

*Refugees and the regional dynamics of peacebuilding*¹

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1. Introduction

A striking feature of discussions on conflict management in recent years has been an emerging consensus on the importance of ‘peacebuilding.’² As illustrated by cases as diverse as Afghanistan, Burundi, Liberia and Haiti, armed conflict has the potential to re-emerge and become more protracted if active steps are not taken to build a sustainable peace. While the importance of post-conflict reconstruction has been recognized for more than fifty years, the broader notion of peacebuilding became the focus of particular interest in the early 1990s when it was highlighted in the UN Secretary-General’s report *An Agenda for Peace* (UNSG 1992). Since then, there have been numerous conceptual and institutional developments, including the establishment of the UN Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) in late 2005. While debates on definitions persist, recent discussions have generally revolved around developing ways to ensure stability in countries previously affected by conflict so as to prevent a slide back into war.

Much of this debate has, however, focused exclusively on peacebuilding activities within the country in question, with little or no attention paid to the regional nature of conflict and the regional dynamics that should consequently be addressed as part of a successful peacebuilding programme. This is especially striking given the growing literature on the regional nature of conflict and insecurity in the Global South. As argued by Ayoob (1995), Buzan (1992) and others, intra-state conflict in the Global South has the demonstrated potential to ‘spill-over’ into neighbouring, and equally vulnerable, states, thereby regionalizing conflict. For example, civil conflict in Sierra Leone and Burundi not only affected these two countries but other countries in the Mano River Union in West Africa and the Great Lakes region of Central Africa as a result of the proliferation of small arms and the movement of armed elements across borders. These aspects of conflict have the demonstrated ability not only to spread conflict to neighbouring countries, but also to undermine conflict management and peacebuilding activities in the country of origin.

¹ This paper draws on previous research undertaken by the author under the auspices of *The PRS Project: Towards Solutions to Protracted Refugee Situations*, University of Oxford (<http://www.prsproject.org>), and the United Nations University project “Protracted Refugee Situations: Political, Security and Human Rights Implications”. See: Gil Loescher, James Milner, Edward Newman and Gary Troeller (eds). 2008. *Protracted Refugee Situations: Political, Security and Human Rights Implications*. Tokyo: United Nations University Press. Elements of this paper previously appeared in Gil Loescher and James Milner (2005), *Protracted Refugee Situations: Domestic and Security Implications*, Adelphi Paper no. 375, London: Routledge ; and G. Loescher, J. Milner, E. Newman, and G. Trolller (2007), “Protracted Refugee Situations and the Regional Dynamics of Peacebuilding”, *Conflict, Security and Development*, Vol. 7, no. 3.

² See: Ali and Matthews 2004; Crocker *et al* 2001; and Stedman *et al* 2002.

Refugee movements also have the demonstrated ability to regionalize conflict.³ In fact, refugees are to be found in some of the world's poorest and most unstable regions, and originate from some of the world's most fragile states, including Afghanistan, Burundi, Liberia, Myanmar (Burma), Sierra Leone, Somalia, and Sudan. Just as conflicts in the countries of origin have become protracted, some two thirds of refugees in the world today are not in emergency situations, but trapped in protracted refugee situations. Such situations – often characterized by long periods of exile, stretching to decades for some groups – constitute a growing challenge for the global refugee protection regime and the international community. Refugees trapped in these situations often face significant restrictions on a wide range of rights, while the continuation of these chronic refugee problems also frequently gives rise to a number of political and security concerns for countries of origin, host states and states in the region. In this way, protracted refugee situations represent a significant challenge to both human rights and security.

Notwithstanding the growing significance of the problem, protracted refugee situations have yet to feature prominently on the international political agenda. In response, humanitarian agencies, like the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), have been left to cope with caring for these forgotten populations and attempting to mitigate the negative implications of prolonged exile. These actions do not, however, constitute a solution for protracted refugee situations. Such a response also fails to address the security implications associated with prolonged exile, with the potential consequence of undermining stability in the region and peacebuilding efforts in the country of origin.

This paper considers the regional dynamics of peacebuilding by examining the relationship between protracted refugee situations, regional insecurity and the regional dynamics of peacebuilding. The paper has five sections. Section one considers the focus of recent peacebuilding policy and research, especially as it is reflected in the work of the UN Peacebuilding Commission. Section two provides an overview of the growing significance of protracted refugee situations and their links to a broader range of peace and security concerns. Section three of the paper draws on research in Tanzania and Guinea⁴ to argue that the link between peacebuilding and refugees goes beyond the repatriation of refugees. Instead, section four of the paper argues that the presence of 'spoilers' within refugee populated areas and the potential for early and forced repatriation by the country of asylum have both proven to have the potential to undermine peacebuilding efforts, while the experience of exile may enable refugee to contribute to various stages of the peacebuilding process. The paper concludes by considering the importance of incorporating these broader regional dynamics into broader policy and research debates on peacebuilding.

2. Peacebuilding: Institutional innovations

In his 1992 report, *An Agenda for Peace*, UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali argued that the end of the Cold War presented new challenges and

³ See: Loescher 1992; Loescher and Milner 2005; Weiner 1993.

⁴ Fieldwork in Tanzania (especially in Dar es Salaam and Kibondo) was undertaken by the author in 1998 and 2004. Fieldwork in Guinea (especially in Conakry, Kissidougou and N'Zérékoré) was undertaken by the author in 2001 and 2004.

opportunities for both the international community and international institutions mandated with the preservation of peace and security. In considering the various tools at the disposal of the United Nations in responding to the new security environment, the Secretary-General added 'peacebuilding' to the more established activities of preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and peacekeeping. He argued that such an innovation was required as the United Nations system needed to develop the capacity to "stand ready to assist in peace-building in its differing contexts: rebuilding the institutions and infrastructures of nations torn by civil war and strife; and building bonds of peaceful mutual benefit among nations formerly at war" (UNSG 1992, paragraph 15).

While few of these activities were new, it became increasingly recognized that these longer-term undertakings were essential elements in preventing a return to conflict. The importance of peacebuilding was clearly illustrated by several cases through the 1990s, including Liberia, Rwanda and Sudan,⁵ however, numerous gaps remained in the conceptual and practical understandings of peacebuilding. In particular, there has been significant debate on the scope of peacebuilding activities and who should undertake them.⁶ While there is growing empirical evidence to suggest that effective peacebuilding strategies should involve long-term activities designed to support the security, political, economic and justice and reconciliation needs of a country emerging from conflict (Ali and Matthews 2004, 409-422), no single international organization had the mandate to undertake this full range of activities. While the UN system contained a number of specialized agencies with mandates to undertake some of these activities, and while these agencies have been involved with peacebuilding activities around the world for some time, it became increasingly clear that stronger leadership and institutional coherence were required to ensure that peacebuilding was more effectively and systematically undertaken.

