzania. However, the refugees' experiences of persecution made them more supportive of the Burundian rebel groups that operated out of the refugee camps. Unlike situational refugees who only require peace and stability, the Burundians demand security guarantees that persecution will not resume if they return home.

The Afghan refugees in Iran and Pakistan also started as persecuted refugee groups; the refugees in Iran remained as such while those in Pakistan transformed into a state-in-exile. The millions of refugees fled attacks and oppression by the Soviet-backed government. The refugees were united in their strong anti-Communism and adherence to Islam, but their political and military organization was fractured and weak at the beginning of the crisis. Unlike the Rwandans, the Afghan refugee crisis was not engineered by an army in retreat. Rather, once in exile, the anti-Communist Mujahideen parties took advantage of the refugees' natural sympathy for the rebel cause. During the first year or so of exile, the persecuted group in Pakistan transformed into a state-in-exile

with the help of donations from Pakistan and other states. With Pakistan's acquiescence, the Mujahideen parties exercised control over all aspects of refugee camp administration. From Pakistan, the refugees launched a successful guerrilla war against the Soviet occupation.

The Bosnian renegade refugees constituted a state-in-exile for both of the refugee crises there. In the 1994 crisis, the refugees followed their leader, Fikret Abdic, in an orderly procession out of Bosnia. Once in the camps, the refugees prepared to invade their hometown and organized a 10,000 strong refugee army. The 1995 crisis was also the retreat of a defeated army. However, that time the refugees did not have the capability to reorganize militarily. The state-in-exile disintegrated and ended in peaceful return home or resettlement abroad.

The origin of the crisis helps predict initial levels of political and military organization, but it does not explain why some militant groups flourished and others withered. Rwandan states-in-exile, the Afghan persecuted groups, and the Bosnian state-in-exile all show variation in violence over time and/or space. In order to understand the variations among similar groups it is necessary to understand the policy of the refugee receiving state. In crises involving violence-prone refugees (i.e. persecuted and state-in-exile groups), the level of violence is determined by the capability and willingness of the receiving state to prevent the spread of civil war (see Table 7.2).

Table 7.2
**Capability and Willingness of Receiving States
to Prevent the Spread of Civil War**

	High Capability	Low Capability
High Willingness	No Spread of War Bosnians in Croatia, 1995 Rwandans in Tanzania, 1994-96 Afghans in Iran, 1980s	
Low Willingness	Violence Spread Bosnians in Serb Krajina, 1994 Burundians in Tanzania, 1990s Afghans in Pakistan, 1980s	Violence Spread Rwandans in Zaire, 1994-96

The spread of civil war occurred when the receiving state was unwilling to secure its borders and police the refugees. In most cases, the unwilling receiving state had the capability to reduce violence, but chose not to. Tanzania turned a blind eye to Burundian rebel activity in and around the refugee camps. The comparison between the Burundians and the Rwandans demonstrates that Tanzania had the capability to control the Burundian refugees' violence, if it had wanted to. Pakistan had the capability to reduce the cross-border attacks by the Mujahideen, had it chosen to do so. Instead, Pakistan funneled arms and other resources to the militants. The government could not have sealed its borders entirely, however, due to the 300 mountain passes connecting the two countries. Pakistan also did not have the capability to deter Soviet cross-border attacks, which occurred frequently. The exception was Zaire where the central government had very little capability to prevent cross-border attacks, both emanating from and targeting the camps. In addition, Zaire was allied with the Hutu refugees and hoped to manipulate the crisis to increase its international standing and distract domestic critics.

The spread of civil war was contained when the receiving state had the willingness and the capability to prevent militarization. Tanzania was willing to prevent militarization because it did not have a strong alliance with either the Rwandan Hutu or Tutsi. The Tanzanian army closed the border with Rwanda when the refugees were deemed a threat. Croatia policed the Bosnian renegades and shot any escapees from the camp. The Croatian government was allied with the United States and the Bosnian government, and thus had no desire to expand the war. It had just defeated the Krajina Serbs, who were the past allies of Abdic's group. Therefore, the Croatians had no sympathy for the refugees' militant goals. Iran prevented the Mujahideen from organizing in Iran and regulated the border with Afghanistan. Iran did have ties with some of the Afghan refugees, especially the Shi'a. However Iran had other more pressing national interests, such as the war with Iraq, and could not afford to become deeply involved in the Afghan conflict. Iran also needed cordial ties with the Soviet Union and did not want to provoke military or economic retaliation.

The third aspect of the political context is the international influences on the crises. This includes state and non-state actors that intentionally or inadvertently contribute to the spread of civil war. The role of third party states in spreading conflict is usually straightforward and involves military and political assistance. This aid is sometimes covert, but it is usually an intentional effort to boost the capability of one of the combatants. A more complex situation is that of non-state actors, especially international humanitarian organizations, that operate during refugee crises.

Humanitarian assistance helps fuel conflict by providing the infrastructure for the state-in-exile, in the form of food, health care, legitimacy, and other resources.³

The capability and willingness of the receiving state shapes how much or little international actors can affect the crisis. Capable receiving states more easily regulate the activities of external donors, potential interveners, and international humanitarian organizations. If a capable state wants to prevent the spread of civil war, such as Tanzania with the Rwandan refugees, international actors will have more difficulty supporting militarization. When the receiving state has less capability or a strong desire to abet the spread of conflict, international influences will be greater and more detrimental to peace. The collapsed Zairian government could not regulate the hundreds of NGOs on its territory, leading to a misuse of humanitarian assistance. Zaire was also unable and/or unwilling to prevent third party states (such as France and Kenya) from supporting the Hutu genocidaires.

II. Applications to Theories of Conflict

The spread of civil war in refugee crises has the potential to shed light on more general theories of conflict. The theory of civil war is still evolving and many questions remain unanswered. Most of the literature deals with either the start of civil war or its resolution. There is not much attention paid to the phenomenon of spread or escalation. Yet the study of internationalization of war informs both how wars start and how they can be resolved. My aim here is to examine theories of civil war as they relate to the spread of civil war during refugee crises. I do not offer a complete critique of the theories as they apply to all

³ Chapter 8 deals with this situation in greater detail.

civil war. Instead I focus on how supposedly general theories hold up when applied to a different variant of conflict—the spread of civil war in refugee crises.

The Economic Causes of War

“The true cause of much civil war is not the loud discourse of grievance but the silent force of greed.”⁴

The findings from this dissertation call into question some of the new emphasis on economic causes of civil war.⁵ Economists and political scientists have advanced a “greed” theory of civil war that focuses on economic incentives as a cause of war. One variant of this theory, put forward by Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler, argues that the ability to finance rebellion is the major cause of civil war. Their econometric analysis discounts ethnic and religious divisions, political repression, and inequality (what they term “grievance”) as causes of civil war. They find that dependence on primary commodity exports is the most “powerful risk factor” for civil war. This is because such products (e.g. diamonds, oil, and timber) are easily exploitable and highly profitable. One aspect of the greed argument assumes that “all countries might have groups with a sufficiently strong sense of grievance to wish to launch a rebellion, so that rebellions will occur where they are viable.”⁶ That implies that grievance is a universal, and static, variable across all states.

My findings on refugee crises clearly demonstrate that a universal grievance theory does not explain why refugee crises lead to the spread of civil war. Not all refugee

⁴ Paul Collier, “Doing Well Out of War,” In Mats Berdal and David M. Malone (eds.), *Greed and Grievance, Economic Agendas in Civil Wars*, (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2000), 101.

⁵ Space does not allow for a full review of the literature on the political economy of civil war here. For an excellent overview, see Mats Berdal and David M. Malone (eds.), *Greed and Grievance, Economic Agendas in Civil Wars*, (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2000).

⁶ Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler, “Greed and Grievance in Civil War,” World Bank, Jan. 4, 2001, quotes p. 2-3.

groups harbor the same level of grievance. Situational refugees have no intention of becoming militarized or starting a war. These refugees have a low level of grievance around which to organize. Persecuted and state-in-exile groups have higher level of grievances, but the level still varies considerably. Only among state-in-exile groups is a rebellion almost sure to occur, given sufficient resources. Among persecuted groups, it is not a foregone conclusion that an infusion of resources will lead to war.

The most straightforward form of the greed theory argues that groups engage in civil war for material gain, not to achieve political goals. David Keen persuasively argues that not all groups engaged in war desire a political victory.⁷ Rather, for some groups, the economic gains from war itself outweigh the benefits of political and military victory. This argument makes sense in some civil wars, such as Sierra Leone, where capturing the state would bring little reward and where abundant natural resources are available to the combatants. However, the theory does not fit well in situations where refugees instigate the spread of civil war. In the case of refugee crises, economic gain has not been a major motivating factor for the spread of civil war. Refugee armies have not generally fought for plunder or for material gains but for political influence. Refugee situations are so politically tenuous—refugees have no sovereign territory or legal right to govern themselves—that the continued limbo of their situation does not allow militant refugees to consolidate much economic gain.

One aspect of Keen's argument worth exploring in later research is the economic incentives to prolong refugee crises. Militant refugees and many other groups (including NGOs) profit from refugee crises and have been accused of preventing their resolution. This has been observed in numerous crises, such as Zaire, where the militants prevent the

⁷ David Keen, "Incentives and Disincentives for Violence," in Berdal and Malone, 19-41.

return of the refugees. Incentives to prolong refugee crises, rather than war, seem more analogous to Keen's theory in the case of militarized refugee crises. During a conflict (or in order to prepare for one), a refugee crisis provides substantial economic and political benefits to the militants.

The Rwandan Hutu were motivated more by political goals and the desire to eliminate the Tutsi government. The militants used the exile to gather resources for the war, but this was not the motivation for the war. During their conflict, the Hutu took advantage of Zaire's natural resources and funneled gold out of the country. Rather than staying in Zaire and enriching themselves, they imported weapons and continued to attack Rwanda. For the Hutu refugees, varying levels of aid did not produce corresponding variation in levels of violence. More aid did not sate the political aspirations of the Hutu militants, it just enabled them to extract more resources from the refugees (e.g. in food taxes).⁸

The Mujahideen in Afghanistan also were not motivated by economic goals. In fact, the life of a Mujahideen was singularly unpleasant. Staying peacefully in the refugee camp would have been materially superior in terms of food, health care, and employment opportunities. Mujahideen had few rewards in terms of plunder or other economic opportunities. They risked their lives due to the motivation of anti-Communism, defense of Islam, and nationalist and/or tribalist loyalty.

Another variation of the economic explanations is deprivation theory. This is the idea wars occur due to declining standards of living. The case studies directly address the theory of deprivation as a cause of conflict. As shown in all the cases, poor living

⁸ Since 1998, however, and the intervention of numerous states and rebel groups, the Congo war has become deeply intertwined with exploitation of the DRC's natural resources. Persuasive arguments have been made that many parties to the conflict are perpetuating war for their own enrichment.

conditions (absolute and relative) did not cause refugees to support military activity. The most militant cases are those in which refugees have better than average conditions. Further research could examine if the findings from the refugee crises are applicable to other aspects of civil war.

The economic theories of war are most persuasive when they acknowledge the importance of political goals and grievances. It is impossible to separate finance as a cause of war and eliminate “grievance” or political goals. The refugee crises studied here suggest that the existence initially of political and/or military goals is a prerequisite to the spread of civil war. Capability, in the form of receiving state support and international influences, leads to war once a high level of political organization has been achieved among the refugees. It is possible that a high level of capability encourages better political organization, but this is more likely to occur in persecuted and state-in-exile groups, not situational groups.

No doubt war profiteers existed and flourished in all of these conflicts. Nevertheless, economic gain was not the primary impetus for the spread of civil war in these refugee crises. Much of the current civil war economy literature has focused on economic factors to the detriment of political goals in conflict. This is not an either/or debate, or it should not be. Even if economic incentives gain importance in the conflict, they are nearly always preceded by political grievance or ambition. Further research will help uncover the relationship between economic and political incentives in civil wars, and specifically in the spread of civil war due to refugee crises.

Security Dilemma or Hegemonic Aggression?

"[The coming war] will be long and full of dead people until the minority Tutsi are finished and completely out of the country."

-- Colonel Theoneste Bagasora (ex-FAR), from exile in eastern Zaire, November 1994⁹

Another important theory of civil war examines the motivation of the actors for instigating violence. Since the end of the Cold War, much attention has focused on the security dilemma as a cause of civil war.¹⁰ Preliminary examination of the motivations of militarized refugee groups suggests the security dilemma may not be as prevalent in civil war as the international relations literature suggests. When refugee groups instigate cross-border attacks, it is almost never due to defensive fear. Rather, the spread of civil war in a refugee crisis usually occurs to fulfill the predatory, hegemonic goals of one or both parties. This provides insight into theories about the causes of war and also about the appropriate policies to combat refugee-related violence.

The security dilemma posits a situation in which groups become more insecure and fearful due to their misperceptions of other groups' behavior. Usually, however, a fearful refugee group actually finds an increase in security by leaving the sending state. By becoming refugees, fearful groups put themselves in a situation where they can avail themselves, *in theory*, of international protection. The fearful refugees have not lost the protection of the sending state because they did not have that protection, even while they

⁹ Quoted in OAU, "International Panel of Eminent Personalities to Investigate the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda and Its Surrounding Events," July 7, 2000, sect. 19.25. Found at: <http://www.oau-oua.org/Document/ipep/ipep.htm>.

