



Analysis

## Protracted refugee situations and state and regional insecurity

Gil Loescher and James Milner

This article examines the long-standing importance of refugee issues in international politics and underlines the changing emphasis given to these issues by policy makers and academic researchers, both in the immediate post-Cold War and post-9/11 periods. The authors then address the manner in which the relationship between forced migration and state security has been addressed in the past decade. The article highlights how this area of research continues to

over-emphasize the migration-related security of Western states and the presence of armed elements in refugee movements in the Third World. In contrast, the literature largely neglects the security concerns of states hosting protracted refugee populations. Ironically, chronic refugee situations in regions of refugee origin constitute the overwhelming majority of the world's refugee population.

Since the early 1990s, the international community has focused on refugee emergencies, delivering humanitarian assistance to refugees and war-affected populations, and encouraging large-scale repatriation programmes in high profile regions such as the Balkans, the Great Lakes or recently Afghanistan and Iraq.<sup>1</sup> The majority of today's 12 million refugees, however, are trapped in protracted refugee situations, unable to return home and without the prospect either of a solution in the country where they have

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sought asylum or of resettlement abroad. Such situations are often characterized by long periods of exile (stretching to decades for some groups) and can occur on most continents in a range of environments including camps, rural settlements and urban centres.

A serious consequence of protracted refugee situations is that they can foster instability, insecurity and conflict and can even be prime targets for recruitment into armed units and terrorism. Such refugee situations may not only cause such direct security concerns but also have indirect security implications, through the exacerbation of pre-existing social and economic tensions among local populations. Thus, protracted refugee situations are no less dangerous sources of instability than other more conventional security threats and there are reasons of state and security for the international community to focus its attention on protracted refugee situations.

This article examines the longstanding importance of refugee issues in international politics and underlines the changing emphasis given to these issues by policy makers and academic researchers, both in the immediate post-Cold War and post-9/11 periods. The authors then address the manner in which the relationship between forced migration and state security has been addressed in the past decade. The article highlights how this area of research continues to overemphasize the migration-related security of Western states and the presence of armed elements in refugee movements in the Third World. In contrast, the literature largely neglects the security concerns of states hosting protracted refugee populations. Ironically, chronic refugee situations in regions of refugee origin constitute the overwhelming majority of the world's refugee population. In Africa alone, three million refugees have been 'warehoused' in over 170 refugee camps, in isolated and insecure environments, for extended periods with no hope of a resolution to their situation.<sup>2</sup>

The article continues by outlining the relationship between protracted refugee situations and national and regional security. In particular, the article outlines the causes and consequences of both the direct and indirect security implications of chronic refugee populations. Finally, the authors conclude by setting out the possible elements of an appropriate and comprehensive approach to the security and other political challenges posed by the continued presence of these displaced populations, particularly in regions dominated by the problem of 'failed states'.

# The relationship between forced migration and security

Forced migration has always had security implications. International political concern for refugees first emerged after World War I when mass flows from Russia and Balkan states heightened inter-state tensions and threatened the security of European states. These refugee crises became protracted affairs that surpassed the capacity of humanitarian agencies and individual states to resolve on their own. Consequently, an international framework of institutions and agreements, a nascent international refugee regime, was created to deal with this contentious issue. Following the end of the World War II, the current international refugee regime emerged in reaction to the security threat posed to the fragile European state system by some 12 million displaced persons.<sup>3</sup>

During the Cold War, forced migration constituted one of the central concerns of US and Western foreign policies.<sup>4</sup> Refugees were seen as part of the global struggle between East and West. Refugees fleeing communism were portrayed as 'voting with their feet'. In the interest of exploiting the ideological and public relations benefits of such movements, the West responded through generous burden sharing and resettlement schemes. During the late 1970s and 1980s, the Indo-Chinese exodus in Southeast Asia, the flow of Afghan refugees into Iran and Pakistan, the exodus from Central America, and the Angolan and Mozambican refugee situations in Southern Africa and those in the Horn of Africa all had significant security dimensions. In regions of intense superpower conflict and competition, refugees were armed and their military struggles were supported both materially and ideologically. Host states did raise security concerns about refugee flows, especially in the context of the Indo-Chinese exodus, but these concerns were addressed comprehensively in their interest by the West.

