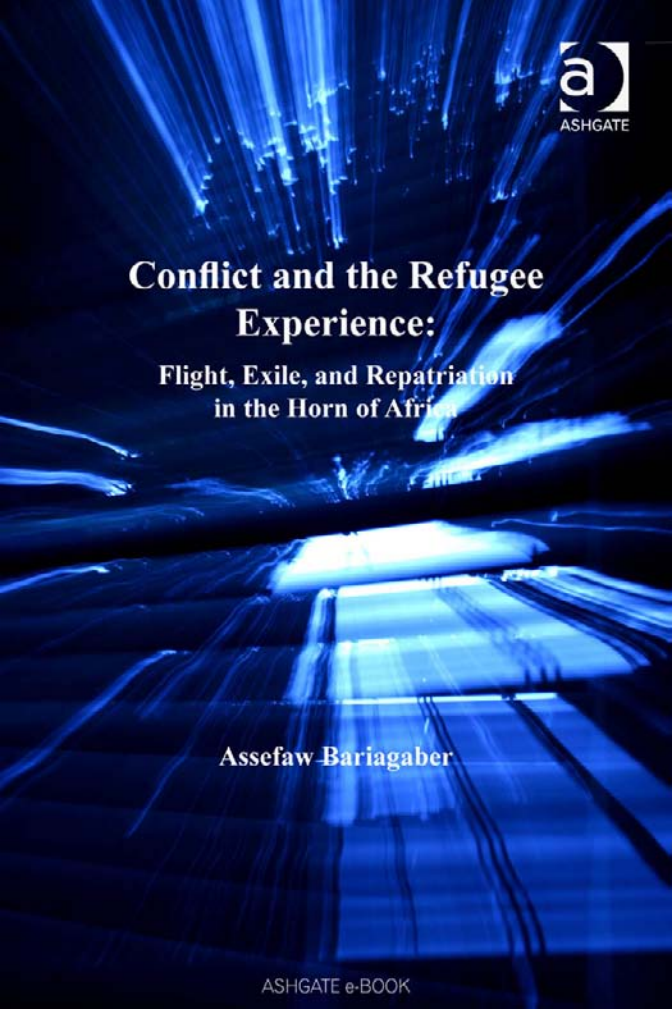
ASHGATE
Conflict and the Refugee Experience:
Flight, Exile, and Repatriation in the Horn of Africa
Assefaw Bariagaber
ASHGATE e-BOOK

CONFLICT AND THE REFUGEE EXPERIENCE

Dedicated to my late brother
Mesfun Bariagaber
who was executed on 15 July 1979 in Asmara, Eritrea,
by the brutal military regime of Ethiopia only because
he was one of the best and brightest.

Conflict and the Refugee Experience:

Flight, Exile, and Repatriation in the Horn of Africa

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ASHGATE

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Preface

Of the many political events in the Horn of Africa two stand out for their indelible impact on the refugee crisis in the region. These are the overthrow of the Imperial Government of Ethiopia and the onset of the Ethiopian Revolution in 1974, and the liberation of Eritrea in 1991. The first plunged the region in turmoil: ethnic and nationalist sentiment in Ethiopia reached their zenith; the Eritrean war of independence became truly national and Eritrean independence more that a possibility; the war in the South in Sudan resumed and escalated, thanks in large part to Ethiopia's role; and Somalia's stable government came under increasing challenges because of Ethiopia's assistance to Somali dissident groups. Sudan and Somalia had also played negative roles during most of the time the Ethiopian military was in power. Therefore, the Ethiopian Revolution is associated not only with the various conflicts in Ethiopia itself but also with the conflicts elsewhere in the region. As a result, the Horn of Africa became known for its high concentrations of refugees between 1978 and 1995.

The liberation of Eritrea in 1991 is the second event that had an indelible impact on refugee issues, but not because it contributed to refugee formations as the Ethiopian Revolution did. Its impact was more at the scholarship level: it made us question the prevailing assumption that refugees—indeed majority–identified refugees—will repatriate if peace is established. This is because the anticipated massive and complete repatriation of Eritrean refugees failed to materialize, especially given their well–known longing for independence. Indeed, during the years of the struggle for independence, it looked as if Eritreans will return in droves upon independence, and this included not only those who were leading a miserable camp life as refugees but also those who were leading a comfortable life in foreign countries. For some reason, this failed to occur. It was then that I seriously began thinking about transformations that refugees undergo after dislocation, and the political, economic, and other factors that encourage or discourage repatriation.

This study, therefore, examines the entire refugee experience—flight, exile, and repatriation—to locate variables that affect refugee lives. The book is divided into four parts. Part I (Chapters 1–2) is a general introduction to the nexus of political conflicts and refugee situations at three levels—world, Africa, and the Horn of Africa. Part II (Chapters 3–4) takes each country in the region and investigates the diffusion of refugee situations and analyses the factors associated with the decision to seek asylum. Part III (Chapters 5–6) explains the processes and patterns of refugee settlement in the country of asylum and how actor interests and the 'kinetics' of flight from the country of origin may be related to refugee settlements in the country of exile. Possible links between different forms of conflicts and varying characteristics of settlements are also explored. Part IV (Chapters 7–8) explores issues related

to repatriation to the country of refugee origin, including why refugees respond differently to the end of the conflict that in the first place caused their 'refugeehood'. Influences of the 'kinetics' of flight from home and the patterns of settlement in exile on repatriation are also included. The last section (Chapter 9) explores the theoretical and policy implications of the study.

Because refugees pose political as well as humanitarian challenges, my hope is that this manuscript will appeal to scholars, government policy–makers, and officials of governmental and non–governmental philanthropic organizations. It is also my hope that the average reader will find it useful because it provides comprehensive information on the plight of refugees in the Horn of Africa.

Assefaw Bariagaber
February 2006

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Some of the data for this manuscript were collected in Summer 1995 and Summer 1996 in Asmara (Eritrea) and Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) for a different project on refugee repatriation in Eritrea and Ethiopia. At that time, UNHCR/Eritrea, UNHCR/Ethiopia Regional Office in Addis Ababa, and the Government of Eritrea provided me with all the assistance I needed. This has been duly recognized in a publication on repatriation that I published a few years back. Nonetheless, I again thank each one of them. I am especially indebted to the UNHCR/Eritrea, including Mr. Arnulv Torbjornsen, Ato Belai Ghebre Egziabiher, and Ato Ogbai for their assistance with transportation to Guluj in western Eritrea. I am equally indebted to the Commission for Eritrean Refugee and Returnee Affairs, and it's then Commissioner, Ato Taha Yassin Baduri, for promptly issuing the necessary papers for me to have an unrestricted access to the returnee camps in Guluj to conduct the interview. Indeed, the data collected then was useful not only to the earlier project on repatriation but also for the present manuscript.

The original idea for this project, however, came in early 1998. Subsequently, in 1998–99, I sought and was awarded Research Fellowship at the Center of International Studies, Princeton University, to spend full time to further develop the book prospectus. I gratefully acknowledge the support from the Center of International Studies, Princeton University. I especially thank its then Director, Dr. Michael Doyle, both for the support he gave me while I was a Princeton Fellow and for the funds he made available to me to help facilitate my research. I am also grateful to Seton Hall University for its Summer 2000 Stipend to collect data for the chapters on settlement patterns. But, more importantly, it would have been impossible to finish the manuscript had it not been for my 2005–2006 Sabbatical leave. I am grateful to Seton Hall University for approving my request for the leave. I also thank my friends Larry Becker and Nurudeen Akinyemi for their comments on PART I of the manuscript.

Above all, my special gratitude goes to my dear wife Hirut Negash not only because she took over all household chores to help me spend more time on the project but also for typing most of the manuscript. It would simply have been impossible to finish this project without her support. Finally, I must say that I made myself scarce to complete this manuscript and seldom played with my two sons, Mesfun Aron Bariagaber and Abraham Assefaw Bariagaber, when they needed me most. Yet, they were forgiving. Their playfulness after my long days of work was especially gratifying. I thank both of them very dearly.

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List of Abbreviations

CERA	Commission for Eritrean Refugee Affairs
ELF	Eritrean Liberation Front
EPLF	Eritrean People's Liberation Front
EPRDF	Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front
EPRP	Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party
OAU	Organization of African Unity
OLF	Oromo Liberation Front
OLS	Operation Lifeline Sudan
ONLF	Ogaden National Liberation Front
PROFERI	Programme for Refugee Reintegration and Rehabilitation of Settlement Areas in Eritrea
RPF	Rwandan Patriotic Front
SNM	Somali National Movement
SPLM/A	Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army
SPM	Somali Patriotic Movement
SSDF	Somali Salvation Democratic Front
TPLF	Tigray People's Liberation Front
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
USCR	United States Committee for Refugee
USC	United Somali Congress
WSLF	Western Somalia Liberation Front

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PART 1
Political Violence and Refugee Situations

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Chapter 1

Political Violence and Refugee Situations around the World

Introduction

Population migration is one of the most serious threats to peace, security, and the sovereignty of nations in the post–Cold War era. A particularly volatile form of this threat is the global refugee crisis, and nowhere has this problem been more severe and persistent than in the Horn of Africa. While attention today focuses more on West Africa and the Great Lakes region of Central Africa, conflicts between and within nations have caused similar movements in the Horn of Africa for about four decades. Huge numbers of people have suffered dislocation. Some have been internally displaced, and others have crossed international borders to seek asylum in neighboring countries. Governments have manipulated these movements out of concern for national security, undermining the security of other states, and the resulting diffusion of conflicts has invited intervention by powers from outside the region.

Despite the seriousness of this problem however, the Horn of Africa has not attracted the necessary attention. At the academic level, there is a missed opportunity to develop a better understanding of continuity and change of the refugee problem—a problem unprecedented in its persistence and severity (Holborn 1975; Zolberg et al. 1989).[1] At the policy level, the lack of understanding and appreciation of this problem has created problems in the modalities of allocation of resources to manage the refugee problem in the region. Therefore, the lack of attention at both levels has adversely affected the emergence of a refugee regime capable of formulating an effective refugee management policy with potential applications elsewhere.

Although conflicts and the ensuing refugee problems have disproportionately affected the Horn of Africa, other countries have had their share of problems as well and have devised contingent policies in dealing with them. Some countries, especially those in the developed North, see refugee influx into their territories as a national security threat. In response, they have adopted policies that restrict immigration and have maintained strong pressure to bring about a speedy repatriation of those

1 Back in 1975, it became increasingly apparent that refugees were a major international concern. Thus, Louise Holborn published a two–volume book fittingly entitled, *Refugees: A Problem of Our Time*. Almost a decade and a half later, Aristide Zolberg et al. saw the refugee issue as an 'unprecedented crisis' of our time.

already in their territories.[2] Although they insist they view the refugee problem as humanitarian and base their refugee policy upon this, in reality they have never seen the refugee and immigration issues independent of politics. As Teitelbaum (1984) has indicated a few decades ago, many countries in the developed North, including the United States, have always treated the refugee and immigration as a national security issue. The differential treatment of Cuban and Haitian asylum seekers by the United States is a case in point. Therefore, the connection between states' foreign policies and the refugee and immigration issue is not new. What is new, however, is that the connection has 'taken a quantum leap in importance' because of the 'transformation in the size and nature' of the issue and the 'series of [visible] international events' that occurred in the late 1970s (Teitelbaum 1984, 431). These events include the outflow of 'boat people' from Vietnam; the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, which forced millions out of their homes; and the expulsion of large groups of populations from Cuba, Nigeria, and Uganda.

It may even be argued that the foreign policy and immigration and refugees nexus has taken a more quantum leap with the adoption of more restrictive refugee policies after the 11 September 2001 terrorist bombing in the United States. In Europe, these policies have pitted humanitarian groups and politicians against each other because the latter had 'lowered existing protection standards for asylum seekers' to protect Europe from being 'overrun by unwelcome outsiders' (UNHCR 2004a, 7). Hence, forced repatriation or deportation has increased recently. For example in 1984, the Netherlands, a country long-regarded as a nation of 'liberal values', had planned to 'deport 26,000 asylum seekers amid concerns that immigrants pose a threat to Dutch culture' (UNHCR 2004b, 18).

Other countries, especially those in the South, adopt ambivalent and often opportunistic refugee policies. In some cases, they welcome refugees because they see them as lucrative sources of much needed foreign exchange. Thus, they inflate refugee numbers to attract more aid from governmental and nongovernmental agencies, extract political capital internationally, and discredit refugee origin countries with which they are usually at odds. The behavior of the Somali government when faced with influxes of Ethiopian refugees in the late 1970s is a case in point.[3] Furthermore,

2 Examples of this abound. The most visible are the recent US and European measures to enforce strict border controls. Also, measures by Germany to encourage Eritrean refugees in its territory to return to Eritrea and start a new life with financial assistance from the German government is an example of an anti–immigrant bias that has swept Europe recently.

3 Understandably, the number of refugees in a particular country may not be exactly determined and different estimates of refugee numbers are often given by the asylum country and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). However, the author knows of no other estimate other than those of Ethiopian refugees in Somalia, which had generated continuous friction between the UNHCR and Somalia. Their respective estimates were at such variance that it was impossible to reconcile them. In fact, 'many Western government and private agency officials say that Somalia consistently inflates camp populations by at least 25 percent' (United States Committee for Refugees 1985, 47). Nonetheless, Somali refugees in Ethiopia in the late 1970s and 1980s, in the least, numbered in the hundreds of thousands.

to advance their national security interests and gain added leverage in their dealings with neighboring countries, they arm refugees and help fuel political instability in the home countries.[4] Liberia's covert activities in the brutal conflict in Sierra Leone in the 1990s, where the then President Taylor helped the infamous Sierra Leone Revolutionary United Front (RUF), illustrate the extent to which states contribute to conflict escalation across their borders. Some, such as Uganda and Rwanda, do so overtly by sending regular troops in support of opposition armed groups, as they did in the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The DRC, in turn, accommodated Rwandan ethnic Hutu refugees who made '*massive exit*' from the state and came back from across the border to carry out subversive activities inside Rwanda after it came under the control of the Tutsi–led Rwanda Patriotic Front (RUF) (Zolberg et al. 1989, 44, emphasis in original). The Hutu refugees have come to exemplify what have been aptly referred to as 'warrior refugees' (ibid. 125).[5]

Regardless of the manner of intervention, the result has always been an endless stream of refugees, who are often employed by host governments as instruments for avoiding threats. For example, when Ethiopia increasingly supported the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) in response to alleged Sudanese support of Eritreans, 'Nimeiri publicly promised to support Eritrea's independence' and to assist the Ethiopian Democratic Union, a monarchist group opposed to the military government in Ethiopia (Baissa 1991, 9) Sooner or later, the refugees become targets of restive host populations, especially if they competed in jobs, housing, schools, and medical care. In an environment of scarcity common in Africa, the once amicable relationships between refugees and the local population is replaced by hostility and outright violence. The transformation of the nature of the relationship between Eritrean refugees and the local population in Sudan from amicable relationship during the first ten years into a hostile relationship thereafter is an apt example.

In other cases, many developing nations adopt policies that restrict refugee entry into their territories, and discourage refugee assimilation with the host population, as Djibouti has done. Still in other cases, they create artificial roadblocks and discourage peaceful repatriation of refugees, as illustrated by the recent difficulties in the repatriation of Eritreans from Sudan.[6] In such situations, the refugee origin country,

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4 The behaviors of Sudan and Eritrea are cases in point. Eritrea sees the refusal by some refugees to return to their homeland 'as a clear sign of a campaign of political sabotage by Eritrean opponents in refugee camps in Sudan who are backed by Sudan's National Islamic Front'. Please consult, *Africa Research Bulletin: Political, Social, and Cultural Series*, 31:23, 23 January 1995, 11672.

5 These are refugee communities, who cross the border to carry out subversive activities in their countries of origin. For more on this and why they pose threats to international peace and security, please see Adelman (1998).

6 Spontaneous repatriation of Eritrean refugees started towards the end of 1989 when it became clear that the Ethiopian government was on the verge of collapse. The official repatriation, which started in 1995 with a pilot program to help return approximately 25,000 refugees to Eritrea, was however abruptly ended after Sudan and Eritrea severed diplomatic

covertly or overtly, encourages political dissent in the host country and may openly invite opposition movements to use its territory as a base for subversive activities in the host country.[7] Such destructive behavior has often been used in furtherance of national interest objectives by the countries of the Horn of Africa.

Each country, therefore, simultaneously becomes a refugee host and a refugee origin country, as in the Horn of Africa, and the refugees become not only pawns in interstate relationships but also reactive in affecting the nature of these relationships. Such relationships, more often than not, are conflictual and detrimental to the general interests of these nations. The relationship between Ethiopia and Somalia, where both countries armed and exploited refugees in their territories in the 1970s and most of the 1980s, is a case in point. Belatedly, however, such countries recognize their relationships had been mutually destructive and reluctantly initiate negotiations resolve the conflict and attendant refugee formations. They do not succeed, however, because meaningful negotiations entail possession of ample resources for exchange, which many developing nations lack.[8] This deficiency hampers their ability to engage in constructive negotiations. In the absence of a sufficient resource base to enter into mutually beneficial exchange relationships, the most likely avenue for conflict resolution open to such countries is open subversion of the other. This leads to yet more conflicts and attendant refugee flows as evidenced in some parts of the developing world, especially the Horn of Africa, in the latter half of the twentieth century.

In response to states' inability to resolve such an enduring human suffering, the hitherto passive refugees become active participants in the search for solutions to their unending ordeal. Although a few migrate to an unwelcoming third–country in search of better opportunities, others stay put and become instruments of one party against the other. They may also become members of groups that operate in opposition to the government of the refugee origin country. The host government may also use them to extract compliance from the refugee origin country. This adds yet other variables to an already saturated set of conflict–escalating variables.

The refugee problem continues to haunt various actors even after the conflicts that in the first place helped produce refuges are resolved. In the present environment, where immigrants and refugees from developing countries have come under

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relations, and after Sudan called for a revision of an understanding it reached with the UNHCR earlier. The official repatriation program remained on hold for several years. However, after a long delay, the official repatriation has resumed in early 2000 and continued well into 2004.

7 An apt example of this is the open invitation of the Eritrean government for Sudanese opposition groups to open offices in Eritrea to help facilitate the overthrow of the Islamic Government of Sudan. As a result, the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), of which the SPLM/A and other northern opposition groups were members, escalated its attacks beyond the South and into the North.

8 Here I draw upon the literature on patron–client relationships. The conditions under which such relationships collapse includes the inability of the parties, especially the patron, to possess comparable resources needed for exchange. This is amply discussed in Kaufman 1972, 284–308.

increasing pressure in many parts of the world, the most durable and perhaps the only solution to the refugee problem is repatriation to the country of origin. However, successful repatriation is difficult to achieve because of contrasting interests of those involved in the process, including relief organizations and the refugee host and origin countries. Even if these actors agree in principle on the need for repatriation and are ready to provide resources to carry this out, the consent of the refugee presents another hurdle to cross. Indeed, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is obligated to make sure that repatriation is voluntary and free of coercion. Therefore, the cessation of conflicts does not automatically guarantee an end of the refugee problem: it is only a condition necessary—*and not sufficient*—for resolution of refugee situations.

The entire refugee experience is thus surrounded by political and economic variables that different actors at different stages of the refugee experience encounter. Each of these actors behaves in ways that advances its interests. Successful management of conflicts and accompanying refugee formations, therefore, require either a hegemonic state capable of imposing its will through rewards and/or sanctions or the convergence of actor interests. However, close examination of the power capability of nations of the developing world, especially those in Horn of Africa which are among the poorest, excludes the former. Convergence of actor interests is also rare: the more actors with varying interests—indeed often opposing interests—the less likely they will reach negotiated settlements.

Contemporary global refugee formations have thus become enduring problems and serious threats to international peace and security because conflicts and refugee formations feed on each other. They may spread like a contagion, as exemplified by the recent diffusion of conflicts and attendant refugee flows in West Africa and the Great Lakes region of Central Africa. In the former, the conflict started in Liberia towards the end of the 1980s, spread to Sierra Leone in the early 1990s, and seriously threatened Guinea's stability because of the massive refugee formations along the border. Even the once–peaceful and prosperous Cote d'Ivoire did not escape this and finds itself embroiled in a civil war whose solution has become illusive despite the presence of United Nations (UN) peacekeeping forces since 2004. In the Great Lakes region of Central Africa, the conflict started in Rwanda and spread to the DRC, when millions of Rwandan 'refugee warriors' sought asylum in that country. More than six African nations intervened either on the side of the government or the opposition, and UN peacekeeping forces have been stationed since 1999 to help resolve the conflict. Also, refugee formations in one nation affect the domestic and international politics of nations in faraway places. As mentioned earlier, the politicization of immigration issues in the United States and Western Europe is a case in point (Teitelbaum 1984; Koehn 1991). That is, refugees pose not only humanitarian but political challenges as well. The latter have become more critical recently, for the humanitarian dimension of 'refugeehood' is only a symptom of much deeper political problems in many parts of the world, including the Middle East, the Balkans, and of course, the Horn of Africa.

Therefore, through an examination of refugee flight to asylum, settlement in exile, and repatriation to the country of origin, this book argues that: (1) because of their structural weaknesses, the countries of the Horn of Africa have been unable to find solutions to their internal problems from within, and often seek solutions from without by employing 'refugee exchange' as an important means of advancing their respective national security interests; (2) the different actors, including nation–states, international organizations, and individual refugees make 'considered' decisions in the management of refugee issues because their behavior is a function of the constantly changing political landscape; (3) as a corollary to (2), the actors are value–maximizers; and (4) patterns of refugee flight from home influence patterns of settlement in exile and both, in turn, influence patterns of repatriation to the country of origin. That is, early stages of the refugee experience have an indelible impact on successive stages. Together, these propositions provide answers to a series of questions about the nexus of conflicts and refugee situations: Why have conflicts and refugee situations endured in the Horn of Africa? Why were governments in the region unable to resolve conflicts and refugee situations in the face of overwhelming evidence that failure would be detrimental to each? What roles have different actors in the refugee experience played and how did these roles exacerbate conflicts and refugee formations? What is the nature of the decision–making of the various actors, in particular refugees, in the management of refugee issues? How are the different stages of the refugee experience linked to each other? And finally, which factors have impeded the formation of an effective refugee management regime?

In order to fully address these questions, this study assumes that the refugee situation in the Horn of Africa, like many refugee situations elsewhere, is the result of identifiable political, economic, social, and other forces. However, the domestic, regional, and international *political* developments in the region have had much greater impact on the variations of the refugee situation compared to the economic, social, and other developments. As Bascom (1998, 176) has aptly underscored, 'all facets of the refugee experience—migration, resettlement, repatriation, and reintegration—represent an ongoing process of choices made and played out in a *changing* context' (my emphasis). However, the political variables change much quicker over a short period of time compared to the slow the often indiscernible variations of the economic, social, and other forces. Therefore, in line with Zolberg et al (1989, vi), this study assumes refugee situations as patterned and structured because they result from identifiable and patterned domestic, regional, and international political forces.

The State of Refugee Studies in the Contemporary World

It is impossible to adequately understand refugee situations and their relationships with conflicts unless the different stages of the refugee experience are viewed as interconnected and integrated. This is not to suggest that scholars have totally ignored this connection. Indeed, numerous studies have each made significant

contributions to our understanding of some aspects of the refugee phenomenon. For example, Hansen and Oliver–Smith (1982) examined the relationship between the dynamics of flight from home and settlement in exile, while Harrell–Bond (1986) studied the impact of humanitarian agencies in refugee assistance. Similarly, Kibreab (1996c) studied effects of displacement on land use and the environment. Other works, such as Zolberg et al. (1989) made a rare and comprehensive study of the factors that generate refugees in many parts of the world. Although many attempts to link refugees and international politics have been made in numerous studies, Leoscher and Monahan (1989) came closest to accomplishing this task by focusing on refugee movements and international responses to such movements. Their study put refugee issues squarely within the realm of international relations. These works have advanced out knowledge of refugee behavior during flight, in exile, and during repatriation.

However, studies such as these have not systematically analyzed the roles various actors play at different stages of the refugee experience because they have not considered 'refugeehood' as a process whose initial stages affected succeeding stages. That is, there is a need to study the refugee experience over time and this includes flight, exile, and repatriation. In some, issues related to refugee repatriations have not been given the necessary attention (e.g., Hansen and Oliver–Smith 1982; Harrell–Bond 1986; Kibreab 1987; Kibreab 1996c), while in others, refugee settlement and repatriation patterns have not been included (for example, Zolberg et al. 1989). The exception to these is Gordenker (1987), who linked refugee flight with both asylum and repatriation. However, this study has not examined possible links between patterns of settlement and repatriation, and their impact on the diffusion of conflicts. In others, the three stages of the refugee experience and the roles various actors play at each stage have yet to be studied over time.

The failure to employ the holistic approach in the study of the refugee experience, as outlined above, is nowhere more evident than in studies of African refugees, particularly those in the Horn of Africa. For example, Brooks and El–Ayouti (1970), one of the earliest studies on conflicts and refugees in Africa, explored the historical, political, legal, and humanitarian factors associated with 'refugeehood'. However, examinations of the patterns and processes of repatriation are conspicuously absent. The same may be said of Rogge (1985), Kibreab (1987), and Bulcha (1988). This, of course, is understandable: apart from the official repatriations of southern Sudanese refugees from Ethiopia following the 1972 Addis Ababa Accord and Ethiopian refugees from Djibouti in 1983–84, and the self–repatriation of Ethiopian Tigrayans from Sudan in the mid-1980s, no widespread refugee repatriations occurred in the Horn of Africa until the early 1990s. What is difficult to understand, however, is the absence of studies that link systematically flight, settlement, and repatriation of refugees, even after such large–scale repatriations of Ethiopians from Sudan and Somalia, Eritreans from Sudan, and Somalis from Ethiopia in the first half of the 1990s. The two most recent works, Allen and Morsink (1994) and Allen (1996), although rich in their study of repatriation, did not explore its relationship with

the dynamics of flight and settlement.[9] The study that came closest to making an integrated study of the entire refugee experience is Bascom (1998), although it did not examine actual repatriations.

Nonetheless, studies such as the above have each made important contributions to our knowledge of refugee behavior. However, the emphasis on only one or possibly two stages of the refugee experience has limited our understanding of the nexus of conflicts and the refugee experience. In short, there is no theory that explains why refugee situations persist, especially after the conflicts that caused such situations have been resolved. To this end, this book conducts a forty–year (1964–2004) longitudinal study of the refugee experience in the Horn of Africa. The successive periods in the region's refugee history provide the framework for this study: the flight of refugees from their places of habitual residence, the structure of their settlements, and their repatriation back home. In general, the earlier period, extending from 1964 to the latter half of the 1980s is associated more with continuous refugee flight and life in exile, while the latter period, extending from the early 1990s to the end of 2004, are associated more with repatriation.[10] In short, this book will examine flight, settlement, and repatriation patterns and will to advance general propositions on refugee repatriation.

Concept Definitions and Case Selection

To qualify as a refugee, the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees adopted by the UN in 1951, requires refugees to show 'a well–founded fear of being persecuted' in their countries of origin of because of their affiliation with a particular race, religion, nationality, or political opinion (UN 1951).[11] Although this criterion for identifying a refugee has been employed in the past five decades and hundreds of thousands of individuals have benefited as a result, it leaves behind many more individuals who equally suffered because of other reasons. First, this definition relies on individual motives to make a determination of refugee status and, second, it does

9 While many of the studies conducted in the 1970s and the 1980s focused on refugee flight, reflecting the proliferation of conflicts in many parts of the continent, those conducted in the 1990s focused on repatriation.

10 There were a few exceptions. As indicated earlier, the repatriations of Ethiopians from Sudan and Djibouti in the mid–1980s and of Sudanese refugees during 1990–91 all occurred during periods of massive flight in the region. This will be examined in Chapter 7. Also, Somali flight to Ethiopia and other neighboring countries occurred during the late 1980s and early 1990s when many of the refugees in the region were returning to their countries of origin.

11 This definition, as stated in the 1951 UN Refugee Convention, reflected the European character of early refugee formations. In many instances, there was no mass outflow of refugees similar to that of Third World refugees, which became a source of concern in the mid–1960s. It soon became clear that this Eurocentric definition was inadequate in dealing with mass flows of African refugees. As a result, the Organization of African Unity adopted a much broader definition in 1969.

not cover those who flee because of external aggression, international war, or civil war. Given the narrowness of this definition, it is practically impossible to determine the flight motive of each individual refugee in any violence–induced mass exodus like those in the Horn of Africa for various reasons.

First, the sheer scale of their numbers and their patterns of movements in waves of tens of thousands make it practically impossible to make a determination on each individual. Second, there are no set of entry points, as one might find in Europe. That is, African refugees cross unmarked borders through multiple entry points and blend in with the population. Third, the first country of exile does not have the economic and manpower capabilities to strictly apply the provisions of the 1951 Convention. In short, the bureaucratic, manpower, and financial impediments, coupled with the massive, wave–like influxes of refugees make it difficult for African countries to comply with the provisions of the Convention. European countries, on the other hand, are economically developed, possess skilled manpower, have well–defined entry points, and faced smaller and more orderly influxes of refugees. Therefore, they were generally able to apply the provisions of the Convention.

This book will, therefore, employ a broader definition, as adopted by the OAU in 1969. Thus, *refugee* in this study refers to any person 'who has fled from his or her state of nationality because of political, racial, religious, ethnic or other kinds of persecution or to avoid warfare or other violence' (OAU 1969).[12] Although this definition is much broader than the definition in the 1951 UN Convention, it excludes victims of natural disasters who cross national borders in search of aid. Similarly, internally displaced persons are excluded because they stay within the borders of the country of origin, even if their displacement was violence–related. Refugees from countries studied in this book generally move from one country to the next *en masse* and camp in sites with only the bare necessities of life. They usually move as population groups to countries with chronic political, economic, and social problems. Apart from opening their borders, these countries have little else to offer.

Refugee experience refers to the patterns and processes of flight to exile, the duration and size of refugee formations, characteristics of settlement camps in exile, the size and number of settlement camps, and the dynamics of repatriation. This study assumes that refugee formations do not occur unless there was violence or fear of persecution. As a process, the refugee experience ends after refugees are successfully repatriated to their country of origin. *Domestic political violence* refers to the overt, coercive confrontation between two or more conflicting groups, whether national or sub–national, within a country.[13] This definition subsumes guerrilla attacks, riots, violent coups (including attempted coups), political assassinations, and civil wars.

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12 A full text of the 'OAU Convention Concerning Specific Aspects of the Problem of Refugees in Africa' may be found at www.africa-union.org/Official_documents/Treaties_%20Conventions_%20Protocols/Refugee_Convention.pdf

13 A full set of indicators of domestic/regional political violence are found in Rummel's pioneering *Dimensionality of Nations* (DON) project. Please see Rummel 1963, 1–50 and Stohl 1980, 300–302.

Regional inter–state political violence involves armed confrontations between two or more states in the region. Perhaps an important feature of the conflicts in the Horn of Africa has been its capacity to attract foreign power interventions: that is, the conflicts in the region have not been entirely local. Thus, *violence internationalization* refers to the participation of any state outside the Horn of Africa in the conduct of violence between two or more opposing domestic/regional parties. These range from direct participation in the conflict, like the Soviet intervention on the side of Ethiopia in the Ogaden war of 1977–78, to indirect participation like Egypt's arms support of Somalia, to influence the outcome of conflicts between the conflicting groups in the region.

It is also important to note the conceptual distinction between migrants and refugees, especially as it relates to their respective motivations, flight characteristics, and the nature of their relationships to the home country. Migrants have positive outlook about their future in their new country of residence because of actual or perceived benefits the new environment provides (Kunz 1973). Once in their destinations, their uncertainties are not markedly different from those of the citizens of the society they have joined. By contrast, refugees leave their places of habitual residence against their will, stay in the host environment reluctantly, and keep their lives on hold temporarily. As Kunz (1973, 130) has noted, it is 'the reluctance to uproot oneself, and the absence of positive original motivations to settle elsewhere, which characterize all refugee decisions and distinguish refugees from voluntary migrants'.

The manner of flight also distinguishes migrants from refugees. In general, migrants depart from their places of habitual residence in an orderly fashion, as individuals or as family groups, well prepared for the challenges in their destinations. Therefore, their decision to leave and settle elsewhere is orderly and the result of a well–thought–out process. On the other hand, refugees in general and rural refugees in particular are part of a mass of fleeing individuals primarily interested in safely and quickly reaching neighboring countries. They 'flee reluctantly, without a solution in sight; they flee because they react to a situation which they perceive to be intolerable', and cross international borders in sudden refugee flows (Kunz 1981, 44). The factors that push refugees are overwhelming and their departure from home and arrival at the destination are not orderly. In other words, with respect to their 'kinetics' of flight, refugees are generally subjected to pressures that migrants are not (Kunz 1973).[14] This is especially true of rural refugees, who generally find themselves in the midst of rural–based guerrilla warfare between opposing combatants.

The final conceptual distinction between migrants and refugees deals with the nature of the refugees' social relationship with the population they left behind (Kunz 1981). In general, migrants identify with the society they have joined and actively

14 This is Kunz's (1973, 132) terminology for the dynamics of refugee flight and is intended to underscore the differences in flight characteristics between a refugee and a migrant. Indeed, the terminology emphasizes factors from outside of the refugee that makes the refugee move like a 'billiard ball'.

participate in shaping their own future. On the other hand, most rural refugees do not see any future for themselves in their country of exile and are willing to return if the situation permitted. In Kunz's terminology, they are 'majority–identified' refugees because they believe that the majority of refugees share their opposition to events at home and see their stay as temporary (ibid. 43). Therefore, their level of participation in the social, economic and political issues affecting the host country is rather low. In fact, they may not have the right to participate.

Which then, are the countries selected as cases in this study and what is the nature of the refugee formations in the region? The majority of these refugees originated in the rural areas of the countries of the Horn of Africa—Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, and Sudan—as opposition groups operate in such areas because governments have minimal control. Also, because of their rural background and unfamiliarity with the environment in exile, they are more likely to stay in refugee camps compared to urban refugees, who usually migrate to cities and blend in with the population. Since they flee under continuing armed attacks between opposing parties, their movement may be termed as an 'acute' refugee movement (Kunz 1973, 132). Once they reach in their destinations, they live in overcrowded refugee camps and they are more likely to get involved in political issues affecting their home country, especially if the host country did not restrict opposition group access to the camps. This is amply documented in Smock (1982) study of Eritrean refugees in Sudan, although this also appears to be true of other refugees in the Horn of Africa.[15] In other words, the refuges whose behavior is examined here are active and play crucial role in the politics of the region. As Hakovirta (1986, 19) has aptly noted,

> to understand refugeeism it is usually necessary to take into account the dynamic interaction of pushes, pulls and restraints … To understand these processes it is in turn *essential to pay attention also to the active role of the refugees in the conflict from which their refugeeism arises*. For these reasons, the simple push–pull–restraint thinking does not suffice … (my emphasis).

Before proceeding on a detailed study of these refugees and the conflicts that shaped their refugee lives in the next chapters, a critical review of conflicts and refugee formations at the global and continental levels will be made in the next two sections. This will provide a frame of reference or context for the nexus of conflicts and refugee formations in the Horn of Africa in Chapter 2.

15 Smock interviewed samples of Eritrean refugees in two settlement camps in Sudan and reported that the overwhelming majority took their flight because of fear of death, and further reported that their intention to return home was unambiguous. For more information, consult Smock 1982, 451–65.

Conflicts and the Global Refugee Crisis

Refugee situations are neither unique attributes of the post–1945 bipolar world nor the products of the ethnic and nationalist revival that coincided with the demise of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War. The religious persecution of the early followers of the Prophet Mohammed in the eighth century and their exile across the Red Sea in the Horn of Africa (a region well known for its high concentration of refugees in recent decades) is an example of an involuntary population movement in deep historical time.[16] Similarly, the persecution of Muslims and Jews in Spain and the Huguenots in France a few hundred years ago are examples of massive refugee movements that resulted from religious intolerance (Zolberg et al. 1989, 5–8). Although the frequency and size of refugee movements resulting from religious intolerance decreased after the eighteenth century, the lasting effects of ethnic and religious 'refugeeism' may be seen in the Armenian case in 1923, the Jews during the Second World War, and the movements of millions of Hindus and Muslims across the Indo–Pakistani border in 1947.[17] Also, the ongoing exile of hundreds of thousands of Tibetans in India and Nepal may be attributed to the contested claims over Tibet by the supporters of the Dalai Lama and the People's Republic of China.[18] The civil war in Sudan between the North and the South, the recent civil war in Yugoslavia, and the 'ethnic cleansing' that accompanied the latter were partially rooted in religious cleavages. Similarly, the contested claims over Palestine by Jews and Palestinians and the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, which produced the most intractable refugee situation in existence as of 2005, are also rooted in religion.

Major refugee movements during the last three centuries mainly occurred during the process of the formation and consolidation of nation–states and the subsequent adoption and promotion of nationalist ideologies by these states. Indeed, political and military conflicts that accompanied such processes constitute the most important variables associated with refugee flows, especially since the latter half of the eighteenth century. For example, the French Revolution generated more than 100,000 refugees; the incorporation of Alsace and Lorraine into Germany in

16 The early Muslims, many of whom were relatives of the Prophet Mohammed, sought and received asylum in what may be referred to as ancient Abyssinia, whose core constituted parts of present day Eritrea and Ethiopia. The refugees totaled more than one hundred. For more details, see Kobishchanov 1979, 111–12.

17 All three had religious dimensions, although twentieth century nationalist or ultra–nationalist currents were also manifest in each of these population displacements. With respect to the magnitude of the population dislocation across the Indo–Pakistani border in 1947, Ahmed (1995, 1–25) states that about 10 million people crossed the border and an additional one million killed in what he calls 'ethnic cleansing'.

18 Tibetan exile started in 1952 after the newly established People's Republic of China annexed the territory and the Dalai Lama, the spiritual and political leader of Tibet, fled to neighboring India. India and Nepal now give sanctuary to hundreds of thousands of his followers.

1871 triggered refugee flows to France, while the French civil war in the same year triggered refugee movement out of France. In the twentieth century, the Russian revolutions of 1905 and 1917 prompted the fleeing of workers and elites, respectively (Zolberg et al. 1989, 9–11). Similarly, many refugees fled Nazi Germany during the 1930s. After the Second World War, most ethnic Germans living in central and Eastern Europe left for Germany either on their own volition or were expelled by the newly instituted governments. After the 1950s, the refugee exit from Eastern Europe continued on a much smaller scale and remained negligibly low until 1989, when a new and massive flow of refugees began because of the inability of the Communist regimes of Central and Eastern Europe to maintain the strict controls they had imposed during the previous forty years. Thus, 'towards the end of 1989, the developments in Central Europe resulted in the largest movement of persons in 30 years, not only from East to West, but within the region itself' (USCR 1990, 21).

Although changes in Soviet foreign policy towards Central and Eastern Europe contributed significantly to the massive refugee movements to Western Europe in the late 1980s, more serious refugee movements occurred in the erstwhile republics of the Soviet Union during the early 1990s. After the Soviet Union collapsed in the early 1990s and fifteen sovereign republics were born out of its ashes, ethnicity and nationalism became salient in each of the new republics, as the nationality question had largely remained unresolved during the Soviet era. As a result, conflicts over national self–determination produced massive population dislocations in many places. For example, the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno–Karabakh forced almost half a million Armenian and Azeri refugees out of their homes; more than 80,000 refugees from Moldova sought asylum in Ukraine because of alleged discrimination by the predominantly Romanian population of Moldova; and the Russian Federation was home to almost 460,000 refugees, mostly non–Russians, and to some 700,000 ethnic Russians from the non–Russian republics of the former Soviet Union (USCR 1994). Similarly, the conflict in the former Yugoslavia generated more than a million and a half refugees in the early 1990s and another 750,000 Kosovo refugees in the late 1990s. Almost all the conflicts occurred after the splintering of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, and were provoked by an irresistible nationalist drive to form homogeneous nation–states out of culturally plural states.

Thus, ethnicity and nationalism, long dismissed as incompatible with modernity, returned with a vengeance and became the most potent force and the root cause of many conflicts in contemporary Europe and elsewhere. Few had noticed the pervasive nature of 'primordial' sentiments and fewer still expected such sentiments to profoundly shake the post–Westphalian state system. Indeed, liberal and Marxist scholars were uniformly in agreement that ethnic and similar societal cleavages would be increasingly irrelevant in the modern world. They predicted, almost to the point of certainty that in a few years citizens of culturally plural societies would shed their ethnic baggage in favor of a national identity (see, for example, Toure 1959 and Emerson 1960). On the contrary, ethnicity and nationalism have withstood the

onslaught of modernization and have actually become more potent, as each group aggressively looked for ethnic markers to differentiate itself from the other. As Smith (1994, 192) cogently described, 'the process of redefining the community as a nation–to–be … locks out all those who cannot prove their membership credentials through the criterion of alleged ancestry'. While this process of redefinition contributed to the homogenization of the community, and some may see this process as something to be welcomed, it also produced massive redistribution of populations and human suffering of mammoth proportions.

The revival of nationalism and ethnicity and other forms of societal cleavages coincided not only with the inability of the centralized Leninist type state to meet the challenges of modernization but also with a similar inability of the post–colonial state based on the French and British systems. Citizens expected the state to solve economic problems, especially after it nationalized the means of production, distribution, and exchange. Although the source of much needed resources, the state generally failed to effectively manage those resources. In fact, the state transformed *public goods* into *ethnic group entitlements*. Those excluded chose to make an 'exit' from the political system and challenged the state from outside. In the process, massive population dislocations occurred in almost every corner of Africa. Such forced population dislocations also occurred in Asia in the 1990s: in Sri Lanka, ethnic conflict between Tamil Hindus and Buddhist Sinhalese displaced many, including about 100,000 who sought asylum in India; in Pakistan, about 1.2 million refugees from Afghanistan lived in refugee camps in 1996, while about 1.4 million lived in refugee camps in Iran during the same time period; and Bangladesh provided sanctuary to some 40,000 Burmese in 1996 while, at the same time, approximately 53,000 refugees from Bangladesh sought refuge in India (USCR 1997).

The above are only some of the recent refugee formations in the world where societal cleavages played a major role. Such cleavages in multi–ethnic societies were usually accompanied by protracted conflicts that ended either in the reconstitution of some states or the collapse of others. However, before things settled down, they disrupted the livelihood of hundreds of thousands who flee their homes in search of sanctuary. Thus, in late 2004, there were almost 11.5 million refugees and asylum seekers worldwide, many of which have been refugees for more than a generation (USCR 2005).

To summarize, various conflicts and refugee formations around the globe are inextricably linked. The sources of conflicts are many and include ethnicity, religion, political ideology, and regime changes. These factors, individually or in concert, contributed to massive flows of refugees across national borders in the last few decades, and Africa contributed a lion's share to these flows.

Conflicts and the Refugee Crisis in Africa

Some scholars have explained the nineteenth and early twentieth century European intrusion into Africa and elsewhere in terms of the need to extract raw materials

for home industries and markets for finished products, thus providing an economic explanation for colonialism (Hobson 1961; Lenin 1979). Others have provided political–security explanations and saw European colonization drive as an extension of the balance of power security management approach prevalent in Europe at the time (Baumgart 1982). That is, in their search for peace and stability in Europe through the balance of power system, Europeans added territories in Africa and in other parts of the Third World into their roster of exchangeable resources, and extended what was essentially a European feature of inter–state competition to their colonies. As a result, many of the colonies Europe carved out in Africa did not reflect the economic, political, and cultural realities of the territories. Nonetheless, the Second World War brought about a restructuring of the international system in which the United States and the Soviet Union became the most dominant powers in world politics while Great Britain and France, hitherto the most important colonial powers, were relegated to the status of secondary powers.

Thus, colonial territories, conceived and created to meet the political, economic, and security needs of the metropole gained their independence and the era of 'refugeeism' in Africa began, as conflicts spread into the new sovereign multi–ethnic states. As we have seen earlier, with the exception of those from the former Yugoslavia and the former Soviet Union, where ethnicity and other cleavages played major roles, twentieth century refugee movements in Europe were mostly ideologically motivated. Refugee flows from the newly independent countries of Africa, however, have multiple sources. Some refugees flee from repressive regimes, such as those in the former Zaire, Ethiopia, and Uganda, when Mobutu Sese Seko, Mengistu Haile Mariam, and Idi Amin Dada, respectively, were in power. Others see exile as an 'exit' strategy from a multiethnic state dominated by a single cultural group, because they do not see much prospect for an inclusive state in the future, as in Sudan. Still others flee because of inter–state wars, such as those between Ethiopia and Somalia, and more recently, between Ethiopia and Eritrea.

As stated earlier, the creation of new states in Africa did not take into account the ethnic and religious configuration of the continent. Even the smallest ethnic group often found itself on both sides of an international border, and each state consisted of disparate peoples with different religions, languages, and social practices. Sudan, with at least two major religions and the deep African–Arab cultural divide, and the DRC, with more than one hundred ethnic groups, are such examples. Zolberg (1967) refers to these states as 'syncretic' to highlight the incongruity between the centripetal forces necessary for a viable state and the centrifugal forces working against the modern African state. To homogenize its constituent groups and to look much like a European state as is possible, the new state undertook forcible measures to forge ties that bind, including common language, history, and psychological orientation, most of which were conspicuously absent at the time of independence. The incompatibility of the requirements of the new state, which was based on an insatiable need for uniformity (language, education, taxation, laws, and so on), and the objective needs of the community, which was characterized by pluralism, inevitably created mutual resentment and suspicion between the state and its cultural constituents. That is,

state pressure for increased homogeneity of its population through various means of assimilation and minority groups' resistance to these provided conditions sufficient for civil conflicts and attendant refugee flows.

To counter the breakdown of law and order and absent of institutional mechanisms to settle disputes, the new state took military measures against rebellious groups. As a result, many perished and others were forced to flee their places of habitual residence. The conflict between the Hutu majority and Tutsi minority in Rwanda in which between 500,000 and 1,000,000 individuals perished; the civil war in Sierra Leone, where hundreds of thousands were either killed, maimed, or forcibly dislocated; the civil war in Sudan, which claimed millions of casualties and displaced persons; the recent humanitarian disaster in stateless Somalia; and the Nigerian Civil War in the latter half of the 1960s are all cases in point. Although qualitatively different from the preceding examples because of their aborted decolonization, Eritrea and the Western Sahara have waged wars of independence that also generated massive movements of refugees to Sudan and Algeria, respectively.

Foreign intervention has also exacerbated refugee formations in Africa, perhaps on a scale unparalleled anywhere else in the world. Prior to the achievement of independence, refugee movements in Africa accompanied anti–colonial struggles; afterwards they accompanied intensified civil and interstate conflicts. The latter, initially local, have invited intervention by external powers, which also exacerbated the violence and attendant refugee flows. Schultheis (1989, 15) notes that East–West conflict has 'so polarized the nations of the world that ideological and security considerations now render cooperative institutional change in the world system extremely difficult'. He further notes that 'forced displacement [of peoples] is a direct consequence of this polarization …' (ibid.). In fact, the most persistent refugees in Africa were found in Southern Africa and the Horn of Africa, two regions where superpower intervention has been manifest (Schultheis 1989).

Internationalization of local conflicts may also be seen as a reaction to an already formed refugee situation. As Hakovirta (1986, 23) has correctly noted, 'disputes over the refugee problem tend to make more countries take a stand on or even intervene in the conflict …'. The US intervention in Somalia to avert massive hunger and population displacement in the first half of the 1990s, and the intervention of several African countries in the DRC in the latter half of the 1990s, which caused population movements of mammoth proportions, are cases of interventions due to appalling levels of refugee numbers.[19] The latter intervention has been unparalleled in the history of African conflicts because of the overt intervention by many African countries in a domestic conflict of a fellow African country. Hence, refugee formations in Africa may be seen as both causes and effects of foreign interventions in local conflicts.

19 The Rwandan direct intervention in the civil war in the then Zaire, ostensibly to neutralize Hutu extremists from among the hundreds of thousands of Rwandan refugees inside Zaire, is more of an example of a recent state intervention intended to resolve security problems posed by refugees and less of an example of intervention for humanitarian reasons.