The establishment of a UN Peacebuilding Commission was subsequently proposed as a means of ensuring better leadership and coordination of peacebuilding activities within the UN system. The initial proposal was included in the 2004 report of the UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change. In his 2005 memo, "In Larger Freedom", UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan endorsed the creation of a Peacebuilding Commission as an intergovernmental advisory body, which could ensure long-term political support and funding for post-conflict recovery programmes, in addition to advising on thematic issues and specific cases.

The UN Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) was subsequently established by the UN General Assembly (UNGA) in December 2005. In establishing the PBC, the UNGA recognized the "interlinked and mutually reinforcing" nature of peace and security, development and human rights, and the benefits of "a coordinated, coherent and integrated approach to post-conflict peacebuilding" (UNGA 2005). To this end, the PBC was established to serve three functions:

- To bring together all relevant actors to marshal resources and to advise on and propose integrated strategies for post-conflict peacebuilding and recovery;

⁵ See: Ali and Matthews 2004.

⁶ See: Cutter 2005.

- To focus attention on the reconstruction and institution-building efforts necessary for recovery from conflict and to support the development of integrated strategies in order to lay the foundation for sustainable development;
- To provide recommendations and information to improve the coordination of all relevant actors within and outside the United Nations, to develop best practices, to help to ensure predictable financing for early recovery activities and to extend the period of attention given by the international community to post-conflict recovery.

Important decisions were then taken in the first half of 2006 on the size and composition of the PBC. By mid-2006, the PBC was comprised of 31 Member States, including members of the Security Council, members from ECOSOC, representatives of the major donor countries, troop contributing countries, other members of the UNGA with experience in post-conflict reconstruction, in addition to those states directly implicated with the specific peacebuilding operation under consideration. Selections from the various pools of candidate Member States resulted in a diverse membership of the PBC's Organizational Committee for its first session (June 2006 to June 2007) (See Appendix 1), and additional interested parties for discussions on specific peacebuilding operations (See Appendix 2). Finally, meetings of the PBC during its first session invited contributions from senior UN representatives in the field, representatives of other UN agencies, and representatives of major development institutions, including the World Bank, and representatives of civil society. In this way, the PBC brings together a wide range of institutional stakeholders implicated in peacebuilding initiatives.

At the same time, the UNGA resolution created the Peacebuilding Support Office (PSO) to facilitate the on-going work of the PBC, to gather expert opinions on thematic issues and country-specific plans, and to collect examples of 'best practices' from previous and on-going post-conflict recovery programmes that could be replicated elsewhere. In May 2006, Carolyn McAskie, a senior Canadian diplomat who was previously the UNSG's Special Representative to Burundi, was named Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support and head of the PSO.

The first formal meeting of the PBC was convened in New York on 23 June 2006. As detailed in its report to the UN General Assembly in July 2007 (UNGA 2007), the first year of the PBC's work was largely devoted to developing a clearer understanding of the scope and nature of the Commission's work and to country-specific work on Burundi and Sierra Leone.⁷ Through its country-specific work, the PBC adopted workplans, sent several missions to both Burundi and Sierra Leone, and identified key priority areas for peacebuilding in both cases. In the case of Burundi, the PBC focused on promoting good governance, strengthening the rule of law, security sector reform, and ensuring community recovery. In Sierra Leone, the PBC

⁷ While the conceptual orientation of the UN-PBC did not change in the following session, this section of the paper will be developed to consider the work of the UN Peacebuilding Commission during its Second Session. See: UNGA 2008.

focused on youth employment and disempowerment, justice and security sector reform, democracy consolidation and good governance, and capacity building, especially the capacity of government institutions. In addition, the engagement of the PBC coincided with important developments in both countries, including parliamentary elections in Sierra Leone and the development of a Strategic Framework for Burundi.

While these are important developments for peacebuilding in both cases, it is important to note the limited scope of the early work of the PBC.⁸ Specifically, the early work of the PBC has focused exclusively on activities within the country in question, with little or no attention paid to either the regional nature of conflict or the significant refugee populations associated with these conflicts. The treatment of these and similar cases by the PBC, and the sustained political and donor interest this is hoped to generate, could provide a unique opportunity for engaging the full spectrum of stakeholders required to formulate and implement a comprehensive solution, not only for peacebuilding and post-conflict recovery in the country of origin but also to resolve the related refugee situations. The emerging approach of the PBC, however, does not appear to make this link. Instead, the members of the Commission seem to be adopting a myopic, country-specific approach. Such an approach does not allow for a full consideration of factors outside the country that could upset post-conflict recovery. It also adopts a limited understanding of the links between long-term displacement and peacebuilding, incorporating the issue of refugees only insofar as the return and reintegration of refugees is taken to be a barometer of the success of peacebuilding efforts.

While this is an important dimension of the issue, such a limited approach risks not only missing an important opportunity to resolve protracted refugee situations, but also excludes from the work of the PBC a range of factors that could potentially undermine peacebuilding efforts. Refugee-populated areas in neighbouring states may harbour elements that seek to undermine peacebuilding in the region, especially when underlying political tensions still exist and reconciliation has not been fully achieved, and refugee populations may be drawn into a campaign of destabilization. It would therefore be problematic to assume that refugees remain passively in neighbouring countries, awaiting the opportunity to return. Instead, there are many instances where large and protracted refugee situations, left unaddressed, have the potential to undermine the consolidation of a peace process.

Likewise, the concerns of host countries and the limitations on their willingness to host refugees must be taken into account. If the concerns of host states relating to the potentially negative impact of the prolonged presence of refugees on their territory are not addressed, host states may pursue early and coerced repatriation, placing fragile institutions in the country of origin under significant strain and further undermining peacebuilding efforts. For example, Tanzania has frequently claimed that the prolonged presence of Burundian refugees has a negative economic, environmental and security impact. In response to what it sees as a limited and unpredictable donor response to address these concerns, the Tanzanian government has, in recent years, pressed for the repatriation of refugees to Burundi. Many UN and

⁸ This section is based on interviews conducted in New York in May 2006, December 2006 and March 2007.

NGO officials in both Dar es Salaam and Bujumbura are concerned about the coerced nature of this repatriation, feel that refugees are being returned to areas that are unable to adequately receive them, and that the scale of the repatriation risks undermining peacebuilding efforts in Burundi.

Given these dynamics, and their potential impact on peacebuilding activities, it is important to consider the growing significance of protracted refugee situations, their causes, and their links to regional security.