Throughout the Cold War, refugees and the security problems they raised were addressed as part of a broader and wider set of geopolitical considerations and a specific understanding of security. The study and practice of international relations during the Cold War were dominated by an understanding of security based on two major assumptions: one, that most threats to a state's security arise from outside its borders and two, that these threats are primarily, if not exclusively, military in nature and require a military response. Thus, the logic of the Cold War was bound by a very limited

notion of security, which conceptually did not see migration as a central issue of security.

The security implications of forced migration have gained new salience in recent years, especially since the end of the Cold War. What resulted was a period of 'issue-widening', growing out of a frustration with the narrow Cold War understanding of security. Speaking at the first summit-level meeting at the end of the Cold War, the President of the UN Security Council noted 'the non-military sources of instability in the economic, social, humanitarian and ecological fields have become threats to international peace and security.'<sup>5</sup> Throughout the 1990s, refugee movements were central elements of numerous UN Security Council resolutions. For example, resolutions on Iraq, Somalia, Haiti, the Balkans, Rwanda made the link that forced migration, unaddressed, can lead to threats to international and regional peace and security.<sup>6</sup> It became clear that refugee movements were not only a consequence of insecurity, but could also be a cause of insecurity, for host states, countries of origin, for regions hosting refugees, and even a threat to international peace and security.

## The literature on forced migration and state security

A period of 'issue-widening' was also seen in the international relations literature.<sup>7</sup> Research began to highlight how factors as diverse as environmental degradation, economic interdependence, transnational crime and migration and refugee movements had the potential to influence state and regional security agendas. Consequently, a distinct literature on refugee movements and international security emerged.

In the early 1990s, researchers and scholars began to take cognizance of the rising importance of security in migration and refugee studies. Two of the earliest works were Myron Weiner's edited volume *International Migration and Security*<sup>8</sup> and Gil Loescher's IISS Adephe Paper *Refugee Movements and International Security*.<sup>9</sup> Both works attempted to raise the issue of forced migration as both a potential cause and consequence of insecurity, by emphasising the 'high politics' dimensions of the issue and by charting a cross-regional framework for future research in the area. Both studies had as a primary objective the raising of the profile of international migration in the eyes of national security and foreign policy planners and defining the issue for further research. Both researchers argued that it was essential to recognize that refugee problems are in fact

intensely political. Mass migrations create domestic instability, generate interstate tension and threaten regional and sometimes international security. These authors argued that solutions to refugee problems necessitated not only humanitarian but also political solutions.

Both works aimed to provide a basic typology of migration flows and their related security concerns, particularly for sending and receiving states. Examining the question in a broad, cross-regional and comparative perspective, these studies sought to clarify the possible security implications of refugee movements and the potential concerns of host states. Particular reference was also made to the numerous cases of 'refugee warriors'<sup>10</sup> and the negative impact of these forces on regional and international security.

These early works, however, had certain limitations. First, neither work incorporates a comprehensive conceptualization of 'security' appropriate to the study of forced migration. Second, while attempting to bring the migration question into the mainstream of security studies, the nature of the security implications of migration portrayed in these early works focus disproportionately on the 'high politics' dimension of the security concerns of host-states at the necessary expense of the 'low politics' concerns. Both works make reference to concerns surrounding host community receptivity and questions of ethnic affinity, but, as recent cases illustrate, the domestic, 'low politics', or indirect security concerns, have proven to be far more pervasive and preoccupying for host-states than previously thought, especially in Africa, and in light of the failures of international solidarity and burden sharing.