The different types of conflicts, as outlined in the preceding paragraphs, have resulted in millions of African refugees. For example, in 1974, about 1 in 14 of world refugees was from Africa, as compared to about 4 in 14 at the end of 2004.[20] Indeed, while the 1974 world refugee population of approximately 14.2 million has actually come down to approximately 11.5 million at the end of 2004, the numbers of African refugees increased from a little over 100,000 to almost 3.3 million during the same time period. This represents thirty–fold increase over the 1974 number (Table 1.1). The stability of world refugee numbers suggests a simultaneous refugee formations and repatriations around the world. These include refugee flights and repatriations from such countries as Afghanistan, Cambodia, Nicaragua, and others. Although there were some refugee repatriations in Africa, as in Mozambique, refugee flights remained much more intense and more frequent. Thus, when one looks at world refugee numbers closely, there was a quasi–balance between the numbers of those who joined the ranks of the refugee and those who repatriated.

Table 1.1 World and African Refugees for Selected Years

Year (ending)	*World*	*African*	*% of*
1974	14,195,451	1,105,217	7.79
1977	8,485,347	1,692,041	19.94
1980	15,965,250	4,045,200	25.34
1983	7,186,200	1,921,000	26.73
1986	11,698,000	3,112,950	26.61
1989	15,093,900	4,524,800	29.98
1992	16,647,550	5,340,800	32.08
1995	15,337,000	5,222,000	34.01
1998	13,469,000	2,922,000	21.69
2001	14,921,000	3,002,000	20.12
2004	11,498,100	3,295,900	28.70

*Source***:** Compiled and computed from the United States Committee for Refugees, *World Refugee Report: Annual Survey***,** 1974−2005**.**

On the other hand, the refugee crisis in Africa escalated mainly because early African refugee–generating states were unable to end the war by forcible means. They were also unable to resolve the crisis peacefully. In addition, there have recently come into being refugee–generating states in West Africa, where the state structures in Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Cote d'Ivoire have collapsed, mainly because of countrywide economic problems but also because of the exclusion of some segments of the population from the political and economic process (Abdullah 1998). Thus,

20 Estimated from numbers published in United States Committee for Refugees, *World Refugee Survey,* 1974 and 2005.

Liberia and Guinea provided asylum to an estimated 360,000 refugees from Sierra Leone in the 1990s (USCR 1997). Similarly, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Sierra Leone, and Nigeria provided refuge to an estimated 755,000 refugees from Liberia in late 1980s and early 1990s, and Benin and Ghana provided refuge to an estimated 140,000 refugees from Togo in 1995 (USCR 1995, USCR 1997).

Another recent refugee formation on the continent occurred in the Great Lakes region of Central Africa. Although this region has seen periodic massacres and refugee flows, a more disturbing phenomenon of recent origin has been the apparent application of the 'final solution' as a way to solve the ethnic conflict in Rwanda. In 1994, efforts to annihilate the Tutsi and transform Rwanda into 'Hutuland' produced one of the most gruesome acts of genocide since the Second World War. Fortunately, the regime associated with this was overthrown and replaced by the RPF in 1994. In its wake, however, an estimated 1.7 million Hutu refugees sought asylum in the DRC, Tanzania, and Burundi, and this created the most acute but short–lived refugee formation Africa has ever seen (USCR 1995). Like Rwanda, ethnic cleavages between the Tutsi and the Hutu in Burundi degenerated into a series of massacres of one by the other. As a result, an estimated 330,000 refugees from Burundi continued to live in refugee camps in Zaire and Tanzania in 1995 (ibid.).

The discussion above highlights escalating conflicts and attendant refugee flows in Africa. There were hopeful signs also: the civil conflict in Mozambique was successfully resolved and, subsequently, an estimated 1.8 million refugees were repatriated (USCR, 1997). Similarly, hundreds of thousands of refugees who fled Rwanda after the RPF seized power were repatriated in 1996. Although on a much smaller scale, other repatriations have also occurred elsewhere in Africa. For example, by the end of 1995, approximately 25,000 Liberians were repatriated from neighboring countries and nearly 35,000 Malian refugees returned to their places of habitual residence. When the numbers between those who fled and those who returned are compared, however, the evidence points in favor of the former. As stated earlier, conflicts in Africa spread like a contagion and many countries serve as refugee origin and refugee host countries simultaneously, and this has exponentially increased the size of African refugees. This is especially the case in the Horn of Africa, as explored in Chapter 2.

Chapter 2

Political Violence and Refugee Situations in the Horn of Africa

The Horn of Africa as the Region of Study

The countries of the Horn of Africa selected for study are Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, and Sudan.[1] The selection is based on the substantive questions raised with respect to variations in political violence and refugee situations in these countries. For example, during the late 1960s and early 1970s, Sudan went through higher levels of political violence and generated an estimated 240,000 refugees who sought exile in neighboring countries (Akol 1987). The violence subsided as a result of the 1972 Addis Ababa Accord and a significant number of Sudanese refugees were repatriated. After the *Sharia*—an Islamic law that regulates individual as well as public behavior—was adopted in 1983, violence erupted again and refugees in large numbers sought asylum in many countries. At present, conflicts continue in many parts of the country, and these are in addition to the protracted conflict in the southern part of the country. Therefore, Sudan has long struggled to hold itself together

Similarly, Ethiopia and Eritrea exhibit the necessary variations with respect to political violence and refugee formations. As the severity of violence increased virtually in every corner of the country in the late 1970s and all of the 1980s, the regime of Mengistu resorted to an all out war against various groups to hold the country together and this caused massive refugee outflows in every conceivable direction. Thus, by the latter half of the 1980s, the number of refugees climbed to more than a million.[2] After the regime of Mengistu Haile Mariam was overthrown and Eritrea became independent in 1991, relative peace was established and the numbers decreased significantly. However, there still remained more than 300,000 Eritrean refugees in camps in Sudan at the end of 2001, some ten years after the cessation of hostilities and the establishment of cordial relationships between Eritrea and Ethiopia (USCR 2003). Unfortunately, the recent conflict between them has caused the deaths of tens of thousands of combatants on both sides and the exile of

1 Djibouti, also in the Horn of Africa, shares many of the cultural and religious characteristics of its neighbors. However, it has not suffered from the persistent violence and refugee formations as the others and, therefore, will not be studied closely.

2 Eritrean refugees were considered Ethiopian at the time, as Eritrea was yet independent. Therefore, Eritrean refugee flight and exile have been treated as Ethiopian in the literature. However, Eritrean repatriation essentially occurred after Eritrea became independent in 1991 and is separately treated here.

thousands of Eritrean refugees in Ethiopia. The necessary variations in conflict and refugee formations are also found in Somalia. It was relatively peaceful until the first half of the 1980s and had not generated refugees until the late 1980s. However, with the violence of the late 1980s and the first half of the 1990s, it became one of the major refugee–generating countries of the region. Like the governments in Ethiopia and Sudan, the government of Siad Barre also resorted to brute force to hold the country together. In sum, the political violence and refugee situations in the countries of the Horn of Africa show enough variations across time not only *within* a country but also *between* countries in the region. This makes each of the countries appropriate cases to study the nexus of conflicts and refugee situations.

Although there is between country dissimilarity with respect to variations in political violence and refugee situations in the Horn of Africa, as stated above, there is also remarkable similarity with respect to other characteristics. In each of them, partly because of the inability of the governments to effectively control their territories, and partly because of their exclusionary politics, opposing groups have opted for armed challenge to central authority. This has become an important means of realizing political aims, while the ensuing cycles of reprisals and counter–reprisals have generated refugees moving in opposite directions of their common borders. Each country, therefore, is vulnerable to destabilization by others in the region, and is a major host and origin of refugee movements and settlements. For example, in 1988, approximately 660,000 Ethiopian refugees (which included Eritrean) were exiled in Sudan and another 365,000 in Somalia (USCR 1989). At the same time, Ethiopia provided asylum to approximately 350,000 Sudanese refugees and to about an equal number of Somali refugees. Somalia also hosted Ethiopian refugees in the hundreds of thousands well into the early 1990s (ibid.). In addition, Eritrean refugees have been living in Sudan for more than 30 years, and recently a few Sudanese refugees have sought asylum in Eritrea. That is, when compared to other regions in Africa and elsewhere, the nations of the Horn of Africa show almost unique features of being simultaneously refugee host and refugee origin nations, especially when considering the extended period of time this has lasted.[3]

Each country has been greatly influenced by Arabs in the distant past and has, what may loosely be called, an historical 'African–Arab cultural mix'. The most dominant population groups in each country claim some lineage to African and Arab ancestry. While Somalia and Sudan are overwhelmingly Muslim and members of the Arab League, the Muslim populations of Eritrea and Ethiopia comprise roughly 50 per cent of the population. In each country, the civil unrest has a similar geographic character—north against south.[4] Therefore, because of their capacity to destabilize each other, their roles in generating and or hosting refugees, and the presence of strong centrifugal tendencies and political cleavages in each country, the selection of

3 West African countries, including Liberia and Sierra Leone, have also become simultaneous refugee origin and refugee host countries. But this is only recently.

4 This applies also to Ethiopia because Eritrea was its northernmost part for a significant period of the study.

these countries resembles the 'most–similar–systems' research design (Przeworski and Teune 1970). This design minimizes the effects of the common characteristics on the explanatory variables, and may be viewed as one that provides a semblance of experimental control for potentially confounding variables. Therefore, explanations for differences in the variations of political violence and refugee situations will be sought not from their commonalities but from their differences.

The complexity of conflicts and refugee formations in the Horn of Africa is manifestly evident, especially when one compares the conflicts in the Horn of Africa with other present and past conflicts on the continent. To do this, one has to look at two dominant types of conflicts and attendant refugee flows in Africa. The first type of conflicts includes wars of national liberation against Portugal and European settler regimes, such as the former Rhodesia and apartheid South Africa. The presence of white colonizers and settler regimes, and the monopoly of power by Europeans to the exclusion of the majority black population, were seen as illegitimate, both domestically and internationally. Hence, the entire black population backed by a significant support from around the world, opposed the regimes. Refugees from such places attracted international sympathy and were provided with humanitarian aid in their places of first exile. They were also more likely to get the opportunity to migrate to third countries, especially those that originated from urban areas.

In most cases, the composition of such refugee populations transcend ethnic and religious differences and most, if not all, of the refugees who remained in their country of first exile were repatriated after independence from colonial rule. Angola provides an exception to this because of the contested authority that existed following the departure of Portugal, the colonial power. The roots conflicts in the Horn of Africa, however, included elite–sponsored exclusionary ethnic politics, and refugees, more often than not, were members of suspect groups. Moreover, there was no concerted effort by the international community to bring the conflict to a close similar to the role it played during the struggle against the vicious regimes in the former Rhodesia and apartheid South Africa, and the anachronistic Portuguese colonial rule.

The second type of conflicts occurred within independent countries of Africa and is closely related, but not identical, to the conflicts in the Horn of Africa. Such conflicts are rooted in rivalry and disagreements over the management of state resources and entitlements of the public good. More often than not, the elite of a dominant ethnic group manage state resources as if it was exclusively theirs, and manipulate existing 'primordial' attachments to serve their goals.[5] At the same time, the state lacks institutional mechanisms that allow excluded groups to peacefully address the inherent inequities in the distribution of the public good. The excluded group then makes 'exit' from the political system to challenge the state from without. This has been evident in the conflicts in West Africa and the Great Lakes region of

5 The struggle for independence usually required a multi–ethnic coalition to succeed. Hence, the colonized, as well as the oppressed in both apartheid South Africa and the former Rhodesia, had established grand, multi–ethnic coalitions in their struggle for independence, and all Africans were targets regardless of their ethnic background.

Central Africa, as ethnicity, especially in the latter, had been central to the conflict (Newbury 1997). But this is a recent phenomenon. In the Horn of Africa, on the other hand, ethnicity had remained salient in the evolution of the conflicts for a much longer period. Moreover, the enduring border problems, and superpower geo–strategic interest and intervention that characterized the Horn of Africa for a long time are conspicuously absent in Central and West Africa. In addition, one would be hard pressed to show a *persistent,* mutual refugee exchanges that made the Horn of Africa unique with respect to conflicts and attendant refugee flows.

It is also important to emphasize that the various conflicts in the region have been intractable: the North–South conflict in Sudan, which formally ended with the signing of the peace agreement in early 2005 began in the early 1960s and is more than fifty years old;[6] the conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia lasted thirty years; the border conflict between Ethiopia and Somalia started when the latter became independent in 1960, and has not been resolved completely despite two wars; and Somalia's internal conflict is almost twenty years old and, so far, has defied many attempts at resolution. Also, because of the aforementioned strategic location of the region adjacent to sea–lanes through which oil is transported to the West, the conflicts have attracted superpower intervention on a scale not seen anywhere else in Africa. Such features make the Horn of Africa distinct in Africa, and perhaps in the world.

Thus, untangling the causal factors for conflicts and refugee situations in the Horn of Africa requires an examination of a host of interacting factors, including historical legacies and the myths associated with them, ethnic and religious segmentation, colonial partition of the region and accompanying irredentist– and separatist–inspired violence, wars between states in the region, and the manifest intervention by external powers. The multiple sources of the various conflicts in the Horn of Africa have made the attendant refugee flows more complex and the most durable of all refugee formations on the continent.

Long–term Contextual Variables in the Evolution of the Conflict in Ethiopia

The complexity of conflict and refugee situations in the Horn of Africa may not be usefully understood without a brief historical account of the region. Indeed, history informs and, more importantly, reveals the long–term contextual variable(s) at play in the region. Thus, the conflict in Ethiopia, where most of the refugees in the Horn of Africa originated from, is closely associated with three critical issues. The first issue, and perhaps what makes Ethiopia such an important country in the study of conflicts and refugee situations in the Horn of Africa, is the myth of what constitutes Ethiopia and the effects this myth had on the entire region. Some argue that Ethiopia

6 Even if the agreement between the North and the South continues to hold and the proposed referendum is conducted in six years as of January 2005, the recent conflicts in Darfur in the west, Beja in the east, and Nuba in the center will continue to make Sudan the most conflict–ridden country in Africa.

has continued to exist in one form or another for about three thousand years, and modern Ethiopia was a successor to the ancient Axumite Kingdom, which flourished some two thousand years ago.[7] While this contention does not deny the multicultural nature of the Ethiopian state, it puts more emphasis on past 'Ethiopian' grandeur and on the essential unity of the various peoples, anchored on the Monarchy, the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahdo Church, a language with its own unique script, and a myth of invincibility that developed out of Ethiopia's persistent struggle and ultimate success against foreign encroachment (Gashaw 1993). Therefore, it may not be too difficult to understand why Menelik II, who became emperor in 1889, and Haile Selassie I, who became emperor in 1930, acquired more and more territories and significantly expanded Ethiopia.

Although the exact southern boundaries were not clear, the Axumite Kingdom was a sea–faring power in northern Ethiopia and Eritrea, and extended well beyond the coasts of the Red Sea. [8] However, under pressure from the newly–expanding Islam, the core of the Kingdom progressively moved south, and the coastal regions along the Red Sea coast were lost. Unable or unwilling to challenge the Italians and expand northwards, yet determined to take a piece of the pie at a time when European colonizers were carving up the Horn of Africa, Emperor Menelik II extended Ethiopia's rule in every other conceivable direction. And by the early 1900s, Ethiopia had expanded to about four times the size it had in the 1880s. According to Marcus (2002, 104), Emperor Menelik II's determination 're–established Ethiopia's control of the southern regions, which were lost in the seventeenth century, and restored 'Ethiopia to its historic grandeur and size'. There were material reasons as well. Control of Oromo–inhabited lands of western and southwestern Ethiopia, where most of Ethiopia's coffee grows, and southeastern Ethiopia, adjacent to the coastal areas in the east, was crucial to the economic survival of Ethiopia (Zewde 1991).

There may also have been religious reasons. The Emperor's destruction of the central mosque in Harar, an important Muslim emirate he conquered in 1887, and the building a church in its place illustrate this dimension of his conquests (Habte Selassie 1980). Thus, these expansions, mostly accomplished through a series of wars on the peripheral peoples, were motivated by gold, God, and glory, similar to European imperialist expansion to the Americas, which started a few hundred years back.[9] At that time, nobody noticed this was going to haunt Ethiopia in the latter half of the twentieth century, when Oromo and Ogaden Somali nationalists raised the stakes by

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7 Others contend that modern Ethiopia was a late 19th century creation when the Amhara ruling elite imposed exclusionary and predatory state apparatus on most of the southern half of present Ethiopia. See, for example, Jalata (1993).

8 Axum, the then center of the Axumite Kingdom, is now a small town in Tigray, northern Ethiopia. Some of the obelisks the Axumites had erected are still standing some 2000 years later.

9 A detailed analysis of the reasons and the motivations of Menelik II's expansion into the southern, western, and eastern Ethiopia are found in Marcus (2002). See also Zewde (1991).

demanding the right to self–determination. In addition to his military capabilities, Emperor Menelik II was also a well–seasoned diplomat. After defeating the Italians at Adwa in 1896, he used his newly acquired fame and power to play off one 'power against the other … in an effort to ensure the sovereignty of his country' (Keller 1988, 36). He successfully negotiated an expanded border to the east and southeast with France and Great Britain, colonial powers in the then French Somaliland and British Somaliland, respectively. The border with the latter continues to be a thorny issue in the relationship between Somalia and Ethiopia. Thus, through conquests of peripheral regions and formal agreements with European colonial powers in the early 1900s, most of which were at the expense of the inhabitants of the territories whose identification with ancient Ethiopia was minimal at best, the boundaries of Ethiopia took their present shape. In fact, some groups saw Ethiopia in the same light as European colonial powers and have resorted to armed struggle to demand a full measure of self–determination.[10]

Ethiopia's expansionist policy continued in the aftermath of the Second World War when Emperor Haile Selassie, also appealing to the distant past of 'Ethiopian' grandeur, claimed Eritrea, Somalia, and Djibouti as authentically Ethiopian. He failed to acquire Djibouti because of its strategic importance to France and the latter's resolve to hold on to it, or if the people chose, to lead it towards independence. Likewise, he failed in his claim to Somalia because of the strong Somali nationalism in the 1940s and 1950s and UN's determined effort to lead Somalia towards independence.[11] However, he succeeded in Eritrea, which was federated with Ethiopia in 1952. The federation was dissolved ten years later and Eritrea became one of about a dozen administrative regions of Ethiopia. His success, however, plunged Ethiopia into a quagmire from which it could not extricate itself, as Eritrean nationalists began armed struggle for independence from Ethiopia.

The Emperor ruled Ethiopia with an iron fist concentrating power in his person and those close to him. The system provided no mechanism even for a measured self–rule of the incorporated peoples, including the Oromos, which constituted the largest group in Ethiopia, the Ogaden Somalis, the Afars, and other minority groups bordering Kenya and Sudan. The same may be said with respect to his policies in Eritrea, a country that enjoyed greater exposure to western ideals of democracy after Italian colonialism came to an end. The combined pressure from such groups for more say in the country's affairs and the refusal by the central government to give in to their demands made Ethiopia highly unstable.

Ethiopia's behavior, therefore, was no different from any other empire. It forcibly incorporated many peripheral regions and ruled these regions from the

10 Oromo nationalist literature sees no difference between the way Europeans colonized Africa and the way Ethiopia took possession of the Oromo–inhabited areas. Therefore, many Oromos continue to call for a full measure of self–determination, including the right form an independent 'Oromia' state. See, for example, 'OLF Mission' www.oromoliberationfront.org/OLFMission.htm, accessed on 1 July 2005.

11 For more, please see Touval 1963, Chapter 6.

center, imposing a medieval–like administration at the expense of traditional administrative structures. However, its efforts to homogenize the hitherto peripheral peoples did not produce the desired outcome because of a lack of resource base to finance such efforts. Hence, nationalist demands, spearheaded and articulated by university students, started to challenge the system in the mid–1960s. Serious cracks developed in 1973 after the government failed to resolve both the fuel shortage and the devastating drought that gripped the country. The effects of the latter have been particularly visible: it exposed the political and economic bankruptcy of the once–respected Imperial Government of Haile Selassie, which had capitalized on the glorious history of a 'never' colonized Ethiopia.[12] In 1974, the military overthrew the Emperor's government.

The new military regime put resolution of the question of nationalities and the economic well being of the people at the top of its agenda. Like its predecessor, however, it was unable to effectively address both issues. It essentially followed the Soviet model, which codified and institutionalized 'nationhood and nationality exclusively on a sub–state level rather than a state–wide level' and, contrary to its promises, showed no inclination to devolve power to the regions (Brubaker 1996, 27). Similarly, its centralized socialist economic policies failed to effectively solve the prevailing economic problems, as the economy was hopelessly depressed to implement socialist policies, which were predicated on the existence of a supportive industrial base. As a consequence, disgruntled elites founded their own ethnic–based liberation movements to press for more economic and political rights.

The second critical issue, whose solution has so far proved illusive and closely related to state formation in Ethiopia, is the question of the Ogaden. Ever since Somalia became an independent republic in 1960, it laid claim to all Somali–inhabited regions of Ethiopia, Djibouti, and northeastern Kenya. Of the regions not yet part of present Somalia, the Ogaden region of Ethiopia and its future has been so central in the foreign policy of Somalia that it went to war against Ethiopia in 1964 and in 1977–78. The latter was especially important because of the massive intervention, including the direct participation by Soviet, Cuban, and Yemeni forces on the side of Ethiopia to win back the Ogaden, where the western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF) had gradually escalated its attacks since 1975. Ethiopian forces finally withdrew from the Ogaden after Somalia sent its regular troops to fight alongside the WSLF in July 1977.[13] The problem in the Ogaden has not been entirely resolved, as the ongoing low level conflict indicates.

The third critical issue is the question of Eritrea. Having been an Italian colony from 1890 to 1941, Eritrea had benefited economically, as Italy had built the necessary

12 The other country in Africa that escaped colonization was Liberia. One must also note that Ethiopia was occupied by Fascist Italy from 1936–1941 and became part of Italian East Africa, which included Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Somalia. Whether this brief period constituted colonization of Ethiopia or not is marginal to this study.

13 The scale of the foreign intervention and the activities of the WSLF are found in Gorman 1981, 61–5.

infrastructure in Eritrea to help in its efforts to colonize Ethiopia. On the other hand, Ethiopia's economy was based on subsistence agriculture. Thus, when Ethiopia took control of Eritrea, two distinct economic units within the same state came into being. Moreover, after Italy's defeat in the Second World War, Great Britain administered Eritrea for about ten years: people organized various political parties, founded independent daily newspapers, and created labor unions, all of which were absent in Ethiopia. In other words, Eritrea was comparatively more democratic during the ten–year British administration and more industrial because of Italian colonialism.

The incongruity between the archaic political system and the semi–feudal economy in Ethiopia on the one hand, and the rather open political system and the relatively developed market–oriented economy in Eritrea on the other, brought about stiff resistance in Eritrea to its incorporation. Moreover, Eritreans were resentful at what they considered to be an unjust United Nations resolution to federate Eritrea with Ethiopia at a time when Libya and Italian Somaliland, the other two former Italian colonies, chose and became independent.[14] In the early 1960s, the resistance coalesced into one of the most organized liberation movements in Africa, which significantly weakened the central government's hold on the rest of Ethiopia.

Thus, Ethiopia's failure to manage effectively the multiple sources of grievances produced severe conflicts for most of the latter half of the twentieth century. These conflicts generated what Kunz (1973) calls, 'acute' refugee movements across the borders of Ethiopia.[15] Towards the end of the 1980s, the United States Committee for Refugees (USCR) estimated that Ethiopia had generated 1.1 million refugees, most of which where members of suspect groups, including Eritreans, Ogaden Somalis, and Tigrayans (USCR 1989). This number significantly declined after the Mengistu regime was overthrown in May 1991. Nonetheless, the Horn of Africa continued to host hundreds of thousands of refugees, most of them from Ethiopia. According to USCR (1998), almost seven years after the conflict ended in 1991, there were an estimated 360,000 Eritrean and Ethiopian refugees in Sudan, 5,000 Ethiopian refugees in Kenya, and 2,000 in Djibouti.

The brief historical account presented above points to an important long–term variable that contributed to refugee flight from Ethiopia. Indeed, the process of the formation of modern Ethiopia was such that it incorporated disparate groups of people with no overarching loyalty to the state, and this transformed Ethiopia into an empire. The fact that there are disparate groups in Ethiopia does not make it terribly different from other societies, especially in Africa. However, its incessant drive for centralization, uniformity, and homogeneity in an otherwise plural society, with no net benefit to the peripheral peoples in return, was bound to fail. Thus, in the 1970s, the once dormant ethnic and national attachments were rekindled, and this made it

14 See, for example, Habte Selassie 1980, 56.

15 Acute refugee movements are large scale, wave–like refugee movements, where the 'push' factor is overwhelming. Refugees flee *en masse* to reach their destinations as quickly as possible. For more discussion on the typology of refugee movements, please see Kunz 1973, 125–46.

difficult to manage inter–group relationships short of war between the state and the various groups. In the process, there were massive population displacements, most of which crossed international borders in search of refuge. The dynamics of state formation and/or transformation, therefore, provides a necessary condition for the onset of conflicts and ensuing refugee crisis in Ethiopia. As a necessary condition, however, this variable may not in itself account for the conflict. The often complex interaction of this variable with the global economic down turn of the early 1970s, the ever–diminishing returns of coffee sold at the international market, the 1973 drought that deeply affected Ethiopian prestige, and superpower intervention in Eritrea and the Ogaden in the latter half of the 1970s made the conflicts more intractable and the refugee situation more acute.

Long–term Contextual Variables in the Evolution of the Conflict in Somalia

Perhaps one of the most homogeneous states in Africa in terms of culture, religion, language, and societal practices, Somalia was expected to avoid the endemic fractionalization in the rest of the continent. Unfortunately, it has become a victim of unseen, indeed unexpected, centrifugal forces of 'segmentary clanism' and an unenviable example of a failed African state, where state structures have collapsed and replaced by warlordism reminiscent of feudal Europe a few hundred years ago. The absence of state protection, coupled with clan segmentation that permeates Somali daily lives, has given rise to various clan–based warlords. They have successfully established feudal–like patron–client relationships based on mutually agreed, probably unwritten and unspoken arrangements, whereby the warlords promised protection of the clan in return for loyalty and political allegiance. In fact, modern Somalia had fallen prey to modern warlordism long before Sierra Leone, Liberia, and the DRC. It is, therefore, necessary to look briefly at the distant and the not–so–distant past to locate the long–term contextual variables that played crucial role in the present predicament of Somalia.

Prior to colonial penetration in the late 1880s and early 1890s, Somali–speaking populations inhabited large parts of the Horn of Africa in an egalitarian, nomadic and semi–nomadic way of life, but with no centralized political administration. They were organized along blood lineages, where each clan controlled a piece of territory and fought regularly against other clans with competing claims to the same territory, or a piece thereof. This was partly due to the undemarcated clan territories, where competition for water and grazing land was fierce, and partly due to the endemic shifting clan alliances prevalent in resource–scarce environments, where 'one does not have a permanent enemy or a permanent friend [but] only a permanent context' (Samatar 1993, 94). Despite the egalitarianism of their system, however, 'internecine segmentary conflicts' has been a constant feature of Somali social, economic, and political life (Laitin and Samatar 1987). Indeed, as anthropologist I. M. Lewis has noted, 'segmentary clanism' had always been 'the most pervasive, the most commanding, and above all the most insidious' in Somalia (Lewis 2002, 166).

A common language, religion, culture, and claims of a common ancestor, however, unite all Somali–speaking peoples against non–Somalis.

Despite the clan segmentation of Somali political and social life, the belief in the essential oneness of the Somalis remained unshaken throughout the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, when major European powers and Ethiopia carved and established separate administrations in what came to be known as British Somaliland, French Somaliland, Italian Somaliland, the Ogaden (Ethiopia), and the Northern Frontier District (Kenya). The lack of centralized authority in pre–colonial times not withstanding, the Somalis never accepted foreign claims on their habitual areas of residence, and resisted colonialism and balkanization of their territory until 1920. Notable among their resistance was the movement led by Mohammad Abdille Hassan who fought outsiders, including the Ethiopians, for more than twenty years.[16] To underscore his refusal to recognize Ethiopian and European balkanization of what he considered to be an indivisible Somalia, Mohammad Abdille Hassan employed highly mobile guerrilla warfare, impervious to the colonial borders that divided the Somali–inhabited areas. Resistance such as this, glorified in oral narratives and songs, provided the Somalis a link with the past and an aspiration for a united Somalia, which encompassed all five regions. Therefore, modern Somali nationalism, especially in its mid-twentieth century variant, was based on the myth of a common ancestry, contiguity of their land, shared language, religion, history, tradition, and resistance to colonialism.

After the end of the Second World War, Italy relinquished its claim to Italian Somaliland, and Great Britain, faced with strong opposition to colonial rule, accepted the inevitable independence of its colonial domains as well. Thus, in 1960, independent Somalia was born as a voluntary union of the former Italian Somaliland and British Somaliland. This union, rare in the annals of the decolonization process because of its voluntary nature, was a concrete manifestation of Somali solidarity, which colonialism failed to erase. And many hoped it was a unique Somali asset, which other postcolonial African states could only hope to have. The sense of common identity, however, became a liability also. Modern Somalia was seen as small and incomplete without the three regions, and preoccupation with the establishment of a 'Greater Somalia' became a key foreign policy objective of the newly–established Republic. From its creation, therefore, modern Somalia had a rocky relationship not only with neighboring Kenya and Ethiopia, but also with France, the colonial power until 1977 in what is now Djibouti.

Similarly, the irredentist policy Somalia followed had a profound impact on its foreign relations with international actors outside of the Horn of Africa. Its relationship

16 Mohammad Abdille Hassan was able to gain many followers to fight foreign encroachment into Somali–inhabited areas for many years not only because of his oratory and his skill as a poet, but also because he infused Islam into the struggle. The British called him 'mad mullah' to describe what they thought was a traditional Muslim extremist movement. However, this was an intensely patriotic movement and Great Britain fought for twenty years before finally defeating the movement.

with the OAU the UN, both of which had accepted the status quo and had sanctified colonial borders, was far from cordial. Indeed, Somalia, had challenged the status quo in Africa much like Germany did in Europe in the 1930s, and this had an adverse impact on its relationship with African countries and the rest of the world. At the domestic level, the unresolved debate over 'moderation versus militancy on the pan–Somali question' in the 1960s had sapped resources for internal development (Samatar 1993, 33). And despite two wars against Ethiopia—a border war in 1964 and large–scale war in 1977–78—and guerrilla campaigns against Kenya during 1960–64, Somalia has been unable to translate its pan–Somali aspirations into 'Greater Somalia'. The incongruity between pan–Somali nationalism and the state's inability to successfully translate this into a Somalia encompassing all territories in which all Somalis lived not only caused economic hardships, but also a sense of powerlessness in the Somali national psyche. In situations such as this, people usually turn against each other, as witnessed in the recent inter–group violence in Sierra Leone and, of course, Somalia.

There are, therefore, three critical issues in understanding the long–term contextual variables at play in the present crisis in Somalia. First, the pan–Somalia question had remained unresolved because every Somali government since independence saw no other way but the complete union of the 'lost territories' with the Republic of Somalia. This hindered the ability of post–independence governments to give priority to economic development and to cultivate cooperative relationships with its neighbors in the region and beyond. Second, although Somali cohesion was strong, especially when it encounters 'the other', the Somalis remained divided along clan lines.[17] Clan loyalty had always served as the yardstick for dispensing the public good and had remained endemic in Somali social, political, and economic life. Even Siad Barre, who seized power ostensibly to extirpate this social ill, finally succumbed to the overpowering clan nepotism. Thus, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, entire clans or sub–clans in the northern part became suspect and suffered decisive and heavy–handed government responses to any opposition. As Lewis (1990, 58) has observed, 'The north as I saw when I last visited it in 1985, began to look and feel like a colony under foreign military tyranny'.

Third, the existing externally–induced divide between the two former Somalilands were expected to wither away, especially after former Italian Somaliland and British Somaliland entered into a voluntary union that served as a concrete expression of pan–Somali nationalism. Overtime, however, this divide became increasingly sharp. Problems of national integration continued to haunt the new republic, as Italy and Britain had left two different legal and administrative systems, each conducted in a distinct colonial language (Samatar 1993). Moreover, Hargeisa, the capital of the British Somaliland, had been reduced to a provincial capital in favor of Mogadishu, which became the national capital. It is not surprising, therefore, the north should question the 'value of [the] union', and to find it hard to 'stomach this reduction

17 A brief description of the segmentary social order and its role in the Somali civil war are found in Samatar 1993, 71–80 and 92–4.

in prestige' (Lewis 2002, 72). The departing colonialists had also left two distinct economic systems: sedentary agriculture, mostly based on banana production in the southern part, and pastoral economy, based on cattle in the northern part, although this was also a function of the topography of the land. Because of this, Southerners were comparatively more urbanized than Northerners (Lewis 2002). This resulted in Southern disproportionate presence in the bureaucracy and other managerial positions, and this increased Northerner resentment. The recent unilateral secession of a yet to be recognized Republic of Somaliland in the north, and the self–declared autonomous entity called Puntland in the northwest could be traced to this.

The fratricidal conflict in Somalia generated hundreds of thousands of refugees who sought asylum not only in neighboring Ethiopia, Kenya, and Yemen, but also elsewhere. Most of the refugees, who fled to Ethiopia to avoid the scorched earth policy of the regime of Siad Barre, were from the Isaaq clan in the north. Those in Kenya, however, fled after the regime was overthrown and are predominantly members of the Darod and other clan or sub–clans in the southern part. Although many Somali refugees have repatriated during most of the 1990s because of reduced violence, there still remained approximately 300,000 Somali refugees at the end of 2003.

The myth of a common ancestor, the objectively shared societal characteristics, and the subjective psychological disposition of oneness of the people of Somalia all point in the direction of the pan–Somalia policies the state followed. However, clan divisions that became increasingly stronger in the 1980s and thereafter point in the opposite direction. Together, these variables constitute the long–term contextual variables in the predicament of modern Somalia. However, these variables are not sufficient in and of themselves to cause that predicament, as history is full of examples of peaceful states with irredentist aspirations and myths of oneness. In other words, these long–term contextual variables need to interact with medium and short–term political, economic, and social variables to pinpoint the immediate causes of the conflict and attendant refugee movements in the hundreds of thousands. These variables will be closely examined in Chapter 4, as their interaction with the contextual variables is crucial in understanding the nexus of the conflict and the refugee situation in Somalia.

Long–term Contextual Variables in the Evolution of the Conflict in Sudan

Sudan is the largest country in Africa and extends almost 1300 miles from north to south and 950 miles from east to west, with extreme climatic and topographic variations. These variations range from deserts in the north to tropical forests in the south. Some argue that corresponding roughly to this geographic contrast, Sudan is inhabited by 'two distinct peoples with differing value systems: the Arabs in the north and the African Negroid in the south ...', each with distinct modes of economic activity, social organization, history, religion, language, and psychological make–up

(Wai 1981, 20). Thus, Sudan is perhaps the most highly segmented country in Africa, especially because of the segmentations within the North and the South.

It is important to note that history has played crucial role in the making of modern Sudan. In the past, Sudan served as conduit for different peoples, including Arabs, who moved into what is now the South to exploit the enormous riches of the hinterland, while at the same time, spreading Islam. People from West Africa also used Sudan as staging ground for their pilgrimage to Mecca and for trade with the Arabs.[18] As a consequence, most Sudanese, especially those who claim Arab heritage, exhibit varying complexions. These range from darker, more African–like features, especially in the areas adjacent to the South, to lighter, Arab–like features in the North. Nonetheless, Northerners are united by a common culture based on Islam and the Arabic language. This cultural component, and not a blood lineage, differentiates the North from the South. According to Wai (1981, 20), identification with Islam and the Arab World is considered '…an index of distinctiveness, and exclusiveness from the Negroid Africans of the South'. The latter are either Christians or followers of traditional religions and have a shared memory of subjugation under the Turko–Egyptians, who made periodic incursions into the South in search of riches and slaves. Under pressure from Great Britain, the Turko–Egyptians formally abolished slavery in 1877.

The Southerners also share common memory of subjugation under the Mahdists, a religious–nationalist group which fought and expelled the Turko–Egyptians in the mid–1880s and established their rule. However, during their brief stay in power, the Mahdists presided over the return of 'full–scale slavery' (Deng 1995, 72). The Southerners remember this period as 'the time when "the world was spoiled", and as an abomination of which they speak with consistency and vividness' (ibid. 73). Their shared history of oppression at the hands of the Turko–Egyptians and Northerners, and their opposition to slavery has created a sense of Southern togetherness, at least vis–à–vis their compatriots from the North.

For Northerners, on the other hand, Sudan represents a continuum in which the Islamic and Arab influence gradually becomes less marked as one moves from north to south. However, it is impossible to reach a state of total 'Arabness' or total 'Africanness', whether in the extreme north or extreme south. In other words, Sudan represents both Arabization and Africanization—a synthesis of the two. Accordingly, they reject the notion that the two are very different entities that cannot constitute a single state.[19] Furthermore, although there were wrongs perpetrated by the North on the South, both have intertwined histories of colonial subjugation, first under the Turko–Egyptians and later under the British. But, more importantly, Northerners blame British rule for creating a big divide between the two parts of Sudan (Khalid 2003).

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18 There still exist pockets of Sudanese of West African ancestry in the North. Such pockets of populations were also found in western Eritrea. In fact, this group was one of the first to seek exile in Sudan in the 1960s.

19 A detailed discussion of this is found in Abd Al–Rahim 1973, 233–49.

After the British defeated the Mahdists at the Battle of Omdurman in 1898, Sudan fell under the joint administration of Great Britain and Egypt. This arrangement, known as the Anglo–Egyptian Condominium, lasted until 1956.[20] Although slavery was abolished once again, Great Britain did not have a coherent policy for the entire colony. While its policies in the North had laid the foundations for an economic transformation, such as the Gezira irrigation scheme, it essentially neglected the South to continue its traditional ways of life. Also, the Colonial Government under the Condominium discouraged North–South contact. On the other hand, it gave Christian missionaries unfettered access to spread the Gospel while curtailing the same missionary activities in the North. Khalid (2003, 18) contends that the missionaries 'inculcated into the hearts of Southerners, bitterness against the whole North based on the humiliating slave experiences'. Thus, two communities, one in the North with relative wealth, and the other in the South with little or no wealth came into being. Similarly, the shared Southern experience of slavery under the Turko–Egyptians and the Mahdists, Great Britain's colonial policy of neglect of the South, and historical narratives of the distinctiveness of the South have shaped Southern psychological orientation. With such lingering memory of injustice, it is hard to imagine why Great Britain abandoned its policy in 1947, and administered the territory until 1956 directly from Khartoum like any other province in Sudan.

Given the objective and subjective factors that played critical roles in the divergent identities of the North and the South, it is also important to note that the two regions are not internally homogeneous. Although most of the populations of the North are Muslim, the Beja in the northeast, the Nuba in the center, and the Darfur in the west do not define themselves as Arab. The core Northerners appear to share the 'non–Arabness' of these regions and this is reflected in the present government's continued neglect and marginalization of these regions, including its scorched earth policies in the recent conflict in Darfur. Nonetheless, because of their religion and a comparatively stronger Arab influence, they do not identify with the South. As John Voll has cogently put it, 'When *the north* is used as a noun to represent a specific entity, it implies contrast with *the south*, which by inference, helps to define the North. It may not be too extreme to say that without the concept of the south, there is no "north" in Sudan' (quoted in Deng 1995, 402; emphasis in original).

Equally, it may not be too extreme to state that without the concept of the North, the 'south' would consist of hundreds of disparate groups, internally divided by language, religion, and social practices, with no overarching loyalty to the South. The various groups have traditionally competed for resources and have gone through numerous wars against each other. Despite these differences, however, the Southerners feel more 'racially akin to tropical Africa and identify culturally with Africanism (Wai 1981, 19). Therefore, the North and the South each need 'the other' for self–identification and conflicts born out of this need have directly or indirectly caused massive population displacements. The North–South contrasting identities,

20 For a discussion of the Condominium, please see Khalid 2003, Chapter 1.

manifested in the now almost five decade–old conflicts, therefore, represent the long–term contextual variable in the making of the conflict.

Although wars are inextricably linked with forced population displacements, and wars in Africa tend to affect civilians disproportionately compared to wars elsewhere, Sudan is infamously known for its huge number of forcibly displaced persons. According to the US Committee for Refugees, for example, a total of about four million Southerners have been internally displaced in 1998 because of the civil war (USCR 1999). This number was the highest in the world. With 1.2 million, Angola ranked a distant second in terms of the number of internally displaced (ibid.). Moreover, by 1998, it was estimated that 1.3 million inhabitants of southern Sudan had died as a result of the continuing civil war, and a significant majority of the population has been displaced at least once since 1983 (USCR, 1998). Towards the end of the 1990s, with approximately 353,000 refugees, mostly from the South, Sudan was the highest refugee–generating nation in the Horn of Africa, and one of the top three refugee–generating nations on the continent (USCR 1999). More recently, more than 200,000 Sudanese from Darfur have crossed into Chad in search of asylum, and another 2,000,000 were displaced within Sudan itself (Human Rights Watch, April 2004).

As stated earlier, the contrasting North–South identities constitute the long–term contextual variable upon which the present conflict and ensuing forced population movements in Sudan are based. This long–term contextual variable is a condition necessary for the state in which Sudan found itself since it became independent in 1956. Chapter 4 will examine the short– and medium–term political, economic, and social variables to provide reasons sufficient for the formation of refugees and internally displaced persons unparalleled in the history of African conflicts. These are the political opportunism of parties in the North, exemplified by the numerous government changes and the near paralysis of the state in dealing with the 'Southern question', and the intra–South political rivalry, commonly seen in the constant shifting alliances within the South. The latter included alliances with the government directed against other Southern parties. Together, these variables have defined the character of Sudanese political discourse, which has never appealed to all and particularly to the North and to the South. Politics in Sudan has been a zero–sum game where one's gain is seen another's loss, and this has made peaceful resolution of the conflict more difficult to achieve.

The Magnitude of the Refugee Crisis in the Horn of Africa

The preceding sections have examined the long–term contextual variables in the making of the conflicts and refugee formations in the Horn of Africa. These variables, in conjunction with medium– and short–term political, economic, and social variables and the massive intervention by external powers made refugee movements in the Horn of Africa distinct from many of the refugee–generating conflicts elsewhere in Africa, both in their scale and duration. That is, the Horn of Africa provides a fertile

ground for the study of conflicts and refugee formations not only because of the mere presence of many variables, some of them not at work elsewhere in Africa, but also because of the very manifest presence of these variables.

As indicated earlier, the persistence of acute refugee formations in the Horn of Africa for about forty years has made it one of the top refugee–generating regions in the world.[21] Indeed, when compared to the continental refugee rate, the number of refugees the Horn of Africa generated had increased at a much faster rate after the mid–1970s and peaked in the latter half of the 1980s. In fact, about *one* in *two* of all African refugees were from the Horn Africa at the end of 1986. This ratio decreased to about *one* in *three* at the end of 2004, partly because of refugee repatriations to Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Somalia. It is easy to see this ratio was *one* in *sixteen* thirty years earlier (Table 2.1).

Table 2.1 African and Horn of Africa (HOA) Refugees for Selected Years

Year (end)	*African*	*HOA*	*% of*
1974	1,105,217	66,700	6.04
1977	1,692,041	102,000	6.03
1980	4,045,200	323,000	7.98
1983	1,921,000	907,100	47.22
1986	3,112,950	1,622,869	52.13
1989	4,524,800	1,893,800	41.18
1992	5,340,800	1,676,800	31.40
1995	5,222,000	1,355,900	25.97
1998	2,922,000	1,072,000	36.69
2001	3,002,000	994,000	33.14
2004	3,295,900	1,147,100	34.80

Source: Compiled and computed from the annual publications of the United States Committee for Refugees (USCR), *World Refugee Report: Annual Survey*, 1974−2004.

A three-way comparison between the numbers of refugees in the world, Africa, and the Horn of Africa further highlights the seriousness of the refugee situation in the latter (Table 2.2). While world refugees, as a percentage of world population, has decreased between 1974 and early 2002, African refugees, and particularly refugees from the Horn of Africa, as percentages of their respective populations, have increased substantially during the same time period. For example, the refugee

21 Most of the refugee numbers in this study were taken from the refugee surveys the United States Committee for Refugees (USCR) publishes annually. It must be understood that there may be some variance in the numbers the USCR, the UNHCR, and host governments provide, as it is always difficult to determine the exact refugee numbers. Therefore, they need to be taken with caution. Nonetheless, they provide estimates strong enough to see trends and make meaningful generalizations.

population in the Horn of Africa in 1974, as a percentage of the total population, was actually smaller than that of the world for the same year (0.14 per cent against 0.36 per cent). It was also smaller than that of Africa (0.14 per cent against 0.28 per cent). However, at the beginning of 2002, the refugee population in the Horn of Africa, as a percentage of the total population, increased to 0.92 per cent while that of the world decreased to 0.25 per cent for the same time period (Table 2.2). In other words, almost thirty years back, the global share of refugees from the Horn of Africa (and indeed Africa's) was much lower. It is also important to observe that the percentage of world refugees actually dropped from 0.36 to 0.25 per cent of world population between 1974 and 2002, while that of the Horn of Africa, as a percentage of the region's population, increased from 0.14 per cent to 0.92 per cent between 1974 and 2002. No other region in Africa has seen such an exponential growth of refugees in such a short time, and none has persisted at such intensity for such a long time.

Table 2.2 Comparisons of World, African, and HOA Refugees, 1974 and 2002

	1974	*2002*
World population	3,890,000,000	6,057,000,000*
World Refuges	14,195,000	14,921,000
% of Refugees	0.36	0.25
African Population	391,000,000	794,000,000*
African Refugees	1,105,000	3,002,000
% of Refugees	0.28	0.38
Horn of Africa's Population	47,650,000	107,659,000*
Horn of Africa's Refugees	66,000	994,000
% of Refugees	0.14	0.92

*Data represents mid-1974 and mid–2000 numbers.

Source: Refugee numbers were compiled and computed from the annual publications of the United States Committee for Refugees (USCR) (1974), *World Refugee Report: Annual Survey*; United States Committee for Refugees (USCR) (2002), *World Refugee Survey—2002*; United Nations (1975), *1975 Demographic Yearbook*; United Nations (2002), *2000 Demographic Yearbook.*

In sum, the global redistribution of refugees occurred mainly because the traditional refugee–generating areas of the world, Europe in particular, became progressively more stable, while conflicts in Africa, and the Horn of Africa in particular, persisted as a result of several interrelated factors. These factors, generally acting in concert, have created conflicts and refugee situations more enduring across time, more extensive across space, and much less amenable to peaceful solutions.

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PART 2
The Dynamics of Refugee Flight

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Chapter 3

The Dynamics of Refugee Flight from Eritrea and Ethiopia

Introduction

At the end of 2004, the United States Committee for Refugees (USCR) estimated that there were a total of approximately 217,500 Eritrean and Ethiopian refugees, of which about 206,000 were in exile in Sudan. Of the latter, more than 190,000 were from Eritrea and the remaining 15,000 from Ethiopia (USCR 2005). Almost all of the refugees from Eritrea have been in exile in Sudan for generations because of the war of independence in Eritrea. Those from Ethiopia (excluding Eritrea) fled because of multiple reasons. Some fled in the latter half of the 1970s because of ethnic–based conflicts, others because of ideologically motivated conflicts, and yet others because drought and conflict–induced famine of the mid–1980s. A few others fled in the early 1980s to escape conscription into the military and forced settlement in government constructed villages far away from their home areas. Therefore, they have been in exile for a considerably shorter period of time. At present, therefore, Eritreans in the hundreds of thousands and Ethiopians in the few thousands continue their exile in Sudan, although the war in Eritrea and Ethiopia ended in 1991.[1] Indeed, Ethiopia, of which Eritrea was formally part until 1993, was 'best known as Africa's largest refugee–producing country', with conflicts spanning over a 30-year period (USCR 1987, 38).