¹⁰ International relations scholars originally developed the concept of the security dilemma to explain interstate war and have more recently applied it to civil war and ethnic conflict. See Robert Jervis, "Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma," *World Politics*, 30, 2 (Jan. 1978), 167-214; Barry Posen, "The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict," *Survival*, 35, 1 (Spring 1993), 27-47; Barbara F. Walter and Jack Snyder (eds.), *Civil Wars, Insecurity, and Intervention*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999); David Lake and Donald Rothchild, (eds.) *The International Spread of Ethnic Conflict*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).

resided within the national border. Obviously, this does not imply that refugee groups live in peace and security; often refugees lack the protection of a state government that respects international law. Nevertheless, compared to the level of fear that preceded their flight, refugees usually do not increase their insecurity by crossing an international border. This applies especially to political and military leaders who flee with the refugee group. The structure of a refugee crisis suggests that the logic of the security dilemma does not apply to refugee-instigated violence.

In addition to increased fear, the security dilemma also presumes that the parties prefer the status quo to a violent outcome. Logic dictates that refugees do not benefit much from the status quo and thus are unlikely to feel complacent about their situation. Among state-in-exile and persecuted groups, refugee leaders have little scope to advance their political ambitions within the confines of a refugee camp. The mass of refugees are either disaffected from the sending state government or they have been forced into exile by unscrupulous leaders. In either case, a refugee population often provides a fertile recruiting ground for opponents of the sending state since they seek alternatives to the status quo.

In a security dilemma, one party mistakes the other's defensive preparations for offensive action. This misperception is not likely to occur in a refugee crisis. Almost by definition, any militarization among a refugee population constitutes an offensive action. According to international law, a refugee camp is a neutral, civilian, non-militarized area. Unlike a sovereign state, which has the right of self-defense, refugees must rely completely on the receiving state and the international humanitarian presence for their security. Any exile who takes up arms or engages in military training forfeits refugee

status.¹¹ Thus, observers understandably presume that militarization of a refugee area will lead to offensive action.

An alternate explanation for the spread of civil war focuses on the desire to attack, rather than the fear of attack, as a motivation for war. This explanation proposes that states or groups profoundly dissatisfied with the status quo will take great risks to improve it.¹² According to this idea, war is an intentional result of a state's goals, not an unwanted effect of defensive fear. For leaders with predatory goals, "the desire to expand and the willingness to run risks to do so is great enough that a freezing of the status quo would not be acceptable."¹³ In terms of refugee leaders, this would describe leaders who refused to return home peacefully, even if they received an amnesty offer and a credible security guarantee.

The spread of civil war often occurs due to the predatory ambitions of refugee leaders who view the refugee crisis as a strategic opportunity rather than as a vulnerability:

The terrain of exile is not wholly disadvantageous for the development of a political movement. It can provide protection, security, powerful forms of external support, factors and conditions which facilitate the development of a form and quality of organization unattainable in the precarious circumstances of opposition politics within the homeland.¹⁴

¹¹ The UN Refugee Convention excludes from refugee status any person who "has committed a crime against peace, a war crime, or a crime against humanity" or who "has been guilty of acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations." See United Nations, "1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees," Chapter 1, General Provisions, Article 1. Numerous international instruments prohibit the militarization of refugee areas and affirm the responsibility of the receiving state to preserve the civilian and humanitarian character of refugee camps. See *Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa*, OAU, 1969, Article 3; and UN Security Council Resolution 1265, adopted Sept. 17, 1999, UN Doc. S/RES/1265 (1999).

¹² Randall L. Schweller, "Neorealism's Status-Quo Bias: What Security Dilemma?" *International Security*, 92, 107. For a classic statement of this theory, see Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, (New York: McGraw Hill, 1948), especially chapters 1, 3, and 9.

¹³ Jack Snyder and Robert Jervis, "Civil War and the Security Dilemma," In Walter and Snyder (eds.), *Civil Wars, Insecurity, and Intervention*, quotes p.16, 20.

¹⁴ Tom Lodge, "State of Exile: the African National Congress of South Africa, 1976-86," *Third World Quarterly*, 9, 1 (Jan 1987), 2-3.

In some cases, such as the Rwandans in Zaire, refugee leaders have found greater freedom to recruit and train followers, amass weapons, and launch attacks against the sending state, than they had while based within the sending state. In their discussion of predatory behavior by elites, Jack Snyder and Robert Jervis recognize that:

...leaders often try to manipulate security concerns in order to solidify their positions and extract additional resources from society. To strengthen their hold on their followers, they may incite conflicts that make the latter more vulnerable and entice or force them to join in the enterprise of collective 'self-defense.'¹⁵

The clearest example of aggressive, rather than fearful, motivations for violence is the Rwandan Hutu in Zaire. From the refugee camps Zaire, the Hutu leaders pursued a hegemonic plan of action with no pretense of defensive motivation. Observers noted that the leaders who orchestrated the refugee flow did so "to preserve their own political and economic hegemony."¹⁶ The Hutu leaders repeatedly and publicly crowed about their impending complete defeat over the Tutsi-led government of Rwanda. A Hutu refugee leader, Jean Bosco Barayagwiza, gloated that "Even if they [the RPF] have won a military victory they will not have the power. We have the population." The militant leaders boasted of their plans to invade Rwanda, or at the least cripple the new RPF government. Colonel Musonera (ex-FAR), based in Bukavu, declared the intent of the Hutu leadership to "kill all Tutsi who prevent us from returning."¹⁷ The Organization for African Unity (OAU) reported that:

The role of the Hutu Power leaders in the camps was not remotely clandestine. Their activities were public knowledge, because they spoke about their plans publicly and because they carried out their terrorist tactics openly....The Ex-FAR

¹⁵Jack Snyder and Robert Jervis, "Civil War and the Security Dilemma," In Walter and Snyder (eds.), *Civil Wars, Insecurity, and Intervention*, 23.

¹⁶ Reed, "Refugees and Rebels," 3.

¹⁷Human Rights Watch Arms Project, *Rwanda/Zaire*, 3. See also "U.N. Says Exiled Rwandans May Invade," United Press International, Nov. 22, 1994.

received arms shipments in the camps, conducted military training exercises, recruited combatants and ...planned a 'final victory.'¹⁸

The actions and statements of the militants make clear that hegemonic, predatory goals guided their behavior. By becoming refugees, the genocidaires boosted their own security and rescued themselves from RPF retaliation. The Rwandan government rightly interpreted the militants' actions as offensive rather than defensive. The genocidaires adeptly manipulated the mass of the refugees, harnessing their fear for offensive purposes. The conflict escalated to international war when Rwanda responded to the provocation by seeking hegemony over the Hutu Power movement.

The spread of civil war following the 1994 Abdic refugee crisis also suggests that refugee-instigated violence rarely stems from defensive fear, i.e. a security dilemma. The actions and statements of Abdic and his followers indicate that they acted in order to regain power and continue their rebellion against the Sarajevo government, not as a last-ditch measure to defend themselves. Both the leaders and followers resisted a peaceful return to Velika Kladusa, even when offered an amnesty. The only way the refugees contemplated return was in an Abdic victory.

Observers agree that the refugees, for the most part, voluntarily joined Abdic's army. One observer estimates that 75% of those who fought did so willingly. People "had a feeling they were fighting for something good."¹⁹ As one refugee testified, "Babo's idea

¹⁸ OAU, "International Panel of Eminent Personalities," sect. 19.25.

¹⁹ Abdic and Serb police drafted any refugees who were unwilling to serve. Escapees were caught and returned to the camp by the Serb police. UNHCR official, interview by the author, Split, Croatia, June 1998.

must win over these war mongers [the Bosnian government]. We firmly believe in it, otherwise we wouldn't be here fighting for it.”²⁰

The actions and statements of the refugees and their leaders make clear the aggressive nature of the military activity. At no point did the Bosnian government threaten to attack the refugee camps and it repeatedly offered amnesty to returnees. Rather than negotiate a return, the refugees used the crisis to regroup their army and join forces with the Serbs. The ultimate goal was defeat of the Bosnian 5th Corps and the destabilization of the Sarajevo government.

The logic of refugee crises, such as the Rwandan and Bosnian cases, suggests that some situations are not structurally conducive to security dilemmas. It would be misleading to assume that all refugees desire peace, for many state-in-exile refugee groups desire victory before peace. Thus, policy measures based on the assumption that the right mix of incentives can forestall war will fail. The next chapter will explain the security policies necessary for averting conflict when dealing with a violence-prone refugee crisis.

III. Generalizations and Limitations

Three aspects of the methodology used in this dissertation make the findings generalizable across refugee crises:

- *Systematic study of the dependent variable.* Previous work has made general claims about refugee-related political violence based on a few high-profile cases of violence. There has been no understanding of the nature or prevalence of the

²⁰ Quoted in Julijana Mojsilovic, “Rebel Muslims: Fighting for Return,” The Associated Press, Nov. 27, 1994.

violence over space and time. My large-n dataset provides information on all refugee crises, both violent and non-violent, over a twelve-year period spanning the Cold War and post-Cold War period (see Chapter 2). Thus my findings can now be placed in a broader context.

- *Regional diversity in case selection.* The case studies examine refugee crises on three continents: Asia, Africa, and Europe. This means the generalizability of the findings is not restricted by variables specific to one region.
- *Variation in outcomes of war and peace.* My pairing mechanism compares violent and non-violent refugee crises across time and space (see Chart 7.1). This is the first analysis that systematically compares violent and non-violent cases. No previous scholarship has examined why Tanzania remained peaceful and Zaire did not or why Iran remained peaceful and Pakistan did not.

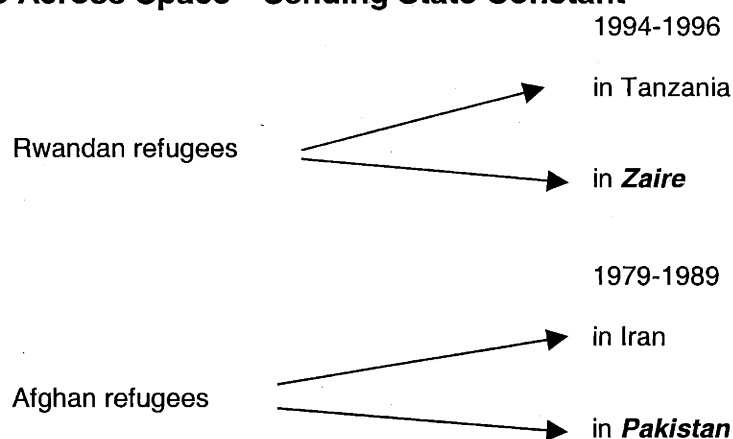
Chart 7.1

Paired Case Studies
Violent Outcomes in Italics

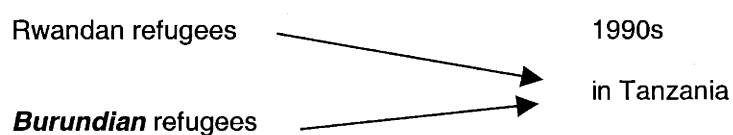
Compare Across Time—Refugee Group Constant



Compare Across Space—Sending State Constant



Compare Across Space—Receiving State Constant



There are numerous other potential cases with which to test the political and socioeconomic explanations for the spread of war in refugee crises. One interesting case, briefly described in Chapter 3, is the Mozambican refugee crisis in Malawi. This case provides an opportunity to study a situational refugee group. The Mozambican refugees are particularly interesting because so many aspects of that crisis led to predictions of

political violence. Another interesting set of cases is the West African states of Sierra Leone, Liberia, Guinea, and Ivory Coast. The civil wars in Sierra Leone and Liberia have exported thousands of refugees to neighboring countries and caused war to spread throughout the region. It would be useful to see if the conflicts there follow the same patterns as those in Central Africa and other regions of the world.

For a historical case, Central America during the Cold War would provide a good comparison to the Afghan and Rwandan crises studied here. The situations of Salvadoran and Nicaraguan refugees in Honduras and Costa Rica provide variation in levels of violence. The United States supported the militant activities of the *contra* rebels based among the Nicaraguan refugees. In contrast, Salvadoran refugees suffered oppression and attacks due to hostility from the Honduran government and the United States.

Limitations of this research include a paucity of systematic data on refugees. The inherent unreliability of many refugee statistics hinders the extent to which systematic analysis, especially econometric analysis, is possible. The findings from this dissertation are limited by the difficulty of obtaining accurate, systematic information about mobile populations. For example, recent UNHCR figures are able to present demographic data on only 5.4 million out of about 13 million refugees.²¹ This dissertation contributes to improving refugee data by creating the time series dataset on political violence.

Another limitation is the fuzziness of many of the categories used to analyze refugees and violence. It is important to remember that most of the categories constitute continuums and that there are areas of vagueness inherent in my classifications. For example, state-in-exile, persecuted, and situational refugee groups are not always clear-cut. There is a range of political and military organization. Similarly, the capability and

²¹ UNHCR, *Refugees and Others of Concern to UNHCR, 1999 Statistical Overview*, Table III.1.

willingness of the receiving state follows a range. A collapsed state, such as Zaire, represents the furthest edge. With other states, such as Tanzania, one must describe the level of willingness and capability rather than just categorizing the state as willing and/or capable. Measures of violence also range along a continuum. Here again, Zaire provides the highest measure of international war. Other cases of violence did not erupt into full-scale war, but included intense and frequent cross-border attacks.