Following these earlier works, from the mid-1990s on, the literature on migration and security focused more on the securitization of asylum in the European context and tried to address the 'high politics/low politics' gap by focusing on notions of societal motivations for casting migration in terms of security concerns.<sup>11</sup> The focus of the debate has been on the way that societal identity and societal concerns about migration and immigration translate into state action against migrants. The focus is predominantly on the use of security in public discourse, and who has the authority to turn migration into a security issue.

While this literature lays an important foundation to understand the process by which the language of security may be applied to cases of migration by various actors within society for differing reasons and with various degrees of success, it is not directly applicable to the question of host-state security in the Third World, especially Africa. The arguments contained within the more recent literature are heavily based on the

European context, especially the European state and European state-society relations. In fact, the nature of the European state is very different from the African state.<sup>12</sup> The realities of the refugee issue in the developing world, especially Africa, are quantitatively and qualitatively so different that there is a clear need for a different approach for understanding the security concerns of host-states in the Third World.<sup>13</sup>

A useful work that highlights the important distinctions between the European and Third World debates on host-state security and refugee protection is a paper on security and forced migration by Jeff Crisp, Head of UNHCR's Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit.<sup>14</sup> Crisp argues that, while 'the poorer countries of the world now routinely refer to the asylum practices of the world's more prosperous nations as a means of providing a rationale for their own efforts to obstruct the arrival and ensure the rapid departure of refugee populations,'<sup>15</sup> the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the security concerns of Southern states are very different from the West's. He emphasises that 'the nature of many recent mass exoduses and the character of the resultant refugee populations has raised some legitimate security concerns about the impact of exiled communities on peace and security in refugee-hosting areas.'<sup>16</sup> However, the list of concerns of developing countries differs considerably from the concerns of European states. This includes: the causes and nature of the displacement, the mixed character of refugee camp populations, the political and military abuse of camps, the location of refugee camps in border areas, the weak rule of law in refugee camps, and the impact of these camps on the local communities.

International relations researchers currently address the security implications of forced migration in two ways. First, and especially since September 11, 2001, there has been an emphasis on the potential links between migration and asylum in the West and transnational crime, terrorism and the identity of European political communities.<sup>17</sup> Second, through multilateral discussions and negotiations,<sup>18</sup> there has been a focus on the security implications of large-scale and sudden refugee movements in developing countries, and the particular problem of armed groups within some refugee communities. Both of these approaches are useful, and address current policy concerns of governments, but they fail to address an issue that is of particular concern to states that host the overwhelming majority of the world's refugees: the problem of protracted refugee situations and regional and host state security.

## Protracted refugee situations and regional and host state security: a neglected policy problem

The long-term presence of Burundian refugees in Tanzania, Sudanese and Somali refugees in Kenya, Liberian refugees in West Africa, Afghans remaining in Pakistan, Burmese in Thailand, and other chronic refugee populations, have come to be seen by many host states as a source of insecurity. In response, they have enacted policies of containing refugees in isolated and insecure camps, have prevented the arrival of additional refugees, and in extreme cases, have engaged in forcible repatriation.<sup>19</sup> Not surprisingly, these populations are also increasingly a source of insecurity for Western states. Refugee camps are sometimes breeding grounds international terrorism<sup>20</sup> and armed groups in these camps engage in activities that destabilize not only host states but also entire regions.<sup>21</sup> Given the transnational importance and significance of protracted refugee situations in today's security environment, much greater attention needs to be given to understanding this pressing problem and developing appropriate policy responses.

Unfortunately, until very recently, the problem of protracted refugee situations has largely been ignored by scholars and practitioners. A few key studies addressed this issue in the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>22</sup> More recently, a series of studies were undertaken by the Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit at UNHCR.<sup>23</sup> While these studies provide important new insights into protracted refugee situations in Africa and elsewhere, the primary focus of the research has been on addressing the daily security concerns of refugees and not on the links between local and regional security and protracted refugee situations. This work also largely focuses on refugees in camps and not on urban refugees or self-settled refugees, partly because these groups are of less direct concern to UNHCR.