The conflict in Eritrea started as low–level guerrilla war in the western lowlands bordering Sudan. It gradually spread to the highlands and the eastern lowlands, and progressively increased in scale and intensity. The progressive escalation of conflict was accompanied by movements of refugees from the conflict areas in ever–increasing numbers. It is, therefore, helpful to chronologically divide the period of study into three—1967–73, 1974–90, and 1991–2004—to examine the variations in political violence and attendant refugee flows. This division corresponds, respectively, to the pre–revolutionary time period, when the first sizable Eritrean refugee flows to Sudan occurred in 1967; the revolutionary time period, which began with the military coup against the Imperial Ethiopian Government and the onset of the military–initiated Ethiopian Revolution in 1974; and the post–revolutionary

1 Most of the about 95,000 Eritreans who sought refuge in Sudan because of the 1998–2000 border war have been repatriated. Those who still remain have been in Sudan for a long period of time, some since the latter half of the 1960s.

time period, which began with the collapse of the People's Republic of Ethiopia and the formation of the Transitional Government of Ethiopia in 1991. This chapter (1) identifies the medium– and short–term conflict variables and associated refugee formations; (2) investigates the possible relationships between types of conflicts and refugee formations; and (3) explains how the refugee decision to flee may be seen as 'considered' in contrast to the literature, which depicts refugees as helpless and unable of making deliberate decisions.[2]

Conflicts and Refugee Formations in Pre–Revolutionary Ethiopia

As explained in Chapter 2, the long–term contextual variable in the dynamics of the conflicts in Ethiopia was state formation and/or transformation. This variable is associated with three persistent questions—the question of Eritrea, the question of the Ogaden, and the question of nationalities. Failure to resolve these gave rise to the conflict in (1) Eritrea, which started in 1961 because of the progressive erosion of the Ethio-Eritrean federal structure; (2) the Ogaden, where Ethiopia and Somalia went to war twice because the latter never recognized Ethiopian sovereignty over the territory; and (3) the Ethiopian heartland, where long–suppressed ethnic and nationalist sentiments surfaced after the onset of the Ethiopian Revolution of 1974. Thus, contrary to what many think, pre–revolutionary Ethiopia had actually been less stable than it actually appeared.

The first event that brought to the surface the existing discontent in Ethiopia was the attempted coup against Emperor Haile Selassie in 1960, where the coup leaders blamed the Imperial Order for Ethiopia's lack of political and economic advancement, even by African standards (Marcus 2002). The first to notice and act on this were Haile Selassie I University students.[3] This is exemplified by their active opposition to the land tenure of the feudal system, where they came out with the slogan of 'land to the tiller' in the 1960s, and the question of nationalities, where they likened Ethiopia to a prison of nationalities (Balsvik 1994). Similarly, the war of independence in Eritrea and Somali–supported nationalist activities in the Ogaden had started to seriously challenge the system. Ethiopia was unable to pacify Eritrea despite disproportionately harsh measures against combatants as well as civilians. Also, its call upon Somalia to recognize the existing international boundary and establish amicable relationships between the two countries did not interest Somali

2 I use the term 'considered' to mean that refugees flee to exile after evaluating the very *few* information they had and the *very limited* alternatives they had to choose from. This is also true during their exile and repatriation. The use of the word 'rational' is avoided because is a stronger term.

3 Balsvik (1994, 87) notes that Ethiopian university students 'felt humiliated when they realized that the [African] foreign students [among them] have had better schooling and knew far more than they did about political development in the continent'. Hence, the students were very receptive when the leaders of the attempted coup d'etat talked about the need to change the system to propel Ethiopia towards economic and political development.

leaders as well as the people of the Ogaden. These were the early indications of the abyss Ethiopia was surely heading for if it did not resolve the three persistent questions. Despite these, however, foreign powers regarded Ethiopia as stable mainly because of the international prestige the Emperor enjoyed at the time.

The War in Eritrea and Refugee Flight in Pre–Revolutionary Ethiopia

As stated earlier, Eritrea became a formal Italian colony in 1890 and remained as such until it was liberated by British forces in 1941. Great Britain administered Eritrea until 1952, after which it was federated with Ethiopia under UN Resolution 390 A (V) of December 2, 1950. However, this federation was dissolved in 1962 and Eritrea formally became an Ethiopian province. Eritrean nationalists believe the dissolution of the federation was illegal because the UN never gave its consent and also because it denied the Eritrean people the right to a full measure of self–determination, including statehood, which was readily extended to Italian Somaliland and Libya.[4] Therefore, Eritreans made a passionate appeal to the UN, the legal authority with respect to the former Italian colonies, to reverse this not only because it was illegal but also because Eritrea had evolved into a nation distinct from Ethiopia.[5] Ethiopia, on the other hand, saw Eritrea as Ethiopian since antiquity; therefore, despite the short Italian rule, Eritrea's unity with Ethiopia was natural because of historical, religious, political, and ethnic affiliation. Thus, the war of independence was based on these diametrically opposed claims.

The Eritrean war of independence began in 1961 under the direction of the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF). Initially, it conducted low-intensity guerilla war in the lowlands of Eritrea bordering Sudan, where Muslims mostly lived and where government control was weak. The conflict did not generate sizable refugee flight until 1967,[6] when more than 26,000 refugees sought asylum in Sudan because of large–scale offensives of the Ethiopian army (Kibreab 1987; Ruiz 1988; USCR

4 Eritrea was the first of three Italian colonies. After Italy's defeat in World War II, the UN deliberated on the future of these colonies and decided on a full measure of self–determination for Libya and Italian Somaliland. The issue of Eritrea, however, became problematic because of Ethiopia's claim to Eritrea and also because of geopolitical considerations of major powers during the first years of the Cold War. In this regard, John Foster Dulles (then American Secretary of State) made the following statement before the UN Security Council in 1952: 'From the point of justice, the opinions of the Eritrean people must receive consideration. Nevertheless, the strategic interests of the United States in the Red Sea basin and considerations of security and world peace make it necessary that the country has to be linked with our ally, Ethiopia'. These words may indicate why Eritreans felt their cause was just and were prepared to persevere.

5 For more on the federation and subsequent Eritrean armed revolt, please consult Habte Selassie 1980, 55–65. See also Keller 1988, 150–55.

6 It is instructive to note that there were a few refugees prior to 1967. However, the United States Committee for Refugees (USCR) did not report any Eritrean refugees in Sudan in its 1966 *World Refugee Report: Annual Survey*.

1969). Most of these refugees settled among the local population in and around the border town of Kassala, Sudan. However, the conflict escalated further and, as a consequence, the Ethiopian government adopted scorched earth policies to resolve the problem, which it viewed as Arab and Muslim–inspired plot to destroy Christian Ethiopia in an Arab–dominated region. This was seen as a serious national security threat and Ethiopia responded with its full might.

Kibreab (1987, 16-18)) notes that the main factor that triggered, the first wave of refugee flight in 1967 was the indiscriminate killing and burning of villages in the western lowlands of Eritrea. Similarly, Smock (1982) notes that the main reason why Eritrean refugees fled into Sudan in the 1960s and 1970s was repeated Ethiopian offensives, which targeted innocent civilians and their means of livelihood. That is, the refugees decided to seek asylum in Sudan only after series of military engagements between the combatants, which spilled over into the civilian population and took the form of government reprisals and counter–reprisals, and persistent disruptions of their daily lives. In other words, the Ethiopian government adopted a policy of targeting civilians to create a wedge between the latter and the ELF.

Thus, in 1969, a large number of refugees not only from the lowlands but also from the mountainous regions in the north and northeast fled in larger numbers because of ever–increasing indiscriminate measures. Smock (1982, 454) quotes the following vivid description of the situation by a refugee:

> In 1975 the Ethiopian Government raided Om–Hager [a small town bordering Sudan] and killed more than 20 civilians and burnt more than ten houses. The next day the Government ordered the people to come to an open field and when the people were gathered, the Government opened fire and hundreds of people died. Then I took my family and fled to the Sudan where we can find security. This was the only chance for us because our house was destroyed and all property was taken by the soldiers.

The conflict further escalated with the splintering of the ELF in the late 1960s and the establishment of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) in the early 1970s. According to the EPLF, the split occurred because of ELF's lack of revolutionary program, its sectarian inclination and religious discrimination, it's overly reliance on Arab support, and the ineptitude of its leaders.[7] The split meant that the Ethiopian Army had two fronts to fight on: the ELF in the western lowlands and the EPLF in the northwestern and northern mountainous terrain. Within a short period of time, the EPLF became a formidable opposition front even when compared to the ELF, and this transformed the conflict quantitatively and qualitatively: the scale and frequency of military engagements increased and the theater of war expanded considerably. As a result, the war affected many more peoples. Thus, on the eve of the Ethiopian Revolution of 1974, there were more than 50,000 Eritrean refugees

7 The reasons for the split is amply discussed in *Nihnan Elamanan*, a document in Tigrigna (a major language in Eritrea) the People's Liberation Forces made public in early March 1971. The rough translation of *Nihnan Elamanan* is 'We and our Goals'. The People's Liberation Forces later renamed itself as the Eritrean People's Liberation Front.

who sought asylum in Sudan (see, for example, USCR 1974). Most of these refugees were Muslim and settled among the Muslim population of Sudan in the border areas. Besides a common religious belief, many were members of the same ethnic group and this made their exile in Sudan easier.

It is important to emphasize that the first wave of Eritrean refugees to Sudan occurred in 1967, some six years after the initiation of the conflict in Eritrea. At first, the violence was a typical low–level hit and run guerrilla attacks, and Ethiopia's response was more or less targeted against combatants. This spared the civilian population from the adverse effects of the war, as Ethiopia had hoped the armed opposition would gradually die. Moreover, the loyalty of the civilian population was still contested and each party had to earn the support of the population. Thus, combatants on both sides left the population in relative peace for a while. However, after opposition attacks became more daring the population was perceived as having directly or indirectly aided the guerrillas, Ethiopian response became wide–spread and less–targeted. Nonetheless, the population stayed put until it became virtually impossible to stay any longer. They finally and reluctantly sought refuge because of the imminent threat to the very security of their lives; the repeated disruptions of planting and harvesting cycles; and the destruction of their means of livelihood, including the killing of livestock and the poisoning of water wells. That is, the refugees made and executed the decision to flee based on their evaluations of the political, security, and economic situation, which had become intolerable. Hence, their decision to flee was 'considered'. Contrary to Kunz's (1973, 132) characterization of 'a singular absence of self-propelling inner forces', Eritrean refugees maintained the necessary composure to make the decision to leave and to reach the destination safely.

The Conflict in the Ogaden in Pre–Revolutionary Ethiopia

Many have repeatedly observed that the colonial division of Africa made no social, political, or economic sense, as colonial powers implemented the division based on their interests only. The commonly held belief is that European capitalism could only function under enormous stresses if restricted to the home base because increasingly efficient industries produced more than what was consumed at home. As mentioned earlier, Hobson (1902) suggested that colonies were needed for markets and for profitable investment of surplus capital. Also, Baumgart (1982) suggested that European colonial expansion, in addition to being driven by economic needs, as Hobson (1961) had earlier suggested, was also driven by other factors, including security needs. That is, Europeans colonized territories because of their need for security through the balance of power approach. This is evident in the British and French colonization of Aden and Djibouti, respectively, only a few miles apart across the Bab el Mandeb. Great Britain also encouraged, or at least tolerated, Italian expansion in Eritrea for fear of greater French influence in Ethiopia and the surrounding areas. Similarly, as we have seen earlier, different powers divided the Somali inhabited areas: Great Britain, France, and Italy occupied what came to be known as British Somaliland, French Somaliland, and Italian Somaliland,

respectively. Ethiopia, a non-European power, also took its share and occupied the Ogaden.

Thus, the territories in which the Somalis habitually lived were arbitrarily divided by more powerful nations. This did not sit well with independent Somalia, which was formed after the merger of the former Italian and British Somalilands in 1960. In particular, Somalia refused to accept Ethiopian sovereignty over the Ogaden and set to acquire its 'lost territories'. This resulted in conflict not only with Ethiopia but also with Kenya and France, the colonial power in Djibouti until 1977. The conflict with Ethiopia had been more intense partly because of the size of the Ogaden, which is much larger than the two other territories it laid claim to—the Northeastern Frontier District of Kenya and all of Djibouti. Moreover, the Ogaden is considered more strategic because of the possible presence of oil, and also because some Somali leaders have Ogadeni clan lineage. For example, Siad Barre, who ruled Somalia during 1969-90, is Ogadeni from his mother's side.[8] Thus, Somalia has always encouraged active Ogadeni opposition to Ethiopia's rule and has even gone to war, albeit brief, back in 1964. The brief border war did not advance the Somali cause because challenges to existing borders were seen as threat to peace and security of Africa.[9] Thus, for most of the latter half of the 1960s Somalia did not push hard enough to advance its claims. Indeed, during the Egal government from 1967 to 1969 and the first few years of the Barre government, Somalia followed a policy of détente with all its neighbors. However, it never gave up on its claims. With the adoption of 'scientific socialism' as a guiding principle in its domestic and foreign policy, it established a cordial relationship with the Soviet Union and received massive economic and military support. By 1973, the Somali Armed Forces became one of the more modern armed forces in Sub–Sahara Africa. In return, the Soviet Union established a base at the port city of Berbera to monitor US naval movements and to project its power over the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean.

In the early 1970s, thanks to the support from Somalia, the WSLF began its campaign to unify the Ogaden with the Republic of Somalia. However, there was no significant refugee movement to Somalia, perhaps because Ethiopia never had effective control of the Ogaden. That is, unlike Eritrea, Ogaden was not yet strategic enough for Ethiopia and was not prepared to pour in its meager resources to make its presence felt. At the same time, the WSLF was not as active as the ELF or the EPLF in Eritrea were. Hence, significant refugee movements to Somalia did not occur until after the onset of the Ethiopian Revolution of 1974.[10]

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8 See Ofcansky (1993, 189).

9 The OAU squarely sided with Ethiopia because it had earlier adopted colonial borders as sacrosanct in its 1963 Charter. Please consult the OAU Charter, available at: <www.uneca.org/itca/ariportal/oaucharter.htm>.

10 In its 1967 and 1968 issue of *World Refugee Survey*, the USCR indicated that there were an unconfirmed 189,000 Ethiopian refugees in Somalia. However, no Somali refugees were reported in the preceding and succeeding issues of the publication and no visible refugee flight or repatriation had occurred to warrant such fluctuations.

The Ethiopian Revolution and the 'Question of Nationalities' in the Ethiopian Heartland

As stated earlier, towards the end of the 1960s and early 1970s the war in Eritrea had escalated to engulf the hitherto peaceful highlands, where Christians generally lived. The increased security measures Ethiopia took in response became more expensive and had begun to drain Ethiopia's economy. There were also three additional reasons why the Ethiopian economy was under much stress. First, Ethiopia's feudal political and economic system, in a world increasingly moving towards economic and political modernization, had suffocated the productive sectors of society. Thus, although the 1973 global oil embargo and the subsequent increases in oil prices had affected nearly all countries, it had a more detrimental impact on least developed countries of which Ethiopia was one. Second, the price of coffee, on which Ethiopia's economy overwhelmingly depended, had plummeted, and there was severe inflation (Keller 1988, 170). Third, the severe drought that gripped all of northern and north–central Ethiopia in 1973 exposed the government's inability and/or unwillingness to deal with it effectively. The drought, coupled with less income from coffee, demands for more pay by teachers, and work stoppages by taxi drivers, is perhaps the most important precipitating variable for the onset of the Ethiopian Revolution in 1974.

Although drought is cyclical in the Horn of Africa and peasants had developed coping mechanisms over the centuries, there is some evidence that the frequency and intensity of drought has increased over the preceding few decades.[11] However, the 1973 drought was unprecedented in its scale and intensity, and was too much for a nearly bankrupt state. Cognizant of its limitations, the government was expected to make domestic as well as international appeals for aid to feed the hungry. However, the Imperial Government of Haile Selassie hid the humanitarian catastrophe from foreign donors and the Ethiopia public. Although aid did finally arrive, thanks in large part to Jonathan Dimbleby's Fall 1973 documentary that chronicled the famine and put the pictures of emasculated children on television screens across the West, it was too late to save the estimated 200,000 individuals and almost 90 per cent of the livestock from death (Keller 1988, 166–73). On 12 September 1974, the military overthrew the regime.

The unrest in the military, which culminated in the formation of the Coordinating Committee of the Armed forces, the Police, and the Territorial Army (or *Derg*, as was commonly known in Amharic), did not at first appear it was going to lead to a coup. In fact, the unrest started because of demands for higher pay by the military (Abate 1983). It took a series of 'uprisings' within the military before it culminated in the creation of what Tiruneh (1993, 62–63) called 'Major Atnafu's Coordinating Committee'. The committee was not yet cohesive, however. It did not have any

11 Zewde (1991) stated that about 100,000 individuals died in Tigray in 1958 because of drought–induced famine. Similarly, there was famine in Wollo in 1966, although it was not publicized. For incidences of drought and famine in Ethiopia, please see Kebbede 1992, Appendix.

political program, except perhaps the removal and detention of top personalities of the *ancien regime* and, above all, it did not have a paramount leader. Indeed, the members of the *Derg* came as representatives of their respective disparate units and did not know each other well. Some were selected because of their merit, others because of their ethnicity, and still others because they were not collegial and their unit commanders were happy to see them go.[12] It took the armed forces about eight months to finally depose the Emperor and seize power in September 1974 in what some have referred to as a 'creeping coup' (Tiruneh 1993, 64–71). The *Derg* became a fully cohesive force only after it executed senior members of the Ethiopian Government in November 1974, an act which united its members 'in a "blood" pact' (Ottaway and Ottaway 1978, 61). After numerous putsches and killings within itself, the *Derg* settled on Mengistu as its undisputed leader and on a political program that tilted far to the left.[13]

Soon after the coup d'etat, the military announced a series of initiatives of which the resolution of the question of nationalities and the question of Eritrea were central. However, it did not have the ideological clarity nor the know–how to devise and implement its visions and initiatives. It increasingly sought the support of intellectuals and students, who gave the revolution a decidedly Marxist orientation. This culminated in the promulgation of the National Democratic Revolution Programme (NDRP) in April 1976, which, among other things, put into effect 'land to the tiller', a crucial demand of student revolutionaries of the 1960s and 1970s. Similarly, the question of nationalities, which university students had championed, was recognized as central and included in the program. As the military regime became more and more secure in its position, however, it succumbed to the inherently centralizing urges of the state. It put aside the NDRP and paid only lip service to the legitimate rights of nationalities to self–government. Ethnic leaders immediately opposed this and started mobilizing their co–ethnics on the basis of escalating communal demands. Indeed, as Bariagaber (1998, 106) has noted:

> … by first creating high expectations of a truly democratic, multi-ethnic state and later suppressing the forces that were unleashed by such expectations, the revolution only helped reify ethnic solidarities: ethnic movements proliferated in many parts of the country and '[ethnic groups] pressed their demands for self-determination, many through armed revolt.

12 For example, Harbeson (1988, 135) states that Mengistu Haile Mariam, the undisputed leader of the *Derg* since February 1977 and later the President of the People's Republic of Ethiopia until he fled the country in 1991, was a 'good commander but was given to bouts of drinking and disorderly conduct' and was once reportedly accused of 'irregularities in the handling of spare parts and even court–martialed'.

13 Many of the originally visible members of the *Derg* were dead by February 1977, an act aptly referred during those days as 'the revolution devouring its own children' for moving away from the correct path.

Among the most important of these movements were the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) and the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF). There were also pan-Ethiopian parties such as the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP) and the All Ethiopia Socialist Movement (*Meison*—its Amharic acronym), both of which were Marxist in orientation, and the Ethiopian Democratic Union (EDU), led by members of the *ancien regime*. The government successfully neutralized the pan–Ethiopian parties partly because of bickering among themselves and partly because they did not have external support. One such disagreement centered on the nature of the *Derg* and how to deal with it. The EPRP saw the *Derg* as no revolutionary, which must be forced to hand over power to revolutionary civilian groups. On the other hand, *Meison* saw the *Derg* as revolutionary, which must be supported and encouraged because of a real threat from counter–revolutionaries. The *Derg* capitalized on this division and, in cooperation with *Meison*, eliminated the EPRP from the urban areas during the 'Red Terror' campaign of 1977–78. *Meison* suffered the same fate as the EPRP under the *Derg* a few years later and continued its operations clandestinely. Finally, it is important to note that the TPLF had also played a crucial role in the weakening of both the EPRP and the EDU because it forced them out of their base–areas in rural northern Ethiopia.

The TPLF and the OLF, however, posed a much greater threat to the government because both operated among their co–ethnics and appealed to the primordial sentiments of their ethnic constituencies to mobilize the people. For example, the TPLF appealed to the great Axumite Civilization to illustrate Tigrayan grandeur in antiquity and revised northern Ethiopian historiography in favor of Tigray. It attributed the prevailing poverty in Tigray, its base of operations, to the oppressive rule of Amhara elites during the twentieth century (Markakis 1994). In short, it succeeded in mobilizing the people of Tigray by putting their ancient glory and their present predicament side by side. The OLF, on the other hand, focused on Oromo cultural elements, which were suppressed after their incorporation into Ethiopia at the turn of the twentieth century. For example, it embraced the pre–incorporation Oromo *gada* political, economic, and social system. According to Bulcha (1988, 51), this system was based on 'egalitarian distribution of power and authority' and the OLF portrayed the Ethiopian imposed socio–economic system as an 'antithesis of the *gada* system'. It also adopted the Latin script for *Oromiffa*—the Oromo language—in place of the *Geez* script of Amharic, the Ethiopian national language. In short, it reconstructed Oromo identity to be in stark contrast to the dominant Amhara identity. Therefore, the nationalist appeals of both the TPLF and the OLF provided the necessary support from their co–ethnics.

The second explanation of why the ethnic–based parties did not suffer the same fate as the pan–Ethiopian parties is the support they had from the EPLF. Both the TPLF and the OLF had recognized the right of the Eritrean people to a full measure of self–determination, for which the EPLF reciprocated by supplying them with armaments and training. However, the OLF did not make much progress in its armed struggle as did the TPLF. Indeed, after its victory in the Ogaden and before moving north to Eritrea, Ethiopian troops had directed their attacks against the OLF and

its alleged civilian supporters, and had burned many villages in southern Ethiopia. As Braukamper (1982) has noted, Ethiopian troops carried many offensives in the Oromo lands of Bale in the late 1970s and in 1980, and this caused massive casualties and the exile of hundreds of thousands of Oromo refugees to Somalia (Bulcha 1988). These offensives greatly weakened the OLF and never posed significant threat to the regime thereafter. Moreover, EPLF's support of the OLF was not as strong as its support of the TPLF in next door Tigray because of the logistical problems between Eritrea in the north and the southern half of Ethiopia, where the OLF operated. Nonetheless, the OLF remained an important actor in the opposition because the Oromo constituted the largest ethnic group in Ethiopia. Also, there was no other better organized Oromo nationalist group.

On the other hand, the TPLF grew by leaps and bounds in the late 1970s and early 1980s partly because of the trust the peasants had on the organization and partly because of the strong support it received from the EPLF. Indeed, EPLF's support of TPLF was crucial not only to the very existence of the latter but also potentially to the former. Tigray borders Eritrea and the Ethiopian army had used it as a staging post for its offensives against the EPLF in Eritrea. A pacified Tigray from which the Ethiopian army could launch offensives, therefore, presented a real threat to the EPLF itself. Hence, the latter assisted the TPLF to make Tigray a hostile environment for the Ethiopian Army. By the early 1980s, the TPLF became a formidable force capable of overrunning Ethiopian garrisons. The Ethiopian government responded in the way it responded in Eritrea: the complete militarization of Tigray and use of massive force against the combatants and civilians suspected of supporting the TPLF. The massacre of civilians in an air raid by the Ethiopian Air Force in Hauzien, Tigray, in 1988 is one of many cases in point.[14] However, despite escalating conflicts in Tigray, it is remarkable that no significant refugee exodus occurred mainly because the Tigrayans, as Christian and Tigrigna speakers, did not have much in common with the host population in Sudan, who were Muslim and Arab.[15] In addition, there may have been residual enmity between the two because Ethiopian Emperor Yohannes IV, who was Tigrayan in terms of ethnicity, was killed by Sudanese Mahdists at the War of Metema in 1889 (for example, see Marcus 2002; Zewde 1991). This, however, changed later and hundreds of thousands of Tigrayans and others from northern Ethiopia sought asylum in Sudan after escalating conflicts in the latter half of the 1970s and the 1984–85 drought, which caused famine of major proportions in northern Ethiopia.

Unlike the 1973 drought, however, the international community was aware of the unfolding catastrophe of the mid–1980s early on and food aid was ready.

14 For a detailed look at Ethiopian Air Force bombings in Tigray and Eritrea, please consult Africa Watch, *News from Africa Watch,* 24 July 1990.

15 Highland Eritrean refugees were also Christian and Tigrigna speakers. However, their long exposure to Muslims in Eritrea, including the common struggle they waged in the 1940s and 1950s, and the political struggle for independence that Sudan had embraced early on appear to have mitigated highland Eritrean fear of a Muslim host community.

There was another problem, however. The government prohibited distribution of food in areas outside of its control, all in an effort to 'starve Tigray' and to force the population to withdraw their support of the TPLF (Human Rights Watch 1991, 195). The government's actions in Tigray, when compared to its actions in Eritrea and the Ogaden, had involved a 'greater level of indiscriminate violence against the civilian population, and there was no attempt to provide even the most minimal compensatory assistance to the [drought] stricken population' (Human Rights Watch 1991, 133). As a consequence of this and the prevailing drought, a total of about 200,000 Tigrayans, assisted by the Relief Association of Tigray (REST) crossed the border into Sudan in search of food, and settled in and around the Wad Sherife refugee camp near Kessala and the Wad Kauli refugee camp, about 100 km southeast of Gedaref (Clay and Holcomb 1986, 53).

There were also other factors associated with mass flight of Ethiopians to Sudan. Bulcha (1988, 124) has empirically established that armed conflict, political persecution, military conscription the government introduced in 1976, forced labor in state farms, mass relocation from the northern arid regions to the more fertile southwest, and villagization—the 'process of moving peasants who lived traditionally in scattered homesteads'—were all associated with Ethiopian refugee flight to Sudan. Therefore, it is important to observe that while war was perhaps the most singular element in the exile of Eritreans to Sudan, a combination of many factors contributed to the exile of Ethiopians. As will be shown in later chapters, this will have important implications not only for settlement patterns in exile but more importantly for repatriations.

By the mid–1980s, it all became clear that the Ethiopian military did not have the capability to defeat the TPLF. By the latter half of the 1980s, the military situation turned in favor of the TPLF in Tigray. It liberated all of Tigray, thanks in part to EPLF direct support in some major wars, including the occupation of Shire, a major town in western Tigray (Tareke 2004). Towards the late 1980s, the end of the regime was in sight, as the TPLF went on the offensive beyond Tigray and, in coordination with other Ethiopian forces, occupied most of northern and central Ethiopia and areas surrounding Addis Ababa, the capital city. The Military Government lost control of Addis Ababa in May 1991 and its 17–year rule ended.

The Ethiopian Revolution and Refugee Formations in Eritrea and the Ogaden

I have earlier explained that the conflict in Eritrea had escalated in the early 1970s, especially after the splintering of the EPLF from the ELF. Partly because of their intense rivalry and partly because the Ethiopian army had been weakened in the mid–1970s, they quickly expanded their theater of operations beyond the Eritrean lowlands. Thus, the ELF controlled the southwestern highlands and moved towards the Eritrean capital, Asmara, from the southwest. The EPLF, on the other hand, controlled the Sahel region of Eritrea in the north and moved towards Asmara, from the north, east, and southeast. By 1978, all of Eritrea was under the effective control

of the EPLF, except for Asmara and the sea port of Massawa, which were both effectively encircled, and Assab, a sea port in the southern tip of Eritrea, still secure under Ethiopian control.

Such swift military developments in Eritrea occurred in the aftermath of the regime change in Ethiopia in 1974, which created a power vacuum favorable for the two liberation movements to expand their activities. Whereas the conflict was far more localized in the lowlands and got most of its support from Muslim Eritreans during 1960–74, it now spread all over Eritrea and Christians as well as Muslims became equally involved in the quest of independence. Thus, for the first time since its inception, the Eritrean struggle for independence assumed a real national character, as large number of Christian Eritreans joined the movements, especially after the ELF and the EPLF encircled Asmara in the mid–1970s (Habte Selassie 1980). By January 1978, an estimated 150,000 Eritrean refugees had sought asylum in Sudan, and this represented a 40 per cent increase in one year alone (USCR 1978; USCR 1979). This number reached 300,000 at the beginning of 1980 as a result of Ethiopian counter–offensives supported by Soviet forces in the latter half of 1978,[16] which ended in Ethiopia's repossession of areas it lost in the previous years (USCR 1980). Indeed, when the EPLF and ELF retreated to their base areas, many civilians left for exile because they feared possible wide–scale retaliation now that Ethiopia has obtained the unqualified superpower support it had sought. Indeed, new and larger influxes of refugees to Sudan accompanied the retreat, as many had tasted life under the EPLF and the ELF and were not ready for Ethiopia's return. In fact, many gave up hope of an independent Eritrea and left for good. Hence, internationalization of the conflict greatly increased the scale and frequency of political violence, and this, in turn, increased the refugee numbers exponentially.

The conflict continued throughout the 1980s, with periodic large–scale government offensives in the 1980s, of which the 'Red Star' campaign in 1982 was the largest. Despite initial Ethiopian successes, however, the EPLF persevered and never lost its base areas, thanks in part to the support from the TPLF (Negash and Tronvoll 2000).[17] However, the conflict forced additional hundreds of thousands of civilians to seek exile in Sudan. In 1984 and 1985 only, an estimated total of 190,000 Eritreans joined the ranks of Eritrean refugees in Sudan, and this had put their estimated total at more than 550,000 (van Praag 1985, 25). Towards the end of the 1980s, the Ethiopian Army was weakened partly because of the non–stop military operations and partly because the Soviet Union was no longer prepared to support Ethiopia the way it did in the previous ten years. By 1989, the EPLF had

16 The Soviet Union had assisted Ethiopia in its war in the Ogaden before moving north to help Ethiopia in its war in Eritrea. Soviet and Soviet–allied assistance to Ethiopia will be explained in the next few pages.

17 The rivalry between the ELF and the EPLF continued until the early 1980s, when the EPLF finally forced ELF combatants out of Eritrea. Therefore, the battles in Eritrea in the 1980s were essentially between government and EPLF forces.

liberated most of Eritrea. All of Eritrea, including the two sea ports and Asmara, the capital city, was liberated in May 1991.

It is important to note that the violence continued until 1989; however, the number of Eritrean refugees in Sudan progressively increased only until 1986, after which it essentially stabilized (for example, see USCR 1988). Part of the reason for this is that many of the prospective refugees can now get sanctuary behind the secure liberated areas in Eritrea. Also, there was a depletion of prospective refugees after more than two decades of non–ending exodus. Indeed, out of a total population of about 3 million in 1984, more than 550,000 Eritreans were exiled to Sudan and hundreds of thousands more in the Middle East, Europe, US, Canada, and Australia. Thousands also went to Ethiopia to escape the effects of the war in Eritrea. Although no definitive statistical estimate is available, it is not an exaggeration to say that, by 1988, about *two* in *seven* Eritreans had left the country because of the war. On per capita basis, such massive forced population displacement compares well with any forced population movement that Africa has ever seen.

In the southeast, the WSLF mounted very successful attacks against the Ethiopian military, and occupied much of the Ogaden in the latter half of 1977 (Gorman 1981). The Ethiopian government requested Soviet armaments to avert a serious national security threat after a similar request from the US was rejected. After initial hesitation, the Soviet Union granted the request and supplied Ethiopia with limited armaments. This was especially disturbing to Somalia, whose leaders had considered the Soviet Union an unflinching supporter in their dispute with Ethiopia. Such limited delivery of armaments, however, was not enough to deter Somali formal intervention in the Ogaden in 1977 because of the rare opportunity the Ethiopian revolution presented Somali leaders to finally realize their aspirations of 'Greater Somalia.'

By late 1977, the WSLF and Somalia's regular troops effectively controlled the Ogaden. Subsequently, the Soviet Union granted Ethiopian request for additional support and sent massive amounts of armaments, including 3000 Russian advisors. Similarly, Cuba sent about 16,000 troops to fight on the side of Ethiopia (Korn 1986, 93). East Germany and South Yemen also intervened openly on the Ethiopian side (Gorman 1981). This made the scale of the intervention unparalleled in the history of interstate conflicts in Africa, not only because of the massive amount of armaments delivered to an African country in a record time but also because of the manifest intervention by Soviet and Soviet–allied forces outside of Eastern Europe. Similarly, some external powers sided with Somalia, although this was on a much–lesser scale.[18] Supported by external powers, Ethiopian counter–offensive in the Ogaden began in February 1978 and most of the Ogaden was recaptured in less than two months (Gorman 1981; Korn 1986). Although the WSLF continued to fight, it

18 Habte Selassie (1980) lists Egypt, Iran, Saudi Arabia, West Germany, and Italy as countries that supplied Somalia with armaments and money to help in the war effort. However, this support pales in comparison with the direct intervention of Soviet and Soviet–allied forces and the estimated US$1 billion worth of Soviet armaments to Ethiopia.

was greatly weakened partly because of the military setbacks it suffered and partly because Somalia was in no position to provide the necessary material support.

The level and intensity of violence and the Ethiopian troop reprisals that followed after Somali and WSLF troops were defeated created an unprecedented number of refugees from the Ogaden. In the first year after the war alone, the number of Ogadeni refugees in Somalia reached 600,000 (Gorman 1981, 211). In other words, refugee movements from Ethiopia to Somalia increased after the war ended and not during intense violence, contrary to the commonly–held belief of concomitant variation of armed violence and refugee formations. The influx continued well into 1979 and, by the beginning of 1980, there were an estimated 1,173,300 Ogadeni refugees in Somalia, of which some 474,300 were in refugee camps and rest among the population (USCR 1980). Similarly, some 50,000 Ethiopian Ogadeni refugees sought exile in neighboring Djibouti.

The exponential increases in Ethiopian refugees in Somalia towards the end of the 1970s is best explained in terms of the fear of reprisals against civilians by the victorious Ethiopian forces, who had been earlier forced to surrender the Ogaden to WSLF and Somali regular forces. The refugees' fear was well–founded because of the wide–spread perception that the population of the Ogaden had earlier welcomed WSLF and Somalia's regular forces as liberators. Involvement of foreign powers also added to the seriousness with which the population saw the conflict. This, in turn, helped aggravate the magnitude of the dislocation, and made Ethiopia the single most important center of conflicts and refugee formations on the entire continent. The positive correlation between foreign intervention in a local conflict and refugee formations seen here is consistent with Schultheis (1989) findings of a high correlation between foreign interventions and refugee formations.

Thus, the period after the Ethiopian revolution is associated with remarkable increases in the frequency and intensity of the conflicts in the north and the southeast, and with subsequent massive increases of refugees from Eritrea, Tigray, and the Ogaden. The magnitude of the refugee numbers and their wave–like influxes in the tens of thousands made the refugee situation the conflict in Ethiopia created 'acute' (Kunz 1973, 130). Indeed, at the beginning of 1980, there were an estimated 2,378,800 refugees and internally displaced persons from Ethiopia out of an estimated total of 4,045,200 refugees and internally displaced persons from Africa (USCR 1980). That is, the number of Ethiopian refugees and displaced persons constituted a whopping 58 per cent of all refugees and displaced persons in Africa! Most of the refugees from Ethiopia were 'majority–identified' because of their shared views on the reasons for their exile, their support for the opposition, and their longing to return after the end of the conflicts (Kunz 1981, 43).

Conflict and Refugee Flight in Eritrea and Ethiopia since 1991

Having liberated Eritrea, the EPLF began its de–facto rule of Eritrea without Ethiopian interference. The EPRDF, of which the TPLF is a major partner, also established a

transitional government in Ethiopia. At long last, the EPRDF and the EPLF, two war–time allies, were in power in Ethiopia and Eritrea, respectively.[19] Hence, their success was expected to enhance peace and stability in the two countries. In 1991, the EPLF began to organize a referendum on Eritrea's formal break from Ethiopia. This was conducted in 1993 and Eritrea became a sovereign nation, and Ethiopia led the avalanche of formal recognitions that followed.

Initially, the relations between the two once–warring countries were amicable. They signed many agreements, including a defense agreement.[20] However, this was short–lived because both countries failed to resolve their contesting claims over a small area around Badme, a village along the border between the two countries, and went to war in May 1998. Variously described as a senseless war, a war about pride, or a fight between two bold men over a comb, the fighting between the two consumed the lives of about 70,000 combatants on both sides. The war resembled the trench warfare of the First World War, whose casualties had stunned the world. As Negash and Tronvoll (2000, 97) have aptly noted, it was a 'pre–modern [war] in post–modern times'. By May 2000, Ethiopian forces had controlled a large segment of Eritrea, including all of the contested areas and some non–contested Eritrea territory. As a result, almost 100,000 Eritreans sought asylum in Sudan in less than two weeks (Bariagaber 2000). Although the refugee formation this time around was short in duration, the suddenness and scale of the refugee influx is only surpassed by the exodus of Rwandan refugees to the then Zaire in 1994 and Somali refugee flight from Somalia to Ethiopia in the late 1980s.[21]

Thus, refugee movements from Eritrea, which have been interrupted for about ten years resumed. Like previous Eritrean refugee movements to Sudan, the post–1991 Eritrean refugees were 'majority–identified'. In fact, they returned soon after Ethiopian forces withdrew. Unlike it, however, the refugee movement took place well ahead of advancing Ethiopian troops. Hence, the 'new' refugees made and executed the decision to move in anticipation of violence in their places of residence. Moreover, unlike the surreptitious trek of the pre–independence era, the

19 It has been reported that the TPLF played crucial role in the defense of EPLF base areas during the 1982 Ethiopian offensive. Likewise, it has been reported that the EPLF had assisted the TPLF in the battle to liberate Shire, a town in western Tigray, in the late 1980s (see Tareke 2004). Keller (1992) also notes that the EPLF assisted the TPLF in the aftermath of six offensives Ethiopian government forces launched in the early 1980s to eliminate the latter.

20 Negash and Tronvoll (2000) have stated that they were in possession of a three–page unsigned document titled, 'Principles of Cooperation between the Transitional Government of Ethiopia and the Provisional Government of Eritrea', adopted in July 1991. The main provisions of the document include mutual recognition of the right of the two peoples to determine their future; recognition of the importance of Assab to Ethiopia, which will serve as its free port; common defense against aggression, and so on.

21 About 95,000 Eritreans sought refuge in Sudan in the two weeks between 15 May 2000 and 31 May 2000. Moreover about 750,000 were internally displaced. More on this may be found in Bariagaber 2000, 4.

recent movement was made in the open and with the knowledge, and perhaps the encouragement, of the Eritrea government.

Finally, it is important to note almost all of the refugees who sought asylum in Sudan in 2000 were themselves refugees during the war of independence, and had only repatriated in the aftermath of the independence of Eritrea. Hence, they had prior knowledge of what 'refugeehood' entailed. Although the speed with which Ethiopian troops advanced was remarkable and this was the reason for the refugees' quick departure, their previous familiarity with 'refugeehood' had also made their decision to seek exile less agonizing. Indeed, most of them returned to Eritrea after the conflict ended in 2000. There remain, however, about 7,500 Eritrean refugees, mainly from the Kunama ethnic group, in camps in northern Ethiopia. These refugees never left when Ethiopian troops occupied the border areas. However, they left to seek asylum in Ethiopia after Ethiopian troops departed, apparently fearful of possible reprisals by the Eritrean Government.

In the Ogaden, there is general stability now that Somalia is in no position to give assistance to opposition forces. All, save about 3,000, of the more than one million refugees have returned to Ethiopia in the late 1980s and early 1990s because of the fighting in Somalia, their country of exile since the late 1970s (USCR 2005). However, the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) continues to wage low–scale attacks against Ethiopian forces. It has not made much progress partly because the support from Somalia, itself without a central government since 1991, has not been forthcoming and partly because of war fatigue. Nonetheless, the ONLF makes its presence known occasionally by disrupting Ethiopian troop movements and issuing statements, such as those that threatened violence during the 2005 general elections in Ethiopia. In fact, it created enough anxiety that the Ethiopian government decided to postpone the general elections in the region by a few more weeks.[22]

Political Violence and Patterns of Refugee Flight from Ethiopia and Eritrea

In the previous sections, we have seen how armed violence, broadly conceived, was associated with refugee flight from Ethiopia. Indeed, the literature suggests that, unlike migrations, which are explained by the 'push–pull' model, refugee movements are explained in terms of 'push–pressure–pull' factors (Kunz 1973). When looking at refugee flight from Eritrea and northern Ethiopia to Sudan there was no indication, economic or otherwise, that pulled or attracted them to Sudan, except for the safely to be had across the international border. Hence, like most refugees, the 'push'

22 The most recent general elections in Ethiopia were held on 15 May 2005 throughout the country, except for the regional State of Somali (Ogaden), which was held on 21 August 2005. According to the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia, the elections in the latter were deferred 'due to logistical reasons, as the people in this region [were] pastoralists and mobile registration units [were] needed to register voters'. See NEBE, *Election Day Countdown,* <http://www.electionsethiopia.org>. Others, however, have pointed at the lack of security as the main reason why the elections were not held on 15 May 2005.

factors were overwhelming. However, there was no strong 'pressure' because most of the refugee influxes to Sudan did not coincide with the wide–scale violence. Rather, the influxes occurred in the lull of fighting and before the next large–scale fighting. For example, the frequency of violence in Eritrea increased in 1975, but there was no significant fresh refugee flight to Sudan during that year.[23] Indeed, at the time, Eritrean liberation movements had liberated much of the rural areas and had encircled Asmara and Massawa, the two largest cities in Eritrea. Many expected a quick end to the war. So, despite increased violence, Eritreans stayed put.

Another explanation of why Eritreans did not flee during periods of intense violence was because their movements would inevitably expose them to more dangers during their trek to exile. Indeed, increased exposure of refugees must be avoided when combatants are more visible, which are during periods of increased violence. Thus, Eritreans left for Sudan during lull in the fighting and before another round of fighting precisely because combatant visibility decreases during those periods. The few that dared to move did so surreptitiously because flight to exile is not an option the conflicting parties saw approvingly. The Ethiopian government did not approve it because flight is seen as an expression of no confidence, or a 'no vote with one's feet'. Likewise, the Eritrean opposition movements did not want to see people leave because they would be losing an important source of manpower. The few that did not want to seek exile in Sudan but were also unwilling to stay in their homes sought temporary shelter in places hard to detect, including caves and other secure places.

The same holds true for refugees from the Ogaden region of Ethiopia to Somalia. Most of the refugees fled to Somalia not during the war of 1977–78 but after the war subsided. It is instructive to note that there were about 20,000 Ethiopian refugees in Somalia in January 1978 when the war was about to start as opposed to about 1.1 million in January 1980 (USCR 1978; USCR 1980). The large–scale fighting, where extra–regional powers were involved, had ended by March 1978 with the withdrawal of Somali troops. And so the massive refugee movement to Somalia started after the fighting subsided, partly because people were afraid of being caught in the middle of possible future military operations and partly because of fear of Ethiopian reprisals. They also left after having realized that the outcome of the fighting had been decided in favor of Ethiopia with which they did not identify. That is, like their Eritrean counterparts who fled to Sudan, Ogadeni Somali decision to seek exile in Somalia was also 'considered.'

Elsewhere in Ethiopia, massive refugee flight to Sudan, especially from the northern provinces of Tigray, Gondar, and Wollo, coincided with a host of many

23 This author is aware that Kibreab (1987) has reported that about 40,000 refugees crossed the border into Sudan in 1975. It can only be because of the Ethiopian military's indiscriminate killing of civilians in and around Om Hager, only a few miles form the border. Hence, the decision to escape to a safe haven only a few miles from home during periods of increased fighting was a strategic decision (see Kibreab 1987). However, despite violence escalation, not many had departed from further inland.

factors, including political persecution, military conscription, forced labor, relocation, and the 'villagization' program. However, the main reason that impelled large numbers of refugees to seek exile in Sudan was violence and the 1984–85 drought. Because of the latter, it may be tempting to say that many were actually economic migrants. However, as Ek and Karadawi (1991, 198) have observed, the main influx of refugees to Sudan 'originated from conflict areas, which were also severely affected by drought. The war situation in Eritrea and Tigray had seriously disrupted agricultural activities as well as politically and logistically impeded food distribution efforts'. This had left the people with no choice but to depart. Indeed, there is ample evidence of cyclical droughts in northern Ethiopia and Eritrea, but people never sought exile across borders in large numbers. It has also been documented that the Ethiopian government prohibited aid agencies from operating in areas the opposition controlled and had adopted food as a weapon in its fight against the opposition. This has been underscored by a Tigrayan in Sudan who stated: 'The lack of rain is the most important cause of the drought, but the reason we are in Sudan is because of the *Dergue*' (Clay and Holcomb 1986, 69). In other words, the massive population displacement occurred because of the prevailing conflict and also because the political and security decision to use of food as a weapon. In short, the 'primacy of politics' was never in doubt during 'The Great Famine of 1983–6' (Keller 1992, 618).

It is also important to re–iterate that all refugee movements from Ethiopia, whether to Sudan, or Somalia, or the small–scale movements to Djibouti and Kenya may be termed as 'acute' refugee movements because the majority of the refugees crossed national borders in sudden refugee flows (Kunz 1973). They fled reluctantly, because they did not have other ways of reacting to a situation which they saw as intolerable. Hence, with respect to their attitude to displacement, the overwhelming refugees, most of them of rural background, may be termed as 'majority–identified' (Kunz 1981, 43). That is, they were convinced their opposition to events at home is shared by most of their compatriots and believed their decision to seek asylum was correct. As we shall see in later chapters, such characterization of the majority of refugees will help explain their behavior towards repatriation.

Chapter 4

The Dynamics of Refugee Flight from Somalia and Sudan

Introduction

Somalia and Sudan represent two cases at the center of the refugee crisis in the Horn of Africa. At the end of 2004, there were about 16,500 Somali refugees in Ethiopia, about 158,100 in Kenya, and about 17,300 in Djibouti (USCR 2005). Similarly, there were an estimated 99,500 Sudanese refugees in Ethiopia, 45,200 in the DRC, 20,900 in the Central African Republic, 214,800 in Uganda, and 67,600 in Kenya (ibid). It must be noted that although these numbers are significant on their own, they represent hundreds of thousands of refugees less than Somalia had at the beginning of the 1990s. The number of refugees in Sudan, however, did not come down appreciably because of the violence that continued well into 2003. The comparatively lower refugee numbers at present came about only after reduction in violence in the 1990s and the significant repatriations that followed, especially in Somalia. Therefore, because of past and present conflicts, both countries have generated hundreds of thousands of refugees. Except for this communality, however, the two countries cannot be further from each other in many societal characteristics. They are also different in the way the conflicts have evolved, including their variations and durations. Because of these, combining both countries in the same chapter presents enormous challenges.

As indicated in Chapter 2, Somalia is composed of people with ties that bind, including common language, religion, ancestral myth, history, and common ways of life based on the 'rules of the *Xeer,* 'the values of Islam', and agro–pastoralism.[1] Therefore, the few centrifugal forces in existence in Somalia were regarded as weak compared to the centrifugal forces in other polities in Sub–Sahara Africa. Indeed, if one were to predict which countries in Sub–Sahara Africa would collapse, Somalia would probably come last. At present, however, Somalia has the distinction of being the only country in the world without a central government since 1991. What happened to this once stable country and why did the ties that bind fail? Why did the

1 Samatar (1992, 631) notes that the *Xeer* was a 'social contract democratically constructed (all adult males took part in this) to check the occasional conflicts between individuals and among communities. What gave the *Xeer* a staying power in the absence of centralized coercive machinery was the voluntarism associated with the absolute necessity of relying and living on one's labor/livestock rather than exploiting others'.

once refugee–receiving country become a refugee–generating country since the late 1980s? How is the violence in Somalia correlated with refugee exodus? How did the conflict in Ethiopia affect Somalia? It is, therefore, helpful to divide the study period into two to help answer these questions. The first period, 1960–90, interrogates the state's search of a more complete nation–state, and how state policies ended up with a less complete nation, while the second period, 1991–2004, interrogates the less complete nation in search of a state.[2]

On the other hand, Sudan is the very opposite of Somalia when it comes to the ties that bind. The North is inhabited by people who consider themselves Arab. They profess Islam, have relatively well developed infrastructures and, in the distant past, have used the South as source of slaves and raw materials.[3] The South, on the other hand, is inhabited by people who consider themselves non–Arab Africans. Most profess Christianity and other traditional religions, and have always associated the North with their underdevelopment and their recent predicament. Therefore, the North–South divide is as deep as any division can get.[4] Indeed, if one was to predict the most non–viable state in Africa, Sudan would probably come to mind immediately. What is the nature and evolution of the conflict, and why did it become intractable? What is the relationship between the violence and refugee formations? How has the conflict in Ethiopia affected Sudan? To answer these questions fully, the study period is likewise divided into two: 1956–72, where the conflict escalated and caused massive refugee flight, and 1983–2004, where the conflict resumed with increased intensity after a break of about ten years and resulted in a far more serious forced population displacements (that is, refugees and internally displaced persons) than before.[5] That is, the study examines the state's search for a more centralized state and a more unified nation only to end up with a less centralized state and a less unified nation that finally recognized its multiculturalism.