3. The growing challenge of protracted refugee situations

In June 2004, UNHCR defined a protracted refugee situation as “one in which refugees find themselves in a long-lasting and intractable state of limbo. Their lives may not be at risk, but their basic rights and essential economic, social and psychological needs remain unfulfilled after years in exile. A refugee in this situation is often unable to break free from enforced reliance on external assistance” (UNHCR ExCom 2004b, 1). In identifying the major protracted refugee situations in the world, UNHCR used the “crude measure of refugee populations of 25,000 persons or more who have been in exile for five or more years in developing countries” (UNHCR ExCom 2004b, 2). These figures exclude Palestinian refugees who fall under the mandate of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). Applying this definition to UNHCR refugee statistics from the end of 2004, there were 33 major protracted refugee situations, totalling 5,691,000 refugees.

Table 1:
Major Protracted Refugee Situations: 1 January 2005⁹

Country of Asylum	Origin	end-2004
Algeria	Western Sahara	165,000
Armenia	Azerbaijan	235,000
Burundi	Dem. Rep. of Congo	48,000
Cameroon	Chad	39,000
China	Viet Nam	299,000
Congo	Dem. Rep. of Congo	59,000
Côte d'Ivoire	Liberia	70,000
Dem. Rep. of Congo	Angola	98,000
Dem. Rep. of Congo	Sudan	45,000
Egypt	Occupied Palestinian Territory	70,000
Ethiopia	Sudan	90,000
Guinea	Liberia	127,000
India	China	94,000
India	Sri Lanka	57,000
Islamic Rep. of Iran	Afghanistan	953,000
Islamic Rep. of Iran	Iraq	93,000
Kenya	Somalia	154,000
Kenya	Sudan	68,000
Nepal	Bhutan	105,000
Pakistan	Afghanistan (UNHCR estimate)	960,000

⁹ This table refers to refugee situations where the number of refugees of a certain origin within a particular country of asylum has been 25,000 or more for at least 5 consecutive years. Industrialized countries are not included. Data does not include Palestinian refugees under the mandate of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). Source: UNHCR 2006, 107.

Rwanda	Dem. Rep. of Congo	45,000
Saudi Arabia	Occupied Palestinian Territory	240,000
Serbia and Montenegro	Bosnia and Herzegovina	95,000
Serbia and Montenegro	Croatia	180,000
Sudan	Eritrea	111,000
Thailand	Myanmar	121,000
Uganda	Sudan	215,000
United Rep. of Tanzania	Burundi	444,000
United Rep. of Tanzania	Dem. Rep. of Congo	153,000
Uzbekistan	Tajikistan	39,000
Yemen	Somalia	64,000
Zambia	Angola	89,000
Zambia	Dem. Rep. of Congo	66,000
Total		5,691,000

Recent attention to reductions in global refugee populations has largely masked the increasing significance of protracted refugee situations. In fact, changes in the global refugee population in the past 15 years have resulted in a significant increase in the scale and nature of the problem of protracted refugee situations. In the early 1990s, a number of long-standing refugee populations who had been displaced as a result of Cold War conflicts in the developing world went home. In Southern Africa, for example, huge numbers of Mozambicans, Namibians and others repatriated. In Indochina, the Cambodians in exile in Thailand returned home and Vietnamese and Laotians were resettled to third countries. With the conclusion of conflicts in Central America, the vast majority of displaced Nicaraguans, Guatemalans and Salvadorans returned to their home countries. In 1993, in the midst of the resolution of these conflicts, there remained 27 protracted refugee situations, with a total population of 7.9 million refugees.

While these Cold War conflicts were being resolved, and as refugee populations were being repatriated, new intra-state conflicts emerged and resulted in massive new flows during the 1990s. Conflict and state collapse in Somalia, the African Great Lakes, Liberia and Sierra Leone generated millions of refugees. Millions more refugees were displaced as a consequence of ethnic and civil conflict in Iraq, the Balkans, the Caucasus and Central Asia. The global refugee population mushroomed in the early 1990s, and the pressing need was to respond to the challenges of mass influx situations and refugee emergencies in many regions of the world simultaneously.

More than a decade later, many of these conflicts and refugee situations remain unresolved. As a result, the number of protracted refugee situations is greater now than at the end of the Cold War. At the end of 2004, using UNHCR's conservative figures, there were 33 protracted refugee situations, with a total refugee population of nearly 6 million. While there are fewer UNHCR-recognized refugees in protracted situations today, the number of situations has increased. More importantly, UNHCR recognizes that refugees are spending longer periods of time in exile. It estimates that "the average duration of major refugee situations, protracted or not, has increased: from nine years in 1993 to 17 years at the end of 2003" (UNHCR ExCom 2004b, 2). With a global refugee population of over 16.3 million at the end of 1993, 48% of the world's refugees were in protracted situations. More than a decade later, with a global refugee population of 9.2 million at the end of 2004, over 64% of the world's refugees were in protracted refugee situations.

As illustrated by Table 1, these situations are to be found in some of the most volatile regions in the world. East and West Africa, South Asia, Southeast Asia, the Caucasus, Central Asia, and the Middle East are all plagued with protracted refugee situations. Sub-Saharan Africa hosts the largest number of protracted refugee situations, with the largest host countries on the continent being Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, Zambia and Guinea. In contrast, the geographical areas Central Asia, South West Asia, North Africa and the Middle East host fewer major protracted situations, but account for a significant number of the world's refugees in prolonged exile with some 2 million Afghan refugees remaining in Pakistan and Iran. While the Afghan refugees are the largest protracted refugee population under the mandate of UNHCR, the scale of this situation pales in comparison to the more than 3 million Palestinian refugees under the mandate of UNRWA.

Causes of PRSs: Political impasse and lack of external engagement

Protracted refugee populations originate from the very states whose instability lies at the heart of chronic regional insecurity. The bulk of refugees in these regions – Somalis, Sudanese, Burundians, Liberians, Iraqis, Afghans and Burmese – come from countries where conflict and persecution have persisted for years. In this way, the rising significance of protracted refugee situations is closely associated to the growing phenomenon of so-called 'fragile states' since the end of the Cold war. While there is increasing recognition that international security planners must pay closer attention to these countries of origin, it is important to also recognise that resolving refugee situations must be a central part of any solution to long-standing regional conflicts, especially given the porous nature of these countries' borders and the tendency for conflict in these regions to engulf their neighbours. In this way, it is essential to recognise that protracted refugee situations are closely linked to the phenomenon of fragile states, have political causes, and therefore require more than simply humanitarian solutions.