The rising significance of protracted refugee situations has recently been given a higher profile within intergovernmental settings. In December 2001, there was an African Ministerial Meeting on protracted refugee situations<sup>24</sup> and the issue has been considered at recent UNHCR Executive Committee sessions<sup>25</sup> as well as within the framework of the UNHCR Global Consultations on Refugee Protection.<sup>26</sup> While there has been some preliminary discussion on comprehensive solutions for the most prominent protracted refugee situations,<sup>27</sup> the focus of discussion has generally been on issues of livelihood and burden sharing and not on either the links between regional

security and chronic refugee situations nor on the security problems refugees pose for host countries in regions of refugee origin. The fact that these discussions have not been accompanied by a sufficient understanding of the security impact of long-staying refugee populations reflects the preoccupation of UNHCR with human rights and protection concerns of refugees rather than with security considerations of governments. While this may be understandable given UNHCR's specific mandate,<sup>28</sup> it is essential that agencies involved in protecting refugees are sensitive to host governments' security concerns regarding chronic refugee populations.

Policy discussions within UNHCR frameworks have also tended to concentrate on the need to develop the refugees' potential to engage in economically productive activities, to foster refugees as 'agents of development', and promote community-based assistance, including aid to host communities, as a pillar of UNHCR's future programmes. While recent research has highlighted how the long-term presence of refugees can contribute to the development of infrastructure and state building,<sup>29</sup> there appears to be little recognition in these discussions of the history of UNHCR's earlier and often unsuccessful efforts to promote self-reliance in Africa's rural refugee settlements.<sup>30</sup> The current policy proposals and solutions advanced by UNHCR and others need to be examined critically and addressed within a historical perspective so as not to simply repeat past policy failures.

## The security implications of protracted refugee situations

The authors intend to conduct focused research to address this pressing gap in the literature and policy debate regarding protracted refugee situations and security. The research will build not only from past work on chronic refugee populations, but also from recent work on the militarization of refugee populated areas and the economic, social and environmental impact on host states.<sup>31</sup> The cases of Somalis and Sudanese in the Horn and East Africa, Liberians and Sierra Leoneans in West Africa, and Burundians and Congolese in the Great Lakes Region of Central Africa. These and other cases demonstrate that protracted refugee situations can result in both 'direct' and 'indirect' security concerns for host states and states in the region. The authors' research will highlight both of these security concerns of states regarding chronic refugee populations



and propose a comprehensive framework for resolving and mitigating at least some of the problems in the future.

### **Direct threats**

The direct threats faced by the host-state, posed by the spill-over of conflict and the presence of 'refugee warriors', is by far the strongest link between refugees and conflict. Here, there are no intervening variables between forced migration and violence as the migrants themselves are actively engaged in armed campaigns typically, but not exclusively, against the country of origin. Such campaigns have the potential of regionalizing the conflict and dragging the host-state into what was previously an intra-state conflict.

It is important to note that there was a time when states were willing to host refugee warrior communities, notwithstanding the threat they posed. In the context of the Cold War and the ideological struggle between East and West, the overspill of violence assumed a very different meaning than it does today. At the time, "the emergence of armed groups of exiles, the so-called 'refugee warriors', symbolised for the West the popular rejection of communist governments and served to legitimize the resistance movements."<sup>32</sup> Examples of such resistance and support are to be found in the anti-Soviet Mujahideen based in Pakistan, the Khmers Rouge in Thailand and the Nicaraguan Contras.<sup>33</sup> As part of the Cold War logic of international security, all these groups received US and Western support, both military and political.<sup>34</sup>