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2 I have earlier indicated that the period with which this book is concerned begins in 1964 because this was the year the first sizable group of refugees in the region (from southern Sudan) sought asylum in neighboring countries. The inclusion of pre–1964 years is intended to give context to the violence and to the refugee movements that followed a few years later.

3 For a detailed history of Sudan in the distant past and how the Turks, the Egyptians, and the Sudanese from the North made incursions into the South in search of slaves and other raw materials, please consult Deng 1995, 9–68.

4 There are also divisions within the North into Arab, Beja, Darfur, Nuba, and so on. The last three do not consider themselves as Arabs, although they are Muslim and may have some Arab cultural influence. Equally, the South is divided into numerous groups. Based on Wai's (1981) classification of the inhabitants of the South, this author counted nine, sixteen, and eleven ethnic groups belonging to the Nilotic, Nilo–Hamitic, and Sudanic groups, respectively. Of the Sudanic group, the Dinka, the Nuer, and the Anuak are the largest.

5 During 1972–83, Sudan was relatively peaceful because of the negotiated settlement Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia brokered in 1972. In the following years, many refugees returned from exile in the Central African Republic, Ethiopia, Uganda, and the former Zaire. More on their repatriation from Ethiopia will be made in Chapter 7.

Somalia: The State in Search of a More Complete Nation–State

When Somalia became independent in 1960 as the union of the former British and Italian Somalilands and established the Republic of Somalia, it set out to unify the Ogaden in Ethiopia, the Northern Frontier District in Kenya, and Djibouti with the newly–established Republic. This was made amply clear in the constitution, which gave automatic right to citizenship of Somalis in the three territories, not yet part of the Republic. In addition, the flag of the Republic depicted a five–pointed star, each representing the constituent parts of the nation (Habte Selassie 1980). However, the numerous diplomatic and the non–diplomatic attempts to fulfill this failed. As stated earlier, the latter included the brief border war between Ethiopia and Somalia in 1964, the active support the Republic gave Somali *shiftas* (or bandits) in the Northern Frontier District of Kenya, and the contentious relationship with France because of the latter's reluctance to support Djibouti's union with the Somali Republic (see Touval 1963). Likewise, Somalia's relationship with the OAU, headquartered in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, was less than cordial. Indeed, OAU's charter explicitly states that colonial boundaries were to be respected and this opposed pan–Somali aspirations.

Nonetheless, the three governments that preceded the 1969 coup d'etat by the military were unable to put aside these aspirations and focus on serious developmental issues.[6] They were all immovably fixated on the pan–Somali issue to the detriment of other more pressing domestic issues. The increased attention the leaders gave to the 'lost territories' meant a proportional reduction in the allocation of attention they gave to the management and consolidation of state structures of the new Republic. As a result, many domestic problems were left unattended. Partly because of the frustration at the lack of progress in the pan–Somali issue and partly because of growing corruption and nepotism within the civilian governments, the armed forces seized power in 1969. Although, there was no fundamental change with regard to policies about the 'lost territories', the military government gave priority to economic development, and to fighting corruption and nepotism. Thus, for a time, Somalia looked inward and the pan–Somali issue, hitherto central to the foreign policies of past government, was placed on the backburner. The unqualified support for a full measure of self–determination of the inhabitants of the three territories, however, remained unchanged.

The inward looking policy of Somalia later changed with the onset of the 1974 revolution in Ethiopia, which created much uncertainty in the latter and a golden opportunity for Somalia to once more attempt to translate its vision of a 'whole' Somalia into reality. This, of course, did not include territories in Djibouti and Kenya. In fact, Djibouti–Somalia relations improved markedly after 1974. In 1977, Somalia welcomed the independence of Djibouti, which it has always opposed, and both countries established ties in trade, immigration, tourism, and other areas.

6 These were the Shermarke, Hussein, and Igal governments during 1960–66, 1966–67, and 1967–69, respectively.

Relations with Kenya also improved as incidences of *shifta* activities declined. Thus, the collapse of the Imperial Government of Ethiopia in 1974 was accompanied by a tension between Ethiopia and Somalia and by cordial relationships between Somalia and its other two neighbors.

As indicated in Chapter 3, the implications of the Ethiopian Revolution were far–reaching. It is directly associated with Somalia's decision to intervene in the Ogaden in 1977–78 along side the WSLF, which had already intensified its attacks against Ethiopian forces during 1975–77. The Ethiopian army was increasingly on the defensive and forced to withdraw from many areas. Indeed, Somalia found this to be too attractive to pass by because the unrest in Ethiopia has eroded the moral its armed forces stationed in the Ogaden as well as in Eritrea. In July 1977, it sent its regular troops and occupied all of the Ogaden save the two largest towns, Harar and Diredawa, which were effectively encircled. This was the single–most foreign policy blunders that Siad Barre committed, as the Soviet Union, hitherto Somalia's staunchest ally in Sub-Sahara Africa, switched and sided with Ethiopia. As a consequence, Soviet and Soviet–allied forces directly intervened on the side of Ethiopia and pushed the Somali Army back across the border (Gorman 1981).

Somalia's intervention in the Ogaden did not bring closer the aspired pan–Somali unification, which the government hoped it would finally realize. Instead, clan based segmentation, which Siad Barre had suppressed, reemerged and became politically salient. There was also unrest in the Somali Armed Forces, which led to an attempted coup d'etat only one month after Somalia's withdrawal from the Ogaden (Galaydh 1990). Although this attempt did not succeed, it opened the door for more unrest and also for unmitigated nepotism in the Somali Armed Forces and in the government.[7] As Galaydh (1990, 19) has noted:

> the National Army was constantly purged and for the first time there were open selective recruitments of both cadets and enlisted men. Promotions and postings were decided not on professional criteria and standard norms but pre–eminently on patronage, which was not determined solely by clan politics. Personal factors such as friendship, marriage, district–regional background … were also at play.

Nonetheless, the defeat in the Ogaden, the attempted coup d'etat, the unrest in the army, and the deterioration of security in northern Somalia created an environment for Barre's unbridled personal rule, where his 'whimsical exercise of power … enhanced the propensity for private appropriation of public office and public resources' (Galaydh 1990, 23). More importantly, however, was the continuing low moral of the military, the only truly national institution in Somalia, whose size and quality declined significantly after the Ogaden war. This had left many officers dissatisfied. In addition, the disabled veterans of the Ogaden war, including the wounded, did not receive the necessary medical attention and this contributed to the rise of a more parochial clan affiliation. In other words, the stability and professionalism of the military, which was the most critical variable that gave Siad

7 For an account of the series of coup attempts against Barre, please see Sseroe (2003).

Barre's rule the necessary stability in its first ten years of rule, unraveled. And when the military itself became factionalized and some units became beneficiaries of Siad Barre's largess, the government followed and became factionalized as well.[8]

In addition to the internal variables above, there was also an externally–induced variable that contributed to the further deterioration of stability. In the 1980's, the Ethiopian government actively encouraged the formation of the Somali National Movement (SNM) and the Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF), both of which began armed struggle to overthrow the government. With the initiation of the armed struggle, Somalia entered a new period in its history. First, the end of the regime was in sight. As the activities of these opposition movements grew, Siad Barre responded with disproportionately harsh measures in traditionally Isaaq areas of northern Somalia, where the SNM was active. These measures were interpreted as clan based reprisals perpetrated by Barre's Marehan clan. Coincidentally, these measures were taken in the wake of government law outlawing *qat*—a mild stimulant and an important source of income for many Isaaqs. In other words, the Isaaq saw the actions of the government as two-pronged war: political, because of the indiscriminate killings and economic, because of the banning of an important means of their livelihood. As a result, the trajectory of the conflict took a deadly turn and made clan affiliation a central factor in the evolving conflict.

This does not mean Barre's government was the only party responsible for this evolution. Indeed, the SNM, in terms of its membership, had its base of support and its theater of operations in overwhelmingly Isaaq areas. Similarly, the SSDF of Abdullahi Yusuf operated mostly in Darod–inhabited areas of the northeast (Campagnon 1990). Therefore, there was an all out appeal to clanism by the opposition, the government, as well as the military. In addition, the government and the military had encouraged militia from rival clans to forcefully take Majertyn property (Lyons and Samatar 1995). While these were some of the responses Siad Barre took to bolster his regime, he also entered into mutual agreement with Ethiopia in March 1988 in which the two parties agreed to, among other things, restore diplomatic relations, end hostile propaganda against each other, terminate support for the other's Somali dissidents, and so on (Lewis 2002, 262).

The conflict entered what may be considered a decisive phase with the daring attack of the SNM on Hargeisa and other towns in May 1988 after the Ethiopian government demanded it cease operations against Somalia from Ethiopian–controlled Ogaden. The Somali government responded with all the power at its disposal, including air power, and destroyed a significant portion of the city. The following captures the brutality with which government forces responded:

> … the Somali Armed Forces appear to have engaged in a widespread, systematic and extremely violent assault on the unarmed civilian Isaaq population of northern Somalia in places where and at times when neither resistance to these actions nor danger to the

8 Galaydh (1990) has noted that Arab Gulf States contributed between US$300 and US$400 million for the war effort. It is suspected that a significant amount of this was siphoned to finance the emerging patronage system.

> Somali Armed Forces was present. The Somali Armed Forces conducted what appears to be a systematic pattern of attacks against unarmed, civilian Isaaq villages, watering points and grazing areas of northern Somalia … In an additional pattern of systematic, organized, and sustained Somali Armed Forces actions in Berbera, which has not been the object of an SNM attack or the scene of a conflict, at least five hundred, and perhaps many more Isaaq men were systematically rounded up and murdered, mainly by having their throats cut, and then buried in mass graves…, apparently solely because they were Isaaq … (Gersony 1989, 60–61).

Despite the brutality with which the government handled what increasingly became clan–based conflict, the SNM captured large areas of northern Somalia and some major towns, and the state apparatus in those places totally collapsed in 1989.

While the conflict was raging in northern half of Somalia, clans in the southern half also became restive and established their clan–based organizations. These include the Ogaden–dominated Somali Patriotic Movement (SPM) and the Hawiye–led United Somali Congress (USC). Indeed, as the national army increasingly became an instrument of Siad Barre and Marehan interests, other clans became receptive to warlords, who promised protection in return for loyalty. Hence, the descent into clanism, which Siad Barre paved the way, spread like a contagion all over Somalia. As Lyons and Samatar (1995, 19) have succinctly observed, 'The regime's practice of targeting clans for punishment pushed Somalis to organize opposition along clan lines and in defense of the clan'. What drove the people of Somalia to support warlords was, therefore, the state's manifest loss of impartiality and its inability to maintain law and order, and the ensuing fear for personal safety. Siad Barre's regime collapsed 1991 and warlords' control of feudal–like enclaves in Somalia begun. As indicated earlier, the former British Somaliland formally announced its break from the rest of Somalia and now calls itself the Republic of Somaliland. Northeastern Somalia also broke and now calls itself Puntland, although it did not seek secession. The 30–year old search by the state for a 'more complete' nation–state ended with a 'less complete' nation and with no state at all.

The conflict in the North, especially the wanton and destructive measures the government took, was responsible for the deaths of many. But it also caused the forcible dislocation of hundreds of thousands of internally displace persons and refugees, who sought exile in Ethiopia and Djibouti. By the end of 1988, the number of Somali refugees in Ethiopia—a country the Somalis have traditionally seen as an enemy—reached about 350,000. At the height of the influx between 3,000 and 4,000 refugees per day crossed the border and this represented, what the USCR (1988) called, flight under 'emergency' conditions. Rarely has this terminology been used to describe a refugee flight in Africa.[9] However, given the cruelty with which the war was conducted, the refugees did not have any choice but to leave. Indeed, the

9 The Rwandan refugee exodus to the DRC, which occurred after the Rwandan Patriotic Front seized Kigali, the capital, in July 1994 and the subsequent flight of about 2,000,000 mostly Hutu refugees to Zaire in less than one month, of course, far surpasses the magnitude and intensity of the displacement in Somalia and anywhere in Africa.

scale and intensity of fighting between the SNM and regular government forces, and the latter's indiscriminate measures has been attributed to humanitarian catastrophe of major proportions. It is reported that the fighting had 'left over 10,000 dead, the overwhelming majority of which were civilians (USCR 1988, 41). By 1991, the total number of Somali refugees reached 527,000. These include all those who sought asylum in Kenya, Djibouti, and, of course, Ethiopia.

Thus, like Ethiopian and Eritrean refugee flight to Sudan, Somali refugee flight to Ethiopia may be termed an 'acute' refugee movement because the 'push' motive was overwhelming (Kunz 1973, 132). In fact, because of the all out war against civilians, the 'push' motive was much more overwhelming compared to Ethiopian and Eritrean refugee flight to Sudan. However, unlike Ethiopian and Eritrean refugee flight, Somali refugees 'plunged' into 'refugeehood' and trekked to a country they had viewed with suspicion for generations and a country that had been responsible for the dislocation of their co–ethnics from the Ogaden a few years earlier, many of which were still among them. Hence, the best model that describes their movement is 'push–pressure–plunge' (Kunz 1973, 134). Because of the 'kinetics' of their flight, and the fact that their destination country has been perceived by the majority of them as enemy for generations, their decision does not appear to be 'considered'. The sheer brutality of the Somali Armed Forces, as described earlier, and the fear this generated were such that exile was probably the only option. They did not have a comparable luxury of time to decide what to do and no other possible alternatives as the refugees from Ethiopia and Eritrea appear to have had. Their decision under the circumstances was perhaps understandable but may not be taken as 'considered'. Like Eritreans and Ethiopians, however, they were 'majority–identified' refugees, because their opposition to the government of Siad Barre was shared by the entire Isaaq clan.

Post-Barre Somalia: A Less Complete Nation in Search of a State

As indicated earlier, by the end of 1989 various clan–based militias proliferated all over Somali. Some attempted to establish a national government and others were content in holding and controlling their clan territories. Among those who attempted to establish a national government includes the Hawiye–based USC, led by Ali Mahdi and General Aideed. The USC had earlier played a critical role in defeating and dislodging Barre's forces out of Mogadishu and the regime's final collapse in 1991. However, Ali Mahdi and General Aideed did not agree on mechanisms for sharing power and, as a consequence, the USC splintered into sub–clan factions, with Ali Mahdi leading the Abigal–dominated faction and General Aideed, leading the Habar Gidir–dominated faction. Each vehemently opposed the other's quest to form a national government. The ensuing fighting left thousands dead and many more wounded.

Other parties also entered the fray hoping to hold on to a piece of Mogadishu. Similarly, fighting between various factions flared up in the fertile area south and

southwest of Mogadishu between the Shabelle and Juba rivers. Thus, unlike northern Somalia, where there was relative stability after Siad Barre's forces were defeated, southern Somalia suffered more because of the large number of parties who vied for control of the productive areas. With so much factionalization, it became impossible for a strong man to emerge. As in the classic balance of power arrangement in Europe between 1815 and 1914, where smaller nations made alliances to survive, the smaller parties in Somalia also formed alliances to prevent the emergence of a strong group able to subdue others. However, no alliance lasted long and was replaced by another alliance as explained below.

First, the 'insidious clanism' that permeates Somali lives, at least in the psychological sense, made it easier to break and form alliances. In the concrete sense, however, in the scarce environment that Somalia is, clan competition for meager resources remained high. In fact, most of the shifting alliances occurred within parties in Mogadishu, the capital, and in the highly sought fertile but small area between the two rivers (for clan boundaries, see Lewis 2002). Second, since the fall of Siad Barre, many external parties have stepped in to make sure they will have some influence in any emerging government. For example, Ethiopia has supported those parties who called for a highly decentralized and federated Somalia not only because that would be in consonance with its political system, but also because a decentralized government would potentially give up on the long–aspired pan–Somalia state, which the unitary (and highly centralized) governments consistently refused. Therefore, Ethiopia established friendly relations with 'Somaliland' and 'Puntland' without extending a formal recognition to the former. It also provided arms and other logistical support to groups opposed to Aideed's group, which envisioned a unitary state. Eritrea and Egypt, on the other hand, supported those groups opposed to Ethiopia because a united and centralized Somalia would serve as countervailing force against Ethiopia. As a consequence, arms flows to Somalia continued unabated, sometimes tipping the balance in favor of one and soon after in favor of the other. This made any alliance temporary and the southern part ungovernable.

As indicated earlier, the conflict in northern Somalia forced hundreds of thousands of refugees to exile in Ethiopia in 1989. In subsequent years, however, refugee flight to Ethiopia stabilized because of the relative peace, and was replaced by refugee movements from the southern half of Somalia into Kenya and internal displacements within Somalia itself. Many gravitated towards Mogadishu looking for stability and humanitarian assistance. The lawlessness, however, made distribution of humanitarian assistance difficult so much so that the UN, for the first time in its history, intervened not because of manifest threats to international peace and security but to feed the hungry (UN Res/794/1992, 3 December 1992). At the height of its intervention, the UN had about 38,000 uniformed personnel of which 24,000 were Americans. Although the humanitarian disaster was averted, attempts to reconstruct the state failed and American troops withdrew in haste in 1995.[10] Various attempts

10 A discussion on how the UN attempted to employ the American-led Unified Task Force (UNITAF) in the reconstitution of state power is found in Freeman et al. (1993).

to re–constitute the state have so far failed and Somalia's search for an effective national government, which began in 1991, had not yet been accomplished by the end of 2005.

At the time the UN withdrew in the mid-1990s, there were an estimated 170,000 Somali refugees in Kenya. Almost 10 years later, the Somali refugee situation in Kenya has not appreciably changed and there still remained 158,000 refugees. Like their counterparts who moved to Ethiopia, the 'kinetics' of their flight may be termed as 'acute' refugee movement. The 'push' factor was overwhelming and their motivation to reach a safe place as quickly as possible was high. Unlike Ethiopia, however, Kenya is not a country they have much ill–feeling for. Hence, Kunz's (1973) kinetic model of 'push–pressure–plunge', which was the most appropriate model in the case of Somali refugees in Ethiopia, may not apply. The fact that many refugees did not return from Kenya indicates that there is a long way to go before peace is established in the southern half of the country. By contrast, there were only 16,500 Somali refugees in Ethiopia in early 2005 (USCR 2005), as compared to 230,000 in early 1995, almost all from the northern half of Somalia (USCR 1995). That is, at present there are two 'Somalias'—the northern part, including the self–proclaimed Republic of Somaliland and the 'autonomous' Puntland both with relative stability, and the southern part, which still remains in Hobbesian–like 'state of nature'. The once vibrant Somalia, which looked for a more complete nation appears to have settled for a less complete nation and is struggling to find a state, albeit less centralized state, to save the less complete nation from extinction.

Sudan: Conflict and Refugee Flight, 1956-1972

We have seen in Chapter 2 that the long–term variables for the conflict in Sudan over the last 50 years were the contrasting historical trajectories of the North and South, which came about because of differences in language, religion, and the cultural and psychological makeup of the northern and the southern populations of Sudan. These long–term variables provided conditions necessary for the conflict. However, to establish why the conflict started and evolved the way it did, one has to locate the sufficient conditions. These sufficient conditions are found in the political, economic, and socio–cultural policies of independent Sudan.

At the time Sudan became independent in 1956 as an amalgam of two units, disagreements over three critical issues had not yet been resolved. First, there was no agreement on the nature of the state. The South envisioned a federal state composed of the North and the South, with autonomous powers for each. On the other hand, the North pressed for and established a unitary state, where power was concentrated in Khartoum, the capital city. Second, and related to the first, is the contentious issue of Islam. While the South envisioned a secular constitution, the North opted for a constitution in which Islam was the state religion (Johnson 2003, 30). Third, there were contrasting views on the nature of Sudanese national identity. While the South saw Sudan as one with no 'national' culture because it was composed of peoples

with different historical antecedents, the North took Sudan as Arab, with Islam as the basis of this culture and identity. There is especially strong convergence of views on the latter even among moderate Northern politicians. For example, Sayed el–Mahdi, who became Prime Minister in 1966, put it best in his address to the Constituent Assembly of Sudan in October 1966 when he said, 'the dominant feature of our nation is an Islamic one and its overpowering expression is Arab, and this Nation will not have its entity identified and its prestige and pride preserved except under an Islamic revival' (as quoted in Alier 1973, 24).

Thus, at the time Sudan became independent, the environment lacked the necessary stability for political, economic, and social development. Despite this, the state vigorously pushed the Arabization of the South, a process which began immediately before independence. As Wai (1981, 90) has noted:

> Educational repression in the South was represented by the introduction of compulsory Islamic education with Arabic as the medium of instruction throughout the country. Economic suppression and deprivation took the form of sitting all industrial projects in the North in addition to the more painful policy of assisting Arabs to settle in the South and appropriating land from Southerners. The practice of open segregation of Southerners from Northerners in ordinary social life was as oppressive as it was insulting. Finally, the abolition of Sunday as a day of rest for students and public employees was considered the indiscreet example of the repressive policies aimed at the South, occurring in such an important sphere as religion.

Similarly, the Sudanization of the civil service in the South meant disproportionately larger share for Northerners. This process actually started before independence in which only 6 of 800 posts were accorded to Southerners (Khalid 2003, 74). The South resented this and the continued reluctance of the government to address the fundamental constitutional issues the nation faced. At the same time, Northerners were dissatisfied with the pervasive corruption and the insidious political opportunism of the parties in the North, and with the inability of the various governments to control inflation. As a consequence, the first post–independence civilian government voluntarily handed over power to the military in 1958 to address these and the 'Southerner question'. Upon assuming power, however, the military sought to accomplish the latter through 'brutal Islamization and Arabicization', which included a resolute drive for more Quoranic schools and mandatory licensing for Christian missionary work (Khalid 2003, 86; Wai 1981, 85–89).

Thus the dialogue—if one can call it as such—ended because the political, economic, and socio–cultural policies of various governments became increasingly rejectionist of Southern demands. The South's response was simple: take an 'exit' from the political system and challenge it from outside through armed struggle. Therefore, the persistent neglect of the South, including its aspiration for autonomy; its continued economic marginalization; and the vigorous campaign to Arabize and Islamize the South constitute the precipitating variables for the 1963 start of the first Sudanese Civil War between the central government and the Anya–Nya, as the

Southern forces were commonly known.[11] Indeed, the various leaders lacked the courage to face the 'Southern question' squarely, and used religion and Arabization in their bid to stay in power.[12] In other words, the above issues were instrumentally used by various leaders and parties in the North to win power.

Thus, the Anya–Nya armed struggle began to press the South's demand for a federative and a secular state. Its tactics included attacking isolated police posts, and sabotaging economic infrastructure and government installations (Khalid 2003). For example, in September 1963, hardly a year before the initiation of the conflict, Anya–Nya combatants attacked and occupied Pacalla, a government post in Upper Nile Province, for a week and killed 'all Northern traders except for one woman' (Eprile 1974, 96). Similarly, in the same month, Anya–Nya initiated a military offensive in Equatoria and captured a police post, where they killed Northern polices officers (ibid.). A few months later, they attacked Wau, the capital of Bahr el Ghazal Province, but were repulsed. This was a major escalation of the conflict in a very short period of time and was accomplished with a poorly–equipped, small force size. However, it served as a harbinger of the serious conflict that was to follow later.

By 1965, Anya–Nya had purchased armaments from Congolese rebels and international arms dealers with money collected in the South and from exiled southern Sudan communities. It also captured some armaments from government soldiers. Thus, during the mid–1960s, Anya–Nya became a force to be reckoned with, as it escalated its attacks of government posts, army garrisons, and government installations throughout the South (Wai 1981). In response, the government of General Abboud, responded by giving government soldiers free reign to contain the deteriorating security situation. As a result, the army targeted innocent civilians, razed entire villages to the ground, and disrupted their means of livelihood entirely. For example, in 1965, the army machine–gunned 1400 helpless civilians in Juba, the largest town in the South, and killed another 76 in Wau (Wai 1981, 109). As the scale and intensity of Anya–Nya attacks increased, so did reprisals by government soldiers against civilians. Indeed, Anya–Nya forces employed guerrilla warfare, whose success depended on the support of the civilian population, and the government responded in a way that left many civilians looking for exile across borders. Others sought for sanctuary in 'peace villages' within the South, where 'people could live in peace under the protection of army guns' (O'Ballance 2000, 44–45). Still others moved North, especially to urban areas to escape violence. Thus, the 'free rein' General Abboud gave his soldiers to pacify the South resulted in human suffering of mammoth proportions.

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11 The political organization that spearheaded the movement was known as the Sudan African Nationalist Union (SANU). Its armed guerrilla wing was known as Anya–Nya, and refers 'to a type of poison' found in the South (Johnson 2003, 31).

12 Between 1956, the year of independence, and 1963, the year the Anya–Nya armed struggle began, Sudan had a total of three governments: January 1956–July 1956, July 1956–58, and 1958–64, where al–Azhari, Khalil, and General Abboud, respectively, served as leaders.

In 1964 General Abboud resigned and Khatim Khalifa formed a new civilian government in November of the same year. He started negotiations to resolve the 'Southern question' peacefully and ordered the soldiers not to fire except in 'self–defense' (O'Ballance 2000, 27). However, this was short–lived, as Ahmed Mahgoub became Prime Minister in June 1965 and reintroduced General Abboud's harsh policies. This policy was later reversed after Sayed el–Mahdi became Prime Minister in 1966. Despite this, the conflict escalated and became a drain on the economy. As a consequence, Gafar Mohammed Numeiri, a junior officer in the army, seized power in a coup d'etat and gave 'priority to the solution of the "Southern Problem"' (Khalid 2003, 135). And true to his word, he negotiated with the Anya–Nya and reached a political settlement under the 1972 Addis Ababa Accord. The agreement stipulated that the South would enjoy a 'regional Self-Government within a United Socialist Sudan'. Although Arabic remained the national language, English became the 'principal language' of the South (Khalid 2003, 137). In addition, the National Assembly passed a 'permanent constitution, which "adopted" secularism (without using the term) by removing all references to a state religion …' (Khalid 2003, 143). At long last, peace was established, but at an enormous human cost, which included hundreds of thousands of refugees in neighboring countries, including Uganda, Ethiopia, Central African Republic, and Zaire.

We have earlier seen that there was a rapid escalation of conflict during 1965 after Prime Minister Khalifa resigned and Mahgoub became Prime Minister. As a result, there were an estimated 70,000 refugees in neighboring countries. By July 1966, when Mahgoub lost the premiership to el–Mahdi, the number had increased to about 86,000 refugees, a leap of almost 23 per cent in one year. Indeed, during the one year that he was the Prime Minister, Mahgoub had presided over the military's a reign of terror throughout the South. Mahgoub was back in power in April 1968, and he 'reintroduced his former harsh laws and regulation, which gave virtual license to his soldiers in the South to keep order as they saw fit' (O'Ballance 2000, 50). Thus, at the time Numeiri seized power in 1969, there were at least 172,800 refugees in neighboring countries, mainly caused by harsh measures the military took against civilians (USCR 1970). These represented a 100 per cent increase over the 1966 refugee numbers.

Also, a glance at the distribution of refugees in Ethiopia, Central African Republic, Zaire, and Uganda, which hosted 20,000, 19,500, 66,000, and 71,500 of the refugees, respectively, reveals that refugees chose the shortest distance from their places of habitual residence to safety. Indeed, the highest concentration of fighting occurred in Equatoria, which borders both Uganda and Zaire. Therefore, most of the refugees originated from Equatoria and sought asylum in the nearest independent country. In other words, refugees from the South were not mindless trekkers when they saw violence. Despite the violence perpetrated against them, southern Sudanese refugees did not disperse in panic and instead chose the shortest distance to a safe destination. That is, they made 'considered' decision when seeking exile and returned back home after they learned peace was established.

Sudan: Conflict and Refugee Flight, 1983-2004

In the first few years after the 1972 Addis Ababa Accord, many significant measures were taken. These included the adoption of a new secular constitution, the reduction of government soldiers in the South, and the self–administration of the South within a united Sudan. Anya–Nya disbanded and about 6,000 of its combatants were integrated into the national army. A significant number of refugees also repatriated and many economic initiatives, especially in the agricultural sector, were undertaken with funds received from the international community. In fact, Sudan became 'the second largest (after India) per capita recipient of World Bank assistance' and this made the South self–sufficient in food a few years after the Accord was signed (Khalil 2003, 140). Moreover, 'the number of secondary schools had more than quadrupled. Vocational institutions for teachers, artisans, veterinarians, cooperative officers and agricultural extension workers were established … Southern Sudan had began to look like a normal, important and functioning part within the Sudanese body politic' (ibid).

But there were dissenting voices in the South as well as in the North. The dissenters from the South remained in Ethiopia but did not pose any threat until after the inception of the Second Sudanese Civil War in 1983. However, those in the North, especially Arabists and Islamic leaders, such as Turabi, saw the 'relative independence of the South as an impediment to the creation of an [Arab–oriented] religious state in a unified Sudan' and continued to mount stiff resistance to the agreement (Khalid 2003, 152). Because of this and also because Numeiri saw the Accord as politically expedient, the government became increasingly hesitant to implement some of the provisions of the Accord. For example, the 'number of Northern troops in the South was not reduced to the [agreed upon] 6,000' (Johnson 2003, 142). Also, the North redrew Southern borders to place high–yielding agricultural areas squarely within the North. It also carved out a new and oil–rich province out of southern territory to be directly administered from the Office of the Head of State and Government.

Other Southerners, who accepted the Accord but were also suspicious of the North, were also alarmed at the speed with which the integration proceeded. For example, John Garang, who later became the leader of the SPLM/A, had advised Joseph Lagu, the leader of Anya–Nya, to slow the rapid integration of Southern forces (Khalid 2003, 144). Others were alarmed at the transfer of Southern forces to the North and early retirement of Southern commanders from the Armed Forces in violation of the Addis Ababa Accord. Finally, there were structural impediments similar to the Ethio–Eritrean federal arrangement that made implementation of the agreement difficult. That is, the South was a democratic, parliamentary system, where process mattered and where elections resulted in personnel changes, while the North was a one–party dictatorship, where decisions were made at the whim of one individual. This led to divergent tendencies in the North and South even if they were willing to implement the Accord in good faith.

By the early 1980, Numeiri was under immense pressure, especially from Islamists, after having withered more than eight coup attempts and assassination

plots.[13] At the same time, Sudan faced economic problems, including high inflation and balance of trade deficits (Johnson 2003, 43). Subsequently, it adopted the harsh Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) the International Monetary Fund (IMF) recommended, and these cut government services and subsidies essential for the common people. This further eroded whatever support the latter had for the government. As a solution, Numeiri reverted back to the 'values of Islam', and in September 1983, he promulgated the *Sharia* Law. It must be noted however, the September Laws, as the *Sharia* Laws were commonly known, were a culmination of the gradual drift to the right that begun in the mid–1970s. Nonetheless, the September Laws served to formally bring the 1972 Addis Ababa Accord to an end.

Inevitably, Southern fears and suspicions came to be true. Although they gave Numeiri the benefit of the doubt, repeated broken agreements and promises made in the past continued to ring loud in the psychology of Southerners. Indeed, as it became clear later, Numeiri signed the Addis Ababa Accord not out of conviction that the 'Southern question' was legitimate, but rather out of his need for popular support. That is, he saw the Addis Ababa Accord in terms of the political capital that he could make out of it. Similarly, it does not appear he was religious, nor was there any 'conversion on the Road to Damascus', as a simple pressure was enough to make him play the Arab–Muslim card. Thus, the Second Sudanese Civil War began in 1983 after troops of the 105th battalion mutinied in full possession of their armaments. They made their way to Ethiopia and founded the SPLM/A to fight for self–determination of the South and for the democratization of Sudan.[14]

Thus, from 1983 to 1984 alone, Northern troops, assisted by government–supported armed Arab militia, raided parts of the South and laid waste to large parts of 'Dinkaland'.[15] As Burr and Collins (1995, 19) have stated, the activities of Northern forces, especially the various militias were 'little short of genocide'. The response of the SPLM/A to this threat was quick and decisive because it did not face the shortage of military hardware that the Anya–Nya faced early during its struggle. Indeed, those who ignited the armed struggle this time around had remained in possession of their weapons, and the Ethiopian government readily assisted the SPLM/A to counter alleged Sudan's support of Eritrean liberation movements. Therefore, unlike opposition groups in Ethiopia and Somalia, whose armed struggle took years of preparation before they could carry bold military initiatives, the Second Sudanese Civil War became deadly within a relatively short period of time. Although Numeiri

13 There were at least a dozen coup attempts against Numeiri during 1969–85, the period he was in power. Please see publications for the various years of *Africa Research Bulletin: Political, Social, and Cultural Series* (London).

14 The concept of self–determination, at least as far as John Garang saw it, did not automatically imply secession. All the speeches he made clearly indicate that he and the movement he led stood for a generous devolution of power, and this included full autonomy for the South.

15 Most of the SPLM/A combatants and the leadership, including Garang, were Dinka, the largest ethnic group in the South. Hence, government and government–allied forces focused their attacks more on the Dinkas in their attempt to neutralize the SPLM/A.

played the ever–popular religious card to placate Islamists and abrogated the Addis Ababa Accord to please Arabists, the worsening economic, political, and social conditions together brought an end to his regime in 1985, just about two years after the SPLM/A was established.

Thus, during its first few years, the SPLM/A focused on neutralizing the threat posed by various Arab and Southern non–Arab militias. It sought to contain the terror perpetrated against the Dinkas because of the strong support it had in Dinka areas and also because of the ruthlessness of the Arab militias. It also sought to contain the threat the latter posed because intra–South fighting had been a critical handicap during the First Sudanese Civil War. Therefore, its reprisals against militias and civilians suspected of aiding the government were especially brutal.[16] As we will see later, the brutality with which both sides conducted the war was instrumental in the creation of an 'acute' refugee exodus to neighboring countries. First, however, intra–North and intra–South factionalization and how this made the conflict more intractable is explained briefly.

Intra–North and Intra–South Factionalization in Sudan

Even though the North–South divide is the most fundamental in the predicament that Sudan found itself in the latter half of the twentieth century, intra–North and intra–South conflicts and competition have also contributed to the intractability of the conflict. In the North, each party, whether in power or in opposition, had come out with initiatives to end the conflict. Each time these efforts have been frustrated by one or the other party in order to help it climb on top of the competitive political ladder that Sudan has. Also, at one time or another, each party had come to the realization that the North–South divide was eroding Sudan's viability. Thus, any governing party—and each party had been in power since independence in 1956—had faced a 'power dilemma'.[17] Naturally, any initiative a party had advanced to resolve the 'Southern question' was expected to have peace dividends, as the rapid economic development during the first few years after the 1972 Addis Ababa Accord indicated. And this was expected to extend the life of a government. However, the very solutions were exploited by opposition parties and were presented as either a capitulation to rebels or an abandonment of the values of Islam, or both. This had shortened the lives of the tenure of the various governments Sudan had and no meaningful progress was made on any issue, including the perennial Southern issue.

There is a long list of examples of the contingent and fluid nature of the North's approach to the 'Southern question'. For example, the parliamentary government el-Mahdi, the Umma Party's leader, collapsed in 1989 because it held 'real policy

16 For details of the military operations of the SPLM/A (and the government and government–allied forces), see Johnson 2003, 81–4.

17 This is true of all northern parties with the exception of the Sudan Communist Party (SCP), which never played a formal and significant role in any national government.

decisions including the "Southern Question" in abeyance' (Simone 1994, 150). Also, the Umma Party supported the Koka Dam Declaration—'a practical programme for the cessation of hostilities, and guidelines for the political restructuring of Sudan'—while it was in opposition and abandoned it when it came to power.[18] Similarly, the recent meeting of el-Mahdi with President Bashir of Sudan without the knowledge of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), an umbrella of parties opposed to the regime of President Bashir of which his party was a member of, is an apt example of the sinister back door dealings common among Sudanese political parties. Finally, the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) had conducted negotiations in 1998 with the SPLM/A without the knowledge of the government of which it was a member, and this, according to *The Sudan Times* (18 December 1998), was a 'highly unusual step for a governing party'. As I have written elsewhere, 'if there was any constant or permanence in Sudanese politics, it is the ease with which alliances have been made, many times at the back of an already existing alliance, only to be broken with [the same] ease later'.[19] Therefore, the jockeying for power within the North has been one of the most important variables for the lack of bold initiatives to resolve the conflict.

There was also endemic factionalization within Southern parties. The fact that many of them were armed, coupled with the traditional conflict between some ethnic groups in the distant past had made a unified 'Southern Demand' more difficult to come by. In fact, the Southern cause suffered more from the mistrust and rivalry within the Southern camp as from the unwillingness of the North to take bold measures. As may be expected in a multi–ethnic entity such as the South, there were numerous factions, organized along ethnic lines. For example, before 1972, it was almost impossible for the National Union, the Sudan Unity Party, the Southern Front, and of course, the Anya–Nya (all of them Southern parties) to agree on a mechanism for peace (O'Ballance 1977). Although some progress was made in harmonizing Southern demands during the Second Sudanese Civil War, parties occasionally broke away from the SPLM/A to form alliances with the government and against the SPLM/A. For example, in 1991, a faction of the SPLM/A, known as the 'Nasir' group had sought but failed to remove Garang in 1991. This led to the formation of Machar–led and Nuer–dominated Southern Sudan Independence Movement/Army (SSIM/A) in 1994 and a conflict between the Nuer and the Dinka followed. Later, the SSIM/A concluded a peace agreement with the government to oppose the SPLM/A. The SSIM/A later split into various Nuer militias and Machar himself abandoned the government and rejoined the SPLM/A (Hutchinson 2001).

18 A full statement of the Koka Dam Agreement of 24 March 1986 may be found in Garang 1992, 142–44. Koka is an important electric power generating center in Ethiopia.

19 An unpublished article titled, 'The Politics of Cultural Pluralism in Sudan: Issues, Actors, and Governance', the author prepared for a Ford Foundation–funded project on *Government Policies, Constitutions and Ethnic Relations in Africa.*

Thus, not only was there intra–South civil war but also intra–Nuer civil war.[20] Indeed, like the leaders of the North, who instrumentally used parochial sentiments to advance their individual goals, Southern leaders have also tapped from the insidious reserve of past ethnic animosities in the South. Therefore, there was no clear and consistent 'Southern Demand', and northern parties have been quick to exploit this inherent weakness by co–opting factional leaders. Simply put, there was a lack of consensus on what must be done, not only among the political parties, religious groups and intellectuals of the North, but also among the political parties, ethnic groups, and intellectuals of the South.

Conflict and the Refugee Situation in Sudan

By the early 1990, the SPLM/A had developed into efficient fighting machine capable of defeating larger government forces, overrunning towns, and, above all, defending the territories it had seized. At the same time, it enlarged its theater of operations beyond the South to include Kordofan, Darfur, and Blue Nile Provinces. As a consequence, there was dramatic rise in 'significant military operations', initiated either by the government and government–allied militias or by the SPLM/A. These 'significant military operations' further increased in frequency in the latter half of the 1990s and caused massive flows of refugees across borders.[21] Others remained in Sudan as internally displaced persons. For example, at the beginning of 2000, there were about 4,000,000 internally displaced persons, many of which moved to the North to find refuge (USCR 2000). With these many displaced persons, Sudan ranked top among countries with significant internally displaced persons.

More importantly, however, with an estimated total of 475,000 refugees by early 2003, Sudan became Africa's principal refugee-generating country, and remained one of the principal refugee–generating countries in Africa from latter half of the 1980s to the end of the 1990s (ibid). It is also important to recognize that the refugee numbers show discernible patterns of change vis–à–vis the political and security situations in Sudan in particular, and the region in general. For example, in the latter half of the 1980s, most of the 350,000 southern Sudan refugees sought asylum in Ethiopia not only because of the ideological compatibility between the SPLM/A and the Ethiopian government but also because southeastern Sudan, where the rebellion against central authority started, was close to the Ethiopian border (USCR 1988). As the conflict escalated in the 1990s, the number of refugees from the South rose to almost 450,000, of which only 60,000 were in Ethiopia. Indeed, after the EPRDF seized power in Ethiopia in 1991, Ethio-Sudanese relations warmed up and Ethiopia ordered the SPLM/A to cease all activities from its territory. Many of the refugees felt unwelcome in Ethiopia and left for Sudan, some of which found their way into

20 Details of this are found in Johnson 2003, 111–26.

21 For a chronology of what I have referred to as 'significant military operations' and their increases in frequency, please see Johnson 2003, 195–221.

Kenya. As a result, Kenya, which never hosted significant refugees from Sudan, became a refuge for about 40,000 of them (USCR 1996).

It is also instructive to note the total number of Sudanese refugees decreased from almost 450,000 in 1996 to about 352,000 by 1999 (USCR 1997; USCR 2000). This may be attributed to the instability in the then Zaire, where about 110,000 Sudanese refugees had sought shelter. Feeling insecure because of the fighting in northeaster Zaire, especially Ituri Province, most of the refugees returned to Sudan, leaving behind only 30,000. In the early 2000s, the conflict in Sudan escalated in scale and intensity once more and this resulted in the resurgence of the refugee number to about 475,000 by December 2002 (USCR 2003). This number included more than 200,000 refugees from Darfur, who fled into Chad because of the atrocities and destruction of genocidal proportions.[22] Therefore, the number of reported refugees from the South actually went down.

There are three plausible explanations for the reduction and/or stabilization in the refugee numbers. First, with the increasing military might of the SPLM/A, the war had reached a point of stalemate. It became evident the government had neither the power nor the will to defeat the SPLM/A, which can now defend its liberated areas effectively. Therefore, the people of Southern Sudan had finally found the security they had always wanted and remained in their homeland. Second, after almost 20 years of renewed fighting in which between 1,000,000 and 1,500,000 people had died, about 4,000,000 had been displaced internally, and between 300,000 and 400,000 had been exiled as refugees, the sources of possible new refugees had been depleted.[23] Third, although peace negotiations between the government and the SPLM/A had began in the late 1990s, they only continued in earnest after June 2002. At long last, peace was on the horizon and this, as in Eritrea, probably had a discouraging effect on the decision to leave.

Therefore, refugees from southern Sudan fled to neighboring countries because of fear for personal security brought about by a combination of factors, including

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22 At the time of writing, there was an ongoing conflict in Darfur. This represents yet another dimension of the Sudanese saga. This particular conflict and the attendant refugee formations are not included in this study primarily because the conflict in Darfur first captured headlines in 2003, only one year before the end of the period of study for this book. However, the destruction of hundreds of villages, the deaths of hundreds of thousands, and the forced dislocation of millions because of government and government–supported Janjaweed militia activities should not be discounted. At the least, as the UN–appointed Commission of Inquiry has stated, the government of Sudan and the Janjaweed militias were responsible of 'serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian law amounting to crimes under international law'. For more, please consult 'Report of the International Commission of Inquiry on Darfur to the United Nations Secretary-General' (25 January 2005).

23 The estimated population of the 'South' in 2005 was 8.5 million (see www.en.wikipedia/Wiki/southern-Sudan). Even if we generously assume this number as the population size back in the late 1980s and 1990s, on per capita basis, the author strongly suspects that the total numbers of the refugees, the internally displaced, and the dead associated with the conflict is one of the highest in the latter half of the twentieth century.

military engagements between the Government of Sudan, the SPLM/A, and the various militias. The use of food as a weapon by the government in the conduct of the war had also a positive impact on the decision to depart (see Burr and Collins 1995, 46-65). Thus, Southerners fled *en masse*, and the 'kinetics' of their flight may be termed as an 'acute' refugee movement. Although the 'push' factor was overwhelming, because of unmitigated atrocities by various parties, the refugees fled towards the nearest international boundary, and especially Ethiopia where they were welcome. And when conditions in their exile became unwelcoming, as in Ethiopia and the DRC, they fled back to their country of origin. From 2002 onwards, refugee numbers stabilized because of the prospects of real peace despite increases in the scale and intensity of fighting among the combatants. The fighting did not, however, spill into the general civilian population because of the secure liberated areas. Overall, therefore, refugees from southern Sudan left only after evaluating the changing conditions in their surrounding. Therefore, their decision was 'considered'.

Finally, it is important to note the parallels between refugee flights in Sudan and those in Eritrea and Somalia. All three were 'acute' refugee movements and the refugees in all three were 'majority–identified', because they shared the belief that their flight was justified and their return home was contingent upon peace in their respective homelands. In all three cases, the refugee numbers stabilized toward the end, not because the fighting had ended, but probably because of the depletion of the sources of refugees and the prospects for peace. Also, much of the contested territories were liberated and out of reach of government and government–allied forces which targeted civilians. Indeed, exile incurs economic and social cost, and refugees tend to minimize those costs by staying put unless it was essential. And this was what the refugees from southern Sudan did. They only fled because that was the best option.

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PART 3
The Structure of Refugee Settlements in Exile

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Chapter 5

The Structure of Refugee Settlements in Ethiopia

Introduction

In Chapter 4, we saw that the First Sudanese Civil War ended with the signing of the 1972 Addis Ababa Accord. Immediately thereafter, most or all of the Southern Sudan refugees left Ethiopia and went back home.[1] The Second Sudanese Civil War started in 1983 after the promulgation of the September (*Sharia*) Laws and became deadly within a short period of time. By early 1985, about 72,000 refugees from the South had sought asylum in Ethiopia (USCR 1985). This number continued to climb, and by the late 1980s, it reached about 350,000 (USCR 1991). Most of them settled in camps in western Ethiopia, especially in the Gambella region of Illubabor, where they had earlier settled during the First Sudanese Civil War.[2]

Similarly, we have seen that the conflict in northern Somalia escalated and became deadly in 1988 because of the indiscriminate measures the Somali Army took against opposition forces as well as innocent civilians. By the end of that year, there were an estimated 350,000 refugees in Ethiopia, the overwhelming majority of which were Isaaq (USCR 1988). They settled close to the Ethiopian town of Jijiga and further south along the easternmost part of the border with Somalia. As the conflict escalated and moved south in the early 1990s, many more refugees were displaced. Whereas the 1988–90 refugees overwhelmingly sought asylum in Ethiopia, those that were displaced later sought asylum in Kenya in large numbers.[3] However, a few also sought asylum in Ethiopia. This chapter examines the structure of refugee settlements in western and eastern Ethiopia. In particular, it examines the role various actors played in determining the structure of settlements, especially the roles of the Ethiopian government, the UNHCR, and the refugees. It also interrogates whether or not the 'kinetics' of flight had any impact on the structure of settlements.

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1 A detailed examination of the dynamics of their repatriation will be made in Chapter 7.

2 Assefa (undated) has reported that there were about 400,000 refugees in the camps, which is about 50,000 more than the number the USCR reported. This discrepancy is to be expected, especially in the absence of census in the refugee camps.

3 Refugees from northern Somalia had also sought asylum in Djibouti and in Yemen, across the Red Sea. However, their numbers, especially the number of those who were in Yemen, pale when compared to the hundreds of thousands who sought asylum in Ethiopia and Kenya.

First, however, a brief discussion of the structure of refugee settlements in Africa is made.