Despite the limitations, my findings offer robust and generalizable support for the political explanation of the spread of civil war in refugee crises. These findings have important theoretical implications for understanding the causes of conflict. They also suggest many avenues for further research on the spread of civil war. Perhaps even more importantly, however, the evidence for the political explanations and against the socioeconomic explanations suggests radical shifts in policy toward refugee crises. International humanitarian organizations, in particular, bear the brunt of these policy implications since these organizations are often the sole international actors during refugee crises. The findings from the case studies show that reliance on socioeconomic solutions to militarized refugee crises will be ineffective, at best, and perhaps even counter-productive. Given the theoretical findings presented above, the next chapter explains how international humanitarian organizations can best prevent or limit the spread of civil war in refugee crises.

Chapter 8

Policy Implications: The Risks of Humanitarian Responses to Militarized Refugee Crises

I. Introduction

“To deliver humanitarian assistance in a no-questions asked, open-ended manner is to deliver the extremists their strongest remaining card.”

--African Rights¹

Among academics and policymakers, it has become fashionable to condemn humanitarian assistance for its role in promoting conflict. A cottage industry of critics has exposed the perverse effects of humanitarian aid and discovered that humanitarian organizations are often motivated by the same non-altruistic incentives that affect other organizations.² The slew of negative books and articles have pointed to important flaws in the humanitarian assistance regime, however they have not properly situated

¹ African Rights, *Rwanda: Death, Despair, and Defiance*, (London: African Rights, 1995 revised edition), 1100.

² See Alex de Wall, *Famine Crimes: Politics and the Disaster Relief Industry*, (Indiana University Press, 1998); Mary B. Anderson, *Do No Harm; How Aid Can Support Peace—or War*, (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 1999); Neil S. MacFarlane, “Humanitarian Action: The Conflict Connection.” (Providence: Brown University, Thomas J. Watson Jr. Institute for International Studies, Occasional Paper #43, 2001); Tony Vaux, *The Selfish Altruist: Relief Work in Famine and War*, (Earthscan, 2001); Alexander Cooley and James Ron, “The NGO Scramble: Organizational Insecurity and Transnational Action,” Paper presented at the International Studies Association Annual Meeting, March 24-27, 2002, New Orleans, LA. This is just a small sample of the dozens of relevant works.

humanitarian aid, and specifically refugee relief, within the context of all the relevant actors in a crisis. Other parties, including perpetrators of violence and their allies, are far more culpable for the spread of conflict in a refugee crisis.³ The culture of blame and defensiveness that generally pervades discussions of humanitarian assistance has obscured the need for clear analysis of militarized refugee crises.

The analysis of the refugee relief regime as a contributor to conflict presumes that a governmental failure has occurred. In order for a militarized refugee crisis to flourish, the refugee receiving state, donor states, and the UN Security Council must have failed to provide protection and security. In the ideal situation, government action prevents militarization among refugees by disarming them, separating militants from the refugees, and protecting the refugee population from intimidation or attack. A more common situation is partial or complete failure to demilitarize and protect refugees from physical harm. In a militarized situation, humanitarian organizations have a potentially large impact on the political and military aspects of the crisis. This effect is magnified when the crisis occurs in a resource-poor environment, leaving humanitarian aid as the main resource available for financing conflict.

In the cases presented earlier—Rwandan refugees in Zaire, Afghan refugees in Pakistan, and Bosnian refugees in Serb-held Krajina—states and international organizations failed to uphold international refugee law. The receiving states lacked the capability and/or will to demilitarize the refugees. Zaire lacked the capability to provide security in the refugee populated areas. Pakistan enjoyed the support of external donors, including the United States, who approved of the military activity. The Krajina Serbs

³ Otto Hieronymi suggests using a hierarchy of responsibility to understand the role of humanitarian organizations. He places humanitarian organizations at the bottom of the hierarchy, after perpetrators, their supporters, and the international community. Personal communication with the author, March 27, 2002.

joined forces with the refugees to attack Bosnia. Donor states and the United Nations Security Council failed to intervene to prevent the spread of civil war. This left the humanitarian organizations alone to contend with the situation. In each situation, the humanitarians basically ignored the military activity associated with the refugee population.

In evaluating their actions during militarized refugee crises, humanitarian organizations usually focus on the failures of states to implement international law. Transferring blame to states, even if it rightfully belongs there, does not solve the difficult issue of a militarized refugee crisis, however. Even if states and the United Nations fail to act, or act in a way to encourage violence, refugee relief agencies still bear responsibility for their actions. Ignoring the militarization affects the situation, just as confronting it does. Either actively or passively, the refugee relief regime can contribute to the spread of conflict.⁴

The refugee crisis spawned by the genocide in Rwanda provides the most extreme example of humanitarian aid that contributed to conflict. In 1994, after organizing the mass killing of hundreds of thousands of Tutsi, the Rwandan Hutu leadership forced over a million Hutu into eastern Zaire and western Tanzania. From the sprawling refugee camps in Zaire, the genocidal Hutu leadership re-energized. Militant leaders extorted humanitarian aid from the refugees, recruited and trained new combatants, stockpiled weapons, and launched cross-border raids into Rwanda. The actions of the exiles eventually sparked two international wars that have drawn in over a dozen states and

⁴ Using the context of the Ethiopian famine, Rony Brauman explains how NGO inaction and/or silence constitute a political position. Brauman, "Refugee Camps, Population Transfers, and NGOs," In Jonathan Moore (ed.), *Hard Choices, Moral Dilemmas in Humanitarian Intervention*, (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998), 177-194.

rebel groups and led to further massive population displacement in the region. The Rwanda crisis exposed humanitarian organizations to blistering criticism for their role in sustaining the genocidal killers. The humanitarian fiasco in eastern Zaire sparked a surge of debate about the role of aid agencies in conflict situations.

In order to avoid contributing to the spread of conflict, humanitarian organizations, such as United Nations agencies, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), cannot approach their work in isolation from the political and military context surrounding it. Despite the desire for neutrality, it is virtually impossible for material assistance to have a neutral effect in a conflict situation. Recognizing that fact, aid organizations should press for external political and military intervention when faced with a militarized refugee crisis. Even without external assistance, it is possible to counter militarist propaganda and support non-militarist leaders among the refugees. In extreme situations where the negative effects of assistance outweigh the benefits, humanitarian agencies must consider withdrawing or reducing assistance.

This chapter explains and analyzes the collateral damage, i.e. unintended and negative side effects, of humanitarian assistance in militarized refugee crises. I begin below by defining the essential concepts used. Section II describes the ways in which refugee relief can exacerbate conflict. I then explain the status quo policy of ignoring militarization in refugee crises. The fourth section evaluates policy options for humanitarian organizations trapped in a militarized refugee crisis. Finally, I discuss the controversial option of making refugee assistance conditional on security guarantees and predict future directions in refugee policy.

Essential Concepts

Although this chapter uses the phrase ‘humanitarian organizations’ to discuss a broad spectrum of groups, it is important to bear in mind the many differences among organizations. One difference is intergovernmental versus non-governmental organizations (NGOs). United Nations agencies, such as UNHCR, are not independent from the member states of the UN and rely on funding from donor states. NGOs are more able to operate independently of state direction. There are hundreds of humanitarian NGOs, many of them working in refugee crises. These NGOs often have sharp differences among themselves, as well as with the intergovernmental agencies.

Under the broad umbrella of refugee relief, organizations have different mandates and agendas. Some organizations have a mission to protect and assist refugees, for example the International Rescue Committee (IRC) and UNHCR, whereas other agencies limit their activities to material assistance. NGOs such as Médecins sans Frontiers (MSF) combine advocacy on behalf of victims with the provision of material assistance. In addition to formalized differences (e.g. in funding, mission, etc.) frictions occur due to “turf” battles and personality conflicts, just as in any organizational context. The result of these different agendas and mandates can be conflict and chaos (as occurred in eastern Zaire), especially if there are insufficient mechanisms for coordination. The many variations among humanitarian organizations also mean that there are likely to be exceptions to any generalization about them.

The traditional understanding of the term “refugee protection” refers to the legal protection afforded refugees, especially asylum. Interestingly, “refugee protection” has not usually included issues of physical safety. UNHCR defines its primary protection role

as ensuring implementation of international refugee law, including the right of non-refoulement (no forcible return) and to apply for asylum.⁵ Physical protection and security issues have been left to the receiving state. That separation of legal and physical protection obscures the link between the two concepts—physical protection is a prerequisite for successful legal protection.

Recent failures by receiving states have led some humanitarian organizations to widen the protection concept to include physical protection and security issues. There is a growing realization that legal protection activities cannot progress in an atmosphere of insecurity and militarization. Yasushi Akashi, a high-ranking UN official, explained in 1997 that:

When people are forcibly uprooted and pushed from their houses, and the aim of warfare is to inflict maximum pain, then ‘protection’ requirements are quite different to what was needed in more traditional humanitarian assistance operations.⁶

There is also a greater willingness among the humanitarian organizations to include protection of human rights as a goal of their activities.

This chapter uses the term physical protection to distinguish this aspect of protection from legal protection. Physical protection entails safeguarding refugees from attacks or threats of attacks against their life or well-being. The attacks could emanate from militants among the refugees, the sending state government, or other parties to the conflict. I also use the term “security” to denote a broader concern with threats to the territory and citizens of a state.

⁵ UNHCR, *Protecting Refugees, A Field Guide for NGOs*, (Geneva: UNHCR, 1999), part I.

⁶ Quoted in Carola Weil, “The Protection-Neutrality Dilemma in Humanitarian Emergencies: Why the Need for Military Intervention?” *International Migration Review*, 35, 1 (Spring 2001), 101.

In addition to the broad idea of security, this chapter focuses specifically on the role of refugee-relief programs in the spread of conflict across borders. The international spread of conflict occurs when refugees and/or the sending state engage in cross-border attacks against each other.⁷ Essentially, the refugee crisis exports a previously internal conflict to neighboring states. In some instances, militant groups use refugee camps as rear bases in continuing their war against the sending state. Alternately, the sending state may view the refugee crisis as an opportunity to crush its opponents, leading to attacks against the refugees. Such cross-border violence often draws in the receiving state and external parties, leading to regional destabilization and international war.

II. When Humanitarian Intentions Go Awry

“Aid constitutes a source of wealth that can be plundered, an instrument that fosters the creation of allegiances, bait, and it is seen as a source of embarrassment.”

--Médecins du Monde⁸

How does the humanitarian distribution of food, provision of protection, and organization of camp life empower militants among the refugees? At the most basic level, direct assistance to militants, both inadvertent and intentional, relieves them of feeding themselves (see Box 8.1). Inadvertent distribution occurs when militants camouflage themselves among the refugees. Aid workers may be unwilling or unable to sort out the militants and deny them food. In some cases, NGOs have intentionally provided food directly to militants. One rationale (heard in eastern Zaire) is that if the militants do not

⁷ The term *sending state* refers to the country from which the refugees fled. *Receiving state* describes the country that hosts the refugees.

⁸ Médecins du Monde, “A Case by Case Analysis of Recent Crises Assessing 20 Years of Humanitarian Action,” Paris. April 1999.

receive aid, they will steal it from the refugees. Another rationale is strict adherence to the humanitarian imperative of impartiality, i.e. providing assistance using only the criteria of need, without determining if the recipients include hungry warriors.

In addition to feeding themselves, militants use relief resources in order to finance conflict. It is not uncommon for refugee leaders to levy a war tax on the refugee population, commandeering a portion of all rations. Refugee leaders can also divert aid when they control the distribution process. Among Rwandan refugees, militant leaders diverted large amounts of aid by inflating population numbers and pocketing the excess. In Sudan, food aid provided valuable resources for the warring parties. An observer noted that:

A new phenomenon exists. That is, the actual creation by international aid agencies of the necessary machinery to achieve through the food weapon, rural domination on behalf of the SPLA [Sudanese rebels].⁹

Often, rebel groups and government forces raid warehouses and international compounds in order to steal food, medicine, and equipment. Thousands of dollars of relief resources, including vehicles and communication equipment, are stolen every year. In the 1990s, massive theft of vehicles and equipment in Liberia forced aid organizations to suspend their operations there.¹⁰

⁹ Vaux, *The Selfish Altruist*, 84.

¹⁰ Neil S. MacFarlane, "Humanitarian Action: The Conflict Connection," (Providence: Brown University, Thomas J. Watson Jr. Institute for International Studies, Occasional Paper #43, 2001), 17.

Box 8.1

How Refugee Relief Contributes to Conflict

- Feeds militant elements
- Becomes part of the war economy
- Sustains and protects militants' supporters
- Provides legitimacy to combatants

Even if assistance does not directly sustain the militants, it exacerbates conflict by succoring the civilian supporters and families of the military elements. Humanitarian assistance relieves militants from providing goods and services for their supporters. Aid keeps the followers alive so that militants do not have to divert resources to do so. Even the provision of physical protection can indirectly prolong conflict. Rebels may live outside of the camps, but they will send their families there to live in relative safety. Ironically, militants often present themselves as a state-in-exile, even though the humanitarian organizations provide much of the functions of the state. As Mary Anderson explained, “when external aid agencies assume responsibility for civilian survival, warlords tend to define their responsibility and accountability only in terms of military control.”¹¹

More abstractly, international assistance unintentionally shapes international opinion about the local actors in the crisis. The public relations campaigns required to raise money for humanitarian endeavors can lead to exaggeration and obfuscation about the political context of the crisis. Aid to the Rwandan refugees established a perception of the Hutu refugees as needy victims, obscuring their role as perpetrators of genocide. Aid also provides international legitimation, sought by states and non-state groups. The ruling

¹¹ Anderson, *Do No Harm*, 49.

party in Angola, the MPLA, has used humanitarian assistance to bolster its political standing during the civil war. One member of the opposition explained:

The greatest problem is that people confuse humanitarian assistance as assistance from the MPLA party. The MPLA have taken advantage of this situation and many people think that what [aid] arrives has been given by the MPLA, not by the international aid organizations nor [sic] the government....We [the UNITA-Renovada faction] don't have access to distribution of humanitarian aid, this is going to affect with certainty the electoral constituency of the future."¹²

Rebel groups also manipulate aid agencies in order to increase their legitimacy and profile in the international media.