With the end of the Cold War, the logic has changed, but the relevance of refugee warriors remains. This relevance is especially true in Africa, as brought home with particular force in the maelstrom of violence that gripped the Great Lakes region of Central Africa between 1994 and 1996. This particular case initiated discussions between UNHCR, regional states and the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations, resulting in the formulation of the 'ladder of options' policy.<sup>35</sup>

The direct causes of insecurity to both host states and regional and extra-regional actors stemming from chronic refugee populations are best understood within the context of so-called failed states, as in Somalia, and the rise of 'warlordism', as in the case of Liberia. In such situations, refugee camps are used as a base for guerrilla, insurgent or terrorist activities. Armed groups hide behind the humanitarian character of refugee camps and settlements, and use these camps as an opportunity to recruit among the disaffected displaced populations. In such situations, there is the risk that

humanitarian aid, including food, medical assistance and other support mechanisms, might be expropriated to support armed elements. Similar security concerns may arise within urban refugee populations where gangs and criminal networks can emerge within displaced and disenfranchised populations. These groups take advantage of the transnational nature of refugee populations, of remittances from abroad and the marginal existence of urban refugees to further their goals. In both the urban and camp context, refugee movements have proven to provide a cover for the illicit activities, ranging from prostitution and people smuggling to the trade in small arms, narcotics and diamonds.

The security consequences of such activities for host states and regional actors are real. They include cross-border attacks on both host states and countries of origin, attacks on humanitarian personnel, refugees and civilian populations. Direct security concerns can also lead to serious bilateral and regional political and diplomatic tensions. Cross-border flows are perceived by host states to impede on their national sovereignty, especially given the tenuous control that many central governments in the developing world have over their border regions. Finally, the activities of armed elements among refugee populations not only violate refugee protection and human rights principles, but also can constitute threats to international peace and security.<sup>36</sup>

### **Indirect threats**

More difficult to identify, but just as potentially destabilising as direct threats, refugee movements may pose indirect threats to the host state. Indirect threats may arise when the presence of refugees exacerbates previously existing inter-communal tensions in the host country, shifts the balance of power between communities, or causes grievances among local populations. At the root of such security concerns is the failure of international solidarity and burden sharing with host countries. Local and national grievances are particularly heightened when refugees compete with local populations for resources, jobs and social services, including health care, education and housing. Refugees are also frequently scapegoats for breakdowns in law and order in refugee-populated areas, both rural and urban.

The indirect threat to security that long-staying refugees can pose to host states is a key concept that has been lacking in both the academic and policy consideration of refugee movements. In these cases, refugees alone are a necessary but not a sufficient cause of host state insecurity. It is not the refugee that is a threat to the host state, but

the context within which the refugees exist that result in the securitization of the asylum question for many states.

Lacking policy alternatives, many host governments now present refugee populations as security threats to justify actions that would not otherwise be permissible, especially when the state is confronted with the pressures of democratization. More generally, the presence of refugees can exacerbate previously existing tensions and can change the balance of power between groups in the country of asylum. For this reason, refugees play a significant but indirect role in the causes of insecurity and violence, but with consequences potentially of the same scale as the direct threats.

This dynamic has been emphasised in recent research examining the dramatic restrictions on asylum that have been imposed by host states in Africa since the mid-1990s. Several researchers have pointed to the significance of the absence of meaningful burden sharing and the growing xenophobia in many African countries as the key factors motivating restrictive asylum policies.<sup>37</sup> It has also been argued that these xenophobic sentiments 'have emerged at a time when most of Africa is democratizing and governments are compelled to take into account public opinion in formulating various policies. The result has been the adoption of anti-refugee platforms by political parties which result in anti-refugee policies and actions by governments.'<sup>38</sup> Just as 'government leaders found themselves facing more and more pressures to restrict entry' as 'asylum became part of the cut and thrust of domestic politics'<sup>39</sup> in Western Europe in recent years, Gibney emphasises that 'the rise of multiparty democracy in Africa ... has arguably diminished the autonomy of state elites in determining the security agenda.'<sup>40</sup>

Two social and political variables are useful in explaining the dynamic between failures of burden sharing, xenophobia and the securitization of asylum. These are political opportunity and grievance.