The Structure of Refugee Settlements in Africa

When refugees cross international borders, depending on the preparedness of the host government and international organizations, such as the UNHCR, they may self–settle or settle with assistance from various actors. Those who self–settle may do so in urban areas and blend into city populations, or in rural settings among village dwellers, or may claim an unused land to establish new settlements and start life in exile. Those who settle in cities disappear among the population and are out of reach of governments and other agencies. They do not receive any form of assistance and not much is known about the patterns and distribution of their settlements. We know, however, many were city–dwellers before exile and were looking for opportunities to settle in a third country. Therefore, any talk of the structure of settlements is conjectural. However, as new–comers who departed in haste from their homes with no belongings to carry except perhaps a little cash, the likelihood that most will settle in poorer quarters of urban areas is high, especially because the prospect of gainful employment in Third World cities is next to none. Likewise, most of those who self–settle in villages do not receive assistance. However, they live as a group in villages and are more visible. Therefore, we know more about them. According to Hansen (1981, 192), for example, such settlements were popular with Angolan refugees in Zambia because settlement in villages among co–ethnics provided the refugees with 'more stability and control over [their lives]', despite the obvious loss of benefits in organized settlements. This is because flight diminishes 'people's power and self–control', and self-settlement, especially in a familiar linguistic and ethnic environment, helps minimize losses and maximize sense of control (ibid. 191). In this sense, self–settled rural refugees may be seen as value–maximizers.

Those who settle with the assistance from governments and international agencies are, in general, taken to temporary reception centers and are supplied with food, and other immediate necessities until they are moved to a more permanent refugee camps or settlements schemes. In the refugee camps, they are supplied with food, medical care, and shelter. Some schooling for children and vocational training for adults are also provided, although it is assumed that the camps were set up to house refugees until they returned home. In general, these camps are located in isolated, rural areas about 50 km away from the border to be eligible for UNHCR assistance.[4] Hence, there is no much interaction with the local community. Indeed,

4 This is not followed in many cases and the UNHCR seldom refuses to provide aid in acute refugee formations, where refugees congregate in reception centers or settle spontaneously in other sites close to the border, such as those that existed along the border between Ethiopia and Somalia. However, there are many cases where the UNHCR has refused to provide funds for long–term settlement schemes, such as those in Sudan, if they were not located at least 50 km away from the border.

governments prefer such settlements because of security reasons: they are easier to control and competition with the local community is avoided (Mudepziswa 1993). International agencies also welcome such settlements because they increase refugee visibility, which is necessary for aid flow. Moreover, problems of logistics and aid distribution are easily overcome due to high concentrations of refugees in a limited space. A significant number of rural refugees also welcome such settlements because they create conditions conducive to maintaining their social practices and authority structures during exile, and minimize the sense of loss associated with dislocation. Settlements also make it easier to reconstitute such practices after repatriation (Bascom 1995). However, refugees wish such camps were located near markets, roads, and agricultural enterprises to buy and sell daily necessities and to get employment to supplement their camp rations, which many have described as insufficient to meet their daily needs.[5]

With increased intractability of many conflicts in Africa, however, it has become clear that refugees may stay in exile for a considerable number of years and perhaps permanently. The international community, however, does not favor the continuation of the status quo because it is not prepared to provide money for an indefinite period of time. Likewise, many refugees prefer other options, especially employment opportunities in the host country to supplement relief aid or, in the case of refugees with urban background, chances of resettlement in third countries. The preference of the host country may not be known for sure. What is generally known, however, is that host countries have not been willing to extend citizenship to facilitate the integration process.[6] If the refugees are kept in isolated camps and provided with enough support from the international community, then asylum countries may want the status quo to continue because of the economic benefits the refugee industry generates.

As a partial solution, therefore, settlement schemes have become the preferred option to help make refugees self–sufficient.[7] These are like newly–established villages, where the refugees are given land to support themselves. Therefore, settlement schemes are located in rural areas where land and water is in abundance, and their viability depends on these and other factors such as large start-up capital and skilled bureaucracy (Rogge 1981, 202–06). However, their success rates have not been very encouraging. Only Tanzania and Botswana have fared better in their efforts at making settlement schemes successful, while countries such as Sudan have not had comparable successes (Rogge 1981; Rogge 1985; Bascom 1995). Therefore, many refugees continue to live on hand–outs from the international community for

5 For example, Kibreab (1994) has noted that Somali refugees were industrious and entrepreneurial and had opened tea and other shops to supplement their camp rations even though the income from these endeavors was negligibly low.

6 Botswana and Tanzania are the only two countries in Africa that readily extended citizenship to refugees to help in the process of self–sufficiency and ultimate integration.

7 For an explanation of why governments prefer this, please consult Bascom 1995, 210–11.

decades. Such has been the case for Sudanese and Somali refugees in Ethiopia as discussed below.

Southern Sudanese Refugee Settlements in Western Ethiopia

Less than a year after the Second Sudanese Civil War started many refugees from the South sought asylum in Ethiopia. The first group, which numbered about 40,000 refugees, settled in the Itang refugee camp of Illubabor region after it was established in June 1983, where the government and the UNHCR provided them with full relief assistance. A subsequent joint effort by the UNHCR and the Lutheran World Federation to make the refugees self–sufficient did not succeed because the Ethiopian government was under immense pressure from many opposition groups in other parts of the country, and had not developed a comprehensive policy to deal with refugees in its territories. The effort at making the refugees self–sufficient was later abandoned altogether because the Ethiopian government was unwilling to provide land. There were many reasons for this. First, Ethiopia was more preoccupied with conflict in other parts of the country and did not allocate much attention to refugee issues. Second, it sought to keep refugees in visible camps to serve as a reminder to Sudan, which allegedly supported Eritrean and Tigrayan opposition movements, that Ethiopia too had refugees in its territory it can use to advance its national security. Third, Ethiopia needed to show the world that, unlike the refugee–generating country it has always been known, it too was a refugee host country; that is, the refugee formation in Ethiopia was not a function of its political system. Fourth, it was concerned about availability of land since it had also began massive relocation of peasants from the low–yielding highlands into many parts of western Ethiopia, including areas close to the Itang refugee camp (Bulcha 1988). Finally, the SPLM/A may not have been favorably disposed to the idea of permanent and self–sufficient settlements because it also needed refugee visibility to attract international sympathy.

In August 1986, the Ethiopian government made land available for a second refugee camp to be built at Dimma, south of Itang, to relieve increased refugee pressure on the latter. However, it did not make land available for cultivation. The two camps together accommodated an estimated total of between 110,000 and 132,000 refugees. It is important to note that, as in Somalia, different estimates for the refugee size are given because it had not been possible to take census for political reasons, including SPLM/A control of the camps.[8] Thus, the attempt to come up with a credible estimate of refugee numbers has been a contentious issue. However, unlike Somali, the range of the difference was smaller. Assefa (undated), for example, reports that the total number of refugees in the two camps was about

8 The reason the SPLM/A was reluctant to allow census in the camps was probably because the numbers were inflated. More accurate estimates would have meant smaller allocation of rations for refugees as well as the SPLM/A, which had effective control of the camps.

132,010 in 1986, almost all of them in Itang except for about 10,000 at Dimma. However, the USCR (1986) took a more conservative estimate and put the number at about 110,000. Whichever number is taken, there is no doubt that there was a dramatic increase in refugee numbers from the estimated 40,000 refugees in 1983.

The conflict in Southern Sudan increased with higher intensity in the later half of the 1980s and, as a result, the number of refugees swelled to an estimated 221,000 in 1987, 331,000 in 1988, and 385,600 in 1989 (Assefa undated). Therefore, roughly about 100,000 new refugees each year were added to the ranks of the existing ones for three consecutive years—1986, 1987, and 1988—and about 50,000 in 1989. Two other camps at Assosa/Tsore and Fugnido were added to accommodate the incoming refugees in May 1987 and December 1987, respectively. All of the camps were located near rivers or other sources of water and the UNHCR did not face the logistical problems it faced in eastern Ethiopia, where the issue of water had been a central concern. By April 1991, the number of refugees reached an all time high of about 402,000 refugees in the existing three camps.[9] Of these, Itang had accommodated about 280,000, Fugnido about 86,000, and Dimma about 35,000, all of them housed in temporary camps.

There are two main reasons as to why all of the refugees were made to live in temporary camps. First, as mentioned earlier, the Ethiopian government and the SPLM/A were remotely interested in well–developed schemes for political and economic reasons and the UNHCR could do nothing on its own. Second, as will be explained in the next few pages, the conflict in Sudan was far from the world's attention until 1988 despite humanitarian problems of major proportions. As Winter (1988, 3) has noted, 'The conflict in southern *Sudan* finally entered the world's focus' after the arrival of an emaciated and dying Dinka refugees after a long and hazardous journey (emphasis in original). In Fugnido camp, for example, there were 18,000 unaccompanied children out of a total camp population of 44,000 in early 1988 (USCR 1988, 41). Like the camp at Dimma, this camp was established to relieve the Itang camp, whose refugee population had reached about 220,000 by 1988.

It is important to note that some of the camps were more or less ethnically homogeneous. Until it was evacuated in 1990, the camp at Assosa/Tsore was exclusively Uduk settled. Similarly, Itang and Dimma were Nuer–dominated. On the other hand, the camp at Fugnido was ethnically heterogeneous with Nuer, Dinka, and Anuak. However, each group lived in segregated quarters within the camp. This structure had probably mitigated ethnic based conflicts, which were common among southern Sudan refugees. Also, since the Ethiopian government had given the SPLM/A full control of the camps, open conflict between camp dwellers was rare before 1991. It must be remembered that the SPLM/A had zero tolerance for inter–South conflict because this was the greatest weakness that made them prey to northern domination.

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9 The Uduk evacuated the Assosa/Tsore camp in 1990 because of instability in the region.

Things, however, changed in camp structures after 1990 because of the increased instability in western Ethiopia, first in the Assosa/Tsore area, where the Uduk were camped, and later in the remaining camps further south. It is interesting to note that, unlike other camps, where there was a preponderance of males and unaccompanied children, the Uduk had left Sudan with their families and communal and authority structures in tact. Because of this they were seen as 'model refugees' (James 1996, 187). They were, however, the first group of Southern Sudan refugees to evacuate in 1990 because of fear of reprisals from advancing Ethiopian opposition forces. In fact, they left their refugee camp because the OLF had earlier destroyed a small refugee camp nearby apparently in retaliation for SPLM/A support of the Ethiopian government. They fled across the border back into Sudan and did not receive much assistance from the SPLM/A because it was itself under attack from government forces. Many died because of bombings by the Sudanese Air force, others succumbed to various illnesses, and yet others died because of hunger (James 1996). So the Uduk turned back, moved south, and again crossed the border to seek refuge in the Itang refugee camp in Ethiopia. They numbered about 22,000 and exclusively settled in Village No. 6 to continue their exile as a cohesive group (James 1996, 188). As indicated earlier, at the beginning of 1991, the camp at Itang housed as much as 280,000 refugees.[10] Some of these were Ethiopians from the surrounding areas attracted because of aid (Johnson 1996, 172).[11]And they received aid without any problem not only because of their ethnic affiliation with those from Sudan but also because the SPLM/A, which had a full control of the camps with the blessing of the Ethiopian government, was reluctant to refuse aid to Ethiopians.

It is interesting to note that regional inter–state politics, especially between Ethiopia and Sudan, had a significant impact on the structure and administration of the camps. First, Ethiopian government policy, or lack thereof, meant institutionalization of the camps. No significant attempt to develop self–sufficient schemes was made because, as noted earlier, Ethiopia's focus was on more pressing national security issues in the northern part, including Eritrea and Tigray. Second, in its efforts to pressure Sudan to withdraw its actual or perceived support of Eritreans, the Ethiopian government allowed the SPLM/A to establish military bases in the region and

10 This would make Itang the largest refugee camp in the world at the time. But no reference to this is made in the literature because of the persistent lack of interest on the plight of southern Sudan refugees. With at most the same number of refugees in 1995, the Hartisheik refugee camp in eastern Ethiopia has been repeatedly referred to as the largest refugee camp in the world. Perhaps because of this, the world knew more about the plight of Somali refugees and the international community was much more generous with Somali refugees in eastern Ethiopia.

11 Johnson (1996, 172) notes that the 'Number of refugees was not carefully monitored, because of double registration …'. This was perhaps the reason why there was so much variation in the estimates of the camp population in the Itang camp. Another plausible explanation is that in 1991 there was so much insecurity in the surrounding areas—hence higher mobility in and out of the camps—that camp sizes fluctuated rapidly within a short period of time. In general, however, Assefa (undated) provides higher numbers for camp populations.

provided it with military and logistical support to conduct the war in the South. It also gave the SPLM/A an unfettered access to the refugee camps to establish its own administration and conduct political activities. As Johnson (1996, 172) has stated, the 'Ethiopian government ensured that the SPLM/SPLA was able to run the Itang camp (and other camps later) without much oversight from the UNHCR'. As noted already, the Ethiopian government and the SPLM/A both preferred increased camp visibility because it maximized their political and economic gains.

By early 1989, therefore, the refugee camps in western Ethiopia evolved into one of the most highly politicized camps in the world. And when the Ethiopian government collapsed in 1991, almost all of the refugees in Itang and at other camps left for Sudan because the new EPRDF–led government ordered the SPLM/A to cease all activities in order to return favor for Sudan's earlier support. All of them, except for about 10,000 of the estimated 240,000 to 280,000 refugees at Itang, went back to Sudan. There is no evidence that the new government had asked the refugees to leave. Nonetheless, they packed and followed the SPLM/A back to Sudan (Assefa undated).

The UNHCR had expected that the fall of the Ethiopian government was going to have consequences for the SPLM/A and perhaps some minor consequences for the camp administration. However, the near total evacuation of more than 400,000 refugees caught everyone by surprise and their whereabouts remained unknown until they resurfaced in Sudan. Their return back to Sudan caused massive problems for the UNHCR. Even Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS), established in 1989 to provide aid to nearly 100,000 Southerners inside Sudan, was too overstretched to cope with the new arrivals.[12] Some settled in Boma, others in Nasir and Akobo, and still others, in Pachalla. As a consequence, UNHCR's focus shifted from Sudanese refugees in Ethiopia to Sudanese refugee–like returnees inside Sudan.[13]

The 1983–91 refugee situation, therefore, ended with almost all Sudanese refugees in Ethiopia back in Sudan and their continued suffering in their new settlement. No conflict in the last forty years has been farther from international media spotlight, and no group anywhere in Africa had to endure what these refugees went through. The main reasons for this were: (1) the lack of international attention to their plight because the Southern educated elite capable of publicizing their cause was few and also because the historic events that took place in Central and Eastern Europe in the latter half of the 1980s attracted all the attention because the they were seen as more important;[14] (2) the under–developed and the remoteness of the South, which

12 For brief accounts of Operation Lifeline Sudan, please see Johnson 1996, 173–74.

13 Details of the challenges the OLS faced when many Southerners fled back into Sudan and sought assistance is found in James 1996, 190–97.

14 Indeed, even during the Condominium era, Great Britain did not make much effort to develop the South. Similarly, after independence, the various national governments saw Southerners as objects for exploitation not worth expanding educational opportunities. Therefore, the educated class has remained negligibly small.

made it strategically less important to major powers;[15] (3) the continuing intra–South conflict, which exposed the existing weaknesses in the South, and made their chances of success look remote; (4) the vicissitudes of inter–state relationships in the Horn of Africa, which marginalized their cause and made them expendable; and above all, (5) the resolve of the North, with the political support from Egypt, to use all means necessary, including mass starvation and killing, to pacify the South.

All these factors directly or indirectly contributed to the intractability of the conflict and the return migration to Ethiopia in 1992. There were also other reasons for the return migration. These include local factors, such as the lack of adequate aid in Sudan, inability to grow crops because of insufficient rain, and increased instability and lawlessness brought about by the splintering of the SPLM/A and the formation of a rival group, the SPLA–Nasir. The reverse migration was also a function of the political developments in Ethiopia, where a new regime was firmly in place and peace had returned after the 1991 upheaval. With the new group in power, the refugee issue became less political and more humanitarian, and the UNHCR was given responsibility for the overall management of the camps. Thus, when the Southern Sudan refugees returned back in 1992, they returned to camps where the UNHCR and the Ethiopian government were responsible for the distribution of relief aid and security, respectively. In fact, the UNHCR finally conducted the long–overdue census in 1994. Another difference between the pre– and post–1991 camp structures was that in the latter there were a new 'series of smaller settlement schemes and the encouragement of partial self-sufficiency …' (James 1996, 184). The new Ethiopian government had supported the reorganization of the camps and had agreed to make land available for cultivation in Bonga to help make refugees self–sufficient. However, the land made available was not nearly enough to lead to self-sufficiency.

By 1998, there were an estimated 60,000 refugees in three camps—Fugnido, Dimma, and Bonga. Itang, probably the largest refugee camp in the world in 1991, remained closed for good. Two more camps, Sherkole and Bambudie, were added because of pressures of new arrivals towards the end of the 1990s. It is instructive to note how 'camp pressure' was perceived during the pre–1991 and the post–1991 periods. In the former, the camp at Dimma was built to relieve pressure on Itang because the latter could not accommodate additional tens of thousands to the already existing hundreds of thousands. In the latter, the three camps had only 60,000 among them and two more camps were opened to house the few thousand additional refugees. That is, the change in the structure of the camps meant closely monitored camp sizes in the lower tens of thousands, as compared to the large, unwieldy camps in the hundreds of thousands. Thus, the refugee population in the five camps reached

15 At the time, the South had no known strategic minerals and no coastline to make it strategically important. The fact that the White Nile passes through only made the North (and Egypt) more resistant to Southern demands for fear that more autonomy may mean less control of the flows of the White Nile. Luckily, oil was discovered later and this probably had some effect in making the South an important international issue since the late 1980s.

about 82,000 by 2002,[16] and further increased to more than 90,000 by early 2003. Even though, the camps were much smaller than the pre–1991 camps and there had been hope for some measure of self–sufficiency, this was not realized mainly because the Ethiopian government did not see integration as an option and refused to make land available. Therefore, this represents a constant in an otherwise changing camp structure. However, the refugees had 'somewhat better opportunities to attain some level of self-sufficiency in food production than the Somalis (in eastern Ethiopia), as all but one of the camps were located in areas with potential for agricultural activities' (WFP/UNHCR 2005). Also, there was some expectation from the UNHCR that refugees would use their backyards to grow between 10 and 15 per cent of their food requirements (ibid).

A major similarity with the pre–1991 camps, however, was the continued ethnic segregation in the camps. For example, the camps at Bonga and Dimma were overwhelmingly Uduk and Nuer, respectively. On the other hand, the camps at Fugnido, Sherkole, and Bambudie were ethnically mixed. Those ethnically mixed camps were, however, ethnically homogeneous within quarters. Recent killings between the Anuak and Dinka at Fugnido camps are reminders of the volatile ethnic relations that continues to haunt the Southerners not only at home but also in exile (IRIN 2002). There were also conflicts between Anuak and Nuer (Vaughan 2004). And because of this, the Ethiopian government and the UNHCR have moved some refugees from one camp to another to prevent future conflicts. That is, there were increased violent ethnic conflicts in the post-1991 camps compared to the conflicts in pre–1991 camps because there was no longer the overpowering SPLM/A presence, which had kept a tight lid on such incidents.

Therefore, refugees played important roles in the increased camp homogenization through their self-selection. The occasional bouts of conflicts between different ethnic groups also played some role in the evolution of camp structure. If there was any role for the Ethiopian government, it can only be because it made land available for sites, and not much land for cultivation to establish settlement schemes. Beyond that, it did not have a role comparable to the role the Sudanese government played in the structure of settlements in Sudan for Eritrean and Ethiopian refugees (see Chapter 6). The UNHCR, on the other hand, played a major role after 1991: it run the camps and it determined camp sizes. The behavior of the three actors, therefore, produced medium–sized, evenly distributed, but also some ethnically homogeneous and others heterogeneous but ethnically–segregated camps.[17] Nonetheless, the fact that only about one–quarter of the pre–1991 refugees had returned back to Ethiopia after their unceremonious repatriation earlier is suggestive of the military capability the SPLM/A had developed, which could now defend the liberated areas where many of the returnees settled. The peace agreement signed in early 2005 is expected to result in the total repatriation of Southern Sudanese in the near future.

16 For a distribution of camp populations, please see Vaughan (2004).

17 The Bambudie camp had a much smaller refugee population because it was the last to be established.

Somali Refugee Settlements in Eastern Ethiopia

Somalia has long been known as a refugee host country because it provided asylum to more than a million Ethiopian refugees in the early 1980s displaced because of the 1977–78 Ogaden war. For most of 1979–89, Somalia had one of the highest concentrations of refugees per capita in the world. Most of these refugees stayed until early 1989 and went back home unceremoniously because of conflict in their country of asylum. At the same time, this conflict generated hundreds of thousands of refugees and made Somalia the latest to join the ranks of its neighbors in the Horn Africa as a refugee–generating country.

The first small group of about 13,000 refugees arrived in Ethiopia in late 1987 followed by a much larger influx of about 350,000 refugees by late 1988 (USCR 1987). The overwhelming majority of these refugees came from Hargeisa and its environs. Smaller scale influxes continued until 1991, when a massive influx of about 275,000 occurred. Although the overwhelming majority was Isaaq, there were large numbers of non-Isaaq as well. Thus, 'At the peak of Somalia's upheaval in 1992, about 800,000 Somalis were refugees in neighboring countries …', and this number included those in Kenya and Djibouti (Argent et al, 1998, 92). Of these, about 600,000 were in Ethiopia (UNHCR 1996). Smaller scale influxes also continued between 1993 and 1996 because of the spreading violence in the mid–1990s, of which the most significant was the exile of about 90,000 refugees in Ethiopia. These influxes were, however, more that offset by the self–repatriation of some 350,000 refugees, leaving about 230,000 refugees in eight temporary camps in Ethiopia at the end of 1997 (USCR 1997).

Most of the camps were established at the peak of refugee influxes between 1988 and 1991. Four of the eight camps—Hartisheik, Camaboker, Rabasso and Darod—were built in 1988 to house the hundreds of thousands of Isaaq.[18] The Aisha camp was opened in 1989 as a settlement for Isaaq and Darod clans, traditionally in competition against the Isaaq. The remaining camps—Teferi Ber, Darwanaji, and Kebri Beyah—were established in 1991. The refugees who settled in Teferi Ber and Darwanaji were Gadabursi–affiliated, while those in the latter were Isa.[19] In general, therefore, the different dates and entry points characterized refugee clan affiliation. In turn, political and security development characterized the dates and entry points. The initial military superiority of the Somali government was associated with Isaaq entry into Ethiopia from the Hargeisa area of northern Somalia. The quick decline of this superiority and the increasing military capability of the SNM are associated with the displacement of non-Isaaq from the far north, which borders Ethiopia and Djibouti. That is, non–Isaaq Somalis became increasingly apprehensive of the victories of the Isaaq–dominated SNM and left.

18 The Darod camp was ethnically mixed because it was located in the 'fault line' of clan territories.

19 See Farah (1995) for camp composition.

As indicated in the previous paragraphs, the number of refugees decreased by 1995 because of repatriations in the previous five years. In fact, between 1991 and 1995 more than 200,000 had spontaneously returned (UNHCR 1996, 23).[20] Nonetheless, there were still eight camps in 1995, most of them with smaller camp populations compared to their camp populations in early 1992. For example, unlike the hundreds of thousands of camp residents in 1989 at Hartisheik, there were only 58,675 in 1995. The smallest camp, Kebri Beyah, had about 10,106 residents. All in all, there were about 300,000 Somali refugees in Ethiopia at the end of 1995 (*2003 UNHCR Statistical Yearbook,* 149). As we will see in Chapter 7, many refugees went back to their homes during the latter half of the 1990s and early 2000s. In fact, there were only three camps in late 2003—Aisha, Hartisheik, and Kebri Beyah—with total refugee population of about 28,108 (Vaughan 2004, 41). In mid–2005 all camps, save Kebri Beyah, were closed for good (UNHCR 2005).

Many of the camps were not set up after a careful evaluation of the surrounding area in terms of water availability, access to roads, and so on. For example, Hartisheik, the largest refugee camp in the world in 1991 with about 275,000 refugees, started as a market when the more well–to–do merchant refugees from Hargeisa first established their shops in 1988 (UNHCR 1996). Soon after that many refugees began to congregate in search of goods and also relief aid. Clan politics also played crucial role in the development of the camps. For example, Hartisheik is located in Isaaq territory in Ethiopia and is settled by Isaaq from Somalia. As UNHCR (1996, 9) has put it, 'Hartisheik refugees [were] relatively comfortable [there]. For them Hartisheik is home as Hargeisa was'. In other words, by the time the Ethiopian government gave its formal approval, refugees had already begun their spontaneous settlement and Ethiopia's formal decision to approve the camp site reflected what already existed on the ground.

Similarly, other refugees established their specific sites in locations where their Ethiopian co–clans lived. For example, the Aware camp, like Hartisheik, was mostly Isaaq-settled because it was located in Isaaq area of Ethiopia. On the other hand, the camps at Teferi Ber and Darwanaji were in the 'sphere of influence of the transitional Gadabursi clan' (Farah 1995). Therefore, the camps were mostly settled by non–Isaaq refugees, who sought exile in Ethiopia after Somali government forces ceded control of northern Somalia to the SNM, and were fearful of reprisals because of their actual or perceived support of the central government (Farah 1996). The Daror camp, on the other hand, is a mix of many clans because it is located in the fault line of clan territories. There was hardly any objection from the Ethiopian government to the location of settlement camps and the clan composition within the camps so long as the refugees remained inside the camps, most of them located close to the

20 According to the United States Committee for Refugees, the number of returnees was about 350,000 as opposed to the 200,000 the UNHCR estimated. This discrepancy was partly due to the fluctuations brought about by high mobility in the camps and partly because of financial reasons, where the UNHCR generally prefers to err on the side of over–estimation of refugees who needed assistance.

border. Therefore, the refuges essentially determined who settled where, how, and when through self–selection.

Likewise, the host community did not influence camp structure because the refugees did not place much strain on services which hardly existed. In fact, the Ogaden is isolated, arid, and long marginalized to have had social services comparable to the services available in Sudan, where Eritrean refugees settled. At the same time, the 1977–78 Ogaden war had destroyed whatever few services there may have existed and Ethiopia, with all of its security problems elsewhere in the country and its lack of resources, did not rehabilitate the region. Therefore, as we will see in Chapter 6, where the local population in Sudan made demands on the government to relocate the refugees to isolated rural areas, the local population in the Ogaden actually welcomed them because their presence had brought about vibrant commercial activities. It is also important to observe most of the local population was in exile in Somalia and had returned to Ethiopia along with the Somali refugees because of the deteriorating security situation in their country of asylum. Therefore, Ethiopian returnees and also the few that stayed behind received aid in the refugee camps, as it was impossible to differentiate between an Ethiopian Somali and a Somali from the Republic of Somalia. That is, the local population were 'refugees' in their places of habitual residence and did not influence the settlement structure in the way the local population in Sudan had.

Also, the UNHCR did not play crucial role in the camp plan except for the distribution of aid. In general, it prefers accessible settlements with enough water and firewood. However, it was forced to transport an 'an average of 800,000 liters of water per day' from Jijiga in water tanks, an expensive endeavor which incurred high costs (Assefa undated). And most of the eight settlement camps, including Hartisheik, Teferi Ber, and Darwanaji, were well within 50 km from the border in contravention of the UNHCR–recommended distance to be eligible for relief aid. This, of course, worked well for Ethiopia because their isolation served its security interests. It also worked well for the refugees, who generally prefer to settle in camps located as short distance as possible from the borders of their home country.

There were also topographic, historical, political, 'kinetic', and financial reasons for the temporariness of the camp structure. An important characteristic of the camps in eastern Ethiopia, which contrasts them with the camps in western Ethiopia, is their location in an area that lacked sufficient water and arable land for cultivation. The camps, therefore, were established to provide immediate relief aid. The topography of the region was, therefore, an important variable that influenced why 'permanent' self–sufficient schemes conducive to refugee integration were never envisioned. Historically, the Somalis have viewed Ethiopia with suspicion and there was no reason why they would opt to settle in 'permanent' self–sufficient schemes. In fact, many of the 1988–91 refugees had self–returned the moment the situation in northern Somalia stabilized (UNHCR 1996, 5). Politically, the Ethiopian government 'still harbored suspicions against the Somalis against whom it had gone to war' for control of the very region the refugees had settled (ibid. 9). Indeed, the government was unwilling to provide camp sites further inland, where water was adequate, for fear of

subversive activities by individuals affiliated with the ONLF. It was also worried at the activities of Islamic groups, such as the Al-Ittihad. Hence, it maintained strong presence in the camps to monitor their activities (ibid.).

In terms of the 'kinetics', the refugee flight was massive and required emergency responses to house and to feed the hundreds of thousands who needed immediate relief. The volatility of the security situation in northern Somalia, which made refugees go back and forth several times, coupled with local residents and Ethiopian returnees who moved into the camps to receive aid, also kept the emergency atmosphere in the camps until 1996. Thus, the UNHCR was fully occupied providing medical care for the sick and the dying in addition to the usual provision of food and shelter to the needy. Also, preventing the constant outbreaks of infectious diseases made the UNHCR more than occupied. All these added to the perpetual emergencies in the camps. As a result, there was hardly any respite for the UNHCR to look into other type of settlements.

Financially, the camps had proven to be very expensive to run, especially because much–needed materials, including water, had to be transported to the arid environment where the camps were located. Supplying the camps with daily necessities, especially water, had remained the most important challenge for the UNHCR throughout the 1990s, as various expensive attempts to locate water sources in the area had not succeeded. According to UNHCR (1996, 23), for example, since 1988, it had 'spent some $20 million on water transport [alone]—$2.5 million every year'. Feeding the refugees was also expensive, as camp residents were not able to supplement relief aid with backyard gardens. In other words, it was difficult to come up with additional funds to establish self–sufficient camps, which probably would have required a much higher start–up costs compared to what the UNHCR spent in Sudan in the late 1960s and early 1970s. All these, and probably the UNHCR's bold but unfulfilled vision of self–sufficiency at the Qala en Nahal region in Sudan, contributed to the institutionalization of the camps.[21] It looked as if there was an unwritten and an unsaid agreement between the Ethiopian government, the UNHCR, and the refugees on the non–viability of permanent settlement schemes.

It is interesting to note how the camps evolved over time from a humble beginning of a few *tukuls* (or huts) into important economic and administrative centers. For example, there was hardly anything at Hartisheik in the early 1980s except for four or five *tukuls*. Later, however, Hartisheik developed into a vibrant commercial center and an 'urban' area of more than 220,000 inhabitants, two hospitals, at least two schools, and water storage and distribution systems.[22] As UNHCR (1996, 9) has stated, Hartisheik has provided Hargeisa urbanites with 'employment and other opportunities that they cannot find in Hargeisa'. Other refugee camps have likewise become important '*wereda'* (or district) centers of administration (Farah 1995, 4).[23]

21 This will be explained in Chapter 6.

22 For more on the social services at Hartisheik, please consult UNHCR 1996, 18–21.

23 See www.sas.upenn.edu/African_Studies/EUE/ethsoml.html, accessed on 7 October 2005.

Although the camp population have significantly decreased in early 2000 because of repatriations, and commercial activities have suffered as a result, the likelihood that the camps will revert back to what they were before the refugee influxes of the late 1980s and early 1990s is rather slim. Therefore, when all is said and done and after all the refugees are repatriated, the 15–year old refugee presence in eastern Ethiopia will have ended with an indelible, positive impact on the surrounding communities.

Finally, it is important to note how the pre–1991 military–led and post–1991 EPRDF–led Ethiopian governments saw the presence of refugees in their territories.[24] The former saw the refugee presence in western Ethiopia as an important means of exerting pressure on Sudan for its alleged help of Eritrean and other Ethiopian opposition groups. Hence, it supported the SPLM/A militarily and allowed it to have a full control of the camps. In return, the SPLM/A was sucked into Ethiopian domestic politics, and this brought about its conflict with the OLF. On the other hand, the government's approach to the refugee presence in the eastern part of the country was hands–on, especially in the management and control of the camps, because it saw the refugees as possible sources of destabilization. It never trusted the SNM to the same degree it trusted as the SPLM/A to allow it to take full control of the camps. Hence, its policies were at best situation and location specific.

When the new Ethiopian government came to power in 1991, it essentially followed the approaches its predecessor followed in the eastern part of the country, especially because of added fear of an Islamic fundamentalist influence in the camps. Its refugee agency, the Administration for Refugee and Returnee Affairs (ARRA), supervised UNHCR activities from which it also received funds—an apparent 'conflict of interest' for which it was criticized (USCR 2000). On the other hand, the government adopted a new approach in the western part of the country. It made the refugee issue less political and more humanitarian and allowed the UNHCR to play a greater role in the management of the camps, while at the same time restricting the dominant role the SPLM/A earlier had. Hence, politics always played an important role in Ethiopia's responses to refugee presence in its territory. On balance, however, the approaches of the post–1991 Ethiopian government were driven more by the humanitarian needs of the refugees when compared to its predecessor. This is probably because it was on better terms with neighboring countries to the west and to the southeast compared to its predecessor, which was seen as Marxist in a pro–West neighborhood.

24 The phrase 'Ethiopian government national refugee policy' is not being used here as Ethiopia had no comprehensive refugee policy.

Chapter 6

The Structure of Refugee Settlements in Sudan and Somalia

Introduction

Many factors determine the structure of settlements in a host country. These include international factors, such as availability of funds for refugee settlements, where the international community, mainly through the UNHCR but also through other non-governmental humanitarian agencies, plays a central role. National factors also play important roles in determining the structure of settlements. These include local absorption capacity, including availability of jobs, water, food, and other social services, and ethnic and cultural compatibility between the host and refugee populations. Environmental concerns also affect the structure of settlements (Jacobsen 1996). Since most host communities in Africa do not have enough resources to share with new comers, environmental degradation arising out of the presence of large concentrations of refugees may prompt communities to restrict refugee access to scarce resources. Therefore, the host communities, among which refugees settle, influence the nature of settlements. But more importantly, security threats associated with refugee presence appear to have an indelible impact on the structure of settlements. These include threats originating from the refugee origin country, especially if the refugees are viewed as 'warrior communities' in exile (Adelman, 1998). There may even be threats to domestic order if the refuges belong to rival political groups. The present tension along the border between Sudan and Chad is an apt example.

As we have seen in Chapter 5, the nature of refugee flight may also influence patterns of settlements. For example, a poor country is ill–equipped to control large numbers of refugees because it does not have sufficient resources, especially when refugees enter in wave–like influxes. In these instances, refugees cross the country's borders at multiple entry points of their choice, and settle spontaneously along the border and in areas where they will feel comfortable with the religious and cultural environment (Hansen 1981). Many of the variables in the paragraphs above have influenced the structure of refugee settlements in Sudan and Somalia in one way or another. This chapter examines the Ethiopian and Eritrean refugee settlements in the former and Ethiopian Somali refugee settlements in the latter and interrogates whether or not the host government had employed the refugee presence to extract political and economic gains. Similarly, the roles of the host communities, the refugee, and

international organizations in the evolution of the structure of settlements in eastern Sudan and Somalia are examined.

Eritrean and Ethiopian Refugee Presence in Urban Centers in Sudan

We have seen in Chapter 3 that the first sizable group of about 28,000 Eritrean refugees from the lowlands bordering Sudan sought asylum in 1967, although refugees in small numbers had crossed the border a few years earlier.[1] From 1967 onwards, however, large–scale influxes and small–scale streams of refugees continued non–stop for the next 20 years. And like almost all refugees in Africa and elsewhere, the first groups of Eritreans essentially self–settled in the rural areas of eastern Sudan along the border. A few found their way to urban centers. Those who found their way to the urban areas were younger and more educated urbanite Eritreans. So few was their number until 1975 that the Office of the Commissioner for Refugees (COR) in Sudan had registered around 300 refugees only (Karadawi 1980). Those who settled in the rural areas were more likely to have been rural dwellers in Eritrea and settled in Sudan in family groups much in the same way they did back home.

Prior to 1975, nobody noticed Eritrean refugee presence in the urban areas. First, because their numbers were small, they were easily absorbed by the larger local population. They did not strain the various services available for the local population, including housing, medical care, jobs, and so on. Second, they existed hidden in the urban under–world and never sought assistance from the government. The few that were gainfully employed were highly sought after because of their reputation as dependable and hardworking. Third, the government saw their stay as temporary before they could resettle in a third country. Therefore, the government as well as the local population tolerated their presence and no policy on urban refugees existed until 1975. On the other hand, the government was concerned about rural refuges and came out with a (rural) refugee policy in 1967 immediately after the first sizable group of Eritreans arrived.[2] The same year it established COR as a government implementation agency to work with the international community, especially the UNHCR (Rogge 1985; Karadawi 1999).

After the 1974 Ethiopian Revolution, however, the conflict escalated in the lowlands as well as highlands of Eritrea. As a consequence, refugees in much higher numbers sought asylum in Sudan. This time, however, there were higher proportions of refugees of urban background and, like the few urbanites during the pre–1974 period, they were more likely to settle in cities. But, more importantly, a higher number of refugees with rural background also spontaneously settled with their

1 In fact, the first Eritrean refugees arrived in Kassala, Sudan, in 1962. Please see Rogge 1985, 152.

2 The policy emphasizes relocation of refugees away from the politically sensitive border areas to government–organized settlement schemes further inland, and aims to make refugees self–sufficient either through farming or through the sale of their labor. For a summary of the policy, see Rogge 1985, 56–7.

families in cities (Karadawi 1999). Thus, Khartoum, Port Sudan, Kassala, and other urban areas became refugee settlement destinations like never before. For example, by 1983, there were between 45,000 and 55,000 refugees in Port Sudan out of a total population of about 350,000 (Rogge 1985, 143). A conservative estimate put the number of refugees in Kassala, a city of about 250,000, at around 30,000 in 1980 (UNHCR/ILO 1983, 417).

The refugee numbers grew with new influxes in the early 1980s mainly because of the infighting between the ELF and the EPLF inside Eritrea. This ended with EPLF victory, and combatants as well as supporters of the ELF crossed the border in search for refuge in Sudan. Most of the combatants, especially those with urban background, settled in Khartoum. Their presence had many positive as well as negative effects. On the positive side, they significantly contributed to the economy because they were regarded as dependable, industrious, and highly skilled electricians, carpenters, and truck drivers. And because of the large–scale out–migrations of skilled Sudanese to oil–rich Arab countries, Eritrean refugees helped mitigate the existing labor shortage in Sudan.[3] Also, many refugees received financial support from relatives abroad while waiting for their chance to leave for a third country, and this helped Sudan acquire much–needed hard currency. On the negative side, however, the increased presence of refugees created more competition for jobs in the urban areas and depressed wages by as much as 25 per cent, as in Port Sudan (ibid. 147). Similarly, there were increased competition for the limited spaces in schools, hospitals, and clinics. And, more importantly, rents soured and this made it difficult for the average Sudanese to afford to live in urban centers, such as Kassala and Port Sudan. As a consequence, the people blamed the refugees for the deterioration of their city lives.[4]

Of particular importance, however, was the presence of Eritrean and Ethiopian refugees in Khartoum and the issues that arose because of this. While post–1975 refugees in Port Sudan, Kassala, and Gedaref came from urban as well as rural areas of Eritrea and some were single and others married, those who settled in Khartoum remained, on the whole, young and single. They were also more educated compared to earlier urban refugees because they came overwhelmingly from the larger urban centers in Eritrea, including Asmara (Goitom 1980). Most were 'opportunity seekers', who looked for third–country settlement (Karadawi 1999, 84). In fact, COR issued about '37,000 Convention Travel Documents (refugee passports)' between 1977 and 1982 to facilitate their departure to countries of the Middle East and Europe, of which the overwhelming majority went to the former (ibid.). Also, many ex–ELF combatants were resettled in the US and Canada in the 1980s as a result of special legislations for resettlement of Ethiopians (and Eritreans) these countries adopted in 1980 and 1981, respectively. Although the numbers of those who departed is significant when compared to the estimated 40,000 'registered' refugees in Khartoum in 1980, one must note many more had remained unregistered (Rogge 1985, 156).

3 A detailed discussion of the role of Eritrean refugees in the labor market may be found in Rogge 1985, 134–38.

4 For more on this, please see Rogge 1985, 149–55.

Also, since 1982, many settled in Khartoum and this more than offset the reduction that came from third–country resettlement.

Thus, there were growing calls to limit refugee presence in major towns, especially Khartoum, which suffered from rising 'cost of living and scarcity of essential commodities and public services' (Karadawi 1999, 102). Also, like other major urban centers, the authorities associated rising crimes with large–scale influxes of refugees into Khartoum. There is no empirical evidence for this, however, the drive for evicting refugees gathered momentum, as there were an estimated 225,000 mostly Eritrean refugees in all urban centers, perhaps too many for the hitherto tolerant host community not to notice (COR, 1980). Even President Numeiri himself joined the chorus of calls for the evacuation of refugees from all urban areas. As a result, Khartoum and Kassala in 1978 and Gedaref in 1979 started rounding up refugees to be resettled in rural areas because of a litany of complaints (Karadawi 1999). As stated above, these complaints were made because of economic reasons. There were also political–security and social–cultural reasons.

Politically and in terms of security, the national government saw large concentrations of refugees as threats to public order because the refugees were highly politicized and belonged to rival political organizations. There were instances of refugee on refugee violence because of differences in political affiliation and this became a threat to domestic order. In terms of the social–cultural dimension, the local population associated refugees with drunkenness, prostitution, improper mixing of sexes and other behavior normally considered anti–social in an Islamic and conservative society that Sudan still is.[5] For example, a demonstration to demand the removal of refugees from Gedaref turned deadly when about eight people were killed. Similarly, hundreds of refugee huts were burnt in the refugee quarters of the city, usually associated with prostitution and illegal beer selling (Rogge 1985). Thus, in the end, the 'invisible' life refugees led in urban centers, mainly tolerated because of the convergence of interests of the host government, the UNHCR, the local community fell apart not because of the large–scale refugee presence per se, or the attributed social–cultural, economic, and political–security risks, but mainly because of what Kibreab (1996a, 145) calls 'macro-economic causes of the country's economic decay' in the late 1970s. This included shortage of hard currency, which resulted from falls in the price of exportable items and the devaluation of the Sudanese Pound. IMF's prescription to address the problem, which included withdrawal of subsidies for bread and other daily necessities, were accompanied by demonstrations the government was keen to avoid (Ek and Karadawi 1998).

It is important to make clear that there was indeed a convergence of actor interests until the late 1970s with regard to refugee presence in the urban areas. The Government of Sudan did have a generous refugee policy in terms of refugee admissions and settlement locations. However, it did not assist refugees financially and their existence in the under–world did not incur costs on the state. In fact, they

5 Rogge (1985, 138–42) provides a detailed discussion of how such issues came to the forefront in Sudan. See also Kibreab (1996).

were sources of much–needed hard currency. Similarly, the UNHCR did not extend much aid to those who settled in the urban areas. Hence, there was no cost to the agency associated with their urban settlement. The local population was generally receptive of refugee presence because of their work ethic and because they were not competitors in well–paying jobs. The refugees also liked the urban setting because of the opportunity for third–country settlement it provided, and were content to hold menial jobs until the day of their departure.

The end of the traditional tolerance refugees enjoyed was replaced by changes in policy whereby refugees were to be relocated in official, refugee settlement camps. It was hoped that this will reduce competition for scarce resources, and the social and cultural ills allegedly brought about by refugees. Rogge (1985) has noted that the physical separation of the refugees from the locals became a national imperative only after the violent incident between the refugees and the locals. It was also hoped this separation would create conditions for better control of the political activities among refugees and refugee on refugee violence. The state, however, lacked the necessary financial and bureaucratic know–how to translate the policy of relocation effectively. Instead, a virulent campaign against refugees started. These included inflated refugee numbers, magnified economic problems, and exaggerated social and cultural ills brought about by refugees.

All these made refugees an easy target for the security forces. Kibreab (1996a, 144) quotes the 18 March 1987 issue of the *Sudan Times* to underscore the excesses of the security forces in Khartoum:

> … [R]efugees [Khartoum] be they from Ethiopia, Uganda, Chad … are being systematically harassed, arrested and held without charge and in numerous cases being forced against their will to leave the city. Under the guise of a so-called 'clean–up' campaign of the Three Towns, criminal elements, the police under the authority of the Commissioner of Khartoum have unleashed a campaign that flies in the face of human rights, confuses forced submission with public good order and comes close to making a mockery of Sudan's otherwise admirable record with respect to refugees.

Not many, not even the UNHCR, came in defense of refugee rights. Nonetheless, despite some evictions and continuing threats thereof, the refugee population in the urban areas continued to grow. Although there is no accurate statistical data, COR (1994) estimates that in 1994 about 500,000 were self–settled, 'the majority [of which] are said to be in the urban areas in defiance of government policy' (Kibreab 1996a, 146)). Therefore, what the eye was probably unable to see the few urban refugees during the pre–1974 period became large enough during the 1980s and the 1990s. But this time, the eye 'Refuse[d] to See', and refugees continued to live in urban centers with no hope of integration, third–country settlement, or repatriation (Kibreab 1996a, 131).

It is interesting to note how and why the issue of refugees in the urban areas evolved the way it did. Prior to 1974, urban refugees were generally welcomed because of the initial sympathy generally accorded to refugees everywhere; the modest number of early arrivals; the availability of resources enough to accommodate modest increases

in demands; and the refugees' religious and kin connection with the locals, especially in and around Kassala.[6] After 1974, however, refugees were no longer welcome because of the inevitable thinning of sympathy associated with longer stays; the unprecedented and large-scale refugee presence, which increased their visibility; the increased competition for meager resources at a time of economic slowdown in Sudan; and the cultural and religious incompatibility between a significant portion of later arrivals and the local population. The latter is especially significant. Indeed, before 1974, almost all of the Eritrean refugees entered Sudan through the border areas adjacent to Kassala and were ethnically and confessionally–affiliated with the locals. After, 1974, however, there were additional entry 'points'. These were in the Red Sea region, which leads to Port Sudan, in the Blue Nile region, which leads to Gedaref and Wad Madani, and in the Upper Nile region, which is far south and away from urban areas. The Blue Nile region is especially important because it has served as a crossing 'point' for Christians from the northern part of Ethiopia, many of whom gravitated towards urban centers for possible destination in a third–country. In other words, there was more heterogeneity in refugee ranks in post–1974 influxes, which was worrisome to the government as well as the general public. The multiplicity of crossing points was directly correlated with refugee settlements in many cities.

Eritrean and Ethiopian Refugee Patterns of Settlement in Rural Sudan

We have earlier seen that some Eritrean and Ethiopian refugees settled spontaneously in the urban areas of Sudan. Their numbers were, however, smaller when compared to those who settled in the rural areas with or without assistance. In fact, a significant portion of the estimated 28,000 Eritrean refugees in Sudan in 1967 settled in rural areas on their own, while others settled in hastily prepared six contemporary camps in the environs of Kassala (Karadawi 1977). Partly because of the suddenness of the refugee influx and partly because of lack of funds and a responsive bureaucracy, the Government of Sudan did not make the necessary preparation to accommodate them.[7] Hence, the local population provided the refugees with food and shelter until aid arrived.[8] Bascom (1995, 70) states that the Wad el Hileau village sheik took it as his 'obligation' to assist neighbors and fellow Muslims at the time they first

6 The Beni Amer ethnic group of Eritrea, who were among the first to seek asylum in Sudan, settled alongside the Beni Amer of Sudan around Kassala, the spiritual capital of the Khatimiya sect to which all the Beni Amer belong.

7 At the time, the UNHCR did not have any presence in eastern Sudan. It only became involved in humanitarian assistance after the refugees arrived and the government made an international appeal. At about the same time, the government established the Office of the Commissioner for Refugees (COR) to coordinate government activities with the UNHCR, and to encourage Eritreans to repatriate (Karadawi 1999, 52–4).

8 The local population was generous and sympathetic to the refugees and their cause, and established the National Committee for Relief for the Eritreans to collect funds (Karadawi 1999, 46).

arrived in Sudan. Similarly, when another group of refugees arrived in 1975, the same village sheik received them warmly (Bascom, 1995, 72).