Notwithstanding the possible political and military effects of refugee relief, humanitarian organizations usually characterize their activities as impartial and non-political. Impartiality is understood as using need as the only criterion in aid distribution. The emphasis on intentions can lead to a "type of groupthink...where the group perceives itself as having a particular inherent morality. This prevents the group from considering the consequences of its actions."¹³ In reality, the humanitarian assistance may be delivered with impartial and non-political *intent*, but the *effects* of the humanitarian actions certainly have political and military repercussions. Having a impartial intent cannot guarantee that the assistance does not fuel a conflict.

III. Status Quo Policy: Ignoring Militarization

The illusion of neutrality often encourages humanitarian organizations to ignore militarization or deny responsibility for it. Military activity that occurs outside the camp

¹² Integrated Regional Information Network (IRIN), "Angola: IRIN Interview with Eugenio Manuvakola," March 14, 2002.

¹³ Kurt Mills, "Neo-Humanitarianism: The Role of International Humanitarian Organizations in the Emerging Global Order," Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the International Studies Association, March 2002, New Orleans, LA, 16.

does not impede humanitarian activity within the camp and thus is not viewed as a threat. For example, it is commonly known that Burundian rebels mingle with refugees in Tanzanian camps. The rebels conduct their military activities in the bush and on the Burundi border, evading direct observation by international aid workers. Thus, humanitarian organizations can claim that the camps are not militarized. Aid agencies have often relied on this narrow conception of their mandate to ignore the role of aid in supporting conflict outside the camps. Because of this humanitarian myopia, militarized refugee groups manage to reap the benefits of international aid, as long as they maintain a low profile.

Practical reasons also encourage humanitarian organizations to ignore signs of militarization. Legally, the receiving state, not the aid agencies, must provide security in refugee crises. Without support from the receiving state, the unarmed humanitarians have little capacity to quell military activity. Militarization that is condoned by the receiving state or a powerful donor state further limits the options of UNHCR and NGOs. In the 1980s, humanitarian organizations sustained Afghan and South African refugee groups, both of which used refugee camps as rear bases and recruitment pools in their conflicts against the Afghan and South African governments, respectively. These conflicts were supported by Western donors and the receiving states.

Ethical issues cloud the issue of militarization, as well. Humanitarian organizations are likely to feel ambivalent about encouraging (or forcing) refugees to return home, even if that seems the only solution to militarization.¹⁴ The norm against *refoulement* (forced return) is deeply ingrained in the culture of humanitarian

¹⁴ On forced repatriation, see Anne Bayefsky and Michael W. Doyle, *Emergency Return, Principles and Guidelines*, (Princeton: Center for International Studies, Princeton University, 1999).

organizations and in international law. A second ethical qualm concerns the uneasy relationship between aid organizations and security organizations. Philosophically, many NGOs oppose the presence of armed guards or security details for humanitarian missions. Reliance on any form of coercion is viewed as antithetical to the humanitarian enterprise.

Although ignoring militarization risks the spread of conflict, both governments and aid organizations find it expedient to do so. Framing refugee crises solely in terms of their humanitarian aspects allows states to ignore the political ramifications of the refugees and respond to the crisis with humanitarian assistance rather than political engagement. Treating refugee crises as humanitarian emergencies also allows the refugee-relief organizations to view their actions as non-political, ignoring the political impact of international humanitarian assistance. Thus, both states and humanitarian organizations willingly ignore the political and military implications of many refugee crises in order to avoid responsibility for demilitarization. When conflict escalates, each party (government and humanitarian organizations) tends to blame the other. After the Rwandan refugee crisis in Zaire, states blamed aid workers for succoring genocidaires. Aid workers responded by blaming states for abandoning humanitarians in a military and political quagmire.

IV. Forestalling Militarization

Preventing the spread of civil war is most likely to succeed when the receiving state is willing and capable to undertake demilitarization. In such a case, the humanitarian organizations and the receiving state cooperate to provide physical and legal protection and assistance. This represents an ideal, but not likely, scenario. Quite often, relief organizations must deal with an incapable or unwilling receiving state. The problem is

exacerbated when the receiving state enjoys the support of a powerful third-party state. In such a situation, the chances of policy change are minimal, leaving humanitarian agencies on their own to deal with the problem. For example, the American commitment to the militarized Afghan refugees in the 1980s greatly limited the scope for action of both UNHCR and regional states (e.g. Pakistan) that benefited from US donations.

Despite the shortage of resources and influence that plagues most humanitarian organizations, ignoring militarization is not the only option. Humanitarian organizations can help prevent the spread of conflict. A prerequisite to preventing the spread of civil war is identifying violence prone situations as early as possible. Thus, prevention depends on accurate political analysis by humanitarian organizations to target actual or potential militarized crises.

Once a violence-prone situation is identified, the ideal solution is the deployment of a security force to separate non-civilians and provide physical protection in the refugee populated area. Such a force could be provided by the receiving state (army and/or police) or by international donors (e.g. United Nations peacekeepers). In all likelihood, however, adequate security will not be provided in a timely manner, if at all. And humanitarian organizations on their own usually cannot provide sufficient security in potentially militarized situations. Instead, these organizations can publicize the need for security. Humanitarian organizations can pressure the receiving state, the United Nations Security Council, and major donors for quick police action to demilitarize the refugees and protect international borders. The longer the crisis drags on, the more organized the militants become.

Political Analysis of the Crisis

“Relief workers on the ground should be alert to the political and social climate in which they’re operating.”

--UNHCR manual for NGOs¹⁵

“For UNHCR staff, the general tendency is to perceive emergencies in terms of logistics and not as failures of politics, the development process, or ethnic relations.”

--Gil Loescher¹⁶

The first hint that a refugee crisis could cause the spread of civil war is the origin, or cause, of the crisis. As presented earlier in Chapter 3, there are three types of refugee groups based on the cause of their flight: 1) situational refugees, 2) persecuted refugees, and 3) state-in-exile refugees.¹⁷ Situational refugees flee their homes in order to escape the intolerable conditions and general destruction wrought by civil war, not due to specific persecution or any premeditated strategy. Such refugees are less likely than other groups to organize for political or military purposes. Security measures needed for situational refugee populations include law enforcement and judiciary support by the receiving state or an external donor. The main obstacle to physical protection of situational refugees is usually financial, rather than political.

The second type of refugee population flees due to direct persecution or oppression, rather than general chaos. These persecuted refugees escape ethnic cleansing, genocide, or other oppressive policies that target them on the basis of ethnic, religious, language, or political affiliations. The coalescing event of group persecution can facilitate political or military organization among the refugees and possible cross-border violence. The goals of physical protection policy for these groups must include controlling

¹⁵ UNHCR, *Protecting Refugees, A Field Guide for NGOs*, (Geneva: UNHCR, 1999), Part II.

¹⁶ Gil Loescher, *The UNHCR and World Politics*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 363.

¹⁷ These categories are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3, “Political Incentives for the Spread of Civil War.”

information flows and political activity among the refugees in order to forestall military organization. Adequate security arrangements must also protect the refugees from attack by the sending state.

The third type refugee group is actually a state-in-exile. This group contains political and military leaders who, in some cases, organized the refugee crisis as a strategy to avoid defeat in civil war. State-in-exile groups have the highest propensity for political violence. Policy to deal with state-in-exile refugees faces the greatest hurdles, both in resources and political commitment. Preventing violence requires the separation of armed elements from the refugees and disarming the population. Adequate police protection, in some cases including border patrols, are needed to prevent attacks by either the refugees or the sending state.

Prevention of conflict requires early knowledge about the origins of the crisis and the type of refugee group that results. With limited resources, humanitarian organizations and governments should target security forces toward the most violence-prone situations.¹⁸ For example, it is a waste of money to send peacekeepers to screen a situational refugee group for militants. The resources will be better spent on more violence-prone groups. If the refugees flee as a state-in-exile or from targeted persecution, military activity is more likely. Such refugee groups may organize an offensive or may be victims of attack by the sending state.

The importance of the cause of the crisis forces aid agencies to do something they often neglect—look beyond the refugee crisis. Usually the provision of emergency assistance consumes all the attention of the aid groups, leaving little room for political

¹⁸ The distinctions between the groups are not always clear-cut and may range along a continuum between situational and state-in-exile characteristics. However, it is possible to identify aspects of a crisis that predict later violence, even if the refugee group falls somewhere in-between the categories.

analysis, which is seen as the purview of policy makers and academics. One NGO report admits:

Once the team is in the field, the intensity of the medical work it faces prevents it from making a true analysis of the society in which it is operating, of the surrounding conflict, its roots, or its impact on a national and regional scale. This is why a real analysis, based on a conceptual framework which takes into account the complexity of the situation, is indispensable.¹⁹

However, in order to identify violence-prone situations as early as possible, everyone involved in the crisis must understand the reason for the refugee flow.

Separate Non-civilians from Refugees

“After the genocide, we failed to push hard enough to expel genocidal killers from the refugee camps, and we shrank from the truth that it was worth risking bloodshed to force a separation between killers and legitimate refugees.”

--Roger Winter, US Committee for Refugees²⁰

The best way to prevent the spread of war, once a potentially violent crisis is identified, is to separate the non-civilians from the refugees as quickly as possible. UNHCR recognizes: “In certain situations,...there may be no other option than to deploy international police or military forces to effect the separation and exclusion of people who do not qualify for international protection as refugees.”²¹ The longer the separation takes, the more entrenched the militants become among the population. The time factor underlines the need for early identification of potential state-in-exile groups. However, many obstacles hinder screening and separation of militants. Problems include

¹⁹ Médecins du Monde, “A Case by Case Analysis of Recent Crises Assessing 20 Years of Humanitarian Action,” Paris. April 1999, sect 2.b.

²⁰ Roger P. Winter, “How Human Rights Groups Miss the Opportunity to Do Good,” *Washington Post*, Feb. 22, 1998.

²¹ OAU/UNHCR, *Regional Meeting on Refugee Issues in the Great Lakes*, Opening statement by Sadako Ogata, Kampala, Uganda, May 8-9, 1998, 2.

prohibitive costs (political, military and economic), logistical difficulties, and ethical dilemmas. Currently, no humanitarian organization has the resources or mandate to identify and separate militants during a refugee crisis.

A major obstacle to separation and disarmament is the need for coercion. In situations where the militants are organized and capable, disarming and separating them will require the use of force. In 1994, a United States Committee for Refugees (USCR) mission to the Rwandan refugee camps in Zaire warned that “any disarmament effort would probably require a mini-war for several weeks or months against a desperate regime that has already proven its willingness to employ brutally extreme tactics to survive.”²² This clearly falls beyond the purview of humanitarian organizations and would require a political and military commitment from external forces.²³

In eastern Zaire, no external actor was willing to pay the political and military price of separating the Rwandan militants from the refugees. Numerous appeals by humanitarian organizations were ignored or watered down by the Zairian government, the United Nations, and major donors. On Nov. 18, 1994 the UN Secretary General offered the Security Council four options to address the security problems in the camps: a UN peacekeeping operation, a UN force to separate the militants from the refugees, a non-UN multinational military force, and the use of foreign police and military to train local forces. The Security Council rejected all but the weakest option—using foreign forces to train Zairian forces.

Even if the use of force is not required, the cost and time of identifying non-refugees is enormous. A small screening project in Tanzania illustrates the prohibitive

²² Jeff Drumtra, “Site Visit to Rwanda, Zaire, and Burundi, Oct. 20 to Nov.17, 1994,” (Washington DC: US Committee for Refugees), sect. 27E.

²³ See MacFarlane, “Humanitarian Action: The Conflict Connection,” 35.

costs of individual refugee screening. In 1998, UNHCR started individually screening the 12,000 Rwandans in Tanzania to determine which Rwandans merited refugee status and which did not. UNHCR projected a cost of \$350,000 to screen 12,000 refugees. The screening was estimated to take a few hours per person.²⁴ At that rate, it would cost nearly \$3 million to screen 100,000 refugees and would take months, if not years, to complete.

The time and money involved in individual screening of refugees suggests that it is not feasible for large, rapid outflows. In the Rwanda crisis, initial plans to separate the militants from the refugees fell through when aid agencies realized that they would have to move 60,000 to 100,000 militia and army members (with their families) at an estimated cost of \$90 million to \$125 million. UNHCR received no help from the Zairian government, which lacked the will to separate intimidators from the refugees. The government put the onus on UNHCR to gather a list of names of intimidators, but UNHCR could not convince the Zairian army to arrest any militants. UNHCR itself had no mechanisms in place for screening out militants. One official noted that two years into the exile (summer 1996) UNHCR was still discussing the proper criteria for exclusion from refugee status.²⁵

Even given the existence of a screening process, the aid workers still have to determine—with scant evidence—who the militants are. Many humanitarian organizations cite the difficulty of identifying militants and war criminals, especially in a

²⁴ Project Description, "Screening of Rwandan Refugees in Tanzania," 1998, UNHCR document.