As argued by UNHCR, "protracted refugee situations stem from political impasses. They are not inevitable, but are rather the result of political action and inaction, both in the country of origin (the persecution and violence that led to flight) and in the country of asylum. They endure because of ongoing problems in the country of origin, and stagnate and become protracted as a result of responses to refugee inflows, typically involving restrictions on refugee movement and employment possibilities, and confinement to camps" (UNHCR ExCom 2004b, 1)

This analysis illustrates how protracted refugee situations are the combined result of the prevailing situations in the country of origin and the policy responses of the country of asylum. In fact, protracted refugee situations are caused largely by both a lack of engagement from a range of peace and security actors to address the conflict or human rights violations in the country of origin and a lack of donor government involvement with the host country. Failure to address the situation in the country of origin means that the refugee cannot return home. Failure to engage with the host country reinforces the perception of refugees as a burden and a security concern, which leads to encampment, a lack of local solutions, and sometimes early repatriation. As a result of these failures, humanitarian agencies, such as UNHCR, are

left to compensate for the inaction or failures of those actors responsible for maintaining international peace and security.

For example, the protracted presence of Somali refugees in East Africa and the Horn is the direct result of the consequences of failed intervention in Somalia in the early 1990s and the inability or unwillingness of the international community to engage in rebuilding a failed state. As a result, hundreds of thousands of Somali refugees have been in exile in the region for over a decade, with humanitarian agencies like UNHCR and the World Food Programme (WFP) responsible for their care and maintenance as a result of increasingly restrictive host state policy.

In a similar way, failures on the part of the international community and regional actors to consolidate peace can lead to resurgence of conflict and displacement, leading to a recurrence of protracted refugee situations. For example, the return of Liberians from neighbouring West African states in the aftermath of the 1997 elections in Liberia was not sustainable. A renewal of conflict in late 1999 and early 2000 led not only to a suspension of repatriation of Liberian refugees from Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire and other states in the region, but also led to a massive new refugee exodus. Following the departure into exile of Charles Taylor in 2003 and the election of Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf as President in November 2005, there has been a renewed emphasis on return for the hundreds of thousands of Liberian refugees in the region. In July 2006, UNHCR reported that it had helped some 73,000 Liberian refugees repatriate from neighbouring countries since 2004, and anticipated that the repatriation programme would continue until 2007.¹⁰ It does not, however, appear as though the lessons of the late 1990s have been learned. Donor support lacks predictability, with only 28% of the 2006 Liberia Consolidated Appeal having been met by mid-June 2006. As cautioned by UN-OCHA:

Liberia is at a critical juncture. In order to build upon the hard-won peace and political progress, international support both financial and political, will be vital to stabilise the population by addressing the continuing urgent humanitarian needs of the population to ensure a rapid and sustainable recovery (UN-OCHA 2006).

As illustrated by these examples, the primary causes of protracted refugee situations are to be found in the failure to engage in countries of origin and engage in effective and sustainable peacebuilding. These examples also demonstrate how humanitarian programmes have to be underpinned by long-lasting political and security measures if they are to result in lasting solutions for refugees. Assistance to protracted refugee populations through humanitarian agencies is no substitute for sustained political and strategic action. More generally, the international donor community cannot expect the humanitarian agencies to fully respond to and resolve protracted refugee situations without the sustained engagement of the peace and security and development agencies.

Declining donor engagement in programmes to support long-standing refugee populations in host countries has also contributed to the rise in protracted refugee

¹⁰ UNHCR Briefing, Geneva, 31 July 2006.

situations. A marked decrease in financial contributions to assistance and protection programmes for chronic refugee groups has had not only security implications, as refugees and local populations have come into competition for scarce resources, but has also reinforced the perception of refugees as a burden on host states. Host states are now more likely to argue that the presence of refugees results in additional burdens on the environment, local services, infrastructure, and the local economy, and that the international donor community is less willing to share this burden. As a result, host countries are less willing to engage in local solutions to protracted refugee situations.

This trend first emerged in the mid-1990s, when UNHCR experienced budget shortfalls of tens of millions of dollars. These shortfalls were most acutely felt in Africa, where contributions to both development assistance and humanitarian programmes fell throughout the 1990s. Of greater concern was an apparent bias in the allocation of UNHCR's funding to refugees in Europe over refugees in Africa. In 1999, it was reported that UNHCR spent about 11 cents per refugee per day in Africa, compared to an average of \$1.23 per refugee per day in the Balkans (Vidal 1999).

These concerns continued in 2000 and 2001, with most programmes in Africa having to cut 10 to 20% of their budgets. The case of Tanzania provides one example of the implications of these budget cuts. UNHCR has consistently reported since 2000 that its programmes in Tanzania have been "adversely affected by the unpredictability of funding and budget cuts" (UNHCR 2000b, 121). In 2001, UNHCR was forced to reduce its budget in Tanzania by some 20%, resulting in the scaling-back of a number of activities (UNHCR 2001, 137). In 2002, UNHCR was forced to cut US\$1 million in both the months of June and November out of a total budget of approximately US\$28 million for its Tanzania programme. In 2003, UNHCR reported that it "struggled to maintain a minimum level of health care, shelter and food assistance to the refugees in the face of reduced budgets" (UNHCR 2003a, 165). Most recently, in 2005, UNHCR reported that "not all refugees' needs were met, a consequence of UNHCR's overall funding shortage" (UNHCR 2005, 141).

Similar shortages over the past decade have also affected food distribution in the camps. Dwindling support for the World Food Programme (WFP) in Tanzania has led to a reduction in the amount of food distributed to refugees on numerous occasions in recent years. WFP was forced to significantly reduce food distribution to refugees in November 2002 and again in February 2003, resulting in a distribution of only 50% of the normal ration, itself only 80% of the international minimum standard (UNHCR 2003b). At the end of 2004, UNHCR and WFP were still advocating more funds to address chronic food shortages (UNHCR 2005, 141).

Sensitive to these recurring shortfalls in donor support, and in response to a range of other pressures, the Tanzanian government has frequently stated that it is only willing to continue hosting refugees if the international community is willing to provide the necessary support. As then Tanzanian President Benjamin Mkapa told a meeting of foreign diplomats in Dar es Salaam in 2001, Tanzania's "sympathy in assisting refugees should be supported by the international community because it was its responsibility" (IRIN 2001). This is particularly striking, given that Tanzania was once the vanguard of local settlement for refugees, distinguishing itself as only one of two African countries to grant mass naturalization to refugees. In stark contrast,

Tanzania's national refugee policy now prohibits refugees from travelling more than 4 kilometres from the camps and identifies repatriation as the preferred solution for refugees on its territory.

In this way, protracted refugee situations are caused by the combined effect of inaction or unsustainable international action both in the country of origin and the country of asylum. These chronic and seemingly unresolvable problems occur because of ongoing political, ethnic and religious conflict in the countries of refugee origin and stagnate and become protracted as a consequence of restrictions, intolerance and confinement to camps in host countries. Consequently, a truly comprehensive solution to protracted refugee situations must include sustained political, diplomatic, economic and humanitarian engagement in both the country of origin and the various countries of asylum.