The formal involvement of the UNHCR came about in 1967 with the approval of US$150,000 for the local purchase of food and other immediate necessities, and a further US$300,000 to find suitable rural settlement sites further away from the border. Thus, from the very beginning, the UNHCR promoted refugee self–sufficiency in rural settings, which the Sudanese government readily agreed with (Kibreab 1987, 71-72). However, both were utterly unprepared to manage the refugee issue not only at the time of the refugees' arrival, when only the locals came forward with assistance, but also after the decision to place them in settlements was made. Indeed, the first government–selected site for about 23,000 refugees at Abu–Sabeka was abandoned in favor of a new site because it was later found to be unsuitable for a cultivation that will lead to the envisioned refugee self–sufficiency. To this end, the UNHCR and the Government of Sudan signed an agreement in December 1968 to settle the refugees at Qala en Nahal because of better land and water availability. As the oldest, largest, and most significant endeavor in the refugee settlement program in Sudan, the Qala en Nahal resettlement scheme will be discussed below in greater detail. Indeed, it had an indelible impact on the structure of refugee settlements that followed not only in Sudan but also probably in Somalia and Ethiopia.

The selection of Qala en Nahal to settle about 23,000 Eritrean refugees during 1969–72 was the first attempt by the Government of Sudan to 'bring a tract of largely, unused, yet potentially productive land into the Sudanese rural economy' (as quoted in Kibreab 1987, 18). However, it was also aimed at making the refugees self–sufficient until they returned home. It was also meant to isolate refugees from the local population and to make it easier for the government to control and supervise the refugee camps. Hence, Qala en Nahal is located in sparsely populated area about 225 km from Kassala, the largest town in eastern Sudan. Thus, by 1972, six settlement schemes—Umsoqata, Umbrush, Dehama, Adingrar, Salmin, and Zurzur—were established in the Qala en Nahal area to house about 20,000 refugees (Rogge 1985; Kibreab 1987).[9] This number represented a significant portion of the approximately 28,000 who sought refuge in 1967, although subsequent influxes between 1969 and 1971 had pushed the total refugee number to more that 50,000 by early 1972 (USCR 1972). Had it not been for such increases, the original plan would have placed about 70 per cent of the refugees in the proposed scheme. Even so, those in the scheme represented about 40 per cent of all refugees in eastern Sudan when it was completed in 1972.

The total cost, including the start–up and additional support funds for the scheme reached US$3,057,000 when it became fully–operational, after which the UNHCR handed over the management of the settlement scheme to local authorities

9 Because of the politics associated with numbers, various sources give different estimations ranging from a minimum of 18,000 to a maximum of 22,000. The fluidity of refugee numbers is not only apparent during their flight, which is highly dynamic, but also during resettlement, when things have stabilized.

(Kibreab 1987, 83). Immediately thereafter, however, there was drastic decline in the total area of land under cultivation because of shortages of managerial and technical know–how, lack of funds to run the agricultural machinery, and absence of enthusiasm on the part of the refugees. And neither the national government, nor the local authorities, nor the refugees were prepared to contribute operational funds (please see, Rogge 1985, 95–108; Kibreab 1987, 184–202).

First, the refugees never welcomed their relocation to Qala en Nahal and had resisted the move because they saw it as a conspiracy to permanently cut them off from their homeland (Kibreab 1987). Indeed, they had lived in reception centers close to the border and had regularly received information about their loved ones across the border. Their relocation inland into camps with water pumps, clinics, and so on appeared to them as a permanent solution to their plight, and as 'majority–identified' refugees, they have always viewed their stay as temporary. Second, they were never consulted when the protracted negotiations between the UNHCR and the government on the establishment of the scheme were conducted in 1968 and 1969, and this fed into their dislike for such types of settlements. Third, the refugees were not interested in investing their time, money, and energy on an endeavor that gave them no opportunity to own land. Therefore, it should not have come as a surprise when production fell because they saw no reason to ensure the productive future of Qala en Nahal. As a result, many refugees moved out of their camps in search of better opportunities elsewhere. Indeed, Rogge (1985, 96) has reported that the refugee population in the scheme decreased from the estimated original of 20,000 in 1972 to about 13,000 in 1976.

The Sudanese government, on the other hand, saw the international community as ultimately responsible for the smooth running of the scheme. Therefore, it encouraged the establishment and development of the camps with funds from the international community so that its citizens would also benefit. There was nothing wrong with that, as this is consistent with existing UNHCR policies. Hence, it expected the UNHCR to provide operational funds until the refugees became self–sufficient. The UNHCR, on the other hand, held Sudan as ultimately responsible for refugees in its territory, and saw its role in terms of providing whatever assistance it can give the government. Consistent with this, the UNHCR came up with large sums of money to make the scheme operational. However, it expected the government to provide the necessary operational funds to ensure its continued success. Indeed, since the settlement scheme had become de–facto state or community property upon completion, the UNHCR expected the government to extend the same kind of assistance it extended to other state– or community–owned irrigation schemes. However, in its drive to cut cost, the UNHCR overestimated the local technical, managerial, and financial capability, and the much anticipated refugee self–reliance did not materialize as it was hoped it would. In short, the lofty ideal of self–sufficiency became a disappointing experience.[10]

10 My reading of Karadawi, if correct, suggests that the project was actually a success. Its problems arose after the UNHCR handed over the management of the camp to an 'unprepared

Thus, following the completion and final hand–over of the Qala en Nahal resettlement scheme in 1974 and the actual or perceived lack of success thereof, there was a pause in the development of permanent schemes. For example, there was an agreement in December 1972 to establish a large–scale scheme to resettle about 25,000 Eritrean refugees in the Red Sea Province. However, it never took off because the UNHCR came to doubt its viability. Many issues, including land ownership and availability of dependable water sources kept the project stalled. In the meantime, most of the prospective refugee beneficiaries left their camps and migrated to Port Sudan and the surrounding areas, leaving an estimated 20 per cent of the original refugee population behind. In light of this, the UNHCR finally decided not to go ahead with the project. This was the first casualty of, what was earlier referred to as, the disappointing experience at Qala en Nahal.

Instead, the UNHCR set out to make a thorough review of its refugee policies. As a result, it hired the Huntings Technical Services Ltd. to propose ways to establish viable settlements in Sudan.[11] However, the Huntings Technical Services' proposal to resettle about 20,000 refugees in eastern Sudan came to a prohibitive US$6.5 million.[12] This, and the ever–increasing refugee influxes in the later half of the 1970s pushed UNHCR's priority away from organized schemes towards relief in temporary refugee camps or, where possible, towards wage–earning and semi-urban settlements. According to Rogge (1985, 118), wage–earning settlements were 'a unique Sudanese experiment', where rural refugees were supposed to become 'self–reliant through the sale of their labor'. These wage–earning settlements were to be established adjacent to large–scale Sudanese agricultural schemes in need of additional labor. Although clinics, schools, and other amenities were to be built to support these types of settlements, the issue of land, water, and farming machinery became mute, and this resolved the thorny issue of land ownership which had soured UNHCR–government relationships. By 1983, there were five wage–earning settlements, with a total of 22,100 refugee population. However, early assessment suggests that there was 'little likelihood that self-reliance [would] be realized' because of insufficient economic base to keep the wage earners fully employed year round (Rogge 1985, 125). The situation did not improve in the latter half of the 1980s, as there was no much change in the economic base of the region that would have moved refugees away from seasonal employment towards permanent employment.

Similarly, there were three semi-urban settlements for refugees with urban background. These types of settlements came into being after the riots in Gedaref and were established close enough to their employment places in the urban centers,

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local government authorities in Kassala …' (Karadawi 1999, 139–41).

11 The UNHCR had earlier hired Robert Chambers, a well–known scholar in refugee studies and an expert in rural development, to evaluate its activities in Eritrea. His recommendations included a more UNHCR hands–on management approach on issues affecting rural refugees, including added emphasis on organized settlements (Chambers, 1975). For a summary of Chambers' recommendations, please see Karadawi 1999, 150.

12 Compare this with the approximately US$3 million spent on Qala en Nahal to resettle about the same number of refugees.

such Gedaref and Port Sudan, but far enough from the towns so that 'the refugee community can exist as an independent and separate entity' (Rogge 1985, 163). At the end of 1982, the number of refugees in such settlements stood at about 18,400 (Rogge 1985, 91). Therefore, it is crucially important to note the fundamental changes from the notion that permanent settlement schemes, such as Qala en Nahal, were the only way to refugee self–sufficiency to the notion that wage–earning and semi–urban settlements were also other possible options. Indeed, settlements in Sudan have evolved into what looked like custom–made to appeal to refugees with urban as well rural background, and also to accommodate the needs of the host community and the host government.

Thus, since the late 1970s, the UNHCR, on the whole, has given up on integrative settlements and has focused more on temporary solutions until refugees repatriation. The refugee exodus, however, dramatically increased not only from Eritrea but also from Ethiopia and reached about 440,000 by 1982. This further increased to almost 800,000 by the end of 1985 because of conflict escalations and also because of famine brought about by the 1984–85 drought. As a result, the focus shifted to temporary camps to handle the incoming refugees. The existing temporary camps, such a Wad el Hileau, turned into 'permanent' camps because of continuous flows. At the same time, more and more refugees continued to settle spontaneously, many of whom with no hope of any assistance. For example, by 1993, there were 453,000 spontaneously settled refugees in the country (COR 1993).

It is important to note the progressive reduction in the proportion of refugees who settled in schemes since the Qala en Nahal settlement scheme was completed. In 1972, the proportion stood at 40 per cent of all refugees (that is, 22,000 out of the total of 54,500 refugees). The proportion decreased to about 27 per cent (100,000 out of 390,000) by 1980, to 25 per cent (110,000 out of 440,000) by 1982, and further decreased to about 21.5 per cent by March 2004 (Kibreab 1987, 76; Karadawi 1999, 201)). With the exponential increases of asylum seekers in the latter half of the 1980s, this proportion is expected to have decreased further. However, the volume of refugees in schemes, wage–earning settlements, semi-urban settlements, temporary refugee camps, and reception centers increased dramatically. For example, by the end of 1988, there were an estimated total of 660,000 Eritreans and Ethiopian refugees in Sudan, out of which 360,000 were directly or indirectly aid recipients (USCR 1988, 46). Nonetheless, estimates of those who settled spontaneously remained consistently higher compared to those who stayed in any of the above types of settlements.

Actors, Interests, and Structure of Settlement in Eastern Sudan

We have examined the different types of settlements and how the needs, priorities, and capabilities of different actors played critical role in the evolution of settlements in eastern Sudan. The two most important actors in determining the structure of settlements were the Government of Sudan and the UNHCR. In line with the assumption in earlier studies, both the government and the UNHCR assumed refugees

were passive, unresponsive, and an unfortunate group of the human community at the mercy and protection of others. In other words, they took as given the refugees' grateful acceptance of decisions on their fate by others. The refugees, therefore, were not consulted during the negotiations to launch the Qala en Nahal settlement scheme and during the construction phase. No objective assessments of their needs and aspirations were made. As it turned out, the refugees were far from passive. In fact, they resisted because they took their resettlement as a ploy to severe their ties to their homeland. After they were pushed to settle in the scheme, they did not turn out to be as productive as it was hoped they would, and self–sufficiency still remained a goal after the completion of the project.

The Government of Sudan saw the refugee presence as a threat to public order.[13] Hence, it pushed to confine them in locations away from the rural as well as the urban communities, and made land available in isolated areas for the UNHCR to come up with sufficient funds to develop. And because it always saw the refugee presence as temporary, it hoped it would acquire the ready–made area for Sudanese tenants after the refugees had departed, and never extended the refugees citizenship rights or rights to the land. That is, it sought full control of the scheme ultimately. But in the meantime and until repatriation, the government expected continued UNHCR funding for as long as necessary based on the belief that the international community was responsible for the well–being of the refugees. In other words, the Government of Sudan saw UNHCR assistance as 'complementary to its overall refugee policy, the management of which was a prerogative of the government itself' (Karadawi 1999, 219). Therefore, the government's basic interest was in pushing the UNHCR to establish as many schemes as possible and ensure the latter's continued financial and technical support until the schemes become self–sufficient, and until the chances of reverting back to dependency are eliminated.

The UNHCR, on the other hand, saw the Government of Sudan as ultimately responsible for the well–being of the refugees so long as they were in Sudan. However, it reserved the right 'to influence government policy and, in particular to guarantee the cost effectiveness of the programs according to the requirements of international donors' (ibid.). Hence, its interests mainly lie in supporting the government but also in minimizing costs to the international community. For example, it preferred refugee settlements away from the border areas and close to population centers so that refugees will have the opportunity to use services available to the local community. If this was not possible, however, the UNHCR was prepared to come up with a reasonable amount of money to resettle refugees in schemes, provided the chances that refugees become self–sufficient in a short period of time were high.

13 Although COR, as a government agency, deals with refugee issues and is responsible for executing government decisions, it is also obligated to see to it that internationally recognized refugee rights are not violated. Hence, it was often sandwiched between the government and the UNHCR. On many occasions, it had frustrated refugee evictions from the urban areas by 'playing off the demands from different levels of the government against each other'. See Karadawi 1999, 219.

This would involve sites with reasonable infrastructure, where refuges would own the land, cultivate, and sell their produce like other Sudanese farmers.

The refugees and the local communities also contributed to the evolution of the structure. The former invariably preferred to self–settle and, if at all possible, also receive aid. However, many were prepared to forgo aid and settle on their own, especially those with urban background who were looking for third-country settlement or those who were fully employed. But those from rural areas preferred to settle in villages or in self–established communities near villages and receive aid until they returned home. As 'majority–identified' refugees, they looked forward to the time when they would be able to return home. Hence, they preferred to settle in camps as close to the border as possible, especially if their places of habitual residence were close on the other side of the border. Indeed, because of their need for information about conditions at home, they did not want to settle further away from the border (Johnson 1979). Also, given the arbitrariness of the way African boundaries were drawn, as indicated in Chapter 1, the likelihood that a refugee group from across the border finds itself among ethnically–related host community is high. Therefore, as Hansen (1981) had demonstrated in Zambia, Eritrean refugees preferred to settle among co–ethnics because it minimized the loss suffered as a result of the dislocation.[14] Hence, like the Government of Sudan and the UNHCR, they have also contributed to the proliferation of settlement sites as close to the border as possible.

Finally, the host community played an important role in the evolution of the structure of settlements, especially because of the drastic changes in its attitude towards refugees. As indicated earlier, it was hospitable when the first refugee groups arrived and had contributed funds to support them. However, when the refugee problem persisted with increased intensity, the host community called for their eviction, as in Khartoum, Kassala, and other urban communities. That is, the local communities became 'involuntary hosts' (Karadawi 1999, 134). And this was taken seriously by government officials, including President Numeiri. In fact, the novel idea of semi–urban settlements evolved to partially relieve cities of their concentrations of refugees and to show the population that the government was responding to their concerns. Thus, actor interests, usually based on political and financial benefits, constituted an important variable in the structure of settlements.

The second variable that contributed to the structure of settlements is the nature of the conflicts in Eritrea and Ethiopia and the 'kinetics' of refuge flight associated with them. The refugee exodus became especially overwhelming in the late 1970s and most of the 1980s because of a series of Ethiopian government offensives in

14 Opposition movements also welcome camp settlement for refuges because their proximity to the homeland makes it easier for them to conduct various activities in the camps, including recruitment of needed personnel. This, of course, does not mean they have influenced the evolving structure of settlements.

both Eritrea and Tigray, many of which occurred during the 1984–85 famine.[15] This meant increased wave–like influxes into villages and reception centers close to the border. It was no longer possible for the UNHCR to insist on locations of at least 50 km to provide aid. And even if there had been an agreement to settle all refugees in schemes, it would have been simply impossible because of the large amount of money this would have required. That is, the higher the frequency and intensity of wave–like influxes, the more refugees settle spontaneously, most close to the border.

The resultant structure of settlements, therefore, reflected partial accommodation of the interests of the different actors. There were four types of structures which indicate the influences of the different actors. Some were permanent settlement schemes, such as those at Qala en Nahal, which the Government of Sudan pushed for and which the local community supported. Others, such as the wage–earning settlements at Kashim el Girba, were established for rural refugees and were less expensive to operate compared to schemes. This was what the UNHCR preferred. The government was also on board because it never needed to make land available. Similarly, the host rural population supported this because they confine refugees and limit their access to scarce resources. At the same time, they provide a good source of much–needed refugee labor, especially during harvesting seasons.

Yet others, such as the semi-urban settlements, came about because of the need to relieve cities from increased refugee competition for social services, and also to reduce the actual or perceived refugee vices, including crime and prostitution. Hence, the Government of Sudan had a special interest in supporting these types of settlements. But most importantly, the attitude of the urban population to the presence of refugees among them was instrumental in the emergence of this type of settlement. And, finally, there were refugee interests that prevailed. Refugee non–cooperation in the Qala en Nahal had been instrumental in scaling back such undertaking in the years that followed. Subsequently, more and more refugees stayed in refugee camps and reception centers, and continued to receive assistance, often times in locations close to the border, as they had always wanted. The wave–like influxes in the tens of thousands also helped in the proliferation of reception centers and camps from 1984 onwards. In short, the Sudanese refugee settlement structure was the result of the interaction of many actors and variables.

Ethiopian Ogadeni Refugee Settlements in Somalia

Ethiopia remained the most important source of refugees not only in the Horn of Africa but on the entire continent at least for the period between 1975 and 1989. For example, by 1987, there were an estimated 1,122,000 Ethiopian refugees, most of which were in Sudan and Somalia (USCR 1987). As indicated earlier, those in Sudan numbered approximately 677,000. Some settled spontaneously in urban areas

15 For an account of a few of the large–scale offensives the government initiated and opposition responses to those offensives, see Tareke 2004, 245–69.

but most settled in the rural areas. Of those who settled in the rural areas, some spontaneously settled in villages and irrigation centers while others in refugee camps and reception centers, settlement schemes, wage–earning settlements, and semi–urban settlements assisted by the Government of Sudan, the UNHCR, and other private agencies. It is important to note that the dynamic nature of the settlement structures was a function of the flight characteristics of the refugees and the actors' interests and priorities.

Of the estimated 1,122,000 Ethiopian refugees in 1987, about 430,000 sought asylum in Somalia. Most were ethnic Somalis dislocated after the end of 1977–78 Ogaden War (USCR 1987).[16] There were also Oromos displaced in the mid–1980s because of various reasons, including military engagements between the Ethiopian army and OLF combatants, forced conscription into the military, villagization programs, and drought (USCR 1986). The overwhelming majority of the refugees settled in the border areas in four of Somalia's sixteen regions. Because most were Somali–speaking, the local population was more than willing to assist with the little they had. Partly because of this and partly because they were regarded as Somalis in line with its policy, the Somali government never appealed for any outside assistance. Therefore, wide–spread spontaneous settlements remained a basic feature of the patterns of settlements in Somalia until the end of the 1970s.[17] Because of the welcoming environment they received and their absorption by the local population, and the near impossibility of distinguishing them from the locals, information on them remains scant. Nonetheless, their presence among the population is uncontested, with Somalia consistently claiming that their numbers were higher than those in refugee camps.

16 There has always been a fundamental disagreement between the UNHCR and the Somali government as to the estimations of refugee numbers, with Somalia consistently accusing the UNHCR of underestimating the numbers and the UNHCR accusing the government of gross overestimations by at least 25 per cent. For example, at the end of 1980, the Somali government estimated that there were 1.3 million refugees in camps and an additional 700,000 to 800,000 who spontaneously settled. That is, according to the Somali government there would have been between 2 and 2.1 million refugees. However, the USCR reported that there were a total of about 1.5 million refuges at the time (USCR 1981). The UNHCR and the government's estimates were so irreconcilable that UN demographers were called in to conduct a survey. Based on this, the UNHCR and the government negotiated annual 'planning figures' for resource allocation purposes. Therefore, all refugee figures are estimates and must be taken as such, and Ogadeni Somali numbers were less accurate estimations.

17 Please note that Sudan appealed for international assistance when about 28,000 Eritrean refugees arrived in 1967 because it wanted to de–politicize the refugee issue. That is, it saw the refugees as citizens of another state that needed assistance from the international community. On the other hand, citing Mister (1985), Kibreab (1994, 322) reports that there were between 150,00 and 250,000 refugees among the population before the government made its first international appeal in October 1979.

Other refugees sought assistance in refugee camps, whose camp population sizes varied between 3,000 and 70,000 refugees (Samatar 1993, 113). There were many factors that contributed to such large variations in size. First, arable land with sufficient water sources is generally scarce in Somalia. Therefore, the smaller camps were generally close to the border, in arid and not easily accessible locations. Most of the larger camps were located at the banks of the Shebelle and Juba rivers close to urban centers. In other words, the holding capacity of refugee camps was a function of the environment's ability to sustain a given number of refugees. Both the government and the UNHCR agreed to minimize the adverse environmental impact of the refugees by controlling refugee numbers, although the UNHCR naturally prefers large and accessible camps for easy distribution of relief aid. Second, the periodic massive inflows of refugees from the Ogaden and the inability of the government and the UNHCR to set up camps and respond quickly inevitably meant additional number of refugees in those camps that were closer to the 'points' of entry of refugees. Finally, the pastoral background of most of the Ogaden refugees and their preference to move, especially in search of grazing land for their domestic animals, contributed not only to variations between camp sizes but also to variations within a camp.

Another aspect of the variation in the structure of settlements is the number of camps set up to aid the refugees. In late 1979, for example, there were 21 refugee camps (USCR 1980). This number increased to 35 in late 1980 (Kibreab 1994), to 36 in late 1985 (USCR 1985), and to 43 on the eve of the massive violence in Somalia in 1988 (USCR 1988). Many of the camps became overpopulated not only because of new refugee arrivals but also because many of the Somali indigenous populations moved into the camps in order to 'benefit from food distributions' (USCR 1987, 45). For example, the camp at Tug Wajale, originally established to house about 2,000 persons was made to accommodate an additional 50,000 new arrivals (ibid.). The magnitude of refugee influxes and associated increases in the number of camps resulted in proliferation in the number of international organizations that provided aid. By 1980, there were about 50 relief agencies (Kennedy 1982).[18] It is especially important to compare this with that in Sudan, where there were about 24 relief agencies catering to the needs of an estimated 718,000 Ethiopian and Eritrean refugees in 1985.

Therefore, the changes in the numbers of refugee camps and relief agencies in Somalia have increased sharply because of the exponential increases of refugees who needed immediate care. This made the structure of refugee settlements in Somalia qualitatively different from those in Sudan, where, as we have seen earlier, three types of rural settlements emerged based on the needs, interests, and priorities of the Sudanese government, the UNHCR, the refugees, and the local community. We have also seen earlier that the wheeling and dealing between these, especially between the former two, has been critical in the emergence of various types of settlements that were intended to address the particular needs of rural and urban refugees, as well as

18 Tucker (1982) puts this number at about 30.

the concerns of the host government and the host communities. For various reasons, including the 'kinetics' of flight and the political, economic, and social environments, no such thing was envisioned in Somalia as explained below.

Temporary Refugee Camps as 'Permanent' Refugee Settlements

We have earlier characterized the movement of Ethiopian Ogadeni refugees to Somalia as 'acute'. Almost the entire population of the Ogaden sought asylum in Somalia within 18 months of the end of the 1977–78 Ogaden war. We have also seen there were an estimated 80,000 refugees in Somalia in late 1978, all of which spontaneously settled among the local population. At the time, the Somali government made no appeal for international assistance. The first such appeal came in late 1979 at which time there were an estimated 1.2 million refugees (USCR 1980, 45). Of this, some 473,000 were housed in hastily established government camps while the remaining 700,000 among the population (ibid.). Many needed immediate assistance because of hunger and illnesses brought about by their long trek on an inhospitable semi–arid environment.

By the time international assistance arrived, the situation had become the 'most acute' [refugee situation] in the Horn of Africa' and required emergency–based response to save refugee lives (USCR 1980, 40). After 1980, the intensity of refugee flows increased when another large–scale influx of more that 150,000 refugees occurred. Whereas pre–1980 refugees were almost exclusively Ogadeni Somalis and were displaced because of fear of reprisals by the Ethiopian army, the post–1980 refugees consisted of Ogadeni Somalis as well as Oromos displaced because of continuing low–level conflict and also because of drought. Hence, their physical condition was far worse than the earlier refugees. In fact, there were wide–spread nutrition–related illnesses and periodic outbreaks of epidemics, such as cholera. Hence, the nature of their displacement was such that long–term plans for refugee self–sufficiency were placed on the backburner in favor of an immediate response to feed, house, and provide medical care. The continuing emergency nature of the refugee situation, therefore, constituted an important variable for the quick proliferation of temporary camps and reception centers, and international relief agencies.

There were also political reasons as to why land–based and other forms of settlements, as in Sudan, did not develop in Somalia. Consistent with its policy of unifying the Somali–inhabited Ogaden with the Somali Republic, the government saw Ogadeni Somalis as members of the Somali nation, who have rights that other inhabitants of Somalia have. As far as the government was concerned, its citizens were dislocated to another part of 'Somalia' because of the actions of an occupying power, which targeted only Somalis. Therefore, the initial policy of not making an international appeal for relief aid was meant to serve two purposes: to 'justify the war with Ethiopia over the Ogaden' and to 'focus attention of Somalians on the common enemy—Ethiopia—rather than on the problems within the country' (USCR 1984, 15). And when the government made the decision to make an international appeal

because of exponential increases in refugee numbers in the latter half of 1979, it insisted that aid be given to refugees in camps only because they will remain visible to the international community and to the people of Somalia.[19] That is, the camps were not to evolve into, or replaced by, permanent self–sufficient settlements as this would undermine the long–aspired pan–Somali nation–state. Therefore, even after the policy to make a humanitarian appeal was adopted, the refugee issue remained subordinate to the larger political struggle of a 'more complete' nation. Also, the eventual repatriation of refugees back to the Ogaden, an unjustly occupied territory, remained a constant feature of the refugee politics in Somalia.

Similarly, in light of the debacle in the Ogaden War and the ensuing unrest in the military, Siad Barre saw Ogadeni Somalis as potential recruits into the army because their loyalty to him and to 'Greater Somalia' remained intact at a time of an irreversible descent into clanism within the army. Their presence in the camps provided an easy reach for possible recruitment (USCR 1984, 46; USCR 1988, 44). It is also instructive to note that the Somali government consistently denied the existence of Oromo and other Ogadeni non–Somali refugees until 1985 in spite of their visible presence since 1976, long before Somali Ogadeni refugees arrived (USCR 1987, 39). Likewise, it always denied reports of the voluntary repatriation of Ogadeni Somalis as 'Ethiopian propaganda' (see for example, USCR 1985, 47). All these were made in an effort to underscore that Ethiopia specifically targeted Ogadeni Somalis, and their return was unthinkable under the prevailing conditions.

The non–evolution of the temporary camps into viable permanent settlements was also a function of the economic needs of Somalia. To begin with, due to its topography and lack of commercially feasible natural resources, Somalia is one of the least developed states, even by African standards. The war in the Ogaden and the subsequent withdrawal of Soviet economic and military support further depressed its economy. As Laitin and Samatar (1984, 64) have stated, 'When the Soviets left Somalia, so did their boats, and the Somali government has procured replacements from Austria and Italy. But the co-operatives have not been self–sustaining. When the Soviet advisors left, the annual catch was in the thousands of tons, by 1980, less than 500 tons of fish and lobsters were caught'. Therefore, Somalia was in dire straits as no other suitable power came forth to provide the same degree of support the Soviet Union provided, both economically and militarily.

Thus, the exceptionally favorable response to the appeals for refugee assistance gave the government a much–needed economic reprieve, as the amount of aid reached about 40 per cent of its GNP in 1980. The high volume of aid provided thousands of Somalis with jobs in the ports and in the refugee camps and in between. These benefits created what Tucker (1982, 23) called a 'strong constituency within the Somali establishment interested in maintaining [temporary refugee camps] and keeping the aid pipeline open'. In other words, the relief effort became an industry, whose beneficiaries, like all beneficiaries in a given industry, resisted any change to

19 The UNHCR also made its own appeal in 1980 after it saw the emergency nature of the refugee situation.

the status quo. And when pressed to effect changes because of threats of possible withdrawal of funds, the government made only incremental changes, such as allocating small plots of land to a few refugees to supplement their camp rations (Kibreab 1994). No qualitative policy changes were made until March 1983 when the government reluctantly agreed to permanently settle refugees who did not want to repatriate.[20] Even after this, nothing happened, as the government's paramount interest was to extract political as well as economic capital out of the highly visible refugee camps.

It is important to observe that the UNHCR found the government's policy of maintaining camp life as something with which it can live. In Sudan, it has had a first hand experience of the complexities and intricacies associated with designing and maintaining well–functioning settlement schemes. Indeed, they require a high start–up money and continuous engagement, not only to build the infra–structure but also to make the refugees self–sufficient. Land settlement schemes in Somalia would have required not only comparatively higher start–up funds, but also more expertise and funds to keep them operational, as Somalia did not have enough arable land and water (Schraeder 1986). Therefore, as long as aid was flowing in, it was easier for the UNHCR to administer aid distribution. It was also more gratifying to see immediate results, where the many hungry, the sick, and the dying were fed, cared for, and brought back to life. It must, however, be emphasized that the goals of the government and the UNHCR have always been at variance, and the UNHCR never gave up on self–sufficiency. The Somali case however, presents a rare convergence of government and UNHCR priorities.

Within the social realm, two dimensions contributed to the maintenance of 'temporary' camps. The first, born out of the pastoral background and high mobility of the refugees, assumed that permanent settlement schemes were 'unnatural' for Ogandeni Somalis. It appears that the government adopted this view not only with respect to refugees but also with respect to its own pastoral communities. For example, Schraeder (1986, 654) quotes Mohammed Issa Abdi, the Director of Planning in the Ministry of Public Works, as saying 'Nomads prefer fishing to farming. They can see result of a day's work at the end of each day. As farmers, they stay in the same places, their backs are bent, and they must wait a season to see any result at all'. That is, although camps were confining, land settlements were more confining for those Clay (1984, 16) has aptly referred to as the 'once–proud herders'.

There is some empirical support for the pastoralist dislike of sedentary life. Kibreab (1994, 329), for example, has reported that 90 per cent of refugee respondents in the Qoryoley and Jolalaqsi camps in Somalia described camp life as depressing. And when asked if they would accept relocation '76 per cent in Qoryoley and 54 per cent in Jalalaqsi preferred to remain in the camp'. Given the obvious distaste for a hypothetical relocation to land settlement by a significant majority in one camp and

20 The change was made after a high–level UNHCR mission visited Somalia to discuss more durable solutions to the refugee crisis. Please see, Government of Somalia (1983).

a simple majority in the other, it is not hard to imagine a much increased majority in each camp had actual relocation been attempted.[21]

The second social aspect deals with what Kibreab (1994, 326) called 'Conventional Wisdom'. In general, the literature assumes that refugees were helpless, traumatized, and unable to fend for themselves. Indeed, because of the combined effects of long desert treks and the drought that continually affected the Ogadeni, the refugees that reached Somalia prior to 1981 were weak and probably weaker than Eritreans and Ethiopians when they fled to Sudan (see, for example, USCR 1981, 10–12). Those who reached Somalia during 1984–85 were much weaker because of the drought–induced famine conditions throughout the Horn of Africa. Hence, priority was given to daily relief efforts. In addition, the camps were so overcrowded that periodic outbreaks of epidemics killed many people. As the USCR (1985, 47) has reported, 'there was an outbreak of cholera at Gannet, where some 35,000 new arrivals had gathered with virtually no sanitation facilities, on the outskirts of Hargeisa town. Before the epidemic was diagnosed and actions taken, 1,262 had died and cases were reported at other camps and among the local population'. Therefore, the emergency nature of the refugee situation reinforced the need to continue to provide relief aid in the camps.

There was also the view that the overwhelming majority of the refugees were women, children, and the old, all of which needed relief aid because many of their able–bodied providers were combatants, or have been killed in action. This may or may not have been the case. While Kibreab (1994) has not been able to find an empirical support for this, others, including Young (1985), have reported a high preponderance of female–headed families. Nonetheless, the actual composition is at best tangential here. What is important, however, is the continuing assumption that this was indeed the case. As a result, the international community rushed in to alleviate the more pressing food and medical needs, at the expense of the search for a more durable solution.

Therefore, the convergence of many variables, as outlined above, contributed to the ten–year long ad–hoc approach to the refugee crisis. No land settlement schemes, no wage-earnings settlements, and no semi–urban settlements were initiated by the UNHCR or the government. The only attempt at a durable solution was the Save the Children Fund (SCF)–funded program at Qoryloley to turn the refugee camp into irrigation–based permanent settlement for about 40,000 refugees (Schraeder 1989). Although the erratic flows of the Shebelle River may make self–sufficiency harder to attain, the refugees nonetheless continued to farm and to trade, and have contributed to a 'thriving trade economies' of the surrounding areas (Kibreab 1994, 340).

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21 In face to face personal interviews respondents are generally less likely to respond in the negative, especially if they think the interviewer is expecting an answer in the affirmative. This is more so in non–western societies, where respondents find it easier to answer in the affirmative, especially when they did not understand the question or when they are unsure as to whether or not say a 'yes' or a 'no'.

Apart from the temporary gain by entrenched individuals, the SCF–funded project is about the only thing that comes close to a long–term impact of the refugee presence in Somalia. No infra–structure was built and the local population continues to lead its life virtually unchanged after its ten–year encounter with Ogadeni refugees. The government that presided over the institutionalization of camps was overthrown in 1991, leaving behind a people yearning for a state.

PART 4
The Dynamics of Refugee Repatriation

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Chapter 7

Repatriations in the Horn of Africa

The End of the Cold War and Repatriations

In the preceding chapters, we have examined the dynamics of refugee flight from home and the patterns and processes of refugee settlements in exile. Indeed, because of many political–security, economic, and social variables, there existed continuous flows of refugees from Ethiopia and Eritrea during the mid–1960s to the late 1980s, from Somalia during the late 1980s to the mid–1990s, and from Sudan during the mid–1960s to 1972 and again during 1983 to 2003. The existing large body of literature on refugee flight and settlement in the Horn of Africa, especially during 1970–90, was a reflection of the prevailing preponderance of refugee outflows in the region. Repatriations in the region, however, have been rare during much of the time, except for the repatriation of Sudanese refugees from Ethiopia following the 1972 Addis Ababa Accord, the repatriation of Ethiopian refugees from Djibouti in 1983–84, and the repatriation of Ethiopians from Sudan in 1985–87.

In the first, the United States Committee for Refugees puts the number of those who repatriated at about 24,000 out of a total of about 35,000 Sudanese refugees (USCR 1983, 9), while Zolberg et al. (1989, 52) indicate all had repatriated except for some 3,000 Anya–Nya troops, who remained in Ethiopia because they rejected the agreement. Akol (1987, 148–49), on the other hand, goes further and writes that all of the 35,000 refugees were repatriated. In spite of the various estimates of those who repatriated, however, this was the first ever significant repatriation in the Horn of Africa. In the second, more than 30,000 of the estimated 45,000 were repatriated by 1984, although there was debate as to whether or not the repatriation was voluntary.[1] While the debate was continuing, the repatriation was altogether stopped because of the 1984 drought that gripped in the entire Horn of Africa (Zolberg et al. 1989). In the third, about 68,000 out of an estimated 190,000 Tigrayan refugees, who has sought asylum in late 1984 returned home in 1985 voluntarily and in haste to cultivate their land before the rainy season arrived. Both the Relief Society of Tigray (REST) and the Sudanese Commissioner for Refugees played crucial role in the return. The UNHCR, however, was not closely involved for legal and technical reasons, as Sudan had hesitated to accord the Tigrayans refugee status. The number of returnees reached 164,000 out of the original 190,000 by 1987 (Hendrie 1991, 201). Aside

1 There were allegations that Djiboutian authorities had coerced refugees to 'voluntarily' return using various methods, including imprisonment and the withdrawal of relief assistance (see Crisp 1984 and Aitchison 1983).

from these three repatriations, however, the Horn of Africa had remained as one of the most important refugee–generating regions of the world for quite a long time.

The situation, however, changed 30 years later. With the impending end of the Cold War in the early 1990s and the retrenchment of the superpowers, prospects for resolution of many of the intractable conflicts and associated refugee flows improved in many places, including Afghanistan, Kampuchea, Southern Africa, Central America, and, of course, the Horn of Africa. As a consequence, the reverse of what happened in the previous three decades was eagerly awaited. That is, the systemic change in the international political environment, which ushered in a new era of cooperation between the superpowers, was expected to spillover and to help end the various proxy conflicts they fought. This, in turn, was expected to produce steady and continuous repatriations. In fact, the UNHCR had named 1992 as the 'year for voluntary repatriation' (UNHCR 1991, 22). In a sense, therefore, the Cold War presented a paradigm shift on how to deal with refugee issues. As Bayefski and Doyle (1999, 2) have stated: '[i]f the normative paradigm of the early Cold War for refugee protection was individuals achieving permanent resettlement on the other side of the Cold War divide, the later Cold War and post-Cold War normative paradigm has been voluntary mass repatriation in the aftermath of civil war'.

The effects of the end of the Cold war, however, have been mixed at best. On the positive side, the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in the late 1980s opened the door for the repatriation of more than 3 million refugees from camps in Pakistan and Iran (Wood 1989). American and Soviet rapprochement resulted in the resolution of conflicts in Nicaragua and, as a result, tens of thousands of Nicaraguans retuned home from exile in Honduras and Costa Rica (Basok 1990; Larkin et al. 1991). Similarly, Soviet and US rapprochement in southern Africa resulted in a series of political developments that steered the region away from conflicts and towards peace. These include the withdrawal of Cuban forces from Angola, South Africa's belated recognition of the right to a full measure of self–determination of the people of the then South West Africa, an end to South African interference in Angola, and an agreement between the Mozambican government and the Mozambican National Resistance (RENAMO) to end the civil war in the former Portuguese colony. The end of the Cold War also facilitated the demise of the apartheid regime in South Africa, although the attempt to resolve the conflict had started a few years back. Thus, thousands of Namibian exiles were airlifted from Zambia and Angola (Gasarasi 1990), and about 1.7 million Mozambican refugees returned home from Zimbabwe, Malawi, and other neighboring countries (UNHCR 1998a). These are only a few of the positive impact the end of the Cold War had on conflicts and refugee movements around the world.

The Cold War also had negative impacts in terms of refugee formations. When the Soviet Union dissolved and many new independent republics were established out of its ashes, ethnic and nationalist currents engulfed these republics. The quest to establish homogeneous entities out of culturally plural societies or, as the case may be, to establish single–nation–dominated entities, resulted in movement of peoples across borders in the hundreds of thousands. The same happened in the

former Yugoslavia and this created humanitarian problems in Europe never seen since the end of World War II. The end of the Cold War is also associated with the fall of Mobutu of Zaire after major powers abandoned him. The resulting instability in central Africa and the ensuing refugee movements stemmed from the collapse or near collapse of states, such as Zaire, which were unable to stand on their own. Similarly, state structures in Sierra Leone and Liberia collapsed and this caused refugee formations in the hundreds of thousands in a hitherto peaceful region of Africa.[2] Nonetheless, the end of the Cold War is distinctive compared to the decades earlier because there were also large–scale repatriations.

The distinction has been most sharp in the Horn of Africa, where there existed continuous repatriations in the 1990s as opposed to the punctuated repatriations of earlier decades. The fact that the Horn of Africa has been at the center of refugee crisis is apparent because it is more susceptible to the vicissitudes of the international political and security climate. As indicated in Chapter 2, its strategic location close to important waterways, where oil tankers navigate non–stop, has made it attractive for major power involvement, more often detrimental to the region but sometimes also beneficial. It was detrimental because no serious attempt to push the existing leaders to open the political system was made. As a consequence, disgruntled groups saw no other way but to challenge the system through armed struggle and this, in turn, led to massive outflows of refugees for many years. However, superpower policy changes in the late 1980s, more or less based on non-involvement, was beneficial because they helped bring about the collapse of the incumbent regimes in Somalia and Ethiopia, and the beginning of the resolution of the refugee problem. As a consequence, most Ethiopian refugees in Sudan, Somalia, Djibouti, and Kenya repatriated. Similarly, most Eritrean refugees in Sudan repatriated. However, there were also some refugee outflows as in Somalia in 1994, where many refugees sought shelter in Ethiopia and Kenya and others internally displaced.[3] Indeed, regime change in Ethiopia brought about the secession of Eritrea and fresh territorial claims by one against the other. This led to a full–scale war and the displacement of over one million Eritreans, of which almost 100,000 crossed the border into Sudan. Almost all repatriated after both countries signed the 2000 Algiers Peace Agreement and the withdrawal of Ethiopian forces from Eritrean territory. That is, there were simultaneous refugee outflows and repatriations during the 1990s in the Horn of Africa but the scale of the latter far outweighed the scale of the former.

Besides the end of the Cold War, there were also other reasons that gave added focus on repatriation, which the UNHCR has long adopted as one of the three most ‘durable solutions’ to the refugee problem. The two other ‘durable solutions’

2 The collapse of these states many not be directly attributed to the end of the Cold War but rather to the economic downturn they suffered in the 1980s. However, because of their retrenchment, major powers were not forthcoming with assistance.

3 The Somali refugees in Kenya and Ethiopia were better off compared to the internally displaced persons because aid did not reach the latter. As a consequence, UN and US forces intervened to feed the hungry.

are settlement in the country of first asylum and re–settlement in a third country. However, given the overwhelming numbers of refugees who seek refuge in a less–developed country, which is unable to absorb large numbers of refugees, settlement in the country of first asylum has not been a viable option. Indeed, attempts to find a permanent solution to refugees through integration in the country of first asylum, first championed during the First International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa (ICARA I) in 1981, had not given fruit primarily because of different donor and recipient priorities.[4] Likewise, in 1984, the Second International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa (ICARA II), convened to find a permanent solution through integration in the country of first asylum and also through repatriation to the country of origin, did not bear fruit. As Stein (1987, 49) has stated:

> To the African countries of asylum, ICARA II was to be a burden–sharing conference to provide assistance to strengthen their social and economic infrastructure. To the donors, however, the conference promised a chance to achieve durable solutions and lead to the voluntary repatriation or permanent integration of refugees.

Therefore, ICARA I and II failed to garner enough support for integration in the first country of asylum. However, African countries succeeded in putting the huge but hitherto unrecognized refugee crisis in Africa (and the developing) on the international agenda. Indeed, as Stein (1986, 265) has stated 'Low–income countries bear the main refugee burden. Of the 34 countries listed as low-income … in the 1983 World Development Report … 27 are or recently have been involved in refugee or refugee–like situations as sources, sanctuaries or both'. This has not changed over the last 20 years. In fact, out of the 36 countries with low Human Development Index (HDI) at the beginning of 2004 (Human Development Report 2004, 213-14), 27 have either been refugee source or refugee asylum countries, or both. At the same time, funds for temporary relief from richer nations is also drying up because of the 'specter of an endless drain of resources' (Stein 1986, 265). Hence, a 'durable solution' through integration in the countries of first asylum has not proven achievable.

Similarly, third-country settlement for African refugees has not been an option apparently because of lack of skills necessary to cope in developed countries and also because of alleged cultural/racial incompatibility.[5] More recently, there has been increased reluctance by major countries in Europe and the US to admit refugees partly because of legitimate national security concerns and partly because of the rise of far

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4 Stein (1987) notes that only $570 million of the more than $1 billion requested was contributed, and most of it was only for immediate refugee needs and not for infrastructure development, as the host states had envisioned. For more on ICARA I and reasons for its failure, please see Gorman (1993).

5 For example, of the tens of thousands of refugees the US admits annually, a quota of only 3,000 was appropriated for Africa in the early 1980s. Considering that Africa generated more than one in four of world refugees for the most of the 1980s, this has been insignificant.

right parties, especially in Europe, who have exploited the refugee presence to further their ulterior motives. Even mainstream European political parties have adopted restrictive refugee policies to appeal to their constituencies. Hence, the only 'durable solution' left is repatriation. The following sections critically review repatriations in the Horn of Africa, and identify the types of repatriations and associated political–security, economic, flight, and settlement patterns. First, however, a brief discussion of relevant theoretical issues on repatriation is presented below.

Some Theoretical Issues in Repatriations

In examining the dynamics of flight in Chapters 3 and 4, we have seen that the refugee decision to flee was made under conditions of fear for one's personal security. Although the decision was usually made in haste because of the pressure the refugee was under, nevertheless, it was a 'considered'. Despite this, however, Kunz's (1973) 'push–pressure–pull' model was still a better tool to understand the dynamics of flight compared to the migration 'push–pull' model. The former may, however, explain only the rare 'emergency repatriation' cases like those of southern Sudanese refugees fleeing from Ethiopia in 1991, and Ethiopian Ogadeni refugees fleeing from Somalia in 1988–91, respectively.[6] In the first case, Sudanese refugees fled back to their country of origin to beat advancing Ethiopian opposition forces with whom the SPLM/A was at odds. In the second case, Ethiopian Somali refugees, who were seen as supporters of the Siad Barre regime, fled back to the Ogaden when the Somali Army retreated and the SNM liberated most of northern Somalia. In fact, repatriations of this nature may be seen as 'flight from asylum', induced by the deterioration of the security situation in their countries of asylum similar to the deterioration of the security situation that induced their flight in the first place.

The most common types of repatriations, however, are self–repatriations and assisted repatriations, and occur under different circumstances.[7] Refugee self–repatriation is made after assessing the pros and cons of return, and only the refugee decides whether or not to return.[8] Assisted repatriation, on the other hand, occurs after protracted negotiations between different actors, of which the refugee is only one of four (Bariagaber 1999). First, international organizations generally want swift

6 I borrow this terminology from Bayefski and Doyle (1999), which used it to refer to the sudden return of Rwandan refugees from Tanzania in the mid–1990s. It must be emphasized that these repatriations may sound positive because the end result is return to one's own country. However, they were actually no different, and in some cases more catastrophic, from refugee flights.

7 Following Koser (1993), I use the term self–repatriation in place of the widely used spontaneous repatriation. The latter seems to imply refugees move on impulse, while the former implies that refugees plan to repatriate.

8 It is possible the country of asylum to close borders to prevent repatriations as it is also possible for the country of origin not to let its refugees come in. However, such instances are extremely rare.

but voluntary repatriation of refugees because they have become less successful in sustaining the interest of the international community, especially because of recent manifestations of 'compassion fatigue' (USCR 1997). They have to show that refugee crises were solvable to ensure continued flow of funds. At the same time, international organizations, especially the UNHCR, are required to make sure that repatriation is voluntary and, in line with the *non–refoulement* provisions in international law, free of coercion.[9]

Second, the host country may want swift repatriation, especially if the local population views refugees as competitors for meager resources, as Djibouti had insisted in the aftermath of Ethiopian and Somali refugee flows in the latter half of the 1970s and the late 1980s, respectively. Or, as the case may be, it may create artificial roadblocks in repatriation endeavors, particularly when there is economic and political capital to be extracted from refugees. Such behavior has been manifest in the refugee crisis in Sudan, where it indirectly demanded funds to rehabilitate refugee vacated areas. Third, the refugee origin country, which generally supports return of its citizens, may insist on an orderly repatriation process and a comprehensive program for returnee reintegration into the social and economic fabric of the home environment. Thus, it seeks massive infusion of foreign capital as a necessary condition for repatriation. Eritrea's and 'Somaliland's' behavior, where each favored a managed and controlled return of refugees to settlement sites, readied with funds from the international community, are cases in point. Fourth, individual refugees may choose to repatriate based on their evaluations of the political and economic situations in both the origin and asylum countries. They may also choose to stay in exile, especially if the economic benefits in exile were better than those in the origin country. Those who decide to repatriate may do so on their own volition, or they may wait until an internationally approved and recognized repatriation plan is set in place. This type of refugee behavior is evident in almost every repatriation endeavors, including Central America and the Horn of Africa.