²⁵ Joel Boutroue, "Missed Opportunities: The Role of the International Community in the Return of the Rwandan Refugees from Eastern Zaire," *Rosemarie Rogers Working Paper Series*, (Cambridge, MA: Center for International Studies, MIT), 1998; UNHCR, "Information Bulletin, Burundi and Rwanda," June 1996.

chaotic emergency situation.²⁶ For example, in Zaire, many of the Rwandan Hutu soldiers shed their uniforms and, conversely, many of those wearing military uniforms turned out not to be soldiers. Additionally, “the top ex-FAR officers and other Rwandans with past high positions were highly mobile.”²⁷ UN observers concur that “the identification of armed elements leads to enormous problems.”²⁸

A related problem is the treatment of the militants once they are identified. Refugee relief agencies rarely have the mandate to assist non-refugees, especially non-civilians. However, humanitarian organizations would oppose their forcible return to the sending state. One solution would be some sort of detention center in the receiving state. War criminals could be prosecuted under international law. Soldiers could have the option of demobilizing and returning to the refugee camp or returning home. Soldiers who refused to demobilize would stay in detention until they could safely return home.

In addition to logistical, political, and cost issues, humanitarian organizations face ethical dilemmas regarding separation of militants. UNHCR officials with experience in Zaire worried: “One problem with the separation proposal is that many people inciting trouble in the camps are accompanied by innocent family members. Separating leaders and soldiers from their families would be controversial under international guidelines for treatment of refugees.”²⁹ Humanitarian organizations also want to avoid a situation where they became responsible for detaining non-refugees.

²⁶ One UNHCR official disagrees and argues that the top leaders among the Rwandan Hutu refugees were well-known and that identifying and apprehending these leaders would not have been difficult. Boutroue, “Missed Opportunities,” 43, fn159.

²⁷ Boutroue, “Missed Opportunities,” 38-39.

²⁸ United Nations, Security Council, “Report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict,” S/2001/331, March 30, 2001.

²⁹ “Security Council Blames Hutus for Part of Refugee Situation,” The Associated Press, Oct. 14, 1994.

So far, the assessment of separating militants from refugees is not encouraging. This does not mean the idea should be abandoned. In a large, rapid influx, there are ways to shorten the process of demilitarization. Rather than in-depth individual screening, a peacekeeping force could disarm entering refugees and detain obvious soldiers or known war-criminals. Such a broad sweep might not find every militant and every weapon, but the goal would be to prevent the coalescing of an organized military and political entity. Breaking or preventing organization among militants would go a long way toward reducing the spread of conflict.

With a willing receiving state, the issue of separation of militants poses fewer problems for humanitarian organizations. Recent instances of separation and demilitarization show that a committed receiving state, or a welcome international force, can succeed, especially when the numbers of militants are small. In October 2001, United Nations peacekeepers in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) separated 1,000 Central African Republic (CAR) soldiers from 24,000 refugees camped on the border of CAR. The peacekeepers disarmed the soldiers and transferred them and their families to a site 120 kilometers away from the border. Once the soldiers were separated, UNHCR assessed their qualifications for refugee status.³⁰

Despite the patent need to demilitarize, especially when facing a state-in-exile such as the Rwandan Hutu, international support is not usually forthcoming. To increase support, humanitarian organizations can publicize the need for security measures and lobby governments for assistance. One selling point of an international demilitarization

³⁰ IRIN, "UN separates CAR soldiers from civilian refugees," Oct. 8, 2001; IRIN, "UN begins separating civilian, military refugees," Oct. 17, 2001.

force is that the operation is likely to be of short duration, especially compared to most peacekeeping operations.

Seek a speedy and peaceful resolution to the crisis

"Time was reinforcing extremists within the refugee population."
--UNHCR official in Goma, Zaire³¹

Most state-in-exile groups gain strength over time. The longer it takes to separate the militants, disarm the refugees, and develop alternate solutions to the crisis, the more time the group has to organize and grow. In exile, the militants improve their security situation vis à vis the sending state. They also have greater freedom to raise funds and develop alliances. Time in exile gives leaders the opportunity to expand their popular support. As a crisis drags on, discouraged refugees may begin to believe that the only escape from an interminable situation is through violence.

The two years in eastern Zaire clearly helped the Rwandan Hutu state-in-exile consolidate its military capability and organization. For the first few months after the Rwandans arrived in Zaire, chaos (and cholera) reigned in the camps. During the early period of confusion (July to October, 1994), thousands of refugees willingly returned home. By November 1994, virtually no refugees returned voluntarily; a number of would-be returnees were beaten to death by extremists.³² Observers suggest that the period of chaos was a tragic missed opportunity for the international refugee-relief effort

³¹ Boutroue, "Missed Opportunities," 6.

³² Drumtra, "Site Visit to Rwanda, Zaire, and Burundi," 1994, Sect. 23E.

to organize a mass repatriation. Instead, as time went on, the genocidaires improved their organization, gathered more resources, and exerted complete control over the refugees.³³

Similarly, the Afghan refugees in Pakistan evolved into a state-in-exile over the first months of that crisis in early 1980. When the Soviets invaded Afghanistan in December 1979, most of the Afghan resistance parties were newly established. Initially they did not constitute a state-in-exile. As millions of persecuted refugees poured into a sympathetic Pakistan, the resistance parties used the refugee crisis as an opportunity to recruit followers and consolidate their power. With massive external humanitarian and military assistance, these persecuted refugees hardened into a state-in-exile. Those early months after the Soviet invasion would have been the best time to impede militarization among the refugees, had that been a desired option.

A quick and durable resolution to the crisis will stunt the growth of a state-in-exile. The three generally accepted durable resolutions to a refugee crisis are repatriation, resettlement to a third country, or local integration into the receiving state. Third country resettlement probably offers the most desirable non-violent resolution for refugees who feel they cannot return home. The increasingly rare option of resettlement usually entails permanent residence in an industrialized country. A second attractive option consists of local integration into the receiving state. In this option, the refugee receives the right to own property, hold employment, and eventually attain citizenship or permanent residence in the country of asylum. Like resettlement, this coveted option rarely occurs. Resettlement or local integration will blunt the militant goals of the refugees and reduce their ability to organize militarily. These options also reduce the threat perceived by the

³³ Eleanor Bedford, USCR, interview by the author, Washington, DC, Nov. 2, 1999.

sending state. By accepting a durable solution, refugees sever, to some extent, the ties with their homeland.³⁴

Recent trends in refugee crises have favored return to the sending state as the optimal outcome. Former High Commissioner for Refugees, Sadako Ogata, confirmed the emphasis on repatriation:

When refugee outflows and prolonged stay in asylum countries risk spreading conflict to neighboring states, policies aimed at promoting early repatriation can be considered as serving prevention.³⁵

However, for a persecuted or state-in-exile group to return to the sending state usually requires coercion or a subordination of refugees' political goals.

In many crises, a quick, durable solution is not possible. In the Afghan case, return to the Soviet-occupied country was not a feasible solution. The refugees could not return to such an unsafe environment. The sheer size of the refugee population in Pakistan (two to three million) made resettlement impossible and local integration unpopular with local residents. In cases that defy peaceful resolution, aid agencies and governments must take into account the added negative effect of a long refugee crisis. In the case of a state-in-exile or persecuted refugee group, a long exile will aid those among the refugees who seek to engage in organized military activity.

V. Reducing the Spread of Civil War

Preventing the spread of civil war is an expensive, risky undertaking that requires timely political and military cooperation from the receiving state and/or external donors.

³⁴ Resettlement abroad or integration into the host country may create a new problem—a politically active diaspora—but this falls beyond the scope of this study.

³⁵ Sadako Ogata, Remarks at a conference on "Humanitarian Response and the Prevention of Deadly Conflict," Sponsored by UNHCR and the Carnegie Commission on the Prevention of Deadly Conflict, Geneva, Feb. 17, 1997.

Because of those obstacles, humanitarian organizations with inadequate security resources often find themselves facing an actual or potential state-in-exile. In this situation, humanitarian organizations can either ignore the militarization or attempt to reduce it. For reasons detailed earlier in the chapter, humanitarian organizations often ignore militarization. However, reducing the spread of conflict has long-term benefits for refugee protection and regional security.

Assuming aid agencies want to reduce militarization, there are three useful policies they can follow. The first is to develop security partnerships with entities that will help demilitarize the refugee area. Possible partners include the receiving state police or army, United Nations or regional peacekeeping forces, international police, and private forces. Secondly, humanitarian organizations can support non-militant leaders among the refugees. Lastly, aid agencies can implement information campaigns to counter militant propaganda. As in prevention, the success of security partnerships, leadership development, and information programs will depend on the cooperation and capability of the receiving state. The following section discusses each option for reducing the spread of conflict.

Develop security partnerships

A humanitarian organization that wants to reduce the spread of violence often has to rely on its own initiative. In many cases, the receiving state is unwilling and/or incapable of providing adequate security. Adequate security entails demilitarizing refugee populations, separating non-civilian elements, and protecting refugees from attacks. In addition to political will, effective security requires training, equipment, and funding.

Refugee crises in Zaire and Tanzania offer two models of security provision, both of which fell short of demilitarizing the refugee areas. In Zaire in 1994, a militant Hutu state-in-exile controlled the camps and openly prepared for war against Rwanda. Then Secretary General of the United Nations, Boutros-Boutros Ghali, asked 60 countries for help in providing a security force; only Bangladesh responded positively. This lack of action in the Security Council pushed the issue into UNHCR's lap. UNHCR hired 1500 elite soldiers from Mobutu's Presidential Guard as a last resort when no international force was forthcoming. The Zairian force, called the *Contingent Zairois pour la Sécurité dans les Camps* (CZSC), deployed in February 1995. The objectives of the force were to ensure security in the camps for refugees and relief workers. The force had no mandate to disarm the militants. UNHCR paid the soldiers \$3 per day plus food, lodging, and clothes.³⁶

The Zairian force received mixed reviews. The first contingent of soldiers that arrived in early 1995 were relatively well disciplined. Later contingents of soldiers actually contributed to insecurity as their discipline and morale broke down. The soldiers became involved in crime and extortion, victimizing the refugees rather than protecting them. By the time of the Rwandan invasion in 1996, many of the Zairian soldiers fought with the Hutu militias against the Tutsi invaders. The Zairian experience suggests that an ill-disciplined force may be worse than no force at all. Throughout the crisis, UNHCR had little or no control over these forces, even as it footed the bill for their presence.

A second model for security provision was undertaken in Tanzania in the late 1990s to deal with security threats associated with over 500,000 Burundian and Congolese refugees. Security problems included military activity by Burundian rebel

³⁶ Boutroue, "Missed Opportunities."

groups, violence between rebel factions, and criminal activity within and around refugee camps. The violence strained Tanzanian relations with Burundi and created popular discontent among local citizens. Under the arrangement, called the “security package,” UNHCR agreed to train, equip, and pay nearly 300 police officers to work in the refugee areas.³⁷ The Memorandum of Understanding signed between UNHCR and Tanzania outlined the goals of the package: “It is expected that the additional police presence will considerably reduce the level of insecurity, criminality, and safeguard the civilian and humanitarian character of the refugee camps.”³⁸ The mandate of the police included reducing criminal activity, reducing gender-based violence, and separating armed elements from the refugees. Police also confiscated weapons and arrested rebel recruiters in the camps, but did not deal with possible rebel activity that occurred away from the camps.

Inappropriate police behavior and inadequate capability bedeviled the security package. Refugees and humanitarian workers noted a lack of discipline among some officers that included public drunkenness and the failure to patrol the camps. At higher levels of management, there was also non-compliance with aspects of the security package. A police report for Ngara district noted that between January 1998 and June 1999, 120 police were dismissed and 132 reassigned for taking bribes.³⁹ Police rotations usually did not last the agreed-upon six months, leading to many inexperienced and untrained officers who stayed only a few months in the camps. The police were

³⁷ UNHCR paid the officers a stipend of about \$280 per month—about three times their normal wages.

³⁸ Memorandum of Understanding between the Tanzanian Ministry of Home Affairs and UNHCR, September 28, 1999.

³⁹ Jane Okello, UNHCR Kigoma Office, “Memo: Review of Protection Activities, 1997/1998.”

singularly unsuccessful in separating militants from the refugees. In 2001, for example, 40 percent of detained militants absconded from detention.⁴⁰

Although refugee crises rarely allow much lead time for planners, security partnerships do not have to be created from scratch when a crisis occurs. Planning activities can, and should, take place beforehand. In this spirit, UNHCR has developed the concept of a ladder of options for providing security.⁴¹ The options range in the level of force needed and the actors necessary for implementation. The lowest level, implementable by humanitarian organizations, includes mass information systems and dispute resolution mechanisms. The most forceful measure is a Chapter VII peace enforcement operation. Agencies can also assess the likelihood of receiving state cooperation when a crisis seems imminent. Humanitarian organizations can press for a quick response by the UN Security Council to send peacekeepers. At a minimum, organizations can seek funding for security partnerships, so that financing will be in place to implement a Tanzania-like security package.