Consequences of PRSs: Human rights and state security

Tanzania's response to protracted refugee situations is by no means unique. In fact, an increasing number of host states respond to protracted refugee situations by pursuing policies of containing refugees in isolated and insecure refugee camps, typically in border regions and far from the governing regime. Many host governments now require the vast majority of refugees to live in designated camps, and place significant restrictions on refugees seeking to leave the camps, either for employment or educational purposes. This trend, recently termed "refugee warehousing" (Smith 2004), has significant human rights and economic implications. As argued by UNHCR, "most refugees in such situations live in camps where idleness, despair and, in a few cases, even violence prevail. Women and children, who form the majority of the refugee community, are often the most vulnerable, falling victim to exploitation and abuse" (UNHCR Africa Bureau 2001, 1).

More generally, the prolonged encampment of refugee populations has led to the violation of a number of rights contained in the *1951 UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees*, including freedom of movement and the right to seek wage-earning employment. Restrictions on employment and on the right to move beyond the confines of the camps deprive long-staying refugees of the freedom to pursue normal lives and to become productive members of their new societies. Faced with these restrictions, refugees become dependent on subsistence-level assistance, or less, and lead lives of poverty, frustration and unrealized potential.

UNHCR has noted that "the prolongation of refugees' dependence on external assistance also squanders precious resources of host countries, donors and refugees...limited funds and waning donor commitment lead to stop-gap solutions...spending on care and maintenance...is a recurring expense and not an investment in the future" (UNHCR ExCom 2004b, 3). Containing refugees in camps prevents their presence from contributing to regional development and state-building (Jacobsen 2002). In cases where refugees have been allowed to engage in the local economy, it has been found that refugees can "have a positive impact on the [local] economy by contributing to agricultural production, providing cheap labour and increasing local vendors' income from the sale of essential foodstuffs" (UNHCR ExCom 2004a, 3). When prohibited from working outside the camps, refugees cannot make such contributions.

Unresolved refugee situations represent a significant political phenomenon as well as a humanitarian problem. Protracted refugee situations often lead to a number of political and security concerns for host countries, the countries of origin, regional actors and the international community. One of the most significant political implications of long-standing refugee populations is the strain that they often place on diplomatic relations between host states and the refugees' country of origin. The prolonged presence of Burundian refugees in Tanzania, coupled with allegations that anti-government rebels are based within the refugee camps, led to a significant breakdown in relations between the two African neighbours in 2000 - 2002, including the shelling of Tanzanian territory by the Burundian army. The prolonged presence of Burmese refugees on the Thai border has been a frequent source of tension between the governments in Bangkok and Rangoon. In a similar way, the elusiveness of a solution for the Bhutanese refugees in Nepal has been a source of regional tensions, drawing in not only the host state and the country of origin, but also regional powers such as India.

Host states and states in regions of refugee origin frequently argue that protracted refugee situations result in a wide range of direct and indirect security concerns.¹¹ The **direct threats** faced by the host-state, posed by the spill-over of conflict and the presence of 'refugee warriors', are by far the strongest link between refugees and conflict. Here, there are no intervening variables between forced migration and violence as the migrants themselves are actively engaged in armed campaigns typically, but not exclusively, against the country of origin. Such campaigns have the potential of regionalizing the conflict and dragging the host-state into what was previously an intra-state conflict. Such communities played a significant role in regionalization of conflict in Africa and Asia during the Cold War. With the end of the Cold War, the logic has changed, but the relevance of refugee warriors remains. This relevance was brought home with particular force in the maelstrom of violence that gripped the Great Lakes region of Central Africa between 1994 and 1996.

The outbreak of conflict and genocide in the Great Lakes Region of Central Africa in the early 1990s serves as a clear example of the potential implications of not finding solutions for long-standing refugee populations. Tutsi refugees who fled Rwanda between 1959 and 1962 and their descendants filled the ranks of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), which invaded Rwanda from Uganda in October 1990. Many of these refugees had been living in the sub-region for over 30 years. In the aftermath of the Rwandan genocide, it was widely recognised that the failure of the international community to find a lasting solution for the Rwandan refugees from the 1960s was a key factor that put in motion the series of events that led to the genocide in 1994. According to UNHCR, "the failure to address the problems of the Rwandan refugees in the 1960s contributed substantially to the cataclysmic violence of the 1990s" (UNHCR 2000a, 49). More than ten years after the 1994 genocide, it would appear as though this lesson has yet to be learned, as dozens of protracted refugee situations remain unresolved in highly volatile and conflict-prone regions.

¹¹ For a more detailed discussion of direct and indirect security concerns related to refugee movements, see: Milner 2008; and Loescher and Milner 2005.

This lesson has not, however, been lost on a number of states that host prolonged refugee populations. In the wake of events in Central Africa, many host states, especially in Africa, increasingly view long-standing refugee populations as a security concern and synonymous with the spill-over of conflict and the spread of small arms. Refugee populations are increasingly being viewed by host states not as victims of persecution and conflict, but as a potential source of regional instability on a scale similar to that witnessed in Central Africa in the 1990s.

The direct causes of insecurity to both host states and regional and extra-regional actors stemming from chronic refugee populations are further understood within the context of so-called failed states, as in Somalia, and the rise of warlordism, as in the case of Liberia. In such situations, refugee camps are used as a base for guerrilla, insurgent or terrorist activities. Armed groups hide behind the humanitarian character of refugee camps and settlements, and use these camps as an opportunity to recruit among the disaffected displaced populations. In such situations, there is the risk that humanitarian aid, including food, medical assistance and other support mechanisms, might be expropriated to support armed elements. Some refugees continue from camps their activities and networks that supported armed conflicts in their home country. Similar security concerns may arise within urban refugee populations where gangs and criminal networks can emerge within displaced and disenfranchised populations. These groups take advantage of the transnational nature of refugee populations, of remittances from abroad and the marginal existence of urban refugees to further their goals. In both the urban and camp context, refugee movements have proven to provide a cover for the illicit activities, ranging from prostitution and people smuggling to the trade in small arms, narcotics and diamonds. For example, such activities are prominent characteristics of the long-standing Burmese refugee population in Thailand and of the Liberians and Sierra Leonean refugees throughout West Africa (Loescher and Milner 2005).

The security consequences of such activities for host states and regional actors are real. They include cross-border attacks on both host states and countries of origin, attacks on humanitarian personnel, refugees and civilian populations. Direct security concerns can also lead to serious bilateral and regional political and diplomatic tensions. Cross border flows are perceived by host states to impede on their national sovereignty, especially given the tenuous control that many central governments in the developing world have over their border regions. Finally, the activities of armed elements among refugee populations not only violate refugee protection and human rights principles, but can constitute threats to international peace and security. For example, the training and arming of the *mujahidden* in the refugee camps in Pakistan (including by the United States and others) during previous decades underscores the potential threat to regional and international security posed by refugee warriors.