Thus, the window of opportunity for assisted repatriation is seldom wide open for a meaningful end to the refugee crisis because of a host of political–security, economic, and social factors. Indeed, '[v]oluntary repatriation—the ideal, best, preferred, most desirable solution—[has been hampered because] there is no agreement on the means of achieving it' (Stein 1986, 296). Despite this, millions have repatriated, most on their own volition (Rogge (1994). In general, prospective returnees weigh the benefits and losses incurred in their repatriation and behave based on those (Bariagaber 1999). Indeed, some return during conflict if that is what

9 According to the 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, states are under obligation not to forcibly return refugees to countries where their lives are threatened, including the refugee origin country. For a complete draft of the Convention, please see United Nations, *United Nations Treaty*, 189:2545, July 1951.

it takes to ensure maximum benefits.[10] The refugee, therefore, plays an important role in the decision of whether or not to repatriate.

Therefore, in order to reach at an informed decision, the refugee relies on available information to help in the decision-making. As Koser (1997) has argued, information is a critical variable in self–repatriations because it plays a role similar to the role it plays in the decision–making process a migrant goes through in evaluating conditions in the destination country. That is, self-repatriation is seen as 'return migration' because the only actor in the decision is the refugee (Koser 1997, 173–74). However, assisted repatriation may not strictly be seen as 'return migration' because of the various actors involved in the process. Nonetheless, there is no doubt that the self–returnee makes 'considered' decision to agree (or not to agree) to repatriate through assistance. Indeed, with no resource capabilities to help participate as a full member in the wheeling and dealing between governments and aid agencies, the prospective assisted refugee relies more on available information to reach a decision. The information is obtained by way of refugee representatives, whose visits the UNHCR facilitates, and information the host government, the home country government, and the UNHCR provide. Other sources of information include kith and kin connection and, in some cases the very refugee, who crosses the border to collect the needed information (Koser 1977). Except for the UNHCR–facilitated visits, these agents of information transmission are also available and indispensable for self–returnees.

Hence, repatriations, whether conducted on one's own volition or through assistance, involve the refugee's non-coerced consent and are, therefore, 'considered'. Hence, the 'push–pull' migration model is a better tool to study self– as well as assisted repatriations, not only in the Horn of Africa but also elsewhere. Indeed, the 'pressure' factor we saw in the flight model is nearly non–existent. Also important to note is that the majority of repatriations in the Horn of Africa have been non–emergency repatriations, as most refugees were not directly or indirectly coerced to leave. For example, out of a sample of 104 Eritrean returnees from Sudan who settled in Guluj, Eritrea, only 17 (or about 16 per cent) had indicated that they were somehow pressured to leave for Eritrea (interview 1996). The only possible exception to this may be the repatriation of some 30,000 Ethiopians from Djibouti in 1983–84.

Ethiopian Refugee Repatriation from Sudan

By the late 1980s, there were more than a million Ethiopian refugees (including Eritreans) in neighboring countries. By early 2004, this number had shrunk to a mere 2000 (USCR 2004), as many had returned home not only from Sudan but also from

10 This had earlier been demonstrated in Larkin et al. (1991) in a study of repatriations in Central America.

Djibouti, Kenya, and Yemen.[11] Thus, from 1991 to June 1966, UNHCR/Ethiopia (undated) reported that a total of about 776,593 Ethiopians had returned. Of these, the majority was Ogandeni refugees and returned home because of the collapse of the Somali state and the deterioration of security conditions in their country of asylum. They may rightly be referred to as 'repatriates under emergency conditions', and their return was *en masse*, similar to their flight some 13 years ago. They received no assistance, except for some who joined the temporary camps established for Somali refugees. Hence, the repatriation of many of these was a continuation of their 'refugee' life, now in their own country.

On the other hand, repatriation of Ethiopian refugees from Sudan was more organized and similar to repatriations elsewhere in Africa and around the world. They received support in the form of 'nine months of food aid, transportation assistance, and a monetary integration grant equivalent to about USD 150' (USCR 1998, 70). By the end of 1997, the UNHCR had assisted about 65,000 Ethiopian returnees from Sudan, leaving about 40,000 yet to be repatriated (ibid).[12] The latter shrunk to about 25,000 by June 2001 and, as stated earlier, this further shrunk to about 2000 by early 2004.[13] Similarly, Ethiopian refugees in Djibouti completed their repatriation in May 2001, when an estimated 2,000 refugees came back home (USCR, 2001). All in all, therefore, the repatriation of Ethiopian refugees has been smooth because of the following reasons.

First, after the overthrow of the *Derg* and the establishment of the Transitional Government of Ethiopia in 1991, there was visible peace in the country. Most of the ethnic–based parties, whose combined efforts brought down the *Derg,* joined the Transitional Government of Ethiopia in what looked like a multi–ethnic grand coalition.[14] Hence, almost all Ethiopian refugees in Sudan were keen to return home and to re–establish their livelihood. Second, the number of Ethiopian refugees was modest and neighboring asylum countries did not have vested interests in the continuation of the refugee situation, especially because they were favorably disposed towards the incoming government. Also, they saw a good opportunity to advance their national security goals after the regime change in Ethiopia. Sudan, for example, looked upon Ethiopia to stop its assistance of SPLM/A, which became a formidable force by 1991. Containing the threat posed by the SPLM/A was critical, as groups in other parts of Sudan, including the Beja in the east and the Nuba in the center, took inspiration from the SPLM/A and challenged the government. Similarly,

11 The return of 574 Ethiopian refugees from Yemen occurred between 1992 and 1994. Please see UNHCR–RLO (Ethiopia), Information Section, undated.

12 An unknown number, probably between 20,000 and 30,000 returned on their own.

13 This number refers to those who were officially recognized as refugees. USCR (2004) reports that an 'additional 10,000 Ethiopians lived in Sudan in refugee–like circumstances, although they lacked official refugee status.' Please see www.Refugees.org/countryreport.aspx?id=759, accessed on 7 December 2005.

14 Ogaden–based opposition parties, such as the ONLF did not, however. But, with the disintegration of Somalia from which they received most of their support, they were too weak to mount any successful challenge against the Ethiopian government.

Djibouti was keen to improve relations with Ethiopia to attract Ethiopia's use of its ports, now that it has become landlocked after Eritrea seceded. In addition, the refugees were a significant burden to Djibouti's small economy.[15] As a result, it was not as hospitable as the others in the region.

Third, the relatively modest size of Ethiopian refugees in Sudan was not especially burdensome on Ethiopia's larger economy if the refugees returned. Therefore, Ethiopia never insisted on generous reintegration funds as a pre–condition for repatriation of its citizens like Eritrea, for example, insisted. In fact, out of the approximately 65,000 refugees who returned to Ethiopia from Sudan between 1993 and mid–1996, only an estimated 18,000 went to resettlement areas, where the UNHCR and Ethiopian authorities provided modest financial assistance and a 'reasonable size of agricultural land from Regional authorities; and basic agricultural inputs and services such as seeds, oxen, hand tools and ploughing sevice (sic) with tractor through the various Returnees' Rehabilitation Projects' (UNHCR/Ethiopia, undated, 2).[16] The rest went back to their places of original residence and started life on their own. In other words, the costs of repatriation to the state were minimal, not only because the assistance it provided was modest but also because its population of about 60 million at the time had the capacity to easily absorb such a modest number.

Fourth, the UNHCR was eager to cooperate in the Ethiopian refugee repatriation process because of the minimal expenses it incurred in what was a significant endeavor. Indeed, unlike the Eritrean repatriation process, which still continues and which the Eritrean government and the UNDP estimated higher per capita repatriation expenses, the UNHCR essentially provided minimal assistance to help Ethiopian repatriates reach their destinations.[17] Finally, Ethiopian refugees were eager to return because exile in Sudan was much less attractive to them compared to Eritrean refugees. Most of the Ethiopian refugees came from the heartland of the conservative Ethiopian Orthodox Christian tradition and were less at ease with their Muslim host environment. The self–repatriation of Tigrayans in 1985–87, which occurred despite political, bureaucratic, and legal impediments the UNHCR faced, is a case in point. The discomfort they felt in Sudan has always been there, and the impending arrival of the rainy season only acted as a precipitating variable for their departure.

Despite numerous attempts to discourage the Tigrayans from returning to a war zone, about 164,000 had returned with minimal assistance from COR and REST (Hendrie 1991, 201). Indeed, they 'felt acutely the loss of control over their ability

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15 Zolberg at al. (1989) note that the unregistered refugees and migrants numbered between 50,000 and 100,000 and were far more than the 45,000 officially recognized as refugees.

16 The author has in his possession this undated, personally–secured document in Summer 1995 from the UNHCR Regional Office in Addis Ababa (Ethiopia), entitled 'Statistics on Returnees–Voluntary Repatriation from Sudan Project: 93/94/95/96/HA/ETH/RP/372'.

17 An in–depth discussion of the Eritrean repatriation endeavor, including the estimates, funds pledged, and refugees repatriated, will be made in Chapter 8.

to secure livelihood' in their new environment and trekked back to Tigray. At the time, their trek was referred to as 'death march' because they were returning to their homes at a time when the scale and intensity of hostilities between the Ethiopian government and the TPLF had reached alarming levels (Hendrie 1991, 210). Also, the fact the Government of Sudan was hesitant to extend refugee status (which it readily extended to Eritreans), coupled with their 'determination to recover their identity as self–governing participants in a popular revolution' was an important factor in their self-return (Hendrie 1991, 215).

Thus, when peace was established in 1991, most Ethiopians flocked back to their country from Sudan unassisted because of the remarkable convergence of interests of the parties in the repatriation endeavor. As a consequence, the UNHCR officially declared in 1999 that a 'fundamental and durable change' had occurred in Ethiopia. This means that pre–1991 Ethiopian refugees can no longer claim refugee status (USCR 2001). Like migrations, the Ethiopian repatriation from Sudan, therefore, is best understood through the 'pull–push' migration model. The 'push' factors included cultural and religious incompatibility, the less than generous assistance in exile, and Sudan's belated and grudging recognition of their refugee status. On the other hand, the 'pull' factors included peace and stability at home, 'control over [one'] ability to secure a livelihood' in a familiar cultural and religious environment, freedom of movement and the choice of where to settle, and some financial and material support to restart life disrupted because of conflict. Indeed, like all migrants, Ethiopian returnees from Sudan had 'positive original motivations' to return home, and their departure from the asylum country was orderly (Kunz 1973, 130).

But more importantly, the kinetics of their flight, their attitude towards their displacement, and the patterns of their settlement in Sudan were correlated with their repatriation. Rather than succumb to the temptations of the much–needed relief provided by the then Ethiopian government in 1984, Tigrayans fled *en masse*, not exactly knowing what awaits them in exile in Sudan. As we saw in Chapter 3, their movement was 'acute'. They were also 'majority–identified' because of their shared view of the sources of their predicament. Therefore, the self–repatriation of Tigrayans effectively demonstrates that refugees, who had fled in an 'acute' refugee movement and as part of a 'majority–identified' group were more likely to repatriate on their own volition compared to refugees in an 'anticipatory' refugee movement, who identify more with the new society they have become part of.

The Tigrayan 'kinetics' of flight also meant that they settled as a group in various refugee reception centers and camps. This form of settlement continued to cement their attachment to the homeland, solidarity with the revolution, and most probably, loyalty to the TPLF. And when they received news of some rain in their drought–stricken homeland, they set out and walked despite an advice to the contrary. As Hendrie (1991) has reported, out of 19,000 refugees who left the Safawa camp

unassisted, only 350 had changed their mind and decided to remain in Sudan.[18] That is, refugees who settle in homogeneous camps were more likely to repatriate when the time comes, as compared to refugees in camps with heterogeneous refugee groups. This is because group setting is conducive to the transmission of information, whether this information is obtained through informal refugee channels, such as kith and kin, or through formal channels, such as UNHCR–assisted travels by refugee representatives. Of course, the likelihood of repatriation increases if the refugees were 'majority–identified', as stated in the previous paragraph.

The above also applies to assisted repatriation of Ethiopian refugees from Sudan during the early to the mid–1990s. In fact, a UNHCR/Ethiopia report indicated many of those who repatriated during this period 'have been assisted in refugee camps' in Sudan and were part of a cohesive unit of refugees (UNHCR/Ethiopia, undated). Indeed, most of the 21,000 refugees the UNHCR and the Ethiopian Administration Refugees and Returnee Affairs (ARRA) assisted as part of the first group of voluntary returnees a year or so after the regime change in Ethiopia had lived in camps for about 15 years. That is, assisted camp refugees were more likely to repatriate with assistance if the opportunity presented itself. However, not many of those who resided in towns such as Khartoum, Kassala, and Port Sudan had repatriated until 1996 because of the difficulties in information transmission, problems with logistics, and multiple influences that open possibilities other than repatriation, including resettlement in third countries. Nonetheless, the same UNHCR/Ethiopia also reported that this group of refugees may also want to return to their villages to resume normal life. In other words, if urban refugees were to return, they usually return after camp dwellers have returned, and only if they are apprehensive of their environment.

Somali Refugee Repatriations from Ethiopia

Most of the Somali refugees in Ethiopia fled the civil war in the self–proclaimed Republic of Somaliland during 1988–91 and spontaneously settled in camps along the northern Somalia–Ethiopia border. At the height of the Somali refugee presence in Ethiopia in late 1991, there were an estimated 600,000 refugees. Of these, some 363,000 fled in 1988 and settled in four refugee camps, of which Hartisheik was the largest with about 220,000 refugees.[19] Refugee influxes continued intermittently until 1991, and this brought the number to a peak of about 600,000. As a result, four more camps were established to accommodate the new arrivals, and this brought the total to eight by 1992. There were also Somali refugee influxes into Ethiopia

18 The Tigrayan departure from Sudan has been described as 'highly dramatic', and occurred despite pleas from doctors and nurses, some of them in tears, to convince them not to implement their decision to return (Hendrie 1991, 209).

19 Different entities, including relief organizations and governments had, at different times, given estimates that range between 220,000 and 275,000 perhaps because of the existing high mobility of refuges, where individuals move in, move out, and then move back again. It is estimated as many as 400,000 have received aid in the camp at one time or another.

between 1993 and 1996, of which the arrival of about 90,000 in 1994 was the most significant (UNHCR 1996, 28). However, these refugees were accommodated in the existing camps.

Although accurate data is not available because of the back and forth movements across the border, it is estimated that 350,000 had also repatriated on their own between 1991 and 1997 (USCR 1998). No assisted repatriation occurred until 1997 because of periodic outbursts of violence in northern Somalia, although the UNHCR had planned to carry such repatriations as early as 1992. Nonetheless, at the time the assisted repatriation began in 1997, there were an estimated 230,000 refugees in the eight refugee camps. This number declined to about 120,000 by the end of 2001 because of assisted as well as unassisted repatriations. However, the number of camps remained at eight, with much less camp populations. By the end of 2001, however, the Teferi Ber, Darwanaji, and Daror camps were closed, either because of total assisted or self–repatriations or because of transfers of a few remaining refugees from one camp to the other.[20] Similarly, the Rabasso and Comaboker camps were closed in 2002, leaving a total of about 30,000 refugees in the Aisha, Hartisheik, and Kebri Beyah camps (USCR, 2004).[21] At the end of 2003, there remained about 14,000 refugees in the three camps (*2003 UNHCR Statistical Year Book−Ethiopia*, 2004). By July 2004, there were less than 10,000 refugees in the Kebri Beyah camp, after the successful closure of Aisha and Hartisheik camps. Those who remained in the Kebri Beyah camp came from the southern half of Somalia, where peace had not yet been established. Except for some operational difficulties that contributed to delays in repatriating a set number of refugees by a given date, the above cursory review leaves no doubt that the Somali refugee repatriation from Ethiopia has been successful.

To understand the success of the Somali repatriation from Ethiopia, it is imperative to look at the two types or modes of repatriations separately. The self–repatriation began immediately after Somali government forces were defeated and expelled from northern Somalia in early 1991. Immediately thereafter, many crossed the border into Somalia, some to assess conditions before returning and others to stay for good. Their quick response to the return of relative stability in northern Somalia was a function of many variables. First, the Somalis have always viewed their exile in Ethiopia as temporary because of the suspicion they have always harbored against Ethiopia, Somalia's traditional enemy.[22] Likewise, Ethiopia was apprehensive of their presence and had maintained strict control of the camps and

20 It is estimated that about 50,216 Somali refugees from Camaboker, Darwanaji, Daror, Rabasso, and Teferi Ber camps voluntarily repatriated to 'Somaliland'. See www.addistribune.com/Archives/2002/01/04-01-02/UNHCR.htm, accessed on 20 October 2004.

21 This number refers to the official UNHCR report. USCR (2004), however, reports that there were only about 10,000 refugees, and attributes the highly–inflated UNHCR number to the 'massive fraud in eastern Ethiopia's refugee program'. See www.refugees.org/countryreports.aspx, accessed on 20 October 2005.

22 Although Ethiopians are viewed as Christian and culturally distinct, the Somalis settled in Muslim areas with their co–ethnics and, therefore, religious and cultural incompatibility

their movements outside of the camps (UNHCR 1996). Hence, they were reluctant to stay in an environment where they were under close scrutiny. Second, unlike southern Somalia where conflicts increasingly escalated in the first half of the 1990s, there was discernible peace in northern Somalia, where about 90 per cent of the refugees originated from. Indeed, almost all of the refugee camps were close to the border and many have been able to assess the security situation either through the self, or through information provided by individuals, who frequently went back and forth across the border. Also, with the establishment of the self–proclaimed Republic of Somaliland and the euphoria generated as a result of this, many saw reasons for continued peace.

Third, because of the occasional clan–based outbursts of violence, such as those in 1994, and the logistical and financial constraints the UNHCR faced, there was no assisted repatriation until 1997 (USCR 1998). Hence, those who decided to return earlier had no option but to self–return. This is especially true of the relatively well to do refugees from Hargeisa, who had fled leaving behind their shops and their secure government employment. Fourth, and related to the previous, most of the camps were close to the border. Hence, the costs of relocation were low, especially for the wealthier refugees. In addition, there were obvious benefits (and some risks) in returning to re–start what appeared to be a much better life compared to camp life. Fifth, as we have seen in Chapter 4, Somali flight to exile was 'acute' because they fled in large numbers to escape the indiscriminate killing and destruction by government troops. They were also 'majority–identified' because they shared the causes of their ordeal. Hence, their attachment to their homeland, when contrasted with the suspicion of Ethiopia they have always harbored, became a powerful 'pull' factor for self–repatriation.

Therefore, the self–repatriated Somali refugees behaved like typical migrants when they decided to return. Indeed, there were manifest political, economic and social variables that acted to 'push' them from the refugee camps, including residual suspicion of Ethiopia, restricted movements and government control of the camps, overcrowded and difficult camp life, and lack of opportunity. As explained above, there were also variables that acted to 'pull' them to their places of habitual residence, including peace, a familiar environment, and the hope of a better economic future. Indeed, as the UNHCR (1996, 27) has observed, 'When peace has returned and the fears that drove refugees into exile are gone, no one needs to tell them it is time to go home. Many of them do—on their own'. And that was exactly what many Somali refugees did.

In some case, however, some refugees do not return on their own even after peace had been established. This was because 'they now have a new kind of fear—that of going back to a ruined homeland and starting over again with very little' (UNHCR 1996, 27). Hence, those with very little possessions wait for incentives to overcome this fear and to decide to return. These incentives, however, do not easily come by

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did not seem to matter much although Ethiopia–Somalia political rivalry has some roots in religion.

because they only occur when there is convergence of interests of the main actors in the repatriation process. In general, the UNHCR and the refugee origin country provide these incentives, as the Somali assisted repatriation process that began in 1997 indicated. The UNHCR readily supplied each returnee with transportation to the destination, some kitchen utensils, food for nine months, and US$30 cash for other expenses prior to departure (USCR 1998). Their departure enabled it to close many camps and to prove to reluctant donors that it can deliver. On the other hand, 'Somaliland' did not have much to provide and resisted uncontrolled assisted repatriation, and instead proposed a managed and gradual repatriation. As 'Somaliland' leaders have indicated, the country just came out of a civil war, some areas were not yet safe, and the self—proclaimed republic did not have a strong economy (USCR 1998). Therefore, they appealed for more development funds, 'saying that rehabilitation [of 'Somaliland'] and repatriation programs must go hand in hand' (UNHCR 1996, 7).

While there was clear economic motive for this, the leaders also had understandable political concerns. Indeed, as Refugees International (10 November 1998) had warned, '[w]ithout international development assistance, Somaliland's commendable transition from war to peace may disintegrate. This is particularly the case if significant numbers of refugees return to conditions which do not permit the basic living standards'. Thus, as an incentive to extract repatriation agreement from the leaders, the UNHCR had spent almost US$14 million in 'Somaliland' on 'quick impact projects' to help integrate refugees in their destinations (ibid). In addition to the funds allocated for rehabilitation purposes, the UNHCR also agreed to replace its initially aggressive repatriation plan by a 'pilot repatriation' of about 10,000 refugees in 1997, and this continued with added resolve thereafter.[23] And this served the repatriation process well because the government received a small fund that it desperately needed and also avoided an uncontrolled repatriation. Although the return of these many refugees was surely burdensome even with these funds secured, it would have been politically unwise for the leaders to oppose repatriation until more development funds have been secured while at the same time pleading for international recognition of the 'Republic'. In other words, the repatriation to 'Somaliland' was an important opportunity for the leaders to prove to the world that the government has been successful at establishing peace and has effective control of its territories. It was also meant to prove to the world that they were responsible and capable of tackling a problem of this magnitude. That is, the UNHCR and 'Somaliland' accommodated each other to push through the repatriation process.

23 The UNHCR was also involved in what is known as 'facilitated returns' to southern parts of Somalia. This means that the UNHCR arranges the trips but also fully informs the prospective returnees of the continuing dangers in their destinations. The large–scale repatriations to the northern part of the country the UNHCR was involved in are known as 'promoted returns'. See http://uscis.gov/graphics/services/asylum/ric/documentation/SOM01022.htm, accessed on 22 October 2005.

As the country of asylum, Ethiopia also had political–security and economic stakes in the repatriation endeavor. It benefited economically from the presence of Somali refugees in its territory. Its refugee agency, the Administration of Refugee and Returnee Affairs (ARRA) run many of the camps with UNHCR funds and this provided employment for its citizens and markets for its products. For example, UNHCR expenditure on the Hartisheik camp from 1988 to mid–1996 amounted to US$124 million, a significant amount for a rather economically marginalized area (UNHCR 1996, 11). At the same time, the government played a supervisory role over the management of camp affairs and this meant some financial benefits for Ethiopia. Indeed, there was constant friction between the UNHCR and Ethiopia (USCR 2000). The economic contributions of the refugees have also been visible. As indicated earlier, many were well to do merchants in their country and continued their entrepreneurial activities in exile and this made the settlements vibrant economic centers. As the UNHCR (1996, 8) has stated, '[y]ou can find almost anything you need at the Hartisheik market: imported clothes; jogging shoes; radios and televisions; auto spare parts …'. Hence Ethiopia had benefited economically, especially because it was not able to provide many of these products itself.

However, there were political risks for Ethiopia, as it has been on constant lookout for ONLF and Al–Ittihad members, who continued to wage low level attacks against government forces. Justifiably, therefore, it maintained strict control over the camps, closely monitored refugee activities, and restricted their interaction with the local Somali population, especially because the latter have yet to identify with Ethiopia. Thus, because of the economic benefits and the political–security risks, Ethiopia's position was ambivalent. Therefore, the main actors in the Somali repatriation process had something to gain, and this ensured a positive outcome of what was once malnutrition and disease ridden largest concentration of refugees in the world.

Spontaneous Repatriations from Ethiopia and Somalia

At the end of 2004, there were about 90,000 Sudanese refugees in Ethiopia and their repatriation is expected to begin in February 2005, approximately one year after the North-South peace agreement was signed. However, there were two large–scale Sudanese repatriations from Ethiopia over the last four decades. The first repatriation of southern Sudan refugees from Ethiopia was the first of its kind in the Horn of Africa and, as briefly mentioned earlier in this chapter, it occurred after the 1972 Addis Ababa Agreement was signed. Most or all of the estimated 35,000 refugees in Ethiopia were peacefully repatriated.[24] The second large–scale repatriation of Sudanese refugees occurred in 1991 when it became clear that the military–led regime in Ethiopia was about to fall. About 300,000 refugees 'spontaneously' returned at a time of increased violence in their homeland, unsure of

24 There were also much bigger repatriations from other neighboring countries, including the former Zaire, Uganda, and the Central African Republic. For details on these, including the numbers who repatriated, please see Akol (1987).

their security brought about by the loss of a sympathetic regime in Ethiopia and the ascendance of a regime friendly to the Sudanese government. As indicated earlier, the SPLM/A, the vanguard party leading the rebellion in the South and with which most of the refugees identified, had assisted Ethiopian government forces in their fighting against the OLF, at the time part of the victorious opposition in Ethiopia. Therefore, they had a well-founded fear of retaliation by the OLF against the SPLM/A, and possibly against the themselves. Hence, the 'kinetics' of their repatriation was 'flight from asylum', similar to their 'kinetics' of flight to asylum.

Therefore, the migration 'push–pull' model, which was taken as a better tool for understanding the assisted and unassisted Ethiopian refugee repatriation from Sudan and Somali refugees from Ethiopia may not apply. Indeed, Sudanese refugees left their asylum country almost suddenly, not knowing what awaits them back home.[25] In fact, as indicated in Chapter 5, many died on their way back because of hunger, disease, and attacks by the Sudanese Air Force. Some also died because of ambushes by rival ethnic militias inside Sudan. Hence, the 'push–pressure–pull' refugee flight model has a better explanatory power for the return of southern Sudan refugees compared to the proposed 'push-pull' model for Ethiopian returnees from Sudan and Somali returnees from Ethiopia. Indeed, their flight was sudden, massive, and conspicuous in its 'absence of positive original motivation'. And much like the decision dynamics of refugee flight to exile, the prospective Sudanese returnee alone made the decision to repatriate in haste.[26]

The return of an estimated 400,000 to 500,000 Ethiopian Somali refugees from Somalia, at the time of a life or death struggle to overthrow Siad Barre during 1988-91 was also flight under emergency conditions and somewhat similar to the return of Sudanese refugees from Ethiopia. Actually the Somali repatriation had started a few years earlier. In fact, the USCR (1985, 46) reported that by 'the end of 1984, more than 300,000 of the 700,000 estimated to be in Somalia had returned to Ethiopia attracted by a UNHCR program agreed upon by the government of Ethiopia and Somalia to provide food, tools , and cattle to help them rebuild their lives'. However, the majority left in haste in the late 1980s because of fear of SNM and Isaaq reprisals for their alleged support of the regime of Siad Barre. Therefore, when the forces of the latter retreated from northern Somalia, almost all of the refugees packed and left for Ethiopia not knowing what awaits them in their homeland. Luckily, they were not subjected to the same indignities the southern Sudanese went through. Nonetheless, the 'kinetics' of their repatriation was similar to the 'kinetics' of their flight to exile. They returned suddenly and in large numbers because of legitimate fear for their personal safety. Like the southern Sudan refugees who spontaneously returned in

25 The evacuation of the camps, especially the huge Itang camp, and the trek back to Sudan is discussed in Johnson (1996, 174–79) and James (1996, 188–90).

26 Although their fear was well–founded, the author saw no evidence the incoming Ethiopian government (or even the OLF) had asked the refugees to leave. Similarly, the UNHCR and the Sudanese government were not involved. However, the SPLM/A may have played some role in their sudden departure from Ethiopia.

1991, the migration 'push–pull' model, therefore, has limited explanatory power because it does not take into account the 'pressure' the refugees were under.

Although southern Sudan refugees in Ethiopia and Ethiopian Somali refugees in Somalia returned on their own volition, the term 'self–repatriation' may not be appropriate. Indeed, 'self–repatriation', as seen earlier, is characterized by a notable absence of life threatening pressure and a conspicuous presence of 'positive original motivations', like the repatriation of Ethiopian Tigrayans from Sudan. Therefore, we may refer to the Sudanese and Ethiopian Somali repatriation discussed above as 'spontaneous' because it is conceptually distinct from 'self–repatriation' both in terms of its 'kinetics' and the nature of the motivations. Simply put, 'spontaneous' repatriation is 'flight' to one's country of origin.

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Chapter 8

Eritrean Refugee Repatriation from Sudan

Introduction

In Chapter 7, we examined Ethiopian refugee repatriations from Sudan and Somalia (and, in passing, from Djibouti) during the 1990s.[1] Indeed, of the over 500,000 Ethiopian refugees in the two countries in 1991,[2] there remained about 32,000 refugees by late 1998 as a result of assisted as well as unassisted repatriations (USCR 1992; USCR 1999). This represents about 94 per cent reduction in the seven years following the regime change in Ethiopia. The number further declined to about 15,000 by early 2004 (USCR 2005). Thus, between 1991 and 2003, the number of Ethiopian refugees declined by a total of about 97 per cent. Therefore, the repatriation endeavor of Ethiopian refugees has been successful and the UNHCR no longer supports pre–1991 Ethiopian refugees in Sudan.

We have also seen Somali refugee repatriation from Ethiopia. As in the Ethiopian repatriation from Sudan and Somalia, this endeavor has also been successful. Of the estimated total of 600,000 Somali refugees in Ethiopia in 1991, only an estimated 201,000 had remained as refugees by late 1998 because of assisted as well as unassisted repatriations (USCR 1992; USCR 1999). This represents about 65 per cent reduction in the seven years following the regime change in Somalia. By early 2004, the total number of Somali refugees in Ethiopia and Djibouti further declined to about 33,800 (USCR 2005). Thus, over the last 13 years between 1991 and 2003, the number of Somali refugees in Ethiopia and Djibouti declined by a total of about 94 per cent. This represents a durable solution to one of the most acute refugee crisis of the early 1990s. The UNHCR has now scaled back its operations and it presence in eastern Ethiopia in early 2005 has been minimal. Similarly, between 350,000 and 400,000 Ethiopian Somali refugees returned under flight conditions in 1988–91 after widespread violence in their country of asylum and most or all of their temporary camps inside Somalia have been closed.

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1 Ethiopian returnees from Kenya are not included in the study, as Kenya is not considered as part of the Horn of Africa.

2 The USCR (1989) reported there were about 365,000 Ethiopian refugees in Somalia and about 660,000 Ethiopian refugees in Sudan in late 1989. The latter included about 500,000 Eritrean refugees. Therefore, the number of non–Eritrean Ethiopian refugees in Sudan was about 160,000.

This does not, however, mean the refugee crisis in the Horn of Africa has been resolved. In fact, in late 2004, there were an estimated 345,000 refugees in the region (from countries of the region) of which some 191,000 were Eritrean refugees in Sudan (USCR 2005). Most of the remaining are Southern Sudan refugees in Ethiopia. There were, however, significant repatriations to Eritrea since the cessation of hostilities in 1991, both assisted as well as unassisted. In fact, out of an estimated total of more than 500,000 Eritrean refugees in mid–1991 in Sudan, about 320,000 remained as refugees in late 1998, a decline of about 36 per cent (USCR, 1999). As indicated above, the refugee number further declined to about 191,000 in late 2004. Thus, between 1991 and 2004, an estimated total of about 310,000 Eritrean refugees repatriated from Sudan. This represents about 62 per cent of the Eritrean refugees in Sudan in 1991. It is clear, therefore, the Eritrean refugee repatriation endeavor from Sudan has gone a long way but has not been as successful as the Ethiopian and Somali repatriation endeavors from Sudan and Ethiopia, respectively.

This chapter examines the dynamics of refugee repatriation to Eritrea, and identifies variables that contributed to its complexity and the continuation of the Eritrean refugee presence in Sudan, some 13 years after the cessation of conflict and the liberation of Eritrea. In particular, what factors made the Eritrean refugee repatriation from Sudan more difficult to manage? Why did some refugees choose to repatriate on their own volition while others waited for assistance from relief organizations and governments? Why did some refugees choose to continue their exile in Sudan despite the successful conclusion of the 30–year old struggle for Eritrean independence?

Refugee Repatriation in Eritrea

There is a large body of literature, which examines variables that encourage or discourage repatriation. These include availability of information to the refugee about conditions at home, which is itself a function of camp distance from the border (Koser 1997); the duration of exile (Bariagaber 2001; Bascom 1994; Rogge and Akol 1989); concerns about the political situation at home (Bariagaber 2001; Bascom 1994); economic benefits in exile and chances of 'repatriating accumulated wealth and personal belongings' (Rogge and Akol 1989); the nature of settlements in the asylum country and ethnic ties with the local population (Akol 1987); and the attractiveness of the returnee destinations (Hansen 1994). The last two variables may easily be manipulated to induce repatriations. For example, in some instances, the UNHCR has resorted to reduction of camp rations in order to promote repatriations. However, the UNHCR did not appear to have resorted to such wide–scale practices to induce Eritrean repatriation. In fact, out of 61 returnees who were aid recipients in exile, only 8 (or about 12 per cent) have indicated that camp rations were reduced or withheld after 1991 (interview 1996). Similarly, governments, the UNHCR, and other aid agencies have undertaken reconstruction and rehabilitation of returnee sites

to make repatriation attractive. Eritrea and the 'Republic of Somaliland' are cases in point.

Almost all of the variables above influence the refugee as to whether or not to repatriate. There are, however, other factors that influence the success or failure of repatriations, especially assisted repatriations. As indicated earlier, the UNHCR, the refugee host country and the refugee origin country all have a stake in the repatriation outcome. That is, they must first agree among themselves before seeking the consent of the refugee to repatriate (Zaeger and Bascom 1996; Bariagaber 1999). In contrast to the positive impact many of the above variables had on the successful repatriations of Ethiopian and Somali refugees from Sudan and Ethiopia, respectively, some had negative impact on the Eritrean repatriation effort. And this makes a deeper examination of the Eritrean case critically important.

It must be noted at the outset that the Eritrean refugee crisis, including the dynamics of flight and settlement in exile, has been more overwhelming compared to the Ethiopian and Somali cases. First, it has been more extensive in duration: it started in 1967 and remains unresolved in 2005. Second, it has been more acute: the number of Eritrean refugees reached the half million mark in the mid–1980s and remained above this number until Eritrean independence in 1991.[3] Third, once the refugee formation started in 1967 it continued to grow non–stop until the late 1980s. On the other hand, the Ethiopian refugee formation in Sudan started only towards the end of the 1970s and was resolved in about two decades; the Somali refugee formation in Ethiopia started in 1988 and was resolved after 15 years; the Ethiopian refugee formation in Somalia started in 1978 and was resolved some 12 years later; and the Sudanese refugee formation in Ethiopia started in 1964 and was resolved by 1974 thanks to the 1972 Addis Ababa Agreement. However, it resumed ten years later and awaits resolution.[4] As difficult as these cases have been to manage, however, the Eritrean refugee formation presented a more intractable case in the region.

Although Eritrean repatriation has not proceeded as smoothly as the others and its successful resolution may take a few more years, many Eritrean refugees, like those from Ethiopia and Somalia, have been willing to return home with assistance from relief organizations and governments. Indeed, in a study of unassisted Eritrean refugees in the Wad el Hileau camp, Bascom (1996, 73) reported that almost all Eritreans included in his sample were willing to return home, and to 'resettle in Eritrea at the same location from which they fled …'. Also, Kibreab (1996, 58) notes that many Eritreans were impatiently waiting for UNHCR assistance to repatriate. In fact, in their eagerness to return to Eritrea, many 'sold their possessions and

3 The number of Ethiopian Ogadeni refugees in Somalia has also remained above the half million mark for about ten years. Hence, it was very comparable to the Eritrean case in terms of its 'acuteness' However, the refugee presence in Somalia was shorter, declined after 1983, and was completely resolved by 1991.

4 The repatriation of the more than 70,000 Sudanese refugees in Ethiopia at the end of 2005 will start in February 2006. There are positive signs that it will proceed smoothly. Already, at least 15,000 of the refugees have indicated their willingness to repatriate (IRIN, 20 December 2005).

dismantled their houses', and were 'reluctant to plant crops'. Other studies also indicate that about 90 per cent of the Eritrean refugee population in Sudan wanted to repatriate (USCR 1998). Therefore, given their preference and their eagerness to repatriate, one would have expected a smooth repatriation and an end to one of the longest refugee crisis in all of Africa. What challenges did the Eritrean repatriation endeavor present when compared to the other successful repatriations in the Horn of Africa?

The Simplicity of Unassisted Repatriation in Eritrea

There were two types or modes through which Eritreans returned home—self-repatriation and assisted repatriation. The self–repatriation of Eritreans actually begun about one year before Eritrea was liberated in 1991. With the series of defeats the Ethiopian army suffered at the hands of the EPLF and the collapse of administrative structures in Eritrea that followed, it had become clear that the end of Ethiopian presence in Eritrea was imminent. As a result, many refugees packed the few belongings they had and left. The self–repatriation continued with increased intensity after Eritrea was liberated. Thus, '[i]n less than a year [after May 1991] more than twenty thousand refugees had crossed the border to Teseney', a border town in Eritrea, and this swelled '[i]ts population of 2,500 … to 10,000 …' (Mayotte 1992, 285). And in three years—that is, 'the 12 months preceding the end of the armed conflict as well as the first two years there after', about 'one in seven' refugees had retuned to Eritrea (Bascom 1996, 67). This ratio translates to roughly about 70,000 refugees. By May 1995, about '110,000 spontaneous returnees refugees (sic) have settled home', of which 'approximately 80 % … were from Sudan' (Government of Eritrea 1995b, 12). That is, close to 90,000 had retuned on their own, some four years after the cessation of hostilities. This represents about 18 per cent of the estimated 500,000 Eritrean refugees at the time of independence.

By August 1998, the total number of self–returnees reached about 200,000 (UNHCR 1998, 102). Most settled spontaneously in places of their choice in the western lowlands of Eritrea and received 'little on no assistance', either in Sudan or in Eritrea (USCR 1998, 68). It is important to note that the self–repatriation of Eritreans, which began in 1990, continued until the late 1990s despite lack of any assistance to reconstitute the ruined home areas. And the returnees knew about the destruction the war had caused, as 'about half of [those] living near the Eritrea–Sudan border had visited Eritrea to assess conditions' and had expected that life was not going to be easy (ibid). Despite this, they returned, sometimes impervious to the potential assistance by the UNHCR and other agencies and at other times unwilling to use this option. Indeed, out of a sample of 49 self-returnees, 19 said they had knowledge of the bipartite repatriation agreement between the UNHCR and the Eritrean government (interview 1996). Nonetheless, they returned on their own.

From May 1998 to the end of 2002, there was no significant self–repatriation because of the Eritrean-Ethiopian border war. Clearly, as any rational actor would do, Eritreans postponed their return. This is especially true because the intended

resettlement areas were close to the border with Ethiopia. Moreover, with Ethiopian troop advances and the retreat of the Eritrean army in mid–2000, a new influx of nearly 100,000 refugees to Sudan occurred. This discouraged potential self–returnees, not only during the said period but also thereafter. Nonetheless, by 2002, a total of about 268,000 Eritreans retuned either on their own volition or through assistance (Kibreab 2005, 133). Given that almost 200,000 retuned unassisted by 1998, it is clear that there were more self–returnees compared to assisted returnees, some seven years after the successful end of the struggle for Eritrean independence. This compares well with the self–repatriation of the Somali and Ethiopian refugees. Although a lot of attention has been given to assisted repatriation in Eritrea as well as in other cases, the most important and durable solution to the refugee crisis has been self–repatriation of refugees. As the UNHCR (1996) has indicated, refugees do not need any reminder about the time to go home. Indeed, they go when it is time to go and do not wait for the international community to get involved unless they have reasons to do otherwise.

The Complexity of Assisted Repatriation in Eritrea

The second type or mode of repatriation of Eritrean refugees from Sudan is assisted repatriation. However, the success of this type of repatriation pales in comparison with the assisted repatriations of Ethiopians from Sudan. Initially though, there were high hopes that the Eritrean refugees presence in Sudan would cease to exist by 1997 because of the refugees' eagerness to return, the helping hand of the international community and the country of origin, and the good will of the asylum county. As explained below, it ran into difficulty after difficulty because of contrasting actor interests and the vagaries of regional politics.

Immediately after Eritrea's liberation in May 1991, the Provisional Government of Eritrea and the UNHCR began negotiations to help repatriate the hundreds of thousands of Eritrean refugees in Sudan (Provisional Government of Eritrea 1992). The UNHCR was eager to resolve one of the most durable refugee crises in Africa to reduce cost. Likewise, the Government of Eritrea was very receptive—indeed enthusiastic—to the idea of assisted repatriation, provided sufficient funds were available to help the refugees resettle and start a new life. Having proven its efficiency during the war, the EPLF saw this as an opportunity to show the world it has transformed from a successful liberation movement into a responsible and effective government. In fact, the Commission for Eritrean Refugee Affairs (CERA) 'planned to repatriate about 250,000 refugees from Sudan … to be completed by the end of 1993 (UNHCR 1992, 10). The Eritrean government estimated this would cost about US$ 200 million. On the other hand, UNHCR's estimate was about US$ 30 million (Kibreab 1996b, 58). The plan fell apart because their respective estimates were irreconcilable. Eritrea refused to cooperate with the UNHCR on the grounds that it did not have the economic capacity to absorb the hundreds of thousands who will arrive in UNHCR–organized convoys. However, it never interfered with the self–return of individual Eritreans because the government expected this would be

gradual as self–repatriates will have to make their own arrangements. Also, they had a clear understanding that the government was not obligated to provide them with any assistance.

Thus, the need for the UNHCR to resolve a long–lasting problem with minimal funds and to show the increasingly impatient donor community that is can deliver, on the one hand, and the inability of the Eritrean government to support massive refugee return only a year or two after independence, on the other, created the first roadblock on the way to a successful assisted repatriation. The heart of the problem was, therefore, the way the two parties understood what repatriation meant. For the UNHCR, repatriation involved successful return across the border and perhaps some assistance with food and farming tools, similar to what it did, or intended to do, for Ethiopian and Somali returnees.[5] For Eritrea, repatriation and re–integration were organically linked, with significantly larger capital allocated to the latter because it included rehabilitation of the war–devastated areas on which the returnees were expected to settle.

The UNHCR interpreted Eritrean leaders' behavior as uncooperative because '[they placed] obstacles in the way of their people coming home' (Kibreab 1996b, 62). Eritrea, on the other hand, saw UNHCR estimates as woefully inadequate, and perhaps discriminatory, as UNHCR's previous assistance for refugee repatriation in places such as Mozambique, Namibia, and Kampuchea were more generous. In Mozambique, for example, the 'UNHCR established not only a major program to help refugees return, but also started the most ambitions project in its history to help them reintegrate once they reached home, spending around $100 million distributing food, providing seeds, tools and shelter materials and rebuilding roads, schools, health centers and wells' (UNHCR 1998, 7). This amount was spent to help repatriate about 400,000 returnees, with about US$250 per returnee.[6] On the other hand, UNHCR's estimate of US$31 million for Eritrean repatriation would have meant about US$155 per Eritrean returnee. The attempt was, therefore, abandoned because of irreconcilable differences. As a result, the UNHCR continued to provide assistance to those still in Sudan, perhaps at a higher cumulative cost to the international community.

The stalemate in the refugee repatriation endeavor ended when the Eritrean government formally proposed a new and comprehensive Programme for Refugee Reintegration and Rehabilitation of Settlement Areas in Eritrea (PROFERI) in July 1993. This program envisioned to repatriate about 380,000 refugees from Sudan at a cost of approximately US$262.2 million in 'three phases beginning July 1993 and ending in January 1997' (Government of Eritrea 1995b, 12 and 20). Phase I plan envisioned 'the repatriation of 100,000 refugees to 50 sites in 18 months …'

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5 It also allocated some funds for infrastructure development in Somalia and Ethiopia. However, the UNHCR saw this as a generous extension of the repatriation endeavor.

6 In Kampuchea, the UNHCR estimated the costs of repatriation at about US$3 billion for 'similar operations'. This is a far more generous repatriation estimate than any other repatriation in Africa and probably anywhere else in the world (Habte Selassie 1996, 49).

at a cost of about US$100.9 million, after which Phases II and III plans would be implemented to resettle about 150,000 (at an estimated cost of US$79.9 million) and 130,000 (at an estimated cost of about US$71.2 million), respectively (Government of Eritrea 1995b, 14; Hansen 1995, 11).

The search for funds for PROFERI officially began in July 1993 when the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Department of Humanitarian affairs (UNDHA), in cooperation with the Government of Eritrea, organized a PROFERI Pledge Conference in Geneva, Switzerland, where 69 governments, 24 UN agencies, five multilateral organizations, and 37 NGOs took part (Government of Eritrea 1995b, 20). At the home front, the UNHCR and the Eritrean government reached a Memorandum of Understanding in April 1994 to facilitate the planned official repatriation of Eritreans. Similarly, Sudan and the UNHCR reached a separate bilateral agreement covering the modalities of repatriation from the camps to the border. Although this arrangement (that is, two parallel bilateral agreements) was 'unusual' in the sense that it deviated from the 'tripartite' agreement the UNHCR, the host country, and the origin country commonly employ, it nevertheless set the stage for the formal beginning of the repatriation.[7]

The optimism generated after the successful attendance of many parties did not, however, translate into generous pledges. Only US$ 32.4 million out of the estimated US$ 262 million was pledged, and this was not nearly enough even for the Phase I of PROFERI to repatriate the 100,000 Eritreans (Government of Eritrea 1995b, 20).[8] As a consequence, PROFERI was 'scaled back' and replaced by a Pilot Project to return about 4,500 families, or close to 25,000 individual returnees. By 14 November 1994, some 4,970 families have been repatriated, more than the envisioned 4,500 families. In other words, the refugees as well as the Government of Eritrea and the UNHCR showed repatriation could be that much efficient when the available funds and the volume of returnees are made to fit each other. Nonetheless, the lack of funds to undertake the much more ambitious PROFERI represented the second roadblock on the way to successful repatriation.

Political disagreements between Sudan and Eritrea also hampered the repatriation effort. Immediately after Eritrea became independent, the victorious EPLF formed a provisional government that excluded other opposition groups, such as the Eritrean Islamic Jihad. The latter expanded its activities against the Government of Eritrea during 1992–94 with the support of the newly–established Islamic government in Sudan, which was bent on exporting 'Islamic fundamentalism'.[9] As a result, the two countries severed diplomatic relations at the end of 1994, and this made the repatriation effort more difficult. Indeed, in October 1995, the Sudanese government 'announced that it no longer recognised (sic) the bipartite agreements' to repatriate

7 See '*Memlas*: The UNHCR in Eritrea', May 1996, 2. *Memlas* is a Tigrigna word for return or repatriation.

8 For a list of donors and the amount pledged, please consult Kibreab 1996b, 63.

9 See, for example, www.iss.co.za/AF/current/Sudan03.html, assessed on 24 December 2005.

Eritrean refugees and called for a new tripartite agreement to replace the existing parallel bilateral agreements (*Memlas*, May 1996, 2). The Eritrean government was unwilling to negotiate with the Sudanese government about the repatriation of Eritrean refugees not only because of the existing political disagreements but also because of economic reasons. According to an Eritrean government official, Sudan made the call for a tripartite agreement because of its need to secure financial dividends from PROFERI funds for rehabilitation of the refugee vacated areas in Sudan. That is, this demand was made in order to get a 'compensation' for hosting Eritrean refugees for decades (interview with a government official 1996).

The same official also gave the following additional reasons for Sudan's reluctance to let Eritreans go. First, Eritreans provided 'cheap and effective' labor in sectors where the Sudanese were unwilling or unable to work, and Eritreans were hard working and competent. Second, Sudan was benefiting from refugee remittances sent from relatives abroad and this had alleviated hard currency shortages for many years. Third, Sudan was getting food assistance for its population partly because it gave asylum to hundreds of thousands of Eritrean, Ethiopians, and the Ugandans. Kibreab (1996a, 173) also notes that the reluctance of the Sudanese government to cooperate may be explained in terms of its need to ensure the continued employment of the about '2000 employees of the Office of the Commission (sic) for refugees (COR) who are presently paid by UNHCR'. Also, it is not difficult to imagine additional employment opportunities the refugee industry provided, not only for COR personnel but also for others involved in relief distribution from the docks in Port Sudan to their final destinations in the refugee camps. Thus, while the Pilot Programme was in the progress, it became increasingly clear that Phase I of PROFERI was not going to start because of political and financial reasons.