The capability and intentions of the receiving state determine how successful a security partnership will be. Tanzania was a stable, peaceful country which sought international recognition for assisting refugees.⁴² Even in Tanzania, the security partnership was limited by Tanzania's political relationship with Burundi. Chaotic or hostile receiving states will further complicate attempts at security partnerships. Such inhospitable environments would require more external security assistance, and perhaps

⁴⁰ The police detained or fined 143 combatants in the first half of 2001. Jeff Crisp, "Lessons Learned from the Implementation of the Tanzania Security Package," UNHCR, Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit, May 2001.

⁴¹ Quang Bui, "Ensuring the Civilian and Neutral Character of Refugee-Populated Areas: A Ladder of Options," Geneva: Center for Documentation and Research, UNHCR, July 1998.

⁴² Jeff Crisp, "Lessons Learned from the Implementation of the Tanzania Security Package," UNHCR, Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit, May 2001.

coercion, in order to implement security programs. With a hostile or collapsed receiving state, a security partnership would be impossible and a peace-enforcement force would be required instead. That is a completely different undertaking; one not suited to humanitarian organizations.

Among humanitarian organizations, the attitudes toward security partnerships are varied and volatile. Some agencies express qualms that security partnerships will compromise their neutrality. UNHCR warns, “using force to protect humanitarian assistance may compromise the foundation of those activities, since the actual use of force, by its nature, will not be neutral.”⁴³ Refugees and combatants may not distinguish between United Nations relief workers and United Nations peacekeepers, reducing the perception of humanitarian neutrality. There is also a fear that external military force will act as a magnet for refugees hoping for physical protection. Military units may also increase security risks by drawing fire from opponents of demilitarization.⁴⁴

In addition, some organizations have a philosophical antipathy to relying on armed security. For example, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) stresses that “humanitarian work must be disassociated from military operations aimed at ensuring security and restoring law and order in regions affected by conflict.”⁴⁵ Most NGOs do not have the capacity to deploy their own security, however, they jealously guard their autonomy and are wary of UN domination. No hierarchy exists among organizations, meaning that each can make its own decision regarding security issues.

⁴³ UNHCR, *Handbook for Emergencies, Second Edition*, 1999, Chapter 24, par. 20.

⁴⁴ On this point see Carola Weil, “The Protection-Neutrality Dilemma in Humanitarian Emergencies: Why the Need for Military Intervention?” *International Migration Review*, 35, 1 (Spring 2001), 98.

⁴⁵ ICRC statement quoted in Sean Greenaway and Andrew J. Harris, “Humanitarian Security: Challenges and Responses,” Paper presented to the Forging Peace Conference, Harvard University, March 13-15, 1998. ICRC has accepted, however, the possibility of using armed protection to guarantee the safety of its personnel and the delivery of assistance. Médecins du Monde. “A Case by Case Analysis of Recent Crises Assessing 20 Years of Humanitarian Action,” Paris. April 1999.

Influence Refugee Leadership Structure

Aid workers often rely on existing leadership structures among refugee populations in order to run the camps. In part, that is done to maintain community, encourage self-reliance, and avoid paternalism. UNHCR mandates that refugees “should always participate in determining the needs of their community and planning and designing programmes to meet those needs.”⁴⁶ Aid agencies work with the local leaders, even if they are not democratically chosen. As a result, refugee leaders wield great influence and can easily access resources, especially via food distribution.

In general, the instinct to maintain refugees’ communities is a good one. However, maintaining the refugees’ original leadership structure backfires in a militarized crisis. A nascent state-in-exile will gain legitimacy and power if humanitarian organizations funnel resources through established channels. In a militarized crisis, the benefits of a close knit, organized refugee community become perverted because militant misuse the social structure and humanitarian resources for their own ends.

In the Rwandan refugee camps, the UNHCR attitude toward camp leadership had the unintended effect of strengthening the genocidaires. Immediately after their arrival, the refugees reconstituted themselves into their pre-flight social and political structures. At the time, the overwhelmed humanitarian organizations appreciated the orderly and rapid arrangement of the population. With their power established, the genocidaires blatantly recruited fighters and intimidated the refugees in the camps. Once the agencies realized the power of the militants, it was too difficult to change the established situation.

⁴⁶ This sentiment is laudable, unless the community leaders are war criminals or genocidaires. Quote from UNHCR, *Protecting Refugees, A Field Guide for NGOs*, (Geneva: UNHCR, 1999), Overview.

In theory, UNHCR understands the potentially dangerous influence of refugee leaders. Its *Handbook for Emergencies* warns aid workers to “be aware that some new power structures might emerge, for example through force, and may exercise de facto control over the population, but may not be representative.”⁴⁷ During an actual crisis, however, the path of least resistance is to work with the existing leaders, even if they have militant tendencies. In Tanzania and Zaire, many genocidaires ended up on NGO payrolls because they were educated and spoke English. This sent an unintentional message to the refugees about the humanitarian organizations’ attitude toward the leaders. Another UNHCR official noted that the tendency to hire English-speakers undermined the role of traditional elders, who often are not as hot-headed as the young, educated leaders.⁴⁸

Humanitarian organizations cannot single-handedly mold the leadership structure of refugee populations. Nevertheless, aid agencies can avoid propping up war criminals, militants, and genocidaires. UNHCR and NGOs can promote new leadership in their hiring patterns and by organizing the selection of new leaders. Some Tanzanian camps had elections for leaders in which UNHCR stipulated a certain number of women must stand for election. Humanitarian organizations can also more carefully screen their refugee employees in order to avoid supporting militants. As with other aspects of demilitarization, accurate intelligence is essential to identify and neutralize militant leaders.

⁴⁷ UNHCR, *Handbook for Emergencies, Second Edition*, 2001, Chapter 7, par. 37.

⁴⁸ Maureen Connelly, UNHCR official, interview by the author, Geneva, July 20, 1999.

Improve Information Flows

Information is an essential, but often overlooked, aspect of physically protecting refugees. Refugees constantly seek information about their home country. They want to know about the political situation and whether or not it is safe to return. This knowledge greatly influences whether the refugees will return peacefully or whether they will actively sympathize with a rebel group.

Powerful militant leaders control and distort the information received by the refugees. Using propaganda, leaders manipulate the refugees' perception of past and current events. Leaders often greatly exaggerate the threats from the sending state, convincing refugees that return home is suicidal and that their only hope is to support the militants. Leaders also convince reluctant refugees that military activity is defensive, whereas the militant actions of the refugees may actually constitute an offensive threat to the sending state and precipitate an attack on the camp. Tools used to spread information include word of mouth (rumors run rampant in refugee populations), radio, newspapers, and community meetings.

In the Rwandan Hutu camps, militant leaders quickly realized the value of controlling the information available to the refugees. Refugee leaders circulated leaflets that described the horrors endured by Hutus who returned to Rwanda. The militants operated radio stations from eastern Zaire and propagated the idea that Hutus were the main victims of the genocide. To the warring parties, information provided a valuable resource. The calculated strategy of manipulating information effectively sidelined humanitarian organizations and the international media. The refugees considered the aid agencies as biased and inaccurate sources of information.

Humanitarian organizations face two obstacles in providing information to refugees. First, agencies must obtain accurate information. This is not an easy task in war-torn regions with poor communications capabilities. In a few instances, humanitarian organizations have not received information in a timely fashion, or have unknowingly disseminated erroneous reports. These errors damage the reputation of aid agencies as unbiased and reliable sources of information.

Secondly, the aid workers must convince the refugees that the information is accurate. This is very difficult if militant leaders are also sending powerful and contradictory messages to the refugees. Refugees generally mistrust information from aid agencies and rely on their own sources, as well as international news (such as BBC). Humanitarian aid workers are often seen as allied with the sending or receiving state, not with the refugees.

Information failures often result from lackadaisical planning and execution. Insufficient resources and attention are paid to the importance of disseminating information and gaining the refugees' trust. In some camps, there are not even organized channels for sharing information between refugees and humanitarian organizations.⁴⁹ Mechanisms for sharing information include radio, newspapers, bulletin boards, public meetings, and word of mouth (e.g. a version of a town crier) Successful information campaigns must start early and be tailored to the refugees' needs.⁵⁰ Countering militants' control of information will reduce the likelihood of conflict and increase the chances for voluntary repatriation.

⁴⁹ Author's observation, refugee camps in Kigoma region, Tanzania, February, 1999.

⁵⁰ A successful program was the Jesuit radio stations that broadcast in some areas of western Tanzania.

VI. When All Else Fails...Humanitarian Aid as Leverage

Humanitarian Dilemmas

“Striking the proper balance between real security concerns and humanitarian obligations is an unanswered challenge of the Central Africa experience.”

--Dennis McNamara, UNHCR⁵¹

In militarized, resource-scarce environments, impartial and indiscriminate assistance is a building block for successful rebel movements. Unconditional assistance worsens the security situation for refugees, local residents, and relief workers by enriching militant elements. This distorts the character of the humanitarian enterprise. Despite that reality, many impassioned arguments deplore the use of humanitarian assistance as leverage to improve security. Such tactics are viewed as a perversion of the humanitarian imperative that uses need as the only criterion for assistance. This school of thought stresses the impartial and neutral intent of refugee relief programs. As yet, humanitarians are still struggling with how to reconcile the pure intentions of assistance with the polluted outcomes.

Recent crises, such as the Rwandan refugee crisis in Zaire, have seen a colossal failure of state actions to prevent militarization. However, the admitted policy failures of states do not absolve humanitarian organizations, especially UNHCR, from action or responsibility. The human rights organization African Rights suggests that UNHCR should have resolved conflicting claims between justice and humanitarianism in Rwanda by “linking the provision of assistance to the refugees with the extradition of leading extremists to face trial for crimes against humanity and the disarming and demobilization

⁵¹ Dennis McNamara, “Everyone Is Found Wanting,” *Refugees, Crisis in the Great Lakes*, (Geneva, UNHCR, No.110, Winter 1997), 22.

of the remnants of the Rwandan Armed Forces.”⁵² Along similar lines, Ben Barber argues that by ignoring militarization, NGOs and UNHCR unwittingly affect the military balance between combatants. He recommends that “demilitarization of camps should be a requirement for humanitarian aid.”⁵³ If militants would rather sacrifice the refugees than disarm, the alternative is forceful demilitarization by an external security force.

UNHCR is charged with the mandate of protecting refugees, as well as providing assistance. Therefore, it cannot easily rationalize providing material assistance at the expense of physical protection. With a careful and sparing use of conditionality, aid agencies can leverage their resources to attain a more secure environment for refugees, local inhabitants, and aid workers. Using aid as leverage can prevent future loss of life of unknown magnitude if war does not spread. Humanitarian organizations can demand a basic set of security conditions so that their work does not contribute to conflict. This involves negotiations with the receiving state, rebel groups, external donors, and potential interveners. The need for adequate security should be highly publicized and clearly communicated to all involved parties.

Humanitarian organizations have two assets, or forms of leverage—one intangible and one tangible. They have the moral clout that comes from the charitable, altruistic nature of their work. They also have the tangible asset of material resources. Organizations have these assets in different amounts, depending on their reputations, wealth, and mandates. Moral clout enables humanitarian organizations to lobby policymakers and use the media to gain support for their positions. This asset is best suited for influencing donors and Western publics. Organizations use this asset to differing degrees.

⁵² African Rights, *Rwanda: Death, Despair, and Defiance*, 1100.

⁵³ Barber, “Feeding Refugees,” 13.

UNHCR, for instance, has good access to world governments, but fears losing its funding if it sours relations with major donors. NGOs vary in their desire and ability to influence policy-makers and gain public support. Some NGOs restrict their activities to the delivery of humanitarian assistance. Others, such as Médecins sans Frontiers (MSF) combine assistance with public advocacy.

The second asset, material resources, has a great impact on the war-torn areas that receive humanitarian assistance. Humanitarian aid is a much sought after resource during a refugee crisis. The amount of leverage it wields depends on the other resources available to refugees and combatants. In Angola, rich with oil, or Sierra Leone, rich with diamonds, combatants also fund conflict through smuggling natural resources. In resource-poor environments, militant leaders need humanitarian assistance in order to sustain their followers.

A humanitarian organization's attitude toward conditionality depends on its mandate. Organizations that focus purely on assistance generally avoid security and physical protection issues. These agencies view their actions as separate from the political sphere. The sentiments of one aid worker in eastern Zaire illustrate this attitude: "I know some of them [refugees] have killed a lot of people. But I don't care about the past. My job is to feed everyone irrespective of the past."⁵⁴ Such agencies rejection conditionality of any sort as a violation of their mandate. Other organizations have multiple (and sometimes conflicting) mandates. Médecins sans Frontiers (MSF) provides medical assistance and also acts as a vocal witness to human rights abuses. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) describes its mandate as helping

⁵⁴ Quoted in African Rights, *Rwanda: Death Despair and Defiance*, 1092.

victims and promoting respect for international humanitarian law.⁵⁵ Agencies with multiple goals are more receptive to using some limited form of conditionality. MSF France demonstrated such an attitude when it pulled out of the Rwandan camps and refused to support the genocidaires controlling the refugees. MSF decided that the negative impact of assistance on the political and military situation outweighed the humanitarian benefits.

There are many ethical and practical challenges associated with using assistance as leverage. The greatest fear that prevents aid workers from using assistance as leverage is the fear that people will suffer and perhaps die if aid is withdrawn or reduced. In the short-term, making assistance contingent on physical protection is often viewed as an unacceptable trade-off because it punishes legitimate refugees for the behavior of the militants. Part of the concern about refugees' suffering is because the benefits of physical protection are less tangible than those of assistance. It is easy to see that providing food and medicine can prevent deaths. It is less easy to demonstrate (especially to the public back home) how demilitarization will prevent deaths.