In East Africa, both Kenya and Tanzania have raised significant concerns about the direct security threat posed by long-standing refugee populations fleeing from neighbouring countries at war. In particular, Kenya feels vulnerable to the spill-over of conflict from neighbouring states and from terrorist activities. Kenya's porous borders and its position as a regional diplomatic and commercial centre has made it a target of international terrorist attacks in 1998 and 2002. Kenya is also concerned about the flow of small arms into its territory, and especially into its urban areas, primarily from Somalia. As a result of the link between Islamic fundamentalism, the

lack of central authority in Somalia and a long history of irredentism within its own ethnic Somali population, the government in Nairobi now views Somali refugees on its territory almost exclusively through a security prism.

The presence of armed elements in Western Tanzania and allegations that the refugee camps serve as a political and military base for Burundian rebel groups have been the source of significant security concerns for the government in Dar es Salaam. Tensions deriving from these allegations have led to open hostilities between Tanzania and Burundi, including the exchange of mortar-fire across the border. Concerns have also been raised by politicians and police about the perceived rise in gun-crime in urban areas resulting from the flow of small arms from Burundi. Consequently, the Tanzanian government has increased restrictions on the Burundian refugees, is pushing for early repatriation, and has also adopted the official policy that refugees should be restricted to safe havens in their country of origin.

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

Furthermore, it has been argued that “in countries which are divided into antagonistic racial, ethnic, religious or other groupings, a major influx can place precariously balanced multi-ethnic societies under great strain and may even threaten the political balance of power” (Loescher 1992, 42). In this way, the presence of refugees has been demonstrated to accelerate “existing internal conflicts in the host country” (Weiner 1993, 16). This concern was made most explicitly clear in Macedonia’s reluctance to accept Kosovar Albanian refugees in March 1999, citing the concern that the mass of Kosovar Albanian refugees “threatened to destabilise Macedonia’s ethnic balance.”¹² Other examples include the arrival of Iraqi Kurds in Turkey, of Afghan Sunni Muslims in Shia-dominated Pakistan, or of Pashtun Afghans in Beluchi-dominated Beluchistan (Stepputat 2004, 4).

But, not all refugees are seen as threats. The question of which refugees are seen as threats, and why, may be partially explained by understanding the perception of refugees as members of the local political community or as outsiders. Indeed, “in the Third World, the remarkable receptivity provided to millions of Afghans in Pakistan and Iran, to ethnic kin from Bulgaria in Turkey, to Ethiopians in the Sudan, to Ogadeni Ethiopians in Somalia, to southern Sudanese in Uganda, to Issaq Somali in Djibouti and to Mozambicans in Malawi has been facilitated by the ethnic and

¹² Comments by the Macedonian Deputy Foreign Minister at the Emergency Meeting on the Kosovo Refugee Crisis, Geneva, 6 April 1999.

linguistic characteristics they share with their hosts” (Loescher 1992, 42). In this sense, the importance of affinity and shared group identity cannot be overstated. If a host community perceives the incoming refugee as ‘one of us’, then positive and generous conceptions of distributive justice will apply.

Conversely, if the refugees are seen as members of an ‘out-group’, they are likely to receive a hostile reception. In cases where there is a division along ethnic, linguistic or religious lines, “a major population influx can place precariously balanced multi-ethnic societies under great strain and may even threaten the political balance of power” (Loescher 1992, 42). Indeed, refugees, “as an out-group, can be blamed for all untoward activities” (Maluwa 1995, 657). While levels of crime may rise by no more than expected with a comparable rise in population, refugees increasingly are seen as the cause. As argued by Maluwa, the “presence of massive numbers of refugees” can “create feelings of resentment and suspicion, as the refugee population increasingly, and often wrongly, gets blamed for the economic conditions that may arise within the domestic population” (Maluwa 1995, 657). This can lead to a point where “poverty, unemployment, scarcity of resources, and even crime and disease, are suddenly attributed to the presence of these refugees and other foreigners” (Maluwa 1995, 657).

The indirect threat to security that long-staying refugees can pose to host states is a key concept that has been lacking in both the research and policy consideration of refugee movements. In these cases, refugees alone are a necessary but not a sufficient cause of host state insecurity. It is not the refugee that is a threat to the host state, but the context within which the refugees exist that results in the securitization of the asylum question for many states. Lacking policy alternatives, many host governments now present refugee populations as security threats to justify actions that would not otherwise be permissible, especially when the state is confronted with the pressures of externally-imposed democratization and economic liberalization. More generally, the presence of refugees can exacerbate previously existing tensions and can change the balance of power between groups in the country of asylum. For this reason refugees play a significant but indirect role in the causes of insecurity and violence, but with consequences potentially of the same scale as the direct threats.

This dynamic has been evident in the dramatic restrictions on asylum that have been imposed by host states in Africa since the mid-1990s (Milner 2009). Numerous reports have pointed to the significance of the absence of meaningful burden sharing and the growing xenophobia in many African countries as the key factors motivating restrictive asylum policies (Crisp 2000, Rutinwa 1999). There is significant evidence to suggest that as international assistance to refugees is cut, refugees are forced to seek alternative means to survive. This frequently places refugees in conflict with local populations and can even lead them into illegal activities.

Rather ironically, xenophobic sentiments among African populations against refugees “have emerged at a time when most of Africa is democratizing and governments are compelled to take into account public opinion in formulating various policies. The result has been the adoption of anti-refugee platforms by political parties which result in anti-refugee policies and actions by governments” (Rutinwa 1999, 2). Just as politicians in Western Europe faced increasing pressures to restrict entry as asylum became a significant issue in domestic politics, “the rise of multiparty democracy in Africa ... has arguably diminished the autonomy of state elites in

determining the security agenda” (Gibney 2002, 2). A common response to these pressures has been for host states to push for the repatriation of refugees at the earliest possible occasion.

4. Refugees and the regional dynamics of peacebuilding

Given these diverse links between protracted refugee situations and regional instability, it is striking that the question of refugees has been largely absent from recent debates on peacebuilding. Contemporary policy and research debates on peacebuilding have generally addressed refugees as a matter of secondary concern, focusing instead on programmes in the country of origin to consolidate peace and prevent a return to conflict. Within this approach, the relationship between peacebuilding and refugees is seen to be unidirectional, with the return of refugees seen as a barometer of the extent to which peacebuilding has been successful.