As indicated earlier, the UNHCR saw the Eritrean government as uncooperative and ambivalent about repatriation of its citizens, and as the main source of the difficulty in the repatriation process. According to the UNHCR (1998, 68), the Eritreans requested that prospective returnees be screened to determine their 'suitability for repatriation', and this was intended to make repatriation almost impossible, given the hundreds of thousands of individuals to be screened. Also, the screening process would potentially discourage would–be returnees from coming forward because of the fear that this is likely to generate. Indeed, the Eritrean Liberation Front–Revolutionary Council (ELF–RC) suggested that the lack of progress in the repatriation of Eritreans from Sudan was due to EPLF's unwillingness to admit refugees who harbor anti–EPLF sentiments. It further stated, '[f]or a considerable number of refugees the EPLF [now in power] persecution was the direct cause of their leaving the country [and this] *remains the main reason for their continued stay abroad*. The majority of them are considered by the government as political enemies because they happen to be members or supporters of the ELF–RC… (ELF–RC 12 May 1997, emphasis in original).

The tension between the UNHCR and the Eritrean government finally led to 'rupture' between the two and the expulsion of the 'international employees of UNHCR from the country in May 1997' (USCR 1998, 68). Thus, there was almost

no assisted repatriation after the successful end of the Pilot Program in 1995 because of the contest of two wills: the UNHCR insisted and expected Eritrea to take what it was offered and Eritrea determined to expose the double standards of the international community in dealing with repatriations and also to show, as a sovereign nation, it was entitled to reject offers it deemed as insufficient to meet its stated objectives. This was an important incident in post–independence Eritrean history because it began a pattern of Eritrean behavior based on 'cooperate if you can, withhold cooperation if you must'. It is, therefore, important to make a brief note as to why the UNHCR saw Eritrean government leaders as hard to deal with, and how the latter viewed their relationship with the outside world, especially their relationships with the UN and its various organs.

During the long years of the struggle for independence, Eritrean leaders in general and, EPLF leaders in particular, have come to view that international politics was not based on strict adherence to international law nor on widely accepted ethical standards. This view came to take shape after Eritrean leaders made repeated but unsuccessful appeals to the UN in the late 1950s and later to the OAU to look into the illegality of Ethiopia's gradual erosion of the Ethio–Eritrean federal arrangement and the final annexation of Eritrea.[10] Instead major powers, including the US and the former USSR, at one time or another, have assisted Ethiopia in its quest to crush the independence struggle. Hence, Eritrean leaders have come to accept 'self–reliance' as the only way to achieve a desired goal. Similarly, they have noticed that interference by various Arab governments to extend their influence in the ELF had greatly weakened the organization.[11] Hence, they cherished 'organizational autonomy' and kept other parties' influence on the EPLF at a minimum. Therefore, their 'rigid' stand in their dealings with the UNHCR may be seen as a continuation of this.

These two related 'principles' continued to shape EPLF leaders in the way they dealt with the international community after independence. They indeed recognized the need for assistance in the daunting task of reconstruction and development. So they relaxed 'self–reliance' and welcomed outside assistance as long as Eritrea retained the 'national execution' of plans, which included absolute control of the initiation, planning, and, above all, implementation of assisted programs (interview with a government official 1996). Any assistance which puts this in jeopardy was summarily rejected despite the short–term (and possibly long–term) financial benefits.[12] Thus, with regard to repatriation, the government expected the UNHCR and other NGOs to assist, and only assist, in the implementation of plans. Moreover, the UNHCR

10 The OAU did not see the Eritrean struggle for independence favorably and Eritrean leaders have never been invited to attend any of its meetings. Hence, use of conference corridors was the only avenue available to the leaders.

11 On the weaknesses of the ELF and the reasons for the internal factionalization, please see *Nihnan Elamanan* 1971.

12 Recent rejection of UN food aid because of 'good harvest' and suspension of US Agency for International Development (USAID) operations in Eritrea at the request of the government in late 2004 may be related to this. These are only two of many others that indicate the extent to which Eritrea may go to safeguard its 'autonomy' and 'self-reliance'.

and other relief agencies knew they may not enter into a formal agreement with each other to coordinate their activities in Eritrea because the government would object (interview with UNHCR personnel, 1996).[13] The UNHCR, on the other hand, has resources the mostly poorer asylum and/or home countries need and is, more often than not, used to pushing its plans through, as in the repatriations in Ethiopia, Somalia, and others places in Africa. Nonetheless, both the UNHCR and the Eritrean government knew that they needed each other, and their relationship in the 1990s revolved around accommodation and tension, one replacing the other constantly, except for the one instance of a 'rupture' in 1997 (interview with UNHCR personnel 1996). Hence, in addition to the political and economic variables identified earlier, there was an important psychological barrier that made the repatriation process more complex.[14]

The Eritrean-Ethiopian war, which began in May 1998, also had a negative impact on repatriation. Any talk of repatriation was out of the question, as Eritrea was focused on the war effort. This ended in February 2000 after the formal signing of the Algiers Agreement between Ethiopia and Eritrea, and the UNHCR resumed operations nearly three years after its international staff were expelled. Similarly, Eritrea and Sudan renewed diplomatic relations in January 2000 and re–opened their common border. Thus, in April 2000, the UNHCR, Eritrea, and Sudan signed a Tripartite Agreement to resume assisted repatriation (USCR 2001). The repatriation process was back on track in 2001, during which an estimated 33,000 refuges returned with assistance. Although the nature of the assistance did not go as far as Eritrea had demanded, still UNHCR assistance to Eritrean refugees were more generous compared to Ethiopian and Somali returnees. Indeed, the returnees received a one–year food supply, home essentials, farming tools, and cash grant of about US$200. The Eritrean government agreed to provide each refugee family a plot of land on which to build a house and an additional plot of land to cultivate (USCR 2002).

The final roadblock in the repatriation effort occurred when Sudan and Eritrea once more broke off diplomatic relations and closed their common border in October 2002.[15] Of the estimated 36,000 Eritrean refugees who registered with the UNHCR to repatriate during 2003, only about 9,444 have been repatriated (*UNHCR Global Report 2003* 2004d, 176).[16] In 2004, only about 9,900 repatriated with assistance

13 The Danish Refugee Council, one of the largest contributors of funds to UNHCR endeavors in Eritrea, was not directly involved in the repatriation effort. However, it was regularly updated through an 'informal information sharing mechanism' it had with the UNHCR (interview with Danish Refugee Council official 1996).

14 A Danish Refugee Council official thought the main sources of the friction between non–governmental organizations (NGOs) and government officials was the military thinking of the latter. The same official talked about the impatience of government officials with the way the UNHCR and other agencies do business because Eritrean leaders were used to perpetual states of emergencies during the 30–year period of independence.

15 The two countries have re–established diplomatic relations in December 2005.

16 In addition to the border closure, heavy seasonal rains, especially from July to October, also hampered the ongoing repatriation.

(*UNHCR Global Report 2004* 2005, 204). It is clear, therefore, that assisted repatriations are on the decline because the pool of prospective returnee has been depleted. In fact, not more than 5,000 were scheduled to repatriate with UNHCR assistance in 2005 (*UNHCR Global Appeal 2005* 2004c, 123). Nonetheless, since 2000, an estimated total of 120,000 refugees have repatriated with assistance and another 110,000 without assistance. That is, there were parallel assisted and unassisted repatriations.

There still remained about 190,000 refugees still in Sudan at the beginning of 2005, two years after the UNHCR invoked the 'Ceased Circumstances' clauses on 31 December 2002.[17] Accordingly, the UNHCR determined that Eritreans can no longer claim refugee status based on the pre–1991 independence war or on the 1998–2000 border war with Ethiopia. However, individual refugees were given the opportunity to come forward and submit claims for consideration of continued international protection. Consequently, about 100,000 refugees have asked for continued international protection and have made known their desire not to repatriate to Eritrea any time soon.

The issues in the paragraphs above raise three critically important questions on the dynamics of Eritrean repatriation (and non-repatriation). First, why did some Eritrean refugees choose to stay in exile and not repatriate at all? Second, why did others opt to repatriate? Third, of those who opted to repatriate, why did some repatriate on their own while other waited for assistance from governmental and non–governmental agencies?

Deciding Not to Return

Eritrean refugees, like most refugees elsewhere, are not the homogeneous group of individuals that we generally assume. They are differentiated by age; gender; political, ethnic, and religious affiliation; socio–economic status; and so forth. Refugees may also be differentiated by the 'kinetics' and the reasons for their original flight, even if they belonged to the same age, gender, socio–economic, or ethnic group. However, most refugees flee because of imminent threat to their lives. Of those, some flee with a clear intention of migrating to a wealthier third country. That is, the economic motive is superimposed on the security situation to become an important precipitating variable for flight. Kibreab (1996a, 161), for example, reports that almost two in five in a sample of 292 Ethiopian and Eritrean refugees in Khartoum responded that they were in the city to 'seek resettlement and emigration opportunities'. Therefore, cessation of hostilities will have no impact on their behavior. Similarly, many of those who originally left because of legitimate security concerns and intended to return when the situation permitted go through many life changes in exile and may not want to repatriate. Indeed, some become financially

17 See Article 1. C (5) of the 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, as well as Article 1. 4 (e) of the 1969 OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa.

successful, others more politically active in opposition to the government at home, and yet others get married and become parents of children who know of no other 'home' than that in exile. These and other transformations are expected to make repatriation unattractive.

There are other reasons as well. First, as we have seen earlier, assisted as well as unassisted repatriations were more or less like migrations, and the 'kinetics' may be determined by 'push' and 'pull' factors. It is, therefore, expected that Eritreans would repatriate if there were strong incentives that serve as 'pull' factors for them to return. However, there were economic, political, and other factors that made it unattractive for Eritreans to return. To begin with, the thirty–year war has decimated the Eritrean economy and the EPLF had inherited a country in ruins with no natural resources to generate immediate capital for reconstruction. And although it registered remarkable growth in the first few years after independence, thanks in large part to the generous contributions of the Eritrean Diaspora, the tragic war between Eritrea and Ethiopia in 1998 has had a negative impact on its economy. Indeed, the war was associated with increases in resource allocation for defense purposes. Similarly, the imposition of strict military conscription requirement for the young and able–bodied has created shortages of manpower in other sectors of the economy, and this has adversely affected Eritrea's economic performance. Therefore, the government was unable to generously support the returnees to start a new life. At the same time, the international community was not forthcoming with the necessary funds for reintegration and rehabilitation of the resettlement areas. Many of the refugees knew first hand through visits and information from relatives that their lives were not going to be easy in Eritrea. As a result, some chose to stay in exile.

Second, at the domestic level, political developments in Eritrea have evolved in a direction that discouraged repatriation. After the EPLF defeated the Ethiopian army, it outlawed all opposition groups. Although it invited members of these groups to return as individuals and re–start their livelihood, many felt excluded and unwelcome in Eritrea. Hence, they continued their political activities abroad and this included refugee camps. Also, the recent 'clampdown on government reformers, journalists, and anyone suspected of allegedly threatening "national security"' has created a sense of 'generalized fear of insecurity' in Eritrea and on those who aspired to return (Kibreab 2005, 136−137). Opposition groups have skillfully used this to instill fear and the reluctance to return among refugee communities. For example, when the Eritrean government called for a process to determine whether the individual refugee was willing to repatriate, the ELF–RC came out with a statement that the main reason for the continued exile of Eritreans had been EPLF's unwillingness to see supporters of rival opposition parties return (ELF–RC 12 May 1997). That is, personal security at home has become an issue of paramount importance for returnees.

Third, at the regional level, political tensions between Eritrea and Sudan and between Eritrea and Ethiopia have had an adverse impact on the willingness of some Eritreans to return. The repeated Eritrean–Sudanese border closures and the political support each gave to the opposition in the other have magnified the sense of insecurity not only along the border areas but also inside Eritrea and Sudan. Similarly, the

Ethiopian–Eritrean border war has had a discouraging effect on refugees' return. Although close to a 100,000 Eritreans had become new refugees in Sudan in 2000 because of the war, most have since returned. However, streams of modest numbers of refugees are still crossing the border either to look for better economic opportunities elsewhere or to escape the 'open–ended National Service program for all people between the ages of 18 and 40 …' (Kibreab 1996a, 136). There has also been increased refugee flight from Eritrea lately because of fear of a renewed war. It would not be hard to imagine some refugees postponing or altogether abandoning their return because of increased regional instability. This is especially true for those that are between the ages of 18 and 40 who would naturally be concerned about what appears to be an indefinite service in the armed forces or in other defense–related sectors.

As rational actors, therefore, refugees weigh the benefits and losses of repatriation as they have done that during their flight to asylum years earlier. Indeed, more than ten years ago, Hansen (1994) concluded that Eritreans in Sudan were unlikely to repatriate in overwhelming numbers unless they were convinced that their lives would be better off in Eritrea compared to their camp life in Sudan, and had further suggested ways to make return more attractive. As explained above, therefore, the further deterioration of the political and economic situation in Eritrea and across the region have resulted in yet a new group of arrivals, commonly referred in Sudan as the 'Kosovo' group. They do not 'fit [the] the stereotypical image of a refugee' because they [are] 'well–dressed, well–fed and disinterested in spending even a single day in Sudan' (Kibreab 2005, 136). They are also not interested in returning to Eritrea. Hence, this new group of post–independence refugees and the older pre–independence refugees, many of which are members or hard–core supporters of opposition groups, are unlikely to return to Eritrea under the present political climate. Hence, they constitute new 'events–alienated' refugees (Kunz 1981, 43).[18]

Deciding to Return and How

Eritrean refugees in Sudan responded in three different ways to the cessation of hostilities in Eritrea in 1991. As we saw earlier, some continued to live in exile apparently impervious to the fundamental changes that took place in their home country. On the other hand, others readied themselves to return home after decades of absence. Thus, out of the estimated 500,000 Eritrean refugees in Sudan in 1991, between 300,000 and 320,000 have returned under their own direction or under the auspices of governmental and non-governmental agencies. All of those who self–sponsored their own return received little or no assistance. On the other hand, those who returned under governmental and non–governmental sponsorship received assistance in various degrees. For example, those who retuned under the

18 According to Kunz (1981), 'events–-alienated' refugees are those who do not take a stand on issues affecting the nation. They do not look forward to return to their homeland and, as a consequence, they are more likely to be more successful in the asylum country.

Pilot Project of PROFERI in the mid–1990s were given transportation assistance, farming equipments, food until their first harvest, ready–made residential units, and land to plant crops. Although those who returned after 2000 with assistance did not get ready–made residential units, they received transportation assistance, some pocket money, farming equipments, and so on. Therefore, there were clear economic advantages to organized repatriation. What are the factors that contributed to the two modes of repatriation, especially when one of them was far more attractive? To answer this question, we rely on data the author collected in Summer 1996 in Guluj, a returnee site in Eritrea, and on interviews conducted in Summer 1995 and Summer 1996 with Eritrean government officials, UNHCR personnel, and Danish Refugee Council, all based in Asmara (Eritrea).

Although most of the pre–1975 Eritrean refugees in Sudan originated from the western lowlands of Eritrea, larger proportion of Eritreans from the highlands became refugees thereafter. And when repatriation started in the early 1990s, lowland as well as highland Eritrean refugees, the Government of Eritrea, and probably the UNHCR favored the Gash–Setit Province in the western lowland for re–settlement of the majority of the returnees. According to the government, 'the plan [was] for the western lowlands to absorb the majority of the returning refugees from Sudan. The province of Gash–Setit … [was] expected to more than double in population once the returnees have arrived' (as quoted in Hansen 1995, 2). Given a population of nearly 300,000 in the province in 1995, it means that about 300,000 of the 500,000 estimated refugees in Sudan were expected to resettle in the province alone. Indeed, the Gash–Setit Province is more sparsely populated, has higher average rainfall, and less competition for farmland than other parts of Eritrea. Additional factors for the projected resettlement in the province included the 'willingness of residents to accept returnees as well as willingness of returnees to return to the site and equity considerations between provinces' (Government of Eritrea 1995a, 10). Thus, by early March 1995, a total of 3,872 families had returned to Eritrea. Of these '3,237 families … or 84 per cent of all returnee families' settled in sites in the Gash–Setit Province (Hansen 1995, 13).[19] Given the initial estimate of settling about 300,000 returnees in the province, many more returnees are expected to have settled in the province during 2000–2004.

Of the sites in Gash–Setit, Guluj is notable not only because of its relatively large number of assisted returnees of about 650 families, but also because of its large self–settled returnees of about 600 families as of April 1995.[20] In terms of its setup, Guluj consists of two quarters separated by a small creek. The newer quarter, which

19 A joint publication of the Commission for Eritrean Refugee Affairs (CERA) and the UNHCR puts the number of returnees in the province at 14,498 or 85.5 per cent of all returnees (Government of Eritrea April 1995, 28).

20 Of the 17 sites in the province in April 1995, only Tebeldia, Fanco, and Gergef sites with 925, 863, and 729 families, respectively, had larger number of returnee families compared to Guluj. All the sites in the six other provinces had accommodated much fewer returnee families (Government of Eritrea undated, 4).

consisted of residential units built with funds secured from the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ), houses assisted returnees who also received many types of assistance, including transportation from refugee camps in Sudan to the resettlement site, food until the first harvest, farming equipments, and land for farming the government allocated.[21] They mainly came from camps in Sudan designated by the UNHCR for repatriation, such as Um Sagata, Shegerab, Kassala and Fau. Refugee representatives had previously seen these sites in a UNHCR–arranged pre–repatriation visits. That is, the assisted returnees were given enough information while in Sudan and decided to return voluntarily.

Those who retuned on their own, however, have built their own individual residential units in the older quarter of Guluj on small plots of land the government allocated. Beyond this, however, they received little or no assistance, either in Sudan or in Eritrea. In fact, some of them came forward to ask for repatriation through UNHCR assistance while in Sudan but were told to wait for their turn until the end of the Pilot Project and the beginning of the full–fledged PROFERI. They were not willing to wait and instead returned on their own. Hence, these refugees also decided to return voluntarily. Both types of returnees resettled in Guluj, and this made it logistically easier to have access to both types of returnees and to examine the factors that influenced their assisted or unassisted return.

In an effort to increase the representatives of the sample of assisted returnees, a systematic sampling method was applied. Accordingly, every sixth residential unit from the patterned and clearly identified GTZ built units was selected for the interview,[22] and this resulted in a total sample of 55 assisted returnee families out of a total of about 650.[23] In case the head of a household was not available, the next residential unit was selected for an interview. The residential units for self–assisted returnees were not, however, patterned. Therefore, an ad–hoc pattern was identified for sample collection purposes, and this resulted in a sample of 49 unassisted returnee families from a total of about 600. Again, the head of the household of every sixth unit from the 'quasi–pattern' identified for the study purposes was selected for the interview. Also, in case the head of a household was absent, the next residential unit was interviewed. Hence, significant effort was put to make the sample of assisted as well as unassisted returnees as representative as possible.

The questionnaire consisted of 27 individual questions, dealing with the refugee reasons for flight, duration in exile, political affiliation, socio–linguistic characteristics, personality traits, and other demographic characteristics. The original English questionnaire was independently translated by two individuals for each of

21 Originally, the food aid was to last until the first harvest. However, the returnees did not become self–sufficient after the first harvest. Therefore, aid was extended until the second harvest (interview with UNHCR personnel, 1996)

22 The interview was conducted with the head of the household, and this could be the wife or the husband in married households. However, in almost all cases the husbands were interviewed because they came forward.

23 The sampling interval, n=6, was selected because the principal investigator was informed in advance that some of the families may be away tending their farmlands.

the two dominant languages in Eritrea—Tigrigna and Tigre. For each language, any discrepancy in the translation was reconciled to give the best possible translation of the English questionnaire, and to make any question as clear and as unambiguous as possible. In an attempt to avoid interviewer bias, or interviewer undue influence on how respondents answered each question, prior instructions on how to collect data was given to each interviewer, who read each question and registered the respondent's answers.

The empirical findings were mixed, some consistent with the literature and others not. That almost all Eritrean returnees (and probably those that are still in exile) fled because of violence in their vicinity, unlike Ethiopians who also fled because of military conscription, villagization, and other factors, has been clearly demonstrated. In fact, about 87 per cent of all returnees fled because of war in close proximity of their homes, and an additional 9.2 per cent fled because of security–related reasons. Only 1 in 55 (or two per cent) of self–returnees and 3 in 49 (or six per cent) of assisted returnees said they left because of 'imitation', that is, because they saw other fleeing. Although the latter finding may not say much because the percentages are small, the proposition that refugees who fled because of 'imitative behavior' tend to look for assistance if they were to return deserves a more in depth investigation in future studies.[24] None of the respondents said conscription was a factor in their flight, as the Eritrean military landscape was highly contested and Ethiopia was in no position to implement the conscription endeavor. Also, about four in five of all returnees had prior knowledge of the conditions in Eritrea after independence and made their decision based on that. Indeed, Eritrean refugees made 'considered' decisions to repatriate and how.

The second important finding is that refugees who left a family member behind were more likely to self–return. In fact, about 65 per cent of self–returnees said that they had left a family member back home at the time they fled compared to about 49 per cent of assisted returnees. That is, the need to see a family member for the first time in decades constitutes one of the strongest 'pull' factors, and is an important predicator for self–repatriation. Also, availability of farmland upon return acted as a powerful 'pull' factor for assisted returnees. About 60 per cent of all respondents comprised of individuals belonging to one linguistic group that came from the highlands of Eritrea, where land is scarce and less productive compared to the Gash–Setit Province. However, they comprised about 77 per cent of assisted returnees. The fact that they overwhelmingly returned with assistance ensured that they will have housing and farmland to make a living, something which is scarce if they were to return to their places of habitual residence in the highlands of Eritrea. Indeed, this study confirmed the hypothesis that the more attractive the offer is to an individual, the more that individual will choose assisted repatriation (Hansen 1994).

24 This, of course, hinges on the assumption that there are enough of those who are prepared to say they indeed fled because they saw others fleeing. For obvious reasons, the likelihood many would say this is small.

The third important finding pertains to the personality traits of an individual: refugees who were assisted in exile were more likely to return with assistance compared to unassisted refugees in exile. Indeed, about 73 per cent of the assisted returnees had been assisted in exile, as opposed to 44 per cent of the unassisted returnees. Similarly, about 79 per cent of self–returnees believed that the type of life they led was determined by their own actions (as opposed to some kind of fate) compared to about 51 per cent of assisted returnees. We may then, plausibly conclude that self–returnees have a higher 'internal locus of control', and were more independent (Lefcourt 1982). That is, 'internals experience the greatest discomfort as refugees and were more likely to take active steps [that is, steps on their own] to re–establish control over their lives. Externals, on the other hand, were more likely to await programs provided by external agencies in responding to opportunities to repatriate' (Bariagaber 2001, 54). How and why some refugees have higher 'internal locus of control' and others lower 'internal locus of control' was beyond the scope of the interview.[25]

The data, however, did not support the theoretical expectation that politically conscious groups abroad will immediately self–repatriate once the regime they opposed is removed and replaced by a sympathetic regime. Of those who were members or supporters of opposition groups, about 65 per cent repatriated unassisted as opposed to about 88 per cent who repatriated with assistance.[26] That is, support for the incumbent regime did not translate into immediate self–repatriation. Probably the ruined economy at home, the realization that the new government had limited means to assist, and the benefits to be had from assisted repatriation, which included the singularly important land for farming but also ready–made housing, had a dampening effect on their enthusiasm for a quick self–return.

Moreover, about 56 per cent of the unassisted returnees took asylum before 1982 as opposed to 31 per cent of assisted returnees. Theoretically, one would expect that those who had lived in exile longer would get used to their environment in exile and stay. But if they were to return, they would repatriate under the auspices of aid agencies because they provided transportation assistance for property accumulated over the years. Alternatively, it may be argued that because of the hardships of exile, where UNHCR assistance for African refugees on per capita basis is smaller compared to refugees elsewhere, they never had much and this made them candidates for quick and unassisted repatriation. The latter is more plausible, especially because Sudan had effectively isolated rural refugees and never extended citizenship rights

25 The study of the psychological traits of refugees has been scant. More in–depth studies may shed light on the prospects for successful repatriations. It would also be interesting to see if assistance in exile contributes to 'dependency syndrome' that may extend to repatriation behavior.

26 It was unwise to ask the returnees if they had been members or supporters of opposition groups in exile. It is assumed that refugees of this orientation will stay in Sudan, as the ELF–RC statement mentioned earlier had indicated.

that would have opened opportunities for a better life for urban as well as rural refugees. Hence, self–exit from Sudan was a way out of years of hardships.

Chapter 9

Conclusions

This study set out to accomplish four main tasks relevant in the conflict–refugee nexus in the Horn of Africa. These were (1) to explain the intractability of the various conflicts, which made each country in the region a refugee origin and host country at the same time; (2) to examine the nature of the decision–making of the various actors during refugee flight, exile, and repatriation; (3) to explore the possible links between the dynamics of refugee flight, the structure of settlements in exile, and the dynamics of refugee repatriation; and (4) to advance a general proposition that would potentially help in the formulation of policies for effective and successful repatriations. These issues can only be explored fully if conflicts and the refugee experience—flight to asylum, settlement in exile, and repatriation back home—are studied longitudinally.

The Horn of Africa provided a fertile ground for this study because conflicts and the accompanying refugee situations in the region have been the most persistent in Africa and perhaps elsewhere in the world, with the exception of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict and the attendant refugee situation.[1] Indeed, some trace the North–South conflict in Sudan and the struggle for independence in Eritrea to political developments in the 1950s and the armed revolt that followed. With the ongoing fresh conflicts in the eastern and western parts of Sudan; the continuing border conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea; and Somalia's inability to constitute a national government despite many attempts, the Horn of Africa still remains one of the most conflict–ridden regions in the world. Therefore, the fact that conflicts and refugee situations persisted for so long invited a close examination of their relationships. In the remaining pages of this chapter, we (1) underscore the political nature of the refugee crisis, (2) take some of the findings and consider their theoretical implications, and (3) assess the implications of these findings for refugee policy formulation.

1 Zolberg et al. (1989, 23) note that the Palestinians were the first non–European refugees, where the international community assumed responsibility with the creation of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in the late 1940s. UNRWA still exists today and the Palestinian refugee issue remains outside of the mandate of the UNHCR.

The Political Nature of the Refugee Experience in the Horn of Africa

Explaining the connection between politics and immigration and refugee issues a little over 20 years ago, Teitelbaum (1984) observed that this connection took a 'quantum leap in importance' after the dramatic increases in the volume of refugees and the visible 'international events' like the outflow of the 'boat people' from Vietnam and the exile of millions of Afghan refugees to Iran and Pakistan. If there was any doubt about the connection then, the recent series of terrorist bombings in the United States, Great Britain, and Spain, and the subsequent measures Western countries have taken to build 'fortresses' to deny refugee and immigrant entry into their territories should serve to underscore the manifestly political character the refugee phenomenon has assumed, not only in the West but also elsewhere. In the Horn of Africa, however, politics has been a visible and an important dimension in the refugee crisis for a long time.

More often than not, economic issues are at the root of the conflicts and the refugee situation in the Horn of Africa. However, this dimension has been buried quickly and replaced by the vicissitudes of fast changing political developments. Thus, the conflicts in Ethiopia, Sudan, and Somalia evolved from demands for more economic opportunities to demands for self–determination, including the right to form an independent state. Even Ethiopia has now adopted a constitution that recognized the right of 'nations' and 'nationalities' to a full measure of self–determination to preempt possible call for armed struggle to bring about this right.[2] Somalia has splintered and Sudan is now composed of two autonomous states. While these are the domestic roots for the existing conflicts, inter–state wars based on contested borders have also been part of the conflicts in the region. The conflict over the Ogaden a few decades ago and the recent conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea are such examples. Similarly, the geo–strategic location of the region has attracted interventions by external powers, sometimes directly as the interventions of Soviet and Soviet–allied forces along side Ethiopia, and often times indirectly as Egypt's support for Sudan and Somalia. Interventions such as these have increased the scale and intensity of the domestic political and/or regional political violence and attendant refugee flows. Therefore, the domestic, regional, and international political interests of various parties have contributed to refugee formations across the region and have made the refugee formations in the region intractable.[3]

It is important to note why refugee issues have been more political in the Third World and particularly in the Horn of Africa for a long time. Unlike post–Second World War refugees in Europe, who generally settled in states that do not border their countries of origin, Third World refugees in general and refugees from the

2 The Ethiopian constitution is the only constitution in the world at present that explicitly gives 'nations' and 'nationalities' in Ethiopia the right to secede and form an independent state.

3 Hocke (1989, 38) has also underscored the transformation of the reasons for conflict and refugee formations from the economic realm to the domestic political realm, and then to the international political realm.

Horn of Africa in particular, settle in overwhelming numbers in states contiguous to the state from which they came. And when their stay is prolonged, as it was in the Horn of Africa, they become 'refugee–warrior communities' and go back to carry out acts of sabotage in the home country (Zolberg et al. 1989, 275–78). Indeed, the longer they stay in camps, the more likely opposition groups establish contacts with their refugee compatriots to replenish their ranks and carry on the armed struggle. This situation creates conducive conditions for the diffusion of inter–state conflicts. Moreover, it appears that the covert support states gave to opposition groups (and refugees) during most of the Cold War era has unraveled, and the environment has now given rise to open conflicts between states because of refugees. For example, it would have been unlikely some 20 years ago for about a half–dozen African countries to openly intervene in the DRC like they did in the late 1990s. It is equally alarming to see how quickly the conflict in Darfur has drawn Sudan and Chad into conflict. Indeed, Ethiopia and Sudan never reached a state of conflict that Chad and Sudan are in now despite prolonged and massive refugee presence in each of their territories.

We must emphasize that variations in the dynamics of flight, the patterns of settlement, and the dynamics of repatriation mostly, but not exclusively, occur because of changes in the national, regional, and international political climate. Although the individual refugee is usually placed at the center of the refugee crisis because we talk about individuals in their relations with states during 'refugeehood', there exists also inter–state as well as state–UNHCR relationships that affect refugee issues. Indeed, the behavior of states as well as international organizations changes constantly because of a host of factors, as the Sudan–Eritrea and the UNHCR–Eritrea relationships examined earlier have suggested. Refugees equally go through many transformations from the time they make and execute the decision to flee to the time they decide to repatriate or not to repatriate. Had there not been significant transformations in the refugees, the very individual who became a refugee because of fear for personal security would have most likely returned at the end of the conflict.

This does not mean the absence of other variables in the refugee transformation. In fact, Bascom (1998) has demonstrated the effects of social and economic variables in Sudan that negotiate refugee lives and the refugee's responses to them.[4] However, changes in Sudan's refugee policies, some of them based on alleged threats to domestic stability that the refugees posed, disrupted decades–old social and economic relationships when the government ordered refugees to return to camps. Similar effects were seen in the relationship between Ethiopia and Somalia. More often than not, such policies were politically–driven, as seen in Chapter 6. Therefore, following studies that put refugee studies squarely within International Relations, as Gordenker (1987) and Loescher and Monahan (1989) did, this study focused on the overt political dimension of the refugee experience and its implications to regional

4 These variables are 'reciprocal' relations of production in Eritrea, where money is not involved, and 'commodified labor' relations in Sudan, where people sell their labor. For more on this, please see Bascom 1998, 91-107.

peace and security. While the above is a general discussion on the essentially political nature of refugee issues, the following summarizes the important findings and their theoretical and policy implications.

Important Findings and their Theoretical Implications

On the Intractability of the Conflicts and the Decision to Flee

The conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia prior to 1991 was internal to Ethiopia because Eritrea was part of Ethiopia. While it was rooted in Ethiopia's gradual erosion of the federal arrangement, which culminated in Ethiopia's annexation of Eritrea in 1962, the subsequent policy by Ethiopia to make Eritrea look similar to other provinces did damage to possible peaceful resolution of the incipient conflict in the 1960s. These policies chocked the comparatively open political space in Eritrea, encouraged foreign investors in Eritrea to divest and instead invest in Ethiopia, and made international organizations, such as the Desert Locust Control Organization (DLCO), relocate their headquarter out of Asmara, Eritrea. And when the conflict escalated, Ethiopia did not have the economic capability and the political will to peacefully resolve the conflict through rewards. Similarly, Ethiopia was unable to meet the political and economic demands of other nationalist groups inside Ethiopia. Instead, it pursued a military solution. [5]

In Sudan, the roots of the conflict were the economic and political marginalization of the South. The conflict was temporarily resolved when Sudan agreed to grant internal autonomy to the South and to undertake economic investments in the region. The agreement worked well for a few years but was not sustained for long because of economic problems the country faced in the late 1970s. IMF's prescription to remedy this through the 'devaluation of the Sudanese pound and the withdrawal of subsidies from basic commodities [raised] their prices [and helped] spread discontent among the Sudanese' (Ek and Karadawi 1991, 198). In response, the government played the 'religion card', which was highly political, and abrogated the 1972 Addis Ababa Accord. As a consequence, conflict resumed in 1983 and Sudan pursued a military policy to resolve this. Similarly, the conflict in Somalia was initially internal and born out of the economic discontent in the country. Like Ethiopia and Sudan, Somalia did not have much to offer in terms of economic incentives to disgruntled groups other than the use of force. And because this did not work, each subverted its next door neighbor in a futile search for solutions to its internal problems. In the process, each became a refugee host and origin country, and 'refugee exchange' became an important characteristic of the refugee situation in the region.

The spiraling nature of the conflicts also attracted foreign powers because they saw the region as strategically important, and this increased the scale and intensity

5 During the 'Red Star Campaign' of 1982 to resolve the question of Eritrea once and for all, the *Derg* announced two–pronged initiative of which economic investment in Eritrea was one. However, it was too late to make any difference in the evolution of the conflict.

of the conflicts. The study, therefore, confirmed Schultheis (1989) contention that refugee formations increase with superpower involvement. However, the concomitant variation of the scale and intensity of violence and refugee flight was not supported. Would–be refugees wait until violence makes it impossible to go on with their daily lives and take flight at a time of reduced violence. Therefore, overall, refugees in the region made 'considered' decision when they fled. This puts into question Kunz's (1973) contention of a 'singular absence of self–propelling inner forces' in refugees. Such statement may apply in few instances such as the Hutu flight from Rwanda after RPF seized power and perhaps the flight of Somali Isaaq to Ethiopia.

On the Nature of Settlements

State behavior of subverting the next door neighbor in the region continued with more earnest after the refugees reached their asylum destination. However, with the possible exception of Somalia, which was alleged to have conscripted Ethiopian Somali refugees into its armed forces, there was no evidence that Ethiopia, Sudan, and Eritrea had actually armed refugees to go back into their countries of origin to carry out subversive activities.[6] There was, however, enough evidence that governments had allowed opposition groups access to refugee camps to carry out various activities. In extreme cases, some have given opposition groups 'virtual' control of the camps, as Ethiopia did. With the exception of Somalia, whose policies with respect to refugees remained unchanged and entirely political throughout, the others had implemented other policy options. However, politics was still primary, although they also took into account the humanitarian dimension of refugee issues occasionally.

Sudan was perhaps the only country that played a prominent role in the structure of the camps. Initially, it applied the term 'refugee' for Eritreans in order to emphasize the humanitarian nature of its involvement, and set up camps further away from the border to allay Ethiopia's concerns. It also allowed the establishment of permanent settlement schemes to show Ethiopia, the world, and the Sudanese public that efforts were being made to keep refugees gainfully occupied in their country of exile. However, when the refugee numbers increased and Ethio–Sudanese relations soured, it allowed refugee reception centers and camps to be established closer to the border, and relaxed its sometimes strict control of the camps for the opposition to carry out political and recruitment activities. It also ordered all refugees to move into camps in response to increasing complaints by the Sudanese public at what was perceived as an uncontrolled refugee entry and settlement in Sudan. In other words, Sudan's policies, which took humanitarian concerns into account initially, became more political later.

6 Ek and Karadawi (1991, 199) contend that Sudan had 'provided the Eritrean fronts with an open pipeline for humanitarian and military assistance during most of the war'. That is, it only allowed the passage of these materials through its territory.

Ethiopian policy was also politically–driven. It allowed the establishment of the camps closer to the border with Somalia and kept strict control of the camps for fear of Islamic fundamentalist influence and also subversion by the opposition ONLF. Its policy with respect to the camps in western Ethiopia, as indicated earlier, has however been hands–off prior to 1991. After 1991, however, its policy changed and it kept a watchful eye over the camps to reassure Sudan that the SPLM/A no longer controlled the camps. Although this was a political move on the part of Ethiopia, it also allowed the UNHCR to carry out its humanitarian activities in the camps.

On Repatriation as Return Migration

State use of the refugee issues for political and economic purposes also continued during the process of repatriation, although they were not as visible as when refugees were in settlement camps. Allegations that Sudan needed to influence Eritrea to open the political space for Eritrean Islamic groups by continuing to host and then use the refugees as bargaining tools, and Eritrea's request that the prospective returnees be screened to determine their willingness to repatriate so that opponents of the regime would be discouraged from returning, if true, are political. However, there were also economic reasons for the problems that some of the repatriations went through. For example, Sudan requested a new tripartite treaty in October 1995 to extract funds for rehabilitation of its refugee–vacated areas. Similarly, Eritrea declined to cooperate with the UNHCR because the international community did not provide sufficient funds to rehabilitate the war–torn resettlement areas. UNHCR's rehabilitation fund and the scaled–back organized repatriation in 'Somaliland' were also economic in nature.

The study argued that the migration 'push–pull' model may help understand repatriations, whether they were assisted or unassisted. Indeed, in both types of repatriations, refugees seek, collect, and evaluate information to help them decide how to respond to the opportunity to repatriate. Therefore, this study suggested that Koser's (1993) information model for self–repatriates may equally serve as a tool to understand the decision–making process in assisted repatriations. The implications of this are far–reaching because we would then have the migration model to help us understand almost all repatriations with the possible exception of a few. The strength of the 'push–pull' model when studying repatriations lies in the deliberative nature of refugee decision–making as opposed to the 'billiard ball', impulsive nature that Kunz (1973) assumed. In other words, if refugee behavior is 'considered', it would then be possible to predict refugee behavior, including their choices of settlements and repatriations. It would also help to move away from the assumption that a refugee situation was country–specific and idiosyncratic.

But why do some refugees choose to stay in exile and other to return? If we assume, as we should, that refugees flee because of violence–induced fear for personal security, and if this source of fear is removed, then we would expect massive and quick repatriation. The fact this did not occur in many cases suggests an array of transformations that the refugee undergoes during flight and exile. These include

transformations in political orientation, socio–economic status, family relationships, and so on. There may even be personality characteristics that a refugee develops because of the refugee experience.

In general, those who choose to stay in exile are those who have undergone through many life changes. Some, who were single and have been exiled for long, get married and their children know of no other home but the asylum country. They are likely stay in what has become home. Others become gainfully employed or are engaged in lucrative commercial activities and do not want to take risk and loose what they have accumulated over the years. Yet others become politically active in opposition to the government at home and find it difficult to return. Although many of the above variables affected both urban as well as rural refugees, they have had more effect on urban refugees. Indeed, urban areas have better economic opportunities and multiple channels for new influences. This makes such refugees less likely to pack and return. Similarly, governments and the UNHCR have less chance to transmit repatriation information to urban refugees because of the absence of well–defined patterns of settlements in urban areas. Even if this was possible, the relative absence of peer pressure that characterizes urban refugees when compared to the peer pressure in refugee camps makes it easier to decide not to return.

Camp settlements, on the other hand, put immense pressure on refugees to repatriate. First, the UNHCR and government agencies do not in general transmit detailed information about the home country resettlement sites directly to the refugees. They use refugee representatives, whose role is to visit the sites and report back to the refugees. These visits are arranged by the UNHCR in cooperation with the country of origin. During their visit, these representatives are likely to have received good treatment, promises of further improvement of the returnee sites, and so on. They know the UNHCR expects them to convince the refugees to return. They also have self–interest in repatriation. Indeed, Bascom (1996) has documented that Eritrean refugees in Wad el Hileau, a temporary reception center close to the Eritrean border turned ‘permanent’ because of pressures of continuous influxes, yearned to go back home to rebuild the home areas and to *reconstitute authority structures* destroyed after dislocation. Obviously, therefore, the representatives (often group elders) are more inclined to push for repatriation because they are the ones who will benefit from the reconstitution of authority structures. Finally, because of peer pressure and also because the magnitude of risks to the self appear smaller when others in the group also face the same risks, the likelihood of camp populations repatriating in groups is higher than urban refugees. In addition, camps are confining and the transformations that refugees in camps undergo are comparatively weaker than the transformations that urban refugees undergo. Therefore, there are a host of reasons why camp life is more conducive to repatriation when compared to urban life. Indeed, those who repatriated in the Horn of Africa were almost all from rural refugee settlement areas.

There may be a psychological explanation as to why people use one of the two modes of repatriation. There was some evidence that those who did not receive assistance in exile were more likely to repatriate unassisted. Similarly, those with

higher 'internal locus of control' were more likely to repatriate on their own compared to those with lower 'internal locus of control'. Why some refugees have higher and others lower 'internal locus of control', we do not know. If this is a function of the refugee's experience in exile, then more focus on this may shed additional light on the dynamics of refugee repatriation. Nonetheless, an important predicator for assisted–repatriation is the attractiveness of the repatriation package. For example, about 70,000 Eritrean refugees returned during the first two years after the end of hostilities in 1991. When the official repatriation started, however, the numbers declined in part because of the assistance to be had through organized repatriation.

On the Link between the Different Stages of the Refugee Experience

One of the main issues examined here is whether or not the different stages of the refugee experience were interrelated. That is, does the 'kinetics' of flight tell us anything about patterns of settlement and this, in turn, tell us about prospects of repatriation? The study identified refugee movements in the region as 'acute' and the refugees, on the whole, 'majority–identified'. However, some movements were more 'acute' and some refugee groups more 'majority–identified' and cohesive than others. The latter include the Tigrayans from Ethiopia, the Uduk from Sudan, and perhaps the Isaaq from Somalia. For example, all of the Uduk settled in the Asossa/Tsore area and maintained their social practices. When the time to evacuate the camp came they all left for Sudan and still remained a cohesive group despite hardships that tested their cohesion (James, 1996). Again, they settled as a group when they returned to Ethiopia in 1992. Similarly, the Tigrayans came to Sudan as a group, settled in adjacent camps because there was no single camp to accommodate close to 200,000, and almost all left for home in groups of tens of thousands. The important thing to observe is not only the groups' identification with their respective homelands that propelled their return but also the pressure individuals feel when peers decide to return. In other words, cohesive refugee groups may be considered as unitary decision–makers. We can then apply models of decision–making from Political Science to understand their behavior.

Therefore, by way of generation, a cohesive group of 'majority–identified' refugees in an 'acute' refugee movement is more likely to settle in temporary camps along the border compared to 'events–alienated' refugees in an 'anticipatory' movement. Those who settle in temporary camps along the border are more likely to repatriate compared to those who settle in other types of settlements, including urban and semi–urban centers, and permanent settlement schemes. Indeed, cohesion, isolated camp setting, and prevailing group authority structures insulate such refugees from external influences. Because of this, the political, economic, social, or cultural space of the refugee in exile changes little and the group's yearning to return home remains alive.[7] Urban refugees, on the other hand, are free from the confinements of camp

7 If opposition groups have frequent access to the camps, however, this may not hold. Indeed, refugee frequent contact with opposition groups expands the political, economic, and

life and are subjected to competing views that free them from the yearning to return home.

Important Findings and their Policy Implications

Since we have documented that most refugees flee because of violence and violence–related variables, such as military conscription and use of food as a weapon in drought–stricken areas, the ideal solution to the refugee crisis is to remove all political and security–related factors that impel people to move out of their homes and seek asylum. These factors include inter–state wars; intra–state wars; ideological conflicts; religious, linguistic, and other conflicts based on parochial sentiments; and foreign interventions. However, many of these factors are not easily manipulable and, therefore, they may not have immediate policy implications. For example, it would be immensely difficult to homogenize polities through mass expulsions of 'undesirable' groups to avoid conflicts based upon parochial sentiments. Measures such as these occurred in Spain some 500 years ago and across the Indo–Pakistani border some 60 years ago. The present international political climate does not permit such cruel measures.

It is also difficult to find a solution to a conflict where two or more groups claim the same land as in the Middle East, where territorial division may be an unlikely solution. However, the solution becomes much more difficult in such cases as Rwanda, Burundi, and Bosnia–Herzegovina. The difficult arises because of the problem 'intermingled population settlement patterns' create (Kaufmann, 1996, 137). That is, it is impossible to divide the land even if there was the needed political will. In such cases, the international community can only encourage groups to accept each other through massive rewards, as in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Hopefully, such measures will reduce the frequency and intensity of violence and attendant refugee flows and, in time, result in a movement away from violence and towards accommodation.

Preventive action, therefore, is important. European Union policy requiring aspiring members to accede to protocols on the treatment of minorities is a sure way to moderate state policies with respect to minorities. At times, pre–emptive intervention, as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) intervention in Macedonia, may be necessary. In cases this is not possible, a more vigorous UN peacekeeping will surely help mitigate conflicts and accompanying refuge formations. Indeed, the UN has helped repatriate refugees and internally displaced persons, and has provided funds to rehabilitate returnee areas, as in Somalia, Eritrea–Ethiopia, and Sudan[8] More importantly, it is laying the foundations for a democratic

cultural space of the refugee.

8 As of January 2006, there were 15 UN peace missions around the world, of which 7 (about 44 percent) were in Africa. Also, about 79 per cent of the estimated 60,000 UN troops around the globe are stationed Africa.

and inclusive political system in those countries to help prevent future conflicts and refugee formations.[9]

At the more immediate level, however, the need to make repatriations more successful is more urgent now than at any time before. Because of the present political climate, where refugees from Africa and perhaps elsewhere in the world are seen as undesirable, existing third–county settlement programs will have no tangible effect on the problem. Even during 'better' times, only 'one African refugee in every ten thousand' was fortunate enough to end in a third-country (Bascom, 1998, 164). Similarly, as indicated in Chapter 7, integration in the neighboring first county of asylum has not been successful. And since the study has documented that many refugees in the Horn of Africa wish to return to their countries of origin at the end of hostilities if provided with the necessary support, the issue then is to make an attractive repatriation package by manipulating variables in the 'push-pull' model. That is, one need to increase both the 'push' and 'pull' factors to effect successful repatriations: make refugee lives difficult so that they hate it enough to want to leave and at the same time make the resettlement areas in the home country more attractive for them to want to go there. The former has been tried in Djibouti with no success. Also, it may not be right. Increasing the attractiveness of the home country, however, may encourage refugees to consider going home. In fact, Ethiopian refugees left Djibouti for home only after they were given guarantees that their properties back home would be returned to them. Larkin et al. (1991) have also documented refugee repatriation in Central America during conflict because of the attractiveness of the return package. In other words, one must focus on how to increase the 'pull' factors to induce massive return.

We have also seen that refugees were active players who made 'considered' decisions in their flight, exile and repatriation. One of the reasons why refugees did not cooperate with the UNHCR in its attempts to make self–sufficient schemes in Sudan was their exclusion from the decision–making. This should be avoided if repatriations are to succeed. Refugee involvements in repatriations, such as the existing UNHCR–sponsored visits, should be expanded because they play important roles in refugee repatriations for the reasons outlined earlier. Of course, there must be something positive for the UNHCR and home governments to show.

Finally, it is crucial that the UNHCR expand its ability to collect information on the political, economic, and social developments in the origin as well as the country of asylum. For example, more information on Eritrean leaders' perceptions and ways of doing things could have led to an effective repatriation. Also information on refugee attributes, including their ethnic and religious background, and how they view exile could have positive impact on repatriations. The lack of this contributed to the confusion in the UNHCR regarding the whereabouts of the 'lost Sudanese refugees' in 1991. The UNHCR has gone a long way in involving refugees and other actors in the management of refugee issues. However, the still–prevailing view that

9 Details of UN activities are found in the various reports on each mission the Secretary–General periodically submits to the Security Council of the United Nations.

the UNHCR knows what is best for refugees and has the resources sufficient to extract compliance from resource–lacking governments as well as refugees must be seriously revisited. Granted the UNHCR faces many difficulties in dealing with contrasting actor interests, and is always under pressure from the donor community to show results. However, possession of up to date and comprehensive information on crucial variables, which admittedly requires additional money at a time when the UNHCR is facing financial problems, is a *sine qua non* for an effective management of contemporary refugee crises.

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