One problem with emphasizing physical protection is public relations. Donors want to provide food and medicine to needy children, not train local police. Also, physical protection is perceived as more political than material assistance. The act of providing security, including demilitarization, clearly affects the political environment. Donors may fail to recognize that material assistance is also a political act. This public relations problem is not an insurmountable obstacle, but it requires a concerted effort to

⁵⁵ICRC, "ICRC Conditionality: Doctrine, Dilemma and Dialogue," In Nicholas Leader and Joanna Macrae (eds.), *Terms of Engagement: Conditions and Conditionality in Humanitarian Action*, (London: Overseas Development Institute, Humanitarian Policy Group, Report No. 6, 2000), 23.

educate governments and the public about the importance of security during a refugee crisis.

Humanitarian organizations point out a practical objection to withdrawing assistance or making it contingent on security. There are so many organizations, and they are so uncoordinated, that the actions of one organization will have little effect. If an organization decides to withhold assistance, or target aid away from militants, other organizations will probably step in to provide it. Thus an NGO risks losing funding and publicity in order to make an ethical statement that has no practical impact. The lack of coordination among agencies leads to the mentality that action is useless and therefore organizations continue to ignore or abet militarization. Conversely, the multiplicity of actors ensures that an organization can make an ethical statement without imperiling the aid recipients. For example, before Médecins sans Frontiers (MSF) withdrew from Ethiopia in the 1980s due to government abuses of aid, the organization negotiated for a replacement NGO to step in.

UNHCR faces additional obstacles to withholding assistance. The agency is beholden to the governments that finance it: "This dependence on governments can sometimes constrain UNHCR from taking a strong and public stance on protection issues and may affect the vigor with which it discharges its protection mandate."⁵⁶ It has often been repeated that donor governments use UNHCR as a shield. By sending UNHCR to the crisis, governments claim to take action while avoiding political and military commitments to resolve the crisis. This means that UNHCR could face stiff resistance if

⁵⁶ Amnesty International, "In Search of Safety: The Forcibly Displaced and Human Rights in Africa," Report AFR 01/05/97, June 20, 1997, sect. 1.

it demands a peacekeeping force to demilitarize the refugee situation. UNHCR would also be concerned about losing its relevance and status as the preeminent relief agency.⁵⁷

In overcoming the many obstacles to demilitarization, organizations can use their second asset—moral clout. One way to gain more public support is to raise drastically the attention focused on physical protection and security. The assistance part of a crisis response is generally well-publicized. Newspapers regularly report on the amount of tents, food, medicine, etc. that humanitarian organizations provide in a crisis. Issues of physical protection receive much less attention, both from UNHCR and the media. By directing more resources toward issues of physical protection of refugees and aid workers, aid agencies can increase public awareness of the issue. The need for physical protection should be just as important as the more easily quantified and photographed assistance operations.

One caution is to avoid becoming mired in conditionality. Humanitarian organizations need to seek the barest security protections before distributing aid. The leverage should not be used to pressure for major changes in the government of the receiving state or structure of peacekeeping operations. In a refugee crisis, humanitarian organizations need to gain security for the refugees and aid workers. This includes demilitarization and/or separation of militants from refugees. Adequate border security also prevents cross-border attacks by the sending state or the refugees. Humanitarian organizations should use their aid as leverage until they assess that there is adequate physical protection such that the assistance will do more good than harm, both immediately and in the long-term.

⁵⁷ On the challenges facing UNHCR, see Gil Loescher, *The UNHCR and World Politics*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), chapter 10.

Past Precedents

The initial reaction of many humanitarian organizations to suggestions of making aid contingent on physical protection is that such actions are unethical and contrary to the humanitarian imperative of impartiality. However, organizations have used aid as leverage in many instances in the past when faced with unacceptable security risks. Most of these decisions were made on an ad hoc basis rather than in compliance with a formalized policy. For UNHCR, the decision to withhold assistance often rested with the UNHCR officers in the camps. The withdrawals were not long-term or complete, but they were designed to gain compliance from the militant leaders in the camps.

In the Great Lakes, aid agencies used assistance as leverage on several occasions. In Goma, Zaire, the UNHCR official in charge of the camps banned machetes in a camp after militants threatened inhabitants and aid workers. Humanitarian organizations cut off food aid to the camp and withdrew personnel until the camp leaders were ready to give a security guarantee. It took ten days before the refugee leaders agreed to put away their weapons. During that time, NGOs chafed at the strict measures used by UNHCR.⁵⁸ In another instance, humanitarian organizations temporarily suspended their activities when militants shot at aid workers who were trying to conduct a census.

Individual NGOs, such as MSF France, pulled out of the Rwandan refugee camps completely to protest the militarization. The MSF director, Jacques de Milliano, claimed “in refugee camps there are killers walking around making plans for new attacks. We don’t want to be part of that system.”⁵⁹ Tellingly, however, not all country chapters of MSF withdrew from the camps. This illustrates how even within an organization there are

⁵⁸ Joel Boutroue, UNHCR official, interview by the author, Geneva, July 2, 1998.

⁵⁹ “Aid Agency to Abandon ‘Killers’ in Hutu Camps,” *The Herald* (Glasgow), Aug. 29, 1995.

different understandings of its mandate.⁶⁰ The charity CARE withdrew from Katale camp in October 1994 after it was taken over by Hutu ex-soldiers. The takeover led to five hours of talks between Zairian authorities, UNHCR, and 150 representatives of the refugees.⁶¹ In these small ways, aid workers made assistance contingent on demilitarization. On the whole, however, millions of dollars of humanitarian assistance sustained the militant Hutu state-in-exile during the refugee crisis.

Another past precedent occurred after thousands of Kurdish refugees fled Turkey and moved to northern Iraq in 1993 and 1994. UNHCR eventually withdrew from Atroush camps in northern Iraq due to rampant militarization and cross-border violence. The Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) firmly controlled the Atroush refugee camp, which housed around 10,000 refugees. Turkey claimed the camp was militarized and conducted cross-border attacks against it. This expansion of the civil war occurred despite the small number of refugees and the location of the camp 160 kilometers from the Turkish border. In 1996, the Turkish government pressured UNHCR to close the camp. UNHCR complied in early 1997, citing the unacceptable level of politicization and militarization in the camp.

Conditionality has occurred in other types of humanitarian crises, as well. The International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC) felt compelled to withdraw assistance from rural Liberia in 1994 when it found:

That the level of diversion by the factions had reached a systematic and planned level, that it was integrated into the war strategy...It had become obvious that the factions were opening the doors to humanitarian aid, up to the point where all the sophisticated logistics had entered the zones: cars, radios, computers, telephones.

⁶⁰ I thank Kurt Mills for this insight. Personal communication, March 27, 2002.

⁶¹ "Rwandans' Camps Reported Tense," *The Gazette* (Montreal), Oct. 4, 1994.

When all the stuff was there, then the looting would start in a quite systematic way.⁶²

During the mid-1990s, armed elements looted 20 million US dollars' worth of equipment from humanitarian agencies in Liberia.⁶³

MSF withdrew its presence from North Korea in 1998 after determining that the organization was too constrained to fulfill its mandate. The North Korean government refused to provide the aid agency with independent access to famine victims, instead the government attempted to control all aid distribution.⁶⁴

Leverage—When and How to Use It

A seemingly logical requirement for refugee relief is that the assistance must do more good than harm.⁶⁵ The difficulty is that one cannot easily determine the harm being done or what would happen in the absence of humanitarian assistance. This standard is best applied only in extreme, egregious situations (such as Goma, Zaire). In most cases, humanitarian organizations need a more measurable framework to help make these difficult decisions. Possible requirements include disarmament of refugees, separation of militants, and adequate police protection of the refugee populated area. An MSF official persuasively argues that humanitarian organizations should take action to preserve “humanitarian space” but not to enforce respect for human rights.⁶⁶ In practice, that means NGOs should act to prevent situations in which aid is diverted or used to endanger the recipients.

⁶² ICRC, “ICRC Conditionality: Doctrine, Dilemma and Dialogue,” 25.

⁶³ ICRC, *Strengthening Protection in War*, (Geneva: ICRC, 2001), 48.

⁶⁴ Austen Davies, “Thoughts on Conditions and Conditionalities,” In Leader and Macrae (eds.), *Terms of Engagement*, 31.

⁶⁵ See Anderson, *Do No Harm*, for the best statement of this idea.

⁶⁶ Françoise Bouchet-Saulnier, “The Principles and Practices of ‘Rebellious Humanitarianism,’” Médecins Sans Frontiers International Activity Report 2000. Found at www.msf.org/publications/activ_rep/2000/index.htm.

Conditionality is not necessarily an all or nothing proposition. There are gradations in levels of assistance and numbers of agencies involved. In extreme cases, all humanitarian organizations may withdraw; in other situations, selected organizations will do so. Sometimes essential life-saving services remain (such as hospital workers and emergency feeding centers). For example, the World Food Programme scaled back its services in Afghanistan in the 1990s to the bare minimum in an attempt to promote respect for human rights.

In militarized crises, the culture of relief agencies may cause problems in implementing conditionality policies. Humanitarian organizations closely guard their independence and each agency reserves the right to act as it sees fit: "Agencies have differing and sometimes competing mandates, and are often reluctant to coordinate the type of detailed information regarding their operations that is required to plan and conduct effective emergency security operations."⁶⁷ Some analysts question the value of this independence when taken to extreme levels:

Is a point reached where the right of each agency and donor government to make its own ethical judgment in fact makes the impact of the system 'dysfunctional'? To what extent do different mandates justify different compromises?⁶⁸

The lack of coordination and competition between agencies does not lend itself to a clear-headed analysis of the situation. Ideally, there would exist some overarching framework that could help guide organizations when making these difficult decisions.⁶⁹ Better

⁶⁷ Sean Greenaway and Andrew J. Harris, "Humanitarian Security: Challenges and Responses," Paper presented to the Forging Peace Conference, Harvard University, March 13-15, 1998.

⁶⁸ Nicholas Leader and Joanna Macrae, "New Times, Old Chestnuts," in Leader and Macrae, (eds.), *Terms of Engagement*, 12.

⁶⁹ Arthur C. Helton presents a plan for a humanitarian coordinating body in his article, "Rescuing the Refugees," *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2002.

coordination would also avoid ethical “grandstanding” where one organization makes a public point of withdrawing, only to be replaced by another NGO.

As a very last resort, humanitarian organizations can consider shutting down the refugee camps. This is a drastic step that would occur when the harm caused by the camps overwhelms the benefits of refugee assistance. Myron Weiner warned “Sometimes it may be necessary to close refugee camps because they are used by warrior refugees intent on pursuing armed conflict.” According to Weiner, conditions for forcible return include when “camps are used by military forces as a staging area for resuming the war (by recruiting boys and young men in the camps, extracting resources from camp refugees, and using camps as a safe haven) and...refugees have become hostages to warriors and are therefore unable to choose whether or not to repatriate.”⁷⁰ UNHCR also recognizes that, in extraordinary circumstances, forced return and camp closure may be the least harmful policy. UNHCR reasons that, in forced returns, “the risk of undermining the principle of voluntariness must be weighed against the ability to save people’s lives.”⁷¹

VII. Conclusion—The Future

“When there is a strong degree of convergence of strategic interests among major states, host states, and resistance forces, UNHCR will have limited options.”

--UNHCR analysis⁷²

The foregoing analysis assumes that refugee relief agencies do not ignore militarization in refugee crises. As explained earlier, there are many incentives for them to do so. These

⁷⁰ Myron Weiner, “The Clash of Norms: Dilemmas in Refugee Policies,” *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 11, 4 (1998), 10, 17.

⁷¹ UNHCR, *Protecting Refugees, A Field Guide for NGOs*, (Geneva: UNHCR, 1999), Part II, Return.

⁷² Quang Bui, “The Militarization and Demilitarization of Refugee Camps: An Empirical Analysis,” UNHCR, Centre for Documentation and Research. Undated draft manuscript.

include aid agencies' powerlessness, narrow mandates, dependence on donors, and institutional self-interest. Militarization is often perceived as either none of the humanitarians' business or as a phenomenon outside the control of the humanitarian sphere. Given these perverse incentives, what is the likelihood that humanitarian organizations will take some of the measures described in this chapter to prevent or reduce the spread of civil war in refugee crises?

The ideal situation is a convergence of purpose between the main actors to reduce militarization. Usually this does not occur; the militarization may be in the strategic interest of the receiving state or external powers or it may be of no concern to major powers. Either way, the refugee relief organizations are left to deal with the issue on their own. In this worst-case situation, organizations have two possible motivations to pursue demilitarization. First, a humanitarian organization is more likely to act if its mandate includes protection, as well as assistance. Such organizations include UNHCR, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and various NGOs (including Médecins sans Frontiers, and the International Rescue Committee, among others). The severity of the situation also drives motivation. If the militarization threatens the security of aid workers and hinders agencies' abilities to fulfill their humanitarian tasks, refugee relief organizations are more likely to pursue demilitarization. Essentially, aid agencies are likely to reduce or prevent militarization based on ethical norms to protect refugees and/or based on the practical need to safeguard the resources (including staff) of the agency.