Current thinking stresses that effective peacebuilding activities must address the needs of refugees by ensuring that the preconditions for successful return and reintegration are present in the refugees’ home country (Chimni 2002). This is often a significant challenge, especially following a protracted conflict where physical infrastructure, homes and social services have been destroyed (Ogata 1997). As the lessons of the past decade make clear, effective peacebuilding in such contexts should also address a wider range of issues affecting returnees, from justice and reconciliation, housing and property rights, human rights monitoring, to the provision of livelihoods in war-torn economies. In this way, the reintegration of displaced populations poses a wide range of peacebuilding challenges, many of which fall beyond the mandate of humanitarian agencies such as UNHCR.

Addressing such challenges should not, however, obscure the fact that the prolonged presence of refugees in neighbouring countries cannot be treated as an isolated factor, to be addressed at the end of the peacebuilding process. In fact, a number of the political and security challenges associated with the prolonged presence of refugees in the region have the proven ability to undermine peacebuilding efforts, including the presence of so-called ‘spoilers’ in refugee populations and pressures from the host country to push for early and unsustainable return. A failure to engage with such regional dynamics has the real potential to undermine peacebuilding efforts within the country of origin.

Challenges to Peacebuilding: ‘Refugee Spoilers’

The most significant challenge to peacebuilding posed by protracted refugee situations is the presence of so-called ‘spoilers’ in refugee camps or in refugee populated border areas. Spoilers, understood as “groups and tactics that actively seek to hinder, delay, or undermine conflict settlement” (Newman and Richmond 2006, 1), are akin to so-called ‘refugee warriors’, as outlined above.¹³

During the 1970s and 1980s, examples of refugee warrior communities could be found among Afghan *mujahidden* in Pakistan, the *Khmers Rouges* in Thailand, and the Nicaraguan *Contras* in Central America. In Africa, refugee warrior communities

¹³ See: Stedman 1997.

were the product of proxy wars in the Horn of Africa and in Southern Africa, wars of national liberation, especially in Southern Africa, and post-colonial conflicts, especially in the African Great Lakes. Similar dynamics exist in many contemporary conflicts, both in Africa and elsewhere, and constitute a serious challenge to peacebuilding activities. In fact, the presence of spoilers in the refugee populated areas of neighbouring states have frustrated peacebuilding efforts in conflicts as diverse as Burundi, Liberia, Afghanistan, Myanmar and Sudan.

In the African Great Lakes, the alleged presence of Burundian armed elements in refugee populated areas of Western Tanzania has had a significant impact on prospects of peace in Burundi. In fact, two of the earliest Burundian rebel groups, Palipehutu and Frolina, were formed from refugees who fled Burundi in 1972. Burundian refugee warrior communities continued to play a role until early 2005, as refugee camps in Tanzania were widely understood to play a key role in recruitment, fundraising and other activities for *la Conseil national pour la defence de la democratie-Forces de defense pour la democratie* (CNDD-FDD), who sought to undermine the peace process in Burundi.

It is widely understood that the best response to the presence of armed elements within a refugee population is through their physical separation and legal exclusion from refugee status, but such an undertaking has consistently proven to be beyond the capability of humanitarian actors, such as UNHCR.¹⁴ For example, in the aftermath of the Rwandan genocide and the militarization of refugee camps in the region, UNHCR called for closer co-operation with regional and international security actors to more effectively address the challenge posed by refugee warriors. More than a decade later, however, broader co-operation within the UN system to deal with the problem of refugee warriors remains problematic, and the militarization of refugee camps and settlements continues to undermine refugee protection, regional security, and peacebuilding efforts in the country of origin.

Push for Early and Unsustainable Repatriation

A second challenge to peacebuilding posed by protracted refugee situations is the potential for the large-scale repatriation of refugees before the necessary conditions of safety and sustainable return exist in the country of origin. Likewise, if the concerns of host states relating to the potentially negative impact of the prolonged presence of refugees on their territory are not addressed, host states may pursue early and coerced repatriation, placing fragile institutions in the country of origin under significant strain and further undermining peacebuilding efforts.

The potential for forced and premature return is heightened as donor interest shift from the host country to the country of origin following the outbreak of peace. Given that many host states feel that they are unfairly burdened with the great majority of the world's refugees, failure to consider the needs and interests of host states as part of broader peacebuilding efforts could exacerbate the concerns of countries of asylum, leading to additional restrictions on asylum and a push for early forced repatriation.

¹⁴ See: O'Neill 2000; and Lawyers Committee for Human Rights (LCHR) 2002.

Such concerns were clearly visible in the case of Tanzania in recent years. With the early signs of peace in Burundi, coupled with a significant shift in donor engagement away from the refugee programme in Tanzania in early 2002, the Tanzanian government began to push for a tripling of the number of refugees repatriating to Burundi. While UNHCR did not agree to promote repatriation, given the prevailing insecurity in many regions of Burundi, some 85,000 refugees nevertheless repatriated from Tanzania to Burundi in 2003. The scale of these returns placed a significant strain on the fragile peace in Burundi. Given that these returns coincided with sustained crime and insecurity, additional reductions in food rations, and increased restrictions on refugees' freedom of movement and economic activity in Tanzania, a number of refugee advocates questioned the voluntary nature of the repatriations, suggesting that conditions in the camps had become so unbearable that many refugees felt compelled to repatriate to Burundi, notwithstanding the continuing insecurity there.

Similar dynamics have been experienced elsewhere in Africa and Asia, where donors and host countries all see an interest in pursuing refugee repatriation at the earliest possible opportunity. In many instances, however, such repatriations do not result in a solution to protracted refugee situations, but instead result in a reoccurrence of conflict and future refugee movements as the root causes of flight are often left unaddressed and the preconditions for sustainable return are not ensured. In cases as diverse as Liberian refugees in Guinea, Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh and Afghan refugees in Pakistan, early and unsustainable repatriation did not lead to a durable solution, but instead formed the foundation renewed refugee movements.

While part of the solution to this dynamic is to ensure that the preconditions for repatriation are in place, as outlined above, it is also important to ensure that donor interest does not rapidly shift to peacebuilding in the country of origin at the expense of refugee assistance programmes in neighbouring countries. Instead, the interests and concerns of host countries need to be more fully considered as part of the regional dynamics of peacebuilding. Such an approach would not only ensure that host states do not pursue early and unsustainable repatriation, but would also contribute to the rehabilitation of refugee populated areas in host countries. While the majority of peacebuilding activities must necessarily be focused on the country of origin, any approach to peacebuilding that is not mindful of broader regional dynamics, including the presence of refugees, risks overlooking factors that could undermine peacebuilding efforts. At the same time, it is important to consider how early engagement with refugee populations in neighbouring countries may contribute to peacebuilding in the country of origin.