'Political opportunity' can be understood as the 'consistent dimensions of the political environment that provide incentives for people to undertake collective action by affecting their expectations for success or failure.'<sup>41</sup> According to this understanding, when groups hold an advantage in the area of resources, alignments, elite support and potential allies, it is held that they will act against the holders of power, based on the belief that their likelihood of success has been increased.<sup>42</sup>

This notion relates to migration-related security concerns of host states in two ways. First, it has been argued that 'in countries which are divided into antagonistic racial,

ethnic, religious or other groupings, a major influx can place precariously balanced multi-ethnic societies under great strain and may even threaten the political balance of power.<sup>43</sup> Indeed, opportunity threats are specifically linked to the understanding that the presence of refugees has been demonstrated to accelerate 'existing internal conflicts in the host country.'<sup>44</sup> For example, this concern was made most explicitly clear in Macedonia's reluctance to accept Kosovar Albanian refugees in March 1999, citing the concern that the mass of Kosovar Albanian refugees 'threatened to destabilise Macedonia's ethnic balance.'<sup>45</sup>

Second, and especially in the context of externally-imposed democratization, understandings of opportunity structures illustrate the constraints placed on a state by the presence of large numbers of refugees and the limitation of the space within which the state can make policy decisions. The fact, for example, that Tanzania has restricted asylum while Guinea continues to encourage the presence on its territory of Liberian rebels may be partially explained by the fact that Tanzania is faced with the pressures of democratization and Guinea is not.

In particular, it has been argued that the Tanzanian government's decision to close its border with Burundi was closely linked to the lead-up to the 1995 parliamentary and presidential elections. Opposition parties exploited local dissatisfaction with the government's handling of the asylum question in the region, and thereby tried to create political opportunity by demonstrating that they had the power to restore order and stability to border regions by expelling unpopular refugee populations.<sup>46</sup>

This example helps explain how notions of political opportunity also highlight the dynamics of internal competition between the core and periphery of a state, and how the presence of refugee camps typically in the 'hinterland'<sup>47</sup> of a state influences this dynamic. The presence of large numbers of refugees in the periphery of a state may give that region significance that it did not previously have. This is particularly true when the political geography of the African state is considered.

Herbst argues that 'states are only viable if they are able to control the territory defined by their borders'<sup>48</sup> and that such control is 'assured by developing an infrastructure to broadcast power and by gaining the loyalty of citizens.'<sup>49</sup> Unlike European states, which have managed to broadcast this power to all sectors of the state, Herbst argues that African states have concentrated power in economic centres and have very limited control over the periphery of the state. The presence of large refugee populations in these 'hinterlands', where the regime typically does not exercise effective control, is a

serious concern for the state. This fact, combined with an understanding that 'rule by the centre' in many African states is so weak and that there is 'space for challengers to form large and sophisticated rebel armies'<sup>50</sup> in the periphery of the state, clearly adds to an understanding of why African states are increasingly concerned about the security implications of large, insecure refugee camps and settlements in their hinterland.

It is also important to understand the 'generally high levels of social tension and physical violence' endemic in protracted refugee situations, generally resulting from 'the high levels of material and psychological deprivation' within refugee camps.<sup>51</sup> To reinforce this claim Crisp points to his previous work on insecurity in the Kakuma and Dadaab refugee camps in Northern Kenya. Crisp has previously argued that, in these camps, 'incidents involving deaths and serious injury take place on a daily basis' and that 'outbreaks of violence and unrest occur without warning.'<sup>52</sup> While such events are manifestations of the low quality of asylum, such events can have security implications for the host state, especially when this violence and insecurity spreads into the surrounding area.<sup>53</sup> In such cases, the low quality of asylum leads to state security concerns, which can lead to further restrictions on asylum, and the cycle continues.