Despite the many differences between NGOs, the ICRC, and United Nations agencies, they all need to improve their political analyses of crisis situations. It is

generally recognized that humanitarian crises are part of a larger political and military context. However, to move beyond lip service to that fact, humanitarian organizations must improve their analytical capabilities. An understanding of the political context and origins of the crisis will enable organizations to predict potential militarized situations. At the extreme, such analysis will give warning of a state-in-exile movement, such as the Rwandan Hutu in Zaire and Tanzania.

Given an accurate understanding of the situation, humanitarian organizations can use their moral clout and media connections to publicize the desperate need for security assistance. Western publics and policy makers already understand the benefits of material assistance, such as food, medicine, and shelter. Less understood is the equal need for physical protection and demilitarization in refugee crises. This issue must be brought to the fore and a concerted effort made to raise funds for security—both for refugees and aid workers.

With adequate political and military support, humanitarian organizations can pursue strategies of prevention. This would require military or police intervention to disarm entering refugees and separate militants from the refugees. Prevention also requires a concerted political effort to find a durable, quick, and peaceful solution to the crisis. The longer the crisis drags on, the more likely that persecuted or state-in-exile groups will turn to military activity.


Even without external support, agencies can attempt to reduce the effects of militarization. One way to do this is to enter into security partnerships. This is commonly done with local receiving state forces, especially police. This type of partnership requires a financial commitment from donor states, but not necessarily a military one. Security

partnerships have the potential to reduce militarization and crime in the refugee populated areas. Thus far, security partnerships, such as the one between UNHCR and the Tanzanian police, have been partially successful. Their ultimate success relies on cooperation from the receiving state government. In the absence of a security partnership, humanitarian organizations can attempt to reduce the influence of militarist leaders. This can be done by promoting alternative leaders and engaging in information campaigns that counter militarist propaganda.

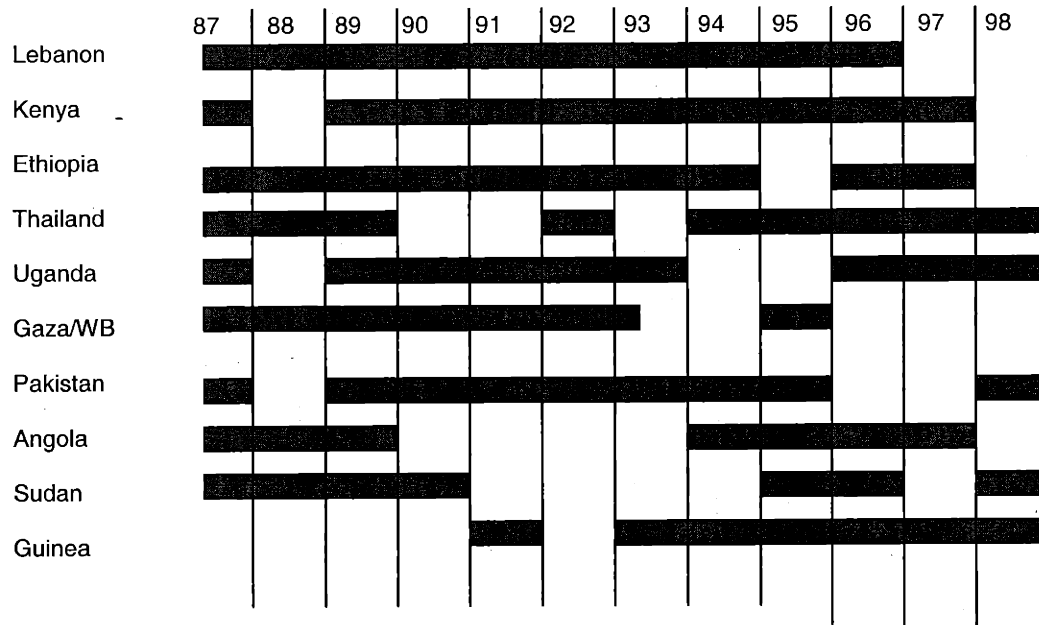
As a last resort, humanitarian organizations can use their assets as leverage in obtaining better security conditions. These assets include material resources and moral clout. Placing conditions on humanitarian assistance is a hotly contested topic with many valid arguments both for and against. However, in the long-run, if agencies do not leverage their resources, they risk losing their moral clout when humanitarian assistance contributes to conflict. The humanitarian community suffered massive damage to its international image after the travesty in the eastern Zaire refugee camps. That crisis highlighted the urgent need to design refugee relief programs with some understanding of their political and military impacts. In militarized refugee crises, purity of intention cannot prevent the spread of conflict.

Years of Violence Reported—Receiving States

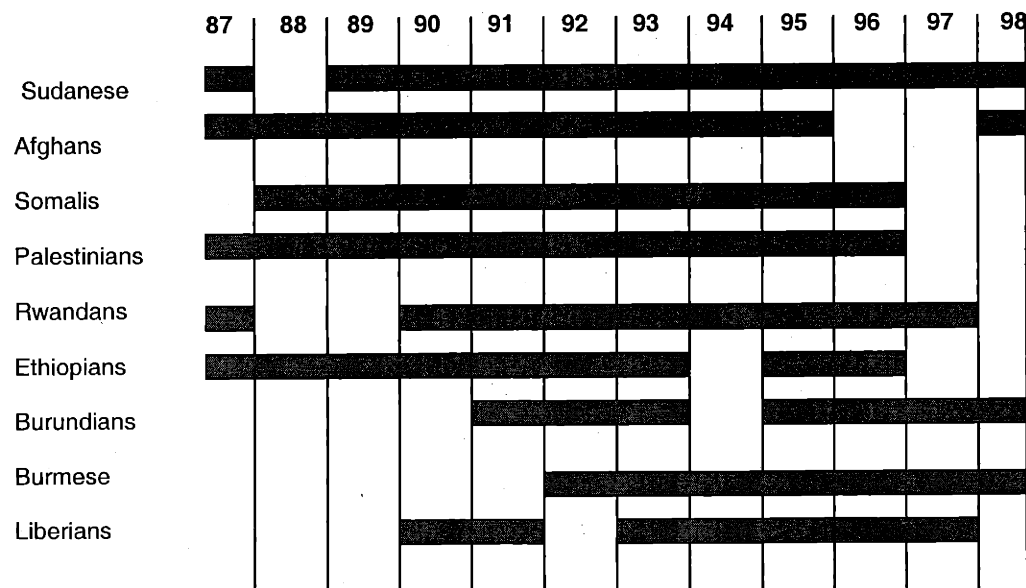
9-12 years	5-8 years	1-4 years
1. Ethiopia	1. Angola	1. Afghanistan
2. Gaza/West Bank	2. Bangladesh	2. Armenia
3. Kenya	3. Guinea	3. Benin
4. Lebanon	4. Hong Kong	4. Botswana
5. Pakistan	5. Iran	5. Burundi
6. Sudan	6. Iraq	6. Cent. African Rep.
7. Thailand	7. Liberia	7. Croatia
8. Uganda	8. Rwanda	8. Djibouti
	9. Tanzania	9. Dominican Rep.
	10. Zaire/DRC	10. Germany
	11. Zambia	11. Guatemala
		12. Guinea Bissau
		13. Honduras
		14. India
		15. Ivory Coast
		16. Jordan
		17. Lesotho
		18. Malawi
		19. Malaysia
		20. Mauritania
		21. Mexico
		22. Nepal
		23. Papua New Guinea
		24. Saudi Arabia
		25. Senegal
		26. Sierra Leone
		27. Somalia
		28. Swaziland
		29. Sweden
		30. Switzerland
		31. Syria
		32. Turkey
		33. USA
		34. Yemen
		35. Yugoslavia
		36. Zimbabwe

KEY: Years reporting
 violence 

Persistently Violent Receiving States



Persistently Violent Refugee Groups



Intensely Violent Refugee Situations

1987 to 1990

Refugee Group	Receiving State	Political Violence
Palestinians	Gaza/ West Bank	<i>Intifada</i> ; attacks between refugees and Israeli forces
	Lebanon	Israel bombs camps; factional violence between PLO and rivals; attacks between refugees and Lebanese forces.
Afghans	Pakistan	Afghan/Soviet forces shell camps; cross-border attacks by Afghan mujahedin based in camps; factional fighting among refugee/rebel groups.
Sudanese	Uganda	Sudanese rebels in camps. Refugee camp bombed. Cross border attacks between refugees and Sudan.
	Ethiopia	Cross border attacks by SPLA on refugees. Sudanese rebels forcibly recruit refugees. Ethnic riots by locals and refugees near camps.
Rwandans	Uganda	Tutsi refugees form an army of 7,000 and invade Rwanda.
Mozambicans	Zambia	Cross-border raids by RENAMO and counter-attacks by Zambian forces.
	Zimbabwe	RENAMO incursions against refugees and locals. Zimbabwe forces retaliate against refugees.

1991 to 1994

Refugee Group	Receiving State	Political Violence
Rwandans	Burundi	Burundian Hutu attack Tutsi refugees after assassination of Burundi's president; Tutsi refugees attack new Hutu refugees; RPF crosses border to attack Hutu refugees.
	Zaire	Hutu ex-army and militias control camps and conduct cross border attacks on Rwanda; conflict between refugees and Zairean forces; factional fighting among refugees.
	Uganda	Tutsi refugee army continues invasion of Rwanda;
Palestinians	Gaza/ West Bank	<i>Intifada</i> ; attacks between Palestinians and Israeli forces; factional fighting among Palestinians.
	Lebanon	Camps under siege by Lebanese forces; air raids on camps by Israeli forces; factional fighting among Palestinian militias in camps.
Liberians	Sierra Leone	Liberian rebels cross border and attack refugees and locals; local retaliation against refugees
	Ivory Coast	Liberian NPFL rebels attack refugees and locals; militias in camps recruit refugees to fight in Liberia.
	Guinea	ULIMO rebels attack refugees and locals; refugees recruited to join ULIMO and attack Liberia.
Sudanese	Uganda	Sudanese rebels attack camps

1995 to 1998

Refugee Group	Receiving State	Political Violence
Rwandans	Zaire	50,000 Hutu former military/militia in camps; military training in camps; cross border attacks on Rwanda; RPF cross border attacks against camps; RPF and Zairean rebels bomb camps; Hutu refugees attack Zairean Tutsi; Zaire arms Hutu refugees to fight rebels
Sierra Leoneans	Guinea	Sierra Leone rebels attack camps and local villages.
	Liberia	Sierra Leone government shells refugee settlement
Liberians	Ivory Coast	Liberians attack across border; Ivoirians attack refugees in revenge
	Guinea	Liberian rebels attack refugees and locals; reprisal attacks on refugees by Guineans
Burmese	Thailand	Burmese government and dissident rebels attack refugees in dozens of incursions; shelling of camps.
	Bangladesh	Violent clashes between police and militant refugees; factional fighting within camp.
Sudanese	Uganda	Anti-government Ugandan rebels massacre refugees; dozens of rebel attacks on camps; Sudanese rebels active in camps.

Afghan Resistance Parties

1. **Hizb-i-Islami.**
 Ideology: Fundamentalist
 Leader: Gulbuddin Hekmatyar
 Ethnic support: Pushtun
 Description: Strong following among Afghan refugees. Most radical. Known for attacks on other resistance groups. Strong organization. Good at self-promotion. Clandestine radio into Afghanistan started in 1979. Had his organization in place before 1978 coup. The Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence favored Hekmatyar in the distribution of military assistance.
2. **Hizb-i-Islami faction.**
 Ideology: Fundamentalist
 Leader: Yunus Khalis, the 'fighting mullah'
 Ethnic support: Pushtun
 Description: Split from Hekmatyar in 1978.
3. **Jamiat-i-Islami**
 Ideology: Fundamentalist
 Leader: Burhanuddin Rabbani
 Ethnic support: Tajik.
 Description: In 1977 Rabbani went to Peshawar and turned Jamiat into an active resistance party.
4. **Jabha-i-Nejat-i-Melli-Afghanistan**
 Ideology: Traditionalist. Constitutional monarchist.
 Leader: led by Sibghatullah Mujaddidi.
 Ethnic support: Pushtun
 Description: Supported by Sufi Brotherhood in the north. Conservative.
5. **Harakat-i-Inqilab-i-Islami**
 Leader: Nabi Mohammadi.
 Ethnic support: Pushtun and Uzbek clergy.
6. **National Front for the Islamic Revolution**
 Ideology: Traditionalist
 Leader: Sayyid Gailani
 Ethnic support: Pushtun
 Description: Party founded in early 1979. Pro-western. Leader was former advisor to King Zahir Shah.
7. **Harakat**
 Ideology: Traditionalist.
 Leader: Maulawi Mohammadi (early 1980s)
8. **Harakat-e-Islami,**
 Ethnic support: Hazara. Shi'a
 Description: Most active Shi'a group. Small but militarily effective. Fought the Russians (other Shi'a groups just fought each other).
9. **Shura-ye-Engelabi-ye Ettefag-e Islami-ye Afghanistan**
 Leaders: Sayed Ali Beheshti and Sayed Mohammad Hussein

Ethnic support: Hazara, Shi'a

Description: Established in the highland fortress of Hazarajat. Well organized. Required conscription, 20-30,000 soldiers. Tax of Hazara's working in Iran. A strong faction of pro-Khomeini followers.

10. Nasr

Ideology: Shi'a group.

Description: Set up in Iran after the Soviet invasion. Recruited among Hazara in Iran. But desired independence from Iranian control.

11. Sejah-yi Pasdaran

Ideology: Shi'a group.

Description: Encouraged and controlled by the Iranian Pasdaran. Received a limited quantity of weapons from Iran.

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