Contributions to peacebuilding

It is increasingly recognized that refugees can make a significant contribution to peacebuilding in their country of origin. In a statement to the UN Security Council on 24 January 2006, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Antonio Guterres, noted that "refugees return with schooling and new skills...Over and over, we see that their participation is necessary for the consolidation of both peace and post-conflict economic recovery." Thus, refugee contributions may result from particular skills that they acquire in exile that may directly contribute to post-conflict reconstruction, from the direct involvement of refugees in the negotiation of the peace agreement, and

through peace education and reconciliation activities that can occur prior to repatriation. For example, special teacher training programmes have been implemented in Kenya to train Sudanese refugees to meet the educational needs both in the Kakuma refugee camps and in Southern Sudan.

In fact, a wide range of training opportunities can be extended to refugees in prolonged exile that would eventually contribute to ensuring a durable solution to their plight, either through repatriation, local integration or resettlement in a third country. Opportunities such as language training, vocational training, professional development, peace education and other activities could all form part of a broader solutions-oriented approach, and contribute both to peacebuilding and the self-reliance of refugees. Notwithstanding the clear benefits of such programmes, they remain difficult to fund. At the same time, host states are generally wary of such programmes and view them as a backdoor to local integration.

Given the potential benefits of such programmes to both peacebuilding and the livelihood of refugees, it is important to address donor and host country concerns and ensure that such programmes become a standing feature of programmes for protracted refugee situations. Programmes to enhance the self-reliance of refugees do not, however, constitute a solution to protracted refugee situations. These short-term interventions can only help manage the situation until a resolution can be found. In the long term, the implications of protracted refugee situations can only be fully addressed through the formulation and implementation of comprehensive solutions.

4. Conclusion: Towards a more predictable response to refugees and peacebuilding

Given the links between protracted refugee situations, fragile states and peacebuilding, it is clear that actions by humanitarian agencies, such as UNHCR, without the support of peace and security and development actors will lead to neither comprehensive solutions for protracted refugee situations nor an effective response to the peacebuilding implications of prolonged exile. So long as discussions on protracted refugee situations remain exclusively within the humanitarian community, and do not engage the broader peace and security and development communities, they will be limited in their impact.

Despite the need for a multifaceted approach to protracted refugee situations, the overall response of policy makers remains compartmentalised with security, development and humanitarian issues mostly being discussed in different forums, each with their own theoretical frameworks, institutional arrangements, and independent policy approaches. Meaningful comprehensive solutions for protracted refugee situations must overcome these divisions and adopt a new approach that incorporates recent policy initiatives by a wide range of actors. While there remains a significant role for UNHCR to play as a catalyst for bringing together key stakeholders and for ensuring that the process is sustained, this type of broader engagement cannot occur without the sustained engagement of all branches of the UN system. In this way, the establishment of the UN Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) provides both a timely opportunity and a possible institutional context for this type of cross-sectoral approach.

The composition and mandate of the PBC places it in a unique position to address a number of these concerns. In fact, the UNGA specifically provided that country-specific meetings of the PBC shall include as additional members the country under consideration (ie. the country of origin), countries in the region (ie. host countries) and senior UN representatives in the field and other relevant UN representatives (including UNHCR). In this way, the PBC represents a unique forum for the coordination of peace and security, development and humanitarian activities to address both protracted refugee situations and the regional dynamics of peacebuilding.

There is a risk that the emerging response of the PBC, will not engage with these broader issues. Indeed, the Commission seem to be adopting a country specific approach that excludes a consideration of factors outside the country that could upset post-conflict recovery. It also adopts a limited understanding of the links between long-term displacement and peacebuilding.

A broader recognition of the role of refugees and the regional dynamics of peacebuilding will be an important precondition for the success of the PBC, especially as it undertakes its country-specific deliberations on Burundi and Sierra Leone. Conflict in both Burundi and Sierra Leone resulted in significant refugee movements into neighbouring countries which, in turn, played a significant role in the course of the conflict. More generally, conflict in both countries is largely tied to broader regional dynamics and neighbouring conflicts – the African Great Lakes for Burundi and the Mano River Union for Sierra Leone. Given the regional dynamics of conflict and the role that refugee populations play not only as a consequence of conflict but as a source of its perpetuation in both cases, the importance of situating peacebuilding efforts in Burundi and Sierra Leone within a broader regional context would seem logical. The PBC has not, however, adopted such an approach, and its discussions have remained country-specific, with no discussion of the regional dynamics.

A closer consideration of the links between protracted refugee situations and peacebuilding will be important to ensure effective international response to both issues. The establishment of the PBC draws together the full range of actors required to formulate and implement truly comprehensive solutions for protracted refugee situations, and therefore represents a unique opportunity to articulate a system-wide response to a long-standing challenge to the international community. At the same time, effective peacebuilding initiatives must incorporate a full consideration of the potential role that refugees and the regional dynamics of conflict can play both in undermining and supporting peacebuilding activities in the country of origin.

Appendix 1: Membership of the UN Peacebuilding Commission's Organizational Committee (23 June 2006 to 27 June 2007)

Angola (Chair of the Commission for the First Session)
Brazil
Bangladesh
Belgium (until 31 December 2006 – succeeded by Luxembourg)
Burundi
South Africa
Chile
China
Croatia
Czech Republic
Denmark (until 31 December – succeeded by Panama)
Egypt
El Salvador (Vice Chair)
Fiji
France
Germany
Ghana
Guinea-Bissau
India
Indonesia
Italy
Jamaica
Luxembourg
Netherlands (Chair of the country-specific meeting on Sierra Leone)
Nigeria
Norway (Chair of the country-specific meeting on Burundi)
Pakistan
Panama
Poland (until 31 December 2006 – succeeded by Czech Republic)
Russian Federation
South Africa
Sri Lanka
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
United Republic of Tanzania (until 31 December 2006 – succeeded by South Africa)
United States of America

Appendix 2: Additional members of the country-specific configurations on Burundi and Sierra Leone

Additional members of the Burundi country-specific configuration:

Belgium
 Canada
 Denmark
 Democratic Republic of the Congo
 Economic Community of Central African States
 European Community
 Kenya
 Nepal
 Rwanda
 Uganda
 United Republic of Tanzania
 African Development Bank
 African Union
 East African Economic Community
 Executive Representative of the Secretary-General
 Organisation internationale de la Francophonie
 International Monetary Fund
 Inter-Parliamentary Union
 Economic Commission for Africa
 World Bank
 Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region

Additional members of the Sierra Leone country-specific configuration:

Sierra Leone
 Guinea
 Ireland
 Liberia
 Sweden
 African Development Bank
 African Union
 Central Bank of West African States
 Commonwealth
 Economic Community of West African States
 European Community
 Executive Representative of the Secretary-General
 International Monetary Fund
 Mano River Union
 Organization of the Islamic Conference
 World Bank
 Economic Commission for Africa
 Special Representative of the Secretary General for West Africa

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