The spread of violence and insecurity into the local population points to the need to consider factors beyond political opportunity. Not all refugees are seen as threats. The question of which refugees are seen as threats, and why, may be partially explained by understanding the perception as members of the local political community or as outsiders. As Maluwa argues that 'unwanted migrants and refugees may cause ... intercommunal tensions within a receiving state'<sup>54</sup> due to either antagonistic ethnic, cultural, religious or linguistic forces within the host population or where refugees are seen as being in competition for scarce resources. In fact, the limited state capacities of many Third World states magnify these threats.

This leads to an understanding of grievance threats and a need to consider notions of distributive justice and the construction of spheres of moral communities in relation to refugees. Such a consideration must be rooted in an understanding of the foreigner as being either 'one of us' or 'one of them'. In this sense, the importance of affinity and shared group identity cannot be overstated. If a host community perceives the incoming refugee as 'one of us', then positive and generous conceptions of distributive justice will apply. The empirical evidence is overwhelming.

As Loescher argues,

... in the Third World, the remarkable receptivity provided to millions of Afghans in Pakistan and Iran, to ethnic kin from Bulgaria in Turkey, to Ethiopians in the Sudan, to Ogadeni Ethiopians in Somalia, to southern Sudanese in Uganda, to Issaq Somali in Djibouti and to Mozambicans in Malawi has been facilitated by the ethnic and linguistic characteristics they share with their hosts.<sup>55</sup>

Conversely, if the refugees are seen as members of an 'out-group', they are likely to receive a hostile reception. In cases where there is a division along ethnic, linguistic or religious lines, 'a major population influx can place precariously balanced multi-ethnic societies under great strain and may even threaten the political balance of power.'<sup>56</sup>

Indeed, refugees, 'as an out-group, can be blamed for all untoward activities.'<sup>57</sup> While levels of crime may rise by no more than expected with a comparable rise in population, refugees increasingly are seen as the cause. Maluwa also argues that the 'presence of massive numbers of refugees' can 'create feelings of resentment and suspicion, as the refugee population increasingly, and often wrongly, gets blamed for the economic conditions that may arise within the domestic population.'<sup>58</sup> This can lead to a point where 'poverty, unemployment, scarcity of resources, and even crime and disease, are suddenly attributed to the presence of these refugees and other foreigners.'<sup>59</sup>

## Elements of a necessary response

The direct and indirect security implications of protracted refugee situations have had significant consequences not only for refugee policy, but also for broader international strategic, political and humanitarian policy. Security concerns have frustrated efforts to resolve refugee situations, through repatriation, local integration or third country resettlement, and have complicated the formulation of effective regional development plans. They have also limited the access of UNHCR and other humanitarian organizations to refugee populations and have resulted in the death and injury of humanitarian workers. Direct security concerns have frustrated peace processes, especially in Sudan, Kashmir and Burundi, to name but a few, and have complicated the work of regional organizations and peacekeeping missions. It is also increasingly evident that counter-terrorism policies have been complicated by the activities of al Qaeda and other groups in refugee-populated areas in Kenya and elsewhere.

Since September 11, 2001, the US and much of the international community have

increasingly viewed international security policy through the prism of 'failing states', where a breakdown of institutions and governance has resulted in a vacuum of authority, leading to conditions where 'warlordism', terrorism and chronic instability flourish. A crucial but largely unrecognized component of peace-building processes in failing states in several key regions of the world is the relationship between chronic and recurring refugee flows, and regional and intrastate conflict and economic underdevelopment. Recognizing the link between the related problems of failed states and protracted refugee situations would be an important first step in formulating an effective response.

Many of the most unstable regions of the world are major producers of refugees and displaced people. For decades, international responses to refugee situations have been driven by emergencies than long-term strategies. However, governments in refugee prone regions show few signs of resolving recurring refugee problems on their own and observers now question the adequacy of short-term relief alone to deal with these problems. Moreover, the huge cost of emergency relief operations has caused development and security planners to reconsider how best to invest in troubled regions besides humanitarian aid and pre-emptive military action against source countries.

In the past, comprehensive approaches and greater external engagement in regions of refugee origin have proven to be the most effective way of resolving not only long-standing refugee problems but also sources of regional instability. The US and the international community employed a broad range of policies to resolve refugee situations of a protracted and seemingly insoluble nature in Europe in the 1960s for displaced persons still in camps in Europe nearly 20 years after World War II and from the late 1980s to the mid-1990s in Southeast Asia to deal with the protracted Vietnamese refugee problem.<sup>60</sup> It is likely that the potential benefits of a comprehensive approach apply with equal force to the protracted refugee problems and conflicts in many regions of the world today.

Despite the need for a multifaceted approach to protracted refugee situations, the overall response of researcher and policy makers remains compartmentalised with security, development and humanitarian issues mostly being discussed in different forums, each with their own theoretical frameworks, institutional arrangements, and independent policy approaches. There exists little or no strategic integration of approaches and little effective coordination in the field. In addition, international involvement in nation building, reconstruction, and rehabilitation in war-torn regions is still

piecemeal and under-resourced. The assistance given to countries in conflict or emerging from war is conditioned in ways that emergency relief funds are not, with major impacts on humanitarian, security and development initiatives.<sup>61</sup> Consequently, there is a pressing need to develop a policy agenda that extends beyond conventional boundaries and seeks to integrate the resolution of chronic and recurring regional refugee problems with economic development and security issues.

## Endnotes

1. Numerous studies analyze these developments. See, for example, Gil Loescher, 2001. *The UNHCR and World Politics: a Perilous Path*. Oxford University Press, Oxford; 2000. *UNHCR, The State of the World's Refugees: Fifty Years of Humanitarian Action*. Oxford University Press, Oxford; and the various studies and reports found in the humanitarianism and war project [www.hwproject.tufts.edu](http://www.hwproject.tufts.edu).
2. Arafat Jamal, 2003. 'Camps and freedoms: long-term refugee situations in Africa'. *Forced Migration Review* 16, 4.
3. See Gil Loescher, 2001, *The UNHCR and World Politics*, Chapters 2 and 3.
4. See Gil Loescher and John A. Scanlan, 1986. *Calculated Kindness: Refugees and America's Half-Open Door, 1945-Present*. The Free Press, A Division of Macmillan, New York.
5. UN Security Council, 31 January 1992. 'Statement of the President of the Security Council', UN Doc. S/PRST/1992/5.
6. See Adam Roberts, 1998. 'More Refugees, Less Asylum: A Regime in Transformation'. *Journal of Refugee Studies* 11(4).
7. See Richard Ullman, 1983. 'Redefining Security'. *International Security* 8(1); Jessica Matthews, 1989. 'Redefining Security'. *Foreign Affairs* 68(2); Thomas Homer-Dixon, 1991. 'On the Threshold: Environmental Changes as Causes of Acute Conflict'. *International Security* 16(2).
8. See Myron Weiner, 1993. 'Security, Stability and International Migration', in Myron Weiner (ed.), *International Migration and Security*. Westview Press, Boulder, CO; and Myron Weiner, 1995. *The Global Migration Crisis: Challenges to States and to Human Rights*. HarperCollins, New York, Chapter 6.
9. See Gil Loescher, 1992. *Refugee Movements and International Security*, Adelphi Paper 268. Brassey's for the International Institute for Strategic Studies, London.
10. See Aristide R. Zolberg, Astri Suhrke and Sergio Aguayo, 1989. *Escape from Violence: Conflict and the Refugee Crisis in the Developing World*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.
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  33. See Loescher, 2001, 201–246.
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  47. Herbst, 2000, 3.
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  52. Crisp, 2000 in Crisp 2002.
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